Multimedia, digital press and journalistic genres in Catalonia and in Spain: an empirical analysis

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The multimedia resources in the digital journalism

THE phenomenon of the digital press is in way of consolidation in the Spanish and in the Catalan panorama. From the basics, at the end of the 20th century (Armañanzas &Díaz Noci &Meso, 1996), until now (AIMC, 2009), the evolution has been almost exponential (Gilder, 2002; Salaverría, 2005). It is accompanied of parallel processes, like the irruption of the denominated participative journalism (Gillmor, 2004). The first experiences of digital journalism in Spain, in 1994 (El Temps and *El Periódico de Cataluña)*, had two versions of visualization, the hypertextual one (HTML) and that of whole page (PDF).

In a quite speeded timing in comparison to other means, experiences of digital newspapers born only in the Internet (those that we denominate pure players) are developed and are acquiring relievant audience ratios. Furthermore, there are digitals newspapers in the Internet that turn up as a digital branch of the traditional media (Bains, 1996; Burke & Briggs, 2002).

In spite of some attempts towards the contents at payment (Fondevila Gascón, 2008a), the reality brings a free consultation of the contents and production systems which optimize the human and technical resources. The unified redactions, that elaborate contents for the newspapers in paper and for the digital ones, are consolidated all over. Because of that we can consider that the concept of coopetence (collaboration & competition) among traditional press and digital press is settling in the sector, from a perspective intramedium or extramedium. As the process is relatively novel, there is a movement of collaboration and corporative and cooperative research that gives positive results for all the agent involved.
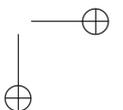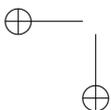
A step in the lucrative synergy between journalism and telecommunications can be the integration of elements of the network as the contents, the core and the access or the establishment of tolls or quotas. In fact, it is a logical aspiration of the digital newspapers. It depends on the moment, the type of contents or enclosedly the classification of the deliveries and the percentages of guarantee depending on the need of the reader. Hereby, the chain of value of the Information and the Knowledge Society and the Broadband Society (Fondevila Gascón, 2008a) would depart from the contents creators (It what would corroborate the Law of the Journalism victory, of Gilder, 2002), would continue with the aggregation and the presentation, the infrastructure of rendering of services, the IMS (IP Multimedia Subsystem), the network and the device of receipt. The journalistic genres would adapt to the digital environment (Díaz Noci, 2004). It is produced in the scenario of mediamorphosis and media mithosis (Fidler, 1997) that is leading new concepts like blogosphera and the weblogs (Baltasar & Germano, 2006; Hookway, 2008).

We can observe a strong link between the journalism, the computing and the telecommunications, which has effects on positive for all three disciplines. The digital journalism has been the big feeder of these sinergies, since it has forced to developing the technology applied to the digital media: hypertext, interactivity and multimedia (Díaz Noci, 2004) characterize this new ecosystem. In the case of the multimedia, the digital mass media have an only opportunity to play with these resources: text, images (still or in movement), video, still or interactive graphs, audio executable programs (like applets Java or Flash), among other. These elements can be ordered juxtaposed or in an integrated way.

The digital newspapers emulate the function of the traditional ones, but they use channels which allow to build use a set of unthinkable complements. The cybermedia or the updated Internet media have will of mediation between facts and public, and uses criteria and journalistic skills, multimedia, interactivity, hypertext (Salaverría, 2005). To complement the contents with audio, video or other multimedia resources opens a new dimension, that it is necessary to develop empirical analysis and to remodel the classical journalistic genres or to create of new (Fondevila Gascón, 2009a). The goal of the research that has caused this article is to ascertain empirically the use of the multimedia resources that carry out the digital pure player media. These media tries to squeeze the new multimedia possibilities to the utmost in the elaboration and
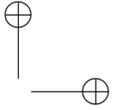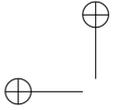
the presentation of the contents. As a matter of fact, Trujillo and Contreras (2006) affirm that the use of audio and video complements the text to transport the reader towards the place of the facts. The digital reader can recreate the one that has happened.
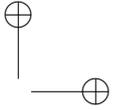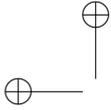
Five characteristics configurate the cybernetic speech, that is part of the cyberjournalism (Díaz Noci & Salaverría, 2003). The features are multimedia (the writing is mixed with sound and image in motion), the hypertext (navigation from nodes), the instantaneousness (the present acquires a new dimension due to being cumulative and non substitutive, successive and sequential like in the other media), the interactiveness (the user becomes an active element of the communicative process) and the universality (in Internet everything is in 0'1 seconds, since the information circulates at the speed of the light). Therefore, following this argumental line, the hypertext, of the hand of the multimedia, confers a kind of hypermedia on the cybernewspapers. The classification of the journalistic genres in the digital environment shows also nuances. Thus, we can find informative genres (news), interpretative genres (report and chronicle), dialogic genres (interview, forum or debate, chat and survey) and argumentative genres (comment and opinion). All the dialogic genres are interactive, but not they all those who use the interactivity are necessarily dialgic (Díaz Noci, 2004). However, there are new genres that burst forth of the Internet (the, for example, multimedia report, analyzed by Marrero Santana, 2008) and diverse proposals (Martínez Albertos, 2000) as for the analysis of the journalistic genres. To carry out the statistical study we use a traditional and debatable proposal, since has to adapt to the digital journalism. We understand that scientifically it is careful to wait to the consolidation of a long-term taxonomy. Because of that we tend to the classical theory of the journalistic genres (adapted by us) of Martínez Albertos, who considers three types of genres: informative (news), interpretative (report, chronicle, interview) and of opinion (editorial, comment, opinion article, column, letter to the director, critical article, cartoon and blogs). The digital journalism is a manna of new genres, having in counts the hibridation process (Larrondo, 2004; Salaverría, 2005) and in spite of the most conservative concept of transposition (Cantalapiedra, 2004), the mechanism that leads to a text or to a genre to jumping from a language to other one or from a way to other one (Steimberg, 1993). The pure players, paraphrasing the mithosis between traditional and digital press, would exist in this area.
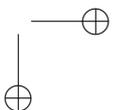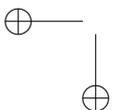
The hypermedia characteristic ones of the digital journalism extract profit of the connectivity, the multimedia integration and the convergence. Even though the multimedia resources of the digital newspapers have gone off, the media are conscious of the traditional weight of the text and of the focussing of the reader in headlines or summary (Valero, 2001). One of the angular goals of the digital press consists in the contents to make the speed and the reliability compatible. In such effect, the language has had to adapt to transmit the information through the network, to become an unifying, plural and multimedia language (Edo Bolós, 2001).

The digital journalism creates a new informative model, which combines shots of the traditional press, of the radio and of the television, in form that incorporates the image in motion (through videos or in movement graphs) and the sound. Multimedia, therefore, acquire an unthinkable protagonism few years behind, with the possibilities of return of the investment that this implies (Garnham, 1996; García de Torres et altri, 2004). Multimedia concept has experienced a process that, *mutatis mutandis*, has led it of referring to the pleiad of different media and cultural industries in the area of the communicative and cultural sector until the technological combination that generates an encounter among the audiovisual communication, the computer science and the telecommunications.

It is necessary to establish which degree of use of the multimedia resources make the digital newspapers, protected at the same time in the trend of the readers of the discharge of contents in a cross-platform dynamics. As an added value of the technological convergence, the readers can manage the plethora of information in a constant way and cross-platform. Devices like the computer, the television (Fondevila Gascón, 2009b), the mobile telephone or the electronic agenda have been favored of the new technological standards and become interchangeable. They configure the hypermedia (Edo, 2001). In this ecosystem we find the infomediary (Onudi, 2003), harvester of contents which connects the offer of market with the demand of solutions requested by the consumers. The main axis of the journalistic portals would be the contents, channeled through the informative products, documental products and services of added value (López & Martínez, 2009). The contents present an optional registry, of payment or free, from which the user receives a personalized attention depending on the economical contribution or supplied information, like newspaper library, surveys, chat pictures, virtual shops and dictio-

nary. The contents evolve for the stages of creation, administration, distribution and publication. The phase of publication implies to make the documents with the suitable formats (HTML or PDF) and to adapt to the several channels or to devices of publication (WAP, PDA, WebTV or Internet) the informative piece.

However, the multimedia starts to work in in the adapted traditional genres into the digital journalism. We will analyze the degree in the empirical analysis. In the piece of informative genre the use of sound and video is recommended when improves the quality of the information, and is indispensable for the correct understanding of the contents, in the supposition that text or photography are not enough. On occasions these elements turn up on the fringe of the narration, as an added value in the information. The sound complements images or occupies an own and singular space, especially in the case of declarations that are a piece of news *per se*. The audiovisual sequences are usually short. The inclusion of fragments of video is not too frequent, as a result of the costs that it implies and of the time of discharge. The broadband is every time more determining (Fondevila Gascón, 2009c) when viewing genres with multimedia elements, in spite of the expansion of understanding formats to be able to see videos.

An empirical analysis of the use of multimedia resources

The degree of utilization of the multimedia resources on the part of the digital press in Catalonia and Spain is, then, an object of desert study that requires from statistical bases to generate solid conclusions. The study, of type applied, empirical, with evaluative results, temporarily sectional, using primary sources, methodologically exploratory, descriptive and explanatory, and with quantitative character, analyzed four digital newspapers, two Catalan ones and two Spanish ones, representative in Catalonia and in Spain, during the month of March of 2009.

In the Catalan case, the local journalistic industry rode towards a hybrid model traditional-digital (Fondevila Gascón, 2008b). It was in this process, and we chose, like in the Spanish case, digital pure player newspapers, that is, only born to and for the Internet. The selected digital journals are vilaweb.cat,
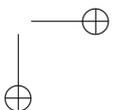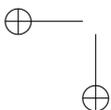
e-noticies.cat, elplural.com and libertaddigital.com. The analysis was structured in two parts: among week and the weekend.

The criterion of selection of the analyzed media was the representativeness depending on the data of audience of OJD Interactive (www.ojdinteractiva.es/historico.php?id=345) for the media in Spanish and in Catalan. A conditio sine qua non was that the analyzed newspapers were controlled for OJD, and had a representative audience. Some digital media like diaridecatalunya.net, diaridebarcelona.cat, elsingulardigital.cat, lamalla.cat or eldebat.cat show symbolic figures of audience. Another criterion for the Catalan media is an autonomic reach of contents. Newspapers like elripolles.com or diaridegirona.cat focus on local or provincial contents. Digital versions of the traditional in paper media (free or of payment) or digital branches of audiovisual media were discarded.

The goal was to analyze to confront the use of the multimedia resources in these digital newspapers from the news of the title page that they drove to an internal link, following the hypothesis that the utilization of the multimedia resources is still in incipient phase in the digital press in Catalonia and in Spain. The contents corresponding to the genres were classified in informative, interpretative and of opinion, following the theory of Martínez Albertos (adapted by us). In each piece the following resources were counted: text (characters with space), photography, video, audio (declarations without video), infograph and executable programs (like applets Java or Flash). For each variable the corresponding number was established. Of all the achieved and classified data some averages were elaborated for being able to establish the comparison, among week (of Monday on Friday) and the weekends (Saturday and Sunday), and we have made the statistical average between both. The study allowed to discover if the media subjected to research used any resources that other did not use also, if they used all of them or only a few, and the averages of use of each resource. From here, and considering the use of the text as supposed, the goal was to establish a global average of use of the rest of multimedia resources on the part of each newspaper, and the average of all newspapers

The analysis of the informative genres (Table 1) reflects a clear leadership of the photography. The two digital newspapers in Spanish lead the number of characters of text. The Catalan ones are positioned in the first positions in use of the photography. Thus, Vilaweb includes 1,50 pictures for each piece

Table 1. Use of multimedia resources in digital journals (Informative genres)

Digital journal	Characters with space	Photo-graphy	Video	Audio	Info-graph	Executable programs
Vilaweb	1966,35	1,50	0,07	0	0,01	0
e-Notícies	1397,40	0,82	0,23	0	0	0
Elplural.com	2610,19	0,74	0,06	0	0	0,01
Libertad Digital	2312,22	0,72	0	0	0,01	0
Average	2071,54	0,94	0,09	0	0,01	0

Source: Statistical research of the Group of Research and Analysis about Digital Journalism (May 2009), leadered by the author of this article

of news, and e-noticies.cat 0,82. The average of the Spanish tandem is right. Therefore, following the analogic tradition, the pure player make an intense use of the photographic resource. However, the video and the sound, differential factors in relation to the traditional journalism, present some very scarce ratios of use. As for the video, e-noticies.cat is the leader digital newspaper (each piece contains 0,23 insertions), vilaweb.cat (0,07) and elplural.com (0,06) resort to this formula in a more occasional way, while libertaddigital.com obviates it. Regarding the audio, it does not turn up in any publication. The infograph sets up as a resource only used by Libertad Digital (0,01) and Vilaweb (0,01), symbolic figures. Executable programs are only used by elplural.com (0,01 on average for piece of news). Therefore, Vilaweb and e-noticies.cat are those that use the multimedia resources more, but always with conservative figures.

As for the interpretative genre (Table 2), elplural.com and libertaddigital.com, followed by vilaweb and e-noticies.cat, are the digital newspapers which dedicate more textual space. It shows its brief and direct style. The Catalan Vilaweb ratifies its bet for the use of pictures (1,16 on average, slightly under the informative one), followed by elplural.com (0,94), e-notícies (0,75) and libertaddigital.com (0,72). The average use of photography in the interpretative genres is under the figure of the informative genres. About the video, Libertad Digital perseveres in the line of the informative genres and does not include some. Vilaweb, elplural.com and e-noticies.cat (this one with a clear descent in relation to its informative genres marks) includes this multimedia resource. The infograph is used by Libertad Digital (0,13) and Vilaweb (0,09),

Table 2. Use of multimedia resources in digital journals (Interpretative genres)

Digital journal	Characters with space	Photo-graphy	Video	Audio	Info-graph	Executable programs
Vilaweb	1581,76	1,16	0,12	0	0,09	0
e-Notícies	1275,43	0,75	0,06	0	0	0
Elplural.com	3597,85	0,94	0,09	0,02	0	0
Libertad Digital	2652	0,72	0	0	0,13	0
Average	2276,76	0,89	0,07	0,01	0,06	0

Source: Statistical research of the Group of Research and Analysis about Digital Journalism (May 2009), leadered by the author of this article

Table 3. Use of multimedia resources in digital journals (genres of opinion)

Digital journal	Characters with space	Photo-graphy	Video	Audio	Info-graph	Executable programs
Vilaweb	1891,38	0,58	0,10	0,01	0	0
e-Notícies	1824,59	0,37	0,01	0	0,12	0
Elplural.com	3841,71	0,99	0	0	0	0
Libertad Digital	4344,86	0,63	0,03	0	0,01	0
Average	2975,64	0,64	0,04	0	0,03	0

Source: Statistical research of the Group of Research and Analysis about Digital Journalism (May 2009), leadered by the author of this article

very above the use that they make in informative genres. The executable programs are not a used resource. However, elplural.com is the only one that uses the audio, with a testimonial average (0,02).

The use of the multimedia resources in the genres of opinion (Table 3) is minor than in the other group of genres. Regarding the text, Libertad Digital uses an average of characters very over that in the other genres, the one that drives it to overcome elplural.com, and, a great distance, e-Notícies and Vilaweb. The use of pictures in genres of opinion favors the Spanish media: elplural.com (with an average of 0,99, above its own registry in interpretative and informative genres) and libertaddigital.com (0,63, under the informative and interpretative genres) overcome vilaweb.cat (0,58) and e-Notícies (0,37). In both Catalan cases, the presence of photography is clearly above the other

Table 4. Global average for publication of multimedia resources use (photography, video, audio, infograph, executable programs)

Digital journal	Global average
Vilaweb	0,24
e-Notícies	0,10
Elplural.com	0,19
Libertad Digital	0,14
Average	0,17

Source: Statistical research of the Group of Research and Analysis about Digital Journalism (May 2009), leadered by the author of this article

genres. About video, Vilaweb includes it opinion more than in the informative genre. However, e-noticies.cat use it less that in the other genres. The newspaper libertaddigital.com uses the use of the video (0,03) for the first time and elplural.com, which used it more in interpretative genres than in informative genres, omits it in those of opinion. Of infographs use only makes e-noticies.cat (that had not employed it in the other genres) and libertaddigital.com (that uses more in interpretative genres). Vilaweb uses symbolically audio and for the first time in the statistical sample (0,01 on average). The executable programs are missing.

We consider it is interesting to establish a global average for publication of multimedia resources use (photography, video, audio, infograph, executable programs) of the digital newspapers. The classification of multimedia resources use is headed by the text, followed by the photography, the video, the infograpgh, the audio and the executable programs. For analyzed digital newspapers, and without counting out the text when elaborating the average (Table 4), Vilaweb obtains a 0,24 on average of global use of multimedia resources. El Plural (0,19), Libertad Digital (0,14) and e-Notícies (0,10) are the next ones. The average is eloquent: 0,17. This statistical datum confirms the hypothesis of departure (extensible internationally). The possibilities of intensification of use of the multimedia in the Catalan and Spanish digital press is clear, and it must stimulate de digital journals to try it as soon as possible.

Conclusions

We can achieve original and interesting conclusions thanks to the empirical study and the analysis of the use of the multimedia resources by the four digital media selected (Libertad Digital, El Plural, Vilaweb and e-Notícies). It can be useful to the reflection of the newspapers of the sector regarding the amount and type of multimedia resources use. Taking already into account that it makes fifteen years of the landing of the Spanish and Catalan digital newspapers to the Internet (even though in the version pure player are more recent), a use conservative of the multimedia resources was predictable.

We can affirm, through the statistical results, that, in spite of exceptions like the photography -the analogic tradition of which is undeniable-, the use of the multimedia resources (especially audio, infograph and executable programs) on the part of the pure player digital newspapers is in a primitive phase of development. The averages of use that transpire from the empirical research are clearly improvable.

Of the analyzed digital newspapers, elplural.com and libertaddigital are those that publish more text in the studied genres: in informative and interpretative the first is elplural.com, and in those of opinion Libertad Digital. Vilaweb overcomes in amount of textual resources in e-notícies.

The photography is the multimedia resource more used by the Catalan and Spanish digital press, with difference. Vilaweb use it very often, and El Plural, Libertad Digital and, at a distance, e-Notícies follow it. In contrast, the bet from the video is very shy: the newspaper e-Notícies is the leader, in front of Vilaweb, El Plural and Libertad Digital. The inclusion of audio is only used in the case of El Plural and Vilaweb, but of a testimonial way. The other two cybermedia do not use this resource in the studied period. Only El Plural uses executable programs, also in a symbolic way. The infograph achieves more presence than the audio, with poor registries of Libertad Digital, e-Notícies, Vilaweb and El Plural.

Then, the text leads the use of multimedia resources, followed by the photography, the video, the infograph, the audio and the executable programs. If we count out the results of the analyzed digital newspapers, and leaving the text apart, Vilaweb adds up a 0,24 on average of global use of multimedia resources, overcoming El Plural (0,19), Libertad Digital (0,14) and e-Notícies
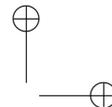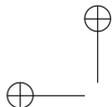
(0,10). The global average (0,17) still reflects a situation driven away from the reasonable and advisable use.

Beyond the possible causes (immaturity of the digital newspapers; need of more technological and human resources in the digital journals and in broadband in the media-reader relationship for the full development of the new possibilities; more maturity and demand of the reader) of the phenomenon, it is necessary to take into account that the multimedia resources are the added value of the cybermedia, which allow the reader to complement the texual information with audio and video, often indispensable for the holistic understanding of an event.

As the text, the still image and the infograph are already used in the traditional press, it is advisable that the digital journals put emphasis in theirs value additions, become signs of identity: the video (the image in motion) and the audio, and, in a second term, the executable programs. Nowadays, however, the resource more used by the digital means is the photography, like in the traditional press. As a matter of fact, if the press in paper was also reluctant to include the image, it is understandable that the digital press is it to include the image in motion. It is a matter of a parallel phenomenon that our study ascertains, the same as it allows to foresee a use more intense of the multimedia resources in an immediate future. This is an obligatory way for the optimization of the digital journalism.

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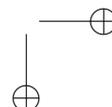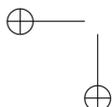
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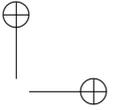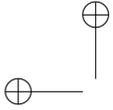
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