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ARTICLE

Integrated and Cross-Media Newsroom Convergence

Two Models of Multimedia News Production – The Cases of Novotécnica and La Verdad Multimedia in Spain

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Abstract / This article deals with the work of journalists in newsrooms that produce content for multiple media: print, radio, television, the internet and others. It builds on the relevant literature about the implementation of newsroom convergence in Europe and the USA. Specifically, the study analyses change in journalistic practice and newsroom workflow in the newsrooms of two Spanish multimedia groups: (a) La Verdad Multimedia, a regional media group owned by Vocento, which publishes the newspaper *La Verdad*, the online site La Verdad.es, the local radio station Punto Radio and the television station Punto TV; and (b) Novotécnica, a regional independent company which publishes the newspaper *La Voz de Almería* and also owns both Radio Almería (Cadena Ser) and Localia television. Researchers interviewed reporters and news directors and observed newsroom practices. The results suggest the emergence of two different models of newsroom convergence: the integrated model and the cross-media model, each with a different production system, newsroom organization, degree of journalists' multi-skilling and business strategy.

Key Words / journalistic practice / media convergence / multi-skilling / newsroom convergence / newsroom culture

Introduction: Perspectives on Media Convergence

Over the last few years, a large number of media companies in Europe and the USA have begun a process of convergence which is still in its infancy and poses relevant questions about the future of journalism (Quinn, 2005). Digitization of news production systems facilitates the erosion of borders that have traditionally separated the creation of content for print, the internet, radio and television, thus allowing so-called 'media convergence'. Digital systems allow journalists to share data files (audio, video and text) with increasing versatility, in order to elaborate content for the various platforms. A true 'media-morphosis' (Fidler, 1997) is taking place, based on the multimedia integration provided by the internet, while at the same time specific content is being developed for each

platform. Such convergence occurs in a market context characterized by the fall of press circulation worldwide, the stagnation of television audiences, the growth of internet news users, the introduction of budgetary cuts in news departments and media diversification (Deuze, 2004; Klinenberg, 2005).

Media convergence is inseparably related to industry convergence. Since 1996, the communications, computer and media sectors have found a common path, facilitated by the deregulation of communications law, media digitalization and the global reach of the internet (Wirtz, 2001; Soo Chon et al., 2003). As the business of content providers and distributors came closer, many companies positioned themselves strategically in the new scenario, forging alliances with partners from other sectors (Chan-Olmsted and Chang, 2003). Thus, the process of fusions, mergers and acquisitions of traditional and new media accelerated the transition to the converged era, where media cross-ownership and business economics shape market structure (Jenkins, 2006). As managers perceived the internet as a multimedia platform, convergence has grown to currently become 'the strategic option' for many media companies, though various levels of response still make it possible to differentiate among 'leaders, learners and laggards' in the new scenario (Dennis et al., 2006).

Convergence refers to 'some combination of technologies, products, staffs and geography among the previously distinct provinces of print, television and online media' (Singer, 2004: 3). The phenomenon might be analysed from at least four perspectives: technological, management, communicative and professional, which are intertwined in a media environment in continuous evolution (Salaverría, 2003; García Avilés, 2006). Convergence is reshaping the landscape of journalism in a variety of ways for, as Pavlik puts it, 'newsroom structures, journalistic practices and news content are all evolving' (2004: 28). The process has been described 'in terms of (increasing) cooperation and collaboration between formerly distinct media newsrooms and other parts of the modern media company' (Deuze, 2004: 140). It often consists of partnerships among media organizations in order to meet a variety of technological, editorial, regulatory, and market-based challenges.

These partnerships, some of which have existed for several years, were created as digital technology allowed journalists to produce news across several multimedia platforms at increasing speed. The relationships became more attractive as declining or flat circulation numbers forced newspapers to look for new ways to market their product to the younger audiences television news sometimes attracts. The technological foundation of newsroom convergence lies in the digitization of production. This, of course, does not lead to cross-media cooperation in itself, but greatly enhances its possibilities because digital production systems allow for immediate sharing of content, in formats that are ripe for editing and republishing within the same organization.

From the business perspective, newsroom convergence tends to be regarded as a cost-saving strategy and as an opportunity for newspaper editors to revise their business model (van Kranenburg, 2004). According to Quinn (2005) managers adopt convergence with two main goals, improving the quality of journalism and tightening production costs, which do not necessarily conflict with one another. Media companies have developed 'tactics' which show an incipient convergence from the early 1990s, as business convergence developed much earlier than newsroom convergence (Gordon, 2003; van Kranenburg, 2004). Unlike strategies, such tactics usually attempt to solve problems or

reach objectives in the short term at the operational level. Strategy requires long-range planning while tactical convergence does not. Tactics might involve different levels, such as marketing and customer relations, advertising, product cross-promotion, technological operations and team motivation (Gordon, 2003).

From management's standpoint, the most frequent strategies are collaboration and partnership among different media. Thus, managers have used convergence in order to achieve more efficient multiplatform news production and increased profits (Killebrew, 2005). Convergence is usually a corporate management decision when it involves several business units, such as organizational structure, production, distribution, marketing and human resources. At the corporate level, media convergence is involved with ownership and growth strategies in at least three ways: '(1) operational convergence, wherein internal infrastructures conform to digital standards; (2) cross-platform marketing, in which companies leverage their platforms and repurpose old content; and (3) delivering on-demand content in addressable form for viewers and users' (Dennis, 2006: 24–5).

The increase of concentration in media ownership has sparked off the debate about the control of information and freedom of speech. As long as most distribution channels are in the hands of a small number of media companies, pluralism and diversity are threatened (Klinenberg, 2005). According to Huang et al. (2006: 85), there is a growing concern among media analysts that cross-promotion and content sharing could harm the diversity of viewpoints in the news. Some critics lament that 'convergence is the enemy of quality journalism' (Haiman, in Huang et al., 2006: 86).

Development of Newsroom Convergence

When many television stations and papers launched their respective web services at the end of the 1990s, they generally chose to set up a small newsroom, whose journalists were devoted for the most part to repackaging news content from the traditional media in the new platform (Deuze, 1999; Boczkowski, 2004). The initial investment just allowed hiring journalists who would repurpose original stories for the online service, though some news organizations began to draw plans to converge their print and online news-rooms. A 2002 study from the International Institute of Infonomics estimated that almost 100 media companies had adopted some type of convergence (Aquino et al., 2002). At this stage, convergence originated many practical problems and it was regarded with scepticism by industry leaders and fiercely opposed by many journalists (Stone, 2001; Bierhoff, 2002). In Europe, the first cases of newsroom convergence were developed by media companies mainly located in the Nordic countries, Great Britain and Spain (Aquino et al., 2002: 27–40).

In Spain, only a few companies have so far implemented newsroom integration to supply the information requirements of at least three media (García Avilés, 2006). The most extended model of convergence contemplates the collaboration of journalists from different platforms, content cross-promotion and multimedia news coverage in breaking news or planned events. The business information division of the Grupo Recoletos in Spain brought about a tumultuous integration of the newsrooms of its four media outlets (the newspaper *Expansión*, the online news service *Expansiondirecto*, the business magazine *La Actualidad Económica* and the 24-hour news channel *Expansión TV*) throughout 2003 (Boczkowski and Ferris, 2005). All four newsrooms, located in different

areas, were unified in the same building and editors and section editors worked together across media in the new structure. More recently, the Madrid-based newspaper *El Mundo* and the leading free newspaper *20 minutos*, owned by the Scandinavian Schibsted, have also started the integration of their own print and online newsrooms.

Vocento was the first Spanish media group to implement a regional multimedia strategy as its core business in 2001. The company has invested heavily to reinforce this strategy by developing regional multimedia business units from its newspapers in order to preserve its leadership in the communication market. Vocento currently owns 12 large regional multimedia groups that comprise a newspaper, its online edition, a local radio station, a local television network and an advertisement-selling company. The company also owns the national newspaper *ABC* and the news agency *Colpisa*, which is to be turned into a central newsroom that will supply content to all its regional newspapers and websites.

In the USA, the most significant convergence ventures began at three large regional corporations: Media General's Tampa News Center, in Florida (Huang et al., 2004; Dupagne and Garrison, 2006, among others), the Tribune Group, in Chicago (Hickey, 2002) and Belo Corporation, in Dallas (Lawson-Borders, 2006: 127–58). According to Duhe et al. (2004: 81), nine out of ten US television news stations were practising some type of convergence in 2004, although 'the majority converged by sharing news content with other news organizations'. Several newspapers have also chosen to integrate their newsrooms. *The New York Times* started the integration of its print and online editions early in 2007. *The Washington Post* and the *Los Angeles Times* also followed suit and their journalists are asked to contribute to both editions of the paper. A survey of 63 major metropolitan US newspaper editors showed 'that these managers have a high level of commitment to integration' (Bressers, 2006: 134). Among the key factors, editors included having a partnership with other media, developing a converged news desk that handles stories regardless of medium or distribution method, management commitment to integration, equalizing perceptions of status between newspaper workers and online workers, empowering online staff to actively participate in planning meetings and encouraging print journalists to generate content for exclusive use online (Bressers, 2006).

Perceptions about the implications of newsroom integration tend to generate anxiety among fellow workers, and sometimes disrupt the positive climate at the workplace. Silcock and Keith (2006) examined journalists' attitudes during the implementation of convergence in two media companies in Florida and Arizona. Their study reveals that professional culture differences between print and television may hinder the convergence process, because they give rise to several practical problems that demand a difficult resolution. As Killebrew states:

> *Value and attitude discrepancies will pose serious risks to the undertaking if communications are not complete, accurate and forthcoming. Corporate myths regarding the competing platforms should be discovered and either exorcised from the lexicon or marginalized by consistent information to all employee groups. (Killebrew, 2003: 45)*

Although journalists at converged newsrooms experience additional pressures to those already existing in a traditional newsroom, they do not believe that convergence by itself poses significant ethical problems. According to Singer (2006: 47–50), journalists do show

concern for the deterioration of some standards, such as accuracy, independence from business pressures or preference for hard news over sensational items.

Models of Newsroom Convergence

Dailey et al. (2005) have conceptualized the nature of newsroom convergence following the assumption that convergence is characterized by 'some degree of interaction and cooperation among cross-media partners, whether the media are owned by common or separate companies' (2005: 151). These authors established both a model ('the Convergence Continuum Model') and the categorization of specific cross-media behaviours in the various levels on that model. Their model defines news convergence as a series of behaviour-based activities illustrating the interaction and cooperation stages of staff members at newspapers, television stations and web organizations with news partnerships along five levels. Each of those levels comprises a series of tasks and processes whose undertaking leads to changes in the 'convergence continuum'. At the minimum level, we find media that capture news items on their own and then promote them on other platforms; in the top level, a single newsroom generates content for several platforms. Within this convergence spectrum, there are several convergence parameters developed by the authors, such as cloning and brand building with cooperation among the media; 'coopetition' and added value, content sharing with regular meetings and full convergence (Dailey et al., 2005: 152–4). However, this model assumes that any form of convergence that is not full integration is just a stage in the process.

Three essential activities take place within the value chain of any media business: information gathering, news production and content aggregation, and distribution. Thus, media convergence might be considered from each of these standpoints. It can be found at the information-gathering level, that is, newsrooms whose journalists cover the news for different platforms and share information with their counterparts. It can also be found at the news production and aggregation level, that is, journalists from separate newsrooms who package information in different platforms. Finally, media convergence at the level of content distribution takes place when the same company distributes news through different platforms. Therefore, it seems that media convergence does not necessarily imply that journalists must share a single newsroom to produce news content for several platforms.

In this article we adopt a non-linear approach to newsroom convergence, with the purpose of establishing different levels of development, making convergence an open process with many possible outcomes, which is what empirical evidence suggests. From the professional standpoint, any type of newsroom convergence challenges some traditional journalistic practices. First, it advocates some degree of multi-skilling, as opposed to specialization in a single medium. Multi-skilling means each journalist is expected to gather the facts, assemble the content, edit the pictures and sound, and deliver the news via several platforms. Second, it also speeds up the production process, in order to meet tighter deadlines in a 24-hour news cycle, where questions arise about journalistic standards and editing procedures (Singer, 2006). Finally, it creates a conflict between the routines and practices prevailing in each journalistic culture (print, television, the internet . . .) when they get to work together (Huang et al., 2006).

Nevertheless, our intention is to avoid oversimplifying the analysis. Journalistic convergence should not be regarded as just an 'effect' of corporate or technological trends, as Dupagne and Garrison (2006) imply. Technical innovation is usually based on professional and economic decisions and journalists use new tools in order to fit their own expectations, skills and practices. Therefore, newsroom convergence will be discussed not as a technology-driven process, but as a process that uses technological innovation to achieve specific goals in particular settings and that is why each convergence project might have a different outcome.

Methodology

Media research indicates that journalistic standards and practices are socially constructed systems, which deal with complex work processes by organizing news flow and explicating roles and competences (Tuchman, 1978; Fishman, 1980). The case-study method is regarded as a valid tool to analyse a complex issue and it allows one to research a contemporary phenomenon in its own context (Yin, 2003: 13). Such method is eminently qualitative and it focuses on the parameters of a specific case, using several sources such as direct observation, interviews, written records and other documents, as evidence to validate certain conclusions. Case study has been used as a methodological tool to describe changes in the professional roles of journalists in Finnish Public Broadcasting (Rintala and Suolanen, 2005); to examine the implications of newsroom convergence at the Tampa News Center, in Florida (Huang et al., 2004; Dupagne and Garrison, 2006); to study the reactions of journalists in four media companies which initiated convergence in different geographical locations in the USA (Singer, 2004) and also to analyse new journalistic competencies in multimedia newsrooms in Catalonia (Scolari et al., 2006).

After surveying 14 different experiences of media convergence in Spain, two cases of regional multimedia groups were selected. First, the regional group Novotécnica, which implemented a converged newsroom that has fed news for three media outlets in the city of Almería since January 2004. Its newsroom is made up of 85 journalists who provide content for the newspaper *La Voz de Almería*, the *Cadena Ser* radio station and the *Localia* television station. In 2006, *La Voz de Almería* reported a daily circulation of 9556, according to the Spanish audit bureau OJD. Its website will be launched by early 2008, according to management. As Novotécnica´s convergence is a pioneering experience in Spain, it was selected as a case study.

The second case study deals with La Verdad Multimedia, owned by Vocento, a leading media company in the Spanish newspaper industry, which also began its multimedia strategy in 2004. La Verdad Multimedia publishes the regional newspaper *La Verdad*, which leads the market with a circulation of 40,654, according to audit bureau OJD. The same company owns both local television (Punto TV) and radio (Punto Radio) stations, also embedded in the Vocento Media Group. *La Verdad* launched its online edition in 1998, which reached a monthly average of 3 million pages visited in 2006, according to the OJD. An editor is responsible for the print newsroom staff of 95 journalists, and a separate editor oversees the audiovisual newsroom staff of 12 journalists. La Verdad Multimedia is capitalizing on its strong regional position in the provinces of Murcia and Alicante, by channelling all Vocento advertising through a single sales company.

All four perspectives of convergence mentioned (technological, managerial, communicative and professional) are undoubtedly present in the implementation of any converged newsroom. Given the limitations and scope of this study, it has focused on the professional perspective. The consolidation of convergence strategies in both regional groups suggested three research questions:

1   How do converged newsrooms operate in order to be able to produce content for multiple media?
2   How have journalists adapted to the requirements of convergence and to what extent have they become multi-skilled in their work?
3   What are the main issues that arise in the coming together of different journalistic cultures (print, radio, television, the internet)?

Researchers carried out fieldwork both at La Verdad Multimedia and Novotécnica newsrooms in November 2006 and January 2007. They spent two days observing newsroom operations in each facility, attending news meetings and interviewing journalists. In all, seven news professionals were interviewed at La Verdad Multimedia and 10 at Novotécnica, including the editor, the manager, the assistant editors, section editors, reporters and reporter-anchors. Interviewees were selected according to their functions and their degree of involvement in convergence operations, so that they would represent the journalistic and managerial areas of the process. Face-to-face interviews lasted an average of 45 minutes and sometimes they were completed by email or phone. All interviewees were granted confidentiality.

Findings

Newsroom Workflow

The Case of Novotécnica

The concept of workflow refers to the dynamics of media production and it embraces the process which goes from story assignment and its production to editing page content and distribution (Hjarvard, 1995; Zavoina and Reichert, 2000). The integrated newsroom at Novotécnica, located in a two-storey building, was inaugurated in January 2004. Prior to that, there were two separate newsrooms (print and radio-television) on different floors. There are seven sections: Sports, the Economy, Business, Living, Almería, Cities and Weekend. Each of them consists of a section editor and an average of seven journalists, who produce content for all three media. The newsroom contains three editing booths and one postproduction facility. The second floor houses four radio studios, one television news set and the control room.

Novotécnica's newsroom operates with a flexible organizational structure. The news desk is the heart of the system, with the role of managing the workflow in order to simultaneously supply the radio station, the television station and the newspaper. The desk consists of the assistant editor, the deputy assistant editor and four editors-in-chief who supervise all the assignments and stories. They hold three staff meetings with the section editors throughout the day (at 10 am, 1 pm and 6 pm) and there is always at least one

of the senior editors available at the desk, channelling the news flow and setting priorities. A senior editor describes the role of the central desk:

> *Reporters are constantly generating news content and the central desk decides each time how to distribute it: if it is immediately broadcasted over radio, if it is saved for tomorrow's newspaper, if it is aired in the TV newscast or if it is shared at once by several platforms.*

Newsroom structure facilitates direct eye contact among all reporters. Separating screens were abolished and all sections were unified in a common space, with no separation by media, because 'everyone does everything', as a section editor put it. In this way, teamwork is strengthened and each individual is helped to overcome natural resistance to participate in the common project. One section editor shares this view: 'It is very useful for us to see each other all the time and to work side by side with our companions.'

According to news editors, it would not be accurate to say that journalists now carry out more work than with the old system. 'Their input is the same, with a working day of a similar length, but they generate more products out of their sources and raw material,' argues the news director. Two reporters interviewed joined the newsroom within the last six months, so they are not able to make a comparison with the former situation. Another reporter asserts that convergence has increased the amount of work, for 'we have to elaborate three pieces using the same material, in order to feed the three media. And there is neither salary increase nor other type of compensation for that.' News flow in Novotécnica´s integrated newsroom is described by a section editor with a revealing metaphor:

> *Each medium resembles a vehicle. The newspaper is like a tractor, because journalists work with long deadlines until their story is published the following day; radio is like a Ferrari, because journalists run fast in order to air the news in time; and television is like a small car; news is not as slow as in print but it airs regularly on the local nightly news.*

In this way, deadlines set the degree of tension during an average working day, so that as many products as possible are made out of a single news story. Editors at the central desk also develop intensive story cross-promotion. However, the central management content system does not seamlessly control the production of news through the various platforms with the same efficiency and this is said to be one of the challenges for Novotécnica's newsroom in the near future.

The Case of La Verdad Multimedia

La Verdad Multimedia illustrates Vocento's growth strategy in the Spanish regional markets, in order to protect its leadership by incorporating new outlets, increasing their market share and stopping new competitors. In 2004, the newspaper *La Verdad* linked with the local free television and radio stations, Punto TV and Punto Radio, integrated in Vocento's network. Company structure is designed to generate synergies between all its outlets, especially in cross-promotion and content sharing. The group facilities are located in two separate buildings. The print newsroom occupies the main building and it is connected with a second building, where 12 journalists at the audiovisual newsroom provide news to both the radio and television stations. Media convergence is primarily

developed at the newspaper website, which publishes news and features from the print edition and a selection of audiovisual news stories. The site also provides a link to the Punto Radio station.

The manager of the audiovisual newsroom also has the job of coordinating content with the newspaper editor. He relies on an assistant editor, who deals with newspaper journalists in order to share information and also anchors Punto TV's nightly news. The print newsroom is organized in a traditional pyramidal structure, led by the editor, the assistant editor and editors-in-chief. The editor is considered the coordinator of the editorial convergence among all media, although there is a great deal of autonomy in each newsroom.

The web section is made up by five journalists who work in the newspaper newsroom. They basically update the news site, laverdad.es, and daily upload three video features which have been produced by the audiovisual newsroom. The online site also provides several links to other group sites as well as video and audio clips. Generally, videos are reduced to a lower quality format, to facilitate users' downloading.

Workflow among newsrooms and sections is coordinated by a separate editor in each newsroom; both of them are permanently in contact. Two meetings are programmed in order to coordinate the multimedia workflow at 10.30 am and 7 pm, attended by the newspaper editor, four editors-in-chief, an online journalist and the editor of the audiovisual newsroom. During the first meeting, editors share breaking news, plan coverage throughout the day and set the tasks to be carried out by each newsroom. During the second meeting – traditionally devoted to closing the front page – they check the work done and resolve last minute problems. In this meeting they also decide which journalist will deliver an editorial comment in the television nightly news: a 30-second opinion piece, devoted to a special story in the following day's newspaper.

Collaboration between the audiovisual and the newspaper newsrooms is much higher in both the local and sports sections. Sometimes journalists share an interview and they package it in both media. The print editor-in-chief describes the motivations of the convergence effort:

> Obviously, our company is interested in this project for cost and market-driven reasons. But in the same way, our journalists are also interested in it, especially younger people, because they have a chance to work with the best journalists in town. Their work is highly regarded because they are able to share their work with senior journalists who have been 40 years at the job. They are involved with an experienced group, led by a newspaper which is an institution in its own market.

Degree of Multi-Skilling

The Case of Novotécnica

Convergence introduces a series of changes in journalistic practice. The results show that the main challenge is multi-skilling. It involves each journalist being able to elaborate news stories for the print, radio, television, the internet and other platforms. It is useful to distinguish between convergence at the newsgathering level, at the production level and at distribution level. They are three separate stages, which can function in different ways. During newsgathering, a larger degree of multi-skilling is often required, for the same reporter gets the statements from a source in various formats: text, video and audio.

During production, however, a journalist might use the material for the television piece, for the radio newscast and for a multimedia story, so that both editorial and narrative priorities prevail in each platform.

In Novotécnica's integrated newsroom, all journalists were asked to become multi-skilled from the first day onwards. The project is based on the assumption that out of a single piece of raw material, that is, the news about what takes place in Almería, each journalist will able to elaborate a product for a separate platform, using the appropriate skills. Therefore, the built-in philosophy, according to the news editor, is 'all journalists must do all things'. This level of multi-skilling was introduced from scratch, so that all news professionals would be aware of the radical change and the new demands; according to the editor:

> *Newsroom integration was quick: we announced the decision on a Friday and we moved to a single newsroom the next Monday. In this way, we invited everybody to join in, so that no-one would feel excluded from the project. I think it worked out better. Within a short time, the days of* monomedia *journalists were numbered.*

Resistance to change is part of any organization's culture. Changes that affect deeply rooted habits and motivations tend to be instinctively rejected at the start. These processes will find obstacles even if they achieve consensus, because resistance to uncertainty is a built-in mechanism. At Novotécnica's newsroom, the main resistance came from older and experienced journalists who were utterly opposed to being turned into multimedia professionals. There were several professionals who rejected the new demands and left the company. They were suspicious about accepting the cross-media structure and they worried about their professional future and how they would fit into the new system. In turn, the main motivation for other journalists was to be able to publish stories in all three media, increasing the reach of their news. Most journalists accepted the logic of convergence, but some were still uncomfortable with multimedia and they struggled to acquire the necessary skills to do well in all media.

In the integrated newsroom, it is not enough for reporters to master writing techniques. Other skills are required as well, such as video editing, page design, photography, audio editing and voice-over narration. Alongside the reporters, news editors also had to acquire new abilities in order to edit content in all media. Managers assume that the multi-skilled reporter is able to adapt content according to the narrative qualities of each medium. This model takes for granted that each journalist would gradually acquire the talent and the competence required to master news language in print, radio and television. A related part of this strategy is to achieve increased flexibility for managers in the daily planning of news production. Having multi-skilled reporters gives opportunities for shuffling them between media platforms when needed. It is expressed explicitly that this does not mean that managers think that everybody should do everything, but that they should be able to.

Management provided journalists with a series of courses in digital video editing throughout 2004. Other courses on sound editing or video shooting were arranged informally by journalists themselves over weekends. However, journalists were not satisfied with the training provided by the company in order to meet the demands of full-scale convergence. 'We began to work from day one with no safety net whatsoever. We had to assume multi-skilling in real time,' a section editor says. Although none of the

interviewees thinks that convergence by itself poses significant ethical challenges, they agree that some public service standards might deteriorate, such as accuracy in the news reports or making the effort to check sources or find additional voices that could enrich a story. Journalists have less available time to carry out their reporting tasks. Time pressure also generates a considerable amount of stress. According to one reporter: 'If I have to rush to the newsroom to enter with the story in an hour's time, I just cannot stay around to get another interview or to do additional research, which I would had done if I were only writing for the newspaper.'

Managers acknowledge that the degree of multi-skilling in the newsroom currently reaches 70 per cent of its capacity. Therefore, about 30 per cent of journalists are not yet multi-skilled. Multi-tasking worked out better in the case of radio and television journalists than in the case of their print counterparts. The former found it less challenging to write texts for the newspaper, while on the other hand, their print colleagues were more reluctant to edit video stories or to make on-camera appearances. Some lowering of standards in the quality of the pieces at the initial stage has been acknowledged by managers. For example, some reporters learned to record video and they used it in their pieces. The quality of broadcast pictures was initially quite poor, but it gradually improved. The sports section is currently the most multi-skilled, as all its six journalists are able to elaborate stories for the three media. They also broadcast sports events live both on television and radio.

The Case of La Verdad Multimedia

When managers first implemented La Verdad Multimedia's project, they encountered resistance, particularly from print journalists. In fact, convergence mainly developed at the management level: editors and section editors are the most committed to collaboration. Journalists know they can produce content for other media if they wish, but only as a possibility, not as an obligation. According to the assistant editor, 'No-one is obliged to do a job which is not properly remunerated. Multimedia journalists are an investment in time and money that management is willing to support for the benefit of the company.'

In *La Verdad*'s print newsroom, only six journalists (out of 95) are fully multi-tasked. They produce a television programme and they contribute to radio and television news. Moreover, the newspaper chief editor presents a preview of the following day's front page in the nightly news. Audiovisual journalists, however, collaborate to a lesser extent with the newspaper. Multimedia workflow takes place in a functional way: sharing information about a particular story, publishing readers' phone calls in the newspaper or providing a video frame as graphic material. Sometimes a broadcast journalist writes an article or an interview for the newspaper. It should be noted that the audiovisual newsroom is devoted to both radio and television, so that professionals are highly skilled multimedia reporters.

Both newspaper and audiovisual journalists agree that 'becoming multi-skilled is a good thing, provided that it is developed with caution, in a rational and coordinated way'. Multi-tasking also opens up new job possibilities for younger journalists. Most interns tend to work first at the broadcast newsroom, and afterwards they move to the newspaper, where they usually become multimedia reporters, for they are able to produce content for all media. However, management so far does not want to enforce multi-skilling in the newsroom:

The main filter to convergence is quality. We shouldn't do all that we are able to do. Newsroom convergence has to be coordinated and controlled. Quality must be the key issue in convergence, at least for us. Workflow between different newsrooms is largely due to journalists' ability and the possibilities technology brings. But the key factor is that journalists are willing to collaborate.

Managers argue that each journalist provides their specific input within the current production structure in separate newsrooms and they are not willing to promote the role of a 'one-man band journalist' who does everything by himself. They fear that if reporters are to cover stories with a television camera, an audio recorder and a laptop, they will be too busy with technology and the requirements of the various media, and the quality of content will diminish. Management prefers to expand cross-media collaboration gradually, before deciding if 'full integration' is the right strategy. As the editor-in-chief puts it:

Convergence is an adventure, in the sense that there are no previous experiences, so most times we are working by intuition. Nobody is able to predict what is going to happen and how the public will react in a few years' time. Therefore, we encourage reporters to make the most out of this multi-media structure they have at their disposal. But we cannot change those operations that already work properly in order to promote instead what it is still uncertain.

While reporters say that management does not demand that they have to work for more than one platform, it is expected that they contribute to media other than their own. However, when a deadline is approaching and time is limited, they have to focus on their primary medium. Journalists involved in multimedia news production agree it is a very demanding job, and they show concerns about time pressures and a heavy workload. A newspaper reporter states:

I direct a debate news show and it does require time off from my work at the newspaper. I would prefer not to do it, but I would then waste a great deal of effort the company has made in this regard. Therefore, I committed myself to this job because it stimulates my work and I see professional rewards in it.

Managers praise the benefits of cross-media convergence, although they are aware that each platform involves its own production constraints and demands. They have been building in a change of mindset from top to bottom in their staff, described as 'a thin drizzle which slowly penetrates the minds of the team' by the print news editor.

Integration of Different Journalistic Cultures

The Case of Novotécnica

According to the company's news director, newsroom convergence brought 'a radical change of mind for all of us: we are just journalists – not radio, television or newspaper journalists'. When the single converged newsroom began, 'in no place in Spain journalists worked like we do here. This is the best opportunity to become a multi-skilled journalist and to learn what multimedia journalism is all about,' the chief executive officer argues. Indeed, the assistant director maintains that they stimulated an innovative culture which breaks decades-old differences between print and broadcasting routines: 'We went

a step further: a journalist *lives* the story fully, so that he or she will able to tell it in the best possible way through all the available platforms. But it is undoubtedly a very complicated process.'

Managers were aware that for the project to be successful it was necessary that all staff would share a new vision. Conveying motivation and commitment to middle staff was an important issue because they had to coordinate newsroom workflow. Problems soon came up and some section editors were fired within the first months. It was 'a take it or leave situation', as the editor explains:

> If a journalist does not believe in our model, he or she could be very harmful, for it could undermine staff morale and it could even finally destroy the process. Newsroom convergence's beginning was a hard time.

During the implementation of convergence, news directors placed emphasis on the psychological aspects because it was an ongoing process of radical change, and the more implicated people had to be rewarded. They motivated journalists just by appealing to personal success and the professional reward of seeing their own work published in several media. A section editor points out that

> maybe the newspaper is more prestigious because of its history, its performance in public opinion and its audience leadership. But the fact the journalist also sees himself appearing on television news or on the radio news programmes is an incentive.

Management did not demand that any journalists become multi-skilled from day one; convergence goals were set within a time span of several months. However, managers had to cope with structural resistances and with psychological reluctances because the convergence process affected journalists a great deal, according to the assistant editor:

> Some people did work wonderfully as soon as they had to; they developed their attitudes to write stories in specific ways tailored to each medium; others needed much more time to get used to the new workflow. We still find differences among journalists because not everyone is able to develop the same multi-tasking skills. Indeed, some sections work better than others in this regard.

In the case of Novotécnica, where journalists came from three different media backgrounds, implementing convergence from scratch was hard work: 'Journalists who had been working in print for 10 years and then suddenly also had to tell stories in radio and television experienced a lot of frustrations when using cameras or new techniques they were not familiar with,' says the CEO. One of the most important obstacles was a poor internal communication strategy about the convergence project and its goals. Journalists were told about the project's general issues, but they were not properly informed about the details of the implementation process. A reporter put it this way:

> At the beginning, the integration process increased my expectations. But when I tried to collaborate with other media, I found it was an extremely difficult job and nobody rewarded my effort. I got involved in a lot of problems. My bosses didn't value my dedication and my motivation.

Internal competition for stories is also an issue. News exclusives are usually a journalistic reward. There is a marked difference between what is regarded as 'common news', that is, news that is shared by all media, and exclusive stories. One example of

the first may be a robbery. This kind of news is covered by most media outlets and here the company stands more as a whole in the news race against its external competitors. The main aim is to publish the news fast, get it out before anyone else, regardless of platform. When news stories are the result of extensive research, however, the media platform becomes more important. This is partly because this kind of news is not expected to be covered by other media, hence there is no need to get it out there before anyone else. In Novotécnica's newsroom the policy is that the newspaper publishes an exclusive first and afterwards it goes to radio and television. If it is an important story, with a huge and immediate impact on public opinion, then it is aired by the radio station. Internal competition among journalists is regarded as 'healthy' by management.

The Case of La Verdad Multimedia

La Verdad Multimedia follows a model based on cross-media synergies. Management likes to say 'it is a multimedia company, but its newsrooms are not'. They argue that the pressure to 'become multimedia' is placed on the management side, mainly on newsroom editors. At the beginning of convergence, journalists were reluctant to embrace multi-media work and the majority of them still are. But nobody is obliged to work more hours, for multi-skilling is a voluntary option which has no monetary compensation. Collabor-ation is regarded as a 'positive' thing by journalists who carry it out, because broadcast reporters like to see their by-line on their newspaper articles, and print journalists enjoy a wider audience reach with their television appearances. The collaboration of print journalists with other platforms represents an investment of time and resources that the newspaper has to face with the allocation of other journalists.

Journalists at Punto Radio and Punto TV are hired by a company different to the one that hires journalists at the newspaper *La Verdad* and its web edition. It implies that they have separate labour agreements, with different levels of income and working conditions. Most print journalists enjoy larger salaries than their broadcast counterparts. According to a news director, 'television and radio people are regarded as print journalists' younger brothers; they are younger, they are much more multi-skilled and they tend to be more motivated to do cross-media work than their newspaper colleagues.'

Among the frustrations there is the perception that the proliferation of platforms and programmes increases the workload of journalists; not only on a cross-media basis, since the number of programmes and slots that need to be filled on either of the radio and television platforms have increased over recent years. Most radio reporters have a number of deadlines during the day. As one desk editor observes: 'Radio reporters have no time to write anything for the web. There is more than enough work producing for those who want radio news.' While some reporters support management's involvement in cross-media production, they also argue that it is not possible to carry it out in their everyday work:

> *You're supposed to work as much across media as possible, and ideally make content for the web, radio and television. But reality gets to you eventually. You don't have enough time, it is not possible to perform well in all three media.*

Managers have set up filters to convergence, so that the specific quality of each medium is not undermined. Many experiences of print journalists airing stories on

television and radio have been successful. However, they are introduced with caution. 'Some bright television reporters were not doing well when writing in the newspaper, and some print reporters performed poorly when they appeared on the screen,' according to a news director. Self-promotion and cross-promotion among platforms are also viewed with caution. In *La Verdad*'s newsroom jargon, cross-promotions for other media are called *pills*. These *pills* include the publication of the email address for sending in questions to a guest taking part in a televised debate, the reference to additional information available on the web, or the announcement of a news service via phone instant messaging. The SMS service is run by a different company within the group, Vocento Media Trader, which specializes in content management through new technologies. Managers do not want to use cross-promotion too often, as it could be viewed as propaganda and damage the product. The director of the broadcast newsroom ensures that the newspaper will promote among its readers the most attractive programmes from Punto TV and Punto Radio. However, he prefers to limit multimedia cross-promotions and to operate independently most of the time.

Competition for exclusives is very fierce, since each platform usually operates separately in terms of news coverage and content allocation. Besides, newspaper people share a solid culture of exclusives, in-depth reporting and analysis, which they are reluctant to share with their broadcast counterparts. Journalists work with sources and contacts that add value to their stories and therefore they tend to be reluctant to share information with colleagues. The different journalistic cultures are seen, to a large extent, as complementary. The radio station and the website function both as lead-in and live platforms throughout the 24-hour cycle. The television nightly news programme functions as the summary of the day's events and the newspaper provides analysis and in-depth reporting. News directors do not envisage total integration of the two newsrooms in the short term, since they feel each medium would lose its own identity and the overall quality would be lost.

Conclusions

This article has shown how convergence operates at two Spanish multimedia groups, where content is produced for more than one medium platform at the same time within the same organization. Convergence usually involves different kinds of cooperation among several platforms, not necessarily in an integrated way. Collaboration may range from information sharing between journalists and desks in different newsrooms, through reporters producing for more than one platform, to various forms of repackaging of content for different platforms. In other cases, a single newsroom feeds different platforms in the news coverage as a whole.

Two different models of newsroom convergence have been identified according to a series of parameters about journalists' involvement and workflow (see Table 1). The 'cross-media model' is linked to a resource and organizational strategy, where multimedia production based on synergies is the desired ideal. In this model, cross-media work is not regarded as a goal in itself, rather as a tool. Managers express a desire to strengthen the company as a news provider on the whole, regardless of media platforms.

The 'integrated model' is related to the aim of creating a single journalistic culture transgressing traditional media boundaries. It strengthens the internal company news

TABLE 1

Models of Multimedia Newsroom Convergence

Convergence descriptors	Integrated model	Cross-media model
Physical structure	One single newsroom, direct eye contact	Two or more separate newsrooms
Newsroom management	A single news editor	A multimedia editor in each platform
News flow	Based on a central desk	Based on multimedia editors
Degree of multi-skilling	A requisite	An option
Levels of multi-skilling	Newsgathering, production and distribution	Distribution
Training in multi-skilling	Some, but insufficient	None
Compensation for multi-skilling	Professional, no monetary	Professional, no monetary
Percentage of multi-skilled journalists	At least 50%	Less than 10%
Content–platform relationship	Content is primary, platform is secondary	Platform is primary, as important as content
Professional cultures	One culture across boundaries	Each medium's own culture
Implementation of the project	Directly and in the short term	Gradually and in the long term
Attitude from journalists	Many show resistance, with dismissals	Attitude of wait and see
Cross-promotion	Advertising, content and collaboration	Advertising, content and some collaboration
Project scope	Company and newsroom convergence	Company convergence
Strategy	Convergence as a goal	Convergence as a tool

Source: Authors' own research.

identity, making reporters think about the organization as a whole, not in terms of separate platforms or programmes. The 'integrated model' overcomes the traditional culture of 'one medium, one newsroom' and it promotes a converged culture that is mainly 'content-oriented', rather than 'platform-oriented'. This process erodes the dedication of journalists to a single medium, and it forces them to regard the news as the basic commodity, which they elaborate, regardless of the medium. The emerging inte- grated culture is characterized by reporters' full multi-skilling, coordinated management of the news flow and multimedia production, with a special emphasis in immediacy and versatility. Reporters cover any event for all platforms, and it is assumed that they will exercise skills in video editing, recording, voice-over narration and web publishing.

The implementation of any model of newsroom convergence meets a complex reality of structural constraints and difficult cooperative practices. It brings about the need to invest in additional training for journalists and also to establish a hiring policy which regards multi-skilling as an indispensable condition. It also demands the strengthening of existing procedures of quality control in the newsroom, so as to avoid the deterioration of news standards such as truthfulness, accuracy, source checking and rigour. Even though management will endorse the idea of publishing to all platforms from the very beginning, the development of convergence is far from easy. It is a difficult balancing act, which sometimes brings a heavy burden for the professionals. If the reporter faces a tight deadline and has to produce stories for all three media, time for research or following up the news will be scarce. Besides, it is difficult for the same journalist to carry out a quality job in all media, for each of them demands skills and competences that are only achieved with dedication and experience.

Time is one of most frequently mentioned structural constraints. While management wants more cross-media cooperation and production, reporters negotiate this in their daily work by stating that they do not have the required time. All platforms demand content. Concerns expressed about time pressure and how this affects the quality of journalism need to be researched further. Internal competition also shapes cross-media cooperation. Within the same news organization, internal competition proliferates. The production culture of journalism values the exclusive story. Cooperation across media platforms therefore is closely linked to competition. Proliferation of platforms and deadlines tends to increase the workload and pressure of multi-skilled reporters, although more quantitative research is needed to examine the opposing perceptions both of managers and reporters.

One of the main problems in any convergence process is the lack of determination about the final scenario. In the case of Novotécnica, management led the way by sharing the objectives and procedures to be implemented in the short run. However, it proved a disruptive process, which was not without dismissals, complaints and labour disputes. Management also had to overcome cultural clashes among journalists with print and television backgrounds. When multi-skilling is not enforced, such in the case of La Verdad Multimedia, journalists adopt an attitude of wait and see.

This study suggests that managers' confidence in the implementation of the process and their ability to anticipate the disruptions and challenges posed by convergence are essential. Either of the two models of newsroom convergence can become workable depending on the specific context and strategy developed by a media company. We hope that this conceptual framework can facilitate international comparisons of media convergence.

Production involving several media platforms needs to take into account other aspects, which have not been examined in this article. In a newspaper/website organization, a large portion of cross-media production will be related to republishing writing and images from newspaper to web. The forms of communication remain largely the same, while any dynamic content, such as video pieces, implies additional production. In a broadcasting organization, on the other hand, web articles are most often produced on the basis of radio and television news scripts. Switching platform means switching modes of communication between audio, video, writing and images. This is closely connected to a more ambitious goal of creating a journalistic culture that shares

information and content across platforms, for the benefit of the news organization as a whole. Further research is needed in other media companies with different scopes and newsroom size, in order to test and further complete the two models of newsroom convergence outlined here.

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