

## LEVELS OF PROFESSIONAL POLYVALENCE IN SPANISH MULTIMEDIA GROUPS

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The same scenario, different models and degrees of convergence. This sentence summarizes the Spanish case, although there is a common link in all these experiences: professional polyvalence is the key to understanding the convergence processes that have started in Spain. The main trend in media business is towards complete polyvalence of the journalist, and this process is irreversible. However, opposing realities exist even within the same multimedia group; for example, in Vocento there are dailies where polyvalence is not enforced, whereas other media have become a benchmark regarding multitask journalists both on paper and on the web. From this point of view, we can observe a professional/digital divide inside multimedia companies. From a broader perspective, it is clear that newspapers are more reluctant to fully implement professional polyvalence, which is paradoxical because newspaper companies show the highest rates of media polyvalence, i.e., the highest levels of communication between media. Only in magazines and on radio stations have some cases of complete isolation been identified. The following are some of the data from a national study on the impact of convergence in the Spanish media system developed by the Infotendencias group between 2008 and 2009. The methodology consisted of a first phase in which 138 media from the main Spanish multimedia groups were interviewed by telephone. Once this quantitative phase was completed, a second qualitative phase was realized where 50 interviews were

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conducted with professionals in 12 media to obtain an inside view of the convergence process.

This article offers an analysis of the implantation of professional polyvalence in the main Spanish multimedia groups. The study explores how enterprises and journalists have reacted to the arrival of professional convergence in newsrooms, which has, in parallel, made it possible to establish different models of implantation in the contemporary context. The article examines how this new reality is influencing staff at the organizational and economic level, what training support journalists are receiving, what some of their new routines are, and their attitudes toward accepting these changes.

## **1. An approach to professional convergence**

The expansion of Internet in the mid-1990s changed newsroom dynamics, increasing the coordination between people working in different media. News businesses started to be organized as multiplatform conglomerates under the convergence philosophy. Convergence is a very polysemic concept, which predicts the blurring of the limits between different media and their productive routines. The first empirical research on convergence initiatives shows that interpretations of convergence are heterogeneous. There are as many ways to understand the concept as projects that have been set in motion (Silcock & Keith, 2006).

Our research focuses on how convergence modifies journalists' roles. In the international sphere, researchers have explored the context and the consequences of media convergence for the professional identity of journalists (Deuze, 2008: 103), related to a convergence culture (Jenkins, 2006). Others have described professional attitudes and working conditions (Weaver & Willnat, 2012), but we found a lack of theoretical definition about professional convergence.

This article shows results framed in a broader project in which the members of the Infotendencias Group have been involved for the last seven years. In that period, the group's research work has been linked to the concept of convergence, which has favored an intense theoretical reflection enabling the group to propose its own definition of "journalistic convergence":

Convergence in journalism is a multidimensional process that, facilitated by the widespread implementation of digital communication

technologies, affects the technological, business, professional, and publishing aspects of the media, fostering the integration of tools, spaces, working methods, and languages that were previously separate, in such a way that journalists can write contents to be distributed via multiple platforms, using the language that is appropriate in each medium. (Infotendencias Group, 2012)

Similarly, the Infotendencias Group (2012) distinguishes amongst four types of convergence: technological convergence (multiplatform); business convergence (concentration); content convergence (multimedia); and professional convergence (polyvalence). Although all these typologies have been analyzed in our project and influence the transformation, disappearance, and emergence of new professional profiles, this article is centered on the results of professional convergence.

### ***1.1. Typology of professional convergence***

Salaverría (2010) identifies three possible types of polyvalence:

1) Thematic polyvalence runs contrary to the specialization of the journalist, as it proposes that the same professional can cover areas as varied as sports, health or politics. This organizational system has mainly been implanted in small newsrooms and in correspondents' offices.

2) Media polyvalence consists in the same journalist constructing audio, audiovisual, textual and interactive content for different media of the same group, or for independent enterprises if she offers her services as a freelancer.

3) Functional or multitask polyvalence involves one journalist combining different tasks to complete the productive process of a news item (documentation, layout, writing, photographic editing).

In Spain, only a few groups have adopted the three types of multiskilling at the same time, where journalists cover any kind of news, for any platform, and control the whole production process (Masip *et al.*, 2007). The expansion of these forms shows that the journalist required by today's enterprise must not only have news writing skills, but also be prepared to take up numerous tasks and be willing to work for different formats. However, it turns out that these preferences are not as novel as they might at first seem.

## 2. Origin and evolution of polyvalence

In 1999, there were already symptoms of an organizational change in the BBC. These changes were centered on the search for efficiency: a greater interdependence amongst journalists, an increase in computerized tasks, and the elimination of redundant jobs (like those of news editor, assistant editor, bi-media editor) in the fusion of radio and television. The multi-media nature of journalist practices, and the career structure were wiped out (Cottle & Ashton, 1999). In the same period, there was already a commitment to redefining the profession, since the key characteristics of Internet (interactivity, customization of content, hypertextuality and multimediality) were also beginning to infect traditional journalism and there was starting to be talk about network journalism (Bardoel & Deuze, 2001).

Saltzis and Dickinson (2007) also published another of the pioneering studies of journalistic practice in environments marked by journalistic convergence. After interviewing 20 journalists from the BBC, Sky News, The Guardian, and the Financial Times between 2002 and 2003, they concluded that there was a growing demand for multiskilled as well as multimedia journalists. They also predicted that such recruitment would increase in parallel to the rise in the consumption of information on Internet, since it reduced costs and made work more flexible. Some of the advantages of multiskilled professionals are that they have more control over the production process and more responsibility for the final product (Masip *et al.*, 2007).

In Spain, Scolari, Micó, Navarro and Pardo (2008) analyzed the reaction to the profile of the polyvalent journalist in different Catalan newsrooms. They concluded that polyvalence was not a novelty, since professionals had always been polyvalent in small media, and that online newspapers would take up these new responsibilities in a natural way. However, in larger traditional enterprises the transition has turned out to be conflictive and unstable.

That same year, the Oriella PR Network carried out a survey of 347 European journalists for the *European Digital Journalism Study – How the Digital Age has affected journalism and the impact for PR*, which stressed the increase of journalists' responsibilities in a period marked by business and multiplatform convergence. Forty-one percent of those surveyed stated that their enterprises expected them to produce audiovisual content, although only 3% of the sample worked for television.

### ***2.1. The challenge of digital identity***

This tendency towards taking up new roles is not limited to knowing how to handle traditional media. Adaptation to the new media scenarios is underway, and there is special interest in journalists developing a digital identity in the professional field. Keeping a blog has been one of the first mechanisms for attaining this aim. Moreover, blogs were one of the first materializations of professional convergence because, since their appearance, online media have featured distinguished authors proceeding from print editions. In 2008, Abc.es, Elcorreodigital.com, Elmundo.es, Elpais.com and Lavanguardia.es displayed 202 authors' blogs, and only 29% of these bloggers received money for such work. In spite of this limited economic recognition, journalists taking part in the new media extensions classed the experience as an enriching one, due to the breadth of knowledge acquired, the reward they encountered in readers' comments, and the possibility of dealing with questions for which no space was available in the print edition (Palomo & Meso, 2009).

This line of activity is more audience-directed, and the latter's active role and the benefits of such interaction are of special interest. From the point of view of the new responsibilities deriving from the 2.0 environment, there is clear concern in the Anglophone professional field for these practices, as shown by different studies (Thurman, 2008). Since 2008, the personnel of the BBC have had a manual for using social networks, which includes certain limitations such as a ban on using Wikipedia. In this publicly-authored space, freedom of expression can sometimes turn into real acts of vandalism (Shachaf & Hara, 2010), and non-existent murders have even been attributed to renowned journalists (Rosenzweig, 2006). Other media like The New York Times, The Washington Post or The Wall Street Journal have also placed limits on this participatory culture by developing an editorial policy in this respect, and failure to follow these regulations is punished with dismissal. There is thus a relationship of dependence and enmity between the mass media and some social spaces, a paradoxical situation that the World Association of Newspapers and News Publishers (WAN) has transformed in the publication *Digital Frenemies*.

In Spain, Prisa is the first multimedia group to develop a code of conduct on social media for internal use, launched in the spring of 2012. This decalogue deals with questions like commitment to the values of the enterprise, veracity and legality, or respect for internal confidentiality,

to which recommended conduct in case of crisis is added. From reading it, the conclusion can be drawn that business logic places precaution before improvisation. Unidad Editorial, in October 2012, and Vocento, in January 2013, followed the same steps.

New times not only demand a change of mentality by the professional; they also require new journalistic contributions. To meet this challenge, the media agenda has also recently undergone a transformation in favor of including news items where social networks like Twitter (Arceneaux & Schmitz, 2010) or Facebook play a prominent role in the story, or are the source of emission of the news event, another reason for drawing attention to them. The internal instruction of the mass media is to speak of these networks so as to increase the impact of the medium itself. With this formula, the latter has a parallel repercussion on social networks, which is translated into business success by obtaining a bigger audience and more visibility for its content. In short, the diffusion of the media is increasing thanks to social networks since there is multiplatform promotion. According to data for November 2011 obtained from the online newspaper Sur.es, 20% of its visits came via Facebook, and 5% via Twitter.

The interest of state-of-the-art technology companies in participating in these scenarios is also evident. For this reason, Turo Uskali (2009), at the University of Stanford, has designed a model of news evolution with several level indicators for determining the relevance attributed to a technological innovation company by a medium. This study is centered on the cases of Google, Facebook and Twitter, and its conclusions show that when a company with these characteristics appears in less than one hundred news stories a year, it has a weak visibility, while if it exceeds this figure, it gains a national and international reputation.

The complexity of the convergence phenomenon required a complex approach in its study, with a combination of different quantitative and qualitative methodologies. Nowadays the boundaries between traditional and new media are less clear, and the relationships between media are defined by increasing cooperation, compatibility and connectivity (Saltzis & Dickinson, 2007: 217). This context determined the object of study, formed by the four main multimedia groups operating in Spain, which are privately owned and have the highest turnover: Promotora de Informaciones S.A. (Prisa), Vocento, Grupo Planeta and Unidad Editorial S.A. (Unedisa). In 2007, a database was prepared with their business units that totaled 207 communications

media. In May 2008, 138 of these media took part in a telephone survey, in which a sample representativeness of 66.7% was obtained. Four basic motives determined the final sample: the changing landscape of media ownership; the refusal of some media to participate in the study; the absence of journalistic content in some of the enterprises; and/or the impossibility of contacting someone in charge at the medium.

It was also decided that those surveyed should be people holding positions of responsibility, such as an editor, a sub-editor, an editor in chief, an editorial secretary or a section head.

The questionnaire designed in this phase, titled “Map of initiatives in media convergence”, had a dozen sections aimed at detecting whether the mode of convergence was based on integrated production, polyvalent professionals, multiplatform distribution or active audiences (Domingo *et al.*, 2007). More concretely, the section devoted to analysis of polyvalent professionals, which is the focus of this article, was subdivided into other sections to explore the existing degree of polyvalence, the number of media involved, when these practices started, and the training received by journalists.

Given the broad number of researchers involved in collecting samples, it was necessary to draw up a script that included a presentation of the project and its aims, so that the first contact with the medium would not influence its acceptance or refusal to take part in the survey, as well as to ensure uniformity in its realization.

In order to complete the survey data with qualitative viewpoints, 50 interviews were held in March and April 2009 with different professional profiles to obtain a panoramic view of the effects of convergence on the newsrooms of the main Spanish multimedia groups. This second sample was formed of nineteen news writers, ten newsroom managers, seven editors in chief, four managers, three section heads, two sub-editors, one editor, an anchorwoman/editor, a documentalist, a multimedia coordinator and the president of a committee of trade union representatives. The twelve media that provided these meetings proceeded from the four multimedia groups analyzed, which guaranteed their representative character, namely El País, Cinco Días, Ser, Cuatro (Grupo Prisa); El Mundo, Marca, Expansión (Unidad Editorial); Antena3 TV, Avui (Grupo Planeta), and Sur, La Verdad and Las Provincias (Vocento). In this sample a balance was guaranteed between media with national and regional distribution, print and audiovisual media, and general and specialist media.

### ***3.1. Limitations of the study***

In designing the project, we considered realizing short observation stays in five newsrooms and carrying out in-depth interviews in eighteen media. But the difficult economic situation in which our country has now been immersed for several years directly influenced how the project was carried out. Thus, for example, all the media refused to take part in an essential phase of the ethnographic study, direct non-participatory observation in newsrooms, with the exception of Sur. The latter's acceptance was probably influenced by the excellent relation existing between the University of Málaga and the newspaper, partly due to some of its journalists being members of the teaching staff of the Journalism department. In spite of that, those in charge of the medium only allowed non-participatory observation to last for ten days, divided between March and April 2009.

The principal excuse given for opposing application of this technique by mainstream media like El País or Diarivasco.com is that they were in the midst of reorganizing their newsroom or were at an initial phase of convergence, from which it would be premature to draw conclusions.

## **4. Results: Three polyvalence tendencies**

The tendency to reorganize newsrooms to cover cross-media needs has generated new professional roles and flexible work structures, based on an increase in journalists' responsibility and their skill at managing different tools that facilitate the emission of content for different media. However, there are several degrees and models of convergence, and depending on these structures the level of polyvalence required of news professionals also varies from one newsroom to another.

In the in-depth interviews held with managers in 2009, at least three tendencies were found:

1) Voluntary polyvalence. The aim is to create an attitude and willingness to report using any format, but without impositions. It is based on voluntary acceptance, a process that while slower is considered more solid. Collaboration with other media can take place on specific occasions (e.g. preparing a news story) or be permanent (creating a blog, participating as a talk-show guest, or presenting a radio or television program). An example of this is Diario Sur, where in 2008 a quarter of the news writers already had a blog housed on



Sur.es. In 2004, this local newspaper was a pioneer within Vocento in adopting the figure of the multimedia coordinator, whose function has since been centered on promoting convergence amongst the group's different platforms operating in Málaga. In fact, all the news writers of the print version have been assigned to the digital version to become more familiar with this environment and update their skills, and to foster a good relationship between the two media.

2) Zero polyvalence. Referring to those newsrooms where journalists have barely perceived changes in the tasks developed, as in El País for instance.

3) Full polyvalence. Referring to those newsrooms where radical changes are imposed, such as the implantation of a single newsroom, with news writers proceeding from the print version and the web, to provide a simultaneous service to both media. Rafael Alique, editor of Marca.com until 2010, described the philosophy of change in Spain's most widely read newspaper as follows: "A journalist who has a priority medium will find it difficult to continue working with us, because this enterprise has decided that news writers must provide services to the media and it is the managers who will decide at each moment where a news item goes". That is, all the news writers have a single directive, to work for the brand, without being attached to a format. To this end, since January 2009 all news writers have been part of the same enterprise, Marca, and for this to be achieved it was necessary to get through a year of intense negotiations and salary adjustments to guarantee starting this new stage on equal terms.

From a general perspective, the interviews confirm the relevance of the object of study at the company level, and two main conclusions can be drawn from their analysis: First, the traditional model of journalist was already in decline four years ago, and second, different models and degrees of convergence coexist within a single multimedia group, which directly influences the existence of varied levels of polyvalence. José Antonio Frías, editor of Sur from 1994 to 2011<sup>2</sup>, confirmed this scenario: "In Vocento convergence was posed as a priority aim, but at the same time it was concluded that there was no single highway for travelling that route". In spite of this heterogeneous panorama, a common nexus can be observed in all the practices analyzed: the journalist's polyvalence is essential for understanding the convergence processes found in Spain (Aguado & Palomo, 2010: 136).

In all the media analyzed in 2009 there was an increase in cooperation between traditional editions and web editions; there was

greater dialogue amongst professionals working for the group's different platforms so as to share information and forecasts. There was even one case of fusion, with the decision to create a single newsroom in the case of the sports medium Marca. The actors of this new environment agreed that in 2009 convergence was already an irreversible process, an inevitable change imposed by the technological and management form of the convergence dynamic itself.

#### ***4.1. Dual and antagonistic experiences***

In this context, the principal tendency was to introduce total polyvalence amongst journalists. Already in 2008, 55.2% of the newsrooms analyzed in Prisa had opted for a professional who was prepared for multichannel production and working in a network. Vocento, where many photographers also contributed videos to enrich the multimedia dimension of the online media, showed a similar figure (50%) at that time, while in the case of Planeta full polyvalence affected 41.7% of its media. Unedisa was left in fourth place, since only 28% of its media applied this profile.

Our quantitative analysis detected five levels of professional polyvalence. It is surprising, as can be seen in figure 1, that the second predominant line of activity is totally opposed to full polyvalence. This tendency consists in not introducing the profile of the polyvalent journalist in the newsroom. This conservative strategy is led by Unedisa, publisher of the newspaper El Mundo, since there were no multitask journalists in 32% of its enterprises. In the case of Prisa, 31% of its newsrooms did not have this profile, which was also found to a lesser extent in Vocento (23.6%) and Planeta (16.7%).

These data confirmed the existence of dual and antagonistic realities, revealing a panorama of great contrasts, even inside the same communications group. In this respect, there was no policy of common action on the level of polyvalence required of professionals from the same media conglomerate, not even those belonging to the same sector. Thus, while the level of polyvalence in Gentlemen magazine was zero, in other magazines like Foreign Policy it was one hundred percent, although both titles belong to Prisa. Vocento showed similar examples, where there were paid-for newspapers that did not practice professional polyvalence (Hoy, La Verdad, La Rioja), while others had become a referent in both web and print editions (Sur).

Figure 1 - Levels of professional polyvalence in Spanish multimedia groups (2008)

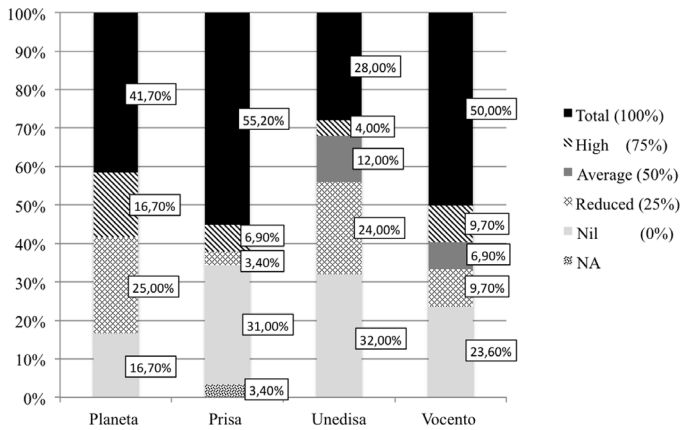
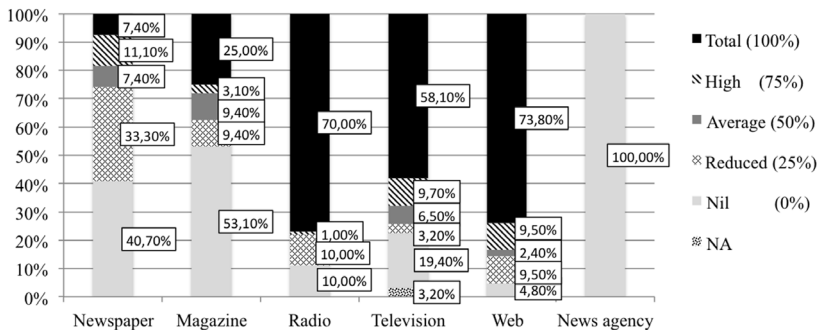


Figure 2 - Levels of professional polyvalence according to the medium (2008)



If we approach professional polyvalence from a general perspective, marked by the typology of the medium and not by the corporation that backs it (figure 2), we can observe that the print media were the most reluctant to fully implant professional polyvalence. This profile did not exist in 40.7% of the newspapers and 53.1% of the magazines surveyed. This tendency was inverted especially in the radio (70%) and online media (73.9%), where nearly three out of every four media had a higher level of polyvalence. The data corresponding to agencies were not representative, since only Colpisa participated.

The conservative posture of the newspapers is surprising if we recall that they had taken the lead in introducing the greatest media polyvalence, understood as a transfer of content occurring amongst several media. Newspapers had the greatest communication flow amongst media, with more than six media involved in 56% of the newspapers studied (table 1). Only in magazines and radio were some cases of total isolation localized. It should also be noted that the most complex part of the survey consisted in detecting polyvalence in content.

**Table 1 - Media Polyvalence According to the Medium (2008)**

Medium	Number of media involved in media polyvalence							
	NS/NC	0	2	3	4	5	6	>6
Newspaper	8.0%	-	20.0%	4.0%	4.0%	8.0%	-	56.0%
Magazine	55.2%	6.9%	6.9%	17.2%	6.9%	-	-	6.9%
Radio	42.9%	14.3%	42.9%	-	-	-	-	-
Television	-	-	39.3%	25.0%	17.9%	17.9%	-	-
Web	28.6%	-	16.3%	8.2%	4.1%	4.1%	2.0%	36.56%
Newsagency	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	100.0%

As table 2 reflects, in Prisa 56.7% of the newspapers studied were unable to indicate the number of media involved in media polyvalence, which demonstrates an ignorance of intermedia practices within the multimedia conglomerates.

**Table 2 - Media Polyvalence in Multimedia Groups (2008)**

Multimedia group	NA	Number of media involved in media polyvalence						
		0	2	3	4	5	6	>6
Planeta	-	8.3%	75.0%	8.35%	-	8.3%	-	-
Prisa	56.7%	-	13.3%	20.05%	6.7%	3.3%	-	-
Unedisa	41.7%	8.3%	12.5%	12.5%	8.3%	12.5%	4.2%	-
Vocento	12.5%	-	16.7%	11.1%	6.9%	5.6%	-	47.2%

But what does polyvalence mean? Varied readings of the phenomenon can be found. In some of the twelve Spanish cases studied only a convergence of knowledge was practiced; news writers only had to make the key points of the information available without having to intervene in producing the piece. In others, journalists worked for the brand, and had to show their versatility in any format. In both cases, the margin of time available to news writers in the print medium for

reflecting and organizing information had disappeared. In exchange, agility was imposed in coverage, content transmission and the emission of headlines and leads for any of the group's media that might require them, almost in real time.

#### ***4.2. Difficulties in professional integration***

According to the interviews, the main difficulty in implanting newsroom integration proceeded from the professional gap existing between journalists of the traditional medium and those of the web, the dichotomy between journalists who were digital natives and those who were digital immigrants (Scolari, Micó, Navarro, & Pardo, 2007). In the majority of cases, they had been kept apart for over a decade by generational differences, organizational culture, work rhythms, timetables, degree of physical distance from events and sources (Chan, Lee, & Pan, 2006), and unequal labor agreements. El Mundo was one of the few media able to pride itself on the salary balance between workers of both its print and online editions. However, in another relevant enterprise, El País Digital, the labor contract and working conditions were far inferior to those of their colleagues on the print edition, in spite of the staff of the conventional medium voluntarily agreeing to an 8% reduction in pay to balance the situation.

A key strategy for extending the 24/7 mentality to all the staff consisted in detecting the journalists most predisposed to change so that they could provide encouragement. In this respect a greater involvement was found amongst younger news writers.

In this context, sometimes marked by a forced union and at others by a voluntary one as we indicated initially, describing the predisposition of traditional journalists towards the new media is complex. While some were more receptive and considered polyvalence to be an opportunity for professional improvement and approaching the future of communication, for others it represented a work overload and was rejected for this reason. However, the attitude found amongst professionals of the digital medium was much more optimistic, as they considered that convergence had meant liberation, allowing them to take up more varied activities. In conclusion, it can be said that journalists felt that convergence revitalizes the medium's image, but worsens the quality of professional life and content. As Arantxa Noriega, a news writer at the economic newspaper Cinco Días, observed, "if you have eight hours to do a report, it's going to come out much better than if you

have one”. An anachronistic complaint, which repeats the view already expressed in 1999 by some journalists at the BBC, as reflected in the following quotation of a senior broadcast journalist:

I’m better at doing television reports than I was before; I’m better at presenting on a digital editing studio than I was before; I’m better at using a digital camera than I was before. But I’m not skilled at any of them! I’m just about good enough to use them and do those things. But I’m not highly skilled like the people who would normally do them full-time. And that’s the problem. The quality of each of those jobs goes down as people try and do different jobs. (Cottle & Ashton, 1999: 34)

In the same vein, Bardoel and Deuze (2001) indicated that the journalism of the future is not going to be just the same ‘good old journalism’ that we knew at past.

In the cases studied, low-cost solutions were decided on as there was no economic stimulus that might support the new work dynamics. Enterprises did not remunerate content generated for another platform, as managers considered that these activities formed part of the journalist’s working day. This perception gave rise to a general complaint from news writers, since they were in fact taking on more tasks for the same pay. In exceptional cases, like the news programs of Antenna 3, there was compensation in holiday hours in recognition of the greater workload involved; at the same time the ENG editor, qualified to prepare the news item as a whole using image, audio and text, received the highest remuneration since 1998, as indicated by José Luis Olmedo, a member of the Committee of Trade Union Representatives.

In general, the interviews with members of trade unions and committees of trade union representatives reflected a positive but cautious attitude towards polyvalence.

### ***4.3. Improving training***

Training is a key element for understanding the transformation that has taken place in newsrooms. In recent years, there has been a general interest in promoting journalists’ training and in encouraging print and web journalists to have the same skills. During the period when this study was conducted, we ascertained that this commitment to recycling journalists’ knowledge was especially high in Prisa and Planeta (table 3),

where, according to data available from managers, 83.3% of their media offered this type of courses. In Vocento and Unedisa, the figures fell to 67.6% and 64% respectively, although in general few media delegated this responsibility to the journalists themselves, obliging them to sign up for master's degrees or expert courses unrelated to the enterprise. In spite of that, it must be said that after analyzing the interviews, an imbalance was found between the training activities referred to by the managers, and the autodidactic attitude that many journalists admitted to adopting in their incursions into Internet and in their connection to convergence in general.

**Table 3 - Professional Training in Multimedia Groups (2008)**

Multimedia group	Responsibility of the enterprise	Responsibility of the journalist	Responsibility of both	No training	NA
Planeta	83.3%	8.3%	8.3%	-	-
Prisa	83.3%	-	-	10.0%	6.7%
Unedisa	64.0%	-	16.0%	20.0%	-
Vocento	67.6%	2.8%	2.8%	18.35%	8.55%

A large part of the training offer involved Dreamweaver, HTML, VEGAS, Millenium, Methode, Gamma and Dalet courses, Internet searches and Content Management System (CMS) applications.

**Table 4 - Professional Training in Spanish Media (2008)**

Medium	Responsibility of the enterprise	Responsibility of the journalist	Responsibility of both	No training	NA
Newspaper	70.4%	3.7%	11.1%	11.1%	3.7%
Magazine	71.0%	-	-	19.4%	9.7%
Radio	66.7%	-	16.7%	16.7%	-
Television	64.0%	4.0%	4.0%	20.0%	8.05%
Web	80.0%	2.05%	4.0%	10.0%	4.0%
News agency	-	-	-	100.0%	-

By media (table 4), online media (80%), magazines (71%) and newspapers (70.4%) were the sectors most committed to updating their employees' knowledge. This practice was less habitual in radios (66.7%) and televisions (64%).

Finally, the management structure of some media also showed symptoms of being influenced by professional convergence in 2009. While some provincial and regional publishing companies within Vocento had created a new figure, the multimedia coordinator, others like Marca or Abc had opted for duplicating roles, transforming the editor of the digital edition into a sub-editor of the medium in its printed format. The third strategy consisted in unifying the management of several media, as occurred at the Catalan medium Avui.cat, where the editor of the print edition was also editor of the digital edition, or at Marca, where the editor in chief of each section took responsibility for both web and print content.

## **5. Conclusion**

Technological determinism has been the driving force for change in newsrooms, producing deep alterations in journalistic routines, especially during the last decade. What has happened to journalists does not represent an exceptional change, as it can be extrapolated perfectly to other areas of society like education or the administration, given that the spread of an innovation reconfigures the system, causing the disappearance of some of its agents and the appearance of new tasks and profiles.

During the period of analysis, Spanish enterprises were still to be found in a primitive phase of convergence, marked by improvisation, lack of cost forecasting, absence of successful models that could transmit confidence in change, and an uneven acceptance of new routines amongst journalists. This situation explains why contradictions were found in the answers of interviewees from the same medium – especially in relation to training received, material available to them, and time invested in participating in other media – or even that there should have been a high percentage of “no answers” in some cases.

## **6. Discussion**

In recent years, this dynamic of change has been accelerating. Society has erupted into the production processes of the media, and journalists have been obliged to improve their skills to continue being necessary in the production process. A multiplatform public demands to be understood by a journalist who also works in multiple formats. In this respect, polyvalence represents a challenge to optimize



information production and, at the same time, is a condition of business viability. It could be said that the expansion of the 2.0 sphere and the economic crisis have brought about a revolution in the profession, since professionals have been forced to develop a 2.0 attitude and to search for new business opportunities in order to adapt to the new scenario, characterized by an instability that is affecting both large and small media companies. In this respect, although this article was centered on analyzing the four main Spanish multimedia groups, the researchers belonging to the Infotendencias Group have not been oblivious to other realities.

One of the new lines of activity developed by media companies is related to the field of training. In Spain, all multimedia groups are linked to some professional master's degree (the Autonomous University of Madrid-El País Master's Degree in Journalism was founded in 1986; the ABC- Complutense University of Madrid Master's Degree in Journalism was also created two decades ago; the El Correo-University of the Basque Country Master's Degree has just celebrated its 25 anniversary, and the Antonio de Nebrija University and Antena 3 offer a Master's Degree in Television Journalism); but this already traditional offer has been widened with the addition of shorter sessions, such as the ABC meetings, or the Aula de Cultura Sur-Fundación Vocento, where meetings are fostered amongst feature writers, journalists and readers. The current technological context also facilitates client participation in the journalistic experience. This is the case of the Prensa Ibérica group's master class, free practical workshops aimed at transmitting knowledge based on the professionals' own experience of the medium. The first of these sessions was held in June 2012, and was devoted to digital communication for enterprises, since this publishing group has launched a pioneering service in Spain, offering companies the possibility of directly publishing their news on the web, on receipt of payment and after validation by a journalist. In order to promote this service, Tomás Mayoral, responsible for Prensa Ibérica's digital publications, and Fátima Fares, web director of La Opinión de Málaga, offered guidance in Search Engine Optimization (SEO), the use of hypertext, the value of graphic elements in news stories, editing in digital environments, and online reputation, at this master class aimed at businesspeople. At the end of the session a voucher was distributed for a free trial of the new business communication service, where the journalist disappears as an intermediary<sup>3</sup>.

### ***6.1. Risks of polyvalence***

This increase in journalists' responsibilities has gained no economic recognition within the enterprise, quite the opposite in fact. Many newsrooms have opted for internal professional recycling to provide the whole staff with a multimedia profile, so that reductions in the number of personnel are not so much influenced by journalists' knowledge as by the economic costs involved in maintaining labor conditions that the managers consider to be currently unsustainable. In this respect, human capital has been devalued and early retirement has been encouraged for professionals who represented the experience and living memory of the medium, and were a source of inspiration for new generations of journalists. In the Grupo Joly, designers gave classes in layout to the news writers, without realizing that they would be laid off once this knowledge had been passed on. In this context there has also been an increase in job insecurity of journalists, who can receive job offers such as preparing 800 character articles for 0.75 Euros.

For all of these reasons, paradoxically, professional polyvalence represents an opportunity and simultaneously a danger for journalists. On the one hand, it enables the profession to survive and renew itself, but it also facilitates cuts in staff and a deterioration of the profession. This double reading has produced different levels of resistance to change and an uneven implantation of professional convergence. It is clear that a new generation of polyvalent journalists has been born, but this profile is surrounded by controversies. Many reporters, especially veteran journalists, wonder why it is necessary to acquire new skills and are opposed to change.

The main conflict arises from the perception of polyvalence held by many news writers as an additional workload without consideration or recognition. Finally, this absence of economic recognition, the increase of tasks entrusted to journalists, and the cuts in staff deriving from the fusion of newsrooms have also generated distrust of the quality of the journalistic product (Cottle & Ashton, 1999). This is due to a tendency towards content homogenization (Boczkowski, 2010), since many of these business measures are aimed at increasing productivity in quantitative terms, while the qualitative result becomes secondary.

## 6.2. *Future lines of research*

Such types of strategy confirm that the audience has become the central axis of the communicative process and this has resulted not only in a redefinition of the classical theories on the question, but also in a transformation of the essence of the social phenomenon viewed from a global perspective (Qualman, 2009). Our next objective consists in analyzing the revolution that active audiences are bringing about in newsrooms. The study will be supported by the national research project Active Audiences and Journalism: Innovation Strategies in Media Companies and New Professional Profiles (CSO2012-39518-C04-04). This question began to interest some academics more than a decade ago (Deuze, 1999; Deuze and Dimoudi, 2002). Web 2.0 has generated new responsibilities and a demand for new professional profiles, such as the participation manager or the community manager. According to data of the Association of Self-employed Workers (Asociación de Trabajadores Autónomos), in Spain there are 48,460 freelancers and self-employed workers in journalism. This has been the only sector of self-employed workers to undergo an increase during the crisis, as 2,094 professionals have registered. The technological revolution and the expansion of digital communication have been key factors in this atomization of the profession.

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### **Notes**

<sup>1</sup>The following scholars, listed here in alphabetical order, also took part in the project: Juan Miguel Aguado, Jaime Alonso, María Ángeles Cabrera, Javier Díaz Noci, David Domingo, Concha Edo, José Alberto García Avilés, Álvaro García Gómez, Teresa de la Hera, Mar Iglesias, José Larrañaga, Ainara Larrondo, Moisés Limia, Guillermo López García, Xosé López García, Pere Masip, Koldo Meso, José Luis Orihuela, Xosé Pereira, Idoia Portilla, Pedro Antonio Rojo, Charo Sádaba, Ramón Salaverría, María Sánchez González, Carlos Toural, Anna Tous, and Alfonso Vara.

<sup>2</sup> José Antonio Frías was removed from his post in 2011, and was replaced by Manuel Castillo, a multimedia journalist who has worked in press, television and news agencies.

<sup>3</sup> The cost of a news story of up to 1,500 characters is 29 Euros. If it exceeds this limit, it costs 149 Euros; if the addition of a photographic gallery is required, or a PDF is to be attached, this costs 119 Euros.