

Managing 2.0 newsrooms: insight stories of spontaneous innovation and improvisation

Nowadays audiences love live communication (Deuze, 2011), the possibility of reaching news in real time, receiving contents without the effort of having to search for them. The concept “news now” (Sheller, 2014) is an audience imperative.

Previous research show that media have developed in the last decade a great dependence on social networks (Singer *et al*, 2011). Source of new audiences, social media are also a space for the verification and localization of new contents. Sometimes these functions has forced to alter editorial models to host viral topics, necessary to try to overcome the crisis of attention particularly concerning in the context of the young people (Boczkowski and Mitchelstein, 2016). Digital media estimate that one third of their visits come from Facebook (Somaya, 2014), a figure that forces them to create specific strategies that ensure the reputation and growth of the company in the 2.0 sphere because the atomization of content causes fragmented and decontextualized audiences to consume individual news. Recently, Emily Bell (2018) confirmed also that Facebook is reshaping newsrooms.

From an international perspective, this context has led the creation of new hires and the emergence of new professional profiles.

From the point of view of the audience, the number of users of Facebook or Twitter in Spain is not reached by any mass media. This context generates a strange symbiosis, which combines the need and the competition that we consider relevant to analyze. One of the routines which come from this relationship has been the integration of soft news on the front page of online media. This practice has also affected media credibility.

These antecedents aroused our interest to visit newsrooms to know their vision of the phenomenon. Therefore, we consider that the changes in the routines have relevant side effects, beyond the appearance of metrics displayed on screens in the newsrooms.

A wide range of studies analyze the different forms of media participation from the perspective of the user, studying the degree of interactivity or through content analysis techniques, while the internal opinion of the newsroom is more inaccessible. The aim of this research is to know the motivations of Spanish digital newspapers to act on social networks; describe how they manage their relationship with audiences, and focus on their internal vision of Facebook.

The methodology applied to achieve these objectives have been the in-depth interview with ten social media managers representative of five national media

(El País, El Mundo, Abc, La Vanguardia, El Periódico de Catalunya), four digital natives (El Confidential, eldiario.es, The Huffington Post, El Español) and a local media group (Joly). All interviews were conducted in person in the newsrooms, during 2016 and 2017.

This slide represents our first result, because most of them are not working in the media they represented one or two years ago, when this research was conducted. The dynamics of the market has caused a great instability of the positions.

However the qualitative approach of the study yields novel results. In the recent practice of journalism there is a new choreography of information, where breaking news are released first on Twitter, then published on the web and finally on Facebook. This atomization of content has caused fragmented and decontextualized audiences (Masip, Suau and Ruiz Caballero, 2017) consume individual news, as we explained previously. What kind of relationship does the medium maintain with these new consumers? According to the interviews carried out, in the Spanish media scene very diverse and even antagonistic participation management models coexist. We detected that there are as many management models as possible: while some media value the elimination of comments, others defend the externalization of moderation, or the programming of messages. The reality is that there is no time for a real communication bidirectionality. Decisions in general reduce the responsibility of the journalist, and allow him/her to focus on the production of content.

Although progress has been made in newsrooms by creating specific positions to coordinate participation, the lack of resources prevents a continuous dialogue with users. Only about thirty Spanish cybermedia are monitored by Chartbeat. Participation media formula is based on intuition, voluntarism, common sense, and trust on the good sense of the journalists.

At the end of this slide you can also read two relevant statements of our interviews that summarize this situation.

We observed that media want to reinforce their brand image in networks and expand the reach of contents. Several participation managers consider that “a good strategy in social networks starts from having a good content, because social networks are saturated, and there are many media doing similar things”. Another inside critic is that Twitter is oversized by journalists, and it means that they are applying a contradictory strategy: Journalist prefer Twitter but Twitter requires a lot of effort and time, and it gives you a very little traffic comparing to Facebook.

In this context, the shadow of Google has ceased to be a threat to the Spanish media. Now most of them distrust Facebook, due to its opaque behavior and the constant changes in its algorithms. Facebook represents the new friend-enemy.

More than ten years after the birth of Facebook and Twitter, there is still a digital, generational and conceptual gap related to social networks in newsrooms. In general, the personal habit is transferred to the professional field. Today to be active in social networks is not an obligation in many newsrooms. Editors believe in convincing or recommending rather than imposing. In fact, on many occasions, internal training courses are taught by colleagues from the same media who tell their own experience.

We have detected four types of journalists according to their relationship with social media: Intensive, Passive, Away, Tired. Intensive role is a journalist posting original content several times during a day. Passive is a journalist only reading social media or retweeting or copying and pasting contents developed by other authors. Away is when a journalist choose not having an account on social media. Tired is when they don't feel anymore comfortable because that social sphere has been transformed into a place no constructive; there is an excess of permanent messages, more aggressive and more insistent.

According to our interviews media managers avoid superficial conversations. Their priority is leading the public debate selecting the agenda before audience determine it. So that media are more interested in comments of web users than social media comments. As the quality of comments is more relevant than the number of comments, sometimes the option to comment is eliminated on specific news (for example those news related to the King of Spain).

Finally, their main strategy on social networks is consistency. They post on a regular basis, without saturating. They normally publish between 6 and 10 tweets per hour; 2 post per hour on Facebook; and 4 Telegram or WhatsApp messages per day. El País is the only one that does not program its social media contents, because at night their correspondents in America develop this task.