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Digital Media in Ecuador – Future Perspectives
Medios digitales en Ecuador: perspectivas de futuro

Abstract

The advances in technology, especially in the field of communication, cause mass media to constantly evolve- and thus not to perish. Indeed, this occurs in situations that are marked by a series of media transformations and changes that have affected journalism as a profession and mass media as a process. The studies that have resulted from these changes have been positive and negative. This paper analyses the digital media panorama in Ecuador, the characteristics of journalism culture and the specific usage of web content. It describes the trends of the main digital media in the country, which have been selected for a case study. The article takes as a core reference 'ten digital trends in media communication' proposed by Pepe Cerezo Gilarranz– a specialist in digital strategies. We then focus on the deficiencies of Ecuadorian mass media, which is mainly due to a lack of control over technological environments and the scarcity of links between business and journalism projects that have technological and innovative support, such as the usage of social networks and others. The final result is a detailed guide to the weaknesses and strengths of each digital medium that has been studied. Furthermore, this work highlights reliable trends so that the selected media can orientate can orientate towards digital environments. This is achieved by making use of technological tools for creating business and service opportunities.

Resumen

El avance de la tecnología, en especial, en el ámbito de la comunicación, obliga a los medios a evolucionar constantemente para no morir en un escenario marcado por una serie de transformaciones y cambios mediáticos que han afectado al periodismo como profesión y a los medios de comunicación, proceso que ha generado estudios de todo orden. Este trabajo analiza el panorama mediático digital en Ecuador, las características de cultura periodística y el consumo de contenidos en la Red. Describe las tendencias de los principales medios digitales en el país, seleccionados para realizar un estudio de caso. El artículo toma como referencia central el estudio de las diez tendencias digitales en medios de comunicación de autoría de Pepe Cerezo Gilarranz, especializado en estrategias digitales. Posteriormente, se identifican las deficiencias que tienen los medios en Ecuador; principalmente por la falta de domino de los entornos tecnológicos, y la escasa vinculación del proyecto empresarial y periodístico con soportes tecnológicos e innovadores, como el uso de redes sociales y otras. El resultado final es una guía detallada de las debilidades y las fortalezas de cada medio digital en estudio. Asimismo, este trabajo propone tendencias fiables para que los medios estudiados puedan encaminarse firmes en entornos digitales, asumiendo a las herramientas tecnológicas como oportunidad de negocio y de servicio.

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1. Introduction

1.1. Public and private media

The panorama of ownership in mass media in Ecuador is marked by two genres of media control: the first, which has been recently consolidated, is public media with the support of a national bureaucratic apparatus. On the other hand, private media has been weakened by a series of legal reforms and discretional management of the governmental publicity quota. The digital media in this latter group are analyzed in this paper.

Public media, which is controlled by an executive central function, amount to 21 groupings - among which are those «confiscated by the state», those recently created and private media, a total of 1,355 entities (among which are communication companies, publicity companies, public relations firms, cinema and television producers, subscription-based television providers, journals, newspapers and digital media) (Banegas, 2012).

According to the «UNESCO media analysis (2011)» report, the public media are comprised of: Ecuador TV (ECTV), the Public Radio of Ecuador (RPE), two newspapers, El Telégrafo and the government-run El Ciudadano, and the Public News Agency of Ecuador and South America (ANDES). The popular daily «PP El Veradero» also entered into circulation as a tabloid paper in 2010. Later, the other mass media, which have less coverage, were added as a result of state confiscations by the Deposit and Guarantee Agency of Ecuador (AGD). This government agency was created by the state after the economic crisis and the financial crash of 1999. The private media outlets that have national scope in Ecuador are managed by eight groups that are characteristically «monopolistic» and «family-run». According to the Commission for the Auditing of Radio and Television Frequencies (UNESCO, 20111), these private media group owners are: Grupo Eljuri, Grupo Martínez, Grupo Vivanco, Grupo Egas, Grupo Alvarado, Grupo Mantilla, Grupo Pérez and Grupo Isaías (Martínez, 2009). The structure and business administration of Ecuadorian media is diverse and also faces the ineluctable fact of the transformation of journalism, namely the Internet has become a paradigm of «total» communication (López, 2001).

1.2. Internet and Mass Media

As Serrano (2011), the Colombian Editor of Interactive Media, stated: «Today, the media eco-system is a complex scenario comprised of professionals, users and machines with different languages and forms of narration, which create and exchange contents in digital platforms.» The use of the Internet within the industry of Ecuadorian communication has not been fully explored. As we will explain later, the web does not form part of business strategies. What is more, access to the Internet is no longer a limitation and digital divides are being reduced worldwide. The digital scenario offers a gamut of possibilities for interaction –commencing with images, sound and text (Dezuanni & Monroy, 2011).

1.3. Internet and mass media

In Ecuador, until July 2012, the number of Internet users was established at 7,320,206, which is 50.5% of the population, according to the statistics of the National Corporation of Telecommunications (CNT). Our neighboring country, Colombia, has 4,046,997 subscribers to the Internet– of which 37% corresponds to wireless Internet via mobile phone devices and 63% with a fixed Internet service (data from the Ministry of Information and Communications [2010]). Conversely, in 2010, Peru's Internet access was calculated at 42.8% in urban areas – with a total of 12,412,001 users, according to the National Institute of Statistics and Information (INEI).

1.4. Digital Journalism in Ecuador: the enchantment of the «digital» and the demise of «trans-media»

Negroponte (1995) affirms that «computing» is not about «computers»; it is about «life». We are therefore talking about a fundamental cultural change. The 'digital person' is not merely about being a «luminary», or a person that navigates the Internet, or a child who is gifted at math. It is really about a way of living, which is going to affect absolutely everything we do: the way in which we work; the way in which we study; and the way in which we communicate with friends and with children, etc. This is the reality in Ecuador: access to the Internet is positive and generates an obligation for mass media to act within the context of a web platform.

It has been observed that the rate of Internet subscription (obtaining an Internet connection) and the rate of permanence (keeping an Internet connection) is actually unequal –thus questioning journalism itself. Igarza (2010), for example, affirms that many cities are now suffering from an excess of micro-waves that are constantly overlapping. In this regard, citizens can remain connected 24-7 –and stay connected on the electronic superhighway, and be simultaneously connected to various networks. Hotspots and WiFi networks thus offer connectivity to the Internet in numerous public and private places.

According to the web portal Perint (2011) (Journalism, Research and New Technologies/Fundamedios), digital media in Ecuador amounted to a total of eight providers, including the Bureau of Analysis and b10- the latter has not been updated since April 2012.

As far as the context of the first digital media is concerned, we can also mention: Ecuador Inmediato and Ciudadanía Informada, both of which commenced in 2004, according to Rivera-Costales (2007) from CIESPAL. The media in Ecuador do not compete with each other in terms of production, i.e. with international media channels. This is not because of an inability to do so, but because the local production is rarely taken into consideration. One cannot therefore talk about media production per se with an international focus except for cinema, which is backed by a law approved in 2006. What is more, film production has now been incorporated into Ibero-American and international film festivals (Mora, 2010).

The Ecuadorian media generally prefer to copy program formats produced abroad rather than create original product. According to two local journalists, Fernando Astudillo and Rubén Buitrón, «One of the greatest drawbacks of Ecuadorian society is the huge inferiority complex we have about developing and discovering a clear identity; we have to admit that the persistent view that all national journalism as mediocre is true» (Astudillo & Buitrón, 2005). The journalistic culture in Ecuador can generally be summed up by three characteristics (Abad, 2011: 136):

1) A way of doing and producing (ownership rights and control norms).
2) A way of thinking and acting (the conditions under which journalists work and also the demands of the profession).
3) A way of saying and narrating things (discourses and informative priorities).

2. Materials and methods

For this article, we have considered digital media as media used as a technological platform (from the Internet). This process is about generating new forms of consumer behavior and news production (Fidler, 1998: Diaz-Noci, 2010).

2.1. Methodology and sampling

The methodology used is observation and takes into account the ten trends proposed by Pepe Crezo (2012), the Director of Analysis and Research at Prisa Digital. The updating of the digital media was measured daily during the 56 days of the study. A comparative analysis was carried out that used as a reference the extensive work on digital media carried out by The Guardian (www.guardian.co.uk), USA Today (www.usatoday.com/), the New York Times (www.nytimes.com) and the BBC (www.bbc.co.uk/mundo), which are journalism references within their native (English-speaking) digital media scenarios. For this study, there was a follow-up of six digital media natives, which were selected based on the methodology of the case study. With this homogenous sample, a comparative analysis was performed of the ten cited trends, which are related to the implementation of technology that offers digital resources, i.e. whose objective is to maintain and to diversify the audiences.

2.2. Periods and variables of our study

Our study and observations were made between October 11th and 6th December, 2012. The quality parameters that were taken into account for the digital media in Ecuador are principally based on the study of the ten previously mentioned trends. The web portals of these digital media provide a different view in compari-

son with the online media in Ecuador. For example, multi-media usage, hypertext usage, the usage of social networks, interaction with users and web applications are all present in the digital media discussed in this paper. In addition, they provide solid evidence of the development of digital journalism. This article concludes with a series of recommendations so that Ecuadorian media may quickly and efficiently form part of the enormous and changing digital scenario.

3. Results
3.1. Presence in social networks

According to Rivera (2010) at the International Centre of Higher Studies in Communication for Latin America (CIESPAL), there are eight media outlets in Ecuador that use the Internet to reach their readers under the name of «digital newspapers». The media websites with the greatest number of visitors, followers and fans on the social networks to November 2012 were: Ecuador Inmediato.com, La República.ec, Ecuador en vivo.com, Confirmado.net, Ciudadanía Informada.com, Infórmate and punto.com. The table below shows the analysis of their presence on the social networks:

Ecuadorian digital media in social networks						
Nº	Media	Website	City, year of creation	Fans/ Facebook	Followers/ Twitter	Other networks
1.	Ecuadorinmediato.com	www.ecuadorinmediato.com	Quito 2004	1,724	46,490	Youtube
2.	LaRepública.ec	www.larepublica.ec	Quito 2011	1,365 (2007)	19,419	Google plus, Youtube
3.	Ecuadorenvivo.com	www.ecuadorenvivo.com	Quito/ Guayaquil 2008	2,055	26,178	RSS/Canal Youtube
4.	Confirmado.net	www.confirmado.net	Quito (S.D)	N/A	3,702	RSS
5.	CiudadaníaInformada.com	www.ciudadaniainformada.com	Quito 2004	4,907	3,855	RSS-Blog/ciudadanía informada
6.	Infórmate y Punto.com	www.informateypunto.com	Quito 2009	263	1,874	RSS

Table1: Media editors and web pages of the various types of media studied (06/12/2012).

Digital media are currently of great interest to us as scholars. However, taking on this new initiative often depends on what action needs to be taken. Moreover, thanks to their presence on the web, they can fulfill the functions of the three Cs, namely: communication (core principle); community (communities that are created), and cooperation networks (networks are established by working together) (Orihuela, 2008). With Web 1.0, for instance, there was no real interaction, nor were there Internet platforms. Then, we transitioned to Web 2.0, which facilitated interaction between the communication medium and the receiver. Today, we are presented with Web 3.0, which offers unlimited space for the common man. In the words of Dan-Gillmor (2003), «technology has provided us with communication tools that can enable anyone to become a journalist at a low cost - with an impact on universal theory».

However, as one can see from Table 1, only 101,518 people follow digital media via Twitter, and only 8,949 follow them on Facebook. That is to say, in these two important social networks, only 110,467 Internet navigators follow the most important digital media in the country. If we consider, for example, the fact that Ecuador has 7,320,206 people with access to the Internet, only 1.51% use digital media via these two important social networks. The reason for this is the means of communication used. Technology offers us the tools, but it is necessary for digital media to fulfill the three functions proposed by Orihuela. The Internet is thus becoming more and more prevalent in modern society. Within this framework, it is necessary to create quality content that enhances humanity. According to the Spanish researcher, Orihuela, «It is the moral responsibility of communicators nowadays to be informed about its complex nature, as well as the conversion of information into knowledge, the management of knowledge and to respond in a more effective manner to the public. This public, which has almost been submerged in a sea of chaos, has learnt that we can help them stay afloat by navigating in a sea of information» (Orihuela, 2002).

Although it may be certain that there exist various trends in digital journalism in Ecuador, we cannot yet talk about a prosumer. According to Sanzo (2010) in the digital journal Economic Self-Sufficiency, the word prosumer was coined by Toffler (1980) in his book «Third Wave». The term Prosumer refers to a synthesis of the words producer and consumer. In barter networks, prosumers are those who are producers of goods, products or services. The prosumer that we currently have is the Average Joe, who contributes as a creator of active information − helping with the creation of new content in a disinterested manner. It is a process, which, in our case, is contributing to the de-professionalization of journalism in general.

An acceptable hypothesis to justify the low number of followers of the digital media on the social networks could be that we do not take into consideration that Internet navigators of both Twitter and Facebook are «prosumers» not consumers of information. Another hypothesis is to analyze the journalistic practices of Ecuador Inmediato- as it is the digital media with most influence on the social networks.

3.2. Digital media in Ecuador: a defenceless child?

Digital media in Ecuador still offer few applications for mobile phones and other types of portable technological devices. It is here where one should promote, for example, trans-media projects, portable applications for technological devices- with the aim of creating multimedia and facilitating communication via various platforms. We understand this trans-media phenomenon as the usage of multi-media platforms that enable the user to play an active part in history – using their mobile telephone devices. For example, this could be via games, where multimedia is the combination of two or more media within the same platform, i.e. a text and video in a blog. According to Balestrini (2009), «Apps have created a culture and for this reason play an important role in contemporary life». What's more, in Ecuador they have yet to be explored fully.

The current reality of digital media exists because of trends in the business world. It is vital that the media be seen as a business that requires investment. The applications and content that can be implemented are infinite. Notwithstanding, the need has not been created to acquire these trends in media. They are uniquely comprised of the function of informing. However, they do not take into consideration the fact that the reader is more and more demanding. Moreover, the types of errors that appear in Ecuadorian digital media can be verified by their presence in social networks but this culture simply does not exist. On the other hand, there is no active or constant participation. What is more, there is no feed-back – as we will explain later on.

In addition, there are no specific studies published that examine the causes of this slow growth. The analyses related to the academic training of social communications in Ecuador reveal scarce and almost negligible training in digital media (Punín, 2011). Therefore, if universities do not instruct journalism students on digital media, these initiatives will probably not be at the core of journalism companies.

The demands of the journalism business are not covered in the curricula of the schools or faculties of communication, despite the fact that both sectors agree on the fact that everything related to digital journalism is no longer considered a trend and thus will not become a major training requirement.

According to Cerezo, Director of Analysis and Research from Digital Prisa, there are ten trends that should define the management of digital media. Among them, we highlight the importance of interactions between the medium and the audience, as well as the implementation of technological and multimedia applications in the media. The following chart presents the ten trends that have been studied here. (This information has been taken from: www.rocasalvatella.com/blog/2012/10/tendencias-en-medios).

	Tendencias 2012		En cifras	Modelos
1	Estrategia Digital First	Los medios priorizan en su estrategia el canal digital y móvil frente al off line.	**45.7 millones £** reporta el área digital a Guardian NM, lo que representa un incremento del 16,3% como consecuencia de su estrategia digital first	**The Guardian** http://tinyurl.com/95uaqps
2	Influencia creciente de las tabletas y de los móviles inteligentes	Las tabletas y los móviles modifican los hábitos de acceso a la información. Los medios intentan adaptarse al nuevo ecosistema	**37% de los usuarios** de tabletas leen a diario prensa online	**USA Today, QUARTZ** http://beta.usatoday.com/ http://qz.com/
3	Modelos de negocio híbridos	Los medios buscan alternativas de ingresos a la publicidad online, insuficiente para mantener las actuales estructuras	**20-25% de los periódicos online** de EEUU desarrollarán algún modelo de pago al finalizar 2012	**NYT, WSJ,** http://tinyurl.com/bm93798
4	Apps nativas vs aplicaciones HTML5	El Financial Times ha abierto la puerta al desarrollo de apps HTML5 sin necesidad de pasar por la App Store de Apple.	**2.000.000** de usuarios acceden a la aplicación HTML5 del Financial Times.	**FT.com** http://tinyurl.com/cjrmd44
5	Agregadores inteligentes	Nuevos servicios como Flipboard, Livestand, Pulse, o zite están revolucionando la agregación y recomendaciónón de contenidos.	**20 millones** de usuario de Flipboard en apenas dos años desde su lanzamiento	**ZITE** http://tinyurl.com/d36u8kl
6	Data Journalism	El análisis de grandes cantidades de datos será cada vez más importante para los medios tanto para generar contenidos como para desarrollar nuevos negocios.	**180.000 expertos en BigData** se demandaran en EEUU durante los próximos 5 años. Medios como Bloomberg demandan cada vez más este tipo de perfiles	**NYT** http://tinyurl.com/c5o52vm
7	Apuesta por el vídeo	El consumo de vídeo online sigue creciendo. Se espera que el mercado publicitario para este soporte sea el que más crezca durante 2012.	**43.1% crecerá el mercado** publicitario para el vídeo online en los EEUU durante 2012.	**BBC** http://tinyurl.com/dyflw5e
8	Second screen apps	Los nuevos dispositivos conectados como smartphone, tablets, etc. se están convirtiendo en el complemento perfecto para los nuevos hábitos de consumo de TV.	**50%** utiliza otro dispositivo electrónico mientras ve la televisión.	**GetClue, Shazam** http://tinyurl.com/c29ad6h
9	Social-local -móvil (SoLoMo)	Los medios han encontrado en el denominado "flujo social" una vía para atraer nuevos usuarios, al tiempo que aumentan la fidelización (engagement), potenciada por la movilidad y la información local.	**20% del tráfico** externo a el Guardian proviene de Facebook, habiéndose superado temporalmente por primera vez al procedente de Google	**The Guardian** http://tinyurl.com/96ppwfl
10	TV conectadas	Los Juegos Olímpicos y la Eurocopa impulsarán la venta de TV conectadas a Internet. Los medios tienen la oportunidad de transformar sus productos (información) en servicios: tiempo, deportes, etc.	**25%** de las Tv vendidas en España durante 2012 tendrán conexión a Internet.	**BBC** http://tinyurl.com/8txm9u3

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Table 2: Digital trends in mass media.
(www.rocasalvatella.com/blog/2012/10/tendencias-en-medios).

In a similar vein, we have analyzed each of the trends – with the aim of understanding importance and usage with regards to Ecuadorian digital media. The following table specifically explains the function of each trend:

Table 3: Explicative Analysis of Digital Trends in Mass Media		
Trends 2012	General Trends	Characteristics
1	Digital First	Digital First: to give priority to 'digital' in media, that is, all the content and work are carried out in an environment that is wholly virtual and is updated constantly.
2	Growing influence of tablets and intelligent phones	Nowadays, access to the Internet via wireless devices, excluding mobile devices, is an important trend. To be able to access (the Internet) via a mobile telephone, tablet or digital media device is a priority strategy for mass media, for example, by means of a Media Shift application (2012).
3	The Hybrid Business Model	It refers to publicity. This is very important and represents a significant source of earnings, which could be positively invested in the chosen media.
4	HTML5 native Apps Applications	This is a medium to help the public access information. HTML facilitates the multimedia work in a digital page; to share videos and images, etc.
5	Intelligent information mulitpliers	Information multipliers – applications that help to receive information according to personal preference. Internationally, there is the Zite application (Google Play 2012).
6	Data journalism	This is the quantity of information that is managed by digital media. Their storage is considered important considering the fact that it may be useful in the future- such as for the constant updating of information and, above all, its correct classification (DJB, 2011).
7	The video option	In any form of digital media, it is videos that stand out. For this type of information, it is a priority. Multimedia are very important. It is now very easy to create an account in You Tube – and to link videos to a digital medium, thus complementing the information that is offered.
8	Second screen apps	Users that watch TV can utilize this function by means of a second screen (Tablet, Smartphone). It is an electronic device that enables you to interact with the content that you visit online, which also leads to the selection of audiences.
9	Social-local-	To be involved in social networks is of immense importance. The

	mobile	interaction that we can generate with our audience via common social networks (Facebook, Twitter and You Tube) is primordial. This does not have a price. To create an environment of feedback guarantees that our audience is loyal − not only to publish content, but also to ensure that the audience participates and that they are heard by means of the chosen media.
10	Connected TV	Currently, it is possible to link television and the Internet. However, this «smart TV» device has not reached Ecuador (at least not in the mass market).

On the other hand, Ecuador is becoming a digital country. The rise of the web is something that is seen as very positive. We are now all digital consumers, even though the creation of one's own content is occurring at a slow pace within Ecuadorian media. In the world context, «The Guardian News and Media» is an example of how to prioritize what is considered «digital». In fact, in this case it is achieved by using a market study that analyzes potential digital consumers and determines the group objective in this technological environment (LNR, 2012). In this sense, it is essential to take the initiative. Indeed, we could add that no one is born with this pre-knowledge. «Digital natives are not born previously literate in digital culture» (Orihuela, 2012). With respect to the focus of the first trend, «Digital First», is based on the results found during the follow-up and critical observation». It is logical to assume, then, that they (digital natives) achieve this 'trend'.

In Table 4, there are three categories of evaluation: from 0-5 hours; from 5-10 hours, and 10+ hours of updating news- i.e. as a valid means to calculate the level and speed of content and services on the web. Constant updating is a characteristic of digital journalism in Ecuador, especially in focusing journalism work on daily events which can then be converted into future news items.
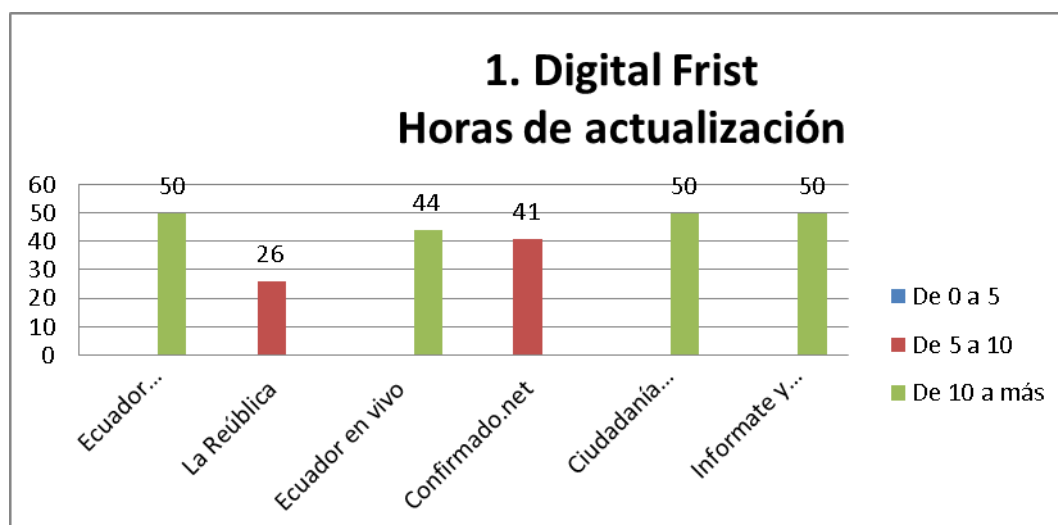

Table 4: Digital Trends: Digital First.

The table reflects the average daily updates made by the digital media studied. As can be seen, they all register updating levels that surpass 40 per day, which indicates an average of two updates per hour. In the case of the second trend, which is related to the growing influence of tablets and smart phones, all the digital media have an Internet configuration for their web pages, which enables users to access their web portals via any mobile device. Within this trend, one may refer to a «media-shift», which is the way in which one manages information via different devices and platforms. In the case of Ecuadorian media, their web pages can be visited using mobile devices that have access to the Internet. However, they should promote the «media-shift» which, apart from being dynamic, provides certain mobility within the content- a characteristic that most digital media have.

3.3. Intelligent devices vs. the Media and Sloppy Advertisers

A vast number of people have access to the Internet via a mobile device, tablet or PC. In data obtained from the Superintendence of Telecommunications (Supertel) from January to June 2011, web access figures reached 1.3 million users in Ecuador – that is to say, 17.76% of Ecuadorian web surfers navigate from their mobile devices. The following graph is related to publicity: models of hybrid businesses. The third trend analyses the financing of the media used.

Table 5 shows the number of adverstising spaces in the portals studied. As a result of the observation process, we find a very limited number of independent and famous brands: Nestlé Ecuador, Claro, Movistar, Produbanco, Toyota, Master Card, Noos Clínica Psiquiátrica, Schullo and San Martín-Verdesoto Abogados Asociados, among others. The rest of the publicity is state advertising, which are mainly digital media owned by the government.

Although this is based on trends in advertising, it can be interpreted in many different ways. For example, The New York Times uses annual payment models. In addition, there is a «pay-per-click» option. Therefore, any of these payment models can be considered a strategy to finance the media used, which, interestingly, has not been fully explored in Ecuador.
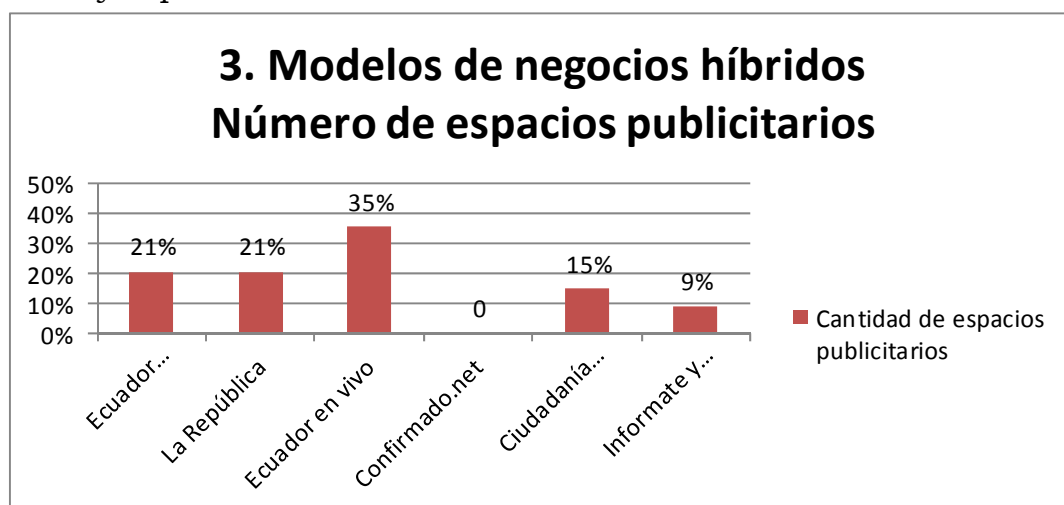

Table 5: Digital Trends: The influence of digital devices and hybrid businesses.

As seen here, the type of media with the most advertising space and, consequently, the one with the best chance of survival, is Ecuador en Vivo, despite the fact it is not related to the number of followers on the social networks (Ecuador Inmediato has almost twice as many followers on Twitter). Nor is it related to the frequency the portal is updated. In this case, Ecuador Inmediato has higher figures. This yields another hypothesis: that advertisers have not found an efficient way to measure audiences and the level of digital media updating.

3.4. Other trends in our digital media

In as far as the fourth trend is concerned, the HTML5 application (Hyper Text Markup Language, version 5) has an important function in digital media as it can be used to develop web pages. HTML5 is a web application that is totally free. Nowadays, however, it is better to go for web applications that contain a simple method of executing applications that are apt for various platforms. In this case, the communication media in this article may opt for the usage of this tool. We should remember, however, that the aesthetics of a web page is one way to innovate and contribute to its overall look. For this reason, digital media should not be strictly considered «linear».

Intelligent multipliers, which is the fifth trend analyzed, explain the importance of promoting the journalistic content of their platforms, for example, via the usage of applications such as Flipboard, Livestand, Pulse or Zite. All these applications form the basis of a digital repository using a digital magazine style consisting of articles, reportage, photographs, videos and audio. Moreover, this repository receives additional information. It is a service that is similar to RSS, which could also include «Ecuador en Vivo», «Confirmado.net», «Ciudadanía Informada» and «Infórmate y Punto».

The sixth trend, which is data journalism, is the correct classification of information within digital media. This facilitates the search for specific themes. This phenomenon is gaining ground as it has led to more job hires for people who classify information. As it is optional for the digital media studied here, one cannot quantify it or put it into graphs. In the case of well-established media in Ecuador such as Ecuador Inmediato, which has existed since 2004, it would be useful to help to organize and facilitate the search for information.

The video option is the seventh trend. Videos are a necessary resource for digital media; their usage generates variety to meet audience demand. The following table focuses on the quantity of videos (per front page of digital media). Of the six forms of media analyzed, only three publish their own videos via You Tube, La República– with 528 videos. It is the medium that most uses this multimedia resource, followed by Ecuador en Vivo–with 16 videos and Ecuador Inmediato, with only 3 audio-visual products. The rest of the portals share and link videos from other web pages.
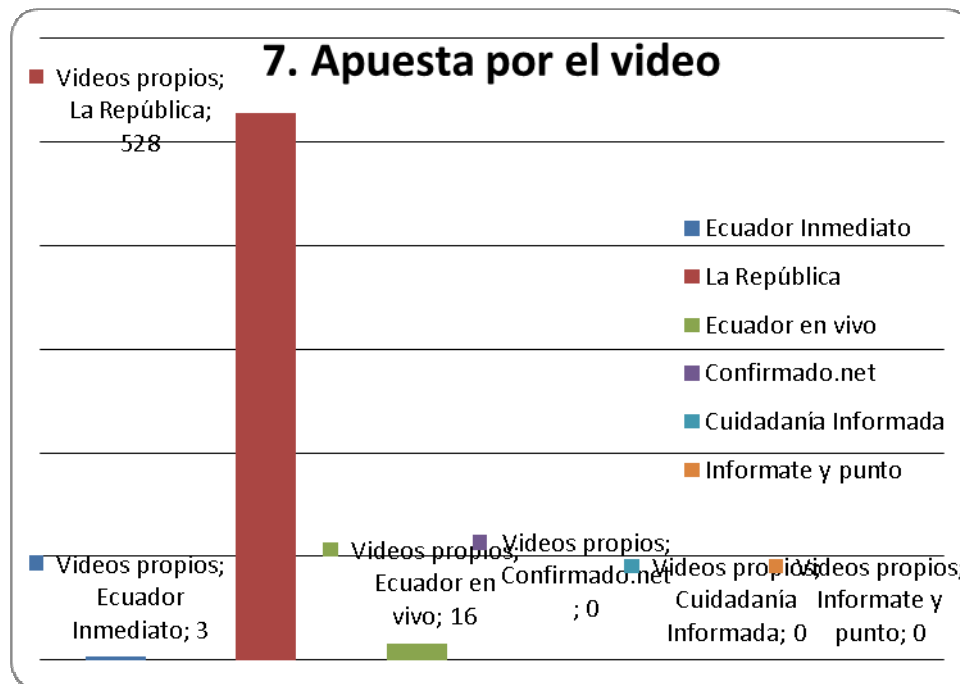
Table 6: Digital Trends: the Video Option

The eighth trend is Second Screen Apps. It concerns the 'consumption' of television via new technological devices. There are applications for mobile phones that are fused with television. Without doubt, they can be converted in a profitable business for any digital media. They are software applications that enable users to interact with content such as films, music or videos. However, none of the media analyzed convincingly follow this 'trend'. This can be easily proved by visualizing their technological environments.

The ninth trend is Social-Local-Mobile. As Orihuela (2012) has pointed out, social media are not bothersome, but a cultural habitat for students. This expresses the importance of social networks and of creating loyal consumers that help to maximize the potential of digital media and their usage. With respect to this trend, it is convenient to highlight how social networks are managed. This is shown in more detail in Table 1, which shows how social networks indicate the number of 'fans' and 'followers' of the media types studied in this paper.

Finally, the tenth trend is 'Connected TVs'. Here, there is a conversion of information into services which financially support the media, for example, advertising. This HTML application made specifically for TVs, referred to as Smart TVs are mostly made by Samsung (Panoramaaudiovisual.com, 2011).

4. Final analysis

4.1. Trends that impact on the route of digital journalism in Ecuador

Ecuador Inmediato, Ecuador en Vivo, La República, Ciudadanía informada and Infórmate y punto are the digital media best placed to succeed in Ecuador. How-

ever, their progress has been slow despite the fact that they are adapting to these digital trends. The previously mentioned forms of mass media have the following characteristics: Digital First: the growing influence of tablets; smart phones; data journalism; the video option and social-local-mobile. The photo press only grows when their off-line and on-line versions are added (Segado, 2011). What is more, the key evening news programs compete with new online media– all of which are multimedia (Igarza, 2008). Among the gaps revealed by the case studies, we can see that Confirmado.net, Buró de análisis and b10 are digital media that have «neglected» their technological platforms. In the case of Confirmado.net, no applications for intelligent mobile phones have been developed yet. Neither has there been a multimedia initiative. Furthermore, the structure of this digital media is very «flat».

It seems that all the digital meaning in Ecuador have deficiencies in bi-directional communication. There is no interaction between the media and the audience. Could this be a reason, as we mentioned earlier, for the low number of followers on the social networks – compared to the number of people who have access to the Internet?

4.2. Recommendations: keys for making dynamic progress

One form of mass media that regularly updates its digital platform and is apt to offer a product that meets the needs of the public could be reflected in a sustainable business model. The scarce presence of media on the social networks discussed in this article reveals the need for a more detailed study of the levels of interaction between the media and the audience. This study shows that only 17.76% of Ecuadorian Internet users navigate from mobile devices.

Digital media should be aware of the fact that they are essentially a company dealing with a product, which is information. They should use marketing and advertising strategies – focusing on and analyzing their public-oriented objectives. The trends presented here are set within a framework of an international study, and it is necessary to highlight the importance of all these factors –since they can be useful tools for improving any digital media– both in the journalistic sense and also in advertising or publicity. They should at least take into consideration seven of the «Ten trends» mentioned in this study. Advertising fees bear no relation to the number of followers on the social networks – something that would be a new and interesting topic for future research

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