

Periodismo en línea latinoamericano: Explorando tendencias internacionales en versiones digitales de diarios

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Abstract:

A descriptive analysis of the data from 74 editors and reporters from 62 print-affiliated newspapers sites in Latin America indicate that journalists and print-based sites follow similar broad tendencies observed in different studies inside and outside of the region. The surveyed online editors and reporters -mainly young men with university studies- have a career background in print newspapers, with salaries equals or lower than their print colleagues. They perform weekly activities more related with immediacy than multimedia, and they perceive their primary function as disseminators and interpreters of information. Working in small and integrated newsrooms, online journalists basically interact with their print partner in terms of editing content. Although, advertising is a primary source of revenue, the majority of national, regional and local print-based sites confirm that they depend on the print partner for content and financing their online operations. Furthermore, the online version of papers do not fully take advantage of the Internet technology and capabilities, particularly multimediality and interactivity, or provide too much original new media content.

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This study aims to provide an explorative overview of online newspapers, journalists and journalism in Latin America at the beginning of the 21st century. It attempts to explore the most controversial issues related to online newspapers, particularly the Web editions of daily and generic-information newspapers, known as "affiliated online sites" (Berkman and Shumway, 2003). Through a Web-based survey, this thesis examines whether international trends in online newspapers and journalism are operating in the print-based sites in Latin America. The Internet questionnaire comprised 31 closed-ended questions related to five topics: occupational profiles, job routines, organization structures, content production, and business models.

A descriptive statistic analysis is used to examine the result of the previous five areas, and compare them with other findings reported by studies conducted outside and inside of Latin America. Furthermore the data provide two parallel levels of analysis. Associations of variables also allow portray tendencies' similarities and differences among the participants sites of national,

regional and local papers in Latin America, and online and print partners. The findings contribute to relate Latin American online newspapers with other peers around the world, and with themselves. This thesis argues that despite certain financial and structural constraints, Latin America online papers are not so different to other worldwide counterparts.

After a long process of e-mail verification, the defined sample constituted 129 print-affiliated sites operating in the 18 Latin American Spanish-speaking countries. Sixty-two sites of papers with national, regional and local circulation (48 percent of the sample) participated in the survey, and 74 online editors and reporters responded the questionnaire.

Internationally, scholars have been exploring various aspects of the development of online newspapers over the past ten years. American, European, and Asian scholars have continually monitored the progression of online editions developed by print editions in their countries and regions. However, in Latin America few media reports and academic articles have investigated issues dealing with Internet newspapers in this region. Empirical studies, mostly content analysis available on the web, are limited to digital versions of a few papers in few countries: Mexico (Navarro, 2003); Argentina (Lemos, 2002; Albarello, 2002); and Peru (Zeta de Pozo, 2002).

Most recently, Guillermo Franco and Julio Cesar Guzman (2004), an online editor and a reporter respectively from the Colombian newspaper, El Tiempo.com, conducted the first web-based survey about online journalism in the region. They surveyed online editors from 70 websites of national papers in Latin American and their results will contribute to the explorative overview proposed in this study.

In reviewing the diverse literature about online journalism, newspapers and journalists, relevant and current research and studies were crucial for formulating the research questions and for planning the methodology of this thesis. Quantitative (surveys and content analysis) and qualitative studies have examined the most relevant communication theories, assumptions and concerns about news media and print-based online papers in developed regions and nations

Kopper, Kolthoff, and Czepek (2000) identified seven tracks pursued by research projects about online journalism: "market analysis; product analysis; user studies; occupational changes; quality assessments; macro-studies; and experimental projects." This thesis explores topics related with the five first perspectives. Reviewing the paths of international research in the topics, these scholars observe that the previous approaches involve the major concerns of the journalism activities on the Internet, and the use of journalism products and services in the profession and among users. Another scholar in the United States also found the same patterns of online journalism's research classified in three broad sections: production, use and interactivity (Boczkowski, 2001). These authors recognized that the research in this field is just now beginning and that online communication is developing so fast that the patterns of usage, products and technology become outdated immediately.

In this sense, this study began with a review of located, and recent international studies, mostly published or presented during the last 3 years, with the purpose of identifying worldwide broad tendencies about occupational profiles, job routines, organization structures, content production, and business models in the Latin American print-based online papers. This study expects to find and compare wide-ranging conclusions.

Research Questions and Conclusions

RQ1. -Are the professional standards of online journalists in Latin America similar to their worldwide counterparts?

The variable “professional standards” is understood for this study as a set of journalist’s personal data, which include age, sex, educational background and former professional experience. This set of variables is based on surveys conducted by Weaver and Wilhoit (1996). Online journalist is understood for this study as those responsible for the Web content’s plan, production and divulgation. Web content includes texts (news articles and stories), graphics, photos, interactive items, videos or audio clips.

Based on the findings, it might say that like their counterparts around the world, Latin American online journalists who work for print-affiliated sites, are young professionals with a high level of education. (Deuze & Paulusse, 2002; Neuberger et. al, 1998; He & Zhu, 2002; Chyi & Sylvie, 2001; Quandt et al., 2002). Almost 60 percent of the surveys’ participants reported an age between 20 and 35. More than 80 percent have a university degree. The surveyed online editors and reporters mainly have a background in print newspapers, with salaries equals to or lower than their print colleagues. Nearly 70 percent of the respondents selected newspapers as their main media and professional background. Almost half of online journalists have comparable incomes (46%) to their print counterparts, and 34 percent say they earn less.

Additionally, thirty percent of the respondents were women, and 41 percent reported inferior salaries compared to their print counterparts, while 31 percent of male professionals says they have lower salaries than their equivalents for the print edition. Spanish surveys of online journalists also illustrate salary differences between print and online staff, as well German and Dutch scholars (Consello Da Cultura Galega, 2002; and Grup de Periodistes Digitals i Sindicat de Periodistes de Catalunya, 2003; Deuze & Paulusse, 2002; Quandt et al., 2002).

Similar results were also reported by Franco and Guzman (2004) in their survey of Latin American online editors and reporters exclusively working for national print-based paper sites. They

found online journalists are between 20 and 30 years old, and almost half of them earn less than their print counterparts. This survey did not report level of education. However, Franco and Guzman (2004) asked about background in online journalism, and 53 percent of their respondents said they did not have any.

Overall, Latin American online journalists have similar basic characteristics and professional profiles as online journalists from different parts of the world (Europe and U.S.), in terms of age and educational background. However, the findings indicate other pattern for salaries and journalists' former media experience. In some countries such as Germany and the United States, some research has found that online professionals have diverse media experiences different from print, and their incomes are similar to other journalists from the print partner (Boczkowski, 2000; Quandt et al., 2002).

RQ2. -Are the online journalists in Latin America following the same occupational functions than their worldwide counterparts?

The variable "occupational functions" is defined as the most frequent job routines developed by the online journalists in a weekly basis, and the journalist's description about their main professional roles in the online environment, described by Quandt, Altmeyden, Hanitzsch, and Loeffelholz, in *Online Journalists in Germany* (2002).

.In terms of job routines, Latin American online journalists, - working for print-affiliated sites- are frequently performing some traditional weekly activities as any journalist such as selecting, and editing news, particularly from news wire agencies. For instance, almost half of them (45%) say they "always" do weekly news selection processes and 49 percent edit news from agencies and other media. However, writing original stories is a task only performed "always" by 31 percent of the surveyed journalists during a week; and 24 percent say they "always" do live coverage. A similar percentage (31%) reported the activity of transferring or repacking print text.

Additionally, their routines include tasks with technical attributes of the online media such as online investigation, user contacts through emails, and content management. More than half of the respondents say they "always" do online searching (57%); and respond to user's emails (57%), and organize content (54%) weekly. On the contrary, the duties of multimedia production and programming reported to be less frequently done on an average week than the previous tasks with technical elements. In the case of multimedia production, 20 percent of the respondents reported it to be a "rarely" performed weekly activity, 16 percent reported "frequently" and 16 percent, "sometimes". The task of programming is the process with the largest disparity in the range of answers. While 38 percent of the participants say they perform programming activities always or frequently weekly, 32 percent say they do not carry out any programming tasks.

These findings corroborate those found by Franco and Guzman (2004) in their recent survey conducted by with journalists from national print-based online papers in Latin America. Their study revealed that the majority of the surveyed journalists believe their main job function is to write and edit texts, particularly content provided by international news agencies. A small percentage reported multimedia production as the main activity.

Other surveys reported analogous results regarding the most common tasks performed by online journalists. For instance, Deuze and Paulssen (2002) concluded that the vast majority of the surveyed online journalists in the Low Countries (Netherlands and Flanders) spent most of their time in the newsroom searching, rewriting material from others or repurposing content from their parent medium. Also 65 percent of their respondents said they spent more than an hour per day technically managing content for the website. A large number of journalists (69% in Holland, and 78% in Flanders) also agree they used to answers the users' emails daily.

In Germany, a survey concluded that online journalists spend the most part of their week on writing, online investigations, news selection and editing content from news agencies and other media (Quandt et. al, 2002). Programming and user contacts were infrequent. Compared with the findings of this thesis, the evidence that editors and reporters from print sites in Latin America perform certain common job routines observed in other studies outside and inside the region, such as searching and selecting news, managing content, and editing content from news agencies and other media partners However, the data suggest dissimilarities in the frequency of programming and multimedia production activities, as well as users contact through e-mails.

With respect to professional roles, Latin American online editors and reporters form print-based online papers perceive themselves as neutral news journalists, mainly getting information quickly and neutrally to the public. More than half of them (66%) say that "getting information quickly to the public" is a very important role, followed by "getting information neutrally to the public" (53%). They primarily seek to play the role of information disseminators.

However, the data show they also consider it important to function as interpreters, "explaining some complex issues" (47%), and they see as an important function "express their opinion to the public" (51%). This last item illustrates that online journalist are also more inclined to play a critical role. This result might imply that this attribution is related to the print professional background of the majority of the surveyed online editors and reporters. Education and experience are predictors in journalists' role adoption. Although there is no doubt about the role of disseminators and interpreters, it is not clear from the data if Latin American online journalists are playing in fact a critical role.

Additionally, the respondents (46%) insist that they give the public the option to express their opinion. However, it is not clear how they offer this opportunity. The respondents also say that they always provide responses user's emails but it is unclear from the data other types of

interactivity. There are few interactive features, such as forums, chats and surveys in individual news stories and sites, as the data show for the findings regarding interactive content.

According to Deuze (2003), the mainstream media are frequently practicing an orienting and an instrumental journalism. Based on interactivity levels, the interaction between journalists and audience is indirect in these two previous types of journalism. Mainly the online journalists provide information or background explanations to practical and specialized news without any two-way communication with the readers. On the contrary, a monitorial and dialogical journalism let the readers an open participation posting news, answering questions, and shaping the content.

Based on the same set of professional roles' descriptions, Quandt and his research colleagues (2002) found that German online journalists see themselves as neutral journalists although they consider too much less important than Latin American surveyed counterparts "present their opinion to the public." In Deuze and Paulssen (2002) survey, Dutch and Flemish respondents selected as their main functions disseminating information quickly and providing explanations.

In conclusion, Latin American journalists in print-affiliated online papers do perform weekly activities more related with immediacy than multimedia and programming. They are not frequently doing live coverage or writing original stories. Their weekly routines mainly comprise online searching, editing news from wire agencies and material from print colleagues.

Additionally, Latin American online journalists mainly perceive their primary function as similar to their counterparts outside the region. They basically function as disseminators and interpreters of information. However, Latin American editors and reporters from print-based online papers agree that it is also very important to express their opinion to the public and let the readers to express their point of view.

RQ3. –How much of the Latin American Journalists' routines involve the creation of original content tailored to Web capabilities?

The variable "Web capabilities" is described for this study as the inherent characteristics of hypertextuality, multimediality, interactivity and immediacy (Deuze, 2001; Pavlik, 2001). Original content is understood as all that non-duplicated or reedited content from the print edition.

Among the four web capabilities examined in this study, hypertextuality and immediacy are the most common elements in the creation of original content in the journalists' routines. The other capabilities, multimediality and interactivity, are occasionally used in the online newsrooms' production of news.

The journalists most frequently use hypertextuality, understood as the connection of links to external or internal texts. Hyperlinks (52%) are the feature most often selected as the first option by 52 percent of the 62 participant online papers, followed by photos (35%). The highest percentage of

hyperlinks used as a first option seems to suggest the existence of internal Internet links to different documents and pages on the same site. This finding also might offer some clues to determining the closed communication structure of the sites. Additionally, the use of photos as first and second options might be interpreted as the influence of the traditional media, in this case print, in the online environment.

Multimedia and interactive features are rarely employed as an added value to news production. They were only selected as second options but in smallest percentages. Audio clips (4%), video clips (7%), forums (4%), and chat rooms (2%) features seem not to be included in the process of news production. Surveys (48%), forums (18%), and animated graphics (16%) obtained the highest percentages only as third options multimedia and interactive features selected for the updated news. Additionally, multimedia and interactive special projects are “occasionally” done by 20 percent of the sites. Only 14 percent of the sites produce special projects weekly, and 8 percent, daily.

Franco and Guzman (2004) found that 43 percent of Latin American papers’ online editions say they use audio and video on their sites. Half of them use them regularly, and the other half for special projects. However, they did not specify if these multimedia features are been employed to complement the news stories. This thesis shows that video and audio are not regularly used to complement news stories. On the other side, immediacy was to be a relevant capability for more than half of the surveyed sites. Sixty-two respondents reported updating their sites several times an hour (39%) and several times a day (14%). Although the frequency of updating is not necessarily around-the-clock, national and regional print’s online editions are more likely to update their sites than online papers from local print media. Half of national print-based online papers update their sites several times an hour, and 28%, several times a day. Thirty-six regional print-affiliated sites are updating their sites several times an hour, and 14%, several times a day.

Certain indicators reveal that immediacy is a constant element in the production of content. For instance, news wire agencies were selected as a second source of information by 47 percent of the sites, particularly for the online editions of national papers (63%). Almost 50 percent of surveyed journalists agreed that they edited news from agencies and other media in an average week. These findings might be interpreted as evidence that the majority of the original content in the sites comprises updated news.

Other studies conducted outside of the Latin America show comparable findings. For instance, a longitudinal content analysis of 83 online newspapers in the United States revealed that interactive elements remain limited in the online news, but multimedia features have increased on the news content (Greer and Messing, 2003). The previous authors also found that print partner size determine the frequency of creation of multimedia and interactivity in the sites. In addition, the

study concludes that the newspapers' sites are more likely to update their news stories frequently during a single day.

An analysis of the news website content conducted as part of the Project for Excellence in Journalism (2004) conclude that the majority of the examined sites do not take advantage of multimedia and interactive content, and the use of hyperlinks is the technical capability most used. He and Zhu (2002) concluded that Chinese online newspapers provide insufficient multimedia resources and interactive functions.

From the theoretical perspective, the results about immediacy might be interpreted following Rost's (2004) dimensions of *actualidad multiple* (concept refers to an interpretation of news content and immediacy based on news-time). Applying his notions to the results, it might be suggested that Latin American journalists' routines mainly involve the dimension of *actualidad reciente* (breaking news) due to news are being updated with daily frequency. However, the *actualidad sincronica* (live coverage) and *actualidad prolongada* (special event news presented in specials projects with multimedia and interactive elements) are barely produced by the sites.

In terms of multimediality and interactivity, the journalists' routines do not involve them constantly in the production of news. In fact, the use of video clips, audio features, forums, and chats rooms in news production were substantially lower than hyperlinks and photos. Multimedia production was also selected as an activity inconsistently performed during the week routine. The surveyed journalists also specified that the use of multimedia and interactive special features is limited to special, infrequent, projects.

For the case of interactive capabilities, the results indicate frequent use of e-mail to respond to users, but remain undeveloped in other features as forums and chat rooms, called adaptive interactivity by Deuze (2001a). Two of Massey and Levy's (1999) four dimensions of interactivity seem to be incorporated regularly into the routine of online newsrooms: responsiveness to the user (defined as the frequency of journalist's responses to users' emails on a weekly basis) and immediacy of content (defined as the frequency of home page updating). The dimension of complexity of choice available (percentage of original content in the site) is also present in the sites with percentages ranging from 20 to 60. Finally, the last dimension, facilitation of interpersonal communication (interactive options such as surveys, chat rooms, and forums), is infrequently used.

The analysis of the results in terms of interactive items also suggest the web editions of Latin American generic and daily papers offer an array of editorial content with a closed participation of users, according to the Deuze's observations. In few words, the Latin American online journalists' routines involve the creation of original content tailored to only two web capabilities: hypertextuality and immediacy. Multimediality and interactivity are not frequently included in the production of original content.

RQ4. -Are the online versions of newspapers in Latin America operating some form of convergence with their print partner?

The definition of the variable “some form of convergence” comprises the definitions of the five stages of convergence model developed by Dailey, Demo and Spellman (2003), for illustrating “the interaction and cooperation levels of staff members at newspapers, television stations, and Web organizations with news partnerships.”

This model, called The Convergence Continuum, consists of five stages that extend and apply the diffusion innovations and gate-keeping theories. These five stages are cross promotion, cloning, cooperation, content sharing and convergence

The answers of this research question will provide information to test the assumption of Rich Gordon (2003): “Convergence in media organizations is clearly most prevalent in its ownership and tactical forms. The progression toward information-gathering and storytelling convergence will be slow.” This author defines the convergence concept based on five dimensions (ownership, tactical, structural, information-gathering convergence and/or presentation convergence), which will be explained in the Theoretical Framework.

To answer the question about forms of convergence, it is important to mention that the surveyed Latin American print-based online papers are inclined to operate with a small number of workers ranging from 1 to 8. Fifty percent show online staffs exclusively integrated by full-time professional and 32 percent combine full and part-time workers in their Internet units. At the same time, half of the respondents say they share their newsroom with their print counterparts, and 42 percent operate in a separate newsroom. The online staffs from sites of national circulation newspapers show the same percentage difference, meanwhile more than half regional dailies (79%) and local papers (75%) reported shared newsrooms for their online and print editions. Integrated newsrooms in the majority of the surveyed print-based online papers imply that some forms of interaction, at least spatial, between the online and print media. Deuze (2003) reviewed different authors who argue that an optimal convergent relationship between the online site and their print partner occur in integrated newsrooms. However, the convergence concepts, process and strategies are so varied as the journalists, media and business involve them. For this thesis, it was used a convergence model to illustrate forms of convergence, specifically regarding content (Dailey, Demo and Spellman 2003), and it also was considered some Gordon’s dimensions of convergence. To illustrate levels of cooperation and integration behaviors between online and print staff, the respondent chose some content convergence process and their frequency of performing.

Online and print staffs regularly interact in one of the five stages of The Convergence Continuum (Dailey, Demo and Spellman, 2003): content cloning or editing content. Almost half of the respondents (41%) say online staff “always” edits content from the print edition. This result indicates that sites are using so-called “shovelware.” Lower percentages (22%) were found for

cross promotion (content promotion between both media), and cooperation (independent production of original content). Both previous interactions are “frequently” or “sometimes” operated, but not “always” like content cloning. The last stages, content sharing (exchange ideas and jointly develop occasional special projects) and convergence (share content to develop multimedia projects) were rarely reported. Content sharing is frequent (23%) or sometimes (22%) used, but true convergence is rarely (19%) or never (20%) achieved

Based on the data, some of Gordon’s (2003) convergence types are also evident. As expected, a certain level of tactical convergence based on cross promotion and content sharing was found on this study. According to the Gordon’s five dimensions of convergence, the results might also demonstrate at some grades that structural and information-gathering convergence might be happening in the online and print routines. For instance, the majority of digital units that works in the same space with the print staff reported that their main source of information is the print newsroom. However, other newsrooms reported wire agencies as the main source of information.

Boczkowski (2004) reviewed literature about the relationship between print and online newsrooms and he found that the different journalist cultures impact in the cooperation and coordination in editorial routines and production processes. Singer (2003a, 2003b) found that the implementation of convergence is difficult because of the social and physical structures of the newsrooms. Factors such as competition, former media experience, journalists’ own perceptions about their roles, lack of training in technological tools and interpersonal communications might facilitate or obstruct the application of convergence in newsrooms routines and norms. A comprehensive study about multimedia news and media companies in the United Kingdom, Spain, France and Sweden report low levels of collaboration between print and web editions, and “convergence is seen as merely automatic content sharing between different platforms” (Aquino et. al, 2001).

To summarize, Latin American print-affiliated online papers are mainly interacting with their print partner in terms of editing content, and less frequently in cross promotion and cooperation. The convergence, understood in this study as the sharing assignments and content in the production of multimedia project between both staff, is a rare routine. Based on the data available, Latin American print-based online papers show different frequency of practice in content interactions between the sites and their print partner. Additionally, the results suggest that the different stages of the convergence model are an ongoing process that it seems to be difficult to clearly detect by the journalists automatically involve in the multiple functions and routines. For understanding deeply this model, it should be explored other processes and kind of interactions between both staffs. Similarly, a deep study about convergence might include other questions to examine the concerns and obstacles mentioned above by Boczkowski (2004), Singer (2003a, 2003b) and Aquino et. al, (2001).

RQ5. -What is the most common business model operated by the online versions of the print papers in Latin America and how does this compare to other parts of the world?

The variable “business model” comprises in its definition the array of different options yield by Peng, Tham, and Xioming (1999), and Greer and Messing (2003): Advertising (Banners, Ad pages hosted on the site), Online classified, Subscription fees for some content (Archives, Premium Services), Subscription fees for all content, and Internet access (ISP for subscribers). For this thesis, it was also included the option of revenues obtained through Alliances with other companies.

Advertising is a primary source of revenue for the Latin American online papers surveyed (26%). Among them, national print-based online papers (42%) reported advertising as primary source of revenues, followed by “any source of revenue” (30%). This last item suggests that some online papers are not operating any model of business and they are only a mere extension of their print partner, which financially supported them. An exact half of regional newspaper’s sites show advertising and 22 percent of this type of print-based online papers states “others” as main sources of revenues. Profits for subscription fees to some or all content were only reported by national print-based online newspapers. However both types of subscriptions were mentioned by 12 percent of these types of online papers.

Asking about the current financial status, 17 percent of the participants reported that the websites are totally supported by the print partner. Eleven percent of the respondents said their sites provide little revenues, and other 10 percent, offer enough revenues. Almost 20 percent of the online editions of national newspapers reported enough profits and 17 percent, little revenues. Online papers of regional print media show that 14 percent of them obtain enough revenues, and 7 percent, little profits.

Comparing the current financial situation with sources of revenues, the sites that reported profitability (22%) operate four different models of business. Twenty-six online papers with an advertising model reported enough or little profits (42%) and 15 percent are expecting revenues soon. Only one paper says it is losing money, and four are totally supported by the print partner. Among five papers, which report subscription fees to all or some content, two are reporting some revenues (little or enough). Alliances with other companies are only generating profits for four papers, and online classifieds, for three sites

Some of the findings in this question confirm the results revealed by Franco and Guzman (2004). For instance, 39 percent of their surveyed sites of national print media in Latin America reported to be totally supported by the print partner. This percentage is similar to that found for national print-based sites in this thesis, as well as the proportion of sites, which reported any sources of revenue (28% vs. 30%). In the same way, less than 15 percent of the national newspapers with sites are obtaining profits from subscription fees to some or all their content.

With respect to other findings revealed outside of Latin America, German scholars concluded that almost 80 percent of media companies finance their online operations with the revenues obtained through Ad banners (Quandt et. al, 2002). In the United States, Greer and Mensing (2003) state that websites of American newspapers are operating different types of business models, which the most used are advertising and registration fees. In 1999, more than three quarters of the 21 national and local surveyed U.S. online newspapers carried advertisements and most of them said the advertising covered between 10 and 50 percent of their costs (Peng et. al, 1999). One year later, Chy and Sylvie (2000) interviewed 14 American online papers' executive and they agreed that advertising would remain as the first source of revenue for the print-based online media.

To conclude, Latin American print-affiliated online newspapers, as well as other worldwide web papers, are still depending on advertising for obtaining some profits, and the print partner's support for financing their operations. A small number of sites reported some revenues charging for subscriptions. Although advertising is expected to be the predominant business model among the news sites of papers, some Latin American print-based online newspapers –particularly national media- are replicating or thinking in implementing charge for their content as Franco and Guzman (2004) remarked in their study.

Overall, the journalism on print-Web affiliated sites in the region does not seem significantly different from that in other parts of the globe. In a second level of interpretation, the data gathered for this study show that sites of national papers in Latin America reveal a high level of online development compared to regional and local papers' sites. The boundaries and relations between print and online papers remain difficult to distinguish and categorize.

The results contributed to compare them with others found in previous surveys and studies conducted inside and outside of the region and examined some relations between online and print partners; particularly in the news production process performed by print-affiliated Web sites. Additionally, the data gathered for this study may facilitate future longitudinal or comparative studies. Other research methods, such as content analysis, could corroborate the findings of this study. Although this study's survey was based on a preliminary content analysis of some print-based online newspapers, it would have been better to employ a multi-method investigation to compare the data and refine the results.

Although it is difficult to make generalizations about communication processes, cross-national and comparative studies of journalism, as Reese (2001) recommends, must be conducted. This is particularly true in of Latin America, with its linguistic, cultural, and historical links. Also cross-national research can provide deep and more representative insights for media sociology comparisons. National Web or phone surveys might contribute to portray a more precise outline of

the online journalism in each country. Financial and logistic support from universities, media and/or public or private institutions would facilitate such an endeavor.

Much remains to be learned about online journalism in Latin America. It would be relevant to conduct an historical analysis about the evolution of online newspapers and their relationship between their parent paper, other traditional and new media, and other new players in the telecommunications market. As a participant of the Web-based survey of this study commented, it is very important to find the future path for online journalism, as well as the importance of the convergence between the online newspapers with other radio and TV partners.

To understand the new journalism better, further research could address the editorial and managerial policies of print-based online newspapers; definitions of audiences; and usages of online newspapers. Cases studies may contribute to examine experiences and patterns in each country. Experimental research may provide insights about users' participation and usability of the sites.

Overall, this study offers some clues about professional profiles, occupational functions, content production, and business models. It would be necessary to explore each topic more, such as the convergence models between the online and print newsrooms. It would also be relevant to ask in other surveys the perceptions that online journalists have about the future of online journalism. For instance, this study suggests that the first generation of online editors and reporters in Latin America has to deal with fundamental issues of journalism professionalism. Journalists at different Web sites have diverse ideas about their professional role. They seem to fulfill the promise and perceived roles of online journalism when they are supported in terms of financing, infrastructure, and training.

Several theoretical approaches may help define the different processes involved in online journalism. Singer (1998, 2003) and Garrison (2001) suggest that it was not clear at the end of the 20th century how the diffusion of technologies in newsrooms was changing the journalists' jobs and roles. These authors propose several theoretical approaches to examine how the new media environment is transforming gate-keeping practices, information-gathering and dissemination patterns, reporting functions, process of making news, journalistic values and media-effects.