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Saturday-Keynote Speaker:

All for One and One for All? A Spanish Experience of Research About Media Convergence

Speaker:

Ramón Salaverria, Professor and Vice Chair, School of Communication, Navarra University, Spain

Mark Tremayne: ...introduce the keynote speaker today, Ramón Salaverria from the University of Navarra, where he is an Associate Professor of Journalism and the Director of the Multimedia Communications Laboratory. A few things from your program of note. El Mundo included him in its ranking of the 500 most influential Spaniards, which I thought was interesting. We were going for the top ten, but we went with best we could— [audience laughter]—someone from the top 500. He has lots of experience in this area and he writes a blog on these topics as well, so he knows this -- he knows this field from both the traditional journalism side and from some of the new media side. His talk today, I'm sure, will be quite illuminating. It's called "All for One and One for All? A Spanish Experience of Research About Media Convergence." Ramón.

Ramón Salaverria: Thank you very much, Mark. And first of all, I would like to thank the University of Texas for the invitation. And Mr. Rosental, thank you as well. Basically because you didn't ask me to give you the money that the other keynote speaker had to [laughs] give you.

Rosental Calmon Alves: \$10-million.

Ramón Salaverria: Yeah. That's money. Well, um, my presentation today is much more academic than yesterday's one. And when I asked to Rosental what theme, what issue should I talk about here, he told me, "Well, tell us something about the research projects that you are developing in Spain." So that's exactly what I'm going to do. Basically, not only the -- well, I will explain basically the things that we are doing nowadays, which deal about media convergence, but first I will explain a little bit the things that we have done so far, because I think that should be -- it might be interesting to know the kind of research projects that are being developed overseas. So well, in Spain, we started the online journalism. Publications started back in the late 1994, beginning 1995, so basically, it wasn't a delay comparing to the other western countries. And after that, well, beginning period, there was several professors in different universities that started interest in the issue of online journalism. We finally gathered in our first research project called "The Impact of the Internet on the Multimedia in Spain," which aim was basically to make a sort of cartography of what had happened in the first decade of the

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online journalism in Spain. We gathered four universities, the University of [inaudible], of Santiago de Compostela Malaga, and the University of Navarra with 15 researchers. And our main results were a first national census of online media, dated in January 2005, and a multidisciplinary analysis of the first decade of online media in Spain.

Some little data about that. In January 2005, in Spain, we have 135 papers, more than 7,000 magazines, more than 900 TV stations, more than 400 -- 4,000 (excuse me) radio stations, half of them non-legal, and we found -- we found 1,274 online publications of different kind. We were starting from this. We thought big universe. We analyzed some variables like presidents^[?], type of company, geographical distribution, inside Spain obviously, language, and timeliness. And here are a few results.

In the beginning of 2005, most of the online publications in Spain were coming from newspapers and magazines. And it was interesting for us that only nine percent of the publications were coming from the net itself. We also found interesting that six out of ten publications were general information online publications and that their distribution into Spain, it was also quite interesting, because general information publications were basically, obviously, concentrated into the big capitols. But it was interesting that there was much more general information online publications in Catalonia, probably because there is a strong local information tradition. Whereas, considering the specialized information, Madrid was clearly the capitol or the area in which much more publications were gathered.

Well, some other little data. Considering only the specialized content publications, we found that most of the publications are devoted to culture, considering culture [as] film, arts, music, and whatever. And obviously, considering language, we found out Spanish was obviously the first one, but the local official/co-official languages were quite well represented as well, and even the international languages like English and German had a significant presence as well.

Well, out of all that research, there were a couple -- well, not a couple -- several publications. Probably the main two are these ones: Cibermedios, which was the book that explained all the data, and we also participated with an international, broad research project inside Europe who was a comparative analysis of online and print newspapers in European 16 countries.

Well, now, let's talk about this project, the second research project, which is sort of a continuation of what we have done so far. The name is Digital Convergence on the Media. And after the first experience, we have been able to broaden a little bit our research network. And nowadays, we are working together [with] 12 universities, which in Spain, believe me, that's not very easy to achieve. And we are working with 24 researchers divided into four thematic groups, which try to assess the convergence from a technological,

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management, professional, and content perspective.

Well, we are divided into several groups, as I said just a moment before. In Pamplona, Tarragona, and Alicante, we are assessing technology; in Santiago de Compostela and Madrid, management; professional issues in the South of Spain; and finally content in other very critical places. As you can see, basically, the research in Spain is quite related to coast. We like very much the beaches probably. [audience laughter] So, that's probably requested.

Well, we have some expected results. I don't have final results yet, because the project will be finished in 2009, that is next year, but we have some -- we have done a little bit of work so far, and I can present a little bit of running results. A comprehensive understanding of convergence processes and a proposal of theoretical definition, because we have found that many people is talking about convergence -- many, many people is talking about convergence integration, but very few has stopped to define the concept. And after defining that, an analysis of main media convergence cases in Spain, dating them in 2009.

Well, why do researching about convergence? Well, there is much talk about that, but, well, for instance, this is just a little example, no? This is a report in 2006 from the World Association of Newspapers Conference that took place in Moscow. And Clarin from Argentina made this piece. Convergence is the fashion concept in journalism. If you go to Google, you'll see that most people is -- many people have started to talk about that. And even if so many people is talking about this kind of concept, we find that there is not a clear understanding what convergence means. So I will try to explain in the coming month -- minutes, excuse me, the ideas that we have developed so far around this question.

Well, one interpretation of convergence could be presented probably with this picture, no? It's like everybody is happy, all together. [audience laughter] I mean, newspaper, radio, television, [inaudible] and the Three Musketeers, right? This is quite an optimistic understanding of convergence, but we are not very sure but this is what really is happening in the market. In the other part, there is another understanding of what really convergence means. It's just a medicinal^[?] for a declining medium, and we have also some examples of that, no? You can write this.

Well, is convergence exactly the same, is equal to integration? When we talk about convergence, is it a syn--synonym--synonym?--of integration? We think that it's not at all. At all. Basically, because when we are talking about convergence, we are talking about a process. And when we are talking about integration, it is an effect, a possible effect of that process. So that means that, as I will explain, most of the media groups are now developing convergence, but just a few [if] anyone is experimenting [experiencing] integration. There is a convergence process running in almost every media

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group, but as I said there is not a result of integration almost in any of these groups. And in this particular case, I think that I am not speaking only considering the Spanish case, which is exactly this way, but probably also considering what is happening in other places too.

Convergence does not deal only with newsrooms. It's a multi-dimensional process. It includes technology in the basis. You cannot develop a convergence process without considering a technological convergence at the very beginning. After that, there is a management level, another professional level, and finally a content level. From the technological level, there has been a convergence in journalistic production tools. Once when a journalist used to work before in front of a typewriter, it used to be called writer, or when he worked in front of a microphone, it used to be called speaker. Now we have journalists who gather all these kind of different profiles.

Also, there is a technological convergence which affects to media usage and consumption. Because we all know newspaper, radio, television, all have converged into one single tool, which is the computer, and even these computers are getting smaller and smaller, so we have experimenting [experiencing] an increasing portability.

Another technological convergence means that there is an all media blurring. They are some kind of losing their profiles. And once there was a newspaper as a clear textual information media, and now we have the possibility to access to that kind of text through another digital ways. That happens also with radio, and that happens also with television. So all media -- all the old media are blurring.

There is another level which affects to management. At the very beginning, the first step of the convergence, I would say [is] the complete absence, inexistence of convergence should be the self competition. That means that you have an online publication and maybe a print publication and both are competing one to each other. The first step of convergence will be the cross promotion. One is talking well about the other one. [chuckles] We saw a very interesting example yesterday from the Daily Telegraph. You remember how it was that it changed from, as I recall, 2006 to 2007? And the next step will be the coordination. We try to not integrate, but work in a coordinated way. And finally, it might happen that there is a kind of integration between both operations.

In the first step, still many publications are around the world. Most of the publications, nowadays, are at the cross-promotion area. Some have arrived to coordination. And my concern or my question is that if anyone has arrived to a real integration.

In the professional level, once upon a time, [chuckles], journalists used to have just one task for just one medium. Nowadays, we have two ways of

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developing that and we have any task, a task for one media, or one task for an media, and we are arriving to a complete convergence that should be an task for an media. And this is happening. Remember that this kind of integration which is above the level of technological and management convergence is taking place without having developed the previous convergence. So that's a real problem. That's a real problem. But that's not new.

Once upon a time, journalists used to make different task as well. Back in the sixties, there was a differentiation between reporting and writing. There were reporters who went to the street to get the news and went back to the newsroom and tell -- told the information to the copy desk. Is it said that way in English? And that guy was the guy in charge of writing the article. In the seventies, both activities were integrated in one single person. In the eighties, reporting, writing, and editing were included into the abilities needed in every single journalist. In the nineties, there was another ability who was considered, which was designing our layout. In this decade, the big issue, it seems to be, to include it for the reporting and sound and video reporting to the general tasks to the journalist. And nowadays, our vision for the near future is that maybe even that journalist will take the sound and video editing tasks as well.

Content convergence, the fourth and final category. The first step in this category will be a mono-media information; that is, you present just one class of content for just one media. The second one will be the many-media. And the final step will be the multimedia that we have seen in several presentations yesterday and even today as well. Well, mono-media will be text, image, sound separated. Many-media will be text, image, sound, one next to the other, but not necessarily integrated. And finally, multimedia will be the combination, the perfect combination, the integration of these possibilities.

Again, we have a sort of different steps in different media, and some of the media -- probably most of the media are still in mono-media category, some have arrived to many-media, and just a few have arrived to really multimedia level. That means also in the content convergence category that the work of journalists is changing very much.

I come from a school of journalism with concepts like 5 W's and inverted pyramid [that] are still widely considered, but maybe we should consider another way of explaining how information is written nowadays. Because information is prepared in pieces which is -- which are derived to different platforms, so this is another understanding of what is happening in the content level in terms of convergence.

Now we finally have a comprehensive definition of convergence, I guess. That's our proposal. Media convergence might be [laughs] a multi-

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dimensional process which facilitated by the permutation of digital technologies of telecommunication involves technological, management, professional, and editorialists views of the mass media, favoring an integration of tools, spaces, work methods, and languages, so journalists produce contents that are distributed through multiple platforms using the specific language of each one. In one single sentence, it was quite difficult to [chuckles] compile everything, but I think that it's an approach. It's an approach.

Now, our research question is, is this definition, is this happening in Spain, and to what extent? To what extent? And that will be our role for the forthcoming months, so probably I can come back next year to explain the results. [laughs]

Well, we have developed some, well, I think they are interesting things, because we are working together quite hard. And we have a collective weblog called [inaudible], InfoTrends.com, in which we deal about convergence issues and put many, many news on that ... in Spanish. We have developed a research database. This is just on internet, but a database for researching about these different categories on spheres of convergence in the Spanish media. And we have already selected our universe of research that will be the four main, private, commercial, news media groups in Spain, which are PRISA, [inaudible], Vocento, and Grupo Planeta. The fourth one has El Pais and Cadena SER. Well, not only newspapers and online, but also radio stations, televisions. And PRISA has, in considering all these media outlets, 66; [inaudible], El Mundo, Marca, 38; Vocento, 111; and Grupo Planeta, 19. That means at task of 234 news media, which is, well, fine.

Well, final thoughts. Media convergence is inevitable, but, however, convergence is a process that consists of different spheres. We might recall that. And each sphere has different levels of development from a minimum to a maximum. Media groups have to decide what is the level of convergence that they *need* in *each* sphere. And confusing convergence and integration may be the cause of big management mistakes, I think. Convergence will produce shifts like from many-media to true integrated multimedia. A shift from uncoordinated newsrooms to coordinated newsrooms. And I don't say from separate to integrated, I say from uncoordinated to coordinated, and coordinated might mean integrated, but not necessarily. From a redundancy of content to a growing complementarity^[sic] in content of each media outlet. And finally, from a media-ruled journalism to a content-ruled journalism.

That's why I like very much an expression or phrase that I read sometime ago, which I think that it's quite summarizing the idea of what is happening into the media market. "If people want information beamed directly into their minds, we will create a cerebral cortex edition." That's obviously a joke, but maybe not.

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Thank you.

[Audience applause.]

Mark Tremayne: I think we have a couple of minutes for questions if there are some. Anybody? Yes.

Rosental Calmon Alves: Cecelia, can you come to the mike? Since we are broadcasting to millions of people.

[Audience laughter.]

Cecelia: [speaks Spanish]

Rosental Calmon Alves: In English.

Cecelia: In English, okay. Hi. I'm Cecelia [inaudible]. I'm just thinking about do they need like a traffic cop at this point to ease this transition? Because if it is a newspaper that is moving onto the web, to the other different platforms, who is going to be the editor who rules? Who decides who covers what, in what form? And who is going to be the dominant force? The same thing with broadcasting. So, how -- who helps to get all of this traffic directed in the right directions?

Ramón Salaverria: That's an interesting question that I can't answer. [laughs] Probably because, well, I am looking at what is happening in the media groups from outside. But when you talk with the people with -- I mean, people in charge of deciding things inside these groups, they say that nowadays the big concern or the big pressure comes from basically where the money comes [from]. You can't hurt the cow that gives you milk, basically. So even... Well, I usually say that online journalism, online media nowadays is a media with a very short past with a small person and probably, who knows, with a big, huge future. But we have another media in the same groups which has -- which have a great past, a very, very significant person, and many questions for the future. So in this... How do you say [speaks Spanish]?

Audience Member: Relay race.

Ramón Salaverria: Relay race. In this relay race, it's -- we are living in the moment, probably, in which the relay is passing from one runner to the other one. So we cannot answer yet probably. Not me at least.