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# Entrepreneurial journalism: sports journalism in Spain

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## Abstract

**Introduction.** This article analyses entrepreneurial journalism as a phenomenon that has emerged in Spain’s news media industry and has developed strongly in the sports news. **Method.** The analysis is based on the identification and analysis of the media startups launched since 2008 and on the results of the 2013 Report of the Journalistic Profession published by the Press Association of Madrid. **Results.** Sports journalism is a field that favours innovation and the creation of a diversity of projects. Two tendencies stand out: hyperlocal start-ups and niche information products. **Discussion.** The article examines the contribution of these projects to the current structure of the journalism industry, as well as their viability, characteristic business models, and common patterns. **Conclusions.** Sports journalism is still at an expansive phase and involves new ways of managing internet-based businesses that rely heavily on the personal brand of journalists, as well as new thematic areas and contents.

## Keywords

Entrepreneurial journalism; sports journalism; digital journalism; digital storytelling; startup media.

## Contents

1. Introduction. 1.1. State of the journalism industry. 1.2 Elements of entrepreneurial journalism. 1.3. Research objectives, hypothesis and justification. 2. Methods. 3. Results. 3.1 State of entrepreneurial

sports journalism in Spain. 3.2 Census. 3.3 Overspecialisation and hybridisation of contents. 3.4 Structure and viability. 3.5. Common patterns. 3.6. New research challenges. 4. Conclusions. 5. Notes. 6. List of references.

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## 1. Introduction

Entrepreneurial journalism is a phenomenon that emerged in the news media industry in 2008. It involves a set of initiatives led by journalists for the creation of their own media companies. They are very different from the industrial model whose ownership is controlled by large media groups or companies outside the sector. They are characterised by their bet on the digital environment (contents, applications) to the detriment of the analogue system (paper). Moreover, this type of journalism uses the personal brand of journalists intensely as an engine of promotion through the social networks.

It is a worldwide phenomenon. In 2011, “the New Ibero-American Journalism Foundation proposed the creation of a laboratory for digital journalistic ventures to help entrepreneurs in their efforts to achieve financial and organisational sustainability”.

The justification is well known: “to take advantage of the great opportunity offered by the Internet to change the structure, contents, and audience of the internet with new technologies (mobile devices, software, etc.), new distribution channels (social networking sites, RSS, mobile phones), new ways of thinking, new marketing and advertising tools, new sources of revenue for the media and new ways to how to run an organisation (leadership). From the beginning, the promoters emphasised the importance of creating a loyal community through the quality and relevance of the contents directed to a particular audience” (Breiner, 2013).

This approach transformed the idea of the journalistic business. In academic literature, Picard (2012: 70) explains that “the theoretical framework comes from entrepreneurship and business management”. This means that this study involves new research sources and methods in order to cover the journalistic startups born during this period.

In the professional field, the 2011 Report of the Journalistic Profession (*Informe de la Profesión Periodística*) published by the Press Association of Madrid (APM according to its initials in Spanish) highlights how intrusion, precariousness and lack of independence have deteriorated newsrooms. The crisis has accelerated the degradation of the informational system (Farias, 2011: 15).

The increase in unemployment among journalists, documented in the 2013 Report of the Journalistic Profession (Palacios, 2013: 28), helps to explain the exponential growth of journalistic startups and media companies created by journalists themselves. It is not an ideal situation, but what the literature terms “forced entrepreneurs”, especially in new industries or those transformed by the environment (Davidsson & Wiklund, 2001).

This is an evolution from the freelance journalist, who sells his/her work, while the entrepreneurial journalist organises his/her work, creates his/her own journalistic company (offering products or services) and leads his/her own project. Rottwilm (2014: 18) points out that the journalistic business has been opened to other activities (consulting, public relations and strategic communications) that complement the income statement.

In this context of great transformation, we studied the development of entrepreneurial journalism in a particular area: sports. Along with the conventional general-information offer, entrepreneurial sports journalism has fostered the overspecialisation (hyperlocal, minority sports and exclusive products) and hybridisation of contents (paper and digital, applications).

In this way, entrepreneurial sports journalism has become one of the engines of journalistic innovation and a favourable field for entrepreneurship. However, the viability, sustainability and revenues of these projects in the medium term are yet to be confirmed. The lack of consensus on what business model is the right one for these projects is at the centre of the debate.

### 1.1. State of the journalism industry

It is known that 2007 was the last year of the golden age of contemporary industrial journalism. According to the white paper of the Spanish Association of Newspapers Publishers (AEDE), that year the profits after tax reached 232.9 million euros (2009). Since then, the results have plummeted and have accelerated the transformation of the industry. Meyer's metaphor (2004) seems more accurate than ever: the newspaper has vanished. In the Spanish case, it means the disappearance of print newspapers and the dismissal of journalists. The crisis is the result of the concatenation of four crises.

The first reason is an economic one. There is a direct relationship between advertising investment and the general state of the economy, so it is expected that unemployment and consumption reduction, the collapse of the financial system, the decline in institutional advertising and the closing of companies will directly affect investment. In practice, when the economic crisis puts pressure on the general economy, the estimated real investment slows down rapidly. Data published by Infoadex (2014) reveal the speed of this change. Even if we add the investment collected by the Sunday supplements, the decline is remarkable. The following table details the estimated real investment in millions of euros in 2013/2008.

	2013	%13/12	2012	2011	2010	2009	2008
Daily newspapers	662.9	-13.5	766.3	967	1,124.4	1,174.1	1,507.9
Sunday supplements	38.7	-25.6	52	67.1	72.2	68.9	103.9

Source: AEDE (2014)

In absolute terms, in these six years, the sale of spaces and other advertising formulas has fallen 67%. This fall has revealed the high dependence on advertising, the limited room for manoeuvre in the sale of copies, and the improvable management of other operating income.

Second, the journalistic company has been built around an analogue business model. Professional journalism is the result of the accumulation of the news published the next day in a physical platform

distributed in a narrow network of kiosks. This model requires a huge budget allocation for physical resources that is greater even than the resources destined for journalistic content creation. According to a study published by the OECD (2010), printing represents 28% of the cost, while sales and distribution represent 24%. Thus, 52% of the costs are associated with the print platform, even if it has not been able to increase its profit ratio.

Robert G. Picard (2010) thinks that while the business worked, neither publishers nor journalists worried about the coming changes. His hypothesis is well known: in the 20<sup>th</sup> century journalists stopped worrying about the business. When it was decided what was valuable about the product, they were out of the market with very little opinion about what was and was not important.

It seems to be an archetype of the innovator's dilemma. It consists of the disability of leading companies to face a technological disruption that breaks the paradigm on which its business was sustained. It happens very rarely, but when it occurs it has devastating consequences for the old giants. New media and technology have changed the rules of the game.

Christensen, Skok and Allworth (2013) have examined the impact of disruptive innovation in the newspaper industry. They attribute poor innovative capacity to the companies that have led the market. If everything goes well and the cash flow is constant, who dares to innovate? Now the decrease in circulation and advertising revenues ensue, so the daily newspapers run out of time to innovate, experiment and find reasonable formulas in the digital world. David Simon, creator of the series *The Wire* and former journalist for *The Baltimore Sun*, is harsher in his analysis: “the newspaper industry has despised itself and its product, and the Internet has recognised that contempt and has doubled it”. In particular, he accuses media editors and owners of being “so concentrated in advertising” that they failed to see the future (Alzaga, 2011: 232).

The paradigm shift presumed the decline of the founding families. In a global and competitive market, the big newspapers have been converted in multinational companies listed on stock exchange markets. Pablo Eisenberg, intellectual and Professor at Georgetown, speaks of the commitment of those old families (the Ochs, the Graham and the Schulzberger) with newspapers rather than with the decisions of Wall Street. While newspaper founders were content with a return of 12% to 16%, now investors want margins of 30 to 40%. In Spain we know well about the arrival of the American Liberty Investment Group to PRISA. Through a capital increase operation, PRISA took 650 million Euros and Liberty became a shareholder in the group.

The new group had to deal with the departure of 18% of the workforce and manage an estimated debt of around 3.3 billion Euros. In this situation, the Polanco family saw its capital reduced from 70% to 30%. In United States, in March 2009, *The New York Times* agreed to the injection of capital from Carlos Slim's investment group after announcing losses of 74.5 million dollars. With this move, Slim already represents 6.4% of the shares.

In the United Kingdom, we had another example of globalisation. The Lebedev Family purchased several newspapers, and changed them in all aspects, from their design to their business model. Also outstanding is the case of *The Independent*, the legendary newspaper of progressive ideas that turned into a tabloid and abandoned the broadsheet format (to reduce production costs).

*The Evening Standard* turned into a free newspaper and doubled its circulation in London. In France, the Pougatchev family purchased *France Soir*, which has enabled the survival of this historical

newspaper. The succession of changes endorses the thesis of Hanson Hosein, who considered that media concentration increases the corporate digital divide.

The third crisis is linked to the previous one given that journalism had been justified by the form and not by the role it played in democratic societies. The mission of journalism is to publish accurate information that is relevant to the public interest in order to strengthen the economic, political and social development. It does not depend on the technological platform, but on the questioning of those in power, the verification of sources and data, the comparison of information and the respect towards readers. Journalism theory is solid in this regard.

The expansion of the information technologies within the profession of journalism, the inclusion of journalism studies at the university, and the new theoretical and practical foundations have renewed the theory of journalism and have questioned the meaning of the profession within the framework of open societies. They are the so-called signs of identity that give sense to journalism.

The fourth element is the conflict that has arisen in the newsroom. It is the internal threat. The poor economic performance has caused numerous redundancies, the worsening of working conditions and the abandonment of professionals. The talent has been lost and, with it, the experience. According to the Federation of Press Associations of Spain (FAPE), Madrid has experienced 8,800 layoffs since 2008. In addition, more than 190 newspaper companies have been shut down. The disappearance of the newsroom model based on the coexistence between young and veteran journalists to give continuity to the editorial project and the knowledge acquired over the years is a serious problem.

David Simon considers that the “institutional memory” is an asset and a value of professional journalism and insists that “the newsroom not only promotes good journalism, through experienced editors who can develop their work better than a single individual, but also prevents someone from post something stupid or bad” (Alzaga, 2011: 232).

Anthony Smith (2010) supports the idea that journalism is a constant learning process and wonder who is going to train journalists and where will we find the newsrooms, the big bosses who selected and trained journalists and gave them opportunities, and criticised them until they became great opinion leaders. Technology has accelerated the de-structuring of newsrooms, because it has opened the gap between those who want and can adapt to the digital lifestyle and those who consider the Internet as the cause of the problems of printed journalism and/or a good excuse to reduce veteran and expensive journalists. Newspapers have lost their ability to lead the democratic epistemic community, because the internet has undermined the ideas underpinning the newspaper, according to the ideas of Anthony Smith in his visionary 1980 book titled *Goodbye, Gutenberg*.

The lack of criticism towards the power, the blind belief in the “common interests” and the bet on leaks at the expense of transparency have ended up drowning the credibility of newspapers. The details are terrible. In Spain, the *Pulso de España 2010* report stipulates that the press has credibility, but as long as it is considered a political, not informative, organ. In another survey carried out by the CIS in 2010, only 6% of the population would choose the press for more information. Similarly, in the United States, the *Pew Research Center for the People and the Press* confirmed the trend: 71% of the population considered that information companies do not present the facts accurately, while in 1994 (when the first survey was carried out) the percentage was 45%.

These trends confirm that journalism has lost its relevance in the public sphere and that many segments of the population are not interested in information published in the mainstream media. Social networks, blogs and self-communication spaces (Manuel Castells, 2009) have become substitutes for newspapers. The contradiction lies in that while the information space has expanded and social participation has increased, everything indicates that there has been a decline in the quality of reading (time spent reading a news story) and the depth of ideas (the space dedicated to developing a concept or an argument).

## 1.2. Elements of entrepreneurial journalism

The great transformation has stimulated the radical transformation of the industry through new media initiatives. They are innovative projects because instead of trying to maintain the current analogue model, new companies are digital in nature, which means more flexibility, dynamism and speed in the ability to adapt to change. They also represent a strong reduction of the investment needed for news production (Manfredi and Artero, 2014: 161). Without trying to be exhaustive, the following table shows the variety and diversity of companies born in the new environment. The Press Association of Madrid itself maintains a regularly-updated census on the web [1].

	DIGITAL ONLY	HYBRID
General information	Periodismo Humano Utopia.tv <a href="http://Cuartopoder.es">Cuartopoder.es</a> <a href="http://Vozpopuli">Vozpopuli</a> <a href="http://Teinteresa.es">Teinteresa.es</a> <a href="http://Elpulso.es">Elpulso.es</a>	Lamarea.com Eldiario.es
Specialised information	Esmateria.com Politikon <a href="http://Portalparados.es">Portalparados.es</a> <a href="http://FronteraD">FronteraD</a> Press People Tu2sis Smark Magazine Materia Mongolia <a href="http://Sportyou">Sportyou</a> <a href="http://Granadamedia">Granadamedia</a> Muchodeporte.com <a href="http://Líbero">Líbero</a> <a href="http://Apuntanoticias">Apuntanoticias</a> (Campo de	Vis-à-Vis Yorokobu Jot Down Magazine (and Jot Down Books) Panenka Plaza Tomada <a href="http://Revista Orsay">Revista Orsay</a> España en Llamas (project)

	Gibraltar) Vía 52 Informacionsensible.com Miradas de Internacional	
Other initiatives	Fixmedia.org Weblogs SL Agora News Covertimedia Más público La Parada <a href="#">HackersHackMAD</a> <a href="#">Se buscan periodistas</a>	Quepo Video Social Fundación Civio

Source: Manfredi and Artero (2014)

As we can see, the journalistic initiatives are varied: some offer general-interest information, some offer specialised news, some are digital-only and some combine print and digital platforms. There is no unique or exclusive criterion in the previous table. However, we did identified five elements that characterise entrepreneurial journalism: the ownership of the new medium, the digital environment, the personal brand, the value proposition and the new narratives. Let’s take a look at each of them.

In relation to ownership, it should be noted that the new journalism is owned by journalists themselves and other investors that are distanced from the conventional industry. Turns out that many journalists have used the termination payments to bet on their own projects, on what they wanted to do and could never do due to “editorial reasons”. Now, and within the legal framework, many journalists have taken advantage of the dismissal compensation to capitalise on a new business. A recurrent example is Lamarea.com, a cooperative created by journalists from the *Público* newspaper. Each member contributed an initial capital of 1,000 euros. Such a decision makes them the owners of the medium.

The second feature is the bet on the digital model. So far, the digital newspapers had been created as by-products of a print newspaper, which set the agenda, production times and deliveries. This model of journalistic production generates high costs (distribution, promotion and sales) that are now difficult to cover. The bet on the digital platform also uses the tools inherent to this platform, such as the Creative Commons licenses. Esmateria.com has reached numerous partnerships with other general-interest media, which has allowed it to reduce its distribution costs and expand its audiences. Moreover, it has reinforce the brand and the recognition by the readers. *Eldiario.es* uses the most open license (BY-SA) that allows the copying, dissemination and re-use of the contents as long as the same license is used, and the source is cited and a link to its origin is provided.

The digital element does not aim to save the print editions or the industrial formulas. It is the heart of the business and the reason why they eliminated all analogue burdens that prevent the exercise of

journalism. Internet is not a cost centre, but the content and the business, with the only responsibility of producing of journalistic content (Gómez-Borrero, 2010: 99).

The ‘think the web’ idea eliminates the commitments with the past and promotes the unrestricted presentation of information, multi-platform accessibility, permanent availability, interactivity and even the full transactional possibility of the product or service. The practical consequences are visible in the adjustment of costs. Offices, technologies and salaries are fixed costs far away from the final product. It is precisely the Internet and the new media what allow us to lighten the structures and focus on the product.

Here it is appropriate to point out the rise of the personal brand of the journalist. The case of reference is Ignacio Escolar, director and editor of *Eldiario.es*, whose profile on social networks is visited, commented and shared repeatedly. All studies identify him as one of the most influential journalists. It is interesting to know that the intensive use he makes of Twitter, his blog (now embedded in the digital newspaper) and other activities on social networks for the promotion of contents, the establishment of a channel of conversation with readers and other similar functions.

Other journalists, such as Mar Abad, deputy director of *Yorokobu*, use Twitter and Facebook to channel sources, to interact with readers, to answer questions about content, and to promote competitions and their own themes. A second variable of personal branding is the creation of value through the aggregation of professionals under a common medium. This can be a very interesting model for start-up projects (*Miradas de Internacional* and *Cuartopoder.es*) or to revive old ones (*Forbes*).

The fourth feature is the proposal to create revenue. The journalistic company needs to think again how revenues are generated. Other formulas are articulated: it is necessary to establish a new relationship between audiences, advertising markets and the media companies. There are many formulas that seem to give result. *Eldiario.es* has chosen the *freemium*, a mixture of advertising and subscriptions. *JotDown Magazine* offers free content on the web, but takes great care of the printed edition of a cult magazine.

It offers editorial packages with other similar projects. Other journalistic initiatives have discovered the gold mine in training and consulting in digital marketing and new media. The idea is to educate potential customers on what they can achieve in the digital environment beyond conventional advertising placement. *Yorokobu*, a magazine specialising in design and digital culture, produces content marketing for third-parties and has created corporate magazines. Hyperlocal journalism has bet on this formula to a large extent as it shows its adjacent businesses network how to engage in social networks. There is also opportunity for crowdfunding and other innovative methods. *FixMedia*, *España en Llamas* and *Vía 52* have used this system to finance their projects.

The fifth feature is the creation of new narratives. New projects have used data visualisation, computer graphics, big data analysis and other innovative tools to capture the reader’s attention. Linear text and the subordination of contents to the style of the print newspaper do not apply here. Without these barriers, journalists have transformed and improved their products and at the same time have dedicated more resources to design. The most advanced example is *ElConfidencialLab*, which has blended new narrative journalism and data journalism to unravel the current political and economic issues. It is here where we see more journalistic innovation to the extent that it is



rethinking the product and creates differential news, which cannot be copied on the following ticker and fosters readers' loyalty. The exclusivity is not the news itself, but the way in which it is told.

### 1.3. Research objectives, hypothesis and justification

This paper aims to explore the status of sports journalism startups launched in Spain. This research is the result of the combined interests of both authors and the discussions held in the seminar titled "Entrepreneurial journalism, a renewed hope", which took place at the School of Journalism of the University of Castile-La Mancha in June 2014. The objective is, therefore, to establish the situation, nature, geographical dispersion, specialisation, structure and feasibility of these startups.

The initial hypothesis is that sports is one of the most active areas in the implementation of the aforementioned principles of sports journalism. It is a branch with strong social roots; there is a constant demand for this type of content; it is dominated by professional male football; and attracts a large number of journalism students.

The second hypothesis is that it is a conducive environment for innovation and the creation of novel projects. The need to find an alternative answer to the two major daily newspapers and the television images leads to the creation of other products targeting segments of population, geography, or specialisation.

The third hypothesis is typical of the new journalism landscape. There is no stable or universally-accepted economic or business model in the new sports journalism. Due its innovative nature, it is still seeking financial balance, the feasibility of the projects, and resources structures.

This study is justified by the great transformation of the encounter between journalism professors and the real need of knowing the dimensions of entrepreneurial journalism in a key sector, sports.

## 2. Methods

This study is based on the data published in the 2013 Report of the Journalistic Profession (*Informe de la Profesión Periodística*) published by the Press Association of Madrid, and on previously published works about entrepreneurial journalism (Manfredi and Artero, Casero). In particular, these works highlight a trend on the rise in the journalistic industry, which is possible to analyse.

This study was divided in four phases. The first one focuses on the analysis of the performance of the newspaper industry since 2008, the year identified as the beginning of the crisis and of the decline of profits for the Spanish newspaper industry. In this phase we discuss how the economic crisis is linked to three others crises and the resulting consequences. The second phase identifies the startups in the field of sports journalism. They represent about 10% and it has been necessary to filter, analyse and compare.

The digital nature of these initiatives complicated the carrying out of a comprehensive analysis and so it was more convenient to examine each case on a one-by-one basis. Given that this phenomenon is still at an expansive and ever-changing phase, it was necessary to examine the peculiarities of each project and to analyse their evolution from their birth to the present time as well as the different products and services they have offered over time. The third phase seeks to identify the common patterns and elements among these projects. Finally, the fourth phase proposes new research lines based on this preliminary study.

Moreover, this research design is inspired by the knowledge acquired from the “Entrepreneurial journalism, a renewed hope” seminar, developed at the School of Journalism of the University of Castile-La Mancha in June 2014. This seminar addressed the strengths and weaknesses of the journalistic startups, and examined the new business models and new specialised magazines.

### **3. Results**

#### **3.1. The state of entrepreneurial sports journalism in Spain**

Sports journalism is currently the type of journalism to which the greatest number of specialised newspapers in Spain are dedicated (ten publications, including national and regional sports newspapers) and has become a strategic section of the general-interest media, which dedicate more and more space to this type of news [3].

It is a complex journalistic field where specialisation is based around sports modalities (mainly football, which tends to occupy around 70% of the daily content of news outlets) and even around teams (Real Madrid, Barcelona, Seville, Betis, Valencia, etc.) and categories (first or second division, international league, regional football), all depending on the dissemination scope of the medium and, therefore, of the community to which it belongs and the public it targets.

This area of journalistic expertise is not alien to the complex process of adjustments that the media sector is current undergoing. In fact, this area is undergoing a period of expansion and diversification with the recent birth of new media and micro-media companies (in digital platforms for the most part), which have taken advantage of the possibilities offered by the new technology platforms to cover football and the other sport modalities with greater specialisation and, thus, to reach an audience whose information needs may have not been sufficiently met by the traditional media.

The emergence of these new voices, together with the adoption of new news-production processes in order to adapt them to the demands of the Internet, have led the ‘old’ media, especially print newspapers, to rethink their contents and coverage, and to provide news with more analysis, explanation and depth. Meanwhile, from a business point of view, the publishing companies have undertaken a gradual workforce reduction and are increasingly focusing their efforts on expanding their journalistic brand through the web. So, they are looking to produce a more dynamic and versatile information product that responds to the changes in an effective, original and convergent way and that can be complemented and fed back with the contents published on their digital platforms.

The projection of this journalistic modality has been demonstrated once again after the emergence and growth of the Internet, which has led to a real wave of entrepreneurship in a new scenario where more and more journalists have taken the initiative to create their own communication companies or projects, many of which have been decided to specialised on sports, and in its most varied aspects.

In fact, sports journalism has emerged as one of the spearheads in entrepreneurship in the Spanish media landscape, as reflected in the 2013 Report of the Journalistic Profession of the Press Association of Madrid. As mentioned, this report presents sports journalism as one of most entrepreneurial news fields, representing about 10% of the new 297 digital, printed and audiovisual media companies launched by journalists in Spain since the beginning of the crisis in 2008. Based on data from this report, the APM developed in its website a regularly-updated census, which in its last

update, made on 28 August, 2014, indicated a total of 442 new media and micro-media companies, of which 43 were specialised in sports news.

In order to carry out an in-depth and faithful analysis of the current state of the sports journalism start-ups projects launched in Spain, we incorporated a short survey that has allowed us to establish a classification of the media startups in terms of themes, platforms, dissemination scope, narrative innovation and business models, and to determine the predominant kind of sports journalism, as well as their similarities and differences in relation to the contents offered by the traditional media. For the purposes of this study, we designed a census that expands the data collected by the APM and relies substantially on the media that are also the subject of study on the blog titled *Periodismodeportivodecalidad* [2].

### 3.2. Census

The following section presents the projects identified in different censuses.

*The 28 media new companies included in the APM's report*

. *Alirón*

Weekly free printed (also digital) newspaper from Bilbao.

. *Campdesports.cat*

Digital multi sports news website from the Province of Tarragona.

. *Canariasbasket.com*

The first iPad magazine specialised in basketball, from the Canary Islands.

. *Cronometrodeportivo.es*

National and international multi sports news website.

. *Cuadernos del basket*

Quarterly print magazine. Articles, news and in-depth interviews about the world of basketball.

. *Deporadictos.com*

Sports news website.

. *Ecosdelbalon.com*

News website with articles and opinion pieces on football.

. *Falso9.com*

News website about national and international football.

. *Ha10.es*

Sports news website.

. *Juegosriojaneiro2016.com*

Spanish and Portuguese news website about the Olympic Games.

. *Libero*

Print quarterly magazine about football and culture.

. *Martiperarnau Magazine*

Multi-sports news website.

. *Masquealba.com*

News website dedicated to the Albacete Balompié football club and sports in Castile-La Mancha.

. *Mundialdefutbol2014.es*

News website about the Football World Cup.

. *Munideporte.com*

Sports news website focused on sports played on the municipalities and provinces of Spain. On the web since 2011.

. *Palabradefutbol.com*

Sports news website, focused on football.

. *Panenka*

Monthly print magazine about soccer culture. Features news, articles and interviews. Its slogan is 'Football that can be read'.

. *Piratasdelbasket.es*

News website about national and international basketball

. *Proyectopremier.com*

News website dedicated to the English Football League.

. *Qualitysport*

Multi-sport news magazine launched in paper in 2011 and currently available in digital format for tablets.

. *Ramirobadalona.com*

Basketball news website, also published annually in print format.

. *Ritmodejuego.com*

News website about national and international sports.

. *Spherasports.com*

Multi-sport and football news website.

. *Sportics.es*

Sports and technology news website.

. *Sportyou.es*

News website about football and other sports.

. *Fireengineering.com*

International sports news website.

. *Vivafutbol.es*

Football news website.

. *Radiogoles.es*

Online radio station specialised in news sports. Specialised in the Football League second division. Launched in 2012.

*Other media startups and projects*

. *Pasaporte Olímpico*

Launched as a blog in 2009, turned into a website in 2012. Specialised in Olympic sports. Edited by *Podium* magazine since 2014.

. *DeporPress*

News website specialised in Tenerife' sports events. Launched in 2011

. *Oncecontraonce*

Football news website from Valladolid.

. *Sentimiento AyN*

News website specialised in national and international basketball. Launched in 2011

. *Kaiser Football Magazine*

Bi-monthly magazine specialised in international football. Launched in 2012.

. *Eldeporteconquense.com*

Sports news website from the province of Cuenca. Launched in 2012.

. *Protagonistasdeljuego.com*

First magazine specialised in women's football in Spain. Launched in 2012.

. *Elevenfoot.com*

Digital football magazine in Spanish for tablets and mobile platforms. Launched in 2012.

. *Diario Gol*

Launched as a free sports newspapers in 2004, then turned into a Catalan-language weekly paper, then turned into a news website in 2012. Its slogan is "Different sports news".

. *HockeyDH*

Only digital newspaper devoted to Spanish field hockey. It also publishes a quarterly print magazine. Launched in 2012.

. *Lineker Magazine*

Digital magazine for tablets and mobile devices specialised in British football. Launched in 2012.

. *Tribunadeportiva.es*

Digital sports news magazine. Launched in 2013.

. *Deportesevilla.TV*

Television website about the latest sports news from the province of Seville.

. *Gipuzkoasport.com*

Platform that incorporates a digital newspaper, an FM radio station, and audiovisual content to promote sports events from Guipúzcoa. Launched in 2013.

. *Eljuegodenaismith.com*

Basketball news website. Launched in 2013.

. *Time Out Magazine*

Andalusian sport news website. Launched in 2013.

. *La Jugada Financiera*

News website about sports marketing, sponsorship and finance. Launched in 2013.

. *Minuto 116*

Free multi-sports online magazine. It is available through an app for iPad and iPhone. Launched in 2013.

. *Metadeporte*

Monthly tablet-format pay news magazine about sports economy, business and companies. Launched in late 2013.

. *KIAenzona.com*

News website about national and international basketball. Launched in 2014.

. *La Fosbury*

Catalan-language online sports news magazine (but no football news). Launched in 2014.

. *Olympo Deportivo*

Digital magazine and website. Launched in 2014

. *Volata*

Print magazine about cycling, culture and journalism. Launched in 2014

. *El Enganche*

News website specialised in international football re-launched as bi-weekly subscription-based web magazine. Launched in 2014

*Media incorporated in the last census of APM*

. *Ciclo21.com*

Cycling news website (2013)

. *Losotros18.com*

National and international football news (2013)

. *Diariodelaroja.com*

Spain's national football team (2014)

. *Master1000.es*

News website specialised in international tennis (2011)

. *Mundosala.es*

News website specialised in five-a-side football

. *Proyectopremier.com*

News website specialised in the English Football League

### 3.3. Overspecialisation and hybridisation of contents

This map of new media, composed of a total of 57 companies, suggests that, indeed, this is a journalistic sector that has great vitality, continues to grow (during the development of the study this figure was increasing gradually) and characterised by two trends, which represent great opportunities for journalism in general and sports in particular: on the one hand, the commitment to the hyperlocal and, on the other hand, the search for niche markets, differentiation (based on the thematic overspecialisation of contents) or content hybridisation, and even the combination of information products with other services. Most analysed media are digital, both those targeting national audiences and, especially, those targeting a much more direct and closer, local or provincial audience (*Eldeporteconquense*, *Oncecontraonce*, *Canariasbasket*, *Time Out Magazine* and *Campdesports*). The former group follows the trail left by such media companies as *Sportyou* (2008), while the latter take over other pioneering websites in this field such as *Cordobadeporte*, founded in 2000; *Muchodeporte*, launched in 2001 in Seville; and *El Desmarque*, created in 2006 and currently established with six editions in Spain.

Despite the unstoppable expansion of new media on the internet, entrepreneurial sports journalism has also advanced in the print platform with the emergence of super-specialised publications, which have opted for long formats, an original design and quality content produced by famous signatures. In this sense, football magazines such as *Proyecto Panenka* and *Liberio*, the weekly free newspaper *Alirón* (also has a digital edition), *Cuadernos de Basket*, a quarterly news magazine specialised in basketball, and *Volata*, a magazine about cycling and culture. Other projects were launched in the print format and evolved into news websites, like *Quality Sport*, a multi-sport magazine, and the *Protagonistas*, the first magazine in Spain specialised in women's football. At the same time, there has been an increased development of complementary services for the web or printed products, like solutions adapted to mobile devices (*Eleven Foot*, *Minuto 116*, *Metadeporte* and *La Fosbury*).

With regards to the theme of these new media projects, there are 21 multi-sports news websites (including two that stand out for their super-specialization (*Juegosriojaneiro2016.com* and *Pasaporte Olímpico*): one about women's and minority sports (*Avance Deportivo*); 15 football news

websites, standing out those specialising in international football, a single team (like *diariodelaroja.com*, which focuses on the Spanish national team); or a championship (like *Proyectopremier.com*, which focuses on the English League); 5 basketball news websites; 2 magazines about football and culture; one magazine about basketball; another magazine about cycling; a free weekly multi-sports publication; a municipal sports news portal (*Munideporte.com*); a digital radio station (*Radiogoles.es*); a local television-website (*Deportesevilla.tv*); 2 digital news outlets specialised in economy and sports (*La Jugada Financiera* and *Metadeporte*); one digital regional multi-support sports outlet (*Gipuzkoasport.com*); one news website specialised in sports and technology (*Sportics*); a cycling magazine and another one specialised in field hockey; a news website specialised in five-a-side football; a tennis news website and another one dedicated to cycling. As we can see, therefore, in entrepreneurial sports journalism there is a wide and varied range of themes, many of which result in contents specialised in a single sport, in modalities that do not normally occupy important spaces in traditional media, or in the coverage of football or a variety of sports, or teams and athletes from certain territories.

### 3.4. Structure and viability

Outstanding among the new sports news media that have emerged in recent years are those that have been or are being created by a small number of journalists who had a long career in the sports sections of the traditional media or specialised magazines and have decided to make the leap to the Internet to advance professionally. They are entrepreneurial journalistic projects that have evolved towards specialisation in sports and do so with the backing of the experience, sources and contacts of journalists who have been dismissed or have been forced to abandon their media companies after many years

There are other entrepreneurial journalistic projects that have a distinct amateur character y have been designed by recently graduated young journalists who are seeking to make a name for themselves and advance their career in the profession. It is for the most part digital media by their lower costs of opening and maintaining.

Aside from these independent media, which constitute the vast majority, other startups have emerged under the protection of some media groups, such as *Grada360*, launched by the Vocento group in September 2012 and was closed in April, 2014; *Diario Gol*, which was launched as a free publication in 2004 and then became a weekly Catalan-language newspaper in 2012, and later became a news website after becoming part of the limited digital media company *Economía Digital*; and *Quality Sport*, which in 2014 became part of *Unidad Editorial* and launched *Marca Plus*, a multi-sports digital magazine app for tablets.

A peculiar case within this new media landscape is *Munideporte.com*, a digital portal created in 2011 and specialised on sports news from all the Spanish municipalities. This website is managed by the sports communication services company Equipo de Gestión Cultural S.A. and was the result of a collaboration agreement with the Spanish Federation of Municipalities and Provinces (FEMP). Thus, the website is also supported with public funds. In addition to this website, the company publishes *Deportistas* magazine and produces the programme ‘Al Límite’, of *Radio Marca*.

Also relevant is the re-launch of *El Enganche*, a digital medium specialised in international football news and analysis that was launched as a blog in 2006, and subsequently turned into a website and later in October 2014, after increasing its number of users, visits, contents and contributors, became a



subscription-based digital magazine. It is in this sense, this is a pioneering sports news medium in Spain that introduced a new journalistic concept in this specialised field: seeking alternatives funding sources to advertising through a sustainable paid-subscription model that works thanks to its quality content.

The new *El Enganche* is a bi-weekly magazine (published on the 1<sup>st</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> of each month) that offers three subscription modes to access its contents: one-season subscription at 50 euros, half-season subscription at 30 euros, and one-month subscription at 5. It also offers users the possibility of accessing previous editions at 3 euros each. In addition, it offers users a membership that gives them access to exclusive contents, as well as discounts and promotions in its store, and participation in raffles and contents.

This is an innovative digital medium not only for its implementation of the payment and subscription business model in a news sector where everyone is used to get totally free access to content, but also for the quality of its content. It seeks to exploit the interest aroused by international football news to capture users' attention through the creation of new narratives, a solid bet on videos and their transmedia possibilities, due to their data visualisations and infographics, as well as on long form formats that have emerged in important international sports news media on the web such as *Sports Illustrated*, *ESPN*, *SBNation* and *L'Equipe*. Based on the mixture of audiovisual contents and infographics and textual depth and interactivity, *El Enganche* proposes a new formula of digital sports journalism that is yet to explode in the Spanish media landscape.

Of all these new sports media incorporated in this study, only a few have managed to become consolidated as real companies in the market based on a viable business model, with income formulas alternative to traditional advertising and based on the diversification of their activity, and often complementing their journalistic product with other services that provide profitability and income.

However, despite being running for several years, other media still lack sufficient financial strength to guarantee their continuity and, despite having earned a place and recognition among fans and athletes, are in a critical stage, in which they have to determine whether the original idea that led them here will be their final guide.

In this regard, the *Informe de la Profesión Periodística* ("Report of the Journalistic Profession") published by the Press Association of Madrid indicates that most media startups launched in Spain in 2008 just reached three years of existence and that the priority of their creators was to earn a place in the market, by projecting their journalistic brand –personal in many cases- and then to deal with the commercialisation needed to survive.

The average profile of these entrepreneurial projects is an austere, self-financed medium, launched with an initial capital of between 3,000 and 50,000 euros of their own resources. They are one-person media surrounded by collaborators or composed of a small number of journalists (the business formula most adopted in the Limited Company category), who often suffer from economic fragility.

Therefore, the challenge of these media, which still have a micro structure that cannot guarantee their viability in the medium and long term, is to diversify their income beyond traditional advertising and enhance the digital training of their workforce, as well as their skills in management and marketing

in order to be able to cope with the new demands of the increasingly more complex and changing environment 2.0.

### 3.5. Common patterns

Thirdly, we identified the similar patterns and common elements in these initiatives. As mentioned, these journalistic startups pursue originality and differentiation based on the offer of journalistic products that are much more segmented, thematically or geographically, than the traditional sports media.

To do this, most of the new media analysed in this study bet on the possibilities offered by the web to achieve the overspecialisation or hybridisation of contents and services, and to move towards innovation. In this sense, there is a constant increase in the number of digital sports journalism startups that have begun to explore the implementation of new narratives (scrollytelling, longform journalism, interactive infographics, database journalism and transmedia elements) to tell stories and even to reformulate formats, genres and informative journalistic languages. The use of this narrative aims to depart from the nowness and instantaneousness of sports associated to urgent news stories and results. New genres or, at least, their new applications allow extensive interviews, which depart from the weekly results, historical chronicles or the creation of feature articles based on statistical data.

Similarly, mobile journalism is getting stronger. The most consolidated media and many of the new media that have emerged on the internet have developed increasingly sophisticated apps to bring information to mobile phones and tablets in all types of operating systems (Android and IOS). New sports media have also started a transition from the *Digital First* to the *Mobile First* to the point that the mobile-only media constitute the majority of the media initiatives. The transition is justified for two reasons. The first of these reasons is a demographic one: the patterns of use and consumption of information and entertainment have moved to mobile devices. The second is that the creation and launch of contents for mobile devices reduces costs.

Another common feature in most of these new media and micro-media is their massive and very active presence on the social media, especially Twitter. Without exception, the new media rely on the microblogging network to preview and promote their contents and in this way generate flows of visits to their websites, where they can promote the direct and continuous interaction with their audience, whose loyalty they foster by inviting them to be part of a community that shares analyses and debates opinions. This idea of a community that shares a common interest has been recurrent in previous studies (Ferrier, 2013).

New media professionals also take advantage of their active participation in social networks to promote their personal journalistic brand among thousands of followers in the new global communicative environment. In this context, sports journalists can become very influential people due to the great social repercussion of sports and everything that surrounds them, and in many cases become authentic opinion and information leaders whose messages on Twitter are subject to permanent scrutiny by a high number of followers who generate multi-directional conversations (Lastra, 2014).

In short, the new media that emerged in the field of Spanish sports journalism have shown that in order to create a product capable of making a place in the market and stand out as truly different in

the digital realm, it is necessary to create in the user a feeling of belonging to a community. For this reason, they have implemented various strategies to attract readers (with the commitment to produce quality content), and loyalty strategies, such as the creation of members' clubs which offer access to exclusive news content, discounts to use in their online stores, and access to contests and sports events, which strengthen the bond with the public and thus consolidate their social base.

### **3.6. New research challenges**

This study identifies and lists the journalistic entrepreneurial projects that have emerged in the field of sports in Spain. This research work, which explains the common elements of this business and journalistic phenomenon and identifies the niche in sports, opens up new avenues for research.

In particular, the study rises the following questions. In the field of content, it would be interesting to investigate the narratives that are used to cater to different audiences. To be precise, in the future we could analyse the use of data journalism, the development of applications, native journalistic content for the digital environment (not just the web), the type of language and its relationship with social networks.

In the professional field, it would be relevant to carry out an ethnographic study of the entrepreneurial journalists in order to determine whether they are “forced entrepreneurs” or not and to know the reasons that have led to create their own projects. While universities have launched programmes to promote and encourage entrepreneurship (FJ Paniagua Rojano, M Gómez Aguilar, ME González Cortés: 2014; Vázquez Schaich, MJ y Klein, J: 2013), it does not seem that these projects were created by journalism graduates with no previous experience in the labour market.

In the business sphere, it is advisable to carry out an in-depth study to determine what are the business models that work best in this niche market and why. One of the common features that we identified is the specificity of each of the projects, i.e. almost all of them has a unique structure in terms of income, commercial performance and stability. For this reason, future research should analyse which media have survived and under what conditions. The current expansive phase of the entrepreneurial media fits with the economic cycle. For this reason, it is relevant to see which of the media examined in this study are able to adapt and become sustainable in the medium term.

## **4. Conclusions**

After studying the Spanish landscape, we have detected a profound transformation of the journalistic system. The convergence of the four major crises has accelerated the end of the industrial model and has allowed the creation and management of new journalistic companies oriented to the new media and the internet. They are companies created by journalists and open a new stage in the journalistic services models. Sports journalism is still at a very early stage: initiatives and projects are multiplying. In this expansive cycle, the new companies are still testing new business models, relations with advertisers and audiences, new editorial models, and new contents and narratives. Moreover, the relationship between the personal brand of the journalist and the news company is becoming stronger: private channels and social networks increase the impact of the journalistic contents.

In this context of entrepreneurial journalism, sport specialisation represents one of the most active fields. It responds to geographic interests (local, hyperlocal) as well as sectoral or thematic interests (overspecialisation, mostly of minority sports), so that it covers a broad spectrum of journalistic

experiments and innovations. The momentum of entrepreneurial sports journalism materialises in 57 projects launched from 2008, the year in which this phase began. As it has happened in other industries transformed by technology, we observed many models and systems but no uniform criteria for business creation, or a funding system. This variability, as well as the inherent changing and experimental nature of the digital environment, complicates the carrying out of more advanced studies. The first task was to undertake the first census and to identify patterns in order to broaden future studies.

Finally, there are new avenues for research to further the understanding of a phenomenon will become consolidated in the next few years in the journalistic landscape. In this regard, it is important to carry out research at three different levels: first, the journalistic level (i.e., what genres and styles are being proposed?); second, the ethnographic level (who are the people developing the new projects?); and, finally, the business level (which requires to deepen the study of the structure, viability and business models).

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## 5. Notes

[1] The continually-updated census carried out by the Press Association of Madrid (APM) is available at the following URL: <http://www.apmadrid.es/noticias/generales/nuevos-medios-lanzados-por-periodistas?Itemid=209>

[2] This blog, created by Professor and researcher José Luis Rojas Torrijos, presents its own census carried out in 2014. It is available at the following URL: <http://periodismodeportivodecalidad.blogspot.com.es/2014/02/censo-de-nuevos-medios-deportivos.html>

[3] Together with the four daily national sports newspapers (Marca, As, Mundo Deportivo and Sport), there are other local and regional media such as Superdeporte in Valencia, L'Esportiu in Barcelona, Deporte Campeón in A Coruña and Estadio Deportivo and Decano Deportivo in Seville. In addition, Mundo Deportivo also has regional editions in the Basque Country (Bilbao and San Sebastián).

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