COMMUNICATION

The Influence of the Internet on European Journalism

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This study investigates how European journalists evaluate the changes that have occurred in their profession since the Internet has been integrated in newsrooms. How do journalists perceive the features and innovations associated with the Internet? What are the principal changes in the profession? Do practitioners believe that the quality of journalism has been raised or lowered? To answer to these research questions, we carried out a survey across 11 European countries–Cyprus, Estonia, Finland, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Lithuania, United Kingdom, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden–of 239 journalists, working for 40 of the most-read print/online news outlets in these countries. The survey shows that the opportunity to use the Internet to reinforce the social functions of journalism has not been fully recognised.

Rationale

This study investigates how journalists perceive the changes, or potential changes, brought by the Internet to the functions, practices, and ethics of their profession. It is part of a wider research project on journalism and the net, and follows two previous European studies, financed by COST[1], on the influence of the Internet on European news markets (van der Wurff & Lauf, 2005; van der Wurff et al., 2008) and on the exploitation of the opportunities of interactivity provided by the Web (Fortunati, Raycheva, Harro-Loit, & O'Sullivan, 2005). The current investigation has been conducted in 2005–2006 in 11 European countries: Cyprus, Estonia, Finland, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Lithuania, United Kingdom, Slovenia, Spain, and Sweden (cf. also Sarrica et al., forthcoming). These countries are characterized by different media contexts but seem to represent increasingly similar approaches to and understandings of journalism as a profession (O'Sullivan & Heinonen, 2008), which will be illustrated and discussed below.

Our main research questions are: How are the features and innovations associated with the Internet perceived by European journalists? What are the main changes that have occurred, or may occur, in the various fields of the profession following the advent of the Internet? In journalists' perception, do these changes raise or lower standards of journalism? We have inherited these research questions from the larger debate which has developed in the last decade around understanding what is happening in the journalistic world in the context of the net (Deuze, 2001, 2005; Ruggiero, 2004). In order to interpret the changes occurring in the profession of journalism, we need to consider how this profession is socially constructed, and how these socially shared meanings emerge from the relationships between journalists and their social context. Far from being static, these meanings and relationships are continuously reshaped and negotiated by social actors, with different levels of power, so we further propose to situate the social coconstruction of journalism within wider changes that have occurred in the global labour market, where knowledge-based labour plays an increasingly crucial role (Arvidsson, 2006).

We enter this debate by providing an empirical approach to the perception that journalists from around Europe have of the changes brought by the Internet in their everyday practice, professional role, and ethics, linking at the same time these perception with the differences in the social context of the countries included in the research.

Over the past decade, these topics have been investigated in several countries, with a variety of methods. The majority of studies deepen understanding of the state of play in a single country. Examples are, in the USA, the seminal works by Pavlik (2001) and Boczkowski (2004); in Finland Heinonen (2001), in Australia Metcalfe and Gascoigne (2001), in Germany Loosen (2002), Altmeppen et al. (2000) and Meier (2002), in the UK Ward (2002), in the Netherlands Deuze and Dimoudi (2002), and in Catalonia Domingo (2008). Another strand of studies collects research studies in several countries (e.g. Paterson & Domingo, 2008 in U.S., UK, Germany, Spain, Argentina, Australia and China), but which adopt different designs of research

making it difficult to compare them. A third typology of research is carried out by scholars who, adopting an external and ''neutral'' perspective, gather a variety of sources from different countries in order to describe similarities and differences across nations. An example here is the study by Paschal Preston (2008), which gathered 95 in-depth interviews, seminars, and roundtable discussions with media professionals, politicians, and nongovernmental organizations. A further difficulty in comparing results is due to the fact that, in a large part of research, not only samples and time of data collection are different but also survey methods. Data are collected, for example, via in-depth interviews, ethnographic observation, surveys administered personally, by telephone, e-mail, and online. As a result, although the literature already might allow an integrated vision of the influence of Internet on European journalism (Allan, 2006; Bruns, 2005; Jamieson & Campbell, 2006; Machin & Niblock, 2006) the available data does not facilitate true cross-cultural comparisons. For this reason, it was felt necessary that our research be situated in the wider strand of cross-cultural studies and research designs (Van der Vijer & Leung, 1997).

Valid examples of this approach are the studies carried out by Martha Stone and Jan Bierhoff in UK, Spain, France, and Sweden (2002), the research by Trench and Quinn (2003) in four European countries (Denmark, Ireland, France, and UK), or, more recently, the COST A20 research studies carried out in 16 countries (van der Wurff & Lauf, 2005), and the research project carried out in eight European countries and the United States by Domingo et al. (2008) on audience participation in online media.

Cross-cultural studies on journalists' perception of technological and professional changes occurred in their sector require a theoretical framework, a model for producing a classification of countries in order to detect similarities differences across clusters.

One model that has been offered and largely used in Europe is that that has been formulated by Hallin and Mancini (Hallin & Mancini, 2004; Mancini, 2005). In their recent analysis, these two scholars identified several typologies of journalism based on the relationship between media and political systems. Their analyses has posited the fundamental question of whether or not one or more European model of journalism exists. A first categorisation distinguishes between the Anglo-American and the European models, the former being based on independence from power and the latter rooted in a literary approach to the profession and in the strong role played by the state. Further distinctions or submodels have been proposed within Europe between the *North European democratic corporatist model*, the *North Atlantic liberal model*, and the *Mediterranean polarised pluralist model*.

The proposed categories of media systems provide useful orientation tools. However, as Karol Jakubowicz argues,[2] empirical analyses show high levels of heterogeneity within and between countries. For example, research indicates the special features of Eastern European countries or Baltic republics (Elvestad & Blekesaune, 2008), or more specific similarities and differences between Spanish and British journalists as regards evaluation of the functions of the press (cf. Canel

& Piqué, 1998). These few examples underline the need to consider, along with differences at structural levels, the role that societal backgrounds and newsroom cultures have in the continuous process of negotiation between the ideal models and individual everyday practices (cf. Sanders, Hanna, Berganza & Aranda, 2008).

Theoretical Background

Journalism as a Social Construction

The theoretical framework assumed in this study is the application to the journalistic field of the approach outlined by Jacoby and Ochs (1995, 171) and built on Berger's and Luckmann's work (1966). They see coconstruction as "the constitution and interpretation of culturally and historically situated social interactions". For these authors, coconstruction is "the joint creation of a form, interpretation, stance, action, activity, identity, institution, skill, ideology, emotion, or other culturally meaningful reality." We propose to look at journalism as a "social construction," coconstructed meanings of which are rooted in the social relationship between journalists, publishers, and readers[3]. Conceptualizing journalism in this way allows us to see it as a phenomenon that is neither inevitable, unilateral, or absolute. In this framework, journalism is made up of different images, ideologies, and perspectives that are generated by various actors and negotiated along the different lines of power existing in their relationships. Many theories, analyses, and narratives intertwine in the attempt to describe the network of these relationships and their reciprocal influences, so giving concreteness to this notion of journalism as social construction (Tuchman, 1978).

The branch of theories on media effects, notwithstanding the criticisms which they have incurred in the course of time, might help us in understanding some of the issues relative to the relationship between authors and audiences: The effects (and so the power) of newspaper content on the audience. The cultivation theory (Gerbner & Gross, 1976) is still useful for capturing how the persistent exposure to news might have measurable effects on audience's perception of the world. Agenda-setting theory (McCombs & Shaw, 1972) still helps us to understand the dual nature of influence: newspapers do not tell us merely what to think, but, principally, what to think about. Media dependency theory, developed by Ball-Rokeach and DeFluer (1976), remains relevant in that, as social institutions and media systems address audiences to create interest, needs, and expectations, so audiences depend on the media information to meet their needs, while the theory on the spiral of silence advanced by Noelle-Neumann (1974) is still powerful in depicting the enormous impact that mass media have on how public opinion is constructed, in the sense that mass media tend to cover the majority opinion, which becomes the status quo, while the minority opinion is swallowed by silence. On the other hand, social action theory, developed by Anderson and Meyer (1988), is convincing in positioning the understanding of audiences in a more realistic perspective. Far from being passive or hapless, media audiences are seen as actively participating in journalists' communication by interpreting news

content. In this context, the construction of meanings in the journalism comes from three sources and is negotiated among them: the intentions of the journalist, the conventions of the content, and the interpretations of the readership. This theory represents an important step of a long evolution of analyses and research on the role of the audience, which start from the hypodermic needle model, continue through the two-step flow theory (Katz & Lazersfield, 1955), the Uses and Gratifications theory (Blumler & Katz, 1974) and reception theory (Hall, 1973) and arrive to the current notion of active audience (Livingstone, 2000).

Clearly, there is an increasing understanding of the audiences' role and also of their practices, attitudes, and behaviours towards newspapers, and it is not by chance that these phenomena structure themselves in a clearer way along with the increase of audiences' power. Audiences slowly become true actors in the course of time (they are better educated, have more money to spend, have different media choices, are more individualized), as all the media system is based on the purchasing power, the selective capacity, and the hermeneutic ability and activity of the audience. The advent of the Internet potentially enhances the role of audiences even more and pushes scholars to revisit both media effect and audience theories.

Correctly, Singer (1998), in order to capture how journalism may be redescribing itself, invites us to challenge specifically the theories of gate-keeping (White, 1950) and diffusion of innovation (Rogers, 1995) along with approaches applied by the sociology of news work. These theories and approaches address work functions and practices, as well as attitudes and behaviour towards technology, which have been challenged by the Internet. Singer calls on us to re-examine them in the light of the changes generated by the diffusion of the Internet in the newsrooms and in the whole society: how gate-keeping is transforming itself in the face of competition from search engines, the personalization of news consumption, and so on; how we can understand the diffusion of ICT in newsrooms, since these are organizations and not single individuals. This analysis may benefit from the application of Orlikowski's work studying the implementation and activation of technologies within organizations, by drawing on Giddens' theory of structuration (Orlikowski & Baroudi, 1991; Orlikowski, 1992). Each of these theoretical strands remain valid in helping to form a framework in which to consider how the conceptualisation of news, the process of news gathering and dissemination, the career paths of journalists, and values and ethical issues change following the advent of the Internet.

Finally, to understand the changes occurring in the world of journalism after the Internet, we need to look at computer-mediated communication theories. Several of them, such as social presence theory (Short, Williams & Christie, 1976), media richness theory (Daft & Lengel, 1986), hyper-personal communication theory (Walther, 1996), are mainly focussed on the comparison with communication in copresence. However, a re-examination of these perspectives in the context of mass communication is warranted, in order to understand how the unidirectional message typical of mass media, and typically with many more structural limits if compared to communication in co-presence, may acquire a new life online. Here, at least

potentially, the message can acquire the strengths of multimedia and of interactive communication between the readership and the editorial staff and even among readers. Boczkowski (1999) also underlines the necessity that a dialogue takes place between CMC and mass communication scholarship. In short, the social study of CMC has generated knowledge that must relevantly be applied to the development of online newspapers: Thus, CMC scholarship becomes crucial for analysing the electronic version of a medium that mass communication theorists have traditionally investigated.

Guided by this excursus on studies which help us to build upon the concept of journalism as a social construction, we further specify the idea of a journalism that, as the resultant of the negotiation process among journalists, publishers (and editors) and the readership, is always locally and temporally situated. In this perspective the ideal research should investigate the perspective of these three actors jointly. But it is evident that organizational constraints make it difficult to realize a research designed in this way across 11 countries. A more realistic approach is to investigate journalists' point of view and to provide publishers' and readers' point of view using other data. For these reasons, in the current study we focus mainly on the journalists' perspective, foregrounding their acceptance, use, and vision of the Internet. Publisher and readers, however, remain on the scene as actors who materially influence the work environment and whom journalists ideally confront (cf. the idea of imagined reader; Eco, 1979). We use secondary data to outline these actors' visions of what journalism is, as well as data that relates to journalists' perception of publishers and readers.

As recently shown by Domingo (2008), online journalism is characterized by myths (such as interactivity) that shape the discourse on how the profession should be renewed. But what is more interesting for us is that, as proposed again by Domingo, new professional features can be considered as coconstructed and situated practices which combine "material (staff size, technical resources) and social (professional culture, work organization) factors in the shaping of online news project" (Domingo, 2008, p.681). The social construction of journalism, moreover, depends also on different social and national contexts and situations. We therefore look also at differences at the level of societal contexts (across national spaces) and practices as generated by the power dynamics between journalists and other stakeholders such as publishers (and editors) and readers, in order to understand the different interpretations and evaluations of the influence of the Internet on journalism practices. In this context, "Power [. . .] refers to being capable of: to be able to produce an effect, to construct a reality, to institute a meaning" (Campbell & Jovchelovitch, 2000, 267).

Changes in Journalism Practices

Conflicts and negotiations between social actors make up the narrative of continuous change that journalism has faced. Roughly two stages can be distinguished: in the first, journalism has been emptied of its critical, dynamic aspects that place it in

balancing opposition to power; in other words, it has been domesticated by publishers and embodied in the macrophysics of power, becoming its "guardians" (Edwards & Cromwell, 2006). In the second stage, publishers have had the opportunity to de-structure journalism by using the Internet and the networked organization that globalization has provided (Castells, 1996-1998). From their perspective, the Internet has allowed for a rationalization of journalists' work, based on a typology of immaterial labour. As such, journalism is repositioning in the sociotechnical systems.

However, several meanings can lie under the concept of rationalization leading to different editorial strategies. For example, it can be conceived as an unstoppable tendency towards outsourcing, through which, according to Newsrooms Barometer survey (2008)[4], editors aim to reduce direct and indirect labour costs, and that editors consider an increasing tendency for the near future (Fortunati & Sarrica, 2008). Rationalization could also mean the merging of offline and online newsrooms (Singer, 2004: Quinn, 2005; Quinn & Filak, 2005) with the construction of a new journalist, more multimedia-oriented and able to write, to interview and to produce a video at the same time (Deuze, 2004) In contrast, it could also mean keeping clearly differentiated, nonintegrated newsrooms, where professionals maintain different profiles but at the same time are asked to co-operate strongly, as discussed in the report Trends in Newsrooms 2008, the fourth annual report from the World Editors Forum[5]. These different editorial strategies must deal also with the fact that, while northern countries are characterized by a broad readership and a large diffusion of the Internet at social level, southern countries are characterized by a small readership and a limited diffusion of the Internet.

In conclusion, there is evidence that the application of IT logic in the organization of labour in newsrooms, as well as shifts in narratives and contexts, have brought many changes in the profession, and the need to assess the interplay between the net and journalism is dictated by these structural shifts. On the positive side, the Internet has been considered a source of new opportunities for journalists. It offers the possibility of enhancing their work; it enables a faster and wider interactivity with readers (Schultz, 2000); and it provides them a new mediation role, allowing them to shift from being information gatekeepers to facilitators (Boczkowski, 2004), whose new function could be to orient readers in the ever-increasing and overpowering stream of information (Kenney, Gorelik & Mwangi, 2000). From a pessimistic perspective, the Internet has introduced a new breed of professionals explicitly devoted to preparing online editions, often young and underpaid, with tight deadlines, and forced by time pressures to focus on copy-and-paste work rather than writing articles (van der Wurff, 2005; O'Sullivan, 2005; Neuberger, Tonnemacher, Biebl & Duck, 1998).

Journalists, thus far, show ambivalent patterns: They either acquiesce in technological innovation or they passively resist change (Ruggiero, 2004), or at best, as Deuze argues (2005), they seek, in the debates about quality of journalism, to reinvent themselves by incorporating a new outlook and an IT ideology. This brings us to a second issue: professional identity.

Changes in Professional Identities

The Internet also has opened a new chapter in the relationships between publishers and journalists as regards professional identity: a story of modest wages, of precarious jobs, and of extreme flexibility (Domingo, 2006). At the same time, the Internet has presented readers with an opportunity to redescribe their role. Readers use, or potentially can use, the Internet to redefine their relationships with information, news and newspapers, overcoming the impotence of their assigned role. However, contradictions arise in the historical dynamics of this relationship. On the one hand, readers have the wherewithal to become producers of news, ideas, and original reflexivity, and so they potentially have become competitors for both editors and journalists (within the limits of their individual competence); but on the other they potentially have become unpaid, external content producers. As in many other sectors, including the press industry, workers (journalists) have reacted with ambivalence towards the Internet and what this tool represents in their professional identity. They have been the first actors in many countries to inform readerships about computers and the Internet, and to help form a kind of information literacy (Fortunati, 2005). But they also have reacted with defensive attitudes and still refer to traditional professional role conceptions. Journalists, both print and online, continue to rate the interpretative/investigative role and the disseminator role as the most important (Weaver, Beam, Brownlee, Voakes & Wilhoit, 2006). Thus, even if journalists' tasks have changed, they continue to rate as crucial for their profession the investigation of governmental decisions, the analyses of complex issues, and the ability to get relevant and verified news to the public as quickly as possible.

If a few years ago the debate concerned the distinction between traditional journalists and new "online" journalists, more recently the focus has shifted to the potential demise of the reporter who risks being replaced, in print as well as online, by new kinds of worker, with less protection and fewer rights, who can be more accurately labelled news producers rather than journalists. As recently underlined (Lewis, Williams, Franklin, Thomas & Mosdell, 2007), these news workers find themselves caught between, the activities of public relations professionals, which represent a power which shapes news content (Fletcher 2006; Franklin 2006; Deuze, 2007), the time concerns and productivity demands of editors and publishers, and the inertia of a traditional journalistic culture (Domingo, 2008).

Changes in Ethics

From the perspective of readers, this scenario of shifts in journalism raises questions about news quality and independence. Research show that readers are increasingly concerned with the issue of online news credibility; when they select online news sources they, in fact, choose news. Websites that are considered almost as accurate as newspapers or television bulletins (Consumer Reports Web Watch, 2005). From the perspective of journalists, trust is linked to professional ethics. As already observed, the Internet has created a sense of discomfort and the need to reassess professional roles. Seen in this light, it is possible to understand why journalists sometimes express

a critical perspective towards the ideal of investigative reporting, together with fears of an uncertain future (Cohen & Lévy, 2008). However, as Cassidy (2007) recently pointed out, the situation is complex. On the one hand, news information is far from being universally accepted by newspaper journalists as a credible source, particularly by print newspaper journalists (p.491). Moreover, print and online journalists differ in the evaluation of credibility of online news. On the other hand, journalists' acceptance of the Internet as a source of credible information is evolving. This could be related to the increase in the use of Internet by journalists, but also perhaps may be linked to the incorporation in the professional ideology of traditional journalists of the norms and values of online journalism (Cassidy, 2007, p. 491).

The ethics of journalism thus seem to be changing, and contemporary journalists seem to be able to mingle traditional and new normative values. The other side of the coin of this change is that with professional values coming to the centre of the debate, noxious practices may emerge. In this vein, 'churnalism' has been identified as the outcome of cost-cutting strategies that have transformed journalists into scoop seekers at any cost and have exposed them to the need to recycle content and manipulate stories in order to continuously provide readers with ''new'' content (Davies, 2008). But it may be that there are even more fundamental, structural, elements which contribute to the homogenization of news, as news outlets fear missing out on breaking stories, pushing them to monitor and appropriate each other's content and as competition for audience and for advertising revenues results in a convergence on a restricted news agenda.

Aim and Sample

Aim

The purpose of the research is to understand how journalists perceive and evaluate the changes occurring in their world following the advent of the Internet. Our main interest is to investigate differences and similarities concerning this perception and evaluation across country, gender, age, professional profile (print or online), length of work experience, intensity of Internet use, and degree of familiarity with the net.

As regards changes in journalist functions and practices, our research question is:

RQ1. On the whole, is the Internet considered a source of new opportunities by journalists in terms of work enhancement, speed, and opportunity to reach wider audience?

Our hypotheses are:

H1a) respondents from countries characterized by different levels of technological implementation should show different levels of acceptance of the Internet and different evaluation of its features, reflective of their societal context.

H1b) those who are more open to accepting the Internet, or who already define themselves as online journalists, should appreciate more the opportunities provided by the net for the improvement of their work practices.

As regards changes in professional identities, our research question is:

Table 1 Countries and Groups

Countries	Clusters	Frequencies
UK and Ireland	Atlantic islands	67 (28.0%)
Finland and Sweden	Scandinavian countries	46 (19.2%)
Italy and Spain	Neo-Latin countries	54 (22.6%)
Lithuania and Estonia	Baltic countries	29 (12.1%)
Cyprus, Greece and Slovenia	South-Central countries	53 (22.2%)
Total		**239**

RQ2 Do journalists rate positively the changes wrought, after the advent of the Internet, on their traditional profile, especially on the gate keeper, investigative, and disseminative functions?

Our hypotheses are:

H2a) respondents from different national background and professional traditions may differ in the development of new professional identities.

H2b) online, young, and female journalists may have developed new positive roles, linked to the enhanced ability to orient readers in the flow of information;

As regards ethics and trust, our research question is:

RQ3) Are journalists developing a new ethical outlook that mingles traditional and new values?

Our hypotheses are:

H3a) older journalists, and those from countries were the Internet has lower penetration, may passively resist change, may seek to emphasise traditional roles, and may look at the online world as irreconcilable with traditional values.

H3b) print and online journalists, low and high Internet users, as well as male and female journalists differ in the evaluation of the credibility of online news.

Sample

Forty of the most-read generalist newspapers, based on print newspaper sales, were selected, from 11 European countries: Cyprus, Estonia, Finland, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Lithuania, United Kingdom, Slovenia, Spain, and Sweden. The convenience sample so recruited included 239 journalists. According to their self-description, journalists were categorized as print-only journalists (print journalists); or as Web journalists, this latter group comprising journalists who publish only online or in both the print and the online editions of their newspaper.

Countries were categorized in order to obtain balanced groups to analyse. Taking into account the number of participants for each country, cultural background, and similarity of media landscapes, we identify five main groups (see Table 1).

Baltic Republics (Estonia and Lithuania)

In spite of some differences, journalism practices in Baltic countries can be researched as belonging to a single group with defined common characteristics: Each country has a small market (geographically and linguistically restricted) and very recent

history of political, economic, and social transformation from a communist regime to a capitalist democracy. From the point of view of language, the news market in Lithuania is small but homogeneous (3.38m., with 86% of population belonging to the Lithuanian linguistic group); in Estonia the market is even smaller (with 1.34m., 65% of Estonians) and split between two the Estonian and Russian languages. Rates of Internet use are relatively low, but it is possible to observe a recent, significant increase. Two significant turning points (mid-'90s and 2000) can be identified for online newspapers in the Baltic Republics: in the mid-'90s, online versions were created, but they were considered secondary to the print edition; however, since 2000 they have begun to develop their own, independent content. In 2006, when the research was carried out, Estonian dailies had separate online newsrooms and print journalists wrote additional stories for the online editions. In Lithuania, reviews prepared by external commentators and experts were used to provide additional content for online readers.

Scandinavian Countries (Finland and Sweden)

The Scandinavian Internet market is characterized by a high percentage of households with broadband connections, with large percentages of people using the net daily or often. The newspaper market is traditionally strong, both in terms of number of copies sold and of percentage of everyday readers among the population. Recently, both Finland and Sweden have shown a relative decrease in newspaper circulations. This has led publishers to intensify international investment, to create media partnerships , and to devote a greater effort to develop online editions. As a result, in 2006, most newspapers had an updated online version with free and original content, as well as a charged version of the print edition. In spite of the high use of Internet in Scandinavian households, and although the number of online readers is increasing constantly, online editions are typically in deficit and a successful business model has not emerged yet. Accordingly, multimedia publishers look at online newspapers as an investment for the future, and as a complement to print.

Atlantic Islands (U.K. and Ireland)

The U.K. and Ireland provided similar backgrounds in 2006: average percentages of Internet access in the population (about 50% of households) and an increasing proportion of broadband connections. The newspaper market is traditionally strong in both entities, even if a decrease in circulation has been recently observed. The distinguishing character of the press in the U.K. is its aggressive commercial rivalry (De Aquino, Bierhoff, Orchard, & Stone, 2002). In the U.K., a relevant issue concerns the internationalization of content, with news increasingly read by an international audience in the English-speaking globalized world.

The U.K. online news market was strongly developed in 2006: London-based newspapers had a more developed Web presence than many provincial newspapers, and provided readers with original content as well as with articles reproduced from print editions. The diffusion of the broadband as well as the development of the BBC's

online presence gave impetus for experiment, such as the inclusion of multimedia content. Nevertheless, a clear model had not emerged, and various choices were adopted simultaneously, including news portals, standalone online newspapers, and networks between local and national dailies.

In Ireland, the newspaper scene is characterised by concentration of ownership of indigenous titles, with concerns sometimes expressed over lack of diversity, but with very significant commercial competition from British titles, and a robust regional press (Horgan, McNamara, & O'Sullivan 2007). For the most part, other than in terms of relatively recent visual redesigns, newspaper Web editions have tended to be conservatively implemented, with content closely allied to that of print, and little or no multimedia or interactivity (though with some tentative developments recently in the latter).

Neo-Latin Countries (Italy and Spain)
Nearly 30% of the Italian and Spanish populations used the Internet in 2006, showing lower rates of penetration than in northern countries. However, online activity was growing gradually, and in 2006 the net was the only medium able to attract new users. The same trend has characterized online newspaper markets in the two countries, with an increase in the number of readers and a flourishing market with hundreds of news sites, including dailies, magazines, and portals.

In both countries, a restricted number of titles had a prominent position in the market, both in terms of online audience and print circulation. These newspapers had independent online editions that only partially replicated the print version. Despite the small number of dominant publishers, it has been possible in both countries to observe some differences in the business models adopted by the dailies, as well as varying levels of exploitation of the Internet features (interactivity, multimedia publishing, etc.).

South Central Countries (Cyprus, Greece, and Slovenia)
The group of South Central countries shows greater internal dissimilarity. Cyprus and Greece shared, in 2006, low Internet penetration, with about a quarter of the population having access. Slovenia had higher percentages of users, (nearly half the population). In spite of their different histories and their geographical distance, Cyprus and Slovenia also shared some similarities, namely, a market of limited dimensions, dominated by a few newspapers that had a prominent role both in the print and in the online news systems. Online editions often provided independent content and were accessible for free. The Greek newspaper landscape also was characterized by a high concentration of ownership and control, but the picture was more complex in the last decade. The number of newspapers had increased to 90 publications, while the country still had one of the lowest rates of readership in Europe. Since the '90s, most dailies had created independent online editions, while the same publishers provided other news services and portals in direct competition with online newspapers.

Participants

Men prevail in our convenience sample (61.5%), while in the overall European journalist population genders are more balanced.[6] Gender distribution is similar in Neo-Latin and Anglophone countries, with a prevalence of men; in South Central and Baltic countries this gap is less evident; and the Scandinavian sample is balanced. Mean age is 37.9 (s.d. = 9.9); thus, our sample can be considered as young adult. Differences emerge across country groups[7]: South Central journalists are younger (M = 35.7) while Neo-Latin are older (M = 42.3).[8] Our respondents declare a mean of 14.1 years of working activity as journalists: those from Neo-Latin countries have a longer work experience, while respondents from Atlantic Islands declare a shorter one. Familiarity with the Internet varies from 1 year to 26 years of use (M = 7.7, s.d. = 3.1), with no variations across countries.

Method

The research follows cross-cultural principles as set out by Van der Vijer and Leung (1997). 1) involvement of at least one researcher from each country in the team which has designed, carried out and interpreted the findings; 2) common construction of the questionnaire; 3) use of a tool not only formally identical, but also valid for all the realities (being generated by the convergence of common issues and meanings); 4) systematic checking of the translation; 5) identical criteria of sample selection; 6) contemporary administration of the survey in all the investigated countries; 6) identical modality of administration, of data management and control of the quality of findings.

A questionnaire, elaborated in English and translated by the researchers in their national languages, was submitted to participants. The questionnaire was sent by e-mail to the selected journalists, many of whom were known by the researchers, and followed up by telephone interviews, but in some cases, the questionnaires were returned by e-mail. It included 11 groups of items, to be evaluated on 5-point Likert scales (for examples of the items see Tables 6, 9, 13 in the results section).

The questionnaire was kept anonymous and we asked questions regarding data such as gender, age, length of work experience, intensity of Internet use and degree of familiarity with the net. Professional profile was defined on the basis of the self-description as print or online journalist.

Group comparisons were exploited through analyses of variance and post-hoc analyses. Moreover, to identify underlying dimensions, each group of items was submitted to exploratory factor analysis (varimax rotation). For reliable factors (Cronbach's alpha), composite factor scores were computed and submitted to regression models in order to identify the importance of other considered variables (gender, age, professional profile, nationality, familiarity with and intensity of Internet use)[9].

The different items and questions covered various aspects of the influence of the Internet on European journalism. (i.e. its influence on newsrooms, and on

Table 2 The influence of the Internet on the functions of journalism

Functions	Countries					
	South-Central	Neo-Latin	Atlantic Islands	Scandinavian	Baltic	Mean (s.d)
Get news to the public as quickly as possible	4.30	4.22	4.42	4.72	4.41	**4.41** (0.94)
Reach the widest possible audience*	**3.87**	3.96	4.40	4.39	**4.45**	**4.19** (1.02)
Give people a forum to express their views	3.96	**3.87**	4.11	**4.27**	3.96	**4.03** (0.96)
Signal new trends and ideas	3.92	**3.80**	**3.93**	**3.93**	3.82	**3.89** (0.95)
Maintain contact with the public	3.89	3.91	**3.70**	4.16	3.75	**3.88** (0.98)
Be responsive to reactions on journalistic work*	3.74	**3.44**	3.65	**4.15**	3.50	**3.70** (1.08)
Provide a forum for public deliberations*	3.68	**3.06**	3.74	**4.20**	3.82	**3.68** (1.10)
Provide entertainment	**3.43**	3.44	3.65	3.61	**3.68**	**3.55** (1.09)
Disseminate credible (objective) information	3.45	**3.35**	3.53	3.63	**3.86**	**3.53** (0.99)
Be a spokesperson for certain groups*	**3.85**	3.23	3.66	**3.16**	3.46	**3.49** (1.07)
Provide analysis and interpretation of complex issues*	3.66	**3.17**	**3.70**	3.39	3.55	**3.49** (0.97)
Be a watchdog for democracy*	3.29	**2.96**	3.63	3.71	**3.89**	**3.45** (1.10)
Create a good environment for advertisers*	**3.49**	**2.80**	3.45	3.22	3.46	**3.28** (1.04)
Influence public opinion*	3.19	**2.96**	3.28	**3.52**	3.46	**3.26** (0.94)
Exert influence on the political agenda*	3.04	**2.59**	**3.19**	3.13	3.18	**3.01** (0.96)

*Significant differences between countries on this item. Scale ranging from 1 (very negative effect) to 5 (very positive effect).

relationships with the audience). For space reasons, only data pertaining to the Internet's interplay with various dimensions of journalism practices are discussed here.

Results

Journalists' Perception of Changes in their World

In order to investigate which of the changes occurring in newsrooms after the advent of the Internet are recognized or foreseen by journalists, we focused our attention on three distinct and complementary features of the profession: everyday practices, professional identity, and ethics. A fourth theme crosses all these areas of investigation: journalists' relationship with the audience.

The Functions and Practices of Journalism

According to our sample of 239 European journalists, the answer to our first research question (on the whole, is the Internet considered a source of new opportunities by journalists in terms of work enhancement, speed, and opportunity to reach wider audience?) is two-sided, since the Internet is seen as a positive tool in respect to their material work practices, but it is not seen as influential as regards the core functions of the journalist profession. In fact, for our respondents, the Internet has had a very positive influence on some structural characteristics of journalism, such as news speed, the opportunity to reach wider audiences, and the capacity to provide a virtual public arena where readers can express their opinion (see Table 2). In other words, the Internet is seen as the driver of a new role, more visible and public, for the readership. The Internet also is considered to have a positive influence because it allows journalists to signal new trends and ideas, and to keep in touch with readers.

In contrast, less importance is ascribed to the Web in the context of the provision of entertainment or of an enhanced environment for advertising. Particularly interesting is journalists' perception of the lack of influence as regards some ''traditional'' functions of journalism, such as to distribute credible information. The assessment of our respondents is the opposite of that reported by Cassidy (2007), according to whom the perception of online news credibility is increasing among American journalists. Other traditional functions of journalism not seen as influenced by the Internet are the ability of journalists to be spokespersons for groups, to provide in-depth analyses, or to be a watchdog of democracy. Finally, the Internet is seen as having a marginal part to play in two fundamental elements of information processes: the ability to influence the political agenda, and the ability to influence public opinion.

Putting it differently, the Internet gives journalists the opportunity on the one hand to *enhance their communicative performance* (that is to make news faster broader and accessible to a wider audience) and on the other to *enhance the interactive potentiality of the communication channel*. The main advantages arise around three themes: speed, size of diffusion, and interactivity with readers. But the Internet is perceived *neither as an instrument that can enhance politics*–by means of defence of democracy, a check on politicians, influence on public opinion and political agendas, or analysis and interpretation of complex issues–*nor as a business medium* that offers a better platform for advertisers.

As regards our first hypothesis, according to which respondents from countries characterized by different levels of technological implementation should show different acceptance of the Internet and different evaluation of its features, consistent with their societal context, it emerges that Neo-Latin journalists are rather sceptical about Internet's influence, while Scandinavian journalists are more convinced in ascribing to the net a pivotal role in developing the key elements of journalism. Moreover, Scandinavian journalists underline as a further improvement the opportunity to be responsive to readers[10].

	B	B	t	p<
Professional profile	.35	.24	3.68	.0001
Intensity of Internet use	.21	.20	3.16	.01
Gender		.26	.18	2.97
Constant	2.69		10.91	.0001
Adjusted R^2	14.2*			
N	231			

*p < .0001

In respect of our second hypothesis, according to which those who are more open to accepting the Internet, or who already define themselves as online journalists, should appreciate more the opportunities provided by the net for the improvement of their work practices, it emerges that many of these opportunities are, as expected, emphasised by Web journalists who, to a greater extent than their print colleagues, point out the positive effects of the new medium[11]. Women appear to be more innovative than men[12]. They consider the Internet very important in its potential to provide a public place for debate, but also to help journalists exercise their watchdog role and influence the political agenda. Female journalists, moreover, recognise a greater role for the Internet in advertising. Young and more intense Internet users give more importance to the net as regards its influence on the political agenda, on public opinion, and on the possibility to give voice to specific groups.

Factor and regression analyses reconfirm and further articulate these results. Factor analysis extracts three factors that we interpreted as "interaction with readers" (variance 12.8%, $\alpha = .77$); "relationship with stakeholders" (variance 12.4%, $\alpha = .72$) and "traditional professional values" (variance 5.6%, $\alpha = .65$). If we examine the relationship between these dimensions and the five country groups, Neo-Latin journalists emerge as those who least appreciate the impact of the Internet on traditional values of journalism[13]. Professional profile affects the evaluation of the first and of the third dimension: That is, Web journalists more than print journalists[14] consider that interaction with readers and the traditional values of journalism have been or can be improved by the net. Regression analyses identify various variables (personal and professional profile) significantly influencing these three dimensions. The first analysis (see Table 3) explains 14.2% of the whole variance. Three variables influence interaction with readers in the first analysis (see Table 3): professional profile, intensity of the Internet use and gender. Recognizing oneself as a Web journalist is a strong predictor of having an appreciation of the contribution of the Internet to the construction of interactive relationships with audience. In addition, the more journalists use the Internet, the more they are able to appreciate this possibility. Finally, women are more sensitive than men to the opportunities provided by the Internet to improve the relationship with the audience in a dynamic way.

Table 4 Multiple regression analysis for "relationship with stakeholders" (stepwise method)

	B	B	t	p<
Respondents' age	**−.11**	**−.16**	**−2.44**	**.05**
Constant	3.74		20.66	.0001
Adjusted R^2	2.1*			
N	230			

*p < .05

Table 5 Multiple regression analysis for "traditional values of journalism" (stepwise method)

	B	β	t	p<
Southern and Northern countries	.32	.20	3.11	.01
Professional profile	.25	.15	2.41	.05
Constant	2.98		18.88	.0001
Adjusted R^2	5.9*			
N	231			

*p < .0001

For relationship with stakeholders, which explains just the 2.1% of the whole inertia, only one variable (i.e. respondents' age) has an influence (see Table 4). The older our respondents, the less they see the Internet as an important tool in this regard.

There are two relevant variables–being from a Southern or a Northern country, and professional profile (see Table 5)–affecting the third factor, the influence of the Internet on traditional professional values, (2.1% of the whole inertia). Southern and print journalists do not acknowledge a relevant influence of the net on traditional values.[15]

A positive change for journalists' identity?

According to our respondents, the answer to our second research question "Do journalists rate positively the changes produced after the advent of the Internet on their traditional profile, especially on the gate keeper, investigative, disseminative functions?" is again rather ambivalent, and on the whole more negative than positive. While our respondents appreciate the fact that the Internet provides additional information with which they can enrich their articles (see Table 6), they do not think that Web or multimedia publishing is in itself a way to write more engagingly or with greater satisfaction. Moreover, they seem to consider print and Web journalism as two distinct jobs: A good print journalist is not necessarily also a good Web journalist, and vice versa.

Respondents disagree with the proposition that journalism has become more superficial or that the Internet offers access to information otherwise impossible to reach. At the same time, they say that online environment doesn't necessarily offer

better tools for journalism, that technical skills have not become disproportionately emphasized, and that online journalists are not automatically nearer to their audiences. Nor are gender gaps considered relevant.

In respect of our hypothesis H2a, according to which "respondents from different national background and professional traditions may differ in the development of new professional identities," it emerges that the same scepticism expressed by Neo-Latin journalists regarding the influence of the Internet on their professional functions is expressed by them also in respect of identity: They rate lower the opportunity offered by the Internet to enrich articles (compared with Baltic journalists) and also are less in agreement with the statement that multimedia publishing makes journalistic work more interesting (as opposed to Atlantic Islands journalists). Neo-Latin countries express more agreement with the idea that the Internet is making journalism more superficial. Baltic journalists express a more positive view of the possibility of finding information online that was unavailable before, but at the same time they are more critical as regards the growing importance of technical ability[16]. South Central journalists declare gender gaps more relevant (as opposed to Neo-Latin countries) and are more likely to consider online journalism as a packaging of information. In the same vein, they do not agree with the idea that online journalists have better tools than traditional journalists as regards in-depth analysis and access to background information[17].

In respect of our hypothesis H2b, according to which "online, young, and female journalists may have developed new positive roles, linked to the ability to orient readers in the stream of information," it emerges that gender differentiates answers only on two items: Women denounce gender inequalities more than men, and agree more strongly that journalism is more superficial in the Internet era.[18]

Web use, age and work experience influence answers in the same direction. The more journalists use the Internet, the younger they are, and the less work experience they have, the more they think that journalists will enrich their work in multimedia environment, that online journalism has better tools for providing information and for understanding background, and that online journalists are closer to their audience. In contrast, especially light users are convinced that the net is making journalism more of a desk job, that male journalists use the Internet more than their female colleagues, and that online journalists are just information packers[19].

Interestingly, younger journalists are more likely to think that new journalism is a desk job, but that it is not necessarily more superficial[20], even as they acknowledge the excessive importance of technical ability[21].

Web journalists, as expected, express more positive perceptions as regards the influence of the Internet on creating interesting articles, and express more satisfaction about multimedia journalism[22]

Factor analysis reduces the complexity of all these answers to two main factors: "decay of the profession" (variance 16.4%, $\alpha = .73$) and "Internet: a better tool" (variance 16.3%, $\alpha = .68$). Atlantic Islands journalists express lower ratings on the first: For them, the Internet has not worsened journalism, while Latin journalists

Table 6 Influence of the Internet on practices

Issues	Countries					
	South-Central	Neo-Latin	Atlantic Islands	Scandinavian	Baltic	Mean (s.d)
With the Internet, journalists can get more information into their stories than before*	4.25	3.71	3.73	4.17	4.45	**4.04** (1.09)
Future newspaper journalists can enrich their work by moving between different outlets (publishing channels) of their newspaper	3.49	3.72	3.98	3.96	3.93	**3.80** (1.17)
The Internet is leading journalism towards more of a 'desktop job'	3.42	3.76	3.44	3.80	3.62	**3.60** (1.26)
Online journalists are more information packers than creators of original content *	3.75	3.57	2.81	2.98	3.52	**3.31** (1.30)
Web publishing allows journalists to develop more attractive story-telling formats	3.28	2.94	3.32	2.83	3.34	**3.13** (1.23)
A good print journalist is usually also a good online journalist	3.21	2.94	3.44	2.83	3.10	**3.11** (1.35)
Working for multiple media outlets makes journalistic work more rewarding*	2.89	2.32	3.33	3.28	3.10	**2.97** (1.32)
In online journalism, journalists have better tools for giving background information and context than in print journalism*	2.28	2.57	3.54	2.83	3.17	**2.86** (1.46)
The Internet is rendering journalistic work more superficial*	2.85	3.24	2.16	2.33	3.07	**2.70** (1.41)
Alongside the development of the Internet, the importance of journalists' technological skills has increased too much*	2.96	2.98	2.11	2.09	3.62	**2.68** (1.39)
Journalists find information on the Internet that they wouldn't have found otherwise*	2.47	3.04	1.95	2.04	3.24	**2.49** (1.35)
Online journalists are closer to their audience than print journalists	2.09	2.77	2.46	2.33	2.48	**2.43** (1.33)
Male journalists tend to use the Internet more frequently than female journalists*	2.42	1.37	1.77	1.64	1.53	**1.80** (1.12)

*Significant differences between countries on this item Scale ranging from 1 (completely disagree) to 5 (completely agree).

Table 7 Multiple regression analysis for "decay of the profession" (stepwise method)

	B	β	T	p<
Respondents' age	.21	.19	2.99	.01
Southern and North- ern countries	−.34	−.16	−2.49	.05
Professional profile	−.34	−.15	−2.39	.05
Constant	3.06		8.26	.0001
Adjusted R^2	9.3*			
N	231			

*p < .0001

see a greater decline. Similarly print journalists express more concern than Web journalists that the Web is harming journalism [23].

Regression analyses (see Table 7 and Table 8) have been run on these two main factors. In the first analysis, which explains 9.3% of the whole inertia[24], three variables are in play: respondents' age, being from a Southern or a Northern country, and professional profile. The vision of the Internet as a cause of decline of the European journalism is shared more by print and Southern journalists than by the others. Furthermore, the more age increases, the more this viewpoint is adopted.

In the second analysis, which explains 30% of the inertia, the opinion that the Internet offers better tools to journalism is shared especially by Web journalists and Northern journalists, and by those who have more familiarity with the Internet.

Professional ethics

The third aspect which we investigated in order to monitor the influence of the Internet on journalism is its effects on ethics (Wilkins & Brennen, 2004). According to our sample, the answer to our third research question "Are journalists developing new ethics that mingle traditional and new values?" is again ambivalent (see Table 9). On the one hand our respondents underline some positive consequences of the Internet, such as the access to a greater number of sources and an improvement in the ability to double-check stories. On the other, they argue that the Internet also has

Table 8 Multiple regression analysis for "Internet: a better tool" (stepwise method)

	B	B	T	p<
Professional profile	.93	.52	9.23	.0001
Southern and North- ern countries	.34	.20	3.53	.01
Respondents' Internet age	.38	.14	2.43	.05
Constant	1.29		6.10	.0001.
Adjusted R2	30.0*			
N	231			

*p < .0001

Table 9 Influence of the Internet on ethics

Ethical issues	Countries					
	South-Central	Neo-Latin	Atlantic Islands	Scandinavian	Baltic	Mean (s.d)
The Internet lets journalists use a wider range of sources*	4.47	3.80	4.16	3.91	4.75	**4.14** (1.05)
The Internet makes it easier to double-check information*	3.70	3.17	3.98	3.89	3.39	**3.65** (1.18)
Online, journalists have to deal more often with unreliable information*	4.04	3.26	3.65	3.33	3.52	**3.57** (1.31)
Online journalism has sacrificed accuracy for speed*	3.40	3.44	2.75	2.57	3.31	**3.08** (1.28)
The Internet's interactivity makes journalism more accountable to the public*	2.75	2.56	3.49	3.09	3.24	**3.01** (1.33)
Online journalism has meant that media converge on a narrower news agenda*	3.25	2.37	2.30	2.11	3.13	**2.56** (1.26)
Distinguishing between true and false or inaccurate information is as easy on the Internet as elsewhere	2.21	2.50	2.63	2.65	2.76	**2.53** (1.30)
The Internet threatens the quality of journalism*	2.62	2.50	2.54	1.91	2.93	**2.48** (1.29)

*Significant differences between countries on this item Scale ranging from 1 (completely disagree) to 5 (completely agree).

introduced negative effects, mainly relating to the unreliability of online information and the greater difficulty in differentiating falsehood from truth. Answers to items related to the sacrifice of news accuracy for speed, and to the homogenization of news, come in around the middle of the scale (3).

In respect of our hypothesis H3a, according to which "old journalists, and those from countries where Internet is less spread, may passively resist change, may seek to emphasise traditional roles, and may look at online world as irreconcilable with traditional values," the contrast between Southern and Northern countries emerges again. In detail, Neo-Latin journalists are more sceptical as regards double-checking information and the responsibility toward the audience (as opposed to Atlantic Islands journalists); they are also more convinced that Internet journalism has sacrificed accuracy for speed. South Central and Baltic journalists believe that the net makes news converge on a narrower agenda and that it is more likely to relay unreliable information. Scandinavians are on the opposite pole on these questions, and disagree that the net threatens the quality of journalism.

Table 10 Multiple regression analysis for "the more online, the less concern for ethics" (stepwise method)

	B	β	T	p<
Professional profile	−.53	−.27	−4.20	.0001
Southern and Northern countries	−.29	−.15	−2.41	.05
Constant	3.82		20.11	.0001
Adjusted R^2	9.0*			
N	231			

*p < .0001

As regards our hypothesis H3b, according to which "print and online journalists, low and high Internet users, as well as male and female journalists differ in the evaluation of the credibility of online news," it emerges that Web journalists, as well as heavier Internet users[25], express more positive views as concerns the various elements of ethics which have been considered[26].

Women journalists[27], as well as young journalists[28], are less convinced that the Internet represents a menace to the quality of journalism.

Factor analysis run on this set of items reduces them to a single dimension that can be interpreted as "the more online, the less concern for ethics" (variance 30.4%, $\alpha = .73$). Scandinavian and Atlantic islands journalists score significantly lower than journalists from the other countries on this dimension; that is, they do not see the Internet as a source of ethical decline. Print journalists score higher on this dimension than Web journalists[29]. The regression analysis (see Table 10) confirms the role of these two variables: Recognizing oneself as an online journalist and being from the North are strong predictors for disagreeing with this perception.[30]

Journalists' Perception of the Internet's Influence on their Relationship with Readers
Finally, let us analyze the fourth theme that crosses the previous three areas investigated: the new relationship that journalists might entertain with the readership. One of the crucial changes that the Internet may make possible concerns the relationship between journalists and their audiences. Editors, in principle, seem to be aware that they must reader-orient their output, keeping the organization focused on the needs and desires of their readers/customers, and taking steps to respond to the continuous changes in their readerships.[31] In order to complete the European picture of how journalists perceive and evaluate the changes occurring in their world following the advent of the Internet, we investigated to what extent journalists are informed of their online audience's behaviour (in terms of pages visited and messages posted to online forums). This knowledge would be fundamental to managing the interactivity with readers that, in an Internet-oriented publishing organization, might be regarded as pivotal to the profession. However, only a quarter of our participants declare that they have access to detailed information on readers.

Table 11 Access to information on readers by countries

Access	Countries					
	South-Central	Neo-Latin	Atlantic Islands	Scandinavian	Baltic	Mean (s.d)
Yes, I have access to detailed information on reader behavior	20 (39.2%)a	3 (5.7%)	13 (24.1%)	14 (30.4%)	6 (42.9%)	56 (25.7%)
Yes, but only in broad outline	16 (31.4%)	19 (35.8%)	21 (38.9%)	23 (50.0%)	4 (28.6%)	83 (38.1%)
No	15 (29.4%)	31 (58.5%)	20 (37.0%)	9 (19.6%)	4 (28.6%)	79 (36.2%)
Total	**51**	**53**	**54**	**46**	**14**	**218**

[a]column percentages

Comparing the data regarding the access across countries, it emerges that Baltic journalists receive more detailed data on audience behaviour, while half of Scandinavian journalists receive only broad outlines and more than a half of Neo-Latin journalists do not receive any such information (see Table 11)[32].

If we check for differences between online journalists, print journalists, and print/online journalists (see Table 12), we may observe that, as expected, more than a half of the first group have detailed information on their audience, while more than a half of print journalists do not.[33]. Finally, half of print/online journalists have access to broad outlines on readers.

Almost all journalists agree that the relationship with readers improves if the potentialities of the Internet and of print news combine. They are, however, convinced that, on important issues, the audience still prefers print newspapers. The role of audience stereotypes is central in driving the production of cultural artefacts. Since the relationship until now has been mainly unidirectional, with feedback rare, journalists have been obliged to imagine the most important characteristics of their readers in order to tailor their 'product' for this community. Certainly, publishers often organize marketing surveys to improve understanding of the tastes, attitudes, and behaviours of their audiences, but, as we will see below, this information often is not transmitted to journalists.

But do journalists feel that they need information on the readership to inform their work in the Internet era? We tried to answer this question by asking them a set of items focused on their relationships with the audience (see Table 13).

Almost all journalists agree that the relationship with the public improves if print and online journalism combine. They are however convinced that, on important issues, the audience still prefers print newspapers. This is inconsistent with the number of web pages visited especially during relevant national and international events and gives an idea of the prototype of audience that journalists share. Looking

Table 12 Access to information on readers by professional identity

Access	Respondent's work profile			
	Print j.	Online j.	Print/Online j.	Total
Yes, I have access to detailed information on reader behaviour	24 (17.5%)a	15 (57.7%)	16 (29.6%)	55 (25.3%)
Yes, but only in broad outline	47 (34.3%)	11 (42.3%)	25 (46.3%)	83 (38.2%)
No	66 (48.2%)	0 (0.0%)	13 (24.1%)	79 (36.4%)
Total	**137**	**26**	**54**	**217**

[a]column percentages

at cross-national differences, South Central journalists, who perceive themselves mainly as print journalists and who declare that they receive detailed information on audience, think, to a greater degree than other journalists, that the audience still prefers print newspapers.

Comparing Web journalists and print journalists, each group responds according to its own professional agenda[34]. The former declares that the audience benefits from the opportunities offered by online news (items 1, 3, and 5); the latter estimates that the audience prefers the reliability of printed press (items 2, 4, and 7).

Women agree less with the idea that the audience ascribes more credibility to print press; moreover, they are much more convinced than men that the audience needs to receive not only uni-directional information but also to interact with journalists[35].

Internet use and work experience also occasion differences between journalists. The more journalists use the net, the less they agree with the statements concerning the audience's preference for print newspapers[36]. The pattern is reversed for journalists with more work experience[37].

Factor analysis highlights the underlying relations between these items. Two factors emerge: The first relates to items that can be interpreted as "audience prefers print newspapers" (variance 32.26%, $\alpha = .82$), the second can be interpreted as "audience prefers online newspapers" (variance 30.86%, $\alpha = .69$). It is worth noting that these two dimensions describe journalists' perception of their audience and are independent, in the sense that higher agreement with the former does not necessarily imply lower agreement with the latter. Countries differ only on the first dimension: Southern journalists tend to be more convinced that the audience prefers print; Scandinavian journalists agree less with this idea[38]. Print journalists and Web journalists differ on both dimensions, in expected directions[39]. In other words, print journalists are convinced that the audience prefers print newspapers and Web journalists think the opposite. This result is interesting, because it seems to confirm that professional self-representation lies at the origin of the stereotype of the audience.

Regression analyses on these two dimensions verify the predictors on the representation of the audience shared by journalists. The first analysis (see Table 14)

Table 13 Influence of the Internet on the relationship with the audience

Issues	South-Central	Neo-Latin	Atlantic Islands	Scandinavian	Baltic	Mean (s.d)
			Countries			
Combining the potentialities of print and online media results in an improved relationship with the audience	4.06	4.15	4.19	4.33	4.10	**4.17** (0.88)
On important issues, the audience prefers print media	4.57	4.04	3.63	3.14	3.62	**3.84** (1.25)
Linking with the audience is an important benefit of online journalism	3.75	3.78	4.02	3.78	3.72	**3.82** (1.09)
Print media is more trusted than online media	4.04	3.70	3.91	3.27	3.06	**3.70** (1.27)
The public demands that newspapers make use of online possibilities	3.36	3.28	3.58	3.60	3.00	**3.39** (1.18)
Audience needs news, not interaction with journalists	2.96	3.27	3.26	2.96	3.21	**3.13** (1.30)
Print media serves audience better than online media	3.74	2.98	2.79	2.69	2.93	**3.04** (1.28)

Scale ranging from 1 (completely disagree) to 5 (completely agree).

explains 27.3% of the whole variance. Three variables have a significant influence: professional profile, being a journalist of a Southern or Northern country, and gender. Recognizing oneself as an online journalist, belonging to a Northern country and being a woman tends towards disagreement with the idea that the public prefers print newspapers. The second analysis (see Table 15), which explains 6.5% of the total inertia, shows that being a print journalist and a male tends to lead to a contrary viewpoint.[40]

Conclusion

This research confirms at a pan-European level the results which have emerged in other studies concerning the influence of the Internet in the journalism in Europe (Paulussen, 2004; van der Wurff & Lauf, 2005). The social construction of journalism we observed is twofold: On the one hand, journalists positively assess the role of the Internet in the material, practical organization of their labour. They welcome the Internet when it suits their professional skills, practices, and purposes: This tool speeds up and facilitates the functions of journalism, it improves the work's impact on audiences, and it enables a more visible and public relationship with readers. Through the Internet, journalists take the opportunity to *enhance their communicative performance* and *the interactive potentiality of the communication channel*. In short,

Table 14 Multiple regression analysis for "audience prefers print newspapers" (stepwise method)

	B	β	t	p<
Professional profile	−.99	−.44	−7.82	.0001
Southern and Northern countries	−.49	−.23	−4.03	.0001
Gender	−.334	−.151	−2.68	.01
Constant	5.28		27.00	.0001
Adjusted R^2	27.3*			
N	231			

*p < .0001

Table 15 Multiple regression analysis for "audience prefers online newspapers" (stepwise method)

	B	β	t	p<
Professional profile	.40	.24	3.75	.0001
Gender	.21	.13	2.01	.05
Constant	2.95		18.65	.0001
Adjusted R^2	6.5*			
N	231			

*p < .0001

the main advantages relate to three themes: speed, breadth of diffusion, additional information, and interactivity with readers.

On the other hand, journalists hesitate, as argued by O' Sullivan and Heinonen (2008), to abandon the conventions of traditional journalism, both at organizational and at professional level. Moreover, they are suspicious of the unreliability of online information and acknowledge the greater difficulty of distinguishing credible content. More importantly, perhaps, our respondents do not perceive the Internet *either as an instrument that can enhance politics* in its different elements–defence of democracy, a check on politicians, influence on public opinion and the political agenda, analysis and interpretation of complex issues–*or as a merely business-oriented medium* that offers a more useful platform for advertisers.

In sum, as we look at the power dynamics between journalists and media owners, the multimedia journalist appears among publishers' strategic goals rather than among the professional aspirations of our respondents. Moreover, they consider print and Web journalism two distinct jobs, which present severe limits of interchangeability. This attitude towards the effects of the Internet on their profession is strengthened also by their concern about the unreliability of online information. The negative picture of the Internet put forward appears to be consistent with the difficulties journalists have in producing new strategies to manage the changes occurring in the norms and standards of their profession (Ruggiero, 2004). For

example, looking at the ongoing power dynamics within modern societies, and the accessibility of direct sources offered by the Internet, it may be argued that journalists have lost some of their status, as they no longer can be considered the sole gatekeepers of news (Singer, 1998). However, journalists, it seems, have adopted a passive stance and have not sought, in the context of the Internet to effect a professional shift or to propose (or impose) themselves in a new leading role, i.e. as professionals who are the principal point of reference, able to select, to frame, and to interpret relevant news within the overwhelming chaos of information. Nor have they succeeded in using the Internet to improve the core of values which traditionally were at the basis of the journalism ethics (Evans, 1999). The "normalization" and "domestication" of the traditional values of journalism were effected long before the advent of the Internet. But, if there was a hope that the Internet could provide some possibility to support and reinforce the social functions of journalism, this survey suggests that this opportunity has not been recognised. Journalists, at the time the research was conducted, were a social group in defence, trying to resist the changes introduced or potentially introduced by publishers and readers through the Internet.

As regards the relationship between them and the readers in this new Internet landscape, on the one hand there emerges the indifferent attitude of publishers and editors towards interactivity; on the other, journalists are divided among themselves about the interpretation of readers' needs or preferences, but the majority is convinced that the audience still prefers print newspapers.

Furthermore, this research confirms that journalists' perception and evaluation of the changes occurring in the world of journalism following the advent of the Internet depends on a series of differentiation variables, such as gender, age, country, professional profile (print or online), length of work experience, and intensity of Internet use.

Some caveats should be stressed at this point. Respondents of the most-read, generalist, daily newspapers of 11 European countries voluntarily took part to our research. Thus, it is possible that our picture reflects the state of the main newsrooms, but we cannot exclude the fact that those who decided to participate also were those more motivated to express their positive or negative opinions on the Internet. Further research could expand our results by taking into account other European countries and other kinds of newspapers, and by collecting data with randomized samples. Moreover, the dimension of the sample should be enlarged: Although the convenience sample of the present study is quite large and some of its characteristics are similar to the overall population distribution, we can consider the results only as indicative of some trends. It is worth noting that, due to recruitment procedure and dimensions, our respondents do not constitute a representative sample and thus our results cannot be properly generalized to the European journalist population.

As already noted, some of the regression analyses explain only limited percentages of variance. We elected to present them equally in order to provide indicative results. Further research is required to assess empirically some of the questions that this

investigation has raised. Third, as in other fields, the speed of advances in the digital domain requires further efforts to investigate how more recent technological innovations have been socially interpreted, reconstructed, and implemented in journalistic work.

The research, however, adds some new perspectives in the landscape of journalism studies. It differs from previous research in that the study raises the possibility of tracing a variegated map of differences inside the world of journalism. First of all, the resistance and ambivalence towards the Internet are expressed especially by print journalists and light Internet users. This tends to confirm again that those who express negative attitudes towards a technology are those who have less familiarity with it and who use it less (Fortunati & Manganelli, 1998). This means the journalists who work exclusively offline (or identify themselves as such) are less likely to respond positively to innovation. This defensive posture, however, carries a risk of being counterproductive, as it excludes the possibility of framing the Internet as a tool to promote a new role for journalists that could enhance their role in society. Second, journalism culture is very much influenced by the general background of the individual country. Even if some common trends emerge, North-South differences are strong. Southern journalists are affected by a social context which is less embracing of the Internet, while Northern journalists reflect an attitude of general appreciation of the net in their countries. Third, gender differences are shown emerging. Despite the fact that a higher presence of women in newsrooms has up to now not changed the logic and the quality of the framing of news (probably due also to the weaker professional positions which they have occupied), women appear to emphasise more the importance of the Internet with respect to both politics and business. They are also more sensitive towards the opportunity to improve the relationship of journalists with their audience, and are more convinced that the audience needs to receive not only information but also to interact with journalists. Conversely, women are also less concerned that the Internet represents a menace to the quality of journalism, but at the same time they are more concerned with the superficiality of journalism in the Internet era.

Notes

1 COST is a European programme of cooperation in the field of technology and science, which finances the construction of networks among researchers in Europe.
2 costa30.eu/files/WG2_CFPmediasystems.pdf
3 Nomenclature varies between countries. Here, the term 'publisher' is used to denote the publishing organization.
4 http://www.editors Weblog.org/analysis/2008/05/3_newsroom_barometer_the_future_of_the_p.php (accessed 4/06/2008).
5 http://www.trends-in-newsrooms.org/home.php (accessed 19/06/2008).
6 According to the Efj-survey (2006) "Women journalists in the European integration process" carried out by Annegret Witt-Barthel, women are 47.1% of the whole

universe of European journalists, but they still earn less than their colleagues and less occupy leading positions, although they are slowly catching up. Available at http://www.ifj.org/assets/docs/118/144/bad0a76-d2b7b90.pdf (accessed 4/06/2008).

7 Univariate Anova with factor between age: $F_{(4,232)} = 4.02, p < 0.01$.

8 The seniority in the Neo-Latin sample is mainly due to Italian respondents, whose age is significantly higher than among Spaniards ($M = 46.5$ versus $M = 35.1$: T_{52}: 4.82, $p < .0001$).

9 We entered the following variables as predictors: gender (dummy variable $0 = M, 1 = F$), countries split in Southern (Italy, Spain, Slovenia, Greece and Cyprus) and Northern (Estonia, Finland, Ireland, Lithuania, Sweden, UK) (dummy variable $0 = $ Southern countries, $1 = $ Northern countries), age (measured in years), familiarity with the Internet (measured in years), work experience (measured in years), intensity of Internet use (four levels: $1 = $ less than once a day, $2 = $ from 1 to 5, $3 = $ from 5 to 10, $4 = $ more than 10 times a day), respondent's professional profile (dummy variable $0 = $ print journalists, $1 = $ Web journalists). Only predictors with significant effects are presented in the tables of the results section.

10 Univariate Anova with factor between group of countries: Item 2: $F_{(4,233)} = 3.65, p < 0.01$; Item 7: $F_{(4,231)} = 3.16, p < 0.05$; Item 8: $F_{(4,229)} = 7.56, p < 0.0001$; Item 4: $F_{(4,230)} = 3.93, p < 0.01$; Item 13: $F_{(4,229)} = 5.42, p < 0.0001$; Item 14: $F_{(4,224)} = 4.05, p < 0.01$; Item 15: $F_{(4,231)} = 2.71, p < 0.05$; Item 16: $F_{(4,230)} = 3.55, p < 0.01$.

11 $T_{235} = -4.05, p < .0001$ for Item 1; $T_{234} = -3.04, p < .01$ for Item 2; $T_{233} = -2.48, p < .05$ for Item 3; $T_{234} = -2.42, p < .05$ for Item 4; $T_{233} = -4.12, p < .0001$ for Item 5; $T_{232} = -2.64, p < .01$ for Item 6; $T_{234} = -2.07, p < .05$ for Item 8; $T_{235} = -2.86, p < .01$ for Item 9; $T_{230} = -2.23, p < .05$ for Item 12; $T_{225} = -3.67, p < .0001$ for Item 13.

12 $T_{237} = -2.97, p < .01$ for Item 1; $T_{235} = -2.54, p < .05$ for Item 3; $T_{235} = -2.00, p < .05$ for Item 5; $T_{232} = -3.12, p < .01$ for Item 7; $T_{232} = -2.25, p < .05$ for Item 12; $T_{227} = -2.22, p < .05$ for Item 13; $T_{233} = -2.24, p < .05$ for Item 15.

13 Univariate Anova with factor between group of countries: F2: $F_{(4,233)} = 3.56, p < 0.01$; F3: $F_{(4,234)} = 3.85, p < 0.01$.

14 $T_{235} = -4.53, p < .0001$ for F1; $T_{235} = -2.54, p < .05$ for F3.

15 A warning about these regression analyses: given that the different predictors that emerged explain only 2.1% of the whole variance in the first case and 5.9% in the second, the related results and discussion have to be taken with great prudence.

16 Univariate Anova with factor between group of countries: Item 1: $F_{(4,221)} = 13.06, p < 0.0001$; Item 4: $F_{(4,232)} = 5.51, p < 0.0001$; Item 5: $F_{(4,233)} = 6.50, p < 0.0001$; Item 6: $F_{(4,234)} = 5.60, p < 0.0001$; Item 8: $F_{(4,210)} = 6.99, p < 0.001$.

17 Univariate Anova with factor between group of countries: Item 1: $F_{(4,221)} = 13.06, p < 0.0001$; Item 4: $F_{(4,232)} = 5.51, p < 0.0001$; Item 5: $F_{(4,233)} = 6.50, p < 0.0001$; Item 6: $F_{(4,234)} = 5.60, p < 0.0001$; Item 8: $F_{(4,210)} = 6.99, p < 0.001$.

18 $T_{213} = 2.61, p < .05$ for Item 8; $T_{237} = 2.11, p < .05$ for Item 6.

19 Univariate Anova with factor between intensity of the Internet use: Item 1: $F_{(3,233)} = 2.72, p < 0.05$; Item 3: $F_{(3,234)} = 3.78, p < 0.05$; Item 4: $F_{(3,211)} = 13.46, p < 0.0001$; Item 5: $F_{(3,232)} = 3.59, p < 0.05$; Item 6: $F_{(3,233)} = 3.47, p < 0.05$; Item 7: $F_{(3,235)} = 3.26, p < 0.05$.

20 Univariate Anova with factor between age: Item 1: $F_{(2,234)} = 3.24, p < 0.05$; Item 3: $F_{(2,235)} = 3.07, p < 0.05$; Item 7: $F_{(2,236)} = 4.27, p < 0.05$; Item 8: $F_{(2,236)} = 5.06, p < 0.01$; Univariate Anova with factor between work experience: Item 1: $F_{(2,234)} = 4.29, p < 0.05$; Item 3: $F_{(2,235)} = 3.34, p < 0.05$; Item 8: $F_{(2,236)} = 4.88, p < 0.01$.

21 Univariate Anova with factor between age: Item 5: $F_{(2,228)} = 3.67, p < 0.05$.

22 $T_{234} = -5.18, p < .0001$ for Item 2; $T_{232} = -4.88, p < .0001$ for Item 4;

23 Univariate Anova with factor between group of countries: for F1: $F_{(4,234)} = 4.20, p < 0.01$; for F2 $F_{(4,234)} = 3.30, p < 0.05$.

24 A warning about this regression analysis: given that the different predictors emerged explain only 9.3% of the whole variance the related results and discussion have to be taken with great prudence.

25 Univariate Anova with factor between intensity of Internet use: Item 4: $F_{(3,235)} = 4.20, p < 0.01$; Item 6: $F_{(3,218)} = 4.63, p < 0.01$; Item 7: $F_{(3,235)} = 4.26, p < 0.01$.

26 $T_{235} = 3.03, p < .01$ for Item 4; $T_{235} = -2.23, p < .05$ for Item 5; $T_{218} = 4.74, p < .0001$ for Item 6; $T_{235} = -2.68, p < .01$ for Item 7; $T_{235} = 3.83, p < .0001$ for Item 8.

27 $T_{237} = 2.04, p < .05$ for Item 8.

28 Univariate Anova with factor between age: Item 8: $F_{(2,236)} = 4.85, p < 0.01$.

29 Univariate Anova with factor between group of countries: $F_{(4,234)} = 6.47, p < 0.0001$. $T_{235} = 4.44, p < .0001$.

30 A warning about this regression analysis: given that the different predictors emerged explain only 9.3% of the whole variance the related results and discussion have to be taken with great prudence.

31 See on this the "*Impact Study: The Power to Grow Readership*" promoted by the Readership Institute. http://www.readership.org/impact/impact.asp (accessed 19/06/2008).

32 $\chi^2_{(8)} = 28.37, p < 0.0001$.

33 $\chi^2_{(4)} = 32.95, p < 0.0001$.

34 T test are all significant except for the penultimate item.

35 $T_{235} = 7.58, p < .0001$; $T_{235} = -3.70, p < .0001$.

36 Univariate Anova with factor between intensity of Internet use: Item 2: $F_{(3,233)} = 4.08, p < 0.01$; Item 4: $F_{(3,220)} = 2.88, p < 0.05$; Item 7: $F_{(3,234)} = 7.59, p < 0.0001$.

37 Univariate Anova with factor between work experience: Item 6: $F_{(2,234)} = 3.96, p < 0.05$; Item 7: $F_{(2,235)} = 4.77, p < 0.01$.

38 Univariate Anova with factor between F1: $F_{(4,234)} = 7.59, p < 0.0001$.

39 F1: $T_{235} = 2.07, p < .05$; F2: $T_{222} = 2.55, p < .05$.

40 A warning about this regression analysis: given that the different predictors emerged explain only 6.5% of the whole variance, the related results and discussion has to be interpreted with prudence.

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