Mònica PUNTÍ BRUN*

Proximity Online Media in Catalonia (Spain). The Case Study of *Nació Digital* Group

Abstract

This paper aims to make a conceptualization of proximity digital media. It will define what is local and proximity communication as well as the history and evolution of online journalism and digital media features which are briefly reviewed. Business models that exist nowadays and the state of art in Catalonia (Spain) will also be briefly analysed. From this theoretical framework it will be explained the case of *Nació Digital* and its territorial media. Initially the history of this media group will be developed, as well as its journalistic and business models. The paper seeks to underscore the importance of the journalistic model based on the tradition of the profession, the proximity information and the technology developed for this online media. The *Nació Digital* is an example of a successful media outlet judging from its audience figures (the second online media in Catalonia) and its sustainable model business.

Keywords: Proximity online media, Digital Media, *Nació Digital*.

1. Introduction

The aim of this paper is to explain the case of *Nació Digital*, an online media communication group from Catalonia (Spain). The objective is to systematize the main characteristics and the conceptualization of proximity online media and study an example of it. *Nació Digital* Group has an online digital media that covers the region of Catalonia (Spain), which is called *Nació Digital* (www.naciodigital.cat). It has more than 30 online local editions and some thematic online media about ecology, culture, technology and photo, among others. This article advances the partial results of the doctoral thesis: “Proximity digital media. The case study of *Nació Digital* Group”.

In 1996, the first online media of *Nació Digital* was born. It is *Osona.com*, a proximity online media. In 2005, the group opened an edition that covers all Catalonia, *Nació Digital.cat*. However, the group is deeply rooted in the territory and is aware of the importance of local communication. For this reason, all over the years different territorial editions have been created. The case of *Nació Digital* and its territorial editions has been chosen to investigate because it has been a media understudied and probably a bit forgotten in the history of Internet and digital media in Catalonia and Spain. This media was born at the beginning of the first online media experiences without any reference to other traditional media (press, radio or television).

Although we are currently living in a globalized world, citizens want to have local information and proximity is a raising value. They want to find communication spaces with the

* University of Girona (Catalonia, Spain), monica.punti@udg.edu.

news of their village, county or district. In Catalonia and Spain, new local media projects are emerging, especially on the Internet, and we are in a time of revitalization of such information. Some authors coin the term *glocalization*, a word combining the idea of globalization with the idea of localization. A Spanish author defines this process as follows:

This relationship between the global and the local appears as a basic feature of the new scenario created by the hand of the convergence of telecommunications, computing and content industries. New technologies have not only enabled globalization but also multiplied local spaces. And in those spaces journalism is done with a very sharp features both the proximity and professional specialization. (López García, 2008, p. 40)

The relevance of this research is to examine a case (Nació Digital) with a successful informative model that gives more importance to local information than other kind and which has not been studied in depth before. *Nació Digital* is the second online media in terms of audience in Catalonia after the online edition of the Catalan newspaper *Ara*. Moreover, it has a successful business model too because it is a sustainable media and gets profits of its activity with the principal source of funding that is advertising. *Nació Digital* was founded in 1996 as one of the first proximity online media called *Osona.com*. In 2005, this project started to grow up and the group of communication online was formed as is currently known. Some specific objectives of this paper are:

- to establish a brief theoretical framework of proximity digital media through the concept of local communication, in addition to explain the origin and evolution of online journalism in Catalonia and Spain;
- to define what are digital or online media and its main features in the current media landscape. Conceptualize terms such as online media, online journalism, and features such as multimedia, interactivity and hypertext;
- to tell the story of *Nació Digital* Group from its origins in 1996 to the present, as well as some of their proximity online media;
- to highlight the most representative elements of proximity journalism of this group of online communication and describe its journalism and business model.

In the next section, the theoretical framework on which the paper is based will be explained. The notion of ‘proximity online media’ is defined through two variables that comprise it: the notion of proximity or local communication and the concept of online media. Then, there is a brief history of online journalism, its main characteristics and its business models. In addition, the state of art in Catalonia (Spain) is explained at the end of the section. On the other hand, in the second part, there is a brief history of *Nació Digital* Group, as well as, an analysis of the most significant elements of its journalistic model (proximity information, technology, photography and video, social networks and participation) and its business model too.

2. Theoretical framework

2.1. Proximity online media

Historically local communication in Catalonia has been very important and, at present, has a prominent role. In a globalized society, local information is requiring its space. In fact, users want this kind of information and are interested on knowing proximity news, not only geographically but also culturally, thematically, etc. Some authors talk about *glocal*, as a new stage

of the information on which the local and the global get together (López García, 2004). Both phenomena happen simultaneously and interact in a complementary or contradictory way. New technologies have revitalized the proximity communication, because starting new projects do not require large investments in infrastructure or many personal. Thus, a large number of proximity online media projects have emerged.

We conceive the local ‘cibermedio’ as a transmitter of contents about local entity that is willing to mediate between facts and public, uses fundamentally techniques and journalistic standards, uses multimedia language, is interactive and hypertextual, is updated and published on the Internet. In this approach, the ‘local entity’ is what exists or may exist in a place –in a certain space and time- and for a community, defined in terms of shared identity and with the relationship ‘security-freedom’. (López García, 2008, p. 64)

The name ‘cibermedio’ (in English, it could be ‘cybermedia’) is one of the most used terms in Spain by authors such as Ramón Salaverría, Javier Díez Noci o Xosé López García, all of them prominent researchers of the subject. However, the most used terms internationally are online media, digital media or new media. These are the names used in this paper, but all framed in the definition that has been offered previously. Also Internet journalism has received different names: online journalism, digital journalism or multimedia journalism, among others. In Spain, it is common to use the term ‘ciberperiodismo’ (in English, ‘cyber-journalism’ or ‘cyber-journalism’).

In the previous definition from López García, he adds the concept ‘local’ that defines a specific kind of journalism because our study is about proximity online media. However local communication not necessary has to be digital, both characteristics only describe the concept journalism. While „digital“ describes a type of journalism that is done through the Internet, „local“ describes a specialized thematic that confronts regional or national. The term „local“ is defined as the entity that exists or can exist in a place-in a space and in a time-and for a community (López García, 2008, p. 59).

The term used by Ernest Abadal and Javier Guallar (2010) is digital pressⁱ because it is the most used expression in the Spanish literature. This authors defined the term as follows: “Digital press is the means of social communication which distributes journalistic information in digital format, usually through Internet but not exclusively, which may or may not have been specifically developed for the digital format” (Abadal & Guallar, 2010, p. 24). So, for them, the main characteristic of digital press is how the information is presented. The same authors also explain that digital press is characterized by interactivity, hypertext, multimedia, permanent updating, customization and memory (or documentation). We will describe briefly these characteristics in a later section.

2.2. Brief History of Online Journalism

It was in United States that first online media came. The pioneer was *The Chicago Tribune* that was born in 1992 through America On-line. *San José Mercury News* was the first media that had an electronic version on the web in 1993. The same year it was also created a media exclusively distributed through a network, *The Nando Times*. After that, many others will have been created: *Los Angeles Times*, *The Arizona Republic*, *The Chicago Tribune*, *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, *The Washington Post*, etc. Only few months later, in 1994, some media appeared in Europe such as *Monde*, *The Economist*, *The Electronic Telegraph*, *The Independent*, *The Times*, etc. (Luzón Fernández, 2003).

“In the World Wide Web, the honor of being the first Spanish journal that put entirely their content corresponds to the *Boletín Oficial del Estado* [Official State Bulletin], in September 1994”, explains Díaz Noci (2005, p. 28). The same author thinks that the history of online media in Spain started in 1994 when appeared the digital version of the magazine *El Temps* through Servicom. Then, *El Periódico de Catalunya* and *El Mundo* did the same both in 1994 (Díaz Noci, 2005, p. 25). The first newspaper of general information to enter on the Web was *Avui* in 1995, and then *El Periódico de Catalunya*, mentioned before, and *La Vanguardia*. Catalan newspapers were pioneers, but Madrid ones did not take much more time. After *El Mundo*, it was *ABC* who made the leap to the Internet (Armañanzas, Díaz Noci, & Meso, 1996). The newspaper *El País* was one of the last to go online in 1996, along with *La Razón*, in 1998 (Salaverría, 2007, p. 359).

Both, Barcelona newspapers and Madrid onesⁱⁱ, joined the Internet very soon, but the provincial or regional newspapers did the same some time later. Magazines and other periodical publications were also in the Net, especially the local ones. The phenomenon was really important in Catalonia, a region that is the leader in local media. It is also noteworthy the first exclusively online media, *Vilaweb*, born in 1995 with the name of *La Infopista*. It was created by Vicent Partal, Assumpció Maresme and Joan Subirats. At first, it was a local directory that “wanted to put together all webpages in Catalan language” (Iglesias-García, 2002, p. 313). May 1996, it was when the directory changed its name and started to call *VilaWeb*. Its precedent was the first online version of the magazine *El Temps* produced by Vicent Partal. As Virgina Luzón (2003) tells it will be in 1998 when Pablo Sebastián founded the online newspaper without reference in paper, *Estrella Digital*.

Osona.com was born on the 19th May 1996 and it was the second oldest online media in Catalonia, after *Vilaweb*. This digital media is a pioneer in the introduction of online journalism in regional informationⁱⁱⁱ and it is the beginning of the history of Nació Digital Group (GND, its initials in Catalan). Initially, online media was called *Osona al dia*, but in 1998 the name was changed to *Osona.com*, like the URL because it was more used by people. In that time, some digital media began to emerge and it was clear that something was changing in the communication field. However, according to Ramón Salaverría, the Internet in Spain was only for specialists and online media had little audience. For this reason, having an online version was not a priority for the media (Salaverría, 2005).

That situation changed quickly. Not only had the press began to be present in the network, but also had done other media such as radio and television. All the media were gradually opening its editions in the Net. In 1994, the first two radios on the Internet appeared in the United States: the first one was XWYC in North Carolina and the second, RT-FM in Las Vegas. It will be in 1995 when there was the possibility of transmitting with stream technology, that is, listening to the radio in real time (Luzón Fernández, 2003). Also in Spain the history of online media started. Although the first years the audience was limited, it was not expensive to open a digital edition and it gave reputation to the media (Salaverría, 2005).

Some authors, such as Meso Ayerdi (2007), consider that the first radio station on the Internet in Spain was COPE, place it in July 1996, while the next radio station was Radio Galega, born in the same year. This author agrees with others (Armañanzas, Díaz Noci, & Meso, 1996) to highlight experiences arising before, in 1995, like Radio Tecknoland^{iv} and Rambla Bit^v, as pioneers of radio on the Internet. “In United States the first broadcasters to be in computer networks are ABC, through America On Line, and CNN, which in 1995 has its page on the network”, explains the researcher Virgina Luzón (2003, p. 22). The same researcher points out that

one of the first experiences in Spain for television in the Net was the server that TV3, the regional channel in Catalonia, was launched in 1995. According to Salaverría (2007), in 1997 it appeared webpages of the Spanish television channels like Telecinco, Antena 3 and Canal+.

The discovery of the World Wide Web was crucial for the development of digital media, explains Salaverría, because the Net was free and global. Before that, online media were integrated into private networks that had restricted supply (Salaverría, 2007). “Those late nineties were times, in short, the media gave often flying blind: they were not sure how to proceed editorially in this new environment called Internet”, concludes Salaverría. In 1997, when the majority of media had a digital edition, the audience begins to be important. It is, at this point, where the struggle for leadership journalistic audiences begins on the web (Salaverría, 2007). Although, the audience started to grow, the benefits were still scarce and it was difficult for online media to establish a specific business model.

María Angeles Cabrera (2001) distinguishes four models of evolution of the online newspapers: facsimile model, which reproduced the daily paper in PDF format; adapted model, in which the visual presentation and treatment is different from the printed versions because links or hypertext are used, although the design is simple and abuses of the text; digital model, in which electronic journals are now more interactive, visual and offer different services and contents of the printed version; and multimedia model, which makes the most of its possibilities such as interactivity and multimedia, that is, providing information in multiple formats (text, audio and fixed and moving image).

To summarize the evolution of online press in Spain, we can see the timing made by Abadal and Guallar (2010). These authors consider five stages, which are:

1. *Birth and early years (1994-1999)*. Emergence of online media and experimentation with the possibilities of the web. Here the authors include the models of online newspapers mentioned above: facsimile and adapted (Cabrera, 2001).

2. *Initial expansion (2000-2001)*. Coincides with what was called dot-com bubble^{vi}. There was a growth of investments and advertising that produced very optimistic expectations. The period coincides with what has been known as digital publishing model (Cabrera, 2001). Newspapers became news portals, there was a breakthrough with the introduction of multimedia formats and the difference between contents of the print edition and the digital was more important than before.

3. *First Crisis (2002-2004)*. The dot-com bubble burst and advertising declined. New business models were sought and some media tried business model of payment. The model of publishing was digital as in the previous stage.

4. *Second expansion (2005-2008)*. Investments and advertising recovered. Referred to the business model, there was the tendency to be mixt or free, because the payment one did not work properly. The model of social multimedia publishing started with more multimedia information and more participatory resources applying to the principles of the Web 2.0 or Social Web.

5. *Second crisis (des de 2009)*. There was a general crisis, to the economic and media field too, that affected more to the print press than the digital one, but in which some online media disappeared such as *ADN* or *Soitu*, both of them created in the previous stage. Despite the crisis, new media were created like *La Información* and *Factual*.

2.3. Characteristics of online media

In this section, the three most cited characteristics of online media by various authors who have studied the subject would be exposed: multimedia, interactivity and hypertext. Also, three remarkable features following Abadal and Guallar (2010) will be added; these characteristics of online media are permanent updating, customization and memory. It will not be an exhaustive list, but only a brief explanation. Other authors have reviewed characteristics that we do not study in this paper such as universality, ubiquity, instantaneity, virtuality, versatility, etc.

The first characteristic is multimedia that is defined as the “integration, in the same discursive unit, of various types of information: text, images (fixed or moving), sounds and, even databases or executable programs (for example, java applets)” (Díaz Noci, 2001, p. 86). Multimedia is what is expressed, transmitted or perceived through various means, according to Ramón Salaverría (2001, p. 384). We could say that the characteristic multimedia achieves the integration of other media: press, radio and television. So, in online media is possible to find any kind of information format, which is interesting to explain the news.

The definition of interactivity, proposed by Armañanzas, Díaz Noci and Meso (1996, p. 70), is: “the ability of user to ‘ask’ the system, and thus lay the foundations for retrieving the information as desired”. Nowadays the transmitter sends a message that it is not unidirectional, so the receiver can be active, interact with the media and interrogate the system. Virginia Luzón (2003, p. 43) thinks that is the possibility for the user to interact with the media. Certainly, in traditional media, the user could participate through letters to the editor in the print press or by telephone on radio and television. Currently, online media has opened new options for interactivity and participation to users. Other authors agree with both definitions of this concept (Díaz Noci & Salaverría, 2003).

Online media are not strictly sequential access to texts, images and sounds. In fact, they attempt to break the sequences to build the speech in a manner more similar to human thought (Armañanzas et al., 1996). This characteristic is called hypertext and can be defined as follows: “This has induced the hope to offer a more individualized product, ones that does not indicate one way to follow but propose a set of path in which every reader, depending on all these typical characteristics, can get into if they choose” (Armañanzas, Díaz Noci and Meso, 1992, p. 62). This concept appears in 1945 driven by Vannevar Bush and, twenty years later, it will be coined, and defined also, by Theodor Holm Nelson. The term is developed technical and conceptually by Douglas C. Engelbart (Díaz Noci & Salaverría, 2003).

Hypertext, the possibility to link together documents of all kinds, is the essence of the Web. The layout of digital information breaks the usual sequential structure in the presentation of information on paper format. [...] A document or information is hypertextual when allows a tour not necessarily sequential. A hypertext is, therefore, a document composed of several parts (called nodes) and connections between them (called links). (Abadal & Guallar, 2010, pp. 42-43)

Traditional media used to have a certain periodicity, while online media has a permanent updating. On the one hand, newspapers are available for readers every day and periodic publications are also available in specific intervals (weekly, biweekly, monthly, etc.). And, on the other hand, radio and television have a predetermined schedule and, therefore, a periodicity. So, online media break this common feature of traditional media. It is true that television and radio can deliver breaking news faster, but digital media can compete with its constantly or permanent updating.

Another characteristic is customization: “It is referred to the possibility of adapting the contents of the newspaper to the characteristics and interests of each individual person”, (Abadal & Guallar, 2010, p. 44). Some of the most important mechanisms used to customize digital media are adapted homepage, spreading news by email, phone or through RSS^{vii} feeds and widgets, programs which allow to transfer information from the digital press to webs or desktops 2.0. It is a way to get the most interesting information, in the best format and the most comfortable channel for the user. This characteristic improves their experience with the media.

Finally, online media have an unlimited capacity to store journalistic content; it could be current or retrospective content. Different authors have called this feature as memory, archive or documentation. New media can offer different products with this content such as retrospective archive where inquiries can be made, contextualization of journalistic information through links to news archive and create new information from the archive of the online media such as special issues (Abadal & Guallar, 2010).

2.4. Business model

The debate on the business model of online media is raised long ago and there is still no agreement on which is the best formula. Currently, most digital media offer their content for free, but increasingly there are more experiences with various forms of payment. These formulas, at the moment, only charge for value-added information or services, and few have taken the risk to close completely their informative content.

According to María-Nereida Cea-Esteruelas (2013), it is observed in several studies on the business model of online media that revenues for these media companies are based primarily on two sources: advertisers who pay for ads that are inserted on the media and users who pay for contents that they consume. Therefore, revenue sources can be classified into two groups: advertising and pay for content. In general, the first source, advertising, is the one which hold the profit and loss account, while the online media companies want to increase the payment for the content because nowadays it is not so important in their income (Cea-Esteruelas, 2013).

The business models of online media can be classified as follows (Casero-Ripollés, 2010, p. 598):

- Free (advertiser-supported). Advertising is the only source of funding.
- Total payment (pay-wall). It is based on charging for information consumption. There may be several ways such as subscription (annual or monthly) or pay per use, which includes pay per day/week or pay per read article (micropayment model).
- Metered model. Allow free access to a limited number of articles.
- *Freemium*. Combine open access with paid access to information with high added value.
- Donations. The revenue model is based on voluntary contributions from users.

2.5. State of the art in Catalonia (Spain)

According to the report *La sociedad de la información en España 2013* (Fundación Telefónica, 2014), in Spain the number of users who have accessed the Internet in the last three months represents a 71,6% in the age group 16 to 74 years in 2013 which means that has increased by two percentage points respect 2012. In absolute figures there are 24,8 millions, 700.000 users more than the previous year. Frequent users (the ones who have accessed on the Internet at least once a week) represent 92% of all Internet users and, in absolute figures,

are 22,8 million people, which represents 65,8% of the total population. Regarding intensive users (the ones who have accessed on the Internet every day) are 18,6 millions of people representing 53,8% of the population between 16 and 74 years.

In Catalonia, 72,2% of households have Internet access and 74,9% of the population has used the Internet in the last three months in 2013 (Fundación Telefónica, 2014). According to the report of Fundación Telefónica, 75,9% of Internet users in Catalonia use it daily, while 64,1% employ social networks. The report *Informe de la comunicació a Catalunya 2011-2012* already states that “the evolution of Internet consumption in Catalonia during 2011-2012 biennium is subject to mobility and uses of the social network” (Civil i Serra, Blasco Gil, & Guimerà i Orts, 2013, p. 369). Not only increases Internet consumption via the laptop, but also from mobile phones, portable devices and applications for mobile devices, especially those that are free. In reference to digital media, in 2011-2012 this report explained: “During the biennium, the media start a trend to incorporate payment for content, especially digital editions of major print media, and advances in integrating newsrooms of media to disseminate information across multiple platforms” (Civil i Serra, Blasco Gil, & Guimerà i Orts, 2013, p. 369).

The economic crisis in Catalonia and Spain has affected considerably the media sector and its main source of funding, which is advertising. For example, the advertising revenue generated in Catalonia during 2011-2012 falls 26%, advertisers budgets were reduced and investment moved to digital formats (Civil i Serra, Blasco Gil, & Guimerà i Orts, 2013). In the field of local communication, the crisis has had a greater impact, both public and private media that have some kind of dependence from public administration. However, the proximity media is focused on the Internet and digital media where, in 2011-2012, there has been a remarkable growth of news websites because of the low investment cost:

The difficult situation of the local media industry has singularities if we look at the digital media: there has been a growing number of news websites and a consolidation of the associative structure. The low cost of implementation and operation of Internet journalism projects partly explains the resilience of digital information portals despite its endemic economic weakness. (Montagut et al., 2013, p. 207)

3. Methodology

The methodology of this paper is based on two qualitative techniques such as case study and semi-structured and in-depth interviews. On the one hand, the case study, as said before, examines an online media that is Nació Digital. It analyses the business model based on advertising and information model based on traditional journalism and local communication. On the other hand, several interviews were done, in some cases semi-structured and other in depth, with the editor and founder of the online media, Miquel Macià, that is the case study; and other interviews to the Director of Strategy, Jordi Font; the Director of the generalist online media of *Nació Digital*, Salvador Cot, and two responsible for proximity digital media who are Guillem Ramos-Salvat from *DelCamp.cat*^{viii} and Pere Fontanals from *Manresainfo.cat*^{ix}. These interviews are the basis for the presentation of partial results of the research, but they are also presented in some of the preliminary documentary research in the theoretical framework.

4. Results

4.1. History of Nació Digital

In 1996, *Osona.com* was born and it is the origin of Nació Digital Group (GND). The publisher company of all the media of the group is SCG Aquitània S.L., established in September in Vic to work in the digital and Internet sector. It is a family business that has had no changes in shareholdings since its inception. The creator and editor of GND, Miquel Macià, saw early many possibilities that Internet had and he also thought that this new communication channel would integrate and surpass other means of social communication. “If a technology is useful, accessible and affordable, it will win, said Macià in an interview^x.

Originally the webpage of *Osona al dia* (the first name of the online media) had three sections: *L’Enciclopèdia* (The Encyclopedia), which contained information about the region of Osona and all its municipalities; *La Guia* (The Guide), which provided an overview of the services and activities of the territory; and *El diari electrònic* (The electronic journal), that spread the most important news of all areas, as well as commentary and opinion articles. Its editorial line, which has remained to the present, is doing journalism in the Catalan national framework, sovereignty, plural and democratic. Despite this editorial line, Miquel Macià says that the goal is not doing ideology, but doing journalism, and wants that users value the information of *Nació Digital* for its solvency and because they think that it is necessary to read it.

In June 1996, *Osona.com* was launched in the Auditorium of Caixa Manlleu in Vic. This digital media was the main product of the company, although they had other work lines such as production of webpages, digital advice and production the materials for print press. During 1996, *Osona.com* introduced some classic journalism content in the online media and experimented with this new channel. It also created a news bulletin with headlines and news for subscribers. This digital media made a great effort to explain the possibilities of Internet to institutions, organizations and businesses in the region. After overcoming the dotcom bubble in 2000, the group of *Osona.com* online media started its expansion. In 2005, the journey of the brand Nació Digital Group (GND) began with the foundation of some proximity online media, such as *El Ripollès.info*, and the creation of the national brand that covers all Catalonia called *NacióDigital.cat*. In the next years, the GND will grow and create new online media, not only proximity ones but also thematic. Nowadays, this communication group has 35 online media.

Figure 1. List of online media of Nació Digital Group (GND).

Generalist online media that covers Catalonia		
Nació Digital (www.naciodigital.cat)		
Proximity Online Media		Thematic Online Media
Aguaita.cat	NacióAndorra.cat	Adolescents.cat
BaixGaiàDiari.cat	NacióBerguedà.cat	Bloc de fotos
BaixMontseny.info	NacióGranollers.cat	Canal Digital
BaixPenedèsDiari.cat	NacióLaGarrotxa.cat	Catorze.cat
CambrilsDiari.cat	NacióSolsona.cat	Diari Casteller
CostaDiari.cat	NotíciesTarragona.cat	Ecodiari
DelCamp.cat	Osona.com	La Flama
ElRipollès.info	PrioratDiari.cat	Nació Fotos
EsportsdelCamp.cat	ReusDiari.cat	Vadevi
Gironainfo.cat	SalouDiari.cat	
La Torre del Palau	VallsDiari.cat	
LaConcaDiari.cat	Vila-secaDiari.cat	
Manresainfo.cat	ViurealsPirineus.cat	

Source: Personal compilation based on the webpage of the group
(<http://www.naciodigital.cat/grupnaciodigital/edicions>)

Before talking about the keys of GND's success, it is necessary to clarify why it is considered a successful model. First of all, for the audience figures: *Nació Digital* is the second online media in Catalonia in terms of unique users, visits and page views (see the figure 3). It shows the implantation of this online media. Secondly, for the business numbers: the editor of the group, Miquel Macià, said in an interview that every year, except the first two ones, they have been closing the profit and loss account with some benefits. Maybe there are not huge profits, but its model business is sustainable.

The two keys of success are journalism and technology. The first key, journalism, is based in the classical and proximity model. *Nació Digital* makes classical or ancient journalism while incorporating the possibilities of the Internet. Macià explains it as follows: "It is true that social networks and the Internet have a major impact on the model of journalism, but professional work is the same as 30 years ago because the process of making the news has not changed, we have only incorporated the advantages of technology". In the next section, it will be explained the importance of journalistic model of proximity information for *Nació Digital*. Just point out that in 2009, *Osona.com* received the National Award for Proximity Communication that gives *Generalitat de Catalunya* (the government of the autonomous community of Catalonia). The jury considered that this media "has become an important information tool that shows the leading role of proximity information also in the digital field".

If we refer to technology, we have to outline the importance of constant innovation. In September 2006, it started to be implemented the version 2.0 of the platform for editing and laying out the online media of *Nació Digital Group* (GND). Just two years later, in April 2009, version 3.0 was released. At that time, all content came under Creative Common license. From the beginning, the information provided in *Osona.com*, as well as in other online media of the group, is free. The technology used by GND is from their own and designed from a journalistic view to facilitate the daily work of the staff. Currently, version 4.0 has been implemented with new layout and new utilities. Jordi Font, the Director of Strategy of the GND, said in an interview^{xi} that "it would be difficult to outsource the content management system and more difficult to be competitive without this knowledge". He adds that the field of journalism and technology must work together to constantly adapt the system to technological changes. Permanent adaptation and continuous redesign are two essential requirements of digital communication and online media.

Figure 2. Ranking of Catalan online media (July 2014).

Online Media	Unique Users	Visits	Page Views
Ara.cat	1.743.463	6.323.078	17.091.411
NacióDigital.cat	1.401.398	4.866.019	16.587.348
Vilaweb	827.216	2.991.217	7.516.494
NacióDigital – Adolescents.cat	205.486	1.305.700	7-047-954
ElPeriódico.cat	478.010	1.357.818	5.168.609
El Punt Avui.cat	874.571	1.726.674	4.448.123
El9Nou.cat	67.718	147.211	2.205.513
DiarideGirona.cat	274.597	696.169	2.161.423
ElSingular.cat	238.329	781.281	1.682.295
E-Noticiescat – E-Noticies.cat	189.977	718.335	1.666.747

These are the ten first Catalan online media, order by unique users. Source: OJDInteractiva (<http://www.ojdinteractiva.es/mitjans-digitals-en-catala>).

4.2. Journalistic model

I am the director of national journalistic project, but I have always been very aware of the proximity dimension of the group and its depth penetration in the territory. It is one of the fundamental characteristics of the group because it has informative and commercial influences. It is more important that *Nació Digital Group* offers a viable model for regional press in the twenty-first century than the function it has done as a national online media. (S. Cot, personal interview, 18th January 2014)

These are the words spoken by Salvador Cot, the director of generalist online media, *NacióDigital.cat*, in an interview^{xii}. These statements show that the proximity information model of the GND is very important. It is significant that the group born in the Catalan region of Osona and with a media who do local and proximity journalism. Then, in 2005, the generalist online media was born. For Cot, the regional editions are like delegations or correspondent offices.

Figure 3. Screenshot of the generalist online media *NacióDigital.cat*.

Source: www.naciodigital.cat (10th September 2014).

According to Salvador Cot, the GND has three levels: national, regional and thematic. The first one is the national level that has an online media, *NacióDigital.cat* (www.naciodigital.cat), which is directed by Salvador Cot. It is a generalist media that aims to cover information from Catalonia. The second level is regional (or territorial) which covers the information from some specific areas of Catalonia. The type of information that it is done at this level is local or proximity, outstanding feature of GND that clearly defines its journalistic model. Cot said that the group's intention was to cover the whole Catalan territory with regional editions. Finally, the third level is thematic, the aim of which is to provide digital media from various sectors in Catalan and online. Some examples of thematic online media that the group currently are: *Adolescents.cat*^{xiii}, an online media for teenagers; *Catorze.cat*^{xiv}, a cultural digital media; *Ecodiari*^{xv}, an online media about environment; or *Vadevi*^{xvi}, an online media about Catalan wines.

Multimedia. For GND, multimedia information is very important, especially photography because video is a format that has still not been developed. Jordi Font, the Director of Group

Strategy, said that the video would be a challenge for 2014. Nowadays, photography is very used in all Nació Digital editions of every level (national, regional and thematic). All editions publish photos in its pieces of news and are remarkable photo galleries they made. In fact, the GND has two online media devoted precisely to photography: *NacióFotos.cat* (www.naciofotos.cat), a webpage dedicated to photographic and documentary journalism, and *Blocdefotos.cat* (www.blocdefotos.cat), a webpage where users can post their own photos.

Interactivity. In the two regional editions consulted (*DelCamp.cat* and *Manresainfo.cat*) there is quite participation by users, both in comments of the news and in the social media. Comments on pieces of news are always moderated prior to be published, according to the GND policy. All the editions of the group have to manually check all the comments every day. According to Pere Fontanals^{xvii}, responsible for *Manresainfo.cat*, said that offensive comments, insults and personal statements unproven are moderated, as well as comments that have no connection with the news. A relevant question about interactivity is the wide range of possibilities that have opened social media, which will be discussed in the next paragraph.

Figure 4. Screenshot of the proximity online media Manresainfo.cat.

Source: www.manresainfo.cat (10th September 2014).

Social media. “We have clear that social media is very important nowadays and we consider ourselves addicted to Facebook, not personally but professionally, because we need this social network to reach more people”, said Guillem Ramos-Salvat^{xviii}. The responsible for *Delcamp.cat* edition adds that you need to know how to use social media and make them accomplices in daily work of journalist in order that more people can read your news. Fontanals believes that social media is not just a way for users to come to your media, but can also be a good source of information. For example, Twitter is an essential tool for its immediacy, especially in the events, and also as a reminder of other types of information. “We experience with social media because nowadays they are like newspaper delivery”, said Jordi Font. Nació Digital is present on Facebook and Twitter, which are the main social media in Catalonia, but also on Flickr, Pinterest and Google+.

We have to understand social media and make the most of them, but considering that one day will end and others will come. We must be able to adapt to changes. (J. Font, personal interview, 16th January 2014)

Hypertext and other characteristics. Referring to the hypertext, the GND does not have a specific policy for putting links within the text of the pieces of news. While it is true that almost all pieces of news have a link, there is not any specific policy or guide for journalist to do it. They intuitively put links in the pieces of news because the digital media allows it. Of the three features mentioned in the theoretical framework, it is important to comment the following things:

– *Permanent updating.* “The work in the digital media is a little slave because you can never be in calm and can not disconnect, especially with the advent of social media, because you have to be constantly vigilant the current issues”, said Salvador Cot. This is the consequence of permanent updating; you have to pay attention to all the latest news and in online media are more important than other media.

– *Customization.* This feature is not fully developed, but have a few options as to register and receive the newsletter. If you register to Nació Digital, you can save articles to read later, make comments with your nickname and receive exclusive promotions.

– *Memory.* Like the previous feature, memory is underdeveloped. To retrieve previous articles, there is advanced search by keywords and dates. There is also an image search or you can use the Google search engine.

Figure 5: Screenshot of the proximity online media DelCamp.cat

Source: www.delcamp.cat (10th September 2014).

4.3. Business model

During 2013, we made strategic changes to the group, one of which was in technology. This allows us to focus in 2014, with guarantees both infrastructure and possibilities of the tool with which we can work, and this year we concentrate on two major fronts: one is the journalism and the other, growing both in pro-

duction and creation of new media projects and new spaces of communication. (J. Font, personal interview, 16th January 2014)

The aim of GND for 2014 is to continue growing in Catalonia because there are still some areas where there is not any regional online media, such as Lleida, said Jordi Font, the Director of Strategy. This is the strategy of the group and the objective is covering Catalonia territory, but they want to carry out a sustainable growth. In order to do it, Font said that they have to understand every region because each one is different so they have to build a project adapted to its reality and represent something that exists beyond the digital realm. In addition, he explains that the editor, Miquel Macià, always stressed the importance to building projects with soul.

However, the big question on digital media is: what should be the business model? Jordi Font explained that, as in any company, their business model is constantly evolving and sources of income have varied. However, nowadays the main source of revenue is advertising. For this reason, it is considered that the business model of Nació Digital is the one called “free” in which the advertiser support is essential and their main source of income. The Director of Strategy of the group, Jordi Font, gave more details about advertising in their media: “There is a classical advertising similar to other media and another more characteristic of digital media”. In addition, Font explained that in GND there are two levels of advertising: the proximity one for regional editions and the national, for the generalist media. For each type of advertising there are specific departments that search for it. In advertising, there are other ways like sponsorship, mobile versions, etc.

The group is currently looking for other sources of funding in addition to advertising. Like other media companies, they are considering charging for content, but Jordi Font remarks that they never charge for current content because this type of information can be easily found on the Internet for free and users are not willing to pay. There are two kinds of contents they can sell: photos and value-added content. Nowadays, Nació Digital has a large photographic archive (500.000 photos approx.) and users can buy photos^{xix}. It is possible to purchase photos, but value-added content is not available. Font said that the GND is working to offer valued-added content: “We should be able to make new content or new uses of the content, a content developed exclusively for people who are interested and willing to pay a little amount for them”. Finally, another source of funding that they opened is ecommerce store^{xx}. They are currently working on this new pathway that may be important in the future.

5. Conclusions

This research finds that what defines the project of Nació Digital Group (GND) is journalism. Miquel Macià, the group’s editor, thinks that the central purpose of their online media is doing journalism and doing it in the best way as possible, putting aside ideology. The online media *NacióDigital.cat* is doing generalist journalism that covers Catalan sphere, while the group also has an important facet of proximity journalism with its territorial editions. Journalism of GND is for online media, therefore it has many characteristic features of digital field such as permanent updating. However the group do not forget classical principals of the profession, like going to the scene and tell what is happening.

Another element that defines GND is technology, seen as the means to do journalism. In this sense, the platform used is proprietary software made from the journalistic perspective,

by and for journalists. It works in single virtual news desk that facilitates communication of all regional editions of *Nació Digital* brand. Through this technology it is possible to work in a network with all editions connected. Each digital media works independently, because each one has its editorial office, its territory and its issues, but all of them are coordinated to cover information that requires networking. Every online media, either territorial or thematic, make sense by itself, but as part of an online communication group and generalist digital media.

To conclude, we want to emphasize that GND also uses some of the online journalism features such as multimedia and interactivity. On the one hand, the multimediality is present because almost in all piece of news we can find some photos and, sometimes, video is also used. Photography is most commonly used than video in pieces of news and *Nació Digital* gives much relevance when they did photo galleries. In addition, GND has a thematic online media dedicated to photos that is *Nació Fotos* (<http://www.naciodigital.cat/naciofotos>). On the other hand, the interactivity is part of everyday life of online media and journalist of *Nació Digital* because all pieces of news give the opportunity to the users to comment them. Moreover, the users can participate in social media, especially Facebook and Twitter. Therefore, we can say that these networks are gateways to news and online media of the group, like happens in many other media nowadays.

Notes

ⁱ The following section explains a brief history of online journalism. This begins when newspapers and magazines did their digital versions on the Internet. It is probably for this reason that the tradition of online journalism in Spain is closely linked to digital editions of print press and this is reflected in the terminology used.

ⁱⁱ In Spain, there is the distinction between Barcelona newspapers and Madrid ones depending on where they have their editorial office. Barcelona newspapers are *El Periódico de Catalunya*, *Avui* and *La Vanguardia*, while Madrid newspapers are *El Mundo*, *ABC*, *El País* and *La Razón*.

ⁱⁱⁱ Osona is a region of Catalonia and its capital is Vic, a medium city of this autonomous community. Regions in Catalonia are called ‘comarca’ and divide all the counties (*diputacions*) into smaller zones.

^{iv} Radio Teknoland was a radio station which could only be accessed through the Internet (Armañanzas et al., 1996).

^v *Rambla Bit* was a program broadcast by the radio station Onda Rambla in the region of Lleida (Catalonia). The recording of the program was uploaded on the Net. (Armañanzas et al., 1996)

^{vi} In Spain, it was called digital bubble or technology bubble.

^{vii} RSS is an acronym for *Really Simple Syndication*. It is a format for content distribution. The majority of website news has this option to receive information in your email or in a specific program.

^{viii} *DelCamp.cat* (<http://www.naciodigital.cat/delcamp>) is the brand that brings together the regional editions of *Nació Digital* located in Tarragona. This brand includes the following proximity online media: *EsportsdelCamp.cat*, *NotíciesTarragona.cat*, *ReusDiari.cat*, *BaixPenedèsdiari.cat*, *VallsDiari.cat*, *BaixGaiàDiari.cat*, *laConcaDiari.cat*, *CambrilsDiari.cat*, *CostaDiari.cat*, *Vila-SecaDiari.cat*, *SalouDiari.cat* and *PrioratDiari.cat*. Guillem Ramos-Salvat is the Director of this media, which has more than 20 workers.

^{ix} *Manresainfo.cat* (<http://www.naciodigital.cat/manresainfo/>) is the proximity online media located in the region of Manresa (Barcelona, Catalonia). Pere Fontanals is the responsible for this media and the only journalist that works for updating it.

^x The interview with Miquel Macià was on the 26th February 2013 in the editorial office of *Osona.com* in Vic (Catalonia). It was an in-depth interview.

^{xi} The interview with Jordi Font was on the 16th January 2014 in the editorial office of *NacióDigital.cat* in Barcelona (Catalonia). It was an in-depth interview.

^{xii} The interview with Salvador Cot was on the 18th January 2014 in the editorial office of *La Torre del Palau*, the group's online media in the city of Terrassa (Barcelona, Catalonia).

^{xiii} You can see online media *Adolescents.cat* at the following link: <http://adolescents.naciodigital.cat/>.

^{xiv} You can see online media *Catorze.cat* at the following link: <http://catorze.naciodigital.cat/>.

^{xv} You can see online media *Ecodiari* at the following link: <http://www.naciodigital.cat/ecodiari/>.

^{xvi} You can see online media *Vadevi* at the following link: <http://www.naciodigital.cat/vadevi>.

^{xvii} The interview with Pere Fontanals was done by e-mail in January 2014.

^{xviii} The interview with Guillem Ramos-Salvat was done on the 29th January 2014 in the editorial office of *DelCamp.cat* in Reus (Catalonia). It was a semi-structured interview.

^{xix} The photographic archive of Nació Digital can be found at the following link: <http://www.naciodigital.cat/naciefotos>.

^{xx} Ecommerce store of Nació Digital can be found at the following link: <http://botiga.naciodigital.cat/>.

References

- Abadal, E., & Guallar, J. (2010). *Prensa digital y bibliotecas. Biblioteconomía y administración cultural* (Vol. 212, p. 170). Gijón: Trea.
- Armañanzas, E., Díaz Noci, J., & Meso, K. (1996). *El Periodismo electrónico: información y servicios multimedia en la era del ciberespacio* (p. 249). Barcelona: Ariel.
- Cabrera González, M. A. (2001). Convivencia de la prensa escrita y la prensa on line en su transición hacia el modelo de comunicación multimedia. *Estudios Sobre El Mensaje Periodístico*, 7, 71–78. Retrieved from http://pendientedemigracion.ucm.es/info/period/Period_I/EMP/Numer_07/7-4-Comu/7-4-01.htm
- Casero-Ripollés, A. (2010). Prensa en internet: nuevos modelos de negocio en el escenario de la convergencia. *El Profesional de La Información*, 19(6), 595–601. Retrieved from <http://hdl.handle.net/10760/15015>
- Cea-Esteruelas, M.-N. (2013). Economía de los cibermedios: modelo de ingresos y fuentes de financiación. *El Profesional de La Información*, 22, 353–361. Retrieved from <http://www.elprofesionaldelainformacion.com/contenidos/2013/julio/12.pdf>
- Civil i Serra, M., Blasco Gil, J. J., & Guimerà i Orts, J. À. (2013). La comunicació a Catalunya, 2011-2012: síntesi, claus d'interpretació i reptes de futur. In M. Civil i Serra, J. J. Blasco Gil, & J. À. Guimerà i Orts (Eds.), *Informe de la comunicació a Catalunya 2011-2012* (pp. 363–375). Barcelona: Generalitat de Catalunya.
- Díaz Noci, J. (2001). *La Escritura digital?: hipertexto y construcción del discurso informativo en el periodismo electrónico* (p. 233). Bilbao: Universidad del País Vasco, Servicio Editorial.
- Díaz Noci, J., & Salaverria, R. (2003). *Manual de redacción ciberperiodística*. Barcelona: Ariel.
- Iglesias García, M. (2002). VilaWeb: un mitjà de comunicació "glocal." In *La prensa local y la prensa gratuita* (pp. 313–318).
- López García, X. (2004). *Desafíos de la comunicación local?: guía para la práctica de la información en los ámbitos de proximidad* (p. 157). Sevilla: Comunicación Social.
- López García, X. (2008). *Ciberperiodismo en la proximidad* (p. 121). Sevilla: Comunicación Social.
- Luzón Fernández, V. (2003). *Internet, l'eina inevitable: periodistes, mitjans i missatges en la xarxa*. (D. de B.?: C. de P. de Catalunya, Ed.) (p. 91). Barcelona: Diputació de Barcelona etc.
- Meso Ayerdi, K. (2007). Radio en línea. In A. García Jiménez & P. Rupérez Rubio (Eds.), *Aproximaciones al periodismo digital* (pp. 285–320). Madrid: Dykinson.
- Montagut, M., Llamero, L., Domingo, D., Guimerà i Orts, J. À., & Vicenç Rabadán, J. (2013). La comunicació local. In M. Civil i Serra, J. J. Blasco Gil, & J. À. Guimerà i Orts (Eds.), *Informe de la comunicació a Catalunya 2011-2012* (pp. 197–215). Barcelona: Generalitat de Catalunya.

- Salaverría, R. (2001, January 1). Aproximación al concepto de multimedia desde los planos comunicativo e instrumental. *Estudios Sobre El Mensaje Periodístico*. doi:-
- Salaverría, R. (2005). *Cibermedios?: el impacto de internet en los medios de comunicación en España* (p. 339). Sevilla: Comunicación Social.
- Salaverría, R. (2007). Ciberperiodismo: diez años de prensa digital en España. Retrieved from <http://dspace.unav.es/dspace/handle/10171/6039>
- Telefónica, F. (2014). *La sociedad de la información en España 2013*. Madrid, Barcelona: Editorial Ariel. Retrieved from http://www.fundacion.telefonica.com/es/arte_cultura/publicaciones/sie/sie2013.htm