

# INTERNATIONAL COMPARATIVE STUDIES: TOWARDS THE INTEGRATION OF QUANTITATIVE AND QUALITATIVE METHODS

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## Abstract

International comparative studies are becoming increasingly important in the Social Sciences research field due to the role played by different journalistic cultures within the contemporary society. Researchers cannot understand journalism from the point of view of its internal coherence without doing so in relation to its social context. To understand journalistic culture of a particular country, one must first develop analysis patterns of national contextual. This point is essential in a world where the phenomenon of globalization and convergence is a reality. Therefore, in the field of international comparative research, qualitative and quantitative techniques must be used in order to better understand this. Hence, this article proposes that the comparative perspective of journalistic cultures must come together with the use of qualitative and quantitative methodology because in media studies in general, and in journalism in particular, are the largest producers of meaning.

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**Keywords:** Journalistic culture, International comparative studies, quantitative methods, qualitative methods, mix methods

## Introduction

International comparative studies are becoming increasingly important within research in the Social Sciences field due to the role played by different journalistic cultures within contemporary society. The development of communication research in general and journalism in particular, has evolved to create paradigms as well as theoretical international approaches.

It is not possible to propose journalism from the point of view of its internal coherence without doing so in relation to its social context and with other social contexts. These contrasts facilitate research work and help to generate results.

The context, environmental and external factors influence the way of conducting journalism because they influence the actions and decisions of journalists. Such that to understand the journalistic culture of a country, national contextual analysis patterns that establish the relationships between various factors of influence in journalism (audience; political, social and economic institutions; information sources, advertisers, owners, content providers, agencies, etcetera) must be developed.

It is essential that, in a world where the phenomenon of globalization and convergence is a reality, a level of international and comparative analysis must be developed. This phase has particular relevance because in the current journalistic production model in any country, it is encompassed within an organization and an international social system due to the phenomena of globalization and convergence. These cultures maintain journalistic identity characteristics that define and differentiate – as in the case of Intermediate journalistic cultures, on which authors have previously worked.

Thus, journalistic factors that form a national journalistic culture are encompassed within broader international systems that include, on one hand, the political and economic system and, on the other hand, the global cultural and ideological values.

### **Main Text**

### **Comparative Studies In Journalism: The Impact Of International Research**

The terminology in comparative research tends to be ambiguous and confusing. We can talk about cross-country, cross-national, cross-societal, cross-cultural, cross-systemic, cross-institutional, trans-national, trans-societal and cross-cultural (Hanitzsch, 2009a: 414). These terms are used synonymously for comparative research to refer to certain types of comparisons (Oyen, 1990: 7). The wide range of possibilities shows that there is no a common agreement on what kind of research can be classified as comparative. There are scholars such as Edelstein (1982) that speak of comparison between two or more nations, and others, like Beniger (1992), who argue that all social research is comparative. What is certain is that throughout history a vast body of studies and research in this field have been developed. Hanitzsch (2009a: 414-416) explains it through four paradigms:

1) The United States and the rest, paradigm that dominated communication studies and media from 1950-1960. Exemplified by the influence of the work done by American researchers such as Lerner (1958) in his work *The passing of traditional society; or Four theories of the press*, of Sieber, Peterson and Schramm (1956).

2) North and South, paradigm characterized mainly by political processes that took place in Europe and UNESCO, due to inequality between

the industrialized North and the developing South. It was this controversy that led UNESCO to recognize the need for a new world order and communicative approach. This was one of the reasons that resulted in a study in 29 countries viewing the image of foreigners, replicated in the 90's with a sample of 38 countries (Sreberny-Mohammadi, Nordenstreng and Stevenson, 1984).

3) The West and the West, was the dominant paradigm in this field between 1980 and 1990. It was driven by the research carried out in Europe, marking the beginning of the comparative research becoming methodologically more advanced. During this period, investigations focused in Western countries due to their similarity and, therefore, by their comparative capabilities. Highlight research conducted by Köcher (1986); Esser (1998); or Donsbach Patterson (1996).

4) The West and the rest of the world, is the latest paradigm where academics are interested in the study of certain journalistic cultures globally, even though most studies rely on Western concepts. The greatest example of this trend is found in Weaver (1998), which in The Global Journalist conducted a total of 20,280 surveys in 21 countries. Other recent examples are found in the work of Shoemaker and Cohen (2006) in News Around the World, and the work carried out by Hanitzsch and his collaborators in Worlds of Journalism project started in 2007 and which today continues.

Something that these international studies have shown in journalism is that the advance of globalization coincides with convergence in guidelines and in journalistic practices. The idea of objectivity and impartiality dominates newsrooms worldwide, indicating a diffusion of professional ideologies or ideological transfer from West to East (Golding, 1977: 292). These similarities are shown in professional routines, in editorial procedures and socialization processes that exist in different countries (Hanitzsch, 2009a: 422-423; Löffelholz and Weaver, 2008: 3-4). At the same time, many of these studies have shown that substantive differences continue to prevail, and that the practices and journalistic views are deeply marred by the colours of the national media systems (Pfetsch and Esser, 2003: 13; Donsbach and Patterson, 2004: 281-282; Hanusch, 2009: 613-614; Löffelholz Weaver, 2008: 8-9; Hanitzsch, 2009a: 413). These divergences highlight the possibilities of studies in this field. Therefore, comparative analysis appears as the only possible way to investigate the theoretical question that explains the relationship between journalists, political and cultural contexts (Blumler and Gurevitch, 1995: 76; Canel Crespo and Sanders, 2010: 12 - 14; Pfetsch and Esser, 2003: 13; Hallin and Mancini, 2004b: 2-5).

Despite the fact that comparative research has, for years, offered no ideas beyond a mere description of similarities and differences (Hanitzsch, 2009a: 413), currently such comparative studies are essential not only to

establish generalizations of theories and results, but also require us to recheck our interpretations of transnational cultures for inconsistencies or differences (Kohn, 1989: 713). Therefore, we must approach the international comparative study according to the concept of hybridization (Pfetsch and Esser, 2003: 13-17) in which the analysis of the whole (transnational cultures) is always more than the sum of its parts.

### **Scope of international comparative study**

Speaking of journalistic culture only makes sense if we assume that there are other cultures (not necessarily only journalistic) with which it is possible to compare (Hanitzsch, 2007a: 368). This allows comparative research to become the main scope of cultural journalism. One of the challenges of comparative research is to achieve a balanced and functional structure so that media can be studied in all cultures in order to obtain equivalent theories (Wirth and Kolb, 2004: 88 ff.).

Following the linguist Pike (1987), one can speak of two basic strategies in the operational definition of comparative research. This expert suggests making the distinction between etic / emic for the analysis of human communication (Jankowski, 1996: xv). From this dichotomy, Hanitzsch (2007a: 370) argues that both terms are something like a root-metaphor with philosophical implications, which would collapse if done only for the treatment of decontextualized units. First, the etic approach emphasizes the universal and supra-cultural character, examining the constituent elements of culture from the perspective of common theoretical concepts and theoretical terms (Friedman, 1994: 238). Second, the emic approach focuses its attention on a specific culture, and explores it from the point of view of its members. Therefore, this approach develops different conceptualizations of a journalistic culture within a particular cultural context. Thereby resulting in specific cultural definitions which are hard to extrapolate from one cultural context to another (Hanitzsch, 2007a: 370).

Studies carried out by Weaver (1998), Patterson and Donsbach (1998), Esser (1998) or Hanitzsch (2009), among others, demonstrate the different definitions and variables that indicate who is really considered a journalist within each national culture. This conclusion leads us to understand, following Hanitzsch (2007a: 370-371), that in comparing different cultures, the etic approach, coined by Pike (1987), is much more important. From a theoretical common denomination of journalistic culture that can be applied to different contexts, and different nation -which carries out the production of news and information worldwide- could guarantee a high degree of conceptual equivalence. That would ensure their persistence over time due to the specific characteristics related to the constant change maintained by journalistic culture. Hanitzsch (2009a) concludes saying that any strategy related with etic approach must be accompanied at all times by

the emic component, so that the results of these comparative studies have a significant value within different cultural contexts.

Therefore, journalistic culture is required to be deconstructed in the various sections which constitute it, and in its conceptual dimensions, because it is virtually impossible to identify all its dimensions that comprise it. Thus, it is convenient to use a deductive method based on the etic approach to identify the dimensions of analysis (e.g.: objectivity, ethics and roles perceived by journalists) that can be transferred (or not) to other cultures. Developing these dimensions provide a network of analysis within the cultural journalistic map so that, according to the set of universal dimensions and variables analysed, it could develop central points of the international comparative project.

Hanitzsch (2007a: 369) establishes that the journalistic culture is articulated on three basic levels of analysis: 1) the cognitive level, which establishes the fundamental structure where informative work is developed and that are based the perception and interpretation of the news (e.g. the news value of an event or story); 2) the evaluation level, which leads the point of view of journalists (e.g. the perception of their roles) and professional ideologies (e.g. the objective, interpretative and investigative journalism); and 3) the behavioural level, that embody the mode of work of journalists (working methods or news formats used). This author believes that journalistic practices (third level) depend on the cognitive and evaluative level of journalists, who consciously or unconsciously maintain this structure through their work.

Weaver's study (1998) is a good example of the biased Western theory that is being conducting in international research in journalism. Studies in Brazil, China, Hong Kong, Korea, Taiwan, and the Pacific Islands are almost exclusively a translation of the original Americans questionnaires. Therefore, when the authors establish the concept of professional duties, they must ensure the functional equivalence and all relevant issues within their specific cultural areas. In addition, researchers have to invest every effort to develop research tools that fit and can be applied to each of these cultural environments.

### **Why carry out a comparative analysis?**

There are many questions: why is the media so? Why do media serve different purposes and appears in so many forms in different countries? Why do media change in different countries? To these questions researchers have tried to answer over more than half a century of study in the field of communication. Since the 70's, Blumler and Gurevitch (1995) oriented their field of study toward the comparative analysis in an attempt to join forces and improve outcomes. Blumler and Gurevitch (1995: 59 et ff.) consider that the international comparative research in communication contributes to the

knowledge of various aspects due to the following factors: 1) expanding the existing databases, thereby simplifying generalizations and concrete theories; 2) providing an antidote against naïve universalism; 3) is a way to improve the understanding of society through comparing other systems, structures, cultures and patterns of thought and action; 4) can be used as a key to distinguish results from specific cultures; 5) through this experience, offering a variety of experiences and practical knowledge; and, 6) are stimulated by this comparative analysis by the use of analytical instruments of the transnational process and an international diffusion and political, communicative, economic and technological integration. Van Dalen and Van Aelst (2011: 3) affirm that through comparing how journalists perform their work in different media systems, it is possible clarify – and generalize - theories that have been developed in particular contexts so that these theories can be adapted to be applied more broadly. Thus, “making the invisible visible” (Blumler and Gurevitch, 1995: 76; Van Dalen and Van Aelst, 2011: 3).

Meanwhile, Hallin and Mancini (2004b: 2) argue that the role of comparative analysis in social theory can be understood in terms of two basic functions: 1) in the formation and clarification of concepts, and 2) the deduction of causes. First, it forms sensitivity towards difference and similarity, which can greatly help the formation of concepts as well as the refinement of our conceptual apparatus. Much of the literature on media in countries where there are more advanced studies, maintain a highly ethnocentric component. By contrast, in countries with research traditions less developed in this field, it often maintains the tendency to adopt the literature of other countries (mainly of the most advanced). The second reason given by Hallin and Mancini (2004b: 4), confirms that comparison is important within social research because it allows us to test hypotheses about the relationship between different social phenomena, media systems and social and political framework.

Benson (2010b: 616-617) speaks of field-level when contextualizing journalism, which requires a simultaneous analysis of the political, economic and journalistic field. This idea suggests a framework of systems level more complete and useful for comparative research across countries.

For these reasons mentioned, within an international analytical approach, the comparative method of exploratory character as the ideal method for identifying the inference causal certified from the location of the similarities and differences is found. In this respect, it is essential to facilitate the understanding of different national cultures individually and to draw a concrete framework for the study and comparison of journalists as individuals within media systems related with the structure; history; and social, political and economic development of these countries.

A comparative analysis is enormously valuable in spite of the limitations (rudimentary state of the question, international collaboration, coordination, etcetera) and the risky affair of proposing generalizations that encompass different nations. Therefore, these projects need to be considered as a collaboration of different countries based on cooperation and scientific contribution among all participants. The purpose of this multinational area is to create a well-founded theoretical framework in which to extend the national fieldwork.

### **Limitations and risks of cross-cultural research**

One of the main objectives of social research is to make comparisons between the different phenomena. However, according to Moreno Díaz and Humanes (2009: 647), paradoxically, this is one of the areas where least progress has been made due to the complexity that is involved in the theoretical and methodological comparative analysis. All eternal and unsolved problems inherent in research in sociology are shown in international comparative studies. Problems such as lack of time, money, collaborative interests and goodwill, result in many comparative investigations to be not completed, or published, or, if they do, it is too late (Livingstone, 2003: 36).

Through the analysis of the main investigations, such as: Sieber, Peterson and Schramm (1956); Whilhoit and Weaver (1996); or Hallin and Mancini (2004); comparing the results obtained in different contexts, result in very important findings due to different contextual levels (local, regional, national and supranational entities) in an international comparative analysis as journalistic culture cannot be seen independently from the rest of the national organizations. If not that, on the contrary, it must be seen as a dependent structure of other contextual factors, and the influences that may affect its structure decisively.

To conduct this contextual analysis, the researcher can work from several models in which influencing factors are studied. In the following lines, some of more interesting ideas are proposed. First, is the suggested revision proposed by Weischenberg (1992: 68), whose model journalistic paradigm found its key category in the idea of journalism as a social action system. This researcher developed the onion model which represents journalists as individual actors in the centre of a circular formation. Subsequently, Reus (1998) extended this proposal calling the attention to the mutual influences of journalistic actors and media systems; actions and structures (Borrat, 2002: 60). Second, Esser (1998) presented his Mehrebenenmodell (multilevel model), for its application to international comparative. And thirdly, the model of Shoemaker and Reese (1991), which articulated the factors influencing media contents into five stages through a continuum from the micro to the macro.

In addition to previously proposed, two current models, are highlighted. First, the employee by Hanitzsch (2007) in the quantitative study of Worlds of Journalism (WoJ); and, second, the study based on a model that combines quantitative and qualitative methods used by Berganza, Oller and Meier (2010) and Oller and Meier (2012) in their study of journalistic cultures in Spain and Switzerland. These integrated models are based on the concept shown by Shoemaker and Reese (2009: 81) of levels of analysis that divide the media world in to theoretical parts ranging from the micro to the macro. This system is designed based on three basic levels of aggregation in the sociology of work: the micro level of individuals - journalists, meso level of organizations - newsrooms, and macro-level of systems –nations.

Another problem is that extensive studies with quantitative character are oriented to quantitative search for general laws of behaviours (Cea D'Ancona, 2001: 46). Such that they face a loss of interpretative dimension of phenomena despite the fact that one of main advantages is its ability to extrapolate results to the whole population (Moreno Díaz and Humanes, 2009: 648).

To solve this problem, transnational comparative studies based on quantitative and qualitative methods can be posed. Nevertheless, there are limitations and risks that should be noted. According to Grad Fuchsel and Vergara (2003: 72-73, 80-81, 90-91), some of the main limitations are:

1) the so-called “dilemma Malinowsky” which emphasizes that each culture must be understood on its own terms, and each institution has to be seen as a product of culture in which it has been developed;

2) the existence of several sources of bias as those related to samples, conceptual equivalences, survey methods, translations and contextual data; and

3) risks in the statistical analysis of data in the detection of the relationships between the characteristics skills and the context.

To limit these risks, the approach of multilevel analysis (as named in the preceding paragraphs) allows creating a methodology that explains features of different journalistic cultural analysis taking as variables the dimensions that make each of the levels.

In the field of the transnational analysis, there is an emerging methodology which can help researchers to avoid risks in their studies, related to the development of information technology and its application to the field of journalism. This technique emerged in the late 1960s linked mainly with the sociology (Stone, Dunphy, Smith and Ogilvie, 1966; Iker and Klein, 1974; Jörgensen, 2002). Its advantages include the ability to make the text as the unit of observation, from which can be viewed relationships between the key concepts, words and micro/macro structural trends more

representative (Barredo, 2012; Barredo and Oller, 2012a, 2012b). The main advantage is the objectivity of the process because, as Diefenbach (2001) added, a computer cannot interfere in the investigation unless the researchers dictate how. In the opinion of other authors, in the 21st Century, the computerized techniques will suffer an extraordinary increase thanks to the development of New Technologies of Information and Communication.

### **The comparative research of journalists**

Media are being investigated globally around the world. Multi/plurinational researches are more precise and constant. Perhaps, as Reese asserts (1999: 53), works based on the analysis of the roles of journalists has been easier to adapt to comparative analysis. However, as this author mentioned, when researchers perform a comparative survey, they are tempted to focus on the nation as natural principle of organization. Thus, it should be considered carefully how they see journalists and their professional systems in relation to these contexts because whether the comparison is performed internationally, it is implicitly assumed that countries are relatively homogeneous internally, and that the variation of the phenomena of interest is higher outside than inside the country. However, the stratifications of professional conduct may fluctuate more within the country than between countries - something that happens more and more due to professionalism of media (Reese, 1999: 55). As Rühl affirmed (1980), concepts of journalists as individuals must start from the journalism itself as system. Thereby, system and context may be used as theoretical tools of analysis of journalistic functions and journalistic structures (Weischenberg and Malik, 2008: 163).

Löffelholz Weaver (2008: 285) both add that the structures and functions of journalism; and the opinions and behaviours of journalists individually, can be explained on different levels, from social and cultural organizations to individual characteristics. Therefore, the psychological characteristics of journalists interact with organizations, society and cultural variables, so that they are influenced.

Hence, in international comparative research, caution is recommended when offering assumptions about the basic concepts of different cultures. This means that it is possible to have the concept of objectivity at the individual, the perception that journalists have about their role, and the concept of professional ethics, be constructed in relation to their specific cultural context. Consequently, the most interesting question is not how to compare if journalists are more or less objective than others, have a role or another or maintain similar ethical standard within a country. Rather, the question is how these concepts hold different meanings in different cultures and journalistic practices. Therefore, the framework of hierarchy of

influences presented within different levels that form the journalistic context helps to complete the theoretical explanation.

**Quantitative And Qualitative Studies: Triangulation**

**Theoretical approaches to concepts of qualitative and quantitative**

In the field of international comparative research, both quantitative and qualitative techniques can be used. The methodology can focus on one of these techniques or on both - with methodological complication that entail.

Both methods share explicit procedures (Sautu, 1997: 180). Therefore, the difference between qualitative and quantitative is much more than a technical question: is an epistemological, theoretical, methodological and ontological question (Von Sprecher, 2009: 527). According to different positions taken, the qualitative and quantitative approaches focus on opposing aspects of social phenomena, as shown the following table:

**Table 1:** Social aspects of qualitative and quantitative approaches in international comparative studies

Qualitative methods	Quantitative methods
Comprehension	Check
Description	Prognosis
Interpretative	Empirical
Subjective	Objective
<i>Emic</i> (insider’s perspective of the subject)	<i>Etic</i> (perspective of the observer/scientist)

**Source:** Prepared by the authors

Each approach builds a specific view of the world. According to Smith and Heshusius (1986: 10) it is valid to accept a particular outcome because it is based on facts, and it is a valid interpretation of these cases. Therefore, one method works depending on the type of research because, as Von Sprecher affirms (2009: 527), the quantitativism assumes that the rigor of the research passes for measure quantitatively; while qualitative perspective implies that the rigor of a research is based on a study in situ, considering the production of meaning by the people, professionals and their interactions. The accent of the qualitative processes is not to achieve generalizations or distributions, but interpret. From a pragmatic frame, different methods respond to different questions: qualitative methods refer to what type and quantitative methods to how much of this type (Kvale, 2007: 47).

In the following sections, this study tries to transcend the debate around which approach (quantitative or qualitative) is better. The fact is that there are good and bad studies means this statement can apply to both paradigms. Studies must meet a set of quality criteria and standards of trust and reliability, in order to obtain valid results. From this point of view, this article continues to explore these topics within journalistic field.

### **Beyond qualitative versus quantitative methods**

The name of this item came from a paper published in 1982 by Reichardt and Cook. It is appropriate to use because, even today, the distinction between qualitative and quantitative studies is, for some authors, a matter of debate. There are strong defenders of quantitative methods in the history of social sciences, such as Campbell and Standley (1966: 2), who argued that it was “the only way of establishing a cumulative tradition in which improvements can be introduced safely and the cumulative tradition cannot be frivolously discarded in favour of lower novelties”; or Riecken, Boruch, Campbell, et al. (1974: 6, 12), who argued that “the experiments not only induce to clearer causal inferences, but rather the same design of the experimental process helps to clarify the nature of the social problem under investigation”.

In regard to qualitative research, there is a long and rich tradition in the social sciences ranging from the thoughts of James (1884/1885) or Freud (1905, 1927) (holding that the qualitative approach was the most appropriate to explore ideas and emotions) to Grounded Theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), which builds explanations from the data emerged to phenomena investigated. The objective of this qualitative procedure is not, as emphasized Glaser (2002: 1), to draw a detailed description, but rather to create an abstraction on a particular issue. Weiss and Rein (1972: 234) suggest several alternative strategies derived from qualitative research, as they believe that, in general, the experimental method is superior when evaluating projects based on programs aimed to greater reach and impact. Parlett and Hamilton (1976: 141) maintained the same criteria in the field of education stating that traditional investigations were very artificial and restrictive. And Guba (1978: 1) argued that naturalistic research offers a more consistent evaluation mode and more sensitive than any other that is being practiced.

Authors are aware of different characteristics which possess each of these paradigms. Firstly, it is attributed to quantitative paradigms a point of view of the world which is positivist, hypothetical-deductive, particularistic, and objective and which is oriented towards results and towards own natural science. In general, quantitative methods are very powerful in terms of external validity. With a representative sample of the population, it can infer the properties of this population with wide margins of safety and accuracy. This not only eliminates the role of randomness to discard or reject a hypothesis, but rather can quantify the relevance of a phenomenon by measuring the relative risk reduction, the absolute risk reduction and the number needed to cases (Pita and Pertegás, 2002: 77).

In contrast, the qualitative paradigm is subscribed to a phenomenological worldview that is inductive, holistic, and subjective and is

oriented towards the process of social anthropology (Reichardt and Cook, 1982: 43). These features make the qualitative method something especially valuable, specifically to perform studies that attempt to establish an analysis of an activity carried out within a sociocultural context; a routine activity (day after day); an skilled accomplishment through codes and skills learned; and a hermeneutic process, from the interpretation of certain references about existing meanings (Thompson, 1995: 38-43; Thompson, 1998: 197-201)

Moreover, researchers must not fall into the reductionist binary thinking creating false concatenated dichotomies because qualitative and quantitative methods are interrelated through a logical scientific model. Even if their purposes differ, both help to find different kinds of data (Bavelas, 1995: 50).

Through the application of both methods, quantitative and qualitative, in the data collection, researchers can approach the analysis context through a multidisciplinary research, heterogeneous, multiform and temporary international comparative study. This operational structure would not be limited to a positivist methodology based on quantitative research, but would also incorporate qualitative methods developed and articulated through a phenomenologically-oriented paradigm (using a multicultural perspective), and have the acceptance of multiple individual realities represented in each of the cases analyzed. Authors such as Fetterman (2010: 5) believe that people act guided by their individual perceptions and such actions have real consequences. Therefore, the subjective reality that each individual sees, and that is shown through the qualitative study, is no less real than a reality defined and objectively measured through a quantitative study. Researchers must be interested in understanding and describing the social and cultural scene of journalism and communication within. Thus, when researchers approach in a more diverse and varied way to its point of analysis, better final results can be obtained.

The shift of focus that has led evolution of research methodology in the social sciences in recent years can be seen. Today, researchers not base their analysis on the conditions offered by a methodological approach, but rather respond to questions in their research. So, the key is the concept of instrumental adaptation.

### **Mixed Methods**

In this section, the authors demonstrate the advantages of a current trend linked to the development of mixed methods. The procedural hybridization offers interesting possibilities to the object of an investigation. Since the late twentieth century, according to Tashakkori and Teddlie (2003: 458, 483), a position has appeared that recommends the methodological integration rather than separation of a kind of work with text or numbers: this

is mixed methods or triangulation (Flick, 2004; Flick, 2007: 83-84). For an optimization or combination of qualitative and quantitative analysis in his work *Kombination und Integration qualitativer und quantitativer Analyse*, Mayring (2001) presented a general model begun in the 80s with his work *Qualitative Inhaltsanalyse*, and continued with *Einführung in die qualitative Sozialforschung. Eine Anleitung zu qualitativem Denken*, and continues to this day through numerous editions. This author shows different optimization phases. According to this model of analysis, researchers assume that they must determine qualitatively research questions, critical concepts, tools, etcetera. Depending on the purpose of analysis, the instruments can be complemented through quantitative techniques such as a count of frequency of words, or cluster analysis of the major categories. During the final phase, based on a qualitative-interpretative process, linked results can be from the previous step with the initial question, to thereby obtain the conclusions.

Even today, the use of mixed methods is controversial to some authors, because the combination of qualitative and quantitative methods involves the assumption of different paradigms. This controversy has come to be inserted in the socio-political context of the Social Sciences, where methodological hierarchies often exist. Here, quantitative methods represent the top, and qualitative methods have been relegated to a secondary or auxiliary role, as recognized by Howe (2004: 42). In the author's opinion, it would be appropriate to establish the relationship between mixed research methods and conceptions of causality, so that researchers can distinguish between the natural concept of causality and the intentional conception. Howe (2004: 47) claims that the relationship of natural causality builds a causal explanation of the establishment, as well as the enumeration of the patterns that order human behaviour within the model of the Natural Sciences, and which is associated with quantitative methods. Meanwhile, the relationship of intentional causation (causal mechanisms) interprets the causal explanations of the establishment, and the enumeration of the patterns that govern the order of human behaviour (in terms of institutions based on certain rules and practices), so is associated with the qualitative methods (Howe, 2004: 52).

Barbour (1998) maintains that it must be remembered that both conceptions of causality play their own role within social research. For this author, both methods are criss-crossed, so that quantitative methods can be used to investigate relationships of intentional causality; while the qualitative methods can be used to investigate the natural causation within the general framework of mixed methods. In fact, the combination of quantitative and qualitative methods can pose a large number of issues through different approaches (Bazeley, 2004: 142).

## Triangulation

There is a tradition in the Social Sciences that promotes research from multiple methods of study. This strategic form focuses on a multitrait methodology, convergent and multimodal (Campbell and Fiske, 1959), based on convergent validation or in the so-called triangulation (Webb, Campbell, Schwartz and Sechrest, 1966), which discusses the methodological integration under the concepts of mixed methods (Flick, 2007: 11). This notion ensures the complementarity of qualitative and quantitative methods, their integration and their not rivalry. In fact, most authors stress the desirability of a combination of both paradigms, showing the strengths and weaknesses found in the designs based on a single procedure (Jick, 1979: 605). Triangulation, therefore, is a general strategy based on reliability and validity, through which authors get different perspectives of the same phenomenon through the verification and validation of results (Jensen, 2002: 267). To be able to get this set of perspectives on the same event, the triangulation is constructed from a set of data, researchers and methodologies within the experimental approaches and the observation; supported by the interaction human-computer (Denzin, 1970; Denzin, 1989: 239).

The triangulation of qualitative and quantitative approaches, through the complementary nature of both, looking for the verification of the results by crossing final data (Flick, 2007: 76). Bryman (1992: 59-61), in his work *Quantitative and qualitative research: Further reflections on Their integration*, identified eleven variants in the integration of qualitative and quantitative methods in the research of Social Science: 1) the triangulation that conducts a qualitative review of the quantitative results, so that the qualitative method supports quantitative research; 2) the same way as above but in reverse; 3) obtaining a broader view of the investigated object; 4) the connection of structural aspects of quantitative aspects, and the approach of qualitative process; 5) the researcher's perspective as a driving force in quantitative terms, as well as qualitative research as opinion of subjects analysed; 6) the solution of the problem of generalization; 7) easier interpretation of qualitative results thanks to the participation of the quantitative results in the qualitative research 8) and the interpretation of the correlations of these; 9) the relationships between micro and macro levels in an area can be explained by a combination of qualitative and quantitative investigations 10) in various stages of research; 11) and, finally, the possible use of hybrid forms as qualitative investigations based on quasi-experimental designs, which generally generate again a wide range of variants.

As shown throughout this section, many researchers strive to design studies that provide a multidimensional perspective of phenomena (Foster, 1997), and also provide valuable data and unbiased information that can be interpreted with a high degree of reliability (Jick, 1979: 603). Therefore,

according to Thurmond (2001: 253), one of the goals of researchers should be to design a study in methodological terms that has validity and internal reliability; which is integrated into a multiperspective integral vision (Boyd, 2000); and is based on a procedure that minimizes potential bias in the research (Mitchell, 1986).

In the view of authors, it is convenient to use the triangulation of methodologies in international comparative studies, because the benefits of this hybridization, following Jick (1979: 608-610), may reflect in: an increase in the confidence in the research data, the creation of innovative ways of understanding a phenomenon, the revealing of unique results, the integration of theories, and the provision of greater clarity and understanding of the problem.

### **Conclusion**

The essence of the comparative studies is in the identification of common and divergent points within the different journalistic cultures. Each country shows certain national characteristics and a macro or general level in which reveals some similarities with other countries, either by geographical proximity, by commercial ties or historical links. Therefore, comparative research is shown as a methodology capable of analysing cultural flows that determine the kind of journalism in a country or region. Because these points of distance or rapprochement will determinate contextual, cultural and sociological factors that establish the media system and ways of thinking and working of journalists. In this way, the stereotypes based on Western journalism, which have marked until now the international comparative research should be avoided.

As highlighted by Weaver (1996) or Hanitzsch (2007), the greatest difficulty encountered for this type of research, as well as the necessary coordination of a large group of professionals, is to get results that adjust to the reality. Another handicap is to achieve a high degree of analytical depth, to transcend the mere superficial enumeration of statistic data.

The main motivation that can lead researchers to investigate comparatively is the possibility to understand the differences and contrasts that constitute each of the journalistic cultures around the globe. Because these differences show realities which permit to obviate the stereotypes of much national research, and that lead to results with a minimal scientific significance. Furthermore, comparison between countries provides additional data that enriches the final result due to the diversity of data that, finally, improves qualitative and quantitative results.

Authors propose as suitable these comparative studies based on a qualitative and quantitative methodology because both social communication in general, as in journalism in particular are the major producers of meaning. This article is proposed to clarify current methodological possibilities

because taking the concept of culture as signifying system (William, 1981: 11; Von Sprecher, 2009: 526). Firstly, quantitative methods offer objective and statistical data that facilitates for researchers the statistical comparison, standardization and generalization; and secondly, qualitative methods show the descriptive and interpretative character that helps to understand the internal perspective of the subject or subjects. The difference between the qualitative and quantitative is much more than a technical question; it is an epistemological question, theoretical, methodological and even ontological (Von Sprecher, 2009: 527).

Here lies the zenith of the question given that although qualitative research works over a field of historical and cultural study, and the quantitative research based on the rigor of the quantitative, authors believe that comparative studies should be channelled from a multimethod perspective. Their results have to rely on certain parameters focusing on achieving generalizations and distributions as well as in achieving performances that sustain their arguments, isolating them from possible subjectivist or distorted aspects -qualitative- or excessively standardized -quantitative-. Thus, through qualitative and quantitative investigations, it is possible to engage different viewpoints. For this reason, it is considered that both methods should act in parallel, based on a complementary work directed to isolate and analyse different aspects of the same phenomenon.

From this multimethod and international comparative approach, different instrumental positions assumed have been offered. With this work, the authors do not intend to prescribe a recipe with codes or guidelines to follow. It is hoped future studies can find an open door that facilitates the reformulation of their ideas, and which look for a wider range of results that provide a field of study more dynamic, inclusive and which is constantly evolving.

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