Contributions To The Study Of The Relevance Of The Web 2.0 On Online Newspapers In Portugal – Case Study

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Abstract
        With the present investigation we intend to address the effects that Web 2.0 has had in cyber-journalism. Its interest stems from the fact that the Web 2.0 has contributed to the evolution of journalism as well as to the entire communication process by offering experimentation and interaction environments hence promoting the democratization of information. More specifically, we question to what extent have Portuguese online newspapers taken full advantage of the potential and features of the Web 2.0. The investigation will be divided into two structural parts: analysis of the origin and potential of the Web 2.0 and analysis of the Portuguese online newspapers. Insofar as the methodology is concerned, we have opted for a descriptive approach with a review of the literature on the Web 2.0 contribution towards the evolution of the communication process followed up by the analysis of its main features applied to specific newspapers. The sample comprises five Portuguese daily generalist paid newspapers with online version which also offer a paper version with national distribution. We then proceed to an empirical comparative observation of some of the tools made available by Web 2.0. Subsequently, we raise the question to whether – given the present state of affairs – does it make sense to take a step forward into the Web 3.0 concept as a new communicative practice.

Keywords: Cyber-journalism, Web 2.0, Communication, Technology, Internet

Cyber-journalism as a new model of communication
        The course of the present study will stress the ideas of Serrano and Cabezuelo (2009), when they state that newspapers in the era of the Web 1.0 were characterized by using the same contents on their printed version as well as on the online version; as for the Web 2.0 newspapers, they stand out for creating contents that are specific to the web; on their side, the Web 3.0

newspapers are characterized by the socialization of contents, in which the media reveal a strong interaction with the social networks.

In terms of terminology, we will adopt the option selected by Bastos (2005) and Zamith (2008) as for the use of the term cyber-journalism. According to Bastos (2005), cyber-journalism is the "journalism produced for web publications, by professionals seconded to work exclusively on the aforementioned publications". Cyber-newspaper is identified as "a cyberspace publication where journalistic contents are diffused" (Zamith, 2008: 26).

The Internet has revolutionized the way news and information are accessed altering the way of doing journalism. This new social dynamic has consolidated information at a distance in a short period of time. In this atmosphere of constant changes, Fidler named the phenomenon as "mediamophose" (Fidler, 1997: 29), in order to highlight the process of transformation of the means of communication and the permanent adaptation to new media. The increasing utilization of online newspapers is due, to a large extent, to their constant upgrading ability, mass distribution and low cost.

Use of the Web 2.0 in cyber-journalism
Web 2.0 or social Web, has introduced significant alterations on online communication. In terms of newspapers, characteristics of collaboration and participation were enhanced with the incorporation of forums, chats and questionnaires which play a leading role in the space of exchange and dialogue (Tejedor Calvo, 2010). New spaces for interaction were introduced in which the user plays the role of content creator.

Web 2.0 has allowed the consolidation of a more active role to the cyberspace user. This new paradigm, underlying the idea that the user is also the producer of information, has brought with it unavoidable changes to the way we approach cyber-journalism. The capabilities of the Web 2.0 have changed the communication process into a more dynamic one but, on the other hand, the borders distinguishing what is information from what is opinion, were somewhat diluted. This was due to the fact that this almost democratic exercise of content production gave way to a "grey zone", almost laboratory like, which includes innovative characteristics.

In this line of thought, Guallar highlights the creation of an interaction space between media, contents and user, as there already exists the concern for making the guests something more than mere readers once they are invited to not only give their opinion but also to participate in the elaboration of the contents (Guallar, 2007).

Larrondo also points out to the main characteristics of Web 2.0 with great impact and influence on cyber-journalism: hypertextuality,

multimediality and interactivity (Larrondo, 2008). In the same manner, Canavilhas notes that this language includes three features that enable the development of new contents: hypertextuality, multimediality and interactivity (Canavilhas, 2007).

Regarding the potential of Web 2.0 in cyber-journalism, there is a strong consensus among the authors as to the aforementioned characteristics. Nevertheless, some authors point out to other distinctive characteristics, such as instantaneousness (López, 2008: 77) or creativity (Zamith, 2008).

The analytical study of the present research work focuses on the idea that the new language, which allows for the development of innovative contents, includes three features: hypertextuality, multimediality and interactivity (Canavilhas, 2007).

Hipertextuality

Hypertext, as a fundamental element to the organization of information on the Internet, presents itself as a non-linear customizable connection of contents. Through the many links provided by the hypertext, the user has access to parallel and/or additional information that may be presented in several formats. The hypertext has enabled a new way to "read" the information available. Hypertextuality allowed the news to be integrated into a new system designated by inverted pyramid (Canavilhas, 2007).

Multimediality

According to Palácios, the concept of multimediality "refers to the convergence of the traditional media formats (image, text and sound) in the narration of the journalistic fact" (Palácios, 2002). The production of contents has available a wider set of media allowing it to meet the consumers' needs. Each reader makes its own browsing choices. In this multimedia model, online newspapers seek to take full advantage of the Web 2.0 characteristics in terms of the available tools, namely sound, video, photography, illustrations and graphics (Canavilhas, 2007).

Interactivity

Interactivity allows the user to no longer have a passive role, but to become an actor in the process of message construction. In fact, interactivity brought great changes to the communicational model and, for that reason, "the possibility of direct interaction with the news or opinion producer is a strong asset to be explored by web journalism" (Canavilhas, 2001). This new model was only made possible through tools such as chats, forums, comment boxes, surveys, and direct access buttons to social networks like *Twitter* and *Facebook*.

Analysis of the Portuguese daily newspapers
Purpose and methodology of the research

The main objective of this analysis is to address the following question: Are the Portuguese online newspapers taking full advantage of all the potentialities and characteristics of Web 2.0?

The analyzed and studied sample comprises the online edition of each of the five generalist paid Portuguese daily newspapers, which also have paper version with national distribution. The analysis was carried out during the time period comprised between 6 and 10 April 2015. The analyzed newspapers are identified and listed in the following table and in alphabetical order (Table 1).

GENERALIST PORTUGUESE DAILY NEWSPAPERS		
ONLINE NEWSPAPERS	GROUP	URL WEB
Correio da Manhã	Cofina	www.cmjornal.xl.pt
Diário de Notícias	Global Media	www.dn.pt
Jornal de Notícias	Global Media	www.jn.pt
Jornal i	Sojormedia Capital	www.ionline.pt
Público	SonaeCom	www.publico.pt

Table 1 – Analyzed online newspapers.

Measurement table

In order to validate the observation carried out on the identified sample, we have divided our analysis into five categories, applying to each observation unit a questionnaire with twenty different indicators with values of (1) to "Yes" (0) to "No".

The structure of the measurement table is based on the table by Tejedor Calvo (Tejedor Calvo, 2010), with specific changes and adaptations to the sample and to the goals of the study (Table 2).

MEASUREMENT TABLE	
Dialogue tools	1. Forums
	2. Comments
	3. Surveys
Creation and content management of the 2.0	4. Blogs
	5. Photos
	6. Audio
	7. Video
	8. Infographics
	9. Wikis
Contents 2.0	10. RSS Readers
	11. Podcasts
	12. Movable contact services
	13. Labels
	14. Social Markers
Direct involvement of the users	15. Creation of "my" newspaper
	16. Customizing of the home page
	17. Tools for voting
	18. Citizen journalism
Other social networking services	19. Social networks
	20. Researchers 2.0

Table 2 – Measurement table of categories and of indicators.

Global results

After applying the measurement table to the selected sample, the percentage results shown on Figure 1 were obtained.

In a general manner, the dialogue tools (forums, comments and surveys) have found a satisfactory presence in all analyzed daily newspapers (67%), except in the case of *Correio da Manhã* (33%).

In terms of creation and content management of the 2.0, for which a wide range of indicators (blogs, photos, audio, video, infographics, wikis) was analyzed, the results which were found are almost uniform (67%), as only *Jornal I* presents slightly less positive results (17%).

After inquiring about the 2.0 contents, namely RSS readers, podcasts, movable contact services, labels and social markers, it was observed that these were not actually boosted, since *Jornal I* shows a result of 40% and the remaining newspapers a result of 60%.

As for the direct involvement of the users, in which the creation of "my" newspaper was observed, the customizing of the home page, the tools for voting and citizen journalism, the overall results reveal that it is an underrated category by the Portuguese online newspapers. Despite the unfavourable results in this category, the *Jornal de Notícias* has a presence of 50%, while the *Correio da Manhã* and *Diário de Notícias* have a representation of 25% in this category, and no element of the public's direct participation can be seen on the newspapers *Jornal I* and *Público*.

As for other social networking services in which the presence of social networks and 2.0 researchers was observed, the outcome results were very positive.

In view of the set of the exposed and undeniably essential categories in the newspapers of the Web 2.0 era, it is observed that the dialogue tools are the most used means by newspapers to interact with users but it is worth noticing that they do not make the most of all their potentialities. On the other hand, it seems evident that the connection to social networks is one of the characteristic tools of the Web 2.0 that presents a most prominent role.

It is also interesting to analyze the investment that newspapers carry out on dialogue tools compared to the near absence of direct participation mechanisms for users. It may hereby be derived as a conclusion that, in practice, they occupy the same room in the relation between information and the user and that, eventually, they may supersede it by serving the same purpose.
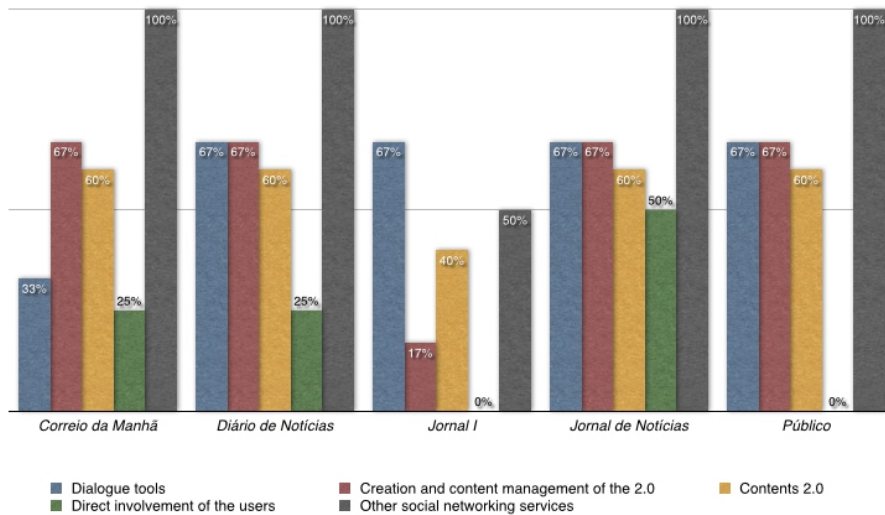

Figure 1 – Graphic of parcelled results per category.

In general terms, it can be stated that the sample shows positive results regarding the use of the Web 2.0 potentialities (Figure 2). However, it seems clear that there is still a way to go in order to enhance all the available tools.
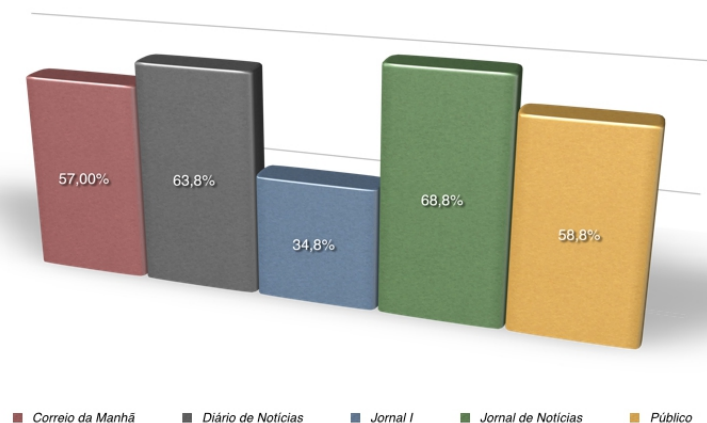

Figure 2 – Graphic of global results per newspaper.

Conclusion and new perspectives

In global terms, we can say that the Portuguese generalist daily online newspapers, while attentive to the potential of the Web 2.0, do not yet fully exploit all the elements at their disposal. This statement is supported by the results exposed following the application of the aforementioned measurement table. However, despite the partial character of the study carried out at present, it seems that an evolution concerning the results presented by the comprehensive study conducted by Zamith was verified.

It seems important to consolidate the main characteristics of Web 2.0 applied to cyber-journalism at a time when all is ready for a step further to be taken: the investment on the Web 3.0.

As it had happened at the time of the emergence of Web 2.0 there is no general consensus on the concept of the Web 3.0. On the Web 3.0, or Semantics Web, the cyberspace, besides including information, provides knowledge. That is to say that the information presented on a virtual space, namely on an online newspaper, does not emerge in a descriptive manner, there exists the intention to provide explanation and clarification of the contents "in order to turn them into knowledge, which, mainly, may be shared globally, in a more effective manner "(Andrade, 2013: 187).

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