

## **Internet and Social Media in European Minority Languages: Analysis of the Digitalization Process**

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The aim of this article is to analyze the Internet reality and performance of European minority language media, including a comparison of the evolution of traditional media websites between 2009 and 2016. The 10 language communities are Catalan, Galician, Basque, Welsh, Irish, Frisian, Breton, Corsican, Scottish Gaelic, and Sámi. The quantitative and qualitative inquiry is based on the data of the complete censuses of the 10 media systems. To evaluate Internet and social media activity, as well as areas of improvement, we gathered information from an adequate sample of media editors and managers. The findings indicate that nine out of 10 news organizations have some presence on the Internet in the form of websites and/or social media. Compared with data collected in 2009, the average number of media organizations with no Internet presence has decreased from 29% to 9.2%. A niche of traditional media, however, remains outside the digital and online world.

*Keywords: minority language media, digitalization, Internet, social media, cybermedia*

The extraordinary progress of and changes to the Internet and digitalization of media in most parts of the world during the past decade (Di Batista, Dutta, Geiger, & Lanvin, 2015), have made it relevant to systematically and comparatively analyze the current Internet and social media reality of

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European minority language media systems.<sup>1</sup> We carried out a comparative evaluation of the changes between 2009 and 2016, in relation to traditional media websites (press, radio, and television). This was a period of rushing evolution and financial crisis (Franklin, 2012; Zabaleta, Ferré-Pavia, Gutierrez, Fernandez, & Xamardo, 2014), which remains unresolved for the media and has caused the closure of dozens of traditional media outlets in some of the minority communities studied. Thus, it has only increased the preexisting difficulty of interpreting the digitalization process of minority language media and even of diagnosing the effects of digitalization, which has been seen as a double-edged sword, not “deterministically” beneficial for small media (Zabaleta, Ferré-Pavia, Fernandez, Gutierrez, & Xamardo, 2015).

This study could be placed within the framework of institutional completeness, which is defined as the existence of “media platforms available in the minority language for each type of media” (Moring, 2007, p. 19).

The concept of minority language is varied. It can be framed in a meta-category of “minoritiness,” which is described as a state of being or being considered subordinate because of sociocultural inferiority (language, ethnicity, class, gender, identity, etc.) or even because of the mere quantity of members, in some cases (Zabaleta et al., 2013).

The languages that are the focus of this research belong to Categories 1, 2, and 3 of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages<sup>2</sup> (Council of Europe, 1992), which sorts them into five types: (1) lesser-used national languages of small nation-states, such as Irish; (2) languages of communities residing in a single nation-state, such as Welsh; (3) languages of communities residing in two or more nation-states, such as Basque and Catalan; (4) diasporic languages, such as Turkish, in Germany; and (5) nonterritorial languages, such as the Romany language.

Category 4 (diasporic languages) was not included, because only autochthonous European languages are investigated and, besides, in many cases, the language itself is the official language in another country where a fully developed media system exists. As for Category 5 (nonterritorial languages), the only case at hand is the Romany language, which does not have a minimum monolingual media system in any specific country, except some content in some mainstream media outlets.

Overall, the 10 languages analyzed are spoken by about 13 million people in Europe: 7.2 million Catalan speakers; 2.2 Galician; 0.9 million Basque; 0.6 million Welsh; 0.8 million Irish speakers; 0.5

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<sup>2</sup> *Text of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages*. Council of Europe, Strasbourg, France, November 5, 1992. Retrieved from <https://www.coe.int/en/web/european-charter-regional-or-minority-languages/text-of-the-charter>.

million Frisian; 0.3 million Breton; 0.2 million Corsican; 60,000 Scottish Gaelic speakers; and 20,000–30,000 Sámi speakers.<sup>3</sup>

Although the Catalan language community has a much larger speaking population and media system than the rest of the language communities, it seemed appropriate and scholarly sound to incorporate it into this study because, according to the European Charter, Catalan is a regional and minority language, and its minoritiness is manifest in different political, social, cultural, and communication-related aspects in the regions in which it is spoken (e.g., Catalonia, Andorra, Valencian Region, Balearic Islands). In fact, it is similar to research on European nation-states, where large countries such as Germany, with 83 million people, and small countries such as Estonia, with 1.3 million, are all included and comparatively investigated, using the same methodological tools, so as to configure a European Union framework.<sup>4</sup> In this case, it pretends to be a study of 10 languages of the European Union of minority language communities, from large to small. The inclusion factor, in addition to the operational limitations of all research projects, is to have at least a minimum monolingual media system.

The relevance of this analysis is based on the importance of the role of the Internet and social media to empower and develop endangered languages (Cunliffe, Morris & Prys, 2012; De Bot & Stoessel, 2002). Young people, especially, consume news through their social media profiles (Gottfried & Shearer, 2016), and these new readers or consumers are needed to maintain these languages. Minority media have been identified as making a substantial contribution to the survival of minority languages (Jones, 2013; Riggins, 1992).

### Literature Review

Academic development in the field of minority language media in Europe is relatively recent, yet significant. Cormack (1998) drew some preliminary conclusions, and, years later, collections of international essays and case studies were published, outlining minority language media as a distinct area of study (Cormack & Hourigan, 2007); addressing the challenges of multiplatform, mobile communication environments (Jones & Uribe-Jongbloed, 2012); examining the relationship between identity and digital

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<sup>3</sup> Catalan, Institut d'Estadística de Catalunya (Idescat; [www.idescat.cat](http://www.idescat.cat)); Galician, Instituto Galego de Estatística (IGE; [www.ige.eu](http://www.ige.eu)); Basque, Euskal Estatistika Erakundea (Eustat; <http://en.eustat.eus>); Welsh, Office for National Statistics (ONS; [www.ons.gov.uk/census](http://www.ons.gov.uk/census)); Irish, Central Statistics Office of Ireland ([www.cso.ie](http://www.cso.ie)) and The Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA; [www.nisra.gov.uk](http://www.nisra.gov.uk)); Scottish Gaelic, National Records of Scotland (Scotland's Census; [www.scotlandscensus.gov.uk](http://www.scotlandscensus.gov.uk)); Frisian, Language Diversity (<http://language-diversity.eu/en/knowledge/regions-of-europe/die-westfriesen-in-den-niederlanden/>); Breton, Le site de la Région Bretagne ([www.bretagne.bzh/jcms/c\\_16790/fr/langues-de-bretagn](http://www.bretagne.bzh/jcms/c_16790/fr/langues-de-bretagn)); Corsican, Collectivité Territoriale de Corse ([www.corse.fr](http://www.corse.fr)); and for Sámi, Statistics Finland ([www.stat.fi/index\\_en.html](http://www.stat.fi/index_en.html)), Statistics Norway ([www.ssb.no/](http://www.ssb.no/)), and Sámi in Sweden (<https://sweden.se/society/sami-in-sweden/>).

<sup>4</sup> See Eurostat, Share of Member States in EU GDP, 10-4-17. Retrieved from <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-eurostat-news/-/DDN-20170410-1>.

media markets and communication (Moring, 2009, 2016); and carrying out empirical and systematic intercommunity comparisons about European minority language media systems and ecologies, journalists' roles, and women journalists (Zabaleta et al., 2014; Zabaleta, Xamardo, Gutierrez, Urrutia, & Fernandez, 2008). Other authors focused on ethnic minority media (Arnold & Schneider, 2007; Deuze, 2006), understood as media of minorities, independent of the language used.

As for media digitalization, since the 1990s, all media in countries with a high level of Internet consumption have been affected by a gradual process of digital convergence, which has resulted in many changes in the economic model of media companies; the consumer's channels and patterns; the organization of enterprises; the production, distribution, and consumption of news; and in many more aspects of journalism and convergent culture (Jenkins, 2006). It is difficult to imagine an exclusively off-line journalism, and "no self-respecting journalistic site remains without a blog, a Facebook, and Twitter account" (Siapera & Veglis, 2012, p. 1).

### **A Linguistic Digital Divide?**

But is such a categorical statement applicable to minority media? Studies in 2009 showed that, on a European level, almost 30% of the traditional news organizations studied had no website (Zabaleta et al., 2013). There is little additional academic literature available to quantify the difference between minority and majority media in adapting to digitalization. As Riggins (1992) emphasized, minoritized language communities are seldom referred to in the context of academic writing or majority language media.

Nevertheless, many authors have contributed to an analysis about the effect that digitalization has had on those media and their communities. For some of them, Internet-based and mobile digital media places minority languages in an "asymmetric position [that] makes them particularly vulnerable to unfavorable changes in the media landscape" (Moring, 2013, p. 34). But even after recognizing the difficulties, many studies highlight the importance of "electronic technology" usage (Crystal, 2000, p. 141) and support the role of the Internet and social media to revitalize endangered languages (Cunliffe, 2008; Lema Blanco & Meda González, 2016).

When the outlets correspond to majority language areas, some researchers confirm that in the use of social media by journalists, "no relationships exist between the number of types of social media used and the size of its organization" (Gulyas, 2013, p. 276). As Cormack (1998) argued, however, "in any discussion of minority language media, careful attention needs to be given to the specific context, considering the political environment" (pp. 48–49).

Especially in the past few years, the potential audiences of minority languages have been studied in addition to their consumption of social media, particularly on Twitter and Facebook. This interest is directly related to the importance of networks being used for the maintenance of healthy indigenous and minority languages (Milroy, 2001; Moring, 2013). Jones (2013) stated that because of the convergence process, broadcasters have to make linguistic decisions, "as they increasingly communicate with their audiences through the written text of their websites, Twitter feeds and Facebook pages" (p. 35).

Studies analyzing the role and use of minority languages on the Internet have proliferated in recent years: Mensching (2000), for Sardinian; Ouakrime (2001), for Tamazight, a language of 12 million speakers in several countries of eastern North Africa; Micó and Masip (2008), for Catalan; and Paricio and Martínez (2010), for Aragonese in Spain. In the case of Frisian and Limburgish, a German-Dutch variety, research concluded that 7.5% of the tweets were on those two languages (Nguyen, Trieschnigg, & Cornips, 2015). As for the Welsh language, in addition to previous studies (Dyfrig, Jones, & Jones, 2006), Johnson (2010) found that 41.2% of the tweets analyzed were in Welsh. Honeycutt and Cunliffe (2010) sampled 236 Facebook groups and concluded the same use of Welsh (41.5%).

The obligation to reconvert the parameters of business exploitation and the competence of app consumption has been difficult for media in all areas (Scolari, 2013). Previous research (Zabaleta, Ferré-Pavia, Fernandez, Gutierrez, & Xamardo, 2015) concluded that in the different European minority media studied, the effect of digitalization on media financing was considered negative. At the same time, however, it turned out to be positive for the audience and the content produced. The possibility of reaching a larger audience does not directly translate to economic profit, as will be observed in the qualitative part of this article.

### Research Questions

The research questions of this study are framed across the variables of media type, ownership, and reach and can be scripted as follows:

- RQ1. Internet presence: What is the total Internet presence of European minority language media, including websites and social media? In what kind of digital clusters could be grouped the 10 communities?*
- RQ2. Website typology: What is the Internet reality of European minority language media in terms of website development and typology? What kind of evolution or change took place between 2009 and 2016? Are there still traditional media outlets with no websites at all?*
- RQ3. Social media: What is the degree of social media development among the 10 media systems in 2016? What social media platforms are the most important? Are there traditional media outlets that only operate on social media, dispensing with the use of websites?*
- RQ4. How do minority language media editors and managers evaluate their performance on the Internet and social media in 2016? What areas or aspects do they think should be improved?*

### Method

Empirical and qualitative methods of analysis have been used in this study, coherent with the three topics investigated: Internet presence in the form of Web platforms and/or social media, website reality, and its evolution between 2009 and 2016; the current state of social media development in 2016; and qualitative evaluation of Internet activity.

The website analysis methodology is based on a longitudinal design, considering the time slots of 2009 and 2016, which covers a period of important digital changes. It may also be framed as an operational replication (Wimmer & Dominick, 1983, p. 3) of another article, in which the measurement unit was the Web platform, categorized into two types (Zabaleta et al., 2013): "(a) the simple website (web) of a traditional company or medium without a news service, also known as a corporate website, used solely to provide background information about the news organization; and (b) a website with a news service (web + news), that is, a corporate website that also included a regularly updated news information service" (p. 1647). The latter category could cover different options, ranging from the simple uploading of traditional media content or programming (e.g., PDF of a magazine) to a totally autonomous and different news service.

As for the study of social media, a coding form with questions was applied to each of the media outlets: Existence of social media account, type of social media (Facebook, Twitter, and others, specifying names), and number of accounts in 2016.

The two previous methods were designed to produce quantitative results at two levels: European and intracommunity. On a European level, the goal was to establish a European total, encompassing the data of all the media outlets of the 10 media systems, regardless of their difference on size. It is a way to imagine and visualize a European Union or framework of minority language media, as it is done similarly in mainstream scholarship to establish a European Union aggregate by researching and accumulating the media systems of European nation-states or countries, diverse as they may be in population and other political, social, and economic parameters. This procedure is standard, in mainstream research, to shed some overarching light on diverse and dispersed situations. For instance, Hallin and Mancini (2004) included 18 countries, large and small, in their three models of media systems. Later, Brüggemann, Engesser, Büchel, Humprecht, and Castro (2014) revisited them and proposed four empirical types. Thus, there should be no reason to reject this approach when it comes to minority language media. Precisely, their problem is isolation and lack of common vision.

At the intracommunity level, the media system of each language is analyzed in a particular and independent way so as to define its Internet development autonomously. Then, once the 10 profiles are set up, intercommunity comparisons can be drawn.

Once the general European frame, the intracommunity level, and the intercommunity comparisons are made, it is time to bring about the qualitative context—the qualified opinion of media professionals. Thus, this third part of the research was devoted to the perception media editors and managers had about their Internet and social media activity and satisfaction,<sup>5</sup> as well as the areas they thought should be improved.<sup>6</sup> Even though the purpose of the inquiry was qualitative, the variables of media type (press, radio, TV, and cybermedia) and reach (local and general) were considered to establish

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<sup>5</sup> Question about the performance on the Internet and social media: "What is your opinion about your activity on the Internet and on social media? Are you satisfied with that (explain it briefly)?"

<sup>6</sup> Improvement on the Internet and social media: "What areas of your Internet and social media activity do you think need to be improved (explain it briefly)?"

a stratified sample of media outlets with the purpose of moving toward the concept of saturation, key in a qualitative sample (Cresswell, 1988; Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

Questionnaires were then filled out by editors and managers, so as to reach a qualitative sample of 130 responses, which offered a plurality of perceptions and insights. The distribution was as follows: One from the Scottish Gaelic BBC Alba TV; three Corsican; five Sámi; six Basque; six Breton; eight Irish; nine Frisian; 15 Welsh; 31 Galician, and 46 Catalan. The sample represented an almost exact match (a difference less than 1%) to the real distribution of media types in the total of the 10 media systems.

For the three areas of analysis, the data gathering process ran from autumn 2015 to the first half of 2016, a period in which the database of 2009 was reviewed, updated, and renewed with the incorporation of the census of cybermedia outlets (online-only outlets). As for the techniques applied, fieldwork trips and personal interviews with media representatives were carried out in nine communities (except Scotland, with only two news organizations). Alternatively, phone and e-mail communication were used.

The news organizations that were included in the analysis were operationally defined as in the previous research:

Any medium in the print, radio, and television [and cybermedia, added] sectors that used the minority language in at least 70% of its content, was available to society (organization bulletins distributed only among associates were excluded), and was published/broadcast more than once a year (Zabaleta et al., 2013, p. 1647)

The variable of reach or diffusion had the categories of "local (town, county or province) or general, that is, accessible to the whole political or linguistic community" (Zabaleta et al., 2013, p. 1647). The three ownership categories were "private or for-profit media companies; public, owned or controlled by public institutions; and social, owned or managed by not-for-profit organizations" (Zalabeta et al., 2013, p. 1647).

The 10 media systems belonged to the Catalan, Basque, Galician, Breton, Corsican, Frisian, Irish, Welsh, Scottish Gaelic, and Sámi languages.

## **Results**

### ***Total Internet Presence***

Considering the European total as an aggregate of the 10 communities, the findings of this research (see Table 1) confirm an important growth in Internet presence. The percentage of media outlets with websites and/or social media combined reached 90.8%, which conversely means that 9.2% of minority language news organizations do not yet have an Internet presence, either in the form of a website or a social media account. Also, 4.2% of media outlets keep a social media account but do not have a website.

The Catalan media system represents 70.7% of the European total, and it could be argued that this may, perhaps, conceal the reality of the other nine systems. We decided, therefore, to provide a complementary result excluding Catalan. Thus, as for the European total of the nine communities, the Internet presence (websites plus social media) reaches 84.0%, which means that 16.0% of the media outlets did not have any Internet presence at all. Consequently, on a European level, the exclusion of the very developed Catalan language media meant an Internet presence decrease of only 6.8%, a figure that cannot be considered very significant and, beyond that, does not seem to substantiate the segregation of the Catalan community from the rest in terms of general results. Thus, looking at the 10 communities, two groups could be established:

- Seven communities (Galician, Irish, Breton, Frisian, Sámi, Corsican, and Scottish Gaelic), where practically all the outlets (traditional and cybermedia) have an Internet presence in both website and social media accounts. Their media systems are quantitatively small, with fewer than 12 outlets, except the Galician language, which has a media system of 60 outlets. The only two traditional news organizations that did not have their own websites were the Sámi print magazine *Ánaras*, edited in Inari (Finland) since 1988 and focused on Sámi culture and nature, and the Frisian print magazine *Swingel*, published since 1998 by the Council of the Frisian Movement and devoted to Frisian culture and language (though the latter provides a PDF copy of the print issue on the platform [www.issuu.com](http://www.issuu.com)).
- Three communities (Catalan, Basque, and Welsh), which have the largest media systems, where there are some traditional media outlets without an Internet presence at all: 48 outlets (6.3%) in the Catalan community; nine (7.3%) in the Basque; and 39 (46.4%) in the Welsh community. From these figures it can be implied that, on the one hand, the Welsh media system has some particular features that singles it out from the rest, and, on the other, the Catalan and Basque media, which, having an almost complete online presence (more than 92%), still include a niche of traditional outlets that do not make the leap to the Internet.

Catalan is a developed language in the virtual sphere. In fact, the first online daily paper in Spain, published in 1995, was the Catalan-language *Avui*, now merged with *El Punt* (<http://www.elpuntavui.cat>). In 2016, out of the 757 outlets that comprised the media system, 131 (17.3%) were cybermedia and the rest (82.7%) were traditional news organizations. In the latter group are the 48 outlets without Internet: 35 magazines and 13 radio stations<sup>7</sup>; almost all of them had a local reach (95%); nearly half were publicly and socially owned (42% each); and only eight were privately owned.

In the Basque media system, comprising 123 outlets, the nine outlets<sup>8</sup> with no access to the Internet were six local, socially owned magazines and three publicly owned local radio stations.

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<sup>7</sup> Among others: Magazines *La Veu de la Segarra* and *El Pregoner d'Urgell*, and Ràdio Municipal de Muro and Ràdio Castelló.

<sup>8</sup> Among others: *Herria* and *Pulunpe* magazines, and Karrape Irratia and Aralar irratia radio channels.

However, the relevant finding is that in the Welsh community, only 53.6% of the Welsh-language outlets could be accessed on the Internet (websites or social media). The lack of an online presence was mostly concentrated among the local, socially owned press—that is, the *Papurau Bro* community periodicals, which have relevant presence and value in the communities, but are mostly published in print. This allows us to infer that the size of the community does not seem to play a determinant role in the degree of media digitalization, but does in the characteristics of the media system itself.

**Table 1. Total Internet Presence (Websites and Social Media), 2016.**

Language Community <sup>1</sup>	1. Total Amt. of Media (N)	2. Media With Websites (n)	3. With Social Media but not Web (n)	4. Total Internet Presence (n = 2+3 columns)	5. Difference (1. Minus 4.)	6. Media Weight of Each Community	7. Media With Websites (%)	8. Media With Social Media but not Web (%)	9. Total Internet Presence (% = 7+8 columns)	10. Media With No Internet Presence (%)
Catalan	757	687	22	709	48	70.7%	90.8%	2.9%	93.7%	6.3%
Basque	123	109	5	114	9	11.5%	88.6%	4.1%	92.7%	7.3%
Welsh	84	28	17	45	39	7.9%	33.3%	20.2%	53.6%	46.4%
Galician	60	59	1	60	0	5.6%	98.3%	1.7%	100.0%	0.0%
Irish	12	12		12	0	1.1%	100.0%	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%
Breton	12	12		12	0	1.1%	100.0%	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%
Frisian	11	10		10	1	1.0%	90.9%	0.0%	90.9%	9.1%
Sámi	6	5		5	1	0.6%	83.3%	0.0%	83.3%	16.7%
Corsican	3	3		3	0	0.3%	100.0%	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%
Scottish Gaelic	2	2		2	0	0.2%	100.0%	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%
<b>Total 10 communities</b>	1,070	927	45	972	98	100.0%	86.6%	4.2%	90.8%	9.2%
<b>Total 9 comm. (Without Catalan)</b>	313	240	23	263	50	29.3%	76.7%	7.3%	84.0%	16.0%

Source: Authors. Note: N = 1,070 outlets.

<sup>1</sup>All types of media included (press, radio, TV, and cybermedia). Quantitative measures and percentages are expressed consecutively in the same table. Updated to June 2016.

At the European level, which includes all 10 communities, looking solely at websites and excluding social media (e.g., see columns 2. and 7. in Table 1), 86.6% of the outlets in 2016 had some type of Web page (76.7% in the case of nine communities), which means that 13.4% lacked that kind of Internet presence. This represents a 19.7% decrease in comparison with 2009, when 29% of the outlets did not have a website (Zabaleta et al., 2013).

Again, in nine of the media systems, the majority of the outlets had websites, the exception being the Welsh community, where only 28 of the 84 media outlets had a Web page. (This was because of the already mentioned *Papurau Bro* magazines.)

Another interesting finding that needs to be addressed relates to the tendency of some media outlets (4.2% of the total European census) to focus their online activity only on social media, without the creation of a website. For the 10 communities, this happens in 4.2% of the media; excluding the Catalan media, the percentage rises to 7.3%, a very small increase, which does not seem to support the prospect of a nine-community European frame.

#### ***Website Typology and Variation, 2009–2016***

Considering the website typology of the 10 communities (see Table 2), 72.0% of all the media outlets (traditional plus cybermedia) had online platforms that included a regularly updated news content service; 14.7% had passive websites that included information about the media company, but no news; and 13.4% had no website. It should be noted that, on a European level, 16.4% of the media outlets are cybermedia (online-only news platforms), and the rest are traditional (press, radio, TV).

When the Catalan community is excluded from the European frame, to avoid any distortion because of its relative weight, the total percentage of the "Web + News" category drops 11.3% to 60.7%, which is virtually the percentage that increases the value of the "No Web" category. Therefore, it could be said that the presence/inclusion of the Catalan media system is relevant in regard to the typology of online platforms. By communities, in all except the Welsh and Breton media, the majority of websites (between 66.7% and 100%) offer a regularly updated information service. In the Breton community, only 41.7% are of the type "Web + News," and that percentage decreases to 29.8% in the Welsh case.

**Table 2. All Media Website Typology in 201 and Variation Between 2016 and 2009.**

Language Community <sup>1</sup>	Website Typology in 2016			Variation: 2016 Minus 2009		
	Web + News	Web	No Web	Web + News	Web	No Web
Catalan	76.6%	14.1%	9.2%	54.2%	-42.6%	-11.7%
Basque	69.1%	19.5%	11.4%	28.6%	-15.4%	-13.2%
Welsh	29.8%	3.6%	66.7%	12.5%	-6.3%	-6.2%
Galician	80.0%	18.3%	1.7%	12.2%	-7.1%	-5.1%
Irish	75.0%	25.0%	0.0%	25.0%	-25.0%	0.0%
Breton	41.7%	58.3%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Frisian	81.8%	9.1%	9.1%	61.8%	-60.9%	-0.9%
Sámi	66.7%	16.7%	16.7%	26.7%	-23.3%	-3.3%
Corsican	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%	50.0%	-25.0%	-25.0%
Scottish Gaelic	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%	33.3%	0.0%	-33.3%
<b>Total 10 communities</b>	72.0%	14.7%	13.4%	44.7%	-34.4%	-10.4%
<b>Total 9 comm. (without Catalan)</b>	60.7%	16.0%	23.3%	20.8%	-13.1%	-7.7%

Source: Authors. Note:  $N = 1,070$  outlets.

<sup>1</sup>All types of media included (press, radio, TV, and cybermedia). The second total results exclude the Catalan community outlets. The variation results compare the totals in 2009 and 2016, both updated to June 2016.

Comparing the evolution between 2009 and 2016 within the frame of the 10 communities, the category of "Web + News" increased 44.7%, with the "Web" category decreasing the most (-34.4%). However, considering the nine-community structure, the variation between 2009 and 2016 represented a growth of 20.8%, which means that the exclusion of the Catalan language media implied a significant 23.9% difference. Again, the effect of the Welsh language media in terms of low quantitative Internet presence had a great impact on the total of the nine communities, something that is mitigated by the inclusion of the Catalan media and by the European framework of 10 communities.

It must be noted that all 49 major traditional news organizations (dailies, weeklies, and radio and TV channels with general content and reach) have a complete journalistic website. However, 27 of them belong to the Catalan media system, and the rest of the communities have between one and four major media outlets.

### **Traditional Media With No Websites**

It appears that many traditional media outlets are still awaiting a digitalization process. Socially owned local press is the media type most affected by an absence of websites. Table 3 indicates that 91.6% of the media without websites are local, a result that occurs in five out of the six communities without websites. Based on ownership, socially owned media is the most affected because 65.7% have no website. As for media type, 81.8% of the media that have no websites are traditional print media.

In 2009, half of the media without websites were press outlets (54%), a third were radio stations (29%), and television had a remarkable 17% of channels with no Internet presence.

**Table 3. Traditional Media With No Websites, 2016.**

Language Community	N	Media Type			Ownership			Reach	
		Press	Radio	TV	Private	Public	Social	Local	General
Catalan	70	0.0%	27.1%	0.0%	18.6%	37.1%	44.3%	97.1%	2.9%
Basque	14	57.1%	42.9%	0.0%	14.3%	28.6%	57.1%	100.0%	0.0%
Welsh	56	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%	3.6%	0.0%	96.4%	83.9%	16.1%
Galician	1	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%
Irish	0								
Breton	0								
Frisian	1	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
Sámi <sup>1</sup>	1	100.0%	0.0%	n/a	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%	100.0%	0.0%
Corsican	0								
Scottish Gaelic	0								
<b>Total</b>	143	81.8%	18.2%	0	12.6%	21.7%	65.7%	91.6%	8.4%

Source: Authors. *Note:* Empty cells mean 0%, applied to communities with no media outlets on this table. The total percentages correspond to 143 total outlets.

<sup>1</sup>n/a: Sámi has no TV channel Updated to June 2016.

Catalan, Basque, and Welsh systems have some traditional outlets with no website, and the Galician, Frisian, and Sámi communities each have just one. In the Catalan and Basque cases, it constitutes about 10% of their whole media system (see Table 2). In the Welsh community, however, because of the *Papurau Bro*, the percentage goes to about 66.7% (also see Table 2). It is worth noting, however, that the Welsh language media system is varied and notably developed, including major TV, radio, and weekly periodicals, but many of those monthly community magazines have a negative influence on the Internet percentage figure.

### **Social Media Development**

From a European perspective (see Table 4), 75% of all the media outlets have social media presence, with Facebook and Twitter being the most popular networks: 93.8% have a Facebook profile and 80.7% a Twitter account.

Apart from Facebook and Twitter, YouTube is the third most used social media platform. Google+, Instagram, Flickr, Pinterest, and Vimeo are not much used, other than in the Basque, Galician, Breton, or Frisian cases, but always after Facebook.

**Table 4. Social Media Presence, 2016.**

Language Community	N	Social Media Presence		Type of Social Media						Average of Social Media Accounts
		Yes	No	Facebook	Twitter	YouTube	Google+	Instagram	Others (Pinterest, Flickr, Vimeo)	
Catalan	757	76.1%	23.9%	93.8%	80.2%	66.1%	19.5%	7.5%	6.9%	2.3
Basque	123	76.4%	23.6%	90.4%	86.2%	30.0%	60.0%	10.0%	0.0%	1.8
Welsh	84	47.6%	52.4%	95.0%	57.5%	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	1.7
Galician	60	90.0%	10.0%	96.3%	83.3%	26.1%	56.5%	8.7%	8.7%	3.4
Irish	12	75.0%	25.0%	88.9%	100.0%	20.0%	20.0%	40.0%	20.0%	2.7
Breton	12	91.7%	8.3%	100.0%	100.0%	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%	2.5
Frisian	11	81.8%	18.2%	100.0%	100.0%	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%	2.7
Sámi	6	83.3%	16.7%	100.0%	60.0%	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%	2.8
Corsican	3	100.0%	0.0%	100.0%	100.0%	0.0%	50.0%	50.0%	0.0%	3.0
Scottish Gaelic	2	100.0%	0.0%	100.0%	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	2.0
<b>Total</b>	1,070	75.0%	25.0%	93.8%	80.7%	57.1%	27.7%	8.5%	6.7%	2.3

Source: Authors. Note: The total percentages refer to the total quantitative figure (1,070 = 100%).

Table 5 shows that in 2016, print magazines and local, socially owned papers had the fewest number of social media accounts.

Of the variables media type, reach, and ownership, 77.6% of the 268 outlets with no social media are print, 47.8% are socially owned media, and 75% are of local distribution.

**Table 5. Outlets With No Social Media, 2016.**

Language Community <sup>1</sup>	N	Media Type			Ownership			Reach	
		Press	Radio	Cyber	Private	Public	Social	General	Local
Catalan	181	75.1%	21.5%	3.3%	33.1%	32.6%	34.3%	22.7%	77.3%
Basque	29	65.5%	24.1%	10%	17.2%	24.1%	58.6%	20.7%	79.3%
Welsh	44	100%	0.0%	0.0%	4.5%	0.0%	95.5%	27.3%	72.7%
Galician	6	33.3%	66.7%	0.0%	33.3%	66.7%	0.0%	33.3%	66.7%
Irish	3	100%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%	100%	0.0%
Breton	1	100%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%	100%	0.0%
Frisian	2	100%	0.0%	0.0%	50.0%	50.0%	0.0%	100%	0.0%
Sámi	1	100%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%	0%	100%
Corsican	0								
Scottish Gaelic	0								
<b>Total</b>	267	77.9%	18.7%	3.4%	26.2%	26.6%	47.2%	25.1%	74.9%

Source: Authors. Updated to June 2016. *Note:* Empty cells mean 0%, applied to communities with no media outlet on this table. The total percentages refer to  $N = 267$ .

<sup>1</sup>All types of media (press, radio, TV, cybermedia).

In the Galician media system, 66.7% of the outlets without social media accounts are radio channels. In the Welsh, Irish, Breton, and Sámi communities, the usual media type without networks are both general and local social press.

It should be noted that some outlets have social media profiles but no websites ( $n = 45$ ), and this warrants deeper discussion. According to Table 1, Catalan and Welsh communities are the most affected, with 22 and 17 cases, respectively. Basque and Galician results were five and one, respectively.

### **Internet and Social Media Performance**

Media editors and managers' level of satisfaction with Internet activity ranged from challenging and dissatisfied to very pleased, and when all responses were gauged, the result was graded as "moderate."

The Catalan representatives were predominantly satisfied with their presence and interaction on social networks, but in most cases they identified a preference for Twitter and not for Facebook. Only the largest enterprise, the public broadcasting system (Catalan Broadcasting Council; CCMA in Catalan), used Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, Periscope, Spotify, iTunes, Vine, and Pinterest in different programs to

connect to their audiences, in some cases focusing on specifically on young people. The majority of the responses mentioned the need to update profiles, adapt to technological changes, and to analyze and adapt to platforms' strategies as well social media's algorithms.

Most participants in the Galician community were satisfied with their network development; however, six (out of 31) media outlets expressed clear dissatisfaction. Most of them also stated that they felt compelled to make a permanent change to their social media use to improve digital performance. Overall, the Galician media expressed limited approval to their digital activity.

The majority of Basque media editors also felt comfortable with their online and social media performance. Major media outlets had even created tools, such as phone apps, to connect to their users. The general opinion was slightly different among the Welsh—10 out of 15 were moderately satisfied, but five disapproved of their Internet and social media performance. One *Papurau Bro* magazine editor considered that, for the magazine and their community reality, they did not need a website. The exception was the Welsh BBC and its Internet performance, which was considered positively.

On the other hand, editors of the Frisian language media system expressed high satisfaction with their digital advances. They all stated, however, that they need more audience interaction.

In the Irish case, practically all participants were happy with the level of activity on their social networks. The cybermedia platform Meon Eile was especially proud about the geographical and international spread of people accessing its site. The majority of Breton respondents were similarly satisfied.

In the Sámi community, there was moderate dissatisfaction with their Internet performance, and only the editor of the daily paper *Ávvir* had a positive opinion, despite the scarcity of resources dedicated to Internet operations.

Corsican respondents had a moderate level of satisfaction about social media. Most of them were satisfied with their social media use, but admitted that swift changes in networks made them difficult to manage. Finally, the Scottish Gaelic editor from the public BBC Alba TV was very satisfied with the website's traffic.

As for the second question, focusing on the areas of Internet and social media that needed to be improved, the Catalan media unanimously agreed that they constantly needed to improve their websites and social network activities and create new means of reaching their audience, such as via external applications. Some examples included online payment platforms, applying Google Analytics, and specific contents to different social media. Auditing the metrics of external platforms was, again, a challenge for Catalan media.

Galician media respondents related precise improvements, both on their Web platforms and social networks: Web aesthetics, PDF usability, news renewal, new apps, and user interaction, among

others, always to increase dialogue and interaction. The responses show that one of the main problems was lack of personnel devoted to manage social media.

Similarly to the Catalan and Galician participants, the Welsh stated that permanent improvement to social media and Web content was necessary. They highlighted the need of more audience engagement, and an editor of a print outlet even cited more funding.

Frisian participants also emphasized the need for more content, audience, and employees to improve social media activity and boost website traffic. Irish participants felt similarly about the need for development and stated ways to improve through Web strategies, increased content, increased audience engagement, and private and free cybermedia access. They also insisted on more marketing or social-activity full-time personnel.

Breton and Basque participants, likewise, underlined the need to increase their audience, especially young people. The editor of Scottish Gaelic public television was worried about community engagement and the difficulties posed by scarce resources involved in increasing it. Sámi media reactions included the necessity to update content and boost the number of journalists devoted to social media.

Finally, Corsican editors were divided about the role of social media: Some were remarkably excited about the expansive possibilities of the Internet and wanted to improve online efficiency; another publisher showed concern about its influence in decreasing attention to print text.

### **Discussion and Conclusions**

Minority languages and the social effects of their presence in the media has become a contemporary and rich field of academic research. Immersed in mainstream Internet studies (Siles González, 2008), this article combines interest in the topics of identity, communication within communities, and social changes based on Internet use. The majority of minoritized language media studies agree that Internet presence and consistent activity in social media networks are necessary to maintain and recover endangered languages.

Some authors, however, believe that the Internet's demands on media around the world is a challenge set in an unfavorable context—that is, the competition between languages. Previous research confirms that minority media understand the digitalization process as a double-edged sword, full of both possibilities and progress but also of difficulties and challenges. The media companies we surveyed acknowledged the positive effects the Internet and social media have on their minority languages and audiences, but they recognized problems and difficulties in organizing and financing as well. Minority media are in an asymmetric position due, in part, to having a smaller community of readers and viewers. Furthermore, they have to cater to different political contexts; some have public support whereas others do not.

The conclusion of this 2016 study is that, on a European level of 10 communities, 90.8% of the minority language media is present on the Internet via websites or social networks, although the figure is

lower among local media. The positive, albeit expected, finding is that all major media outlets (dailies, weeklies, general radio, and TV) have websites with regularly updated news and content. In terms of social media, 75.0% of the media outlets use social media (mainly Twitter and Facebook), which conversely implies that 25% do not have a social account yet, a relevant outcome that could be interpreted in the sense that, beyond other potential factors related to digital strategies of news organizations, managing social media profiles would require specific skills, dedication, and resources. When the findings are constrained to a European frame of nine communities, excluding the large Catalan media system, to avoid any potential risk of distortion, the general picture does not change significantly in most variables. For example, the total Internet presence (Web and social media) reaches 84%, only six points less than in the European total of 10 communities. The only category that gets affected is that of websites with a news service, which decreases considerably (-23.9%) when the Catalan language media are left out.

The 2009 analysis came as a surprise because, nearly three decades into online journalism and website development, 29% of all traditional media outlets in European minority languages did not yet have websites. In 2016, after eight years of strong digitalization, that percentage decreased 15.6 points to a current value of 13.4%. At the same time, the amount of media outlets with an updated news website has increased 44.7%, reaching a current total value of 72%.

Media outlets without websites are concentrated in niches of traditional media, which are still reluctant or feel limited to opening up to the digital evolution. More precisely, most of the outlets without access to the Internet are clustered around local, socially owned press. This lack of access may be caused by vulnerable funding and revenue streams; insufficient public aid schemes specifically devoted to Internet and digital development; and lack of a digital strategy within the media outlet and of skilled personnel. This situation will not be resolved unless they make the necessary changes, especially since young people primarily consume news via online social media.

On the other hand, there is an intriguing situation surrounding media outlets that have social media but no websites. In some cases, those social media profiles (e.g., a YouTube channel) constitute their only media platform, substituting for a previous, traditional, over-the-air channel. The majority of those cases were located in the Catalan, Basque, and Galician communities. The strong financial crisis in Spain prompted the closure of some traditional media outlets and, thus, online social media became an easy and inexpensive alternative for smaller media outlets with reduced personnel.

The Welsh language case is special because, on the one hand, the overall Internet presence of its media system is remarkably lower than in the rest of the communities because of the meagre online percentage of *Papurau Bro* local magazines. On the other hand, however, major media outlets (i.e., Golwg360, BBC Radio Cymru, S4C.Cymru, and Y Cymro) maintain an intense Internet activity.

The six smaller media systems (Irish, Breton, Frisian, Sámi, Corsican, and Scottish Gaelic) are digitally developed, with high levels of Web existence and social media and little or no traditional media without the Web.

The general perception of Internet activity and areas of improvement in most communities was moderately positive, though the majority of the answers mentioned the need to constantly adapt to technological changes, improve interactions with the audience, and feed and update content on the online sites and social media profiles, activities that, in some instances, were perceived as generating some sort of pressure in the management of the news organizations. In fact, the majority of respondents across all the media systems analyzed stated that the lack of trained employees and the absence of public support were significant challenges and hindrances. In any case, as a Corsican editor stated, "Some time ago we stayed at home, now we can open up to the world. The Internet saved us and thanks to it we can divulge the Corsican language" (personal interview, October 28, 2015).

All and all, it is quite positive to witness that, in spite of media and financial crisis, European minority media systems have digitally progressed and are closer to online institutional completeness.

These results may aid cultural policy makers in evaluating the consistency and adequateness of their strategies and funding schemes about the digitalization and Internet development of language minority media, including support for digital content consumption and interaction by users.

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