

**Fundación Nuevo Periodismo Iberoamericano (FNPI)  
Online Training Needs in Latin America**

**By Guillermo Franco and Jaime Abello\***  
**Editor: Jairo Echeverri García/Carlos Serrano**

For the creators of web content in Latin America the greatest need in terms of training is learning how to tell stories in the form of video and other complex fashions. Even though such creators identify generating revenue to finance their website or Internet medium as their biggest problem, they paradoxically show themselves much less interested in learning about business or advertising models.

For those websites that were not originally born in the Internet, in other words, those that originated in newspapers, magazines, radio stations or TV, integrating operations or newsrooms or making media convergence is at the top of their needs list.

For individual bloggers, their priority is learning how to maintain and attract new audiences, as well as giving their websites more visibility.

Social organizations (unions, GNOs and political groups), research centers and companies share great interest in creating easy-to-use Internet sites to improve user experience (usability).

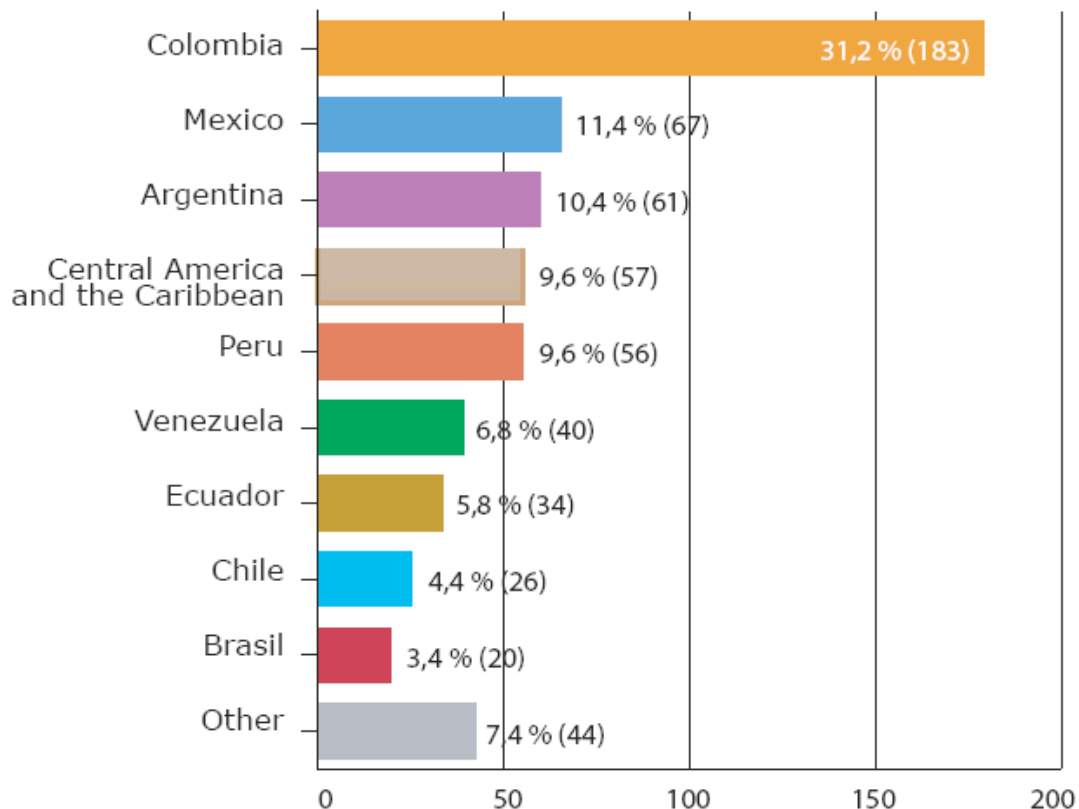
These are some of the most relevant findings after an online survey performed by Fundación Nuevo Periodismo Iberoamericano (FNPI), which was financed by the Agencia Española de Cooperación Internacional para el Desarrollo (AECID), and will allow the design of their seminars, workshops and activities intended for digital media in Latin America and the Caribbean, and can also serve as a point of reference for thought on the academic journalism programs of the region. The research was designed and directed by journalist and new media consultant Guillermo Franco and Diego Fajardo participated in the questionnaire design.

The survey stayed open between June 5 and July 20, 2009, and was responded by 588 individuals representing traditional media websites, blogs on public platforms or online media, as well as individual, group, mid-sized, large, government, social organization related (GNOs, unions, political groups), corporate, university and research center websites, from the countries of the region. This makes the report the largest one implemented so far on the topic in Latin America.

Despite the fact that the call was made to anyone creating content for the Internet, 94 per cent of those who responded said they had

journalistic education. Out of that percentage, 34.6 per cent claimed having additional education in digital journalism at a higher-education institution. Among those who do not have further education degrees on digital journalism (65.4 per cent), most of them acquired the knowledge to run their operation on their own (self taught).

### Countries that participated in the survey



Colombia's generous participation in the sample is explained by the fact this country is where Fundación Nuevo Periodismo Iberoamericano (FNPI) is based. Brazil's rather small participation, in turn, is due to language barriers, since the research was done in Spanish, not in Portuguese. The category for Central America and the Caribbean includes Costa Rica, Cuba, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, El Salvador, Panama, Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico.

The research consists of two parts: the first one intends to find the degree of interest (a lot, some, a little, none) in workshops and seminars; the second tries to establish the characteristics of the websites and the profile of those running them: size, structure, year of foundation, academic education, amongst other variables.

For the first part, two previous pieces of research done in the United States were taken as a reference: [professor Ryan Thornburg's, from](#)

[North Carolina University](#), which was done among newspapers of that region, and Max Magee's "[The role of journalists in digital newsrooms](#)", performed as part of his postgraduate degree at Medill School of Journalism, under the supervision of associate professor Rich Gordon and the cooperation of the Online News Association.

In this assessment, reference to software tools was eliminated and, whenever possible, any technical term that would have led to the confusion of those responding the survey was also eliminated for them to concentrate in 33 skills or pieces of knowledge.

This decision was also made because it was not clear if all the survey's participants would be able to distinguish every software tool nor if they were aware that one same task could be performed with different software tools, depending on the country, financial resources, and technology platform, among other variables.

The 33 skills and pieces of knowledge assessed covered at least eight categories: narrative, business, Web 2.0, website design and creation, audience building, website administration, reporting and context. Nevertheless, they were not identified as such before respondents. It should be noted that some of the skills or pieces of knowledge might have been placed in more than one category.

## **Narrative**

- How to tell stories through VIDEO/How to capture / edit / produce /publish it.
- How to tell stories through AUDIO/How to capture / edit / produce /publish it.
- How to tell stories through PHOTOS (either individual or galleries, with or without audio)/How to capture / edit / produce / publish them.
- How to WRITE FOR THE WEB
- How to use DATABASES for storytelling. (For instance, that every user sees on a map how crime affects the neighborhood he or she lives in).
- How to create ALTERNATE WAYS for storytelling: quizzes, surveys, gaming.
- How to create MULTIMEDIA PRODUCTS (animated infographics)

- How to develop CONTENT FOR MOBILE DEVICES.

## **Business**

- How to design and assess BUSINESS MODELS (cost structure, sustainability, profitability).
- How to create, commercialize WEB ADVERTISING
- How COPYRIGHT AND INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY rule on the Internet. What you can and cannot do with third party content.
- How to create E-COMMERCE operations in websites.

## **Web 2.0**

- How to promote and run USER-GENERATED CONTENT as well as user participation in websites.
- How to create, promote and maintain PARTICIPATORY JOURNALISM projects in the Web.

## **Website design and creation**

- How to design and create EASY-TO-USE websites. How to improve user experience.
- How to organize information in a website / INFORMATION ARCHITECTURE.
- How to use CONTENT MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS.
- Which OPEN SOURCE SOFTWARE can I use in my website.
- How to design and run DATABASES (i.e. to create city and entertainment guides).

## **Audience building**

- How to improve the position of a website or content in a search engine / 'Search Engine Optimization' (SEO).
- How to analyze websites' TRAFFIC MEASUREMENTS (pageviews, unique viewers, etc.) to make content-related decisions (metrics).

- How to publish, maintain and attract audiences to BLOGS.
- How to use SOCIAL NETWORKS to promote websites and content and to perform marketing and/or advertising campaigns.

### **Website administration**

- How to ORGANIZE ONLINE OPERATION.
- How to train and teach other members of the team new skills or concepts (KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER).
- How to understand and run relations with the TECHNOLOGY / ENGINEERING areas regarding online operation (this includes the place where the site is hosted, content project development, functionality, etc.).
- How to integrate operations/print newsrooms, TV, radio, Internet / CONVERGENCE.

### **Reporting and basic skills**

- How to do REPORTING AND RESEARCH.
- How to improve GRAMMAR AND STYLE on writing (Punctuation, spelling, syntax).
- How to identify and solve ethical conflicts / ONLINE ETHICS.
- COMPUTER-ASSISTED REPORTING.
- Using MOBILE TELEPHONY to report newsy events in text, audio and video.

### **Context:**

- How to understand what's going on in the MEDIA INDUSTRY. Trends at print media, radio, TV, Internet, mobile devices, etc.

**The following chart presents, in descending order, the interest in seminars and workshops within the total sample:**

<b>Pos</b>	<b>Skill or knowledge</b>	<b>They find the offer of w seminars VERY USEFUL</b>
1	How to tell stories through VIDEO/How to capture / edit / produce /publish it	<b>80.0%</b>
2	How to create MULTIMEDIA PRODUCTS (animated infographics, etc.)	<b>79.7%</b>
3	How to use DATABASES for storytelling	<b>79.2%</b>
4	How to improve the position of a website or content in a search engine / 'Search Engine Optimization' (SEO)	<b>77.4%</b>
5	How to design and create EASY-TO-USE websites. How to improve user experience	<b>77.2%</b>
6	How to create, promote and maintain PARTICIPATORY JOURNALISM projects in the Web	<b>77.0%</b>
7	How to WRITE FOR THE WEB	<b>77.0%</b>
8	How to integrate operations/print newsrooms, TV, radio, Internet / CONVERGENCE	<b>76.9%</b>
9	How to create, publish, maintain and attract audiences to BLOGS	<b>75.7%</b>
10	How to use SOCIAL NETWORKS to promote websites and content and to perform marketing and/or advertising campaigns	<b>75.5%</b>
11	How to design and run DATABASES (i.e. to create city and entertainment guides)	<b>75.3%</b>
12	How to organize information in a website/INFORMATION ARCHITECTURE	<b>75.1%</b>
13	How to tell stories through AUDIO/How to capture / edit / produce /publish it	<b>75.0</b>
14	How to understand what's going on in the MEDIA INDUSTRY	<b>75.0%</b>
15	How to tell stories through PHOTOS (either individual or galleries, with or without audio) / How to capture / edit / produce /publish them	<b>74.9%</b>
16	COMPUTER-ASSISTED REPORTING	<b>73.8%</b>
17	How COPYRIGHT AND INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY rule on the Internet	<b>73.5%</b>
18	How to train and teach other members of the team new skills or concepts (KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER)	<b>72.0%</b>
19	How to develop CONTENT FOR MOBILE DEVICES	<b>70.7%</b>
20	How to do REPORTING AND RESEARCH	<b>70.7%</b>
21	How to create ALTERNATE WAYS for storytelling: quizzes, questions and answers, gaming	<b>69.5%</b>

22	How to create, commercialize WEB ADVERTISING	<b>69.5%</b>
23	How to promote and run USER-GENERATED CONTENT as well as user participation in websites	<b>69.4%</b>
24	How to analyze websites' TRAFFIC MEASUREMENTS (pageviews, unique viewers, etc.) to make content-related decisions (metrics)	<b>68.8%</b>
25	Using MOBILE TELEPHONY to report newsy events in text, audio and video	<b>67.7%</b>
26	Which OPEN SOURCE SOFTWARE can I use in my website	<b>67.7%</b>
27	How to ORGANIZE ONLINE OPERATION	<b>67.4%</b>
28	How to design and assess BUSINESS MODELS (cost structure, sustainability, profitability)	<b>67.2%</b>
29	How to use CONTENT MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS	<b>65.4%</b>
30	How to identify and solve ethical conflicts / ONLINE ETHICS	<b>65.0%</b>
31	How to improve GRAMMAR AND STYLE on writing (Punctuation, spelling, syntax)	<b>63.3%</b>
32	How to understand and run relations with the TECHNOLOGY / ENGINEERING areas regarding online operation (this includes the place where the site is hosted, content project development, functionality, etc.)	<b>61.5%</b>
33	How to create E-COMMERCE operations in websites	<b>57.8%</b>

Given these results, it is clear that **there is great interest in those training needs**, although after analyzing the websites' answers according to category, country, size and other variables, there are significant differences that reveal individual interests (**See attached graphics and tables**). For instance, not all countries show the same degree of interest regarding the assessed training needs. The highest interest is in Mexico, Central America and the Caribbean, Ecuador and Colombia; the lowest takes place in Argentina and Chile (the latter is where the highest percentage of websites has participants with degrees on online journalism, which is 60 per cent).

### **Latin America wants to tell stories in video and other, more complex, forms**

Repeatedly, video appears in the first places of all analyzed categories. Exceptions to this are Peru and the websites related to research centers, where video occupies spot 16.

Other resources for storytelling such as audio and photos appear in secondary spots, beyond place 10 in almost all categories. In the case of audio, exceptions are Ecuador (third place), Venezuela (fifth) and individually-operated websites (in sixth). Regarding photos, exceptions are the individually-operated sites (in third place), operations integrated by two or three people (in sixth), government or State sites (in third) and the sites associated to research centers (in second).

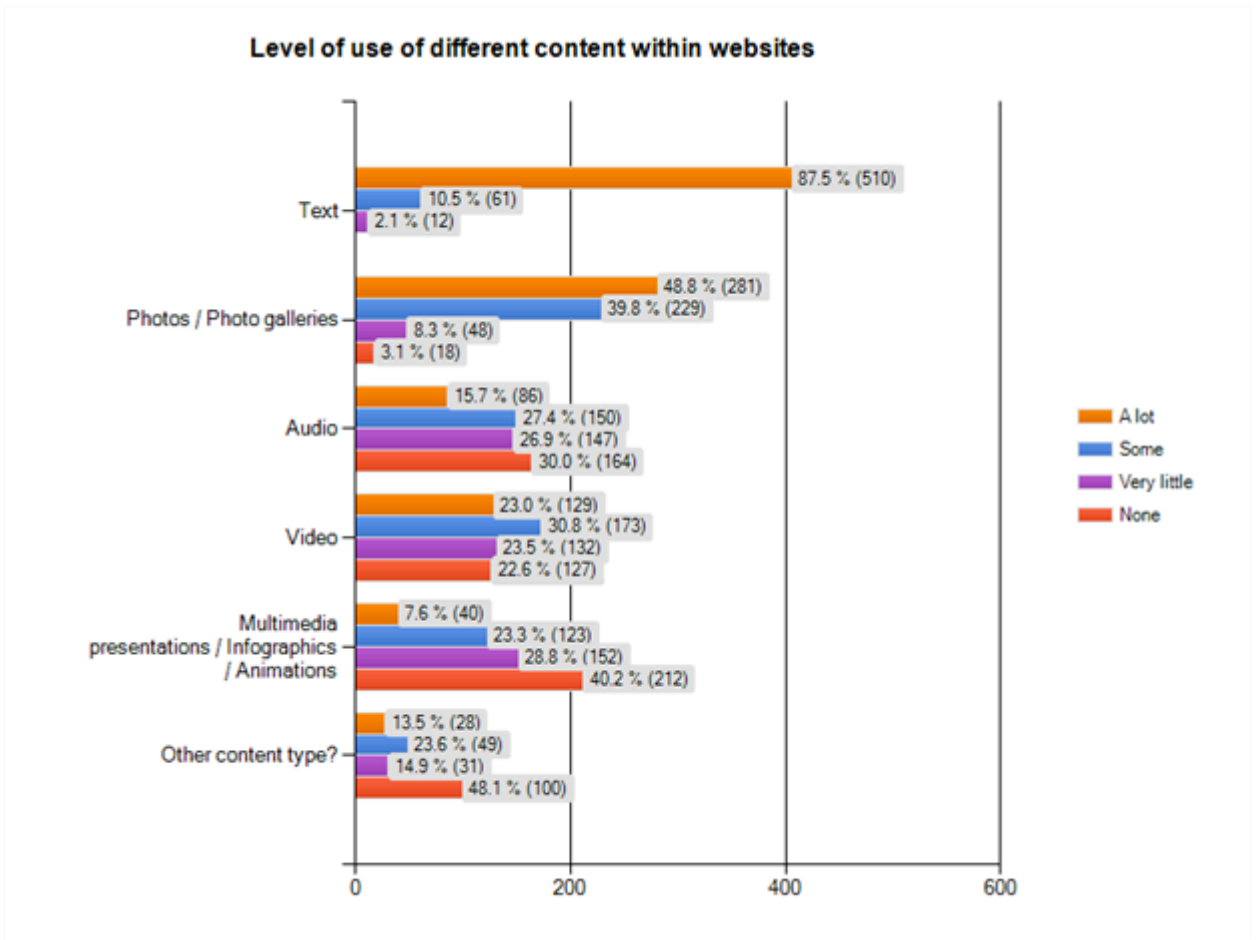
Interest for Web writing appears in a somewhat more disperse way: at least in half the categories it is placed in the top ten, with first place for Peru, group-operated blogs and corporate sites; whereas, in the other half it is placed between spots 10 and 20.

Interest for storytelling in complex fashion, such as using databases and multimedia products, is more evident among research websites, compared to traditional forms, leaving video out.

Using databases for storytelling, for instance, to present crime rate in a given area, in which users can locate their neighborhood on a map (Chicago Crime), and thus obtain personalized information, surprisingly appears in first place among several categories (Argentina, Brazil, government or State websites and newspaper sites) and in the first 10 places in all the remaining categories, with four exceptions (Mexico, websites associated to a social organization; sites conformed between two and five people, and corporate sites).

Creation of multimedia products follows a similar trend: it appears in first place in Central America and the Caribbean; first in Colombia and first in group-operated sites and sites associated to social organizations (GNOs, unions, political groups); and in the top 10 in almost all categories except for five cases (Mexico, group-operated blogs, online media blogs, government or state websites and sites associated to research centers).

The need for learning how to tell stories by means of video and other complex forms contrasts with the fact that web narrative in Latin America is dominated by text, followed by photos.

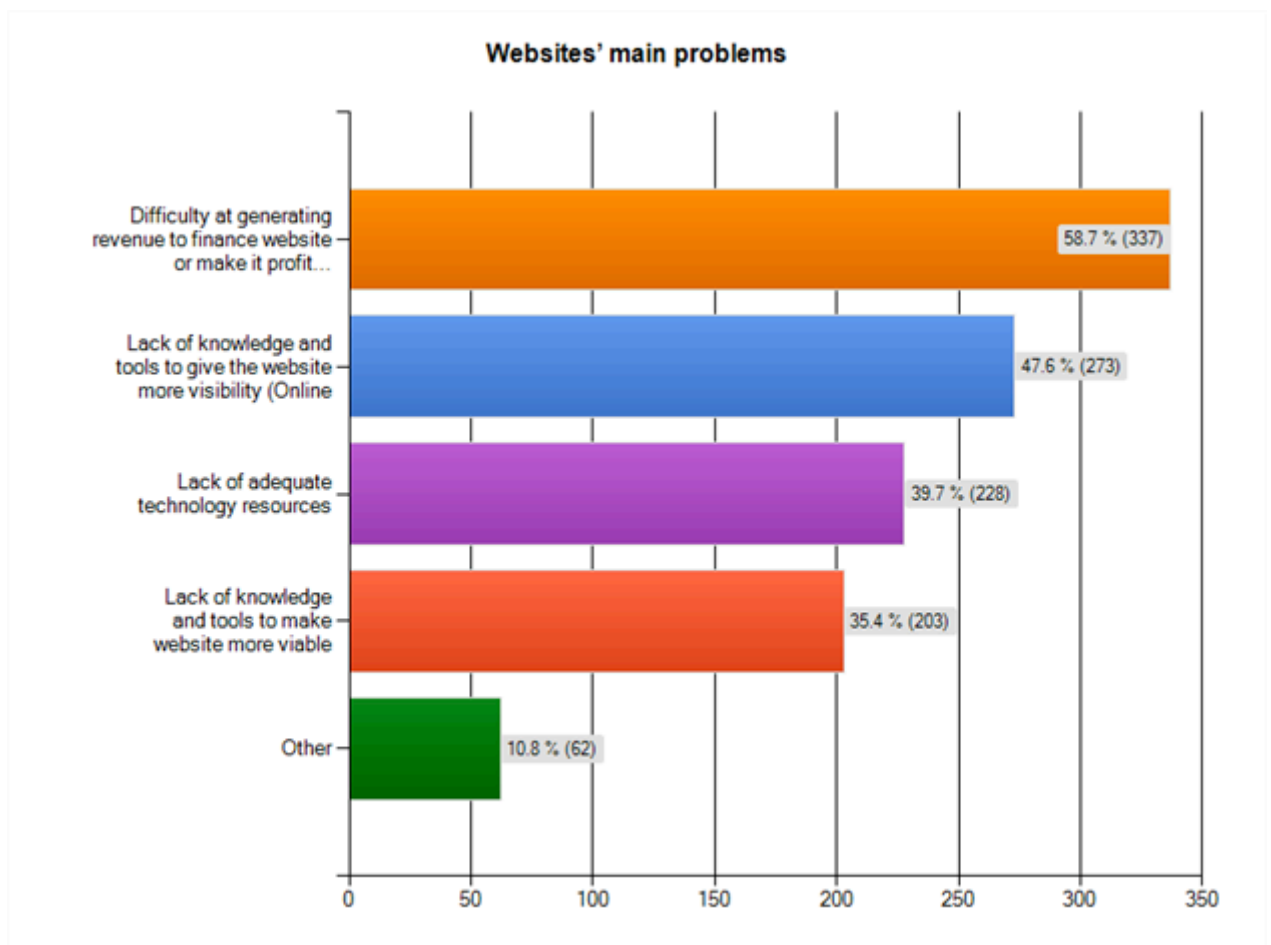


Strikingly, newspapers are leaders in the use of video (32.7 per cent claim using video 'a lot') and are only beaten, obviously, by TV (43.8 per cent).

### **Business and operation sustainability**

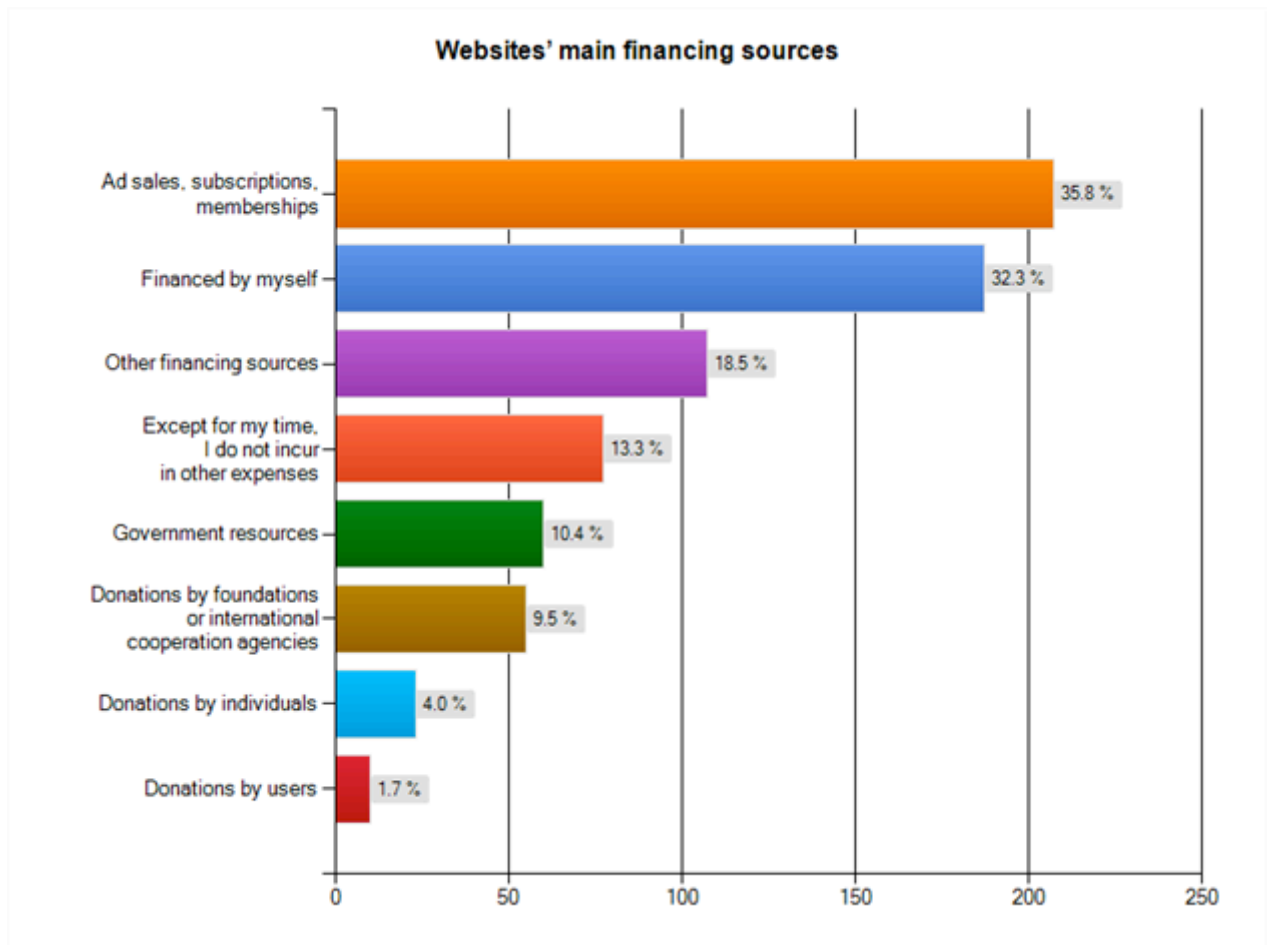
Low interest in learning about business models or web advertising sales is widespread throughout all categories and it goes from the middle to the bottom of the interest classification in terms of skills and knowledge seminars and thus occupy, in extreme cases, spot 32 out of 33. Argentina is the country where the most interest in seminars and workshops on business models is shown (place 13 out of 33).

Paradoxically, as written in the introduction of this document, difficulty at generating revenue for financing or making the operation profitable or sustainable appears to be websites' main problem, followed by lack of knowledge and tools to make sites more visible (online marketing, search engine optimization).



This trend is repeated throughout all categories, even in those in which the cost of the operation is presumably zero, as in the case of blogs; which means that those in charge of running and feeding them wish they became profitable (in fact, 7 per cent of individual blogs claim they are already commercializing). The only categories in which difficulty at generating revenue is not the main problem are education and government websites, in which that variable is surpassed by lack of knowledge and tools to provide websites with more visibility.

Revenue concern is justifiable since half of the websites claim they have to pay for content generation (salaries and fringe benefits, payment by piece produced, or a combination of the two models).

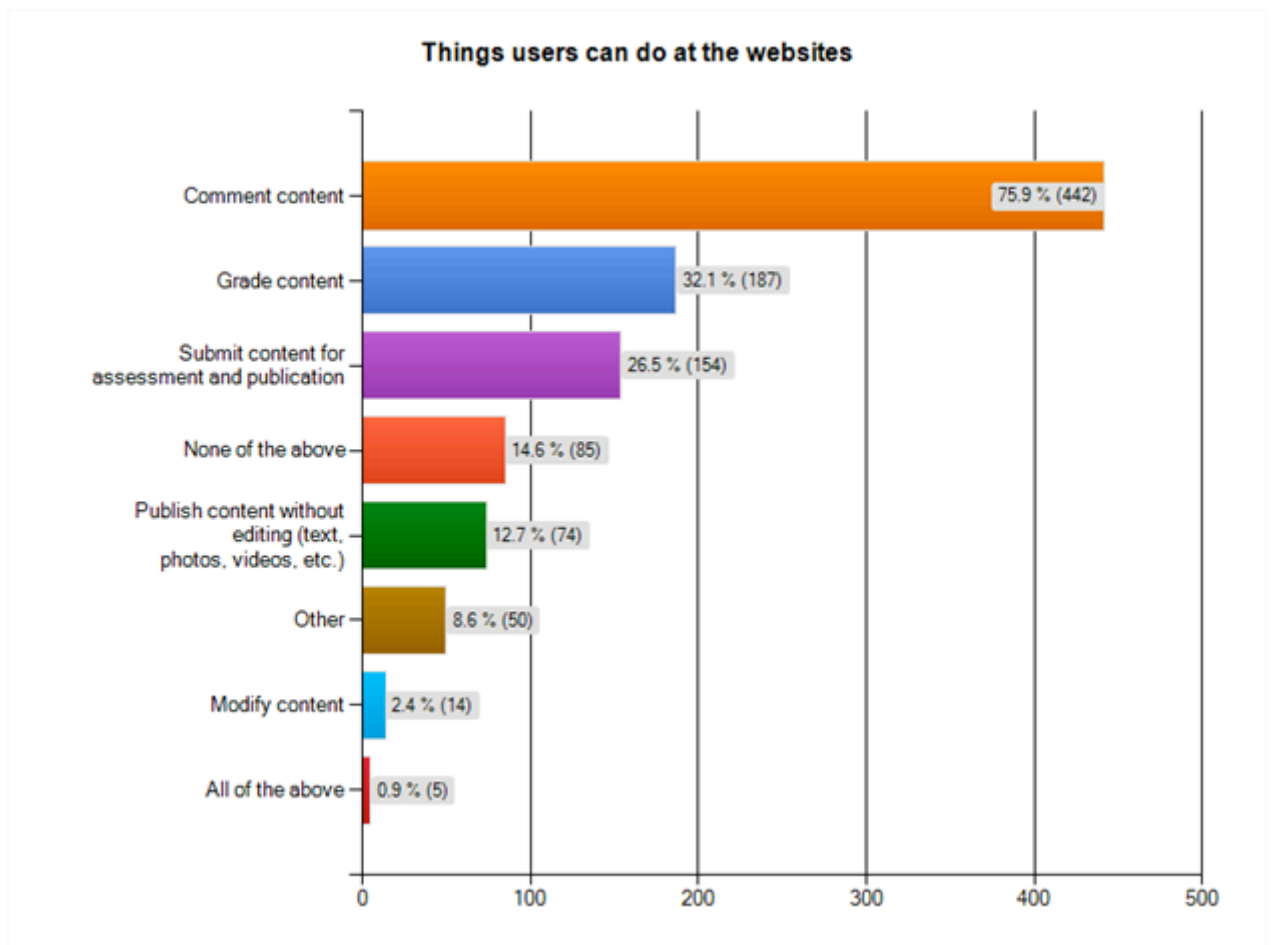


In the category 'other financing sources', which ranks in third place, (most of the times) the organization's budget resources are mentioned (without commercialization interest) as well as the operation subsidized by the mother company (print publication) and even scholarships of state entities for the engagement of the websites operation.

### **From Web 2.0 to Web 0.2**

The most widespread mode of user participation in Latin America is to comment on content, probably the most basic level of citizen journalism (according to some authors). Perhaps because of that, websites do not feel the need for promoting them and do not identify as a problem the excesses that may take place there. For this reason, there is not much interest in seminars and workshops on content promotion and administration of user-generated content. In most categories, interest for such workshops shows up in the last spots.

The user comment participation mode in websites is followed by the possibility of grading content. More elevated levels of participation such as the possibility of submitting content for assessment and publication, or to publish it directly, without editing, are less frequent.



Interest in seminars and workshops on how to create, promote and maintain participatory journalism projects, however, appears in the top 10 of all categories. The first place occupied by the category of operations conformed between two and five individuals, which represent 38 per cent of the sites (**See subtitle on structure and functioning**) is significant. The interest arisen by this topic in Ecuador and Venezuela, where it appears in second and third place, respectively, is also remarkable.

Interest in workshops and seminars on social networks, which is closely related to participatory journalism and audience building, appears very much disperse throughout each one of the website categories, but one significant part of them is among the first 10 places (out of 33 categories).

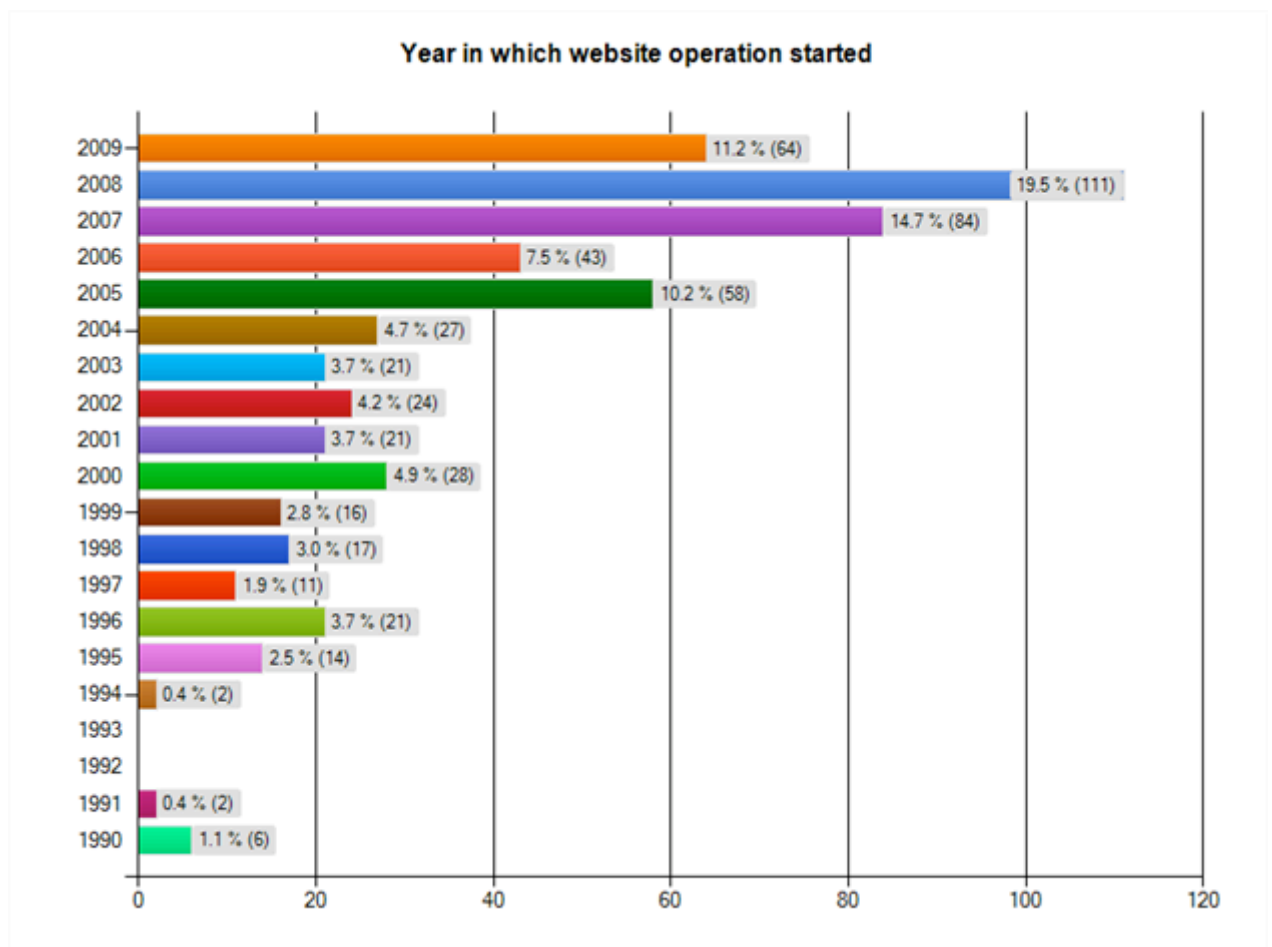
It is worth noting that corporate and research associated sites are the categories in which there is most interest in workshops and seminars

on how to use social networks to promote both sites and content and develop marketing and advertising campaigns .

### Structure, running and other general comments

Despite the importance of traditional media, evidenced by their websites' great traffic and the leadership they had to be able to get into the Internet, websites in Latin America (60 per cent) were mostly born in the Internet, without a traditional medium preceding them. 2005 might be considered the year in which website creation in the region bloomed: 70 per cent of those were created in 2005 or later, and growth continues.

The five most mentioned reasons to explain website creation are, downwards: "getting the new medium to make presence in the Web and create its own audience", "share knowledge", "getting the traditional medium to make presence in the Web and reach new audiences", "it was a trend that needed to be followed" and "it is a cheap way to publish content."



In general, most websites, including those that were born in the Internet and those that had a traditional medium behind, are small operations: 38 per cent are managed by teams of between two and five individuals and 25 per cent are managed by individuals (blogs and websites), which adds up to 63 per cent. Sites conformed by more than 20 people represent just an 8.9 per cent of the sites and most of them (4.96 per cent) correspond to traditional media (newspapers, magazines, radio stations and TV). The rest are medium sized operations with teams that range between 6 and 11 people (16.7 per cent), 12 and 15 (6.7 per cent), and 16 and 20 (4.1 per cent).

It is in the sites associated to preceding media, in other words, Internet non-native, in which there is higher interest in seminars and workshops on convergence and newsroom / operation integration. This interest is also shared by team-operated websites and those of newspapers.

In 75.7 per cent of the websites (team-operated) there is role division amongst content, design, technology, advertising and other activities. In the 20 per cent, each one of the participants does a bit of everything as needed.

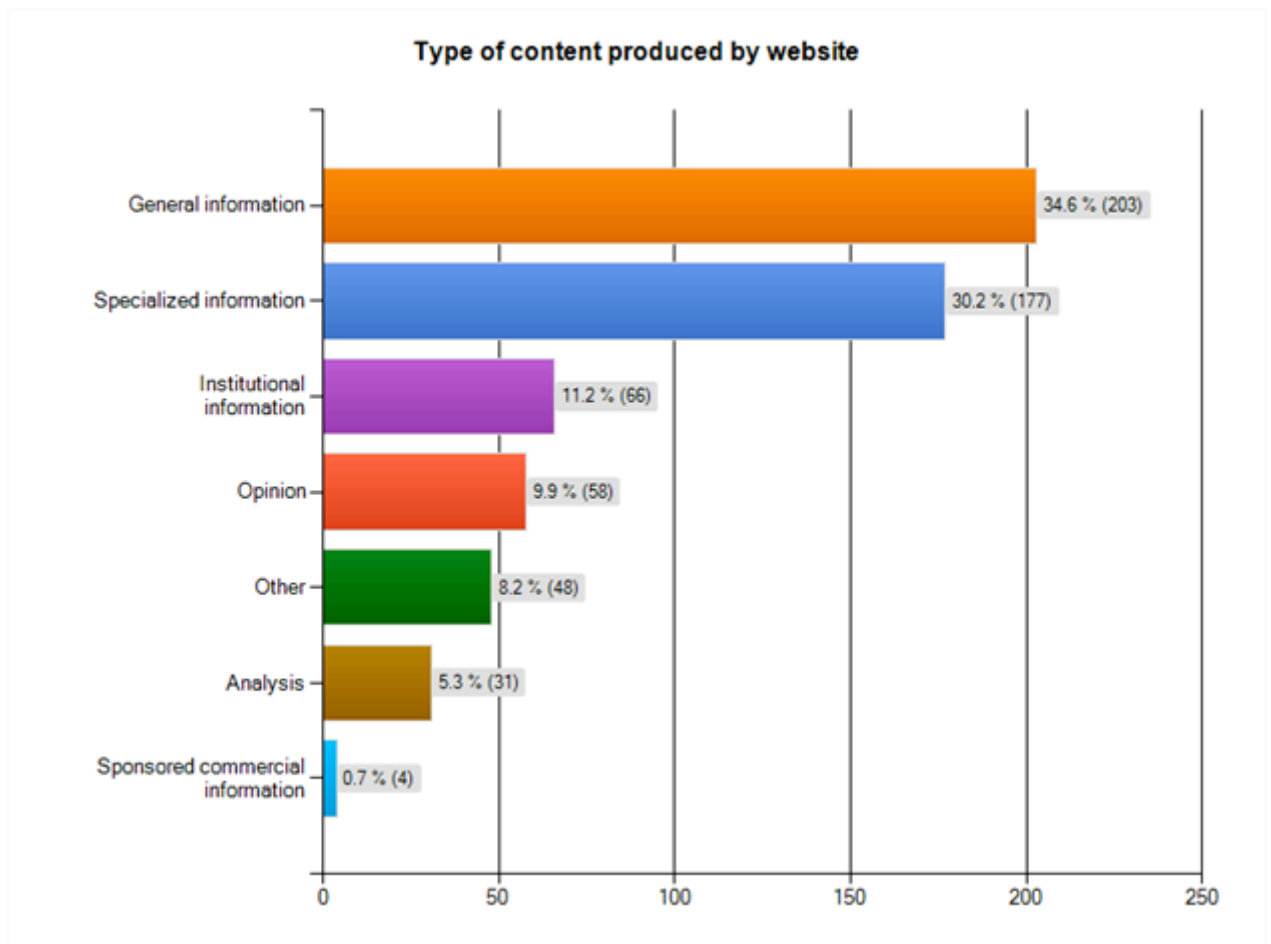
In 68 per cent of media regarding content units, there is division among those who gather the information, the ones who produce it, and those who edit it or design it. Likewise, in 50.6 per cent of these units, editorial decisions (topics covered, approaches, structure, hierarchy of stories for the front page, among others) are made by a head or a group of leaders. In 36.3 per cent of the units these decisions are made by general consent.

In general, 38.6 per cent of the websites are updated several times a day; 37.6, several times a week; 19.2 per cent, a few times a month; and 4.6 per cent, a few times a year.

In the case of newspapers, the percentage of those that update several times a day goes up to 73.1 per cent. Blog dynamics, however, are different: just 10.6 per cent of bloggers updates or publishes several times a day; most, 47.1 per cent, does it several times a week; a 35.9 per cent updates a few times a month; and 6.5 per cent, a few times a year.

Blog dynamics are similar to those of websites associated to social organizations (GNOs, unions, political groups), education, government and research centers in which content is published and updated mostly on a weekly basis.

Regarding content type, most websites produce general information, followed by specialized information.



In the case of newspapers, 72.6 per cent dedicate to the production of general information. This is followed by specialized information, with a 13.3 per cent, and opinion, with 1.9 per cent.

In the case of blogs, either group or individually operated, opinion and specialized information are the most important categories when it comes to content produced (each one with 26.5 per cent). General information is in third place.

Finally, the study reveals that age is not a barrier for technology use: 83 per cent of those who have an individual blog and 59 per cent of those who participate in group blogs are aged between 28 and 65.

For additional information on this research, please contact:

Guillermo Franco  
Journalist – Researcher – New Media Consultant  
[guillermo\\_franco@post.harvard.edu](mailto:guillermo_franco@post.harvard.edu)

Fernando Alonso  
Executive Director FNPI  
[falonso@fnpi.org](mailto:falonso@fnpi.org)

Tanya Escamilla  
Programs Director FNPI  
[tescamilla@fnpi.org](mailto:tescamilla@fnpi.org)

\* **Jaime Abello** is the Director of the Fundacion Nuevo Periodismo Iberoamericano, a Colombian journalism training organization.