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Methodological Proposal for Sustainable Territorial Communication—The Case of Castilla y León

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Abstract: The proximity television model adopted by Castilla y León since 1999 is based on promoting territorial identity and closeness to citizens, in line with the principles of identity and proximity in regional television, albeit with the particularity in the Spanish context of being a regional television system managed by a private concessionaire. In response to the current challenges of the television sector, a consultancy project is implemented with a methodological approach based on a SWOT analysis and the participation of multiple actors. This work details the methodology followed during the different phases of this interdisciplinary consultancy work: definition of bases, development of a base document, and concretion of actions, until reaching the elaboration of a detailed guide that establishes strategic objectives and specific actions. This strategic approach translates into a proposal to improve the performance of regional television and its contribution to the economic and social development of the region; however, the difficulty for its effective implementation due to an uncertain political scenario is pointed out.

Keywords: proximity television; consultancy and strategic planning; Castilla y León; regional television



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1. Introduction

Regional television in Spain has undergone a remarkable transformation since its inception in the 1980s. Created to foster regional cultural and linguistic identities, these channels have blossomed from primarily news outlets to a diverse landscape offering entertainment, fiction, and current affairs (González 2021).

The 1980s witnessed the birth of regional television in Spain, with channels emerging in Catalonia, the Basque Country, and Galicia. The 1982 Law of Autonomy, granting autonomous communities the power to manage their own media, laid the groundwork for this expansion (Moragas Spà et al. 1999).

During the 1990s, the number of regional channels multiplied, currently encompassing 17 channels nationwide. Castilla y León, one of the last to join the scene, launched RTVCyL in 2009, focusing primarily on news and current affairs. Radio Televisión de Castilla y León (RTVCYL), commercially known as Radio Televisión de Castilla y León, is a privately owned company granted the sole regional DTT broadcasting license in Castilla y León. The company operates two television channels: Castilla y León Televisión (CYL7), providing round-the-clock programming for the entire autonomous community, and La 8, a channel featuring specialized content for each province.

In November 2008, the Junta de Castilla y León announced the tender for the operation of two regional DTT channels in Castilla y León, prompting a joint bid from Canal 4 Castilla y León and Televisión Castilla y León, the existing private regional broadcasters at the time. This bid led to the formation of Radio Televisión de Castilla y León, S.A., with each company holding a 50% stake. The tender was awarded on 23 January 2009. Castilla y León Televisión began broadcasting on 9 March 2009, following a transition period starting on 2 February, which involved programming adjustments and the creation of a unified brand incorporating both companies' corporate identities.

RTVCyL is a corporation jointly owned by two media groups: Promecal (owner of *Diario de Burgos* and the agency Ical, led by Antonio Miguel Méndez Pozo) and Edigrup (owner of *Diario de León*, overseen by José Luis Ulibarri). Its latest annual accounts show a turnover of approximately EUR 20 million, with 88% of revenue sourced directly from the Junta de Castilla y León. The remainder includes income from commercial services, public communication campaigns, and contributions from the Castile and Leon Parliament. Its unique trajectory reflects the region's specific territorial and cultural characteristics, further distinguished by its private concession management model.

However, the past decade has presented regional television with distinct challenges (Cañedo and Rodríguez-Castro 2023). The proliferation of digital channels and platforms has fragmented audiences, impacting profitability. Additionally, the convergence of television, the Internet, and telecommunications necessitates adaptation to new technologies and viewing habits. Streaming platforms like Netflix and HBO further fragment audiences, particularly among younger demographics (Turner 2019).

Regional television plays a crucial role in promoting cultural diversity and local identity, while facing challenges related to sustainability in an ever-changing media landscape (Castells-Fos et al. 2022; Morlandstø and Mathisen 2023). Regional television not only serves as a platform for broadcasting local news and entertainment, but also triggers public debate and strengthens a sense of community ownership. Research has highlighted how regional broadcasters are able to address issues relevant to their local audiences in a more meaningful way than national media outlets (López García 1999).

However, the financial and environmental sustainability of regional broadcasters poses significant challenges. In financial terms, reliance on local advertising and subscription revenues may become unsustainable in a media environment increasingly dominated by technology giants and online streaming platforms (Doyle 2018). In addition, the transition to more sustainable production practices, such as the use of renewable energy and waste reduction, requires significant investments that may be beyond the reach of many regional broadcasters.

Despite these challenges, technological innovation offers opportunities to improve the sustainability of regional television. For example, the adoption of digital transmission technologies can reduce energy consumption and operating costs. Likewise, the expansion of online streaming platforms can provide new sources of revenue and global audiences, although it raises questions about the preservation of local cultural identity (López García 1999).

Government policies and regulatory frameworks also influence the sustainability of regional television. A lack of financial support and pressure to consolidate broadcasters can threaten media diversity and local representation; therefore, it is critical that policymakers recognize the unique value of regional television and enact measures to protect its long-term viability (Cañedo 2022). In response to these challenges, a consultancy project was established to define a sustainable community television model for Castilla y León, with the methodology described in this article.

Despite these hurdles, regional television remains crucial to Spain's audiovisual landscape. Its role in safeguarding cultural and linguistic diversity holds even greater importance in an era of globalization. This necessitates increasingly complex management strategies, emphasizing the need for a robust strategic planning system to guide future decision making amidst a dynamic internal and external environment.

Responding to the unique needs of Castilla y León's regional television model, we developed an interdisciplinary project. This project aligns with the principles of local television as a regional fabric catalyst. Notably, the project's core framework could potentially be adapted to other regions, with necessary adjustments to account for the specificities of each territory, including the unique characteristics of their respective regional television models. The following is therefore the methodological proposal made for this work, which slightly varies the classic structure of introduction, methodology, results, and discussion.

2. Theoretical Framework

This chapter establishes the theoretical foundation for analyzing sustainable territorial communication within the context of regional television. By drawing upon relevant academic literature, we explore key concepts that will frame the research and proposed methodology.

Sustainable territorial communication goes beyond simply sharing information within a specific territory. It fosters dialogue, facilitating the exchange of ideas and knowledge (Negreira-Rey et al. 2024). As Cañedo (2022) highlights, communication practices become more impactful when they actively contribute to a territory's improvement across environmental, social, and economic dimensions. A strong territorial identity is fostered by celebrating community and encouraging local citizen participation (López-Olano et al. 2022).

Local media, including television, radio, and newspapers, play a crucial role in building a communication ecosystem within towns and cities. Without such media, communities lose valuable platforms for local storytelling (Ewart 2000). Local stories foster a sense of place and community attachment among citizens. On a regional level, media can contribute to social development by highlighting cultural heritage and the knowledge of local inhabitants, as demonstrated by Mitka and Gioltzidou (2023).

In terms of media proximity (Martori 2019), which means the spatial and cultural nearness between a media outlet and its followers, is the idea that media are not only a tool for consumption but also a means for fostering identity and relationships among people (Larrondo Ureta and Alonso Jurnet 2023; Martori-Muntsant 2023). Local television, which is made as such by the fact of its core mission of regional subjects, experiences a high level of closeness to the audience due to its attention to local news reports. This proximity generates a deeper relationship of the audience with the local station, which in turn helps the station to better perceive the audience and meet their special preferences (Garitaonandia 1993). Undeniably, this brings regional television forward as a tool for the rapid and effective dissemination of ecofriendly information at the local level (Negreira-Rey et al. 2024).

Public broadcasting corporations as well as regional TV channels are privileged actors. Furthermore, both the media and political parties play the role of guardians of the people and articulators of the public interest, which Chadwick (2011) highlights. Digitalization and social media allow public service media to gain more consumers and participate more actively in public debates, but they also require public service media to keep pace with the trends in and maintain their traditional principles of public service, high-quality content, and reach (Potschka and Golding 2012). As pointed out by some authors (López-Olano et al. 2022; Larrondo Ureta and Alonso Jurnet 2023), achieving sustainability in regional television requires innovative approaches.

Several media sustainability models can be illustrated to support regional television by strengthening their structures. As explained by Negreira-Rey et al. (2024), Martori-Muntsant (2023), and Larrondo Ureta and Alonso Jurnet (2023), audience interaction is one of the strengths of some models and allows a deeper connection with the viewer. Another set of strategies, according to Chadwick (2011), revolve around new inventions (López-Olano et al. 2022), the diversification of revenue streams, and the creation of contents for digital platforms. This research will examine how these models can be leveraged to ensure the long-term sustainability of regional television and its role in promoting sustainable territorial communication.

3. Methods

Amidst these changes, broadcasters must adapt to meet the evolving demands of audiences, public authorities, and society at large. This complexity underscores the importance of a robust planning system for strategic decision making, particularly in the context of media proximity—the ability to connect with local audiences on a personal level and provide content relevant to their specific needs and interests (Ewart 2000).

With this background in mind, we present the methodology used in our consultancy study conducted in collaboration with colleagues from the Department of Business Admin-

istration and Economics. The study, carried out between July 2021 and March 2023, aimed to define key action areas for establishing a sustainable local television model for Castilla y León in the coming years. Our approach was informed by existing research on regional media's role in fostering community identity, social cohesion, and democratic participation (Mitka and Gioltzidou 2023; Garitaonandia 1993).

The methodology focused on outlining actionable guidelines and key areas for a medium-term improvement strategy. We began by establishing a systematic process to analyze, evaluate, and diagnose the current situation of regional television in Castilla y León. This analysis formed the basis for defining specific actions to address the identified challenges.

In parallel to the work of the university team, an external consultant studied the channel's programming at the time of the research. These data were of particular relevance for the design of the work axes according to the interests of the audience and, in fact, were taken into account in the internal work meetings of the different phases of the project.

The methodology comprised three distinct phases, each with specific objectives. This systematic approach allowed us to reflect on the company's current reality, future aspirations, and desired trajectory within a set timeframe. Additionally, we designed a strategy outlining actionable steps, required human and financial resources, and a timeframe for executing the plan. Our research design employed a mixed methods approach, combining qualitative and quantitative data collection techniques. This approach allowed us to gain a comprehensive understanding of the regional television landscape in Castilla y León.

In the first phase, the foundations of the plan were defined; some initial meetings were held with managers to try to define the mission and vision of the company, and from there to carry out a SWOT analysis that concluded the main strengths and weaknesses of the company when diagnosing its strategic value (Díaz Olivera and Matamoros Hernández 2011). This process was based on questions centered on the nine criteria of the European Excellence Model of the European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM, 2023)¹, i.e., policy and strategy, people, alliances and resources, leadership, processes and results: in clients, in people, for society, and global results, adapting everything to this company model placing a particular focus on the concept of media proximity (as defined above). The opinions of up to six interest groups (Figure 1) made up of internal and external agents were collected in such a way as to gather the opinions not only of the company's directors and executives, but also those of the company's employees, middle management, and the most relevant audiovisual agents in the sector in the autonomous community: the journalists' association, the audiovisual platform of Castilla y León, and content production companies. All political parties represented in the regional courts were also contacted, as well as the members of the TDT monitoring commission of the Junta de Castilla y León.

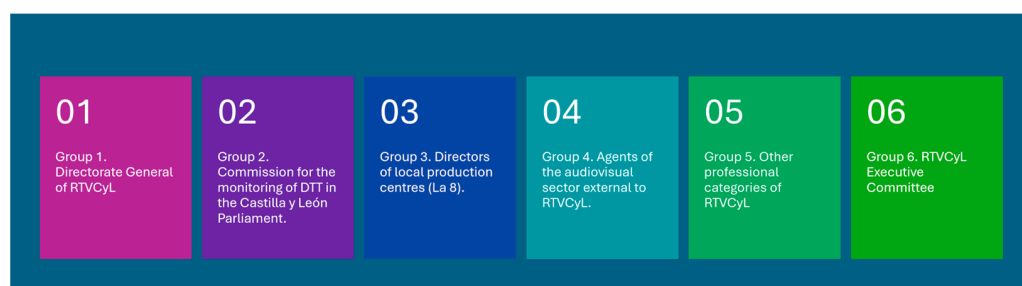


Figure 1. The six working groups.

Different sectoral meetings were held to obtain relevant information for the process. We designed them so that, in a sectorial manner, they would be meetings among equals, in which there would be no hierarchy of command among the participants, thus allowing them to express themselves freely. During these meetings, semistructured interviews were conducted to delve deeper into the identified strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and

threats. In parallel and for the following phase, the people from each group who would be selected for the specific work of phase two were identified.

During the following three months, already in the second phase, the data collected through interviews and questionnaires were thematically analyzed to identify recurring patterns and key themes. This analysis, in conjunction with the SWOT analysis findings, informed the development of a base document outlining key focus areas, objectives, and actions to be undertaken within each area. To create this document, work was carried out continuously with a single working group made up of representatives from different areas of the company. Among them were the general management, the directors of in-house production, broadcasting and marketing, news, finance, online and web, as well as some directors of local centers, among others.

At the same time, it was decided to expand the methodology and also collect more detailed and more personal information through a questionnaire designed exclusively for the members of this working group, which inquired about the importance given to each of the proposed strategic objectives. This complements, in a quantitative, summarized, and anonymous way, the personal opinions expressed in the previous face-to-face meetings.

In the third phase, for each axis of action in addition to each strategic and operational objective defined, the following were specified: actions, people in charge, monitoring indicators and targets, timetables, committed resources (human and financial), and monitoring and evaluation procedures. Eight different meetings were held, one for each strategic objective, in which the operational objectives were worked on as goals, trying to specify the different actions to be carried out, their timeframe and the resources allocated to them. The contribution of the university team in this part of the work consisted of establishing common presentation guidelines, homogenizing the different axes, and providing a global vision.

While this project was designed as a consultancy effort for a specific regional television station, the methodological approach outlined here can be adapted for application in similar contexts.

4. Results

To understand the current television landscape in Castilla y León, it is crucial to consider its unique development history. Unlike other regions, local television was not established until the late 1980s, coinciding with the expansion of the third national channel and the emergence of regional broadcasters; however, by the late 1990s economic hardship led to reduced public subsidies, paving the way for a private regional television model.

The new millennium witnessed the rise of two key players: Canal 4, owned by Promecal, and Televisión Castilla y León, affiliated with the Begar group. Both groups raced to offer regional content, aiming to capture the advertising market and potentially win a future regional television tender (Badillo 2003).

In 2008, the regional government opted for a unique model in Spain: indirect management of public service television. This involved a single license encompassing a regional channel and nine provincial channels, financed by the Junta de Castilla y León through a program contract for public service content. Consequently, the two competing groups merged and submitted a joint proposal, leading to the creation of Radio Televisión de Castilla y León (RTVCyL) in March 2009.

This model established RTVCyL as a regional television broadcaster subsidized by the regional government in exchange for fulfilling public service obligations. Notably, the first program contract emphasized promoting the region's identity and producing content relevant to the citizens of Castilla y León, aligning with the core principles of public service television (Miguel de Bustos and Casado del Río 2012).

Furthermore, the economic crisis that began in 2008 reignited discussions on the sustainability of public television channels facing financial difficulties. Interestingly, Castilla y León's model proved to be the most cost-effective in the country. As shown in Table 1, with

a cost per inhabitant below EUR nine in 2022, RTVCyL stands out as the most economical regional television channel.

Table 1. Cost per inhabitant of regional television stations in Spain in 2022.

Regional TV	Public Transfer Received ¹	Cost per Inhabitant
Euskal Irrati Telebista (EiTB)	172,629,316	77.97
Compañía de Radio y Televisión de Galicia (CRTVG)	121,560,000	45.09
Corporación Aragonesa de Radio y Televisión (CARTV)	55,864,894	42.12
Corporación Catalana de Medios Audiovisuales (CCMM)	300,639,981	38.72
Ente Público de Radiotelevisión de las Islas Baleares (EPRTVIB)	33,465,000	28.52
Radio Televisión Canaria (RTVC)	58,607,440	26.97
Ente Público de Radiotelevisión de Castilla La-Mancha (RTVCM)	52,088,890	25.41
Corporación Extremeña de Medios Audiovisuales (CEXMA)	26,884,632	25.37
Ente Público de Comunicación del Principado de Asturias (RTPA) *	22,716,406	22.45
Radio Televisión de Andalucía (RTVA)	153,768,050	18.15
Corporación Valenciana de Medios de Comunicación (CVMC)	67,911,810	13.43
Radiotelevisión de la Región de Murcia (RTRM) **	18,583,009	12.24
Radio Televisión Madrid (RTVM)	81,734,000	12.11
Radio Televisión de Castilla y León (RTVCyL)	20,235,000	8.49

¹ Source: Arrillaga, Judith. The Economist. INE for the population. * Source: RTPA corporate information; ** 5,423,009 in 2022 to RTRM as direct manager + 13,160,000 per year to the SLU (Secuoya Group) as indirect manager. The bid submitted by this company was EUR 65.8 MM for 5 years. Source: Onda Regional de Murcia.

The current television and broader audiovisual production landscape is riddled with uncertainties. Technological advancements, declining advertising revenue, shifting audience consumption patterns, and the emergence of new players are disrupting traditional national and regional television channels, albeit with a slight delay in the regional context.

In the meetings held with the working groups of internal personnel, especially those formed of members of the Executive Committee, service directorates, and territorial directorates, the main difficulty in medium-term planning is the uncertainty in financing, which in turn leads to a lack of resources for contracting external production that would guarantee better alliances with the audiovisual fabric of the region. A multiyear funding commitment is demanded from the administration to alleviate the weaknesses in this field.

In the same sense, members of external production companies and professional associations express the permanent difficulty of weaving alliances with the company that would result in the development of an audiovisual industry in the region as a fundamental goal of a public service in Castilla y León. The lack of an independent audiovisual council that would watch over the proper functioning of the media system in the region is a demand shared by the company and the external agents of the sector.

Regarding the contents, the high volume of independent production in relation to the financing obtained is highlighted as a strength. Commercially, the work of the local TV stations, which optimize in a remarkable way their resources and their public service work above, sometimes, economic profitability, is highlighted.

One of the results common to all of the working groups highlights the need to promote new mechanisms for the relationship with the administration, which allow the developing and strengthening of regular and more effective communication.

Once this initial diagnosis had been made, the strategic plan identified four main lines of action, eight strategic objectives, and twenty-seven operational objectives, all aligned with the previous diagnosis and with the company's mission and vision. The four main lines of action considered are presented in Figure 2.

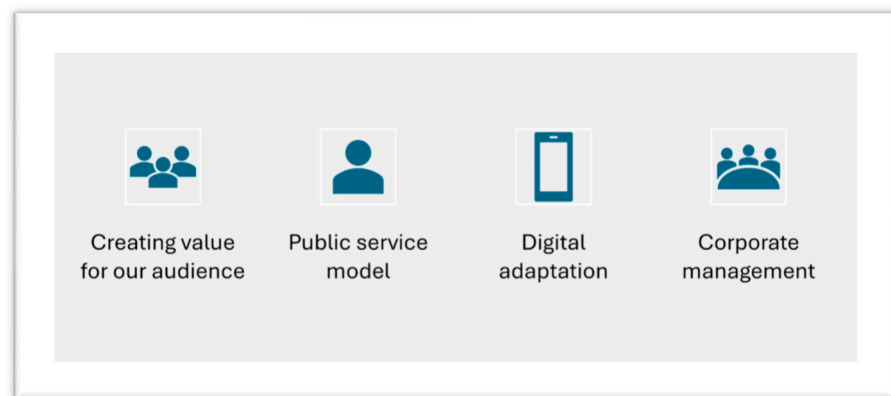


Figure 2. Lines of action.

1. **Creating value for our audience:** Aimed at providing value to the citizens of Castilla y León, offering differentiating content and updated information. Improving to meet their expectations and encouraging citizen participation, which helps to make small local communities visible.
2. **Public service model:** Although it is a private company, it provides a public service, and, as such, it should be committed to the social, economic, and cultural development of Castilla y León, producing content that values the community and establishing continuous channels of interaction and dialogue with the localities. It should be considered one of its central axes that the human team that works creating content or producing news has as an objective to carry out a public service. It is interesting to add that it must be accountable to the DTT commission under the legislation established for the annual subsidy of the regional government.
3. **Digital adaptation:** Aimed at the adaptation to the new digital channels and the organizational transformation required to promote these new models of communication with its audience, which are complementary to the consumption of traditional TV.
4. **Corporate management:** Focused on the internal improvement of the company, strengthening its management mechanisms and guaranteeing its business model based on advertising. It is also about the internal organization and all the people who compose it to put themselves at the service of this strategic project, sharing the same vision of the future.

At the same time, eight strategic objectives have been defined, classified within the four previous axes, which correspond to the main lines of action. These strategic objectives are in turn broken down into 27 operational objectives. These are general actions aimed at achieving each of the strategic objectives.

To ensure that an organization's strategic plan does not remain in the limbo of "what could have been and will not be", it is essential that the different objectives identified are translated into actions. These will be individual or group activities to be completed in order to achieve the objectives. They allow the distribution of tasks and responsibilities and can be linked together (one depends on the results of the previous one). In turn, a methodology is established for the implementation of the plan, detailing the following:

- The deadlines foreseen for each action, from which a chronogram of actions can be concluded, detailing the distribution of actions and resources.
- Members of the organization are responsible for taking the initiative for each action. They do not always correspond to department heads.
- The resources required for implementation, including the need for collaboration with other actors and the financial investments expected to be necessary.
- Indicators and/or measurable goals that allow the monitoring of its implementation and effectiveness. Indicators are instruments of measurement (in terms of time, activity, or results), and targets refer to the expected results or the level to be achieved.

Their inclusion will make it possible to introduce corrective measures so that the plan really becomes a true management tool. Likewise, these indicators and targets will later allow for accountability to the different stakeholders regarding the actual implementation and progress of the plan's implementation.

To this end, scorecards have been generated for each of the 13 operational objectives identified. A total of 96 different actions involving the entire organization have been detailed.

5. Conclusions

The research is concluded by studying the regional television status in Castilla y León, Spain. Such an unstable and unpredictable operating environment, characterized by factors like economic instability, political uncertainty, and unforeseen technological progress (González 2021; Badillo 2003), has not been utilized for strategic development. Instead, it has turned into a complicated problem; however, the project's tangible outcome—a comprehensive report and guidebook—offers a critical foundation for navigating these obstacles.

The strengths of the project are based on the mentioned bibliography which shows how a multifaceted approach contributes to success. As the works by González (2021), Badillo (2003), Moragas Spà et al. (1999), and Miguel de Bustos and Casado del Río (2012) all show, regional television in Spain struggles between being a public service broadcaster and being a commercial channel. This aligns with the identified uncertainty regarding Castilla y León's television model.

In addition, the collaboration between the university and regional television is of great value. The university consultancy promotes territorial sustainability, reflecting the project's objective of strengthening regional television in Castilla y León. This successful collaboration offers a methodological key transferable to other regions: universities, with their expertise in communication, economics, sociology, and political science, can provide valuable consulting services to regional televisions, in line with the proposal of López-Olano et al. (2022).

The project's recommendations can also be structured to cater to the specific needs of each local community. Ewart (2000) points to regional media as a means by which a community may discover its identity. Such an approach is consistent with the particular problems of Castilla y León, a region that is enormous and has a lot of cultural diversity (Domínguez Jiménez 2017). The university's report, once implemented, can effectively be used to adjust the content to meet the needs of the different audience segments, including the elderly and those living in rural areas with poor digital accessibility (as mentioned by Mitka and Gioltzidou 2023). Here, another key aspect of transferability emerges: a thorough audience analysis, with regard to demographics, cultural background, and technological competence, should be performed to make sure that the content is relevant and addresses the particularities of each region.

Technological progress is both a challenge and an opportunity for regional television (López-Olano et al. 2022). The recommendations should be in line with the aspects that have been raised to guarantee the survival of the television model in a digital environment. Hence, this implies the inclusion of technological considerations as one of the significant components in the transferable methodology. Regional broadcasters, jointly with universities, could explore the possibility of low-cost content production, distribution across all platforms (radio, television, and digital), and involving the audience by means of interactive technologies in relation with the necessary innovation proposed by Martori-Muntsant (2023).

Finally, the need for a multistakeholder approach, involving government, businesses, and civil society, as emphasized by Larrondo Ureta and Alonso Jurnet (2023) and López García (1999), resonates with the project's call for stakeholder engagement. This collaborative approach is significant in terms of regional television sustainability in the long run (Doyle 2018). In terms of this aspect, the transferable methodology should include stakeholder engagement strategies at all the stages of the process, starting with problem

identification and ending with solution implementation, so that all stakeholders can have a feeling of shared ownership and responsibility for the successful implementation of the regional television model.

In this respect, the project of regional television for Castilla y León represents a good beginning for the solution of the existing problem. Through recognizing the complexity of the operating environment, utilizing the university's competence, building partnerships with different stakeholders, and incorporating the identified transferable methodological keys, Castilla y León can form a path to a sustainable and effective television model tailored to the specific needs of its heterogeneous communities. This can be, therefore, a prerequisite for the social, cultural, and economic growth of the region, as stated by Cañedo (2022), Cañedo and Rodríguez-Castro (2023), Chadwick (2011), Negreira-Rey et al. (2024), and Castells-Fos et al. (2022). The project achieving success, with its transferable methodological framework, can be used as a case study for regional television across Spain and a reference point for a better future of this key pillar of media democracy.

Regional television plays an essential role in promoting cultural diversity and civic engagement at the local level, but faces significant challenges in terms of financial and environmental sustainability. While technological innovation offers opportunities to address these challenges, a holistic approach involving multiple stakeholders, including governments, businesses, and civil society, is required to ensure the long-term viability of regional television as a fundamental pillar of media democracy.

It is necessary to admit that this study comes with its limitations. A SWOT matrix, as a useful tool for strategic analysis, has the weakness of being subjective and prone to bias, which depends on the people who are involved in the analysis stage (Díaz Olivera and Matamoros Hernández 2011). Moreover, the study concentrates on a single case study, which reduces the findings' validity to be applied to other local television stations. Future studies should aim to improve the methods of data collection and widen the scope of cases to further strengthen them holistically.

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Note

¹ It can be consulted in detail in this website: <https://efqm.org/> (accessed on 21 April 2024).

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