New Media Challenges to Old Media and Response Trends

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New media is constantly challenging traditional media with changes in format, content, interactivity, and audience participation. Palser (2008) defines the state of traditional media as, "walking the tightrope between a diminishing traditional business and a promising but immature new one" (para. 3). The ability of older media to adapt to innovations in technology, news production, and audience value is essential to its survival. Traditional media includes newspapers, magazines, television, and radio. New media includes the Internet, online newspapers, social media, and blogs (Palser, 2010). The Internet produces easy access to non-traditional forms of media. New media allows for innovative methods and increased interactivity for traditional content and for new forms of content (Penfold, 2004). The Internet allows the audience to engage with news and information according to an individual's needs, wants, and schedule. For example, recorded television and radio broadcasts can be listened to or watched at any time by individual users; weather and sports reports can be sent by email alert, and audience members can comment on an organization's online message boards (Palser, 2010).

Traditional media is constantly challenged by new innovations and without modifications to systems and content, older media will become obsolete. Traditional media are caught between idealism for a profession defined by quality of content and serving the public, and the necessity to adapt along with technical innovation (Emmett, 2009). Media needs to for partnerships between its traditional form and its new online form, to remain relevant for consumers (Morton, 2010). The Pew Report, 2010 describes the relationship between old and new media as, "Old media are trying to imagine the new smaller newsroom of the future in the relic of their old ones. New media are imagining the new newsroom from a blank slate and news ecosystem" (para. 25).

Literature Review

Audience Engagement

One essential challenge possessed by new media is an increased level of convenience and interactivity for the audience. Online media allows for access to news and information at any time, for little to no cost and a heightened level of engagement with the journalists (Penfold, 2004). These many options allow for the audience to decide how and when they engage with the media. In contrast, traditional media gives the audience limited choices, such as which broadcast station to watch and what time to watch. Some traditional media has moved toward sensationalism due to the necessity to engage and excite viewers to pay for or tune in to news that is readily available on the Internet. The primary benefit of media as a way to access news at home has been replaced by the ease of the Internet, cell phones, search engines, and other devices such as the Kindle and the iPad (Morton, 2010).

The response of older media is to engage viewers through a greater emphasis on local issues and personal relationships between news reporters and the audience. Broadcast news allows for a level of personal engagement with news personalities that newer media can only provided in a limited capacity. Traditional media forms are forced to adapt by providing an online news counterpart and therefore need to rely on their news personalities to engage viewers. Likewise newspaper organizations are emphasizing aspects that differentiate the concrete newspaper from the online form, such as coupons, cartoons, classifieds, and opinion pieces (Penfold, 2004). Although older media organizations are constantly aiming to create a product that is distinctive from new media, the connection between old and new media continues to strengthen.

Sensationalism in Media

Some older media forms have altered the fundamental dictates and practices of their organizations in order to draw in an audience. Some traditional media have isolated their audience through exaggeration and sensationalism. The *American Journalism Review* uses the Tiger Wood's scandal to emphasize the new tendency of traditional media to ignore established customs during times of breaking news. Farhi (2010) argues, "The scandal may have constituted a watershed in American journalism: A major news story in which many 'respectable' news outlets ditched traditional newsgathering methods and standards of fair play and piggybacked on aggressive but not always accurate tabloid reporting" (para. 10). Caution is vital for traditional media to maintain or re-build reputation and credibility. Rieder (2010) illustrates the importance of delaying stories until they are fact checked and edited because "it's a lot easier to do damage than to undo it" (para. 11).

Online Content

The immediacy of new media has caused greater concern for traditional media and what and how it reports news. The challenge for older media is to integrate itself into the online news format, while distancing itself from the many unsubstantial online sites. Online content through traditional media has the advantage of a recognizable name over online sites lacking ties to traditional organizations. Traditional online news sites have 67% online viewership while online-only sites have 14% online viewership. This fact has convinced some major dailies, including the *New York Times*, that in order to be financially successful they need to transform their websites into paid subscriptions (Pew Project, 2010).

Economic Challenges

The attempt of older media to be more connected with their audience is hindered by budget cuts, layoffs, and a limited numbers of remaining employees. As traditional media continues to focus on surviving with reduced staff and resources, the speed of the Internet allows new media to produce a higher quantity of content. The Pew Report, 2010 explains the extensive layoffs and budget cuts for traditional media have affected the level of content. For example, press releases are not edited or expounded upon and are printed in their original form. These issues have resulted in a decline in the reputation of some traditional news organizations as places for accurate, hard-hitting information (Pew Project, 2010). The challenge for traditional news is to strive for a high level of quality to differentiate their organization, while attempting to increase interactivity with their audience members. This is not an easy task with the extensive cutbacks in all traditional media sectors (Pew Project, 2010). Another important challenge for traditional media is facilitating online advertising so it becomes a stable source of revenue.

Online pay models.

Online pay models rely on the strength of the connection between the audience and the specific news site, and how that connection translates into a willingness to spend money for a previously free service. The question for many traditional news organizations is how to strategically implement a pay model for online content that does not disenfranchised its audience. A poll done by the Nielson Company found that 8% of Americans are currently paying for online newspaper content and 43% would consider paying. The amount for those currently paying or willing to pay is similar for other media forms such as professional videos, magazines, and Internet-only news sources (Nielson Wire, 2010). In January 2011, *The New York Times* will begin charging non-subscribers for access to their website. Online viewers will

be able to access a certain amount of articles, but will have to pay a fixed amount per month for unlimited access. This proposal would have little effect on occasional viewers and would benefit from its loyal, everyday customers.

Other newspapers that have adopted a pay model are *The Wall Street Journal, Newsday, The Financial Times, The Arkansas Democrat-Gazette*, and *The Albuquerque Journal* (Pena, 2010). The *Arkansas Democrat-Gazette* instituted a pay model for its online content before many other newspaper considered the idea. As a result, the paper has seen smaller decreases in profits and advertising revenues then the majority of the newspaper industry. The paper has only laid off 10% of its employees, compared to 30% or more for other newspaper organizations (Schulte, 2010). A related online-payment idea is the micropayment model that charges per click for articles, videos, editorials, and blogs. This model is built around the impulse of customers and has been called the "iTunes for news" (CJR Editors, 2010).

Print versus online content.

This attempt of old media to supplement decreasing circulation with increasing paid online usage is directly affected by the quality of print versus web-based content. A study done by the *Columbia Journalism Review* found that the content of magazine websites was inferior to the content of the print version (Lerner & Navasky, 2010). The researchers interviewed more than 3,000 magazine employees. They determined that 59% of online publications had inferior or no copy editing on online magazine stories. The difference in content between the two medium forms in the same organization can be explained by a lack of communication between the print and web editors and an emphasis on speed of production rather than correctness. The inferiority of some web-based media affects the reputation of the traditional media form to which it is connected (Lerner & Navasky, 2010).

One essential problem with many traditional media organizations is the tendency to ignore quality of content in an attempt to conserve resources. For example, newspaper advertisement space is now available on section fronts and front pages. The increased presence of advertisement space, in an attempt to increase or stabilize profits, could isolate the audience and make instilling a pay model more difficult (Morton, 2010). The most important aspect in instituting a pay model and retaining an audience is successfully balancing quality content and a fair price (Chittum, 2009).

Other economic practices.

Another economic issue for traditional news associated with the decline of circulation is the growing reliance on advertisers for profit. As the relationship between the press and advertisers becomes less concrete, questions are raised about accuracy and objectivity. Traditional organizations need to find a balance between too little advertising revenue and too much advertising, which isolates customers. One idea posed by a group of journalists and academics that illustrates the complicated state of current media is a federal bailout for newspaper organizations (Klose, 2010).

Some individual media organizations have adapted unique methods to survive declining circulation and increasing supply costs. For example, the *Detroit News* and the *Detroit Free Press,* print papers everyday but only deliver three days a week Thursday, Friday, and Sunday. The papers have retained most of their 330,000 home delivery subscribers and saved money on fuel and maintenance costs. For both papers this model has been successful due to the high quality of the content in the print and online versions (Carmichael, 2010). Another unique proposal is for major dailies in cities with one newspaper to switch to digital only content.

Proponents for this idea claim it will save money on delivery and printing costs and represents a change that aligns with the needs of the audience. (Palser, 2008)

Online advertising.

The audience for online news, online advertisements and sales continues to increase so learning to effectively utilize online resources is constantly growing in importance (Palser, 2009). Online news organizations are finding ways to make online advertisements more direct and targeted to specific, local audiences. Examples of targeted advertising are sponsored links, local classifieds, and online banners. The ability to localize advertisements for online news represents a challenge to one of the primary benefits of traditional news, the ability to focus on stories that directly affect the audience. For example, some news organizations have built niche websites, such as city guides, along with their primary news sites to drawn in new viewers (Palser, 2008). Newspaper organizations have to use sound journalism, local information, and a fair amount of advertisements, so customers will pay for an online product.

Media Partnerships

The Pew Project, 2010 advises old and new forms of media to join into alliances in order to emphasize the benefits and compensate for the problems of each media form. In general, online news lacks superior content, reporting quality, and a successful context for advertising (Pew Project 2010). Although some online news counterparts are equivalent in quality of content they are lacking in the other unique aspects, such as coupons and entertainment. Traditional news media has been negatively affected by the economy, the increased level of convenience, and competition. Partnerships would be beneficial for both media organizations but the feasibility and the rules of these partnerships are currently unknown. The success of

partnerships depends on the willingness of traditional media to adapt to new styles and methods (Pew Project, 2010).

The massive quantity of news and information available to audiences continues to expand, overwhelm, and empower audiences to choose a particular news source, time of day, and method of engagement. Online media continues to challenge traditional media through its emphasis on interactivity and a two-way discussion between organization and audience (Pew Project, 2010). Older media forms cannot rely on traditional reportorial journalism to engage their audience and have to adapt by forming a partnership with a new media company. Forming successful partnerships between local owners and larger content distributors is essential for the smaller organizations because of their decreasing resources and personal (Palser, 2008).

Examples of partnerships.

Partnerships between old and new media forms illustrate the future: online news as the dominant medium and traditional news as a complementary, niche medium. There are several examples of successful partnerships between old and new media. YouTube launched a local news feature, which brings up recent local news stories within 100 miles from the login location. Local broadcast news stations contribute the content featured in the local news feature. However, many stations are hesitant to contribute video because it could decrease local viewership on a station's online site and decrease the audience for online advertising. Some stations have adopted the partnership with YouTube because there is no cost and it could indirectly lead viewers to the station's online site (Potter, 2010).

Yahoo Inc. just renewed their licensing agreement with The Associated Press (AP). Google News can feature AP articles in its search results as long as Yahoo Inc. agrees to certain guideline to protect content (Adams, 2010). The AP is an example of traditional media that

successfully partners with new media formats, in order to increase interactivity and connection to their online content. The AP has recently posed stricter regulations for unlicensed use of its online content. The AP will form a news registry of news and video content that is monitored with electronic tags (Liedtke, 2009). One fundamental partnership, between citizen journalists and traditional news, has grown out of financial struggles and advancements in technology. Some news organizations, including CNN and MSNBC, are publishing video content from citizen journalists called "community correspondents." In general, the citizen correspondents are not paid for their multimedia content and the news organization can resell content (Potter, 2007).

Changes in Education and Training

Many of the changes in how the media engages with its audience parallel changes in the higher education system. For example, online classes they were primarily lecture only with little student interaction are now treated as a dialogue between students and professors (Penfold, 2004). One response, to the decrease in available jobs and the increase in skills needed within mass media organizations, is a change in the education system. This change would emphasize cross-training students for several mass media professions rather than targeting one specific field (Lum, 2004). Within the higher education system students are consolidating education and skills for traditional media with new technology-based media. Older news organizations are becoming more specialized to obtain a local or niche audience (Pew Report, 2010). In order to sustain a specialized audience and foster a successful online counterpart, traditional news organization need future employees with industry knowledge and a variety of technical skills.

Social Media Websites

To stay relevant with younger audiences, traditional news has to commit a greater emphasis to citizen reporting seen on social media websites. Some employees for news

organizations have begun posting on Twitter, Facebook, and other social media websites daily.

Other news organizations have hired social media editors and social media staff members

(Gleason, 2010). The *American Journalism Review* uses the earthquakes in Haiti to emphasize

the importance for social media and traditional media to coexist. Although social media was a

good outlet for communication and fundraising, traditional news sites provided more relevant

news stories, pictures, and video. The excessive amount of information increases the need for

traditional news sites to differentiate themselves though contextualizing the story and the

information on a higher level (Palsner, 2010).

Marketing through social media.

Along with the challenges of online news sites is the increased popularity and relevance

of social media sites. The importance of marketing and building a brand continues to increase

along with increases in free, online outlets for publicity. A study done by the Association of

Leading Ag Media Companies (APA) illustrates how important customer recognition of a brand

or company is to its success. The study found that the importance of knowing, understanding,

and trusting the brand affected how satisfied the customers were with the product and the

experience (APA Editors, 2002). Social media allows old and new media organizations to

market their stories, newscasts, and reporters without taxing strained budgets. However it also

challenges organizations to expand the job responsibilities of already overworked employees. In

order to use social media correctly, employees need to be educated in the "best practices" for

utilizing each social networking site (Gleason, 2010). Social network sites guarantee that

information will get filtered and passed on through connections and networks, which is vital to

the continuation of traditional media (Emmett, 2009).

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