Олимпиада НИУ ВШЭ для студентов и выпускников – 2018 г.

Направление: «Медиакоммуникации»

Профиль: «Менеджмент в СМИ» **КОД - 280**

Время выполнения задания – 180 мин.

Прочитайте предложенную статью и напишите на русском языке рецензию на нее, стараясь придерживаться списка вопросов, приведенных в конце статьи.

Legacy and Native News Brands Online: Do They Show Different News Consumption Patterns?

Ángel Arrese & Jürg Kaufmann

Introduction

The current competitive context of the press does not reflect the traditional battle between print media (traditional) and online media (new media), but the new framework of a struggle between news brands of a very different nature that are trying to gain the favor of readers. In this competition of brands around the digital universe, some of them have more or less successful and legendary external referents—the printed newspapers—and others do not, but all are trying to build an audience that fits their editorial identity and business model based on their particular journalistic proposals. The first type of brands, so-called legacy brands need to integrate their traditional readers with their online readers in a unique and valuable way, looking for a balance between quantity and quality—with special emphasis on the latter—in such a way that the idea of charging for the content of the brand is feasible, regardless of its delivery channel. The second type of brands, digital native or online-only brands, also try to create their own audience, with a greater emphasis on quantity and a business model mostly based on free news.

A priori, one would expect that these two types of audiences were significantly different in one or more of the basic aspects of their demographic and socioeconomic profiles, their news consumption patterns, and their relationships with the media outlets. These differences should be linked to the different nature of legacy brands in comparison to native brands with regard to content (some offline and online, and others only the latter), their positioning in news markets (traditional quality brands first and new media brands second), and their business models (with payment for content as a more or less real or potential source of income). This general hypothesis is based on two arguments supported by previous research: on the one hand, the fact that audiences/users perceive and use different types of online news differently, and that Web newspapers do not generate the same learning effects about public affairs and the same convergence dynamics compared to other types of news sites; on the other hand, as regards the online versions of legacy media, researchers in media management have considered media websites in terms of brand extensions, and the prevailing idea is that the use of the same brand name in different channels is an attempt to leverage the brand's equity. Brand equity manifests itself both indirectly as brand awareness and brand image, and also directly as different consumer behavior.

This article aims to analyze whether or not different types of readers could be defined by their greater or lesser association with those types of brands.

Research questions (RQs) and hypothesis

As stated above, the aim of this article is to investigate whether the nature of brands—legacy or online-only (native) brands—is a relevant factor in helping to explain audience differentiation in online news markets. More specifically, the RQs are as follows:

RQ1. Do online audiences of legacy and native news brands differ significantly in their behavior with regard to some of the more specific characteristics of online journalism?

RQ2. Do online audiences of legacy and native news brands differ significantly in their behavior and their attitudes toward payment for online and offline news content?

RQ3. Do online audiences of legacy and native news brands have significantly different demographic and socioeconomic profiles?

RQ4. Do online audiences of legacy and native news brands differ significantly in their opinion about brands as referents for credibility and about journalistic values such as objectivity?

As stated in the introduction, the general hypothesis is that significant differences exist in virtually all of the questions under research, something that seems reasonable considering the different natures of the two types of news brands. A priori, it could be assumed that legacy brands, which are linked with specific online content but also to very well-known offline products, appeal to an audience with profiles and behaviors closest to those of traditional media audiences: less used or able to take advantage of the more specific characteristics of online journalism (RQ1); more used and willing to pay for news content (RQ2); with sociodemographic profiles characterized by higher age, income, and level of education (RQ3); and more inclined to appreciate the value of brands and traditional principles of journalism as factors for news media selection (RQ4).

Methodology

Survey and media sampling

The analysis is based on data corresponding to Spain from the survey carried out for the Digital News Report 2014, in which some questions directly related to this research paper were included. The survey fieldwork, commissioned by the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism Research —and with the University of Navarra as academic partner—was conducted by YouGov using an online questionnaire in late January–early February 2014. The data were weighted to targets based on census/industry-accepted data, such as age, gender, region, newspaper readership, and social grade, to reflect the population of Spain. The sample is reflective of the adult population (18+) that has access to the Internet. As the survey deals with news consumption, it filtered out anyone who said that they had not consumed any news in the past month in order to ensure that irrelevant responses did not adversely affect data quality. This category was 3% of the respondents in the case of Spain. A comprehensive online questionnaire was designed to capture different behavioral and attitudinal aspects of digital media use and online news consumption in different platforms (websites, tablets, mobile, etc.). In the case of Spain, the online survey was answered by 2,017 Internet users, a sample which was representative of the 67% of Spaniards who have Internet access.

In order to focus the analysis on a particular type of news reader, and following the criteria of media selection already adopted in other investigations, a subsample was generated, consisting of a total of 1,216 respondents (56% of respondents) who had read in the last week at least one of the 10 online media representing the kinds of brands that were going to be explored. We decided to select news websites of general information outlets—both legacy and native—

which still presented stories predominantly in what could be called a “newspaper format,” with a textually dominant discourse divided by daily topics and by geographical and thematic sections, etc. Although immediacy has disrupted news cycles, part of the logic of the daily news cycle still remains in many news outlets, and there are some important differences in the journalistic approach between types of websites, even between different categories of legacy media (print, radio, television). As a result, we selected news websites of general information outlets that resemble the daily news cycle as well as their free version, leaving aside other types of news media such as television, radio, search engines, etc., a sample strategy followed in other research works. The chosen websites were a good representation of the main Spanish news brands, both legacy (elmundo.es, elpais.com, lavanguadia.com, elperiódico.com, and 20minutes.es) and online-only brands (elconfidencial. com, eldiario.es, lainformación.com, huffingtonpost.es, and buzzfeed.com). Finally, taking into account that media readership was a multiple-choice question, we decided to divide the readers into two clear-cut groups: on the one hand, those who exclusively read legacy brands (840); on the other hand, those who only consulted native media brands (91). The remaining 285 readers who read websites of both types of media brands were left out of the analysis in order to compare only legacy with only native digital news readers. The unequal size of the groups (840 versus 91 readers) could be a problem if we had used parametric tests, but the non-parametric techniques that we applied, basically Chi-squared tests, do not require equal size groups, provided that the value of the cell expected is five or more in at least 80% of the cells, and no cell has an expected value of less than one. These conditions are met by the statistical analysis reported in this article.

With the brand type read as a grouping variable, we proceeded to select those survey questions that could be used as variables to test hypotheses related to the RQs. All the variables, as explained below, should be considered as reasonable—not exhaustive—proxy measures for the overarching characteristics under research.

Measures

Readers’ interaction with online journalism characteristics (RQ1) was measured through questions relating to their publishing activity (user-generated content) and their preference for textual or multimedia content. The exact wording of the questions was: (1) “Think about the way you consume different news formats on the Internet. Which of the following statements reflects your behavior better?” (I mainly consume news in textual formats/I mainly consume news in audiovisual formats/n/a); (2) “In the last year, have you published any type of comment, question, image, or other content on a news webpage?” (Yes/No/n/a). The use of the year as the unit of observation, and yearly interaction as the variable to distinguish between active and inactive readers, is justified by the fact that online audiences are not using interactive features extensively, contrary to anticipation by media scholars and the news industry. In fact, even in countries with a very developed culture of online news consumption, such as Sweden, only around 10% of the readers declare to post comments or interact with news articles “at least once a year”.

Audiences’ payment for online news content, the purchase of printed newspapers, and the intention to pay for online news were used as proxy indicators of the preference for revenue models more dependent on free or paid content (RQ2). The exact questions asked were: (1) “Have you purchased at least one newspaper in the last week? (Yes/No/n/a); (2) “Have you paid for online news content, or accessed a paid-for online news service in the last year (this could be an ongoing subscription or a one-off payment for an article or app)?” (Yes/No/n/a); (3) “You said you have not paid for online digital content in the last year. How likely or unlikely would you be to pay in the future for online news from particular sources that you like?” (Very

Likely/Very Unlikely/n/a). Payment for online news on a yearly basis and for print news on a weekly basis reflects the more general question of whether the readers pay or not for those two formats, a basic measure that is common in news readership surveys and other studies. At the same time, the consideration of print and online paying bahavior as discriminant variables has a long tradition in the research on the readership of digital news.

Four sociodemographic variables (sex, age, income, and education) were used to characterize the audience profiles (RQ3) of the two groups of readers: (1) sex (Man/Woman/n/a); (2) age (18 to 24/25 to 34/35 to 44/44 to 54/55 or more/n/a); (3) annual income (€) (< 15,000/15,000 to 19,999/20,000 to 29,999/30,000 to 39,999/40,000 or more/n/a); and (4) education level (Master's or Doctoral/Bachelor's/Professional Qualification/High School/ Not completed studies/n/a). Similar sociodemographic cohorts, with a few clear-cut categories, have been used in other studies to test different aspects of online news consumption and behaviour.

Finally, our measurements include three questions concerning the perceived significance of brands and journalistic values (RQ4): trust in news media brands; trust in particular journalists; and the preference for impartial news media versus opinionated news media. The exact wording of questions was as follows: (1) "Think about the different media sources available to you (newspapers, radio, television, online news). Which of them in your opinion generate more trust and credibility?" (Those that make an effort to be neutral and impartial/Those that do not hide their ideology and lack of objectivity/n/ a); (2) "To what degree is the brand of the news company/media important for you when thinking about the trust/credibility deserved by a news source?" (Not important or Not very important/Neutral/Important or Very important/n/a); (3) "To what degree is the particular journalist who writes the article important for you when thinking about the trust/credibility deserved by news content?" (Not important or Not very important/Neutral/Important or Very important/n/a).

The online readership of legacy and native news media was measured in terms of the exposure to these media with a multiple choice question limited to up to five news brands read in the last week. The exact multiple choice question was: (1) "Which of the following online media have you accessed in the last week to get the news?"

Statistical analysis

As we have both categorical and metric variables, we decided to use the Chi-squared test for the first test and the Mann–Whitney U-test for the second test. The selection of non-parametric tests, including for the metric variables, was due to the lack of normality in the distribution of values. An examination of the standardized skewness coefficient and standardized kurtosis coefficient revealed serious departures from normality for all of the metric variables.

Results

Table 1 shows the distribution of readers of legacy brands and online-only brands as reflected in the subsample of Spanish Internet users—only readers who visit exclusively one of the two types of news brands under research.

Table 1. Descriptive data of reader groups and digital outlets readership.

	N	Survey (%)	Brand	Readership *	N (%)
Only legacy brand readers	840	91,2			
			elpais.com	459	54,6
			elmundo.es	406	48,3
			20minutos.es	256	30,5
			elperiodico.com	101	12,0
			lavanguardia.com	54	6,4
Only native brand readers	91	9,8			
			elconfidencial.com	40	44,0
			eldiario.es	37	40,7
			huffingtonpost.es	12	13,2
			lainformacion.com	11	12,1
			buzzfeed.es	8	8,8

**The readership questions are multiple choice into the same category (legacy or native).*

A first look at the data shows that there is a clear predominance of legacy brand reading in comparison with online-only brand reading. In particular, it should be noted how the digital editions of the two leading Spanish newspaper brands, El País and El Mundo, represent a large percentage of news readership, while new formats of news services, such as Buzzfeed, have an almost negligible penetration.

The number of websites visited weekly, among those in the same brand category (legacy or native), can offer a first indication of news reading intensity between the groups of readers. In order to test if a significant difference exists in that intensity of digital news readership, a Mann–Whitney U-test was conducted. This test revealed a statistically significant difference in digital newspaper readership between groups.

With regard to the use of some of the main online journalism features (RQ1), the variables tested are reader interaction with the website and preference for textual or multimedia content. There are statistical significant differences around this RQ among the readers of native and legacy brands. A total of 66% of the former, compared to 55% of the latter, declare that they have interacted with a news website by writing comments or through other modes of participation. Further, native media readers are less oriented toward textual content (72%, compared to 84%), although the statistical power of this difference is also low.

The results from (RQ2) on the habits and willingness to pay for news are mixed. On the one hand, the difference between groups is relevant with regard to whether readers have paid or not for digital news content in the last year. In fact, 15.4% of digital native media readers did so, compared to 6.7% of legacy brands readers (statistically significant difference). However, there is virtually no difference in the degree to which they have paid for printed newspapers. Finally, when considering the readers who have not paid for online news in the last year (N = 788), the intention to pay for digital news in the future shows no significant difference between the two types of readers (see Table 3).

From the point of view of the readers' socioeconomic profile (RQ3), Table 2 shows the profiles of legacy and native online readers. The analysis of the data offers a blunt conclusion: there is no relevant difference around the four variables used to characterize each group: sex, age, income, and educational level. This homogeneity in key variables for audience segmentation draws special attention, as one would expect (as outlined in RQ3) that, especially in aspects such as age and income, readers of legacy brands would present more clearly the typical features of the traditional newspaper audiences, for example being older and having a higher income.

Table 2. Frequency distributions for sociodemographic variables (%).

	Legacy readers	Native readers	Statistically significant /non-significant difference
Gender			
Male	55,8	53,8	Non-significant
Female	44,2	46,2	Non-significant
Age			
18-24	10,7	12,1	Non-significant
25-34	22,6	22,0	Non-significant
35-44	21,9	18,7	Non-significant
45-54	16,7	14,3	Non-significant
55+	28,1	32,9	Non-significant
Income			
Less than €15,000	17,2	19,3	Non-significant
€15,000-19,999	18	18,1	Non-significant
€20,000-29,999	26,9	25,3	Non-significant
€30,000-39,999	15,4	13,3	Non-significant
€40,000+	22,5	24,1	Non-significant
Education			
Master's or Doctoral	7,3	5,5	Non-significant
Bachelor's	39,0	30,0	Non-significant
Professional Qualification	20,2	22,0	Non-significant
High School	29,6	35,2	Non-significant
No completed studies	3,8	6,6	Non-significant
N	840	91	

Finally, as for the effect of brand types in the differentiation of online news consumption patterns, Internet users were asked some questions regarding RQ4 in relation to their opinions on the role of news brands and particular news professionals as drivers of media selection, and overall about their preference for impartial or opinionated media.

RQ4 is probably the question around which the distinction between the two groups of readers is clearer (see Table 3). Although both assign similar importance to journalists in the selection of news outlets, a significant contrast exists when considering the role of brands and, above all, in the degree of attachment to the journalism of more or less impartial media. The legacy media readers place considerably more trust in brands and impartial media when they have to select digital news outlets.

To sum up, all the obtained results do not seem to be adequately explained by the thesis that different types of online news media brands (legacy and native) attract drastically different types of audiences. The results of the statistical analysis do not allow us to conclude that the initial general hypothesis of this study is confirmed. It was expected that the different nature of brands could be associated with readerships that are significantly different, but that is not the case. Although certain divergences in readers' behavior and attitudes have been identified, the effect sizes of the associations between the different variables and the grouping variable are in general very weak and in many cases almost negligible.

Table 3. Frequency distributions for behavioral and attitudinal variables (%).

	Legacy readers	**Native readers**	**Statistically significant /non-significant difference**
Online journalism features			
Interaction	54,9	65,9	Significant
Textual orientation	84,4	71,9	Significant
Revenue model			
Pay for online last year	6,7	15,4	Significant
Pay for print last week	37,1	37,4	Non-significant
Disposition to pay online (non-online payers, N = 788)*	26,6	29	Non-significant
Attitude to brands and journalistic values			
High importance of journalists	63,0	59,3	Non-significant
High importance of brands	59,7	51,7	Significant
High importance of impartial media	88,8	76,9	Significant
N	840	91	

**Note. There were 719 legacy and 69 native readers who did not pay for online news during the last year.*

In spite of this general result, it is interesting to reflect on the more relevant differences between the two groups of readers, as well as on those aspects in which homogeneity between them is the rule.

On the one hand, this research reinforces an idea that has been pointed out in other investigations into different types of online audiences: sociodemographic variables are becoming increasingly less relevant for the discrimination of consumer behavior related to the news on the Internet. The distinction between digital native and legacy online news brands does not succeed in activating those segmentation variables that are so important for marketing management. RQ3 therefore has an unequivocally negative answer. The readers should be remined, however, that our sociodemographic variables are rather crude, hence this finding may not be generalizable to other studies that use more discriminatory variables in analysis. On the other hand, it is noteworthy that of those variables associated with the question of news payment (RQ2), the indifferentiation between groups is very large, and that the only variable of divergence—having paid or not for online news—shows higher values for readers of digital native brands. This is quite surprising if one considers that legacy brands are more concerned with finding ways to charge for their online content.

Less surprising, as expected, is the confirmation that a higher inclination to read native brands is linked to a slightly more active behavior with respect to the specific features of online journalism (RQ1). More precisely, the readers of those news media interact more frequently with the websites and have a higher multimedia orientation, although the association between variables is also very low.

Perhaps the clearest factors that could be used to explain the difference between the audiences under research are their appreciation of the brand and of the value of impartiality as main references for media selection. Legacy readers rely significantly more on these references, while online-only readers have a higher esteem for opinionated media and the journalistic authority of individual authors. This conclusion could be linked to several studies that connect the strength of traditional journalistic brands to their commitment to professional values and explain the importance of this connection for managing news brands, above all in specific situations such as when brand extensions are planned.

Discussion

The consideration of brand type as a factor for better understanding the differences in consumption of online news complements the analysis, mainly from a technological perspective, carried out in the past few years around the topics described in the first part of this article. While not in the manner initially planned, the distinction between legacy and online-only news brands has revealed certain aspects of divergence between the two groups of readers under research. But, at the same time, the overall analysis shows a high degree of similarity in the types of readers and reading behavior. It is interesting to note that a more significant divergence exists mostly around journalistic factors (online journalism characteristics and the value of journalistic brand values) and not around marketing factors (payment for news and sociodemographic audience profiles).

These conclusions have important practical consequences, which are not necessarily positive for those legacy brands that must integrate offline and online content in clearly differentiated and unique brand value propositions. In fact, this should be the basis for persuading particular segments of readers to remain loyal to the brand, and the foundation of business models that could include charging for news content as an important source of revenue.

The relevance of managing the link between news brands and journalistic values and attitudes seems to be the positive lesson that legacy media can learn from the results of this study. Online audiences can respond to distinctive legacy media journalistic practices and can be defined by their attitude to them. An integral news branding strategy of both online and offline contents should take into account this idea, or—said with other words by Chyi and Lee—“the possibility that the long-lasting print business model is supported not by particular demographic groups, contrary to popular misconception, but by attitudinal factors such as format preference as well as news interest”.

Вопросы к статье

1. Какую бизнес-проблему рассматривает статья? Является ли данная проблема актуальной для России или же ее актуальность касается только Испании? Дайте развернутый ответ.
2. В начале статьи авторы формулируют общую гипотезу своего исследования. Подтвердилась ли она, не подтвердилась или подтвердилась частично? Дайте подробный обоснованный ответ.
3. В статье авторы ставят четыре исследовательских вопроса. Что это за вопросы? Даются ли на них исчерпывающие ответы? Воспроизведите их.
4. Какой общий вывод делают авторы статьи относительно сложившейся ситуации параллельного бытования традиционных (унаследованных) газетных брендов и новых (нативных) онлайновых брендов? Дайте свой комментарий относительно сделанных выводов.

Далее Вам предлагается выбрать одну из двух позиций - позицию аналитика-исследователя (А - аналитика) либо позицию медиаменеджера (Б - бизнес).

А. Если Вы выбрали позицию аналитика-исследователя, то ответьте, пожалуйста, на следующие вопросы:

А1. Что в приведенном исследовании было предметом исследования? Какие методы использовались в исследовании? В чем научная новизна данного исследования? Какова эмпирическая база данного исследования?

А2. Есть ли критические замечания к методологии исследования, используемой эмпирической базе? Можно ли результаты данного исследования считать надежными и достоверными? Обоснуйте свой ответ.

Б. Если Вы выбрали позицию медиаменеджера, то ответьте, пожалуйста, на следующие вопросы:

Б1. Если перед Вами стоит задача продвижения в интернете известных газетных брендов, то какие менеджериальные и маркетинговые действия, основываясь на результатах данного исследования, необходимо предпринять? И какие действия заведомо будут неэффективными?

Б2. Если перед Вами стоит задача организации нового проекта онлайн-газеты, то какие менеджериальные и маркетинговые действия, основываясь на результатах данного исследования, необходимо предпринять? И какие действия заведомо будут неэффективными?