“Taking the paper out of news”

10th International Symposium on Online Journalism, University of Texas, USA, 18 April 2009

Neil Thurman and Merja Myllylahti
Taking the paper out of news: A case study of *Taloussanomat*, Europe’s first online-only newspaper

Neil Thurman and Merja Myllylahti
Graduate School of Journalism

Email: neilt@soi.city.ac.uk
“Print newspapers will run out of daily readers late in the first quarter of 2043”
   – Philip Meyer, *The Vanishing Newspaper*, 2004

“In 10 years . . . there will be no newspapers, no magazines that are delivered in paper form"
   – Steve Bullmer, CEO Microsoft, 2008

“by 2021 the few national US dailies . . . will not exist in print"
   – Vin Crosbie, 2008
Christian Science Monitor’s last daily print edition: March 27, 2009

Seattle Post-Intelligencer newsroom, 16 March 2009: end of an era
Taloussanomat’s first edition: 18 November 1997
“A toast to the new”
Taloussanomat: falling print circulation, large losses

“Print-era losses: in the millions of Euros / year”
Killing the print edition: cost savings

35%  
Taloussanomat  
52%  
66%

Source: Edmonds (2007)  
Source: Grindley (2006)
Print vs. Online Ad Expenditures, Newspapers, 2003-2007

Source: Pew / Business Analysis and Research, Newspaper Association of America
Weekly unique visitors to *Talousanomat* and *Kauppalehti*, 2007-2008

Talousanomat’s last print edition, 28 December ‘07

-22%
Nov ’07 – Aug ’08 Change in Unique Users

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Website</th>
<th>% Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TimesOnline.co.uk</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guardian.co.uk</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kauppalehti</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taloussanomat</td>
<td>-0.26</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Taloussanomat & Kauppalehti : weekly page impressions 2007-2008

-11%
Nov ’07 – Aug ’08 Change in Page Impressions

- TimesOnline.co.uk: +45%
- Guardian.co.uk: +32%
- Kauppalehti: -7%
- Taloussanomat: +10%
Average daily reading time: Finland

Newspaper readers: 36 mins / day
(Source: Sanomalehtien Liitto, 2006)

Only Taloussanomat: 1½ mins / day
(Source: Google Analytics, 2008 / TNS Gallup, 2008)
Taloussanomat: web vs print reach

Daily print circulation, 2006: 72,000

Weekly unique users, 2008: 291,966
Taloussanomat: Aggregate weekly viewing time

Print version, 2006 : 216,000 hours.

Only-only version, 2008 : 57,316 hours.

Revenue ▼ down 75% ▼
"Moving online is a [prospect] advertisers will embrace"

– The Ecologist's publishing director, Richard Coles

“We have the luxury — the opportunity — of making a leap that most newspapers will have to make in the next five years ."

– John Yemma, editor, Christian Science Monitor
Conclusion # 1:

Ditching print edition only financially worthwhile if newspaper has operating losses of at least 31%.
“Some of the journalists . . . have their stories ready at 4–5pm. This needs to change.”

– Editor for Development and Strategy, Taloussanomat.
“We do not have time to go to news conferences, meet our sources or even talk to colleagues. 95% of the journalistic work is done on the phone”

– experienced news journalist, Taloussanomat

80% of stories based on agency material 2007: 52, 2008: 31, 2009s <28

(28 July – 5 Aug 2008)
“If you double the amount of stories or the publishing frequency it truly helps [your visitor numbers].”

– Editor-in-Chief and CEO, Taloussanomat

“Churn-alists”

– Nick Davies
“If you want profits, your only solution is to be a Michelin star restaurant. You have to have . . . time to think.”

– Editor-in-Chief and CEO, Taloussanomat
“Your story is flying! In 12 minutes you have got 500 readers”
– sub editor, Taloussanomat, 11 July 2008
“if the visitor numbers are low [the news desk] will publish some populist story like about David Beckham’s underwear to get reader figures up quickly”

– multimedia journalist, Taloussanomat
“more ‘how to journalism’ ”

– Editor-in-chief and CEO, Taloussanomat

“We now have more stories that are closer to the consumer”

– News editor, Taloussanomat
“It is worth training journalists to produce multimedia content? I think it is better to let specialised journalists do their jobs properly. To be able to write good stories, the journalists need time to analyse, think, and discuss”

– Editor-in-chief and CEO, Taloussanomat
paidContent.org - Tracking The Online-Only Seattle P-I: Traffic Down 20 Percent

Joseph Tartakoff
paidContent.org
Sunday, March 29, 2009; 9:07 PM

It makes some sense: Cut your editorial staff by 80 percent, and there's at least a decent chance that Web traffic will tumble. And that's just what has happened at the new online-only Seattle Post-Intelligencer. Page views are down about 20 percent in the week since the newspaper killed its print edition
“it would take years to become profitable even given double-digit growth in income from display advertising”

– Editor-in-chief and CEO, Taloussanomat

“to be profitable, we need to get our mobile services, tailored content [e.g. email newsletters], and community services to make money”

– Editor-in-chief and CEO, Taloussanomat
“We have realised, that during the first six months of the operation we have changed to a news agency”

– Editor-in-chief and CEO, Taloussanomat
“Taking the paper out of news”

Full paper in *Journalism Studies*:

http://www.informaworld.com/10.1080/14616700902812959

Neil Thurman and Merja Myllylahti