

The effects of an external crisis on the prioritisation of innovations

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ABSTRACT

This unique study, for the first time, explores the relative importance of 8 × 2 types of media innovations in the newspaper industry, based on empirical data post-pandemic, from a survey of over 100 Norwegian newspaper executives (i.e., editors-in-chief, managing directors, and publishers). In the aftermath of the Covid-19 crisis, newspaper leaders did not want to make any dramatic changes; rather, they prioritised incremental change. Improving market positions, the products and services, and the existing revenue streams were top priorities. This was not the time to redefine either the concept of newspapers or the genres of journalism. While radical change was not at the top of the agenda, some indications of a willingness to experiment were identified.

KEYWORDS: agility, Covid-19, innovation, leadership, media management

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Introduction

In the first chapter of this book, Olsen and Solvoll introduced the theoretical concepts of crisis, resilience, and innovation and described how these concepts provide frameworks for exploring how Norwegian news media organisations responded to the Covid-19 pandemic, addressing the problem of “how news organisations can cope with and recover from a crisis, and even improve their situation from the pre-crisis status”. In this chapter, we provide additional insights into the theoretical construct of (organisational) resilience and investigate the range of managerial challenges of strategic decision-making in news media organisations during and after a crisis. Our unit of analysis is senior leadership, which we define as the people in news organisations with positions of power (i.e., the members of the organisation’s upper echelon) who make key decisions affecting inputs, transformational processes, and outputs as they find or create, select, realise, and seek to optimise new opportunities, some of which require innovation initiatives.

Our findings are derived from a survey of more than 100 Norwegian senior newspaper executives (including editors-in-chief, managing directors, and publishers), as they had faced a markedly different reality due to the extensive effects of the Covid-19 pandemic. As we are principally concerned with managerial decision-making, we have adopted a more narrow definition of innovation than that presented in Chapter 1 (that “innovation is something new that creates value for stakeholders”). For the purposes of this chapter, we define innovation as a deliverable from specialised work undertaken to transform opportunities, ideas, resources, or needs into something of value that is new to the unit of adoption and strengthens either dynamic or ordinary capabilities or contributes to the achievement of competitive or comparative advantage. By defining innovation as a deliverable from specialised work, we make an unusual distinction. An example clarifies this point: For us, if a news media organisation developed all the systems and procedures required to enable its journalists to work virtually, then this would be a (process) innovation. If the same organisation purchased the required systems and procedures for a virtual newsroom ready-made from a contractor, then (as they did not do the work to transform an idea into an output) we consider this to be an agile initiative. In each case, the output is the same, but the managerial requirements are markedly different.

Context

In early 2020, news media organisations around the world were confronted with an event that profoundly reconfigured industry-specific landscapes of threats and opportunities in ways that were dynamic, complex, and difficult to define. The trigger was the public health emergency caused by the rapid spread of Covid-19. There was no available vaccine for this novel disease, and the medical profession lacked evidence and capabilities to treat patients effectively. One fact clarifies the scope of the crisis: Epidemiologists predicted

that up to six million premature deaths could occur across Europe (Keeling et al., 2021), with ice-rinks being commandeered for use as temporary mortuaries and hospitals being unable to cope with the quantity of patients.

From the onset of Covid-19, enterprises in the news media industry experienced multiple novel external change drivers: almost all European countries required that the population maintained a high degree of social isolation; working from home became the norm; digital technologies were increasingly used for all forms of communication; patterns of consumption of news changed radically; and news media organisations began to examine how they could be proactive socially in a period of crisis. For media managers (Appelgren, 2022), normal life did not return for almost two years, providing an opportunity for researchers to investigate how enterprises managed organisational evolution and revolution, and the role of innovation practices, during and after a “once in a hundred years event”.

Unpacking the construct of resilience

The quantity, importance, novelty, and significance of multiple change drivers impacting news media organisations from the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic meant that “business as usual” was no longer a viable strategy for many traditional businesses. This placed news media organisations in a condition that can be accurately described as “institutional stress”. Those with greater resilience were better placed to cope with and recover from the crisis and even improve their situation (to revisit the definition in Chapter 1). The theoretical construct of organisational resilience is usefully examined using three different lenses: high reliability organisations; dynamic capabilities; and requisite agility.

The history of research into high reliability organisations dates back to 1986, when similar characteristics were found in organisations that were error-free while operating in error-prone conditions (Cantu et al., 2021:1). Hales and Chakravorty (2016: 2873) explained that organisations that succeed in being high reliability organisations are characterised by 1) intense exploration of possible failures and thought given to how to avoid them; 2) a culture of using rigorous methods for the investigation of problems; 3) understanding how a failure in part of an organisation often has consequences elsewhere; 4) clarifying that responsibility for action should be taken by the best-informed available person (probably not a senior remote boss); and 5) an emphasis on ubiquitous continuous improvement in all parts of the organisation. It is reasonable to conclude that competences such as these can only be built over time, and so those news media organisations that possessed at least some of these capabilities were better prepared to deal with any form of institutional stress and would be more capable of planning how to undertake novel initiatives, including those that were innovative.

The construct of dynamic capabilities was defined in 1994, when Teece and Pisano (1994: 537) observed the following:

Winners in the global marketplace have been firms demonstrating timely responsiveness and rapid and flexible product innovation, along with the management capability to effectively coordinate and redeploy internal and external competences. This source of competitive advantage, “dynamic capabilities”, emphasizes two aspects. First, it refers to the shifting character of the environment; second, it emphasizes the key role of strategic management in appropriately adapting, integrating, and reconfiguring internal and external organizational skills, resources, and functional competences towards a changing environment.

The recognition of the nature and importance of dynamic capabilities has been one of the most significant theoretical inputs into the understanding of strategic management for the last three decades. There have been numerous studies of the micro-foundations or components of dynamic capabilities showing that they include organisational design, climate, culture, resources, and reward systems, for example, by Chen and colleagues (2023: 1727–1728), who observed that “the highest-priority core micro-components are the psychological underpinnings and behaviours of actors”. It is reasonable to conclude that those news media organisations that sought to, and were capable of, going beyond resilience and finding ways to gain advantage within the turbulence of Covid-19 possessed dynamic capabilities that were supported by ordinary capabilities (routine operations) and drove initiatives, experiments, innovation, proactivity, and organisational learning (see also Solvoll, Chapter 2).

Requisite agility is a set of organisational attributes that increase the probability that “an organization (will) (i) adapt proactively and intelligently to situational changes; (ii) create or find, select, and responsibly exploit, sufficient numbers of promising opportunities to gain comparative or competitive advantage; (iii) robustly avoid or mitigate threats and (iv) acquire the full range of assets, resources and competences needed to thrive in a different future” (Francis, 2020: 14). There are several reasons why requisite agility (not more agility everywhere) is needed: not all organisations need to be equally agile; being agile is not the only thing that most organisations need to do; adopting the wrong type of agility will be dysfunctional; and sub-units of an organisation often need distinctive pathways for operationalising agility. Although requisite agility is underpinned by dynamic capabilities (see above), it recognises that a key task for those who make strategic decisions in organisations (the members of the upper echelon) is to identify and prudently exploit opportunities and avoid or mitigate threats. Note the word “prudently”: This quality is essential, as a key challenge in many organisations is not finding ideas, but killing many of them. There could be several reasons for being selective: if all proposed ideas were to be adopted, then the quantity of resources required for implementation would exceed that which can be made available; progressing ideas requires unavailable capabilities; a proposed initiative is contrary to core values or strategic commitment; competitive

or comparative advantage would not be gained; and the quantity of work required to develop an idea into an asset would diminish the capability of the organisation to deliver business-as-usual activities.

When examined critically, it becomes clear that the constructs of high reliability organisations, dynamic capabilities, and requisite agility have fuzzy and overlapping boundaries. Indeed, they can be interdependent. It is reasonable to conclude that, when faced with the disruptive force of Covid-19, news media organisations would benefit from strong dynamic capabilities to drive strategic and operational change, requisite agility to create or capture good (for us) opportunities, and high reliability to deliver new products or services efficiently and effectively.

Dynamics of innovation and value creation

The onset of the Covid-19 pandemic meant that strategic decisions had to be taken in a world that can accurately be characterised as having greatly increased VUCA – volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity (Francis & Woodcock, 2023). Just how those leaders and managers with the power to make strategic decisions, known as the upper echelon (Hambrick, 2007), are able and willing to adapt their working practices to lead and manage appropriately in an increased VUCA context is a key factor in determining whether their organisation will be able to identify and exploit opportunities and avoid or mitigate threats. The importance of senior leadership functioning as organisational architects and acting as driving forces and enablers was usefully summarised by Teece (2019: 10), who wrote: “At certain critical junctures, the ability of a CEO and the top management team to sense a key development or trend, and then delineate a response and guide/lead the firm in its path forward, is critical to the firm’s dynamic capabilities”.

The task of forming and deploying strategies in VUCA environments has been studied extensively for several decades, especially in military organisations (NATO Science and Technology Organization, 2018). However, it is likely that enterprises that operate in largely predictable environments lack insights into the specialised managerial practices needed and the distinctive managerial capabilities, processes, and infrastructure required to thrive in a VUCA environment. Hence, if an event like a global pandemic occurs in an industry characterised by a lack of volatility, certainty, low levels of complexity, and predictability, then the upper echelon of participating firms will need to undertake rapid, specialised top-team development that will have generic attributes (such as frequent reviews of current change drivers) and organisation-specific factors (such as limitations of resources).

If a news media organisation possesses a beneficial combination of high reliability, dynamic capability, and requisite agility, then a VUCA environment can be generative, as attempting to seize new opportunities and mitigate or avoid new forms of threat is more than a survival tactic – it creates opportunities for organisational learning. For example, in the pandemic era,

some news organisations found that they could act as hubs for the exchange of experience between customers who shared common concerns. News media organisations who created or successfully exploited this opportunity learnt that there was an untapped appetite for peer-to-peer sharing, discovered what capabilities were needed to deliver the new service effectively, and compared themselves with others who performed similar roles – all of which accelerated their organisational learning. Often without deliberate planning, insights were made explicit, structured, and became a service that was part of the organisation’s strategic portfolio and could be reconfigured to meet other opportunities.

To investigate the managerial challenges of strategic decision-making in news media organisations after a period of crisis, we used a novel research typology (the 8×2 model, elaborated below) to provide fine-grained insights into the dynamics of decision-making related to media innovations after an extended crisis event.

Based on our findings, we present a tentative hypothesis that, when faced with the multiple uncertainties of a crisis situation, leaders and managers will explore how they can configure and exploit existing resources differently (i.e., become more effectively agile) rather than commit to progressing radical innovation initiatives, unless they have no option (e.g., their current business model has become dysfunctional or they take a strategic decision to use the crisis as an opportunity to reinvent themselves).

For our research into the dynamics of innovation and value creation in the Norwegian newspaper industry, we assembled our 8×2 model to provide a fine-grained typology that serves as an analytical framework. By going into this level of detail, our research contributes to the development of middle-range theories that Merton (1949: 39) explained lie “between the minor but necessary working hypotheses that evolve in abundance during day-to-day research and the all-inclusive systematic efforts to develop a unified theory”. Im’s (2018) discussion of a process for the development of middle-range theories was adopted for our investigation, as this provides “a clear, precise, and simple type of theory which can be used for partially explaining a range of different phenomena, but which makes no pretence of being able to explain all social phenomena” (Bearman & Hedström, 2011: 31).

The components of our 8×2 model have two variants (“do-better” and “do-different”) of eight dimensions, providing 16 variables. Our previous research has laid the foundation for our 8×2 model: Six of the eight dimensions are drawn from research conducted over a 24-year period that led to the $6Ps \times 2$ model (Francis, 2020: 33–34), while the other components have been developed to customise the Francis model for media innovation investigations (Krumsvik et al., 2019; Storsul & Krumsvik, 2013).

It is important to demonstrate the robustness of analytical frameworks used by researchers. Until 2005, it was generally recognised that there were just two types of innovation: product and process (Utterback & Abernathy, 1975). This perspective was challenged in a widely cited article by Francis and Bessant (2005), who described innovation capabilities as being targeted

at either product (and service) (P1), process (P2), position (P3), or paradigm (P4) – or a combination of these – and being either do-better (incremental) or do-different (novel or radical).

In media industries, most innovations are incremental. They involve small changes of products or processes that do not challenge the economy or the logic of the media market. These innovations are initiated and managed to secure the economic survival of legacy media businesses. Some innovations, however, have more far-reaching consequences. The Internet, and the ways in which it has been used, are good examples of radical and potentially disruptive innovations (Christensen, 1997; Krumsvik et al., 2019). Francis and Bessant (2005:172) explained:

[The] 4Ps are not tight categories: they have fuzzy boundaries. Nor are they alternatives: firms can pursue all four at the same time. There are linkages between them; a firm using innovation capability for positioning, for example, will be highly likely to introduce or improve products.

This targeting typology became known as the 4Ps × 2 model. Francis (2020) developed the model further as his later research found that innovation capability can also be targeted at provisioning (P5) and platform (P6), providing the 6Ps × 2 model. Francis (2020:146) observed that, for innovation to be insightfully targeted,

it is necessary to hunt for promising opportunity spaces in each of the 6P areas separately, as this [...] benefits from the input of divergent thinkers and looks beyond obvious targets, detects weak signals, investigates multiple possibilities and strives to find fruitful future opportunity spaces [...] The aim is to understand selective opportunities in depth, with the intention of finding those that may be promising.

Krumsvik and colleagues, at the Centre for Research on Media Innovation (CeRMI) at the University of Oslo, realised that innovation targets can be innovation specific, and they added two additional components to the 6Ps × 2 model for adaptation to the analysis of media innovations: genre innovation (Krumsvik et al., 2019) and social innovation (Storsul & Krumsvik, 2013).

In summary, Francis's 6Ps × 2 model is generic and the 2 × 2 CeRMI components are industry-specific, which is an important methodological development, as it shows that the 6Ps × 2 model can be considered the kernel for investigation, but it needs to be supplemented with industry or other locally relevant dimensions. For the unit of analysis studied in this chapter, the innovative use of media and communication services for social purposes does not necessarily imply new products or services, as it could reconfigure existing services or products creatively to promote social objectives. We therefore added social innovation and genre innovation in order to more fully conceptualise media innovation, resulting in the 8 × 2 model.

The underlying construct of the 8 × 2 diagnostic model is that innovation capability is akin to a person's physical fitness, as, once possessed, it

can be used for a wide range of physical activities, from running marathons to ballet dancing. Innovation capability is equally multifunctional, but, to drive change, it needs to be targeted at creating or improving specific forms of value creation activities.

In this chapter, we take a broader view of value creation instead of defining it simply as a tactic for creating revenue by the inclusion of genre and social innovation, and we focus our analysis on the relative importance of provisioning innovation. We explore how each of the eight different types of media innovation were prioritised in the newspaper industry after the Covid-19 pandemic in Norway, drawing extensively from recent empirical data.

In order to explore patterns of innovation longitudinally, cohorts of Norwegian newspaper executives have been studied by Krumsvik and colleagues, using online biennial surveys conducted independently since 2005. New insights have emerged from each successive survey. The first empirical analysis of aspects related to media innovation analysed the relationship between size and ownership of newspapers and their approaches to platform innovation. Ownership was found to be the most important factor for the development of innovation capability, as demonstrated by the fact that, in 2011, only newspapers owned by corporate owners (i.e., media groups) had plans for iPad apps. Newspapers owned by media groups were also more positive towards new media developments. These differences were explained by reference to two types of resources provided by media groups: analytical capabilities and capabilities to enhance joint product development (Krumsvik et al., 2013).

The survey data from 2013 revealed that concentrated newspaper ownership facilitated innovation. However, the focus of innovation in newspapers owned by media groups tended to be on (do-better) process and platform innovation rather than (do-different) genre innovation to provide unique features of digital journalism on each publication platform (Krumsvik, 2015).

An increasing influence of owners on platform innovations was documented in the 2011 survey (Krumsvik & Westlund, 2014). Inside the newspaper organisations, based on the 2011 and 2013 survey data (Westlund & Krumsvik, 2014), and later adding the 2015 and 2017 data (Westlund et al., 2020), technologists' interest in innovation was identified as a key predictor for change in intra-organisational collaboration. This demonstrates the important role of the IT department, in relation to the newsroom and the business department, for innovation relating to the production and distribution of news.

Concepts of 8 × 2 types of media innovations

Previous research into iterations of the Francis Ps model demonstrates that it has widespread utility in helping us understand where innovation can add value in commercial and not-for-profit organisations (Bakke & Barland, 2022; Ruffoni & Reichert, 2022; Sartori et al., 2022). Investigations have shown that there are multiple interconnections between the Ps; for example, collaborative

initiatives, such as Linux or Wikipedia, are product innovations developed through collaborative processes (process innovation) that involve changes in mindset as to how services can be developed (paradigm innovation).

Product and service innovation (P1) targets the outputs of an organisation or a sub-unit that are, or could be, provided for external or internal customers, or other stakeholders. Products are tangible goods or forms of service. For sub-units, internal customers can be more important than external customers. Targeting innovation capability on developing new or improved products or services can involve multiple actors engaged in complex and inter-linked processes with a single end in view, which is creating superior value at an acceptable cost for the customer. In relation to news media enterprises, product and service innovation may include content streaming services and innovation of communication patterns, for example, encouraging audience interaction with television programmes through the use of second screens (De Meulenaere et al., 2015).

Process innovation (P2) targets how work is done. Innovation in process frequently aims to make processes faster, more responsive, cheaper, more reliable, accurately measurable, or better integrated. Processes are extensive, interdependent, and, to some extent, will be routinised and integrate forms of technology with human activity. Process innovation is driven by systematic analyses and comparative benchmarking and needs to extend outside of the boundaries of an organisation into its ecosystem. Multiple small improvements can accumulate into large gains. In relation to news media enterprises, process innovation includes how media businesses organise their activities (Baumann, 2013). It also includes processes outside established institutions, for example, where users are involved in collaborative innovation (von Hippel, 2005; Lüders, 2016; Tapscott & Williams, 2006).

Positional innovation (P3) targets how meanings and interfaces between organisations, and its parts, are managed: specifically, how an enterprise communicates with its customers (internal and external), potential customers, entities in its ecosystem, and other stakeholders or influential bodies. It includes two-way communication, both transmitting and receiving. In relation to news media enterprises, positional innovation will include product positioning that involves “advertising, marketing, media, packaging and the manipulation of various signals” (Francis & Bessant, 2005: 175). Typical examples would be a magazine repositioning itself for a new target audience. For example, between 2012 and 2015, the lifestyle magazine *Elle* repositioned itself as *Elle 360*, a multi-platform company (Champion, 2015). Another example would be how the BBC in the 1990s repositioned itself as a global media corporation (Storsul & Krumsvik, 2013).

Paradigm innovation (P4) targets principles of organising and systems of thought. A strategic paradigm is often described as a business model, but paradigm also includes the constructs that people within an organisation use to make sense of the world. Organisational paradigms are a social fact that evolves as people within an organisation come to share values, possess

a common history, and adopt embedded norms (“the way that we do things here”). Paradigm innovation can be described as “changing the rules of the game” and is relevant at all levels of an organisation. In relation to media enterprises, paradigm innovation can be seen when the music industry shifted from CD sales to streaming services. In the newspaper industry, the focus is no longer primarily on print, but rather on online services, meaning that many media companies are increasingly committed in a search for sustainable business models for online services (Barland, 2015). The process of datafication, where user interactions with media content and services are aggregated and analysed for commercial purposes, is a paradigm innovation. Datafication follows from other broad processes of change, such as digitalisation and mediatisation (Schäfer & Van Es, 2017).

Provisioning innovation (P5) targets where and how resources are obtained, including financial, knowledge, technological, locational, contractual, reputational, or legal assets. This is important, as many forms of innovation cannot progress to execution unless adequate resources are made available. Determining what provisions are needed to transform an intention into an innovation reality can be daunting, especially if do-different innovation is undertaken. Adequate provisioning requires a facilitating ecosystem. This can include users, supporters, actual and potential customers, kindred organisations, funding sources, online special interest groups, networking sites, advisors, and resource providers. In relation to news media enterprises, provisioning innovation can be seen in cases where online newspapers have improved their existing form of income (do-better) by developing new advertising formats and they have developed new forms of income (do-different) by developing and exploiting new concepts of content marketing (Barland, 2016).

Platform innovation (P6) targets how outputs are integrated to be useful or accessible. Many platforms are technologically enabled, but the construct can be used more widely as platforms facilitate many forms of intermediation. In the digital era, the cost of creating platforms can be low and enable an ease of collaboration that was previously unachievable, as they are enabled by the extraordinary power of Internet searches and the increasing universality of access to digital resources. In relation to news media enterprises, examples of platform innovation include the creation and ongoing development of new media platforms, such as the iPad or the smartphone, or of new media services, such as web-TV or media apps for tablets (Krumsvik et al., 2013).

Genre innovation is particularly relevant to media and communication industries, since media products and services can be categorised and developed according to genres. A genre innovation can manifest in various ways: for example, combining elements from different genres to form a unique hybrid (e.g., interactive graphics blending text, video, and graphics into one seamless narrative); introducing new stylistic or thematic elements not traditionally been part of a genre (e.g., data journalism using large datasets to derive

stories and visualisations); or, instead of adding something new, reinterpreting traditional elements (e.g., solutions journalism – instead of just highlighting problems, this approach are examining where and how things are working). Research relating to genre innovation has made interesting contributions with regard to conceptualising degrees of novelty. Miller (2016) has explored how genre innovation is often explained through the frameworks of evolution or emergence. She compares these frameworks to the concepts of incremental and radical change and finds that the evolution of a new genre is more analogous to incremental change, while the emergence of genre involves more radical change. Using the example of blogs, she argued that this genre built on a series of evolutionary changes – such as adapting the personal diary to an online format. However, the emergence of blogs as a genre, synthesising a range of incremental changes and the rapid diffusion of this genre among users, was a more disruptive process. Kim (2023) found that the Covid-19 pandemic significantly altered what genre of television shows individuals consumed, with the degree of change increasing further into the pandemic. Drama, horror, and adventure shows became consistently less prominent in individuals’ viewing history. Changes in user behaviour is known to be a trigger for media innovations (Krumsvik et al., 2019).

Social innovation involves the use of media and communication services for social purposes (Ní Bhroin, 2015). Here, social change is introduced through blending new or existing combinations of media products or services, for example, to produce media that caters to the needs of a linguistic minority. This form of innovation targets social needs and aims to improve people’s lives (Mulgan et al., 2007). A study by Feng and colleagues (2023) demonstrated how short videos on social media (e.g., TikTok) fulfilled social roles by helping citizens accomplish social cohesion and social sustainability during the pandemic. The context was Wuhan, China, a city that implemented a 76-day lockdown in the early stages of the Covid-19 pandemic. A primary motivation behind social innovation is to tackle societal challenges, whether they’re related to education, health, social inclusion, or environmental sustainability, among others. Beyond addressing immediate issues, many social innovations aim for systemic change.

Research questions

In the previous section, the 8×2 targets for media innovation are described, and each deserves an in-depth study. In this chapter, our key questions are whether the prioritisation of innovation targets changes when an external crisis event occurs, and, if the answer to the first question is “yes”, then what that pattern of change is. Hence, our first specific research question: How do media executives prioritise different kinds of media innovations after a crisis situation?

Further, previous research outlined above has emphasised the role of size and ownership as variables affecting the structural, financial, and intellectual capacity for media innovation, and differences in priority, and perceived

coordination and collaboration, based on executive role. Hence, differences in demographic groups are analysed with the following research question: Are there differences in prioritisation between demographic groups categorising 1) the organisations (e.g., size, ownership) or 2) their executives (e.g., executive role, years in current role, level of education)?

Method

Our empirical analysis is based on a survey among senior executives (the people responsible for developing strategy for their respective newspapers) of Norwegian newspapers. A publisher in the Norwegian context is an executive with a dual responsibility for both the editorial and commercial departments of a newspaper; hence, it is a position combining the roles of managing director and editor-in-chief. Since our data source is the executives' perceptions, any conclusions we may draw about the organisations they represent will be based on their perceptions of the state of affairs.

Data collection was performed in the spring of 2022, after the Norwegian society opened in the aftermath of the Covid-19 pandemic, and before the effects of the invasion of Ukraine and associated political and economic insecurity affected the Norwegian economy.

Invitations to participate in the survey were sent by e-mail to addresses provided by the Norwegian Media Businesses' Association (MBL) and the National Association of Local Newspapers (LLA), using the web-based research service QuestBack. Respondents were not sampled, as all member newspapers of these two associations were included and non-response was interpreted as negative self-selection. The response rate was 37 per cent.

Operationalising the types of innovation outlined previously, the questionnaire entailed statements in Norwegian language (translated to English in Table 7.1), where respondents could choose alternatives for level of importance on a 6-point Likert scale: 1 (unimportant)–6 (very important). The 6-point scale was selected due to a cultural phenomenon in Norwegian news media, where this scale is most frequently used by newsrooms to score cultural and political performances. Examples are book, movie, and theatre reviews, or performance in political debates on television. Hence, the respondents were familiar with this kind of 6-point scale. Demographic data include newspaper size, ownership, executive role, and years in current position. The Norwegian Media Businesses' Association provided the industry standard for circulation categories (paper and online combined). Finally, answers were analysed using the SPSS statistical package, applying ANOVA and post hoc Bonferroni test, t-test, and cluster analysis.

TABLE 7.1 Operationalisation of innovation types in questionnaire

Type of innovation	Degree of novelty	Question asked in Norwegian	English translation
Product	do-better	Forbedre eksisterende produkter	Improve existing products
	do-different	Utvikle nye produkter	Develop new products
Process	do-better	Forbedre eksisterende prosesser	Improve existing processes
	do-different	Utvikle nye arbeidsprosesser	Develop new processes
Position	do-better	Forbedre eksisterende posisjon i markedet	Improve existing position in the market
	do-different	Ta nye posisjoner i markedet	Take new positions in the market
Paradigm	do-better	Tydeliggjøre virksomhetens formål	Clarify the purpose of the business
	do-different	Endring av virksomhetens formål	Change of business purpose
Provisioning	do-better	Forbedre eksisterende inntektskilder	Improve existing sources of resources
	do-different	Utvikle nye inntektskilder	Develop new sources of resources
Platform	do-better	Effektivisere drift og distribusjonsplattformer	Streamline operations and distribution platforms
	do-different	Utvikle nye drifts- og distribusjonsplattformer	Develop new operating and distribution platforms
Genre	do-better	Forbedre eksisterende journalistiske sjangere (reportasje, kommentar, etc.)	Improve existing journalistic genres (reportage, commentary, etc.)
	do-different	Utvikle nye journalistiske sjangere	Develop new journalistic genres
Social	do-better	Forbedre avisens samfunnsrolle	Improve the newspaper's social role
	do-different	Utvikle nye tilnærminger til å skape et bedre samfunn	Develop new approaches to creating a better society

Comments: Question: "In the coming year, what kind of changes will be important for your organisation to prioritise? (1 = unimportant, 6 = very important)".

Findings

This section presents findings of the executives' prioritisation of media innovation, in response to our first research question. Further, we determine whether there are differences between demographic groups categorising organisations or their executives, in response to our second two-part research question.

There was a low degree of variation within the demographic groups; however, there were notable findings related to incremental (do-better) versus radical (do-different) innovations. Table 7.2 illustrates how incremental change had a strong priority in legacy media organisations. Of the seven innovation categories with highest (mean) score, six were do-better, and of the nine categories with lowest score, seven were do-different.

TABLE 7.2 Prioritisation of media innovations

Type of innovation	Degree of novelty	N	Min.	Max.	M	SD
Position	do-better	104	3	6	5.22	.812
Product	do-better	104	1	6	5.21	.821
Provisioning	do-better	103	3	6	4.95	.922
Genre	do-better	102	2	6	4.95	.849
Position	do-different	104	1	6	4.86	1.074
Social	do-better	103	2	6	4.66	.966
Process	do-better	104	1	6	4.63	1.025
Product	do-different	104	1	6	4.58	1.212
Provisioning	do-different	103	1	6	4.57	1.355
Process	do-different	104	1	6	4.37	1.062
Platform	do-better	103	1	6	4.14	1.351
Social	do-different	101	1	6	4.11	1.280
Paradigm	do-better	103	1	6	4.07	1.270
Genre	do-different	102	1	6	4.02	1.251
Platform	do-different	103	1	6	3.83	1.401
Paradigm	do-different	103	1	6	2.45	1.412

Comments: Question: "In the coming year, what kind of changes will be important for your organisation to prioritise? (1 = unimportant, 6 = very important)".

In an analysis of variance (ANOVA) of the top priority (see Table 7.2) – “position: do-better” type of innovation – and the size of the newspapers, measured by official circulation numbers (total, print, and digital), scores yielded significant variation among the three circulation groups [$F(2, 100) = 4.46$] ($p = .01$). A post hoc Bonferroni test showed a significant difference between the medium-sized newspapers (circ. 4,000–10,000; $M = 5.00$, $SD = .830$) and the largest (circ. > 10,000; $M = 5.57$, $SD = .626$) (at $p < .05$); the group of smallest newspapers was not significantly different from the other two groups, lying somewhere in the middle (circ. < 4,000; $M = 5.12$, $SD = .851$).

On the same innovation category (position: do-better), we also observed a relation, though not statistically significant (ANOVA analysis performed), with time in current executive position (see Table 7.3). However, a post hoc Bonferroni test showed a significant difference between executives with less than two years in the role and their colleagues with 5–10 years in the role, and this was confirmed by doing a t -test on these two groups [$t(45) = -2.895$] ($p = .01$).

TABLE 7.3 “Position: do-better” versus years in current executive position.

Years in position	N	M	SD	Min.	Max.
< 2	21	4.81*	.928	3	6
2–5	25	5.32	.802	4	6
5–10	26	5.50*	.707	4	6
10–20	19	5.21	.787	4	6
> 20	13	5.15	.689	4	6
Total	104	5.22	.812	3	6

* The mean difference is significant at the .05 level. Post hoc Bonferroni test.

Size and “product: do-different” also indicated significant variation [$F(2, 100) = 3.55$] ($p = .03$). The post hoc Bonferroni test showed a significant difference between the smallest newspapers (circ. < 4,000; $M = 4.21$, $SD = 1.337$) and the largest (circ. > 10,000; $M = 4.90$, $SD = 1.155$) (at $p < .05$); the group of medium-sized newspapers (circ. 4,000–10,000; $M = 4.77$, $SD = .971$) was not significantly different from the other two groups, lying in the middle.

The willingness to prioritise radical “genre innovation: do-different” varied systematically with ownership (media group or independent) of newspapers; executives in corporate media ($M = 4.35$, $SD = 1.128$) were significantly more willing to prioritise this [$t(100) = 2.614$] ($p = .01$) than their colleagues working for independent newspapers ($M = 3.72$, $SD = 1.292$).

On “provisioning: do-better”, by managerial position, we also observe a significant difference between groups [$F(2, 100) = 3.319$] ($p = .04$). There is a

significant difference between managing directors ($M = 5.16$, $SD = .767$) and publishers ($M = 4.56$, $SD = 1.083$), while the editors-in-chief are somewhere in the middle ($M = 5.02$, $SD = .882$).

Cluster analysis

To develop a richer description of the data, cluster analysis was performed. A hierarchical cluster analysis using Ward's method identified three broad clusters. Further, a k-means cluster analysis produced the three clusters ($N = 42$, 42 , and 16 ; see Table 7.4), and they were cross tabulated with demographic variables to detect over- and under-representation. A description of the clusters follows below.

TABLE 7.4 Cluster analysis (mean, top-5)

	Priority	Type of innovation	Degree of novelty	M
CLUSTER 1 Keep calm and carry on	1	Position	do-better	5.06
	2	Product	do-better	4.88
	3	Genre	do-better	4.56
	4	Provisioning	do-better	4.56
	5	Position	do-different	4.31
CLUSTER 2 Polish the product	1	Product	do-better	5.33
	2	Position	do-better	4.98
	3	Genre	do-better	4.79
	4	Provisioning	do-better	4.74
	5	Position	do-different	4.57
CLUSTER 3 Go get new revenue	1	Position	do-better	5.57
	2	Provisioning	do-different	5.40
	3	Position	do-different	5.33
	4	Product	do-better	5.31
	5	Provisioning	do-better	5.31

Comments: K-means cluster analysis. For total priority, see Table 7.2.

CLUSTER 1: Keep calm and carry on

Experienced, modest, and conservative are the characteristics of executives in cluster 1. This is the “quiet group”, in the sense of having the lowest average

scores. Top priorities do not deviate from the total average, besides the scores being more modest. Respondents in this group rather strongly agree on setting the very lowest score on the idea of radically changing the paradigm ($M = 1.44$, $SD = .629$) with platform innovation (both do-different and do-better), also at the bottom of the priority list. Leaders with one–four years of higher education and those working in smaller newspapers are over-represented in this group. This group is dominated by experienced leaders, with more than five years in their current position (69% in this group vs. 44% in total).

CLUSTER 2: Polish the product

The executives in cluster 2 have less experience as top executives and a strong focus on product improvement. This cluster gathers executives with a special emphasis on polishing the product or service. This group is dominated by leaders with less than two years in the current position (29% vs. 19% in total). “Product: do-better” is the only category with absolute scores not significantly different between the groups. However, in relative terms, it is on the very top of this group’s priorities, with “genre: do-better” also high on the list.

CLUSTER 3: Go get new revenue

The money-makers are gathered in cluster 3. This is the “loud group”, in the sense of having the highest scores. Unlike the others, they put developing new sources of revenue high on the agenda ($M = 5.40$, $SD = .936$). Two of the top-three prioritised innovations are of the do-different kind, and position is a top priority, both do-better and do-different. At the same time, radical change in paradigm, genre, process, social, and platform have lowest priority, with paradigm (both do-different and do-better) at the very bottom. They are willing to change, however, neither thinking outside the newspaper-box nor challenging the norms of journalism. Executives without higher education (24% vs. 16% in total), working in larger newspapers, are over-represented in this group.

Discussion

From the analysis of the survey data, we conclude that external events, such as a pandemic, cause waves of changes in the strategic opportunity landscape that are experienced by all players in a defined industry, and they define the foundational layer of possibilities on which individual enterprises can add novel initiatives or configure the opportunity spaces differently. This shapes how innovation initiatives are targeted and their priority within the wider strategies of enterprises. Furthermore, the pace of the onset of a “new normal” and the lack of clarity about the consequences of a crisis creates a logic that favours do-better rather than do-different innovation.

Coming out of the crisis, news media executives prioritise incremental changes in product, position, and provisioning. Even the most progressive group of leaders, described in cluster 3, did not challenge the logics of the newspaper market. While previous research on Norwegian newspaper executives concluded that ownership was more important than size (Krumsvik et al., 2013), we observe some indications of size having a stronger influence in the current study.

In media industries, as in other settings, most innovations are incremental or function to sustain existing operations (do-better). They involve small changes of products or processes that do not challenge the economy or the logic of the media market. These innovations are initiated and managed in order to secure the survival of legacy media businesses (Christensen, 1997; Krumsvik et al., 2019).

Some innovations (do-different) have far-reaching consequences. The Internet, and the ways in which it has been used, are good examples of disruptive or potentially disruptive innovations (Christensen et al., 2015). Music streaming has changed music markets fundamentally. Google and Facebook now challenge media advertising income with particular consequences for the news industry. Television is increasingly moving in the direction of niche products, non-linear scheduling, and streaming services. Do-different innovation is an important part of the contemporary context, where the existing media industry knows that the rules of the game are changing and, in order to survive, they must innovate radically.

The analysis in the previous section found that executives in larger newspapers had a higher emphasis on improving the market position (do-better) and were more willing to prioritise radical change in products and services (do-different). This difference might be driven by media institutional factors such as company strategy, leadership and vision, capacity and resources, and culture and creativity (Krumsvik et al., 2019). Further data collection will be needed to analyse the specific capabilities at play. However, previous research indicates that size matters.

Large firms have better facilities, more professional and skilled workers, and the economic strength to invest in innovation and to develop new services. They can also to a larger degree afford the risk of allocating resources to new areas. Being big implies having the power to influence market developments (Damanpour, 1992), and it is a competitive advantage in the market (Porter, 2008). In line with these findings, large newspapers are more willing to prioritise radical change in product and service innovations.

However, the relative high prioritisation of radical position innovation (do-different), also among the most conservative group (cluster 1) indicates a certain willingness in general to experiment and take risks in order to improve market position and provisioning. The most progressive leaders (cluster 3) also had radical change in “provisioning: do-different” and “product: do-different” high on the agenda (see Table 7.4). Hence, while experimentation is not on top of the agenda, the willingness to take certain risks is present.

Conclusion

With the fine-grained 8 × 2 typology as an analytical framework, we were able to identify the priorities of innovations in the aftermath of an external crisis. After the Covid-19 crisis, newspaper executives did not want to make any radical changes; rather, they prioritised incremental change. Improving market positions as well as the products and services and already existing revenue streams were top managerial priorities. The immediate post-crisis period was not perceived as a time for redefining the very concept of a newspaper nor the genres of journalism. While radical change was not on top of the agenda, indications of willingness to experiment were, however, identified.

While this chapter articulates the strategic priority of editors-in-chief, managing directors, and publishers at a specific point in time, further research should investigate strategy as a practice from other perspectives as well, using a wider variety of methodological approaches. That will add to a deeper understanding of priorities and capabilities for innovation for distinct groups of social actors in legacy news media.

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