

EXAMINING MEDIA CONVERGENCE: DOES IT CONVERGE GOOD  
JOURNALISM, ECONOMIC SYNERGIES, AND COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGES?

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In Partial Fulfillment  
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Doctor of Philosophy

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by

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The undersigned, appointed by the dean of the Graduate School, have examined the  
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EXAMINING MEDIA CONVERGENCE: DOES IT CONVERGE GOOD  
JOURNALISM, ECONOMIC SYNERGIES, AND COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGES?

presented by Yuyan Ernest Zhang,

a candidate for the degree of doctor of philosophy,

and hereby certify that, in their opinion, it is worthy of acceptance.

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For Mom, who did not allow her death to interrupt my first trip to the Missouri School of Journalism as a visiting scholar in residence in 1998. It was during this period that I made the determination to seek my doctorate from this world-famous school.

Dear Mom, May I honor you with this? In 2008, I fulfilled our long-cherished dream 10 years after your death.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....	ii
LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS .....	viii
ABSTRACT .....	ix
Chapter	
1. INTRODUCTION .....	1
The Inevitability of Media Convergence	
Emergence of Media Convergence	
New Trends in Media Convergence	
Significance of Study	
Outline of the Dissertation	
2. LITERATURE REVIEW AND CONCEPT EXPLICATION .....	16
Media Convergence	
Definition of Media Convergence	
3. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND ON CONVERGENCE'S LINKAGE TO GOOD JOURNALISM, ECONOMIC SYNAGIES, AND COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGES .....	25
The Relationship between Media Convergence and Good Journalism	
Economic Synergies or Economies of Scale and Economies of Scope	
Competitive Advantages	
A Viable Trajectory and Research Questions	
4. RATIONALE FOR RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS .....	44
Rationale for Choosing Qualitative Methods for This Study	

Selection of Samples  
Tribune Company.  
Media General Inc.  
Sarasota Herald-Tribune Media Group.  
World Company.

Design of Interviews and Selection of Respondents  
The First Phase of Interviews  
The Second Phase of Interviews  
The Third Phase of Interviews  
The Fourth Phase of Interviews

Data Analysis

5. FINDINGS .....67

Inevitability of Media Convergence

Enriched Media Content, Improved Media Credibility or Shovelware  
Enriched Media Content  
Improved Media Credibility  
Shovelware

Good Journalism, Profits, Lower Cost, and Differentiation  
Good Journalism  
Profit  
Lower Cost  
Differentiation

Heavier Workload and Popularity among Audiences

Competitive Advantages

Summary of Findings  
Inevitability of Media Convergence  
Enriched Media Content, Improved Media Credibility or Shovelware  
Good Journalism  
Profits  
Lower Cost  
Differentiation  
Competitive Advantages

6. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS .....104

Research Question 1: Why is media convergence inevitable?  
Discussion  
Conclusion

Research Question 2: In what ways may convergence enrich media content,  
improve media credibility, and create good journalism?  
Discussion  
Conclusion

Research Question 3: In what ways may convergence allow news  
organizations to share resources so as to decrease costs?  
Discussion  
Conclusion

Research Question 4: In what ways may convergence lead to good business  
and generate profits?

Research Question 5: How may convergence create differentiation?  
Discussion  
Conclusion

Research Question 6: What competitive advantages may convergence create?  
Discussion  
Conclusion

Conclusion for Whether Convergence Can Converge Good Journalism,  
Economy Synergies, and Competitive Advantages

7. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH.....126

Limitation 1: Nonrandom Samples

Limitation 2: Small Pool of Interviewees

Further Research Idea 1

Further Research Idea 2

Further Research Idea 3

ENDNOTE

1. Mercury in Fish.....129

APPENDIX

A. A TRAJECTORY FROM MEDIA CONVERGENCE TO COMPETITIVE  
ADVANTAGES.....131

B. A LIST OF RESPORPONDENTS AND THEIR SHORT  
INTRODUCTION.....132

C. QUESTIONS USED IN THE FIRST PHASE OF INTERVIEWING, A LIST OF  
OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS E-MAILED TO 13 INTERVIEWEES IN  
MARCH 2003 .....134

D. QUESTIONS USED IN THE SECOND PHASE OF INTERVIEWING, A  
LIST OF OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS TO ASK RESPORPONDENTS IN  
SARASOTA, TAMPA, AND CHICAGO IN JUNE 2004.....135

E. QUESTIONS USED IN THE THIRD PHASE OF INTERVIEWING, A LIST  
OF OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS TO ASK RESPORPONDENTS MAILY IN  
CHICAGO AND LAWRENCE, KS IN FEBRUARY/MARCH 2007 .....136

F. QUESTIONS USED IN THE FOURTH PHASE OF INTERVIEWING, A  
LIST OF OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS TO ASK RESPORPONDENTS IN DC,  
CHICAGO, NEW YORK CITY, SARASOTA, TAMPA, AND LAWRENCE,  
KS MARCH/APRIL 2008 .....137

G. INTERVIEW TRAIL – PROCESS OF COLLECTING DATA.....138

BIBLIOGRAPHY.....139

VITA.....147

## LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Figure	Page
1. Kolodzy's Figure Showing Jenkins' Framework for Defining Convergence .....	18
2. Defining Media Convergence, Which May Lead to Competitive Advantages .....	23

Table	Page
1. Response Rate to Question Categories .....	130

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation explores the “simple theory” (Murphy, 2002): Those most experienced in it expect that media convergence will create good journalism, generate the effects of scale and scope economies, and achieve competitive advantages for converged news organizations. Based on theories of scale and scope economies, quality journalism’s generation of good business, and organizations’ competitive advantages, this study achieved some dichotomous findings by using the qualitative technique of semi-structured interviews to interview 37 people who have experience in media convergence,

On the one hand, this qualitative study found media convergence’s inevitability is rapidly emerging, and its influence is being demonstrated with a certain single medium’s content magnified and diversified by convergent media platforms and such user-generated content’s avenues as OhmyNews and YouTube. With the linkage between good journalism and good business further advanced, this study bridged the links between convergence and good journalism.

On the other, this study revealed that private media companies, especially of small or medium sizes, by enjoying some more freedom from the pressures from Wall Street, can demonstrate better balance in continuing with their original convergence strategies to achieve competitive advantages in an environment of weak media economy.

# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### *The Inevitability of Media Convergence*

Communication networks were historically designed to carry different types of information created separately by different organizations. News media that had their own professional characteristics and separate franchises disseminated news and information in the separate realms of printing or broadcasting. It was not until the early 1980s that modern media convergence emerged with a wave of corporate consolidation and cross ownership (Templar, 2002). Taking the primary duties of reporters and producers at local television news affiliates for example, Smith, Tanner, and Duhé (2007) say that, in today's world of media convergence, TV news staffers are doing much more than "just TV," and that they are producing news content for multiple media outlets. Also, in Tampa, Florida, the print *Tampa Tribune* reporters often stand in front of a television camera, waiting to tape their segments for Channel 8, the NBC affiliate (Singer, 2004). Commenting on these cross-media journalistic practice, a lot of media professionals and researchers think media convergence is inevitable in the highly competitive news business (Dupagne & Garrison, 2006).

The 2005 Annual Report on American Journalism (The Project for Excellence in Journalism, 2005) discusses the inevitability from another perspective. It concluded that Americans are becoming news consumers of multi-sources or Americans are now news grazers sampling, through the course of the day, a varied media buffet. Based on statistics, among American news consumers only 8% get their news from television alone and 5%

from print sources alone. Among these “buffet eaters” 24% gravitate to some combination of TV and print as their regular source of news. This is the largest group. The remainder may use any combination of network, cable, and other media. According to this finding, one of the possible transitions for the American newspaper industry found by the 2005 Annual Report is: to increasingly run newspaper companies as providers of content across multiple platforms rather than newspapers first, foremost, and forever.

Compared to the 2005 one, the 2006 Annual Report on American Journalism (The Project for Excellence in Journalism, 2006) directly emphasizes the importance of media convergence while commenting on the new trends in journalism in 2006. It believes that convergence is more inevitable and less threatening the more one looks at audience data. This is because, as the 2006 Annual Report also mentions, that the traditional model of journalism is giving way to other models that are faster, looser, and cheaper, and that the 2005 Annual Report points out audiences have become “buffet eaters,” who like enjoying the news buffet generated by converging different media platforms.

While describing seven new major trends of the news media, the 2007 Annual Report on American Journalism (The Project for Excellence in Journalism, 2007) expresses many questions and much uncertainty. For example, it questions whether the investment community sees the news business as a declining industry or an emerging one in transition and whether the dominant ownership model of the last generation, the public corporation, is suited to the transition that newsrooms must make (The 2007 Annual Report). The report, however, points out some trends in the development of Web sites, such as: first, root media no longer strictly define a Web site’s character; and second, blogging is on the brink of a new phase that will probably include scandal, profitability

for some, and a splintering into elites and non-elites (The 2007 Annual Report).

A Web site may be regarded as a sphere where the news and other content, after repurposing, repackaging, and reformatting, from a single and traditional medium like a newspaper or a TV station can be disseminated by convergent (more than one medium) media platforms with the aid of multimedia, “the combination of text, still and moving images, audio, and computer animation” (Boczkowski, p. 197). That is why the 2007 Annual Report started using “multimedia” instead of “convergence.” It may also be because many years have passed since either “a modern-day version of convergence arrived at Tribune [the *Chicago Tribune*] in the 1993” (Lawson-Borders, 2006, p. 74) or the News Center in Tampa, a “temple to convergence” (Lawson-Borders, 2006, p. 97) started to house the parties from a wedding of sorts in 2000 when the separate media entities entered the new building. When commenting on American newspaper Web sites’ success in attracting visitors, the 2007 Annual Report reveals, “The redesign [for the Web site of *USA Today*]... now offers more video and other multimedia components. It also facilitates more of an online community by allowing users to contribute their voice to the site and tailor it to their needs” (The 2007 Annual Report). The switch to using “multimedia” may enable researchers to better describe the normal process of most newspapers’ convergence journalism strategies and the most common outlet for their convergent products – magnified and reformatted news or information from the original print content on newspapers.

From the metaphor of comparing the American multi-source news consumers to buffet eaters to pointing out the inevitability of media convergence and then to adopting the word “multimedia” to replace “convergence,” the 2005, 2006, and 2007 Annual

Reports on American Journalism all imply the inevitability of media convergence in the news industry. According to the tracking information released by the American Media Center at the American Press Institute (2008), by January 2008, there are 107 convergence relationships are being practiced, explored, experimented, and discussed in about 35 states of America (81 relationships), and in many cities, shires and provinces of the United Kingdom (14 relationships) and Canada (12 relationships).

Then, what is media convergence? According to the Missouri Group of Brooks, Kennedy, Moen, and Ranly (2004), convergence from a journalism perspective is “the practice of sharing and cross-promoting content from a variety of media, some interactive, through newsroom collaboration and partnerships” (p.15). Also from this perspective but put in other words by Ketterer (2004) et al., “Ideally, convergence uses the shared resources of newspaper and broadcast partners to provide more thorough coverage of major news events” (p.53). Expanding from journalism perspective to marketing, Wirtz (1999) emphasizes that convergence is the dynamic approach or partial integration of different communication and information-based market applications. Directly connecting convergence to business, Gentry further defines media convergence as “the ability to deliver messages, sell advertising, etc., across multiple platforms including newspapers, television, radio, the Web, PDAs, and whatever else emerges” (personal communication, March 25, 2004). In a more direct way, Killebrew (2005) points out, the cross-promotional value of sharing and presenting information across platforms could bring about greater advertising revenues. Based on these five classic definitions of media convergence, an obvious hint emerges: Media convergence is inevitable because it may create a trajectory, which will lead media industry to creating good journalism, economic

synergies, and competitive advantage. In other words, it may also converge good journalism, economic synergies, and competitive advantage.

### *Emergence of Media Convergence*

Convergence came long ago to nonmedia industries. U.S. auto manufacturers for example regularly sell under their own names cars manufactured by Japanese competitors, and that in some instances, the U.S. firms own substantial chunks of the Japanese companies (Morton (2000). Therefore, “it should be no surprise that the same thing has invaded the media” (Morton, 2000, p. 88). However, each medium historically had its own distinctive functions and markets; thus each disseminated different kinds of news, information, entertainment, and advertising by using different technologies. Such a kind of traditional media divergence, which separated different media into different domains by walls, was re-organized or even changed by new patterns of cross-media ownership that began in the mid-1980s and made it more desirable for companies to distribute content across those various channels rather than within a single media platform (Jenkins, 2006). It was easier for media content to flow across different media outlets owned by a consolidated media company.

On the other hand, while corporate conglomerates created the imperative for media convergence, digitization set the conditions for convergence (Jenkins, 2006). This is because digital technologies made it possible to permit the manipulation of all forms of information across all types of networks and to enable the distinctions between different types of networks to disappear (Blackman, 1998). The disappearance of distinctions was furthered by the U. S. passage of the Telecommunications Act of 1996, the European Union’s issuance in 1997 of the Green Paper on the Convergence of the

Telecommunications, Media, and Information Technology Sectors, and many other countries' promulgation of laws and rules to abolish the restrictions on media or technology convergence.

As technological and legal barriers disappeared, traditional news media seized on the new medium of the Internet. Therefore, there has emerged the coming together of all forms of mediated communications in an electronic, digital form driven by computers (Blackman, 1998; Pavlik, 1996). However, media convergence does not just mean the linear marriage or alliance between printing or broadcasting companies and the Web. It implies at least two or more separate media forms will jointly operate under the same roof. Perhaps the best-known American example of media convergence is under way in Tampa, FL, involving Media General Inc.'s *Tampa Tribune*, WFLA-Ch 8 and TBO.com. Moving into the new, \$40 million, 121,000-square-foot News Center in March 2000, the three newsrooms, rather than having their newspeople work for just one medium, are converging their operations and thus "multiplying the number of platforms through which they distribute the news simultaneously" (Colon, 2000, p.2). Based on the cooperation of the three media, each medium can do good journalism to its advantageous extent. This is because "Convergence brings together the depth of newspaper coverage, the immediacy of television station and the interactivity of the Web" (Media General, 2003, p.4).

From another perspective, there is also possibility for converged media outlets such as the Tampa model to disseminate news or information and to deliver entertainment to a bigger audience by making fuller use of scarce resources. Media economics supports this possibility. Just as Doyle (2002) asserts, because of the potential for economies of scale and scope, the greater the number of products and services that can be delivered to

consumers via the same communications, the better the economics of each service will be. Since economies of scale may lead to a firm's competitive advantage (Hoskins, McFadyen, & Finn, 2004), to win the stiff competition in media market seems to be another major reason for Media General to converge its three different properties in the same house. According to Colon (2000), Tampa Bay is the nation's 13<sup>th</sup> largest media market, including such news competitors as CBS's WTSP-TV, Fox's WTVT-TV and ABC's WFTS-TV, as well as the *St. Petersburg Times* just across the bay, but Media General sees its convergence as the opportunity to Bigfoot them all.

Did the convergent News Center in Tampa succeed in reaching its? Statistics of the three entities' ratings, circulation, and page views in August 2000 suggests it did. Strupp (2000) found that five months after the three media platforms moved into the News Center, WFLA's overall ratings were up about 3% in July compared with a year ago. The *Tampa Tribune*'s daily circulation rose from 201,002 in July 1999 to 206,694 July 2000. At TBO.com, page views (the number of requests for HTML pages as a measure of online audience size by online advertisers) were up 35% July 2000 compared with May in the same year. However, some scholars are still not sure that convergence has materialized in concrete practical terms, despite numerous policy initiatives and industry attempts (Menon, 2006).

#### *New Trends in Media Convergence*

While some scholars and researchers are debating about whether or not convergence is inevitable and advantageous, new trends in media convergence have emerged. As researchers and scholars have noticed, convergence has rapidly become as both a top-down corporate-driven process and a bottom-up consumer-driven process

(Jenkins & Deuze, 2008). Jenkins and Deuze further point out:

On the one hand, this ‘democratization’ of media use signals a broadening of opportunities for individuals and grassroots communities to tell stories and access stories others are telling, to present arguments and listen to arguments made elsewhere, to share information and learn more about the world from a multitude of other perspectives. On the other hand, the media companies seek to extend their reach by merging, co-opting, converging and synergizing their brands and intellectual properties across all of these channels (p.6).

Many examples can be cited to echo the observation made by Jenkins and Deuze and to exemplify the new trends of convergence. First, in 2005, many American newspapers, such as the *New York Times*, the *Chicago Tribune*, and the *USA Today*, established the Continuous News Desk in the newsroom to break news on their Web sites as soon as a news event happens. Not only does it break the news, but the CND also takes care of enriching the text stories by matching them with convergent media platforms such as slide photo shows, audios and videos. According to DiVito (personal communication, March 7, 2008), multimedia technology editor of the News Center in Tampa, the center is also doing its best to quench customer thirst for immediate news by developing a continuous news desk, which publishes short breaking stories online (Tampa Bay Online and TBO.com) and replaces them with longer versions as the news develops.

Second, on the side of media content’s audiences or users, media and technological convergence are bringing forth many shifts such as participatory culture, user-generated content, connected communities of interest, destruction of the media industry hegemony, and fluidity across platforms (boyd, 2008). These shifts have created a plethora of “socialized media” (Jenkins & Deuze, 2008, p. 5). They are: Social Networking, Facebook, OhmyNews, YouTube, Second Life, Wikipedia, Flickr, and MySpace, to name only a few. They can play the function of linking people to each other

by encouraging various types of activity both commercial and social; connecting young people (usually college or high school students) in the same network: helping users report and publish news stories and information on the line; encouraging audiences to broadcast themselves; facilitating people to share photos; and allowing people to create their own profiles, view others' profiles, blog, rank music, and so on.

These socialized media are becoming more and more popular so that the numbers of both the world users of user-generated content and the world user-generated content creators are increasing fast. According to McKean (personal communication, July 22, 2007), convergence program chair at the Missouri School of Journalism, who cited eMarketer.com to say in 2011 the former number will grow to 253.6 million from 128 million in 2006 and the latter 237.7 million from 117.9 in 2006. Based on some statistics in 2005, Missouri School of Journalism Associate Professor Cropp (personal communication, May 17, 2006) also pointed out that survey shows that 57% American teens are content creators. In face of the abovementioned shifts, McKean (personal communication, July 22, 2007) put forward some good questions: Can a "fake" newscast (like Jon Stewart's Daily Show and Stephen Colbert's Colbert Report) make real news? Can Social Networks make real news? Does Facebook's "News Feed" generate controversy and concern over invasion of privacy? Is user-generated news resulting in ethical and commercial considerations? In response to these questions, McKean (personal communication, July 22, 2007) offered three suggestions for "Traditional" Journalists and media companies to remain relevant: 1) Exploit new digital tools for more effective storytelling; 2) Embrace citizen journalism and "user-generated culture;" and 3) Embed journalism into reader/listener/viewer's personal media space. Jenkins and Deuez (2008)

also encourage media companies to accelerate the flow of media content across delivery channels to expand revenue opportunities, broaden markets and reinforce consumer loyalties and commitments.

Therefore, it is highly meaningful for this study to explore tentative answers to whether convergence can also converge good journalism, economic synergies and competitive advantage.

### *Significance of Study*

The significance of this study is three-fold. First, although the media industry hegemony in the creation and delivery of media content is currently being attacked by the democratization of media use, researchers, scholars and industry professionals believe news or any content generators should stick to the principles and criteria of journalism such as objectivity, fairness, and accuracy. DiVito (personal conversation, March 7, 2008) says that there has never been, nor should there ever be, a substitute for good journalism. Although in today's multitasking world consumers have myriad choices for news and short attention spans, DiVito emphasizes the golden rule "Getting it first" should never outweigh "getting it right." Although OhmyNews insists on its motto "Every Citizen is a Reporter," and about 20% of the site's content is written by the 55-person staff while the majority of articles are written by other freelance contributors who are mostly ordinary citizens (Wikipedia, 2007), its OhmyNews Journalism School regularly teaches such courses as Theory and Practice of Journalism and Tips of Better Journalism Writing (OhmyNews, 2008). Obviously, it attaches great importance to the quality of its journalism, information and other content and to the improvement of the user-content creators' ability of creating content. Therefore, this study's test of the correlation between

convergence and good journalism is meaningful.

Second, it seems that until now researchers, scholars, and media industry executives have not reached the mutual understanding that convergence will also bring good business to media companies. In May 2003, Media General's chairman J. Stewart Bryan commented the relationship between good journalism and good business to say "When quality improves, circulation and audience share increase, all of which create revenue growth" (Fitzgerald & Moses, 2003, p.11). Interviewed by Beard (2003) of *The Financial Times*, Gil Thelen, former publisher and president of *The Tampa Tribune*, believed that the editorial benefits of convergence will translate into greater financial ones over time. Gentry further defines media convergence as the ability to deliver messages and sell advertising across multiple platforms (personal communication, March 25, 2004). Jenkins and Deuez (2008) also notice that media companies are accelerating the flow of media content across delivery channels to expand revenue opportunities and broaden markets. DiVito records that in the past convergence practices have increased financial efficiency in the News Center (personal communication, March 7, 2008). Al Bonner, Advertising and Marketing director of the *Journal-World*, owes its newspaper's annual 5% or more growth of online revenues in the past five years to their convergence efforts (personal communication, April 7, 2007). However, Dupagne and Garrison's (2006) research has found out that the creation of the News Center in 2000 led Media General to anticipate economic convergence derivatives, such as cross-media advertising sales, but that these expected economic advantages have not yet reached their full potential.

Consequently, the abovementioned dichotomy adds significance to one research

purpose of this study: exploring whether media convergence can create economic synergies. This study defines economic synergy (or synergies) in two ways. First, it refers to a more popular notion as the common denominator for all kinds of cost effects ranging from traditional scale and scope economies to economies of multiplant operations and even simple effects of fixed-cost reduction (Stephan, 2005). Second, it refers to the notion that cooperation between TV and newspapers in markets would reap editorial, promotional, and advertising windfalls (Smolkin, 2006/2007). Since the windfalls in most cases may be reaped via the functions of scale and scope economies, these two notions can be regarded the two layers of meaning for one definition.

A third significance of this study is to test the possibility that whether media convergence will contribute competitive advantages to media companies. Porter (1985) writes that there are two basic types of competitive advantage: cost leadership and differentiation. Therefore, based on a conclusion of media convergence's definition: a single business operating with multiple platforms, i.e., common management, ads sold across multiple media, and a shared news operation (Aaron et al., 2002), this study expected to find out the competitive advantages media convergence will create.

Therefore, this study borrowed the guidelines from theories of scale and scope economies, the theory that quality journalism produces ratings and circulation, and in turn makes money, and the theory about organizations' competitive advantages. Depending on these theories, this study attempted to verify the potentially viable theory that reaching audiences through a variety of media is key to turning a profit, (Cristol, 2002), thus achieving competitive advantages for media in the digital age. Based on all these theoretical principles and expectations, this study explored the trajectory from media

convergence to good journalism, economic synergies, more profits and finally to media outlets' competitive advantages.

To this purpose, the present qualitative study used semi-structured interviews as its research methods. The interviews have four phases. First, 13 editors, directors, professors, and even presidents and chairmen of the media companies where convergence was going on were chosen as the respondents for the semi-structured interviews. I e-mailed them in March 2003 a semi-structured questionnaire of 10 open-ended questions. Based on a brief analysis of their feedback and on the response rate, I followed up with their replies by either making phone calls to them or e-mailing them again. As the second phase of interviews, which was conducted in June 2004, I chose 14 experienced but younger practitioners of media convergence from four convergent media companies and interviewed them face to face. To interview them, I revised the semi-structured questionnaire so that it contains eight open-ended questions dealing with the correlation between convergence and good journalism, economic synergies, and competitive advantage. Most of the respondents to the semi-structured questions via e-mail are relative veteran and middle-aged people who have been practicing convergence for many years. Most of the respondents to the semi-structured questions asked face to face in the second phase of interviews belong to the relatively young generation of media convergence practitioners.

For the third phase of interviews, I designed a new interview schedule by mainly targeting the Tribune Company and the World Company as the locations for my face-to-face semi-structured interviews with respondents and also by conducting an e-mail

interview with semi-structured questions with such individual respondents as Diane McFarlin, publisher of the Herald-Tribune Media Group, to collect some new ideas and perspectives of media convergence. By conducting this round of interviews in Chicago and from February 26 to 27, 2007 and in Lawrence, KS on March 1, a total of 21 respondents were interviewed during this phase consequently.

While I was finishing this study, I did the fourth phase of interviews, in which I used e-mails to send a list of questions to eight targeted respondents, who are young and middle-aged. Some of them were interviewed by my previous interviews. My purpose in interviewing them via e-mails was to collect their brand new perspectives of media convergence generated from the debate on the privatization of Tribune Company completed in December 2007 (Tribune Company Press Release, 2007) and Media General's offer to buy out half the employees at the Tampa News Center (Deggans, 2008). Totally, the four phases of interviews interviewed 37 respondents.

#### *Outline of the Dissertation*

The next chapter focuses on the literature review of the existing research into the origin, development, and new trends of media convergence and conceptualization in media convergence. Chapter 3 explains the existing theoretical frameworks pertinent to good journalism-good business model, economic synergies, and competitive advantages. Chapter 4 explains and rationalizes the research methods I used to collect and analyze the data. Chapter 5 contains the findings inferred from the analyses of the data. Chapter 6 is a discussion and a conclusion of the findings matching each research question. Each set of a discussion and a conclusion concludes each ring on the model that media convergence is supposed to lead to good journalism, economic synergies, and competitive advantages.

Finally, Chapter 7 discusses the limitations of this study and related ideas for the further research in the future.

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW AND CONCEPT EXPLICATION

In this chapter, I review what both of the classic prophets and modern practitioners, researchers and scholars comment on and research into media convergence. Jenkins (2006) anatomizes media convergence into three major parts: first, the flow of media content across multiple media platforms; second, the cooperation between multiple industries; and third, the migratory behavior of media audiences who will go almost anywhere in search of the kinds of entertainment experiences they want. Since the research purpose of this study is to test the relationship between media convergence and the other three factors: good journalism, economic synergies, and competitive advantages, my literature review focused on the first two components of media convergence. This is because I think the third component of convergence mentioned by Jenkins mainly deals with the “bottom-up consumer-driven process” (Jenkins) or the “participatory culture” (Jenkins) part of media convergence. It may be studied from another perspective.

#### *Media Convergence*

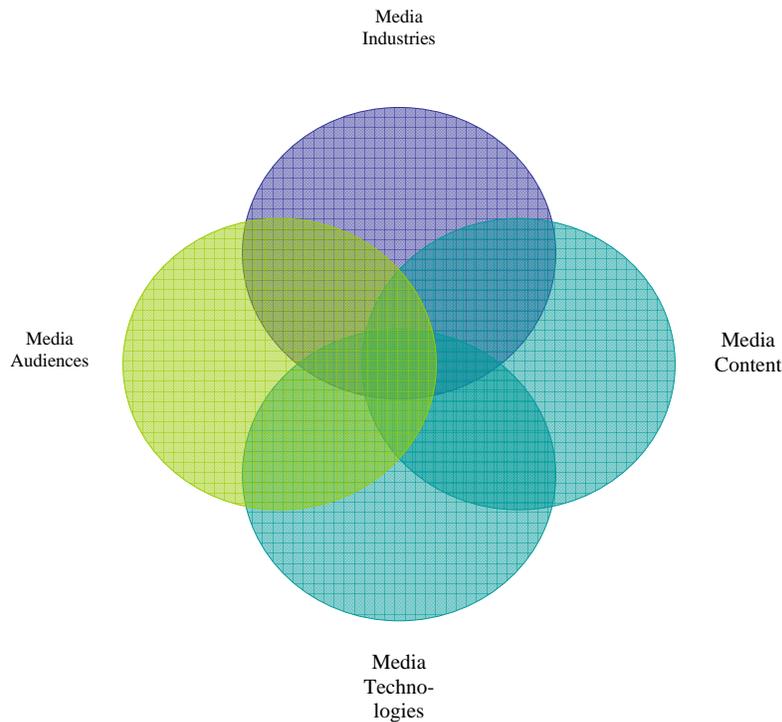
Tracking down the history of media convergence, Jenkins (2006) regards Ithiel de Sola Pool, the late Massachusetts Institute of Technology political scientist, as the prophet of media convergence. In addition, Jenkins also considers Pool’s *Technologies of Freedom* (1983) the first book to lay out the concept of convergence as a force of change within the media industries. In this book, Pool described that in the old past companies that published newspapers, magazines, and books did very little else and their involvement with other media was slight involvement. Pool noticed that at that time each

medium had its own distinctive functions and markets, and each was regulated under different regimes. However, when Pool saw new communication technologies support more diversity and offer a greater degree of participation for media, he commented “A process called the ‘convergence of modes’ is blurring the lines between media, even between point-to-point communications, such as the post, telephone and telegraph, and mass communications, such as the press, radio, and television” (p.23). Pool is one of the early prophets to point out that convergence can break the walls among each media platform and enable the same content to flow through different media platforms.

Also seeking the origin of media convergence, Colon (2000) doesn't think the idea of converging operations is new. Based on Lawson-Borders's (2006) research, Tribune Company started its early model of convergence between the *Chicago Tribune* and the company's radio station in the 1920s. Colon (2000) also finds, back in the 1950s, some newspapers owned television stations and shared news functions. Since then, however, the meaning of media convergence has been evolving in the past half a century. Modern approaches of media convergence represented by Tampa's model speak volumes for its broader connotations. For example, Doyle (2002) talks about media convergence from the perspective of technology by referring convergence to the coming together of the technologies of telecommunications, computing, and media. When she is commenting on convergence, Kolodzy (2006) thinks convergence of news industries involves consolidation of business and companies producing and distributing news. What both Doyle and Kolodzy say matches the first two dimensions when Menon (2006) notes that convergence is typically identified as a three-dimension phenomenon comprising technical, organizational, and market and regulatory components.

While Jenkins (2006) regards Pool as one of the prophets of convergence, scholars, researchers and professionals also give Jenkins credit for his research into convergence from different perspectives. By citing “Media convergence is an ongoing process, occurring at various intersections of media technologies, industries, content and audiences; it’s not an end state,” Kolodzy (2006, p. 4) thinks Jenkins (2001) provides a simple framework for defining convergence. Kolodzy also figures this framework to clearly indicate that media industries are carrying out media convergence on purpose to produce and distribute different media content to different media audiences by using different equipment and tools. Kolodzy’s figure (2006, p. 5) is redrawn and cited as below.

*Figure 1: Kolodzy’s figure showing Jenkins’ framework for defining convergence*



**FIGURE 1.1.** MIT’s Henry Jenkins defines media convergence as an ongoing process in which content, technology, audience, and industries intersect (Kolodzy, 2006, p.5)

In addition to this framework, Jenkins (2001) also elaborates five processes to describe media convergence: technological convergence, economic convergence, social or organic convergence, cultural convergence, and global convergence. Based on his elaboration, the five processes are explicated as follows.

First, technological convergence refers to the digitization of all media content. When words, images and sounds are transformed into digital information, the potential relationships between them are expanded and they are enabled to flow across different media platforms. Second, economic convergence typically refers to the horizontal integration of the entertainment industry. A company like Time Warner now controls interests in film, television, books, games, the Web, music, real estate and countless other sectors. Baldwin et al. (1996) also define this process as corporate mergers. Fidler (1997) further explains, “A merger implies that two or more entities (for example companies, technologies, or media) are coming together to form a single, integrated entity” (p.27). The third process, social or organic convergence, means consumers’ multitasking strategies for navigating the new information environment. Jenkins (2001) exemplifies this process as what occurs when a high schooler is watching baseball on a big-screen television, listening to techno on the stereo, word-processing a paper and writing e-mail to his friends. The fourth one is cultural convergence, which exploits new forms of creativity at the intersections of various media technologies, industries and consumers. Categorizing media convergence, which Media General in Tampa is conducting, into this process, Jenkins believes media convergence encourages transmedia story-telling and the development of content across multiple channels. Fifth, global convergence refers to the cultural hybridity that results from the international circulation of media content.

Scholars and researchers of mass communication have already inferred two mutual points from Jenkins' second and fourth processes: (1) the ownership of media convergence; and (2) ability to maximize the use of scarce resources – media content. Commenting on the ownership, Templar (2002) exemplifies the Phoenix area and puts the biggest players in the state as *The Arizona Republic* and KPNK-TV (NBC-12), which are combining forces at the direction of their parent company, Gannett Communications, into the group under the same ownership. Another group he cites constitutes the *East Valley Tribune*, KNVX-TV (ABC-15), the KTAR 620 AM and the *Business Journal of Phoenix*. He classifies them as a “confederation of separately owned outlets that have agreed to work together” (p. S4). Cited by Robins (2001), the former group is called “easy convergence” while the latter “difficult convergence” (p. 15) by James Gentry. According to Gentry, easy convergence factors include “committed, focused leadership; newspaper and cable TV properties with the same ownership; past work relationships; and flexible or similar corporate cultures, colocated, without labor unions” (Robins, 2001, p. 15). On the contrary, difficult convergence will contain the companies with other leadership properties; “over-the-air TV station and newspaper properties without any past work relationships; and inflexible or dissimilar cultures, located some distance apart, with labor unions” (p. 15). Actually, most of the 107 convergence relationships, which are being practiced, explored, experimented, and discussed in America, Britain and Canada belong to the group of easy convergence.

As to the second mutual point, Doyle (2002) believes globalization (in the sense of expanding economies of scale globally) and media convergence have created additional possibilities and incentives to re-package media content into as many different

formats as is technically and commercially feasible. Concretely, Doyle (2002) points out that media content may be “repurposed” to sell a product through as many distribution channels in as many geographic markets and to as many paying consumers as possible.

#### *Definition of Media Convergence*

It is not easy to define media convergence. Although Lawson-Borders (2006) notices, “An extensive and comprehensive review of convergence definitions could go on for several chapters” (p. 4), still there have been good tries. Wendland (2001) regards media convergence as one of new breakthroughs in digital imaging because it combines the Internet with such conventional media forms as print and broadcast in order to satisfy a public that demands better, fresher and more diverse news.

As an advocator of media convergence and former dean of the University of Kansas School of Journalism and Mass Communication, Gentry holds in a news release in 1999 that media convergence is important because the future media industry will require young professionals with excellent critical thinking skills who can communicate in an era of “convergent media.” Gentry seems to agree to Jenkins’ (2001) fourth process of media convergence by pointing out that one type of convergence combines print, broadcast and Internet newsrooms into one news and information operation. Under this model, Gentry further explains, journalists are increasingly reporting for print, Internet and broadcast media simultaneously, and that at the same time, persuasive communicators are taking a more strategic approach to the advertising and public relations message they develop.

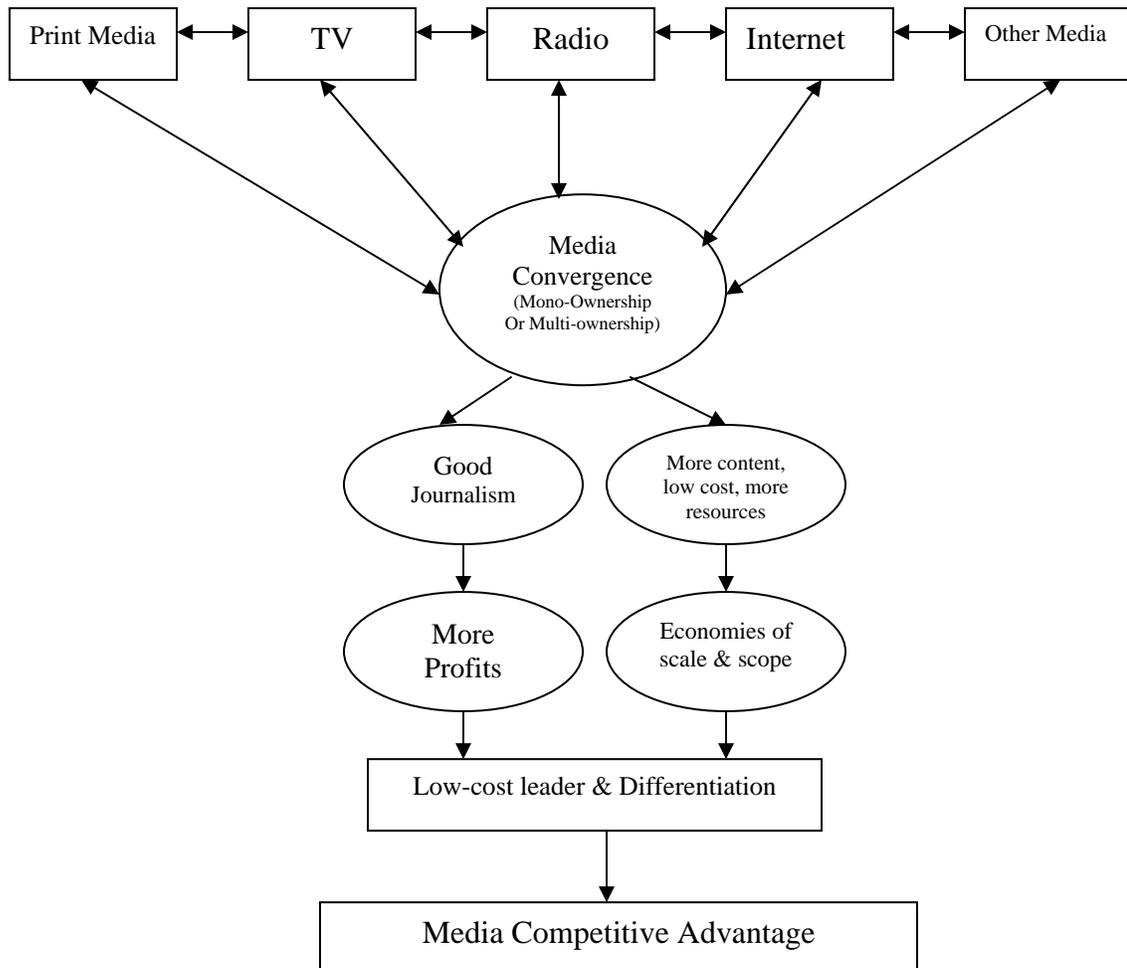
Similarly to what Jenkins (2001) did, Dupagne and Garrison (2006) define media convergence as three main types: technical, economic, and regulatory convergence

because they think there is no “single definition for convergence” (p. 239). As the first type, Dupagne and Garrison echo what Blackman (1998) and Pavlik (1996) have defined: convergence signifies the coming together of all forms of mediated communications in an electronic, digital form driven by computers. From the technical perspective, the two authors cite what Killebrew (2005) points out to say that the cross-promotional value of sharing and presenting information across platforms could bring about greater advertising revenues. However, Dupagne and Garrison conclude that institutional economic convergence, which is supposed to produce cross-media mergers, has not fared well in the marketplace by citing the failures of the AOL Time Warner and AT&T Broadband mergers. Dealing with the third type, Dupagne and Garrison distinguish full regulatory convergence from the partial one. They define the former by citing what Garcia-Murillo and Macinnes (2003) say as “the confluence of previously separate industry-based laws and regulations into a single legal and regulatory framework” (p. 58). They regard the latter as more limited in scope and as deregulatory actions that allow media organizations to engage into economic or technological convergence. In conclusion, convergence partnerships, as Ketterer, Weir, Smethers, and Back (2004) point out, expect to provide more in-depth local news coverage and a wider variety of information, while also contributing to cross-promotional opportunities designed to enhance each respective medium’s market position and even expect to partner in sales efforts to offer combined advertising packages among various media outlets.

Based on the literature review above and the connotation of convergence, this study defines media convergence as follows: Media convergence is an appropriate process of mass communication, which integrates and makes use of print, broadcast and

electronic media of the same or different ownership to magnify the number of platforms and maximize the scarce media resources. Under the functions of economic synergies (economies of scale and economies of scope), the convergent media firms expect to distribute a more substantive content of news and other messages to offer good journalism, generate more profits, and reduce cost by gaining more resources, while differentiating themselves from those media companies that are not converged, so as to keep competitive advantages in the digital age. Please see the following diagram.

*Figure 2: Defining media convergence, which may lead to competitive advantage*



I use the above-illustrated diagram to indicate a viable model that media convergence may also converge good journalism, economic synergies, and competitive advantage, thus bridging a trajectory from media convergence to media's competitive advantages. Put in other words, the trajectory demonstrates that media convergence is expected to integrate different media outlets of either mono-ownership or multi-ownership under the same roof so as to enrich media content, create good journalism, generate more profits, reduce cost by gaining more resources, and, functioned by economies of scale and scope, to finally achieve media outlets' sustainable competitive advantage.

## CHAPTER 3

### THEORETICAL BACKGROUND ON CONVERGENCE'S LINKAGE TO GOOD JOURNALISM, ECONOMIC SYNERGIES, AND COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGES

Since the conception of media convergence deals with the relationship between good journalism, profits, scale and scope economies, and competitive advantage, the relevant theories need to be revisited to proffer rational ground for this research. In this chapter, I re-visited the viable theories about quality journalism producing good business and about convergence producing good journalism; the theories of scale and scope economies; and the theory of competitive advantages. My purpose is to elaborate the theoretical linkage between media convergence and media company's competitive advantages.

#### *Quality Journalism Produces Ratings and Circulation, Which In Turn Makes Money*

Although there is still lack of agreement about the newspaper industry's future, the current discussions concerning the relationship between quality of news content and the financial performance of newspapers have been conducted for many years among journalists, newspaper managers, newspaper investors, and scholars and researchers. As Lacy, Thorson, and Russial (2004) point out, some editors and many researchers continue to think that investment in news coverage will pay off in higher penetration, circulation and revenues. More directly, Campbell (2005) contends that newspapers that provide quality content usually attract wider audiences, which mean greater revenues.

Campbell (2005) even cites an example to strengthen his contention that newspapers doing good journalism also do good business. He exemplifies that in 2003 *The Washington Post* won three Pulitzer Prizes, which were more than any other

newspapers in the nation except for *The Los Angeles Times*, which also collected three that year. He makes it very clear that Pulitzers are journalism highest honor, and Pulitzers may be a big part of the reason why *The Post* sold many papers – more than 1 millions on Sundays that year. Another example to show the correlation between good journalism and good business is the success story of *USA Today*. Fifteen years after *USA Today* was launched in September 1982, Morton (1997) noticed that the newspaper “has changed newspaper publishing in several key ways, including improvements in the appearance of newspapers, an increase in consistency of topics covered, an emphasis on more tightly-written stories and concerns for the making of a profit” (p. 60). Morton concluded that the investments in journalistic quality made by *USA Today* have resulted in a rapid circulation increase.

McCartney (1997) also concluded that there is absolutely no doubt in the minds of *USA Today*'s leadership about what has made the paper more successful, and they think that it has been the quality of journalism because when the journalism improved the advertising cascaded. Certainly, there have been many factors, which will lead to media newsrooms' generation of quality journalism. Levels of newshole, staffing, and newsroom budgets, for example, are related to a standard of evaluating newspaper commitment to newsgathering (Edmonds, 2004), which in many ways decides journalism quality. In the newspaper industry, people have heard the rule of thumb of one staffer per 1,000 circulation (Edmonds). In 1997, McCartney really recorded about 25 slots had been added to the editorial staff of *USA Today* during the last 15 months, and that the paper's editorial staff numbered about 440 that year.

However, currently the more admirable is that *USA Today* is doing good

journalism by using a comparatively smaller-size editorial team of 466 with an average daily paid circulation Monday – Friday of 2,293,137 based on the Audit Bureau of Circulation report for the six month ending September 2007 (USA Today, 2008). By comparison, the *New York Times*, although it has more in-depth stories and more pages on each issue, currently has 1330 newsroom employees when it confirmed involuntary cuts to its newsroom staff on May 7, 2008 to meet its goal of reducing head count by 100 (Associated Press, May 7, 2008). The *Times*' current circulation is 1,037,828 on weekdays and 1,500,394 on Sunday (Media Kit, 2008). With 650 reporters, editors, photographers and artists come from many backgrounds and strive to produce the highest quality of journalism on a daily basis (Employment, 2008), the *Washington Post* also has a bigger-size editorial team and a smaller average circulation of 656,297 (Daily Circulation and CMP, 2008) compared to those of *USA Today*. No wonder Dr. Dean Mills (personal communication, May 5, 2008), dean of the Missouri School of Journalism, commented that *USA Today* is doing good journalism by using fewer staff than the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post*.

Having studied 101 TV stations in 31 cities, Rosenstiel et al. (1999) also find that the data support one conclusion above all: quality does sell, and that the best stations are the most likely to succeed, ahead of those in the middle or the bottom.

Not only some scholars and researchers but also many media executives argue that good journalism is related to ratings and circulation. At a Harvard forum held in 1998, Mark Willes, Times Mirror's then chairman and CEO, and publisher of the *Los Angeles Times*, observed that "high profit in the newspaper business depends on a commitment to top-quality journalism, and that the commitment must be maintained even

when profit margins fall in a recession” (cited in Morton, 1998, p. 72). Decherd, Belo Corp’s chairman and CEO (currently Decherd is Mr. Decherd is non-executive Chairman of Belo Corp but chairman, president and CEO of the new A. H. Belo Corporation, a publicly-traded newspaper company spun from Belo Corp in October 2007), stresses a simple theory about the relationship between good journalism and business, i.e., “quality journalism produces ratings and circulation, and in turn makes money” (cited in Murphy, 2002, p. 24). The cover story, “The Future of *The New York Times*” on the January 17, 2005 issue of *Business Week* reports that in essence, Sulzberger, the current proprietor of New York Times Co., is doing what his forebears have always done: sink money into the *Times* in the belief that quality journalism pays in the long run. Sulzberger is cited to say, “The challenge is to remember that our history is to invest during tough times....And when those times turn – and they do, inevitably – we will be well-positioned for recovery” (Cover Story, January 17, 2005).

The academic community in journalism and mass communication has also been looking for the strong correlation between good journalism and good profits. *Newspaper Research Journal* launched a special issue in January 2004 to discuss the linkage between good journalism and good business. The articles that constitute this issue are written by scholars and writers who have many years of experience in journalism, scholarship or both. This special issue starts with the assumption that there is a positive association between good journalism and business performance. Lacy, Thorson, and Russial (2004) emphasize that the survival of the newspaper industry as something more than just a business depends on this relationship. Also in this issue, by using data collected over the years by the Inland Press Association, Rosenstiel and Mitchell (2004) suggest that the

good journalism/good business linkage runs from newsroom investment to circulation to revenues to profits. Mantrala, Naik, Sridhar and Thorson (2007) conduct an empirical analysis of the impact of marketing investments yields elasticity estimates, thus augmenting the sparse literature on quality, distribution, and personal selling effort elasticities. In practice, this empirical study makes use of the diagnostic tool, which is based on “a simple five-step algorithm” (p.42) that extracts information contained in the market data and combines this information with the firm’s knowledge of margins not only to recommend appropriate investments in quality, distribution, and advertising but also to identify an individual firm’s location on the profit function to mitigate under- or over-spending errors. Therefore, this study is able to strongly generalize that investments in news quality affect not only subscription sales directly but also advertising revenues through subscriptions indirectly, and that their “answer to the question, ‘Is good news quality good business?’ is a resounding yes” (p.42).

Researchers and scholars have studied the criteria for good journalism. First of all, the standard of good journalism may be closely contingent on the evaluation criteria for news. Almost all journalism textbooks, represented by *News Reporting and Writing* (Brooks, Kennedy, Moen, & Ranly, 1999), consider accuracy, attribution, balance, fairness, objectivity, brevity and clarity as essential components of a good news story. Having made exploratory analyses of readers’ ratings of a wide variety of news stories, Sundar (1999) concludes that receivers implicitly use at least four key variables in their perception of printed and online stimuli. The first is *credibility*, which may be defined as a global evaluation of the objectivity of the story. The second is *liking*, which is an indicator of a news receiver’s feeling toward the overall content of the news story. The

third is *quality*, which means the degree or level of overall excellence of a news story's content. Cited by Sundar, Leshner defines quality as an evaluation of how informative, important, interesting, and well-written a news story is. The fourth factor is *representativeness*, which is a summary judgment of the extent to which the story is representative of the category of news.

Of course, currently, while the 2007 Annual Report on American Journalism (The Project for Excellence in Journalism, 2007) emphasizes the multimedia environment, while users are learning how to master different media technologies to bring the flow of media more fully under their control and to interact with other users (Jenkins & Deuze, 2008), criteria for good journalism may be added with some new elements. The following example shows one of these new elements, which is currently emphasized by news industries. Mark Hinojosa (personal communication, July 27, 2007) cites a segment of the news meeting held by *The Chicago Tribune's* Continuous News Desk on a morning of July 2007. Mark LeBien, editor of the CND says at the meeting:

We have a group of editors and reporters who staggered shifts so we can cover breaking news for the Web site almost 24/7, we are not quite continuous news staffed on weekends, but on week days we are staffed around the clock. We can respond to whatever is going on in Chicago or the world for that matter. In the Internet news world there is such a premium on getting news up as quickly as possible and the expectation is of Internet news junkies is that you will have it as soon as possible. If you don't have it on your site they will go to other sites. So speed, but also accuracy, balance, objectivity. We want to be fast, but we also want it to do great journalism and we want to uphold the standards of *The Tribune*.

In view of what LeBien says, we may understand that speed is here emphasized as a criterion of great journalism, and that the continuous news reporting is a strategy for newspapers to integrate speed with good journalism. To break news first on the Web by the CND and follow up with the news by in-depth print reporting and by diversified

reporting implemented through blogs, videos, audios, and slide shows means good journalism in the multimedia environment.

Almost all the abovementioned factors: speed, accuracy, fairness, objectivity, liking, quality, and representativeness directly or indirectly rely on journalists' writing skills, which are considered the basics of good journalism by Peng et al. (1999). These components are expected by scholars, researchers and practitioners of journalism and mass communication to help improve ratings and circulation.

To offer strategies for improving U.S. newspaper industry's product and service, Fink (1996) puts forward some striking innovations, one of which is that editors should push for overall improvement of the entire newspaper, including better reporting and writing. Since advertising provides 75 to 80% of total newspaper revenue while circulation generates about 23 % (Fink, 1996), good journalism, in fact, indirectly contributes important dollars to newspapers. Bogart (2004) also points out that a number of studies, using various indicators of excellence, have found evidence that better newspapers do better in the market. The principles of good journalism can also apply to broadcasters: They may increase the ratings, the access to audience. Since broadcasters are in the market of selling access to audience to advertisers, the higher the ratings a station generates, the more revenues and resources are available to the station (Chan-Olmsted & Park, 2000).

### *The Relationship between Media Convergence and Good Journalism*

Although a strong tie between media convergence and good journalism still lacks agreement among journalists, media managers and media investors, and that convergence creates good journalism is only a viable theory, "convergence has streamlined the process

of reporting and disseminating the news” (Ketterer, Weir, Smethers, and Back, 2004, p. 52). Furthermore, also according to Ketterer et al., convergence can provide more in-depth local news coverage and a wider variety of information.

Therefore, media convergence may create good journalism because it “uses the shared resources of newspaper and broadcast partners to provide more thorough coverage of major news events” (Ketterer et al., 2004, p. 53). Ketterer et al. further contend that digital technology provides advantages to Internet-based convergence so that it will create an unprecedented multi-faced approach to covering important news stories. Such kind of journalism should meet some of the abovementioned criteria of good journalism because multi-faced approach should be able to create credible and quality journalism.

Media convergence may create good journalism because “it can also harness the benefits of online, broadcast, and print to provide news to people when and where they want it” (Kolodzy, 2003, p. 63). Nowadays, few people get their news from one source anymore. They normally use TV for immediacy, online for diversity, and print for in-depth analysis. Just as Kolodzy analyzes, with convergence, TV and the Internet get the depth of reporting and expertise that newspapers offer, and, in exchange, newspapers reach people who would never buy a newspaper. In this way, stories, when they reach audience, should be more representative because they will represent the news category to a wider and deeper extent. The content analysis made by Huang, Radamakers, Moshood, and Dunlap (2004) also finds out that the convergence-pioneering *Tampa Tribune* has enhanced story presentation at least when they conducted their research.

Media convergence may create good journalism, which may lead to more ratings and bigger circulation and more revenues. *New York Times* publisher Arthur Sulzberger

Jr. and other major industry players believe print's convergence with broadcast and online media will drive the successful journalism enterprise of the future (Cristol, 2002). In addition, their beliefs, which are represented by such media convergence cases as The New York Times Co.'s TheStreet.com and Gannett and Tribune Interactive, are banking on the potentially viable theory that reaching audiences through a variety of media is key to turning a profit in the digital age. Jack Fuller (2000), the former president of Tribune Publishing Company, insists that the best way to continue doing quality journalism in an environment that demands financial results is to spread newsgathering costs over multiple distribution platforms with multiple revenue sources and multiple audiences through newspapers, television, radio and the Internet. Tribune Company is another U. S. convergence pioneer. It launched CLTV, a typical convergence project, in Chicago in the early 1990s. As a 24-hour local news and information channel, Robins (2000) notices it features news, traffic, weather and sports. "Good Eating," one of its regular programs, matches and adds to the content of the *Chicago Tribune's* food section. In addition to presentations on the cable channel, this program can also be seen online at Metromix.com, Tribune's Chicago nightlife site. With enriched content and some socials that get the community involved like pizza tasting, this convergence project is conducting a principle, which is somewhat like what Chyi and Sylvie (1998) say about the content sharing among the converged media, "electronic newspapers should provide high-quality news that usually comes from their print counterparts" (p.14).

Of course, some media convergence programs generate great journalism and good profits as well. Decherd believes, "They will prevail in almost any competitive or market circumstances" (Murphy, 2002). According to Murphy, the relationship between Belo's

*Dallas Morning News*, WFAA, Texas Cable News and their respective Web sites has become a model of convergence. Two examples can explain its advantages. One is its coverage of events surrounding Sept. 11, including sending a dozen reporters armed with satellite trucks, edit packs and other equipment to the Middle East and Afghanistan to cover the war. The coverage reinforced subtly the difference between very high-quality, thorough and balanced journalism versus the rest of the news and information marketplace. The other is its sales muscle – selling advertisements the entire state of Texas and some in New Orleans. Belo had made a few million dollars by August 2002. Another example is that Disney's Internet Ventures, which mainly comprises ESPN.com and ABCNews.com, contributed several hundred million dollars to the company's \$25 billion revenue in the 2002 fiscal year (Gentile, 2002). According to Tully (personal communication, July 11, 2007), media convergence, especially the convergence between *The Kansas City Star* and its Web site, Kansas City.com, which distributes news and other content via such convergent outlets as video and audio clips, blogs, and slide shows, has also helped the newspaper company doing better business. Without the contribution of convergence, Tully doesn't think the newspaper company can say it attracts more than 1 million readers a week.

#### *Economic Synergies or Economies of Scale and Economies of Scope*

When we re-visit the theories of scale and scope economies, one phenomenon should be given attention in the research of scale and scope economies although they are two different concepts. As I mentioned in Chapter 1, this study first refers synergies to a more popular notion as the common denominator for all kinds of cost effects ranging from traditional scale and scope economies to economies of multiplant operations and

even simple effects of fixed-cost reduction because in the general media debate the two concepts are used rather imprecisely (Stephan, 2005). Also reiterating what Chapter 1 says, I refer economy synergies in this study to the notion that cooperation between TV and newspapers in markets would reap editorial, promotional, and advertising windfalls (Smolkin, 2006/2007). Therefore, these two notions are regarded as the two layers of meaning for one definition by this study.

Peltier (2004) also regards scale and scope economies and other synergies as similar concepts pertaining to economic size effects. Similarly to the academic world, some business professionals and companies have started to describe the revenues generated by the functions of scale and scope economies by putting them into a category called either “Multimedia” or “Interactive” in their annual financials report.

Scale and scope are two different dimensions of economies, but they exist in any industry (Doyle, 2002). Economies of scale happen where marginal costs (which result from producing one more unit of production) are lower than average costs (the cost of providing the product or service divided by the total number of buyers of the product or service). Economies of scope happen where it is less costly to combine two or more product lines in one firm than to produce them separately (Panzar & Willig, 1981). Picard (1989) further explains that scale economies are related to advantages inherent in the size of a firm or the quantity of output produced. He adds that, as the quantity of output increases, the cost for producing each unit, the average cost, drops, and thus large-scale production is more efficient than small-scale production. Calling scale economies as increasing returns to scale, Hoskins, McFadyen, and Finn (2004) concretely explain that, if an X% increase in all inputs increases output by more than X% – if, for example,

doubling all inputs more than doubles output, increasing returns to scale will apply.

Further explicating scope economies, Doyle (2002) points out scope economies are generally available to firms that are large enough to engage efficiently in multi-product production and are associated with large scale distribution, advertising, and purchasing. Panzar and Willig (1981) concretely say that scope economies arise when a firm that produces its own stream of services from a quasi-public or sharable input (if only a factory building) and utilize them for the production of more than one output. Consequently, according to Doyle (2002), whenever scope economies are present diversification (here referring to product diversification that involves business activities across different product markets) will be an economically efficient strategy because the total cost of the diversified firm is lower compared with a group of single-product firms producing the same output.

Both scale and scope are important characteristics of media economics. Based on Doyle's (2002) analysis, economies of scale exist in the media because of the public-good attributes of the industry's product. As Picard's (1989) example shows, the average newspaper production costs drop occurs when the number of copies produced increases even if the first-copy costs are high. Similarly, because in most sectors of the media, marginal costs tend to be low, and in some cases they are even zero, Picard (1989) further exemplifies that scale economies will be enjoyed by broadcast companies if bigger amount of programming broadcast or cablecast or viewers or listener time is generated.

Also based on Doyle's (2002) analysis, economies of scope are common in the media because the nature of media output is such that it is possible for a product created for one market to be reformatted and sold through another. To better explain this concept

dealing with media economics, Hoskins et al. (2004) exemplify the approaches used by studios. They display that most studios produce both feature films and television programs, which share labor with the same skills and use the same capital equipment and distribution infrastructure. Therefore, scope economies happen from producing these products within the same company because of these shared inputs.

Perryman (2008) does a case study, “*Doctor Who* and the Convergence of Media” to explore whether many of the transmedia strategies that the BBC has employed have resulted in merchandising and branding effects via scale and scope economies and have enabled related various media platforms to work together to create a coherent and satisfying whole. According to Perryman, the British science fiction series *Doctor Who* embraces convergence culture on an unprecedented scale, with the BBC currently using the series to try a plethora of new technologies, including: mini-episodes on cell phones, podcast commentaries, interactive red-button adventures, video blogs, and companion programming. Perryman has found out that all the BBC’s experiments, except that the mini-episodes-on-cell-phones program failed to find an audience, have achieved some groundbreaking successes in such aspects as the interactive adventures, webcasts, online games and podcasts. In reality, these experiments were conducted by the BBC under the theoretical frame of scope economy although Perry did not mention it directly.

Matching the concept of economies of scope, the News Center in Tampa generates at least three categories of products: content of news, entertainment, and advertising disseminated by newspaper, television and Web site. These three kinds of products are generated by one firm, the newly built Media Center, by using their converged newspeople, many of whom work for more than one medium, their converged

operations and shared resources. These three products can serve a bigger audience from more various and broader markets. Matching the concept of scale economies, the marginal costs for repackaging or repurposing the news content (mainly generated by convergent coverage on major events), entertainment, and ads for different media platforms should be theoretically lower than the original average costs. Therefore, both scale and scope are assumed to be enjoyed by converged media outlets represented by the Tampa model because convergence makes it possible to spread newsgathering costs and other news production costs over multiple distribution platforms with multiple revenue sources and multiple audiences through newspapers, television, radio and the Internet. The effects of scale and scope economies are just like what Quinn (2004) says when he comments on the business ideal of the Tampa convergence model. He says that cross promotion of other media outlets in the same group offers a way to market other members of the group or partnership cheaply, and it also presents major opportunities to sell multiple-media advertising campaigns.

### *Competitive Advantages*

Commenting on the relationship between organizations' strategic planning and human resource management, Gary Dessler (1999) points out that all companies try to achieve competitive advantage for each business they are in. The idea of competitive advantages has been championed by Michael Porter (Gunnigle & Moore, 1994) through Porter's works such as the book *Competitive Advantage: Creating and Sustaining Superior Performance* (1985) and the article "From Competitive Advantage to Corporate Strategy" (1987). Porter (1985) defines competitive advantage as the search for a favorable competitive position in an industry, which is actually a profitable and

sustainable position against the forces that determine industry competition. Based on Porter's works, Gunnigle and Moore redefined competitive advantage more specifically as "any factor(s) which allow(s) an organization to differentiate its product or service from those of its competitors to increase market share" (p. 65).

Flanagan and Deshpande (1996) support competitive advantage theory, stressing that sustainable competitive advantages are fundamental to a firm's long-run success. Cited by Flanagan and Deshpande, Barney (1991), Hitt, Ireland, and Hoskisson (1995) believe, "A sustainable competitive advantage is derived from a firm's resources or capabilities that are unique to the firm, cannot be easily duplicated by competitors, and offers customers special value" (p. 23). Based on their research into top management's perceptions of changes in several human resource practices, Flanagan and Deshpande assert that a firm cannot expect to make above-average returns in the long run without sustainable competitive advantages.

Other researchers also emphasize the importance of a firm's resources and capabilities. Lado and Zhang (1998) regard the firm itself as a collection of hard-to-copy resources and capabilities, and that differences in size distribution and competitiveness of firms arise from their unique abilities to accumulate, develop, and deploy those resources and capabilities to formulate and implement value-enhancing strategies. According to their explanation, a firm's resources consist of all assets – both tangible and intangible, human and nonhuman – that are owned or controlled by the firm and that enable it to formulate and implement value-enhancing strategies, while organizational capabilities refer to the dynamic processes that facilitate the accumulation, development and deployment of rent-yielding resources.

Feldmann (2002) connects some mobile Internet device producers' capabilities with their competitive advantages. Feldman contends that their new time management capabilities emerge with real-time pushed and pulled voice and data communications that quicken the pace of both business and personal life. Feldmann believes that the mobile Internet's access device also differs from the fixed desktop computer that accesses the Internet, that the mobile phone is far more personal than a PC, and that it is likely to be used by only one single person. Therefore, Feldmann thinks the companies, which combine their services in the mobile Internet with personalization of processes, at that time, could enjoy competitive advantages.

More directly, Stephan (2005) connects economies of scope with competitive advantages. Stephan argues that the strategy of related diversification, which refers to the expansion of the media companies' business activities across different product markets, enables media firms to exploit scope economies based on sharable or quasi-public inputs. Stephan exemplifies that the corporate center of a firm operating in two strategic business units that do business in two related media markets can exploit any synergies between the two to achieve cost or differentiation advantages over an undiversified rival.

Based on the discussion above, the competitive advantage theory can be summarized as what Porter (1985) writes: There are two basic types of competitive advantages: cost leadership and differentiation. The first type implies that a firm sets out to become the low-cost producer in its industry. In a differentiation strategy, a firm seeks to be unique in its industry along some dimensions that are widely valued by buyers. Dessler (2001) regards Porter's two basic types as two major ways for organizations to achieve competitive advantages. For cost leadership, Dessler thinks Wal-Mart is a typical

low-cost leader that depends on its satellite-based distribution system, low-cost store location, and low-cost sources of its goods. As to differentiation, Dessler believes good examples are Apple, which stresses the usability of its computers, and Mercedes Benz, which emphasizes reliability and quality. In the media industry a good example of differentiation may be *The New York Times*, which is widely perceived as the world leader in serious and in-depth news coverage.

In the United States, almost all media outlets are commercial enterprises, so competitive advantages are very important for them. However, according to media economics, media organizations function in the economic system to meet both private and public needs and wants, but the resources available to produce goods and services to satisfy private and public needs and wants are scarce, and meeting all the wants is impossible (Picard, 1989).

Media convergence was in fact launched mainly to maximize the media's scarce resources and meet more wants from both the public and the private sectors. Media General's News Center in Tampa is a typical example that demonstrates the resource-sharing operation of a media convergence. As Thelen (2002) records, print, broadcast and online occupy separate parts of the building and retain editorial independence, but the three platforms cooperate fully in newsgathering and share information freely. Each of the three is strengthened by contributions from its partners. *Tribune* reporters appear on TV. WFLA-TV journalists write for the paper, and online producers contribute to all platforms. Considering the fact that media convergence can offer people a smorgasbord of information platforms and save resources, Picard's worries about the scarce resources and the difficulty in satisfying both private and public wants may be somewhat smoothed.

More importantly, once print and broadcast media become online their audiences and market will be magnified because the Internet technology enables them to seek a worldwide market (Chyi and Sylvie, 2001).

From the perspective of economies of scale, which is explained by Picard (1989) as: “The cost of production is not affected by the number of users” (p. 62), production costs of a television show, a radio broadcast, or a feature film remain the same whether many or few individuals comprise their audiences (Picard, 1989). Chyi and Sylvie (2001) assert that online publishing typifies such economies, i.e., by reaching more users, the cost per user drops remarkably and revenue potential also increases. A typical example found out by Dupagne and Garrison (2006) is that WFLA-TV in Tampa’s News Center often benefits from the depth of the *Tampa Tribune*, which was not available when the three different platforms were housed in separate locations and did not work together. In a way, the *Tribune*’s cost decreased because it was shared by WFLA-TV, Thus, media convergence may gratify Dessler’s two ways to achieve competitive advantage: the low-cost leader, and differentiation, which may be understood in the way that both the abovementioned *Tampa Tribune*, and Belo Corp models are somewhat unique to their competitors.

#### *A Viable Trajectory and Research Questions*

A viable trajectory from media convergence to good journalism, profits or economic synergies and eventually to competitive advantage is proposed by this study and visually shown as figure 2 (see Page 22 and Appendix A). The trajectory assumes that media convergence may also converge good journalism, economic synergies (composed of economies of scale and scope) and competitive advantages, thus bridging a

trajectory from media convergence to media's competitive advantages. Put in other words, the trajectory demonstrates that media convergence is expected to integrate different media outlets of either mono-ownership or multi-ownership under the same roof so as to enrich media content, create good journalism, generate more profits, reduce cost by gaining more resources, and, functioned by economic synergies, to finally achieve media outlets' sustainable competitive advantage.

Because "media convergence is an ongoing process" (Jenkins, 2001, p. 93), not many researchers are so sure about the positive correlation between media convergence and good journalism and more profits and competitive advantage. Neither have many empirical and qualitative studies have done to test this correlation. That is to say the two links of Figure 2: the link between Good Journalism and Profits and the link between Media Convergence and Lower Cost or More Resources, are not universally ascertained yet. It is such an uncertainty that inspires my interest in this study. To test whether media convergence may also converge good journalism, economic synergies and competitive advantages, I put forward the following research questions:

RQ1: Is media convergence inevitable?

RQ2: In what ways may convergence enrich media content, improve media credibility, and create good journalism?

RQ3: In what ways may convergence allow news organizations to share resources so as to decrease costs?

RQ4: In what ways may convergence lead to good business and generate profits?

RQ5: How may convergence create differentiation?

RQ6: What competitive advantages may convergence create?

## CHAPTER 4

### RATIONALE FOR RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS

In this chapter, I discussed why I chose qualitative research methods to conduct this study and why I chose interviewees mainly from four American media outlets. Two rationales, research design and selection of samples, are proffered. In the later part of this chapter, I elaborate the research methods I applied in this study.

#### *Rationale for Choosing Qualitative Methods for this Study*

According to Christians and Carey (1989), in America, the social sciences share certain characteristics with such natural sciences areas as physics, chemistry, and biology, but the social sciences also have their own distinctive features: They have a common task with humanities: to explain what people have created – civilizations and cultures. Furthermore, Christians and Carey stress that, as an important research method of social sciences, qualitative study helps social sciences conduct research into such human creations, civilizations, cultures, with communications included. Also, social scientists have already made clearer the task of qualitative studies. Pauly (1991) points out the task very briefly, which is to investigate meaning-making. Christians and Carey echo Pauly but add that qualitative studies are examining a creative process whereby people produce and maintain forms of life and society and systems of meaning and value. Put in other words, this creative process is unique to human beings, and grounded in this process is human creative activity. This creative activity represents human ability to build cultural forms, which are the whole body of meaning-making practices, and to uncover symbols, which construct the worlds in which humans live. That's why Pauly can define the task of

qualitative studies so briefly – to investigate meaning-making.

Centering around this overall task of qualitative studies, Pauly (1991) describes five steps for beginners doing qualitative research in mass communication: finding a topic, formulating research questions, gathering the evidence, interpreting the evidence, and telling the researcher's story. For the first step, Pauly first cites Harold Lasswell's classic formulation "mass communication research investigates who says what in which channel to whom with what effect" (p.5). He further points out that many mass communication researchers are tracing messages from senders to receivers, through an ever more elaborate maze of circles, boxes, and arrows. But this is a continuum. Researchers normally choose one or another stage of this continuum, studying senders' strategies, or the effect of different messages on receivers, or the amount of information receivers get from different media, or the consequences of sending messages to receivers via different channels, and etc. As mentioned previously, this study aims exploring whether media convergence may also converge good journalism, economic synergies and competitive advantages, thus bridging a trajectory from media convergence to media's competitive advantages. This exploration deals with many stages of the continuum explicated by Pauly, such as news and information senders' (convergent media companies') strategies and the consequences of sending messages to receivers via different channels (good journalism made by convergent media companies is expected to produce good business, thus generating economic synergies and competitive advantages). Therefore, it may be meaningful and rational to elaborate various facets of media convergence by using qualitative methods.

While Pauly (1991) puts forward five steps for beginners to develop their

qualitative research skills, Christians and Carey (1989) advocate four criteria to guide qualitative studies: naturalistic observation, contextualization, maximized comparisons, and sensitized concepts. By naturalistic observation, the two researchers emphasize that the qualitative research, which puts human interpretation at the core, should stress naturalistic observation as the way of determining those interpretation. Qualitative researchers, from this perspective must enter the situation so deeply that they can recreate in imagination and experience the thoughts and sentiments of the observed. Jane Singer (2004) spent a week in each city (Dallas, Tampa, Sarasota, and Lawrence [KS]) during January and February in 2003, observing newsroom operations, attending news meetings, and talking with journalists about media convergence. A total of 120 staffers were interviewed intensively. They were also surveyed by a 54-item questionnaire. Based on this period of naturalistic observation, Singer wrote the paper “More Than Ink-stained Wretches: The Resocialization of Print Journalists in Converged Newsrooms, which was by the fourth issue of Volume 81 of *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly*.

Singer’s (2004) research leads to the successful application of interview as a step in a complete set of naturalistic observation and also as an important qualitative research method. Citing that people now live an “interview society” (Fontana & Frey, 2000, p. 646), Fontana and Frey emphasize that the use of interviewing to acquire information is so extensive, thus it may be useful to employ interview, an important qualitative research method, to explicate the concept of media convergence, which is evolving over time, across different media platforms, and through different media markets.

When Stacks (2002) defines in-depth or intensive interview, he believes that it refers to “the most controlled of situations, where a researcher sits with another

individual and ask carefully crafted questions that often provide the lead for follow-up questions” (p.85). When Stack defines interview in general as a qualitative research method, he points out its direct interaction between researchers and other people while differentiating one-on-one interviews from what has been described as group interviews, the focus group. Defining one-on-one interview, Wimmer and Dominick (2000) further divide it into two basic types of interviews, structured and unstructured. Their definition is as follows:

In a structured interview, standardized questions are asked in a predetermined order; relatively little freedom is given to interviewers. In an unstructured interview, broad questions are asked, which allows interviewers freedom in determining what further questions to ask to obtain the required information. Structured interviews are easy to tabulate and analyze but do not achieve the depth or expanse of unstructured interviews. Conversely, the unstructured type elicits more detail but takes a great deal of time so score and analyze (p.181).

Fontana and Frey (2000) echo Wimmer and Dominick (2000) to say that unstructured interviewing can provide a greater breadth of data than other types, but they regard the traditional type of unstructured interview as “the open-ended, ethnographic (in-depth) interview” (p. 652). Actually, Wimmer and Dominick’s comments on intensive (in-depth or depth) interviews that intensive interviews are essentially a hybrid of the one-on-one interview approach, and that they provide detailed background about reasons respondents give specific answers speak volume for the fact that intensive interview is very close to unstructured interview. The other characteristics of intensive interview mentioned by Wimmer and Dominick are: (1) They generally use smaller samples; (2) Elaborate data concerning respondents’ opinions, values, motivations, recollections, experiences, and feeling are obtained; (3) They are usually very long; (4) They are customized to individual respondents; and (5) There may be certain groups for which

intensive interviewing is the only practical technique, like a study of the media habits of U.S. senators.

When I designed the research methods used by this study, I had a thorough consideration of the practical points of conducting it: (1) This is a doctoral candidate's single-handed study, which has difficulty in interviewing too many respondents and in analyzing too big a set of data; (2) This is not a fully-funded and large-scaled qualitative research, and its interviewing should be controlled within my ability; and (3) Many of the targeted respondents are publishers, editors in chief, managing editors and associate managing editors, and they might be willing to talk to an interviewer but not to take the time to respond to a survey questionnaire.

Based on these points, I decided to adopt semi-structured interviews, which is a qualitative research method, to implement this study. Semi-structured interviews integrate the characteristics of both structured and unstructured interviews and expect to contain some characteristics of intensive interviewing, such as a smaller sample of respondents (Wimmer and Dominick, 2000), rich detail and the ability to understand what the individual being interviewed really thinks about something (Stacks, 2002), and the extension of time (a minimum of one hour, according to Stacks, 2002).

Commenting on semi-structured interview, the Web site of the Ipsos Group (2008), a France-based international research company, gives a good definition to semi-structured interview: Semi-structured interview is a combination of the individual in-depth interview and the standardized, structured questionnaire. The Web site also concludes the characteristics of the semi-structured interviewing technique as follows:

It is situated between the individual in-depth interview and the quantitative interview with a standardized questionnaire. It contains closed-ended,

multiple choice and scale type questions, but also a lot of open-ended questions which, like in an in-depth interview, provide room for the individual train of thought of the respondent and allow them to shape their opinion.

Cited by Donohue et al. (2006), Groth-Marnat also points out, “In contrast to questionnaires, semi-structured interviews are flexible to permit elaboration of ethnic cultural perspectives” (p.870). These definitions and characteristics further rationalize my application of semi-structured interview method to conduct the interviews, collecting data, and analyze the data.

### *Selection of Samples*

I selected four media convergence pioneers, i.e., four media conglomerates that have incorporated convergence as part of their journalistic practices and marketing strategies, as four reasoned samples of convergent media companies, where I conducted the interviews. They are: (1) Tribune Company in Chicago; (2) the Tampa News Center of Media General Inc. in Richmond, VA; (3) The Sarasota Herald-Tribune Media Group (belonging to the New York Times Co.) in Sarasota, FL; and the World Company, in Lawrence, KS.

*Tribune Company.* The history of American journalism records the coverage of the Scopes Monkey Trial by the *Chicago Tribune* and its sister radio station, WGN (standing for “World’s Greatest Newspaper”). Researchers regard one of the cross-promotion cases done by the radio station and the newspaper across the two media in the 1920s as an early form of convergence (Lawson-Borders, 2006). Witnessing convergence in action many times in the converged *Tribune* newsroom, I selected Tribune Company for the first sample not only because of its tradition of utilizing cross-promotion strategy but also because of the following three reasons. The first is that the company’s modern

version of convergence is more aggressive. Not only has its CLTV, a 24-hour all-news cable channel, become a model for multimedia content sharing and cross-promotion throughout Tribune Company, but Tribune newspapers are also cooperating more with both Tribune TV stations and non-tribune broadcasters. The second is that Tribune Company was grandfathered into the 1975 Federal Communications Commission (FCC) cross-ownership act because it owned its multimedia outlets before the act was issued (Lawson-Borders, 2006). It means the company can enjoy the legal authorities to own various kinds of media outlets in the same market. Tribune Company's multimedia outlets in Chicago include the *Chicago Tribune*, the *Red Eye* (a daily tabloid targeting young readers), WGN Radio and TV, CLTV regional cable, [chicagotribune.com](http://chicagotribune.com), and [Metromix.com](http://Metromix.com). A third reason is that Tribune Company, in 2000, by buying Times Mirror, including Newsday, the Los Angeles Times, the Hartford Courant, and the Baltimore Sun, tried to give it both newspapers and TV stations in the top three media markets of Chicago, Los Angeles, and New York City. Although Tribune's executives called this purchase as "synergy," it is actually a typical example of economic convergence regarded by Jenkins (2001), and it is no different than the AOL/Time Warner merger except that Tribune purchase cost it \$8.3 billion, which was not as large.

When I conducted interviews in the *Chicago Tribune* in February 2007, there was much debate on whether the economic synergy (here refers to the second definition of economic synergy mentioned in Significance of Study, Chapter 1), the media convergence in Tribune Company, was a failure and whether the newly privatized Tribune Company would sell all the TV stations and other media platforms and businesses. However, after the company announced in April 2007 its intention to become

a private company, owned 100% by the Tribune ESOP. EGI-TRB, an entity run by Sam Zell, and the completion of its going-private transaction in December 2007 with Zell formally assuming the roles of chairman of the board and chief executive officer (Tribune Company Press Release, 2007), the company is still carrying out its synergy strategy. The mission declaration on the home page of Tribune Company's Web site adds a rational point for this study to select Tribune Company as a sample of conducting media convergence. The declaration says:

Tribune is America's largest employee-owned media company, operating businesses in publishing, interactive and broadcasting. In publishing, Tribune's leading daily newspapers include the *Los Angeles Times*, *Chicago Tribune*, *Newsday* (Long Island, N.Y.), *The Sun* (Baltimore), *South Florida Sun-Sentinel*, *Orlando Sentinel* and *Hartford Courant*. The company's broadcasting group operates 23 television stations, Superstation WGN on national cable, Chicago's WGN-AM and the Chicago Cubs baseball team. Popular news and information Websites complement Tribune's print and broadcast properties and extend the company's nationwide audience (Tribune Company Home Page, 2008).

*Media General Inc.* Somewhat similar to the second reason for choosing Tribune Company, I selected General Media's News Center in Tampa first because it is also grandfathered by the FCC. Second, the moving in March 2000 of the three media outlets originally located in separate downtown buildings to the brand new \$40 million News Center and the follow-up interaction and coordination between the three platforms' journalistic and business staff members have attracted attention both domestically and internationally. No wonder Singer (2004) stresses that the News Center in Tampa is "the most widely publicized convergence effort in the country" (p. 842). Third, the firm determination of Media General to insist on convergence experiment is very impressive. Cited by Dupagne and Garrison (2006), Media General's Chairman J. Stewart Bryan once spelled out his plans: "Any of the places we have a newspaper, we'd like to have a

TV station... Any of the places we have a TV station, we'd like to have a newspaper" (p. 238). Not only did he say so, but the power of convergence, under his leadership, soon extended from the Tampa market to another five new areas within one year (Media General, 2001).

*Sarasota Herald-Tribune Media Group.* The first reason to for me to choose the Herald-Tribune (Sarasota, FL) Media Group is its ownership, the New York Times Co. Different from the reasons for the first two convergent models, this reason may enable me to find how a local media group affiliated to one of America's largest newspaper groups operates its convergence strategies. Second, this model may enable me to find out a good local perspective to look at the proposed trajectory from convergence to good journalism and good business and to competitive advantage. Ferrara (2003), the then general manager for electronic media at *the Sarasota Herald-Tribune*, has a succinct conclusion of how to do good local news via convergence. He declares, "Convergence will allow more outlets to deliver it (local news). Since we've been converged, the *Herald-Tribune* has done the largest, most in-depth investigative packages in its history. Its staff has increased. With TV, print and the Web, we reach more people than we ever have before." More meaningful to this study aiming to examine the relationship between convergence and good business, Ferrara (2003) represents the Herald-Tribune Media Group to say that convergence will mean a lot of changes within advertising departments, and new methods of thinking for news company managers. Based on the home page of HeraldTribune.com (2008), the Herald-Tribune Media Group includes a daily newspaper with six daily zoned editions (Sarasota, Manatee, Venice, North Port, Englewood and Charlotte); SNN News 6, the nation's only 24-hour cable news station fully integrated

into a newspaper; HeraldTribune.com, the market's largest media Internet Web site; three magazines; and a direct-mail business. The home page also says that the *Sarasota Herald-Tribune* is the third-largest newspaper in the New York Times Company and the largest newspaper in the New York Times Regional Media Group. According to Audit Bureau of Circulation figures for six-month period ending on March 31, 2007 cited by BurrellesLuce (2008), the *Herald-Tribune's* weekday and Sunday circulations are respectively 118,328 and 134,101, ranking 87 among Top 100 U.S. Daily Newspapers.

The third reason is based upon the Herald-Tribune Media Company's successful business operation as a convergent media company. According to Diane McFarlin, the media group's publisher, the *Herald-Tribune* has been a leader in media convergence since launching SNN in 1995, becoming one of the first newspapers in the United States to fully integrate a TV operation into a print newsroom (personal communication, March 24, 2008). McFarlin emphasizes that the newspaper was also among the first to stream video when it began streaming SNN on its Web site in 1997, and that the media group's diversification strategy has been a business success, contributing to revenue growth of 54% during the decade from 1996-2006.

*World Company.* The World Company's convergence model will add a unique case to this study to show whether media convergence will create good journalism so as to bring good business, differentiation and competitive advantages to a very small media company. The World Company owns the *Lawrence (Kansas) Journal-World* with daily and Sunday circulation of just under 20,000, 6News Lawrence (cable), ljworld.com, Lawrence.com, and KUsports.com (Singer, 2004).

My interviews with Al Bonner, advertising and marketing director of the *Journal-*

*World* demonstrate good reasons for me to select World Company as my fourth sample, where I conducted my interviews. Bonner notes, “Since we started our convergence efforts in news and advertising five years ago, our online revenues have grown more than 225%, almost three-quarters of a million dollars. We are convinced that without convergence, we would have experienced modest or flat growth each year in total advertising, instead we have grown 5% or more each year in spite of major account losses” (personal communication, April 7, 2007). I guess in 2007 the Journal-World continued with the increase of its revenues brought by its convergence strategies because Bonner predicted their harvest in 2007 by saying “We have planned for significant increases this year with two new sites: Boomer girl.com and ljworld.com/Marketplace” (personal communication, April 7, 2007).

#### *Design of Interviews and Selection of Respondents*

*The First Phase of Interviews.* Prior to conducting the face-to-face semi-structured interviews in the selected respondents’ work place, in March 2003, I started a pilot e-mail interview with a semi-structured questionnaire of 10 open-ended questions sent to 13 editors, directors, professors, and even presidents and chairmen of the media companies where convergence was going on. This nonrandom sample of interviewees was selected from the William Allen White School of Journalism and Mass Communications at the University of Kansas, the Tampa News Center, the Herald-Tribune Media Group, Belo Corporation, and Tribune Company (see Appendix B for the details about the respondents to my first set of semi-structured questionnaire done via e-mails). Some of them were introduced and recommended to me by Dr. George Kennedy, one of my advisory professors, to increase the response rate. Six of them wrote me back,

having answered my questions in detail. One required me via his secretary to have a telephone interview with him. The seven respondents brought me data for my research, notification for my going to interview them face by face, and opportunity for me to improve or readjust my questions for the next phase of interviews.

*The Second Phase of Interviews.* Stacks (2002) reminds researchers, “Prior notification via e-mail might be considered the first of a six-step programs to increase response rates, but the last step, the final contact, should always be by non-Internet methods” (p.184). Enlightened by Stacks’ reminder, I revised my question list and went to the Herald-Tribune Media Group in Sarasota and the Tampa News Center for a round of face-to-face, semi-structured interviews in June 2004 (Please see Appendix C for the different versions of the listed questions). Before I went there, I also exchanged several rounds of e-mails with Lou Ferrara, the then general manager for electronic media in charge of HeraldTribune.com and SNN Channel 6 of the Herald-Tribune Media Group, and Beth Gaddis, the then Newsroom Office manager of the Tampa News Center, for identifying the types of personnel who would be my potential respondents. I also e-mailed them an interview schedule for respondents’ reference. The interview schedule is not a time schedule but a list of questions that drive the interview (Lindlof and Taylor, 2002; Stacks, 2002).

This field visit for semi-structured interviews took place from June 8 to 11, 2004 in Sarasota and Tampa via St. Petersburg. Closely following up with this visit, I got an opportunity to visit the *Chicago Tribune* on June 14, where I conducted the same kind of interview with one editor. All the three visits during this field trip got involved in observation of facilities, attendance at several staff, budget, and multimedia meetings,

and face-to-face semi-structured interviews. In both Sarasota and Tampa, I also had meetings and interviews with circulation, marketing, and advertising managers who handled day-to-day convergence activities in the business wing of their media companies. Following the first round of e-mail interviews done in March 2003, I worked out an interview schedule, which contains eight open-ended questions for the semi-structured interviews with the number of questions smaller than that in the question list I sent to the 13 interviewees for a pilot e-mail study. These questions, which are available from Appendix D, dealt with whether convergence can generate good journalism (e.g., “Do you think media convergence enriches media content? Why?”); whether convergence links to good business (e.g., “Is media convergence, especially the convergence in which you are involved making money? Why or why not?”); whether convergence will lower cost (e.g., “Do you agree that media convergence can lower cost? Why?”); whether convergence can create differentiation for a news company (e.g., “Do you think media convergence can make your company differentiated from the media that are not converged? Why?”); and whether convergence can result in media company’s competitive advantages (e.g., “Do you think media convergence will achieve competitive advantage for your company? Why?”). These questions were semi-structured to allow flexibility and freedom for respondents to have a complete narrative description.

With the help of the two contact persons in Sarasota and Tampa, I then purposely selected 14 individuals with different specialized roles in the newsrooms and business sections of the *Herald-Tribune*, the *St. Petersburg Times*, the Tampa News Center, and the *Chicago Tribune*. There seems to have no firm rule on a recommended sample size for intensive or semi-structured interviews. In Kelly and Mills’ (2003) study of the

evolution of diversity in the news, when they conducted qualitative in-depth surveys of three selected newspapers' staff, they interviewed nearly 100 staffers in a western newspaper. As mentioned previously, Singer (2004) spent a week in each city (Dallas, Tampa, Sarasota, and Lawrence [KS]) during January and February in 2003 to interview a total of 120 staffers intensively for her study of the resocialization of print journalists in converged newsrooms. To test the effect of digital imaging on the news industry through professionals related to the field, Fahmy and Smith (2003) did a qualitative study by following a semi-structured approach to interview intensively a small purposive sample of seven photography professionals, including four jurors for the 2001 Picture of the Year International (POYi) contest. "They are highly respected in the photojournalism field, representing different aspects of the business after years of working in a wide variety of cities and suburbs" (Fahmy and Smith, 2003, p.85). However, McCracken (1988) insists in his book *The Long Interview* that recruiting eight respondents is basically sufficient for many intensive interview projects. Therefore, it suggests that my selection of 14 interviewees is still academically acceptable.

My 14 respondents were selected based on their roles in their news and business convergence practices. To diversify my sample, I chose (with the help of Ferrara and Gaddis) respondents in different types of news and business decision-making roles from different media platforms and business sections (only in Sarasota and Tampa) in the aforementioned four media outlets. The 14 respondents include: the executive editor of the *Herald-Tribune* (Fla.); the managing editor of the *Herald-Tribune*; the executive producer with SNN 6 of the Herald Tribune Media Group; the general manager for electronic media in charge of HeraldTribune.com and SNN Channel 6 of the Herald-

Tribune Media Group; the *Herald-Tribune's* advertising and marketing director; the general sales manager with SNN 6; the news editor with the *St. Petersburg Times*; the editor and vice president of the *Tampa Tribune*; the general manager of Tampa Bay Online (TBO.com) and the Internet division of *The Tampa Tribune* and WFLA-TV News Channel 8; the multimedia technology editor of the News Center in Tampa; the senior consumer reporter of the News Center's News Channel 8; the news director of WFLA-TV, one of the three platforms of the Tampa convergence model; the southeast regional sales manager of News Center; and the associate managing editor of multimedia of the *Chicago Tribune*. Their more detailed profiles are available from Appendix B. Among these 14 respondents, only two had been interviewed by me when I sent them the e-mails containing a list of 10 questions.

I conducted the semi-structured interviews in the Herald-Tribune Media Group on June 8 and 9, 2004; in the *St. Petersburg Times* on June 10; in the Tampa News Center on June 11; and in the *Chicago Tribune* on June 14. All interviews but one took place in the newsrooms of the abovementioned media outlets. The exceptional one with the *Herald-Tribune's* advertising and marketing director and the general sales manager with SNN 6 was conducted on site in the conference room of the *Herald Tribune's* advertising and marketing department. Each interview averaged 55 minutes and was digitally audiotaped after I got each interviewee's obvious permission (Stacks, 2002).

*The Third Phase of Interviews.* Commenting on how to conduct intensive interviews, Stacks (2002) contends the step after interviews is to analyze the data gathered. Fontana and Frey (2000) also stress that the interviewers' notes should be analyzed frequently. After the first two phases of the interviews, I wrapped up all the

notes I took during the interviews and also transcribed verbatim all recorded interviews. On the basis of the analysis of these data, I started to review more literature dealing with the assumed connection between media (or newsroom) convergence and good journalism, the viable theory about quality journalism producing good business, the theories about economies of scope and scale, and the theory about competitive advantages. These literature reviews further enlightened me on the dichotomy of the link between convergence and good business: One is that successful convergence satisfies the twin aims of good journalism and good business practices (Quinn, 2004), but the other is that the expected economic advantages have not yet reached their full potential (Dupagne and Garrison, 2006). They also gave me more inspirations based on Mantrala, Naik, Sridhar and Thorson's (2007) empirical generalization that good news quality is good business; and on the questioned existence of scale and scope economies in media industry because first Peltier's (2004) statistical analysis shows that the merger and acquisition failures in the media industry have proved that the hopes placed in the synergies are generally disappointing and second Doyle (2002) can only prove the positive correlation between the market share and the operating profitability of firms involved in either TV or radio or newspaper company but not between economic benefits and cross-media ownership of television and newspapers.

On the other hand, the invaluable advice given by my doctoral advisory committee professors at my comprehensive-test defense inspired me in new directions to further this study: (1) adding a sample, i.e. World Company in Lawrence, KS, because the debate on whether Tribune Company's synergy strategy is a failure may predict divergent results from this study's anatomizing convergent media companies of different

sizes and ownership; (2) adding the new-generation convergence practitioners to the list of interviewees because they may have different understanding of media convergence under new circumstances; and (3) revising the list of questions for the semi-structured interviews by adding some unique questions to show my understanding of what my interviewees are doing.

Rearmed by the new round of literature review and my advisory professors' directions, I designed a new phase of semi-structured interviews by mainly targeting Tribune Company and World Comp as the locations for my face-to-face interviews with respondents and also by conducting an e-mail interview with semi-structured questions with such individual respondents as Diane McFarlin, publisher of the Herald-Tribune Media Group, to collect some new ideas and perspectives of media convergence.

This field visit for semi-structured interviews took place from February 26 to March 1, 2007 in Chicago and Lawrence, KS. Both the two visits during this field trip got involved in observation of facilities, attendance at several front-page and convergence meetings, and face-to-face semi-structured interviews. In World Company, I had meetings and interviews with marketing and advertising managers who handled day-to-day convergence activities in the business side of their media companies. In Tribune Company, however, I failed to obtain the opportunity to interview the three targeted respondents in the business departments of the company.

As I did for the second phase of interviews, I sent my interview schedule that contains eight open-ended questions for the semi-structured interviews, which are based on my advisory professors' advice, to my contact persons in the *Chicago Tribune* and World Company: Mr. Kerry Luft, the associate managing editor of Foreign News and Mr.

Al Bonner, advertising and marketing director. These questions, which are available from Appendix E, basically dealt with the same content as those in Appendix D, but some of them were asked in a different way. For instance, instead of asking: “Is media convergence, especially the convergence in which you are involved making money? Why or why not?” the new question asks: “How have your company’s convergence models helped make money?”

With the help of the two contact persons, I then purposely selected 16 individuals with different specialized roles in the newsrooms and business departments of both Tribune Company and World Company. Since three business managers and one editor in Tribune Company were not available, a total of 12 respondents in these two companies accepted my face-to-face interviews with them. In addition, two new respondents from the Herald-Tribune Media Group; and four respondents from the Tampa News Center and one respondent from the *Chicago Tribune*, who were interviewed by me in the second phase, sent me back their detailed answers to the same semi-structured questions as those I used for the face-to-face interviews. I also had a telephone interview with Mike Connelly, the executive editor of the *Herald-Tribune* on March 7, 2007 based on the same question list I used in Sarasota, St. Petersburg, and Tampa. Consequently, 20 respondents were totally interviewed during this phase. The 14 respondents who were interviewed for the first time during this phase of interviewing include: the publisher of the *Herald-Tribune* (Fla.); the new *Herald-Tribune*’s advertising and marketing director; the associate managing editor for foreign news of the *Chicago Tribune*; the associate managing editor for innovation of the *Chicago Tribune*; the senior electronic news editor of the *Chicago Tribune*; the editor of *chicagotribune.com*; the managing editor for the

*Journal-World*; the business editor for the *Journal-World*; the manager for 6 News of World Company; the managing editor for convergence; the editor products manager; the online sales coordinator; the advertising manager of the *Journal-World*; and the corporate advertising and marketing director. Their more detailed profiles are available from Appendix B. Among these 20 respondents, six had been interviewed by me before I kicked off this phase of face-to-face interviews.

I conducted the semi-structured interviews in the newsroom of the *Chicago Tribune* on February 26 and 27, 2007 and in the newsroom of the *Journal-World* and in the conference of the corporate advertising department conference room on March 1. During this trip, each interview averaged 45 minutes and was also audiotaped with the interviewees' expressed permission.

*The Fourth Phase of Interviews.* The process of implementing this study was full of dramatic colors because it witnessed and is still witnessing many dramatic changes in the fast-going American news industry. As I discussed previously, the privatization of the former public-traded Tribune Company seems to have rescued the dissected doom of one of the world's greatest media companies with the synergy being still kept until now, May of 2008. No sooner was the privatization of Tribune Company completed in December 2007 than Florida Communications Group President John Schueler declared on April 14, 2008 that Media General, FCG's parent company, has offered voluntary buyouts to half the employees at the Tampa News Center so that some analysts saw this move as a sign of the continuing weakness of the state's media economy (Deggans, 2008).

On the other hand, in the consideration of various user-generated news and information content and various tools such as facebook for users to generate news and

information content, I always remember my advisory professors' advice to keep an eye on what the new-generation convergence practitioners are doing. While I was finishing this study, I was also doing the fourth phase of interviews, which I utilized e-mails to send a list of questions to targeted respondents. They include: the chief business correspondent of the *Chicago Tribune*; the vice president of Communication and Corporate Relations of Tribune Company; the director for product innovation of the *USA Today*; the senior editor at the *New York Times* Continuous News Desk; the publisher of the Herald-Tribune Media Group; the former multimedia technology editor of the News Center in Tampa (he resigned his job from the *Tampa Tribune* in the middle of April 2008 based on my personal communication with him on April 17, 2008) and the corporate advertising and marketing director of the World Company. These seven interviewees are young and middle-aged, and my purpose in interviewing them via e-mails is to collect their new perspectives of media convergence generated from their job positions and the brand new information about their media companies' business performances dealt with convergence in such hard and fast changing times for media industry. Among them, four respondents were already interviewed by me in the previous phases of interviewing.

#### *Data Analysis*

All digitally audiotaped interviews were transcribed verbatim. I manually reviewed the transcriptions based on the procedures, the five stages of data analysis, recommended by McCracken (1988). The five stages were recommended by McCracken to analyze the data collected from a long interview, which he defines as "the opportunity to step into the mind of another person, to see and experience the world as they do

themselves” (p.9). Since Stacks (2002) defines intensive interviewing as an informal (qualitative) research method, which “provides rich detail and the ability to understand what the individual being interviewed really thinks about something” (p.86), the long interview may be considered a kind of intensive interviews. Therefore, McCracken’s five stages of data analysis can also basically be applied to analyze the data collected from intensive interviews, semi-structured interviews, structured interviews, and to this study. These five stages include (1) observation of a useful utterance, (2) development of expanded observations, (3) examination of interconnection of observed comments, (4) collective scrutiny of observations for determining patterns and themes, and (5) final analysis of all the patterns and themes across all interviews. McCracken contends that each of these five stages represents a higher level of generality.

By using these five stages, I believe each of them represents a deeper level of analysis to explore the trajectory from media convergence to good journalism, economic synergies, and competitive advantages. The five stages of data analysis took me about four years. My first stage was reading through all the answers from the seven respondents to my first phase of interviewing questions sent to them via e-mails. By carefully reading them, I identified the significant and useful parts in their responses, to which I compared related literature reviews. I also further categorized them based on my research questions for this study. For example, I grouped together what Ferrara believes about “Convergence is absolutely necessary” and what Bradley thinks “Convergence is an important survival strategy for local media” so as to be ready to discuss on this study’s first research question. The first stage of analysis brought me many useful points of entry to drive this research forward.

The second stage was, based on the results from analyzing the respondents' answers to the e-mail interviews, revising the interview schedule by cutting off two unnecessary interviewing questions, preparing for the face-to-face interviews guided by a revised semi-structured question list, and carrying out the interviews on site in the respondents' office or working place (Stack, 2002). In this stage of my study, revising the interview schedule is important for developing expanded observations and for driving the study forward. For instance, when the respondents' answers from the first phase of e-mail interviews showed that the discussion on shovelware created by media convergence had already become out of the question dealing with media convergence, I deleted the question "Do you think media convergence is producing shovelware? (the content shoveled from Web sites' printed papers onto the Internet without adding much or any new material). This is because Denton demonstrated the respondents' mutual attitudes and approaches to the shovelware by saying, "We don't replicate content. Although we share a lot of things, yet we report from different angles and disseminate news in different ways."

The third stage really got involved with a great deal of interconnection examining of observed comments. As aforementioned, I wrapped up all the notes I took during the interviews and also transcribed verbatim all recorded interviews. On the basis of the analysis of these data, I started to compare them to more literature reviews, especially dealing with whether media convergence can lead to good business. These literature reviews enlightened me on the bridge functions of scale and scope economies, which may be ignited and maximized by the economic convergence mentioned by Jenkins (2001), when he exemplifies the wave of mergers and acquisitions in media industry since the

beginning of 1980s, typically referring to the horizontal integration of the entertainment industry. Based on the comparison between the results of interviews and literature reviews, I realized that, without this bridge, convergence would have difficulty generating obvious profits.

Based on the findings from the third stage, my fourth stage of data analysis was actually combined with the fifth on. The combination focused on monitoring many dramatic changes in the fast-changing American news industry. While keeping scrupulous observations of those changes, I revised the question list again by readjusting Question 1 from “From the perspective of your job involved in convergence (as an editor or a reporter or a producer or a manager), do you think media convergence is inevitable? Why or why not?” to “Based on the debate on the Tribune Company’s convergence strategy and Media General’s recent buyouts of half employees in the Tampa News Center, how do you think convergence is evitable or is not necessary? Do you think privatization of media companies can protect media companies in a way and help keep or improve the convergence strategy? And why or why not?” After the revision, I e-mailed the new question list to selected respondents related to this study in the Herald-Tribune Media Group, the Tampa News Center, the *Chicago Tribune*, the World Company, *The New York Times*, and the *USA Today* to ask for their new perspectives of media convergence based on the newly revised questions. Based on the data collected from this last phase of interviews, my final data analysis combined with analysis of all interviews put this study in a better position to explore some patterns and themes dealing with the possibility that media convergence may also converge good journalism, economic synergies and competitive advantage.

## CHAPTER 5

### FINDINGS

As mentioned in Chapter 4, e-mail and phone call recruitments, personal referrals from colleagues, and follow-up reminders helped me recruit a total of 37 respondents. One of them gave only a telephone interview, one of them gave both telephone and face-to-face interviews, 29 of them participated in face-to-face interviews, 11 of them accepted both e-mail and face-to-face interviews, and nine of them only accepted e-mail interviews. Therefore, this study totally conducted about 48 usable semi-structured interviews with 37 editors, reporters, producers, general managers, directors, managers, and one chairman from nine convergent media outlets.

Based on analyzing the data collected from these 48 personal interviews, this chapter presents the research findings in a descriptive and narrative form, referred to as storytelling by Stake (1998). The findings are arrayed in constructs and concepts found important by previous literature and critical to this study's purpose. All categories under the concepts are discussed according to the order of being mentioned in the research questions. Here is a re-visit to the research questions. The first research question explored whether media convergence is inevitable. The second question examined how convergence may enrich media content, improve media credibility, and create good journalism. The third question examined how convergence may enable news organizations to share resources so as to decrease costs. The fourth question discussed how convergence may lead to good business and generate profits. The fifth question tested whether convergence may create differentiation. The last research question

examined what competitive advantages convergence may create eventually.

### *Inevitability of Media Convergence*

Among the total 37 participants, all offered usable answers to the first category: whether media convergence is inevitable or necessary. Thirty-six of them agreed on the inevitability of convergence, and one pointed out that “synergy,” a version of convergence conducted by his company had not totally reached its planned goals yet.

Respondents agreed on the necessity or even inevitability of media convergence. From the perspective of newspapers, Ferrara believed, “It is absolutely necessary... Newspapers need to adapt to that quickly or lose, probably to TV.” Thelen regarded media convergence as “more a matter of being inevitable than necessary... because of how consumers eclectically access information and the economic constraints that require news organizations to make the most efficient use of their resources.” Bradley thought, “Convergence is an important survival strategy for local media,” but pointed out “it may not be the best strategy for every media entity in a market.” He admitted media convergence is a “difficult and challenging process” because “a converged approach to journalism takes more thought, effort and time.” When answering the question “When do you think it’s a suitable time for big newspaper companies in the United States or in Hong Kong to start media convergence,” Connelly said a little bit surprisingly, “Two years ago or five years ago!” His answer obviously showed that he regarded media convergence as a high necessity at least for the newspaper industry although he added, “The greatest difficulty for media convergence is investment.” To support media convergence, Connelly also offered some concrete reasons. Pointing out the fact that newspaper readership is declining, especially among young people, a lot of whom go to

television and the Internet for information, he thought newspapers should make preparations for this situation. He said, “We all know what will come. Internet has both words and video. Convergence can enable us to be ready for it.”

Talking about the necessity of media convergence, Denton said, “We do more media convergence than anybody else, but not enough yet. Need to plan [different media platforms] them together rather than separately.” Gadsden, a news editor with the *St. Petersburg Times*, said, although without a formal media convergence project like what News Center and the *Herald-Tribune* had, the *Times* had entered into an agreement with WTSP-TV Channel 10 (CBS) in Tampa. “We send them a copy of budget from our 4 p. m. meeting. ... They are selectively giving us some stories but not everything.” Although she mentioned the channel sometimes published stories not on the budget list they gave her, she believed, “It can be better.” She explained the reason why the *Times* had not started a convergence project was it was finishing the newspaper pagination system. With it they would be able to tear down the wall between print and Web systems. Finally, she said, they would also launch their own TV channel in their editorial building rather than have a partnership of convergence with Channel 10. Carr and Gentry emphasized a kind of conditional necessity. The former held, “If enough people do it and do it right ... eventually it will become necessary,” and the latter thought, “It will occur because of competitive factors and technological factors” although he did not directly think it is necessary or inevitable.

It seems, three years since my face-to-face interview with him, in 2007 Thelen still thought convergence’s inevitability is driven by the emergence of the Web as a primary news delivery technology. He pointed out, “Convergence 1.0 was about bringing

the strengths of print to broadcast and vice versa. Convergence 2.0 is about leveraging the strengths of legacy platforms (print, broadcast, radio) on to the Web.” More respondents thought convergence is inevitable driven by technology. Connelly thought since technology had eliminated the barriers between convergence, and media people in media industry naturally had thought about convergence, and that was why “We are also experimenting with one way, which is podcast on our Web site.” McElroy pointed out that New York Times Company believes that the Web is the future business, but she thinks “it will be some time before all reporters and editors here ‘act’ like Web writers and producers.” Coming from the same big newspaper company, McFarlin comments:

Media convergence is inevitable because of the increasing sophistication of technology. As digital capabilities become more powerful, they offer society more convenient and less expensive ways to access news and information. This, in turn, puts pressure on dominant media organizations to offer more choices to their customers.

Many respondents think convergence is inevitable because, increasingly, readers and customers are converging their use of media. LeBien stressed that people want information, particularly news, on multiple media platforms, and that they also want convenience and versatility so that any news organization that wants to compete must provide its content across platforms. Hinojosa echoed LeBien by saying that the audience had already moved to a multimedia world so that news companies need to catch up. Estes insisted that it is inevitable for the *Chicago Tribune* to keep its online interactivity as one of its cutting-edge advantages because audiences have the whole Web now, and there is much wider variety of choices now than it used to be even for local news. Anderson thought it is important for the World Company to feel convergence’s inevitability and to reach out to their audience in many different ways so that when the news breaks they

know where to turn on. Modest about the fact that other media companies may not have to have the single ownership as the World Company has, Mathis believed convergence “is inevitable more here, that’s for sure... Everybody wants to make sure it provides the audience with the maximum things as possible.” Brickley believed that convergence necessity lies in the fact that “Our readers and advertisers rely on us to provide the content and audience, regardless of the vehicle. Whether you prefer television, internet, newsprint or direct mail...we deliver.” Read did believe in convergence’s inevitability

Because the assets (human and capital) will become underutilized and nearly irrelevant if channeled through a single medium. Companies, for public good and as good business, will use convergence/multimedia as a lever. And the consumer is ahead of media companies with regard to multimedia anyway. They’ve been accessing content through multiple forms of media out of convenience long before media companies overtly were providing it. To serve them we must meet them on their terms.

Victoria Lim, the then senior consumer reporter with the Tampa Center’s News Channel 8, who had been honored as “Queen of Convergence” for her award winning consumer reports that had appeared on television, in newspaper, and online (Society of Professional Journalists, 2008), also would like to say convergence is inevitable. As a multi-media journalist, however, she stressed that he or she will need strict guidelines on quality, and managers who can make sure the quality of reporting and writing meets the standards of each medium.

However, many interviewees regard convergence as a strategy for media companies to survive in competitive markets and to catch up with the trend in development momentum of technology and people’s lifestyles. Four years ago, DiVito warned that convergence is absolutely inevitable because media companies that provide quality journalism in an efficient manner will survive. One year ago, Greising and Locin,

two journalists from the *Chicago Tribune*, contended that convergence is inevitable and not optional any more, and we had to move with some dispatch. Now, in April 2008, even after Media General has offered buyouts to half of its 1,326 Tampa Bay-based employees so that to blur the light of its “crown jewel” – the Tampa market (Weisenthal, 2008a), DiVito insists convergence is media companies’ survival strategy:

Now more than ever is convergence inevitable, even where companies don’t own all the delivery methods. Sharing content, whether among joint-owned properties or mere partnerships, is efficient. News agencies need to maximize efficiencies if they are to survive in the business world. I think convergence is going to be a necessity. Media General, or any media company for that matter, must maximize any and all opportunity for efficiency. Partnerships will be especially valuable for smaller newsrooms that don’t have large resources.

Secherman held the same opinion to say on April 4, 2008 that convergence is a certainty. He added that it is journalists’ responsibility to deliver news and information in the most efficient and effective manner in which it reaches audiences. He encouraged print journalists to understand how the pace of a 24x7 news operation is different: “We no longer write for one late-night deadline. It is a constant deadline, more akin to 24-hour cable TV news.” “Using the digital tools to find more sources and more newsgathering opportunities makes any platform, print or digital, better,” Secherman further contends.

Just before Harbinger, the activist fund going after Media General, had successfully installed three representatives to the company’s board (Weisenthal, 2008b), two journalists from the *Chicago Tribune*, sent me the information that Sam Zell, the new boss of the company, wants synergy (convergence) to continue. Luft also indicated his guess that if Media General’s media outlets in Tampa were to become experimental laboratories for privatization to protect convergence strategy, similar things would possibly happen at other properties.

In this category, respondents agreed on the necessity, the certainty, or even inevitability of media convergence from different perspectives: technology's driving force, audiences' demands, media's survival strategy, and trend of lifestyles in society.

*Enriched Media Content, Improved Media Credibility or Shovelware*

Among the total 37 participants, 21 offered usable answers to the category of enriched media content. Nineteen of them agreed on the enhanced content offered by media convergence, but one of them indicated his uncertainty of enriched media content, and the other mentioned the prerequisite for enriched media content to happen. Twenty-nine respondents discussed the category of improved media credibility from various attitudes while all of the 21 respondents did think that shovelware is necessary and can be repurposed, repackaged, and reformatted.

*Enriched Media Content.* Based on his experience working directly with the Tampa project, Bradley contended, “[b]y collaborating with partners, each [platform] is able to leverage the other’s inherent strengths to improve their individual products.” Bradley, Carr, and Ferrara emphasized that media convergence can “absolutely” or “certainly” enrich media content if it is “done right” because, as Ferrara said, “convergence enhances the amount of content by having stills, video, text, rich media online and other elements.” Thelen considered it important that the journalism be “done properly” for media convergence to enhance content. He further explained, “The multimedia news organization can pick from a number of story-telling devices and techniques to enhance impact and understanding.” “It can improve credibility because of the increased transparency of Web presentation,” he added. Gentry believed that convergence “can” enhance content “because it enables a company to prepare and deliver

information in an incredibly wide array of formats.”

Although he mentioned that different media platforms in News Center share reporters, Denton emphasized, “We don’t replicate content. Although we share a lot of things, yet we report from different angles and disseminate news in different ways. We continuously update news, fully aware of what is going on for our audience.” MaFarlin also denied the possibility for convergence her company was conducting to just transport duplicated content across various media platforms. She emphasized,

Convergence definitely enriches content by enabling media organizations to deliver news and information by complementary means. For example, a report in the newspaper can be accompanied by an information box that directs readers to supplemental content online. An online report can include video segments or podcasts that enable the consumer to see or hear what happened. An investigative series can encompass all three: print, online and video. Convergence has a multiplier effect, enabling news organizations to tell the story in many different ways and with any number of combinations. This results in journalism with greater depth and dimension.

Many respondents thought convergence had enriched media content from the perspective of the variety of ways of reporting news and other information. Connelly liked convergence because “it offers more ways to tell stories.” LeBien also believed the great thing about convergence is it provides a platform for merging story-telling techniques: text, photos, audio and video, and the opportunity for interaction with online readers. Hinojosa agreed that convergence can enrich media content because convergence means a rich environment for telling stories. Lim believed convergence can enrich a news consumer’s appetite for information by providing different methods from which a reporter can get news and provide more information than he or she would get by using all three media versus just going to one. Estes liked the availability created by convergence that with newspaper stories journalists can combine television footage, audio, and wider

variety of photos and can have a package of one story that really has a wide variety of content, including reader-submitted content, user-generated content, which is a kind of new thing with the audience sending in photos and the audience participated in a message for doing something else that includes them in the content. In addition to more story-telling techniques, Connelly asserted that convergence can also improve immediacy for the print media to tell stories. With convergence, Brickley believed newspapers can serve up their glamour and immediacy of the moment with their audience of intense readers who are engaged in the communities.

Luft worried that convergence would cause newspapers to use fewer multimedia journalists to do reporting because it is difficult to embrace a scenario under which there are fewer journalists in the field since competition is a healthy thing. Luft's reason is "[t]he odds of a big story going underreported or unnoticed drop significantly if there are more journalists." Pre-requiring the appropriate leadership is in place, Sucherman imagined the concept of putting together experts in different disciplines to work toward the same goal will result in an enriched experience. Sucherman exemplified that, instead of a notebook, a reporter has a video camera to capture the interviews so that he or she can give life to a story on the Web in a way words may not have been able to because a picture may be worth a thousand words, but sometimes video is worth a million.

*Improved Media Credibility.* Talking about whether convergence can improve credibility, Sucherman believed the more angles a journalist can present to a story via convergent media platforms, the more transparency a publisher can provide. Additionally, Sucherman held convergence can help improve credibility because same rules always still play "try to get it first, definitely get it right, but also get to the reader/viewer in a

way that tells the story best.” Brickley argued that convergence can improve media companies’ credibility in the way that having the newspaper’s brand behind the Internet or any product lends believability and strength to readers, which is supported with strong and dependable advertising. As for enriching credibility, Lim emphasized that a news organization can only achieve what with the quality of its work and the quality of the journalists behind the work, but that having someone work on multiple platforms does not guarantee the enhanced quality. Two editors from the *Chicago Tribune* gave credit to convergence’s role of improving credibility. Adee believed that in the community a newspaper for 160 years helps them greatly online, and that its convergence with new media six or seven years old is also a big help to the newspaper’s credibility. As the editor of *chicagotribune.com*, Estes held convergence can help credibility in terms of getting a wider audience and more people understanding what the *Tribune* is doing.

However, Greising, the chief business correspondent of the *Tribune*, thought convergence creates greater risks to credibility because there are fewer voices from the newsroom. “So there is more of a tendency for the media to act as one, rather than having many different points of view about how to approach a story.” McElroy did not think technically converging newsroom improves or enriches credibility because credibility is all about people, not the process used, and that what is important is getting the best people working for all media products – paper or the Web. McFarlin thought convergence neither improves nor degrades credibility, but it places a greater onus on the originating news organization to guard against a loss of credibility that can result from taking short cuts or rationalizing that the ability to deliver news quickly justifies speed over care.

*Shovelware*. Almost every respondent managed to differentiate enhanced content from shovelware. “Shovelware is simply repurposing of already created content” (Gentry) and it should be defined as “the programming that moves the content, not the content itself” (Carr). Ferrara understood shovelware “should happen” because “for the most part, much of the Web convergence involves transitioning the newspaper to an online environment, because more and more readers are getting their news that way.” Thelen pointed out that convergence produces shovelware “no more than unconverged news organizations.” Since I revised my semi-structured questionnaire, which I used for the second phase of interviews, the shovelware topic was no more among the questions. However, time and again, when talking about whether convergence enriches media content, some respondents still mentioned the topic. Locin thought shovelware is important if a newspaper has so much crossover between its print reader and its online reader, and it is normal for part of it is taking some of the same content and packaging it in different ways. “We are adding,” Locin emphasized, “first of all, there immediacy.... The other thing is interactivity.” Citing an example about the local election in Chicago, Locin made clearer shovelware’s importance and its leverage on the online in-depth coverage of the same content originated by the print side. Locin said,

But again, most of the stories themselves, the main story, are from the paper. But, we added a, [look at your] polling place. We added a blog, which is obviously no, just a sort of cautious now in the political world.... So you can see and get this variety here. A content that is really hard to do within these links to the information to each of candidates. Then we go back to the main political page here. We have these videos which show the interviews with all these different candidates who are running for city offices. There are 25 or so interviews here, it is apparent.

Howard thought shovelware was one of the things in the last year (I face to face interviewed him in March 2007), and that they were really trying to go beyond what is

just in the paper. “We try to have a lot of deeper, more contexts and documents and checks about the subject,” Howard stressed. What Howard said was echoed by LeBien. He did not believe newspaper stories displayed online is enough to be called “convergence” (here he meant shovelware). He clarified that convergence requires something more, such as the multimedia presentation: “Convergence means doing more with your content, using the possibilities of the Internet or other mediums.” Both Howard’s and LeBien’s commentaries on shovelware actually touched the criteria of good journalism and good journalism in the multimedia environment.

As aforementioned the criteria for good journalism may be closely contingent on the evaluation criteria for news, which include accuracy, attribution, balance, fairness, objectivity, and brevity stressed by Brooks, Kennedy, Moen, and Ranly (1999); and credibility, liking, quality, and representativeness concluded by Sundar (1999). In the multimedia environment emphasized by the 2007 Annual Report on American Journalism (The Project for Excellence in Journalism, 2007), good journalism may be added such factors as speed, in-depth reporting, and diversified reporting implemented through such multimedia avenues as text, graphics, blogs, videos, audios, and slide shows. Just as Bogart (2004) summarized, the following words and phrases are inevitable to define quality journalism: “integrity, fairness, balance, accuracy, comprehensiveness, diligence in discovery, authority, breadth of coverage, variety of content, reflection of the entire home community, vivid writing, attractive makeup, packaging or appearance, and easy navigability” (p.40). These criteria for good journalism transit the discussion on Enriched Media Content, Improved Media Credibility or Shovelware of the study to the next category: Good Journalism et al.

### *Good Journalism, Profits, Lower Cost and Differentiation*

*Good Journalism.* Among the total 37 participants, 23 offered usable answers to the first part of this category: Good Journalism. Seventeen of interviewees strongly believed in the close relation between media convergence and good journalism. One of them said “No.” Five respondents noted that convergence will create good journalism under certain circumstances. Bradley asserted that media convergence not only creates good journalism but also creates a dynamic that can and should result in even better journalism. Many others held that when it is done well there is absolutely no question that convergence creates quality journalism with explanatory pieces in the paper, amazing video on television, and more information online. Thelen, former publisher and president of *The Tampa Tribune*, confirmed that convergence absolutely creates good journalism. He thought the *Tampa Tribune*'s use of multimedia techniques on projects like a hurricane aftermath is an example of the increased customer impact convergence can provide. “Yes, I have seen it happen in Tampa. Convergence challenges complacent ways of doing journalism and brings forth fresh thinking,” he emphasized.

Denton also gave examples to show the convergent News Center was doing good journalism. For instance, Denton said, when a serious collapse accident happened several days before my interview, the *Tampa Tribune* had a five-page investigative coverage of it and Channel 8 also had a comprehensive and fast reportage of it supported by a chopper camcording from the sky what was going on. With TBO.com also on the ground, Denton believed they did good journalism on this accident with prompt and complete reportage and investigative coverage. As the multimedia technology editor with the News Center, DiVito believed journalism is improved in the way that everyone can have access to the

other's story which is going on although they have separate media platforms. "I can read and give suggestions and comments to my colleagues' stories. We share stories and everything," said DiVito. Even if it is an exclusive story, DiVito stressed, they would share it with each other, but they didn't scoop others' stories. This is because DiVito believed, "When used properly, convergence fosters collaboration, which fosters good journalism."

McFarlin believed convergence can create good journalism because coverage has greater depth and dimension now due to the ability to tell stories in different ways and to supplement core information with illuminating features such as online links, keyword access to databases, video segments, and podcasts. LeBien, McElroy, Hinojosa, Estes, Adee, and Anderson echoed McFarlin's contention, saying that convergence enables journalists to diversify their talents, to think about alternative and multiple ways of telling stories, and to create more substantial content on the Web. LeBien exemplified that convergence can enable investigative journalists to display pdf attachments of public records that they might have used in digging up a good story. Estes also pointed out that convergence did expand the *Tribune's* investigative story on mercury in fish,<sup>1</sup> and that is an example of great journalism on the Web that they have been able to do. Anderson regarded convergence's adding more depth to stories will create good journalism.

McElroy thought convergence has created better journalism on the Web because the whole process during which "the papers move away from fluffy to more content on the Web" is full of many reporters' availability of and contribution to producing for sites. Sucherman also emphasized the interaction between convergence and talented journalists can help create more good journalism. He asserted,

To be sure, there are examples of it [good journalism] every day. Again, putting talented people together with interesting tools leads to innovation and dynamic journalism. The trick is combining great talent with great tools. That's a winning combination.

As always, Brickley and Read liked to connect the discussion on good journalism with good business. Brickley declared that the *Herald-Tribune* was currently expanding their offering and experimenting with unique ways to “gather” news. But, “good journalism from an advertising manager’s perspective is anything that drives eyeballs, keeping readers engaged in our product will deliver results for advertisers.” Read believed convergence will absolutely create good journalism, and that convergence allows for better story-telling. Read further believed that consumers are able to experience and/or engage in such good journalism that otherwise might be limited to the constraints of time and space inherent in the individual medium.

Luft and Connelly thought convergence will generate good journalism on some conditions. Luft believed sometimes convergence can create good journalism but some times it can not. Luft said:

Clearly it is a good option to know that we can draw on our family papers for coverage of certain topics, freeing up our own reporters to do in-depth stories. For example, our China correspondent Evan Osnos filed very few stories in the last half of 2006 as he completed a project about China's thirst for natural resources. But he was enabled to do so because we could rely on the *Los Angeles Times* to cover daily developments. On the other hand, if convergence is used solely as a cost cutting measure ...

Luft's concerns were consistent with his worries about convergence's failure to generate enriched media content if convergence would cause newspapers to use fewer multimedia journalists to do reporting. Although Connelly did not think convergence is naturally related to good or bad journalism, he held that it creates an opportunity of doing good journalism. He exemplified, “For example, we have added the TV studio to our

newsroom and have converged print journalism with broadcast and online journalism for many years. We have been doing convergence although we have made a lot of mistakes.”

Mathis did not want to say that the quality of journalism had been changed really any, or that they were doing better or worse journalism. However, he thought in the World Company they were doing journalism that is different than when they did not have convergence. Greising emphasized that, only to the extent that revenues from Web platforms begin contributing to the ability of journalists to do their work, can convergence contribute good journalism. However, he noted that, so far, the business aspects of convergence had led to a loss of revenue and probably had compromised the ability of reporters to do their work as they had in the past.

What both Mathis and Greising had commented, ignited the remainder of this category: whether convergence can lead to more profits, lower cost, and differentiation.

*Profits.* Before I went to conduct the second phase of interviews in June 2004, Strupp (2000) found out that in August 2000 five months after the three entities moved into the News Center, WFLA’s overall ratings were up about 3% in July compared with a year ago after having done some research into the relationship between Media General’s convergence model in Tampa and ratings, circulation, and page views. Strupp also noticed that The *Tampa Tribune*’s daily circulation rose from 201,002 in July 1999 to 206,694 July 2000, and at TBO.com, page views (the number of requests for HTML pages as a measure of online audience size by online advertisers) were up 35% July 2000 compared with May in the same year. During my first phase of interviews via e-mail, Gentry told me, “There are absolutely no profits from convergence on the news side.” He added, however, “The *Tampa Tribune* is making money from cross-platform sales. The

*Topeka Capital-Journal* and its partners (WIBW radio, KSNT-TV) have put together some profitable cross-platform sales projects.” Ferrara, general manager for Electronic Media in charge of the Herald-Tribune Media Group, said, “Everything we do generates revenue.” Carr, the then news director of Tampa News Center’s WFLA-TV confirmed, “We do make more money through convergence, primarily through sales deals that involve all three platforms.” Thelen, the then publisher and president of the *Tampa Tribune*, in February 2007 confirmed, “We can identify approximately 4-5% plus revenue due to selling across platforms.”

During my second phase of interviews in June 2004, as executive producer, Allan told me that she had witnessed SNN6’s increase of rating since the news channel was housed into the newsroom of the *Herald-Tribune*. According to her, from the time when their convergence program started to the date of my interview with her, SNN6 was available in an increased number of 250,000 households. She also noticed that the *Herald-Tribune*’s circulation had increased twice compared with that in 2003 because of the convergence. In June 2004, advertising managers with both the convergence programs of the Tampa News Center and the Herald-Tribune Media Group provided me some evidence that media convergence had brought more revenues. Because the two companies were converging three media platforms to disseminate media content, both advertisements started multimedia promotion advertising package two years ago (2002). During the interview, *Herald-Tribune*’s Advertising and Marketing Director Lee and General Sales Manager O’Hara confirmed that a new growth had happened in the last two years since convergence. “We have seen solid growth on cable, print and a dramatic one on the Internet.” They added that promoted by the three-multimedia platforms the

company's total ad revenues have increased by 25% in the last four years, which is doubled than those of last 10 years. However, News Center's Southeast Regional Sales Manager Hall was not sure that now advertisers were attracted by her multimedia ad package because the *Tampa Tribune* is the local ad leader while Channel 8's ad opportunities were more attractive to those small businesses. "My ad revenues have never increased by millions since our package [strategy] started, but advertisers trust us."

During the third phase of my interviews in spring 2007, McFarlin, publisher of the Herald-Tribune Media Group, confirmed that the media group had generated several million dollars by building new revenue streams on cable TV and online, and that those were dollars that their print products would not have captured. "The ability to package advertising on more than one medium also has brought in incremental revenue," She added. Brickley, director of Advertising and Marketing of the *Herald-Tribune*, echoed her publisher by saying that their ability of convergence to offer an audience to meet the needs of their advertisers absolutely puts them in a unique position to be very competitive, and to help grow their business and their customers'. Connelly, as the current executive editor of the Herald-Tribune, also asserted convergence absolutely helps make money:

I think that convergence is the smartest strategy or approach, which I have ever seen, in helping newspaper companies make money. By using it, we have been trying to get everybody to read news so that we have multiple ways of selling more eyeballs to advertisers. The Internet has helped us in doing convergence. Media Convergence has created a new revenue string for us.

However, in the macro environment of weak economy in recent years, McFarlin told me during the fourth phase of interviews done by e-mail in April 2008 that she expected, "Regarding 2008, we are having a very difficult year." She pointed out that their declining advertising revenues because of the local recession had undermined their

diversification strategy with revenues down year-over-year in both print and broadcast, and Internet revenue growing more slowly than they had budgeted.

In February 2007, when Read answered my questions via e-mail, he was the regional publisher of Media General's Northern Virginia Community Newspapers. Since he used to be general manager of TBO.com and "still have a belief in and passion for multimedia," he responded to my interviews. He believed that, by operating as efficiently as possible in the administration and support areas so that they can invest in quality news, advertising, marketing and technology resources, convergence has allowed them to grow market share so as to make some profits. However, according to Felberbaum (April 24, 2008), an Associated Press writer, Media General's first-quarter 2008 loss widened, hurt by a charge related to the planned sale of some TV stations, and that the company lost \$20.3 million, or 91 cents per share, in the January-March period compared with a loss of \$6.5 million, or 27 cents per share, last year. The serious financial loss is one of the major reasons, which has caused Media General to open the buyout offer to about half its 1,326 employees (Deggans, April 14, 2008). Will these pieces of news be enough to declare the failure of convergence in Tampa's News Center or a dead end from convergence to good business? Detailed answers were discussed in the next Chapter.

In all the phases of my interviews, some other interviewees also provided a few statistics about the dollars their convergence projects were making. For example, Weitman, vice president of Tribune Company's Communications and Corporate Relations in charge of releasing the company's various statistics, declared, "In 2002, Tribune Media Net [of Tribune Company] which handles our national advertising and our cross media advertising sales reached more than \$60 million in revenue, almost double

what it did the year before.” Weitman was not available during my third phase of interviews in Chicago at the end of February 2007. However, Smolkin’s (2006/2007) investigation already showed that Tribune’s stock, which closed at \$37 on the last trading day before the announcement on the acquisition of Times Mirror, peaked at \$53 in early 2004, then plunged to almost half that by April 26. The Tribune Company case was further discussed in the next Chapter.

Hinojosa asserted that, in the case of the *Chicago Tribune*, great content and presentation had led to a rapid growth in page views, and that page views directly translates to higher ad rates and audience. LeBien pointed out that Chicago Tribune Interactive is a profitable and growing business. Locin believed convergence had helped create some content reachable by multiple media platforms, especially via the Internet, which includes: MetroMixed.com; careerbuild.com; and cars.com. He emphasized, “Content of a newspaper is every thing from the front-page stories to all the listings for restaurants and to the advertising for selling a car, a house or jobs, that is all content.” Therefore, Locin believed that it is always listings and searches, for homes, cars, jobs, everything else, that are very competitive and popular among audience, and that they have offered these online services that were traditionally all could be found home in the newspaper to make some money. Estes confirmed that the amount of revenue that comes in from Web site has grown a lot year after year, and he believed in the Tribune Company it is in the range of 20-30% increase over the past few years. Although he admitted that amount of revenue is still a small percentage in the whole company’s revenues, he pointed out that it has been the biggest growing part of the revenues. He said it is wise for the company to think about putting resources in, anything about what their strategies for

the future that will be interactive as the earlier days.

Sucherman introduced the current *USA Today*'s experience in enabling convergence to make money, "By having our reporters and editors focused on delivering news and information to more platforms in real time, we are increasing the inventory our sales team can monetize. We are also creating new kinds of content which brings with it the ability to create new types of advertising opportunities." As managing editor of the *Journal-World*, Anderson thought they were surely working on the strategy enabling the convergence model to make money although he did not see exact numbers. As manager for 6News of the World Company, Howard observed that the Web has changed so much in five years, and it is evolving so quickly that more and more advertising dollars are going there, and more and more eyeballs are going there. He believed anything that is being in their convergence strategy finally can do to help boost their Web components such as text, graphics, audio, video, photo gallery, and blogs.

As I mentioned previously, Bonner noted in April 2007 that, since the *Journal-World* started its convergence efforts in news and advertising five years ago, its online revenues had grown more than 225%, almost three-quarters of a million dollars. Bonner emphasized, "We are convinced that without convergence, we would have experienced modest or flat growth each year in total advertising, instead we have grown 5% or more each year in spite of major account losses." The better news is that on April 21, 2008, Bonner already let me know, "We have not cut anyone here. We have the same challenges as most newspapers but are not bound to stockholders and operate a little differently," and his detailed information was analyzed in the next chapter.

To sum up, to answer my question whether convergence can help make profits, 31

of the 37 interviewees gave me usable answers. Among them, 24 respondents confirmed from various perspectives the correlation between convergence and profits, and seven said they did not know how to answer this question because they are editorial staffers.

*Lower Cost.* When it comes to the question of lower cost, resources and efficiency, I got usable responses from 27 of the 37 interviewees. Among them, 18 respondents agreed that convergence may lower cost from different perspectives, seven thought convergence could not lower cost or could make cost higher, and two did not know how to answer this question.

Ferrara asserted cost can be lowered by convergence, saying, “You don’t have to pay for some of the same things for all media individually, and you end up with power in your numbers.” Weitman also answered this question from the perspective of resource sharing. He believed lower cost happened because they could devote more resources to covering the news, combining staffs, and maximizing reportage at their TV stations and newspapers so as to deliver a better news product for consumers and serve advertisers better by giving them more options to reach consumers with their messages. Bradley and Carr took the perspective of enhancing efficiency. Carr thought that convergence can create efficiencies while Bradley stressed how to measure efficiency. He cited an example referring to Tampa: Consumer News, which was an area of strength for WFLA-TV, had been aggressively involved in reporting on Consumer Issues for more than 15 years. When the *Tampa Tribune* made a decision to increase the amount of Consumer News it published, it was able to go to the television station and requested one of its primary consumer reporters to write a weekly column for the paper. “They were able to meet a growing need for their readers without expending additional resources,” added

Bradley. “None of this has resulted in specific lowered costs for either operation, but it has resulted in better content for both readers and viewers without additional expense.”

DiVito believed that sharing, repurposing, reusing are all possible and all create cost-saving opportunities although he was not the money person to say exactly how much convergence can save. DiVito also demonstrated that sharing some research results, artwork, and photography among different newsrooms makes good financial sense because the savings are directly proportional to the amount of sharing. Brickley also shared DiVito’s opinions on sharing. She said, “Obviously, having 90 reporters on the street feeding our Internet site and cable television station is much more cost effective than funding each media individually.” She pointed out another way for convergence to save money, i.e., “Using readers and their technology to feed us information will also obviously reduce our costs as that channel emerges.” McElroy took the resources sharing perspective, too. She revealed that by using convergence resources are being redirected in the *New York Times* to investment in online stuffs, even with costs not necessarily lower, since the *Times* has spent a lot of money on Web-only enhancements like video, interactive graphics, Web-based experienced editors like herself.

Howard held that convergence can maximize the resources because right now his company will never send four reporters to cover a fairly simple story. Luft analyzed this topic from the perspective of sharing reporters among the whole Tribune Company. He said, “Overall, of course it has saved costs. Instead of sending correspondents into the field WGN frequently relies on our reporters to provide analysis and coverage. Smaller newspapers in the chain have folded their foreign operations at huge savings to them.”

In echoing Luft’s perspective of sharing reporters, Estes cited an example as

follows to show the lower cost of reporting via convergence:

We have a reporter who was traveling with the vice president in Afghanistan, who gave us a story early today about a bomb attack at the airport space where the vice president was. That story will obviously be in the newspaper tomorrow. As well, this report will also, I believe, be on WGN Radio, talking about this. So, that is an example what you mentioned where... (Right now it is online). It files from online, it goes on the radio, and it files for the newspaper. So, it is basically getting that one reporter on three platforms in one day and 24 hour period.

However, while Greising agreed that convergence can lower cost only to a marginal extent, he noticed that newspapers now equip reporters with video cameras to take on assignment, and that this is considerably less expensive than sending a videographer. He was worried that the content quality is not nearly as good, and the additional work creates distractions for the reporters.

Hinojosa and Sucherman thought what they have done with convergence is to “raise quality and depth of much of our partners’ reporting” (Hinojosa) so as to suit consumer’s demands for more information, faster, and in more places by making smart decisions about “what we cover, how we cover it, and ensure that our infrastructure can support fast and efficient delivery to the right platforms” (Sucherman). They did not believe they could compete and thrive without convergence, but they did not think they were saving great sums of money through convergence.

McFarlin considered whether convergence will lower media companies’ cost from the perspective of investment selections. She thought that any savings in expenses relate to the distribution method, and that the cost of the technology needed to post something online [convergence between print and the Internet] is a fraction of what it costs to invest in printing presses or television technology.

On the contrary, Gentry and Thelen didn't believe convergence can lower cost. "Convergence costs more" (Gentry) and "[i]t's doing more with more, not more with less" (Thelen). "It really hasn't lowered costs because it's about adding content, not substitution," added Thelen. Adee shared with Gentry's and Thelen's opinions, by saying, "Well, our cost is very high right now. If we are starting over now, our cost is not." Anderson thought convergence initially could not save money, but in the long term it can. He thought it is still expensive, but it makes them more efficient. Read did not believe convergence has lowered the cost because it is really not about saving money in the areas of news, content and information. In fact, Read pointed out that it may even increase the cost in those areas due to talent, equipment, and scope of opportunity and competition. Read gave more reasons as the following:

If one is bringing together the resources of totally separate print, online and/or broadcast businesses, then there MAY be some efficiencies in the back-shop/support areas of Finance, HR, and IT. However, on the front-line positions that get closest to the customer, it may even drive more investment. However, the return and upside on that investment is greater.

*Differentiation.* Twenty-seven respondents from the 37 interviewees answered this question. Thelen, executive editor of the *Tampa Tribune* before July 2003, and 14 other respondents answered the question of differentiation from the perspective of news. Seven respondents discussed this question based on the side of business or advertisements of media companies, but two did not give any reasons. Only one respondent answered this question in view of the company's brand image, and another one thought differentiation relates to competition. One did not believe convergence can make a media company differentiated from others. Totally, 22 respondents confirmed this correlation.

Thelen was joined by Carr, the then news director of the Tampa Center's WFLA-TV, to claim that convergence will enable news organization to "better meet customer demands for timely, accurate news on demand" (Thelen) and to "have additional coverage partners helping them to gather the news" (Carr). LeBien said that readers and customers expect media, including news, to be available in multiple platforms, and that a media company that can provide what they need via convergence should be differentiated from a company that does not have multiple programs. "If my company doesn't provide that to them, then someone else will," emphasized LeBien. McElroy was proud that her newspaper can make better use of their reporters to report better news than other top newspapers do, and that is where their differentiation is. She added proudly, "[l]ook at our coverage of the Spitzer sex scandal, etc., with every television including Fox showing our Web page." Luft said, "Clearly, anyone who can bring to bear the resources of a media company like the *Tribune* in a particular market is going to be ahead of the game." Furthermore, Luft listed other differentiations the *Tribune* has: "No other TV or radio station in the market regularly gets the opportunity to tap into the expertise of the only media outlet with foreign and national bureaus, for example, and the *Tribune* has far more reporters dedicated to local news than any other media outlet." Luft hinted those differentiations that can pay off for WGN as well are the differentiation generated by their convergence strategy.

Lim believed that convergence is related to "the case of promoting our online arm for more details, information, copies of documents that may be of interest, links, etc." and that in each medium, she and her colleagues promoted differentiated coverage in the other platforms when they had it. Hinojosa was also clear that a media company's ability

of using convergence to satisfy audience's needs on their terms represents this company's differentiation. Hinojosa commented as follows:

People want news on their terms. Gone are the days when we controlled the content and delivery of news. People are now free to pick among a wide range of news sources, in order to compete, you need to be as engaged as possible in the lives of your readers. A converged news operation allows you to harness as many storytelling tools as possible, allowing news organizations to engage a wider audience. As the number of readers who only get their news in print declines, converged operations hold an advantage.

Anderson and Howard also thought convergence had helped the World Company's media platforms in getting differentiated ways of delivering news and other content. Anderson pointed out that they are doing stories faster and delivering the media content in the ways their readers like. Howard thought the convergent journalists in the World Company are differentiated from others in the way a print reporter can also tell a story from the angle that allows him or her to gather information that is going to supplement their TV products. Sucherman asserted that convergence is making maximum use of the resources at journalists' disposal to create new and interesting ways to tell the story of the news. He believed with confidence that those that don't do convergence now will have to converge at some point to prevent duplication of resources and to tell their stories in a more compelling manner.

As mentioned above, seven respondents discussed the possibility whether convergence can help media companies generate differentiations from business perspective. DiVito believed that convergence absolutely makes sound business sense because it offers advertisers the opportunity to reach their potential customers in a variety of ways. With convergence model used in marketing and advertising promotions, McFarlin thought their strategies are differentiated because:

We are more attuned to the consumers' and advertisers' needs and wants. By offering choices, we are better serving our customers. For example, our conversations with advertisers are no longer directed toward selling them into print. Instead, we are able to talk with them about what approach is more likely to sell their products and strengthen their businesses.

Read passionately praised those media business managers who are differentiated from others because they can use convergence strategies. Read said, "With convergence you are able to reach more people, more often, more effectively and completely in whatever form or fashion they dictate." Read also believed these kind of managers will "have more resources to bear on behalf of the consumers and customers in your community to get them what they want when they want it." Read reiterated, "Convergence also fosters a culture of creativity, innovation, immediacy, and customer-focus, which are empowering and winning elements of an organizational DNA."

Bradley, the then vice president for broadcasting of Media General Corp at Tampa, and some other interviewees considered the question about differentiation in regard to media strategy, journalism, and media brand image strategy. Bradley asserted, "Done right, convergence provides a clear point of differentiation, and is perhaps the most important reason companies should pursue convergence opportunities." More important, Bradley believed it will provide news consumers with "a richer, deeper journalism based product that has a wider area of distribution than can be achieved without multi-media partners." Gentry argued that differentiation will "certainly happen because not all companies will want to do convergence or will not be able to find potential partners." When asked whether convergence will make his company differentiated from other companies, Mathis, convergence manager of the World Company, confirmed, "I think we have been far ahead of them, and a lot of companies

are trying to catch up with us, a certain one.”

By comparison, Estes was not so optimistic about convergence’s effects. Estes revealed that they are more worried about the local TV stations in the media market of Chicago. On the one hand, Adee thought convergence can generate differentiation. On the other hand, he noticed that convergence has also created so much competition for the *Chicago Tribune*. Adee said, “Our competition 15 years ago was the Sun-Times, but right now may be a little bit the *Sun-Times*, but it is also Channel 2, Channel 7, and Channel 5.” “There are still newspapers to make deals with TV stations to share content. That is crazy.” Adee seemed to be more concerned about other styles of convergence in the same media market where the *Tribune* is headquartered.

#### *Heavier Workload and Popularity among Audiences*

Exploring media’s purpose of operation, McQuail (2000) points out, “Media organizations ... are to a large extent in the business of producing spectacles as a way of creating audiences and generating profit and employment” (p. 265). Some interviewees confirmed that audiences understand and like or will understand and like media convergence, thus audiences can be created according to McQuail’s standpoint. Gentry pointed out that “the audience is already converged... they want things in the ways that are most appealing and comfortable to them,” thus he thought the audience likes convergence. Ferrara believed convergence is “becoming expected” by audiences, who “know how to work it and expect us to deliver it,” and that “if you don’t, your credibility comes into question.” Basing his answer on a research result, Carr was sure that “viewers who know that the *Tampa Tribune* helps WFLA-TV land stories tend to appreciate it.” Thelen said yes to this question, but he predicted it will take time for customers to

experience convergence' "quality and accessibility." Bradley also thought customers need time to "accept and credit convergence" although a small amount of consumer research conducted by them on this question showed "most of those who recognize it have positive things to say about it." Hall also added that advertisers liked the News Center's Southeast Regional Sales Department's multimedia ad package that matches the convergent way of delivering news and other content.

Five interviewees didn't think convergence will bring media practitioners heavier workload. Ferrara, the then general manager for electronic media at the Herald-Tribune Media Group, had noticed that some journalists' workload is full, but some others' was the same as five years ago. Ferrara's finding was echoed by Gentry, who had found out "the fact that a lot of journalists are 'at work' for eight hours a day does not mean they are 'working' all eight hours." Additionally, Carr's answer shed light on the other side of this question. Carr explained "it [convergence] sometimes means that a reporter will 'cross platforms'," but that will not necessarily require more work. Just on the opposite, Bradley and Thelen thought convergence definitely takes more work, more thought, and more time. "It is one of the challenges of managing a convergence operation," added Bradley.

Lim was then an active reporter for News Center's three platforms. Although her job contract didn't say she had to work for more platforms, she regarded the 3-platform reporting as a challenge that could serve more people. She didn't have extra pay from her work for extra platforms though she got some compensated days off. However, she said, "I do like it [3-platform reporting]. In America, in broadcast women have short shelf life. I also want to be able to keep scrutinizing words. TBO.com has rotating deadlines, and I

would like to meet them, too.” Managing Editor Tennant with the *Herald-Tribune* also clarified that only a few reporters did extra work because normally only feature reporters with her newspaper had a package on SNN 6.

Although this category may find out some working practice of the editors, reporters, and managers who worked across the media platforms and some opinions on convergence practice from audiences collected by some managers and editors of the related media companies, this category seemed not to center around the research questions of this study. On the other hand, the interviewees who can feel the popularity of convergence among audiences should better target the audiences who are exposed to the news and information disseminated by the convergent media, not the message senders. Therefore, at the end of the first phase of e-mail interviews, I cancelled this question.

#### *Competitive Advantages*

In all, 25 respondents answered the last category on the correlation between media convergence and competitive advantages, and all of them believed that companies that do convergence well have the potential to achieve competitive advantages.

Thelen and Weitman thought the fact that convergence will make media companies “more efficient and more entrepreneurial” and that convergence will create good journalism and profits will lead to competitive advantages. Carr was proud that Tampa model of convergence is “the only one in the market able to put together multi-media sales packages.” Also, he asserted, “Convergence allows us to put out a stronger and therefore more competitive news product.”

Connelly, Tennant, and Denton all contended that the possibility for cross promotion among converged media platforms, the prompt, comprehensive and in-depth

way of offering news and other media content, and the early preparation for the declining circulation and rating differentiate convergent media outlets from those that don't have media convergence programs. They believed this differentiation leads to media's competitive advantage. Connelly offered the following concrete reasons:

In our case, it has satisfied the experience of our readers, users and viewers in getting news and information disseminated by us. From the business sense, it is very valuable because it has created a new string of revenues. In the sense of journalism, it has created ways to tell stories in a much more comprehensive way.

While the above-mentioned respondents offered somewhat comprehensive reasons for the correlation between media convergence and competitive advantages, Tennant stressed the linkage from good journalism to competitive advantages. She pointed out that the ability for all platforms' reporters to go out for comprehensive coverage when breaking news happens should be a kind of competitive advantage. Denton asserted that they have a differentiating advantage that other media companies don't have. It is as follows: Channel 8 does better journalism because of the [Tampa] *Tribune* reporters' in-depth coverage; the *Tribune* does good journalism because of Channel 8's quick and visual reportage; and TBO.com are beneficial of both the *Tribune* and Channel 8.

LeBien also emphasized that convergence helps the *Chicago Tribune* maintain its position as No.1 local news provider in the media market. He added, "Convergence also helps us leverage the multiple platforms our company owns in our market: the newspaper, CLTV, WGN-TV and WGN-AM." McElroy stressed the availability generated by convergence for newspapers to offer quality and speedy journalism on a continuous news basis will bring competitive advantages to newspaper companies. She encouraged

newspapers to be able to put the best reporters, editors and photographers online, with a single mission for print and Web products. Only by offering such kind of journalism-first and speed-second news, she emphasize, will there be advantages for newspapers because “[N]o one will keep reading any media company – the New York Times included – for being first if the quality is better elsewhere.” Hinojosa believed that convergence can help news organizations obtain competitive advantages because it can help them realign their content and delivery in order to catch back up with the news consumer. Hinojosa thought since readers have already come to expect a rich experience in both news and information and they want the ability to go deeper into a story or to interact with it, media organizations should conduct a fundamental shift in the expectations of readers. Still talking about the connection between good journalism and competitive advantages, Sucherman discussed the two points, which convergence can help generate and the 25-year successful experience of the USA Today can prove: tight stories relevant to people’s daily lives and the package of them in an attractive and accessible format. Secherman thought convergence can take these two principles and translate them to the world of new media. “If we can get better and better at that, readers will continue to look to us for that kind of coverage,” Sucherman believed.

Estes linked a media company’s competitive advantages with its differentiation. Estes thought such companies as Google Inc. is a very innovative one, which is very much differentiated from other companies. He thought the only way other media companies can compete with Google in the world we are living today is to be differentiated with the help of convergence. Estes explained his reasons as follows:

When you have companies like Google, a very innovative one. They are taking things we have not thought of. They will take video and audio, and they are taking new things on the web, they are mapping. For keeping up with such a kind of company, we have to have convergence, there is no alternative. That is what the marketplace demands now. People will not wait until tomorrow to read about something in the stock market today, they need it now. If you don't supply information with them now, they will go to somewhere else to get it.

Lim discussed the correlation between convergence and competitive advantages from two perspectives. First, she regarded convergence as the “report on various platforms” model. Based on this model, she contended, news organizations hope they will attract more news consumers to their media outlets by saying that “we cover the news you want, any way you want it, more in depth than the other guys, and therefore are providing you a service no one else can.” A second model is financial, Lim explained, and it will have people who can go more than on job but by paying her or him one salary. Lim did not prefer the second model, but she promoted a way for newspapers to try to save themselves by throwing resources and content online and tapping into the “news on demand” market. By the combination of providing readers a service no one else can and the news on demand model, Lim ignited the discussion on the third channel from convergence to competitive advantages in addition to good journalism and differentiation.

DiVito said he is journalistically confident saying that is advantageous to reach such a large portion of the adult consumers in the market, but it is difficult for him to answer convergence's availability in creating advantages financially. Echoing DiVito's uncertainty, Greising confirmed convergence's advantage in generating good journalism, but he pointed out that the convergence model has not yet demonstrated appreciable comparative advantage as a business model. In a moderate view, Bradley and Ferrara wove hope and worry into their belief that convergence will result in competitive

advantages. While Ferrara believed “it’s really a simple theory [media convergence-good journalism-low cost/differentiation-competitive advantage] that works,” he worried that convergence “often gets caught in muck and personalities of people who are scared of change.” Bradley showed his commitment to the concept that convergence bridges advantages, but he hoped that the government regulations that control the ownership of local television stations will be changed so that they can create more opportunities of owning both newspapers and television stations in the same market.

However, McFarlin’s experience as the publisher of Herald-Tribune Media Group bridged some connection between convergence’s function in business success, which will lead to competitive advantages. McFarlin concluded that, at the most fundamental level, convergence offers advertisers one-stop shopping, and that by dealing with the Herald-Tribune Media Group, they can do business with the predominant media organization in Sarasota region and still select from a menu of media choices: a daily newspaper with six zoned editions, four weeklies, numerous magazines, three web sites, a direct mail services, and a 24-hour local news channel.

### *Summary of Findings*

To summarize what I found out from the data analysis, I outlined how many respondents I got and what their overall feedback is to each concept or category extracted from the interviewing questions.

*Inevitability of Media Convergence.* Among the total 37 participants, all offered usable answers to the first category: whether media convergence is inevitable. Thirty-six of them agreed on the inevitability of convergence, but one pointed out that “synergy,” a version of convergence conducted by Tribune Company in which media companies were

supposed to benefit by sharing resources and expertise among newspapers, TV stations, radio, and the Internet had not yet turned out to be as promising a concept as many people assumed. .

*Enriched Media Content, Improved Media Credibility or Shovelware.* Among the total 37 participants, 21 offered usable answers to the category of enriched media content. Nineteen of them agreed on the enhanced content offered by media convergence, but one of them indicated his uncertainty about enriched media content, and the other mentioned the prerequisite for enriched media content to happen. Twenty-nine respondents discussed the category of improved media credibility while all of the 21 respondents did think that shovelware is necessary.

*Good Journalism.* Among the total 37 participants, 23 offered usable answers to this concept. Seventeen of the interviewees strongly believed in the close relation between media convergence and good journalism. One of them said “No.” Five respondents noted that convergence will create good journalism under certain circumstances.

*Profits.* To answer my question whether convergence can help make profits, 31 of the 37 interviewees offered usable answers. Among them, 24 respondents confirmed from various perspectives the correlation between convergence and profits, and seven said they did not know how to answer this question because they are editorial staffers.

*Lower Cost.* To this question, I got usable responses from 27 of the 37 interviewees. Among them, 18 respondents agreed that convergence may lower cost from different perspectives, seven thought convergence could not lower cost or could make cost higher, and two did not know how to answer this question.

*Differentiation.* Twenty-seven respondents answered this question. Fifteen answered it from the perspective of news. Seven respondents discussed it based on the side of business or advertisements of media companies, but two did not give any reasons. Only one respondent answered it in view of company's brand image, and another one thought differentiation relates to competition. One did not believe convergence can make a media company differentiated from others. Totally, 22 respondents confirmed this correlation.

*Competitive Advantages.* Twenty-five respondents in all answered the last category on the correlation between media convergence and competitive advantages, and all of them extended positive answers to it. They all believed that companies that do convergence well have the potential to achieve competitive advantages

## CHAPTER 6

### DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

This chapter reviews the implications of the findings from the data analysis extracted from the four phases of semi-structured interviews. Then, by addressing each of the research questions, I focused my discussion on each link on the viable trajectory from media convergence to good journalism, economy synergies, and competitive advantages. I based my discussion on the examinations and comparisons among related literature reviews, research findings, and research questions.

An overall review of the summary of the findings in Chapter 5 indicates that among the total 37 interviewees, responses were received from all in the category of Inevitability of Media Convergence; 21 participants answered to the category of Enriched Media Content; 29 of all the interviewees discussed the category of Improved Media Credibility while 21 thought Shovelware is necessary; 23 respondents offered usable answers to the concept of Good Journalism; 31 interviewees offered responses to the concept of Profits; the usable responses to the category of Lower Cost were 27; 27 respondents answered the question about Differentiation; and finally a total of 25 respondents answered the last category on the correlation between media convergence and competitive advantages. Based on the abovementioned response rate for each category, the average response rate for the all categories is 72% (see Table 1 for the detailed response rates). Discussing the response rate for surveys and polls, Stacks (2002) cited what Babbie suggests to say that “a 50% response rate is adequate, 60% is good, and 70% is very good” (p.191). Although what I conducted was not exactly a

survey or a regular poll but four phases of semi-structured interviews, what Babbie suggests may be borrowed to say my response rate is acceptable.

*Research Question 1: Is media convergence inevitable?*

*Discussion*

Among the total 37 participants, all offered usable answers to the first category: whether media convergence is inevitable. Thirty-six of them agreed on the inevitability of convergence, and one pointed out that “synergy,” a version of convergence conducted by Tribune Company had not totally reached its planned goals yet. However, he still confirmed, “Convergence is inevitable.” Therefore, based on the interviewees’ responses, the short answer to the first research question is “Yes.” But why?

I originally designed Research Question 1 as “Is media convergence necessary?” I changed “necessary” to “inevitable” later. I also accordingly changed the first question in the question list for interviewing (see Appendices C & D). This is because of the results from the first phase of interviews via e-mail. For example, Thelen, the then publisher and president of the Tampa Tribune, in response to my interview in December 2003, regarded media convergence as “more a matter of being inevitable than necessary.” The change represents the demanding needs for convergence and the high sense of responsibility and even eagerness of media practitioners for using convergence to better serve the needs of audiences. What Jenkins and Deuze (2008, p.6) said repeated here just shows the rationale for the inevitable emergence of media convergence has rapidly become “as both a top-down corporate-driven process and a bottom-up consumer-driven process.” No wonder DiVito, who was the Multimedia Technology editor of the Tampa Tribune before April 24, 2008, insists on media convergence’s inevitability in my e-mail interview with

him: “Now more than ever is convergence inevitable.”

DiVito’s contention for media convergence also represents the other respondents’ strong belief in the inevitability of convergence and in their practical strategies in carrying out convergence. In my e-mail interview on April 24, 2008 with Luft, current associate managing editor of the *Chicago Tribune*, I got to know that Sam Zell, current chairman and CEO of Tribune Company, wants synergy (Tribune Company’s version of convergence) to continue after the completion of the company’s going-private transaction. My interview done on April 22, 2008 with McFarlin, publisher of the Herald-Tribune Media Group, also told me that the group is still rolling out a new video production house for online video advertising as more businesses look to advertise online although 2008 is a very difficult year for the media group.

These two examples may show the “top-down corporate-driven” (Jenkins and Deuze, 2008, p.6) reasons for convergence’s inevitability. The “bottom-up consumer-driven” (p.6) reasons were spoken volumes by many other respondents in my interviews. For instance, Hinojosa commented on this bottom-up consumer-driven situation in the media market as the following:

Yes [to whether convergence is inevitable], the audience has already moved to a multimedia world – we need to catch up. As our audience has fragmented we need to find ways to attract as many of these fragments as possible, one way to do that is to create news content that can engage readers/users in a multiple of ways. By having these multiple access points, you naturally broaden the reach of a story.

Hinojosa’s commentary indicates his understanding that readers and customers are converging their media so that they also want media organization to provide them with information, convenience, versatility, and, particularly news, on multiple media platforms. Therefore, any news organization that wants to compete must provide its content across

platforms.

Discussing the reasons for convergence' inevitability, I inferred from related literature reviews and the data analysis extracted from research findings that there should be a technology-driven process in addition to Jenkins and Deuze's (2008) top-down corporate-driven process and bottom-up consumer-driven process. As aforementioned in Chapter 1 of this study, Blackman (1998) points out that digital technologies made it possible to permit the manipulation of all forms of information across all types of networks and to enable the distinctions between different types of networks to disappear. Many respondents also thought convergence is inevitable driven by technology. What Thelen emphasized in my interviews with him both in 2003 and 2007 can be cited as a typical example. He said that convergence's inevitability is driven by the emergence of the Web as a primary news delivery technology.

### *Conclusion*

On the basis of the qualitative data of this study, convergence experts believe media convergence is necessary or even inevitable. They emphasize that it is not optional any more. When done well, it is an important strategy for media to obtain survival or advantages in the electronic era. It is inevitable because of a top-down corporate-driven process, a bottom-up consumer-driven process, and a digital-technology-driven process. There has been much debate on whether Tribune Company's synergy (convergence) strategy (before its going-to-private) was a failure or not (Smolkin, 2006/2007). There has been even much ridicule at Media General's experimental convergence strategy in the Tampa News Center. For example, Media General offered buyouts to half of its employees at the News Center just weeks after it called the Tampa market its "Crown

Jewel,” and the offer is part of a realignment due to “convergence” across platforms (Weisenthal, 2008). This is because, according to Weisenthal, that Denise Palmer, president and publisher of the *Tampa Tribune*, is now responsible for content across all the Florida Communications Group platforms; that Mike Pumo, president and GM of WFLA, is now responsible for revenues across all platforms; and that operations at all platforms will be centralized under a single vice president.. All these happenings, however, indicate that media convergence is also a difficult and challenging process, which will take more thought, effort and time, and which may not suit every media outlet in a market.

*Research Question 2: In what ways may convergence enrich media content, improve media credibility, and create good journalism?*

#### *Discussion*

As aforementioned, among a total of 37 participants, 21 offered usable answers to the category of Enriched Media Content. Nineteen of them agreed on the enhanced content offered by media convergence, but one of them indicated his uncertainty about enriched media content, and the other mentioned some prerequisites for enriched media content to happen. Twenty-nine respondents discussed the category of Improved Media Credibility with 17 of them thinking convergence helped enhance a news organization’s credibility, two of them thinking in the negative way, three saying they did not know how to answer the question, and seven giving conditionally positive answers. All of the 21 respondents did think that Shovelware is necessary. Among the total 37 participants, 23 offered usable answers to the category of Good Journalism. Seventeen of them interviewees strongly believed in the close relation between media convergence and good

journalism. One of them said “No.” Five respondents noted that convergence will create good journalism under certain circumstances.

On the whole, the interviewees believe convergence can enrich media content, improve media credibility, and generate good journalism. Take credibility for example. More than half of them said “Yes” to the connection between convergence and a media company’s credibility because 17 respondents from the 29 usable interviews confirmed with this connection. Here are more in-depth answers to this research question. Defining convergence, Kolodzy (2006) asserts, “Convergence of journalistic content involves journalists working in different media coming together to provide different content for different audiences” (p.5). Kolodzy’s assertion naturally enables people to connect different content for different audiences done by different journalists working on different media platforms to enriched media content. Respondents to my interviews echoed Kolodzy’s assertion from their working experience accumulated from their job dealing with media or journalism convergence.

Therefore, the way that convergence can enable a media company to prepare and deliver information in an incredibly wide array of formats across different media platforms is the first way that convergence can help enrich the content a media company needs to disseminate. Respondents also emphasized the diversity of content or “different content” as Kolodzy mentioned (2006), which also helps enhance media content. As Denton and McFarlin stressed these kinds of content are not duplicated but reported from different angles. Even if the content is shovelware, Locin thought, shovelware is important after it is repurposed, reformatted, and repackaged.

As mentioned previously, when Sundar (1999) defines good journalism,

credibility, liking, quality, and representativeness are concluded as four criteria. Sundar further defines a news organization's credibility as a global evaluation of the objectivity of the story. My respondents thought convergence can improve a news organization's credibility because the transparency of news products can be created by the convergence strategy. They held that convergence can improve credibility because of the increased transparency of much Web presentation from different angles (Thelen). Furthermore, because of greater space online, newspapers and other media organizations are free to post source documents, notes and extended interviews, and this freedom allows for a greater level of transparency that is not available in traditional print publications (Hinojosa). Therefore, more credibility is created. Additionally, since extended interviews contain more angles a journalist can present to a story via convergent media platforms, more transparency a publisher can provide (Sucherman).

From another perspective, Sucherman held convergence can help improve credibility because the same rules always still apply, which are "try to get it first, definitely get it right, but also get to the reader/viewer in a way that tells the story best." Here, Sucherman bridged a news organization's credibility to good journalism which it can generate especially via its convergence strategies. Obviously, what Sucherman emphasized here are two of many criteria about good or quality journalism in the multimedia environment emphasized by the 2007 Annual Report on American Journalism (The Project for Excellence in Journalism, 2007), such as speed, in-depth reporting, and diversified reporting implemented through such multimedia avenues as text, graphics, blogs, videos, audios, and slide shows. On the other hand, these criteria also match Bogart's (2004) summary of the following words and phrases inevitable to

define quality journalism: “integrity, fairness, balance, accuracy, comprehensiveness, diligence in discovery, authority, breadth of coverage, variety of content, reflection of the entire home community, vivid writing, attractive makeup, packaging or appearance, and easy navigability” (p.40).

My respondents’ conclusion of convergence’s advantages in generating good journalism also matches the abovementioned criteria in many respects. Most of them believed convergence can create good journalism because their coverage has greater depth and dimension now due to the ability to tell stories in different ways and to supplement core information with illuminating features such as online links, keyword access to databases, video segments, and podcasts. On the other hand, convergence enables journalists to diversify their talents, to think about alternative and multiple ways of telling stories, and to create more substantial content on the Web.

### *Conclusion*

The data analysis suggested several points. First, convergence can help enable a media company to enrich its media content in at least two ways: (1) convergence can help prepare and deliver information in an incredibly wide array of formats across different media platforms; and (2) convergence can help diversify the content a media company needs to disseminate. Second, convergence’s availability in improving a news organization’s credibility lies in the increased transparency of news products that can be created by the convergence strategy. That is because much Web presentation from different angles facilitated by greater space online can enable news organizations to produce more media content based on extended interviews with more angles. When extended interviews and more angles transmit to a greater level of transparency, more

credibility is created. Third, credibility is closely related to good journalism. Diversified media content created by diversified formats across multiple media platforms can result in depth and breadth in journalism. Extended interviews and more angles in reporting can also match the abovementioned criteria of good journalism in many respects. Finally, when talented and ethical journalists apply alternative and multiple ways to telling stories, good journalism is produced. No wonder Quinn (2004) concludes, “[c]onvergence offers a chance to do better journalism by giving reporters the tools to tell stories in the most appropriate medium” (p.110).

*Research Question 3: In what ways may convergence allow news organizations to share resources so as to decrease costs?*

#### *Discussion*

I got usable responses from 27 in all of the 37 interviewees. Among them, 18 respondents agreed that convergence may lower cost from different perspectives, seven thought convergence could not lower cost or could make cost higher, and two did not know how to answer this question because they are editorial staffers.

Sharing resources is the importantly possible avenue for convergent media organizations to decrease costs. Ketterer, Weir, Smethers, and Back (2004) did a case study to examine media convergence in Oklahoma City, OK, among two independent, private-owned media companies, the *Daily Oklahoman* and KWTW Channel 9. They have found out, “By sharing resources and new sources, they [Oklahoman and KWTW] have stressed it will lead to more in-depth news coverage to serve the public better” (p.55). Most of my respondents thought lower cost happened because they could devote more resources to covering the news, combining staffs, and maximizing reportage at their

TV stations and newspapers so as to deliver a better news product for consumers and serve advertisers better by giving them more options to reach consumers with their messages.

They also believed that sharing, repurposing, reusing are all possible and will all create cost-saving opportunities. They also cited an example to point out that sharing some research results, artwork, and photography among different newsrooms makes good financial sense because the savings are directly proportional to the amount of sharing. Besides sharing resources, they also contended the other way for convergence to lower cost is to share reporters because they thought having enough reporters on the street to gather reportage in feeding their Web sites and cable television stations is much more cost effective than funding each media individually. They also exemplified that the World Company would never send many reporters to cover a fairly simple story and that the Tribune Company shared foreign correspondents across the whole company's different media platforms for some world news coverage.

In addition to sharing resources and reporters, they also realized that, by using convergence, they may have another way to save money. They could use user-generated content strategies to invite readers and their technology to feed their information so that they may obviously reduce their costs as a channel of citizen journalism emerges.

However, while one respondent agreed that convergence can lower cost only to a marginal extent, he noticed the abovementioned two ways would cause the media content quality not to be nearly as good, and the additional work may create distractions for the reporters who will do cross-media reporting. Some other respondents did not think convergence could help lower cost, but it had increased the cost because of adding more

content to the Web sites. .

My interviewees also considered whether convergence will lower a media company's cost from the perspective of investment selections. By comparison, one of them thought that any savings in expenses relate to the distribution method, and that the investment in the technology needed to post something online is only a fraction of what it costs to invest in printing presses or television technology.

### *Conclusion*

More than half of my respondents believed sharing resources is a possible avenue for convergent media organizations to decrease costs. In addition, sharing reporters across convergent media platforms normally within the media group with the same ownership is the second effective option to lower costs. Comparatively speaking, investment in the technology for online interaction is cheaper than that in new printing equipment or television technology. On the other hand, shrinking the number of journalists or arming them with multimedia skills and equipment for saving money may reduce the quality of news and other media products, as some interviewees worried about. Therefore, while to reach bigger audiences by using shared resources with somewhat more revenues generated may be considered as lower cost, to get converged with other media now directly means differentiation because to manage convergence today needs creation, courage and efforts. Of course, more details about profits and differentiation will be discussed and concluded under the fourth and the fifth research questions.

*Research Question 4: In what ways may convergence lead to good business and generate profits?*

### *Discussion*

To answer my question whether convergence can help make profits, 31 of the 37 interviewees offered usable answers. Among them, 24 respondents confirmed from various perspectives the correlation between convergence and profits, and seven said they did not know how to answer this question because they are editorial staffers.

For me, a doctoral student and a researcher who has been attaching great importance to any published research into convergence and any news about the trend in convergence's development, to discuss this question after the completion of Sam Zell's, purchase of Tribune Company and Media General's offer of buyouts to half of its 1,326 employees in the Tampa market is not an exciting thing. Although John Morton, as newspaper analyst and *American Journalism Review* columnist, says that synergy (convergence conducted by Tribune Company) hasn't brought the benefits that Tribune anticipated, rejecting the notion that synergy is a failure (Smolkin, 2006/2007), other analysts have given different explanations. The reasons for the underwhelming results are complex, driven in part by bad timing, bad luck and a bad newspaper economy (Smolkin). More detailed reasons given by Smolkin are: Innovative but misguided business assumptions complicated Tribune's strategy, as did the melding of two very different cultures (Times Mirror's and Tribune's), relentless cost-cutting and friction over centralized versus local control of Tribune operations. The more direct factor to this discussion is that, as aforementioned, Tribune's stock, peaked at \$53 in early 2004 and plunged to almost half that by April 26 (Smolkin). Also as aforementioned, the case with the Tampa News Center's convergence can not be regarded as a financial success. Otherwise, there would not have been the offer for buyouts to half of Media General's employees in the Tampa media market.

The third of my four research samples from which I selected interviewees is the Herald-Tribune Media Group. Is their media convergence model making money? The following is the result of my most recent interview with McFarlin, the publisher:

Regarding 2008, we are having a very difficult year. The west coast of Florida was the “epicenter” of the housing boom. As a result, our economy is flagging. Unemployment is at 5.5 percent, the highest it has been in nearly two decades, foreclosures are up four-fold and it is estimated that thousands have families have left the market because they can’t afford to live here any more, due to reduced household income. Overall, advertising is down more than 20 percent because of the local recession. This has undermined our diversification strategy, with revenues down year-over-year in both print and broadcast, and internet revenue growing more slowly than we had budgeted. We forecast that revenues will continue to decline until 2010-2011, when the economy is expected to have stabilized and we can fully capitalize on our online development.

What McFarlin wrote here should be an excellent text of micro economy, media economy or media convergence economy because it objectively reveals the reason when and how media convergence program or a convergent media company can or can not achieve financial success. Then, how about my fourth sample’s financial situation in the multimedia environment but under the same macro economical circumstances? In his answer to my e-mail interview, which he sent to me on April 28, 2008, Bonner, the corporate advertising and marketing director of the World Company, said:

As a newspaper company, we were down to last year due mainly to major account and real estate losses. Local advertising was well ahead of last year. Online helped us off-set many losses, mainly from our new Marketplace, local business directory/local search product. The first quarter of 2008 has started slow for many of the same reasons, but we are optimistic our new online strategies and local converged sales strategies will help turn that around. We have the same challenges but feel because we invested in lots of training in the past that we are equipped to make it through the tough times without making personnel cuts, especially in news. Over-all, we are performing much better than the chains and certainly larger the metro papers.

What Bonner wrote me here is a piece of good news with optimism. The basic reason why the World Company is has better ways to deal with the slow and weak media economy very obvious: They are private company so that they are not subject to the pressures from Wall Street. What the other 22 respondents' answers to the question whether convergence can help make profits can be represented by what Read said. He believed that, by operating as efficiently as possible in the administration and support areas so they can invest in quality news, advertising, marketing and technology resources, convergence has allowed them to grow market share so as to make some profits. I personally think what Read said is correct, but what Jenkins (2001) said "[m]edia convergence is an ongoing process" (p.93) should also be correct. Just because convergence is relatively a new process or new strategy adopted by media industry, advertisers still need some time to make decisions of investing in its different media platforms.

### *Conclusion*

Under this research question, my interviews and literature review can not show the three samples of my research could build a strong link between convergence and good business. One of the possible reasons is that the effect of economic synergies (scale and scope economies) could not be materialized when they were applied to Tribune Company's synergy strategy and the Tampa News Center's media convergence strategy.

The case with the Herald-Tribune Media Group is unique because the media companies' financial performances are tightly tied up with the local economy, which is kind of migrant population's economy as McFarlin analyzed. Her prediction for their revenues to rebound in around 2011, when the economy is expected to have stabilized,

can also explain this point well.

The case with the World Company may prove that the editorial and financial expectations may be more smoothly experimented in a small-or-medium-sized private company without many risks. This is because it will be easier for the more direct top-down leadership in companies of such size to readjust or even remedy its strategies or policies once they spot any problem with their strategic plans and that a private company will not be subject to pressures from Wall Street. Bonner's answer to my question about whether privatization can protect a media company's convergence strategy gives better explanation.

It (private ownership) can help if the owners embrace convergence from the top down. We have seen that here in Lawrence first hand. The owners, the top managers and then the front level editors as well as those in marketing and advertising, must believe in it 100%. Smaller, private companies that are not beholden to stockholders may be able to reverse course. In my view, one corporate strategy for convergence or online for lots of newspapers of all sizes will not work. I hear from too many of the small and medium size newspapers in their large companies. They are frustrated and feel they have not control to react to their markets or have no people left to do so.

*Research Question 5: How may convergence create differentiation?*

*Discussion*

Twenty-seven respondents answered this question. Fifteen answered it from the perspective of news. Seven respondents discussed it based on the side of business or advertisements of media companies, but two did not give any reasons. Only one respondent answered it in view of company's brand image, and another one thought differentiation relates to competition. One did not believe convergence can make a media company differentiated from others. Totally, 22 respondents confirmed this correlation.

When addressing his competitive advantage theory, Porter (1985) defined a firm's differentiation strategy as sought to be unique in its industry along some dimensions that are widely valued by buyers. My respondents regarded the differentiation of a convergent media company as its unique strategies that can enable audiences and customers to expect media, including news, to be available in multiple platforms. They believed that such a media company should be differentiated from a company that does not have multiple programs. Furthermore, respondents were also proud of their print media's *status quo* top and unique advantages, based on which their convergence with other media platforms can create more powerful leverage for all the platforms, including the print side. A third differentiation, respondents thought, is the powerful strength that is normally and originally owned by the print side in a media company, which has a big pool of outstanding reporters. When the print side radiates the strength to other platforms in the media company, the whole company will exert unique advantages that are differentiated from any rivals in the same media market.

### *Conclusion*

A convergent media company may master three factors of differentiation to produce better journalism: (1) more converged media platforms to send enriched media content to bigger audiences; (2) the top and unique print or another kind of medium *status quo* to shed light on the other media platforms in the whole media company; and (3) talented journalists in the core medium to better all media platforms' editorial performances in the whole convergent company.

A convergent media company's editorial differentiation will also apply to its business side and pool of managers. In the organizational structure of a media company,

the whole corporate culture will be convergent, creative, innovative, immediate, and customer-focus.

*Research Question 6: What competitive advantages may convergence create?*

#### *Discussion*

A total of 25 respondents answered the last category on the correlation between media convergence and competitive advantages, and all of them extended positive answers to it. They all believed that companies that do convergence well have the potential to achieve competitive advantages.

The definitions of competitive advantages are revisited as the following:

Competitive advantages are the search for a favorable competitive position in an industry, which is actually a profitable and sustainable position against the forces that determine industry competition (Porter, 1985); or “any factor(s) which allow(s) an organization to differentiate its product or service from those of its competitors to increase market share” (Gunnigle & Moore, p.65). Porter further points out: There are two basic types of competitive advantages: cost leadership and differentiation. The first type of competitive advantage implies that a firm sets out to become the low-cost producer in its industry while the second means a firm seeks to be unique in its industry along some dimensions that are widely valued by buyers.

Respondents reasonably contended that the possibility for cross promotion among converged media platforms, the prompt, comprehensive and in-depth way of offering news and other media content, and the early preparation for the declining circulation and rating differentiate convergent media outlets from those that don't have convergence programs. Their belief in this differentiation leading to media's competitive advantage

can match what literature review's definition of competitive advantages. Another differentiation for a convergent media company to achieve is that they may improve their Web until it can become more and more differentiated as Google Inc.

Other respondents stressed the linkage from good journalism to competitive advantages. They pointed out that the ability for all platforms' reporters to go out for comprehensive coverage when breaking news happens should be a kind of competitive advantage. Many respondents emphasized that the availability generated by convergence for newspapers to offer quality and speedy journalism on a continuous news basis will bring competitive advantages to newspaper companies. They believed convergent media companies can put the best reporters, editors and photographers online, with a single mission for print and Web products. The other possibility is, as some respondents pointed out, that the print side's experience in working out tight stories relevant to people's daily lives and packaging them in an attractive and accessible format can be diffused to the world of new media. Some respondents confirmed convergence's advantage in generating good journalism, but they also pointed out that the convergence model has not yet demonstrated appreciable comparative advantage as a business model. This point needs addressing in the conclusion part.

### *Conclusion*

Almost all the interviewees' points such as the prompt, comprehensive, and in-depth way of offering news and other media content, the early preparation for the declining circulation and rating by cross-media platforms, and uniqueness in offering search service function on their Web sites as Google company are related to the correlation between good journalism and competitive advantages. However, the

possibility that convergence can lead to profits and the profitable results of scale and scope economies need discussing and concluding further.

*Conclusion for Whether Convergence Can Converge Good Journalism, Economy Synergies, and Competitive Advantages*

If this study had been finished as recently as the end of 2007, I might conclude the whole study: By addressing the aforementioned research questions, this exploratory study supports the simple theory: Those most experienced in convergence expect that media convergence will create good journalism, generate profits, and lower cost, thus achieving media's competitive advantage (Murphy, 2002). This simple theory may lead to the trajectory from media convergence to competitive advantage. However, the findings of this study revealed that, as Table 1 shows (see Table 1), many respondents are not sure whether convergence can generate enough profits or can lower a media company's production cost. In addition, with the debate on whether the synergy strategy of Tribune Company was a failure or not, half of Tampa News Center's employees being offered the buyout plan, and the Herald-Tribune Media Group's 20% decline of its advertising revenues in 2007, this study inferred an apparent disconnection between convergence and economy synergies. Or put in other words, this study could not find out a strong linkage on the right wing in the diagram (see Appendix A) from convergence to lower cost and to economic synergies and to competitive advantages

The findings of this study, nevertheless, showed a strong dichotomy. Although it inferred a disconnection between convergence and economy synergies, this qualitative study found media convergence's inevitability is rapidly emerging, and its influence is being demonstrated with a certain single medium's content magnified and diversified by

convergent media platforms and such user-generated content's avenues as OhmyNews and YouTube. With the linkage between good journalism and good business further advanced, this study bridged the links between convergence and good journalism. Findings showed that many respondents confirmed the correlation between convergence and enriched media content, and improved media credibility, and good journalism, and differentiation, and competitive advantages (see Table 1).

The good news is, therefore, in the left wing of the diagram (see Appendix A), this student can find out the linkage from convergence to good journalism and to good business and to competitive advantages. Thanks to Mantrala, Naik, Sridhar and Thorson's (2007) empirical study and the findings of this qualitative study, I may say, in theory, the linkage between good journalism and good business does exist. The bad news is, however, here (in the right wing of the diagram), the good business expected to be generated by convergent media companies is in fact influenced by many factors. In a macro economic environment in which "[t]he media business has been weak. Television has been weak. Radio has been weak. These are things that were completely unforeseeable" (Smolkin, 2006/2007), media convergence needs a good timing, a stronger economy, and a better design before it gets successful in both journalistic and business aspects.

In the meantime, as I mentioned previously, private media companies of small or medium size may enjoy some more freedom to readjust or balance their original convergence strategies to deal with the current weak media economy. I would like to cite what Bonner wrote as his answer to my e-mail interview as a part of the promising ending for this chapter:

I still think it [convergence] is very necessary. In my opinion, the larger companies that are moving away from convergence are doing so at their own peril. It may not be evident right now but it will certainly be the case in the future. The trained graduates will end up going to companies like ours instead of the larger metros or large chains. This will leave them with employees that have not and will not embrace convergence, in part because they are short on employees and have too many things to do already and also because convergence can be expensive and it's clear these companies have made a decision to save money vs. invest in the future.

I may be only partially right. It may be easy to big private company, too.

Weitman wrote on April 28, 2008 to answer my fourth phase of interviews done via e-mail. He pointed out:

Convergence is inevitable. All media companies need to move from being platforms for the dissemination of one or two kinds of news and info (like paper and broadcast news) to becoming true multi-media player that take in news and information from all different sources and repurpose it in a variety of ways – wireless, broadband, broadcast, digital, web-based, newspaper, etc....Being private will help us manage for the long-term rather than meeting the quarterly performance demands of Wall Street.

Weitman is the current vice president of Tribune Company's Communications and Corporate Relations, so was he in 2004 when I interviewed him for the first time. From what he said, I may confirm with the news that Tribune Company, as a huge private company, will continue its synergy strategy mainly because the reasons mentioned by Weitman. So I think what Weitman said is another promising final touch to the promising ending of this chapter.

However, no matter whether it is a small-size or a large-size media company and no matter whether it is a private or a public-traded media company, their activities are considered to be microeconomic activities and may be explained by microeconomics, which “deals with how individual economic units (households and firms) make decisions

regarding their economic activity” (Owers, Carveth, & Alexander, 1998, p.14). Obviously, there is a close relationship between micro- and macroeconomics, which refers to aggregates in the economy and how the economy works as a system (Owers, Garveth, & Alexander). Between the macro- and the microeconomics, Oweers, Garveth, and Alexander further pointed out that, the macroeconomic environment is the context within which microeconomic decisions are made. Therefore, based on the principles of economics, the success or failure of media economy, a branch of microeconomy, should be dependable on a good or bad macroeconomy. Since the weak U.S. economy is taking a toll on consumer confidence (Durbin, 2008), media economy is also very weak. Since media economy is weak or bad currently, many media outlets appear to be like small boats sailing with struggle on the spacious and treacherous sea. To such kind of boats sailing on such kind of sea in such hard times financially, to survive is the first and most fundamental thing. Anything experimental with new technologies or new models of operation and development has become less important. They tend to abandon their strategies prematurely, including the convergence strategy.

What McFarlin commented on the relationship between the local economy in the Sarasota area and the business performance of her media group has proved the dependence of media companies’ good business performance on the macroeconomic environment. Those most experienced in convergence are savvy practitioners in the operation and production of journalism and media business activities. Put in a better macroeconomic environment, their experiment with convergence may be successful, and convergence should be able to converge good journalism, economic synergies, and competitive advantages for convergent media companies.

## CHAPTER 7

### LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

This research has conducted an exploratory investigation into the viable trajectory from media convergence to economic synergies and to competitive advantages. This chapter addresses the limitation of this study and some immature ideas for future research.

#### *Limitation 1: Nonrandom Samples*

I selected four nonrandom samples from which interviewees for my semi-structured interviews were chosen. Although the nonrandom samples have been explained to be reasoned samples, the generality of this study may be weakened by the nonrandom samples. This is because of two reasons. First, the four samples are four media companies where convergence has been conducted as an important development strategy. Second, most of the 37 interviewees selected from these four media companies and other news organizations are the optimists for media convergence strategies. Therefore, it is hard for this study to collect the data composed of different opinions on convergence from those who are pessimists for convergence strategies. Validity of this study has consequently been weakened.

#### *Limitation 2: Small Pool of Interviewees*

Since what I did was four phases of semi-structured interviews, the more interviewees are obviously the better. The bigger pool of respondents would have been enabled to lessen the disadvantages created by nonrandom samples since more interviewees may be included both optimists and pessimists for media convergence. On the other hand, I should have chosen more respondents from the business departments of

media companies when I addressed such questions as “How much do you think media convergence can lower or has lowered the cost of reporting, editing, and producing news in your company?” and “How have your company’s convergence models helped make money?” This is because they should have offered better answers to these questions based on their job positions and working experience.

*Limitation 3: Monotony of Interviewees*

This limitation is closely related to Limitations 1 and 2. Obviously, the interviewees I selected to answer my questions were only media workers. Again, there is a monotony of interviewees in such kind of selection. Certainly, a diversity of opinions to my interviews from a diversity of interviewees should have helped increase the validity of this study. For example, to answer the question about whether convergence can create good journalism, respondents selected from audience may also have objective comments.

*Further Research Idea 1*

A new empirical study may be carefully designed to test the relationship between media convergence and competitive advantages. This should be a set of studies, which respectively explore the correlation between convergence and good journalism, and scope and scale economies, and low cost, and differentiation, and eventually competitive advantages. For example, after giving good journalism an operational definition, a survey for quantitative results may be designed to scale whether convergence can help create in-depth of news stories, report a news story from many angles, break a news story, report a news story by using multiple media platforms, etc. In a word, after good journalism is quantitatively defined, the correlation between convergence and good journalism may be explored quantitatively. After this set of empirical studies are done, the correlation

between convergence and competitive advantages may be revealed quantitatively.

*Further Research Idea 2*

A new qualitative study by using in-depth interviews may be designed to further investigate how scope and scale economies will work or have worked in convergent media companies of both small and big size. To conduct this study, reasoned or purposed sample should be used because the leaders or managers of business side in media companies may be in a better position to answer the interviewing questions dealing with the business performances of their companies.

*Further Research Idea 3*

A new qualitative study by using in-depth interviews may be designed to further investigate how the true and root causes for the unsuccessful strategies of Tribune Company's synergy and the News Center's convergence. This study seems to be a lesson concluding one. Therefore, it should be very meaningful. It is predicted to be easier to be conducted because many executives and practitioners of the convergence in both Tribune Company and the Tampa News Center may have left the two companies. They may have more time to answer related depth interviews, and they may be happy to share their experience in media convergence with interviewers.

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup>According to the online archives of the Investigative Reporters and Editors, Inc, ([http://www.ire.org/extraextra/archives/cat\\_science.html](http://www.ire.org/extraextra/archives/cat_science.html)), on December 11, 12, and 13, 2005, Sam Roe and Michael Hawthorne of the *Chicago Tribune* published “The Mercury Menace: Toxic risk on your plate,” a three-part series of the presence of mercury in fish sold in supermarkets. Cited by the archives, the stories write, “In one of the nation’s most comprehensive studies of mercury in commercial fish, testing by the newspaper showed that a variety of popular seafood was so tainted that federal regulators could confiscate the fish for violating food safety rules. The testing also showed that mercury is more pervasive in fish than what the government has told the public, making it difficult for consumers to avoid the problem, no matter where they shop.” In addition to conducting its own tests, the paper relied on documents and interviews for the series. The stories can also be retrieved by surfing the following link. The link now still shows the multimedia display of this investigative story series with text, photos, graphic, and video.

<http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/specials/broadband/chi-mercury-htmlstory,1,3096866.htmlstory>.

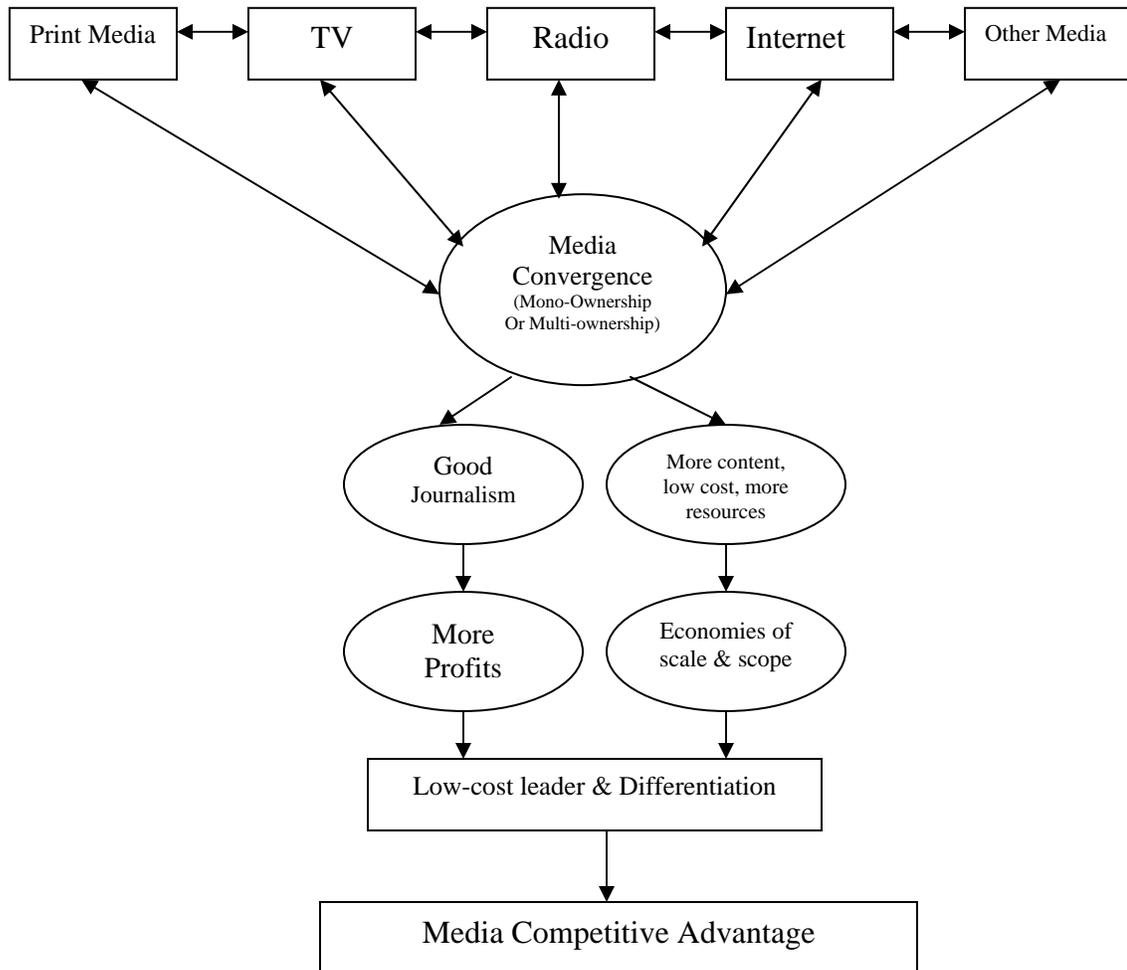
Table 1

## Response Rate to Question Categories

Question Category	Total Interviewees	Respondent %*	Yes %*	No %*	Yes/No Conditional Answer, %*	No Idea %*
Inevitability of Convergence	37	37 100%	36 97%		1 3%	
Enriched Media Content	37	21 57%	19 90%	1 5%	1 5%	
Improved Media Credibility	37	29 78%	17 59%	2 7%	7 24%	3 10%
Shovelware	37	21 57%	21 100%			
Good Journalism	37	23 62%	17 74%	1 4%	5 22%	
Profits	37	31 84%	24 77%			7 23%
Lower Cost	37	27 73%	18 67%	7 26%		2 7%
Differentiation	37	27 73%	22 81%	1 4%	2 7.5%	2 7.5%
Competitive Advantages	37	25 68%	25 100%			
Average Response Rate	72%					

*Note.* \*Percentage shows respondents who say “Yes” or “No” or give a conditional answer or say “I have no idea” compared to the total respondents who offered usable answers to the related question category.

Appendix A: A trajectory from media convergence to competitive advantage



*Figure 1.* A trajectory from media convergence-good journalism-profits/low cost and differentiation, functioned by economies of scale and scope, to competitive advantage. Media convergence is expected to integrate different media outlets under the same roof so as to create good journalism, enrich media content, generate more profits, reduce cost by gaining more resources, all of which may in turn lead to low-cost leadership and differentiation, i.e., media outlets' sustainable competitive advantages.

Appendix B: A List of Short Introduction of Respondents Based on Their Then Titles

**Allan, Alicia** – executive producer with SNN 6 of the Herald-Tribune Media Group.

**Adee, Bill** – associate managing editor for innovation, the Chicago Tribune.

**Anderson, Dennis** – managing editor for the *Journal-World*.

**Bonner, Al** – advertising and marketing director of the World Company.

**Bradley, Dan** – vice president for broadcasting at Media General Corp., the company that owns the *Tampa Tribune*, WFLA and TBO. Bradley was news director at WFLA-TV, and he was said to be one of the two people who really made media convergence happen in Tampa, FL.

**Brickley, Shari** – director of advertising and marketing, the (Sarasota) *Herald-Tribune*.

**Carr, Forrest** – news director of WFLA-TV, one of the three platforms of the Tampa convergence model.

**Connelly, Mike** – executive editor of the *Herald-Tribune*.

**Decherd, Robert** – chairman and chief executive of Belo Corporation, which is a leading media group that owns a newspaper-television combination in Dallas. He is one of the advocates for the viable theory – “quality journalism produces ratings and circulation, and in turn makes money.”

**Denton, Frank** – editor and vice president of the *Tampa Tribune*.

**DiVito, Allyn** – multimedia technology editor of the News Center in Tampa, who was in charge of training sessions to some still picture photographers on how to take mobile pictures and on other multimedia skills.

**Estes, Ben** – editor of [chicagotribune.com](http://chicagotribune.com), the *Chicago Tribune*.

**Fagan, Mark** – business news editor the *Journal-World*.

**Ferrara, Lou** – general manager for electronic media in charge of [HeraldTribune.com](http://HeraldTribune.com) and SNN Channel 6 of the Herald-Tribune Media Group. He was one of the people who made Sarasota convergence happen.

**Gadsden, Sandra** – news editor with the *St. Petersburg Times*.

**Gentry, James K.** – dean and professor at the William Allen White School of Journalism and Mass Communications.

**Greising, David** – chief business correspondent of the *Chicago Tribune*.

**Hall, Melonie** – southeast regional sales manager of the Tampa News Center.

**Hinojosa, Mark** – associate managing editor for Electronic News, the *Chicago Tribune*.

**Howard, Cody** – manager for 6News, the World Company.

**Lee, Robert and Jean O’Hara** – Lee was *Herald-Tribune*’s advertising & marketing director while O’Hara was general sales manager with SNN 6.

**LeBien, Michael** – deputy editor of Continuous News of the *Chicago Tribune*.

**Lim, Victoria** – senior consumer reporter with News Channel 8, the Tampa News Center.

**Locin, Mitchell** – senior editor for the *Chicago Tribune*’s Electronic News.

**Luft, Kerry** – associate managing editor of Foreign News, the *Chicago Tribune*.

**Mathis, Joel** – managing editor for convergence, the World Company.

**McFarlin, Diane** – publisher of the Herald-Tribune Media Group.

**McElroy, Kathleen** – senior editor of the Continuous News Desk, the *New York Times*.

**Read, Kirk C.** – the general manager of Tampa Bay Online (TBO.com), the Internet division of *The Tampa Tribune* and WFLA-TV News Channel 8.

**Royal, Dean** – online sales coordinator, the World Company.

**Ryan, David** – editorial products manager, the World Company.

**Sucherman, Joel** – director for product innovation of the *USA Today*.

**Tennant, Diane** – managing editor of the *Herald-Tribune*.

**Thelen, Gil** – publisher and president of the *Tampa Tribune*. He was one of the two people who really made media convergence happen in Tampa, FL.

**Weitman, Gary** – vice president of communications and corporate relations for Tribune Company.

**Wilhelm, Sara** – advertising manager, the World Company.

Appendix C: Questions Used in the First Phase of Interviewing, a List of Open-Ended  
Questions E-mailed to 13 Interviewees in March 2003

1. Do you think media convergence is necessary? Why?
2. Do you think media convergence enriches media content? Why?
3. Do you think media convergence is producing shovelware? [the content shoveled from Web sites' printed papers onto the Internet without adding much or any new material]
4. Do you think media convergence can create good journalism? Why?
5. Do you agree that media convergence can lower cost? Why?
6. Is media convergence, especially the convergence in which you are involved making money? Why or why not?
7. Do you think media convergence can make your company differentiated from the media that are not converged? Why?
8. Do you think media convergence keeps journalists and media staffers busier because they, in a way, work for at least two or three media instead of one? Why or why not?
9. Do you think media convergence will be understood and liked by audiences? Why?
10. Do you think media convergence will achieve competitive advantage for your company? Why?

Appendix D: Questions Used in the Second Phase of Interviewing, a List of Open-Ended  
Questions Used to Ask Respondents in Sarasota, Tampa, and Chicago in June 2004

1. Do you think media convergence is inevitable? Why or why not?
2. Do you think media convergence enriches media content? Why or why not?
3. Do you think media convergence can create good journalism? Why or why not?
4. Do you agree that media convergence can lower cost? Why or why not?
5. Is media convergence, especially the convergence in which you are involved making money? Why or why not?
6. Do you think media convergence can make your company differentiated from the media that are not converged? Why?
7. Do you think media convergence keeps journalists and media staffers busier because they, in a way, work for at least two or three media instead of one? Why or why not?
8. Do you think media convergence will achieve competitive advantage for your company? Why?

Appendix E: Questions Used in the Third Phase of Interviewing, a List of Open-Ended  
Questions Used to Ask Respondents Mainly in Chicago and Lawrence, KS from

February to March 2007

1. From the perspective of your job involved in convergence (as an editor or a reporter or a producer or a manager), do you think media convergence is inevitable? Why or why not?
2. Do you think convergence can enrich media content and improves media credibility? Why or why not?
3. Do you think media convergence can create or has created good journalism? Why or why not?
4. How much do you think media convergence can lower or has lowered the cost of reporting, editing, and producing news in your company?
5. How has your company used convergent models in the marketing and advertising strategies?
6. How have your company's convergence models helped make money?
7. How do you think media convergence can make or has made your company differentiated from the media that are not converged?
8. Do you think media convergence will achieve competitive advantages for your company? Why or why not? If yes, what competitive advantages can convergence help achieve? And how?

Appendix F: Questions Used in the Forth Phase of Interviewing, a List of Open-Ended Questions Used to Ask Respondents in DC, New York City, Chicago, Sarasota, Tampa, and Lawrence, KS in March and April 2008

1. Based on the debate on the Tribune Company's convergence strategy and Media General's recent buyouts of half employees in the Tampa News Center, how do you think convergence is evitable or is not necessary? Do you think privatization of media companies can protect media companies in a way and help keep or improve the convergence strategy? And why or why not?"
2. Do you think convergence can enrich media content and improves media credibility? Why or why not?
3. Do you think media convergence can create or has created good journalism? Why or why not?
4. How much do you think media convergence can lower or has lowered the cost of reporting, editing, and producing news in your company?
5. How has your company used convergent models in the marketing and advertising strategies?
6. How have your company's convergence models helped make money?
7. How do you think media convergence can make or has made your company differentiated from the media that are not converged?
8. Do you think media convergence will achieve competitive advantages for your company? Why or why not? If yes, what competitive advantages can convergence help achieve? And how?

Appendix G: Interview Trail – Process of Collecting Data

2003	2004	2007	2008
<p><b>March</b></p> <p>The first phase of interviews with 10 semi-structured questions was sent via e-mail to a nonrandom selection of 13 editors, directors, professors, and even presidents and chairmen of convergent media companies.</p> <p>Seven respondents accepted my interviews with six e-mailing back answers in detail and one interviewed on telephone.</p> <p>Respondents' answers brought me data for my research, notification for my face-to-face interviews, and opportunity for me to readjust my questions for the next phase of interviews.</p>	<p><b>June</b></p> <p>The second phase of interviews with eight semi-structured questions was conducted in the Herald-Tribune Media Group, the St. Petersburg Times, and the Tampa News Center.</p> <p>My 14 respondents were selected based on their roles in their news and business convergence practices in order to diversify my sample.</p> <p>Among 14 respondents, two had been interviewed by me via e-mail March 2003.</p>	<p><b>February/March</b></p> <p>The third phase of interviews took place from February 26 to March 1, 2007 in Chicago and Lawrence, KS.</p> <p>Fourteen respondents in these two companies accepted my face-to-face interviews. In addition, e-mail interviews were given to two new respondents from the Herald-Tribune Media Company and four respondents from the Tampa News Center. I also had a telephone interview with one respondent based on the same question list. A total of 21 respondents were interviewed during this phase.</p>	<p><b>April</b></p> <p>The Fourth Phase of Interviews was conducted after Media General declared on April 14, 2008 to offer voluntary buyouts to half the employees at the Tampa News Center.</p> <p>The seven interviewees wrote me their new perspectives of media convergence via e-mail generated from their job positions and the brand new information about their media companies' business performances related to convergence in such hard and fast changing times for media industry.</p>

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## VITA

Ernest Yuyan Zhang grew up with reading some of his favorite Chinese newspapers such as the Guangzhou-based *Yangcheng Evening News*, and the Shanghai-based *Wenhui Daily* and *Xinmin Evening News*. It was from these newspapers that he absorbed unbounded intellectual nutrition for his life, study, teaching, research and work. He joined the *Guangzhou Daily* (currently the daily newspaper with the largest paid circulation and the most annual ad revenues in China) in 1994 to work as a deputy desk editor of Political, Legal, Educational, and Cultural News; and then as the managing editor of the English-language *Guangzhou Morning Post* and deputy director of the President's Office, respectively. From all the stories he wrote at that time for the *Daily*, he considers his serial coverage of crack-down on illegal immigrants to the United States, of the missing girl students from the local high schools, and of the Millennium celebrations in America as the most memorable. He always cherishes the *Daily's* decision to send him to Missouri as a visiting scholar in residence in 1998.

It was his talk with Dean Dean Mills of the Missouri School of Journalism (MSJ) in around March 1998 that changed his life by retiring him from an active journalist to a journalism education seeker. Encouraged and directed by Brian Brooks, Byron Scott, Daryl Moen, and many other professors, he was conferred an MA degree in journalism by the University of Missouri (MU) in December 2001. Dr. Fritz Cropp's advice before

the middle of 2001, which encouraged him to seek his doctorate from Mizzou, became another landmark in his life. Directly educated by Drs. Esther Thorson, Betty Winfield, Lee Wilkins and many other doctoral professors, Ernest regularly got his academic papers presented by various academic conferences in the United States and published by several academic journals in both America and China.

In September 2005, the hiring decision made by MU, the MSJ, and the school's International Programs started to exert Ernest's full array of efforts in promoting the school's penetration in China's media industry and journalism education. Guided by Dr. Cropp, Ernest has helped MSJ establish cooperative programs with China's top media outlets and schools of journalism in Guangzhou, Shenzhen, Chengdu, Shanghai, Beijing, Hangzhou, Hebei, Fuzhou, Changsha, Xiamen, Jinan, Wuhan, and Suzhou. To recognize Mr. Zhang's great contributions to improving China's journalism industry and education, the Renmin University School of Journalism and Mass Communication awarded him in 2005 "The Prize for Outstanding Contribution to Communication and Cooperation between China and America in the Area of Journalism Industry and Education."

To repay my university, my school, and my professors' education, I am determined to turn a new chapter in my work and research. Only with new achievements, can I think that I have done something for all the people who have given me their support.