

Business Models of Digital Longform Publications

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ABSTRACT

Despite a widespread conviction that longform reporting will become unsustainable because of the challenges posed by the internet and the digital environment, numerous digital publications that focus on longform journalism have emerged in recent years. Through semi-structured in-depth interviews with the executives of digital longform publications, this study, using the frameworks of the disruption theory and the five competitive forces theory, presents an analysis of business practices and procedure of such publications to establish the roots and the substance of this phenomenon. The rise of digital longform publication can be explained by the market opportunity that was created by the shrinking economy of the magazine industry, as well as by the technological advances and cheap costs of digital publishing.

However, this microindustry seems to have a considerable lack of sustainable models: while the executives of the publications tend to treat them as experiments, only a few pursue experimental revenue streams. Additionally, both marketing strategies and understanding about the target audience are mostly weak. Using the framework of Porter's five forces theory, the study analyzes key patterns found in the interviews to identify and explain the most significant traits of digital longform publications, contributing to the growing body of knowledge of the media economy in the digital age.