

**Case study 9.2.2: Newspapers on the web — Giving it all away? The dynamics and relationships between digital and printed products at three Swedish newspaper companies.**

**Authors** Karl Wesslau, Professor Nils Enlund & Professor Roger Wallis, Royal Institute of Technology (KTH), Stockholm, Sweden.

**Abstract** Most newspaper companies would confirm that they have had difficulties in making their digital editions profitable. Previous extensive experimenting when developing newspaper web sites has now been scaled down. The priority is to make a profit. In this pursuit the need for clear strategic goals is of vital importance. Such goals can be based on an understanding of

- the *relationship* between the newspaper companies' digital and traditional products,
- *value added* by the digital newspaper to the printed product, and
- how the *consumers regard and use* the digital product.

A study of three leading newspapers in Sweden suggests that, whilst their managements might not explicitly perform measurements of value-adding factors, a deeper understanding has emerged at the firms in question regarding cross-channel relationships and dependencies.

The objective of this case is to study the relationships and mutual dependencies between the digital and the printed products of the newspaper companies in order to identify the value added by cross-media publishing. The study also examines the extent to which such values are recognised as explicit or implicit company goals. Possible methods of measuring such added values are considered together with an assessment of the degree to which newspaper companies currently measure these values. A further focus is consumer reactions and attitudes to the new digital editions.

This case study demonstrates that much of the value added from a digital edition to its printed counterpart seem to be soft values (goodwill, enhanced reader relationship, enhanced credibility). Such values are often hard to measure. Some web editions have higher credibility than the printed counterpart. For some newspaper companies, this might be used for strengthening the brand name.

The study offers a platform both for publishing companies contemplating or already engaged in digital products and for future research. Equally, the reported lessons learned may be useful to organisations in other industry sectors that could or do offer products in digital form.