

The e-newspaper introduction - charting infrastructure influence on production, distribution and consumption

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The newspaper firms are facing an innovation, the e-newspaper published on e-paper technology. The e-paper is reflecting, giving the same reader experience as paper (such as high contrast and the possibility to read in sunlight) and is thin, flexible and non-sensitive. The e-newspaper combines the readability and overview from the printed newspaper with the possibilities of online media such as constant updates, interactivity and video, and is predicted to replace the printed edition in the long run.

The introduction of the e-newspaper will most certainly affect the way the news is produced (Appelgren et al, 2004), distributed and consumed in the future. With the introduction of online newspapers a decade ago, the newspaper firms experienced both organizational and production challenges (Ihlström & Palmer, 2002) and the online newspapers indeed created new consumption habits (Aikat, 1998; Sundar, 1999). However, it has been difficult to find ways of profiting from the online ventures (Ihlström & Henfridsson, 2005), which partly depends on the infrastructure. Moreover, most newspaper firms nowadays offer several mobile services, such as SMS, MMS, and WAP, creating some revenue, but also in this context the infrastructure plays a role.

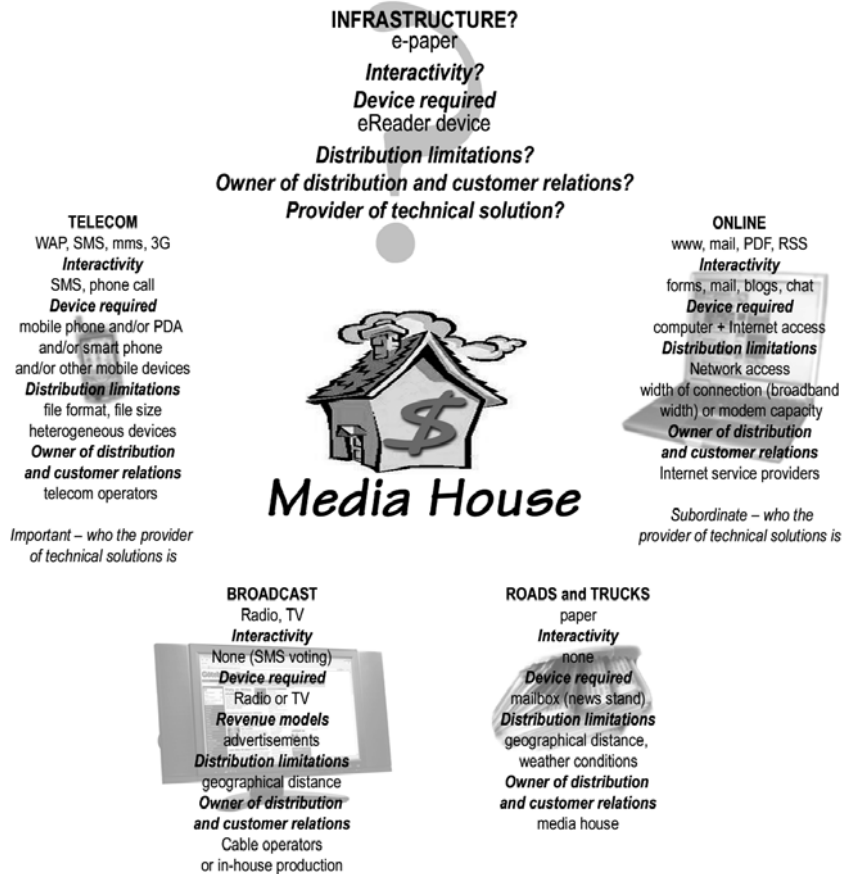
After decades in the laboratory, e-paper technologies seem posed for commercialization starting as early as 2006 [1]. The e-paper technologies are developing rapidly, e.g. Hewlett-Packard is testing material to replace newsprint, and discusses a gadget that is very lightweight, very thin and potentially flexible. "The future newspaper could feature a plastic sheet display on which images and information can be uploaded, through either a wireless or USB connection. But creating a thinner, paperlike medium has proven to be a tougher challenge than making an e-book." [2]. Fujitsu states that color electronic paper should be on the market in 18 months [3] and Ink announces a flexible, 10.1-inch LCD display only 300 microns thick [4].

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Within the DigiNews project, ITEA (03015), we are aiming at combining the accessibility, simplicity and mobility of printed newspapers, with the advantages of digital media, communication technologies and portable consumer electronics in developing an end-to-end solution for the future e-newspaper. During eight workshops in Sweden, Belgium and the Netherlands with newspaper managers we have discussed their preferences of the e-newspaper and the pros and cons of today's media channels. These issues have later been elaborated within the DigiNews consortium. Furthermore, we have conducted three workshops with advertisers, and five workshops with newspaper readers to gather data about their preferences of e-newspaper distribution and consumption. In an earlier study we have also discussed how the introduction of the e-newspaper will affect the production of news (Ihlström et al, 2005).

In this paper we discuss the infrastructure's influence on the channels of today's media houses, i.e. print, online, mobile, broadcast as well as the new possible channel, the e-paper, from different perspectives, such as distribution limitations, ownership of distribution and customer relations, interactivity etc.



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[2] <http://sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/c/a/2005/11/07/BUGP0FIINV1.DTL>

[3] <http://australianit.news.com.au/articles/0,7204,17243141%5E31923%5E%5Enbv%5E15309,00.html>

[4] <http://news.designtechnica.com/article8565.html>