



## EDITORIAL

# A showcase of recent member work from the European Media Management Association

Members and friends of the European Media Management Association (emma) gather every year to present and discuss their latest research in the field of media management. The emma annual conference is a recurring highlight for media management scholars, even beyond Europe. At the conference in 2016, which was organised and hosted by Porto University in Portugal, the attending scholars presented more than 50 research papers. Two of the associate editors of the *Journal of Media Business Studies* (JOMBS), Ulrike Rohn and Bjørn von Rimscha, invited some of these authors to submit their papers to JOMBS for consideration for this special issue.

One of emma's characteristics is its integrated community. The association brings together scholars from schools of communication as well as from business schools. This creates a fruitful forum for discussion that overcomes disciplinary truisms. Following in this tradition, this is the second "emma special issue" of JOMBS featuring papers that in their earlier versions were presented at an emma annual conference. As with any JOMBS submission, the papers underwent a double-blind review, as a result of which they were revised, edited and chosen for this special issue.

All three papers in this special issue shed light on phenomena that are relevant for the sustainability and competitiveness of media organisations in the context of changing market environments. In doing so, all three of them acknowledge the continuing democratic and cultural mandate of media in today's society. While all the papers describe, interpret and clarify underlying factors that influence change as well as the possible resulting organisational adaptation or resistance, they do differ in terms of their theoretical and empirical approaches, as well as in terms of what media sectors are under study. As such, all papers represent both the common understandings and concerns underlying media management scholarship as well as the spectrum of different perspectives and approaches.

The first paper in this special issue is by Miriam van der Burg and Hilde Van den Bulk from the University of Antwerp, Belgium, who ask the question: *Why are traditional newspaper publishers still surviving in the digital age?* Their paper tries to explain why newspaper publishers keep up their profits despite declining advertising and reader demand. With this research aim, the authors conducted a longitudinal analysis of the Flemish market where newspaper publishers, as in many other parts of the world, are faced with challenges caused by economic, sociocultural and technological changes.

Akio Torii from Chuo University in Japan is similarly concerned with changing conditions and resulting organisational adaptation and resistance in his paper titled "Effects of public broadcasting on the competition among private broadcasters and the total surplus". Torii is particularly interested in how private broadcasters react to the entry and investment activities of a public broadcaster. He is also particularly interested in a possible adaptation of their own investments in programming as well as in their choices of revenue. However, in his approach, change is not a change in observable market conditions but rather a result of an altered analytical model of a media market and its players.

In their paper "Managing exploration and exploitation in a media organization – a capability-based approach to ambidexterity", Päivi Maijanen from Lappeenranta

University of Technology, Finland, and Sari Virta from the University of Tampere, Finland, and Jönköping University, Sweden, look at the management of organisational tensions in the media industry. They offer a new, theoretical approach in which they combine ambidexterity, i.e. simultaneous exploration and exploitation, with the dynamic and operational capability-based approach. With this new approach, they asked the question: What kinds of tensions are created by ambidexterity between managerial operational and dynamic capabilities?

The papers selected for this special issue differ in their methodological approaches and level of analysis. Van der Burg and Van den Bulk as well as Torii are concerned with industrial organisation analysis that understands transformation and change as well as responds to disruption and competition on a market and industry level. Van der Burg and Van den Bulk base their conclusions on real-life data, whereas Torii uses assumptions in a model. Maijanen and Virta, on the other hand, investigate organisational tension within a specific company, namely the Finnish public broadcaster YLE. In their differences, the papers reflect and highlight the importance that media management research needs to be conducted on different levels of analysis. Whereas Torii constructs a theoretical model that helps evaluate possible effects of the entry of public broadcasting into the competition among private broadcasters, van der Burg and Van den Bulk work with data from Flemish newspaper publishers, in particular data about their revenues and cost structures and the evolution of their profitability. They conduct a longitudinal analysis of this data and test key financial indicators for Granger causality and those related to the market structure and general economic development in the Flemish market. Corresponding with their case study approach, Maijanen and Virta conducted qualitative interviews with representatives of YLE. With their aim to analyse strategic management behaviour, they interviewed employees who held strategically relevant positions at YLE.

The media industry is characterised by an ongoing convergence of previously separated media sectors. Technological advances and changing audience behaviour force media organisations to defend and reposition themselves in terms of new competitors and platforms. Van der Burg and Van den Bulk's paper, for instance, is motivated by the changing market conditions for traditional newspaper publishers that have led to a mature state of their product life cycle in an increasingly saturated newspaper market. Their main question is why these publishers still survive in the light of the new competitors and platforms. Essentially, Torii's paper also investigates how media organisations may respond to a new, competitive situation. The issue of ongoing convergence is most obvious in Maijanen's and Virta's paper. At the time they conducted their interviews at YLE, the broadcaster was implementing a reform in order to remove barriers between different media types, such as television, radio and the Internet and to move towards digital multiplatform content production. Assessing strategic management behaviour and in particular the management of organisational tensions during these times of reforms, they studied YLE at a time when its role and public service were actively debated and questioned, especially by the commercial media that were concerned with YLE's role in the Internet. Therefore, as with Torii's paper, Maijanen and Virta's paper also needs to be seen in the context of a changing competitive environment between public and commercial broadcasters.

Despite their different approaches and foci, all three papers in this special issue are concerned with the volatility of the media industries and markets. The papers reflect that the ongoing digital transformation and the changes in the competitive environment are of the highest relevance for media organisations today. The results that the authors of this special issue present and the conclusions they draw provide insights into the dynamics in the media industry and are likely to stimulate further investigation and discussion.

As such, van der Burg and Van den Bulk find that the traditional newspaper publishers' strategy to survive was to focus on low costs, which may certainly raise concerns in terms of

important newsroom investments and editorial quality. They do find, however, an increase in the percentage of the newsroom staff in relation to all permanent employees in the Flemish newspaper industry. And although Torii points to the limitations of his theoretical model that by and large depend on the underlying assumptions and their respective simulations of reality, his model points to possible negative effects that public broadcasters may have on commercial broadcasters and the total welfare surplus in the broadcasting market. As such, his model suggests that if public broadcasters provide similar programming to that provided by commercial broadcasters, this may in fact discourage programming investment by commercial broadcasters and therefore negatively influence the total production in broadcasting. With this suggestion, Torii invites us to rethink the competition between public and commercial broadcasters and stimulates further debate. Maijanen and Virta suggest that top managers find it difficult to focus on much-needed dynamic capabilities because they have problems rejecting path-dependent operational capabilities. Pointing to organisational tensions in the media industry, the finding of their paper is worrisome in times of rapid change and uncertainty where dynamic capabilities are much needed.

Despite their differences in theoretical and empirical approaches, all the papers in this special issue address how industries, markets or organisations react to and cope with change. With authors and case studies from different parts of the world, their contributions not only enrich existing scholarship in the field of media management and by emma members, but may also help a range of other stakeholders, such as policy-makers and media organisations, in their decision-making. As change and transformation processes will continue for the foreseeable future, the study of changing market and industry powers and of how media organisations may survive continues to be of great relevance, given the social and cultural role of media in democratic societies.

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