

Managing *Continuous Change* in Multi-platform *Media Companies*

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Abstract

This report presents the main findings of a research project that focused on the management and leadership practices through which multi-platform media organizations seek to respond to and cope with the ongoing transformations in their organizational and business environments. The research project was funded by the *Helsingin Sanomat Foundation* and it was carried out over a period of three years, in 2014-2017, at *Aalto University School of Business*.

Theoretically, the project drew on and sought to contribute to the emerging body of research on *media management*. The aim of the project was to explore the practices of management and leadership through which managers steer their teams and engage with their stakeholders in the midst of continuous change. The objective was to contribute to a better understanding of the ways in which media managers seek to steer their teams and organizations through the continuously unfolding and evolving strategy processes in the context of continuous institutional, cultural, technological, and organizational change. More specifically, the following questions were addressed:

1. What are the key challenges that multi-platform media companies face when struggling with continuous change?
2. How do the companies manage these challenges?
3. How do the key stakeholders (employees and consumers) respond to the new tactics and practices?

These questions were addressed through a number of separate studies that explored the different dimensions of the research task. The results of these studies have been reported and disseminated primarily as scholarly research contributions presented in academic conferences and published in international peer-reviewed journals. In this report, we summarize some of the main findings as they are discussed in these research outputs.

The research project was carried out in two main parts. First, the *challenges of continuous change* for media organizations and the management and leadership responses to these challenges were examined on a general level. This part revealed a number of paradoxes and tensions that managers have to deal with as they respond to the needs of both the employees and the market; shed light on processes of constructing strategy in practice under these conditions; and explored how media managers understand and tackle the constantly changing field through foresight. Based on the insights gained in the first part of the project, in the second part, the research team began an in-depth examination of the management practices from two perspectives: looking at the managers' practices in relation to the employees on the one hand and to the market on the other. In terms of employees, the key themes were *creativity* and *emotion*, and in terms of the market, the focus was on *social media* and *legitimacy*.

The findings suggest that it is essential for media companies to invest in developing the management of creativity, which in turn requires a focus on emotions, communication, and inclusivity. Developing practices of foresight and listening attentively to develop an understanding of stakeholders' values is also important. The insights offered in the published articles will help not only the top management teams but also middle managers and other employees of media corporations to manage their work in the continuously changing business environments of the contemporary media markets.

Managing continuous change in the media markets

In the field of media management, scholars are increasingly drawing on the literature on management and organization studies to shed new light on the strategic and managerial challenges that traditional print and broadcasting media organizations face when trying to succeed and survive in the changing media markets (Achtenhagen, 2008; Achtenhagen & Raviola, 2009b; Berman, Abraham, Battino, Shipnuck, & Neus, 2007; Küng-Shankleman, 2012; Moisander, Könkkölä, & Laine, 2013; Raviola & Hartmann, 2009). The key challenges identified in this literature are typically attributed to the radical technological, cultural, and economic change that is taking place in the media field (Deuze, 2008; Hartmann, 2009). It is observed that many of the existing business models, practices, and procedures that have been perfected over the years for mass media-based production no longer work (Huang et al., 2006; Lawson-Borders, 2003; Vukanovic, 2009). Hence, to remain profitable, media organizations need to re-think and revise their received ways of thinking and practices through a process of radical organizational change (Achtenhagen & Raviola, 2009a; Tameling & Broersma, 2013). In the current business environment “the status quo is not an option” (Küng-Shankleman, 2012); the strategic goals of the company and its different units rather need to be continuously redefined and revised.

In this research project, we have continued and extended this scholarship by examining the practices through which the middle managers of contemporary multi-platform media organizations manage—and cope with—the continuously emerging and evolving strategies of the organization and implement strategic change in the day-to-day activities of their work. We argue that the uncertainty, confusion, and overwhelming sense of pressure that results from the lack of clear direction and well-functioning organizational procedures constitute a challenge not only for the middle managers, who are supposed to manage the change, but also for the other employees of media organizations. The competence and professional self-esteem of sales people, journalists, reporters, photographers, editors, and top-managers is called into question as the nature of their work continues to change (Dupagne & Garrison, 2006; Erdal, 2011; Hellman & Jaakkola, 2012; Kantola, 2013; Karlsson, 2011; Mitchelstein & Boczkowski, 2009; Örnebring, 2010; Ybema, 2010). The professional identity and self-esteem of these professionals becomes threatened as they face the fact that they need to unlearn their admirably perfected but inescapably outdated work practices so as to learn completely new skills and capabilities that are better suited for the new strategic environment (Huang et al., 2006; Lewis, Kaufhold, & Lasorsa, 2009; Pang, 2010). Hence, in managing strategic change and renewal, the middle managers of the multi-platform media organizations are often faced with—and need to cope with—not only the lack of clear strategic vision and direction top-down but also the lack of support and innovation bottom-up.

The project set out to build new theory from practice (Schultz & Hatch, 2005) by critically examining the day-to-day activities that middle managers engage in so as to learn about the dynamics of strategic renewal and strategic change in their environment as well as about the complexities and paradoxes that they need to deal with in steering the organization in the midst of continuous change. This analytical focus allowed us to gain insights into the complexities of strategic media management that are both practically relevant and theoretically original. In doing so, the project thus responds to the recent calls for a much stronger emphasis on the practical and social significance of academic research to society (Corley & Gioia, 2011; Kung, 2010; Moisander & Stenfors, 2009; Schultz & Hatch, 2005).

Theoretically, the aim of the project was to advance knowledge in the field of *strategic media management* by theoretically elaborating and empirically illustrating the strategic and managerial complexities that media management involves in the changing business

environments of contemporary media organizations (see Figure 1 which illustrates the facets of cross-platform media management). This was done by working towards a cross-disciplinary perspective on strategic media management, which integrates insights, concepts, and methods from contemporary theories of strategic change (Balogun, Gleadle, Hailey, & Willmott, 2005; Corley & Gioia, 2004; Floyd & Lane, 2000; Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991; Petriglieri & Petriglieri, 2010; Poole, Van den Ven, Dooley, & Homes, 2000; Tripsas, 2009; Ven & Poole, 1995) and strategy-as-practice (Jarzabkowski, Balogun, & Seidl, 2007; Rouleau, 2005; Whittington, 2007) into discussions of media management (Küng, 2007, 2008; Küng-Shankleman, 2012). In doing so, the project connects a set of related but previously disconnected concepts and ideas to build new frameworks and constructs that open up new perspectives on the dynamics and complexities of strategic media management in the changing business environments of the industry.

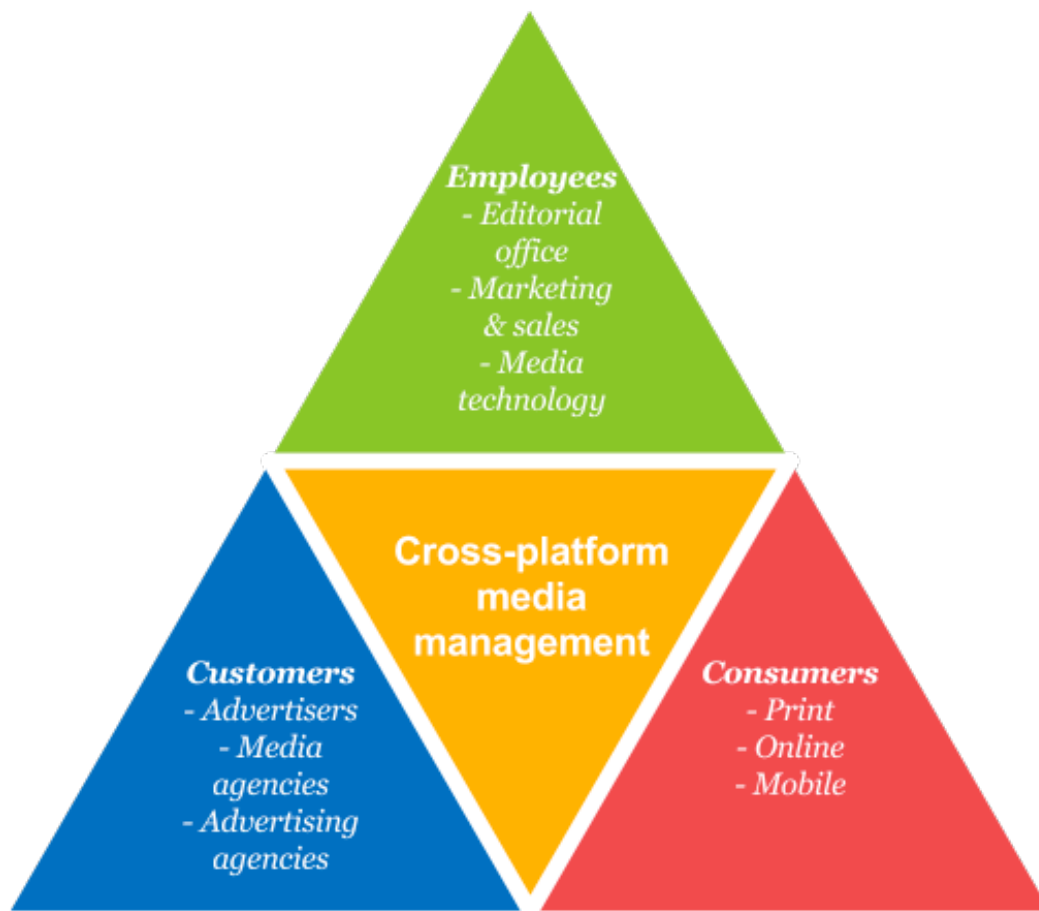


Figure 1: Facets of cross-platform media management.

More specifically, the project set out to build new theory from practice by exploring and critically examining the ways in which managers engage with their team members and manage emerging strategies in contexts where taken-for-granted industry recipes and well-established organizational practices have been called into question by technological and cultural change.

The research task of the project was defined through the following three research questions:

1. What are the key challenges that multi-platform media companies face when struggling with continuous change?
2. How do the companies manage these challenges?
3. How do the key stakeholders (employees and consumers) respond to the new tactics and practices?

These research questions were addressed, first, through a set of instrumental case studies (Stake, 2003) conducted in two large European multi-platform media organizations (however both have an emphasis on print media). The empirical data used in the project comprised printed and online documents, participant observation and personal interviews (Holstein & Gubrium, 1997; Moisander, Valtonen, & Hirsto, 2009) carried out in the case organizations. Second, for some of the subprojects, interviews and electronic questionnaires were used to collect data from multiple media organizations, and some subprojects used online material obtained from online discussion forums and consumer communities (Kozinets, 2002; Maclaran & Catterall, 2002).

Summary of key findings

The research project was carried out in two main parts. In the **first part** of the project, the *challenges of continuous change* in media organizations and management practices related to strategy and change were examined on a general level. This part revealed key paradoxes and tensions that managers have to deal with as they respond to needs of both the employees and the market (Horst and Moisander, 2015), shed light on processes of constructing strategy in practice under these conditions (Horst & Järventie-Thesleff, 2016), and explored how media managers understand and tackle the constantly changing field through foresight (Niinisalo, 2016). Based on the insights gained in the first part of the project, in the **second part**, the research team began an in-depth examination of the management practices from two perspectives: looking at the managers' practices in relation to the employees on the one hand and to the market on the other. In terms of employees, key themes were *creativity* (Moisander, 2015; Malmelin & Virta, 2017) and *emotion* (Host & Pälli, 2015; Lillqvist & Moisander, 2017), and in terms of the market, the focus was on *social media* and *legitimacy* (Lillqvist, Moisander & Firat, 2015; Lillqvist, Moisander & Firat, under review; Lillqvist & Moisander, 2016; Lillqvist & Harju, under review).

Figure 2 below illustrates how, in the constantly changing media industry environment, media managers are caught between the contrasting pressures set by employees (editorial, marketing, and media technology experts), on the one hand, and the market (customers and consumers) on the other. In response, the managers engage in various practices that address managing strategy and change, emotions and creativity, and organizational legitimacy. Some key findings are summarized in Table 1.

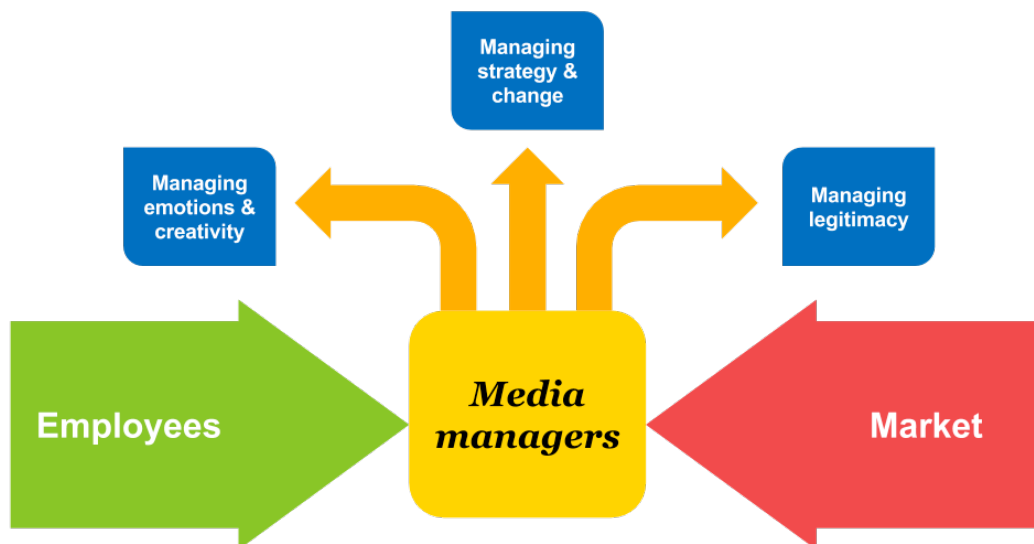


Figure 2: Paradoxical pressures and managerial practices in the management of multi-platform media companies in continuous change.

	Part 1: Key challenges	Part 2: Manager and stakeholder responses
A. Market	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Convergence - Digitalization of media products and advertising - New types of competition - Increasing user-focus - Consumer unwillingness to pay for content, declining sales - Difficulties in anticipation 	<p>Social media and legitimacy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Online: importance of understanding consumer cultures & values - Community - Interaction - Emotion - Consumer expectations and legitimacy criteria – pragmatic, moral, relational
B. Employees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Difficulties in creating new ideas and products - Internal rivalry hinders innovation - But continuous change can also inspire creativity – future is open - Emotional engagement in work (love, pride) - Changing values & identity - Changing work practices - Increased financial pressure & workload -> <i>fear</i> -> <i>pessimism</i> 	<p>Creativity & emotions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Critical to creativity: co-operation willingness, experimental atmosphere, and supportive practices - Enthusiasm, enjoyment & positive feedback support creativity - Display of emotions impacts practices of sharing, collaborating, and decision-making - Emotions used as discursive resources for identity work & guided sensemaking - Ways of using emotions in discourse: express, explain, evaluate, elicit

Table 1. Key findings.

Part 1: Challenges and management of strategy & change

The findings of Horst and Moisander (2015) suggest that in the current disrupted contexts of the media industry the successful management of strategic renewal hinges on the management of paradoxical tensions in the organization: on effectively attending to the competing demands, conflicting interests, and incompatible needs that arise within the different departments, units, teams, and individuals of the organization. The study by Horst and Moisander (2015) illustrates, in particular, how the tensions that arise from the turmoil, ambiguity, and uncertainty that the employees experience in their day-to-day work result in paradoxes that complicate the management of strategic renewal. Employees were concerned because job security had suffered due to economic difficulties, and job contents, values, and identities were also constantly in flux, creating severe feelings of insecurity. Employees also felt that their previously strong professional pride and heritage was threatened by the changes in the industry. The authors therefore

suggested that managers need to focus on actively creating an organizational context where a sense of mutual trust, openness, and sensitivity supports the change process.

Horst & Järventie-Thesleff (2016) extended these findings by zooming in on processes of emergent strategy formation. The study takes a practice approach to strategy, meaning that strategy is formed in the interplay of local actions, practices, and intentions of all staff contributing to strategy making in the organization. The study sheds light on the narratives focusing on employees, managers, and the market, showing that managers face the challenge of balancing diverse interests and needs across the organization and with respect to the changing market.

Niinisalo's (2016) study adds an important perspective by bringing into focus the specific practices that middle managers in media organizations engage in to understand and respond to the challenges of changes in the market and industry. The study finds that the media managers interviewed, with one exception, did not show much interest in foresight beyond the current strategy period due to a lack of resources and because it was seen as too difficult.

The first part of the project thus sheds light on the context of the study, particularly on how media managers are currently caught between the contrasting pressures set by employees (editorial, marketing, and media technology experts) and the market (customers and consumers).

Part 2: Manager and stakeholder responses

In the second part of the project, Moisander (2015) and Malmelin & Virta (2017) focused on managing creativity. Creativity is central in the media industry, not only in terms of the day to day media production but also crucially in terms of developing, marketing, commercializing and branding new products, concepts, and innovations (Malmelin & Virta, 2017). Moisander (2015) emphasizes the role of middle managers in supporting creativity, specifically in creating a corporate culture that values innovation and specific supporting structures such as concrete spaces and events as well as teams and matrices focused on the digital, for example. According to Malmelin and Virta (2017), creativity can be promoted particularly by managerial practices that support co-operation willingness within the company and an open, positive, and experimental atmosphere. Other supportive practices include managers giving encouraging feedback and acting in a non-dictatorial manner. Conversely, creativity can be threatened when, as the first part of this project suggested, employees feel the financial and emotional pressures caused by continuous change, such as increased stress and decreased trust, collaboration, confidence, engagement, and support. As Moisander (2015) points out, creativity is about breaking tradition and norms and it is thus a "political" activity that can cause turmoil within an organization. It is therefore understandable that if people feel insecurity in their jobs, they might be unwilling to "rock the boat" with ideas that go against the social norms and traditional ways of thinking in the company. This can cause a highly detrimental vicious circle: creativity suffers because of negative emotional and social outcomes, and this in turn further hampers economic success by lowering the company's ability to respond to the ongoing changes in the market thereby, again causing more stress and negativity. The reverse can also happen, as creativity advances a sense of workplace wellbeing (Moisander, 2015) which then in turn supports further creativity.

Arguably, then, managing emotions is an important aspect of managing continuous change in media companies. Horst and Pälli (2015) and Lillqvist and Moisander (2017) therefore further examined how managers address the emotional challenges connected to strategic change, identified previously by Horst and Moisander (2015) and Horst and Järventie-Thesleff (2016). Horst and Pälli (2015) examined how emotions were performed and used discursively in strategy workshops and found that these emotional performances were important for the strategic practices of sharing, collaborating, and

decision-making. The findings of Lillqvist and Moisander (2017) show how four ways of using emotions as part of discursive leadership—expressing, explaining, evaluating, and eliciting emotions—inspires and controls followers, and legitimates the speakers and the strategic change process. For example, managers often expressed their own feelings, particularly happiness and excitement, in a way of setting themselves as examples of appropriate emotional reactions and giving a positive impression of the strategic change process. They also evaluated employees' emotions in a way that sanctions specific types of emotional reactions, such as passion, energy, and trust, and criticizes others, particularly fear and suspiciousness which are often portrayed as an irrational resistance (Lillqvist & Moisander, 2017).

In the latter part of the project Lillqvist, Moisander and Firat (2015; under review) and Lillqvist and Moisander (2016) also examined the pressures of the market and responding to them, focusing particularly on consumers in social media and the concept of legitimacy. Particularly, as digitalization and online advertising are currently important factors contributing to the economic success of media companies, the focus in this part was on how consumers react to online marketing and how they judge the legitimacy of organizations in these online contexts. Findings show that some of the key factors in this regard have to do with consumers' needs and interests but also importantly the company's perceived moral acceptability, as well as its perceived respectfulness of and participation in the consumer community – highlighting the importance of understanding local contexts and consumers' norms and values. Lillqvist and Harju (under review), in turn, looked at social media from the perspective of the social media corporations themselves. As social media is a competitor for more traditional media companies, it is useful for the latter to understand the workings of the consumer relationship of the former. The study suggests that Facebook engages in what the authors call “solicitation” (from Baudrillard) of its users in order to achieve user engagement, continued participation, and legitimation-by-participation. This is done through the promise of four types of “Gift,” namely protection (security from bullying and harassment on the site), freedom of expression, personal connection, as well as general altruism of the company. Although there are also critical consumer voices, mostly the users accept these claims by the company, thus implicitly sanctioning and legitimating the business model.

Overall, through these findings, we have contributed to a better understanding of the challenges of managing continuous change in contemporary multi-platform media organizations, where managers need to respond to often conflicting pressures from the employees and the market and understand and participate in complex social processes of forming strategy, emotions, creativity, and legitimacy. In the next section of this report, we provide a more detailed description of individual publications produced within the project.

Publications

The results of the project have been reported and disseminated primarily as scholarly research contributions presented in academic conferences and published in international peer-reviewed journals. In the following sections, we present the abstracts of the key contributions, also giving the URL of the online publication when available. We group the publications, according to what has been presented above, under 1) challenges and management of strategy & change, and 2) management and stakeholder responses, which in turn includes a) creativity and emotions, and b) social media and legitimacy.

Part 1: Challenges and management of strategy & change

Paradoxes of strategic renewal in traditional print-oriented media firms

This article continues and extends the emerging scholarship of strategic media management by examining the day-to-day challenges that media managers face when managing strategic renewal in traditional print-oriented media firms. The aim, in particular, is to shed light on the tensions and paradoxical situations that middle managers need to deal with in contexts where taken-for-granted industry recipes and well-established business practices have become problematized as a result of industry-wide technological and cultural change. Based on an empirical case study, the article identifies and elaborates on three interconnected paradoxes, rooted in the history of the company and past decisions of its top-management: (1) balancing employees' needs for stability with organizational needs for change; (2) bridging employees' needs for security and tradition and the organizational need for learning and taking risks; as well as (3) reconciling employees' needs to "focus on themselves" with organizational needs to collaborate for collective success. Theoretically, the article contributes to the literature by working toward a new paradox perspective on managing strategic renewal in media organizations. This theoretical perspective is offered as an interpretive framework for empirically exploring and critically examining the dynamics and complexities of strategic media management in the continuously changing business environments of the industry.

Reference: Horst, Sven-Ove and Moisaner, Johanna (2015) Paradoxes of Strategic Renewal in Traditional Print-Oriented Media Firms. *International Journal on Media Management*, 17(3), 157-174.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/14241277.2015.1084306>

Finding an emergent way through transformational change: a narrative approach to strategy

Current strategic media management has a tendency to draw on design or planning schools and focus primarily on competitive advantages, industry development, and strategic positioning. However, the way in which strategies emerge from everyday practices is poorly understood. To this end, we build a theoretical lens from the narrative approach to strategy-as-practice and the concept of "wayfinding," and study how organizational narratives can help both managers and employees to construct meaning around emergent strategy during ongoing transformational change. Through interview data of an empirical case study, we identify narratives on three fronts—about (1) employees, (2) managers, and (3) the market—and elaborate on how these narratives may give meaning, offer guidance, and provide an actionable basis from which to find a way through ongoing transformational change. Our study contributes to the research on

strategic media management by showing how narratives can help to make sense of emergent strategy and the way organizations find their way through ongoing change.

Reference: Horst, Sven-Ove and Järventie-Thesleff, Rita (2016) Finding an emergent way through transformational change: a narrative approach to strategy. *Journal of Media Business Studies*, 13(1), 3-21.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/16522354.2015.1123854>

“For us, future studies mean keeping track of what is going on elsewhere”: future foresight capabilities and processes in media companies

Future foresight has gained increasing significance in companies as a tool for decision-making in both strategic planning as well as research and product development. For instance, foresight provides tools for companies to create visions, make strategic choices and engage themselves in innovation activities. Foresight allows preparing for the future and influencing it. This qualitative study focuses on the media sector, a branch currently undergoing radical changes. The aim, more specifically, is to determine how new media organizations acquire, process, and utilize information about the future, and what kinds of foresight processes they develop and deploy to do so. Empirical materials were obtained through semi-structured interviews with nine practitioners who worked with strategic planning and implementation. In this study, these persons are referred to as media directors. Their positions included editor-in-chief, manager in charge of business development and digital director. The material was analyzed with theory-based content analysis, particularly using the absorptive capacity theory and a foresight process model. The findings of the study suggest that news media organizations do not necessarily invest in developing particular foresight processes. Information concerning the future is, nevertheless, acquired and frequently used as a part of normal operations. The temporal span of foresight activities, however, is typically limited to the current strategy period. Attitudes towards the future among the media directors appear to be influenced particularly by the use of agile product development methods, busy timetables, changes that have occurred in the organization, and the economic state of their organizations. Foresight is manifested in a system-like manner and influenced by competence and networks.

Reference: Niinisalo, Tarja (2016) "Meidän tulevaisuudentutkimus on sitä, että seurataan, mitä muualla tapahtuu" – tulevaisuuden ennakoinnin kyvykkyydet ja prosessit mediayhtiöissä. Master's thesis, Aalto University School of Business.

<http://epub.lib.aalto.fi/fi/ethesis/id/14393>

Part 2: Manager and stakeholder responses

2a. Creativity and emotions

Managing creativity in changing media organizations: a practice perspective

Creativity has recently been discussed as the driving force of success and survival in the converging media markets. The traditional print and broadcasting media organizations, in particular, have had to face up to the reality that many of the practices of media work that they have perfected over the years no longer work in the globalized, digitalized and constantly changing media landscape. To remain profitable, therefore, these media organizations need to be creative and innovative, re-thinking and revising their received ways of thinking and doing so as to find novel ideas for doing business. In the changing media organizations, however, managing creativity constitutes a challenging task. The uncertainty, confusion, and overwhelming sense of pressure that often results from a lack of clear direction and well-functioning organizational procedures constitutes a taxing

disruption not only for the middle managers, who are supposed to manage the change, but also for the other employees of media organizations. The competence and professional self-esteem of sales people, journalists, reporters, photographers, editors, and top-managers is called into question as the nature of their work continues to change. The professional identity and self-esteem of these professionals becomes threatened as they face the fact that they need to unlearn their admirably perfected but inescapably outdated work practices so as to learn completely new skills and capabilities that are better suited for the new strategic environment. In this paper, I set out to explore and examine the ways in which media managers, at different levels of the organizational hierarchy, make sense of creativity and the challenge of managing organizational creativity in the disrupted organizational environments that they have to deal with in their day-to-day work.

Reference: Moisander, Johanna (2015) Managing creativity in changing media organizations – a practice perspective. Paper presented at ‘Organization Studies Workshop on Organizational Creativity, Play and Entrepreneurship’ 2015.

Creativity as critical resource in media production

The paper focuses on the critical impact and role of creativity as human capital for media organizations, media work and media production. Previous research on the central importance of creativity in media production is scarce (see e.g. Malmelin & Nivari-Lindström, 2015; Malmelin & Virta, 2015; Nylund, 2013; Markham, 2012; Berglez, 2011; Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2011) despite its pivotal strategic significance for media organizations’ future success in the complex and rapidly transforming operational environment (Küng, 2011). From the resource-based view of the firm (Penrose, 1959/2009; Mierzejewska, 2011), organizational creativity can be conceptualized as media organizations’ core strategic resource for coping with the current changes. In this context, there is an urgent need for new understanding about creativity as a critical resource for media companies as well as media production and its management. The empirical paper analyzes magazine journalists’ views, understandings, and interpretations about creativity in their production work in media organizations based in northern Europe. The empirical material was collected by a web-based questionnaire utilizing the critical incident technique, and the data comprise around 150 writings on creative media production. The magazine publishing is a particularly interesting sector of the media industry, because it is characterized by the requirement to adapt to the disruptive, complex, extensive, and often unpredictable changes of the industry and its operational contexts. The paper contributes to the evolving research field of creative media work and its management (e.g. Deuze, 2007). Grounded on the empirical analysis, the paper presents a new theoretical framework for creating understanding about creativity’s role and impact in media production as a core organizational resource. This results from combining radical and incremental creativity (e.g. Gilson et al., 2012) with media production and its practices. In addition to the theoretical contribution, the findings offer significant implications for the practices and management of creative media production.

Reference: Malmelin, Nando & Virta, Sari (2017) Creativity as critical resource in media production. Paper presented at the IAMCR 2017 conference (The International Association for Media and Communication Research), Media Production Analysis working group, Cartagena, Colombia, July 18, 2017.

Developing emotions and strategy making: management-training workshops under the microscope

While strategy workshops have become an important practice for organizations, empirical studies examining this phenomenon remain scarce. In particular, studies relating emotions and workshops are still wanting. To address this gap, we draw on an in-depth qualitative study of a consultancy that offers management-training workshops. Based on a grounded-theoretical approach, we show that the display of emotions such as joy, curiosity, sadness, fear, or anger influence the strategic orientation of the group work

through impacting the strategic practices of sharing, collaborating, and decision-making. The outcomes of the workshop strongly depend on how these practices are being performed. The findings inform a model which delineates how emotions play an integral part of strategizing in workshops. Our work extends previous research on strategy workshops and integrates the emerging literature on emotions and strategy making.

Reference: Horst, Sven-Ove and Pälli, Pekka (2015) Developing emotions and strategy making: Management-training workshops under the microscope. Paper presented at the 31st European Group of Organizational Studies Colloquium (EGOS), Athens, Greece, July 2-4, 2015.

Discursive leadership of strategic change: emotions as discursive resources in guided sensemaking

Building a discursive leadership perspective on sensemaking and emotions, this paper focuses on how top managers make use of emotions in their discourse in the context of strategic change in a large European media corporation. The paper contributes to sensemaking literature and to a discursive understanding of leadership by showing how emotions are used as discursive resources in leadership, enabling guided sensemaking of a change process. We offer an integrative framework of four ways of using emotions as discursive resources, 1) expressing, 2) evaluating, 3) explaining and 4) eliciting emotions. These enable managers to inspire and control followers and to legitimate themselves as well as the strategic change process.

Reference: Lillqvist, Ella & Moisander, Johanna (2017) Discursive leadership of strategic change: Emotions as discursive resources in guided sensemaking. Paper presented at the 33rd European Group for Organizational Studies Colloquium (EGOS), Copenhagen, Denmark, July 3-5, 2017.

2b. Social media and legitimacy

Marketer legitimacy in participatory media: negotiating the acceptance of marketing communication on Reddit

This paper applies an “inhabited institutionalism” perspective to examine how the legitimacy of marketing communication is constituted in interaction between marketers and consumers in an online participatory media context. We see this context as an “emerging organizational field” where marketers and consumer groups follow somewhat differing institutional logics. Drawing from symbolic interactionism, we contribute a situational view of legitimacy and develop a model that illustrates how it is jointly negotiated case by case. The grounds for legitimation identified include: (1) object-related grounds, i.e. legitimizing aspects of the product or communication about it (relevance, quality, and convenience), (2) subject-related grounds, namely the acceptability of marketer behavior (honesty, selflessness, and respectfulness), and (3) relational grounds (equal standing, participation, and common ground).

Reference: Lillqvist, Ella; Moisander, Johanna and Firat; A. Fuat (2015) Marketer Legitimacy in Participatory Media: Negotiating the Acceptance of Marketing Communication on Reddit. In *Advances in Consumer Research*, Volume 43, eds. Kristin Diehl and Carolyn Yoon, Duluth, MN: Association for Consumer Research, Pages: 611-612.

<http://acrwebsite.org/volumes/1019661/volumes/v43/NA-43>

Constructing legitimacy in interaction: how consumers evaluate organizations on social media

In this paper, we take a communicative institutionalist perspective and explore how legitimacy is conferred or denied by consumers on social media, a communication environment with multiple, partly conflicting logics of action. We develop a theoretical

framework that integrates symbolic interactionist notions with appraisal theory (from linguistics). This allows us to analyze and show how consumers on a popular online content sharing community, Reddit, define communication situations and how they evaluate the legitimacy of organizations in interaction. On Reddit, a communal logic that incorporates anti-marketing ideology constrains how situations are defined and legitimacy evaluated in symbolic interaction. We categorize nine types of legitimacy evaluations which are mapped onto three dimensions of legitimacy: (1) object-related legitimacy, i.e. legitimizing aspects of the product or communication about it (its relevance, quality, and convenience in the eyes of the consumers), (2) subject-related legitimacy, namely the acceptability of marketer behavior within this online context (the perceived character of the marketer as honest, selfless, and respectful), and (3) relational legitimacy which has to do with the relations that the marketer has with the online community (their equal standing, active participation, and common ground). Relational legitimacy, in particular, depends heavily on understanding and sharing the communal logic of the participatory media context and seems to be difficult for marketers to achieve. If successful, it can, however, lead to a strong legitimacy as a “member.” Object-related and subject-related legitimacy can however also lead to a legitimate outcome as a “contributor.”

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Consumers as legitimating agents: how consumer-citizens challenge marketer legitimacy on social media

Previous research has shown that consumers increasingly challenge the legitimacy of marketers and unsolicited marketing communication in online contexts. Based on a qualitative study, this article examines how and for what reasons consumers challenge marketer legitimacy—the perceived appropriateness of marketers and their activities—in the empirical context of Reddit, a popular social news and community website. The study suggests that consumers challenge or accept marketer legitimacy in online communities based on particular, community and situation specific, legitimacy criteria that reflect and reproduce the values and norms of the community. In doing so, it is argued, consumers play a role as legitimating agents—consumer-citizens that have the power to confer or deny legitimacy in the context of business-society relations. Overall, the study advances knowledge in the field of consumer studies in two ways. Firstly, it builds a symbolic interactionist perspective on consumer-citizens as legitimating agents who enact their active citizenship role in the marketplace by assessing and constructing marketer legitimacy in online communities. Secondly, it offers an empirically grounded account of how and for what reasons consumer-citizens challenge or accept the legitimacy of marketers and unsolicited marketing communication in online communities.

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Discourse of enticement: how Facebook solicits users

With much contemporary discussion on social media and the ethics and transparency of the way they operate, this article examines the discursive processes of user engagement as Baudrillardian solicitation. The concept of solicitation allows us to conceptualize social media use as a transactional process whereby the user is enticed by a promise of a ‘Gift’ and thus lured into using a service or a product. Simultaneously, the very act of participation implicates the user, albeit unwittingly, in the sanctioning and legitimizing of the operational logic behind social media. Adopting a CDS perspective, we explore the ways in which Facebook entices users through discursive processes of solicitation. We

analyze, making use of corpus linguistic tools, both Facebook corporate communication and user reactions. Our findings show that the user is enticed by foregrounding the value of participation for the user and promising four types of Gift: protection, freedom of expression, personal connection, and a general altruism on the part of the corporation. Thus, this study sheds light on how users are enticed discursively by the social media company and the ways in which they either accept the discourse or resist it.

Reference: Lillqvist, Ella & Harju, Anu A. (under review, first round). Discourse of enticement: How Facebook solicits users. Paper submitted to the journal *Critical Approaches to Discourse Analysis across Disciplines*.

Contributions

Theoretical contributions

Theoretically, the project contributes to the emerging field of research and scholarship on media management by developing and empirically illustrating an understanding of media management as taking place in day-to-day practices and communication, jointly with employees and to a certain extent also with other stakeholders such as consumers. The project has thus advanced an approach to media management research that acknowledges the constitutive role of interaction, discourses, and narratives, and drawn attention to the role of employee participation in strategic processes through the concepts such as strategy-as-practice and guided sensemaking. The work has also emphasized the importance of *practices* of emotions and creativity—they are also understood not as arising within the mind of individuals but as inherently social practices that hinge on communication.

Practical implications

The findings of this project suggest that the management of strategic renewal and adapting to the continuous change in the industry requires managers to address a set of paradoxical tensions and that anticipating future developments is difficult. This makes leadership a highly contextual process for which it is impossible to give universal advice. However, there are some guidelines that emerge from the insights gained in the project.

In order to succeed in the future, it is essential for media companies to invest in developing the management of *creativity*. Creative work relies increasingly on collaborative efforts within an organization, which is why leadership and people management are critical to the success of creative endeavors. For this purpose, *emotions* are a central consideration. Managers should therefore work to support employees' basic sense security, good self-esteem, and mutual trust, so that they are also able to keep an open mind and tolerate, or even thrive in, conditions on uncertainty and ambiguity. Open *communication and inclusivity* are important in order to achieve this: in the management of media organizations, a guided sensemaking approach is therefore probably preferable to a top-down, dictating orientation. Developing practices of foresight is also advisable. In addition, managers should also maintain open lines of communication and listen carefully to customers and consumers in order to gain and maintain a good understanding of their values and the criteria they use to evaluate the legitimacy of media organizations.

To conclude, the new insights that the project offers help not only the top management teams but also the other employees of the contemporary media corporations, at different levels of the organizational hierarchy, find and invent new ways of thinking about and

managing their work in the continuously changing business environments of the contemporary media markets.

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Alphabetical list of publications

1. Horst, Sven-Ove and Järventie-Thesleff, Rita (2016) Finding an emergent way through transformational change: a narrative approach to strategy. *Journal of Media Business Studies*, 13(1), 3-21.
2. Horst, Sven-Ove and Moisander, Johanna (2015) Paradoxes of Strategic Renewal in Traditional Print-Oriented Media Firms. *International Journal on Media Management*, 17(3), 157-174.
3. Horst, Sven-Ove and Pälli, Pekka (2015) Developing emotions and strategy making: Management-training workshops under the microscope. Paper presented at the 31st European Group of Organizational Studies Colloquium (EGOS), Athens, Greece, July 2-4, 2015.
4. Lillqvist, Ella and Harju, Anu A. (under review, first round). Discourse of enticement: How Facebook solicits users. Submitted to the journal *Critical Approaches to Discourse Analysis across Disciplines*.
5. Lillqvist, Ella and Moisander, Johanna (2016) Constructing Legitimacy in Interaction: How Consumers Evaluate Organizations on Social Media. *Academy of Management Proceedings 2016* (1), 16430
6. Lillqvist, Ella & Moisander, Johanna (2017) Discursive leadership of strategic change: Emotions as discursive resources in guided sensemaking. Paper presented at the 33rd European Group for Organizational Studies Colloquium (EGOS), Copenhagen, Denmark, July 3-5, 2017.
7. Lillqvist, Ella; Moisander, Johanna and Firat; A. Fuat (2015) Marketer Legitimacy in Participatory Media: Negotiating the Acceptance of Marketing Communication on Reddit. In *Advances in Consumer Research*, Volume 43, eds. Kristin Diehl and Carolyn Yoon, Duluth, MN: Association for Consumer Research, Pages: 611-612.
8. Lillqvist, Ella; Moisander, Johanna and Firat, A. Fuat (under review, second round). Consumers as legitimating agents: how consumer-citizens challenge marketer legitimacy on social media. Submitted to the *International Journal of Consumer Studies*.
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10. Moisander, Johanna (2015) Managing creativity in changing media organizations – a practice perspective. Paper presented at ‘Organization Studies Workshop on Organizational Creativity, Play and Entrepreneurship’ 2015.
11. Niinisalo, Tarja (2016) ”Meidän tulevaisuudentutkimus on sitä, että seurataan, mitä muualla tapahtuu” – tulevaisuuden ennakoinnin kyvykkyydet ja prosessit mediayhtiöissä. Master’s thesis, Aalto University School of Business.

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