Cross promotion of online counterparts of the leading US newspapers

Case study of The New York Times and US Today

Summary

This paper discusses the relationship between economic convergence and journalistic convergence. Economic convergence means businesses combine different media to take advantage of all the different properties. It is theoretically based on Convergence Continuum, which explains how to use different forms of media convergence and that the amount of cooperation and interaction can differ from partnership to partnership, depending on the needs of the partners. Apart from marketing value, cross promotion is a good indicator for determining the level of journalistic convergence. The purpose of journalism convergence is to produce higher-quality news, regardless of the delivery platform. This study examines cross-promotion practices at USA Today and The NY Times.

Keywords: economic convergence, journalistic convergence, cross promotion, The NY Times, USA Today
ISTRAŽIVANJA

Mato Brautović

Praksa cross promocije u online izdanjima vodećih američkih novina

Studija slučaja New York Times i USA Today

Sažetak

U radu se razmatra odnos između ekonomske konvergencije i novinarske konvergencije. Ekonomsk progres konvergencija omogućuje tvrtkama kombiniranje različitih medija s ciljem da najbolje iskoriste njihove značajke. To teorijski je utemeljen na Convergence Continuumu, koji objašnjava kako koristiti različite oblike medijske konvergencije, s tim što se načini suradnje i interakcije mogu razlikovati od partnera do partnera, ovisno o njihovim potrebama. Osim marketinške vrijednosti, cross promocija je dobar indikator za određivanje razine novinarskih konvergencija. Svrha novinarske konvergencije je proizvesti kvalitetnije vijesti, bez obzira na platforme. Ova studija istražuje praksu cross-promocije na USA Today i NY Times.

Ključne riječi: ekonomska konvergencija, novinarska konvergencija, cross promocija, NY Times, USA Today

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Introduction

Professor Henry Jenkins from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology defines convergence as "an ongoing process, occurring at various intersections of media technologies, industries, content and audiences," Starting with this definition, we come to economic convergence, where different media businesses collaborate by taking advantage of all the different properties. For example, the formation of AOL Time Warner is a well-documented example of economic convergence (Kolodzy, 2006). The literature has shown many examples of economic convergence that focuses solely on the synergy of television, magazines, films and books. On the other hand, economic convergence in newspapers and their counterparts (web and mobile) has not been investigated.

In a paper published in 2003, Larry Dailey, Lori Demo and Mary Spillman defined the Convergence Continuum, which explains the evolution of convergence from its early stage in the form of cross promotion to the full convergence process. The continuum explains how to use different types of media convergence, and that "the amount of cooperation and interaction can differ from partnership to partnership, depending on the needs of the partners."

This study will examine the initial form of cross promotion, because it is used most often. According to research conducted by Dailey, Demo and Spillman (2004 and 2005), nearly half of media organizations in the United States have cross-promotion partnerships with organizations of other media types. Among all forms of media, newspapers most often use cross promotion. Research conducted by Anne Carrie Criado and Camille Kraeplin (2004) also showed that the cross promotion activities are reported by 26 percent of convergent newspapers. Also, it was found that the newspapers are better at “sustaining convergence partnership” than other media organizations.

"Cross promotion is a marketing effort that places the ‘brands’ of each information-sharing partner in the front of public information through its other partner." (Killbrew, 2005: 48) Simply put, newspapers promote the content of other media partners, and vice versa.

Media use cross promotion to (Dailey et al., 2003):
• Visually promote their partner by publishing or broadcasting its logo on a regular basis.
• Verbally promote content appearing in their partner’s product.
• Encourage audience members to sample offerings available only through their partner.
• Allow reporters or commentators from one medium to appear in the other medium to briefly promote special projects or other content.
• Use news meetings to discuss ways to discuss the partnership (e.g., ways to promote the partner’s content and to display their partner’s logo).

Apart from marketing value, cross promotion is a good indicator for determining the level of journalistic convergence. The purpose of journalistic convergence is to produce "higher-quality news in all the available formats: print, online and on radio and television." (Koldozy, 2009: 37) Journalistic convergence requires changes in the organization of medium, the mode of production and delivery of news. When it comes to newspapers, the most common form of journalistic convergence is publishing the contents of newspapers online. Media "are trying to ensure that the news they are providing is best suited for the audiences of each medium or format being used to distribute the news." (Koldozy, 2009: 37) The above strategy comes from the idea that newspaper readers want more context and detail to their stories. Therefore, we argue that cross promotion that is part of the article and refers to online video, Soundslides, chats and more, is journalistic convergence.

The aim of this research is to determine the extent to which newspapers use cross promotion, and in what ways. The hypothesis is that newspapers do not use the cross-promotion opportunities by promoting their web-based counterparts and that cross promotion is better used for less "serious" content.
Methodology

For quantitative and qualitative content analysis, we selected The New York Times (www.nytimes.com) and U.S. Today (www.ustoday.com) because they are the best-selling newspapers in the United States. The analysis includes national editions published from 2nd to 6th November 2009. This time period was selected because our pilot study determined newspapers routinely repeat patterns of using cross promotion throughout the week. The weekend is an exception because there is a difference in the content on working days, or as is the case with USA Today, no national edition is published. For this study, the newspapers and sections were analyzed through the work week.

The units of analysis were graphics and/or text which include any content that refers readers to online content.

Research results

Content analysis included the 183 (N = 183) different instances of cross promotion found in the selected sections. There is no significant difference in the number of times the NY Times and USA Today (Figure 1) used cross promotion on a daily basis. The largest number of promotions took place on Friday (NY Times N = 23; USA Today N = 25) while the newspapers’ number of promotions on the other days of the week ranges from at least 15 (N = 15) to a maximum of 19 (N = 19). The newspapers published an average 18.3 promotions daily. The coming weekend, when people have more time to consume media and the media are focusing more attention on cross promotion, can explain the increased number of promotions on Friday.
This study also examined the place where the selected newspapers published cross promotion messages. USA Today (Figure 2) had as many instances of cross promotion in the main section of the newspaper as in the Money, Sports and Life sections. The only exception to the rule is on Friday, when USA Today published three times more cross-promotion messages in the Life section than in the other sections. The explanation in the previous paragraph about changes to Friday cross promotions before the weekend applies here, too.
At The NY Times (Figure 3), cross promotion is most dominant in the "serious" part of the newspaper and the section on culture and arts. On the other hand, the number of published cross promotion messages in the Business and Sports sections is less than 50 percent of the newspapers’ total. The trend of increasing the messages on Friday is established only in the Arts section, where the number of cross-promotion messages increased by more than 100 percent.
It was found that there are five different models of (non) relationship between cross promotion and the place in the newspaper where the cross promotion is published. Thus, the analyzed media use cross promotion within the following parts of the newspaper:

- article
- similar content (section)
- specialized place for the promotion of web content
- specialized place for the promotion of print content
- Independent, not related to the content.
ON THE WEB

Articles on these developments are at nytimes.com/business.

**CISCO SYSTEMS** and EMC formed a joint venture called Acadia to sell their data center equipment to businesses.  
**ASHLEE VANCE**

**UBS, THE BIGGEST SWISS BANK,** reported a fourth consecutive quarterly loss, but it said business was improving.  
**JULIA WERDIGIER**

**THE EUROPEAN UNION** said the bloc would be out of recession this year and revised its forecast for growth in 2010 upward.  
**DAVID JOLLY**

**FINANCE**

**SUCCESSION AT ISSUE** The Finger family of Texas, a large Bank of America shareholder, filed a notice with regulators calling on Kenneth D. Lewis, the bank’s chief, to recuse himself from any involvement in the choosing his successor.  
**LOUISE STORY**  
nytimes.com/dealbook

**ENVIRONMENT**

**CLIMATE CONTROL** A California company has developed a device that monitors homeowner habits and the weather to control heating and cooling.  
**TODD WOODY**  
nytimes.com/greeninc

**TECHNOLOGY**

**CELLPHONE RIVALS** AT&T has filed a lawsuit claiming a map in a commercial for Verizon Wireless misleads consumers about coverage.  
**SAUL HANSELL**  
nytimes.com/bits

**POST-DVD ERA** Best Buy is taking another step to get ready for the day when the home video business shifts online with a deal to stream movies from CinemaNow.  
**STEVE LOHR**  
nytimes.com/bits

**ECONOMICS**

**EDUCATION BENEFITS** Almost every country with a high level of education has remained a stable democracy, an economist writes.  
**EDWARD L. GLAESER**  
nytimes.com/economix

**PERSONAL FINANCE**

**COMBATING ID THEFT** Credit freezes may help protect against identity theft better and more cheaply than credit monitoring.  
**RON LIEBER**  
nytimes.com/bucks

**AUTOMOBILES**

**CARBON OFFSETS** Toyota has gone to extreme lengths to offset the carbon dioxide emissions at a plant in Toyota City, where it builds the Prius hybrid.  
**STEPHEN WILLIAMS**  
nytimes.com/wheels
Both media have dominant models for the placement of cross-promotion messages: as part of the articles and as part of similar content (section). However, in USA Today, a significant amount of cross promotion was unrelated to the content \((N = 24)\), while there is no cross promotion situated in a specialized place for the promotion of print content. At The NY Times \((N = 47)\), the dominant model is publishing cross promotion as a part of the article. An explanation for that is a greater level of journalistic convergence at the NY Times.

Our previous data (Figure 4) further clarifies the functions of cross promotion. From the analysis, it can be seen that except for an update of articles \((USA \text{ Today } N = 33, \text{ NY Times } N = 47)\), cross promotion specifically promotes online content platforms \((USA \text{ Today } N = 17, \text{ NY Times } N = 16)\) and sections \((USA \text{ Today } N = 42, \text{ NY Times } N = 28)\). From these data it is obvious that The NY Times is more focused on journalistic convergence, while USA Today is more focused on economic convergence in the form of promoting (marketing) online content.

From the previous data we also can see the following strategies of cross promotion:

- Upgrading and overcoming limitations of the media
Promoting content on other platforms (in the case of our online platform)

Using content and journalism forms from other platforms

In the first case we can talk about convergent journalism, where editors and journalists, because of limitations of the print medium, place the content online. These limits are the limited space, the impossibility of reporting in real time, and the amount of time that passes from the production of papers to the distribution of the newspapers to end users, and the opportunities offered by the online platform, such as interactivity and multimedia.

Promotion of content has its basis in the theory of economic convergence. To increase the number of users online, print editors and journalists are using graphic and text to point newspapers’ readers to content that is published online. Typically, such content is not related to any article, but thematically linked to the section where such promotion is published.

Vaccine video uses humor to ask a serious question

What’s up with the egg technology?

By Steve Sternberg
USA Today

Former U.S. senators Bob Graham and Jim Talent were advised to break a few eggs to make a point. Why they asked, if they’re not studying properly-prepared eggs, providing dietary supplements or watching their gnomes on black-and-white TV, are we still eating eggs to make flu vaccines?

All of the above — the broken-hunting eggs, the prop planes, the environmentally friendly and free — appear to a video made to declassify their concern about why 21st-century designers are using 1950s technology to make a potentially life-saving vaccine.

It’s anything but an all-out war for Graham and Talent, who led the effort to block the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the U.S. Army’s Vaccine Research Center from using H5N1 virus — engineered to be more contagious — to develop a vaccine for the H5N1 Asian flu strain. It is a major risk of complications.

The video begins with an egg splashing on a table. As the eggs are broken, the camera pans to a computer screen, where a graphic shows the eggs are contaminated with H5N1 virus.

What’s up with the egg technology? We think this is a bad idea. We want to take steps to reduce our national health risks. We’re concerned that someone would react to a vaccine that contains H5N1 virus.

Despite the gravity of the subject, the video was designed to be “light-hearted and entertaining,” says commission director Ronald L. Lucas, who created it with Hollywood screenwriter Jay Carter, who wrote the 2006 hit Be-\breakup.

“We want people to pass it around and talk about it,” Lucas says. “We didn’t want to make an Army training film.”

The short film is on why H5N1 vaccine wasn’t available before children returned to school. Today, two months into flu season, vaccine remains in short supply. About 70 million doses are available for 150 million people at high risk of complications.

The vaccine is engineered to be more contagious so it can be more easily transmitted from person to person. But, Lucas says, the virus is too weak to be deadly.

Shaffer says the new approaches may help shorten the time needed to vaccinate, not more than two weeks. But, as one video notes, “what’s the point of a vaccine if it is not fully effective?”

If the virus is not fully effective, the vaccine will not be able to prevent infection.

What’s up with the egg technology? We think this is a bad idea. We want to take steps to reduce our national health risks. We’re concerned that someone would react to a vaccine that contains H5N1 virus.

At health.usatoday.com

Calling for: Bob Graham, MD, and Jim Talent, PhD

What’s up with the egg technology? We think this is a bad idea. We want to take steps to reduce our national health risks. We’re concerned that someone would react to a vaccine that contains H5N1 virus.

Flu viruses are licensed in Europe and China but are still about a year or two away from use in the USA, says William Schaffner, a flu expert at Vanderbilt University. Genetically engineered vaccines also are in the works.

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What’s up with the egg technology? We think this is a bad idea. We want to take steps to reduce our national health risks. We’re concerned that someone would react to a vaccine that contains H5N1 virus.

Cat of stricken Iowa family comes down with swine flu

By Tom Good

The Des Moines Register

DES MOINES — A 2-year-old cat in Des Moines that was in contact with a pig that later died from swine flu was hospitalized on Monday, authorities said.

The cat, which was housed in a separate room with its owner, was found to have signs of illness, and the owner was tested for the flu, authorities said.

"The cat is currently being treated for flu in a veterinary hospital and is doing well," said Dr. Anna Scherer, an associate professor at Iowa State University.

The cat’s owner, a 32-year-old woman, also is being treated for flu, authorities said.

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In its Contents section, on Page A2, the NY Times promotes content from the online platform. In the Business section, there is a section On the web where they promote similar thematic content published online. In addition, the NY Times advertises a particular type of content (usually it is video content) in certain areas of the paper with no
logical connection between the themes of the video and the newspaper section. Similarly, USA Today uses the front cover of the newspaper and its sections to promote online content. These promotions are combined with promotions for the mobile platforms. In the Sports section there is a special feature Webline where they promote the online content.

It is established that the purpose of the promotion is to promote individual content sections or the entire platform. It was not possible to determine which strategy was used to select which content would be promoted, as the approach changed over the five days of analysis. and it is possible that this is depend on a level of education and awareness of editors on duty.

In the last of the three strategies mentioned above, print editors and journalists use content from the online platform and publish it in the newspaper. Usually, the content of blogs from the online platform is published in the newspaper.

Analysis determined that newspapers are promoting these kinds of online content in their print versions:

- Videos
- Articles
- Photo and Soundslides
- Questions and answers
- Online archives
- Discussions
- News Packages
- Original documents
- Opinions (blogs and columns)
- Chats
- Quizzes
- Info graphics
- Databases
- Live results

Figure 5 shows that USA Today promotes content such as info graphics and databases, while the NY Times is focused on multimedia
(video, photo and news packages). The NY Times continues to stimulate discussion with readers, while that kind of content is unknown in case of USA Today. Both papers contain cross promotion referring to two or more types of online content (NY Times $N = 14$; USA Today $N = 12$).

Beside journalistic content, newspapers are promoting weather forecasts, calendars of cultural events, advertising, tv-listings, stockmarket figures and entertainment content (crossword puzzles, comics, etc.).

In terms of the subject of content (Figure 6) that is cross promoted, there is a difference between USA Today and The NY Times. The NY Times is focused on the cross promotion of cultural ($N = 34$) and political ($N = 27$) content, while USA Today focuses on sports ($N = 27$) and economics ($N = 22$) content.
Cross promotions can have five different:

- Graphics and/or text label that is online content
- Graphics showing type of promoted content
- Headline
- A brief description of contents
- Link to the content

In the case of the NY Times, more than two-thirds of the cross promotions (N = 83) contain all five of the elements. At USA Today, approximately one-third (N=36) of the cross promotions have all five elements. A third (N = 30) of cross promotions at USA Today have no graphics and/or text label that says “Online.” USA Today’s remaining cross promotions varied in style. This shows that USA Today has no set style for cross promotion.
Table 3- USA Today's icons

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There is a big problem with cross promotion that uses links that refer users to the content online (Figure 7). The analysis found that two-thirds of links lead to the home page of the online platform or to sections such as Sports, Business, Culture, Life, etc. As these sites often change, there is a great chance that a user who came the next day would not find the content he or she wanted. Therefore, newspapers should use permanent links to refer directly to the content. Though newspapers could not market the online platform as a whole by doing this, they would prevent users from being disappointed, which is a much bigger problem.

Figure 7. Types of links that lead to the content on the online platform
Conclusion

Cross promotion is not only an indicator of economic convergence. Cross promotion is used to provide news that best suits each audience or media format. The hypothesis proposed in this paper is only partially proven correct. The analyzed media used cross promotion significantly, but we noticed differing practices. The NY Times is more focused on journalistic convergence, while USA Today largely practices economic convergence.

The number of cross promotions and their weekly distribution in each paper are not significantly different. Most of the differences that were noted can be explained by different conceptions of media and medium audiences. The NY Times focuses on a "serious" audience, so their emphasis in the use of cross promotion is for “serious” content. On the other hand, USA Today aimsto promoting content such as sports, life, travel, etc.

There is a noticeable difference in the newspapers’ styles of cross promotion. The NY Times insists on using one form, and USA Today uses several different styles, which leads to inconsistency. However, USA Today enhanced its visual approach by using graphical icons that can be explained by tradition of newspapers.

In conclusion, we can say that both newspapers use media cross promotion in an experimental way, as is the case with other areas of convergence. Unfortunately, a small number of activities in modern journalism are based on scientific research.
Bibliography


