

The Huffington NewsBeast Post: An examination of The Huffington Post, Newsweek and the end of print journalism

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Abstract

International news – stories on natural disasters, elections, war, and pop culture – no longer reach the audience via traditional media, such as newspapers and radio. Global news stories seem to reach a majority of their audience through new media, such as social media, blogs, and other participatory mediums. Will online news such as The Huffington Post and *Newsweek* be the death of print media? This paper studies the way The Huffington Post and *Newsweek* deliver news and attempts to answer additional questions about the decline of print journalism in the U.S. How is the print industry performing internationally? How do online news outlets make a profit? How are news aggregators affecting the journalism industry? Most importantly, what might the future hold for print and online news platforms? By examining the work of expert media analysts and gathering information from two case studies, this paper will indicate why the Internet will not kill print journalism.

1. Literature review

The changes the media are undergoing should not surprise the audience. The media has always presented itself in whichever format the general public was using at the moment. From print to radio to television to the Internet, the media has kept up with new technology. There is no doubt the role of traditional forms of media, such as print newspapers, is changing. With these changes will come a cutting-edge method for journalists to break news.

The media business is dominated by a handful of large corporations. Traditionally, national and international news is brought to widespread attention by large news organizations such as television networks and wire services, according to Mazur and Lee¹. The large national organizations select the news of the day, which is then covered on television or sent out to print publications through the wire. Because most organizations subscribe to wire services, news coverage is fairly uniform across the U.S.¹ Mazur and Lee said this uniformity results in media bias spreading throughout the country¹. Providing most Americans with coverage of the same or very similar news stories is agenda setting, when the media encourages the public to ponder an issue by discussing the issue frequently¹.

However, some researchers argue it is beneficial for the entire country, and possibly other countries, to receive fairly uniform news coverage. Global media and social communications help create focal points in a society – that is, contextual clues based on prior knowledge, which create social conventions, according to Kim and Choi². Kim and Choi argue consumer choice is based on social conventions as presented by global media². Because the media tells much of the world basically the same thing, much of the world shares social conventions. This is useful when traveling abroad or working with people of international backgrounds.

The Internet made it easy to convey social conventions around the world. United Kingdom media analyst Forster compared U.S. and U.K. media market capitalization³. Forster found the largest U.S. media company is Google, worth \$148 billion in 2007³. Although traditional media is declining and Internet companies booming in the United States, that is not the case in other countries. Publishing and print media are still very popular in the U.K., according to Forster³. At 52 percent of the U.K. sector and 12 percent of the U.S. sector, Europeans have the publishing advantage³. This makes one wonder if newspapers in the U.K. are suffering as much financially as American newspapers. Forster did not answer this question.

Table 1. Top circulating daily newspapers in the U.S.

Rank	Newspaper	Total circulation
1	Wall Street Journal	2,069,169
2	USA Today	1,784,242
3	New York Times	1,150,589
4	New York Daily News	605,677
5	Los Angeles Times	572,998

Table 1 lists the top five circulating daily newspapers in America. More than 315 billion people live in the U.S. The top circulating newspaper reaches only .66 percent of Americans.

The decline of print is very real in America, but researchers do not blame the Internet. Gentzkow did extensive research on the print and online editions of the *Washington Post* and the *Washington Times*⁴. Gentzkow found print and online papers are substitutes, not complementary⁴. Research shows print and online media appeal to very different consumer groups, based on factors such as age, race and socioeconomic⁴. Because print and online news have different consumers, Gentzkow concluded online newspapers will not threaten the survival of print media⁴.

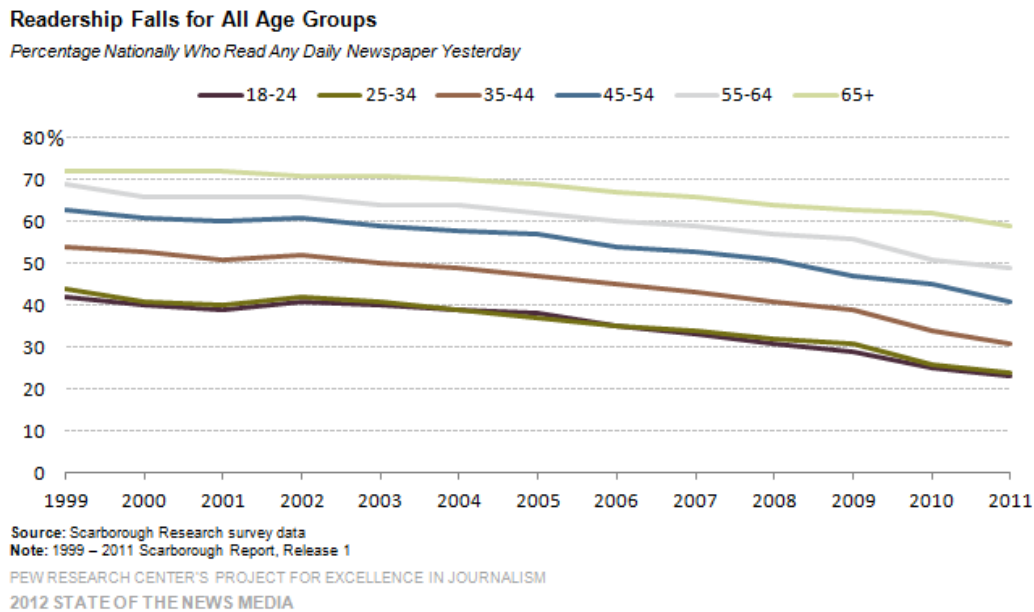


Figure 1. Newspaper readership falls for all age groups

Figure 1 demonstrates the popularity of newspapers within age ranges. Newspapers are read most by those 65 years of age and older. As the average life expectancy increases and Baby Boomers enter this age range in the U.S., one may conclude newspapers will rise in popularity within the 65 and older age category.

The newspaper industry is more likely to sustain lasting financial trauma from dismal advertising sales than online media outlets. Clemons, Gu and Lang identified two main sources of newspaper vulnerability: the advertising business and cross-subsidy between news and advertising and the news reporting business⁵. The researchers

proposed direct distribution of journalists' stories as an alternative to consumers purchasing newspapers. Clemons, Gu and Lang said this solution might decrease some journalists' credibility, as articles read in a newspaper are generally more authentic than articles read on a blog⁵. In regard to advertising, Clemons, Gu and Lang concluded newspapers are safe from erosions to their profitability due to innovations in online communications⁵. This conclusion does not consider current economic strains that have made it difficult to sell advertising space. The researchers did consider that reducing news content would hurt the newspaper industry as advertising would decrease, revenue would decrease and there would be increased revenue pressure⁵.

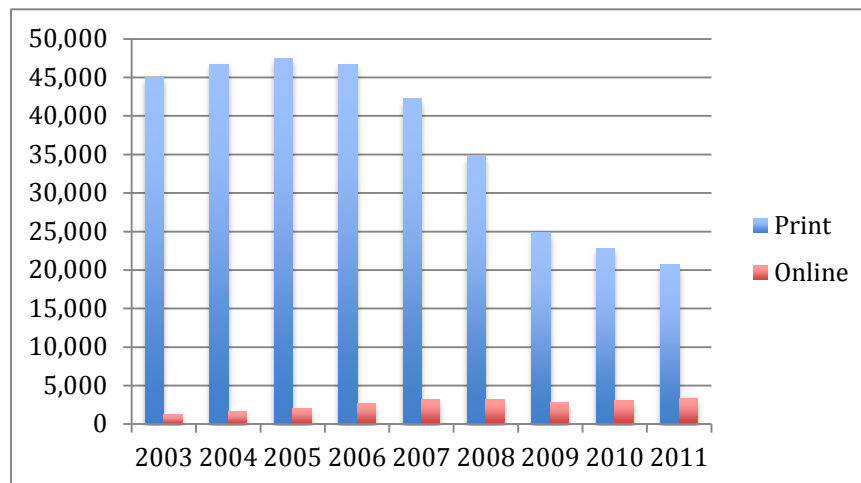


Figure 2. Print vs. online advertising revenue in millions of dollars

Figure 2 compares print and online advertising revenue. From the graph, one can conclude Clemons, Gu and Lang are incorrect in stating revenue from online advertisements will save print. Print advertisements generate more than four times the funds of online advertisements for news sources with both print and online publications. The revenue from online advertisements is slowly increasing.

To increase revenue, Clemons, Gu and Lang suggested newspapers focus on audience willing to pay for the news⁵. The researchers said those willing to pay are more thoughtful, well-educated, worldly readers⁵. This suggestion requires the entire newspaper industry to rebrand itself from news for everyone to news for the elite. This begs the question; do the elite read print news? Are the wealthy more likely to read their news online from their tablets or laptop?

Another suggestion was newspapers should provide a news service that does not require advertising funds⁵. Andrew Sullivan follows this model with his news website⁶. He requires subscribers to pay an annual fee to access content. Sullivan employed this model at the beginning of 2013 and there is no evidence yet as to whether or not it is successful.

The most realistic solution was to “use online distribution as an essential adjunct, not a competitor or alternative to, paper based business”⁵. In today’s world, 11 years after their research was published, this is the model most newspapers follow. One would be hard-pressed to find an American newspaper that does not put content online.

While newspapers are putting content online, they continue to print their best and most controversial stories to sell issues. Some critics think newspapers will not be in print for much longer because of costs and competition from online news sources. Hayles, however, believes the opposite. “Digital media have given us an opportunity we have not had for the last several hundred years: a chance to see print with new eyes”⁷. Hayles said print will not die; it is changing to meet the demands of the consumer⁷.

The decline of print journalism is purely Western, according to an Australian journalist⁸. From 2007-2008, print readership declined in the U.S. and the U.K., but rose dramatically in Asia, South America and the Middle East⁸. Because of their rise in popularity in the East, global circulation of newspapers rose 2.6 percent in 2007, with emphasis in India and China⁸. One Indian media expert predicted print media would grow 9 percent a year in India to reach annual revenues of \$7.7 billion by 2013⁸. Eighty of the world’s 100 best-selling daily newspapers are based in Asia⁸. With the population in the East increasing, consumers on the other side of the world may save print journalism for everyone.

As newspapers tighten their belt buckles and struggle to survive with limited financial resources in the West, many see the web as a viable method of providing news on a smaller budget. With so many news outlets putting their focus on the Internet, it is becoming difficult for consumers to determine which online news source is best. Researchers in Beijing, China, defined eight degrees to identify online opinion leaders⁹. The degrees include “the connected degree, the attention degree, the activity degree, the influence degree, the diffusion degree, the centrality degree, the posts length and the change of average path length”⁹.

Table 2. Top newspaper daily digital editions by unique visits per day

Rank	Newspaper	Total digital
1	Wall Street Journal	537,469
2	New York Times	380,003
3	New York Daily News	165,441
4	Newsday	112,486
5	Detroit Free Press	96,439

Table 2 shows the top five digital editions of print newspapers by unique daily visitors. By Ning, Yijun, Ruya and Qianqian’s research, this means consumers have identified these five websites as trustworthy online opinion leaders.

Once an audience deems an online news outlet credible, they can expect a lot of user interaction. According to Serafeim¹⁰, news websites in Greece are most likely to receive comments on political, opinion and economic articles. Serafeim also found Greek news consumers are more likely to comment on or share political, social issues, and opinion articles on Facebook and Twitter¹⁰. Articles on international news, education, culture, science, the environment, sports and media receive little attention online in Greece¹⁰.

Although the goal of the journalist is to inform the public, Serafeim’s data¹⁰ shows the larger an audience, the harder it is to maintain comparably high levels of engagement. Serafeim’s data did not indicate if overall web activity declined with a larger audience or if only audience engagement declined. As in the U.S., circulation of print media is down in Greece and there is a larger audience on social media. Serafeim presented a sophisticated argument that journalists and the media no longer hold a monopoly for informing society¹⁰.

Some journalists seem to realize they no longer monopolize their industry. “The ubiquity of information and communication technologies are no longer monopolized by industrially centralized, professional organizations.”¹¹ They are responding by leaving the newsroom in favor of the streets. Researchers in France noted journalists in charge of social media are no longer located in the newsroom; they are “on the ground” working from smart phones¹². These social media journalists go where the news is. Whereas a traditional journalist would attend a protest and head back to the office to write an article, a social media journalist would “live tweet” the protest; posting continuously from the event. Later, the social media journalist may compile these tweets into a Storify story – collecting all photos, videos and posts with a certain hashtag and organizing them into an interactive summary of the event.

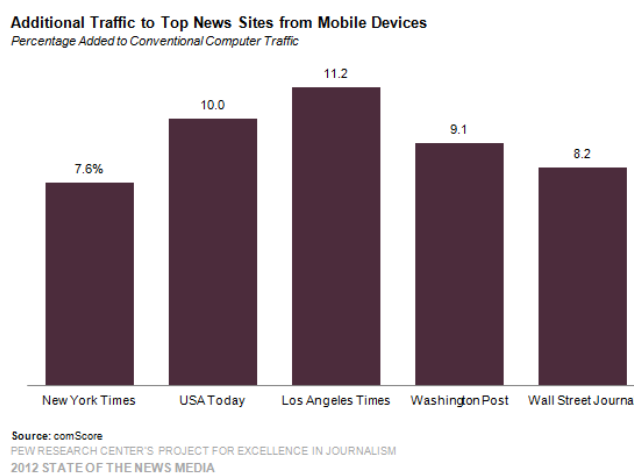


Figure 3. Additional traffic to top news sites from mobile devices

Figure 3 demonstrates journalists are not the only ones working from their phones – consumers are as well. News websites earn an additional seven to 11 percent of their traffic from consumers on their cell phones. These consumers want information when it is convenient for them. Interestingly, these news websites also produce print publications. Although the consumers who visit mobile versions of these websites may not read the print edition, they are still seeking information from print publications.

Researchers in Beijing, China, researched the average number of times a term must occur in an online news document for the document to be clustered with other documents or posts featuring the term¹³. Research shows a term must occur 1.5 times per 200 words for a document to be clustered with other documents containing the term¹³. This information is useful to news aggregators who search for news documents by tagged terms.

Do news aggregators help or hurt the news organizations whose material they use¹⁴? News aggregators reproduce all or part of an article from another source. Even if they give credit to the original writer and link to the original source, Krakovsky said aggregators take readers and advertising revenue away from the original source¹⁴. Aggregators can send readers around newspaper's subscription paywalls by providing the same basic information for free elsewhere¹⁴. Should aggregators continue at this same pace, Krakovsky said they would bankrupt the traditional news sources on which aggregators rely¹⁴. Arianna Huffington is an outspoken defender of aggregation, according to Krakovsky¹⁴. Huffington said the Huffington Post does not aggregate; they curate, providing the most interesting stories from multiple news outlets¹⁴.

Federal copyright law in the U.S. protects only the “actual words and images to tell a story, not the underlying facts”¹⁴. There are varying levels of aggregation. Some aggregates provide only the headline and a few sentences, while others reproduce as much as half of the article¹⁴. Even when an article is copied word for word, aggregators are usually protected by the fair use doctrine¹⁴.

Many bloggers act as news aggregators by posting their response to an article from another source. Internet users who are interested in politics use blogs more than any other online news source¹⁵. Lawrence, Sides and Farrell found about 14 percent of people who read blogs read political blogs¹⁶. The most popular liberal blogs are Huffington Post, Daily Kos and Crooks and Liars, and the most popular conservative blogs are The Drudge Report, Michelle Malkin and Little Green Footballs¹⁶. Those who read political blogs rate blogs as more credible than newspaper sites and online broadcast news sites¹⁵. Readers of left-leaning blogs are more likely to participate by commenting on or sharing the post¹⁶. This may be because left-wing bloggers are more likely to encourage their readers to engage in political action¹⁶.

Just as many blog posts are in response to another news source, bloggers quickly reply to each other's postings. Li, Jin, Yang and Fang researched the amount of time it takes consumers to respond to a post on social media¹⁷. From their research, they concluded a business would receive the maximum amount of consumer response when they post frequently¹⁷. Consumers respond quickly, with most reactions occurring within two hours of a post¹⁷. The researchers concluded social media requires high availability¹⁷. Consumers respond quickly, and they expect a response to their response quickly. They also require new content frequently. Failure to meet these consumer needs will result in “unexpected losses”¹⁷.

The speed of the Internet is not only useful to businesses – it can also help students. Hunt and Hunt said the interactivity of the Internet increases the opportunities students have to publish papers for others to expand upon, agree with or disagree with¹⁸. As research by Li, Jin, Yang and Fang shows¹⁷, these papers will receive a response quickly, so procrastinating students can have almost immediate feedback.

The public demands immediate feedback in the aftermath of disasters. According to a poll by the American Red Cross, almost half would use social media to tell friends and family they are safe after a disaster¹⁹. The chief public affairs officer for the American Red Cross said a single aggregate for all disaster-related information would be “instrumental in disaster response efforts,” but noted it would be difficult to create and execute such a database¹⁹. Senior vice president of Google said he anticipates location-based services to be the next big social media tool, particularly in the aftermath of disasters¹⁹.

Although the future may not seem promising for print media, researchers remind consumers once again not to blame the Internet for the loss of print. Morse and Agopian said “social media are unlikely to make the journalist and institutions that produce journalistic content obsolete just as they are unlikely to make academicians and academic institutions obsolete.”²⁰ They said the quality of content and the freedom to pursue content has not been changed by social media²⁰. “That which is being measured has not changed, though the means of distribution have.”²⁰ Morse and Agopian also said journalists and communication professors are needed now more than ever to guide those seeking the best information toward it and away from poorly interpreted posts²⁰.

2. Case study

The Huffington Post may be strictly available online, but it has clout in the journalism world. Staff writer David Wood won a Pulitzer Prize in 2012 for national reporting²¹. The Pulitzer Board said The Huffington Post is the first commercial, native digital media organization to win a Pulitzer²¹. From this recognition of exceptional journalism, it is clear The Huffington Post is a successful, respectable digital news source.

Conversely, *Newsweek* was the second-largest weekly news magazine in the U.S., according to its website²². *Newsweek* was printed in New York City from 1933 to 2012. The magazine began to struggle financially in 2008, and merged with The Daily Beast in 2010. The magazine still struggled, and printed its last magazine on December 31, 2012. *Newsweek* is now available in an all-digital format at thedailybeast.com.

What makes The Huffington Post successful as an all-digital news source? Why did *Newsweek* decide to cease printing completely? Will this save the magazine or expedite its failure? Will other news sources follow suit and go all digital?

2.1. The Huffington Post

Those who know Arianna Huffington say she is the reason The Huffington Post is successful. Now serving as President and Editor-in-chief, Huffington co-founded the news outlet. Huffington began to strive toward remarkable achievements and social status at a young age.

Ariadne Anna Stassinopoulos, later Arianna Huffington, was born July 15, 1950, in Athens, Greece²³. Huffington attended Cambridge on scholarship and was the debate team's first foreign-born female president²³. After graduating Cambridge, Huffington dated influential London journalists and quickly rose in social status²³. She wrote three books to much acclaim, then moved to New York in 1980 and continued to write.

Arianna met her future husband Michael Huffington while living in California. The pair had an extravagant wedding in 1986, which included Barbara Walters as a bridesmaid²³. Shortly after the wedding, Michael spent \$5 million on his winning-campaign for a seat in the U.S. House of Representatives²³. Michael then ran for Senate. If Michael won, the media speculated he might become the Republican Vice Presidential nominee²³. However, Michael lost due to a scandal about the legal status of the couple's foreign-born nanny, according to Groer²³. The Huffingtons divorced in 1997. Shortly after, Michael came out as homosexual, and insisted Arianna knew about his sexuality when she married him²³. Arianna and Michael have two daughters.

While married to Michael, Huffington was an outspoken Republican. After their divorce, Huffington began to reconsider her political affiliation. She told McGinn she has always been concerned about the role of the government²⁴. She said she left the Republican Party in 1994 after Newt Gingrich because she decided America needs an activist government²⁴.

Following the 2004 presidential election, Huffington discussed the role of the media in the outcome of the election with fellow writers²⁴. From this discussion, Ken Lerer and Huffington founded The Huffington Post, originally intended to be 24/7 news and a collective blog. Huffington now calls the site, which launched in May 2005, a newspaper²⁴.

The attacks on The Huffington Post in the first days of its launch were based less on objections to the site's content than on a general distaste for Huffington herself²⁵. However, those who have expressed distaste for Huffington said she will do and say just about anything to get attention, such as knock down press microphones as she pushed her way through the crowd to stand next to Arnold Schwarzenegger²⁵. Huffington's friends say her desire to change things, such as politics, motivate her to work as hard as she does²⁵.

The Huffington Post attracted 24.3 million unique visitors to the site in October 2010, the most unique visitors of any online news aggregate²⁶. Lyons wrote The Huffington Post ranked sixth among news sites for most unique visitors, with CNN coming in first place²⁶. The Huffington Post was predicted to make \$30 million in 2010, slightly more than \$1 per reader, according to Lyons²⁶. Online advertisement spending for websites as a whole is predicted to grow more than 10 percent per year from 2010-2014, reaching \$100 billion by 2014²⁶. However, this only represents 17 percent of all advertising dollars²⁶.

The Huffington Post considers some of its major competitors to be Gawker Media, Politico, The Daily Beast – now teamed up with *Newsweek*, and The Drudge Report²⁶. The Huffington Post does employ writers to produce original content, but 40 percent of the content published on their site is aggregated from another news source²⁶. Many writers for The Huffington Post practice search-engine optimization; editors search Google to see which search terms are trending, then direct writers to create a story in response to the trending topic using a design formulated to push the story to the top of search rankings. Huffington told Lyons people want to do more than

consume information²⁶. Huffington said she believes the future of journalism is participatory media, and now bills itself as a social news website to cash in on the trend²⁶. Huffington predicts audience engagement will attract advertisers²⁶.

Table 3. Top news sites in 2011 by average monthly unique visitors

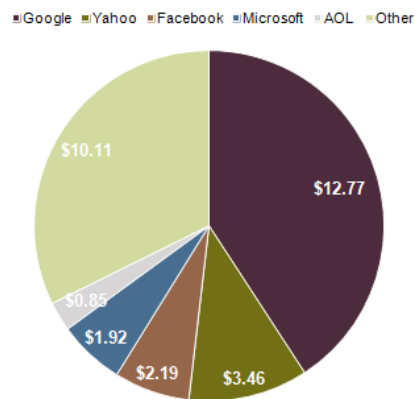
Rank	News site	Unique audience (000)
1	Yahoo News	39,042
2	CNN Digital Network	34,617
3	MNSBC Digital Network	29,438
4	Huffington Post	22,578
5	ABC News Digital Network	18,199

According to Table 3, news sites without print counterparts attract an audience equally large as news sites with print counterparts (Table 2). From this data, one can conclude online-only news organizations do not affect readership of print publications with websites. Some users may visit both online-only and print-online news websites, but the two types of news outlets do not harm each other in terms of gaining audience. From this data, it does not appear that online-only news sources are damaging to the print news industry.

The Huffington Post originally consisted of a news aggregator, six verticals and a group blog²⁷. Since the rise of websites like MySpace and Facebook, The Huffington Post has changed its design to encourage audience engagement²⁷. Many say Huffington practices a similar style of operation in her own life by making connections to all she meets through harmless but shrewd small talk. Her personality has made her and her website very popular as “a Republican political wife, a divorcee cable comedienne, a self-help writer, a progressive, an early environmentalist, a failed gubernatorial candidate, a blogger, an Internet mogul, and, through it all, one of the Anglophone world’s most nimble and ubiquitous communicators.”²⁷

The Huffington Post’s model as an online news outlet attracts many viewers and attention from other news sources. Election coverage saw The Huffington Post traffic increase 474 percent from September 2007 to September 2008²⁸. Riding off this success, The Huffington Post was acquired by AOL, Inc. in February 2011 for \$315 million²⁸. Huffington was named president and editor-in-chief of the Huffington Post Media Group formed by the acquisition²⁸.

Top Five Companies Share of Total Online Ad Revenue
In Billions of Dollars



Source: eMarketer
Note: The total of this chart is slightly different than that total for all online advertising above because eMarketer updated its 2011 advertising numbers, but not the figures for this chart.
PEW RESEARCH CENTER'S PROJECT FOR EXCELLENCE IN JOURNALISM
2012 STATE OF THE NEWS MEDIA

Figure 4. Top five companies share of total online ad revenue in billions of dollars

Figure 4 shows how valuable The Huffington Post is to AOL. The Huffington Post, according to the Pew Research Center's 2012 State of the News Media, generates a vast majority of AOL's advertising revenue. Acquisition of The Huffington Post kept AOL competitive in the realm of online advertising dollars.

Huffington used the opportunity presented by the acquisition to expand The Huffington Post globally. 2011 saw Huffington Post expand to international Spanish and French versions, as well as the launch of HuffPost UK and HuffPost Canada²⁸. The international language versions include partnerships with established media brands. Huffington Post added more than 20 new national news sections in 2011, including HuffPost Women, HuffPost Latino Voices, and HuffPost Gay Voices²⁸. Media analysts credit the success of these sections to Huffington hiring well-known journalists and accepting submissions from celebrities and subject-specific experts.

One such expert is Richard Elliott Friedman, Jewish studies professor at the University of Georgia and author²⁹. Friedman began writing for the Huffington Post when his publisher put him in touch with the religion editor, who was immediately interested in a contribution from Friedman. Friedman's first five posts for the Huffington Post were related to his recent book. He said he wrote the last one just because²⁹. In regard to audience participation with a blog post, Friedman said he does not feel the need to respond²⁹.

"If there are 800 comments, by comment 3 they've gotten away from what you're discussing," Friedman said²⁹. "By comment 10 or 11, they're insulting each other. The first time I wrote online and read comments, they weren't on what I wrote so they didn't offend me. I write a blog post to get it out there, not to hear people's response. I do read reviews on Amazon though."²⁹

Now that he has a connection at the Huffington Post, Friedman said he contacts the religion editor with already written articles²⁹. He said after he submits an article, it can be posted anywhere from three days to three weeks later, without notifying Friedman. Friedman said writing a blog post is easier than writing a book because there are less footnotes and he is free to let loose²⁹. "I only create a blog post because I feel like it, because I have something to say," Friedman said²⁹.

Despite guest bloggers and expansion, The Huffington Post has not forgotten about its hometown readers. The U.S. version now features local sections. Originally focused only on Chicago, New York, Los Angeles, and Denver, the local section has expanded to Miami; Washington, D.C.; Detroit and San Francisco²⁸. The local advertising dollars are unfortunately not keeping up with the local news sections, according to media analyst Ken Doctor²⁸.

The new international, national and local sections of the website are effective at attracting viewers and financially successful. The Huffington Post brand was worth more than twice that of AOL's in 2011²⁸. One major concern with The Huffington Post, according to Doctor, is the brand is based entirely around Huffington²⁸. This could be dangerous in the event of a scandal or major illness, Doctor said²⁸. In spite of the risks involved with The Huffington Post brand depending on one woman, the article predicted AOL would step back into the role of parent company rather than trying to reinvent its own brand²⁸.

Bill Maher disagrees with Doctor³⁰. He has known Huffington since 1993, when she first appeared on his show *Politically Incorrect*³⁰. Maher said it is virtually impossible to disagree with or dislike Huffington because she is so persuasive and seductive³⁰. For the safety of The Huffington Post brand, AOL executives should pray Maher is correct.

Huffington's educational background and work experience is not in the field of traditional journalism. Huffington was an author, not a journalist. She more than likely learned about journalism secondhand while dating members of the London media and working with the media on her husband's political campaigns. Writing news articles is very different than writing a book. Journalism writing states its purpose and important facts first. A book may never state its purpose. Because Huffington does not have a background in print news publications, The Huffington Post does not operate in the style of a print news publication. The Huffington Post is updated numerous times a day, whereas a newspaper's website is updated on average once a day. The Huffington Post is not a threat to print news because it does not create news articles – it creates buzz worthy stories. While The Huffington Post does cover hard news, a majority of its articles are on soft news, pop culture and human-interest topics. The goal of print publications is to inform. One could argue the goal of The Huffington Post is to get people talking.

Huffington continues to build The Huffington Post in innovative ways. She announced the launch of The Huffington Post iPad magazine, Huffington. in June 2012³¹. Huffington said the magazine would feature the best of the week's stories and put the reader at the center to comment, share and engage³¹. Huffington also said The Huffington Post will expand online to Italy, Brazil and Germany by the end of 2012³¹. Although The Huffington Post is a much larger empire than the original website, Huffington does not put the website on the back burner. Instead, it is continually updated with news and other sections the readers demanded. By staying true to the foundation of the company, the American website, The Huffington Post has been able to capitalize on its success and grow.

2.2. Newsweek

Newsweek has been an innovator since its creation in 1933, according to Brown³². *Newsweek* was the first magazine to use color photographs regularly, to print international editions, and to publish a foreign language edition. *Newsweek* had been in a state of flux since 2008, when the Washington Post Company put the struggling magazine up for sale. In August 2010, 92-year-old audio tycoon Sidney Harman bought *Newsweek* from the Washington Post Company for a dollar, according to Brown³³. The magazine joined forces with Brown's *The Daily Beast* in 2010.

Harman said he thought Brown could turn *Newsweek* into a successful magazine once again³⁴. Harman said he and Brown agreed *Newsweek* can no longer focus on events of the past week, but most focus on graphics, design, and a blend of serious and light topics³⁴. Harman said Brown gives *Newsweek* the star power it needs to be successful in today's world, and promised Brown will have access to the financial resources necessary to make the merger a success³⁴.

However, media professionals did not agree with the merger, according to a poll by *Brandweek*³⁵. *Brandweek* asked media executives if the *Daily Beast-Newsweek* merger made any sense³⁵. Four of the eight professionals polled said they thought Brown would do a great job at running both, but they were not sure if the merger would be successful³⁵. The executives wondered what sort of business model would turn two unprofitable businesses into one profitable venture. They also thought the rebranding would be difficult for each company's personality and audience³⁵.

Writers at *Advertising Age* shared many of the concerns media executives mentioned to *Brandweek*³⁶. The deal benefits *Newsweek* as they needed an editor, and *The Daily Beast* could benefit from *Newsweek*'s name and subscribers. In its two years of existence, *The Daily Beast* has not turned a profit³⁶. A lack of advertising sales is hurting *Newsweek*, and ad packages between *Newsweek*, *Newsweek.com* and *The Daily Beast* will certainly be more expensive than just a *Newsweek* and *Newsweek.com* advertisement³⁶. Ives proposed this merger may be even more damaging to the weak state of *Newsweek* advertising sales³⁶.

Lee called the merger of *Newsweek* and *The Daily Beast* the most-watched experiment in media and journalism, "marrying a fledgling website with a stalwart but flagging print institution."³⁷ In the first two months since Brown has been editor, sales have increased 57 percent³⁷. Friends and co-workers told Lee that Brown has brought the "Tina Touch" – redirecting *Newsweek* from its previous coverage of dry economic news toward international news and pop culture³⁷.

Despite Brown's efforts, ad pages in *Newsweek* declined 34 percent in the first year of the merger³⁷. Since Brown has taken over, the magazine has signed lucrative fashion and entertainment deals with brands like David Yurman and HTC Phones³⁷. *Newsweek* says its biggest rival is *Time*, who currently has twice the number of ad pages per issue and increased ad sales 7 percent in the first quarter of 2011, according to Lee³⁷.

The merger has affected important areas such as ad sales, staffing and writing styles. Stephen Colvin, CEO of the *Newsweek Daily Beast Co.*, said *Newsweek* and *The Daily Beast* have different advertising ambitions because print ads appeal to a different set of advertisers than digital ads, and vice versa³⁷. Therefore, the merger has not combined advertising potential. Instead, it is forcing advertisers to choose whether they want to be in print or online, which consumer group they want to appeal to, and other tricky questions which seem to be steering advertisers away from *NewsBeast* entirely.

Colvin did note staffing has been consolidated for both *Newsweek* and *The Daily Beast*. Not surprisingly, *Newsweek* cut more jobs, approximately 120, according to Colvin³⁷. *The Daily Beast* only cut 5 jobs³⁷. The fact that more jobs were cut from *Newsweek* may also be sending advertisers away. Why put your ad money into a magazine that no one is trying to save?

Brown's most noticeable effort to save *NewsBeast* in 2011 came when she invited famous blogger of "The Dish" on *TheAtlantic.com*, Andrew Sullivan, to join *The Daily Beast* in March 2011³⁸. Sullivan blogged he was looking forward to working in print and online journalism³⁸. However, Brown said he is "a natural soul mate of *The Daily Beast*"³⁸. Brown cited his 1.2 million unique visitors per month as why Sullivan's work will be promoted on *The Daily Beast*'s homepage³⁸. It appears Brown wishes to use Sullivan exclusively to benefit *The Daily Beast*, not *Newsweek*, despite her current position as editor of both publications.

Even a full year after the *Newsweek-Daily Beast* merger, the situation has not improved. The combined company lost \$30 million last year³⁹. "Newsmagazines were all struggling by the time of the merger," but does not say which newsmagazines specifically³⁹. The two brands have diverging audiences and voices. The most specific problem facing *NewsBeast* is lack of advertiser support. Advertisers are no longer confident in *Newsweek*, and they do not want the expensive, overly specialized treatment offered by *The Daily Beast*³⁸.

In 2009, *Newsweek* made \$80 million³⁸. The magazine's profits fell to \$63 million in 2010³⁸. Newsstand sales of *Newsweek* are up 2.8 percent since the merger³⁸. Newsstand sales account for only 3 percent of the magazine's circulation because they generate little revenue; *Newsweek* makes 40 percent of the \$4.95 cover price, or \$1 per newsstand issue³⁸. Between 2010 and 2012, Brown said subscription renewals increased for the first time in more than five years³².

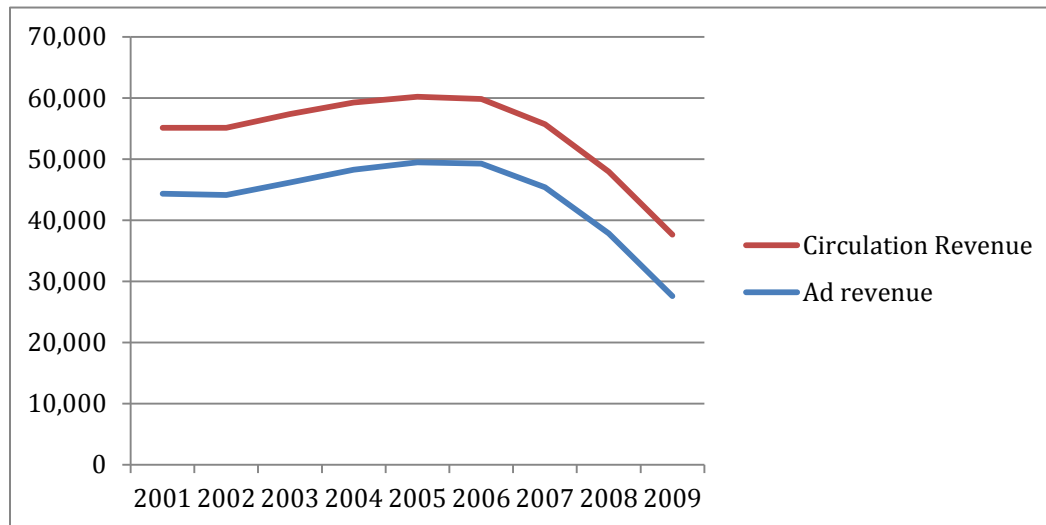


Figure 5. Ad revenue vs. circulation revenue in millions of dollars

Despite Tumolillo's claim newsstand sales contribute little to circulation and overall revenue, circulation revenue is greater than advertising revenue, according to Figure 5. While newsstand sales only generate \$1 for *Newsweek*, subscription renewals provide print publications with circulation revenue.

It seems that NewsBeast's biggest mistake was getting rid of Newsweek.com in favor of one shared website – thedailybeast.com. Newsweek.com had a valuable partnership with MSNBC, according to Moses, which sent traffic to Newsweek's site³⁸. In November 2010, when the merger was announced, the two websites had a combined traffic of 5.3 million per month³⁸. By September 2011, using just the shared website, monthly unique visits have fallen to 2.6 million per month³⁸. Conversely, Brown said the online presence of *Newsweek* and The Daily Beast has grown since the merger, with a 70 percent increase in unique visitors each month³².

Moses said NewsBeast's main option for increasing revenue is to raise print ad prices, but that will not work unless circulation increases drastically³⁸. At current ad rates, experts suggest *Newsweek* will have to double its ad sales. Brown noted it costs \$42 million a year to manufacture, print and distribute the magazine, and the company simply cannot continue to operate on such a tight budget³². The only other alternative is to cut costs; a \$20 million cut would be necessary to make NewsBeast profitable³⁸.

Sources told Lee *Newsweek* and The Daily Beast are not complementary businesses³⁷. The Daily Beast, in Brown's eyes, is a fast-moving news critique; a place to share breaking news³⁷. *Newsweek*, on the other hand, is meant for articles with a longer shelf life, according to Lee³⁷. This sort of distinction could lead to disgruntled staffers who want to write about breaking news in *Newsweek* or elaborate series articles in The Daily Beast and are turned down. Former Daily Beast employees told Lee that Brown is a demanding editor who does not provide clear direction or participate in budget meetings³⁷. This management style probably will not mesh well with *Newsweek* staffers who write longer, more detailed articles. It is possible Brown is being a difficult manager in hopes that some writers will quit and operating costs will decrease.

According to Peters, Brown's high-pressure management style hit NewsBeast hard⁴⁰. Executive editor of The Daily Beast, Edward Felsenthal, and managing editor of *Newsweek*, Tom Weber, resigned in November 2011⁴⁰. Publisher Ray Chelstowski was fired³⁶. Brown replaced Felsenthal and Weber in a week⁴⁰. The publisher was replaced with someone Brown said has more digital experience, the direction she wants to move⁴⁰. Brown said these staffing changes are part of the restructuring process⁴⁰. Staff members told Peters that Brown has made the work environment unbearable and morale is at an all time low⁴⁰.

Despite these troubles, executives at NewsBeast are sensitive to perceptions the merger is not panning out well⁴⁰. These perceptions were enforced when Harman's family pulled their financial support from *Newsweek* in July 2012⁴¹. Harman died in April 2011. His family continued to honor his wishes and invest in the NewsBeast organization. The family's contributions have largely funded *Newsweek* for the last three years⁴¹.

Losing these financial resources certainly expedited the decision to end print publication of *Newsweek*. A mere two days after the Harman family's announcement, Barry Diller, chairman of IAC/InterActiveCorp which owns NewsBeast, told analysts *Newsweek* will become an online publication⁴². Diller revealed little of the long-term plan for *Newsweek*, and said the full plan on restructuring the magazine will be announced after September⁴².

Employees had no knowledge of any upper management plans to no longer print *Newsweek*. In response to Diller's comments, Brown sent a memo to all *Newsweek* Daily Beast employees assuring them the company is doing fine⁴³. "The *Newsweek* brand is strong, and far stronger than it has been in years," Brown wrote. "Eventually, over time, digital would replace much of print (hardly a controversial revelation)"⁴³. Brown also wrote they would begin working on the plan for 2013 in September (two months from the date of the memo), "with many options to choose from"⁴³. This implies Brown and Diller were already scheming. The condescending tone of the memo gives staffers a sense that their concerns are not of any importance to Brown.

Finally, in an article published on Oct. 29, 2012, Brown announced *Newsweek* would print its last issue on Dec. 31, 2012, in favor of an all-digital format³². Brown said *Newsweek* is following its readers online. "We're making our latest, momentous change, embracing a digital medium that all our competitors will one day need to embrace with the same fervor. We are ahead of the curve," Brown wrote³³. The magazine will still be supported by paid subscription for tablet, web, and mobile devices, according to Brown³². Brown called the transition bittersweet: Bitter because she loves print, "Sweet, because we are rising spiritedly to a challenge, not wringing our hands in impotent despair over the way modern life – and modern reading habit – have rendered our print edition unviable"³².

Newsweek's failure as a print publication does not mean all print publications will cease to exist. *Newsweek's* problems are not a result of being in print; they come from funding issues within their parent company and poor management. Not all print publications have such problems. As data shows, print news has its own audience exclusive of the online audience. There is still a market for print news in the U.S., and especially internationally in Europe and Asia. *Newsweek's* transition from print to online is not indicative of the fate of all print news sources.

Staff writers have been quiet about the transition, with the exception of Sullivan. The day after *Newsweek* went exclusively online, January 2, 2013, Sullivan announced he was leaving the company to start his own website⁶. Sullivan said his new website will be funded by subscription revenue only, at a minimum price of \$19.99 per year⁶. He said he did not wish to have advertisements on his site because ads are distracting, intrusive, and slow⁶. Sullivan said his contract ended at the end of 2012, but his move comes at a time when NewsBeast is facing a lot of uncertainties.

2.3. Case study review

The Huffington Post has several advantages over their competitors, including *Newsweek*. First, they are consistent. The Huffington Post has always been a strictly online publication, and they will always be a strictly online publication. Even with tablet and smart phone applications, The Huffington Post is still delivering their same product in its same format. Another advantage is their human resources. All sources indicate Arianna Huffington's strong leadership style and engaging personality gets the most out of her employees. Her connections allow influential guest bloggers to take the stage and drive traffic to the website. The company employs a variety of workers, including trained journalists, professionals from other fields, untrained journalists and bloggers, and social media experts. This variety provides the company a solid background in numerous subjects. The Huffington Post's final advantage is their history. They were one of the first online news outlets. They made a name for themselves before many of their competitors were established.

The Huffington Post has two main weaknesses: their polarity and Arianna Huffington. Research shows those who read liberal blogs are Democratic, and Republicans only read conservative blogs¹⁶. While Huffington was listed as an asset, she is also a risk for the publication. Should Huffington run into legal trouble or engage in some activity that makes her fall from the public's good graces, the company could go down in flames with her. The success of the company depends on her ability to stay on the straight and narrow path.

Newsweek has fewer advantages than The Huffington Post. Their biggest advantage is their rich history. *Newsweek* is a recognizable name with a tradition of excellent journalism. Unfortunately, *Newsweek's* financial troubles may have put the publication on the fast track to failure. Since the publication was sold, its leadership has made a series of bad decisions, like putting Tina Brown in charge, merging with The Daily Beast and ending print. Brown was not

a good fit for Editor-in-Chief of *Newsweek*. She makes it clear that her project, The Daily Beast, is her top priority, not *Newsweek*. Brown should make both publications of equal importance in her book, as she is in charge of both. Her inactive leadership style seems not to fit in with *Newsweek*'s work environment. One cannot ask employees to completely change the way they do their job because a new boss was hired. Brown and the *Newsweek* staff need to be more flexible for this managerial style to work. At this point, neither party seems willing to budge.

The second nail in *Newsweek*'s coffin was ending print. It is not ceasing to print laid *Newsweek* to rest – instead, merging their website with The Daily Beasts' under The Daily Beasts' URL seems to have done them in. When one searches for “Newsweek” on Internet search engines, he or she is led to TheDailyBeast.com. If someone were not aware of the merger, he or she would be confused and unlikely to search around the site to find the desired *Newsweek* articles. The homepage of TheDailyBeast.com only mentions *Newsweek* in the far right corner of its navigation bar, while The Daily Beast logo is located prominently on the left.

3. Conclusion

From the reasons listed above, I believe The Huffington Post is a better model of a successful online news outlet than *Newsweek*. The Huffington Post's has advertising dollars pouring in and has remained profitable since acquisition, whereas *Newsweek*'s decline has scared advertisers away. Strong leadership has certainly contributed to the livelihood of The Huffington Post. Arianna Huffington is an invaluable asset to her company, whereas Tina Brown's presence has hurt morale and profits at *Newsweek*. Maintaining a strong brand image also made The Huffington Post more auspicious than *Newsweek* – despite being sold to AOL, The Huffington Post kept its name and web URL. When *Newsweek* merged, it gave up much of its unique brand identity. These factors, among others, catapulted The Huffington Post to eminence and left *Newsweek* in financial ruin.

From my research, I think more online-only news outlets will be established in the future. I think The Huffington Post needs competition from the political right. A blog-style online newspaper with mainly conservative editorials could benefit from The Huffington Post's model and give the company a run for its money. I do not think *Newsweek* will exist in two years. The company is in severe debt, with no sign of change.

I do not think print media will disappear entirely, based on information from my research. I think social media and online news sources offer a different product – quick tidbits of information versus more researched, lengthy articles – to a different audience. I do think it would behoove all newspapers to establish an online brand through their own website and social media accounts. Employees can and should supplement the online material from their personal social media accounts, but the company account should be the main source for information.

In conclusion, an in-depth look at The Huffington Post demonstrates online news outlets are popular, effective and financially successful and show no signs of decline. The traumas that have befallen *Newsweek* exemplify the importance of brand identity in the online world and raise questions about the best method for online news outlets to generate profit. Research indicates social media and online news outlets deliver a different product to a different audience than print newspapers; therefore, their popularity will not directly lead to the end of print journalism.

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6. V. A. Tables and Figures

Data for tables 1 and 2 and figures 1, 2 and 5 compiled for The Pew Center's Project for Excellence in Journalism's annual report on American journalism by:

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