

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Media Systems Online and Off: Comparing the Form of News in the United States, Denmark, and France

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This study examines how media system differences in the form of news change or stay the same as newspapers in the United States (liberal), Denmark (democratic corporatist), and France (polarized pluralist) move from print to online. Internet technological affordances are posited to move online news toward more advertising and information (liberal model) and more opinion and deliberation (polarized pluralist model). In the liberal direction, advertising and more localized, light news increase; toward polarized pluralism, news as a whole declines while deliberation, opinion, and nonjournalistic voices increase slightly. A lesser degree of change in France may be due to greater state insulation from market pressures; some contradictory tendencies in Denmark indicate that technological influences are shaped by contextual national factors.

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Comparative research continues to show that the form and content of print and television “offline” news vary substantially across national boundaries (Curran, Iyengar, Lund, & Salovaara-Moring, 2009; Esser, 2008; Strömbäck & Dimitrova, 2006). However, does this pattern hold for online news? To what extent and in what ways are online newspapers reproducing pre-existing cross-national differences due to path dependent institutional constraints? To what extent are online newspapers moving away from their print counterparts, and converging cross-nationally, because of the unique technological affordances and geographic reach of the internet? This study, a comparison of print and online newspapers in the United States, Denmark, and France, each representing different types of democratic media systems, seeks to put these questions to the test.

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Hallin and Mancini (2004) document the persistence of three media systems within Western Europe and North America: the “liberal” model of which the United States is the purest example, versus the “polarized pluralist” model of France and southern Europe and the “democratic corporatist” model of Denmark and other north-central European countries. These systems are marked by differences in state laws and regulations, links between media and political parties, journalistic professional traditions, and the structure of audience and advertising markets. As a result of such structural differences, the form of news—the layout and design mix of journalism “genres,” authorial voices, and topical “schemes of departmentalization” (Barnhurst & Nerone, 2001, p. 3)—could be expected to differ across these media systems. News formats are one way that journalists shape democratic participation and debate in the public sphere (Wessler, 2008).

In the abstract, the four key variables examined in this study—information, commercialism, deliberation, and commentary—could be combined in multiple ways by any given media outlet. In practice, Hallin and Mancini argue, commercialism and information go together in the American version of the liberal model, and deliberation and commentary are both highlighted to a greater extent in polarized pluralist countries like France. Compared with their American counterparts, French national newspapers are less dependent on advertising (Benson, 2009); they are also more likely to display news and opinion genres on the same page (Benson, 2009), to have clearer ideological identities (Albert, 2004; Chalaby, 1996), and to present a wider range of nonjournalistic voices and viewpoints (Benson & Hallin, 2007).

Some studies place democratic corporatist media closer to the polarized pluralist model: Haas (2003, pp. 92–93) shows that Danish journalists involved in “public journalism” projects were more likely than American journalists to “present their own solutions” and to “highlight the concerns of traditionally marginalized publics”; Strömbäck and Dimitrova (2006) find Swedish electoral reporting to be more interpretive and less factually descriptive than U.S. reporting. On the other hand, Väliverronen and Kunelius (2008) show that Finnish newspapers are similar to American newspapers in adopting a more neutral tone and in focusing more on policy over ideology in political news coverage, yet closer to French newspapers in their relatively high inclusion of civil society viewpoints and insertion of background information and opinion in news articles. This finding follows logically from Hallin and Mancini’s (pp. 74, 144–145) argument that the democratic corporatist model is uniquely marked by “coexistences,” bringing together characteristics—the polarized pluralist tendency toward more partisan, opinion-oriented journalism, and the liberal tendency toward a more commercialized, news-driven journalism—often assumed to be “naturally” opposed.

Although Hallin and Mancini’s work is path breaking, it does not have much to say about cross-national differences in online media; neither does it fully theorize the ways that the interconnected technological platform of the internet may be producing new degrees, or types, of global convergence. Global convergence is usually conceived of as movement toward the liberal model (Hallin & Mancini, 2004, p. 254), but

it seems just as likely that convergence, if there is any, could be in the direction of polarized pluralism, or perhaps some new mix of these and other approaches. Although an increasing number of cross-national studies of print and online media are being conducted, there is a need for a systematic comparison of both print and online newspapers representing distinct western media systems.

Theoretical frameworks

New institutionalist (Cook, 1998; Powell & DiMaggio, 1991) or field theory (Bourdieu, 1993; Benson & Neveu, 2005) approaches suggest that news media within a given national context will tend to share important characteristics due to enduring, deeply embedded practices and beliefs established at the formation of the journalistic field (which does not preclude within-nation variation, especially between media oriented toward different types of audiences). These theoretical traditions would predict that print newspaper cross-media system differences will hold steady for their online versions.

Indeed, empirical studies in the sociology of news demonstrate strong continuities between online and print newspapers. Mitchelstein and Boczkowski (2009) find that online news products of traditional news organizations are characterized by what new institutionalists call “path dependency”; that is, they are shaped more by pre-existing organizational norms than by new technical possibilities. Hoffman (2006, p. 67) discovers a “startling” degree of “similarity” in news content between U.S. print and online newspapers. Barnhurst’s (2002, p. 486; 2010, p. 563) content analyses of three U.S. newspapers in 2001 and 2005 show mostly similarities between print and online versions; similarly, Finnemann and Thomasen (2005, p. 97, 101) discover broad similarities in the page layout, specific news stories, and news formats of Danish print and online versions of the leading national newspapers. Quandt’s (2008, p. 735) five-country comparative study finds little use of unique internet capabilities by elite online newspapers, leading him to conclude that “online journalism . . . is basically good old news journalism.” Together, this research suggests that the dominant characteristics of national news media will be reinforced online.

Alternatively, medium theory (Deuze, 2003; Meyrowitz, 1994) posits that online media themselves have certain characteristics that make them markedly different from print newspapers and tend to unite them across national boundaries. The claim is that each medium will tend to encourage or “afford” particular types of “meaning making,” and discourage others (Engebretsen, 2006, p. 4). Medium theory can be used to hypothesize competing tendencies toward either a greater emphasis on commercialism and information, or, alternatively, opinion and deliberation.

On one hand, in the Americanizing liberal direction, Barnhurst and Nerone (2001, p. 285, 289) observe that the “most striking characteristic of online newspapers is the dominance of promotion [and] advertising,” which they attribute to the internet’s leveling “logic of the index” (Finnemann & Thomasen, 2005, pp. 100–102; McChesney, 2000, pp. 173–174). Cohen (2002, p. 537) finds that “the online commercial

news environment increases market pressure at all levels.” In the online environment, competition for audiences is also intensified, placing a premium on entertaining, light, and sensationalistic news (Fenton, 2010); Singer (2001, p. 65) shows that, despite their potentially global reach, online newspapers are less likely than print newspapers to emphasize international news.

On the other hand, other technological affordances of the internet push journalism toward a greater emphasis on commentary and deliberation. Barnhurst and Nerone (2001, p. 294) emphasize how online media break down local information monopolies that were crucial in establishing American-style nonpartisan media (due to the fact that a single urban newspaper had to appeal to audiences across partisan divides). News outlets competing online for national and international as well as local audiences now have market incentives to use partisanship, or at least an opinionated style, in order to establish their unique brand niche (Baum & Groeling, 2008; Prior, 2007). The empirical evidence is mixed. Singer (2003) and Kovach and Rosenstiel (2001, p. 140) observe an online increase in opinion-oriented journalism. Adams’s (2007) study of French media documents how the web can foster deliberation via reader comments, question-and-answer forums, and simultaneous chats with journalists. On the other hand, Engebretsen’s (2006, p. 13) study of Scandinavian print and online media concludes that “dialogic” forms of journalism are “utilized only to a very modest degree—or not at all.” In studies of U.S. media, Cassidy (2005) and Cohen (2002) find no major print to online increase in opinion or inclusion of nonjournalistic voices.

Of course, the extent to which commercialism, information, commentary, and deliberation do or do not coincide is shaped by multiple factors, and may not cohere in relation to media system differences or medium affordances. This study simply seeks to put these frequently made claims about medium and media system effects to the test.

Hypotheses

This article posits relationships between, on one hand, either (a) media systems, as repositories of historically shaped institutional constraints or (b) technological capacities and potentials as embodied in internet technology, and on the other hand, the form of news. All hypotheses concern the following elements of news form that have been argued (Albert, 2004; Hallin & Mancini, 2004) to especially distinguish “liberal” Anglo-American news media and “polarized pluralist” southern European news media because of their opposing structural characteristics: commercialism and information versus opinion and deliberation.

H1: Because media systems as manifested in particular national journalistic fields shape both internet and print newspaper content, we should expect internet and print newspapers to be substantially the same within each country (United States, Denmark, and France). Likewise, there should be substantial cross-national media differences, with the liberal U.S. media especially in relation to polarized pluralist French media, offering (a) greater prevalence

(amount of content as a proportion of the whole) and prominence (hierarchical ordering of content) of advertising, (b) lesser prevalence and prominence of opinion genres, (c) lesser prevalence and prominence of deliberative genres, (d) lesser prevalence and prominence of nonjournalist produced content, and (e) lesser prevalence and prominence of government and international topics, and higher prevalence and prominence of light and sensational topics. Given that the democratic corporatist Danish media system mixes structural elements generally opposed in the liberal and polarized pluralist systems, we would expect Danish newspaper form to likewise be a mix of elements found in the United States and France.

H2: Because internet technology facilitates the mixing of advertising content with editorial content as well as the continual updating of news, we should expect that the prevalence and prominence of advertising and news should be higher in online news media than in print news media in all three countries. If there are cross-national differences, these should be less for online media than for print media.

H3: Because internet technology facilitates interactive debate and easier access to nonjournalist produced content, we should expect that the prevalence and prominence of deliberative genres and nonjournalist produced content should be higher in the online than in the print versions of newspapers, for all three countries. In addition, because online competition creates incentives for greater partisan differentiation, we should likewise expect a greater prevalence and higher prominence of opinion in online than in print editions. If there are cross-national differences, these should be less for online media than for print media.

Hypothesis 1 posits constant cross-national (media system) differences for both print and online news, and is therefore incompatible in principle with Hypotheses 2 and 3. In contrast, Hypotheses 2 and 3 are partially competing and suggest differences between print and online across all countries (“partially” because it is possible that different aspects said to group together, for example, advertising and information, may in fact disaggregate in the shift from print to online).

Method

Countries selected to represent media systems are the United States (liberal), France (polarized pluralist), and Denmark (democratic corporatist). According to Hallin and Mancini’s classificatory scheme (p. 70), the United States is the most complete structural embodiment of the liberal model; Denmark is in a virtual tie with other Scandinavian countries as the purest example of the democratic corporatist model. Hallin and Mancini identify France as polarized pluralist while acknowledging it also incorporates some democratic corporatist elements. Previous United States–French media comparisons (Benson, 2009; Benson & Hallin, 2007; Chalaby, 1996; Reese & Rutigliano, 2004), however, have tended to find differences that accord closely with Hallin and Mancini’s liberal-polarized pluralist distinction: our comparison of online as well as print media in these two countries helps extend this important body of research.

We examined both print and online versions of general interest national newspapers, three in each country, which are widely regarded as being among the most prestigious and influential (Albert, 2004; Finnemann & Thomasen, 2005; Søllinge, 1999; Weaver, Beam, Brownlee, Voakes, & Wilhoit, 2007): in Denmark, *Berlingske Tidende*, *Jyllands-Posten*, and *Politiken*; in France, *Le Monde*, *Le Figaro*, and *Libération*; and in the United States, the *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, and *Los Angeles Times*. By holding roughly constant the economic and cultural capital of newspapers (both in terms of the professionals who work there, and their audiences), we can be reasonably sure that any cross-national differences we find will be due to media system factors rather than other confounding variables. While elite newspapers are not perfectly representative of a country's media system, they are likely to embody a system's dominant professional ideals; because of their agenda-setting role, they are important to study in their own right.

Focusing on the online sites of established newspapers—as opposed to online-only media—increases the likelihood of continuity with offline journalistic practices. Given well-known past tensions between print and online news operations, however, it is reasonable to suspect medium-specific differences within news organizations. Pre-internet prestige media organizations continue to attract substantial audiences online (Hindman, 2008) and the content they produce is the chief ingredient of the “aggregated” content of many leading online-only media outlets. For these reasons, our sample provides a reasonable starting point for comparative offline-online research.

The “front page” has historically been the site where journalistic logics are most clearly expressed; newsroom studies highlight editors' focus on determining page one placement (Clayman & Reisner, 1998; Hubé, 2008). We examined each newspaper's print front page and online homepage (first two screen shots) (see Cooke, 2005, pp. 27–28 and Van der Wurff & Lauf, 2005, p. 5, for similar methods). News is sometimes organized as packages mixing multiple “elements” (topical labels, headlines, texts, images) of different genres; to capture the diversity of genres, each element was coded separately for specific genre and then grouped into broader “summative indices” related to hypotheses (Cassidy, 2005, p. 270): advertising, information (documents such as transcripts of court decisions or political speeches, databases, photos, multimedia, as well as news), news (event articles, feature articles, and news analyses), opinion (signed opinion essays, official newspaper editorials, cartoons, and blogs), deliberation (interview transcripts, polls, online chats, and forums), and other (newspaper title, internal marketing, byline, date, time, and latest update). Online-only genres such as blogs or chats were coded for print versions if they were referenced (e.g., “see online”).

To ascertain the prevalence of diverse nonjournalist voices, each element was coded for authorship: journalist, nonjournalist with an organizational affiliation (academic, nonuniversity expert, artist/writer/celebrity, religious, trade union, other civil society association, business, government official, political party, or candidate for electoral office), or unaffiliated individual. Finally, to measure any shift away from

public affairs toward lighter, more sensationalistic news, each element was coded for its topical focus and grouped into relevant, broader categories: international, government and domestic politics, light news (leisure, arts and culture, movie or television reviews/schedules, health, sports, and weather), crimes or disasters, and other (civil society, religion, business, media industries and technologies, physical and natural sciences, humanities and social sciences, environment, and breaking news).

Prominence is measured by location on the online homepage or print front page: Location on the top half of the front page or the first online screen capture is coded as high prominence, which accords with journalistic conventions that the most important news always appears at the top or “above the fold.”

Detailed coding of large samples of elements for each day of nine newspapers’ print and online versions necessitated a small sampling of dates (the collection of studies by Van der Wurff & Lauf, 2005, focused on a single day). Form elements underlying the basic design of a website or print newspaper are unlikely to vary much day-to-day; our topical/departmental findings should be interpreted as more provisional. Print and online data for all newspapers and all countries were simultaneously collected on a total of three weekdays from July through September 2008: Wednesday, July 23; Tuesday, August 12; and Friday, September 5. Selecting from the summer months helped assure we would be examining “routine as opposed to exceptional content” (Barnhurst, 2010, p. 558); a composite sample from multiple weeks offered greater generalizability than the use of consecutive days in a single week (Riffe, Aust, & Lacy, 1993; Singer, 2001). During the fall of 2007 and spring of 2008, we also conducted detailed qualitative “thick descriptions” of a single morning’s edition of each of the online newspapers in the study (all on different days), and these qualitative findings accord with the quantitative data presented here. Events occurring on our sample days that might affect our topical findings include the arrest of Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadzic (July 23), the summer Olympics in Beijing (August 12), and the U.S. Republican Party national convention (September 5, also the Friday prior to a major U.S. holiday). In particular, the U.S. media might be expected to give greater attention than usual to politics and government during a party convention; however, removal of the September 5 data from the sample did not substantively change cross-national patterns of topical findings.

Three graduate student coders—each native to the nation state whose media they were coding—recorded snapshots of online editions at 8 a.m. (local times) to ensure rough temporal equivalences. We performed a pretest (July 2, 2008) to ensure all coders understood the protocol. E-mail dialogues among coders were coordinated by the corresponding author and the Danish coauthors and all coding disagreements were discussed to ensure reliability. Using Krippendorff’s α , overall intercoder reliability (determined by three sample tests constituting 10% of the overall data) between coders was .803. For authorship, average reliability was .805; for genre, .736; and for topical focus, .855.

Table 1 Prevalence of Genres by Country: Print and Online

Country (<i>N</i> Print, Online)	Genre	Print		Online		Difference (% Points)
		%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	
United States (781, 1281)	Advertising	1.0	8	7.9	101	+6.9***
	All information	83.2	650	62.5	800	-20.7***
	News	76.6	598	43.7	560	-32.9***
	Opinion	2.8	22	12.5	160	+9.7***
	Deliberation	0	0	2.5	32	+2.5***
Denmark (241, 1203)	Advertising	12.9	31	5.2	63	-7.7***
	All information	70.5	170	70.1	843	-.4
	News	56.8	137	58.8	707	+2.0
	Opinion	7.1	17	.3	4	-6.8***
	Deliberation	1.2	3	1.0	12	-.2
France (498, 1056)	Advertising	2.4	12	3.6	38	+1.2
	All information	66.3	330	63.4	669	-2.9
	News	50.6	252	44.2	467	-6.4*
	Opinion	7.4	37	8.5	90	+1.1
	Deliberation	8.8	44	8.8	93	0

Notes: Because other genres are not presented, percentages do not add up to 100%.

Statistical significance of differences is measured using Pearson's chi-square test: * $p < .05$.

** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Results

Advertising

In print, advertising¹ is most prevalent in Danish newspapers; online, advertising is most common in U.S. newspapers ($p < .01$ vs. Denmark²). Prevalence of advertising increases from print to online for U.S. newspapers (1.0–7.9% of elements) and stays about the same for French newspapers (2.4 and 3.6% of elements, difference NS). Danish newspapers have more advertising in their print versions (12.9%) than in their online versions (5.2%) (Table 1).

Prominence of advertising sharply increases from print to online for all three countries. None of the U.S. print advertisements are high prominence (above the fold), versus just 12.9% in Denmark, and 25.0% in France. Online, however, the majority of advertisements appear prominently (in the “first screen capture”): 58.4% for the United States, 69.8% for Denmark, and 57.9% for France (Table 2).

Moving from print to online, cross-national differences diminish in both prevalence and prominence of advertising: the three country “high–low” gap in prevalence drops from 11.9 percentage points to 4.3 percentage points, and the high–low gap for prominence falls from 25 points to 11.9 points (high–low figures not shown in tables).

Table 2 High Prominence of Genres by Country: Print and Online

Country	Genre	Print		Online		Difference (% Points)
		%	Total N	%	Total N	
United States	Advertising	0	8	58.4	101	+58.4***
	All information	42.5	650	55.9	800	+13.4***
	News	41.0	598	60.4	560	+19.4***
	Opinion	13.6	22	66.7	160	+53.1***
	Deliberation	0	0	56.3	32	+56.3
Denmark	Advertising	12.9	31	69.8	63	+56.9***
	All information	80.6	170	40.1	843	-40.5***
	News	73.7	137	37.8	707	-35.9***
	Opinion	64.7	17	0	4	-64.7*
	Deliberation	100	3	33.3	12	-66.7*
France	Advertising	25.0	12	57.9	38	+32.9*
	All information	48.5	330	57.0	669	+8.5*
	News	50.4	252	61.2	467	+10.8**
	Opinion	24.3	37	46.7	90	+22.4*
	Deliberation	13.6	44	40.9	93	+27.3***

Pearson's chi-square test: * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

News and information

In print, U.S. newspapers have the most news; online, Danish newspapers do. News prevalence decreases from print to online for U.S. (76.6–43.7%) and French (50.6–44.2%) newspapers, while holding steady for Danish newspapers (56.8–58.8%, difference NS). On the other hand, most other information genres (documents and databases, photos, audiovisual) increase from print to online (not shown in table), lessening somewhat the overall decline in information. Prominence of news in print compared to online increases for both U.S. (41.0–60.4%) and French (50.4–61.2%) newspapers, while it declines (73.7–37.8%) for Danish newspapers. From print to online, high–low percentage point gaps decline for both prevalence (26.0–15.1%) and prominence (32.7–23.4%) of news, but as with advertising prevalence, this convergence cannot be interpreted as a unified movement in a single direction.

Opinion and deliberation

In print, French and Danish newspapers have the most opinion; online, U.S. newspapers do (vs. France online, $p < .01$). Prevalence of opinion increases from print to online for U.S. newspapers (2.8–12.5%), stays about the same for French newspapers (7.4–8.5%, difference NS), and decreases for Danish newspapers (from 7.1 to less than 1%). Prominence of opinion also increases most dramatically for

U.S. newspapers (from 13.6 in print to 66.7% online); prominence increases from 24.3 to 46.7% for French newspapers, while falling sharply for Danish newspapers. Across the three countries, moving from print to online, the opinion high–low percentage point gap increases for both prevalence (4.6–12.2%) and prominence (51.1–66.7%).

Deliberation is most common in French newspapers, remaining steady at 8.8% moving from print to online (differences with both Danish and U.S. print and online newspapers, $p < .001$). Deliberative genres increase very slightly from print to online for U.S. newspapers (from nonexistent to 2.5%) and stay about the same for Danish newspapers (1.2–1.0%, difference NS). Prevalence of deliberative genres thus stays the same or increases slightly from print to online for all three countries, and there is a very slight convergence (from an 8.8 percentage point high–low gap to a 7.8 point gap). Deliberation increases in prominence from print to online for French newspapers (from 13.6 to 40.9%), while decreasing for Danish newspapers (100–33.3%); increase in prominence cannot be measured for the United States given that there is no deliberative content in the print newspapers.

Nonjournalistic voices

Nonjournalistic authorial voices as a whole are more likely to appear in French newspapers than in their U.S. or Danish counterparts, a gap that overall increases in the shift from print to online (author figures not provided in a table).³ It is important to emphasize, however, that journalists are by far the dominant authorial voice in newspapers (both print and online) in all three countries. In their print and online versions, respectively, journalists are 99.2 and 95.6% of authors in U.S. newspapers, 98.0 and 97.6% in Danish newspapers, and 85.8 and 81.5% in French newspapers.

Nonjournalist organization-linked authors (academic, religious, labor, other civil society, business, and government) appear most often in French newspapers, both offline and online (5.7 and 3.8%, respectively), but the proportion increases in U.S. newspapers (.8–2.7%) and stays the same for Danish newspapers (2.0–2.4%, difference NS); due to the slight French decline, there is convergence and online cross-national differences are not statistically significant. Prevalence of nonaffiliated individuals increases in France from print (8.5%) to online (14.7%), and the cross-national differences for both print and online with the United States (0% in print and 1.7% in online) and Denmark (0% for both print and online) are substantial and statistically significant ($p < .001$). Prominence of these nonaffiliated individuals also increases from print to online for French newspapers: while just 3% appear in the top half of the print newspapers, 25% appear in the first screen of the internet home page ($p < .01$).

Topical focus

For both print and online, international news is higher in Denmark and France than in the U.S., while domestic government news is higher in the United States. Light and

Table 3 Prevalence of Topical Focus by Country: Print and Online

Country (<i>N</i> Print, Online)	Topic	Print		Online		Difference (% Points)
		%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	
United States (730, 1025)	International	22.6	165	15.8	162	-6.8***
	Government	38.9	284	37.3	382	-1.6
	Crime/disaster	5.5	40	2.7	28	-2.8**
	Light news	27.3	199	32.6	334	+5.3*
	Other	5.8	42	11.6	119	+5.8***
Denmark (205, 953)	International	41.5	85	21.8	208	-19.7***
	Government	20.0	41	15.9	152	-4.1
	Crime/disaster	4.4	9	7.2	69	+2.8
	Light news	18.5	38	34.1	325	+15.6***
	Other	15.6	32	20.9	199	+5.3
France (378, 780)	International	31.0	117	21.7	169	-9.3***
	Government	20.6	78	21.7	169	+1.1
	Crime/disaster	.5	2	2.6	20	+2.1*
	Light news	25.9	98	26.8	209	+.9
	Other	21.2	80	27.3	213	+6.1*

Notes: Elements without a topical focus (advertising, internal marketing, date, etc.) are omitted from *N*. Due to rounding, some percentages may not add up to 100%.

Pearson's chi-square test: * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

crime/disaster news, combined, are highest in U.S. print newspapers; online, Danish newspapers are highest in these categories. International news declines from print to online in the United States (22.6–15.8%), France (31.0–21.7%), and Denmark (41.5–21.8%); a decline in high–low gaps (18.9–6.0) indicates a clear convergence. Government news drops slightly or is steady in the three countries. Light news increases print to online from 27.3 to 32.6% in U.S. newspapers and from 18.5 to 34.1% in Danish newspapers, while staying virtually the same in French newspapers (25.9% print and 26.8% online). Crime and disaster news are minor topics in all three countries (Table 3).

For U.S. newspapers, prominence of light news (20.6–55.1%, $p < .001$) increases from print to online (topical prominence data not shown in tables), while remaining steady in France (34.7–45.0%, NS) and falling in Denmark (92.1–44.3%, $p < .001$). Prominence of international and government news remains relatively high in the United States and French online editions (around 60% in both countries). Denmark, in contrast, shows large print to online decreases in the prominence of international and government news (falling from 83.5 to 43.8% and 68.3 to 38.8%, respectively, both $p < .001$).

Discussion

This study shows that media systems cannot stop internet-led change, but perhaps they can limit or shape it to a certain extent. Conversely, while the internet is transforming newspaper journalism, it is not always in predictable ways.

As reported above, numerous print to online changes make it impossible to confirm Hypothesis 1. Our Danish findings refute Hypothesis 1's prediction that Danish democratic corporatist media form and content would mix elements found in the liberal United States and polarized pluralist French systems. Danish newspapers, both print and online, emphasize advertising and information about as much or more than U.S. newspapers; while Danish print newspapers highlight opinion and deliberation more than U.S. papers, this gap disappears online.

On the other hand, some broad cross-national differences continue to hold online: in particular, a French tendency to emphasize deliberation and to make more room for nonjournalist authorial voices. It also appears that some types of media systems are better equipped than others to limit internet-led change. Barnhurst and Nerone's hypothesized changes of increased advertising and opinion and deliberative genres (Hypotheses 2 and 3) are related to increased commercial pressures and market competition. We would thus expect any such effects to be exacerbated in market-oriented systems and lessened in systems with greater state intervention that help insulate the press from market forces. Of the three countries in this study, state subsidies and regulation are arguably most extensive in France, and in fact, we do find that the French press changes least from print to online in its mix of genres.⁴ Moreover, with some exceptions, the print to online changes that do occur in France—such as increasing the emphasis on ideas and nonjournalistic voices—tend to accentuate its national press traditions.

Overall, print to online changes provide some support for both Hypotheses 2 and 3. Indicating movement in the direction of the liberal model (Hypothesis 2), prominence of advertising is higher online than in print for newspapers in all three countries, and cross-national differences are less online than for print. While written news reports decline in prevalence, other information genres (databases, documents, photos, and multimedia) generally increase. Online news in general tends to be "lighter" (more sports, weather, leisure, etc.) and slightly more "sensationalistic" (more crime and disaster news in France and perhaps in Denmark, although not in the United States). On the other hand, indicating an online shift in the direction of the polarized pluralist model (Hypothesis 3), there is a print to online decline in the proportion of "news" (although not in Denmark), a steady amount or slight rise in the amount of deliberative genres in all three countries, an increase in the amount and prominence of opinion in the United States and France (although, again, not in Denmark), and an increase in the amount of nonjournalistic authored content in France and the United States (while remaining steady in Denmark).

In general, these findings paint a picture of online news, across media systems (although less consistently for Denmark), simultaneously featuring more advertising

and more localized, light news, while at the same time opening up (if only slightly) toward more deliberation, more opinion, and more nonjournalistic voices. Thus there is evidence to provide partial support for both Hypotheses 2 and 3. If this seems surprising, it is largely only from an American perspective, where commercialism and more overtly opinion-oriented journalism tended not to coincide for several decades after World War II (Hallin, 1992).⁵ However, there are ample examples of this coexistence elsewhere in the world, and with the rising influence of more openly partisan outlets, a simultaneously commercial and opinion-oriented media is now a major part of the U.S. journalistic field as well (Jacobs & Townsley, 2011). While in U.S. print newspapers, the front page remains a bastion of news, the internet is modifying this hierarchy, putting opinion and advertising next to news at the top of the web homepage. More generally, our findings point to the need to disaggregate variables (commercialism, information, opinion, deliberation) that may have historically coincided but need not.

Our results concerning the Danish case may be the most surprising, at least in relation to certain stereotypes of American versus “European”-style journalism. How can it be that Danish print and online newspapers would be so heavy in commercial content and news, and so light in opinion and deliberation? This finding, however, is not inconsistent with the democratic corporatist tradition of a mass-circulation press. Denmark’s newspaper sales per capita are higher than in the United States or France (Hallin & Mancini, 2004, p. 23) and Danish newspapers have long sought to transcend politics and use populist appeals to attract a broad readership (Haas, 2003; Hjarvard, 2000). Although Hallin and Mancini call attention to the coexistence of political parallelism and a highly commercial press in democratic corporatist countries, our study suggests that the commercial part of this structural coexistence may now be substantially stronger. Our findings thus provide a corrective to assumptions that U.S. media are exceptional in their commercialism and news orientation. At the same time, it is important to acknowledge the historical specificity of the democratic corporatist system (Allern & Blach-Ørsten, 2011) and that it is not reducible to any other system or “hybrids” of those systems.

Other explanations for our Danish findings are possible. Engebretsen (2006, p. 13) argues that due to their relatively lower newspaper circulation and less innovative adaptation to the internet, Danish newspapers are no longer typical of Scandinavia, and thus for our purposes, the democratic corporatist system. Contingent business strategies may also be at work, as, for example, with *Berlingske Tidende*’s and *Politiken*’s stated intentions to make their print versions “harder” with more political news, analysis, commentary, and interviews (thus perhaps further differentiating Danish print newspapers from U.S. print newspapers) and their online versions “softer” with more light news and entertainment; in fact, this kind of hard (print)/soft (online) differentiation in Denmark is largely supported by our data.

Although our study highlights technology as the engine of change and portrays institutional field or media system factors as tending to maintain the status quo, an alternative field explanation of change is also possible. Bourdieu (1993) has

emphasized the powerful shaping influence of the historical moment of field formation. If we consider online journalism as its own sort of (sub)field in formation, it is worth noting that it has emerged during a particularly “neoliberal” era in which the market is ascendant and the state and political parties are on the defensive. In addition, during the current economic crisis the relationship between online journalism and its print counterparts are no doubt being shaped by specific commercial imperatives, including an ongoing search for sustainable business models. Thus, if online journalism departs from print journalism in substantial ways, it is not just due to the technology but rather to the sociohistorical context of its moment of creation.

What are the implications of our findings for ongoing concerns about the internet’s effects on journalism’s democratic functions? Despite some decline in traditional news reporting, information is still the dominant genre online and certain forms less easily “afforded” by print have in fact become more prevalent online, such as access to original documents, archive databases, and multimedia presentations of complex issues. The print-online shift from international and domestic public affairs news to more light or sensationalistic news, especially in the United States and Denmark, confirms fears of a gradual loss in “accountability” journalism (Downie & Schudson, 2009). On the other hand, measured against ideals of civic or pluralist democracy (Christians, Glasser, McQuail, Nordenstreng, & White, 2009), our findings of a slight increase in deliberation and opinion, as well as more diverse authorial voices online, provide grounds for cautious optimism.

Going beyond this study, future research could confirm whether our early morning observations hold for other times of the day given the dynamic potentials of the web environment and online newspapers’ increasing awareness that readership and reader interests vary over the course of the day (Boczkowski, 2010). While our project focuses on the front pages of both print and online editions, an investigation “behind” and “beyond” the front pages and home pages might well reveal different patterns. Future studies could also explore variations in the internal properties of various genres (mixture of news and commentary, rational–critical qualities, etc.) both for print and online news media, and how such variations are experienced and interpreted by audiences.

To confirm our findings about the shaping power of media systems, further research should examine countries that are deemed equivalent or purer examples than the countries included in our study: thus, Greece, Spain, or Portugal for the polarized pluralist model, and Norway, Finland, or Sweden for the democratic corporatist model (Hallin & Mancini, 2004, p. 70). Additional research could examine other components of increasingly complex media ecosystems, such as offline and online versions of popular, financial, alternative, and regional/local newspapers, as well as television and radio channels and online-only media. These and other kinds of institutional and technological medium variation could be incorporated into research designs to better ascertain causal pathways shaping the form of news.

Finally, it hardly needs to be emphasized that both print and online news forms are subject to change, although any transformations should be documented rather

than presumed. We thus hope that our study will serve both as an historical snapshot and as a template for future longitudinal research to track changes in the form of news both online and off. Such research will be crucial to understanding and helping develop forms of journalism adequate to the challenges facing contemporary democracies.

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Notes

- 1 Number and prominence of ads are not indicative of their value or cost.
- 2 *P* values are based on Pearson's chi-square tests. Statistical significance only provides the minimal assurance that differences rise above the level of chance and should not be equated with substantial or meaningful differences, much less with results that are significant in the real world (Ziliak & McClosky, 2008).
- 3 External links to content outside the newspaper website make up 5.6% of all French online elements, 4.3% of Danish elements, and 1.7% of U.S. elements ($p < .001$ for both French–U.S. and Danish–U.S. differences).
- 4 Disregarding valence, French newspapers change an average of 1.3 percentage points for prevalence and 22.8 points for prominence from print to online for advertising, information, opinion, and deliberation, substantially less than for newspapers in the U.S. (10.0 for prevalence and 45.3 for prominence) and Denmark (3.8 for prevalence and 57.2 for prominence). French press subsidies are among the highest in Europe (Benson, 2009) while Danish newspapers receive lesser direct subsidies than other Scandinavian countries (Allern & Blach-Ørsten, 2011, p. 97; Hallin & Mancini, 2004, p. 161).
- 5 By opinion-oriented journalism, we mean opinion columns, editorials, op-ed essays, blogs, and the like, rather than the relative presence or absence of opinion and interpretation within news articles—an important question beyond the scope of this study. Historically, U.S. news reporting has become less event centered and more interpretive (Barnhurst & Mutz, 1997); however, in comparison to French news articles, U.S. news articles are still less likely to include interpretation and opinion (Benson & Hallin, 2007).

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미디어 시스템 온라인 오프라인: 미국, 덴마크, 그리고 프랑스의 뉴스 형태 비교연구

Rodney Benson (1), Mark Blach-Ørsten (2), Matthew Powers (1), Ida Willig (2), & Sandra Vera

Zambrano (3)

요약

본 연구는 뉴스 형태로서의 미디어 시스템의 차이들이 미국 (진보적), 덴마크 (민주적 조합주의), 그리고 프랑스(극화된 다원화)에서 프린트 미디어에서 온라인 미디어로 움직이는데 있어 어떻게 변화했는지, 또는 예전 그대로 존재하는지를 연구한 것이다. 인터넷 기술적 접근들은 온라인 뉴스들을 보다 광고와 정보 (진보모델) 그리고 의견과 속의 (다원화 모델)로 향하도록 하였다. 진보적 방향에서는 광고와 더욱 지역화된, 그리고 다루기 가벼운 뉴스들이 증가하였으며, 다원화사회에서는 뉴스는 전체적으로 줄어들었으나 속의와 의견등의 목소리는 다소 증가하였다. 프랑스에서 별로 변화를 보이지 않은것은 더욱 큰 정도로 국가가 시장압력으로부터 초연했기 때문으로 보여진다. 덴마크에서는 다소 논란적인 경향들을 보이고 있는데, 이는 기술적 영향들은 문맥적 국가적 요소들에 의해 형성된다는 것을 보여주는 것이라고 할 수 있다.

Les systèmes médiatiques en ligne et hors-ligne : une comparaison de la forme des nouvelles aux États-Unis, au Danemark et en France

Rodney Benson, Mark Blach-Ørsten, Matthew Powers, Ida Willig & Sandra Vera Zambrano

Cette étude examine les manières par lesquelles le passage de l'imprimé à l'électronique, pour les journaux américains (modèle libéral), danois (modèle du corporatisme démocratique) et français (modèle du pluralisme divisé), transforme ou non les différences entre les systèmes médiatiques en ce qui a trait à la forme des nouvelles. Il est postulé que les affordances technologiques de l'Internet mènent les nouvelles en ligne vers plus de publicités et d'informations (modèle libéral) et vers plus d'opinions et de délibérations (modèle pluraliste polarisé). Dans la direction plus libérale, la publicité et des nouvelles plus localisées et légères augmentent. En direction du pluralisme polarisé, les nouvelles dans leur ensemble déclinent tandis que la délibération, l'opinion et les voix non journalistiques augmentent légèrement. Un moins grand degré de changement en France pourrait être dû à une plus grande isolation de l'État par rapport aux pressions du marché. Des tendances contradictoires au Danemark indiquent que les influences technologiques sont influencées par des facteurs contextuels nationaux.

Mots clés : études journalistiques, communication politique, communication de masse, communication et technologie, communication mondiale et changement social

Mediensysteme Online und Offline: Ein Vergleich der Nachrichten in den USA, Dänemark und Frankreich

In dieser Studie untersuchen wir, wie sich, im Zuge des Umbruchs des Zeitungsmarkts von Print auf Online in den (liberalen) USA, dem (demokratisch korporatistischen) Dänemark und dem (polarisiert pluralistischen) Frankreich, Nachrichten als Ausdruck von Unterschieden im Mediensystem verändern oder gleich bleiben. Wir nehmen an, dass die technologischen Merkmale des Internets Online-Nachrichten in einem liberalen Modell zu mehr Werbung und Information und in einem polarisiert-pluralistischen Modell zu mehr Meinung und Deliberation bewegen. Mediensysteme mit stärker liberaler Prägung bieten mehr Werbung und mehr lokale, leichte Nachrichten. Je stärker die polarisiert-pluralistische Prägung, desto stärker nehmen Nachrichten insgesamt ab, während Meinung und nicht-journalistische Stimmen leicht zunehmen. Die wenig ausgeprägten Veränderungen in Frankreich lassen sich möglicherweise auf die Unabhängigkeit des Staates vom Druck des Marktes zurückführen. Einige widersprüchliche Tendenzen in Dänemark deuten darauf hin, dass technologische Einflüsse durch kontextuelle nationale Faktoren geformt werden.

Schlüsselbegriffe: Journalismusforschung, politische Kommunikation, Massenkommunikation, Kommunikation und Technologie, globale Kommunikation und sozialer Wandel