

THE MULTI-PLATFORM MEDIA CHALLENGE

How easy, and economic, is it to deliver content across multiple platforms?

DIGITAL CONVERGENCE and growth of the internet have had a major effect on how media content is produced and distributed in the 21st century and are re-shaping the economics of the media industry.

A three-year project led by a research team at the Centre for Cultural Policy Research (CCPR) at the University of Glasgow investigates the recent migration of media businesses towards diversified digital distribution and multi-platform growth strategies, and the impact this has had on economic efficiency, the organisation of production, and on the nature and diversity of media content.

Reflecting changes in the appetites and behaviours of audiences, distribution of media content these days is typically not confined to a single mode of delivery - such as print, broadcast or electronic - but instead involves dissemination in a variety of formats and versions and across multiple digital platforms.

The research project investigates how the move to a multi-platform approach is affecting investment flows and patterns of resource usage across industry and to what extent this approach is enabling media firms to exploit their assets and serve audience demands more effectively.

By focusing on a range of different sorts of media organisations, the study aims to uncover what are the main economic opportunities and advantages created by multi-platform expansion and the role of convergent digital technologies and the internet in encouraging such strategies.

Another question is how a multi-platform approach is affecting production of media content and diversity within the composition of media output. Is multi-platform publishing and distribution contributing to a widening of content diversity and choice or, conversely, encouraging greater standardisation and uniformity around safe and popular media themes and brands?

The project started in July 2012 and is led by Professor Gillian Doyle, Professor Philip Schlesinger and Dr Katherine Champion. An initial phase of research centred on national newspapers including the Financial Times Group and Telegraph Media Group suggests that the two-way connectivity and availability of return path data that accompany digital platforms are substantially influencing production practices and content decisions.

As the project progresses, the project team hopes to reveal how current organisational responses to the arrival and growth of digital delivery platforms and especially the internet have altered and potentially improved the economics of supplying media. ■

Content can be disseminated across multiple platforms but to what effect?

