

Presentation

An empirical analysis of the number of Unique Browsers of the websites of UK Regional Newspapers

Purpose

Print circulation has been the traditional method of measuring readership and engagement of newspapers since the end of the 19th Century. Unique browser is the equivalent measure online in the 21st.

Previous research presented at CADE 2017 by the author, using multiple regression analysis, suggested a very strong positive relationship between a regional newspaper's print circulation pre-website (June 2000) and its usage of social networks, namely Facebook and Twitter, to drive traffic to its online presence, with an $Rsq(adj)$ of 82.5%.

The research also showed that Trinity Mirror performed much better on both Twitter and Facebook than competitor publishers Newsquest, Johnston Press and Local World.

The purpose of this further study was to investigate whether Trinity Mirror had made the most of the integration of the business of Local World's online assets since the acquisition in October 2015. In other words, had it used its **competitive advantage in the digital economy?**

Methodology

Fifty regional newspapers audited by Audit Bureau of Circulation (ABC) formed the study with all major publishers represented.

Based on the previous research, the model was

$$UB = C^0 + C^1 \text{circulation} + C^2 \text{connections} + \epsilon$$

where UB is daily unique browsers in November 2017

C^1 circulation is print circulation in June 2000 and

C^2 connections is current Facebook following + Twitter followers

Findings

The model returned an $Rsq(adj)$ of 95.2% that was statistically significant with a p-value of <0.0001 suggesting the continued importance, indeed consolidation, of the use of social networks by regional newspapers to drive traffic to their website.

Trinity Mirror's titles out-performed all other publishers, with no notable improvement from Local World, suggesting that further integration is still required if Trinity Mirror is to gain full value from its acquisition.

Originality and Value

Greater print circulation gave newspapers the ability to charge advertisers more for the same space, hence its importance. It follows, that the higher the number of unique browsers the greater the fee that can be charged for advertisement online. However, there remains little academic research into the success of regional newspapers' websites.

The findings suggest that although Trinity Mirror remains the market leader in its usage of social networks to drive traffic to its online presence, it has so far been unsuccessful in mirroring that success at its Local World titles.