

BREAKING NEWS

HOW THE NEXT PHASE OF DIGITALIZATION
IS POLARIZING THE MEDIA WORLD, AND WHY
SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY IS TAKING CENTRE STAGE.

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How the next phase of digitalization is polarizing the media world, and why social responsibility is taking centre stage.

FUTURE SOCIETY ASSOCIATION
Think Tank W.I.R.E.

THE MEDIA INDUSTRY BETWEEN HYPE AND REALITY

Independent media has been recognized as the “fourth estate” in democratic society since the early 19th century. In the modern context, it serves as an independent source of information for the public, monitors organizations, and decision-makers, and provides critical commentary on significant developments.

As we enter the 21st century, digitization has significantly reshaped the established roles, structures, and business models of the media industry, also known as the fourth power, introducing new dynamics. Initially, the availability of free content on the Internet, and the rise of social media, empowered users, shifting interpretive authority over to them in the spirit of democratization. Simultaneously, advertising revenues moved from traditional linear mediums like newspapers and television, to digital media, leading to the unprecedented growth of big tech companies. These platforms now attract content and advertising investments, representing a historically significant shift that refers to digital users as the “fifth estate.”

Following this initial phase of media digitization, emergent fundamental changes are poised to further transform the media landscape — and subsequently society and democracy in the next decade. These changes encompass the transformation of social media from community-focused platforms to performance-based content dissemination by influencers and brands. Additionally, the elimination of “third-party cookies” in digital advertising, which enabled personalized advertising across numerous websites, is underway. Moreover, the accessibility of generative artificial intelligence, such as ChatGPT, presents new opportunities for automated content creation in the form of texts, images, and videos. Technology companies, consultancies, and agencies also anticipate disruption through the metaverse, a new space for social interaction, e-commerce, and media consumption, with market volume projections of an estimated 5 trillion US dollars.

These developments and technological innovations prompt numerous questions: Do they signify new disruptions and fragmentations of traditional news and entertainment structures, or are they evolutionary developments of existing business models? Is there a risk of succumbing to yet another short-lived digital hype in the attention economy? Critical assessments of Mark Zuckerberg’s virtual dream of the “Metaverse” are accumulating, casting shadows of doubt before it even reaches relevant market maturity.

Given the high expectations surrounding emerging markets, which oscillate between enthusiastic and dystopian forecasts, a comprehensive assessment is necessary to gain insight into the future of the media industry over the next decade. What role does generative artificial intelligence, specifically ChatGPT, truly play in journalism, advertising, and the communications industry? Does the advent of learning machines herald the decline of journalists or copywriters? Will entire campaigns be automated directly by big tech platforms in the future, or will human involvement remain crucial for differentiation? How can journalism, which has become progressively vital in combating fake news and fabricated realities, sustain financial support if advertising funds continue to flow predominantly through social media? Lastly, what are the implications for various stakeholders in the media industry, including public media, particularly with respect to the pressures faced by democracy?

In addressing these questions, it is important to recognize that these developments are not as novel as currently portrayed. The emergence of artificial intelligence (AI) and its profound impact on the labour market and mobility was already predicted to be a “game changer” a decade ago. Elon Musk has repeatedly announced the introduction of autonomous vehicles over the years, but with no tangible progress. Furthermore, when examining macroeconomic productivity data, there is no evidence of AI’s impact on economic productivity. The virtual parallel universe “Second Life” has also remained

insignificant, limited to a global nerd community since 1999. Navigation aids like “smart” glasses, exemplified by “Google Glass” and “Snap Spectacles,” have largely failed to gain traction, ending up as amusing yet impractical ideas.

The crucial question is whether current technological potentials will overcome the obstacles that previously hindered success. Often, mass-market adoption fails due to the lack of real added value, or practicality in users’ everyday lives, even if many things are technically feasible.

Undoubtedly, the increasing convergence and utilization of new technologies necessitate a redefinition of roles, competencies, and business models within the fourth estate of independent media. This transformation also has a significant impact on the role of the state and public service. Therefore, it is crucial to focus on the relevant framework conditions of the media landscape in the 21st century. This should be primarily driven by the needs of users and society, rather than solely by the pipeline of technological innovations. Calls for a moratorium on AI reflect an awareness of broader implications, even if they sometimes serve as superficial gestures to feign responsibility and attract attention. It is worth noting that AI has been a subject of research and public debate for many years.

However, the reality is that companies, public organizations, and states currently have the opportunity and responsibility to shape the media landscape for the future, rather than merely positioning themselves as naive “fast followers” driven by the fear of missing out (FOMO). This study aims to provide a guide and framework for developing sustainable decision-making processes and business models using the new building blocks of future media. It is based on comprehensive desk research, 40 interviews conducted with executives and experts from the media industry in the DACH region, an online survey involving nearly 100 participants to gauge current trends, and a critical evaluation supported by qualitative arguments. With considerations to the increasing social responsibility, this paper is published within the “Future Society Association,” an initiative of Think Tank W.I.R.E.

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CHRONICLE OF AN UNANNOUNCED DISRUPTION

Digitization has brought about a fundamental transformation in the value chain of the media industry over the past two decades. In the initial phase of digitization, publishers pursued a reach-based model for online news, offering articles free of charge on the internet. However, the subsequent prevalence of free content made it challenging to introduce pay models successfully. Despite the shift in the advertising market from analogue to digital spaces, publishers have struggled to capitalize on their reach in the digital realm and generate advertising revenue. This transformation has paved the way for the rise of “big tech” corporations and the increased consumption of media on digital devices.

Throughout the process of digitization, a “disintermediation” of value creation has occurred, where traditional publishers’ roles as content producers and distributors have been challenged by new providers. Digital platforms have rendered traditional newspapers less relevant, while users have gained the ability to distribute their own content. Consequently, the established business models of media companies, successful for decades have been undermined by the separation of journalism and marketing. This has led to the emergence of three distinct sub-markets: online journalism with sophisticated monetization strategies, the online advertising market with growing dominance, and digital marketplaces for classified advertisements.

A handful of media houses, with billion-dollar investments, have successfully converted online classifieds and marketplaces for job and real estate ads into profitable business lines, boasting margins of 50% or higher.

In this process, the entire value creation within the media landscape has undergone a profound shift. In the analogue world, the supply chain operated sequentially, with a manageable number of producers, publishers, and TV broadcasters controlling the entire value chain from content creation to distribution to the end customer. However, in today’s landscape, even

hardware manufacturers of smartphones or TVs, as well as e-commerce providers, have become media players by leveraging their direct access to users to offer media services.

THE END OF “ONE SIZE FITS ALL”

At the centre of this transformation is social media, which did not gain its reach and credibility through a top-down approach, but rather through a grassroots democratic structure that enabled all participants to participate and actively contribute with their content. It was this rejection of hierarchies that for a long time, made the internet seem like a new foundation for democratic structures. Direct access to knowledge, and direct participation still has an enormous influence on the mechanisms of public and political issue management, and the decision-making processes of organizations and politics.

First, the possibility of disseminating information about current events from one’s own perspective in real time opens a broad spectrum of influences on opinion formation. Accordingly, by bundling “user-generated content” (UGC), social media is not only an integral part of media consumption, but it has also contributed to the emergence of a “fifth estate” that has redefined opinion formation and reduced the authority of traditional media to one of many voices. At the same time, content which was once identical for everyone in traditional media can be personalized and attributed in real time, based on knowledge of individual interests. This mass personalization of news and communication, along with the focus on the end user, is at the core of the digital revolution.

The same mechanisms are also used for tailored marketing and targeted advertising. At the heart of this data-based advertising are measurable performance targets that can be used to optimize campaigns with a focus on reaching target groups based on “key performance indicators” (KPI). Native advertising allows ads to be adapted to the look and feel and function of the media format. Digital distribution conduits enable the reporting of advertising effectiveness

and return on advertising spend (ROAS). The impact on the business model of traditional media is that their revenue pillar from commercial advertising continues to erode. A central element of personalized digital advertising today is “third-party cookies,” which are used by publishers, ad servers, or social networks to identify users and store information such as surfing behaviour or online purchases.

By far the largest marketplace for “performance marketing” is Google’s search engine advertising, where targeted advertising is played out based on search queries with paid keywords. However, the biggest growth in the digital advertising market is now being recorded by “retail media” platforms, first and foremost Amazon, on whose platform purchase recommendations and decisions seem to be better made by data from real purchase decisions than by analysing online searches.

MULTI-DIMENSIONAL DISRUPTION

It was this kind of multidimensional disruption that few understood and anticipated at the beginning of digitization. For a long time, the assumption was that existing business models of content producers could continue via proprietary digital channels instead of print. Above all, the fundamental consequences of decentralized content production with increasing fragmentation and disinformation among broad sections of the population

were not sufficiently considered.

In the search for sustainable financing, indeed many newspaper publishers have now switched to “freemium” models, where users get free access to a basic version that

is partially restricted. If the user wants access to more content, there is the option to switch to a paid premium version.

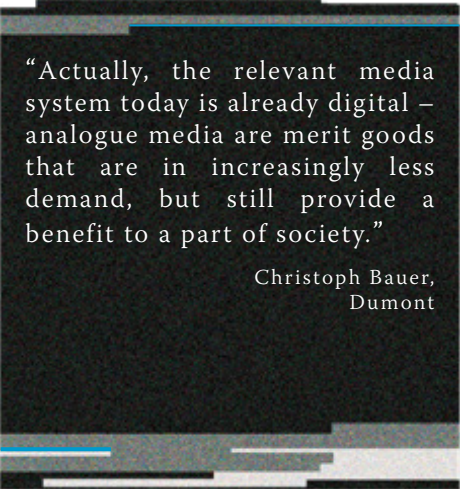
However, many publishers still struggle to attract enough paying subscribers to cover their operating costs. Likewise, even small media companies today can use alternative financing models such as crowdfunding and advertising funding to realize their projects. However, the profitability of the pre-digital era for journalistic products has not been achieved.

On a parallel track, a separate, highly dynamic industry has developed under the rubric “Creator Economy,” in which influencers monetize their number of social media followers via advertising placements with “sponsored posts,” offering their own branded products as independent entrepreneurs. Influencers play an increasingly important role in placing content and products authentically and credibly in the digital media landscape. These individuals have reach that exceeds that of traditional newspapers many times over. Whereas in the past, the focus was primarily on attracting the attention and interest of potential customers to persuade them to make a purchase, today the focus is primarily on concrete deals. Agencies take on an important task in the value creation of marketing by managing the complexity of the offer and the communicative approaches of the multi-layered digital customer journey for advertisers. Former full-service agencies have become 360-degree service providers that utilize modern marketing and ad technologies.

GEOPOLITICAL CHALLENGES POSED BY “HYPERSCALERS”

As part of these changes, the landscape of players has also expanded. In addition to traditional tech corporations such as Google, Meta, Apple, or Microsoft, the streaming platforms of the largest media and entertainment corporations from the USA, such as Comcast, Netflix, and Disney, have established themselves in the media landscape. They offer personalized, on-demand digital subscriptions, creating new distribution avenues for films, series, and live sporting events.

On the other hand, the growth and globalization strategies of the Chinese, especially ByteDance, have led to the growing dominance of popular social media platforms, such as TikTok, in the



“Actually, the relevant media system today is already digital – analogue media are merit goods that are in increasingly less demand, but still provide a benefit to a part of society.”

Christoph Bauer,
Dumont

media market. Using algorithms and machine learning, the system can generate personalized content for users around the world, successfully reaching a younger generation of users. Geopolitical tensions have also put “social media” platforms under political pressure. For example, the US government has threatened a complete ban on TikTok in the USA for some time. Additionally, the EU’s pressure regarding compliance with data protection guidelines and potential fines imposed on the Meta Corporation can lead to a change in international market penetration if corporations choose to withdraw from more regulated markets.

THE RISE OF “ANTI-SOCIAL MEDIA”

However, with the growing abundance and diversity of information, more half-knowledge and “fake news” has become part of the official media landscape in the process, leading to a distortion of facts and confusion of public opinion. These risks are amplified by personalised content distribution and related “echo chamber” effects, where users are fed content that reflects their existing interests or opinions. In this context, the mechanisms of “social media” platforms not only lead to a reduction of diversity, but also promote addictive behaviours, especially among young people more susceptible to the psychological weight of peer pressure, social exclusion, or loss of status. The original added value of strengthening community by connecting people beyond physical boundaries has become incessantly subverted, turning digital platforms – to a large extent and through their own fault – into “anti-social media”.

The immense impact of this transformation on society, and the stability of the media’s democracy has long been part of the public debate and has fundamentally changed the perception of the internet from a bastion of democracy to a hub of manipulative force. The asymmetrical power imbalance between traditional media and tech platforms has since provoked controversy in political circles, resulting in calls for regulation, higher standards of quality controls through “fact checking”, or the public funding of qualitative journalism — which can once again assume the role of the fourth estate regardless of collapsing advertising revenues.

For social media, the spread of misinformation has become an increasing problem with high risks to reputation. Until now, it has not been possible to identify misinformation or even hate speech through (AI-based) automated searches. Instead, the laborious and burdensome task of scouring critical content is carried out by low-paid „click workers“.

CONSTANTLY CHANGING RULES OF THE GAME DUE TO TECHNOLOGICAL CHANGE

“Programmatic advertising“ has been hailed as the panacea with “the right message to the right target person at the right time”. However, this no longer seems to be the spirit of the times, as a large part of users do not appreciate customized advertising based on algorithms. As a result, technological and regulatory hurdles have arisen, making real-time, data-driven, and machine-controlled payout difficult.

Regarding the elimination of third-party cookies in the market-leading browser Chrome, new rules of the game apply to both digital marketing and the personalisation of editorial content. Media houses, advertisers and agencies are working hard on alternative solutions such as context-based advertising, and proprietary data strategies to convert their largely anonymous online user base into 1:1 customer relationships. Login alliances, first-party data and cohorts are used to build customer relationships while complying with data protection regulations.

The log-in models used for this focus on a broad user base with a simple “single sign-on” (SSO) that can effectively measure, analyse, and ultimately monetise traffic in the future.

“The media industry is in a “prisoner’s dilemma” because not all market players follow the login model. There will always be news publishers who allow “free content” without a login or paywall.”

Christoph Tonini,
Swiss Marketplace Group

In addition, the recent rise of artificial intelligence (AI) is also seen as a key factor likely to redefine the media industry. Learning algorithms

have long been used in media creation and distribution, for example in pattern recognition of large amounts of behavioural data for reach forecasts, price calculations or suggestions for advertising islands on TV. But in journalism, as well, efficiently predicted weather forecasts, traffic jam reports, or football ticker updates, have been considered relatively harmless. The possibility of producing automated journalism, blog posts, photo-realistic images, or interpretations of world political events, gives rise to further questions concerning the redesign of media.

In summary, the first phase of digitalisation can be identified in six “shifts” that have redefined the media market, resulting in challenges that currently shape the media market.

SHIFTS

- Linear value creation becomes ubiquitous
- Integrated business models become diversified
- Global offerings replace regional ones
- The Internet becomes mobile
- Users become “content creators”
- Mass media and advertising become personalised

CHALLENGES

- Asymmetry of forces:**
Market failure in the digital ecosystem
- Media independence:**
Commercial pressure leads to commercial journalism
- Value of journalism:**
Loss of monetary compensation mechanisms
- Media credibility:**
The new normal of fake news
- Raw material for digital platforms:**
Data as the new oil

ASYMMETRY OF FORCES: Market Failure in the Digital Ecosystem

Media needs a business model to fulfil its journalistic function. The previously valid interplay between brand manufacturers and traditional media has lost importance in the digital advertising. Algorithms and data now determine competitive thousand-contact prices (CPM) to reach relevant target groups. As a result, tech platforms, especially Meta social networks, and the Google search engine, dominate the global market and “walled gardens.” These walled gardens offer closed advertising environments and distribute their existing user data for targeting, combined with their own inventory.

Therefore, the “winner-takes-it-all-principle” comes into play: of the global digital advertising market revenues, approximately \$682 billion in 2023, around 50% goes to US corporations Alphabet and Meta. This monopoly leads to market failure in the digital ecosystem. Furthermore, publishers rely on Google and other platforms since a significant proportion of their traffic is generated through organic search queries. If an online publisher cannot be found on Google, it is as good as non-existent.

MEDIA INDEPENDENCE: Commercial pressure leads to commercial journalism

The long-term success of media depends on whether it offers added value to users or society. Media satisfies basic needs, fosters a sense of belonging, facilitates social exchange, and contributes to identity formation, and provides information, entertainment, and knowledge. Media actively participates in the development of the social system by informing, overseeing, and offering commentary.

With digitalization and the shift to digital advertising platforms, the independence of media faces pressure. Media now encompasses not only publishers with editorial teams that finance themselves through subscriptions and advertising, but also individuals on social media and platforms who produce blogs and podcasts. Advertisers seek to target their messages and are in search of reach and environments

that align with their values. The growing commercialization has given rise to “market-driven journalism,” where the content and purpose of the content is deliberately tailored to specific target groups. This alignment of form and content has, in recent years, contributed to an erosion of trust, partially offset by collaborating with credible influencers. However, the proliferation of obviously paid posts further compounds this erosion of trust.

VALUE OF JOURNALISM: Loss of monetary compensation mechanisms

An informed and engaged public can participate in democratic processes and make decisions based on facts and diverse opinions. The monetary value of journalism has sparked an open debate following the introduction of ancillary copyright laws in the EU. Collective Management Organisations (CMOs) are demanding substantial sums, often in the hundreds of millions, from tech platforms based on these newly implemented laws. Google has been at the forefront of demanding compensation for the use of content in condensed search results, commonly known as “snippets.”

The acquisition of information, including daily updated content, is predominantly achieved through search engines. Today, algorithm-generated overviews of current topics in news, sports, and entertainment are often sufficient for a large portion of users, leading them to not clicking on the source pages of publishers who invest in editorial teams. The commercialization with advertising is primarily handled by Google, which offers an enhanced user experience through the inclusion of media content. Consequently, “zero-click searches” means the effort put into content creation by publishers remains uncompensated, prompting calls for a “fair share” based on a legal framework to grow louder.

MEDIA CREDIBILITY: The new normal of fake news

The digital revolution has brought about a democratization of knowledge. Online encyclopaedias like Wikipedia and other sources have made information accessible to everyone. This has transformed education

and knowledge, previously restricted to a small elite, as now available to all through the internet.

However, with the abundance of information and the prevalence of one-sided views in digital “filter bubbles,” it has become steadily challenging to differentiate reliable sources from unreliable ones. Consequently, trust in both digital and traditional media has been undermined.

Crises such as the refugee wave or the COVID-19 pandemic have further eroded journalism’s credibility. Accusations suggesting that editorial offices are complicit with governments have arisen, this criticism extending to public service media as well. In extreme cases, this distrust in media is fertile ground for conspiracy theorists.

RAW MATERIAL FOR DIGITAL PLATFORMS: Data is the new oil

The digital transformation of media has implications for privacy and data protection. Data misuse, cybercrime, and surveillance have become important issues. With instances like the Cambridge Analytica scandal, the collection of data by large tech companies and the lack of transparency surrounding it have brought about a change in awareness. The EU, with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), aims to improve citizens’ control over the data that companies possess about them, and has taken initiative in this regard.

User data is of enormous importance to platform operators and holds value for society and the economy. The metaphor of “data as the new oil” aptly illustrates the analogy between these two resources: both generate tremendous value when cleansed, transformed, and analysed. However, data collection and processing pose high risks and costs, especially in the case of leaks.

THE CALL FOR DIVERSITY, IMMERSION AND AUTOMATED MASS PROCESSES

The boundaries between physical and virtual worlds are increasingly blurred. Diverse life models and different values pose new challenges for the media industry because of increasing diversity and simultaneous convergence of channels. At the same time, artificial intelligence promises complete personalisation of content and marketing. However, limits to performance, regulatory restrictions and societal resistance are emerging, which bring new demands and responsibilities on platforms.



DIVERSE LIFE AND CAREER MODELS:

Needs beyond classic segmentation criteria



TRUE COST SOCIETY:

More cost awareness and smart regulations



CONVERGENCE OF MEDIA:

The ubiquitous internet



IMMERSION:

Establishing virtual experiences and navigation



AUTOMATION THROUGH ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE:

Silent Personal Assistants



PLATFORM ECONOMY AS STANDARD:

Efficiency Maximised Media Ecosystems

MORE DIVERSITY, IMMERSION AND MASS AUTOMATION

In order to gain an understanding of how media will change in the next decade, considering the newly announced technological foundations, it is necessary to have a holistic understanding of the entire market's framework conditions. Solely focusing on technological potential is insufficient for determining the long-term success of new offerings or business models. The crucial factor will be whether the real needs of current and future generations can be satisfied and whether there is a willingness, public or private, to pay for these services.

It is evident that the internet and digital solutions will continue to play a decisive role in the transformation of the media industry. However, new priorities that place emphasis on fundamental digital infrastructure are emerging in the second phase. This includes establishing a robust data infrastructure and determining how to handle artificial intelligence. There is also an escalation in the porosity of boundaries between the physical and virtual worlds. There remains uncertainty as to whether economic and social interactions will predominantly shift into virtual worlds like the metaverse, if new "smart" glasses will govern navigation through everyday life in the future, or if the smartphone will continue to dominate as the personal device for all generations.

Considering the increased diversity of lifestyle models and the various values that shape the population, it can be assumed that there will be different market segments with distinct approaches to technologies. An understanding of future frameworks provides the groundwork for a forward-looking comprehension of needs and requirements.



DIVERSE LIFE AND CAREER MODELS: Needs beyond classic segmentation criteria

Traditional marketing typically focuses on well-defined target groups, which can be categorized by factors such as value systems, geographic location, or age groups. However, due to breakdowns of traditional social structures, longer life expectancies, and the ability to shape one's own life and career according to individual preferences, conventional notions of target groups become increasingly blurred. The emphasis is now on diverse values, ranging from a desire for sustainability and health, to the pursuit of differentiation and security. These values are often associated with specific social milieus or generations, such as the emphasis on "diversity" or "work-life balance" among Generation Y or Z. While there are certainly common integers that shape entire generations, the stereotypical classifications of Generation Y or Z tend to oversimplify the complexities involved.

In the future, data-driven characterizations will play a more prominent role in systematically capturing interests. However, these characterizations are typically based on past behaviour or snapshots in time. The presence of digital filter bubbles leads to the reinforcement of existing values, and the escalating emergence of extreme positions, particularly within the "wokeness" movement, heightened by the uncertainty of the times. However, these positions can no longer be easily linked to established political ideologies, as evidenced by joint rallies of disparate extremist groups with differing worldviews. In general, it can be assumed that social trends spread more rapidly and lead to greater unpredictability.

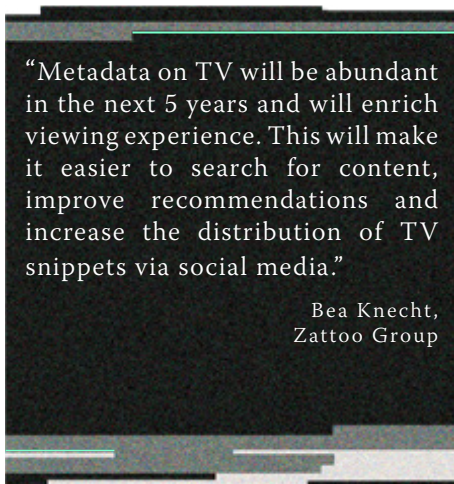
Media will continue to fulfil the need for access to diverse topics, perspectives, and

opinions. That stated, clear positions and values also provide a sense of security. It is important to note that declining trust makes it uncertain whether users will remain loyal to specific media brands, especially in the dynamic landscape of digital trends and platforms. There is the added risk of increased backlash towards media outlets, encountering aggressive “shitstorm” consequences of thoughtless or controversial statements.



**CONVERGENCE OF MEDIA:
The ubiquitous internet**

The advancing digital connectivity encompasses not only people but also an increasing number of electronic devices and everyday objects. This expansion of connectivity will lead to a corresponding increase in the forms of interaction for media providers and content, catering to the attention economy’s principles of providing constant stimulation and information. In addition to smartwatches and televisions, interfaces to the ubiquitous internet in the future will include trackers, vehicles, mirrors, and even clothing. As a result, the convergence of various devices (from mobiles to displays and wearables) enables people to access content through numerous devices and services, diminishing the significance of static standalone media.



“Metadata on TV will be abundant in the next 5 years and will enrich viewing experience. This will make it easier to search for content, improve recommendations and increase the distribution of TV snippets via social media.”

Bea Knecht,
Zattoo Group

Smart TVs, for example, enable users to directly access online content and streaming services, facilitating quick, personalized consumption of exclusive content. Established forms of interaction

and engagement with users through social media and streaming services will present entirely new opportunities to directly

interact with users and involve them in content production. Particularly noteworthy is the ongoing media convergence between TV, radio, and other online platforms, which is likely to expand and demand more comprehensive multi-channel solutions. However, it is important to recognize the growing dominance of moving image formats over textual content.

Within this context, it is crucial to disseminate text, moving images, and audio across all available platforms. The role of journalists and content creators will shift towards something like disc jockeys (DJs), curating content for different formats and target groups with the assistance of algorithms. As the number of internet-connected physical devices increases, so will the complexity and computational power required. Additionally, this increases the number of vulnerable devices and sensors that can be exploited for tracking or manipulation.

The expectation of receiving the desired content and formats seamlessly through the preferred channel is continually growing and becoming the norm. However, as the number of digital distribution channels increases, so does the complexity of delivering content of the same quality to these outlets. AI-supported solutions are likely to become greatly significant in addressing this challenge. Simultaneously, standardization and constant exposure to digital content gives rise to countertrends, with a desire for simplification and deceleration.



**AUTOMATION THROUGH
ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE:
Silent Personal Assistants**

Artificial intelligence (AI) serves as a pivotal driver of digital transformation, beyond the media industry. Machine learning algorithms have been utilized for years to identify patterns and principles in large datasets, optimizing solutions to various problems. The advent of generative AI now allows for the customization and automatic creation

of content, including texts and images. This increased efficiency benefits journalists and marketers, who can employ AI to generate reports, campaigns, and conduct background research. As a result, a significant portion of today's media content creation tasks can potentially be outsourced to automated systems, marking the onset of even more radical disruptions. Tech platforms are no longer limited to content distribution and advertising: they can also curate it.

Digital assistant systems could assume a crucial role in this landscape. Through voice-controlled assistants, media consumption becomes more convenient, rapid, and seamless, enhancing the user experience and enabling access to personalized content. The integration of AI and voice assistants, however, implies a departure from the concept of a "free internet." Previously free search engine queries may transition into paid prompts for AI bots, offered as part of a subscription service.

Nevertheless, there are technical limitations to AI performance, leading to erroneous statements or analyses. There is a risk of AI spreading half-knowledge without critical reflection or being exploited for deliberate manipulation. Additionally, there is a growing challenge in distinguishing artificially created texts and simulated images from reality. Determining human or machine authorship is a rising challenge. Furthermore, the use of AI tends to promote standardization, as content is often based on statistical averages. Furthermore, powerful AI systems rely on high-quality real-time data, which may be lacking or infringe upon intellectual property rights without appropriate compensation. Lastly, the computational requirements for AI queries result in significantly higher energy costs.

With the increasing standardization of personalized news, there is a growing expectation for customized content delivery. Meeting these expectations and covering associated costs will likely require the implementation of artificial intelligence. However, amidst a landscape filled with machine-generated and similar content, there is also a growing desire for authenticity, credible information, and inspiration.



TRUE COST SOCIETY : More cost awareness and smart regulations

For consumers, media spending is often considered a part of cultural expenditure. The majority of media spending is directed towards content and services, with a significant portion allocated to internet-based platforms. However, due to factors such as inflation, rising interest rates, and higher living costs associated with housing, food, and travel, consumers' budgets for media spending are unlikely to increase further.

Businesses also face price hikes and additional costs for energy, data storage, and other aspects included in their overall expenses. Compliance with regulatory requirements, such as GDPR guidelines, necessitates the creation and maintenance of customer databases, which can be resource intensive. The amount of data generated globally is projected to reach hundreds of zettabytes, demanding storage solutions and scarce raw materials. AI-based solutions are steadily employed to address these challenges, with bots monitoring other bots in the process.

Investors may reduce venture capital investments in media ventures as interest rates rise and return on investment (ROI) expectations regain prominence. Various shareholder models are expected to persist within the media industry. In addition to global corporations and national players, private equity firms, patrons, start-ups, and state-owned, license-fee financed broadcasters will compete for user attention and develop lucrative business models.

Moreover, it can be anticipated that further regulatory restrictions will define the parameters for data protection, media concentration, and the utilization of artificial intelligence. Legislative initiatives in the EU, such as the Digital Service Act (DSA), aim to hold platforms accountable for the content they host, while the Digital Market Act (DMA) seeks to establish a level playing field. Substantial fines for

data protection violations have resulted in legal disputes, potentially leading major providers like Meta to cease services in certain regions. The regulation surrounding the training of AI applications using internet content and the protection of copyrights remains unclear. Currently, there is no uniform international regulation for these issues. It is evident, however, that the costs associated with data use and processing will increase as regulations tighten, necessitating a thorough examination of profitability by considering all associated costs.

Considering the anticipated scarcity of financial resources in many segments of the population, there will be an increased demand for consolidated offerings. Concealed digital subscription systems are likely to face mounting pressure. As cost-consciousness grows, competition among providers will intensify, potentially resulting in declining quality and greater reliance on automated systems. To enhance trust, AI-based applications and content should be labelled in a manner like food labelling, providing transparent information on origin and quality for users.



IMMERSION: Establishing virtual experiences and navigation

As a logical evolution of the internet, it is reasonable to expect that digital content and its consumption will become more three-dimensional and interactive. The human brain has the capacity for spatial thinking, and virtual reality (VR) offers a means of internet consumption that taps into this ability. Concurrently, augmented reality (AR) or mixed reality (MR) enables the overlay of information onto the real world through devices like glasses or head-up displays in vehicles. The concept of the metaverse holds the promise of establishing virtual spaces for various private or professional interactions. Currently, there are individual, non-interoperable “metaverses” under development, but they have yet to gain significant market relevance. However, eSports and gaming applications already boast high user numbers

and generate substantial revenues in the billions. Augmented reality applications, on the other hand, are still lacking in robust business models, with early attempts like Google Glasses not meeting expectations. In the future, information media like Wikipedia could enable new applications in public spaces for tourism, architecture, or e-commerce through the fusion of image recognition and geolocation technologies.

After an initial surge of expectations regarding the economic and social impact of virtual worlds, disillusionment set in quickly, leading to divergent assessments. Some tech-savvy experts anticipate a transformative disruption in which a significant

portion of human interactions will occur through avatars in virtual living or working environments. However, a growing number of observers express scepticism

about the extent to which everyday interactions will shift to virtual realms. Challenges include a lack of comprehensive business models and 5G network coverage, as well as biological limitations in terms of widespread physical and mental acceptance. Immersing oneself in virtual worlds for several hours a day or constantly having information displayed – physically speaking – presents significant difficulties. Realistically, specific “metaverses” could establish themselves in select markets, particularly within the realm of games, entertainment, trade fairs, or product presentations. However, it is unlikely that they will completely replace in-person exchanges in the working world or social interactions. The extent to which “digital twins” will be utilized – where a virtual representation of a person predicts their behaviour in various scenarios and even makes independent decisions – is still uncertain.

“The visual presence of an avatar in the metaverse is not decisive, but only a small manifestation. It becomes much more relevant when a digital twin understands the behaviour and needs of humans and thus represents a person virtually.”

Jürgen Galler, 1PlusX

The desire for immersive experiences and self-redefinition in virtual environments or navigate through everyday life more seamlessly are significant needs that will influence the future of the media market. Particularly in the face of uncertain futures, the demand for opportunities to escape from everyday life and engage with products is expected to grow in the coming years. However, there are obstacles to introducing complex or intricate technologies that could further complicate daily life. Considering the rise in stimuli and information overload, the desire for more authentic interactions, especially in terms of trust and avoiding deception, likely increases.



PLATFORM ECONOMY AS STANDARD : Efficiency Maximised Media Ecosystems

The increasing emphasis on efficiency and scale is driving the growth of platforms, which have become key business models in the 21st century. This trend, which has already reshaped the media market over the past two decades, is expected to continue shaping the next decade, fostering the emergence of ecosystems where content ranging from journalism to events, films to merchandising, and e-shops to social commerce are interconnected and aligned with the customer journey.

Technology companies have long recognized the importance and value of digital journalism for their platforms. Google, for instance, operates Google News, a news search engine available in over 70 countries and 35 languages. An algorithm determines the relevance of news content, and it is displayed as a snippet in response to search queries, which has led to legal disputes with publishers. However, the example of Amazon discontinuing its “Kindle Newsstand” service after more than 12 years highlights that paid content does not always yield substantial profits. Despite the sale of an estimated 150 million Kindle devices worldwide and the alignment of e-reading habits with digital news consumption, monetizing paid content can be challenging.

While pay models are well-established in the music and video streaming industries,

attempts by publishers and independent service providers to consolidate digital journalistic content on a single platform have largely failed. Similar to Spotify or Netflix, users can access content from various sources and receive personalized recommendations based on their interests. “Media subscription services” bundle content from multiple relevant media brands under a flat-rate payment model. Platforms like Blendle, Readly, or Informed.io allow users to purchase individual articles from different publishers or subscribe to a flat-rate service. However, these online news kiosks have yet to reach the mass market, potentially due to limited demand. This is partly because the convenience and user experience (UX) of content presented on these platforms are limited. Nevertheless, there is a parallel trend of emerging decoupled offerings. For example, high-quality newsletter subscriptions from online publishers are gaining traction. These newsletters, curated by different journalists or publishers, offer personalized content with specific focus, providing an alternative to globally scaled media platforms where content may not significantly differ.

“Digital newsstands were an idea conceived by publishers to transition from the old to the new world. However, a purely digital news or magazine stand with 1,000 titles is not a true customer need. For users, Google or the App Store is the point of sale (PoS). There, media is just one of many categories, alongside games and productivity applications.”

Christoph Zimmer,
Der Spiegel

In the future, users will encounter diverse offerings competing in terms of quality, personalization, and convenience. Platforms will prioritize access to customer data, leading to intensified competition for this valuable resource. Additionally, providers from outside the media industry, such as retailers or payment platforms, will also become relevant players. Unlike digital search engines, these entities possess information on real-world behaviours. Consequently, customers and users will gravitate towards organizations that can offer clear value in terms of quality, price, or ethical values in exchange for their patronage.

OUTLOOK ON THE MEDIA LANDSCAPE BEYOND THE HYPES

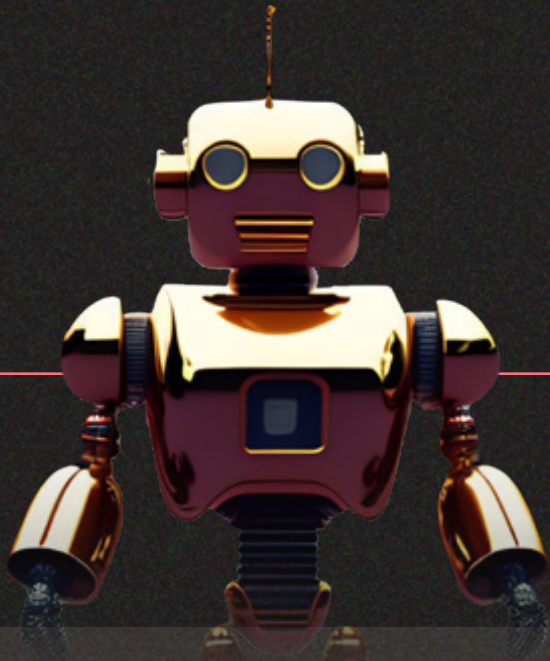
Global technology platforms will largely replace traditional media as a means of distribution – further increasing dependence from publishers. Generative artificial intelligence will cover a significant part of the media value chain, but with a higher degree of misinformation, deception, and risk of discrimination. As a result, trust in digital channels is coming under increasing pressure. Strengthening transparency, copyright remuneration and the protection of intellectual property are becoming crucial foundations for media credibility in the 21st century.



**THE GUARDIANS OF
THE DIGITAL GALAXY**



**THE FINAL
POLARISATION**



**THE 6TH FORCE
SHALL BE WITH YOU**



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THE GUARDIANS OF THE DIGITAL GALAXY



Global technology platforms will become the gateway for entertainment, e-commerce, and news, replacing traditional media as a distribution channel altogether. Consequently, an increasing number of individuals will rely on digital media, contributing to the continued growth of these global tech platforms. Publishers will become more dependent on these globally operating technology companies to ensure discoverability and gain relevance and reach. As a result, the unique identity of publishing

products may largely diminish, as they adapt to the templates and formats dictated by the platforms.

Traditional media brands and independent creators compete for limited user attention and time. Media consumption is expected to rise in terms of hours per day, as individuals engage with multiple media sources simultaneously. Personalized content, ease of communication and sharing with other users, high transmission quality, and

data security are increasingly regarded as essential requirements. A person's entire digital footprint, encompassing emails, blog posts, photos, and more, can be uploaded to personal AI platforms and processed on an individual basis rather than just stored in the cloud. Artificial intelligence is utilized to maximize content creation efficiency, leading to a flood of content on the internet within a short period. Differentiating between real and artificially created information or images, and determining their veracity, becomes a more time-consuming challenge.

The competition for attention is determined by algorithms, and user data can be leveraged to manipulate public opinion. Ongoing consolidation will result in a concentration of power among a few dominant technology platforms, challenging the survival of medium-sized companies. However, control over channels extends beyond creative sovereignty and the risk of global alignment; it progressively encompasses issues of state sovereignty over interfaces with the population. As linear channels of public service media decline, states become increasingly reliant on the decisions of private companies based in the United States or China.

"Whether the metaverse will become a real parallel universe for brands, e-commerce or entertainment and thus relevant to the web is not yet clear. In any case, media coverage has disappeared into oblivion during the course of the discussion about Chat GPT."

Stefanie Jäckel,
Ad Alliance

THE 6TH FORCE SHALL BE WITH YOU



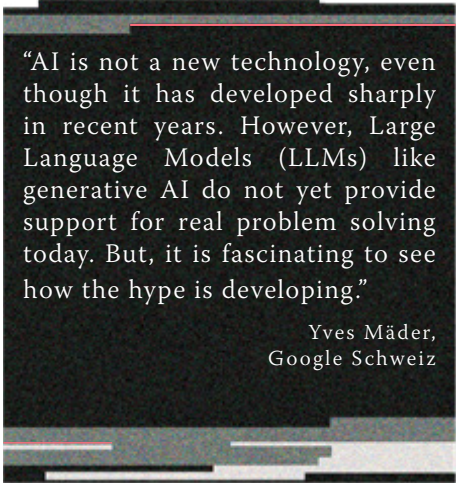
The introduction of “ChatGPT” as a generative AI accessible to all represents a significant milestone in the history of technology and media. It is poised to become an integral part of content creation and will shape, if not influence, a significant portion of the value chain for media companies, akin to a sixth power. At first glance, this advancement promises increased efficiency, and will likely bring about a shift in roles and competencies across industries. AI systems have the potential to make objective

and efficient decisions, free from personal interests and emotions. Consequently, they could significantly reduce corruption and lobbying, fostering greater democratization, provided that the training data is accurate and balanced.

However, amidst this structural transformation, adjustments to job profiles will be necessary, however a complete takeover by AI is unlikely. This is due to technical limitations that can give

rise to social challenges, including the systematic dissemination of misinformation, discrimination, and deception. A real scenario to consider is the erosion of the grassroots democratic functions of independent media, which calls for proactive preparations by public and private organizations. On one hand, there is a risk that interest groups may manipulate AI systems, making it more difficult for the public to engage in autonomous decision-making and political participation. The use of AI systems in media could lead to further alienation of users as they lose trust in artificially generated content and decisions.

Consequently, organizations and governments must define the role and responsibility that artificial intelligence should assume as a sixth power. It is crucial to determine where AI systems can make independent decisions, potentially assuming a position like traditional powers, and where they require control and regulation to ensure future independence and sovereignty. Ethical considerations surrounding the development of AI systems and their societal roles are being widely discussed to mitigate potential risks.



“AI is not a new technology, even though it has developed sharply in recent years. However, Large Language Models (LLMs) like generative AI do not yet provide support for real problem solving today. But, it is fascinating to see how the hype is developing.”

Yves Mäder,
Google Schweiz

THE FINAL POLARISATION



Tomorrow's media market is poised to become more diverse, offering immersive channels, artificially generated content, and user-generated content, along with performance-oriented business models. This presents forward-thinking players with opportunities to penetrate existing markets or explore new market fields. However, the increasing complexity of navigating this future landscape is evident. Looking towards the long-term horizon, the market is undergoing a polarization where not

everyone has equal access to information and content.

The growth of globally operating platforms persists, but with new players emerging beyond social media platforms. Media companies will introduce new products based on "AI-generated content" and may no longer charge for general news as the commercial value tends towards zero. Despite media diversity offering guidance in an increasingly complex world, there

will be more mergers of publishers and TV stations driven by cost-cutting motives. Nonetheless, competition will extend to the broader market environment. Competitive advantage will no longer be solely based on quantity and price optimization as in the past; the greatest advantage will be held by those who have amassed access to customer data. In this context, foreign players from retail, payment, mobility service providers, or consumer goods manufacturers are entering the media industries through new channels. Customer segmentation and content creation are largely automated, but quality restrictions, homogenization of offerings, and social risks of discrimination or misinformation are inevitable side effects. Access to news and content remains free of charge, while cross-financing occurs through official advertising or sponsored content, continuously blurring the line between actual content and the business model.

Simultaneously, there is a growing demand for original content that differentiates itself through in-depth analysis, new insights, and unique designs. Consequently, high-quality media outlets are likely to encounter an increasing willingness to pay if they develop new services such as personalized research or exclusive topics for specialized networks. Co-created and moderated offerings can provide curated analysis and content for discerning audiences. Furthermore, news aggregation portals that offer relevant, high-quality content from selected media brands through a flat-rate subscription provide financially able customers with decision-making advantages. This market polarization also leads to increased social polarization along educational and income lines.

Within this polarized landscape, the pressure on traditional printed daily newspapers will intensify. The days of print news may be numbered, but other forms of physical content communication will persist. Just as vinyl records are experiencing a resurgence in the music industry, differentiated and stand-alone publications, books, or other products with tactile elements are likely to meet long-term demand. Analogue reality is gaining importance again as a countertrend in selected segments, serving purposes such as long-lasting relevant content, nostalgia, or appreciation.

“In the future, quality media will clearly distinguish itself from the information overload created by AI. This can be done by clearly labelling original content created by journalists in the journalistic value chain. It requires a kind of digital watermark.”

Johannes Boege,
NZZ

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Rights remuneration is becoming crucial for the sustainability of independent journalism. Investment protection and copyright for authors in the digital space are necessary to ensure adequate compensation through financial remuneration for their work by aggregators and tech platforms. The implementation of an effective ancillary copyright (LSR) is vital to safeguard the rights of creators amidst the progressively fragmented distribution and dissemination of text, image, and sound content. It is

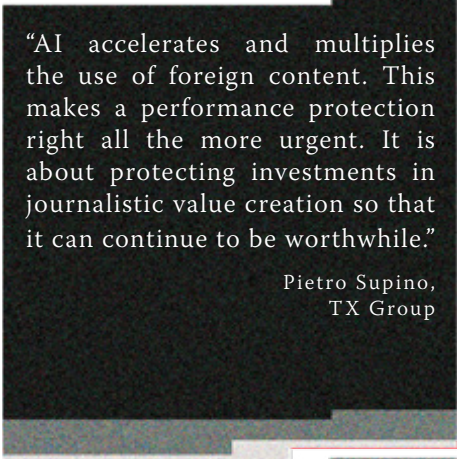
also important to address how copyright-protected data can be legally used for training purposes and ensure that rights holders are appropriately compensated, particularly in the context of artificial intelligence.

One potential solution to facilitate this is blockchain-based platforms that enable creators to sell their content directly and securely to users, eliminating the need for intermediaries with complex clearing

models. Through smart contracts, creators can establish conditions for the use of their content, such as limiting the number of accesses or the duration of use. This ensures that creators are fairly compensated for the utilization of their content. Persistent Identifiers (PID) or Non-Fungible Tokens (NFT) can be employed to uniquely identify digital resources, such as news articles. These codes, akin to digital watermarks, are permanently recognizable, enabling long-term identification and retrieval of objects. Additional information, such as the access address (URL) and relevant metadata, is stored in a database, ensuring that digital content remains discoverable and usable. The fragmented distribution of content necessitates new approaches to safeguard creators' revenues. Subscription models are supplemented by micropayments and metered models, enabling users to access a limited number of items before eventually incurring a fee. This provides users with greater flexibility in selecting and paying for digital content, which is an important revenue source for creators, enabling them to generate income from individual items or content.

PID or NFTs could be utilized to identify content irrespective of its distribution and strengthen protection against plagiarism. This could safeguard intellectual property rights and create potential income streams for authors. However, implementing such a system would require extensive cataloguing of vast amounts of content, leading to increased complexity and costs. Additionally, it would necessitate an internationally binding force in copyright law.

Alternatively, comprehensive databases of original or legally acquired content could be established by states or business associations. These databases would serve as a foundation for differentiation and facilitate flat-rate usage rights. Such databases and usage rights platforms are pivotal to the success and positioning of the future media market.



“AI accelerates and multiplies the use of foreign content. This makes a performance protection right all the more urgent. It is about protecting investments in journalistic value creation so that it can continue to be worthwhile.”

Pietro Supino,
TX Group


FOCUS ON SOCIETY

The ongoing transformation of the media industry requires adapting to the future demands of the market. As a basis for shaping a responsible media landscape, it is important to create unique content, develop independent information architecture that conveys connections, and promote business models that fulfil the social responsibility of big tech platforms' role as gatekeepers. In doing so, there are opportunities for advertisers by focusing on credible dialogues with customers and the public instead of just marketing products.

FOCUS ON SOCIETY

In light of the ongoing transformation of the media industry with its emergent changes and challenges, it is crucial to adapt and align with the future demands of the media market. The tempo of development will remain fast paced, characterized by both hype and gradual developments. Merely emulating dominant trends as a “fast follower” is no longer sufficient; independent positioning is necessary, especially for smaller organizations and companies that cannot rely on scalable platforms.

All established players in the media sector, from newspapers, radio, and TV stations to agencies and technology providers, face hurdles. The competition driven by



“The political regulatory framework is no longer up to date, laws do not reflect development. The legal basis in the Radio and Television Act no longer corresponds to the digital reality of today.”

Bernard Maissen,
Bundesamt für Kommunikation
BAKOM

generative AI for future dominance in search engines demonstrates that even large, established companies cannot afford to be complacent, although not all panic is warranted.

The media industry

in Europe and smaller countries like Switzerland faces particular dilemmas, as true scaling adds complexity when faced with local market conditions and regulatory differences. Moreover, as the reach of digital platforms expands, organizations that were not previously part of the extended media market are now becoming involved. For example, mobility providers, banks, hospitals, and especially schools, which increasingly utilize multimedia information or entertainment systems, must grapple with the new opportunities and challenges of media interaction, whether it be through the development of future advertising formats, or establishing trustworthy communication with customers.

The central prerequisite for sustainable growth in the media sector is the

combination of economic and social progress. This entails designing business models that generate profit while integrating social responsibility into services. In a data and AI-driven media landscape, this becomes a competitive advantage, contributing to the overall success of the industry.

To achieve this goal, the interaction between private and public media, such as Switzerland’s “public service,” is indispensable. It is necessary to align public services with a 21st century framework, ensuring a diverse and high-quality supply of informative content while maintaining sovereign distribution channels independent of global private platforms.

To guide the discussion on shaping an economically successful and responsible media landscape for the 21st century, five areas of focus serve as a foundation. These tenets move away from fleeting trends and mainstream imitation and emphasize independent innovation that provides added value for the economy and society.

DIFFERENTIATE OR DIE

CREATING UNIQUE CONTENT



To gain trust and credibility, media organizations will need to invest in journalistic work and in-depth research to ensure that content is verified, objective, and balanced. This is crucial to differentiate themselves from the growing influx of artificially generated content and visualizations. However, this does not mean excluding the use of artificial intelligence or other tools; rather, they should be utilized in a manner that generates independent and valuable content. In the future, the topic and agenda setting of a media brand can be combined with AI, incorporating a mix of personalized content and human curation for background information and classification. Nonetheless, there will still be a demand for offerings based on “human intelligence” in both content creation and marketing, which can achieve higher margins through authenticity compared to semi-automated approaches. The existing mechanisms of premium and luxury markets are likely to have a similar effect in the media market.

To achieve this, it is necessary to establish systematic early detection systems that allow for regular examination of new technologies, business models, and social changes, while maintaining a clear focus. The risk of becoming overwhelmed by numerous simultaneous changes and announced disruptions remains high. Therefore, specific virtual marketplaces or experience spaces for selected submarkets, such as gaming

or exhibitions, are likely to gain relevance. However, engaging in general activities in diffuse metaverse announcements solely to be part of the movement and not miss out on opportunities is unlikely to meet expectations of a significant return on investment. Differentiation is key to establishing a clear profile.

Entering into collaborations with specialized partner organizations is crucial for differentiation and the exploration of new business areas. This involves leveraging expert organizations with in-depth knowledge and utilizing social media and platforms intelligently to attract target audiences to their own offerings through content seeding. The foundation for this lies in providing exclusive and relevant topics, positioning themselves as the originator, and commercializing traffic within their own ecosystem through “paid” logins and advertising.

Publicly financed media organizations can play a significant role in creating original content by using subsidies more decisively for local productions that can be distributed through various

outlets. By doing so, they can maintain a complementary offering independent of globally scaled providers. Additionally, this approach promotes a national or international cultural identity, which becomes progressively more important in the context of globally aligned formats.

“Entertainment providers can successfully convert their target group to their individual platforms with teaser content via social media – for news publishers, conversion is more difficult, because news can also be consumed in compressed forms.”

Roger Elsener,
CH Media

TRULY SOCIAL MEDIA

TRUSTWORTHY FOUNDATIONS AS THE BASIS FOR SOCIETY-ORIENTED BUSINESS MODELS



The fundamental achievement of the internet is not only to connect people worldwide, but also to create open access to knowledge that increases transparency and enables independent decision-making. Tech corporations like Google have created freely accessible services such as search engines and navigation aids that serve important social functions. However, these public services are financed through data collection and personalized advertising, which can introduce biases and distort objectivity when visibility on commercial platforms can be influenced by financial contributions.

To fulfil the role as gatekeepers of information, clear standards for content review need to be established to strengthen social responsibility and move away from the negative aspects of social media. In light of the growing dominance of platforms in conveying essential information, it becomes even more important to have access to knowledge and decision-making resources that are quality-checked and transparent about their sources and reasons for display. Users should also have control over their personal data. Commercial ads in search queries should be clearly labelled as such, which becomes a challenge with AI-based

search engines that may have limited to no ability to reference sources. Without these fundamental elements in place, widespread use of generative AI lacks purpose.

Simultaneously, investments in technologies for detecting hate speech, cyberbullying, and misinformation is necessary. The current approach of verification by human “click workers” is not sustainable. AI can assist human fact-checkers in this regard, but ensuring ethical foundations will require ongoing human involvement. Nevertheless, taking responsibility for publicly available content on proprietary platforms must be persistently demanded, even at the expense of higher profit margins. The resulting quality should not impede long-term growth and profitability. Companies can use these fundamentals as a competitive advantage by establishing their own guidelines or “ethical charters,” instead of passively waiting for unnecessary time consuming and complicating universally applicable regulations. Active engagement is necessary.

Public media organizations, or the “public service,” can play a central role in quality control. On one hand, they can provide (pre-competitive) news and facts in an “open-source model.” On the other hand, there is a high demand for fact-checking to combat misinformation. Private media can continue translating this information into narratives or tailor-made reporting, creating complementarity, and reducing existing competition.

MAKE ADVERTISING GREAT AGAIN

REDEFINING ADVERTISING CREDIBLY



With the increasing emphasis on target-specific attributes and expectations, the creativity of many advertising campaigns has diminished in recent years due to the prioritization of measurable performance goals. The inclusion of generative AI is likely to reinforce this trend and lead to less surprising, provocative, or emotional solutions. In the advertising industry, a majority of brand owners are expected to rely on a combination of traditional and digital marketing in the future. AI technologies will be used to better understand customer needs and develop personalized marketing campaigns with interactive magazine content and gamification elements. As automation increasingly enables smaller organizations to create marketing or advertising campaigns, it is anticipated that these campaigns will become more homogeneous.

This implies that there is a missed opportunity to differentiate in the market and create credibility. To design advertising that truly adds value to brands, there are several starting points: Firstly, the context in which advertising is placed in newspapers or social media can be curated in a more intelligent or multi-layered way, moving

beyond simply pairing product categories. For example, instead of placing an insurance policy ad next to a car ad, more clever linkages and narratives can be created. Secondly, brands can generate credibility and resonance by incorporating humorous and authentic elements rather than relying solely on product praise. This should be deployed in a fashion that sidesteps performative “political correctness”, focusing more on creating memorable content. Lastly, advertising and marketing can go beyond mere “product pushing” by addressing timely topics in ways that challenge, stimulate, and educate – while steering clear of polemics. This can be achieved by strengthening internal competencies, activating knowledge holders, or partnering with independent and content-driven influencers or organizations. The prerequisite for this approach is courage and trust in one’s own ideas, rather than solely focusing on click rates.

“Advertising must be entertaining and informative. It must lead to engagement and initiate action. There are thousands of touch-points in a customer journey. Personalised advertising that is truly relevant and tailored based on user behaviour will be more expensive in the future.”

Roman Geiser,
Farner International

STRENGTHEN DIGITAL SOVEREIGNTY

BUILDING A FORWARD-LOOKING REGULATORY FRAMEWORK THAT PROMOTES AUTONOMY AND TRANSPARENCY



A digital society requires a regulatory framework that strengthens autonomous, democratic choices, creates a fair playing field, and protects users from discrimination, manipulation, and crime. This requires international guidelines to combat data protection or media concentration without hampering innovation and potential business ideas. The antitrust authorities are faced with the task of defining binding framework conditions and monitoring compliance with them. This also includes the regular examination and sanctioning of market dominance or price discrimination. Analogous to the banking sector's "too-big-to-fail" risks are the "too-big-to-control," media entities, in terms of enforcing regulations.

Generative artificial intelligence in particular needs guidelines to ensure ethical use. This includes the transparent use of AI, for example, artificially generated photos or videos and corresponding filters on social media. In addition, output controls must be established to identify and sanction discrimination or manipulation. Disclosure of competition-relevant patents, on the other hand, is not expedient. Instead, the regulation of access to quality-

checked training data, the observance and remuneration of copyrights, and the correct use of sources are key.

In the near future, competition for the availability and use of data will increase, both between countries and digital ecosystems. Data silos built by big tech companies represent significant value. They will neither share nor decentralize their data. Publishers who start collecting first-party data through logins will not be keen to share their data treasure troves. In view of the competitive global order, once more continuously shaped by ideologies, the implementation of digital sovereignty is also gaining in importance. This includes, on the one hand, an "autarky of data," and on the other, independent design principles minimize the dependency of artificial intelligence on political systems. Decentralized information spaces can contribute to safeguarding European values and interests, particularly privacy and freedom of expression in the digital realm.

In light of the future of independent reporting, the question arises as to whether sovereignty over distribution channels can be left exclusively to private, globally active tech platforms. From the perspective of a sovereign state, the dissemination of information exclusively via popular social media presents high risks. Accordingly, solutions must be defined as to how this sovereignty can be preserved for the future with the decline of traditional, analogue television and radio stations. The establishment of proprietary digital platforms, and clearly defined guidelines and binding regulations for local companies who absorb these social roles – similar to private energy or telecommunication providers – is crucial.

SKILL EM UP

PROMOTING CRITICAL THINKING AND DECISION-MAKING SKILLS



In light of the rapid flood of (artificially generated) information with a growing proportion of half-knowledge and “fake realities,” the ability to check, structure, and question becomes even more important. Although current and future quality assurance measures and regulations focus on avoiding false information, without inherent user responsibility, there remains a high residual risk of internal orientation and manipulation.

Accordingly, promoting media literacy among citizens is a central task for all players in the market. One component is the preservation of and access to a spectrum of relevant media covering local and global developments for all sectors of the population, aimed at promoting competent decision-making and political participation. The ability to deal with the density of information is essential, therefore, educational institutions, (and employers), are responsible for imparting competencies that enable individuals to exercise discernment regarding internet search results, question sources, make comparisons, and form opinions regarding correctness and authenticity.

Concerning the overstimulation of high-frequency content on social media, the ability to decouple is also needed in order to pinpoint addictive behaviours, safeguard against mental illness, and prescribing a balanced mix of digital and analogue media consumption. This can be increasingly promoted as part of workplace health programs, as well as an essential cornerstone of education, where focus should primarily be on skills transfer as opposed to handing out tablets.

In essence, the task of “empowering” the population lies with media providers themselves – from newspapers to advertising agencies and, of course, the operators of digital platforms. This onus should not primarily rest on training programs, rather in the development of an “information architecture” to create possibilities of distinguishing between opinions and facts; daily news and long-term developments; a framework that reveals connections. Public media could collaborate with universities and / or think tanks to build the basic architecture and then integrate it into everyday life of the ecosystem. In such a system, advertising or corporate communication could also make active contributions by imparting knowledge, deepening inquiry, and thus strengthening the credibility of brands across the entire media system.

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Roland Wittmann is Senior Advisor at Think Tank W.I.R.E. and acts as an independent strategy consultant in the media and entertainment industry. After studying business administration with a focus on corporate management and marketing, he began his career as a project manager at Roland Berger. There he gained valuable experience in the areas of restructuring, mergers and acquisitions (M&A) as well as post-merger integration (PMI) in the service and consumer goods industries and with well-known technology companies.

With many years of experience in managerial positions at the leading Swiss media companies Tamedia and Goldbach, he took responsibility for successful complex mergers and integration processes of teams and business processes. In doing so, he was able to actively participate in the consolidation of the media industry in the DACH region. As an expert in strategic planning and business development with extensive leadership responsibility, he has in-depth background knowledge and practical experience in digital transformation, content strategies and cross-media marketing. These competences enable him to support companies in successfully mastering the challenges of the changing environment.

STEPHAN SIGRIST

Stephan Sigrist is an interdisciplinary strategist and founder of the Think Tank W.I.R.E., which systematically analyses new developments, trends and technologies at the interface between science and practice. With his team, he develops forward-looking solutions and advises decision-makers on shaping the future. In 2020, he launched the Future Society Association, which aims to reconnect business and society in order to sustainably curate the upcoming transformation towards a circular economy and data-based business models. He is the author of numerous books and studies, an international keynote speaker and curator of spatial knowledge projects in collaboration with design and art. He was named “Digital Shaper” by the Swiss business magazine Bilanz, a board member of the Swiss Allergy Centre AHA and a member of the innovation council of Innosuisse, the Swiss federal funding agency for science-based innovation. Currently, he is on the board of directors of a start-up for a digital mobility network and on various strategic committees. After studying biochemistry at ETH Zurich and completing a dissertation at the Collegium Helveticum, he worked in medical research at Roche, as a management consultant at Roland Berger and at the Gottlieb Duttweiler Institute. He grew up in central Switzerland, has lived in London and is today based in Zurich.

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GLOSSARY

ADVERTISING TECHNOLOGY (ADTECH)

Also known as AdTech, an umbrella term that describes tools and software advertisers use to reach target audiences and deliver and measure digital advertising campaigns.

AGGREGATORS

A software or service provider that collects, processes and, if necessary, finally categorises media content. Examples of content are digital films, photos, music, news, and reviews.

AUGMENTED REALITY (AR) /

MIXED REALITY (MR)

With AR or MR, users can see interactive virtual elements such as 3D objects, information or animations on their screen that interact with the physical world.

DATA SELF-SUFFICIENCY

Ability of a person, organisation, or system to control, manage and use its own data without depending on external sources or third parties. It includes the idea of data sovereignty, where control over personal or business data is in the hands of the owner to make decisions about its use and access.

BLOCKCHAIN

A decentralised database that is mirrored on multiple computers in the network. It is characterised by the fact that entries are combined and stored in blocks. Basic technology for cryptocurrencies.

BRAND SAFETY

Brand safety is a set of measures aimed at protecting the image and reputation of brands from negative or damaging influence of questionable or inappropriate content in online advertising.

CLICK WORKER

People who perform various micro-tasks or small projects online on behalf of companies or platforms. These tasks can include, categorising images, checking data, or writing product reviews.

CO-CREATION

A process in which different actors work together to develop products, services, or content. This involves the active participation of users, customers or the wider community, whose perspectives and needs are all included.

CONTENT SEEDING

Marketing strategy in which high-quality content is distributed in a targeted and strategic way across different platforms and channels to achieve greater reach, visibility, and engagement. Specific target groups and multipliers are identified to distribute and promote targeted content.

COOKIES / THIRD PARTY COOKIES

Data generated by web browsers and websites to store individual user information. Third party cookies are data records that are stored in a browser or on a user's computer when a website is visited. When the website is visited again, this data can be read by the provider of the third-party cookies.

CREATOR ECONOMY

Also known as the "Influencer Economy". A software-based social media economy that enables content creators and influencers to generate revenue from their own creations and brands.

CUSTOMER JOURNEY

Customer journey, Users or Buyers Journey, is a marketing term that describes the path or the individual cycles that a potential customer goes through before deciding whether to buy a product.

DIGITAL TWIN

A virtual representation of a physical object, product or even a person, containing data and information about the physical object and updated in real time.

DISINTERMEDIATION

An economic entity takes over individual tasks or functions in the value chain. Customers gain direct access to a provider's range of services by means of electronic media. For example, with online newspapers, the distribution logistics of the physical newspaper is saved.

DISTRIBUTED LEDGER

"Distributed account book" is the term used to describe a decentralised database that allows participants in a network to share read and write access.

EMPOWERING

Refers to the process of empowering individuals or groups to realise their full potential, develop self-confidence and self-determination, and gain greater control over their lives and choices.

FACT CHECKING

One of the core tasks of journalistic research.

FAST FOLLOWER

A company or organisation that reacts quickly to the success or innovation of another company and brings similar products or services to market.

FAKE NEWS

False reports spread with manipulative intent in the media and internet, especially through social networks.

FAKE REALITIES

Artificially created or manipulated content in which reality is distorted or falsified to achieve certain goals. It involves the creation of illusory worlds, whether in the form of fake news, manipulated images or videos, or the creation of digital simulations to appear real.

FEAR OF MISSING OUT (FOMO)

The fear of having missed out and choosing an activity that, in hindsight and compared to other options, was not the right activity. FOMO occurs mainly on social media such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, or much-used apps.

FILTER BUBBLE

State in which a person's online world is personalised and only information that matches their preferences, views and interests is presented. This can lead to limited or lack of exposure to different opinions, perspectives, or controversial topics.

FLATRATE

Subscription or payment model where a fixed fee is paid for unlimited access to certain products and services. It allows users to consume as much as they want of a particular offering without incurring additional costs per unit of use.

FREE INTERNET

The concept of the "free internet" is based on the principle of net neutrality and the belief that the internet should be an open platform accessible to everyone.

FREEMIUM

A business model in which a basic product is offered free of charge, while full versions and extensions are subject to a fee. The term is composed of the word "free" and the word "premium".

GAME CHANGER

In business, a game changer is an innovative product or technology that changes the entire market.

GATEKEEPER

An organisation that has control over access to information or resources. They act as "gatekeepers" or "decision-makers" that determine who can access certain content or use certain opportunities.

HYPERSCALE PLATFORMS

Scalable cloud computing systems in which many servers are connected in a network. The number of servers used can be increased or decreased as needed.

IDENTIFIER

Codes consisting of numbers and letters that allow the identification of objects of a computer system. They indicate where an object is located and how it can be reached.

INFORMATION ARCHITECTURE

The organisation, structuring and design of information within a system or website. It involves planning and designing the navigation, categorisation, and presentation of content to help users find, understand and use information.

INFLUENCER MARKETING

Form of social media marketing in which a product expert is commissioned to influence a community of followers to buy a product. In return, the influencer receives the product they are presenting for free and a corresponding payment, depending on the reach and engagement of followers.

KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATOR (KPI)

Performance indicator. Quantifiable metrics that companies can use to assess their progress towards achieving key goals.

LARGE LANGUAGE MODELL (LLM)

Large Language Models are artificial intelligence systems trained on natural language to perform tasks such as text generation, translation, text summaries and question answering.

LEAKS

When information, data or documents are released to the public in an unauthorized, deliberate manner. They are modes through which confidential or secret information is released to the public.

MARKET DRIVEN JOURNALISM

Journalism, usually combined with advertising, aimed at a specific audience. This means the content and purpose of the reported news deliberately promotes a product or service and thus tries to convince the target group.

MEDIA SUBSCRIPTION SERVICES

Services where users pay a regular fee to access a variety of digital media content, such as movies, TV series, music, magazines, or e-books. These subscription services allow users to access a wide range of content and stream or download across different devices and platforms, often with personalised recommendations and without advertising.

MEDIA INDUSTRY

The media industry includes organisations that generate more than half of their turnover through the production of journalistic content, films, music, books, or online content and/or the distribution of such products. This excludes manufacturers and distributors of terminal equipment and suppliers of infrastructure for media companies from the definition.

METAVESE

A concept that describes an augmented virtual reality in which users can interact, communicate, and operate in a persistent, shared virtual environment. It is a digital world that combines different virtual worlds, games, social platforms, and other online experiences.

METERED MODEL

A mixture of hard and soft paywall. Only after a certain number of articles or other content have been consumed is use subject to a fee. Some news sites, for example, offer 10 articles free of charge before a subscription must be taken out.

MICROPAYMENT

Refers to a payment procedure of small sums, which mainly occur when purchasing “paid content”, i.e., digital goods such as pieces of music and newspaper articles. According to prevailing opinion, micropayments include amounts between 0.01 and 5.00 EUR/ CHF.

NATIVE ADVERTISING

A form of advertising on the internet and in print media that is designed by offering content in such a way that it is difficult to distinguish from editorial articles and attracts the attention of users through camouflage.

OPEN-SOURCE MODEL

Software development practice in which the source code is made freely available to the public. This allows developers to read, modify and improve the code. Open source encourages collaboration and exchange of ideas, creating a community of developers who work together to further develop and improve the software.

OWNED MEDIA

In contrast to paid media, owned media are media channels over which the provider alone has full control. These include, for example, corporate websites, blogs, newsletters, and social media accounts.

PAYWALL / PAID CONTENT

Business model on the internet in which payment must be made for certain page areas or content on a website. Users must take out a subscription or pay for individual content. Editorial work is financed through such payment barriers.

PERFORMANCE MARKETING

Online marketing strategy that seeks to generate measurable responses using different channels. In this way, your performance is expressed in numbers and can be precisely analysed and optimised.

PERSISTENT IDENTIFIER (PID)

A code that enables the unique designation of a digital resource, for example a newspaper article. The corresponding PID code is permanently recognisable – especially on the internet – and thus makes an object permanently identifiable and traceable.

PRODUCT PUSHING

Marketing strategy in which a company actively and aggressively attempts to push a product or service into the market, regardless of actual customer demand or need. The focus is on selling and promoting the product, often through intensive advertising, sales promotion, and distribution activities.

PROGRAMMATIC ADVERTISING

Automated, digital playout of display advertising, videos, and native ads on premium internet sites. In this process, advertising space on websites is delivered within fractions of a second or even auctioned off. This is often referred to as Real Time Bidding (RTB).

RETAIL MEDIA

Advertising from marketplace participants and brands who place their advertising directly on online marketplaces and e-commerce platforms.

RETURN ON ADVERTISING SPEND (ROAS)

Key figure in online marketing that measures the profitability of advertising expenditure and calculates the turnover per EUR/CHF advertising costs. To do this, one looks at the expenditure for the advertising measures and the revenue generated by them. The formula for calculating the ROAS as a percentage is: $\text{Turnover} / \text{advertising costs} \times 100$.

RETURN ON INVESTMENT (ROI)

A ratio that measures the relationship between the profit or benefit of an investment and the cost of that investment. It is used to evaluate the profitability or success of a particular investment.

SEAMLESS

On the web, “seamless” refers to a smooth user experience where elements and transitions are seamlessly integrated, without delays or interruptions. It improves user efficiency and satisfaction.

SHITSTORM

Term describing a violent and often uncontrollable wave of negative and insulting comments, criticisms, or attacks in social media.

SINGLE-SIGN-ON (SSO)

Describes a procedure that gives a user access to several services and resources after a single authentication. This eliminates the need for separate logins for the different services.

SMART CONTRACT

Smart contracts enable the execution of trusted transactions and agreements between different parties as digital contracts in the blockchain.

SNIPPETS

Short extracts or fragments of content that are displayed in search engine results. Snippets often contain the title of the page as well as a short description that give users a preview of the content of the respective web page.

SPONSORED POST

Paid posts that are published primarily by content creators as part of influencer marketing campaigns on behalf of clients in return for remuneration. Advertisements placed on social networks (sponsored posts) must be identified as ads or advertisements.

TARGET GROUP RELEVANT TO ADVERTISING

Term from radio and television advertising and marketing that describes the most important target groups for these mass media (e.g., group of 14- to 49-year-olds) when pricing commercials. It is the second important metric alongside total reach.

TECHNOLOGY PLATFORMS

Foundation for the development and operation of digital business applications. The platform allows users to run their applications without worrying about the underlying technology.

TOO-BIG-TO-FAIL

Companies or institutions whose failure would have serious consequences for the entire economy, therefore receiving state support to prevent this.

TRANSACTION-BASED BUSINESS MODELS

A transaction (core service) between seller and buyer taking place on a technology platform. Through this transaction, however, an ancillary

service is provided by a provider. The revenue is generated by a third party paying the seller for the ancillary service.

UBIQUITOUS

In marketing, the term is used when a service is used everywhere (campaigns) or is available (products).

UNBUNDLING

Separation of revenue sources or stages of the value chain of integrated companies.

USER GENERATED CONTENT (UGC)

Online content created by private users. This can be texts, comments, reviews, photos, graphics, or videos published on blogs, social networks or on a website.

VIRTUAL REALITY (VR)

Computer-generated environment that allows users to immerse themselves in an interactive experience. This uses visual, audio and sometimes haptic stimuli to create a virtual world that can be similar or completely different to the real world. VR technologies are often used with special headsets or glasses to create an impressive sense of presence and immersion.

WALLED GARDEN

Closed digital platform or ecosystem that implements strict controls and restrictions on access and interaction with external content and services.

WOKE / WOKENESS

Colloquial term referring to a heightened awareness of social injustice and discrimination. It refers to an attitude and activism aimed at recognising, addressing, and combating oppression, racism, sexism, and other forms of discrimination.

ZERO-CLICK-SEARCHES

Search queries where the search engine directly provides the user with the answer to their question without the need to click on an external link. Information or results are displayed directly in the search results, eliminating the need for an additional click to the original website.

THINK TANK W.I.R.E.

W.I.R.E. is an independent think tank that curates the future at the interface between business, science and society since 2007. A systematic early identification and analysis of relevant developments, trends and technologies lays the foundation for the development of long-term strategies and differentiating positioning for private and public organisations and their decision-makers. As an interdisciplinary platform, W.I.R.E. links insights and people from different sectors and thematic fields against the increasing fragmentation. The thematic expertise focuses on the consequences of the digital transformation, sustainability and the changing conditions of the working world, with a focus on life sciences and health, financial services, real estate, media and retail. In conveying knowledge and experiences, W.I.R.E. relies on a multidimensional information architecture as the basis for analogue or hybrid publications, event formats, “real life labs” and keynotes. The basis is provided by qualitative modelling of possible scenarios based on scientific findings, and the development of theories and incubation of new concepts in dealing with the still unknown challenges of the 21st century in the tradition of alchemy. In addition to an international network of thought leaders and decision makers, W.I.R.E. has partnerships with leading companies, universities and designers.

Established in year 7 of the 21st century
www.thewire.ch

FUTURE SOCIETY ASSOCIATION

The Future Society Association (FSA) is an initiative to reconnect business and society with the aim of shaping the transformation of a digital and sustainable society together with business, science and politics. It is based on the forward-looking identification of future societal challenges as a complement to the existing technology focus of many innovation projects, the transfer of knowledge about new societal developments and the linking of actors to shape the society of tomorrow. The aim is to promote business models and products that integrate social responsibility and thus enable long-term and stable economic growth. At the same time, the FSA promotes new perspectives for a desirable future, since without the participation of the population, neither sustainable data-based nor circular business models will find acceptance. In doing so, the Future Society Association also advocates for a sustainable positioning of Switzerland and Europe that enables a meaningful and inclusive vision beyond traditional ideologies to which people of different age groups, interests and cultures are committed. To this end, the FSA develops instruments such as the “Future Society Radar” and strategic positioning tools and benchmarks that help partners to position themselves in tomorrow’s society. It also publishes in-depth publications and decision-making tools for the general public and organises events for inspiration and new networks that help to focus on society as an integral part of business and science. The FSA was initiated in 2020 by the think tank W.I.R.E. as a non-profit platform and is supported by a group of forward-looking organisations and individuals.

www.futuresociety.org

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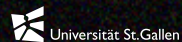
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