

# Wan-Ifra explores how news media is adapting business models to promote press freedom

The World Association of Newspapers and News Publishers (Wan-Ifra) has released a new report that looks into how news media companies - in Africa, South-East Asia, the Middle East and South America - are adapting their business models to ensure press freedom.



Image credit: Juliana Malta on Unsplash

Compiled by [Wan-Ifra](#) and author [Clare Cook](#), a researcher at the [Media Innovation Studio](#) UK, the report looks at how media in politically and financially-pressured environments experiment with revenues and adapt business models to safeguard press freedom.



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Leigh Andrews 12 Nov 2018



Publishers globally are adapting to the digital present, yet even the most experienced practitioners are hard-pressed to define what constitutes sustainable and resilient business models.

## New media, new challenges

The report delves deeper into the digital shift to explore business issues of media in repressed or flawed markets. To date, little is known about their specific economic experiences while evidence of how revenue models adapt remains scant.

Despite this lack of research, business issues remain a major factor in the ability of media to contribute and impact their communities.



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19 Jun 2019



The report identifies how digital media face a particular set of challenges, including business pressures and restrictions. From the one side, they tackle issues relating to online registration or high levels of taxation and from the other side, added pressure of government controls on advertisers and government-controlled advertising agencies.



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Media are concerned about digital monetisation and distribution, as well as playing a balancing act with technology giants like Facebook and Google. Lack of data analysis and a shortage of advertising revenues were cited as key problems.

These challenges are symptomatic both of new media and the new media operations of traditional media and significantly frustrate the ability of these media to reach their audiences and establish financial sustainability.

“ [#mingpao](#) union vice-chairman Chris Leung: "Police are armed with weapons and journalists only have pens." [#antiELAB](#) [#hkprotests](#) [#FreedomHK](#) [#pressfreedom](#) [pic.twitter.com/OCzA227okP](#)— Lok. (@sumlokkei) [July 14, 2019](#) ”

### Nuanced economic experiences

The report addresses this by offering a toolkit approach to the business challenges being faced by media. With the exception of South Africa, all media organisations included in the report operate in areas considered to be politically pressured according to the [2018 World Press Freedom Index](#) – positioned in the lowest half of all countries globally as ranked on press freedom.



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“The main focus is to understand the deep challenges and nuances of economic experiences for media in politically and financially-pressured environments in their day-to-day business operations,” says the report.

“It finds much experimentation around digital revenues in the effort to adapt to changing digital landscapes, however, the amount of revenues being generated remain small in most cases. There was no one approach to revenues or the business operations but rather an acceptance that new models would emerge through an incremental process of adaptation and experimentation.”

The report explores the forces and factors – both external and internal – affecting digital business models against this backdrop.

## **It draws outlived experiences around business considerations in four main areas:**

- What networks or partnerships are forming and how they may assist business resilience
- How media are responding organisationally to business challenges
- What digital content strategies and production techniques are being developed
- The role of audience engagement in the digital model

It then focuses on the revenue model, drawing out workable options or successes in five main areas across classified advertising, advertising networks, display advertising, sponsored content and membership and subscription models.

The findings are based on data gathered between 2016 and 2018 under Wan-Ifra's [Strengthening Media and Society](#) programme, financed by Denmark's ministry of foreign affairs, to promote financial sustainability and professional practice in over 80 media globally. Qualitative data was gathered in three stages to draw the lens on the lived experiences of media in varying systems across multiple operations.



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The sample highlighted by the report offers a range of media in terms of market environment, structures, maturity, outputs and digital media. Successful strategies have been drawn out and the hope is that scrutiny of practice may reveal more about resilient business models in a precarious and rapidly changing environment.

Download the full report [here](#).

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