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NEIL THURMAN (2026). *MEDIA CHANGE: CONTEMPORARY CASES, CONSEQUENCES, AND CONCEPTUALIZATIONS*, JOHN WILEY & SONS, PAGES: 272, ISBN: 978-1-394-29356-8

Neil Thurman's book "*Media Change: Contemporary Cases, Consequences, and Conceptualizations*" is an ambitious attempt to systematize knowledge about the evolution of the contemporary media landscape. Instead of succumbing to pervasive technological determinism, the author proposes a balanced view of media transformation, showing that such change is rarely entirely revolutionary. Thurman bases his analyses on an evolutionary model of media development, drawing on the concept of diffusion of innovations and biological metaphors of the life cycle (from birth through maturation to adaptation or extinction). An important element of his arguments is the original analytical framework of "The Six Rs", which posits that media processes constantly intertwine—new formats borrow from old forms, innovations face natural resistance, their implementation is sometimes slow, and the very direction of change is constantly modified by legal and economic regulations, which sometimes even leads to market reversals.

These theoretical foundations serve Thurman in conducting a meticulous analysis of a series of contemporary case studies. One of them is the phenomenon of media convergence, which the author examines using the example of the „live blog" format (live text coverage). This format fits perfectly into the routines of contemporary information consumers, especially those working in offices, offering them regular text updates that do not require playing a video or turning on the sound. The analysis reveals the dual nature of this form: on the one hand, live blogs increase journalistic transparency through numerous hyperlinks to sources, but on the other hand, they promote a culture of looser fact-checking, in which the speed of publication (often based on anonymous social media posts) takes precedence over reliability.

Another insightful research area is the evolution of television and video content consumption. Thurman successfully traces the development of technology from analog television and the first video recorders (which aroused the industry's fear of ad-skipping) to streaming platform giants like Netflix. Interestingly, the author's original research on viewer behavior (using the BBC Three VOD service as an example) clearly demonstrates that the promises of unlimited user agency on streaming platforms are greatly exaggerated and that viewers' choices

remain subject to rigorous structural constraints. It turns out that it is not necessarily numerous awards or the uniqueness of a program that determines its high viewership, but above all, the time of its availability on the platform and how effectively it is positioned and „nudged” in the service’s digital interface.

An important point in Thurman’s considerations is also the challenge of internet content regulation. The author focuses on the widely discussed problem, especially in democratic countries, of attempts to control minors’ access to legal pornography. He points out that the global nature of the web and the ease of widespread use of technologies such as VPNs make traditionally imposed methods of censorship and technological age verification obligations exceptionally difficult to enforce, especially against entities hiding behind complex corporate structures outside a given country’s jurisdiction.

The book smoothly transitions from regulatory disputes to purely economic issues, reliably analyzing the evolution of charging for online news. For decades, the press wandered—initial experiments with payments failed—until, due to the dramatic collapse of the advertising market after the burst of the dot-com bubble and, subsequently, the global financial crisis (2007-2009), publishers were forced to introduce strict paywalls. The author emphasizes that, despite this, globally, only an average of 16% of users still choose to pay for digital information. However, the research cited by Thurman reveals that publishers can influence this state of affairs by modifying the so-called teasers (text fragments visible to non-payers)—paradoxically, hiding short summaries and introductions behind the subscription wall works to the publishers’ advantage and drives conversion noticeably more effectively than attaching cheap gifts to subscriptions.

Speaking of revenues, the huge analytics industry focused on audience measurement systems (readership and viewership) deserved special attention in the book. Thurman aptly defines media markets as dual-product marketplaces, in which viewers’ attention, measured by specialized research systems, serves as direct currency in the advertising market. Today’s multi-platform nature has spawned a widespread problem of duplicating audiences between print and websites, heavily distorting measurements. However, the most dangerous phenomenon in today’s ecosystem is that new major players (such as YouTube or Facebook) reject objective auditing organizations and independently verify their own reach statistics, which increasingly outrages advertisers and creates the need for framework regulations in Europe, such as the European Media Freedom Act.

An integral part of the work is the examination of the progressing trend among prestigious publishing brands and broadcasters to abandon traditional paper media or typical linear broadcasting in favor of becoming „online-only” brands. While this type of transformation is dictated by sudden budgetary pressure and a dramatic drop in paper sales (a phenomenon highly exacerbated during the COVID-19 pandemic, for example), the author highlights clear differences

between media. Namely, giving up the print edition frees up substantial capital (previously absorbed by ink, paper, and logistics), whereas abandoning radio and television broadcasting (where distribution is negligibly cheap) saves public broadcasters' finances mainly through radical stripping, cuts, and reductions in the content and programming budget itself. Furthermore, working in „online-only” newsrooms inevitably ties journalists to their desks and does not always guarantee the seamless migration of existing, traditional readers to the web.

In the book's final structure, Thurman closes his comprehensive argument by examining the technological phenomena most strongly shaping the present and future of news production. The researcher touches on the threads of the growing use of automation and artificial intelligence, based on powerful generative models, in everyday editorial work. He notes changes in the field of news data gathering—traditional reporting work is increasingly subject to digital surveillance, using constant scanning and monitoring of global streams of social media posts. The publication concludes with an in-depth look at increasingly aggressive automated content personalization and its broad consequences, particularly highlighting the risk of creating deep social divisions as a result of ubiquitous filter bubbles and echo chambers.

“Media Change: Contemporary Cases, Consequences, and Conceptualizations” forms a coherent whole, successfully escaping naive technological enthusiasm. The book offers an insightful analysis of the processes taking place in the contemporary media landscape, while simultaneously providing researchers and students with useful intellectual tools to verify the myths surrounding alleged digital „revolutions”.

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