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Executive Summary

Over the last few decades, Internet has not only become one of the major communication platforms, but has developed to a significant extent, rearranging lifestyles of people around the globe. Internet has gradually influenced informational spread and delivery and turned general public into online information consumers. As one of the world's largest news publications, New York Times (NYT) has not avoided this global trend. Instead, company decided to turn Internet space into a new profitability area. The newspaper has introduced a paywall, offering its readers to sign up for paid membership to enjoy unlimited access to NYT website articles. The decision has been motivated by NYT's assurance in its market esteem and consumer loyalty. Moreover, NYT has always positioned itself as an exclusive information provider. These dogmas led the company's management to paywall launch in 2005 in the form of online Times Select, and later to a more complete and comprehensive paywall. With time, paywalls have become a new business feature in digital information era, as more and more newspapers and analytical magazines have adopted paywalls as an additional customer service. However, until present paywalls remain a subject of debate among journalistic and business field experts.

Are paywalls an ultimate success tool, which allows 24/7 readers access to the latest news? Or is it a steep business path, threatened by subscribers' instability and rapidly spreading free Web resources and social networks? NY Times has developed and outlined over 14 mobile applications, allowing readers to read the news on their mobiles and Apple I pads. However, with all in hand, NYT's massive paywall campaign fails to secure a stable audience. A year after the project initialisation, subscription rates started to drop, signaling of public lowering willingness to pay for previously free content. The given case study on New York Times Paywall was undertaken to draw a realistic picture of NYT's paywall performance. The analysis focused on three business areas, with each critically evaluating newspaper's paywall competence, digital capacity, project management successes and pitfalls and etc. In critical contrast to its competitors, the research study aimed to reveal NYT' business insights which could justify both advantageous and disadvantageous characteristics of its paywall and related digital products.

Consequent chapters of the given analytical report include research findings based on the conducted analysis and the practical recommendations and solutions. In order to prove the viability of the research, it has been based on peer – reviewed secondary data and the industry expert feedback. To demonstrate the importance and practical relevance of the proposed analysis and solutions, similar research was applied to British Petroleum as an alternative business research target.

CHAPTER 3: New York Times Research Analysis Plan

3.1 Strategic Management Analysis

3.1.1 Research Problem 1: Weak process management and manoeuvring in relation to paywall launch and implementation process.

Research Analysis Model: CRM Life Cycle Model

Table 6. CRM Life Cycle Model

Processes	Actions	Focus Center of Organization	Strategies
Attraction	Promoting the goods and services leadership	Distinguish	Innovation
Promotion	Improving the profitability of existing customers	Separation	Reducing costs - service to customer
Maintaining	Customer retention for their life (focus on providing services based on customer desire)	Adaptation	According to customer – supplying new product

Source: Kalakota (2001) cited in Tavana et al. (2013)

Collaboration at all stages of CRM planning and management is a key success element to make the entire CRM strategy work. The CRM Life Cycle Model does not only point out the 3 principal CRM processes, but pushes companies for enhanced inter-departmental communication. Sales, management, marketing, R&D department, quality control and many other organisations will receive specific customer information, which is highly important for the CRM strategy design and implementation (Zia Khosoosi, 2011).

Along with Zia Khosoosi, Abbasi and Turkmeni (2010) believe that today's business trends have transformed customer relationships into a highly powerful activity, which demands strong expertise in all social areas, following all customer traits. This finding led authors towards practical approval of the described model, as it combines CRM top priorities and yet helps companies keep track of their multi-directional operations. Linoff and Berry (2011) turn their views towards widespread application of IT in modern CRM operations. Many companies get misled by excessed reliance on technology and tend to underestimate strategic processes in customer communication. In the above-mentioned framework, all the relevant processes are based on expert activity, which authors believe interferes with modern technological adaptations of customer strategies. Correspondingly, Peelen and Beltman (2013) express doubt over incomplete nature of the proposed CRM model. In their view, it does not advice on the additional customer information management. The model is over-narrowed and does not allow for a broader overview of the accumulated customer data, which could be at times critical for product-related decision-making.

trends, all sets of knowledge and capabilities will eventually outdate, threatening firm's fallout off the competition. As the term of validity of key competencies is practically ignored within the proposed framework, organisations may lose the up-to-date focus on strategic advantages. Kourdi (2015) supports possible pitfalls of the competence theory, by warning about similar core competence adoption by companies within the same industry, minimizing the market competitiveness. He also points out the risk of inadequate competence ranking and evaluation scheme adoption.

3.1.4 Research Problem 4: Insufficient alternative scenario planning for paywall project as of not foreseeing advertisement revenue fall and underestimation of global search engines influence.

Research Analysis Model 4: Scenario Planning

Figure 7. Scenario Planning Model



Adapted from: Chermack (2011)

As pointed out by Wulf et al. (2011) the primary goal of scenario design is to evaluate future perspectives, which may affect certain business units. Therefore, scenario planning as a technique is unique and highly individual as it is customized to each individual company. Scenarios forecasting reveals a broader view on company's external environment and integrates current business issues into corporate strategy. It gradually decreases risk indicators and serves as a safety cushion in sudden changes of business conduct (Hungenberg, 2010).

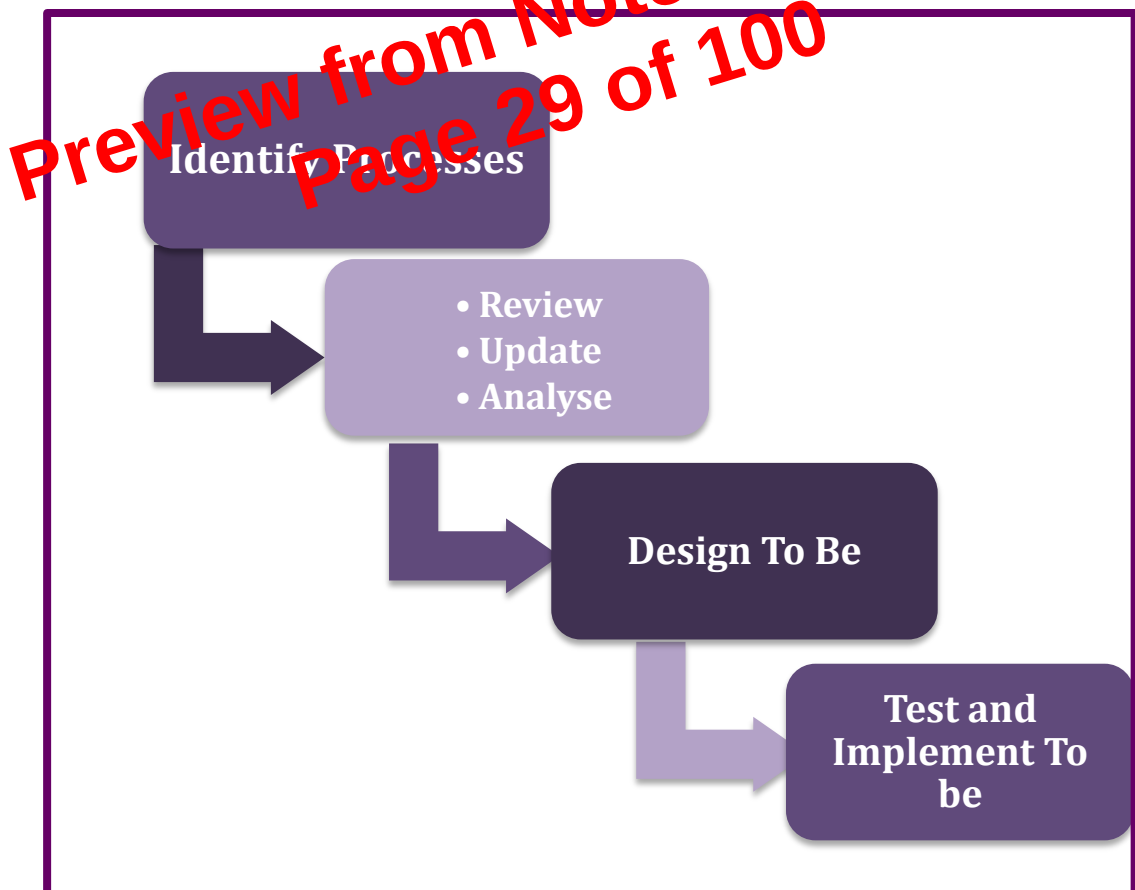
Kesse (2012) claims that Blue Ocean strategy represents an innovative business development tool. It motivates businesses to create niche markets within existing business pools and use it as a moving-forward success drive. It enables creation of demand, rather than just fighting it. Brookes (2013) similarly thinks that creation of a new market as a guiding principle of Blue Ocean strategy, evolves the utmost feature of each successful management team, reaching the top task of every business. Blue Ocean approach motivates both individual profit growth and market expansion.

One of the most widespread critical impressions of the Blue Ocean strategy is that it does not discover any new principles of business conduct. It is a comprehensive variation of Tod Levitt's diversification theory, in the context of innovation (Herman, 2011). Moreover, Kraaijenbrink (2012) raises the inevitability of strong competition eventually arising in a newly created blue ocean. This consequential factor questions the validity of Blue Ocean as a theory and undermines its worth long-term applicability.

3.3.2 Research Problem 2: Lack of coordination between related organisational processes in paywall project

Research Analysis Model 2: Business Process Redesign

Figure 13. Business Process Redesign Model



Source: Johnston et al. (2012)

4.1.3 Core Competencies Analysis and Findings

Proposed statements have been outlined in the context of digital media competencies, which NYT is considered to lack in its paywall management, along with theoretical directives.

- | |
|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Modern newspaper industry is in strategic urge of digital competencies, as they are forced to connect to their audience on online basis. These competencies, however, do not substitute competitive advantage, but rather contribute additional benefits (Wirtz, 2011); |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Before upgrading its digital networking and communications skills, New York Times needs to adequately evaluate its current expertise level, to identify competence gaps and ways for development (The Digital Agenda Assembly, 2011); |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Significant pitfall of NYT is awareness of digital competencies change over time due to rapid technological development and user approaches. This skills area evolves constant learning and resource investment (Digital Economy Rankings, 2010); |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• NYT has to identify clear boundaries between its core and significant skill sets, to elaborate on most intrinsic ones (Hermida, 2010); |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Another skill type, being information literacy application and development, implies another competence standard for newspapers and for entire journalism field (Desai, 2011). |

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Table 7. Comparative Competitors Paywall Factsheet

- The New Yorker is adopting prompt customer response competence, announcing its three months paywall promotion, making all articles, published since 2007, free. The measure is forced by falling website visits and subscriptions (Somaiya, 2014);
- Financial Times makes some of its most popular blogs free for public, to maintain stronger customer acceptance (e.g. Alpha Ville Blog), as reported by Jackson (2013);
- To fight the paywall downfalls, San Francisco Chronicle intends to incline paid schemes only to “exclusive material”, covering arts, leisure and analytical articles. Easily available news will remain free (Bloomberg Business, 2013);
- The Economist (2012) reveals common industry drop in advertisement revenues, as people prefer online news publications. Profitability falls by \$34 billion in USA, equal to only 50% of 2000’s revenue indicators.
- Market leaders such as Financial Times and the Wall Street Journal boast lessened paywall privileges as they lose content exclusiveness to esteemed competitors (Slegg, 2014).
- Numerous publications opt to offer both print and online news material in a combination to provide higher value for money and attain readers. With this approach, newspapers hope to foster a new solely online audience and increase their consequent revenues (Reuters, 2015).

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4.1.4 Scenario Planning Analysis and Findings

As New York Times paywall design and implementation cost the company \$40 - \$50 million, the question remains as of the strong basis for such a massive project. NYT's Digital Products Director, Smurl reports about minor customer research, which demonstrated moderate average willingness to pay for the news (McAthy, 2013). As of the paywall budget, this serves as a poorly justified measure. Moreover, the decision was inspired by companies such as Apple and Amazon, which have earlier established pay-for customer environment.

Gates (2010) defines that strategic planning ought to cover not only the final goal of the project, but also underpin risk management, corporate structure in consideration of their corporate perspectives. With this definition in mind, it is frustrating to observe NYT' online subscriptions failing along with lowering advertisement revenues (13% print and 4% digital losses as of 2013 referring to Filloux (2015)). If the company's paywall scenarios have been thought through, why does the NYT management confess in unresolved fears of online traffic fall and its uniqueness capacity in offering paid-for news? (Reuters, 2011).

Moreover, NYT confessed in its initial insecurity over the potential decrease in advertisement revenues, which is now a real fact. And it is still a doubt whether the newspaper will be able to cover occurred losses by paywall income in the future. Another bullet, hitting New York Times' poor scenario planning is proved vulnerability of the website to hacker attacks. As of Benton (2011), NYT's imbalance between maintaining free audience and attracting paying readers, resulted in highly leaky paywall structure.

Research area 2:	Marketing
Research Problem 1:	Imperfect/Inflexible paywall marketing strategy in maintaining current online audience and attract a new one
Research Question 1:	What marketing elements could be contributing to unstable paywall audience attraction and maintaining?
Research Objective 1:	Discover relevant marketing insights of NYT's paywall planning strategy and link those to Market-driven Organisation Model
Research Analysis Model 1:	Market-driven Organisation

Research area 2:	Marketing
Research Problem 2:	Marketing team's inconsequential Plan-Do-Check-Act plan in paywall supervision
Research Question 2:	What are the practical plan-do-check-act measures exercised by NYT in relation to paywall?
Research Objective 2:	Study NYT's Plan-Do-Check-Act activities
Research Analysis Model 2:	The Deming Cycle

4.2.2 The Deming Cycle Analysis and Findings

- NYT allowed article headlines and extracts availability on Google sources prior to 2011 paywall → **Do**;
- NYT cooperates with Google on discounted tablets along with 18 month paywall membership (Jackson, 2013) → **Act**;
- Strategic shift from information exclusiveness to stronger customer focus. Deeper editorial data analysis → **Plan**;
- NYT jumps into video platform development (Roberts, 2013) → **Do**;
- NYT introduces mobile friendly content display, to achieve on-the-go customer reach → **Act**;
- NYT makes Now application free, redesigns mobile interface and provided backstage details for featured materials → **Act** (Fitts, 2015)
- NYT's digital team fails to cover advertisement losses by newly introduced device apps and complements online subscription with mobile application → **Check** (Althausen, 2013);
- NYT alters its HR strategy towards strengthening its digital team → **Do** (Nevradakis, 2013);

5.1.3 Stakeholders Implications	✓ Rising subscription revenues due to improved customer dialogues (Investors and Shareholders); ✓ Enhanced CRM staff skills and expertise in case of well-established training and development scheme (Employees); ✓ Customer loyalty growth justified by impersonal communication and prompt NYT reaction (Subscribers); ✓ Positive public image to be gained by reducing costs and customer priority (Communities).
5.1.4 Resource Requirements	✓ Additional recruitment of marketing and CRM staff for more fulfilling CRM strategy implementation; ✓ Constant staff training costs; ✓ Rising marketing expenditure for investors and shareholders to consider; ✓ Additional operating and processing investment; ✓ Customer data collection, storage and planning IT programs and platforms.

5.2 7S Research Problem: NYT management's inability to fully employ 7S elements to maximize successful paywall project realisation

5.2.1 7S Research Problem Solution and Recommendations

NYT is highly recommended to alter its key operational processes and business units for paywall performance enhancement. The important concept is perceiving the paywall from various perspectives, enabling multi-directional strategic input from marketing, management, design, R&D, print and other contributing departments. NYT's paywall is not purely digital product, as it concerns informational delivery channels, forms of informational design and content management. Therefore, 7S Model is employed to outline relevant solutions throughout organisational levels.

Table 10. 7S Elements Recommendations for New York Times

Table 12. Core Competencies – Related Stakeholders Implications and Resource Requirements

5.3.2 Stakeholder Implications	✓ Strong data protection (Shareholders and Management); ✓ Increased investment returns (Shareholders and Owners); ✓ Better organized multi-layered digital operations (Employees and Subscribers); ✓ Increased readers loyalty (Shareholders and Owners); ✓ Solid digital publishing sector position (Shareholders and Owners).
5.3.3 Resource Requirements	✓ Financial inflow into talented staff and technological upgrade and restructuring.

5.4 Scenario Planning Research Problem: Insufficient alternative scenario planning for paywall project as of not foreseeing advertisement revenue fall and global search engines influence.

5.4.1 Scenario Planning Research Problem Solutions and Recommendations

- Consider further popularisation of social networks and come up with mutually-substituting cooperation plans;
- List additional online subscription schemes and test them through Reader Experience and Newsrooms with current and potential subscribers. Reserve certain schemes for possible future launch;
- Revise alternative recruitment policies for possible worsening of currently high staff turnover. Survey existing employees on job satisfaction and interview resigning staff members on the leave reasons;
- Introduce additional planning and research responsibilities at R&D department and ensure coherent supervision. Conduct timely monitoring of future planning scenarios;
- Predict and forecast future readers preferences for online news presentation and accessibility. Warrant future investment planning scenarios in strict accordance with quality subscribers' data;
- Combine both internal and external strategic views and goals in paywall scenario planning;
- Maintain balance between paywall-related processes and content in scenario design.

Table 19. Berenschot Project Management Stakeholders Implications and Resource Requirements

5.11.2 Stakeholder Implications	✓ Improved managements' job performance, benefiting NYT owners; ✓ Facilitated results control process for deliberate shareholders' reporting; ✓ Clear job objectives for employees, improving their working environment; ✓ Paywall breakdown into sub-processes, favorable for staff and management; ✓ More targeted products development for the readers.
5.11.3 Resource Requirements	✓ No specific financial costs are associated with adoption and communication of the given project management model; ✓ Necessary time required for staff and management in introduction and practice of the proposed scheme; ✓ Profound managerial skills in successful customisation of the model to all paywall business processes.

5.12 Analysis Limitations

- Recommendations are solely based on secondary data analysis;
- Each research problem analysis and solutions are focused on one particular theoretical model, limiting creativity spread and research scale;
- Management consultant responsible for the given report preparation does not possess professional background in newspaper industry and does not hold industry specific insights;
- Solutions and recommendations do not consider newspaper industry reports and studies from past decades. This ensures reliability of the study outcomes and yet lacks long-term research observations;

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