

# INDUSTRY ASSOCIATIONS AS CHANGE AGENTS: THE INSTITUTIONAL ROLES OF NEWSPAPER ASSOCIATIONS

**Mattias Nordqvist**

**Robert G. Picard**

Jönköping International Business School

**Ossi Pesämaa**

Queensland Institute of Technology

**ABSTRACT** This article explores the institutional roles of industry associations, employing institutional theory to identify and characterize the roles of leading associations in the newspaper industry. Using four leading newspaper associations as cases, the authors explore association functions evidenced through interviews with their key executives. The paper finds that the association leaders tended to emphasize normative functions, while associations' operational executives tended to focus on mimetic and coercive functions.

**KEY WORDS:** institutional theory, associations, organizations, functions, newspapers

---

This article focuses on institutional roles of industry associations in coordinating, developing and preserving their industries. Industry associations provide member firms benefits obtained from cooperation with other firms in the industry. Industry associations assist firms through knowledge building, knowledge deployment, and standard setting (Damsgaard & Lyytinen, 2001), in developing and participating in self regulation and codes of practice (Gunningham & Rees, 1997; Clark, 1999; Haufler, 2001), and promoting favorable trade policies (Procassini, 1995; Sell, 1995).

Industry associations create common benefits by monitoring industry trends and developments, conducting research and training, and engaging in advocacy and outreach activities (Ernstthal, 1997; Cox, 2007). Their value to companies is dependent upon the range and effectiveness of

*Copyright © 2010 Journal of Media Business Studies. Mattias Nordqvist, Robert G. Picard, and Ossi Pesämaa, "Industry Associations as Change Agents: The Institutional Roles of Newspaper Associations," 7(3):51-69 (2010).*

services provided to members or on behalf of members (Mack, 1990; Procassini, 1995). At one time industry associations were primarily perceived as pressure groups engaged in labor and public policy debates, but those perceptions began to change in the 1970s and 1980s (Coleman & Jacek, 1983) and today they build cooperation, foster information sharing, offer training and provide a wide range of services designed to help members improve business performance.

Despite their importance, very little research has been conducted on the role of industry associations in the media sector in general and in the newspaper in particular. The purpose of this article is to contribute with knowledge in this area. We address our purpose by drawing on an institutional theory framework and qualitative case research of the most prominent industry associations in the newspaper industry.

## INSTITUTIONAL THEORY

Following central tenets of institutional theory, industry associations can be seen as institutional actors that help shape perceptions of industry executives and their responses to industry developments. They influence industry norms and practices, provide benchmarks and stipulate best practices, and suggest strategic responses to industry threats and opportunities. Individual companies within the newspaper industry share the same 'fate' in so far as they confront similar issues, trends, and forces. In this sense, they can be seen as representing an 'organizational field', that is, a recognized area of institutional life (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983), and their industry-wide behavior can therefore be examined through institutional theory. We focus particularly on the role of industry associations in forming, spreading and legitimizing the adoption of specific corporate and business strategies, and especially organization *change* in such strategies, within the newspaper industry.

We draw on an institutional approach that views organizational reality as socially constructed (Berger & Luckmann, 1967; Meyer & Rowan, 1977). This means that many organizational activities are the result of "a pattern of doing things that evolves over time and becomes legitimated within an organization and an environment" (Judge & Zeithaml, 1992:769). At least three levels of analysis are relevant in this view of organizations. Oliver (1997) suggests that actions reflect processes at the individual, organizational and interorganisational levels (Oliver, 1997). Focusing on the institutional roles of newspaper associations, we are particularly interested in the interorganizational level. Here, institutional pressure on member companies emerge from the activities of industry associations and similar field specific organizational networks (Greenwood, Suddaby & Hinings, 2002). This pressure include sector and industry related expectations that define socially acceptable conduct to firms in the same organizational field and that tend to cause firms to exhibit similar practices and activities (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Oliver, 1997).

DiMaggio and Powell (1983) identified three general institutional mechanisms: mimetic, coercive and normative, which they argued lead organizations in an organizational field to conformity and homogenization. Mimetic processes are associated with the situation where organizations imitate, or model themselves on other organizations. Coercive processes come from formal and informal pressures exerted by other organizations upon which they are dependent and by cultural expectations in the society (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). Finally, normative pressure related to the process of professionalization, or the joint work to define conditions and methods of a particular profession or industry

Industry associations are voluntary organizations (Aldrich & Staber, 1988), meaning that they rely on the survival of their members to continue to exist (Ahrne & Brunsson, 2005). The voluntary nature make industry associations exposed to a continuing pressure to legitimize their actions towards current and potential members. Meyer (1994), for instance, makes a difference between self-purposive organizations and organizations that function as regulatory others. Industry associations fulfill the definition of regulatory other. They are organizations founded by other organizations to fulfill their collective purposes. Another characteristic is that trade associations are not self-interested. Formally, Aldrich and Staber (1988:111) define industry associations as “Organizations created to represent business interests within specific domains, mobilizing firms within their domain so that collective action can be taken on common problems.”

Institutional theorists have noted that industry associations provide arenas through which organizational members interact and collectively represent themselves to themselves (Greenwood *et al.*, 2002). In this study, we examine how adopting and changing strategy is influenced by newspapers industry associations that serve individual newspaper companies. The participation of managers from these companies in activities and services organized by associations—conferences, courses, training programs, seminars and publications—helps convey common understanding of industry challenges and opportunities. By exercising institutional pressure to change, newspaper industry associations help to stabilize different types of exchange within the industry. Associations promote mimetic functions by conveying the strategies and best practices found among leading and innovative players in the industry in conferences, publications, and training programs. They significantly carry out normative functions in training, but also through publications and conference presentations.

Therefore, the institutional perspective attends more to the social context in which actors in the newspaper industry are embedded than many of dominant strategy change theories, such as resource-based view (*e.g.*, Barney, 1991) or industrial organization approach (*e.g.*, Porter, 1980). In this article, we focus on the associations’ coercive, mimetic and normative roles in creating pressure on newspaper companies’ to adopt and change certain competitive strategies. This study uses four

associations to show the institutional functions and roles they practice in the newspaper industry. The newspaper industry is a very appropriate context for learning more about the institutional roles of industry associations since it has been undergoing acute change in the past two decades and the industry associations have been particularly active in promoting and helping members perceive needs to change, see potential directions for change to follow, and ways to implement change.

## **THE NEWSPAPER INDUSTRY AND ITS ASSOCIATIONS**

Industry associations play significant roles in the newspaper industry at the national, regional, and global levels. They are particularly important to members because newspaper firms engage in little research and development on their own, have historically exhibited low levels of innovation, and generally do not have organized strategy or business intelligence offices. The industry is highly domestic with only a few international firms and few papers are exported (Picard & Brody, 1997). The industry is three centuries old, has undergone relatively few major technological changes in its history, and became extraordinarily profitable during the second half of the twentieth century because of the growth of advertising (Picard, 2002). It has been a highly stable industry in which success historically required little strategic thinking or business acumen. In this environment newspaper industry associations often provide significant business intelligence, research, and training roles, as well as political and public advocacy roles. As institutional actors, they thus exercise considerable influence over their constituents.

During the past two decades, however, the newspaper industry has experienced particularly turbulent markets as rapid changes in technology, policy, and markets have created many substitute sources of news, information, and feature materials and lifestyle changes have altered traditional newspaper consumption patterns (Picard & Brody, 1997; Picard, 2003; Meyer, 2004; Picard, 2004). The increased offerings of terrestrial, cable, and satellite television, the development of the Internet, and the expansion of mobile communication from voice to content provision have been particularly disruptive. In this environment the industry associations have played important roles identifying and explaining developments, exploring threats and opportunity, setting out best practices, and helping firms develop strategic responses.

This study explores the role of the industry organizations in explaining and inducing change relative to Internet and mobile activities beginning in the 1990s. Although television developments have been important, their effects were felt at different times because the industries and the pace of development were regulated by governments and occurred at different times in different nations and regions. Internet and mobile technologies were introduced globally at relatively the same timeframe and the potential impact on newspapers was recognized early in that process.

The newspaper industry worldwide support global, regional and national business associations to serve company and personnel needs. Several of these are particularly influential because of the breadth and depth of their activities. The most significant international associations are the World Association of Newspapers (WAN-IFRA) and the International Newspaper Marketing Association (INMA) [which changed 'Newspaper' in its name to 'Newsmedia' in 2009 to reflect its members online, mobile, and other delivery platforms].

Associations also exist at the regional level, but their primary activities are public advocacy. The European Newspaper Publishers Association, for example, represents European national associations in Brussels and does not engage in the wider research and training activities of the national associations. The Inter American Press Association is primarily concerned with press freedom issues, but sometimes addresses business issues in its congresses, typically following agendas set by international associations and the U.S. national industry association.

National industry associations exist in most nations, but the Newspaper Association of America has significant influence beyond the borders of that nation because of its size and resources and it often sets the agendas for other national, as well as regional and international associations. A specialized industry training center, American Press Institute, offers short term executive training and also plays significant roles in shaping industry perceptions and responses and is open to executives worldwide.

### ***Descriptions of Associations Selected as Cases***

For this study the activities and roles of the four associations will be explored as case study. The following subsections introduce the scope and scale of the activities of the case associations and the member newspapers and executives that they serve.

***International Newspaper Marketing Association (INMA)*** The International Newspaper [now Newsmedia] Marketing Association (INMA) was founded in 1930 and is devoted to improving activities involving marketing newspaper circulation and advertising. It sees its role as recognizing and stimulating marketing activities and innovation in newspapers. INMA represent more than 1,200 members in 80 countries. A typical member is a senior executive in a daily newspaper, but its membership is also open to suppliers, press associations, and academics.

The association provides common global services to members and has geographical divisions providing more local services to Asia, Europe, Latin America and North America. It provides services in multiple languages. Important activities include its annual World Congress and regional conferences and publications of *Ideas* magazine, specialized books and reports based on research about trends, developments, and best practices, and blogs (International Newspaper Marketing Association, 2008). A

major mission is to support membership organizations to sustain audiences, revenues and profits by offering best practices.

**Newspaper Association of America (NAA)** Newspaper Association of America (NAA) is the primary national newspaper association of the United States. It focuses on issues involving marketing, public policy, diversity, industry development, newspaper operations and readership. It was formed in 1992 through the merger of 7 newspaper business and professional organizations. The organization conducts research on industry trends and development, organizes conferences and training seminars, and publishes *Presstime* magazine, special topical reports and industry statistics (National Newspaper Association, 2008).

NAA represents an industry with more than 2 000 newspapers in North America (although U.S. based, it provides significant services to Canada papers as well). It says that its purposes are to promote innovation, new tools of information exchange, and to transmit industry perspectives to key stakeholders and decision makers (Federal, Government and third party interest such as Wall Street and advertising organizations). NAA does not represent journalists, but the owners of the newspapers and their interest in surviving and selling newspapers.

Its range of activities includes developing and maintaining relationships with government, marketing the industry to advertising customers, improve advertising and circulation activities, and promoting the development of digital platforms (websites). This range of activities originates from tradition and a strategic reorganization in 2007.

**American Press Institute (API)** The American Press Institute (API) is a specialized newspaper training and research institute funded by leading newspaper companies. Established in 1946 by U.S. firms, it now provides training for executives globally. It provides seminars on general management, marketing, advertising, and circulation. In recent years it has specifically conducted research and training and on industry change and development, including the Newspaper Next program designed with Clayton Christensen at Harvard Business School (American Press Institute, 2008). API is also in some instances supporting the industry with targeted consulting.

API's support is directed toward helping managers become better at running a newspaper. Their typical candidate is a manager in charge of marketing, circulation or research. The approach is targeted programs for two weeks on advertising, editorial work and related fields to newspaper industry. The research part of the organization plays significant roles in exploring industry challenges and responses, which are reported in publications and seminars.

**World Association of Newspapers (WAN-IFRA)** World Association of Newspapers (WAN) was founded in 1948 and is a global membership organization for national newspaper organizations (currently 76) and

newspaper executives and press associations. Its primary objectives are promoting press freedom, assisting the development of the industry, and promoting cooperation among members. It conducts research on industry trends, technology, and business issues, publishes a variety of reports based on its research (including the annual *World Press Trends*, the definitive statistical report on the newspaper industry worldwide), provides training for newspaper executives, and conducts conferences and seminars for its members (World Association of Newspapers, 2008).

The association conducts specialized research activities and publishes many reports and guides designed to help publishers cope with changing conditions and technical and market developments. In 2009 WAN merged with IFRA, a specialized industry association focused on technology for publishing and news management and publishing systems.

## METHODS

One of the authors interviewed key informants from newspaper associations to collect information about their perceptions of the changes in the industry, the implications of the changes to organizational activities, and how their member services were being directed relevant to the changes. These key informants were picked because they exhibit a certain expertise and position in the selected newspaper associations, as suggested by Bagozzi, Yi and Phillips (1991). The primary informants were association CEOs and executive directors, directors of conferences and events, directors of research, publication editors, training directors, and others with related responsibilities. Table 1 lists individuals interviewed in each case association and their areas of key expertise.

Structured interviews were conducted with the informants at the offices or during conference events sponsored by the organizations. Interviews with each informant approximately 60 minutes and follow-up contacts were made to ensure accuracy.

Interviews were thus made in environments comfortable for the respondents, either at their offices or events they were sponsoring. An interview guide and definitions were provided in advance so that each respondent could reflect on the issues beforehand and have a better idea about the nature of the project. The interview guide also stated what other organizations that were part of the study, the objective of the study, as well as technicalities that such as the use of recorders in the interview situations. All interviews were made and transcribed by the same researcher to ensure consistency in data gathering and identification of relevant statements from the respondents.

Table 1: Key Informants, Their Positions and Expertise

Organization	Selected candidate	Position	Expertise
INMA	Earl Wilkinson	Executive Director	Chief coordinator, spokesperson and major authority for the organization
	Megan DeLeon	Event Manager	Coordinates INMA marketing and conferences
	James Khattak,	Editor	Coordinates activities that relate to the INMA magazine; newsletter and website
NAA	Sturm	CEO	Chief coordinator, spokesperson and major authority for the organization
	Bennett	Director	Business development
	Murray	Director	Marketing research, audience, metrics and circulation.
	Conaghan	Director	Research
API	Davis	President	Chief coordinator, spokesperson and major authority for the organization
	Clisham	Director	Marketing
	Davis	Director	Chief coordinator, spokesperson and major authority for the organization
	Riordan	Director	Programming and personnel
	Peskin	Associate Director	Design, visual journalism
	Mulholland	Associate Director	Executive leadership
WAN-IFRA	Balding	Chief Executive Officer	Main coordinator
	Stone	Director	R & D

INMA: International Newsmedia Marketing Organization; NAA: Newspaper Association of America; API: American Press Institute; WAN-IFRA: World Association of Newspapers and News Publishers

Interviews for the World Association of Newspapers were made in Vienna, Austria, in October 2009 with Timothy Balding, chief executive officer, and Martha L. Stone, director of the Shaping the Future of the Newspaper project. Interviews with personnel at the International Newspaper Marketing Association were made at the organization's headquarters in Dallas in December 2008. Interviews were made with Earl Wilkinson, executive director; James Khattak, editor; and Megan DeLeon, event manager. Interviews were conducted at the offices of the Newspaper Association of America in Washington, D.C., in December 2008 with John Sturm, executive director; Randy Bennett, senior vice president for business development; John Murray, vice president for audience metrics and circulation; and Jim Conaghan vice president for research. Interviews were conducted at the American Press Institute offices in Reston, Virginia, in December 2008 with Andrew B Davis, president and executive director; Mary Peskin, associate director; Mark Mulholland, associated director; Carol Ann Riordan, vice president for programming and personnel; and Elaine R. Clisham, director of marketing.

## PERCEIVED ROLES AS CHANGE AGENTS

In this section we present the results that indicate how the association executives see the roles of their association. Our analysis describes how their roles carry out the mimetic, coercive and normative functions and promote change in the industry and the means the associations use to carry them out. The executives clearly see these functions as a crucial activity for the newspaper associations.

### **Mimetic Functions**

Mimetic functions convey the strategies and best practices found among leading and innovative players in the industry. Mimetic functions are in part a reaction to change and a part of change that comes from learning by observing others.

Megan DeLeon and James Khattak at INMA pursue strategies to identify things that newspapers need or want to hear by bringing relevant, new and exciting stories from others in the industry to conferences and seminars.

*The way things are in the industry right now, it's all about how we can get people there based on what their needs are. What do they want to be hearing? Obviously, innovation, innovation and innovation. We focus on the core aspects of the newspaper industry: you know circulation, advertising, marketing etc. So, we provide a range of topics through case studies where newspapers have implemented something relevant and something new and exciting worth telling a story about (Event Manager Megan DeLeon, INMA).*

*Topics change; you have different speakers; and they talk about different things and have different presentations. Similarly, reports will be on different subjects cover different areas and so on. But we will always be the same with the reports in that we will try to get a lot of detail, whatever the report is about (Editor James Khattak, INMA, 2008).*

John Murray of NNA emphasizes that he is a representative of the consumer side and his perspective on the role of their organization is related to helping newspapers understand how to respond to consumers.

*I focus on the consumer side—traditionally with print. Both in the business operational sense and in what it takes to market the newspaper to the reader...Anything that has to do with how people consume media—and how they move from platform to platform – online to other sources—and how it all fits together (John Murray, NAA).*

Jim Conaghan sees a similar role for the research role for the NAA role, where he oversees applied research on consumer research and

provides information about consumer profiles through surveys. The organization also does business analysis and forecasting by collecting data on the retail side of the business, i.e., how consumers use newspapers and online products. NAA's role from his perspective is characterized as helping papers be reactive to consumers needs.

The association executives thus see their mimetic roles as providing information and examples of how others in the industry are responding to contemporary challenges and how changes in markets are affecting the newspaper business and what their implications are. These serve business intelligence and best practice functions, providing members examples to emulate in their own papers.

### **Coercive Functions**

Coercive functions link players from different parts of the value chain for better coordination and performance. An industry association typically falls into this category because their role is to coordinate and they typically do so through events, magazines, newsletters, reports and websites.

Earl Wilkinson of INMA expresses the view that their core mission is sharing ideas and inspiring change, which is pursued through their website, e-newsletter, magazines, conferences and reports.

John Sturm sees the role NAA as representing the owners of the newspapers. Its major roles are to advocate the interest of the newspaper to the government, to market the newspaper industry to advertising customers, and to be the voice of the industry.

*Our key areas of emphasis are in advocating the interest of the newspaper industry to the federal government. Second, marketing the industry to our advertising customers. And third, being the voice of the industry in the sense that we are the centre of the communication having to do with the newspaper industry to the general press, to the trade presses, to Wall Street, and other analyst who follow the newspaper industry and general public...We do not do too much training...Marketing and lobbying are the major parts...You will notice I did not say technology...We have a small staff that, one with myself, do have some personal relationships—but really lobbying of the Congress and the administration is these days a fact based activity. They want to know what the real facts are...We are able to package the information in a way that they can assimilate it, understand it and use it in a way that is beneficial for the industry (John Sturm, NAA).*

Elaine R. Clisham at API says the institute's roles are that of a training and executive officer development. Their role is to prepare managers to become better in running a newspaper and helping newspapers revitalize their strategies and think about how they can find new routes to make money on what they are doing. From her perspective

their role as to improve performance is therefore more of a coercive than normative role.

*We allow managers to become better in running newspapers. So, not just editors, but people in charge of advertising, circulation, and every functional aspect of running a newspaper are covered by our seminars...So seminars for advertising directors, we would have advertising directors talking about how they compensate their sales people, how they manage their sales territories or anything to do with being a better advertising director, or anything to do with being a better editor—very much like a University model (Elaine R. Clisham, API).*

The coercive functions are thus accomplished through efforts to push members forward in their thinking so they won't be left without knowledge and skills helpful in adjusting to the new environment in which they operate. Much of this is done through publications, training, and conference activities.

All of the association maintain close ties with suppliers and others in their value chain and regularly bring representatives of equipment and supply manufacturers, major advertisers, audience research firms, and business service suppliers to conferences to discuss joint issues and developments and to promote mutual benefits. Association magazines and reports regularly highlight issues involving suppliers and they play roles in many of the research activities sponsored by the associations. These activities thus provide for information exchange and coordination of the newspaper industry with other relevant industries in ways designed to improve the performance of both.

### **Normative Functions**

Normative functions set the norms and standards of behavior for operating in an industry and to show how companies in the industry need to change.

Earl Wilkinson says INMA has two missions. The first is to sharing ideas and the second is inspiring change. Sharing ideas comes out in their traditional channels for provide information (website, newsletter etcetera). The second mission, however, is more driven by research, that is “connecting the dots, finding the trends and spotting the trends in our industry.” (Wilkinson, INMA, 2008).

*Our association is sort of the young and angry association. We do push change; we do not need a global recession for our change agenda. Most of the other industry associations are pretty old, pretty and conservative...I like to think that we tend to attract more progressive, more change-oriented and younger members...These are the executives that believe we need to be researching more, selling more and marketing more in our newspapers. We need a marketing culture, we don't need an editorial culture; we don't need a production culture and we don't need*

*an editorial culture. There are lots of associations that do what we did yesterday, but that is not our association (Earl Wilkinson, INMA).*

Randy Bennett at NAA also sees its role as helping newspapers interpret and forecast emerging opportunities.

*We try to help the newspapers, particularly in this period of transition. We look at where the industry is going, where are the opportunities, who are doing interesting things...We focus particularly on digital media, where that is going, and how newspapers can better leverage digital platforms to drive their business (Randy Bennett NAA).*

Andrew Davis at API believes its role is to improve leadership and thus affect the entire newspaper industry. Because decisions need to be taken at the top of the organizations, API has taken the initiative of forming groups of leading individuals and seeking consensus of what should be done. He thus sees their role more as more normative than just being coercive to performance.

*We realized that these decisions need to be made at the top of the organizations—that the innovators who are in the middle of the organization don't have the capability of turning these organizations around to the future. So, last month we put together a forum of 50 of the CEOs of newspaper companies in US and Canada and just spent a day looking at the financial picture of newspapers, which was not good. They were so excited about the opportunity to meet together and discuss these things so they asked us to put together another forum..Why this is interesting is, this role should have been taken by the Newspaper Association of America or by the World Association (Andrew Davis, API).*

Carol Ann Riordan says the association emphasizes what the industry needs and thus it is their role to identify a new business model, adapt technology and deliver what consumers expect.

*Papers need to create an entirely new business model...Need to make a leap from print and paper into a multi-platform...that serves the needs and wants of very diverse and a very large group of consumers (Carol Ann Riordan, API).*

Mary Peskin stresses that a particular interest at API is the user perspective in how press and online news is presented. She argues that there needs to be a greater focus on visual journalism, designing digital journalism, and the role of esthetics affect how communication could be performed. This is important to adapt performance of the newspaper, but is also becoming important in creating a new role of the association.

*We need to be up to speak the raw model, and the training, and the platform for talking about digital (Mary Peskin, API).*

Mark Mulholland offer a different perspective in the sense that he stresses that role of media associations is to improve opportunity recognition. The idea that things have to be made in different ways, business models will have to change and profit expectations will have to change are all opportunities, he says. His views echo ideas in opportunity recognition literature (Shane & Venkataraman, 2000; Shane, 2000; Arenius & Clercq, 2005).

*Change in the media industry is an understatement. We are in times of huge massive change. I've never seen the pace of things that are happening in our business anywhere close to what have been happening over the last 12 to 18 months. There is absolutely not day that goes by that I do not see notification across my correspondence of some major, and almost always negative, trends going on in the media business right now. People being laid off, newspapers consolidating distribution areas, changing, changing distribution days, all of the things that we hear so much about. So, there certainly is all of that change going on that is a result of the economy, of a combination of transiting at the same time including consolidation of retailers, the emergence of digital media, the internet and other digital media as a growing force. Just changes in consumer behavior. All of those things of course having a huge impact on the business and on the industry. Most of them, at least, if you look at them at the surface on a negative way. We believe, and we'll talk I am sure about some of the things that American Press Institute is trying to do. We believe that it is not inevitable all negative. The glass is sort of half full rather than being half empty. There are opportunities for media organizations, there be different types of opportunities, things will have to be done in different ways, business models will have to change, profit expectations will have to change – but there are opportunities. Certainly, somebody is going to figure out how to do those kinds of things and it might as well be the media companies, primary newspapers and broadcasting (Mark Mulholland, API).*

Timothy Balding's views on the role of WAN definitely support the normative functions in the sense that he sees the role of his organization as to push new trends.

*The defense and promotion of the freedom of the press...helping the development of the press in emerging countries and transitional countries...meeting place for publishers and editors worldwide to come and discuss strategies for making better and more prosperous newspapers and news publishing operations. Within the scope of that we have organized conferences, study tours, workshops, we have a*

*research activity, and we follow newspaper trends and now digital trends also in the world...We represent the newspaper industry on the international stage (Timothy Balding, WAN-IFRA).*

Furthermore, Balding explicitly questions an online business model based on advertising, saying that it has opened an avenue for Google, because the logic of the model is to bring as many readers as possible to the newspaper websites, just because readers are not willing to pay for content.

*The argument until now has been Google brings traffic into newspapers websites and therefore it's a good thing. Because the business model has been to try to build advertising as the source of revenue on the internet because experiments so far to make people pay for content have not been productive...What I do think is that people have been slow to understand the power of Google in terms of the advertising revenues...Google control search advertising...About 75% of advertising have been captured by Google and Yahoo (Timothy Balding, WAN-IFRA).*

Balding takes a counter position to rest of the association executives that argue the newspaper industry was not too slow to adapt to new sources of news and information. He argues they may even have reacted too fast.

*The common idea that newspaper industry reacted slowly to this (internet) is a false one in my judgment. Because—I mean I saw there was panic and fear in the newspaper industry in 94-95 about the sudden emergence of the internet...They said, this is going to destroy us. It is a cliché to say that the newspaper saw it as an enemy instead of an opportunity...What they have not found is a business model. I mean our role was at that time and today being a facilitator. Our mission is to bring before the newspaper community. Pursue best practices in newspaper worldwide and also to have debates on what we perceive as the leading issues. I do not think for a second we were slow about it. I am proud of one thing, which is WAN in 1992 set up its own worldwide electronic network in pre-internet days...If we have to do it again - it sounds boastful, it sounds arrogant but there is nothing we didn't do that I think we should have done - as an association" I am not talking about the industry...(Timothy Balding, WAN-IFRA).*

Martha Stone says the association's members expect it to be identifying and explaining trends and innovations.

*[W]e have to really be on top of the trends and we have to know where the innovations are happening...When you start opening your mind and see where the innovations are happening, you see that there is a whole*

*load of great case studies waiting to be told, about how to do print journalism better, how to do newspaper business, how to do newspaper and advertising sales better. And that is what we are trying to do. That is our mission to find those needles in the haystack—so we can tell rest of the publishers who subscribe to our reports, essentially our members, so that they can bring their businesses forward knowing what the guy in South Africa did or the lady in publisher in Singapore did (Martha Stone, WAN-IFRA).*

Focusing attention on emerging ideas and new opportunities that may bring new revenues streams in the future is an important part of the association's work, but it cannot force publishers to embrace them, she says. Many of the contemporary Internet challenges to the industry were seen well ahead of their success.

*Yes we saw them coming; the industry did. Unfortunately we did not react...Yesterday I gave a presentation about the opportunity for mobile for newspapers. Right now it doesn't really present itself as a revenue stream, but my message is don't blow it this time—what we did in this industry when the Internet became a factor, you know, pre-Google. The newspaper publishers were not paying attention to this, saying no, no, no. We are not going to do this; we are not going to do it well; we are not going to invest in this. It's not going to make us any money – it was all about money then. And then, all the sudden, Google and Yahoo started this powerful revenue stream of contextual ads and made billions of dollars from it and basically own the entire Internet advertising market (Martha Stone, WAN-IFRA).*

When taken to their core, the statements about the roles and functions of the organizations expressed by the association executives clearly evidence the emphasis on mimetic, coercive, and normative functions (See Table 2).

Executives in the associations clearly see that they play significant roles as leaders of the industry. They see their functions as identifying issues that members should address and determining and promoting how the industry should change. These activities thus set out the normative responses for members to changing conditions, what the normal range of activities within the industry should be, what new activities should be taken in by members, and what processes and practices should exist. All of these set the perceptions of norms of the industry held by association members.

Table 2: Roles, Diagnostics and Core Values

Organization	Candidate	Association role	Diagnostics to roles
INMA	Wilkinson	Share ideas and stimulate change through their website, e-newsletter, magazine, reports and conferences. Being progressive to change and supporting a marketing research rather than an editorial culture of the newspaper.	INMA have a coercive (**) role as traditional coordinator of activities they are expected to deliver. On the other hand they see their role as normative (***) in the sense they stress progressiveness and being a relatively new association.
	DeLeon	Share ideas and use best practices.	Mimetic (*) because they coordinate stories that others are willing to hear.
	Khattak,	Not produce our own material but coordinate interesting articles from elsewhere at our website, e-newsletter, magazine, reports and conferences.	No clear direction on having independent information or research on change and thus fit into the mimetic (*)
NAA	Sturm	An advertising, marketing and lobbying organization for owners of newspapers	Coordination information (**)
	Bennett	Support newspapers on forecasting	Identify opportunities (***)
	Conaghan	Research	React to consumers (*)
	Murray	Consumer research	Follow consumers (*)
API	Clisham	Role of the organization is to train directors to become better leaders of newspapers.	Improve performance of executives in newspapers (**)
	Davis	Identify new sources	Be the active voice (***)
	Riordan	Stimulate members to identify a new business model, digital platform and	Proactive to change (***)
	Peskin	API to take a more active role to stimulate how to present digital design and esthetics.	She find that there is a lacking expertise on digital design which needs to be communicated (****)
	Mulholland	Stress opportunity recognition	Identify new opportunities (***)
WAN-IFRA	Balding	WAN-IFRA three main missions are: freedom of the press; meeting place for publishers and editors; and represent the newspaper industry at international stage To achieve this they organize: conferences, study tours, workshops, research, follow newspaper trends and digital trends.	Progressive to change (***)
	Stone	Be ahead of the newspapers and support the notion of free press and coordinate different activities related to research.	Progressive to change (***)

\*Mimetic functions conveying the strategies and best practices found among leading and innovative players in the industry.

\*\*Coercive functions linking players from different parts of the value chain for better coordination and performance.

\*\*\*Normative functions set the norms and standards of behavior.

## CONCLUSIONS

This article shows that there is a clear perception among association executives that new emerging media of digital platforms, visually demanding websites, more active readership, global trends, and media environment are putting great pressure on the newspaper industry. Needs for new business models, reducing costs of printing, managing change, and developing new leadership policies are creating tremendous stress on the strategic work of a newspaper. Executives at newspaper industry associations see their roles as helping the industry understand these changes and pressures and supporting efforts to change and adapt the industry to the contemporary situation.

This article reveals that almost all association leaders play a very normative function in this regard, whereas second-level association executives focused more on operational issues tend to serve mimetic or coercive functions.

One way to identify a normative role is when the “voice” has a preferential role of interpretation to different situations and helps set standards for others. Associations can thus “lead” or speak actively about a certain preferential directions an industry should take. In this case our respondents, as representatives of industry association clear see and engage in the role of directing discourse through their interpretations change and that their promotion of change puts them in the roles as change agents.

This research found that some newspaper association executives also take the responsibility of suggesting directions and means of change. This function was particularly seen among senior leaders and trainers, but less so among less senior executives. An emphasis on means and directionality of change is evident in language such as “we push change” (Wilkinson), “look at where the industry is going” (Bennett), “we realized that these decisions needs to be made at the top of the organizations” (Davis), “having to create a new business model” (Riordan), “we need to speak the raw model” (Peskin), “so that they can bring their businesses forward” (Stone), and “role at that time and today being a facilitator” (Balding).

Aside from this clear normative function, we found that both DeLeon, Khattak (INMA) and Murray (NAA) support the idea providing information or bring in examples so that the members can act properly based on that information.

One exception among the senior leadership is Sturm, who sees his role through informal and formal lobbying as providing decision makers in Wall Street and the Congress with information, to help them take decisions that support newspaper industry. Sturm thus support leaders with greater authority (Congress and Wall Street), whereas the other leaders more clearly address their issues directly to members. This function exists is NAA because it is a national rather than international organization and carries out tasks as a representative of the industry—the

classic functional role of associations before they took on the broader cooperative and service role in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century.

It also seems apparent that the newspaper associations stress radical change at top level but—because operational issues are close the associations' interests—still emphasizes the need to pay attention to operational issues such as sales, advertising, segmentation, circulation, and technology instead of just strategic visions so they can react or act progressively. Such progressive thinking may enlighten leadership in individual newspapers and the way they coordinate their activities.

These results reveal that there is thus hierarchy both within the associations, but also in regard to the audiences to which the associations' messages are directed.

It is noteworthy that the executives of the associations take a very commercial approach to change, based on solid commercial logic, and this is probably due to their memberships and services being directed toward publishers and managerial issues. However, it needs to be noted that some tensions exist between these organizations representing business side of newspapers and editors associations and journalists unions and professional associations because their interests do not always coincide.

The importance of mimetic and normative functions in the industry associations could be problematic if association members do not give adequate consideration to their unique product and market situations. Mimicry not always right for all and differing market conditions, resources available, content emphases, and opportunities. Forming strategy based on mimicry of the best stories, best practices and processes and the normative elements promoted by the associations rather than giving serious consideration of a firm's own unique position may not produce the most effective results.

This study has helped clarify how newspaper association executives perceive their roles, how the associations carry out the functions, and the messages that they are providing the industry and the public. Future research on newspapers associations as change agents can improve this understanding by studying whether the associations or other parties actually led change, how individual newspapers view and use their relationships with these associations, the effectiveness of strategies and actions suggested in association activities during the past decade and a half, and whether emphasis on technology change, consumer change, newspaper culture, or approaches to news induced or supported the greatest change in the industry.

## REFERENCES

[http://www.americanpressinstitute.org/pages/api/about\\_api/about\\_api/](http://www.americanpressinstitute.org/pages/api/about_api/about_api/).

Audia, P. G., Locke, E. A., & Smith, K. G. (2000) The paradox of success: An archival and a laboratory study of strategic persistence following radical environmental change. *Academy of Management Journal*, 43 (5), 837-853.

- Bagozzi, P., Yi, Y., and Phillips, L. W. (1991). Assessing Construct Validity in Organizational Research. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 36: 421-458.
- Clarke, Roger (1999). Internet privacy concerns confirm the case for intervention, *Communications of the ACM*, 42(2): 60-67.
- Coleman, William D. and Jacek, Henry J. (1983). The roles and Activities of Business Interest Associations in Canada. *Canadian Journal of Political Science*, 16(2):257-280.
- Cox, John B., editor (2007). *Professional Practices in Association Management: The Essential Resource for Effective Management of Nonprofit Organizations*. 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. Washington, D.C.: American Society of Association Executives.
- Damsgaard J. & Lyytinen K. (2001). The Role of Intermediating Institutions in the Diffusion of Electronic Data Interchange (EDI): How Industry Associations Intervened in Denmark, Finland, and Hong Kong. *The Information Society*, Volume 17(3):195-210.
- Ernstthal, Henry and Jones, Bob (1997). *Principles of Association Management*. 4<sup>th</sup> edition. Washington, D.C.: American Society of Association Executives.
- Gunningham N. and Rees J. (1997). Industry Self-Regulation, An Institutional Perspective, *Law and Policy*, 19:4.
- Haufler, Virginia (2001). *A Public Role for the Private Sector: Industry Self-Regulation in the Global Economy*. Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.
- International Newspaper Marketing Association (2008). About INMA. Available at <http://www.inma.org/aboutus.cfm>.
- Mack, Charles S. (1990). *The Executive's Handbook of Trade and Business Associations: How They Work--And How to Make Them Work Effectively for You*. Quorum Books.
- Meyer, Philip (2004). *The Vanishing Newspaper: Saving Journalism in the Information Age*. Columbia: University of Missouri Press.
- Newspaper Association of America (2008). About NAA. Available at <http://www.naa.org/AboutNAA.aspx>
- Picard, Robert G. (2002). US Newspaper Ad Revenue Shows Consistent Growth, *Newspaper Research Journal*, 23(4):21-33 (Fall).
- Picard, Robert G. (2003). Cash Cows or Entrecôte: Publishing Companies and New Technologies, *Trends in Communication*, 11(2):127-136.
- Picard, Robert G., ed. (2004). *Strategic Responses to Media Market Changes*. Jönköping: Jönköping International Business School.
- Picard, Robert G. and Brody, Jeffrey H. (1997). *The Newspaper Publishing Industry*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.
- Procassini, Andrew A. (1995). *Competitors in Alliance: Industry Associations, Global Rivalries and Business-Government Relations*. Quorum Books.
- Sell, Susan K. (1995). The Origins of a Trade-Based Approach to Intellectual Property Protection: The Role of Industry Associations, *Science Communication*, Vol. 17(2):163-185.
- World Association of Newspapers (2008). About WAN. Available at <http://www.wan-press.org>