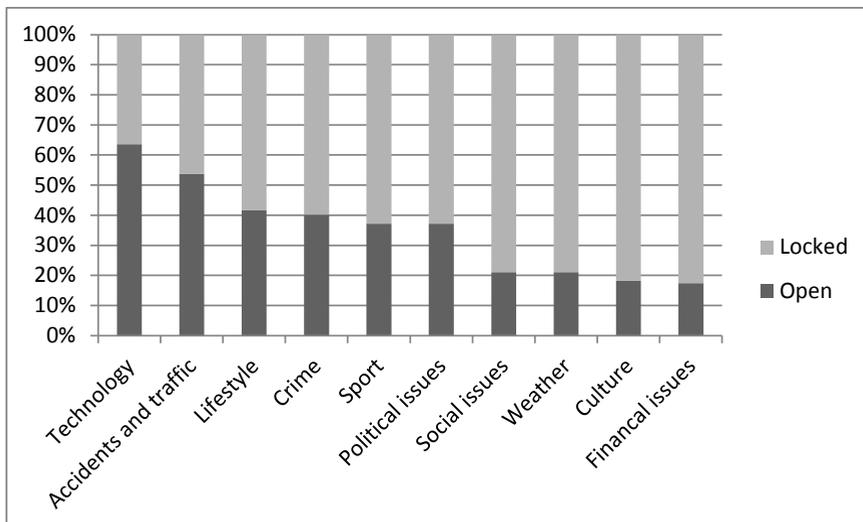


matters related to both cultural policy and celebrity news. On the one hand, the decline in cultural news then supports the tendency for more “tabloid” or soft news content, while on the other hand it supports a focus on more serious news. In addition to these three changes, the category “crime” has also fallen dramatically since the introduction of the paywall. This should not be interpreted as a sign of a decline in the coverage of criminal affairs, but rather be seen as a result of the massive coverage of the trial against the mass murderer Anders Behring Breivik in May 2012.

Although we can see some developments, the overall content profile has not changed dramatically during the post-paywall period and is characterised by a relatively uniform distribution of topics. As argued above *Fædrelandsvennen* might be considered an omnibus newspaper, serving a large and varied audience group. A clear shift of content profile would mean a shift away from this position. As previously mentioned, news and newspapers are considered experience goods, which may also be an explanation as to why the content profile has not changed dramatically with the introduction of the paywall. In order to keep the existing readers and attract new ones, *Fædrelandsvennen* is dependent on showing the readers that the newspaper has not changed, just gone behind a paywall online; they need to protect the brand. The only difference is that the readers now have to pay for the content they were previously offered for free.

What then does the newspaper regard as the most valuable and the most marketable content? Figure 2 reveals that the ‘financial issues’ category of news has the most locked or closed content (published behind the paywall) with a rate as high as 82 per cent. The categories ‘culture’ (81 per cent) and ‘weather’ (78 per cent) are also comprised of an equally high proportion of closed content. By contrast the categories with the most open (i.e. not locked behind the paywall) are ‘technology’ (63 per cent) and accidents and ‘traffic’ (53 per cent).

Figure 2. *Proportion by Category of Locked (behind the paywall) and Open (freely available) News Articles (N=853) in fevennen.no in September 2012 and March 2013*



The distribution of open and locked content by categories (i.e. on either side of the pay-wall) is also interesting (see Table 1). The content categories are fairly evenly distributed on both sides of the wall, suggesting that the open articles might serve as a draw towards the news site, by giving the readers a taste of what is behind the paywall.

Table 1. *Distribution of Post-paywall Articles (N=853) ‘Open’ and ‘Locked’ News Articles by Category*

	Open	Locked
Political issues	11 %	9 %
Financial issues	3 %	7 %
Social issues	10 %	19 %
Lifestyle	12 %	9 %
Accidents and traffic	17 %	8 %
Crime	14 %	10 %
Sport	23 %	20 %
Culture	7 %	15 %
Technology	2 %	1 %
Weather	1 %	3 %
N=853	100 %	101 %

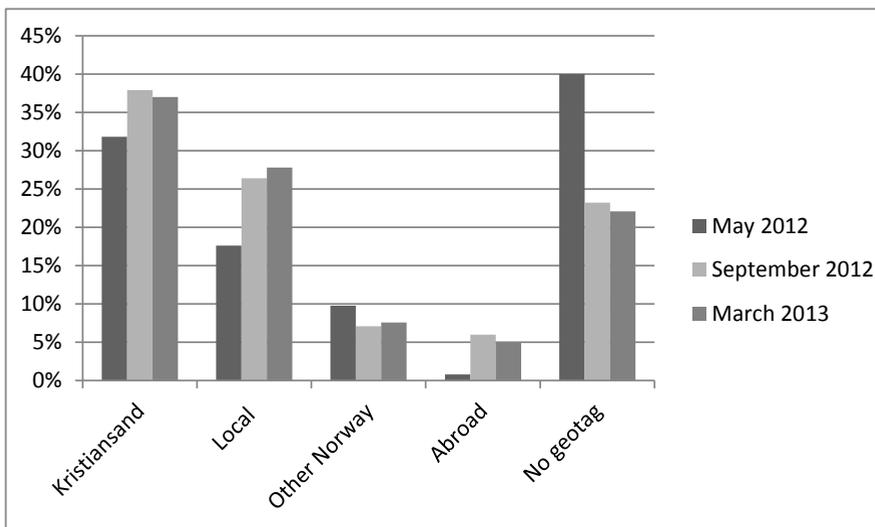
There are, however, also a few differences worth noting. First, the open content largely consists of stories concerning accidents and traffic, and sports. Within these categories, we often find news about traffic accidents, roads that are temporarily closed, flight problems and sport results, i.e. issues that have a short life span and which have an immediate importance. On the other hand, in addition to sport news the locked content largely consists of cultural and social issues and includes news about the distribution of cultural assets, conditions for minorities in Kristiansand, and the local health service, i.e. matters of long term interest.

Proximity and Identification

As argued above the market a newspaper operates in is important for content decisions, indeed one argument is “the news media’s geographical area, the newspaper’s coverage area, will in most cases play a crucial role in what becomes news [...]” (Allern 2001: 213). Whether an event becomes a news story depends, among other things, on readers’ shared preferences, whether they “express a taste for a particular type of news” (Hamilton 2004: 19), and news value increases if “it concerns something the reader [...] has some prior knowledge of” (Østgaard 1967: 45). The geographic location of news is thus important for a local newspaper, which is reflected in *fevennen.no*’s content. Regional news constitutes the largest proportion of the aggregate content – in all three months; May 2012 – 59 per cent – and in September and March – 66 per cent. National or international issues dominate the open articles while regional and local issues are mainly locked behind the paywall, which implies that *fevennen.no* considers issues of close geographical proximity as the most marketable.

In addition to whether a story is of regional, national or international origin, a closer analysis of the coverage of the regional market is also interesting (see Figure 3). The origins of the local stories have been identified with the help of ‘geotags’ (a tag at the beginning of the story that establishes the location of the story). 33 local places within the Agder Counties were identified and they were later merged into the category ‘local’. As Kristiansand is the capital of the Agder Counties, all stories labelled ‘Kristiansand’ were put in their own category. Stories located elsewhere in Norway was coded as ‘other Norway’. ‘Abroad’ is comprised of stories labelled with a geographical location outside Norway, and the stories without a geotag were coded as ‘no geotag’.

Figure 3. *Distribution of Geographical Location of Pre- and Post-paywall Articles (N=833) in fevennen.no*



There are several interesting aspects related to the geographical location of the stories. First, the instances marked with a local tag have risen from a pre-paywall 17.6 per cent to post-paywall 26.4 per cent (September 2012) and 27.8 per cent (March 2013). Second, the number of cases with no geotag fell from 40 per cent, to 23.1 per cent and 22.1 per cent per cent in March. Third, the number of cases geotagged with “Kristiansand” has increased (from 31.8 per cent by 37.9 per cent to 37 per cent), which may be correlated to the aforementioned reduction in instances of ‘no geotag’. Kristiansand is the city where *Fædrelandsvennen* is published and since it is also the regional capital of the two Agder counties, it is natural that this city occupies more news space than the other, smaller, places do. These findings indicate that *Fædrelandsvennen* places greater emphasis on appearing locally oriented after the introduction of the paywall than it did prior to the paywall.

Exclusivity

It is often feared that publishing news on the Internet facilitates an increased cut-and-paste journalism and an increased focus on cheap news (see for example Boczkowski 2010; van der Wurff 2008; Phillips 2012). However, the content analysis of *fevennen.no* reveals a high proportion of in-house produced content⁷, which seems unaffected by the implementation of the paywall. In May 2012 the In-house content was 82.3 per cent, in 81.8 per cent in September and 82.8 per cent in March. It might then seem as if content produced in-house is not regarded as important to encourage readers to pay for digital content. However, figure 4 reveals that quite the contrary is true.

Figure 4. Distribution of Post-paywall ‘Open’ and ‘Locked’ In-house and External News Articles (N=845) in September 2012 and March 2013 at *fevennen.no*

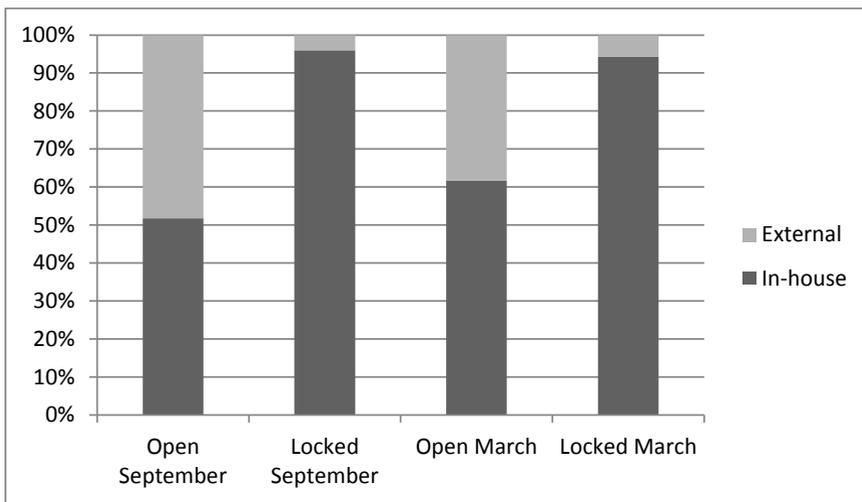


Figure 4 shows the proportion of in-house and externally produced news for the categories of ‘open’ and ‘locked’ articles. In both post-paywall months, September 2012 and March 2013, more than 90 per cent of the locked content is produced in-house compared to only about 50 per cent of the open content. This may indicate that the fear of an increased use of cut-and-paste journalism that has manifested itself in recent years may be exaggerated. If the newspaper considers in-house produced content as most valuable in encouraging readers to pay for digital content, and more and more newspapers introduce paywalls online, the proportion of cut-and-paste journalism may decline. Hamilton (2004: 26) writes that the high fixed costs involved in the production of news give the newspapers incentives to buy items on the open market, instead of producing them themselves. However, a comparison of in-house and externally produced news published on *fevennen.no* indicates that news of national or international character primarily are open articles. This result might suggest that while *fevennen.no* feels obligated towards the readers to publish these stories, they represent little commercial value to the newspaper because the readers can get the same information elsewhere and thus have no incentive to pay for it.

Table 2. Comparison of In-house and External News Articles (N=840) at fevennen.no – by Category

	In-house	External
Political issues	7 %	17 %
Financial issues	6 %	3 %
Social issues	16 %	11 %
Lifestyle	10 %	16 %
Accidents and traffic	11 %	3 %
Crime	15 %	4 %
Sport	19 %	34 %
Culture	16 %	9 %
Technology	0 %	2 %
Weather	1 %	1 %
N=840	101 %	100 %

The most striking differences in a comparison of in-house and externally produced content by category (see table 2) are the high proportions of externally produced sports, lifestyle and politic articles and in-house produced culture, crime and social issues articles. One interpretation of these differences is that the externally produced articles are more geographical insensitive and thus easily can gain access to many newspapers than the articles produced in-house.

These findings indicate that *Fædrelandsvennen* regards in-house content as the most valuable. This concerns the notion of exclusivity, which is important for all newspapers in a competitive situation (Allern 2001: 63; Picard 2010: 94-96). For *Fædrelandsvennen*, exclusivity is less about direct competition with other newspapers than about capturing the audience's attention. The economists Shapiro and Varian (1999) write of "economies of attention", and in an era characterised by abundance of information and where the public's attention is fragmented, to capture and hold the audience's attention is, as McManus (1994: 31) and Picard (1989: 17) argue, very important. Given that the audience is the newspaper's main currency, getting their audience to spend their valuable time and money on their content is the newspaper's greatest task. To provide readers with content they do not have access to elsewhere is therefore of great importance.

Discussion

As illustrated above, neither the content mix nor the proportion of the content produced in-house has changed significantly with the introduction of the paywall. The proportion of in-house produced content is still high, and the content profile reflects that *Fædrelandsvennen* is a newspaper with a relatively large scope within its geographical area. Furthermore, since news output can be considered a result of journalists adhering to specific rules that guide their work, as argued above, news coverage is something journalists "just do". The implementation of a paywall then, will not automatically change the rules, by which journalists work. Since the rules work as justifications of, rather than reasons for, coverage, they do not necessarily come into play at all.

The interesting aspect in this context is the distribution of the open (in front of) and locked (behind the paywall) content. Hamilton (2004) argues that an increased commercialisation lead to the traditional five ‘W’ questions that guide journalistic writing being replaced by, or supplemented with, five commercial variations of the questions. If this argument is correct the idea of what the public is interested in, and especially what they are willing to pay to obtain access to specific types of information, can indeed influence content choices made by the newspapers. According to Hamilton (2004), this will lead to an increase in soft news.

There is, however, an ongoing scholarly debate concerning audience preferences suggesting that the audience might not only be interested in soft news after all. They are also interested in keeping informed on more serious matters (see Boczkowski et al. 2011: 379 for an overview). The distinction between hard news and soft news when it comes to willingness to pay might not be as fruitful then. Without having conducted a formal analysis of this, I will put forward a hypothesis suggesting that news with a longer lifespan and which appears to be more complex, is to a greater extent published behind the wall than issues with an expected shorter life. If this hypothesis holds true, it may seem that what considered sellable is not only based on the actual content of the story, but also on the expected life span of the event in question.

The focus on local in-house produced content may also indicate that the newspaper wishes to differentiate itself from its closest competitors. Whether it actually *is* more locally oriented has not been studied, but the point here is that it seems like the newspaper is using such geographical tags to appear locally oriented. Although *Fædrelandsvennen* does not have any direct competitors in its geographical market, the newspaper does compete in the attention market. *Fædrelandsvennen* thus competes for the audience’s attention on a par with other newspapers and other media operating in other markets, but which are also available within *Fædrelandsvennen*’s scope. The focus on super local and in-house produced content may be a way of distancing *fevennen.no* from other news providers and offering the readers something not available elsewhere – using its local position as a niche strategy. Although most newspapers have a monopoly in their market and therefore do not need any additional niche (Hamilton 2004: 149), it is primarily the niche that allows *Fædrelandsvennen* to charge for online news. Unique – local and in-house produced – content is less vulnerable to substitution (Krumsvik & Sundet 2012: 206), and thus is also easier to charge for it. It seems thus as if geography also plays an important role in terms of marketing. By appearing as locally oriented as possible, the newspaper expresses, “We cover your area, therefore you should you pay to read us”. Geographical location thus builds upon news values such as proximity and identification, and takes these news values in a more commercial direction.

Following this, news values recognised as traditional journalistic values: identification, geographical proximity and exclusivity, also work as parts of a commercial strategy. So although the fear of the quick fix of cut-and-paste journalism is very legitimate, newspapers may due to a restructuring process necessitated by the rise of the digital news and the concomitant availability of free (no cost) news to everyone, concentrate on their core business and their core audience. Newspapers must ensure to be the best at what they do best. While encouraging consumers to pay for news infers an increased commercialisation of news, a paywall also means an increased focus on what the particular newspaper regards as quality of production.

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Notes

1. Gaye Tuchman (1973) demonstrated how news categories structure the editorial process, and Warren Breed (1955) argued that news policy is maintained through informal social control in the newsroom. Likewise, John S. Soloski (1997) pointed to the necessity of understanding professionalisation, while Herbert J. Gans (1979) considers number of employees, column space and production time as structuring the journalists' work.
2. The dataset consists of 1118 articles all together, but because Monday and Tuesday of September and March are excluded when they are compared to May, none of the figures in this article indicates analysis of more than 853 articles.
3. Inter-coder reliability was established by performing a reliability test on 100 random news items from the three weeks examined. Disagreements were mainly related to the content categories, where the codebook consisted of 49 different variables. Here Kappa was found to be 0.62. For the purpose of the reporting of the findings, these 49 variables were merged. The agreement then rose to 0.76. For the place of production and story origin inter-coder reliability was established at 0.73 and 0.89 respectively.
4. The codebook used is a combination of the codebooks used by Wahldal et al. (2002) in their analysis of television news and that used by Allern (2001) in an analysis of newspapers.

5. The other major newspaper in this region, *Agderposten*, mainly publishes news about only one of the Agder Counties (Agderposten 2012).
6. Author's translation from Norwegian original
7. Place of production is established on the basis of the journalist's e-mail address.