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Will The Mini-Tablets From Apple, Google, Samsung, Revive The Newspaper Industry? Probably Not

The Guardian asks whether all these mini-tablets coming out are going to save the newspaper industry. The rumoured mini-iPad to meet the Galaxy Note, [Google's](#) Nexus, the possible new Kindle from Amazon. The hope being that the size and form factor will lead people to using them to read the newspaper apps which said papers can charge for. As opposed to people just surfing the sites as they do on laptops or office/home computers. I think that's a bit of wishful thinking myself and it's prompted by not really understanding what has happened to [the newspaper](#).

“ Or perhaps that should be: yet. “With an iPad mini, the tablet becomes much more portable,” says Francisco Jeronimo, smartphones and tablets analyst with the research firm IDC. “You can slip it in your pocket, take it on the train, wherever.” A smaller screen that you have on a journey is just the audience that newspapers want. And with the low-end versions only offering wifi, without the 3G mobile connections, newspaper and magazine apps could drive people to pay for news apps – if news is what they want on those trips, of course.

There's a minor technical problem here and then a much larger theoretical one. The small is that OK, this next generation of mini-tablets may well not have 3G connectivity at the low end but does anyone seriously think that this is a long term, or even medium term, likely description of the technology? I most certainly don't: I would expect that within 5 years all and any mobile devices would have at least 3G. For I would expect the cost of providing it to continue to fall: to the point that it would cost more to keep it out of a design than to simply leave it be and include it.

But I think that the larger problem is that this hope rests on a misunderstanding of what a newspaper actually is. It was a bundle of goods that came about because of certain specific technological obstacles. Those obstacles have now gone: thus the need for the bundle has as well. That's the real and basic problem that the newspapers have: there's really just no need for them any more.

Oh, certainly, we want to be told what's going on in the world. We'd certainly like to still have reporters, crosswords, comic strips, sports results and yes, even the political diatribes that masquerade as columns in that very Guardian.

But there's absolutely no reason why we should want to have them as a bundle. From the same people, packaged for us as a brand. Browsing on the web allows us to, using the English papers as an example, get our rugby coverage from the Telegraph, celebrity news from the Mail, business news here at Forbes, of course, the crossword from the Telegraph again, soothe our libidos at the Sun and still have time left over to go sneer at the hippies and socialists in The Guardian comment pages. Why would we give that up to purchase (yes, they want to charge us!) for a package which puts together lesser versions of these things just because we have a mini-tablet?

I'm sure that the various pieces of hardware coming from Google, [Apple](#), Samsung, Amazon and so on will gain a very large market footprint. I can also see people using them to read the news. The part of the hope that I don't think will come true is that people will purchase apps to read specific newspapers. Simply because the days of the newspaper as an all in one bundle have gone. We're in the age of disaggregation and the technology that led to our accepting all our news from just one source has gone, never to return.

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