

Who Are The Tech Press Darlings?

An Empirical Study of Coverage of
Innovation-Driven Tech Companies
in US Newspapers

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This paper contains a small study of empirical data collected between April 19, 2010 and May 19, 2010. The data is the five largest newspapers' coverage of the ten largest innovation-driven technology companies in the US. The study is presented as a description of the current state of the presence of Innovation Journalism in American mainstream media. Newspapers have been chosen due to the fact that even though they are losing ground to web, mobile, tv and radio, newspapers still produce the vast majority of news stories proliferated through other media in the US.

The study shows an significant imbalance in coverage. There is a tendency towards coverage of two specific companies, Apple and Google. The difference between their presence in the newspapers, and the amount of coverage given to their competition is quite substantial, with the closest competitor, Microsoft, only obtaining approximately half of the coverage that the two companies get.

In the study, network mapping analysis is used to link journalists to companies in order to find out whether there are certain groups of journalists (e.g. specialized tech reporters) that help create imbalance by focusing on only a few innovators, or if –as is the case – it is a widespread tendency among all the journalists to cover Apple and Google more than others. The network mapping analysis is useful for identifying *hubs*, nodes in the network that are more connected than others, in this case either documenting that one journalist covers tech on a regular basis, or whether one journalist writes more positive stories about a company than negative stories.

The study also shows that positive stories are dominant. There is an approximate 20-30 percent difference in favor of the positive stories, sometimes even more. It is discussed whether this lack of balance and critical journalism is actually good for Innovation Journalism or not. Some argue that a positive slant works to build social capital for innovation in general, while others argue that not following ethical guidelines in Innovation Journalism actually diminishes coverage of the innovators and innovations that aren't necessarily fashionable or popular at a given time – which creates an imbalance like the one we see towards Google and Apple.

Finally, it is discussed what creates an imbalance like the present one, and how to find a solution to the problem. It is argued that it is the success of building an effective reputation and a lovable brand through non-traditional PR and advertising that gives Google and Apple the edge. Towards the end, this paper criticizes journalists for not trying to even out the balance, and seeks to find a reason why a more balanced coverage is not available to the public. It is argued that a self-reinforcing media hype, which stems from the effective attention work of Apple and Google, also has a blinding effect on journalists, creating the illusion that Apple and Google are all the public cares about – giving the editorial decision-makers a reason to cover them more.

1 Introduction

Innovation Journalism has an inherent growth mentality. It is a constructive type of journalism, made to proliferate, diffuse and spread news about innovation and positive developments within technology and ideas which come from all kinds of industries and public spheres. The challenge for Innovation Journalism is to gain foothold in those media outlets that will facilitate the spreading of the word to most people. And even in a modern society that is mediated through and through and where web and mobile platforms have taken their places alongside TV, radio and print, it is still newspapers that generate the most news. Even if you see it on TV, the story might very well have been born in a newspaper newsroom. That newspapers are losing the battle for attention, resulting in devastating sales drops and financial misery, is no longer in question. Yet, it is still the newspapers that generate the most news. This dilemma is interesting, but is not the subject for this paper. Rather, this paper will look into how Innovation Journalism actually fares in the newspaper-generated news stream. Specifically, it addresses how the largest innovators in the US are being covered by journalists in the five largest newspapers in the US. Through an empirical study of stories from April and May of 2010, I seek to show how balanced or out of balance the coverage is, in order to ascertain which challenges are to be addressed in the mainstream media, if Innovation Journalism is to grow.

1.1 Definitions and Case Choices

Innovation Journalism is not just tech journalism. Innovation journalism is a much broader concept, which also covers socio-cultural or business themes or subjects (Nordfors 2009). Innovation Journalism, as defined by David Nordfors, is not just journalism about invention, but about introduction of innovation to market. These introductions of innovative products, processes and methods happen across a wide array of industries across the globe. From the green/environmental sector to the energy sector, from the healthcare industry to IT, new innovations are launched daily, and innovation journalism functions as the catalyst for spreading understanding, backing an interest for innovation amongst the general public.

However, when one studies the business side of innovation, it becomes clear, that the largest group of companies responsible for contributing with innovation that has a great impact on the individual and society, is found in the IT/Tech sector. The Forbes Global 2000¹ ranks the businesses of the world based on general economic performance. The 20 highest performers are all in the Oil and Gas industry or in the financial markets/banking sector, with three exceptions: General Electric, AT&T and Wal-mart. Although the Oil and Gas industry does contribute to the innovation ecosystem – some Oil companies have a sustainable energy strategy and conduct energy research – innovational activity is not a driver for those companies, and most spend only a small fraction of their revenue on innovation.

The banking sector is hardly an innovations-driven sector, especially after the “innovative” launch of the new, yet fallible business models that caused the global financial breakdown of 2008/2009. General Electric brands itself on innovation,

but I have chosen to exclude the company from the list of innovation-driven companies in the study. This is due to the fact that General Electric (#2) now generates revenue in so many different areas that, although innovation is clearly a strategy for them, it would be a stretch to call them innovation-driven. On the company's own list of involvement areasⁱⁱ, you can find Media and Entertainment and Financial Services, as well as a host of business areas, such as Appliances, in which the company seems to do very little to innovate. It would be a stretch to call GE innovation-driven, and therefore they are excluded from the list.

Regarding AT&T (#13) and Wal-Mart (#14), they are both retailers in their respective areas of telecommunications and general retail. AT&T does provide technological solutions, but primarily as a vendor for tech companies. For this reason, they are also excluded from the list.

Continuing down the Forbes list, and using exclusions like the ones above, one finds that most innovation-driven companies in the top 200 belong to the IT or Tech sector. You could argue that companies in the healthcare industry, such as Pfizer (#40) or Johnson and Johnson (#47) are innovation-driven, but the new product launches from these companies happen with a much lower frequency than e.g. the IT/tech sector, and therefore comparisons would be unusable.

That leaves us with the tech companies. The relative large focus in the mainstream media on products from this sector also creates a better base for data collection within a relatively short time-span. Also, I would stipulate that IT/software companies have a faster innovation cycle than most other companies. Whereas most other industries will have cashcow product that sell without being developed (such as a pharmaceutical company which would only let a product evolve if its patent is about to run out), there is a constant product development going on in the IT/Tech industry, with product life cycles becoming shorter and shorter. Technology companies compete on innovation more than most other businesses (Chen, Liu and Tseng 1999).

Also, I have chosen to focus on companies from the United States. This is due to the fact that the most comprehensive article archives from which I would collect data, focuses on news outlets in the United States, and the fact that a large subset of tech companies have their base around Silicon Valley. The most comprehensive, usable data would be on US businesses, and I have therefore limited the data collection to focus on US firms.

The final choice criterion is revenue/turnover. If one is to study how innovation-driven companies are featured in the mainstream press, one must look at which companies has the furthest reach into the mass market. I've used the most recent revenue numbers, from 2009 - provided by Datamonitorⁱⁱⁱ, to determine which companies should be part of the studies, and have selected the top 10.

These were the most revenue-generating, innovation-driven tech companies in the US in 2009 (in ranking order), according to Datamonitor:

1. Hewlett-Packard
2. IBM
3. Dell
4. Microsoft
5. Apple
6. Cisco
7. Intel
8. Motorola
9. Oracle
10. Google

On the media side, the choices first and foremost fell on the five largest newspapers in the US. This is due to the fact that in traditional journalism, outside the innovation journalism realm, newspapers are still responsible for up to 95% of the content that is then repeated in other media, according to (Pew 2010).

Now, innovation journalism might be different, in that it is a technology-heavy genre that therefore leaves room for less traditional publishing methods, such as blogs, websites, mobile news etc. However, if innovation journalism is to have an impact on the general population in a positive way, it is arguably important to let the mainstream media become part of the innovation communication system (Nordfors 2009). In other words, there are already plenty of outlets for innovation journalism in new media. An effective communication of innovation to mainstream audiences will, require participation of the largest generators of news in modern society, because they already command a lot of the mainstream audience's attention. That is why I have chosen to study primarily newspaper coverage of tech companies in the US. I have chosen to focus on the five largest newspapers in the US. They are, in ranking order, according to The Audit Bureau of Circulations^{iv}:

1. The Wall Street Journal
2. USA Today
3. The New York Times
4. The Los Angeles Times
5. The Washington Post

1.2 Empirical Data Collection and Method

Data collection was done by using two sources of data. For newspaper sources, the article database LexisNexis was used. LexisNexis' search criteria include searching solely within the newspapers mentioned above and was therefore a logical choice. Data was collected for the period of April 19-May 19 2010. This period was chosen as May 19 was set as a deadline in order to have time to process the data before the deadline for the 7th Innovation Journalism Conference, which was June 1st 2010. The period of one month was chosen in order to restrict the amount of data, but also to make sure that e.g. stock market reports could be analyzed week-to-week.

The news items included in the study included only stories that was generated by the newspapers themselves. Only in three cases out of the total of 313 references to tech companies did I allow newswire stories to be taken into consideration. One example was the case of Oracle, who was hardly getting any mentions at all, had I not used a story from the Associated Press in The New York Times about Oracle getting more competition, after German company SAP took over Sybase. The other two cases were references to Bloomberg News, in which Cisco and HP reported good earnings. I chose to include these because they were both published by the only West Coast-based newspaper, The Los Angeles Times, that due to the time difference are at a disadvantage when it comes to covering news from Wall Street.

The news items were then categorized as being "positive" or "negative" for the company in question. A news story that reported on a new product launch or another form of innovation, would be categorized as a positive story, even though it was written in an objective manner. However, since this paper focuses on innovation, it would defy logic to define it as detrimental to the brand that it has some new innovations to present. Business stories about revenue gains, stock market success or acquisitions by the company in question would also be placed in the positive column. Stories about looming increased competition, financial losses or declining stock values, as well as stories that from a common-sense point of view would be considered "bad PR", was placed in the negative column.

Casual mentions of the companies, such as a mention of the company name together with other company names as examples of something non-related to the company's core business was omitted. Also omitted were non-business-related or non-innovation-related mentions, such as when Google is used as verb, as a source (Google Maps, Google Earth) or mentioned as being used by a person in an otherwise non-related story.

1.3 Constraints and Restrictions

The empirical data comes from LexisNexis, the article database. This means that the searches are done by keywords, which is considered to be somewhat unreliable by some (Kauhanen and Noppari 2007). However in this case, the normal challenges in using keyword searches are diminished by the LexisNexis works. The article database search interface features a "Company Search" which lets you search for a company name. Also, as previously mentioned, the interface features a

sorting mechanism that will only give you results from a certain newspaper and a certain period. However, it must be stated that the quality of the empirical data is totally reliant on the search results LexisNexis delivers. In other words, if LexisNexis didn't find it, it wasn't included in the data collection –which doesn't mean it doesn't exist.

Also, the Wall St. Journal results are restrained by the fact that LexisNexis doesn't provide access to the whole newspaper, but only to the Wall St. Journal Abstracts database. This should provide samples that are significant enough to draw conclusions from, though. The web sites have not been crawled for this study. If web media were to be included, the scope of this study would have to be substantially larger.

2 Results and Findings

A total of 318 stories mentioning the ten companies were used as basis for this empirical study, selected through the criteria listed above. When looking at the results for all five newspapers combined, the proliferation of company coverage looks like this:

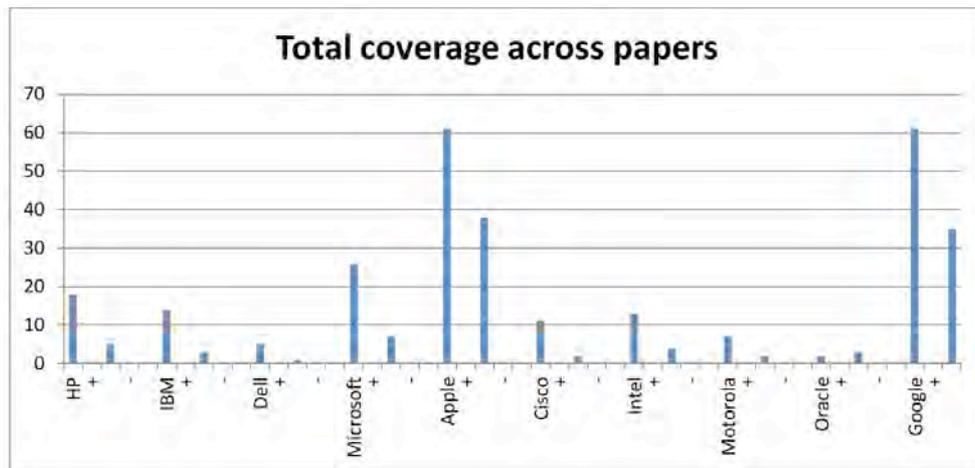


Fig. 1: Total coverage across all five newspapers. Positive-leaning stories are on the left, negative-leaning stories are on the right for each company.

To anyone who follows tech journalism – or even innovation journalism in general – it would come to no surprise that Apple and Google are the leaders when it comes to getting media attention. Yet the difference between these two brands and the competition is quite significant. Although HP is the largest of the 10 companies revenue-wise, Google – the smallest in the group - gets over four times as much coverage. But it's not because the rest of the group isn't trying. The number of press releases sent out during the study's timeframe reveals a rather surprising, or at least counterintuitive fact:

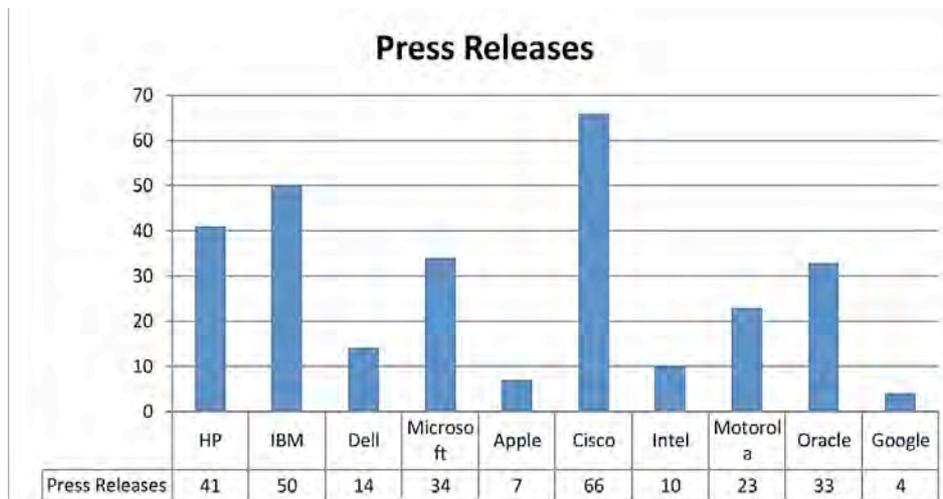


Fig. 2: Number of press releases sent out by the chosen companies between April 19 and May 19 2010. See Appendix I for sources.

Apple and Google, the “winners” in the race for attention, are the two companies who send out *the least* press releases. There seems to be at least four possible reasons for this:

1. Apple and Google manage to command attention through other means than the traditional relation to the newspapers, i.e. through traditional PR work.
2. The lack of information creates a sense of mystery and a vacuum that encourages journalists to explore the companies themselves
3. There is a general interest in Apple and Google within journalist groups and perhaps the general population, which exists independently of any PR efforts or editorial choices.
4. Apple and Google were involved in events such as product launches or acquisitions that commanded more attention than the competition.

It would be premature to single out any of these reasons without further study. Rather, in this paper, I will assume that a combination of the three first options is possible, and explore the data from this perspective. Number four is an unlikely reason for the great difference in attention given to the companies. Apple and Google did not have any major product launches or were involved in major events in the period, in contrast to the competition: HP announced they were taking over smartphone manufacturer Palm, IBM announced a major corporate strategy shift towards software, Microsoft released their KIN phones to reviewers, Cisco announced that their telepresence solutions were benefiting greatly from the volcanic ash cloud from Iceland that was keeping planes on the ground, Intel updated the Atom processor that is the heart of most popular netbooks, and Oracle was hit hard by the fact that SAP took over Sybase as previously mentioned. In contrast, Apple announced that they had sold their one millionth iPad and that they were taking over the company who makes the CPU for that same device. Also, there was still some fallout from the fact that a iPhone 4 prototype was leaked from

the company. Google announced they were to launch a tv service, but most other stories or launches from Google during the study period either involved Google as a partner or were smaller stories equal to the type of stories that were sent out in press releases by the competition. In other words, as far as newsworthiness goes, there is not enough major stories on Google and Apple's side to explain their significant advantage when it comes to grabbing attention.

In regards to the other three options, it can be argued that 2. would follow from 3., leaving 1. and 3. as possible reasons. However, it is a fact that Apple and Google communicate with the public through other means than using PR to get through to the media. ^v Both Google and Apple communicate directly with consumers through their websites and blogs. But several of the other companies in the group do the same^{vi}, hence this is not a completely valid argument for why it is Google and Apple that command the most attention in the public sphere. And if indeed it is this direct-to-consumer communication that drives the public interest, Apple and Google must do it in ways that distinguish them from the competition, as part of a larger strategy (including advertising and branding), which would result in a situation in which the third conclusion above seems more plausible.

2.1 The Question of Bias

Another interesting finding from fig. 1 is how the majority of stories fall into the positive column. With Oracle being the only exception, all the companies receive a positive-leaning treatment in the stories chosen for the study. The difference between positive and negative mentions range from approx. 33% to 20%, i.e. the negative stories constitute from 20% to 33% of the positive stories. The fact that there is such a significant difference seems to indicate bias and an approach that doesn't involve a critical, journalistic stance in the coverage of these businesses. I will delve into this matter further down.

However, once again Apple and Google are exceptions. In their cases, the ratio of critical or negative stories are substantially higher than with the other companies. In Apple's case, the negative stories constitute 62,3% of the number of positive stories. For Google, this number is 57,4%. This indicates that Apple and Google not only get more attention than everyone else in the study, they also get almost double the criticism or negative coverage in the press. Is the fact that they are more present than the others what encourages the press to run more negative stories? Or are they just receiving a natural amount of both good and bad press for a company of their size? It is arguable that the latter is not the case: Apple and Google are by no means the largest companies in the study, and since there is a significant difference between the amounts of good and bad press these two companies get compared to the competition, it would be more prudent to view their cases as special. Thus, it seems more likely that Apple and Google are prone to negative press coverage, because they also command most attention.

2.2 Amount of Innovation Coverage

As Fig. 3 shows, Apple and Google stick out in a third manner. In Fig. 3, I have divided the amounts of coverage for each company across all five newspapers into three categories: B – Business, I – Innovation and G – General news.

The Business category contains stories that are of a more financial orientation, e.g. profit reports, stock market reports, mergers and acquisitions, etc. The Innovation category contains stories that mention new products or innovational initiatives by the companies. The General news category contains stories that are neither Business nor Innovation, e.g. policy stories, articles about criminal investigations etc.

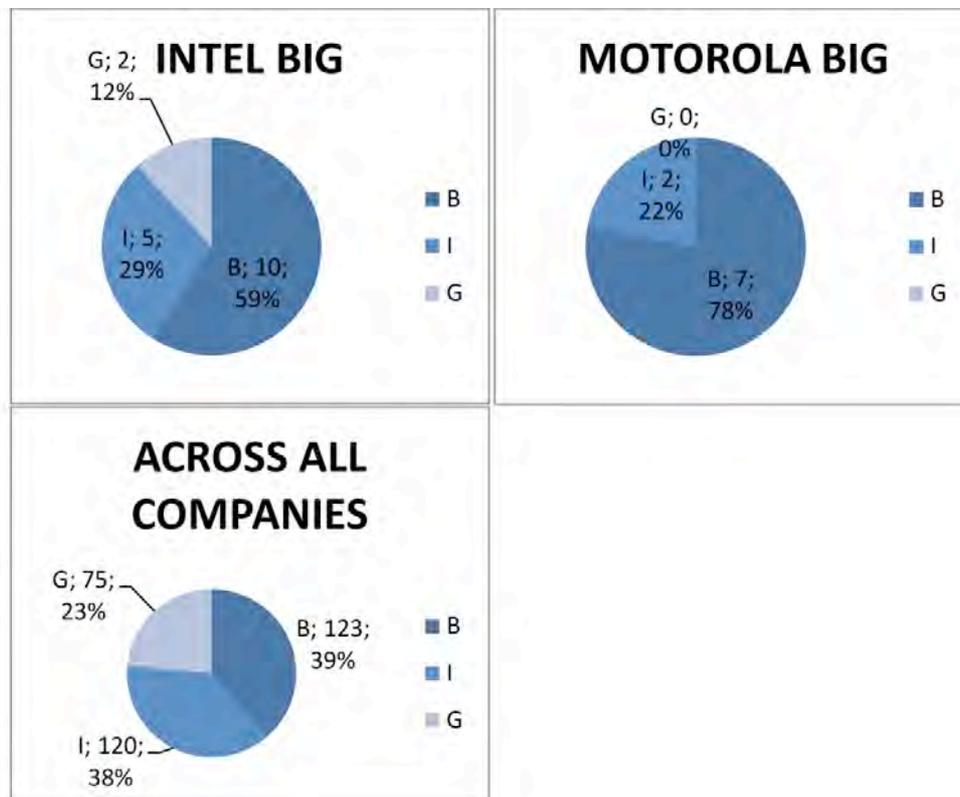
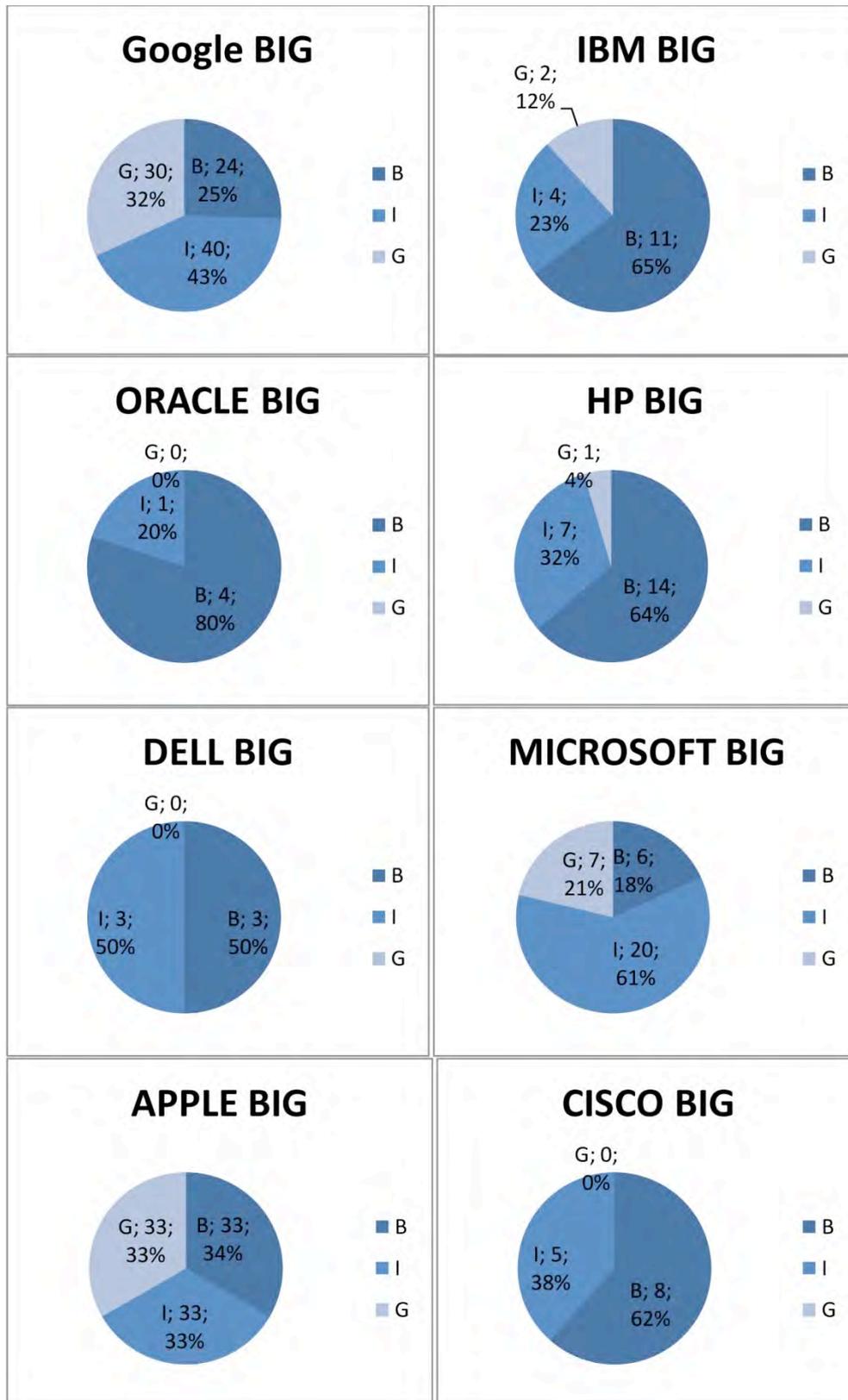


Fig. 3: Division between Business, Innovation and General News stories across all five newspapers. Continues on next page.

As Fig. 3 shows, Apple and Google stand out by getting very even coverage across the three categories. But they are not necessarily the most innovative, judging by the amount of coverage that they get about their innovations. Microsoft and Dell get a lot more coverage about their innovations, even if their total amount of coverage is significantly lower than Apple's and Google's.



tech writers. Journalists like Jon Schwartz of USA Today and Rob Pegoraro of The Washington Post are amongst those who have most article nodes connected to them. The question now becomes whether these tech journalists have a preference towards covering Google and Apple?

There does seem to be an indication of that with at least some of the journalists. The Jon Schwartz cluster contains more Apple and Google links than other companies, as is the case with Jessica Guynn of The Los Angeles Times, who has a significant percentage of Google links in her cluster. This has a very natural explanation, since Guynn, according to the Los Angeles Times website, covers the internet^{vii} – and the only internet-only company amongst the ten companies is Google. It is striking though, that Guynn doesn't even appear in the negative stories network in Fig. 5. In other words, she might cover Google as her regular "beat", but apparently doesn't write many stories that can be considered bad press for the company. The reverse is the case for David Sarno, also of The Los Angeles Times. From the negative network map it is clear that he has a preference for writing stories of a negative sort about Apple, he has four of those on the negative story map and only one on the positive map. Brad Stone of The New York Times also leans towards the negative, when it comes to Google. He has three stories about Google on his own and two with his colleague Kevin J. O'Brien in the negative map, and only two on the positive. However, it is notable that Stone in general focuses a lot on Google. He is, however, not just assigned to covering the internet, if one is to trust his presentation on the New York Times website.^{viii} It is noteworthy that the same site states that the Bits (technology) section of the New York Times covers "[start-ups](#), tech leaders like [Google](#) and [Apple](#), [enterprise technology](#)..." Judging from this statement, The New York Times seems to follow an editorial strategy where size and revenue doesn't matter. Or maybe they are assuming that the public considers Google and Apple to be the leading tech companies, although other companies contribute with just as much innovation and technology, or even more. A full study of all journalists and their connections would be preferable, but would conflict with the necessary brevity of this paper.

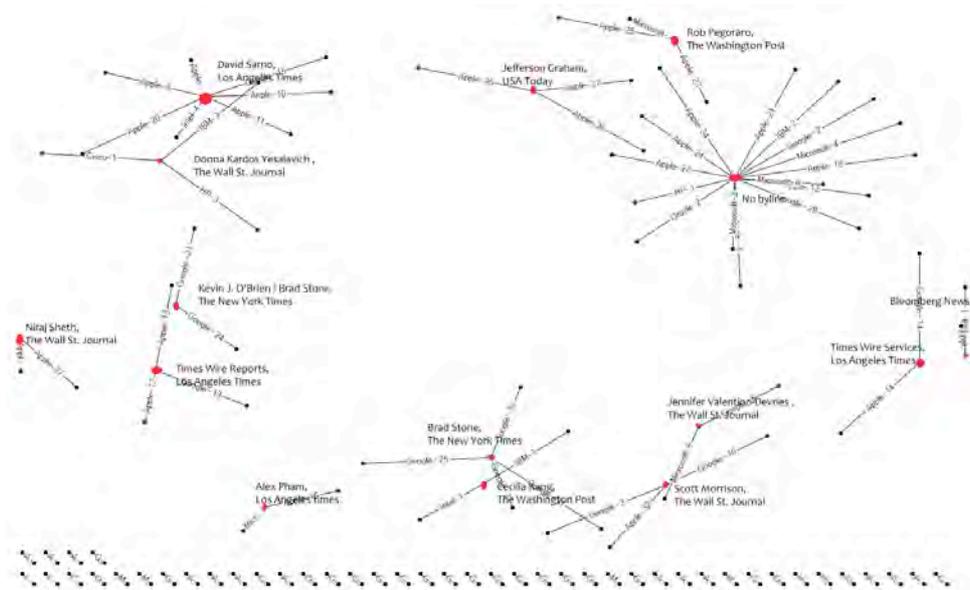


Fig. 5 – Negative stories about companies connected to individual journalists. Larger image can be found in Appendix II

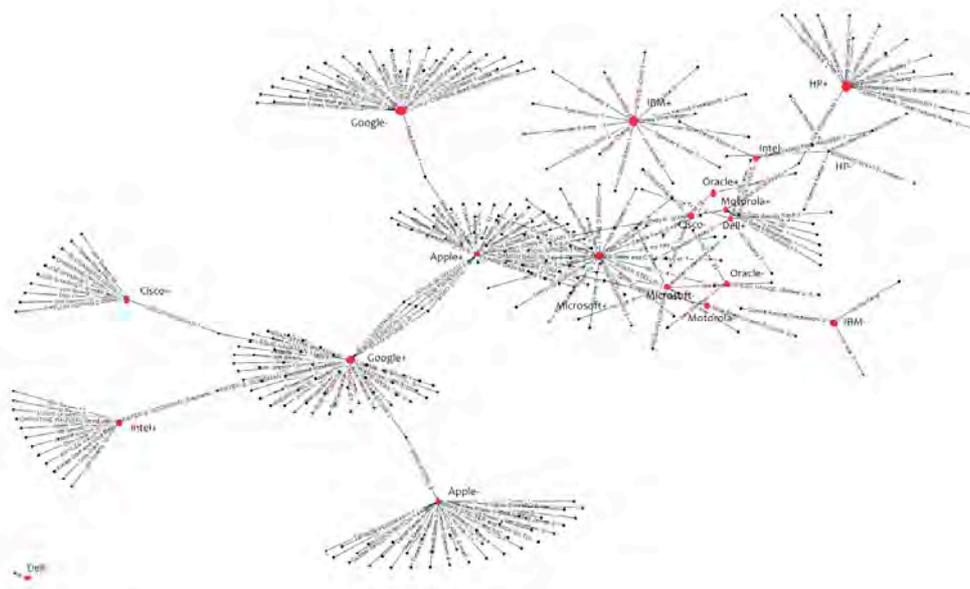


Fig. 6 – Network map of how individual journalists are connected to companies through the stories they write. Larger image can be found in Appendix II

In Figure 6, every single story written by a journalist is mapped out as nodes. Here, the hubs are the companies. This clearly shows the division of attention dedicated by journalists to different companies. And once again, Google and Apple get the most links, both for negative and positive stories. What also appears here,

interestingly, is the fact that that the hubs with the most links also are linked to the most diverse array of journalists. In other words, if the large coverage of Google and Apple were spearheaded by a few very active journalists, the same names would be repeated many times in the clusters. This is not the case. Instead there is wide spread amongst the journalist names connected to each hub, which indicates - in the case of Google and Apple - that the large interest that provides them with more attention than the other companies is shared by all the journalists, not just the regular tech writers. It is fair to conclude that Google and Apple are alluring to journalists who doesn't cover tech regularly, but may be in the business area or who write traditional consumer advice stories.

3 Reflections on Findings

Two key questions materialize from the study of the empirical data:

1. What is it that makes Apple and Google worthy of so much attention, and
2. What is the impact on innovation journalism in general when so much attention is being given to just two companies?

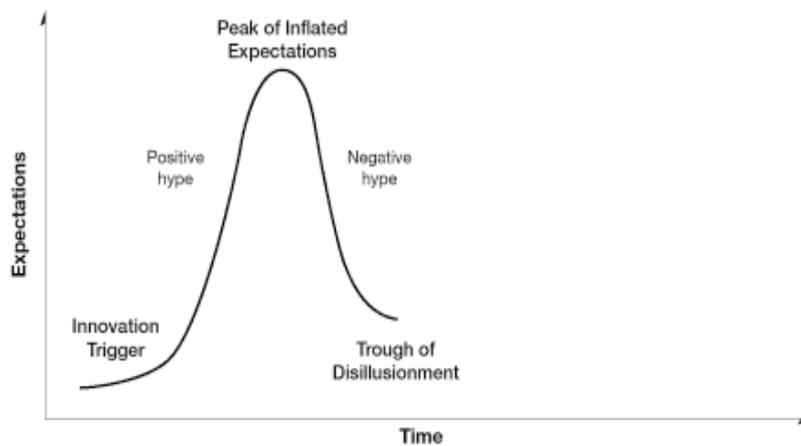
In regards to the first question, there is nothing inherent in neither Apple's nor Google's flow of innovations that make them special. Apple specializes in taking technology that is already available on the market and making it more appealing design-wise, and more user-friendly and intuitive. It was not Apple who launched the first smartphone with a touchscreen, it was Sony Ericsson when they launched the P800 in 2004. And even though Apple did beat their competitors (narrowly) in the race to launch a multi-touch-enabled screen in a mobile phone, it was German company Balda AG who produced the screen module (Texyt 2007). Apple's reputation as an innovations company is based on their launches of likeable consumer products, and in comparison to many of their competitors, their innovation output is relatively low. Google, however, has done real innovation in the search technology area and continues to do so. They also continue to innovate in the online software application area, even if much of the innovation comes from smaller companies they acquire. When one looks at the many press releases that were sent out during the study period (See Fig. 2 and Appendix I), it seems that many of the other companies in the study have a lot of innovation going on. A lot more than Apple, and some can easily compete with Google in their innovations output. According to the empirical data, more than 60 percent of the coverage about Microsoft is about their innovations. Yet Microsoft still doesn't even get half as much coverage as Apple and Google. And most of the companies, like Microsoft, Cisco, HP and Intel even make consumer products that they market directly to the end-user. So the preference for stories about Apple and Google cannot be explained by the fact that they have a lot of touchpoints with consumers.

In other words, it is likely reputation and branding that drives the interest and the ability for Apple and Google to dominate the pages of the five major newspapers in

the US. Therefore we must turn to knowledge about the attention economy in order to find an answer to the first question above. According to Rogers, the diffusion of innovation is driven through attention and reputation (Rogers 1995). In the case of Google and Apple, the reputation obtained by these two companies seems to proliferate through both the general public as well as the press. The heavy leaning towards positive stories – even though Apple and Google also attract more bad press than the competition – seems to indicate that the press is somewhat unwilling to question Apple’s and Google’s reputation as innovators as well as sympathy-inducing companies. One viewpoint states that this could help bridge the relations between two core groups of attention workers (Nordfors 2006), namely the PR representatives and the innovation journalists. Luoma-aho, Uskali & Weinstein call for a better relationship between these two groups in order to build social capital (Bordieu 1997) for innovators, innovation journalists and innovation as such (Luoma-aho, Uskali & Weinstein 2009). However, it could also be argued that adhering to a code of ethics such as the Society of Professional Journalists^{ix}, which states that journalists must “Distinguish between advocacy and news reporting” and “Distinguish news from advertising and shun hybrids that blur the lines between the two”, would be beneficial for innovation journalism as a whole, since it would help get innovations into the public arena from all innovators and not just whoever is popular at the time.

To achieve this, journalists must look through the hype. And hype could in fact be one of the reasons why Apple and Google were in vogue at the time of the empirical data collection. Fenn and Raskino suggest that there is a model for the beginning of a hype cycle that looks like this:

Beginning of the hype cycle



(Fenn and Raskino 2008).

If it was the case that Apple and Google were riding a hype wave, according to Fenns and Raskino’s model, the backlash would have been substantial. But though Google and Apple are attracting a lot of criticism, the number of positive stories for

both of them is approximately 30% higher than the number of negative stories. It is hard to argue that short-term popularity is the reason for the focus on Google and Apple.

This brings us back to reputation, which journalists also need to consider when covering innovation. The question is whether journalists should let the reputation and brand values of an innovative company become a factor when writing about innovation. Or whether it is possible to set aside those values at all? Again, the SPJ seems to think so, as they have put that sort of objectivity into their code of ethics.

Code of ethics or not, if we reflect on the empirical findings of this study, journalists at the top five newspapers in the US – whether they are regular tech reporters or not - prefer to write about Google and Apple instead of HP, IBM, Dell, Microsoft, Cisco, Intel, Motorola and Oracle. It is hard to ignore the slanted choice of stories. Singer points out that even in the network society (Castells 1999, Bay 2009), where online media are stealing more and more of the attention previously given to newspapers, journalists find their gatekeeper role to be important. But they also see their role as less about choosing stories and more about bolstering quality (Singer 1997). In other words, according to the subjects in Singer's article, less effort is being put into actually choosing stories, which could explain why Google and Apple take the lead as they do. While journalists might cover the stories in a more qualitative way, in the busy newsroom and highly competitive environment of the news market, it might be a simple thing as time constraints that make journalists choose the obvious story rather than cover innovation from another company that might not be as much in the public eye.

However (and also to address question number two from above), this can have a potentially harmful impact on the mission of growing the amount of innovation journalism in mainstream newspapers, as well as maintaining a beneficial balance in the diffusion of innovation ideas (Rogers 1995). As Vasterman points out, news waves can be self-reinforcing, where a feedback loop will grow a phenomenon, brand or story in the public eye, thus (re-)generating and growing the public interest for the story (Vasterman 2005). The same exact public interest that would be used as an argument for publishing the story. In this sense, the media can get caught up in covering e.g. Google and Apple and not think that it might be in the public interest to cover the innovations HP have put forward – because the public interest is generated by a feedbacking, growing media-hype about Google and Apple.

Another perspective on this matter comes from former *Seattle Times* reporter Doug Underwood, who considers the modern newsroom as being ruled more by MBAs than journalists. In his view, getting good financial results is taking over as the main motivation for publishing newspapers, and it is impacting the quality of journalism. Underwood's position is that focusing on the business side results in populist journalism, where newspapers are publishing what people want and not what people need to read (Underwood 1995). This could also be why Google and Apple feature so heavily in the newspapers. Their products are very popular, and their reputations in an attention economy context (Nordfors and Luoma-aho 2009) are very effective. So in order to attract (or even just retain) readers, news outlets

will feature these two companies heavily. It can be argued that this is quite rational, since the popularity of their products puts them at the very heart of the public's interest. However, without any form of balancing out from the gatekeeper side, the risk of getting into the aforementioned feedback loop becomes substantial.

4 Conclusion

Considering the empirical findings, it seems that the five major newspapers have a preference for stories about Google and Apple. Whether this is because of what Underwood calls MBA Journalism or it is because of a bias amongst journalists themselves, it does not diminish the fact that innovation journalism becomes less diverse and probably also less widespread because of it. To prosper, innovation journalism must cover a lot of ground in order to gain interest from the public. But as long as there is an imbalance so distinct as the current tendency towards covering Google and Apple rather than other companies, this cannot happen.

This calls for a need to better understand the different roles of the attention workers, as Luoma-aho, Uskali & Weinstein point out. Further, a discussion of balance in story choices also needs to be facilitated. Innovation journalists need to realize their responsibility in covering innovations from all areas of the innovation journalism ecosystem, and not just what seems to be popular at the time. Or what they find interesting themselves. There is a sort of "public service" mentality that needs to be implemented, resembling the public service broadcasting ethics known from European TV and Radio corporations. This is necessary as long as the newspapers are still the main generators of news stories. Which might not be forever.

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5.1 Links

1 http://www.forbes.com/lists/2010/18/global-2000-10_The-Global-2000_Rank.html

1 http://www.ge.com/products_services/directory/by_product.html

1 "Top 50 Global Technology Companies". Datamonitor. <http://www.computerwire.com/companies/lists/list/?listid=7A7B551F-A6C8-47AC-B3AE-3879873B5E23>.

1 List of circulation numbers for US newspapers. Online: <http://abcas3.accessabc.com/ecirc/newstitlesearchus.asp>

1 <http://www.apple.com/hotnews/>, <http://googleblog.blogspot.com/>

1 <http://h20435.www2.hp.com/t5/Voodoo-Blog/HP-s-Slate-Device-Runs-The-Complete-Internet-Including-Flash/ba-p/53838>, <http://www.ibm.com/blogs/zz/en/>, <http://blogs.cisco.com/news>

1 <http://latimesblogs.latimes.com/technology/2008/04/jessica-guynns.html>

1 <http://bits.blogs.nytimes.com/author/brad-stone/>

1 <http://www.spj.org/ethicscode.asp>

6 Appendix

6.1 Press release sources

SOURCE: ONLINE: HP Newsroom

<http://www.hp.com/hpinfo/newsroom/press/2010/news2010.html>

SOURCE: ONLINE IBM PRESS ROOM

<http://www-03.ibm.com/press/us/en/index.wss>

SOURCE: Dell pressroom online:

<http://content.dell.com/us/en/corp/about-dell-press-room.aspx>

SOURCE: Microsoft News Center

<http://www.microsoft.com/presspass/default.mspx>

SOURCE: Apple Latest Press Releases Online:

<http://www.apple.com/pr/>

SOURCE: News@Cisco

<http://tools.cisco.com/newsroom/contactSearch/archive/>

SOURCE: Intel newsroom

<http://lz1.intel.com/appzone/pressroom/PressReleases.asp>

SOURCE: Motorola Media Center

<http://mediacenter.motorola.com/content/default.aspx?NewsAreaId=2>

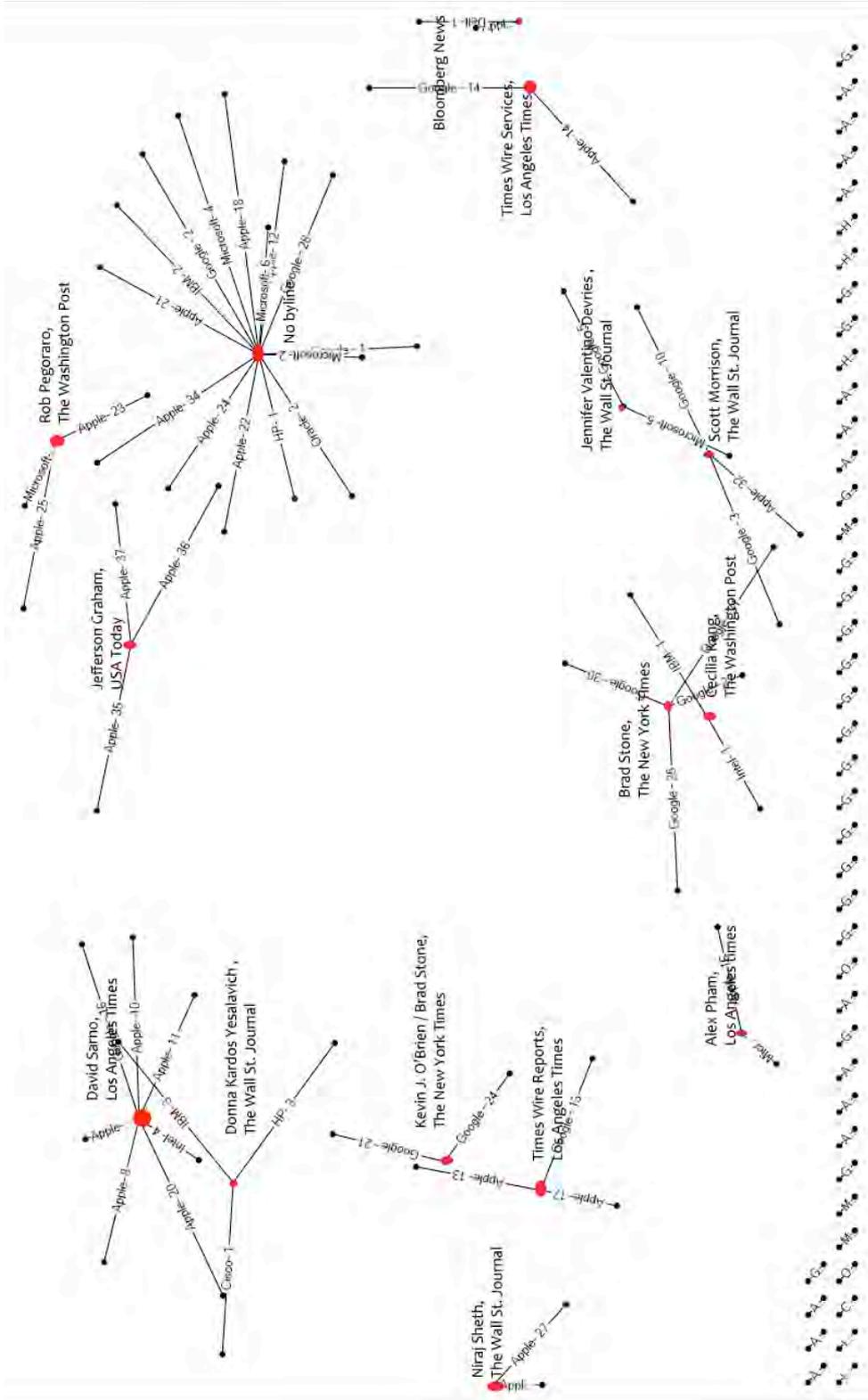
SOURCE: Oracle Press Room

<http://www.oracle.com/us/corporate/press/index.htm>

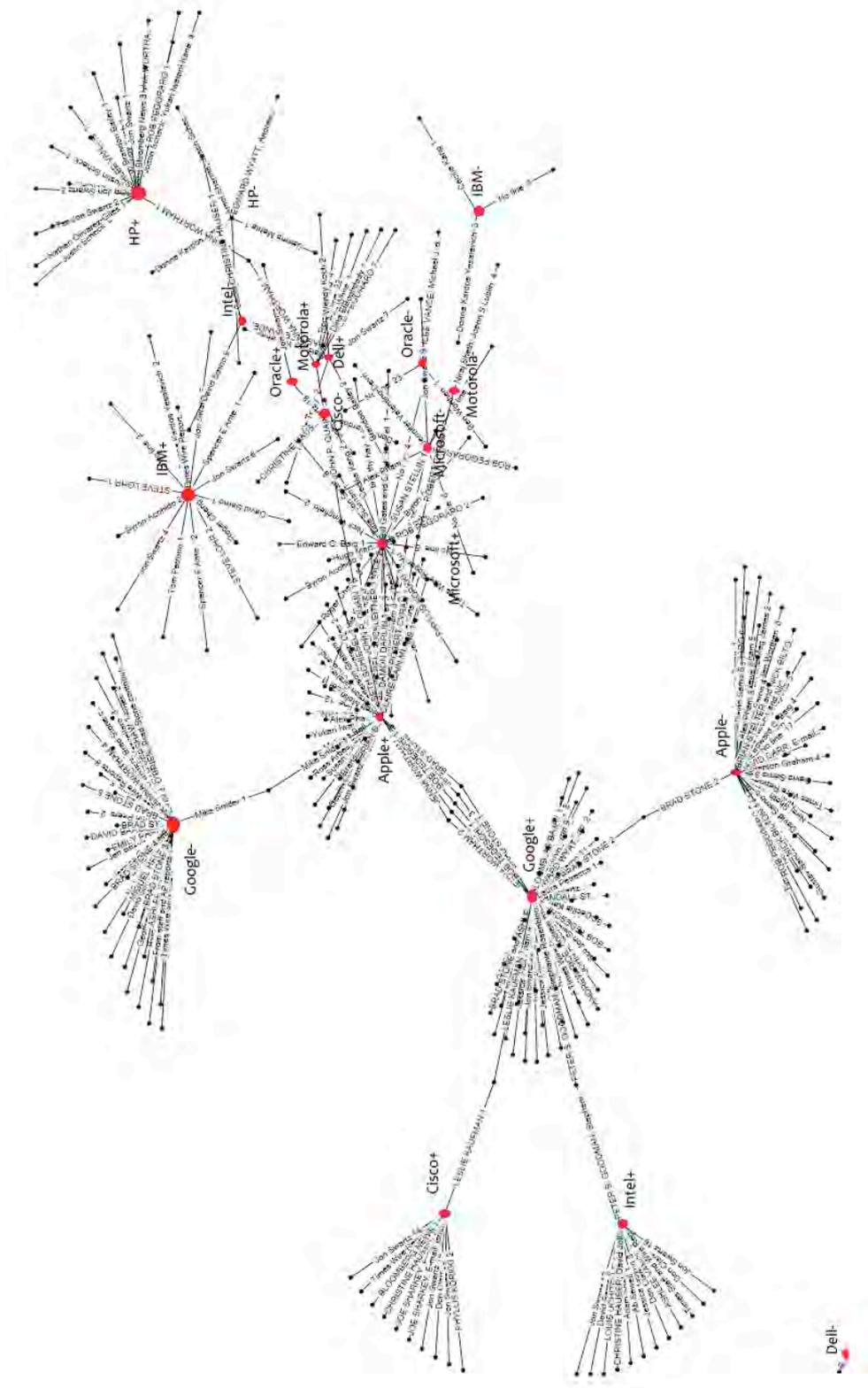
SOURCE: Google Press Center

<http://www.google.com/press/>

6.3 Negative Story Map



6.4 Journalist-company links



6 Endnotes

i http://www.forbes.com/lists/2010/18/global-2000-10_The-Global-2000_Rank.html

ii http://www.ge.com/products_services/directory/by_product.html

iii "Top 50 Global Technology Companies". Datamonitor.
<http://www.computerwire.com/companies/lists/list/?listid=7A7B551F-A6C8-47AC-B3AE-3879873B5E23>.

iv List of circulation numbers for US newspapers. Online:
<http://abcas3.accessabc.com/ecirc/newstitlesearchus.asp>

v <http://www.apple.com/hotnews/>, <http://googleblog.blogspot.com/>

vi <http://h20435.www2.hp.com/t5/Voodoo-Blog/HP-s-Slate-Device-Runs-The-Complete-Internet-Including-Flash/ba-p/53838>, <http://www.ibm.com/blogs/zz/en/>,
<http://blogs.cisco.com/news>

vii <http://latimesblogs.latimes.com/technology/2008/04/jessica-guynns.html>

viii <http://bits.blogs.nytimes.com/author/brad-stone/>

ix <http://www.spj.org/ethicscode.asp>