

Evolution, strategy and economic performance of Bild and Taz

Content Production and Media Companies

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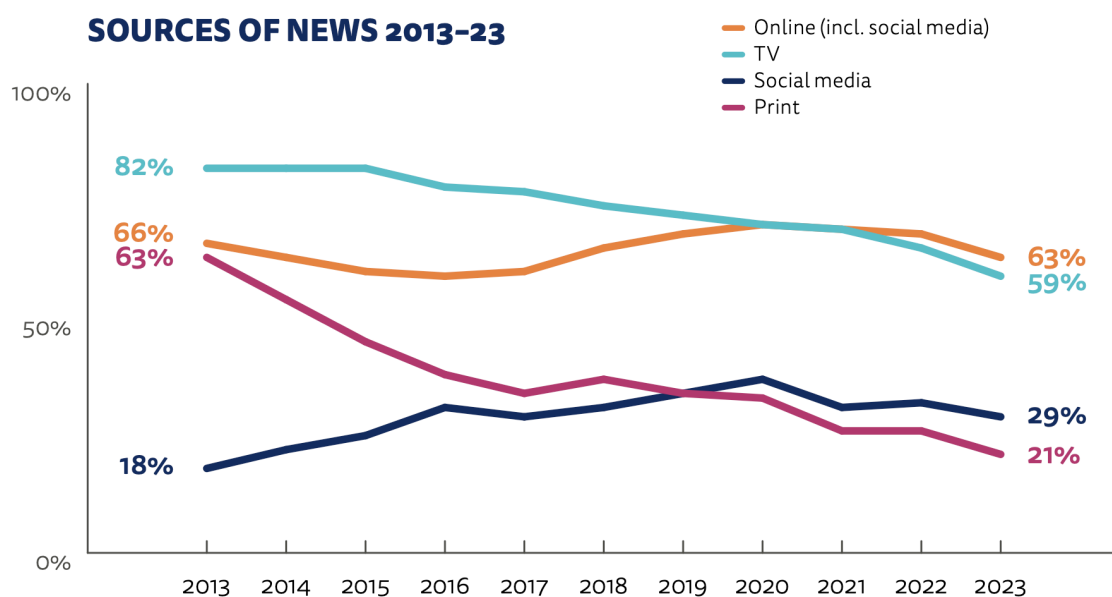
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1 Introduction

1.1 Brief overview of the German newspaper industry

The German newspaper industry is diverse, featuring a range of publications catering to different audiences. Major national newspapers such as Süddeutsche Zeitung, Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung (FAZ), and Die Welt offer in-depth coverage of national and international news. Tabloids like Bild, known for their sensationalist style, contribute to the popular press. Political affiliations are evident, with newspapers like FAZ leaning center-right and Süddeutsche Zeitung having a center-left orientation. Cooperative models, exemplified by Die Tageszeitung (TAZ), emphasize grassroots involvement and independence. The industry has undergone a digital transition, with many newspapers developing strong online platforms. Germany's public broadcasting system, including outlets like ARD and ZDF, also plays a crucial role in providing news content. Local and specialized press, high journalistic standards, and a commitment to diverse perspectives characterize the German newspaper landscape. (Zhen-zhi 2004) The German newspaper market is still the largest in Europe and the fifth largest in the world. According to BZDF statistics, there are currently 1,532 different publications in Germany. There are 330 newspaper publishers in Germany and 130 newspapers with full editorial responsibility. However, it is getting smaller every year. (Eshkerat 2022) The German media landscape has fundamentally changed in the past two decades. The internet democratised how content is created and consumed, enabling new channels of communication between businesses and consumers.



These changes have significantly disrupted traditional newspaper revenues, which have fallen by 31% as the market for printed classifieds advertisements has all but disappeared. Since the turn of the millenium, newspaper revenues fell €3.6 billion. The vast majority (89%) of this decline was from the loss of printed classifieds revenue, which once contributed €4.37 billion to newspaper coffers and now contributes just €1.15 billion. Classifieds advertising now happens on several pure play online sites: digital-only businesses which host listings for a specific niche such as job advertisements, second-hand cars and household items, or real-estate listings. These businesses are often supported by local investors, including news publishing businesses. (Keller 2020) German news readers are increasingly turning to social media and online news and away from print and TV news. There has been a 42 percentage point reduction in the share of consumers who access news via print since 2013. Germans are looking increasingly to the internet and social media as places to access news. As of 2023, the proportion of Germans accessing news via social media is higher then those accessing news via print media. TV remains a dominant medium for accessing the news in Germany however the number of people accessing news via TV has declined 23ppts since 2013 to be 58% in 2023. The number of people accessing news online is with 63% the dominant means of accessing the news in Germany. (Newman 2023)

1.2 Importance of studying the evolution, strategy, and economic results of Bild and TAZ

Analysing the development, strategy and economic results of Bild and TAZ is of great importance in order to gain insights into the media landscape, political discourse and economic dynamics in Germany. Bild and TAZ represent different political spectrums and play a decisive role in shaping public opinion and political discourse. Due to no valid economic data of Bild, the financial part of this paper will look on the whole company of Axel Springer SE. The rest of the paper will only look at the newspaper Bild, as it is already very interesting and a comparison of TAZ and Axel Springer would go beyond the scope of the paper. Axel Springer has so many different divisions and products that it would simply be impossible to look at them all and compare them with another newspaper.

1.3 Thesis statement outlining the main points of the paper

My thesis is, that Newspaper companies can be really different in their orientation. I want to show how this two, political completely different companies are working. It's interesting because these two newspaper's had some fights on the court in the past years. In the big change, the newspaper's have to face in the past years and in the future, the companies go different ways.

2 Evolution and Basic Characteristics of the Companies

2.1 Historical background of Bild

Bild, often referred to as Bildzeitung, is a German tabloid newspaper that has had a significant impact on the country's media landscape since its inception. Founded in 1952 by Axel Springer, Bild quickly became one of the most widely read newspapers in Germany. From its early years, Bild positioned itself as a populist and sensationalist publication. It adopted a straightforward and bold style, featuring large headlines, vivid images, and a tabloid format. The newspaper aimed to appeal to a broad readership, often using sensationalism to attract attention and boost sales. Bild's content has historically focused on a mix of news, entertainment, and human interest stories. It often covers celebrities, sports, and sensational events, employing a style that some critics argue prioritizes entertainment over serious journalism. The newspaper has been known for its provocative headlines and strong editorial stance on various issues. One of the defining features of Bild is its influence on public opinion in Germany. The newspaper has played a role in shaping political narratives and has been known for taking clear editorial positions on major issues. Its editorial stance has been generally conservative, and it has been associated with a more right-leaning perspective. Over the years, Bild has faced criticism for its sensationalism, aggressive reporting tactics, and at times, a lack of journalistic standards. However, it remains immensely popular, with a large and diverse readership. Its impact on German media and its ability to set the agenda on certain issues are widely acknowledged. Bild has adapted to the digital age by expanding its online presence and embracing multimedia formats. Despite changes in the media landscape, Bild continues to be a dominant force in German journalism, both in print and online. Its influence, controversial as it may be, has made it a central player in the dynamics of media and public discourse in Germany.

2.2 Historical background of TAZ

Die Tageszeitung, commonly known as TAZ, is a German daily newspaper that has played a significant role in the country's media landscape, particularly during its formative years. TAZ was founded in 1978 as a response to the perceived lack of alternative and independent voices in the mainstream media. The early years of TAZ were marked by a spirit of activism and a commitment to providing an alternative perspective on news and current affairs. It was established by a group of journalists, intellectuals, and activists who were dissatisfied with the existing media landscape, which they believed was dominated by large, corporate-owned publications. TAZ was founded as a cooperative, with its ownership structure designed to ensure editorial independence and a commitment to grassroots values. The newspaper aimed to cover stories that were often overlooked by mainstream media, giving a platform to progressive and leftist viewpoints. Its founders envisioned TAZ as a counterbalance to the conservative and establishment narratives prevalent in other newspapers. One of the distinctive features of TAZ in its early years was its collaborative and non-hierarchical organizational structure. Journalists at TAZ operated on a rotating editorship system, which meant that no single individual held a permanent editorial position. This structure was intended to prevent concentration of power and to foster a diversity of perspectives within the newspaper. In its content, TAZ covered a wide range of topics, including politics, culture, and social issues, always with a critical and alternative perspective. The newspaper gained a reputation for its investigative journalism and willingness to challenge the status quo. Over the years, TAZ has faced financial challenges and fluctuations in readership, but it has managed to maintain its commitment to independence and alternative journalism. It has adapted to the changing media landscape by embracing digital platforms while continuing to publish a print edition. Today, TAZ remains an important voice in German media, known for its progressive stance and its role in shaping public discourse. The newspaper's early years were crucial in establishing its identity as a platform for alternative voices and perspectives in the German media landscape.

2.3 Basic characteristics of Bild

2.3.1 Ownership structure

Bild is owned by the media-company Axel Springer, which is the biggest company in this sector in Germany. It is a stock corporation. Axel Springer SE, headquartered in Berlin, is a publishing group with several multimedia brands such as Bild, Die Welt, Welt, Business Insider, Politico, Fakt and Blesk. The company is active in more than 40 countries with subsidiaries, joint ventures and licences.

2.3.2 Editorial focus and style

Bild is a tabloid newspaper, characterized by its compact size and a focus on sensationalism, eye-catching headlines, and vivid imagery. This format is designed to appeal to a broad readership. Bild is known for its populist approach, catering to a wide audience. It often covers topics that have mass appeal, including celebrity gossip, sports, and sensational news stories. The newspaper aims to engage and entertain a broad readership. The editorial style of Bild is characterized by a preference for sensationalism and emotional storytelling. Headlines often use provocative language, and stories may be presented in a way that evokes strong emotional reactions from readers. Bild places a significant emphasis on visual elements. The newspaper uses bold and attention-grabbing images to complement its stories. The combination of compelling visuals and concise writing contributes to the overall impact of the newspaper. Bild often features human interest stories, covering personal experiences, dramatic events, and emotional narratives. This aligns with its goal of connecting with readers on a personal and emotional level. Sports coverage is a prominent feature of Bild. The newspaper dedicates considerable space to reporting on sports events, particularly football (soccer), which enjoys immense popularity in Germany. Sports coverage is presented in an engaging and enthusiastic manner. Bild is generally considered to have a conservative political orientation. While it covers a broad range of topics, including politics, its approach tends to be more conservative and nationalistic on certain issues. The language used in Bild is known for its simplicity and directness. The newspaper aims to communicate its messages clearly and concisely, making it accessible to a wide audience. Bild has been known to launch various campaigns and initiatives on social issues. These efforts may include fundraising, awareness campaigns, or advocacy on specific topics, demonstrating the newspaper's engagement with social causes.

It's important to note that Bild's editorial style has both ardent supporters who appreciate its directness and critics who raise concerns about sensationalism and its impact on journalistic standards. The newspaper's approach reflects a commitment to capturing the attention of a diverse and broad readership through its distinctive style and content choices.

2.4 Basic characteristics of TAZ

2.4.1 Ownership structure

In the wake of an existential financial crisis at the newspaper, Taz, the Tageszeitung Verlagsgenossenschaft eG, was founded in 1992 in order to obtain new investment funds while maintaining its journalistic independence. In November 2022, the cooperative, which acted as publisher, had 22,459 members. At the beginning of 2022, the cooperative's capital totalled around 21.9 million euros.

2.4.2 Editorial focus and style

Taz is known for its left-liberal political orientation. The newspaper advocates for social justice, environmental protection, and progressive political positions. Taz is characterized by its critical journalism. Reporting is often investigative, aiming to uncover misconduct and stimulate societal discussions. The newspaper adopts a participatory approach, actively involving readers in the journalistic process. This is reflected in reader letters, comments, and participatory projects. Taz places a strong emphasis on environmental topics, social justice, and human rights. Reporting focuses on events and developments that impact these issues. In addition to political topics, taz covers a broad spectrum of subjects including culture, science, and international news. The newspaper aims to provide a comprehensive view of various aspects of society. Taz promotes alternative perspectives and voices. This is reflected in the selection of authors and opinion leaders who may not always align with mainstream views. The writing style of Taz is often sophisticated yet accessible. The newspaper uses clear and concise language to explain complex issues. Taz emphasizes its independence from political parties and economic interests. Editorial work is based on journalistic principles of objectivity and transparency. Taz advocates for diversity and equality, both in its editorial coverage and the selection of topics. The newspaper reflects a diverse and inclusive perspective.

3 Employees in the Companies

3.1 Workforce size and composition for Bild

The Axel Springer company had 16.835 employees in the year 2021. They had 10.348 employees in 2007 and had a steady growth over the years. Only in 2012 they had a decreasing number of employees. (Appendix) In the sector of News Media, which includes Bild, but also other newspapers, there are 7.078 People working in 2019. There is no valid data about the years after. (Appendix) According to newer informations, Bild will cut 200 jobs because many jobs can be replaced by AI. (Tagesschau 2023)

3.2 Workforce size and composition for TAZ

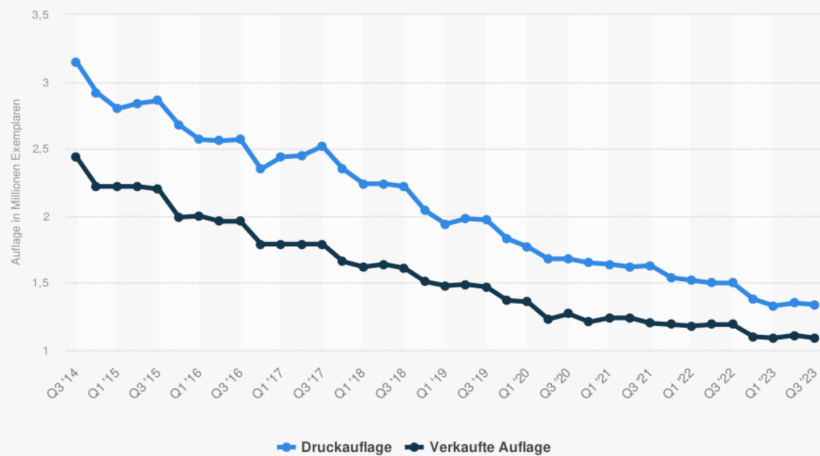
Around 250 employees in the editorial and publishing departments, including many freelancers, work for Taz, which does not pay its employees the standard industry wage. Until 1991, there was a standard wage for all employees, from typesetters to the editor in charge. Since then, there have been "responsibility bonuses" of a few hundred euros, for example for the heads of the individual departments. As of 2020, the average gross monthly salary was 3,042 euros (Bull 2020), with no holiday or Christmas bonus. The comparatively low pay means that the newspaper has become a "hotbed of talent" or even a "flow heater", because "time and again, big papers, left-wing as well as bourgeois, buy away good writers". There is no evident data about the workforce size in the past. (Molin, J., Renner, J. 2023)

4 Daily Circulation

4.1 Daily circulation figures for Bild

The daily circulation of the printed Version of the Bild is decreasing a lot in the past years. It was close to 2,5 Million in 2014 and went down to 1,1 Million in 2023. Thats a decreasing for more then 50 percent. The weekly version, called "Bild am Sonntag", was on a stable level in their readership in the years between 2004 and 2010. In this period it was between 10 and 11 Million, from 2011 on it was slowly decreasing to 8 Million before having a peak in 2016 with 9 Million. After this it decreased to 6.2 Million in 2022.

Druckauflage und verkaufte Auflage der BILD/B.Z. Deutschland vom 3. Quartal 2014 bis zum 3. Quartal 2023 (in Millionen)

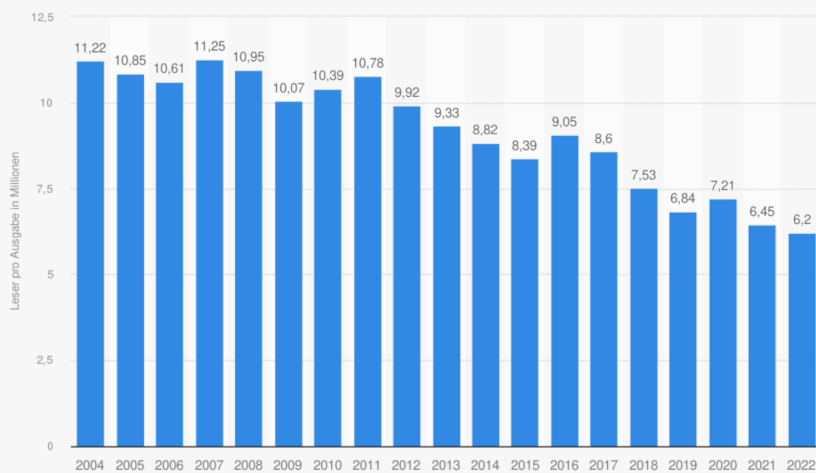


Quelle:
IVW
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Weitere Informationen:
Deutschland; tägliche Auflage; Montag bis Samstag; seit Q2 2012 inkl. E-Paper-Auflagen; seit Q3 2017 inkl. Fußballbild

statista

Reichweite der Bild am Sonntag in den Jahren 2004 bis 2022 (in Millionen Lesern)



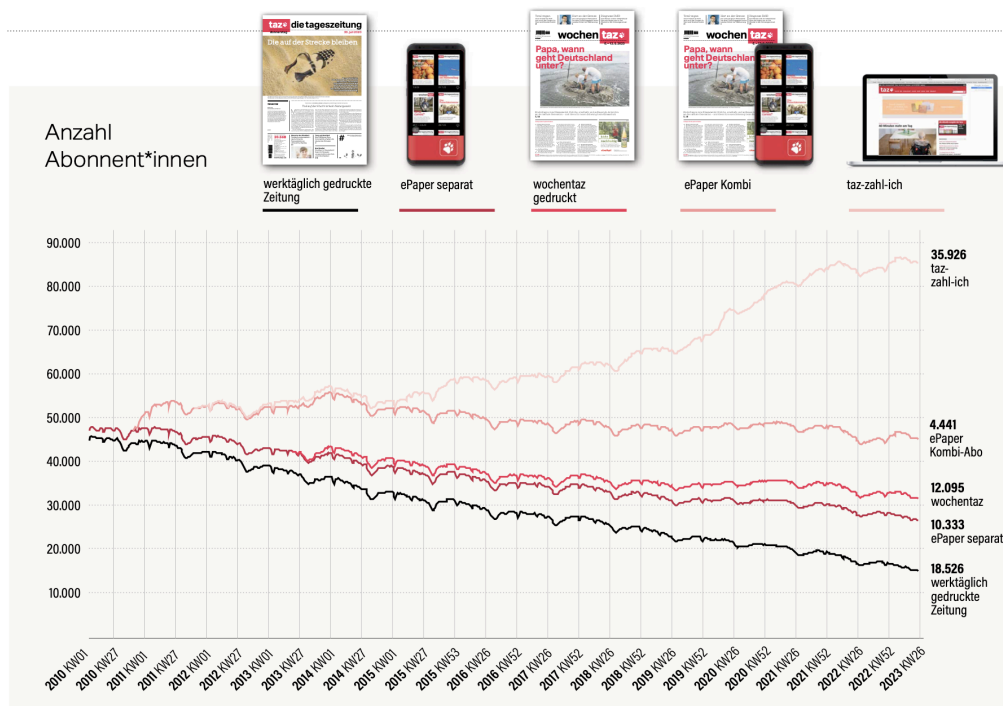
Quelle:
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Weitere Informationen:
Deutschland; 37.248 gew. Fälle (ma 2023 Pressemedien I); ab 14 Jahre; Personen aus Privathaushalten

statista

4.2 Daily circulation figures for TAZ

The daily circulation of the printed Taz is decreasing over the past years. The same happens to the weekly printed „Wochentaz“. Also the ePaper has decreased over the last years. All articles in the printed newspaper are also on the webpage for free. Taz has a special kind of paying audience. Its a model where people can decide wether to pay or not. It is called „taz – zahl ich“ which is increasing over the period we look on. This kind of payment method is really unique in Germany and in the whole world, and it is working.



(Molin, J., Renner, J. 2023)

5 Economical Results and Financial Ratios

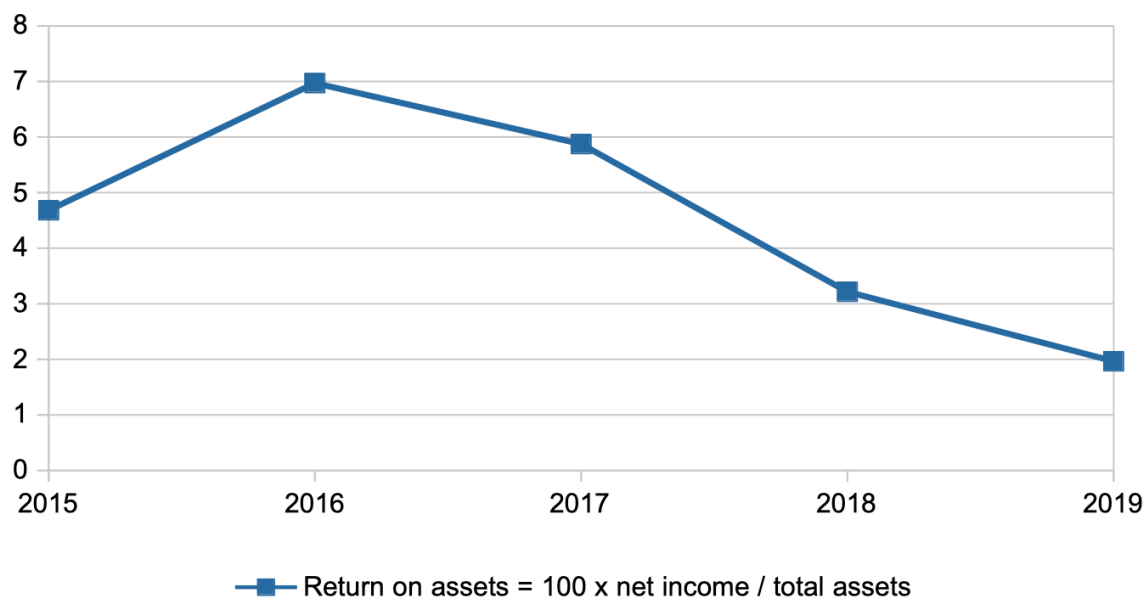
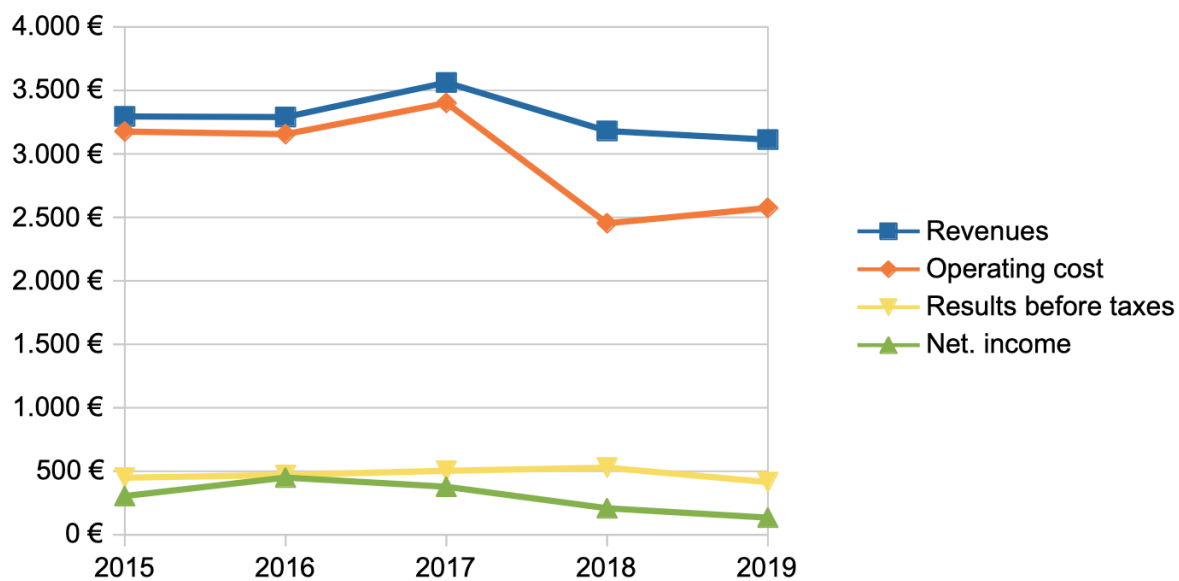
The Bild newspaper's economic report only goes up to 2019, and the Taz data starts in 2015, so the data from both companies is analysed for the period from 2015 to 2019.

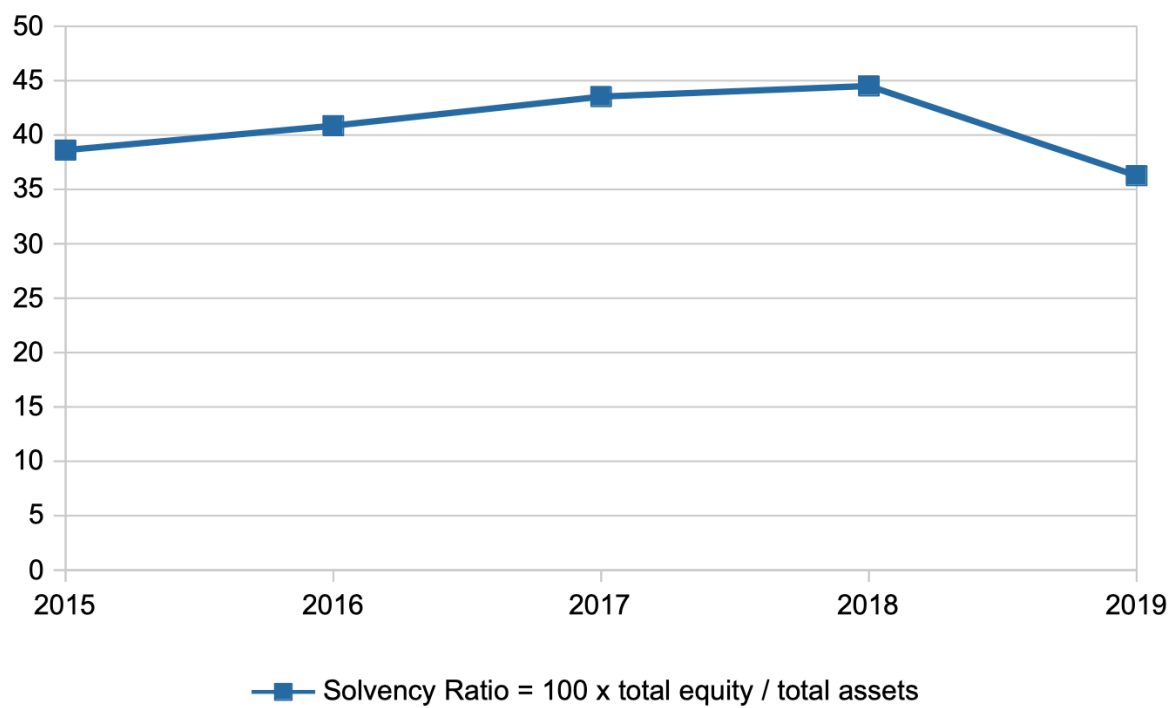
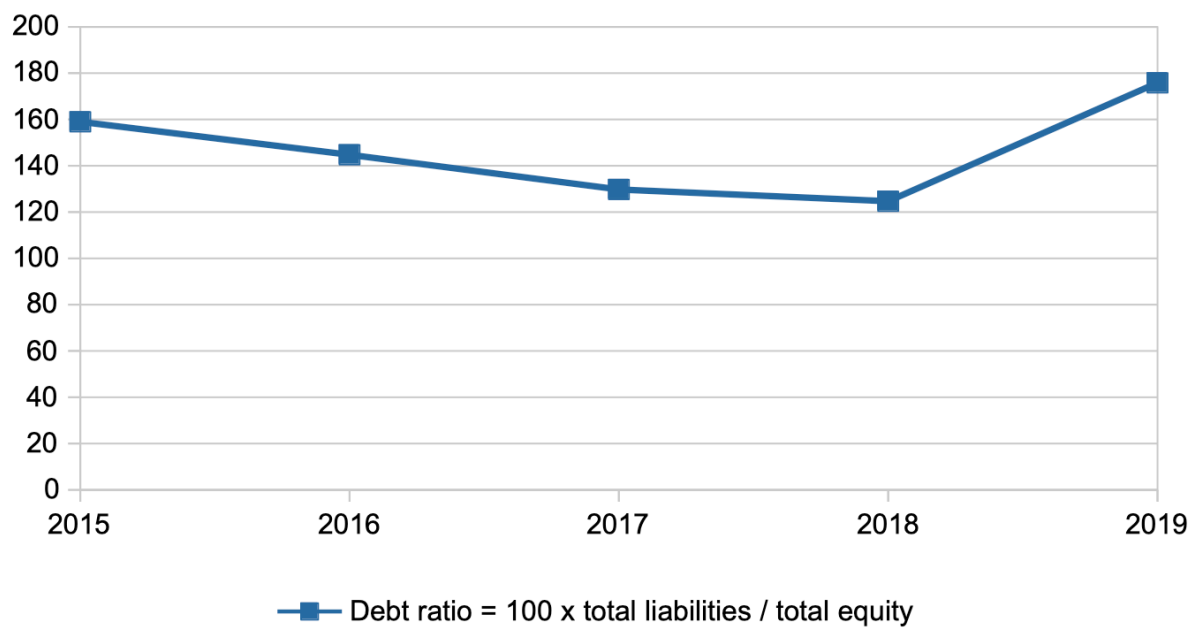
5.1 Financial performance of Bild (Axel Springer SE)

It's not possible to look only on the newspaper Bild because it is a part of the german media company Axel Springer SE. The company's structure is really big and they are not presenting the economical results from the newspaper by itself. I will look in this part on the whole company.

Economic results of Axel Springer SE 2015-19 (in m. €)					
	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Revenues	3.295	3.290	3.562	3.180	3.112
Digital %	61%	68%	72%	71%	73%
Other operating income	272	340	317	170	121
Operating cost	3.176	3.155	3.401	2.453	2.574
Results before taxes	449	471	504	528	415
Net. income	305	450	378	208	135
Total assets	6.505	6.456	6.435	6.479	6.851
Total liabilities	3.993	3.818	3.634	3.595	4.367
Total equity	2.512	2.638	2.801	2.884	2.484
Return on assets = 100 x net income / total assets					
	4,68	6,97	5,87	3,22	1,96
Debt ratio = 100 x total liabilities / total equity					
	159,00	144,73	129,74	124,65	175,81
Solvency Ratio = 100 x total equity / total assets					
	38,61	40,86	43,53	44,51	36,26

(Axel Springer SE 2019, Axel Springer SE 2021)

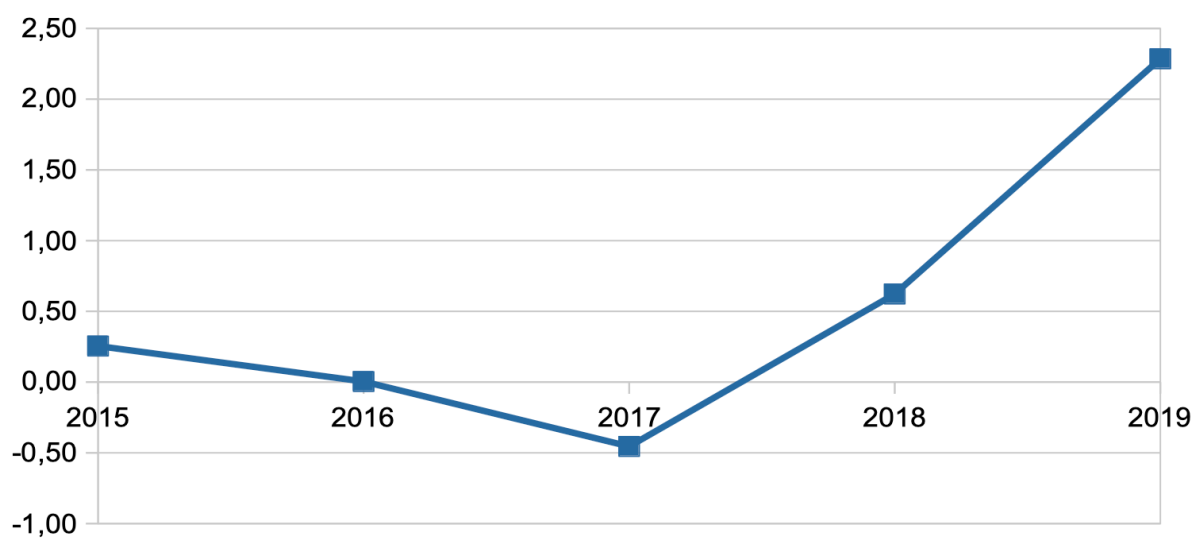
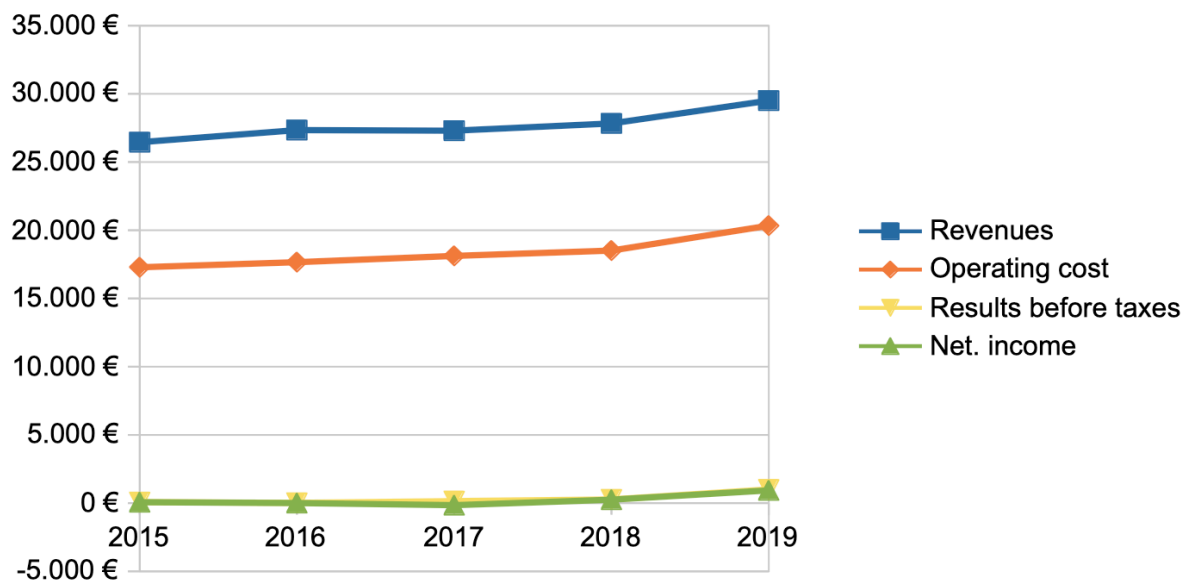




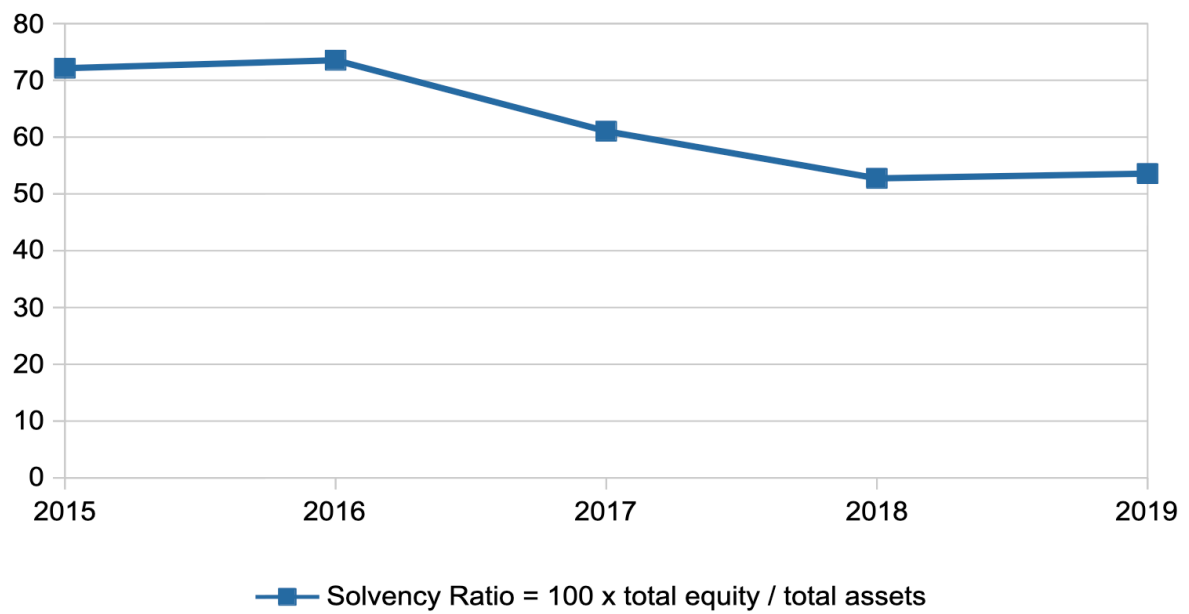
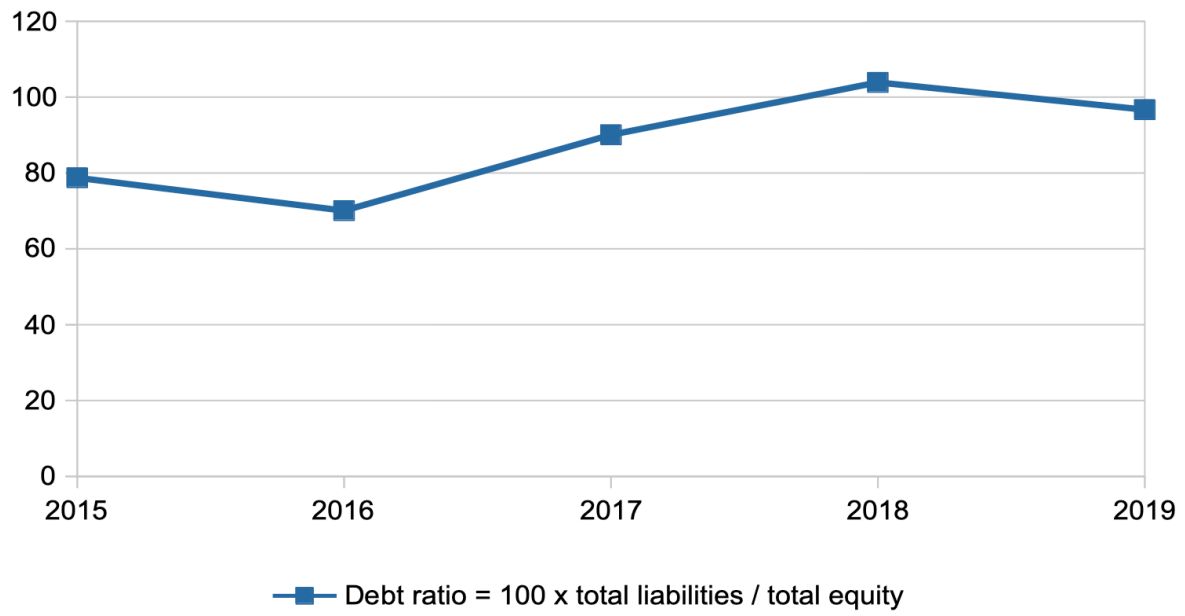
5.2 Financial performance of TAZ

Economic results of TAZ 2015-19 (in t. €)					
	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Revenues	26.451	27.340	27.297	27.827	29.503
Other operating income	553	442	576	598	1.484
Operating cost	17.287	17.662	18.120	18.510	20.337
Results before taxes	71	13	142	264	1.001
Net. income	66	1	-154	252	934
Total assets	25.898	26.593	33.835	40.502	40.868
Total liabilities	14.706	13.702	18.598	22.184	21.168
Total equity	18.678	19.555	20.651	21.356	21.892
Return on assets = $100 \times \text{net income} / \text{total assets}$					
	0,25	0,00	-0,46	0,62	2,29
Debt ratio = $100 \times \text{total liabilities} / \text{total equity}$					
	78,73	70,07	90,06	103,88	96,69
Solvency Ratio = $100 \times \text{total equity} / \text{total assets}$					
	72,12	73,53	61,03	52,73	53,57

(Molin, J., Renner, J. 2023, Gellenbeck, K., Bassin, K. 2020)



Return on assets = $100 \times \text{net income} / \text{total assets}$



6 Corporate Strategy

6.1 Analysis of the corporate strategy of Bild

The Group plans to move away from the printed newspaper business and become a purely digital company. Bild's strategy is "Digital First". Artificial intelligence is also being integrated into Bild's workforce. It is said that the age of the printed press is over.

6.2 Analysis of the corporate strategy of TAZ

The strategy of the TAZ (daily newspaper) includes a "soli-price system" for subscriptions, where readers decide for themselves how much they want to pay. The TAZ also publishes content digitally and allows users to freely decide whether they want to pay for it. The online platform taz.de recorded a growing number of users, with a significant increase in page views during special events. Since 2011, taz.de has offered a voluntary payment option.

7 Annual Reports

7.1 Examination of annual reports for Bild

Journalistic offerings are also developing favourably in Germany. The number of digital subscribers to BILD and WELT is growing strongly. Over the next three years, they plan to invest 100 million euros in growth projects for the two brands - in live reporting, paid content and sport. (Axel Springer SE 2021) With a market share of almost 80% in the fourth quarter of 2019, the BILD newspaper is the leading newsstand newspaper in Germany and the largest daily newspaper in Europe in terms of paid circulation. The Sunday edition, BILD am SONNTAG, is also the market leader with a market share of over 50%. The BILD brand family also includes specialised magazines in the automotive, computer and sports sectors. Revenues in the News Media segment mainly come from advertising and sales, with advertising revenues generated by the reach of online and print media and sales revenues from the sale of print products and digital subscriptions. The value chain is cross-media and includes all steps from conception to marketing. The content is prepared for various media in integrated newsrooms. Despite declining print circulations, reach remains a critical factor for advertising customers, with BILD having the largest reach of any daily newspaper in Germany with 8.6 million daily readers.

7.2 Examination of annual reports for TAZ

The digital transformation in the newspaper market continued. The COVID-19 pandemic initially had positive effects through increased interest in news, but the war in Ukraine and its consequences brought new challenges. Despite an initial increase in demand for journalism, interest quickly declined again. High energy prices and inflation led to rising costs for printing and distribution, which had a negative impact on the subscription business. The total circulation of daily newspapers fell, while that of ePaper editions rose, but this could not compensate for the decline in printed newspapers. The circulation of weekly newspapers increased, especially ePaper sales. The trend towards online reading continued and daily newspapers further extended their paywalls, although the willingness to pay for online journalism remains a challenge, especially among younger readers. (Molin, J., Renner, J. 2023)

8 Outlook for the Future

8.1 Projections for the future of Bild

The future of Bild is characterised by significant changes that are taking place as part of the digital transformation. Axel Springer SE is planning to focus increasingly on digitalisation in the coming years in order to save costs. This includes reducing the number of jobs at Bild and closing some editorial offices. The aim is to reduce the number of regional editions and close smaller sites completely. This process also includes the use of artificial intelligence (AI) to take over certain editorial tasks that were previously carried out by humans. The introduction of AI is intended to support the journalistic process, for example in research, content creation for social media and SEO tasks. Another step towards the future is the publisher's "digital only" strategy, which aims to stop producing printed newspapers in the medium term and instead strengthen its digital offering. These restructuring measures are expected to save around 100 million euros by 2025. The use of AI is intended to give editors more time for journalistic creativity, with all content supported by AI being checked by humans before publication. Despite the cost-cutting measures and automation, the publisher promises to continue investing in journalistic quality and staff.

8.2 Projections for the future of TAZ

The TAZ continues to focus on a daily, self-contained product that offers readers a comprehensive overview of important topics and social developments in both printed and digital form, supplemented by cultural events and the TAZ's characteristic humour. The editorial team deliberately decided against a constantly updated news app and instead developed a daily newspaper app that transfers the printed newspaper into a digital format that can also be read offline. Despite the change, many readers value the printed daily newspaper not only as a source of information, but also as part of a lifestyle associated with a left-wing, alternative movement. The TAZ is exploring the possibilities of a digital newspaper that is more environmentally friendly and enables new functions such as sharing articles and access to further information. Future reader analyses will help to further improve the digital offerings and better meet the needs of readers in order to attract both existing and new readers to digital formats.

9 Conclusion

9.1 Summary of key findings

In the world of news and media, we are experiencing a time of change and adaptation. While the print circulation of newspapers is declining, both Bild and TAZ are showing how they are positioning themselves in this changing media landscape. Bild, known for its broad readership, is increasingly turning to paid content to finance high-quality content and meet the needs of its online readership. This move reflects a general industry trend of moving digital content behind paywalls to create sustainable revenue streams. In contrast, TAZ remains true to its principle of openness and accessibility. As a newspaper organised as a cooperative, it makes all its articles available online free of charge. This decision emphasises its commitment to the community and the idea that information should be freely accessible. Despite this free accessibility, TAZ has seen a steady increase in sales, reflecting its resonance and support among readers. As a cooperative, the focus is not on maximising profits, but on cultivating values and principles that serve the community. This contrasts with the Bild newspaper, whose sales are trending downwards. As part of Axel Springer SE, a stock corporation, it is under pressure to generate profits and pass them on to its shareholders. This commercial orientation reflects a different approach to journalism and its role in society.

Both models show different approaches to how media companies can respond to changing consumer habits and digitalisation. While some rely on paywalls to monetise exclusive content, others rely on the power of community and free access to information. At a time when the way we consume news is changing rapidly, these different models offer valuable insights into possible futures for journalism.

9.2 Personal reflections on the comparison

Personal reflection on the comparison of the two newspapers reveals the profound differences that can be found not only in their reach and economic orientation, but also in their political perspectives and fundamental media philosophies. I was aware that the TAZ and Bild are worlds apart, but the direct comparison emphasised the contrasts even more. The TAZ, with its more modest reach, stands for an alternative understanding of media that is deeply rooted in left-wing and liberal values. Its payment model and its structure as a cooperative reflect a commitment to democratic principles and free access to information. This approach to journalism emphasises the importance of community and collective responsibility. On the other hand Bild represents a very different world with its enormous reach and influence in the German media landscape. The publisher strives for continuous growth and the development of new markets, most recently in the USA, which underlines its commercial orientation and its efforts to maximise profits. Bild represents a more traditional media model based on mass reach and commercial success. The political views expressed through the editorial lines of both newspapers further reinforce these differences. While the TAZ is often seen as a mouthpiece for left-wing and progressive ideas, the Bild newspaper has a reputation for representing more conservative and popular views, making it a powerful player in shaping public opinion. This reflection leads to a deeper understanding of the role and responsibility of media in society. It shows how different business models, editorial orientations and corporate philosophies shape the way news is presented and consumed. At a time when the media landscape is subject to constant change, this comparison offers valuable insights into the diversity of approaches in journalism and the associated social implications.

10 SWOT Analysis

10.1 SWOT analysis for Bild

Strengths

1. High reach
2. Strong brand
3. Wide range of topics
4. Multimedia presence

Weaknesses

1. Image problems
2. Decline in print circulation
3. Dependence on advertising revenue
4. Polarization

Opportunities

1. Digitalization
2. International expansion
3. Innovative content formats
4. Partnerships

Threats

1. Changing media usage behavior
2. Competition
3. Regulatory risks
4. Criticism and scandals

10.2 SWOT analysis for TAZ

Strengths

1. Community-based model
2. Free access to content
3. Steady revenue growth
4. Focus on cooperative values

Weaknesses

1. Limited reach compared to major newspapers
2. Potential digital growth limitations
3. Dependence on community funding
4. Niche audience

Opportunities

1. Expansion of digital content
2. Engagement with younger audiences
3. Innovative journalism formats
4. Strengthening community involvement

Threats

1. Changes in media consumption
2. Intense competition in digital space
3. Regulatory changes affecting media
4. Potential for reduced community engagement

11 Literature

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