

Innovators in Digital News

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Reuters Institute
for the Study of Journalism

Underlying research questions

- **Plan A:**
 - Why are some legacy news organisations more successful with digital than others? How are they innovating?
- **Pivot:**
 - “I’m not really interested in legacy players – what interests me are the new ones”
- **Plan B:**
 - Why are some digital news organisations more successful than others?

➤ Are there common elements behind their success?

Case studies

	GMU's	Bus Mod	Finances/Funding	c. Journ/Tech
The Guardian	c. 100m	Free + ads (inc. native)	Owned by Scott Trust	585: 150
New York Times	c. 70m c. 1m paid subs	Paywall + ads (inc. native)	Public (Sulzberger family holds controlling stake)	1230: 635
Quartz	c.190m	Free + ads (inc. native)	Owned by Atlantic Media	50: 15
BuzzFeed	c.100m	Free + native	Privately owned (funding \$96.3m)	250: 'a lot' (125 news)
Vice	n/a	Free + native + IP licensing	Privately owned (funding \$580m)	?

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(Private questions on the side)

1. BuzzFeed and Vice

- 1. Why so highly valued?**
- 2. Why included in news sector?**
- 3. Why are ‘pedigreed’ journalists joining them?**

2. Why haven’t leading legacy players like The Guardian and The New York Times been even more successful?

Findings

BuzzFeed

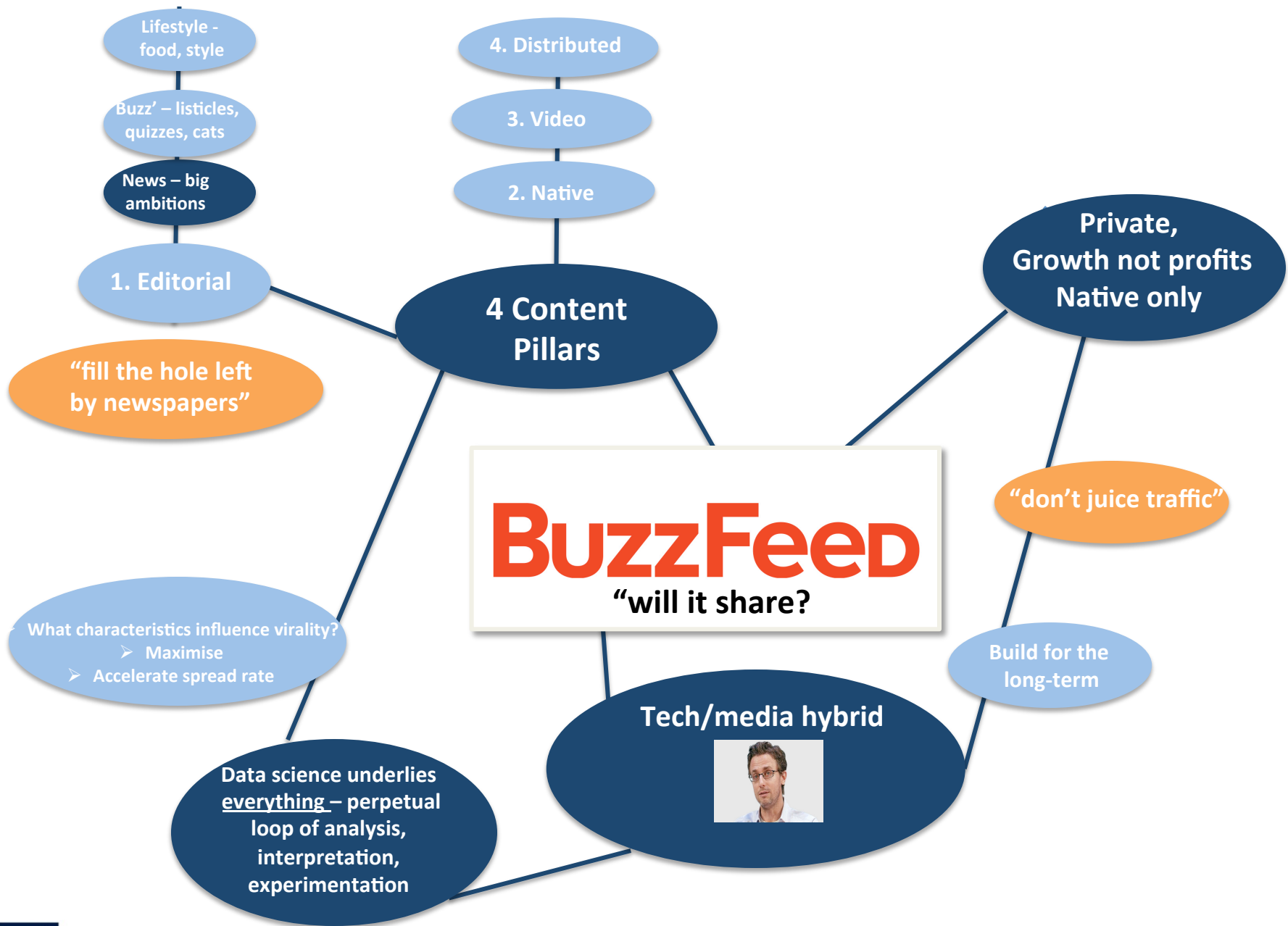


Social Rank

Measures the "social reproduction rate" of media and is a measurement metric that exists in real time

$$R = \beta z$$

Maximization of Content Spread: we accelerate the promotion of content that is taking off.

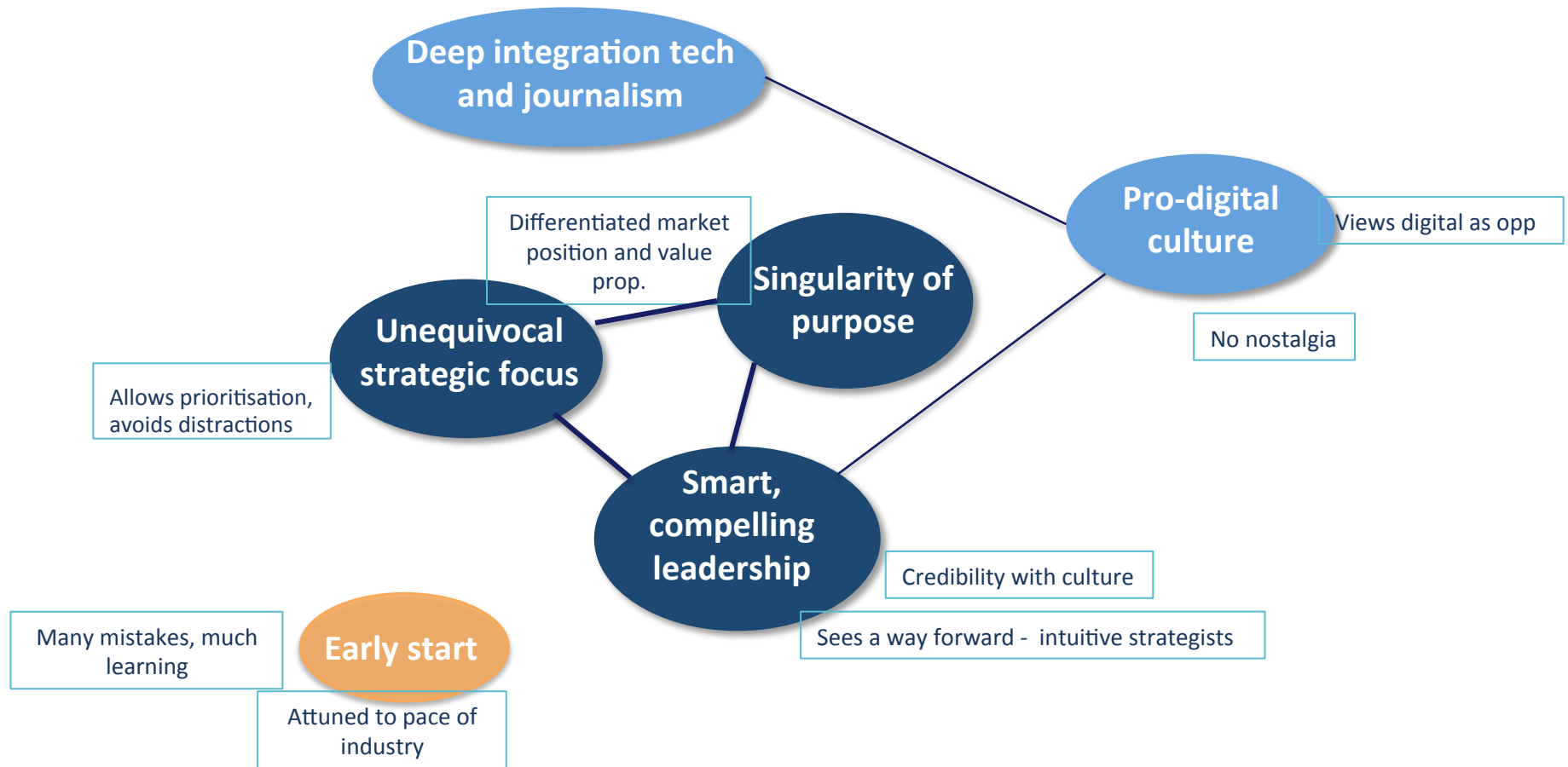


BuzzFeed, in summary

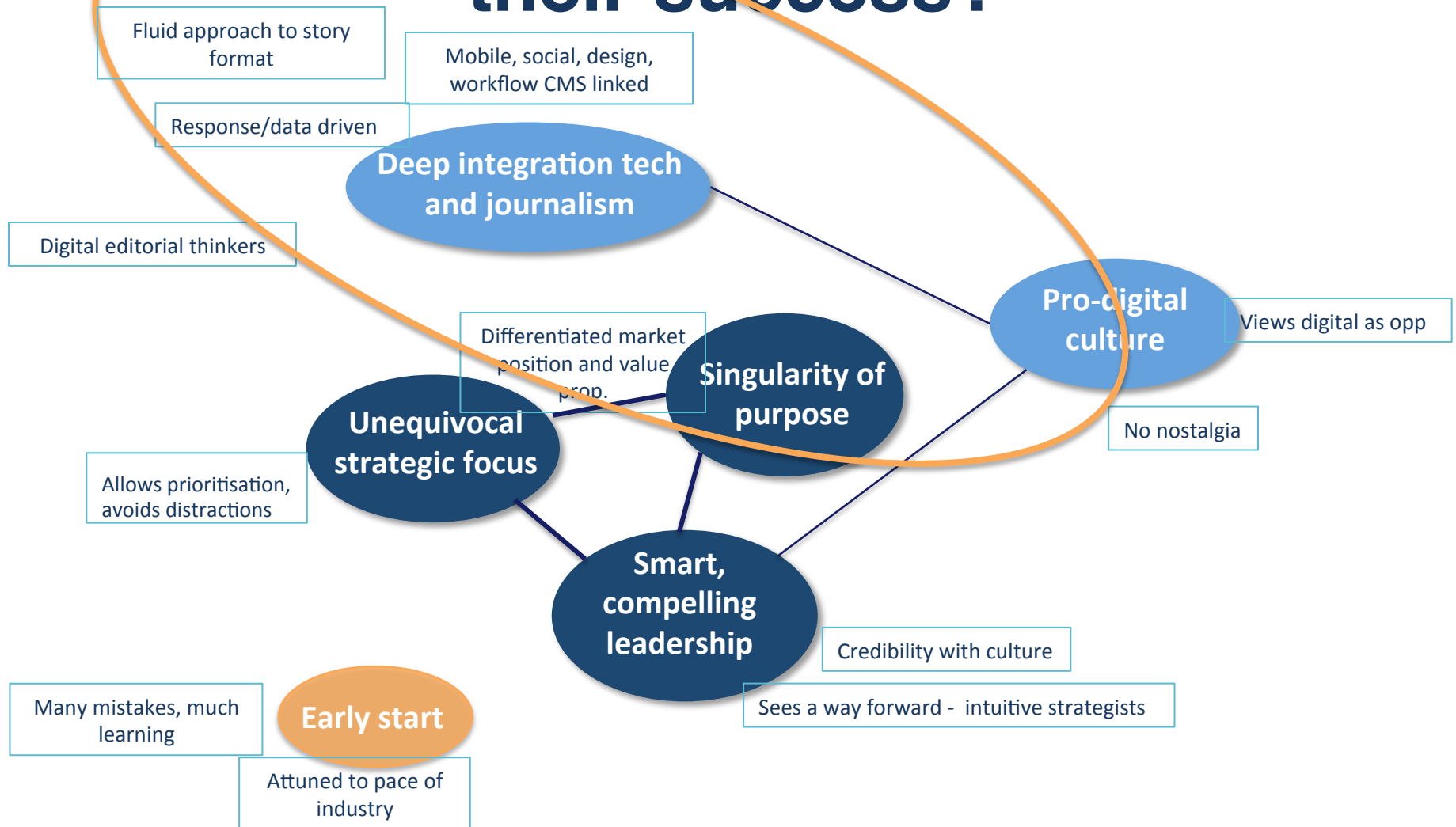
- **started off as lab to test viral content and is still testing**
- **2 big pivots - news (2012), video (2013)**
- **data science underlies content creation, tech industry influences how organisation is run**
- **classic disrupter - started downmarket and progressed resolutely up**

Conclusions

So *are* there common elements behind their success?



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Similar strategic priorities - new business model?

	Guardian	NYT	Quartz	BuzzFeed	Vice
Video	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Native	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Events / membership	✓	✓	✓	✓	
International expansion	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Invest and integrate tech/data	✓	✓	✓	✓	