Gabriele Siegert · Kati Förster
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Preface

As a young and growing research area, media branding has gained momentum over the last decade. Research efforts within the field are diverse and driven by manifold interests, theoretical backgrounds, and empirical methodologies. This book is the result of an ongoing process to bring together the field. Starting from a handful of international scholars, over recent years, a vibrant and active research community has been formed around a shared interest in studying the media from a branding perspective.

The first workshop on the topic was organized in 2007 by the Media Management and Transformation Centre at Jönköping International Business School (Sweden) and took place on a cruise ship between Stockholm and Helsinki. The proceedings of this workshop were edited by Mart Ots and published in the book *Media Brands and Branding* (2008). The second workshop on the topic was hosted by Kati Förster in 2011 at the Department of Communication at the University of Vienna in Austria. The third workshop took place in 2014 at the IPMZ Institute of Mass Communication and Media Research at the University of Zurich in Switzerland on the initiative of Gabriele Siegert. As a well-known media branding expert Sylvia Chan-Olmsted was a participant in and keynote speaker at all three workshops.

On the basis of these workshops and related discussions, the aim of the handbook is to critically reflect the achievements of this "fresh" perspective on the media, to provide a comprehensive review of the literature and theoretical approaches relevant to the field of media branding, to introduce examples of existing empirical research, and to detect areas of interest for further research. We hope that the handbook will be useful to all scholars doing research on media branding and those who want to introduce students to the topic.

We wish to thank all of the colleagues who participated in the workshops and who enrich the ongoing debate on media branding with new ideas and research findings. We especially thank all the contributors for their incredible and disciplined work. You have made this handbook possible.

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Vienna, Austria — Kati Förster
Gainesville, FL — Sylvia M. Chan-Olmsted
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Spring 2015

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What Is So Special About Media Branding? Peculiarities and Commonalities of a Growing Research Area

Gabriele Siegert, Kati Förster, Sylvia M. Chan-Olmsted, and Mart Ots

1 Media Brands as an Area of Inquiry

The view of media products as brands, a genuine economic construct driven by commercial interests, has gained relevance in media economic research. It is demonstrated by a rising number of publications in this field. Therein the efforts to define the term *media brand* seem to be an ongoing debate in the literature between scholars in the areas of communication, marketing and public relations (McDowell, 2006). From an audience's perspective we may understand a media brand as a construct carrying all the connotations of the audience in terms of the emotional, stylistic, cognitive, unconscious or conscious significations. These significations can refer to different levels in a media brand's architecture, which typically consists of the corporate or channel brand as well as its sub-brands with genre, format, and persona brands. The task of media brand management, in turn, is to evoke intended and valuable associations in the audience in order to generate competitive advantages further on (Fournier, 1998; Gardner & Levy, 1955).

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Hence, per definition, media brands are not random or "one-hit wonders", but are the consequence of an institutionalization and systematization of branding activities. Nevertheless, there is an ongoing debate on whether an active brand management is a necessary condition to call a media outlet, a channel, a format or a media company a *media brand*, or whether there is such a thing as a "hidden brand identity" (Gerth, 2010), where a media outlet works as a brand, the audience classifies it as brand, the internal decision making refers to brand dimensions, but the management does not name it a brand or talk about brand management. To give a generally accepted answer to this question is even harder in times of co-creation.

The media industries are full of strong brands. *Google, Facebook, Disney, Discovery, Thomson Reuters*, and *MTV* are all ranked among the 100 most valuable brands globally (Interbrand, 2014). Publications like *National Geographic, Time magazine,* the *BBC, The New York Times, The Financial Times, El Pais, The Wall Street Journal*, and *Die Zeit*, are all regarded as iconic brands, with high brand recognition and a credibility that has stood the test of time (Tungate, 2004).

Though not always making the largest financial profits, media brands have always benefitted from their strong natural social exposure. Despite limited use of traditional marketing campaigns media brands create emotional engagement among their audiences like few others do. One central aspect of this observation is that media consumption helps people to express social belonging and identity or, to paraphrase Bourdieu (1986), to build and enact their "cultural capital". Media brands are in this sense deeply intertwined with people's lives.

This idea of media brands being both product brands *as well as* creators of the popular culture that consumer brands feed from, is an important feature of this research field. It gives additional complexity to the media as being important platforms which fuel social life, debate, and consumer engagement. The rise of social media is further accentuating this aspect of media branding. Audiences are now visibly taking part in the creation of media brands, and media branding is concerned with managing this challenging process.

In this context, the question arises of how media branding as a research area can be characterized. In fact, media branding is an interdisciplinary research area. Drawing from (media) economics, (media) management, media studies, (media) psychology and social psychology, some of the main aspirations of media branding research relate to the successful management of media brands and brand portfolios. This interest is however not unique to the media and one might assume that media branding research is only applying the theoretical considerations of brand research to a new area. But in fact, the media—and thus media brands—have some unique peculiarities.

Throughout the literature in media economics and management (e.g. Doyle, 2012; Picard, 2005; Siegert & von Rimscha, 2013) the unique characteristics of media products are discussed because they have a major influence on the application of management strategies. Berkler (2008) for example distinguishes between a normative, an economic-theoretical and a product-specific level, and mentions the high extent of experience and credence-good character, the lack of objective selection criteria, the lack of marketability, and the lack of visual and content consistency. Media as merit goods, for example, constitute regulation whereas

Table 1 Unique characteristics of media products

Level	Specific characteristics
Normative level	• Importance of media for society • Normative conflicting goals: individualism vs. collectivism, welfare vs. diversity
Market level	• Positive and negative externalities of media consumption • Media as merit goods • Media as public goods & lack of marketability • Lack of market pricing • Low-cost-situation • Economies of scale • Economies of scope • Multi-sided markets
Product level	• Immateriality • Experience and credence-good characteristic • Information asymmetry between media supplier and consumer • Lack of objective selection criteria • Problems in establishing copyright (imitability) • Lack of visual and content consistency

media as public goods make the exclusion of potential users either impractical, impossible and/or inefficient. Both characteristics might lead to inefficiency of resource allocation and consequently market failure (Siegert & von Rimscha, 2013). The following list of unique characteristics of media products (Table 1) expressly underlines the need for adapted or even independent approaches specifically for *media* branding or at least illustrates the specific requirements for media brands. Although not all characteristics might match all kinds of media products, they give reasons not only for the importance of strong and well-positioned media brands but equally for the importance of adapted theoretical approaches.

2 Media Branding and Its Related Branding Areas

When discussing media branding the question arises to what extent media branding is comparable to other branding disciplines and can thus learn from these areas. In other words: what peculiarities (and commonalities) do media brands have as an object of interest in comparison to other branding disciplines?

When approaching this question we can follow two views. *Firstly*, we can look at the media as economic goods with a more or less existing marketability. Media products are marketable to different extents, e.g. depending on the demand and willingness to pay from both the recipients' and the advertisers' market. *Secondly*, we can look at the media as cultural goods fulfilling societal functions, such as creating a public sphere or providing transparency, validation and integration for the public (e.g. Kleinen-von Königslöw, 2010; McQuail, 1992; Picard, 2004; Vlašić, 2012). These two views are intertwined. So on the one end of the continuum we have media products with a high societal importance but a low marketability.

This applies specifically to news media (quality newspapers), educational programs, books and the theater, basically the "highbrow" media. Examples of similar and thus comparable areas of branding research are health care marketing, higher education marketing (e.g. university branding, at least in most parts of the world), political/politician branding and the marketing of public transport. On the other end of the continuum we find more or less meaningful but fully marketable media products. This is especially the case for the entertainment media (e.g. games, blockbuster movies, magazines), but also applies to information. The latter is true in those cases when information serves as investment product for the recipients, e.g. special interest news (e.g. economic news) or news agencies. Similar non-media branding areas are service branding, because of its immaterial nature, and the branding of private goods.

As a consequence we can treat media brands as solely economic goods, neglecting their societal relevance and thereby cutting out the normative level. This might be sufficient—as the previous remarks show—for some kinds of media products. Here media branding strongly benefits from non-media brand research, specifically concerning private goods. We can also treat media (brands) as members of a democratic logic which fulfill essential societal functions. In this case, research would profit by considering and connecting to other emerging areas of brand research, namely those dealing with healthcare, education, public services and politics. This might be a possibility to further establish the field.

3 Scope of This Handbook

The *Handbook of Media Branding* unifies scholars from seven countries, Austria, Finland, Germany, Great Britain, Sweden, Switzerland, and the US, and thus provides a unique international discussion on the peculiarities of the research field. Moreover, we especially emphasize the interdisciplinary nature of media branding research by focusing on the links and commonalities with other research disciplines such as management, communication science, economics and journalism. For this reason we have identified and defined specific perspectives media branding research can take i.e. (1) the management perspective, (2) the product perspective, (3) the communication perspective, (4) the consumer perspective, and (5) the value perspective. These different perspectives provide the structure for the book and reflect interfaces between different research disciplines and traditions. This results in distinct discourses which are taken up by representatives of the various disciplines involved. We thereby aim at a balanced but also critical view of media brands as an emerging research field. Furthermore, to complete the picture we have included research notes in each perspective to illustrate applied empirical research. In the following the individual chapters are described in more detail.

The book starts with an introduction into the field of media branding research. *Sylvia Chan-Olmsted* and *Ronen Shay* examine recent changes and emerging trends in the media industry and discuss their implications for future media branding strategies and potential research topics to address new media branding environments. *Isabelle Krebs* and *Gabriele Siegert* investigate the research on media brands and media branding of the last two decades. In a meta-analysis they identify theoretical approaches that have been applied as well as methods and analyses applied in publications in German and English.

The *management perspective* section looks at media brands as a management task. The organizational and management-centered perspective is—probably—the most studied field in media branding. To look at media brands as an economic construct raises the question of strategies, key success factors and efficiency. In short: How can a media brand be steered, managed and monitored in an ever-changing environment? Undoubtedly these aspects are typical questions of (media) management and economics. But what does the media branding perspective add to established theories or validated knowledge? Moreover, how can media branding research contribute to media management and economics, both theoretically and methodologically? The section is preluded by *Gillian Doyle*, who argues that multi-platform expansion is a key for media brands and branding to effectively engage audiences. In her discussion she highlights the key economic, management and socio-cultural issues in international and multi-platform media branding strategies. *Sabine Baumann* then explores the specifics of media brand management and organization compared to settings proposed in branding literature. As internationalization and thus international branding is becoming increasingly important for media companies, *Ulrike Rohn* discusses the benefits of standardization and localization strategies in a media context and—furthermore—strategic options for foreign market entry. *Christoph Sommer* focuses on the relationship between media brands and the advertising market by exploring the potential of branding in media organizations' B2B relationships. In his essay on the aestheticization of media brands, *Christian Blümelhuber* takes up the discussion about the re-entry of magic into brand management and shows how glamor helps media brands to break free from the classical brand engineering concept and might also add value. The research note of the management perspective is provided by *Ronen Shay*, whose study examines the adopters and non-adopters of pure-play distribution across print, audio, video and gaming platforms through the lens of the consumer-based brand equity model's seven dimensions of perceived quality.

The *product perspective* looks at media brands as branded content. The "heart" of mass communication, the content, specific formats or texts, has been an important topic of communication scientists ever since the beginning, especially with regard to their role in identity formation. Although content and programing is one of the major tasks for media companies, content-centered research from a media branding perspective is very rare. *Walter McDowell* approaches this perspective by discussing emerging trends and issues in the media industry and reflects upon their effects on the branding of media content. A critical view on branding media content is taken by *M. Bjørn von Rimscha*. He poses the question of who will be responsible for branding in the value chain of media productions. *Stéphane Matteo* and *Cinzia Dal Zotto* consecrate their chapter to native advertising in the light of branded content and brand culture strategies. The authors problematize the concept and discuss the potential implications. *Sukhpreet Singh* and *John Oliver* discuss how television format makers use brand management practices, in the absence of any legal solutions, to protect, innovate and trade in their products. In her research note, *Kathrin Natterer* shows how personal and historical nostalgia in entertainment media brands have significant effects on attitudes towards the media brand, buying intentions, affective response and mood.

In the *communication perspective* we look at media brands as marketing communication and—in a more participative view—as co-creation. Media brand communication uses different modes and various instruments such as advertising, events and public relations. All instruments of the media brand communication mix are aimed at changing what is known about the brand and/or at changing or stabilizing the emotional relation to it. Questions that arise in this context include: How do media brands manage to address the audience? How do media brands use their area of competence to gain attention? *Mart Ots* and *Benjamin J. Hartmann* start from the premise that the branding process is an interplay between brand owners, consumers, popular culture, and other stakeholders. They offer an introduction to researching and theorizing how consumers engage in the social construction of media brands and thereby discuss media brand cultures. *Stefan Weinacht* gives a literature overview on publications on media brand communication focusing on communication goals, media messages, media platforms and instruments. In their research note *Verena Friedl* and *Kati Förster* examine how news magazines use social media communication and which types of content and communication styles actually drive user engagement.

Moreover, in the *consumer perspective* media brands are considered as an audience construct. If we consider media brands as a construct integrating the audiences' perceptions, such as cognitive associations or emotions and the thereby related behavior, we are in the tradition of media reception and media effects research. Though working with different constructs, e.g. brand personality, questions of interest focus on the same area, namely: how are media (brands) perceived by the audience and why do recipients use certain media (content) while avoiding another? Is it thus possible to connect more strongly these fields of research in future, and if so, what are the questions most relevant for further research? *Helmut Scherer* grasps this issue by considering the audience as both a part and signal of media brands, thus a target group evaluates a media brand (also) based on its respective users. Furthermore, *Kati Förster* reviews and structures audience-centered research on media brands and uncovers "white spaces" of research in this field by applying a multi-level approach to the study of audiences. In their chapter on media brands in children's everyday lives, *Ingrid Paus-Hasebrink* and *Uwe Hasebrink* shed light on the central aspects of marketing strategies which target children on the one hand, and on the functions media brands have for children on the other. *Juliane A. Lischka* discusses the question of whether audience members become loyal towards a media brand when sharing, liking or commenting on online media content, or whether loyal readers are more inclined to write comments, to like and share online articles. In the research note of the consumer perspective, *Lisa-Charlotte Wolter* examines in her study how media brand strategists can use social network sites to generate positive online and offline word-of-mouth.

Finally, the *value perspective* thematizes the tensions of media brands between societal expectations, quality and profit. The normative, societal perspective has always been an integral part of communication science. With the increasing reception of the genuine economic construct—brands—the discourses center on questions such as: Does the branding perspective within media "damage" or "support" journalistic and ethical values? Is media branding an institutional arrangement to counterbalance market weaknesses? What consequences does a "market-driven" view have for the public sphere? Will we increasingly talk about consumers instead of audiences or the public sphere in future? The section begins with a contribution by *Stephan Russ-Mohl* and *Rukhshona Nazhdiminova*, who focus on the question of how the branding perspective within the media can support professional and ethical journalistic values, and—moreover—whether some marketing efforts cause conflicts. *Gabriele Siegert* discusses whether market driven media brands support journalistic quality or whether media brands only give the appearance of quality journalism and thus "fake" it to the audience and the public sphere. In his chapter, *Frank Lobigs* presents a basic economic theory of media brands building on the theory of reputation and institutional economics. Above that he provides insights into the economics of media product bundling, as well as into the special economics of journalism. The section concludes with a research note by *Isabelle Krebs,* who focuses on news media brands, investigating the perception of the fulfillment of societal functions and journalistic quality.

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Part I

Media Branding: Locating an Emerging Research Area

Media Branding 3.0: From Media Brands to Branded Entertainment and Information

Sylvia M. Chan-Olmsted and Ronen Shay

Abstract

This piece examines recent changes and emerging trends in the media industry, their implications for branding, and specific research ideas that address these changes in the context of media branding. An overview of the characteristics and challenges facing today's media brands is introduced, followed by an analysis of recent changes and how they might re-shape the parameters of media branding strategies. Next, a list of factors that are expected to affect media branding practices into the future and potential research topics addressing the new media branding 3.0 environment are presented.

Keywords

Consumer engagement • Integrated content • Media branding 3.0 • OPEN framework • Participatory branding • Value chains

1 Media Branding 2.0 Revisited

1.1 Evolving Business Models

In 2011, the growing multichannel, multimedia marketing environment presented a new layer of brand management challenges that represented the realization of the second generation of media branding scholarship and research, colloquially referred to as media branding 2.0 (Chan-Olmsted, 2011). From a macro perspective, this meant marketers had to ensure their products and messages were synergistic across different media and channels, while simultaneously taking advantage of each medium's unique characteristics. This shift towards the use of multimedia outlets

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presented both opportunities and challenges for media firms. In regards to content delivery, when a branded content is accessible through multiple platforms, there are more brand touch points and better responsiveness to consumer needs (Chan-Olmsted, 2011). However, the use of multiple delivery outlets has the potential to dilute brand associations for media brands as well (Chan-Olmsted, 2011). For example, the delivery of video content and television programs outside of the brand environment, such as airing a *FOX* show on *Hulu.com*, may also decrease the brand association derived from its network identity.

While the shift towards the delivery of media products and content via multi-channel, multimedia platforms may be inevitable as a result of consumers becoming more mobile and networked, the main issues surrounding the proposition have changed. The corporate discourse no longer focuses on how the newer platforms might siphon away audiences from the more traditional outlets, but how the different delivery systems might best complement each other in responding to consumers' on-demand needs, while simultaneously contributing financially through the use of either different or evolving business models (NBCUniversal, 2014). In fact, many traditional mass appeal content companies such as the U.S. television network, *NBC*, are treating their assets differently. *NBC* now sees its production resources as story-driven content centers, rather than individual show production units. Accordingly, it examines each story written and matches the content with the most appropriate platform for distribution, thus customizing distribution to allow for the best match between audience and platform (NBCUniversal, 2014).

These evolving business models hail the creation of a new challenge for which the arrival of multimedia platforms is the catalyst. Essentially, now the decision of how to appropriate one's branding efforts between content/programming like *Law and Order* (i.e., individual products) and the organization/channel like *NBC* (i.e., the corporate source of the product) is far more complex. Logically, there exists a symbiotic relationship between the two. Studies have shown that perceptions of a program's brand success or failure have an enhancement or dilution effect on broadcaster brand image (Drinkwater & Uncles, 1992). Additionally, program familiarity intensifies these effects, while congruity or incongruity of program and brand image produces enhancement or dilution effects on broadcaster brand image (Drinkwater & Uncles, 1992). While the reciprocal value of a program brand to its parent brand (i.e., the channel or network) might be considerable, contemporary challenges in the electronic media industries threaten this relationship. The increasing fragmentation of the audience, the proliferation of distribution channels, and the advancement of technology that allows for time and platform shifting according to the immediate needs of the audience, all contribute to an environment where the value of corporate or channel branding might be diminishing.

1.2 Participatory Branding and Brand Control

As we are seeing more and more fluidity in content moving across multiple platforms (e.g., cross channels or platforms), the brand identity of the source might become less relevant, especially when the content or programming itself has acquired its own unique brand associations (Keller, 2001). With limited marketing resources, media brand managers should examine the strengths and favorability between a source/corporate brand and its programming components/ brands. Furthermore, the types of brand associations should also be reviewed in order to arrive at the ideal mix of activities that will facilitate the creation of a positive feedback loop benefiting both brands. As the Internet becomes more dynamic and interactive, consumers are becoming participants in the creation of brand associations rather than just the recipients. In fact, brand managers today play a role that is more like *brand hosts* than *brand guardians* (Chan-Olmsted, 2011). This loss of brand control is a side effect of the Web 2.0 mechanism, and now brand strategies must incorporate co-creation into their development, a practice that often leads to diminishing control of the brand source (Chan-Olmsted, 2011).

An alternative perspective on the decrease in brand control is the increase of opportunities to brand through consumer experiences rather than strictly through the product itself (Chan-Olmsted, 2011). For media brand mangers this can mean shifting the focus from a linear content consumption transaction with the consumer, to a brand immersion experience that includes cohesive, multiplatform activities to engage the consumers no matter where they are (Chan-Olmsted, 2011). The *ABC News Channel* on *YouTube* is a prime example of a media brand accepting a state of diminished control, in order to benefit from an increased opportunity to expose viewers to the *ABC* brand (YouTube, 2014). The interactive characteristics of social media like *YouTube* provide excellent brand engagement and development opportunities. For instance, through the use of social media, media brands can develop one-on-one conversations between the consumers and the characters or the content creation crews (e.g., producers, writers, etc.), incorporate a feedback mechanism for consumers to express their opinions about certain content (e.g., reader forums), and even involve the consumers in the creative process (e.g., auditioning as talent or shaping plots) (Christodoulides, 2009). While the strategic use of social media is different dependent on the nature of the brand, certain types of media products are more compatible with the value generated from social networking and consumer involvement. For instance, content products such as drama and reality programming are more likely to benefit significantly from regular audience engagement via social media (Chan-Olmsted, 2011). Ultimately, the degree and type of involvement a brand manager expects the audience to have through social media is no longer an after-thought, but an essential strategic deliberation.

1.3 OPEN Framework

For media managers looking to summarize the aforementioned media branding 2.0 concepts in a succinct and parsimonious manner, consideration should be given to the *OPEN framework* of media branding and its constructs: On-demand, Personal, Engagement, and Networks (Chan-Olmsted, 2011; Mooney & Rollins, 2008). These four characteristics succinctly capture the difference of branding in a post web 2.0 media environment. From the perspective of *on-demand branding*, for instance, it would be fruitful to examine how consumers perceive the value/utilities of different media platforms at different times and settings; and thus how media service/content can be formatted, integrated, and distributed via multiple platforms to be responsive to the needs of the consumers (Chan-Olmsted, 2011; Mooney & Rollins, 2008). From the perspectives of *personal* and *engaging* branding, it would be important to study how the different personalization and engagement mechanisms on media platforms contribute to the development of brand relationships between consumers and the media brands, thus allowing brands to develop an intangible personal feel to their content that creates a long-term emotional investment from consumers (Chan-Olmsted, 2011; Mooney & Rollins, 2008). Finally, from the perspective of networked branding, it would be beneficial to investigate the effectiveness of different co-branding strategies in improving perceived network externalities and enhancing the CBBE (consumer-based brand equity) for various media products, allowing for seamless new product integration into existing brand messages (Chan-Olmsted, 2011; Mooney & Rollins, 2008). The notion is that an *OPEN brand* will improve on: (1) its revenues because of the ability to gain access to more diverse audiences more quickly; (2) its *return-on-investment* (ROI) because it will spend its marketing dollars more effectively; and (3) its consumer relationships because it can develop relevant and innovative approaches to turn consumers into allies (Chan-Olmsted, 2011; Mooney & Rollins, 2008).

2 The Origins of Media Branding 3.0

As a result of the structural, technological, and consumer changes that have affected the media marketplace since 2011, there has been a resurgence in the need to both re-affirm and reshape the parameters of media branding strategies. For example, with the continuous growth of mobile and social media usage, there is increasing demand to integrate mobile and social platforms into all brand management strategies. In 2013, *Netflix* and *YouTube* combined began to account for over 50 % of Internet traffic in the United States measured in bytes, demonstrating the strength of brands that pursue on-demand consumer contexts (Brustein, 2013). While these highlights just scratch the surface of Internet related development since 2011, they all represent extensions of the World Wide Web that, "enable people to share content beyond the boundaries of applications and websites." (Semantic Web, 2014, para. 1). This is the defining characteristics of the semantic web, a milestone in Internet technology development that when realized was set to mark the beginning of the web 3.0 era (W3C, 2014).

The web 1.0 era was classified as Internet technologies like Geocities and Hotmail that were read-only content created through the use of static HTML websites (Radar Networks, 2007). The most common way of navigating the Internet during this era was the use of link directories, like *Yahoo!* (Radar Networks, 2007). Web 2.0 was realized upon the creation and rise to prominence of user-generated content, which shifted the dynamic for users from *read-only* to *read-write* (Radar Networks, 2007). Since entering the web 2.0 era consumers have been consuming and contributing information through blogs or sites like *Flickr*, *YouTube*, and *Digg* (Radar Networks, 2007). The line dividing a consumer and content publisher is increasingly blurred in a web 2.0 environment (Bruns, 2009). While web 3.0 has been described theoretically in a variety of ways, including a web of data, a utopic version of the Internet, or the next evolution of computer-human interaction in our daily lives, the discourse that has achieved the most amount of consensus is that web 3.0 is inherently the realization of a semantic web (W3C, 2014). Intelligent search recommendations, personalization services like *iGoogle*, and behavioral advertising are all examples of how the World Wide Web has been extended beyond traditional websites and applications, as we begin to see a blurring between the virtual and the real (e.g., augmented reality systems layering virtual information onto the real world) (Semantic Web, 2014). The key characteristics that web 3.0 has been theorized to deliver are: more intuitive interfaces; contextually relevant and easily interpretable content; a portable and personalized web experience that focuses on individual needs, smart user engagement, and *advertainment* (e.g., *TiVo* and *Pandora*); user-tailored experiences that are not linear in nature, but are customizable on the user's end; integrated, complex, and intelligent information with dynamically changing content that consistently provides users a connection to relevant information; and an Internet connection that allows users to access any media, on any device, and from anywhere in the world (Semantic Web, 2014; W3C, 2014).

As we begin to meet the assumptions of a web 3.0 era of Internet technologies contextual consideration must be given to how media branding will be affected moving forward. First, it is clear that the power for creating and maintaining brand associations is shifting towards audience and audience communities (Chan-Olmsted, 2011; Napoli, 2011). Accordingly, brand managers need intelligent agents to learn about the audience, to provide more personal relevance in the brand messages coming out of the corporation, in hopes that audience relevance will mitigate the need for consumers to wield their power to change brand associations. Consideration must also be given to integrated platform delivery, as consumers will be able to avoid brands that are not omnipresent on all media platforms (Jenkins, 2008). Storyline branding could help content producers achieve integrated platform delivery, as it maintains context and connection of the brand message to the audience despite the unpredictable behavior of the consumer (Nudd, 2012). Co-branding might also help, as this will allow brand strategists to focus holistically on the audience's experience across all platforms, than each individual media product (Thompson & Strutton, 2012). Finally, the brand message being present and available on demand in all settings while still maintaining contextual relevance is crucial for a consumer that can access the Internet anytime and from anywhere.

While it is important to identify the need for change in media branding, and the opportunities available for firms that can achieve said changes, it is of paramount importance that scholars attempt to address how these opportunities can be realized (Jenkins, 2008). Accordingly, the next section will present five changes that could lead media branding specialists to the realization of a media branding 3.0 era. Holistically, this chapter proposes that the next phase of media branding will be more about branding content consumption experience than branding the platform. That is, there will be branded entertainment and information content with a focus on how both can be willingly and easily distributed across numerous platforms, without necessarily adhering to the traditional mode of branded media outlets that are platform dependent.

3 Media Branding 3.0: The Five Changes

3.1 Change 1: The New Value Chain

The value chain of media industries traditionally includes acquiring, creating, selecting, organizing, packaging, and processing content; transforming content into a distributable; and marketing, advertising, promoting, and distributing the media service (Chan-Olmsted, 2006; Picard, 2002). While much of this remains the same, the arrival of new competitors in content production, packaging, and distribution has prompted the introduction of new business models beyond those observed in the media branding 2.0 era (Stock, 2014). Original, digital-only programming is an example of one such business model that is getting increasingly competitive in the United States. Many tech companies including *Netflix* (e.g., *House of Cards*), *Amazon* (e.g., *Alpha House*), *Hulu* (e.g. *Misfits*) and *Yahoo* (e.g. *Burning Love*) are creating premium digital series that are comparable to what can be found on *HBO* and other subscription based cable and satellite channels (Stock, 2014). The ability of the aforementioned firms to capitalize on the economic efficiencies of digital distribution has made producers of original digital-only programming more aggressive in their creation of premium programming that can compete with traditional media companies (Stock, 2014). *Netflix* will be releasing four new series in 2015 based upon *Marvel* superheroes (Marvel, 2013). *Amazon* is using their enormous user-base to crowd source opinions about what shows to continue, as they have the ability to distribute pilots directly to *Amazon Prime* instant video subscribers (Amazon Studios, 2014). These trends are not limited to entertainment content as in 2012, *Yahoo! News* received the most favorable brand equity rating for news service brands in the United States (Harris Interactive, 2012), leading to the subsequent hiring of veteran Katie Couric to head its news digest group in an effort to maintain its leadership position (Carter, 2014a).

Many of these new entrants have direct access to end users both for the purposes of retailing and spreading their brand messages. Consumer response to firms that follow these business models has been high, as the sale of digital media content has risen year-over-year, which is consistent with audiences desire to be more in control of the content they consume (Balsara, 2012; Jenkins, 2008; Napoli, 2011). This direct access to the end user is the greatest change to the traditional value chain, as ultimately firms no longer need to focus on a selection of activities along the value chain, as it is technologically feasible for a single company to complete all production, distribution, and marketing for original digital-only programming (Anderson, 2006). Accessibility to more distributors on the consumer-side has also resulted in a growing number of media consumers that are not concerned with where their media content comes from in regards to brand (Jenkins, 2008). 43 % of young adults in the United States between the ages of 18 and 36 have a subscription to *Netflix* which follows the content aggregator model (Harris Interactive, 2013), while 46 % have a subscription to cable television which follows the branded content model (Harris Interactive, 2013). Clearly, a growing number of media consumers no longer differentiate about which brand delivers the content to them, it is the consumption experience that determines consumer brand loyalty among competing content (Barkus & Schmitt, 2009).

The implications of this new value chain in the context of media brand management are far reaching. Since consumers are behaving differently in regards to how they access content and are choosing to consume media from multiple touch points as opposed to a singular source (Jenkins, 2008), they are not necessarily paying attention to the content on a single device for an extended period of time (Millenial Media, 2013). Their consumption behavior is mobile, non-linear, modular, and not device/outlet/platform dependent (Jenkins, 2008). Accordingly consideration must be given to a firm's brand image, attachment, loyalty, and relationship, to ensure that brand messages are not limited to specific platforms, but are accessible from wherever the user chooses to consume their content. In doing so a firm must also invest in market intelligence to understand how consumers consume media products and what kind of experiences they expect from consumption (McGuire, Manyika, & Chui, 2012). Another implication is that as a result of the long tail phenomenon, the marketplace is now crowded with a variety of media products both *niche* and *hit* in nature (Anderson, 2006). The long-tail explains that the economic efficiencies afforded to distributors as a result of digital distribution have the potential to create a significant media market by aggregating a high volume of low-demand products (Anderson, 2006). This differs from traditional media outlets that tend to have a low volume of high-demand content (Anderson, 2006). As a result the digital content market is crowded with new players and *points of differentiation* are harder and harder to achieve, while *points of parity* are over-saturated. This influx of new entrants is not a temporary displacement of traditional paradigms as the new value chain offers a better connection with viewers, and the long-tail is not a platform-specific phenomenon, but a digital revolution (Anderson, 2006; Chan-Olmsted, 2006; Picard, 2002; Stock, 2014). As a result, reconfiguring and customizing a media firm's value chain activities is crucial in order to establish competitive advantages through workflow efficiencies and cost savings (Porter, 1998).

One way media brands, both new and old, are differentiating themselves is by exploiting the direct holistic access to consumers provided by the new value chain to appear consistently relevant to consumers. *Amazon*'s brand extension into digital streaming video at first appears to deviate from their core business area; however their ability to access a critical mass of consumers makes them relevant in any industry they choose to compete in (Amazon, 2014). *Yahoo*'s aggressive brand extension into news digest is only made possible by leveraging the brand equity it has generated from the popularity of its news landing page (Harris Interactive, 2012). Maintaining and expanding any brand's holistic and relevant access to consumers is crucial in contemporary marketing, and digital video appears to be the catalyst for establishing long-term brand relationships. On an average day in the United States of America approximately 89 million people watch about 1.2 billion online videos (comScore, 2012). Diversifying product brands are exploiting this audience by extending into the digital media market both as advertisers, but also as creators of original content. *Playstation* and *Xbox* have both used digital video, music, and pictures, in addition to games to establish long-term relationships with consumers while simultaneously establishing organic growth areas (PlayStation, 2014; Xbox, 2014). This also highlights the importance of brand immersion through the implementation of multiplatform experiences, and brand tests via crowd-sourced opinions. Through their vertically integrated distribution channels (i.e., *Xbox Live* and *Playstation Network*), both *Microsoft* and *Sony* exploit the benefits of the new value chain to place their video game characters in other mediums (e.g., television), while using their critical mass of consumers to test and review early versions of games (PlayStation, 2014; Xbox, 2014). All of these activities generate positive brand value through the development of electronic-word-of-mouth (eWOM) as those who experience a video game character in a television show, or beta test the most recent version of *Halo*, are not isolated from other consumers but are encouraged to share their positive brand experiences (Sharma & Pandey, 2011). These experiences are made possible by a new value chain that does not isolate creators from their consumers, but attempts to involve them in the production, distribution, and marketing value activities.

3.2 Change 2: The Power and Necessity of Engagement

The second major change that needs to take place for the realization of media branding 3.0 is highly related to the direct connection to consumers provided by the new value chain. It essentially proposes that the power of pre-established consumer engagement strategies is a necessity in order to meet the demands of audiences that have begun to expect digital branding engagement initiatives. As consumer sovereignty rises (i.e., the assertion that consumer preferences determine the production of goods and services) as a result of user-generated content, the new value chain, and other audience empowering activities (i.e., crowdsourcing, folksonomies) are no longer considered added value (Smith, 1995). Consumers want and expect to be engaged across all media touch points they encounter, and should a desired brand presence not be found, the fluidity at which a consumer can engage with a competing brand is seamless. To illustrate both the power and necessity of social media engagement activities, Horowitz Associates (2012) research firm conducted a study of multiplatform brand salience (i.e., the degree to which your brand is noticed in a buying situation) for television shows and their corresponding social networks in the United States. 30 % of respondents age 15–17 said they had discovered new TV shows that they now watch because of a post on social media or other sites; 28 % stated that social media helps them to remember to tune into shows on television; 20 % agreed that being able to interact with other viewers via social media made them enjoy their TV shows more; 22 % said that while watching TV they often interact with social media and other sites about what they are watching; and finally 21 % said they post comments to social media sites or other websites about the shows they watch (Horowitz Associates, 2012). A European research team (2012) found similar results when they attempted to figure out the share of American tablet users that use their devices while watching television. 34 % of tablet users indicated that they post comments on *Facebook*, *Twitter*, a blog, or another websites regarding a show they are watching; 28 % used their tablets to look up information about a product being advertised on television; and 25 % visited a network or show's website, fan site, or app (Gesellschaft fur Konsumforschung, 2013).

It is important to note that consumers are not just consuming content on social networks, they are actively sharing it. A good example of this is the new *Simpsons World* app that in addition to allowing users to stream every episode of the program, also gives them the opportunity to share episode clips on social networks (Poniewozik, 2014). As television becomes increasingly more digitally native through the compression and distribution of shareable video clips, social media will continue to play an increasingly important role in how consumers discover and engage with various forms of content, especially TV (Poniewozik, 2014). An analysis conducted by *NM Incite* (a Nielsen/McKinsey Company) and *Nielsen* looked at the correlation between online buzz and television ratings and found a statistically significant relationship throughout a TV show's season among all age groups, with the strongest correlation among younger demographics (people ages 12–17 and 18–34), and a slightly stronger overall correlation for women compared to men (Subramanyam, 2011). Men over 50 showed the weakest buzz-to-ratings connection leading up to a show's premiere through the middle of the season, but that relationship strengthened by the finale as all age groups were actively discussing a TV show via social media (Subramanyam, 2011). Among people aged 18–34, the most active social networkers' social media buzz is most closely aligned with TV ratings for the premiere of a show (Subramanyam, 2011). A few weeks prior to a show's premiere, a 9 % increase in buzz volume correlates to a 1 % increase in ratings among this group (Subramanyam, 2011). As the middle of the season approaches and then the finale, the correlation is slightly weaker, but still significant, with a 14 % increase in buzz corresponding to a 1 % increase in ratings (Subramanyam, 2011).

At the genre level, 18–34 year-old females showed significant buzz-to-ratings relationships for reality programs (competition and non-competition), comedies and dramas, while men of the same age saw strong correlations for competition realities and dramas (Subramanyam, 2011). Another Nielsen (2013) study looked to investigate the casual relationship between *Twitter* use and television ratings. The study found that tweets related to certain shows did indeed result in an impact on television ratings (Nielsen, 2013). 44 % of the competitive reality episodes included in the study had *Twitter* activity lead to an increase in television ratings; 37 % for comedies; 28 % for sports; and 18 % for drama (Nielsen, 2013). The importance of the correlation between *Twitter* usage and television ratings is also highlighted by major media outlets *Twitter* activity (Pew Research Center, 2013). In 2011 the *Huffington Post* posted 415 tweets, and in 2013 it was up to 2,191. The *New York Times* went up from 391 to 544; *The Wall Street Journal* from 104 to 520; and *MSNBC* from 33 to 329 (Pew Research Center, 2013).

The power and necessity of user engagement carries with it many implications for brand managers. First and foremost consideration for user engagement must be integrated into all phases of media products. It must be considered during product design, production, distribution, and consumption. Brand managers looking for a holistic approach to customer engagement should consider involvement, interaction, intimacy, and influence (see Fig. 1). Involvement refers to the presence of a consumer at brand touch point; interaction examines the specific action a person is taking at a brand touch point; intimacy is the affection a person holds for the brand; and influence is the likelihood of a person to advocate on behalf of the brand (Gaffney, 2009). While every consumer has a different mix of the aforementioned qualities, all characteristics contribute to user engagement with the brand in the forms of discovery, evaluation, use, and affinity (Gaffney, 2009).

Twitter engagement in television programming once again provides a relevant example to demonstrate successful implementation of the engagement mechanism

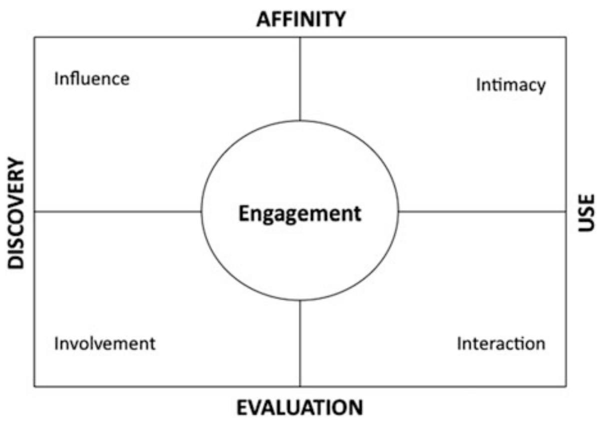

Fig. 1 Forrester's holistic approach to customer engagement (Haven & Vittal, 2008)

into all phases of a media product. Pre-show user engagement on *Twitter* should focus on attaining viewers through the use of information and activation programs (Wiredset, 2014). Marketing partnerships, hashtag strategies, application launches, and traditional media integration are all useful strategies for attaining viewers during the pre-show phase. Towards the beginning of the show the strategy develops a secondary goal of entertaining the viewers in addition to attaining more (Wiredset, 2014). Tools that helps during this phase include: tweets from show talent, curation for show talent, retweets of talent in the shows' *Twitter* feed, video clips, and a reiteration of the pre-established hashtags. As the show moves beyond the first commercial break, the goal of attaining new viewers is generally dropped to ensure full focus on entertaining those viewers who have proven to be engaged (Wiredset, 2014). This is usually done through the continuation of live tweets/retweet, replying to the tweets of viewers, Q/A session in real-time, tracking new followers and user-created hashtags for future follow-up, measurement and assessment of what worked, and promotion of next week's incentives for engagement. When the show has concluded the goal changes once again from entertaining viewers to retaining viewers. Tools that assist in this process include: scenes from net week, setup next week's *Twitter* events, metrics' analysis, establishing projected outcomes for next week's twitter usage, and tie-ins to traditional and integrated marketing initiatives (Wiredset, 2014). Particular focus should be invested in defining, encouraging, and measuring the brand engagement achieved, for any firm interested in seeing their social media engagement transition from a value-adding activity, to monetizable brand equity.

3.3 Change 3: Integrated Content Is King

In 1996, Bill Gates, founder of Microsoft stated, "Content is where I expect much of the real money will be made on the Internet, just as it was in broadcasting" (Gates, 1996). Despite criticism that such a viewpoint is too simplistic, and that the true Internet kings are all companies that provide communication services, the blurring between communication and entertainment has given new importance to the phrase, "content is king." (Gates, 1996; Odlyzko, 2001) Contemporary communication services like *Facebook* and *Twitter* do not discriminate between what is considered communication and what is considered entertainment. They empower users to create and define their own content in ways that seems most suitable to them. This empowerment and blurring of definitions is not limited to the end-consumer as it also enables brands to integrate contextually relevant brand messages from sponsors with professionally produced media content. This is known as *integrated content* and its success is dependent on maintaining consumer relevance, as media that is deemed of value to consumers may drive attention and involvement in the brand (Young, 2014). As such, it is important to consider *fit* between the sponsor message and the subject matter of the media. While industry professionals refer to this *fit* using a wide array of terms including: branded entertainment, content marketing, branded journalism, and native advertising it is ultimately the act of *integrating brand messages* into professionally produced content in any capacity that allows advertisers to organically reach consumers without necessarily stopping them for a commercial break (Young, 2014). Accordingly, it may be fair to say that "integrated content is king," which is well demonstrated by the success of companies like *HBO* and *Red Bull*.

In 2009, *HBO* started a campaign where the moniker was "It's not TV. It's *HBO*." (Creative Criminals, 2009). Of course in 2009, this was not in reference to the platform the consumer was choosing to consume their content on, but to the content itself. It meant that there was something inherently different about *HBO* content than other programs on television (Creative Criminals, 2009). Over time this was arguably proven to be true as *HBO*'s exclusive programs like Game of Thrones and The Leftovers generally have significantly higher budgets than traditional television, thus allowing for superior production quality, scripts, and casting (Stock, 2014). Eventually the "It's not TV. It's *HBO*." moniker was dropped, because the statement was no longer needed. The brand message had been integrated into the show through its decisively different level of quality versus competing programs, and all that was required moving forward was a flash of the *HBO* logo before and after each program (Creative Criminals, 2009; Stock, 2014).

Red Bull's approach to integrating its brand message into professionally produced content came in a different form, as it looked to video based social networks like *YouTube* as potential public spheres for consumers interested in sharing their experience with the brand (Red Bull, 2014). While the company had a history of sponsoring unconventional and extreme stunts and sport events, it was the integrated content they offered on *YouTube* that allowed them to tell brand stories through engaging and relevant video content. Snowboard videos, live streaming sky dives, and archives of do-it-yourself (DIY) flying crafts told a story that was as attractive as competing media content (Red Bull, 2014). While it is still an important technique, having branded content appear alongside professionally produced media in the form of commercial breaks or strategically placed advertisements is no longer the only way to reach consumers. Brands that have been able to tell stories directly to the consumers through engaging and meaningful content are generating high levels of brand equity that can be leveraged in support of product engagement. A *Digiday* (2013) study on online marketing tactics indicated that 25 % of respondents felt that online branded content was the most effective way a brand could achieve their objectives. Branded content achieved the same level of importance as social networks, and search, and was considered more effective than email, mobile, or display tactics (Digiday, 2013). It is also worth noting that video was considered the most effective method in achieving branding objectives, implying that branded video content resonates highly with consumers (Digiday, 2013).

The importance of branded video content can also be highlighted by the website *Storify*. The concept behind the emerging social network is that what people are most interested in consuming are curated stories that put contextual relevance into what a viewer is consuming (Storify, 2014). Accordingly, it allows users to collect media from around the Internet, create a story via the *Spotify* applet, as well as share, publish, and embed that story practically anywhere on the Internet

(Storify, 2014). The success of Storify and the importance of branded video content that tells a compelling story have triggered a variety of brands including *Politico*, *CNNMoney*, and *HBO* to use *Storify* as another tool for integrating brand messages into meaningful content (Storify, 2014). Despite the recent success stories surrounding story driven branded content, there are certain challenges that have emerged that are both ethical, and organizational. From an ethical perspective, there is much discourse surrounding whether incorporating branded content into news media compromises journalistic integrity. Another consideration from the brand management side should also be whether it will serve to further dilute the brand message and confuse the consumer.

While there is no simple answer to the issues surrounding branded journalism, each media firm must look to their mission and substance of their content to determine whether incorporating market driven, branded journalism is contextually relevant and beneficial given their corporate culture. For example, *Forbes BrandVoice* advertising initiative works for marketers because of the equity that *Forbes* has established with its audience (Forbes, 2014). The location of ad space within *Forbes.com* and the print edition lends credibility to companies that participate in this program, but only so far as *Forbes*' credibility remains (Forbes, 2014). Informed consumers also know that *Forbes* will not want to damage the trust in their brand, both from a journalistic perspective, and from a long-term growth viewpoint (Forbes, 2014). This approach is valuable to the media brands that are looking to distinguish their offering and value, while at the same time fear they are being commoditized in a marketplace where real-time bidding on ad inventory and automated ad networks is growing.

Shifting to look at the organizational side of branded storytelling, consideration must be given to whether *brand communicators* need to be developed to act as both internal and external champions on behalf of the media entity (Beurer-Züllig, Fieseler, & Meckel, 2009). *Brand communicators* look to combine the tenets of journalism with brand storytelling to provide a transparent, open and engaging way to have a conversation about a brand and tell its story to an interested audience (Beurer-Züllig et al., 2009). This of course requires a large investment of resources by the firm, as well as the willingness to adhere to the values embedded within the stories being promoted. Another method for bringing context and relevance to a brand's story without necessarily going through a brand communicator is digital curation (Kramer, 2010). This allows a media entity to curate their brand's story digitally during the distribution of their content in an attempt to bring larger context to a user's digital access experience (Kramer, 2010).

The recent proliferation of content marketing has left many researchers and analysts considering the long-term brand implications (Young, 2014). As this is a pioneering area of media branding 3.0 it would be difficult to speculate that the marketplace has truly experienced the broader implications of native branding, but an early look suggests that consideration should be given to an increase in the amount of co-branding relationships (Thompson & Strutton, 2012); the potential for brand equity dilution as a result of consumer confusion as to who is the originator of aggregated content editorial integrity of engaging in branded journalism; the potential for new competition to be generated from independently branded story driven content (e.g., could a *Red Bull* sky diving video achieve a higher audience than a primetime television program?); and finally the potential development of brand content syndication outlets that farm out branded content to populate vacant space on the Internet (Wallenstein, 2013).

3.4 Change 4: Intelligent and Connected Media Access

Another change we are facing today is the development of networked, connected, and intelligent media access. With the proliferation of connected devices, the focus is on the act of consumption, not the devices or access points (Jenkins, 2008). Consumers expect fluid transitions from one access point to the next (Napoli, 2011). The content needs to follow the consumer and be presented in the optimal format for consumption on that particular platform or combination of platforms (Jenkins, 2008). As cloud services in mobile, network, database, server, app, and web industries proliferate consumers are no longer limited to pre-established linear media habits but can choose to be well informed active media consumers (Jenkins, 2008). This behavioral shift is a result of web 3.0 powered intelligent networks that are accessible from mobile devices, intelligent personalization software derived from actual user behaviors (e.g., Apple genius recommendations), and an increase in cloud-based media service. Stepping away from consumer demands, just the act of using the Internet as a mobile repository of media and information requires sophisticated and networked synchronization technologies converging across multiple media platforms. The evidence of such a change within the marketplace can be found in the sales metrics of converged technological devices.

An *eMarketer* (2013) study reported that in 2013 the number of smart TV households in the United States grew to 23 %, up from 15 % in 2012, and 8 % in 2011. Furthermore, it is anticipated that smart TV penetration will hit 29 % of American households by the end of 2014, and 40 % by the end of 2016 (eMarketer, 2013). While there can be little doubt that consumers are demanding more sophisticated technologies that provide them 24/7 intelligent and networked media solutions, some critics would argue that this does not necessarily necessitate a change in consumer behavior. In an attempt to provide an impartial and empirical response to this line of thought a European research team conducted a study of American media consumers, specifically trying to identify whether the primary attention of media consumers was indeed becoming more complex (i.e., splitting across platforms), or staying relatively simplistic in nature (i.e., exclusive to a single platform) (Gesellschaft fur Konsumforschung, 2013). The findings demonstrated that 36 % of second screen users that were engaging both a television and tablet simultaneously felt that they were equally focused on both devices (Gesellschaft fur Konsumforschung, 2013). While it is worth noting that 36 % primarily focused on the tablet exclusively, whereas 28 % focused on the television exclusively, it is impressive to see that multiplatform consumers are not necessarily replacing one platform with another, but are actually choosing to consume more media (Gesellschaft fur Konsumforschung, 2013).

The implications of the proliferation of intelligent and connected media access are extensive for media brand managers who must address how content design, production, distribution and presentation can be fluid across platforms. While it can be a challenge to manage the multiplatform and app ecosystems while maintaining a consistent brand message, the benefits of integrated and engaging content streamed directly to the consumer at whichever media touch point they access the Internet from have been extensively discussed in the previous sections. One potential solution for ensuring a uniform brand message is maintained across all converged media devices is through the use of *brand advocates* (Sharma & Pandey, 2011). By identifying and amplifying the power of *super-engaged* cross-platform users it is possible to protect your brand message while simultaneously promoting tertiary brand touch points to greater prominence (Sharma & Pandey, 2011). Other tools include *brand transparency* to mitigate any undesirable information that is diffused as a result of the reduced control over multiple touch points (Biro, 2013); and *brand reputation training* for all employees as any employee with a social network can cause positive or negative *brand value* (Jiyoung, Yang, & Kim, 2013). Finally, since intelligent network access points are still in the growth stage of the product life cycle it would be an opportune time for brand managers to experiment with access sequence impacts, and determine whether the order in which a user is exposed to information across different platforms impacts their brand loyalty and relationships.

3.5 Change 5: Data Everywhere

The last major change that has heralded in the media branding 3.0 era, is the availability of big data (McGuire et al., 2012). The lowering costs of computer memory coupled with increased capacity enable companies to track every interaction with a consumer to a level that was not previously attainable. *Disney* for example has changed their traditional season passes into scannable wristbands that extract market intelligence on everything from popularity of merchandise, to ride wait times (Disney, 2014). The unique element of this change is that it invariably supports and informs all the other changes discussed in the previous sections. The direct access to consumers made possible by the new value chain when supported by big data allows for tracking and measuring of the full consumer experience from *engagement* to *post-purchase brand interactions* (McGuire et al., 2012). The success of multimedia user engagement opportunities are tracked and learned from to ensure future engagement activities are equally or more successful (e.g., tracking twitter activity during a live broadcast to set goals for future twitter engagement initiatives) (Wiredset, 2014). The market intelligence extracted from the aforementioned engagement experiences is then used to inform brand managers on how best to integrate the firm's brand message into professionally produced media content. Finally, the proliferation of intelligent networks has shown the practical consumer benefits of the availability of big data by consistently streaming sports and news information into customized news tickers on the bottom of one's television, to tracking what products are in the fridge and sending out mobile alerts when a household is getting a low on milk and other beverages (Cisco, 2014).

From an organizational perspective a 2012 study conducted by *IBM* and the *University of Oxford's Said Business School* demonstrated that more and more companies are recognizing the competitive advantages that can be derived from big data. In 2012, 63 % of UK respondents agreed that big data can be used to identify *unique selling propositions*, up from 34 % in 2012 (IBM & Oxford University, 2012). 38 % of respondents indicated that they use big data for customer-centric outcomes; 26 % used it for optimizing operations; while 18 % used it for enabling new business models. 90 % of respondents indicated that big data is generally gathered during business transactions, followed by 72 % of respondents gathering big data from data logs (the source of these logs was not specified) (IBM & Oxford University, 2012). In the United States studies also indicated a newfound importance on big data, as *eMarketer* (2013) found that 64 % of agency respondents, and 64 % of marketer respondents indicated that the leading benefit of big data is, "developing greater insight into the customer experience across all types of media, and then creating a strategy that turns this understanding in positive results." While it is clear that many organizations are recording big data in order to benefit from the opportunities it presents, brand managers should be aware that 41 % of UK companies in the IBM/Oxford (2012) study cited a lack of understanding of how to use big data to impact business as the number one reason for not engaging in a big data collection opportunity. Ultimately, attempting to utilize big data without prior knowledge of how it has been successfully applied is likely to result in challenges. *Amazon* presents an excellent case study for any brand mangers interested in learning from historically successful applications of big data.

Amazon is likely the most widely known example of an international firm that uses big data for key business goals. In 2013 *Amazon Studios* posted 14 different pilots for any interested customer to watch and rate (Solsman, 2013). Two of those shows, *Alpha House*, and *Those Who Can't* were made into full series (Solsman, 2013). This big data agenda is not something new for *Amazon* as past acquisitions target information/data based companies. The 1998 acquisition of the *Internet Movie Database* (IMDb) is now paying off major dividends, as *Amazon* is able to make purchase recommendations based on what movies users have searched for on IMDb (2014). Other big data acquisitions made by *Amazon* include *Goodreads*, a social cataloging website for books (goodreads, 2014); *ComiXology*, the most commonly used cloud-based digital comic reader (comiXology, 2014); and *Alexa*, a web-based information company that ranks websites based on Internet traffic (Alexa, 2014). An important takeaway from this *Amazon* example is learning when to combine audience data with other interactive data (e.g. IMDb) to achieve a greater vision of the marketplace. While big data is a crucial component of this new media branding landscape, it is particularly important to remember that media is an art form, and while big data is a useful tool for understanding your consumers, the brand stories being told must be engaging and immersive.

4 Media Branding 3.0: Looking Forward

While not all media brands have adjusted to the changes presented by the media branding 3.0 environment an excellent example of a brand that has is *Netflix*. In the United States, *Netflix* now has more paid subscribers than *Comcast* (cable television provider), and at the time of this writing *HBO* (who has keenly begun introducing subscription options for consumers who want *HBO* content without a satellite or cable television subscription) (Lawler, 2013). Internationally, *Netflix* membership has topped 40 million worldwide, with its revenue hitting $1.1 billion at the end of 2013 (Carter, 2014b; Lawler, 2013). In regards to their specific branding strategies and their relationship with the five changes outlined above, *Netflix*'s value chain is holistically designed so that every value activity attempts to address user personalization and choice as efficiently as possible. An example would be how their direct access to consumers allowed them to implement a *folksonomy* (i.e., a user generated cataloging system) for ranking their content. Instead of basing their star ratings off of film experts and movie critics, they ask users to rate films they have seen so they can develop a critical mass of crowdsourcing data so recommendations are more organic and in-line with what likeminded users' desire (Shih, Kaufman, & Spinola, 2009). This user generated ranking system is also a form of user engagement, as it encourages participation in the *Netflix* brand and community beyond the consumption of media itself. Recently *Netflix* has partnered with *Facebook* so users can post what film they are watching on their *Facebook* timeline, as well as access crowd sourced recommendations based on what is popular among their Facebook friends (Netflix, 2014).

Integrated content is also a high priority for *Netflix* through the development of its *Netflix Original* line of programming (Netflix, 2014). The most well-known example of this integrated content is *House of Cards*, but other programs like *Orange is the New Black*, and *Lilyhammer* have received critical praise (Netflix, 2014). Other forms of integrated content include *revived programs* that have been cancelled on other networks, and then renewed for another season on *Netflix*. The most prominent examples of *Netflix*'s revived content includes the *Emmy* award winning *Arrested Development*, the critically acclaimed *Star Wars: The Clone Wars* series, and cult favorite *The Trailer Park Boys* (Netflix, 2014). The brand association *Netflix* has established for reviving cancelled content is so high, that there are websites and community groups specifically focused at bringing cancelled series to *Netflix*'s attention so they have an opportunity at a second run. Currently it is forecast that the company will spend $1 billion by the end of 2014 for exclusive content that is both popular/hit (e.g., *House of Cards*) and niche (e.g., *Trailer Park Boys*) in nature (Shafer, 2013). This of course is in line with the firm's core brand identity of user choice. *Netflix*'s commitment to intelligent networks and connected media access has always been a part of their technology strategy. The company has proven it evolves with technology and the context of user usage and preferences. The best example would be their aggressive support of streaming video at a time when the technology was not able to support a massive distribution infrastructure, and their core revenue stream was DVD rentals (Shih et al., 2009). Another example is their current support of the Ultra High-Definition (Ultra HD) video resolution, while few consumers even own the necessary 4 K televisions to enjoy the format. Finally, while CEO Reed Hastings does acknowledge that in the late 1990s and early 2000s, before the prominence of both *Netflix* and big data, the company was unable to test every strategy they developed (Shih et al., 2009); today they are proud to test everything including consumer interactions, product offerings, and pricing. *Netflix*'s technology blog explains,

> At Netflix we engage in what we call consumer science: we test new ideas with real customers, at scale, and we measure for statistically significant differences in how they engage with our product... if you're going to fail, fail cheaply. And *know* when you've failed, vs. when you've gotten it right. Product development at Netflix starts with a hypothesis, which typically goes something like this: Algorithm/feature/design X will increase member engagement with our service, and ultimately member retention (Netflix, 2011, para. 1, 5).

This approach, which is actually only possible as a result of the attainability of big data, demonstrates how big data can be harnessed to ensure brand success. While it is clear that *Netflix* operates successfully in a media brand 3.0 environment, the introduction of this paper explained that while it is important to form new branding strategies, other traditional approaches to branding have also been re-affirmed. *Netflix* engages in co-branding with *Best Buy* to increase consumer touch points. They promote their free 30 trial both on *Best Buy*'s website, in-store, and sometimes flyers are placed with related products like HD televisions (Best Buy, 2014; Shih et al., 2009). This relationship is symbiotic as the *Netflix* brand encourages people to invest in home electronics, while the presence of the *Netflix* in consumer electronics stores legitimizes the brand in the eyes of brick and mortar consumers. The importance of *brand relationships* has also been re-affirmed as *Netflix* tries to cultivate a fun atmosphere during customer service exchanges. Its customer service motto is, "the responsibility is to solve the problem and the freedom is to do it your way" (Stenovec, 2013). The most enduring example of this motto in action is when a customer named "Norm" had a digital chat with a *Netflix* customer service representative named "Michael" (Moran, 2013). The exchange started with Norm saying, "Hi, I have a problem to report," to which Michael replied, "This is Cpt. Mike of the good ship Netflix, which member of the crew am I speaking with today?" Norm responded with "Greetings, Captain. Lt. Norm here," and for the rest of the conversation both Norm and Michael stayed in character (Moran, 2013). The transcript of the conversation was posted on *Reddit*, and news and business websites from around the world picked up the story. The exchange resonated with anyone who's ever sat through the hell of an automated customer service call, and another example of how *Netflix* is aiming to do something different with its customer service (Moran, 2013). Netflix help chats do not feature a robotic, dizzying array of menu options, or a company agent using a script. "We really allow support agents to be themselves," Brent Wickens, *Netflix*'s vice president of global customer support, told *The Huffington Post* in a recent interview (Stenovec, 2013, para. 6). "They're not restricted in any way. If somebody wants to talk to somebody in character, we encourage this" (Stenovec, 2013, para. 6).

Despite many traditional branding strategies being reaffirmed and new models being identified this analysis of the media branding environment has also raised some questions for further research. As the majority of the media branding 3.0 environment focuses on understanding the consumer, research should look to better define the new media consumer, their values, motivations, behaviors, and potential contributions to media branding. A deep dive would also consider who the *brand influencers* and *advocates* are, how do they rise to prominence, and what factors affect their influence. Consideration should also be given to the volume and types of access points that are emerging and whether all are appropriate for the use of media branding. Finally, empirical assessments comparing the *brand loyalty, associations, image*, and *content type dependency* of brand content versus branded media outlets/platforms should be conducted so the information could be synergized into a brand content typology, advising media brand mangers on when different integrated content strategies can expect to be successful. This survey of the media branding 3.0 landscape has identified both opportunities and challenges for brand managers moving forward, and while unpredictable consumer behavior is likely to reveal a few unexpected surprises, the propositions and assumptions described here provide both academics and industry specialists a benchmark from which to strategize.

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20 Years of Research on Media Brands and Media Branding

Isabelle Krebs and Gabriele Siegert

Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to investigate the research output on media brands and media branding over the past 20 years. A meta-analysis was conducted to detect publications and investigate the structure, the theoretical approaches, as well as utilized methods and analyses of research output published in German and English. Thus, a broad overview on the developing area of media branding within the field of media economics and management is provided. Overall the meta-analysis revealed a prevalence of empirical studies and on TV as the dominant medium investigated. Furthermore, management and strategy is shown to be the primary theoretical research focus.

Keywords

Media brands • Media branding • Brand management • Brand strategy • Brand perception • Brand image • Brand equity • Literature review • Meta-analysis

1 Introduction

Branding has become more and more important in the media industry not only as a strategy to differentiate against an increasing number of competitors, but also as tool to address the change in consumer behavior—the brand can act as a quality signal for media contents and therefore guides consumers through a growing number of media offerings available. One of the first media practitioners to mention the important role of media brands was Jürgen Althans, a manager at the German publishing house *Gruner & Jahr* in 1994, who wrote an article on the topic and gave recommendations for the management of publisher brands (Althans, 1994).

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Moreover, Art Allison, a technology officer with the *National Association of Broadcasters* in 1997 stated: "Branding is a serious concern... It's really important to broadcasters" (Brinkley, 1997). Altogether, media brands and their management have a 20-year-old tradition in the media industry.

Accordingly, media branding and brand management also have an approximately 20-year-old tradition as research topics in media economics and management research. Along with the increasing interest of the media industry research activities on the topic started in the 1990s. In 1995 the *Journal of Broadcasting and Cable* declared branding a buzzword, and branding guides for broadcast professionals were published (e.g. McDowell & Batten, 1999). Since that time, publications mainly focused on branding as a strategy for and of media companies and started to name companies and outlets "media brands" (e.g. Chan-Olmsted & Jung, 2001; Chan-Olmsted & Kim, 2001; Jones, 1999; Siegert, 2001). This 20-year-old research history of media branding and media brands calls for a definition of the status quo.

Thus, the aim of this article is to describe and structure research on media brands and branding based on a meta-analysis which we conducted in the summer of 2013. In the following chapters we (1) explain our methodological approach, (2) give an overview of the state of the art of research on media brands and branding, and (3) conclude with a summary including a note on the research deficits.

2 Meta-Analysis: Methodological Approach

Previous overviews of media brand research were given by Walter McDowell in his book chapter "Issues in Marketing and Branding" (McDowell, 2006), by Sylvia Chan-Olmsted in her article "Media Branding in a Changing World: Challenges and Opportunities 2.0" (Chan-Olmsted, 2011) as well as most recently by Nando Malmelin and Johanna Moisander in their article "Brands and Branding in Media Management—Toward a Research Agenda" (Malmelin & Moisander, 2014). While McDowell and Chan-Olmsted considered not only publications on media branding but also from traditional marketing literature and publications on branding in general, Malmelin and Moisander investigated peer-reviewed articles in the journals *International Journal on Media Management*, *Journal of Media Business Studies*, and *Journal of Media Economics*. All authors focused on publications written in English.

For our study the scope was broadened: Firstly, we searched for publications in English, French, German and Spanish to integrate additional international research. As only a few articles could be detected in French and Spanish[1] and a certain number of publications is indispensable for a meta-analysis, we finally included

[1] The articles in French are mostly authored by Rita Valette-Florence and Virginie de Barnier (2011). The articles in Spanish are mostly authored or co-authored by Christina González Oñate (e.g. González Oñate & Fanjul Peyró, 2009).

publications written in English and German. Secondly, we not only included referred articles but also books and book chapters as there is a notable amount on media branding research which is not published as journal articles.

For meta-analysis search and selection of publications is crucial as certain parts of research might be over- or underestimated in the analysis or not included at all. In addition, doing a meta-analysis and considering more than one language poses an extra challenge: the terms used in the publications are different. Whereas in publications written in English the terms "brand" and "branding" are usually combined with the media type under investigation or a media firm's name, publications written in German often use the overall phrase "media brand" instead of referring to the type of media under investigation. Having these challenges in mind, a search targeting all publications mentioning media brand(s) or brand(s) in combination with different media industries is required. Therefore a search for media brand(s) was executed as well as an extended search for (media) brand(s) in combination with the terms TV, radio, newspaper(s), magazine(s), music, book(s), social network(s), search engines, newsportal(s) and games. These chosen terms reflect the different media industries as well as types of media.

The search strategy for the meta-analysis has been carried out as follows: A first search with the described combinations of keywords was performed using scientific databases, in detail the *IBSS-ProQuest* (International Bibliography of the Social Sciences), *Ebscohost*, *Jstor*, *Web of Science*, as well as *Springerlink*, to identify publications including the performed key words in their titles and subtitles and published between 1995 and 2013. Additionally the search was extended to *Google* scholar and *Google* books. All publications found with a title or subtitle not clearly relatable to media brand(s) research were additionally checked by reading the abstracts and the table of contents, partly the introduction and the conclusion, to approve their relevance. Master and PhD theses as well as conference proceedings were excluded if they were listed but not publicly accessible or published as books, book chapters or articles. Thus, altogether 236 publications were found within the period from 1995 until 2013. The publications, in particular the titles, contents and abstracts were analyzed with a codebook. In case of ambiguity, the whole document was also analyzed.

The codebook is composed of three parts: the first part consists of formal criteria such as year of publication, title and subtitle, author(s), language of the text, research field of the lead author as well as type of publication. In the second part we focused on thematic areas and theoretical approaches as well as on types of media and topics under investigation. In the third part we identified the primarily used methods of data collection and data analysis for all empirical studies.

The variables of the second part are the core of the meta-analysis and should therefore be explained in more detail: we differentiated three thematic areas of media brand research, the *management and strategy perspective*, the *perception and image perspective* and the *equity perspective*. Additionally we included a variable which refers to the primarily theory used and differentiated the most common approaches: customer based brand equity, brand management and positioning, brand personality, brand identity, co-branding, brand/line extension and cross-media, brand communities, brand image and brand loyalty.

As there are more approaches discussed in the literature additional theoretical approaches have also been recorded. The variable type of media brand considered, company or station brand, outlet brand and character brand; the type of media included TV, radio, magazine, newspaper, online outlet, book, music, game, social media, search engine, news sites and film. Furthermore, we coded the brand name, the research question or interest and in brief the results of the study.

3 State of the Art of Research on Media Brands and Media Branding

3.1 Structure of the Research Output

The 236 publications included in our meta-analysis show a balanced distribution for the languages utilized—116 publications in German and 120 publications in English. The research output for both languages also shows a similar development over time with only a few publications during the 1990s and a gradual increase of the research output with a distinct emphasis between the years 2006 and 2011 (Fig. 1). Whereas 2004 was the most productive year of media brand research published in German, the peak of the Anglophone research output was in 2008.

The types of publications within the research output show that most of the publications are journal articles (41 %), followed by book chapters (37 %), monographs (15 %), edited volumes (3 %) or others such as textbooks. Whereas most of the contributions in German were published as monographs, edited volumes and especially book chapters (96 % of all publications in German), the emphasis of all publications in English lies on journal articles (77 %). Like many other topics of media economics and management research, the output of media

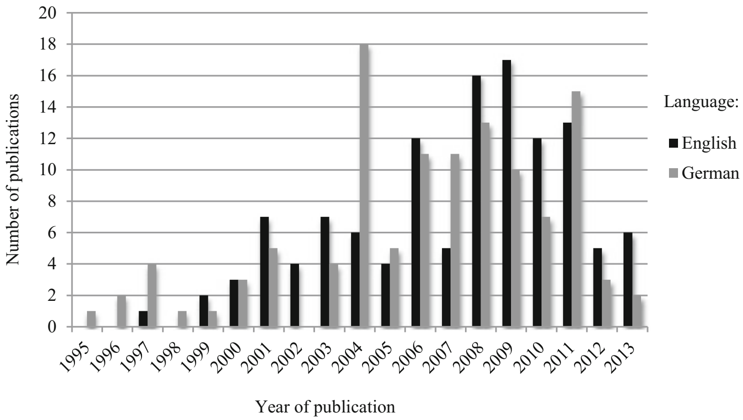

Fig. 1 Publication output of media brand research from 1995 to 2013

brand research investigated in this meta-analysis originated from different disciplines, mostly from communication science, social science and psychology as well as from business administration, marketing and economics (measured by the research field of the lead author). A majority (63 %) of all publications are empirical studies.

As stated above, our analysis notes the theoretical approaches and methods used within the investigated studies. To avoid a bias in the results the following analyses are based upon 221 publications; eight edited volumes, four introductions to editions and three textbooks had to be excluded due to their generalizing genre character: edited volumes as a whole, introductions to editions and textbooks are usually not meant to focus on one theoretical perspective, be empirical or use one methodology and therefore their introductory or summarizing character would inhibit a comprehensive analysis using our chosen criteria.

Almost 40 % of all publications primarily investigate TV as their object of interest, followed by magazines (16 %), newspapers (11 %), music (6 %) and the Internet (5 %). In the publications in English TV as object of interest is more dominant (44 %) than in the German publications (34 %), whereas magazines (21 % vs. 11 %) and newspapers (13 % vs. 9 %) are more dominant in the latter. Altogether more than 40 % of the publications address more than one medium: the TV studies partly include mostly online outlets as a second type of media; the magazine studies partly include TV and online outlets whereas the newspaper studies partly include magazines and news sites. Looking at the development over the years and having the importance of online and social media in the media industry and in everyday life in mind, there is a time lag as well as a shortage of studies dealing with the Internet, search engines and social media in particular.

3.2 Theoretical Foci of the Research Output

Considering the 221 publications, there is a distinct primary research focus on the management and strategy perspective (171 publications, 77 %), whereas the perception and image perspective is considered in 35 publications (16 %) and the equity perspective in 15 (7 %). In addition six publications with a primary focus on perception and image also dealt with management and strategy issues and some with equity issues. Fourteen publications with a primary focus on management and strategy also dealt with perception and image issues and nine with equity issues.

Interestingly more than 50 % of the *management and strategy* publications deal with management and strategy issues in general without using a selected model or detailed theoretical concept (e.g. Swoboda, Giersch, & Foscht, 2006); about 26 % discuss the role of brands in media management and marketing (e.g. Chan-Olmsted, 2006); only about 8 % focus on line and brand extensions or cross-media as underlying concepts (e.g. Kilian & Eckert, 2007). Within the management and strategy publication cluster, some publications deal with different approaches of brand management, such as competence based management (e.g. Geißler, 2009), or focus on the management or positioning of specific types of media outlets (e.g. Stempels, 2004). Some publications address technological changes in the media industry which find branding as the essential strategy for bundle differentiation (e.g. Heatley & Howell, 2009). Some studies within that cluster focus on media industry submarkets, particularly on the TV market (e.g. Stipp, 2012). Although brand identity is one of the key concepts of traditional brand research, it is relatively underrepresented within media brand research (e.g. Siegert, Gerth, & Rademacher, 2011). For details of selected publications see Tables 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5.

We found different results for the *perception and image* publications: about one third of those publications use brand personality, 20 % use line and brand extensions or cross-media as underlying concepts. Only about 15 % deal with brand image in general and about 6 % with brand communities or brand loyalty. Most of the studies focusing on brand personality are based on the use of brand personality scales (e.g. Aaker, 1997; Kim, Baek, & Martin, 2010) to define the personality of media brands and to investigate its perception. The concept is adapted to different types of media, but mostly to TV (e.g. Sung & Park, 2011). On the one hand studies on brand extensions particularly focus on extensions within one type of media or one submarket, for example brand extensions of TV stations or TV networks (e.g. Chang, Jiynad, & Lee, 2004) and on the other hand the studies increasingly address issues of brand extensions of offline brands into digital markets (e.g. Adams, 2006). Sometimes studies of brand image most notably focus on the integration of the audience perspective (e.g. Läge & Kälin, 2004) and increasingly integrate aspects of digitalization, e.g. the brand knowledge of web search engines (Jansen, Zhang, & Schultz, 2009). For details of selected publications see Table 6 (see also Förster, 2015).

Two thirds of all *equity* publications use the Costumer Based Brand Equity (CBBE) as theoretical approach (e.g. Oyedeji & Hou, 2010), about 13 % line and brand extensions or cross-media (e.g. Habann, Nienstedt, & Reinelt, 2008) and about 7 % brand loyalty (e.g. McDowell & Dick, 2005). Publications on brand equity sometimes address the topic beyond a strict economic perspective, for example by including psychological brand equity (Förster & Grüblbauer, 2010). Analogously to research on brand extensions, studies increasingly address brand equity within the context of digital markets (e.g. Pauwels & Dans, 2001). For details of selected publications see Table 7.

3.3 Methods of Data Collection and Data Analysis Used

Of the 221 publications the majority are empirical ($n = 149$). The emphasis of all empirical studies lies on case studies with 48 %. Studies characteristic for case studies on media brands are, amongst others, the studies of Chang, Bae and Lee (2004) or Wolff (2006). Reasons for the high proportion of case studies can be found within the nature of the media market and the subjects or perspective of research used. Compared to other commodity markets, media markets offer a rather limited number of media brands which are available for investigation, especially within submarkets (e.g. the German TV market). This limitation particularly

Table 1 Selection of research output mainly focusing on media brand management

Author(s)	Topic[a]	Type of media[a]	Methods[a]	Data analysis[a]
Altmeppen (2002)	Newsroom and product management (German)	TV	Theoretical approach	Theoretical approach
Bandyopadhyay and Serjak (2008)	Success factors of online brand management	Internet/ online	Theoretical approach	Theoretical approach
Baumgarth (2009)	Brand orientation (German)	Magazines	Quantitative survey	Regression analysis
Berkler and Krause (2007)	Media cooperation (German)	TV	Theoretical approach	Theoretical approach
Brown and Patterson (2009)	Service-dominant logic of marketing	Book	Qualitative content analysis	Qualitative analysis
Esch et al. (2009)	Management of brands within and brands as media (German)	TV	Theoretical approach	Theoretical approach
Förster (2011)	Success factors of TV brand management	TV	Case studies	Qualitative analysis
Ha and Chan-Olmsted (2004)	Crossmedia use in electronic media	TV	Quantitative survey	Descriptive analysis
Hearn (2011)	Reality television, self-branding, social media	TV	Theoretical approach	Theoretical approach
Malgara (2008)	Brand management in the digital age (German)	TV	Case studies	Qualitative analysis
Matteo et al. (2013)	Branding with social media	TV	Case studies	Qualitative analysis
McCourt and Rothenbuhler (2004)	Radio station brand management	Radio	Qualitative survey	Qualitative analysis
McDowell (2011)	Brand management crisis and news journalism	TV	Theoretical approach	Theoretical approach
O'Reilly and Doherty (2006)	Music brands online	Internet/ online	Qualitative content analysis	Qualitative analysis
Shaver and Shaver (2008)	Generating loyalty to internet news providers	Internet/ online	Quantitative survey	Descriptive analysis
Siegert (2001)	Media brand management (German)	No specific type	Theoretical approach	Theoretical approach
Wolff (2006)	TV brand management (German)	TV	Case studies	Qualitative analysis

[a]The categories reflect the primary topic, type of media, as well as methods and data analysis. Therefore others may also be included in these publications and studies

Table 2 Selection of research output mainly focusing on media brand strategy

Author(s)	Topic[a]	Type of media[a]	Methods[a]	Data analysis[a]
Caspar (2004)	Cross-channel brand strategies (German)	No specific type	Theoretical approach	Theoretical approach
Heatley and Howell (2009)	Bundling strategy	Internet/ online	Case studies	Qualitative analysis
Hennig-Thurau and Heitjans (2004)	Branding strategy options for movie production (German)	Movies	Case studies	Qualitative analysis
Hoynes (2003)	Public service branding and the privatization of public TV	TV	Case studies	Qualitative analysis
Loosen (2001)	Crossmedia brand strategies (German)	Magazines	Theoretical approach	Theoretical approach
Siegert (2004)	Differentiation and competition strategies (German)	No specific type	Theoretical approach	Theoretical approach
Stipp (2012)	Branding strategies of television networks	TV	Case studies	Qualitative analysis
Veigel (2008)	Digital brand management strategies (German)	Internet/ online	Theoretical approach	Theoretical approach
Zeng and Han (2012)	Brand building strategies of pay TV channels	TV	Case studies	Qualitative analysis

[a]The categories reflect the primary topic, type of media, as well as methods and data analysis. Therefore others may also be included in these publications and studies

Table 3 Selection of research output mainly focusing on media brand identity

Author(s)	Topic[a]	Type of media[a]	Methods[a]	Data analysis[a]
Engh (2004)	Identity oriented management of music brands (German)	Music	Case studies	Qualitative analysis
Fanthome (2007)	Role of brand identity within brand creation	TV	Qualitative survey	Qualitative analysis
Grainge (2010)	Broadcast branding and digital media design	TV	Case studies	Qualitative analysis
Greer and Ferguson (2011)	The role of identity within the use of twitter for promotion and branding	TV	Quantitative content analysis	Descriptive analysis
Maxwell and Knox (2009)	Employer branding across different firms	TV	Qualitative survey	Qualitative content analysis
Siegert, Gerth, and Rademacher (2011)	Media brands, decision making and content quality	No specific type	Theoretical approach	Theoretical approach

[a]The categories reflect the primary topic, type of media, as well as methods and data analysis. Therefore others may also be included in these publications and studies

Table 4 Selection of research output mainly focusing on media brand personality

Author(s)	Topic[a]	Type of media[a]	Methods[a]	Data analysis[a]
Aaker (1997)	Dimensions of brand personality	TV	Quantitative survey	Descriptive analysis
Chan-Olmsted and Cha (2007)	TV news in a multichannel environment	TV	Quantitative survey	Variance analysis
Henkel and Huber (2005)	Celebrities as brands (German)	TV	Qualitative content analysis	Cluster analysis
Kim et al. (2010)	Dimensions of news media brand personality	TV	Quantitative survey	Factor analysis
Lin (2010)	Consumer and brand personality	Video games	Quantitative survey	Regression analysis
Nasir and Nasir (2008)	Brand personality of web search engines	Search engines	Quantitative survey	Descriptive analysis
Nienstedt et al. (2012)	Brand and consumer personality and loyalty	Magazines	Quantitative survey	Cluster analysis
Sung and Park (2011)	Dimensions of cable television network personality	TV	Quantitative survey	Factor analysis

[a]The categories reflect the primary topic, type of media, as well as methods and data analysis. Therefore others may also be included in these publications and studies

Table 5 Selection of research output mainly focusing on media brand extensions

Author(s)	Topic[a]	Type of media[a]	Methods[a]	Data analysis[a]
Chang and Chan-Olmsted (2010)	Success factors of cable network brand extensions	TV	Quantitative survey	Descriptive analysis
Doyle (2006)	Challenges of expansion of global media products	Magazines	Case studies	Qualitative analysis
Habann et al. (2008)	Success factors in brand extensions	Newspapers	Quantitative survey	Regression analysis
Hamer et al. (2007)	Line Extensions as a strategic option (German)	Magazines	Case studies	Qualitative analysis
Hennig-Thurau et al. (2009)	Monetary value of brand extensions	Movies	Secondary data analysis	Regression analysis
Hörning (2004)	Revenue potentials through brand extensions (German)	No specific type	Theoretical approach	Theoretical approach
Song et al. (2010)	Brand extensions of online technology products	Internet/online	Quantitative survey	Descriptive analysis
Sood and Drèze (2006)	Brand extensions of experiential goods	Movies	Experiment	Variance analysis

[a]The categories reflect the primary topic, type of media, as well as methods and data analysis. Therefore others may also be included in these publications and studies

Table 6 Selection of research output mainly focusing on media brand image

Author(s)	Topic[a]	Type of media[a]	Methods[a]	Data analysis[a]
Chan-Olmsted and Kim (2002)	Public service branding and the privatization of public TV	TV	Quantitative survey	Variance analysis
Guzmán and Paswan (2009)	Image of cultural brands	TV	Quantitative survey	Structural equation model
Jansen et al. (2009)	User perception of search engine performance	Search engines	Experiment	Variance analysis
Paus-Hasebrink (2009)	Children and media (German)	TV	Qualitative content analysis	Descriptive analysis
Thomson (2006)	Attachment with celebrities	TV	Quantitative survey	Variance analysis
van den Bulck et al. (2011)	Responses to product strategies of print media brands	Magazines	Quantitative survey	Descriptive analysis

[a]The categories reflect the primary topic, type of media, as well as methods and data analysis. Therefore others may also be included in these publications and studies

Table 7 Selection of research output mainly focusing on media brand equity

Author(s)	Topic[a]	Type of media[a]	Methods[a]	Data analysis[a]
Chan-Olmsted et al. (2013)	Social network brands	TV	Quantitative survey	Structural equation model
Esch and Rempel (2007)	Equity of magazine brands (German)	Magazines	Theoretical approach	Theoretical approach
Ha and Chan-Olmsted (2004)	The role of cable TV web sites for branding	TV	Quantitative survey	Descriptive analysis
Keller (2009)	Building strong brands in a modern marketing communications environment	TV	Theoretical approach	Theoretical approach
McDowell (2006)	Small media brands in a zero sum marketplace	TV	Case studies	Qualitative analysis
Ots and Wolff (2008)	Media consumer brand equity	TV	Qualitative survey	Qualitative content analysis
Oyedeji (2007)	CBBE and media channel credibility	TV	Quantitative survey	Descriptive analysis
Pauwels and Dans (2001)	Newspaper on and offline brand equity	Newspapers	Case studies	Regression analysis

[a]The categories only reflect the primary topic, type of media, as well as methods and data analysis. Therefore others may also be included in these publications and studies

applies when an organizational perspective is used, often without any integration of the consumer side.

Another 29 % of the empirical studies data is collected using surveys, both quantitative (20 %) and qualitative (9 %). Also nearly 10 % of all empirical studies use survey as an additional method. Studies characteristic for using surveys as preferred method are Davidson, McNeill, and Ferguson (2007) or Tarkiainen, Ellonen, and Kuivalainen (2009). In only 8 % of all empirical studies is content analysis performed as primarily or additional method of data collection, mostly quantitative (e.g. Alessandri, 2009), but also—in a few cases—as qualitative content analysis (e.g. Hills & Michalis, 2000). Only a few studies use a multi-method approach (e.g. Paus-Hasebrink, 2009). Some studies combine quantitative surveys or case studies with qualitative interviews and qualitative content analysis. In some rare cases secondary data analysis is used as the main method of investigation (e.g. Hennig-Thurau, Houston, & Heitjans, 2009).

In terms of data analysis, media brand research is rather qualitative than quantitative with over 50 % of all analysis methods used being of a qualitative nature. Another 17 % of all empirical studies perform descriptive analysis, about 7 % use variance analysis, only 4 % use regression analysis, factor analysis or structural equation modeling as the primarily method of data analysis. In some studies regression analysis is used as an additional method. This may imply a lack of generalizable findings that could be supported by quantitative approaches. A reason might be that researchers often have to rely on case studies where in many cases quantitative methods are not applicable due to the small number of cases. Also there is a smaller scope of analysis for studies applying only an organizational perspective (also mainly due to a small sample size). Studies integrating the consumer side (e.g. with surveys) especially apply quantitative analysis models.

Hence, research on media brands shows a uniform use of data analysis methods. Taking the investigated types of media and theoretical approaches into consideration, results show that about 40 % of all management and strategy publications (theoretical and empirical) prefer case studies as a method of data collection, whereas the majority (55 %) of all perception and image publications work with quantitative surveys. Overall, explorative studies in combination with descriptive analyses are dominant.

4 Summary

Research on media brands has clearly developed over recent years and the research output has increased in both languages investigated in our meta-analysis.

Expectably, media brand management is the key area of research, but theoretical approaches from ‘traditional’ brand research, such as brand identity and brand image, also make up a good part. Publications dealing with brand equity become increasingly relevant but are still underrepresented. This can be due to the measurement of brand equity itself and also due to the characteristics of media goods. Firstly the measurement of brand equity is complex and not consistent. Secondly there is a problem of measuring sub- and content/personality brands and their "share" of the brand equity, e.g. blockbuster movies. Additionally a quality assessment of media products is mostly only possible after consumption therefore the characteristics of credence and experience goods impede the measurement of brand equity. Nevertheless the CBBE especially seems to be a promising approach and the increasing use of the CBBE reflects the relevance of customer orientated measurement of brand equity within convergent media markets.

Overall a prevalence of research on TV and TV markets is apparent within the meta-analysis. Although the focus has been shifting in recent years there is still a lack of studies which take media convergence and changes in user habits into consideration, or investigate Internet use and social media as distribution and marketing channels. Although it is clear that these developments are recent compared with the 20 years span of research, nevertheless the quantity of output seems to reflect an especially late recognition of real-world developments.

Concerning methodological design, we found an overall dominance of empirical studies with case studies as preferred method. The use of rather qualitative analysis methods hints at problems caused by small sample sizes (especially when applying an organizational perspective rather than a consumer perspective of the brand) and a lack of generalizable findings that could be supported by quantitative approaches.

Nevertheless the results of this meta-analysis need some contextualization concerning the applied search strategy as well as the time period considered. Although we tried to perform an extensive search, our search strategy excludes publications which have no direct reference to media brands and media branding within the title, subtitle, keywords or abstract. For example publications on media brand reputation by Frank Lobigs (2004) could not be detected with this search strategy and are not included in our meta-analysis. Furthermore media branding is a dynamic research area with a constant research output. Therefore we missed some important studies, published after the summer of 2013, the addressing of some research deficiencies is also mentioned in our meta-analysis. For example a study focusing on social media (Chan-Olmsted, Cho, & Lee, 2013), and topics dealing with the recipients' quality assessment (Urban & Schweiger, 2013). Broadening the scope and also integrating German research revealed an interesting pattern. Firstly the meta-analysis showed that branding research is a vital field within the German media economics and management field. Secondly, different research and publication cultures are reflected within different publication types—by also integrating books and book chapters, which are predominantly a traditional publication form in German speaking countries—a good part of research could be integrated that was up to now missing in literature reviews on media brands and branding.

Nevertheless, our meta-analysis gives a good overview of the research output on media brands and branding as a research area within media economics and management. The topic will be still relevant in the future but the research needs to adjust faster to the real-world developments. Further research should especially address the developments concerning social media as well as overall changes in media usage, and should increasingly apply sophisticated methods of data collection and analysis that enable more generalizable findings. Further research should also address the relationship of program and content brands in times of changing consumer behavior and media usage, e.g. non-linear TV (see also Chan-Olmsted & Shay, 2015).

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Part II

The Management Perspective: Media Brands as Management Task

Brands in International and Multi-Platform Expansion Strategies: Economic and Management Issues

Gillian Doyle

Abstract

Powerful media branding has historically facilitated successful international expansion on the part of magazine and other content forms including film and TV formats. Multi-platform expansion is now increasingly central to the strategies of media companies and, as this chapter argues, effective use of branding in order to engage audiences effectively and to secure a prominent presence across digital platforms forms a core part of this. Drawing on original research into the experience of UK media companies, this chapter highlights some of the key economic, management and socio-cultural issues raised by the ever-increasing role of brands and branding in the strategies of international and multi-platform expansion that are increasingly commonplace across media.

Keywords

Multi-platform • Internationalisation • Expansion • Economic exploitation • Magazines

1 Introduction

As digital technology has transformed the infrastructure of media distribution, one of the main ways that content suppliers have chosen to achieve growth and renewal in recent years has been through extending their goods and services into new and additional markets. Strategies of international expansion and also of cross-platform and multi-platform expansion have become common-place. At a time of expanding media provision and choice for consumers, branding has become an ever-more vital

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component within the strategic armoury of media managers (Ots, 2008; Siegert, Gerth, & Rademacher, 2011).

Drawing on the findings of a major ESRC-funded project[1] which investigates how media companies have made the journey from being single sector to digital multi-platform suppliers of content, this chapter focuses on the role of brands in facilitating this transition. The analysis presented draws on interviews with current and former senior managers at a range of leading UK media companies including *News UK* (formerly News International), *Telegraph Media Group*, *Hearst UK*, *Future Publishing, EMAP*, *BBC*, *ITV*, UKTV and *Viacom International Media Networks*. This chapter assesses some of the key economic, management and socio-cultural issues raised by the ever-increasing emphasis on brands and branding which, in recent years, have gone hand in hand with a widespread adoption of strategies of multi-platform expansion.

Branding and segmentation of market demand have long been at the heart of the business of magazine publishing and major publishing houses such as *IPC* in the UK, *Condé Naste* or *Hachette* in France, *Bauer* in Germany or *Time Warner* in the US are adept in harnessing brands as a means of achieving expansion across geographic territories. However in the twenty-first century the process of assessing the viability of media brands that are aimed at specific market segments and of calculating the likely profile of returns over the expected life of that brand involves, typically, looking not only at international markets but also, more fundamentally, at the opportunities which delivery across multiple digital distribution platforms may provide. Full exploitation of the brand image associated with, say, a magazine title typically involves extension of that branded content property across a range of delivery platforms and devices, fixed and mobile, and sometimes into complementary product and service markets (such as, for example, organisation of trade fairs), as well as, for many, expansion into international markets.

Multi-platform growth is increasingly central to the strategies of not only magazines but all other media companies and, as this chapter argues, successful use of branding in order to engage audiences effectively and to secure a prominent presence across digital platforms forms a core part of this. For multi-platform media suppliers, branding shapes day-to-day operational decisions about content and business planning. The experience of leading players in the UK media sector suggests that the need for high impact brands is affecting how content is selected, produced, presented and managed. The ascent of branding raises potential questions about standardization of content at the expense of range and diversity (see also Rohn, 2015). Even so, as this chapter concludes, the economic logic that underpins use of brands to support multi-platform expansion is highly compelling and

[1] This is a UK Economic and Social Research Council-funded project (ES/J011606/1) entitled ‘Multi-platform media and the digital challenge: strategy, distribution and policy’. Principal Investigator: Gillian Doyle; Co-Investigator: Philip Schlesinger; Research Associate: Dr. Katherine Champion. The PI conducted all cited interviews except those with staff at *Elle* and with the Senior Marketing Director of Future Publishing which were carried out by the RA.

therefore branding techniques will remain at the fore in promoting the competitive positioning of media companies in the digital era.

2 Brands and Internationalization

In a world of abundant and ever-growing media provision, brands make the process of decision-making easier for consumers (Chan-Olmsted, 2006). Recognisable, memorable brands help products stand out and foster loyalty. Earlier work in media economics and media management has highlighted how, in magazine publishing, the importance of branding has been well understood for many years (Cox & Mowatt, 2008; Picard, 2011). The main asset owned by a magazine and the core source of its strength is its title or, more accurately, the brand associated with its title (Doyle, 2013).

Magazine publishers have been well ahead of rivals in other sectors in recognizing that strategies of branding plus segmentation of market demand into narrow niches work in a complementary way (Doyle, 2013). Branding helps publishers engage with and sustain ongoing relationships with specific audience segments (Davidson, McNeill, & Ferguson, 2007). Consumer and business magazines put great effort into the creation of distinctive brand images which ensure loyalty and repeat purchases or habitual engagement on the part of readers and users (Gasson, 1996). If a brand is strong enough it will frequently have some appeal for the same lifestyle group or niche in many different international geographic markets, albeit that some adaptation at the local level may be required (Doyle, 2006). And, on account of their reliance on visual material, magazines are often relatively easy to adapt for additional language markets.

Branding techniques, although strongly associated with magazine publishing, are also a prevalent feature in other sectors of the media including, for example, the television content business where, as with magazines, perfecting and then adhering to a winning formula provides a good basis for expansion into additional territories (Steemers, 2004; Tungate, 2005). International trade in television formats is a growing industry and one which is dominated by strongly branded entertainment and game shows such as *Who wants to be a Millionaire, Masterchef* and *Pop Idol* (Esser, 2010). Branding is important not only in promoting specific television shows but also channels (Stipp, 2012). This is acknowledged, for example, by the General Manager of UKTV's channel called *Dave* which, until it was rebranded in 2007, went under the name *UKTV G2*:

> when we launched *Dave* . . .a big part of our objective when we were branding was we need to stand out in a crowded marketplace. At that point, there were 400 TV channels. There's now 450 TV channels in the marketplace. We need to find a way of standing up amongst those channels. How do we do that? So part of the reason '*Dave*' worked was because it's different and it's a bit like 'Why?' (Interview, April 24, 2014)

So branding is widespread across the media but, in magazine publishing, the business of developing and harnessing strong brands has a very long history.

In order to widen the international readership for a magazine, its parent company will frequently adopt a strategy of publishing several different international versions (Cabell & Greehan, 2005). Use of a contract-based approach is a popular model whereby, instead of setting up numerous wholly owned subsidiaries in other countries, the brand owner enters into licensing or franchising agreements with a number of local publishing partners. Franchising minimizes many of the risks and costs involved (Deresky, 2006). Sustaining a growing network of international local publishing partners can, however, involve complexity, not least in relation to sustaining control over the brand (Doyle, 2006).

It may be argued that differences in tastes and preferences amongst international audiences are gradually being eroded by processes of globalization which magazines and other transnational media have responded to but, also, which they have accelerated (Cabell & Greehan, 2005; Chalaby, 2005). Much earlier work in cultural studies has adopted a critical stance in relation to the role played by internationalization of media in global cultural exchange (Giddens, 1991; Tomlinson, 1991). Even so, the processes involved in extending a cultural brand across numerous different international settings can involve challenges that are especially demanding (Esser, 2010; Hafstrand, 1995; Sánchez-Tabernero, 2006). The experience of transnational magazine publishers such as *Hearst*, *Bauer* etc. would certainly suggest that cultural variations from one region to another are very far from extinct, and so questions around local adaptation are very much on the managerial agenda (Doyle, 2006). Awareness of the particularities of local tastes and values which local publishing partners bring is essential in avoiding offensive or embarrassing editorial misjudgements. So, a very significant managerial challenge for transnational brand-owners is that of striking the right balance between protecting and preserving the integrity of the core brand versus allowing partners sufficient editorial and operational latitude to implement whatever adaptations they feel are needed at local level (Doyle, 2006).

3 Transition to Multi-platform

Strong brands have not only underpinned international expansion but also expansion across different media platforms and devices such as tablets and mobile phones (Küng, 2008; Ots, 2008). Declining advertising revenues have encouraged more and more print titles to reposition themselves as multi-platform entities (Duffy, 2013). But the re-cycling of strong content brands across a range of delivery platforms is a strategy that is visible across all sectors of the media (McDowell, 2006; Murray, 2005). Indeed, many media publishing businesses are now explicitly structured around the high profile cross-media brands which they own rather than, as might have been the case in the past, according to what sort of activities they are engaged in (e.g. magazine publishing or broadcasting). The homepage of *Bauer*,[2]

[2] Accessed on 1 March, 2014 at: http://www.bauermedia.co.uk

one of the largest consumer magazine publishers and radio broadcasters in the UK, currently describes the company at the homepage of its website thus:

> We have more than eighty influential media brands, spanning a wide range of interests, including. . .Our business is built on millions of personal relationships with engaged audiences. We connect people and communities with compelling and quality content, whenever, wherever and however they want.

The adoption of a more platform-neutral approach that places emphasis on ownership of brands and on the role that brands play in engaging and sustaining relationships with audiences signals an ongoing shift, propelled partly by digitization and growth of the internet, in publishers' conceptions of what their business is centrally about. Whereas the tangible glossy print product was once the primary and sole focus, many leading UK publishers now report that they see their business as being, at root, about devising and building up successful titles or content brands, using those brands to develop close and loyal relationships with target customers, and then translating the brand experience across different technological and market settings. This sentiment is encapsulated by the Chief Executive Officer of *Hearst Magazines* UK thus:

> We are not a publisher. We are an entertainer. Our job is to create a business which is diversified and will enable a connection with our audience around our different brands. . . We want the print experience to be one among many other connections and touch points. (Arnaud de Puyfontaine, CEO of *Hearst Magazines* UK, 2012)[3]

Such a re-conceptualisation of what the business of supplying media entails and of the increasingly centrality of brands is by no means confined to magazine publishers. Since the arrival of the internet, many media organisations have migrated towards a so-called multi-platform approach to supplying content (Doyle, 2013). This both reflects and responds to how digital distribution platforms have changed the consumption behaviours of audiences, opening up numerous new opportunities in relation to capturing and sustaining audience attention.

The term 'multi-platform' involves an approach towards production and distribution in which the aim is to engage audiences across multiple platforms or avenues, rather than just one. Multi-platform publishing involves what the Managing Director of Commercial at *News UK* (formerly News International), publisher of several leading daily newspaper titles in the UK, calls 'multiple touch points' in how readers want to consume news content. The importance of brands in securing a foothold with audiences across multiple digital platforms is explained by the CEO of *Hearst Magazines* UK thus:

> As we move from 'one-to-many' to 'one-to-one' communication. . . our competitive advantage is based on being the owner of brands. One of their expressions is a weekly or monthly magazine. That's fine but it is less and less compelling. [The business] we are

[3] Arnaud De Puyfontaine speaking at 'Hearst Magazines 2012 & Beyond' https://soundcloud.com/icrossing-uk/arnaud-de-puyfontaine-hearst

> currently building around these brands is much more comprehensive (Interview, July 22, 2013)

4 New Relationships with Audiences

According to recent data from UK communications regulator *Ofcom*, "just over half (53 %) of all UK adults are regular media multi-taskers, i.e. they 'stack' or 'mesh' while watching TV weekly or more often" (Ofcom, 2013, p. 4). Changes in media consumption habits are particularly evident amongst the young who have embraced media multi-tasking very readily. This is well understood at, for example, *MTV UK* where, because of the youthful profile of target audiences, its management needs to be fully attuned and alert to changing modes of consumption. As a Senior Vice-President of *Viacom International Media Networks (VIMN)* explains:

> When we think about the business, we think about where the audience is at. And our audience—16–24 year olds primarily—are multi-tasking. They use instant messenger, and texting, and they've got their laptop open whilst they're watching TV. They watch TV, they chat, they social network, they do all those things and they do it all at the same time. So if we were to continue to grow our business there's no point saying 'let's make a great TV show and then put a bit of content online'—it just doesn't work. (Interview, 12 February, 2009)

Another *VIMN* Executive with responsibility for Content and Programming at *MTV* agrees that, where younger audiences are concerned, appetites for television content are now expressed in terms of demand for engagement with specific shows, content brands and characters across an array of digital platforms and devices. For younger audiences, watching television—the linear transmission—although a significant part of the experience, is by no means all, and therefore content needs to be portable:

> For young audiences, portability is everything. Yes, they will watch stuff on linear, but at the same time they will be watching it on iPad, Sky+, Video on Demand. It's about the programme *brand*. If they love something. . . and have that emotional connection, they will find it when they want it and they will come to it wherever they want it. (Interview, 21 October, 2011)

In the contemporary media environment where audiences enjoy a plethora of competing multi-platform offerings, branding has become a vital propeller for the success of individual content properties and suppliers. Across the board, most if not all media organisations recognize that, in a much more crowded and competitive landscape, the ability to form and sustain the kind of relationship with your audience where they actually want to find and follow your content represents a key advantage.

It is widely understood that construction of closer or more intense relationships establishes a means through which particular audience segments or constituencies of interest can be encouraged to seek out preferred content brands across differing platforms and delivery formats. The fact that effective use of branding is integral to the process of forming such relationships is acknowledged by managers in the non-commercial as well as the market sector. At the BBC, one of the vectors via which the organization has sought to become proficient in the use of multiple digital delivery channels is its youth-orientated television service *BBC Three*. The Controller of *BBC Three* acknowledges that two-way connectivity on digital platforms and judicious use of social media allows television channels to:

> create an active community of people who enjoy your brand and engage with it. . . That's very much what the social media team are doing—they are talking about shows with them, answering questions. They're giving the channel a personality. (Interview, 22 January, 2014)

Thus, the task of channel controllers and of commissioning schedulers has changed greatly and likewise the competencies needed to perform these roles in ways that harness digital platforms effectively are different. The Controller of *BBC Three s*uggests that "we need to be much better at engaging in conversation with the audience" (see Ots & Hartmann, 2015; Wolter, 2015). The Head of Content and Programming at *MTV UK* confirms that the role of the television channel manager has become more focused on identifying what sort of content ideas will work for a brand across multiple distribution platforms and how those platforms can be used to secure audience engagement over an extended time period:

> We don't see ourselves now as a traditional broadcaster—we see ourselves as a brand and our content is a part of a brand experience and our brand is on different platforms. . . (Interview, 21 October, 2011)

5 Strategic Brand Management

A more competitive multi-platform environment has encouraged media suppliers to pay much more attention to ensuring that audiences, readers and user-groups understand clearly and accurately what sort of the experiences and content their imprimatur promises to deliver. Powerful media brands are pivotal in strengthening the association between a content service or bundle such as a television channel and the character of its content, as is acknowledged by the General Manager of two of the most prominent of UKTV's television channels:

> Having brands is a shortcut for people to go: "Do you know what? I like *Eastenders* we'll go to BBC iPlayer. Or I like *Coronation Street*, I'll go to ITV . . ." (Interview, April 24, 2014)

Maintaining the integrity of a brand calls for strict control over how it becomes translated from one context to another (Keller, 2013). Protecting the integrity of media brand as it migrates across multiple delivery platforms involves careful control over the character and tone of that product or service. The General Manager of UKTV channel *Dave* confirms that content selection is strongly directed by branding considerations:

> as the world's gotten bigger we still are very strict in the shows that we'll buy from a brand point of view (Interview, April 24, 2014)

In the world of magazine publishing, it is also recognized that, in an increasingly competitive market context, establishing a brand identity that is clear and consistent is vital. The importance of protecting the integrity of the brand and of maintaining a consistent tone across different delivery platforms is emphasized, for example, by the Content Director of *Elle* UK who says:

> *Elle* has to sound like *Elle* whether it's a 3-page feature in the magazine or a 50 word piece on lipstick at the site (Interview, 12 September, 2013)

Likewise, according to the Senior Marketing Executive of Future Publishing, owner of *Total Film*:

> we are quite careful.. that its the same *Total Film* voice you will hear in the magazine and on the website—*Total Film* are very protective of that (Interview, 6 December, 2013)

However, publishers not only need to maintain the consistency of their brand but, also, to adjust their content offerings to suit the specific delivery platform in question. This can create conflicts. For instance, the need for immediacy on digital platforms can at times conflict with the ambition of maintaining a consistently authoritative and reliable voice. According to the Editor-in-Chief of *Elle* UK:

> Every piece of content must be thought through: why is it going out, what's the point of it and what are we doing and is the right tone? We had a terrible issue with tone for about a year. . . Not everybody is good at social media. It was just that sort of sensing who had it and who didn't and who could make sure it represented the brand. (Interview, 11 September, 2013)

6 Brands and Economic Exploitation of Intellectual Property

Whatever the challenges involved, there remains a very strong economic case in favour of extending consumption of a media product or service through means of making minor adaptations to a basic or standard formula so it then appeals across additional delivery platforms and/or in additional geographic markets. Expansion of *any* sort of product on this basis will generally be advantageous because of the low investment risks and high economies of scale and scope involved. But expansion of media products is especially advantageous because, where media content is concerned, the raw material being shared across different platforms and different international versions—the intellectual property which is the core ingredient—once it has been created then costs little to reproduce. The same story, and/or variations of it, can be 'sold' to multiple different audiences around the globe and across multiple delivery platforms without its value ever being impaired or diminished. Hence the basic economic rationale in favour of harnessing the techniques of branding, where these serve to support and facilitate international and cross-platform expansion of a media product or service, is especially compelling.

At root, the opportunity to exploit intellectual property assets more fully is what drives strategies of multi-platform and international expansion in the media industry. One of key advantages driving incumbent media firms towards multi-platform distribution is the ability to squeeze more *value* out of content by vastly increasing the opportunities to consume that content which are presented to audiences. But since the economic viability of multi-platform content publishing depends not only on the marginal value for audiences but also the marginal productions costs involved, it is no surprise that very many (though not all) media suppliers have pushed towards converged or joint production of multi-platform outputs where feasible. The standard expectation of journalists working at most leading UK magazine and newspaper titles is that copy will be produced for print, fixed digital and mobile platforms (Doyle, 2014; McKay, 2013).

Multi-platform publishing routinely entails the generation of multiple versions of narratives out of individual stories and content properties. Re-cycling of content across additional audience segments is not new. But, in the context of the digital environment, with much wider distribution capacity and greater ease in technical processes of re-formatting of content, it is undoubtedly much more feasible and more prevalent than before.

As far as effective management of media content assets in the digital age is concerned, the ascent of branding techniques to facilitate fuller exploitation of intellectual property makes a great deal of sense. Digital platforms bring not only opportunity but also a vast abundance of choice for consumers, and as a consequence rival media suppliers need, more than ever, a means to cut through the swathe and to engage and sustain audience attention for their own wares (Keller, 2013). Effective branding can also help extend the shelf-life of media content assets. This is important since, from a business point of view, the core challenge for media suppliers and brand owners is that of keeping their content properties going and selling them through as many avenues as possible for as long as possible in order to achieve a return sufficient to cover and exceed the cost of developing them in the first place.

So harnessing branding techniques is highly beneficial from the point of view of firms seeking to exploit as fully as possible the value of their content assets across digital platforms. However, from a socio-cultural perspective, the implications are perhaps a little more questionable. Findings from our case study based research into the experience of UK media companies suggest that a drive towards multi-platform delivery has been accompanied by a need for greater selectivity in content decisions with much more emphasis on potentially high impact content proposals. In other words, migration to a multi-platform approach has resulted in at least some forms of pressures *against* rather than in favour of diversity of content

Amongst UK broadcasters, a common strategic response to the problem of how to meet audience and advertiser demand for multi-layered multi-platform output from within static or diminishing content budgets in recent years has been to focus on fewer, high impact ideas (Doyle, 2010). This is true both of the commercial and the non-commercial sector. At the *BBC* for example, the mantra ‘fewer, bigger, better’ was adopted as part of the organisation’s efforts to restructure into a multi-media entity. According to the Controller of *BBC Three*, budgetary constraints have created more focus on 'curation' of content and on squeezing as much value as possible from it. In terms of selecting which items of content to invest in, the challenging of supplying content across multiple platforms from within tight budgets:

> is inevitably going to lead you to fewer, possibly bigger and hopefully bigger bang for your buck [acquisitions] (Interview, January 22, 2014)

As print publishers mutate into digital multi-platform players, production has become orientated towards supplying multiple versions out of the same individual narratives, stories, content properties and brands (Fenton, 2010). Investment in new content management systems (CMSs) has made re-versioning of content for different platforms easier (Doyle, 2014). The journey to multi-platform publishing has naturally precipitated converged production practices plus more emphasis on the sort of content that engages audiences across platforms, as confirmed by the CEO of *Hearst* UK:

> the job of a journalist and content is really to be able to engage with the audience on every platform. So yes, it has an impact on the [volume] of information produced in the job and on diversity. (Interview, July 22, 2013)

So, as earlier research has suggested, rather than supporting greater diversity, multi-platform distribution is apt to encourage strategies of brand extension and, in turn, the 'market ubiquity of a limited number of franchises' (Murray, 2005, p. 431).

7 Brands and Efficiency

International and multi-platform expansion of successful media content properties has become increasingly prevalent and branding is central to this. Once publishers succeed in developing and perfecting a leading product in the home market, the next step is often to extend the brand internationally through publication of multiple international editions of the magazine adapted suitably in each case for local market circumstances. So, although the literature of international management provides numerous stark warnings about the difficulties of sustaining transnational business alliances, the track record of companies such as *Bauer*, *Hachette Filipacchi* and *Hearst* in developing magazine brands that achieve positions of market leadership right across the globe suggests that, at least in publishing, cross-border partnerships can work highly effectively (Doyle, 2006). This is, perhaps, not surprising given the high financial rewards available to both the brand owner and local publishing partners once a magazine title is successfully translated into new geographic territories.

Cross-platform expansion is another tactic that is increasingly deployed in order to maximise the returns from a popular magazine brand. Again, adaptation is necessary, in this case to suit the strengths and specificities of the delivery platform in question. The expertise that most magazine publishers have established in targeting, building relationships with and engaging narrow audience segments is certainly a useful advantage in the context of digital distribution platforms. It is notable that while magazine publishers such as *EMAP* were early in adopting a ‘media neutral’ approach towards content delivery, many other media suppliers are now following suit in identifying themselves not purely as broadcasters or publishers but rather as content brand owners and multi-platform distributors.

Multi-platform expansion is increasingly central to the strategies of media companies and, as this chapter argues, successful use of branding in order to engage audiences effectively and to secure a prominent presence across digital platforms forms a core part of this. The need for high impact brands is affecting how content is selected, produced and presented, with practical and theoretical implications for processes of production, content selection and distribution. Whether the ascent of branding is conducive to an improved experience for media audiences is a debatable question. What is clear, however, is that the deployment of branding to support expansion strategies will continue into the future, not least because maximising the available market for the firm’s output is an obvious economic goal for all media content creators and brand owners.

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Media Branding from an Organizational and Management-Centered Perspective

Sabine Baumann

Abstract

Due to their properties and market structures media products and services depend on trusted brands and good reputation for their success, the more so since the arrival of interactive multi-media platforms. While not fully encompassing the wide body of literature from management or marketing, media management and economics research has also neglected business-to-business settings. Management and marketing research are equally unconcerned with using media as a special case for complex branding issues in highly volatile multi-tier market environments with diverse stakeholder settings. This chapter thus explores the specifics of media brand management and organization compared to settings proposed in the branding literature. Based on these results it discusses implications for both media management practice and media management and economics research.

Keywords

Brand architecture • Corporate brand • Product brand • Media brand strategy • Stakeholder • Co-branding • Brand alliance • B2B • Transmedia storytelling • Organization

1 Introduction

Media companies currently face competitive market environments characterized by immense structural changes driven by new technologies, convergence and audiences increasingly selecting new media channels that provide their desired information at the preferred time and place over traditional media channels. Even

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without these transformations the branding of media products and services is challenging due to their specific properties such as being both experience and credence goods, their cultural dimensions, and often global distribution. Reputation is vital as audiences seek reliable information from other users prior to purchase. Hence, “building and positioning a brand will become a key skill in the future” (Aris & Bughin, 2009, p. 5).

Media organizations have a long tradition of multitudes of *product brands* that include a wide *product portfolio* ranging from news, documentaries, and series to shows or individual products, such as books. It is therefore surprising that media branding is an understudied topic both in general management and marketing and media management and economics. While the latter has contented itself with research into brand extensions (Ots, 2008) and neglected branding in business-to-business settings other than advertising, general management and marketing rarely uses the complex branding issues of media organization in highly volatile multi-tier market environments as study objects.

The objective of this chapter is to explore how media brands can be managed and organized in an ever-changing environment and to determine what the media branding perspective can contribute to established theories or validated knowledge in media management and economics as well as media management practice. The remaining chapter is organized as follows: Sect. 2 provides an overview of branding terminology, objectives and functions as well as management and implementation in general management and marketing literature. Section 3 describes the market structures and specifics of media products and services. Based on these findings Sect. 4 examines the management of media brands, in particular, objectives and functions, media branding strategies and also challenges for their implementation. The final section discusses the implications for both media management practice and media management and economics research.

2 Branding in Management Literature

2.1 Terminology and Categories

The literature reveals an ongoing battle of terminology between communication and marketing scholars (McDowell, 2006).[1] The most commonly accepted definition for the brand is the one proposed by the American Marketing Association as a “name, term, design, symbol, or any other feature that identifies one seller’s good” (The American Marketing Association, 2014). *Brand names* add thoughts and feelings that are designed to enhance the value of a product beyond its product category and functional values (Chan-Olmsted, 2006).

[1] Baumgarth and Bode provide an overview of definitions for the brand depending on perspectives including legal aspects, object orientation, supplier orientation, demand orientation and integrated definitions (Baumgarth, 2008; Bode, 2010).

The *brand identity* denotes those attributes shaping the brand from the perspective of the internal stakeholders that find their outward expression in symbolizing the brand's special characteristics (Förster, 2011). Contrastingly, *brand image* refers to the thoughts and feelings (meaning) of the brand to a consumer and the associations it creates (McDowell, 2006),[2] and as a result, how relevant constituencies such as the media, the public, investors, customers, and suppliers perceive the company (Ferrell Lowe, 2011). The brand image should ideally be a unique set of positive associations comprising the values and promise of the brand. Ultimately, these associations should transform into a positive attitude towards the brand, a higher purchase probability and continued brand loyalty (Chan-Olmsted, 2006).

Brands can be categorized in a number of ways, including their geographical reach (regional, national, international, and global brands) or assignment to stages of the value creation chain (ingredient or final product brand). An important categorization is the distinction of *corporate* and *product brands*. A corporate brand positions and differentiates the company as a whole in its market environment addressing all stakeholders including internal (e.g., employees or owners) as well as external (e.g., investors, politicians or business partners). Product brands focus on single or groups of products and the external stakeholder groups of customers, retailers and other multipliers.

Predictably, companies do not have just one brand (*mono brand*) but a *portfolio* of brands. This portfolio can consist of brand extensions that leverage an "established brand name for a new product to capitalize on the equity of the existing brand name" (Chan-Olmsted, 2006, p. 63) and/or newly developed brands (Homburg & Krohmer, 2006). An organization's approach to the design and management of its brand portfolio is called *brand architecture* (Aaker & Joachimsthaler, 2000; Devlin, 2003; Dooley & Bowie, 2005; Petromilli, Morrison, & Million, 2002). Brand architecture decisions determine the number of brands to utilize, the role of specific brands and brand interrelationships. Two common types of brand architecture are "Branded house" and "House of Brands" (Aaker & Joachimsthaler, 2000, p. 9). The branded house approach proposes an overarching (master) brand to cover a series of product and service offerings that operate with descriptive sub-brand names; in the house of brands each brand stands for itself. Mixed approaches employ combinations of both types (Muzellec & Lambkin, 2009; Petromilli et al., 2002).

[2] Brand image requires that consumers actually notice a brand (brand awareness) and acquire brand knowledge that finds its expression in their ability to recognize (brand recognition) or recall a brand (Chan-Olmsted, 2006).

2.2 Objectives and Functions

Typically, brand management objectives are summarized in three categories. *Brand differentiation* refers to individualizing specific product and service benefits to differentiate a company's product and service portfolio. This can often be achieved "not through the product itself but through its packaging, name, presentation or market positioning" (Murphy, 1990, p. 6). In a situation with ever increasing information loads companies need to distinguish themselves through a clearly profiled brand image that stands out in an array of similar or even substituting products and services (Esch, Krieger, & Strödter, 2009).

Brand strategy aims at effects on the consumers regarding their knowledge, attitudes and behavior by creating brand awareness and knowledge, a positive brand image, brand preference and ultimately brand loyalty. Generating brand equity both on a financial level (i.e., brand value measured in monetary units) and a behavioral level (e.g., image, reputation, recognition or customer loyalty) legitimizes the costs incurred for establishing and managing the brand (Bruhn, 2009a; McDowell, 2006).

There are a variety of functions a brand is supposed to fulfill from a manufacturer, distribution or customer perspective (Gaiser, 2005; Tropp, 2011). For manufacturers, brands distinguish their products and services from similar offers and induce preference building for a company's products and services which in turn improves sales potential and creates long-term profit sustainability. Additionally, market entry for newcomers becomes increasingly difficult with cumulating customer loyalty (Kotler, Bliemel, & Keller, 2007). The stronger the brand the more a manufacturer can leverage latent monopolizing powers, exploiting an improving negotiation position towards wholesalers and retailers. For distributors, strong brands minimize the risks of non-sellers while providing potentials for premium prices or cost reductions through faster product turnover. For customers brands have an identification function affording orientation in their choice between often boundless arrays of similar offers. Prominence and reputation of the brand serve as proof of trust and credibility and hence become expressions of purchase risk minimization behavior through customer selection. Additionally, brands add emotional value to a product or service and allow customers to extend their self-representation through the image and prestige of the brand.

2.3 Management and Implementation

Management literature generally identifies several determinants for the successful management and implementation of corporate and product branding (Ferrell Lowe, 2011). A company needs a *strategic vision* that comprises the central idea behind the organization and its aspirations for the future. Furthermore, it requires an *organizational culture* which represents the internal values, beliefs and basic assumptions that embody the company's history, contemporary perceptions and appreciated legacies (Baumgarth, 2009; Esch et al., 2009).

Successful branding also relies on cross-functional integration of all communication activities (marketing, public relations, and corporate communication) (Baumgarth, 2009; Kotler et al., 2007) to ensure that the core ideas and values of the brand are consistently and coherently conveyed across all platforms (Bruhn, 2009a, 2009b; Gaiser & Bossenmaier, 2005). Companies have to select the best media mix to build and enhance their brand(s), i.e., those that reach the required target group(s) but also fit the identity and positioning of the brand (Esch et al., 2009). On the organizational level integrating communication activities means revising structures to reflect cross-functional cooperation and establish cooperation as an integral part of corporate culture (Gaiser & Bossenmaier, 2005; Baumgarth, 2009). The company must "live the brand" (Aaker & Joachimsthaler, 2001, p. 306) and "engage consumers in a brand experience" (Tuten, 2008, p. 25) across all platforms.

3 Market Structures and Specifics of Media Products and Services

The media industry is not a homogeneous arena but in fact consists of a very heterogeneous array of products and services ranging from print, audio-visual and electronic media to the so-called new or digital media. All these segments bear very specific characteristics both in their product and service contribution, their related value creation as well as their three-tier market structure (Bode, 2010).

Media companies compete in three different markets: recipient, advertising and content. Their products are a combination of content and medium with the medium being used for transmitting and/or storing the content (Bode, 2010). Beyond that, their consumer offerings typically involve a combination of a service package of information and entertainment (content) plus advertising. Content is sold to recipients whereas advertising space is marketed to advertising customers. In the content market media companies both buy and sell media content and related services from and to other media companies but also receive revenues for selling content to businesses outside the media industries (Wirtz, 2011). The three markets are related and in some cases interdependent when the same product or service is being sold in two markets simultaneously. "Payment" received is not merely in the form of direct monetary flows but also through the attention of recipients which in turn can be marketed to advertisers seeking target groups for their output. Content attracting a high audience therefore also achieves potentially higher revenues on the content market (Bode, 2010; Wirtz, 2011).

Media products also bear a very specific cost structure in that the costs for producing the first copy are very high compared to the variable reproduction costs of additional copies. "Information is costly to produce and cheap to reproduce" (Shapiro & Varian, 2000, p. 21). This is particularly the case for media products that can be digitally distributed. In such a cost situation comprehensive economies of scale can be realized because the average costs rapidly decrease with increasing output (*cost digression effect*) (Bode, 2010). Furthermore, media products are associated with network economies where a growing number of participants increases the value of a network for the users. A spiral effect occurs attracting even more users (Wirtz, 2011). In consequence, it can be noted that a dual revenue source mechanism combined with the kind of cost structure described above tend to foster the strategy to offer media products and service appealing to the largest possible group of customers (Chan-Olmsted, 2006).

As media product or service characteristics—in particular their quality—are difficult for consumers to ascertain in advance but emerge only upon consumption, media products and services are regarded as experience goods (Bode, 2010). Consumers try to improve their choices by relying on previous experiences or rewarding good reputation. For some media products and services, such as news, the quality cannot be fully determined even after consumption. Therefore, reputation becomes even more important and audiences seek reliable information from other users prior to purchase to eliminate the existing information asymmetry between the media company and themselves (Dogruel & Katzenbach, 2010; Shane & Cable, 2002). However, since the expense incurred is usually relatively low compared to expensive consumer products, media consumption is a low-risk experience for which consumers will not invest too much effort into the decision process (McDowell, 2006) but are guided by brand reputation (see Lobigs, 2015).

4 Managing Media Brands

4.1 Objectives and Functions of Media Branding

The general objectives of brand management as described above do not differentiate between media and other companies (Siegert, 2001), rather the distinctions become apparent on the functional level. Instead of only distinguishing between manufacturers, distributors and customers, the customers need to be divided into consumers, advertisers, and other business clients (Table 1). Most media products for the consumer market are financed by both advertising and direct sales and consequently the brands need to fulfill functions for recipients and advertisers simultaneously. Just like media companies who need high attention and a large audience to recoup their high first copy costs, advertisers are interested in a broad reach but typically within a specified target group. The positioning of advertising should be embedded in a reliable marketing concept with corresponding values for media and advertised brands (Bode, 2010). In a medium and long-term perspective, communication cooperation can reduce the need to use the advertisers' own marketing instruments (Chan-Olmsted, 2006).

In an environment where products and services are relatively easy to imitate, differentiation serves media companies to protect their output—to some extent—from imitation if the origin and the source of originality are identified. A strong brand can build up preference, increase customer loyalty, and thereby stabilize and increase demand in the long term. Besides, it can structure the internal decision-making and production processes because media brands may act as central

Table 1 Functions of media brands for media companies, advertisers and recipients [Based on Aaker and Mader (1992, pp. 31–37), Bode (2010, pp. 48–52), Gaiser (2005, p. 10), Siegert (2001, p. 121) and Tropp (2011, p. 312)]

Media organization	Advertisers	Recipients
• Identification and protection of origin/ originality • Preference-building for company's products and services • Building of brand bondage and loyalty • Additional scope for price setting • Improved negotiation position with retailers/ traders and advertisers • Use of brand leverage for line extensions • Competitive advantages • Improved sales and profit potential • Barrier to entry for competitors • Long-term profit sustainability • Build corporate identity and give the company "a face" • Acquire good content, personnel, and finance	• Reliable marketing concept • Increased and target-specific awareness for advertising messages • Reduced use of own marketing instruments • Opportunity for communication cooperation	• Identification and recognition of known and tried products and services • Orientation when choosing between alternatives • Orientation for media usage • Proof of trust and credibility by prominence and reputation of the brand • Minimization of risk of purchase • Emotional added value and extended self-representation through image/prestige of brand • Rituals and myths • Expression of group membership

principles to combine editorial and management activities, thus shaping corporate identity. A strong media brand serves as the clear denominator which gives the media company a recognizable "face" (Förster, 2011, pp. 10–11), in some cases including a humanization through animation or personalization that creates a kind of partnership between customer and brand (Fournier, 1998). Finally, a strong brand can signal a certain product and service quality and thereby support the media outlet as experienced and credible, while at the same time offering the audience and the advertising industry dependability and orientation (Bruhn, 2009a; Siegert, Gerth, & Rademacher, 2011).

Once a brand reaches a certain level of popularity, reflecting itself in a positive image and high customer loyalty, the media company acquires an improved negotiation position with retailers, advertisers and B2B clients giving them additional scope for advertising, better placement and distribution, as well as pricing. The pricing scope though is mainly with the advertisers while limited on the consumer side, because for media products financed through advertising consumers pay with time and effort rather than monetary units (McDowell, 2006). Furthermore, brands can be leveraged for line extensions (Chan-Olmsted, 2006). Overall, strong brands provide the media company with competitive advantages, as when acquiring good content, personnel, or finance (Bode, 2010), while constituting barriers to entry for competitors (Kotler et al., 2007).

Brands give consumers the orientation to select between alternatives (Siegert et al., 2011), especially in a media environment with seemingly limitless choices (Siegert, 2008). Trusted brand names afford a cognitive shortcut to make rapid, hassle-free purchase decisions for which often a premium price will be accepted if search and information costs are reduced (Bode, 2010; McDowell, 2011). Media products as goods with a strong cultural interdependency provide not only a means to develop and cultivate habits and attitudes but in particular offer emotional added value and extended self-representation through the image and prestige of the brand (Bode, 2010; Tropp, 2011).

4.2 Media Branding Strategies

Media product brands refer to programs or program elements such as shows or individual products such as games or books (Siegert et al., 2011); media service packages, digital product additions through multimedia platforms as well as related social communities, including social networks, virtual worlds, social news sites, and social opinion sharing sites. Depending on the product portfolio of a media organization there can be an extensive number of product brands, either as single brands or grouped into families. In product branding the advantages of profiling opportunities for special usage philosophies of product lines, and of realizing economies of scale by brand extensions, are counterbalanced by restrictions inferred through the brand philosophy for new products, or in the case of product repositioning (Tropp, 2011). For media companies with their extensive and volatile product offerings, product branding poses particular challenges through the ensuing speed of product additions and disposals from the portfolio. However, a necessary distribution of branded content across delivery formats benefits through established product brands, and the resulting brand loyalty when introducing new consumers to the brand through cross-promotion and advertising across multiple platforms, or targeting specific consumer groups for multiple purchases (Murray, 2005).

Corporate branding uses the media organization’s name as brand. Through a brand extension strategy reputation of the corporate brand can be leveraged onto subsidiaries and their products and services, in turn achieving economies of scale and scope (Argenti & Druckenmiller, 2004). General criticism of this strategy to reduce the ability to position a brand with an individual identity and possibly conceal different products’ unique characteristics (Tropp, 2011) particularly affects media companies whose products and services are essentially unique. However, experience and credence qualities of media offers require an excellent reputation which could be fostered by a strong corporate brand as well as higher visibility in the endless array of media offers.

In the context of the typically complex organizational structures of larger media organizations with their surprising arrays of hierarchies of fully or partially owned subsidiaries of various sizes,[3] corporate media branding potentially incurs similar challenges to product branding. There is a constant flux in structural hierarchies with existing subsidiaries being relocated, merged or closed, as well as new ones being launched. In such a setting corporate branding may not be a viable option, as knowledge of amendments in the organizational structure—such as a small subsidiary being closed—may negatively affect the overall corporate brand if their name includes the latter. Consequently, some media companies such as *Bertelsmann* resorted to separating corporate and divisional brands. In some instances division names (e.g., *RTL*) became lower level corporate brands, in other cases corporate and subsidiary brands were disconnected altogether.

The combination of corporate and product brands into a consistent brand architecture carries an extra level of complexity for media organizations. Not only can overarching corporate brands dilute the uniqueness of particular product or service offers but the large variety of products with equally dispersed audiences in different cultural settings are difficult to capture under the same roof. Adult and children's content sharing the same brand is not advisable due to different brand values, and as a result suggests the assignment of different brands. *Disney*, for example, distributes adult film content via its *Touchstone* pictures brand rather than the family-orientated *Disney* brand.

The multi-sidedness of media markets results in a situation where media brands and advertising customer brands have to align in the same communication sphere. Hence, co-branding and brand alliances—where two or more established brands partner for better leverage—are common settings. However, brand values are restricted to the realm common to the involved incumbents. In other B2B settings such as corporate publishing media companies often fully withdraw from the branding frontline by providing media content under another company's brand, i.e., *Lufthansa* in-flight magazine or board manuals for *Volkswagen*. A strong media brand here functions to initiate the business relationship which is consequently exploited by the parties involved. In the case of *Lufthansa* magazine *Gruner + Jahr* can sell content products to *Lufthansa* while providing their advertising customers with a highly targetable audience, especially for the frequent flyer publications. For board manuals *Bertelsmann* leverages their ability to handle huge volumes of content in time-critical situations but their brands are not used with automotive customers by *Volkswagen*.

Overall, it can be said that media branding strategies represent the full spectrum of alternatives that are reflected in the complex organizational structures and multitudes of platforms and channels for the distribution of media products and services. The increasing fragmentation of the audience, the proliferation of distribution channels, and advancements in technology require flexible brand

[3] For example, *Comcast* operates the dazzling number of more than 1,000 subsidiaries on the first level of the subsidiary hierarchy with many more on consecutive levels. Other media companies such as *NewsCorp* or *Bertelsmann* may have fewer subsidiaries on the top tier but display increasingly broader ranges on lower levels.

architectures with enough width to capture changing market requirements through product differentiation, and an adequate depth to represent the underlying organizational structures and interdependencies between parent, channel and product brands. Furthermore, brand architectures are to reflect synergies for optimal capitalization of the corporate brand(s) with requirements of stakeholders and the ensuing relevance of product brand values.

4.3 Organizational Challenges of Implementation

According to management literature the implementation of branding within the organization should be a straightforward process involving the relevant organizational units, while covering all processes of internal and external communication. Responsibilities for each task related to the process of integrated communication from planning to implementation and controlling must be assigned, including clear directive structures. The definition of points of coordination within the organization required to achieve integration is also a must as well as rules to solve potential conflicts (Bruhn, 2009c). However, especially for media companies with their creative processes and often free-spirit environment it is vital to keep enough flexibility within organizational structures not to harm the necessary creativity and innovation potential. It is important to find the appropriate balance of organizational differentiation as well as the right level of formalization (Bruhn, 2009b). For example, social network communication requires speedy responses where messages cannot go through a time-consuming confirmation process before being posted. Similar pressure occurs for other news media where online now determines the speed of expected responses. The credence aspect of news media brands is consequently directly affected by this setting, if pressure leads to higher error rates. Additionally, chances of failures being detected and being widely discussed on multiple platforms increases potential brand dilution and ensuing loss of control.

Other challenges of brand implementation derive from the dualities inherent in media organizations. Structures set up to foster creative processes exist alongside bottom-line orientated management functions while both are involved in providing media products and services (Achtenhagen & Norbäck, 2010). Besides, media products such as films or games are commonly created on a project by project basis (Blum, 2010, p. 303) with a variety of specialized actors employed for a limited time period (Achtenhagen & Norbäck, 2010). Even the more process-orientated media products such as newspapers or magazines are transient organizations because a lot of their input is provided from outside sources and many of their staff are employed on a freelance basis. The organizational challenge for media companies is to incorporate the dualities into their branding activities in order to deliver consistent brand messages.

The hit-drivenness of many products such as films, books, music, etc. brings both advantages and challenges for media organizations. Successful products can serve as excellent brand ambassadors in whose wake other media products and services can exploit the brand image for brand extensions across additional media platforms (e.g., broadcasting, mobile, or the Internet) and into complementary non-media product and service arenas, as well as for possible international expansion (Doyle, 2006; see Doyle, 2015). However, from an organizational perspective media companies have to promote a multitude of brands for products that essentially never become a hit, and also be prepared to exploit the often brief periods for brand extensions for those products that do.

Branding across multiple platforms requires new forms of content development and distribution. In this context transmedia storytelling has become a means of media branding to create immersive universes composed of numerous elements spread across different media in order to target fragmented audiences (Bourdaa, 2014; Freeman, 2014; Giannini, 2014; Kurtz, 2014). Transmedia storytelling has evolved as an interdisciplinary industrial practice that connects the creatives producing the content elements with the marketing function (see von Rimscha, 2015). "When branding 'goes transmedia', it is primarily because presence on more than one medium means increased audience penetration. But it also allows a more sophisticated melding and fluidity between narrative iterations with the means of selling the original fictional narratives" (Ward, 2014, pp. 61–62). However, transmedia storytelling finds its limit where the familiarity that branding requires for recall and recognition clashes with the needs of the audience for surprising story developments (Hadas, 2014). The protection and control of the brand become increasingly challenging if evolving stories dilute brand values, amplified by audience involvement via social media. Recent legal battles over brand identity and ownership have demonstrated the importance of consistent accounts of themes, styles and content to capture permissible uses compatible with brand values within complex transmedia settings (Hadas, 2014).

5 Discussion and Conclusions

5.1 Implications for Media Management Practice

Media companies have a long tradition of employing a large multitude of branding strategies depending on what is required by a particular business setting. The special characteristics of media products and services render these settings particularly volatile and demanding. Media firms face the additional challenges that their business is content and communication driven and that their brands must work for their three-tier market structure. As a result branding for media products cannot be realized through a common strategy that works in every context. That said, media organizations are advised to exploit the unique position that they own and control communication tools for reaching consumers for building and expanding their brand equity (Ots, 2008; Siegert, 2008), while addressing the pressures through co-branding and co-creation and ensuing loss of control over the brand.

Product and service portfolios of media companies include an extensive spectrum ranging from news, documentaries, and series to shows. Therefore a media branding strategy must develop architectures wide enough to cover the product, program and service variety, but narrow enough to differentiate them from competitors. At the same time these architectures need to be sufficiently flexible to accommodate the speed of necessary changes in the product portfolio through new platforms and a deeply fragmented audience structure. This includes exit strategies for brand activities to avoid continuing to deploy resources necessary for current projects (Chan-Olmsted, 2011).

Regarding social media and transmedia storytelling settings media brand managers must accept a partial loss of control and rather host and nourish the brand (Chan-Olmsted, 2011; No author, 2007). Brand managers also have "to make sure their products and messages are synergistic across different media and channels, while taking advantage of each medium's unique characteristics" (Chan-Olmsted, 2011, p. 5) Eventually, a successful development of a brand architecture depends on the full commitment of all organizational members, including top management, and a corporate culture supportive of the brand identity (see Ots & Hartmann, 2015).

As most consumer media products are financed by advertising and direct sales, the brands need to fulfill functions for recipients and advertisers simultaneously. Brand alliances in the form of co-branding have been established scenarios from the early days of the soap opera, and cross-marketing is a must in multi-media advertising financed environments. As a result, media branding provides some best-practices for business settings that are both content and communication driven.

In an environment where products and services are relatively easy to imitate, differentiation serves media companies to protect their output—to some extent—from imitation if the origin and the sources of originality are identified. A strong brand can build up preference, increase customer loyalty, even in experience and credence goods settings, and thereby enhance demand in the long term. Additionally, it can structure the internal decision-making and production processes because media brands may act as central principles to combine editorial and management activities, thus shaping corporate identity (see Siegert, 2015).

A coherent implementation of corporate and product branding on all communication platforms requires not only a strategic vision that comprises the central idea behind the company but an organizational culture which embodies the company's history, contemporary perceptions and appreciated legacies. A cross-functional integration of all communication activities (marketing, public relations, and corporate communication) ensures a consistent brand representation across all platforms and full consumer engagement in a brand experience.

An organizational integration of media branding relies on clear directive structures. However, especially for media companies with their creative processes and often free-spirit environment it is vital to keep enough flexibility within organizational structures not to harm the necessary creativity and innovation potential. It is important to find the appropriate balance of organizational differentiation as well as the right level of formalization.

5.2 Implications for Media Management and Economics Research

Complex brand architectures are the topic of ongoing research in management literature (Tropp, 2011) and remain largely unexplored in media management and economics (Ots, 2008). Branding needs to be analyzed as a strategic decision affecting the intricate relationships between products and corporate brands within the brand architecture (Muzellec & Lambkin, 2009; Uggla, 2006). Media organizations with their volatile multi-tier markets, diverse consumer and business customer combinations and a multitude of stakeholders requiring their communication platforms are prime examples to investigate image alignment between corporate and product brands and maintain strong relationship franchises with different customer groups and/or to signal distinct competencies to the marketplace. Empirical studies of the branding strategies of media companies can thus enhance theories of the evolution of branding architectures in both general and media management.

Other topics of mutual interest include building coherent international brand architectures to provide a structure to leverage strong brands into other markets, assimilate acquired brands, and integrate strategy across markets (Douglas, Craig, & Nijssen, 2001), as well as success factors of different product, corporate and mixed branding strategies in complex multi-channel communication settings. Additionally, capturing the interdependence of brands within the media brand portfolio regarding the interaction between brands and usage provides behavioral insights into competitive brand architectures (Serota & Bhargava, 2010) and potential brand-to-brand collaborations (Uggla, 2006).

Multi-sided markets are not exclusive to media and have been a burgeoning topic for the past decade (Rochet & Tirole, 2006). Other examples include payment cards (cardholders and merchants), operating system software (application developers and users) or dating clubs (men and women), where platforms court two (or more) parties who use the platform to interact with each other. Branding reflecting stakeholder values could determine customers' presence on the platform and hence provide a competitive advantage. The flood of literature indicates the on-going interest where research into media branding with its two and three-sided markets could contribute economic insights into user behavior with important implications for strategic decision making.

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International Media Branding

Ulrike Rohn

Abstract

International sales and operations are becoming increasingly important to many media companies. Being able to utilize an internationally well-known brand facilitates entry into foreign markets. When operating internationally, the question of whether to localize or to standardize brand communication and content across markets is crucial. After discussing the benefits of an approach of standardization and a possible audience for globally standardized brands, this chapter introduces reasons why companies may, however, choose to localize. Furthermore, it discusses possible areas of localization as well as strategic options for foreign market entry through media brands. This chapter concludes with a call for further research on international branding that takes into account the special characteristics of media products and markets.

Keywords

International strategies • International brand expansion • Foreign entry modes • Concept licensing • Global TV formats • Global magazine brands • Media export • International brand architecture • Local adaptation • Global standardization • Media culture

1 Introduction

Although most media are strongly oriented towards certain national or local markets, many media companies have increasingly become dependent on international sales and operations. Where companies suffer from stagnating or decreasing demand in their home markets, they are enticed into so-called emerging markets,

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for example, in Asia or Latin America. Furthermore, in a dynamic media environment characterized by a high level of uncertainty, a diversification of the competitive landscape may not only improve growth prospects but may also enhance the possibilities of survival by sharing risk across markets.

When entering new markets, being able to utilize an internationally well-known brand may be critical to the success of the entry. In her study of the entry strategies of some of the world's largest media conglomerates into Asian markets, Rohn (2010) found that all of the companies examined chose to enter those markets primarily through their main brands. In particular, media brands that have already been successful in other countries seem to facilitate entry into further markets. Internationally recognized brand names indicate financial strength and experience, which help to attract local producers and distributors as well as multinational advertisers.

The most well-known international content-producing media brand is *Disney*, which was ranked 13 among the top 100 most valuable global brands by *Interbrand* in 2014. Other well-known media brands include TV networks such as *MTV, HBO* or *CNN*; TV formats such as *Who Wants to be a Millionaire* or *Idols*; or magazines such as *Cosmopolitan* or *Vogue*. For a brand to be perceived as global, some of its communication, such as brand name or logo, needs to be standardized across countries. Furthermore, audiences should perceive its 'globalness' (Akaka & Alden, 2010; Oszomer & Altaras, 2008).

The following provides an overview of key issues and previous research on international branding in general, and media branding in particular. The chapter begins with the dilemma between an international standardization approach and one of local adaptation. Firstly, it summarizes the benefits of a standardized approach to international branding and summarizes some of the research that has argued for a demand for globally standardized brands. Further, this chapter will consider possible reasons why companies may, however, choose to localize in markets as well as introduce areas for local adaptation, and list different strategic options between standardization and localization. Subsequently, this chapter will introduce frameworks for understanding a company's choice of market entry. Finally, this chapter will call for further research in order to better understand international media branding in contemporary society.

2 The Benefits of Global Standardization

When companies expand internationally it raises the question of whether to adapt their brands to local markets and to what degree. In fact, much of the research on international strategies concerns the dilemma between local adaptation and global standardization (e.g., Calantone, Kim, Schmidt, & Cavusgil, 2006; Dow, 2005; Rohn, 2004, 2010; Wong & Merrilees, 2007). Adapting a media brand's communication and content may be effective with local audiences, but it may not represent an efficient international approach.

Thus, a *standardized approach* may make use of economies of scope through synergies. Developing an exclusive brand communication for every single market in which a company is active, for instance, is likely to be costly and difficult to coordinate. A standardized brand communication, on the other hand, is easier to implement and to handle (Czinkota & Ronkainen, 2010; Mueller & Taylor, 2013). Furthermore, a standardized strategy also helps to make use of economies of scale. Where the marginal costs associated with reaching additional audiences is low, the average costs for reaching one viewer or reader is increased because costs are shared across different markets (Doyle, 2009).

Furthermore, the more consistent a brand is across different markets the more valuable it is, especially to international advertisers. A localized brand, on the other hand, which does not fit the original brand philosophy, may risk damaging the value of the original brand. Finally, some media brands, such as *CNN International*, follow a strategy of standardization because this is how they reach their international niche audience.

Globally standardized media brands are part of what has been termed a *global consumer culture*, which refers to a collection of signs and symbols understood by a significant number of consumers around the world (Alden, Steenkamp, & Batra, 1999; Cleveland & Laroche, 2007). In order to better understand consumer perceptions associated with global consumer brands, Steenkamp, Batra, and Alden (2003) introduced a construct phrased *Perceived Brand Globalness* (PBG). According to the authors, the perception of a brand is improved where PBG exists, i.e., where consumers believe that the brand is marketed in various countries. Other research has found that global brands attract consumers by delivering a feeling of being part of a global culture (e.g., Wasko, Phillips, & Meehan, 2001). Applied to media markets, viewers may enjoy their membership in a global youth culture when watching *MTV*, or their feeling of being cosmopolitan and knowledgeable when reading the Asian edition of *Time* magazine (Hannerz, 1990; Rohn, 2010, 2011a).

In her *Universal and Lacuna Model*, Rohn (2010, 2011a) introduces three types of so-called Universals in explaining why audiences may be drawn towards internationally standardized media content: Content Universals, Audience-Created Universals, and Company-Created Universals. *Content Universals* refer to content attributes that help to make the content attractive across cultures. This includes content that is of a high production quality or that represents something new and exciting compared to the usual media supply in a country; content that lacks an obvious cultural origin or that avoids political, religious or other value-loaded statements; content that arouses emotions in a fundamental and immediate way; or content that targets an international niche audience. *Audience-Created Universals* refer to the phenomenon where audiences enjoy foreign-produced media content because of the particular way in which they read it. *Random House*'s motivational book on change *Who Moved My Cheese*, for instance, was internationally successful because it allowed readers from different cultures to project their own experiences, hopes, or fears connected with change onto the text. *Company-Created Universals* refer to the phenomenon where internationally standardized media content is successful because companies manage to create a competitive advantage for it. Large international media conglomerates usually have the means to devote substantial resources to promoting their media, something that many of the smaller domestic media companies may not have. Furthermore, internationally recognized brands may find it relatively easy to find crucial distributors in a local market.

Although a standardized approach to international media brand expansion may present an efficient strategy option that avoids the risk of inconsistency in how the brand appears in different markets, and although it may be well-received by local audiences, there are many reasons that explain why a company may choose a more localized approach.

3 Reasons to Localize Media Brands

Although a *strategy of local adaptation* may result in higher costs compared to a *strategy of standardization*, it may be more successful with local audiences. In some cases this may even be the only way a company is allowed access to a market. Much research has been devoted to the internal and external forces that may influence a media company's choice of foreign market between a standardization and localization approach. Chan-Olmsted (2006, pp. 182–186), for instance, lists *country-specific forces* such as political, regulatory, societal, economic, technological, and cultural factors. Furthermore, she points out that the *competitive environment*, the *corporate objective*, the *core competencies* of the company as well as its *strategic networks* influence international decision-making. Likewise, Douglas, Craig, and Nijssen (2001) note that a company's decisions are influenced by *underlying market dynamics*, which include political and economic factors as well as market infrastructure and consumer mobility, by *firm-based characteristics*, which includes the importance of corporate identity and the overall expansion strategy, as well as by *product market characteristics*, which include the culture and the competitive market structure in the target market.

Rohn (2010) introduced the *Vertical Barrier Chain* (VBC), which provides an analytical framework to organize all internal and external forces that may influence international media strategies according to how much they dictate a particular strategy, if a company wants to successfully enter a foreign market. In the VBC, forces in the regulatory, political, economic and cultural environment are labelled as 'barriers' to the extent to which they may represent filters to the successful entry of foreign and undifferentiated media content and brands (see Fig. 1).

A possible reason for localized entry may lie in the *local media law* of the target country. In some cases, local media law does not permit an undifferentiated market entry. In contrast to regulatory forces, *political forces* rarely present reasons for a localized approach. Instead, political issues in a market usually suggest that companies stay away from investing into localization efforts for that market. The following will further examine *economic* and *cultural reasons* that explain why companies may choose to adapt their brand communication and content to local markets.

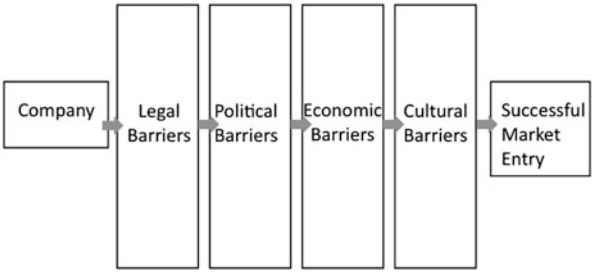

Fig. 1 Vertical barrier chain to successful foreign market entry

3.1 Economic Reasons

Economic reasons to adapt may lie both in the target market and in the company. Concerning *economic market forces*, the larger a market is the more it justifies a costly strategy of localization. Furthermore, large markets usually have the personnel and financial resources available that are needed for local productions. Rohn (2014), however, found that under certain circumstances a small market may, in fact, suggest content adaptation. The Estonian adaptation of the TV format *Idols*, for instance, is designed to attract a wider audience than the young audience at which the original production aims. The Estonian TV market with 0.5 million TV households (Mavise, 2012) is too small to allow for a large fragmentation.

Furthermore, a body of research (e.g., Alden et al., 1999) has found that in markets with lower levels of economic development, consumers are drawn towards global brands through which they express their admiration towards the 'economic centers' and their membership of consumer society (Roth, 1995). With increasing income in these markets and with the improving quality of local products, local consumers are found to increasingly turn to local brands. Research (e.g., Rohn, 2010) has also found that where local competition is high, international brands tend to localize in order to better meet the demands of the local audience.

With regard to the *economic forces operating within companies*, companies with large financial resources will find it easier to localize, as will companies that are experienced in international business. Media companies that own and operate internationally recognized brands often find it relatively easy to transfer the strong and unique associations of their brands to localized versions. Furthermore, good relationships with international advertisers may facilitate a strong head start when launching a localized venture. Also, companies with decentralized organizational structures are more likely to pursue a localized approach than companies with a more centralized structure (Douglas et al., 2001).

3.2 Cultural Reasons

Cultural reasons to adapt to local markets are manifold. After all, the media are not only a business but also a cultural matter. Although Levitt (1983) suggested that the world was becoming increasingly homogenized and differences in cultural tastes and standards were becoming features of the past, the fact that many international media conglomerates had to learn the hard way that their undifferentiated media was not successful with local audiences suggests differently. *Twenty-first Century*'s STAR TV network, for instance, was not successful with audiences across Asia until it started to localize heavily. Likewise, the previously standardized *MTV* channel in many countries was the leading music channel only until local competitors were launched that better catered to local musical tastes (Rohn, 2010).

Though there are many examples of successful international brand expansions, a closer examination of these brands suggests that most of their content is in fact adapted (Rohn, 2010) in order to provide what Straubhaar (1991) called *cultural proximity*. As Tunstall (2008, p. xiv) wrote: "Most people around the world prefer to be entertained by people who look the same, talk the same, joke the same... and have the same beliefs (and worldview) as themselves. They also over-whelmingly prefer their own national news, politics, weather, and football and other sports". Accordingly, media companies that do not adapt to local audiences risk offering what Hoskins and Mirus (1988) have labelled a *cultural discount*.

In her Lacuna and Universal Model, Rohn (2010, 2011a) introduces three types of reason why audiences may not select or enjoy media content that has been produced outside of their own culture: Content Lacuna, Capital Lacuna, and Production Lacuna. Where *Content Lacunae* exist, audiences find media content from outside their culture inappropriate or irrelevant. *Capital Lacunae* exist where audiences lack the necessary knowledge to understand and enjoy foreign content. The most obvious Capital Lacunae are language barriers. However, satirical or humorous shows also often call for background knowledge of people, places and events in order to enjoy them. *Production Lacunae* refer to when audiences do not enjoy foreign content because they do not like the style of production. Many western TV format brands, such as *The Weakest Link*, for example, have a storyline that is too simplistic for Japanese audiences (Rohn, 2010).

When expanding media brands internationally, understanding cultural similarities and differences not only in content preferences but also in communication patterns is crucial. Literature provides for several categorizations of cultures that help to explain differences in consumers' receptiveness to various types of brand communication.

Probably the most well-known and applied categorization is provided by Hofstede (2001), who distinguishes cultures along five dimensions: *power distance*, *individualism/collectivism*, *masculinity/femininity*, *uncertainty avoidance* and *long/short-term orientation*. Research has found that successful brand communication in any given culture mirrors the respective level of these dimensions in that culture. DeMooji and Hofstede (2010), for instance, suggest that the need for prestigious brands as status symbols is lower in low power distance cultures. Hence, in countries with low power distance certain brands, such as upscale fashion magazines, cannot entice readers with their prestigious reputation alone but need to further adapt both brand communication and magazine content.

Another well-known differentiation of cultures is Hall's (1976) distinction between *low-context* and *high-context cultures*. In low-context cultures, communication is straightforward, explicit and direct. Conversely, in high-context cultures, communicators rely much more heavily on contextual cues, and consumers derive more meaning from non-verbal or non-written cues in communication. For brand communication to be successful, it needs to mirror the respective communication style in that market.

In general, it has been found that cultural distance between a company's home country and its target country has a negative effect on the propensity of its brands to be introduced in that country (Townsend, 2009).

4 Areas of Local Adaptation

When media companies expand their brands into new countries, three aspects need to be evaluated in terms of market compatibility and a possible need for local adaptation: *strategic issues of brand building*, *communication and promotion* of the brand, and the *media content* the brand carries.

4.1 Strategic Issues of Brand Building: Brand Identity and Brand Positioning

One of the most crucial tasks when expanding a brand into a new country is to help the emergence of the desired *brand image* in that country. Companies usually aim at retaining the same brand image across countries, especially if they want to attract multinational advertisers. Due to cultural differences, internationally standardized statements about a brand, i.e., the *brand identity* that is being communicated, may however result in different brand images in different markets. In order to arouse the same brand image across markets, companies may need to adapt the brand identity accordingly in some markets.

Likewise, every new market entry requires an evaluation of the *positioning of the brand* in that market. Förster (2011a, 2011b) suggests that brand positioning should consider the characteristics of the target audience as well as the similarities and distinctions to competitors within the market. As such, a proper brand positioning needs to be conducted for every single entry market separately and be adapted where needed. Only very few brands, such as Coca-Cola, can afford a global brand positioning. Most international media brands need to compete against local brands, and companies need to formulate their brand promises based on the conditions in the respective markets.

As Förster (2011b) noted, the strategic aspects of brand building need to be translated into the communication and promotion of the brand as well as into the content of the respective media product – both of which are also areas for a possible adaptation to local markets.

4.2 Communication and Promotion

A common strategy for attracting audiences across markets is to differentiate the brand's communication instruments and how the brand is promoted. Although companies are usually reluctant to change a brand's most visible communication instruments, its name and logo, because these keep the brand recognizable, there are circumstances under which a modification makes sense. Although the Chinese editions of internationally recognized magazine brands, such as *Fortune* or *Parents*, carry their original brand names on their covers – mainly in order to attract multinational advertisers – they also carry translated versions of their titles in order to attract local readers and to ensure that Chinese readers understand the title as it is meant to be understood (Rohn, 2010). Another example is the TV format *Idols*. In countries in which the word 'Idol' has a somewhat different connotation compared to what it has in the format's country of origin, the UK, the local productions follow the example of the German title for the show, *Deutschland sucht den Superstar*, which means that Germany is searching for a superstar (Rohn, 2014).

In terms of adapted brand promotion, program or movie trailers for the same TV program or movie very often differ across markets. The promotion of the animation movie *Bee Movies*, for instance, was marketed as a Jerry Seinfeld movie in the US, while the focus of the communication strategy in overseas markets, where Jerry Seinfeld is not as well-known, was the storyline.

4.3 Content

There are plenty of options concerning how media content can be adapted to local audiences. Localization options range from simple language translations of pre-produced content to creating content uniquely for the local audience. Common adaptations are the inclusion of local pictures or cast, the adaptation of the studio design, or the differentiation of storylines. In general, content adaption does not only mean inserting culturally proximate content, but also deleting content elements that are likely to be not appreciated by local audiences (Rohn, 2004, 2010).

5 Finding the Right Strategy

If and how a brand is expanded internationally is usually the result of a complex decision-making process by the company. A popular model that companies employ for such decision-making is the *SWOT model* (Learned, Christiansen, Andrews, & Guth, 1965; Mintzberg, Ahlstrand, & Lampel, 1998). This helps companies to analyze their international conditions – such as their brand architecture, their financial resources as well as their experience – and put them into contrast to their external environment, such as the regulatory, political, economic, and cultural environment in the target market. The aim of the SWOT analysis is to identify a strategy through which a company can attain or maintain a match between its internal and external environments.

The chances that a company internationalizes its brands are higher the more experienced it is (Townsend, 2009). Usually, media companies start out by exporting and only when they gain more experience in the international marketplace do they develop an overall international approach and get involved in more advanced market entry modes, such as concept licensing or taking the production abroad (Gershon, 2006). The following will introduce the main modes of entry into a foreign market, with a special focus on concept licensing. Furthermore, it will examine how a company's international brand architecture may influence its decision-making, and it introduces some of the key international strategy variants.

5.1 Concept Licensing and Other Modes of Foreign Market Entry

When expanding into foreign markets, two main groups of market entry can be distinguished: *content entry* and *ownership* or *investment entry* (Rohn, 2004, 2010). Content entry modes include *export*, *concept licensing*, or *producing uniquely for the target market*. Ownership entry may be classified as either the establishment of *joint ventures*, with ownership and control shared between companies, or as *sole ventures*, with full ownership and control maintained by the investing company. Sole venture operations include the acquisition and establishment of wholly owned subsidiaries, a so-called 'greenfield' entry (Root, 1994).

Each entry mode offers distinct benefits and costs to the company, and allows for different levels of localization (Rohn, 2004, 2010). When entering through content, exporting pre-produced content is the most distinct strategy of standardization. Producing content uniquely for the local market, on the other hand, is the most distinct strategy of localization. When entering through investment, the more the local entity provides locally produced content and the more local partners and local personnel enjoy creative autonomy, the higher the degree of localization (Rohn, 2004, 2010).

When companies enter foreign markets through their media brands, export and concept licensing are the most common entry modes. Investment entries are not as common, although many TV station brands, for instance, set up local stations in international markets. Yet, the focus of international brand expansion usually lies with product expansion rather than company expansion (Doyle, 2009).

Through *international concept licensing*, a company sells the concept or idea, also referred to as the format, of a media product to a foreign producer. With the increasing strength of local production companies around the world, the need for the importing of ready produced media is decreasing. At the same time, the demand for creative content ideas that have been proven successful in markets around the world is growing as a way to minimize risk in increasingly competitive markets. The licensees of concepts usually profit from the international reputation of a brand, whereas the licensors benefit from the increased value of the brand, if successfully adapted in different markets. Due to the high costs of development and production, many TV programs, for instance, are consciously created with the intention of achieving international adaptations (Moran, 2005).

The amount of adaptation a local production of an international concept undergoes varies across markets and products. Indeed, much research on international media focuses on how local productions of global magazine or TV formats differ from their original versions (Aslama & Pantti, 2007; Beeden & de Bruin, 2010; Rohn, 2014; Turner, 2005). Local editions of international magazines usually start with only a little adaptation but then steadily increase the amount of local content they include (Doyle, 2009; Rohn, 2010). Usually, in established local editions, one third of the content is taken directly from the parent magazine, mainly pictorial and graphics, one third is adapted to local readers, and one third is created uniquely by the local team (Doyle, 2009).

The risk of too many modifications to the original concept is that it moves too far away from its original version. International brand building, however, is only possible when crucial elements of the original brand version are incorporated into its local productions. An inconsistency of the brand image across different markets may actually harm the international reputation of the brand. In order to avoid damage to the brand, brand owners usually provide detailed manuals or so-called workshop notes to local producers which include clear guidelines on what the program or the magazine should look like. Additionally, many brand owners offer initial training support. When TV formats are produced, format holders usually send out *flying producers*, who assist in the local production process (Rohn, 2014). A good working relationship between the licensor and the licensee is essential and common platforms for communication include conferences, editorial get-togethers or regular newsletters. This way, companies ensure that experience is shared and best practice is promoted (Doyle, 2009).

5.2 International Brand Architecture

One crucial factor that influences a company's international entry mode choices is its *international brand architecture*, which includes all its existing brands. Designing an international brand architecture helps companies to analyze their brands in all their diversity and with their respective states of internationalization and levels of localization. International brand architecture is the basis for harmonizing branding decisions across countries, and it allows companies to formulate basic principles to guide the effective use of their brands in the global market place (Douglas et al., 2001, Townsend, 2009). It is through the analysis of their international brand architectures that a company may detect that certain local adaptations of their brands may dilute or harm the original brand.

Townsend (2009) presents a *hierarchical conceptualization of an international brand architecture* in which each brand's position is based on a continuum of geographic scope and degree of consistency. Within this framework, Townsend (2009) identifies four different types of brand, with *domestic brands* and *global* *brands* at the extremes of the continuum and *multi-regional brands* and r*egional brands* in between. The premise behind this categorization is that brands advance from one level of internationalization to the next. Whereas regional brands are relatively early in the process of internationalization, global brands present the mature stage of internationalization. Townsend's (2009) conceptualization may be used as a normative framework for managers to develop their international brand portfolio.

5.3 Variants of International Brand Strategies

A company's preferred choice of entry mode and its international brand architecture shed light on its overall international approach. The following introduces two main categorizations of different variants of international brand strategies.

Within the framework of global standardization versus local adaptation, three types of international strategies can be distinguished: multinational, global, and transnational strategy (Rohn, 2004; Yip, 2000). A *multinational strategy* is characterized by low global standardization and high local adaptation. Companies that follow a multinational strategy usually do not expand their brands abroad, but instead enter foreign markets through investment in local brands. In a multinational strategy, there is little coordination between the company's international activities, and business entities in different countries are viewed as stand-alone operations (Root, 1994). An example would be *News Corp*, which owns and operates seemingly unconnected newspaper brands in different countries. A *global strategy*, on the other hand, is characterized by high global standardization and low local adaptation. A company that follows a global strategy seeks to maximize the worldwide performance of its brands, which are not or only very little adapted to local markets. In a global strategy, content is usually produced with a global audience in mind and then exported across markets, as is the case for Hollywood movies.

The *transnational strategy* is a combination of the multinational strategy and the global strategy. Although media content is tailored to local audiences, operations in various countries are not seen as stand-alone operations. Instead, transnational strategies take into consideration the synergetic effects of central goals and skills and countries are selected for their potential contribution to all business activities. Hence, companies that follow a transnational strategy think globally, but act locally. Any internationally well-known brand that is adapted to local markets, such as *MTV* or TV formats such as *Who Wants to be a Millionaire* or *Big Brother* follows the logic of a transnational strategy. Applying the framework of multinational, global and transnational strategies, Rohn (2004, 2010) found that the world's largest media conglomerates increasingly move away from pursuing a global strategy in favour of a transnational or even multinational strategy.

A further differentiation of international strategies is provided by Alden et al. (1999), who distinguish three variants of international brand positioning strategies: *global consumer culture positioning* (GCCP), *foreign consumer culture* *positioning* (FCCP), and *local consumer culture positioning* (LCCP). When applying a *GCCP* strategy, companies promote a brand in such a way that consumers should associate it with the global consumer culture. A GCCP strategy, however, must not be confused with a strategy of global standardization. Thus, a brand may also be positioned through a GCCP strategy through differentiated communication in each market. Furthermore, although a GCCP strategy may mean providing the same or similar content across countries, so may a FCCP strategy. In contrast to a GCCP strategy, however, a *FCCP* strategy positions a brand as a brand from a specific foreign culture. The promotion of Bollywood movies as an exotic alternative to Hollywood movies may serve as an example. A *LCCP* strategy positions a brand as a member of a local culture. An example is the Indian children's TV station *Hungama*, which was bought by *Disney* and which is promoted by emphasizing its localness.

5.4 General Strategic Challenges

Often, managers make decisions regarding their international brand expansions on a country-by-country basis, without defining an overall strategic approach or considering the coherence of their brands across countries. As international markets are increasingly becoming interlinked, however, branding decisions should be seen in the broader context of a brand's international appearance (Douglas et al., 2001).

Most media companies walk a fine line between adapting their brands to local conditions and adhering to the international philosophy of their brands. Maintaining a complex network of international business partners may be challenging but a good relationship with international partners may help improve a brand's attractiveness in a market as well as retain brand consistency. Another challenge lies in sustaining a close relationship with the audiences in different countries. Companies that operate internationally need to constantly monitor the markets they operate in or wish to operate in. Where market conditions and audience preferences change, brand strategies need to be adapted (Doyle, 2009). This is particularly the case in markets with a fast growing economy where foreign brands and content may lose their attractiveness over time (Rohn, 2010, 2011b).

6 Conclusion: Need for Further Research

This chapter provided an overview of key issues and previous writing on international branding that is relevant to international branding in the media industry. It becomes obvious that research on international media branding lags far behind the amount of writing that has been published on the international branding of other kinds of brands, particularly consumer product brands. Although much of the knowledge of international consumer branding can be readily transferred to the media industry, there are crucial differences between media brands and other types of brands.

As an example, media products are typically low price products and the risks associated with a poor purchase choice are marginal. Whereas buyers of automotive or expensive consumer products often rely for their purchasing decisions on the international reputation of the respective brand, this is much less the case for media brands. What is more, since media brands convey cultural content, they are much less likely to transcend cultural boundaries than most other kinds of brands. And as media companies target two different markets, the audience and the advertising market, the decision between global standardization and local adaptation is much more complex. While local or localized brands may be more attractive to local audiences, globally standardized brands are usually more attractive to multinational advertisers.

Hence, there is a need for more theoretical and applied work on international branding that takes into account the specific conditions of media products and markets. This includes the study of how seemingly contradictory forces, such as local media tastes and global advertising demand, influence international brand decision-making. Furthermore, there is a need for theoretical conceptualizations that regard the translations of brand identities, brand positioning and brand promise to cultures outside the culture of the brand's country of origin.

Countering the lack of research on international media branding is especially important in light of the dynamic and ever-changing business environment for media companies, where the opportunities and challenges associated with exploiting media brands across countries will be of increasing relevance for companies around the world.

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Media Brands and the Advertising Market: Exploring the Potential of Branding in Media Organizations' B2B Relationships

Christoph Sommer

Abstract

Because of the changes in the media industry over the last years, brand management has become a key issue. Media brands fulfill important functions to compensate media product characteristics, one of those being the need to address the audience as well as the advertising market. Accordingly, branding strategies have to be developed from the brand identity for both groups of customers while being considerate about the match of the evolving images. This approach offers benefits not only in the audience market, but to media companies and advertisers alike. Through laying emphasis on a brand's exceptional contents, audiences and services, media companies can build up brand equity and differentiate themselves from competitors. Advertisers on the other hand profit from media brand activation and context leading to involvement of a distinct target group with the advertisement. Associations with the media brand are transferred to the commercial message, making it more credible and effective.

Keywords

Media management • Media product characteristics • Media brands • Media brands functions • Brand management • Branding strategy • Two-sided markets-Advertising • Media planning

1 Introduction

In recent years, brand management has become more important in several industries because of increasing competition and market segmentation. This holds true for the media especially. For years, newspapers, magazines, books, radio, television and

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movies have been distinct media with equally distinct production and consumption characteristics. Because of digitalization and convergence, media boundaries have disappeared and are no longer valid (Sommer & von Rimscha, 2014). In addition, the homogenous mass audience is becoming divided and subdivided into ever smaller target groups, who can choose from several niche products. While the number of options has skyrocketed and is almost limitless, usage has not kept pace. This is a classic example of the law of diminishing returns: more choice has not translated directly into more consumption. The ultimate consequence is a zero-sum market, where the number of brands within a product category increases, while the number of potential customers remains the same. The only way to attract more customers is to take market share from direct competitors (McDowell, 2004, 2006). These developments made it inevitable to put effort into branding strategies as brands can serve as heuristics simplifying decision-making. In doing so, media organizations focus on the audience, working on their differentiation to other products and services, while the advertising side is discussed less frequently.

A similar phenomenon can be observed in brand management research. Studies primarily investigate branding strategies in the audience market. As an exception, Ots and Wolff (2008) connect this stream of research to the advertising market. They look at consumer-based brand equity's implications for media planning and show that it has an influence on decision-making. However, a lot of questions remain unanswered. Therefore, I explore the uniqueness of branding in the media in more detail and investigate the potential of branding in the advertising market as well as potential benefits of media brands for advertisers.

Accordingly, this article looks at branding in the media, pointing out differences to other industries (Sect. 2). In the following, functions of media brands are explored (Sect. 3). Addressing the research gap in the advertising market, the focus lies on media brands' potential in the relationship between media organization and advertisers (Sects. 4 and 5). I suggest an integrated media branding model, considering audience and advertisers in media organizations' strategies. Last but not least, an agenda for future research is proposed (Sect. 6).

2 Branding in the Media

In brand management, *brand identity* is a well-established concept (Aaker, 1991; Esch, 2005, 2012; Meffert, Burmann, & Kirchgeorg, 2008). Based on Aaker (2010, p. 68) it can be described as a "unique set of brand associations that the brand strategist aspires to create or maintain. These associations represent what the brand stands for and imply a promise to customers from the organization". Furthermore, with the help of the brand identity a relationship between the brand and the customer should be established by generating a value proposition involving functional, emotional or self-expressive benefits (Aaker, 2010).

Thus, the concept of brand identity is integrating an internal (self image of the brand) and an external (public image of the brand) perspective and their interactions. The brand is positioned through the brand identity and perceived by the customer through the brand image. *The fit of brand identity and brand image is crucial as it determines the credibility of the positioning of the brand* (Burmann & Meffert, 2005).

McDowell (2006, p. 234) defines a brand in the context of media as "a name, term, sign, design, or unifying combination of them intended to identify and distinguish a product or service from its competitors. Brand names communicate thoughts and feelings that are designed to enhance the value of a product beyond its product category and functional value." According to Siegert (2008), media brand management is defining and communicating what a brand stands for. These definitions are not at all different to those used in other industries. However, when applying the brand identity approach to the media, *media product characteristics* have to be considered.

Firstly, traditional media organizations serve two groups of customers, which is described as a *two-sided market* in scientific literature (e.g., Dewenter & Haucap, 2009; Wildman, 2006). While they offer content to the audience, they create opportunities to promote products and services. Hence, in addition to the audiences' brand image, advertisers have a brand image too. As seen in Fig. 1, media companies define their brand identity, from which strategies for the audience as well as the advertising market are derived. Subsequently, the brand is perceived by both groups of customers and a brand image develops among audiences and advertisers. *In addition to a fit of brand identity and brand image, there should be a match between audiences' and advertisers' brand images*. Both images as well as their match serve as a feedback to the brand strategy as well as the brand identity. Despite audience and advertisers having different interests, they are very likely to come across advertisements targeted at the other group of customers, where contradictory information would be harmful. In the event that a media outlet targets mostly young audiences, but focuses on its wealthier readers, viewers and users when promoting its advertising services, it might lead to the confusion of business customers and less credible positioning. The example of Austrian newspaper *täglich Alles* shows that a bad image amongst advertisers can lead to failure despite success in the reader market (Fidler, 2008). In certain media businesses more than

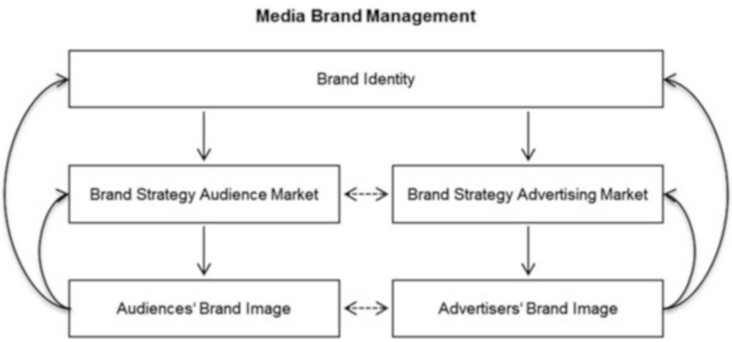

Fig. 1 Media brand management

two groups of customers are important. For instance, cable networks compete not only for the audience's attention and advertiser revenue, but also for carriage on cable systems as well as subscriber fees paid by the system operators (McDowell, 2004). Media not funded by advertising on the other hand, such as movies or books, also have to take the interests of other stakeholders into consideration, such as culture or location promotion (e.g., Castendyk, 2008; Knorr & Schulz, 2009).

Secondly, content and promotion opportunities are immaterial. In addition, media production involves high first-copy costs, creating a one-of-a-kind product in terms of content and design, while up-to-dateness vanishes because of the lack of exclusivity and imitability as they are public goods. From a normative perspective content is important, as media products are not only economic goods but also cultural and merit goods, fulfilling certain functions for society. Hence, branding a media product is different to branding in the consumer goods sector or other industries (Chan-Olmsted, 2006; Craig, 2013; Doyle, 2013; Kiefer, 2005).

Thirdly, media consumption involves high insecurity about the quality of the content as it can be evaluated after consumption or not at all. This makes products experience and credence goods (Heinrich, 2010; Kiefer, 2005; Siegert, 2001). On the other hand, media products are not particularly price sensitive which seldom makes a bad purchase significant, despite the high risk. Therefore, media consumption has been considered a low involvement experience, where there is little motivation to invest in decision making, and competing products are easily accessible (McDowell, 2006). Against this backdrop, branding becomes even more important. While content and design are ever changing, the brand is the only constant. High quality in terms of fulfilling user's needs is not sufficient for success. It has to be signalised through additional information and conveyed effectively before reception.

Lastly, the consumption of media products leads to external effects, such as the issue of climate change and everyone's responsibility in that context being on the agenda, leading to recipients buying something because of an article or consuming something because it was portrayed in the media as environmentally friendly (Kiefer, 2005). Furthermore, media consumption creates network effects. The more people watch a programme, the more important it gets, e.g., you have to watch a certain series to be able to join the conversation about it. Media brands can try to benefit from these effects through being part of the discussion.

In addition to these characteristics that in their unique combination differentiate the media from any other industry, media organizations have the option of self-promotion (McDowell, 2006; Siegert, 2001). Through their content they can contribute to their branding, try to influence brand images in the audience and advertiser markets, as well as set the agenda in a meta-discussion about the brand.

Because of the two-sided market, immateriality, insecurity, external effects and self-referentiality, marketing in the media is very challenging. However, brands fulfil several functions, which help to overcome these obstacles.

3 Functions of Media Brands

In the literature, *media brands' functions* are differentiated from the organizations', the audiences' and the advertisers' perspective (Siegert, 2001; see Table 1). In the following, they will be described in more detail.

For advertisers, media brands provide a known and reliable marketing concept and the attention of a well-defined target group. This in turn might reduce the need of own marketing tools. Hence, adverts can benefit from the fit of the product brand and a media brand as well as reach their target group more effectively. Media brands even offer the opportunity of equal partnerships between the advertiser and the media brand.

For audiences, media brands provide orientation when buying, consuming and interpreting media. They can assure quality and reduce risk in the selection process. For instance, when buying The *New York Times*, one expects a certain journalistic standard, a certain range of topics as well as a certain framing. Hence, when reading political news, the political orientation of the paper can be taken into account. On top of that, media brands provide additional individual and social benefits. As an example, someone might be able to influence his or her image through reading *The Economist* in public (see also Ots & Hartmann, 2015; as well as Scherer, 2015).

For the media organization, brands facilitate choices in the selection process or when setting up selection guidelines. They can also be a point of reference for decisions in production and buying (see also Siegert, 2015). Another function is the media brand's role in recruiting, where it can serve as a signal for human resources management. Furthermore, it is important for deciding on cooperation. For instance, a newspaper defining high quality as the core of its brand identity should

Table 1 Functions of media brands (Siegert, 2001)

Organizations' perspective	– Facilitating decisions in the selection process – Facilitating decisions in buying and production – Facilitating recruiting and cooperation – Securing innovation – Building a corporate identity – Attributing ad effects to products – Structuring program planning and audience/media research – Boosting and stabilizing sales – Differentiating from competition – Strengthening the position in negotiations with advertisers
Audiences' perspective	– Facilitating decisions in the selection process – Giving orientation while using media – Providing a frame for interpretation – Securing quality (e.g., credibility) – Reducing the risk of a mistake – Providing additional individual and social benefit
Advertisers' perspective	– Providing a known and reliable marketing concept – Providing target group specific attention – Reducing the need of own marketing tools – Giving opportunities for equal partnerships

therefore pay attention to the accuracy of its content and invest in exclusive information as well as its employees. The media brand also offers the potential of securing innovation within the organization and building a corporate identity. It allows attributing effects to certain organizations or products. A TV station could stand for very young and innovative programming, transferring these values to products in its environment. From the organization's perspective, the stabilization of sales through media brands is important. It can also be a basis for structuring program planning and audience research. In addition, media brands allow differentiation from the competition and potentially strengthen the position in the advertising market. An online outlet might be able to benefit from its offline reputation and therefore have a strategic advantage over its competitors.

However, *certain functions of media brands for media organizations and audiences are of importance to advertisers as well.* In particular, a media organization's corporate identity and differentiation from competitors are potential benefits. Advertisers also profit from stable sales figures, as it reduces the risk of buying advertising space and time. The benefits of media brands' functions from the audiences' perspective are a frame for interpretation, and especially a proxy for a certain quality.

To sum up, the media brands' communication and signalling opportunities are important for the media organization, audiences and advertisers. In addition, they can compensate immateriality and insecurity within the media selection, consumption and interpretation process, as well as assure an expected quality. Media brands can also support external and network effects through a fit and transfer of associations between brand, content and advert.

As media brands can help to compensate for media product characteristics which complicate marketing, brand management is seen as an important factor in the media industry (Baumgarth, 2009; Köhler, Majer, & Wiezorek, 2001; Walter, 2007; for an overview of success factors in the media see Sommer & von Rimscha, 2013). Its key role is pointed out in the media, brands, actors and communication model (MBAC model), which suggests a brand identity-driven decision making by journalists and media managers (Siegert, Gerth, & Rademacher, 2011). Thus, the media brand is a key asset of media companies (Wirtz, 2011).

A number of studies investigated different aspects of media brand management such as its relation to success (Baumgarth, 2009; Caspar, 2002; Chang & Chan-Olmsted, 2010; Collins, 2006; Förster, 2011; Habann, Nienstedt, & Reinelt, 2008; Rademacher & Siegert, 2007; Schnell, 2008). However, *research shares a focus on the reader or viewer side, while lacking a discussion of the advertising market.*

When focusing on the relationship of the media brand and the advertising market, two perspectives can be distinguished. On the one hand, the media brand can serve as a marketing tool for the media organization in its business with the advertising industry. On the other hand, advertisers can benefit from strong media brands. In the following, these perspectives will be investigated in more detail.

4 Media Brands as a Marketing Tool in the Advertising Market

Baumgarth (2004) assumes that strong media brands are more likely to be in the consideration set of decision makers and that their evaluation will show better results than what you would expect from nothing but quantitative figures. In addition, Ots and Wolff (2008) state that brand equity influences media buyers' selection process. However, this argument focuses on the customer based brand equity with the customer being the audience. But media organizations need to build brand equity in the advertising market as well. It is crucial to communicate information about the company, its media outlets and their contents to potential audiences as well as the business community (Baumgarth, 2004; McDowell, 2004). "Consequently, media brands must generate two sets of brand strategies" (McDowell, 2006, p. 245).

As shown above, brands help to simplify life. Consumers often lack motivation, capacity or opportunity, to process all of the information which they are exposed to. Hence, they opt for quick resolution techniques stored in memory. In addition, strong brands also reduce risk and uncertainty. The behavioral outcome of relying on brands is therefore a cultivation of habits: Loyalty (McDowell, 2006). This holds true for consumers as much as for advertisers.

However, *business-to-business (b2b) advertising* has different objectives compared to advertising for consumers (b2c). While consumer ads are typically aimed at the general public segmented into narrower demographics or lifestyle groups, b2b advertising focuses on business decision makers, such as marketing managers or media planners. In doing so, it has to be considered that members of a business community share a common understanding of what is read, viewed or heard (McDowell, 2004). This makes differentiation easier and more difficult at the same time.

Ots and Wolff (2008) recommend media companies to influence the perception of media buyers in four aspects: Firstly, media companies should focus on the superiority of their audience profile based on either quantitative measures or segmentation. Secondly, commitment of consumers and brand loyalty are important aspects. Thirdly, media marketing should work on the match of media brand image and advertised product brand image. Lastly, media companies have to concentrate on the responsiveness of branded editorial content to certain consumption needs. They conclude that media brands "with a clear audience segmentation profile, the ability to show strong emotional and behavioural attachment of the consumers to the consumer brand, and a clear response to consumption patterns and needs are perceived to have high brand equity, according to our respondents. If these brand positions are communicated consistently to the advertising market, they seem to have good opportunities to build brand equity on the b2b markets" (Ots & Wolff, 2008, p. 108).

A study of cable network's b2b advertising reveals seven differentiation strategies (McDowell, 2004):

- Affluence: Differentiation from "poorer" competitors through statistical information on income and buying power of the audience ("upscale", "professional", "sophisticated")
- Targeted sex or age demographics: Concentration on narrow attractive demographics ("The first network for men", "Dedicated to young American Hispanics) or even ratings growth potential ("fastest growing", "ratings on the rise", "building on the momentum") based on statistical data
- Targeted personality or lifestyle: Combination of statistical information with intangibles of an audience ("Our viewers are a different breed ... Savvy. Curious. Active", "Passionate in their Pursuits")
- Unique audience behaviour: Appreciation of practical needs of advertisers through information on audience behaviour and attitudinal research such as length of tune-in, internet usage, loyalty or satisfaction ("Attracts early adopters—first on the block", "... among the highest in commercial recall")
- Best off-network hits: Focus on previously successful programs ("Prime Time in the daytime")
- Original or first-run programming: Emphasis on original programming not available elsewhere ("... a great passion and investment behind our vision", "Critically acclaimed")
- Reputation: Focus on intangibles rather than quantitative ratings data ("risk taking", "bold", "cutting-edge", "most-trusted")

While quantitative and qualitative criteria play a role in these strategies, the media brand can be a signal for both. In addition to an emphasis on content (topics, quality) or audience (figures, demographics), a media brand can stand for exceptional customer service in the advertising market which is highly valued as well as a means of differentiation (Ots & Wolff, 2008). In doing so, media companies can reduce advertisers' information overload and support their decision process in order to build up brand equity in the advertising market. High brand equity means strong favourable associations towards a brand, which leads to behavioral loyalty, in this example a repeated buy.

5 Advertisers' Benefits from Strong Media Brands

Media brands have certain effects on advertising messages, which provide potential benefits to advertisers (Baumgarth, 2004). Two key concepts are activation and context, which are highly relevant to the level of involvement in reception and perception processes (Marty, 2013).

Watching TV or listening to the radio are common examples of low activation and hence lead to passive media consumption and low involvement. High involvement on the other hand, is characterized through an active consumer, who looks for information intentionally, such as reading a newspaper or a magazine (Berkler, 2008). In the literature, high involvement is attested a positive influence on advertising success and recall. Attention for media content is transferred to placed adverts (Moorman, Willemsen, Neijens, & Smit, 2012).

Context is the environment in which the advertisement is embedded. In television, a positive effect of the programming on advertising success was shown because of a spillover from consumers' interest in the media context on the embedded advert (Moorman et al., 2012; Tsiotsou, 2013). For print media these context effects are even stronger than in TV, as readers can decide how much attention they want to devote to an advert. Involvement with the publication leads to the positive assessment of advertisements and the advertised product as well as a connected buying decision (Tipps, Berger, & Weinberg, 2006). Hyun, Gentry, Park, and Jun (2006) show a positive relation of context and advertising recall for magazines. In radio, the involvement of listeners had a positive connection to the opinion on the advertised brand and the buying intention, as they are more responsive to adverts when listening to a program which they like and are involved in (Norris & Colman, 1996).

It is shown that a positive experience with a medium leads to more ad efficiency (Malthouse, Calder, & Tamhane, 2007). According to Unger, Durante, Gabrys, Koch, and Wailersbacher (2002) the placement of an ad next to a related article affects the effect of the advert. More generally, the fit of media content and ad message also has a positive effect (Norris & Colman, 1996). This is emphasized by Esch, Krieger, and Strödter (2009), who point out that the environment influences a positive or negative attitude towards advertisements and brands.

Involvement and fit can both be provided by the media brand in the relationship between advertisers and media company. In addition, the media brand's image is important. Positive associations such as credibility or high quality are transferred to the advertised product or service (Gierl & Hüttl, 2009). Ots and Wolff (2008) are more specific and point out that the audience's relationship to the personality of the medium can rub off on commercial messages and make the communication more effective.

Another advantage of a strong media brand is its consumer based brand equity. Three different brand effects leading to potential benefits for advertisers can be distinguished (Ots & Wolff, 2008, pp. 105–106; see Fig. 2):

- Behavioral loyalty of consumers to the media brand increases predictability and stability making purchase of ad space less risky
- Attitudinal loyalty of consumers of the media brand improves advertising impact and efficiency
- Differentiation of well-defined target groups of the media brand allows more advanced media planning routines and higher target group affinity

Siegert's (2001) functions of media brands from the perspective of the media company and audiences are closely related to those brand effects.

Baumgarth (2004) summarizes the benefits of strong media brands for advertisers. They stand for a high subscriber ratio, a high reading quantity and a positive reading environment leading to more effective advertising. Another effect

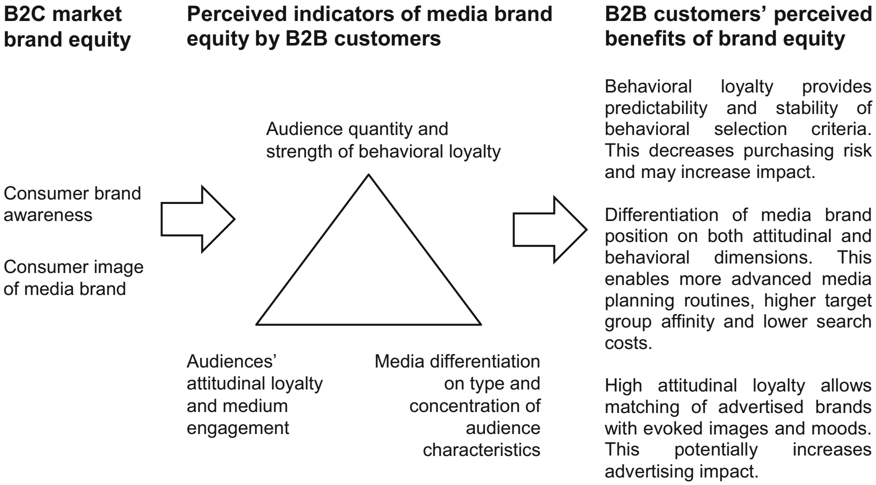

Fig. 2 Consumer based brand equity in media's b2b relationships (Ots & Wolff, 2008, p. 107)

results from addressing a distinct target group. These potential benefits of strong media brands lead to higher brand equity and make media planners accept premium prices.

Despite the potential benefits just discussed, as well as the willingness to pay a premium, the media brand as such does not seem to be an important criterion in the advertising market. Within a study in Switzerland, we investigated the role of the media brand in *media planning* (for details see Marty, 2013). In total, 47 advertising and media planning professionals answered our questionnaire about media selection criteria and the importance of the media brand for different elements in the process. When comparing qualitative with quantitative criteria, they are rated as less important: while 21 % said the relation of qualitative versus quantitative would be 70:30, 40 % chose 30:70. Amongst qualitative criteria which we selected from the literature, the media brand ranks seventh (out of 10 items), after media mix fit ($M = 4.38$), image ($M = 4.34$), involvement ($M = 4.15$), editorial environment ($M = 4.13$), target group profile ($M = 4.04$) and role of the medium ($M = 3.89$) with an average of 3.64 on a five point Likert scale. However, all qualitative criteria are related to the media brand. It is the connecting element when content is offered on multiple channels and therefore closely related to the media mix. The image is an integral part of the media brand concept. Involvement, editorial environment, target group profile and role of the medium are also aspects the media brand can stand for, as shown above. Therefore, *we see a lack of in-depth knowledge in the field of brand management amongst media professionals* (McDowell & Batten, 2005). Difficulties in differentiating qualitative criteria and the media brand are also a conceptual and methodological challenge, as media planners clearly acknowledge the values brand attributes represent (Ots & Wolff, 2008).

6 Conclusion and Implications for Further Research

Digitalization and convergence lead to increasing competition in the media industry, which made it inevitable for media companies to put efforts into branding strategies. Media brands fulfill important functions to compensate media product characteristics. Despite the two-sided market being one of those characteristics, a strong focus on the audience can be observed, particularly in media management research.

However, in media's b2b relationships, branding offers benefits to media companies and advertisers alike. Through laying emphasis on a brand's exceptional contents, audiences and services, media companies can build up brand equity and differentiate themselves from competitors. Advertisers on the other hand profit from media brand activation and context leading to the involvement of a distinct target group with the advertisement. Associations with the media brand are transferred to the commercial message, making it more credible and effective.

Despite the potential of branding, media companies are not able to fully use their brands as marketing tools in the advertising market to put themselves ahead of the competition. This might be also because of a lack of in-depth knowledge of media brands amongst media professionals. Ots and Wolff (2008, p. 108) conclude that media firms "need to support their case with more convincing evidence in order to take full advantage of these largely unexplored resources". Therefore, they have to work on their branding strategies laying emphasis on information relevant to media planners, which could be quantitative as well as qualitative. They need to communicate what they stand for (e.g., target group, content, quality), considering the fit between the brand identity and the brand images of both groups of customers. While Siegert, Gerth, and Rademacher (2011) put brand identity in the center of decision making by journalists and media managers regarding content for the audience side, this paper suggests an integral approach. *Brand identity should be central to the whole organization and a point of reference for developing business models and business activities. Only then, potential conflicts between audiences and advertisers can be avoided and coherent brand strategies lead to matching brand images in both markets as well as a credible positioning.*

Future research needs to explore this holistic approach to brand management in the media. Focusing on the advertising market, there is a lack of studies on the importance of the media brand in media planning. Following Ots and Wolff's (2008) exploratory qualitative interviews, a quantitative survey is necessary. Once a better understanding of media brands in the advertising market is achieved, research should also look into b2b brand equity and brand management's contribution to success in the media industry.

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Add Some Glam? An Essay on the Aestheticization of Media Brands

Christian Bluemelhuber

Abstract

When glamour can sell candidates and cruises, roadsters and real estate, when glamour describes stocks (so called glam stocks vs. value stocks) and rock (glam rock vs. progressive rock) and when football seasons are full of glam transfers: why should the brands of publishing houses, social media platforms, TV series or magazines not also profit from a glam component? As the re-entry (Spencer-Brown, 1972) of magic into brand management, glamour helps media companies to break free from the classical brand engineering concept and offers an aestheticization that might add value—and allure. But it also asks for a reinterpretation of some cherished concepts as glamorous brands are defined through a punctum, an extra, a rainbow-moment—and those are difficult to plan, predict, and produce. Certainties might fade away, but in return (media) brands could stand out.

Keywords

Brand engineering • Glamour • Aesthetics • Punctum • Surplus-value • Brand design • Advertising

1 Dear Branding Experts

Let me begin my small essay with a personal remark:

Brands started out as something magical, something extraordinary, something special, and yes: something glamorous. Brands were like rainbows (Brown, 2005): mysterious, captivating, awesome, and wonderful, an unforgettable experience. They were an injection of color in the grey uniformity of life. But not only were

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the brands mysterious, mystery was also the brand concept. The mechanics of brand design and management—the drivers of brand equity—and brand leadership skills were inscrutable, intransparent, and un(der)explored.

But as the success stories of some super brands convinced more and more managers, a resource-based perspective won ground, and decades of scientific effort uncovered the marketing code. Brands have lost their mystery, their uniqueness, their glamour. Today, every CEO, marketing manager and organization seems to be in brand management and seems to apply the same ABC as everyone else: the rules set by Aaker, Belk and de Chernatony, by Ries, Sherry, Trout, Urry, Venkatesh, and Wipperfurth, not to mention Kevin Lane Keller, Jean-Noel Kapferer, and Kellogg on Branding. These authors (and thousands of others) produced important insights, satisfied researchers with interesting empirical findings, and forced the community of brand managers to answer three questions (Keller et al., 2002); to invest in visual and verbal brand hammers (Ries, 2012), to create stupid two-dimensional positioning models (too numerous to cite) and colonize a perceptual brand territory, to tick off bullet point lists and follow the how-to manuals of the "totally brand everything" promoters.

But the success of those concepts came with a huge price tag, as brand science created the *brand engineer*: an honest manager, who applied POPs and PODs, followed the routes of the superstars (see above) and enriched her brand with an unavoidable, ornamental glimpse of a pomo or SDL customer integration-bricolage.[1] In following this taken-for-granted ABC, these calculated rules and formalized processes the anti-heroes of brand management tried to reduce their (personal) risk or to hide their lack of creativity and courage.

So brand management is characterized by a paradox. By applying the canon of branding techniques and imitating the likes of *Apple*, *BMW*, and *Coca Cola*, those concepts and systems are strengthened through sheer repetition. Once everyone is imitating or applying the same tools as everyone else, it is nearly impossible to break out: uniformity will outplay uniqueness, single brands will be weakened, and mediocre results will be the consequence. In other words, such a process of *institutional isomorphism* (Di Maggio & Powell, 1983) disenchants the brand, makes it an everyday cloth, not a special evening dress.

Following the discussions about brand redundancy, about the reduction of freedom through a brand strategy, about reputation as a core resource, and about the consistency and continuity of branding, we—you and me—probably wish ourselves back to the times when brands were mysteries, when they were regarded as something extraordinary in an ocean of the commonplace. In other words: we miss what Popperian scientists, diligent brand engineers and brand-experts who reduce everything to bullet point lists excluded (or try to exclude) from any

[1] Pomo is an abbreviation of postmodern and SDL the Service Dominant Logic of marketing. Both concepts focus on consumer integration and are important theoretical foundations for social brand/consumer engagement concepts (Cova, 1997; Wood & Allan, 2003) and famous myths, such as "marketers do not control the brand—the consumer does".

discussion. We miss the aspects of magic, we miss a punctum, and yes, we miss the glamour of branding's *Mad Men* days: in our aseptic and anti-heroic times we not only excluded sharp suits, lunch cocktails, and alluring outer office secretaries from brand managers' everyday businesses. The sterility and political correctness of our era also plays a role in the way brands are designed, managed, and controlled: fulfill your promises! Be authentic! Be consistent! Be 360 degrees! Totally integrate everything!

We hypothesize that, like customer orientation (Kumar et al., 2011)—another of those politically correct buzzwords of marketing and branding, those imperatives only serve as the cost of competing and not as a source of sustainable competitive advantage. They remind us of the must-be dimensions in a Kano-model (Kano, 1984), that do not evoke delight, do not make the product "sexy" or make the customer shout out "wow". Instead of creating the next *Vogue* or at least the next *Red Bull*, instead of encouraging cultural or aesthetic brand innovations, they produce an iron cage of brand bureaucracy (Holt & Cameron, 2010) and consequently boring brands.

With some of those ideas in mind I am trying to challenge an audience of likable and scientifically profound media brand experts with a simple question: where is the magic, where is the glamour of media brands? I want the pendulum hurled back towards the magical side of branding. Such an audacious challenge will obviously invite critique to which I must reply.

However, if you expect an answer to my question, you can stop reading now, because I don't have one.

If you can accept a bricolage of ideas then perhaps this is the article for you.

To fulfill the academic requirements, to guide you through the article and to develop a kind of *future memory* (Ingvar, 1985) before reading, I will offer my core hypothesis before I start the discussion:

> The strategic aspect of glamour could aesthetically refine a commodity and characterize a brand. By providing magical traits brand equity could be strengthened, and above-average earnings could be kindled—but there is a price to pay!

2 Why Not Think About (Brand) Glam?

The possible story of a relationship between media, brands, and glamour remains largely untold, although glamour has proceeded to be an important strategic category for any aesthetic production and a main source of survival for several media brands: think about magazines, TV shows, blogs or coffee-table books that accompany the glitzy lifestyle of shining celebrities, vulgar movie stars, and distant dictators, or that picture opulent apartments, heroic shop windows and *James Bond* villain-styled atmospherics.

This essay follows another, a more general route as it will discuss glamour not as the content of media products, but as an aesthetic dimension that could probably add value and so increase brand equity. In other words: we are going to discuss the glam factor as a *strategic aspect* of brands.

From Belle Époque Paris, the classical days of Hollywood and the times of Marlene Dietrich and Greta Garbo, when glamour was a technique of aesthetic production of extraordinary individuality to the glamorous lifestyles of *Balenciaga*, *Blackberry*, and the *Beckham*s: glamour was and is a vague—perhaps even glamorous—concept and word. In this chapter, I would like to offer some contextualization that helps us understand the concept and its management. Beyond that, I will also try to motivate my readers to consider glamour as a perhaps neglected, but nevertheless promising category of surplus value.

First I will present three definitions, I will start with three characterizations of glamour:

2.1 Glam Is a Child of Capitalism

Capitalism rewards companies for offering relevant products, creating surplus value and producing attractiveness and reputation. It pays for innovation and efficiency. Customers respond to the incentives, and so it obviously works.

A performance-driven, information-saturated society that is overwhelmed with "me too's" welcomes those concepts and companies that succeed in an exhaustive search for uniqueness or in making the exchange partner addicted (or at least loyal). That's why marketing and branding became essential features of capitalist market societies.

A key concept that could create brand equity and promise attractiveness, differentiation and loyalty is *aesthetics*. Not in its superficial interpretation as a mere surface and design phenomenon, and not in its historical association with fine arts, but as the source of a sensory experience, as a rich intrinsic hedonic value and as a reason for products being pleasurable and rewarding without regard to whatever utilitarian function the product might perform (Davay, 1989; Holbrook, 1981).

The category we have chosen out of a stunning variety of aesthetic styles—think not only of beauty and the sublime, but also categories like cuteness and coolness, authenticity and elegance—is glamour. Like its cousins, glamour can represent a significant surplus value and create pleasure that heightens the consumer's overall satisfaction, specifies explicit attitudes and influences implicit evaluations.

Although glamour doesn't have a documented archive or a clearly marked history, we can trace some of its roots to Hollywood's star system, to the narratives of pop, and to a Putinesque Russia: The Hollywood glamour style from the 1920s was a unique blend of aristocratic, fashionable, sexual, theatrical, and consumerist appeals that exercised an unprecedented influence over global aspirations, desires, and lifestyles (Gundle, 2008). Based on its European origin—the creators of Hollywood glamour were émigrés from Germany, Russia, Hungary, France, and Britain—and far away from the world's centers of privilege and style, the Californian film industry reinvented glamour as an enticing form of capital that relied solely on technique, artifice, and imagination. In other words: the attribute glamorous was/is not natural, but *producable*, and relied/relies on an audience with aesthetic literacy that rewards the surplus value that endows a person (or an object, or a brand) with a glamorous radiance. It was Bret Easton Ellis (1998) who pointedly expressed such a world when he inaugurated his *Glamorama*, which was populated with consumers that were defined by the branded items they consume: glam brands like *Armani*, *Calvin Klein* or *Dolce & Gabbana* defined the looks, glam items like sunglasses or cellphones the lifestyle, and rock music provided the glamorous sound. At the same time, top marketing academic Jennifer Aaker (1997) identified glamorous as a core trait when defining brand personalities and a few years later John Grant, an author of several marketing bestsellers, promoted glamour as an "erotic brand strategy" (Grant, 2006, p. 224). Dimitry Ivanov even identified a "logic of glamour" as a driving component of today's capitalism, especially in Russia (Ivanov, 2011).

From Hollywood to glam-capitalism, from glam-personalities to glam-brands the scientific community learned that the perception of glamour emerges from certain attributes; design and distance, gloss and grace. Or as Margaret Troph defined it in the 1930s: "sex appeal plus luxury plus elegance plus romance" (cited in Rosa et al., 2004, p. 42). Glamour can be produced, and that's good news for managers. Together with Postrel (2013, p. 9) we could understand it as a "calculated tool of persuasion"—a rhetoric that's used to twist and to woo. A rhetoric that could enrich the brand, improve customer equity and so strengthen a main asset of capitalism.

2.2 Glam Is Kind of a Paradox

The *Colette* fashion store in Paris is not only a well-known and respected media and retail brand, but also one of *the* authorities on European glamour: *Colette* manages to synchronize the visibility of the lower classes (androgynous shop assistants from the banlieues that seem to be tattooed and pierced all over the body) with very expensive luxury fashion from both young artists and major fashion labels. It is this paradoxical bricolage of low and high (culture) that makes the experience of *Colette* so glamorous, that makes the carnivalesque celebration of good taste and the promise of a better life so convincing.

In general, glamour needs such a paradox to keep things from getting too perfect, unreachable, or even boring. Actually, the paradox is already built-in, if glamour is analyzed from a linguistic perspective. Among others, Peter Sloterdijk (2009) clarified that in Middle English the word glamour is an alteration of grammar and also an expression of magic (Sloterdijk, 2009, footnote 1). The *paradessence* (Shakar, 2001) of glamour lies in these two interpretations: on the one hand it is understood as a set of rules that produces predictability and acts as a blueprint for production. On the other, we define glamour as a mysterious appearance, an erratic allure.

This duality reminds us of Roland Barthes (1981), who constructed an alternative critique of photography and its relationship to personal experience, and most prominently distinguished between studium and punctum as the two reading practices for photographs.

Studium refers to the range of meanings available and obvious to everyone. Like grammar this component is readable, decodable, and producible. Barthes says that he is interested in these aspects (as he is interested in the world), but does not love them. We recognize the studium with more or less pleasure, but we never feel delight or pain. Doesn't that sound like a description of the engineered or bureaucratic brand?

Both photo and brand need something beyond their initial meaning, something elusive, an incurable desire, a detail that pricks us. This something, this detail is the *punctum*. The punctum inspires private meaning and cannot be easily communicated through linguistic resources. It's a partial object, a detail, a supplement that holds the recipient's gaze. It is an element which rises from the scene and unintentionally fills the whole image. It steps into the light (glamorous isn't it?), acts as figure, not ground, but can—applying the information integration hypothesis (Anderson, 1981)—dominate the whole appearance.

Every person, product, and brand could be perceived as glamorous when both aspects, *punctum* and *studium* are present to make the entity appear extraordinary.

2.3 Glam Is the (Prissy) Sister of Pornography

When comparing glamour with pornography we will be focusing on the following three aspects that glamour borrows from porn: the visual component, its sequential nature, and the perception of being vulgar.

- The perhaps most famous description of pornography comes from Supreme Court Justice Potter Stewart, who famously said in his 1964 order (Jacobellis v. Ohio, 1964) that he could not define pornography but "I know it when I see it". The same might be true for glamour. One cannot define this aesthetic impression, but one perceives something glamorous when one sees it. And this is meant literally. It is about seeing, it's all about images. More and more movie stars, politicians, and sports heroes understand that principle and generate a large number of images that potentially make them or their corresponding organization appear glamorous
- Both pornography and glamour are not organized as linear stories that consolidate figures, time and coherence into a strong narrative. Instead, glamour and pornography, like splatter movies or circus shows, are organized through *numbers* (Freeland, 2000). The constant onslaught of stimuli is through single sequences, through special moments and episodes that lead to a kind of happiness. Therefore: storytelling is—contrary to most actual discussions and theories—not the name of our game. Like the audience of a porn-movie that goes to the film for numbers, glamour is fed by single sequences of heightened emotions and spectacle. In other words: glamour emerges in stilled moments, where the world might even recede, if only for an instant (Postrel, 2013).

Following Lash's (1988) distinction between stories and (visual) images, between the discursive and the figural, we understand glamour as the *reintroduction of an aesthetics of sensation into marketing and branding*. Glamour is an expression that depends on (visual) signs, and relies not so much on cognition as on immersion. In other words: glam brands are both *silent* (when it comes to storytelling) and *loud* (in their aesthetic expression) (Salzer & Strannegard, 2004)

- Although pornography pervades the contemporary visual landscape, and in particular the Web, it's still a dark market, a little shameful and weird experience, even for its users. And despite its association with the cultural sector, critical acclaim, or at least words like artistry, creativity and profundity never enter the viewer's vocabulary. The question is not how good (the quality of porn), but how much (box office, profit) (Brown & Hackley, 2012). Just as with pornography, glamour is irredeemably *vulgar*. In the dictionary sense of the word it's current, popular, common, pertaining to ordinary people. Claiming or judging something to be glamorous (or cute, or zany) means the application of a trivial aesthetic category that is grounded in ambivalent or even explicitly contradictory feelings (Ngai, 2012). We shall understand that such an aestheticization with a vulgar category is of similar contemporary significance as the traditional moral resonances of the beautiful and the sublime

2.4 Defining "Glam"

I will not offer *a* definition—I will offer three. Although it might appear a little hair-splitting, we will differentiate between glamour, glamorous, and glamorizing, that means we will define the noun, the adjective and the verb separately. For sure, that's unusual, but don't we also find differences between strategy, strategic, and strategizing? Between brands, branded, and branding? Or between aesthetics, aesthetic, and aestheticize? As those examples prove, a noun's, an adjective's and a verb's meaning might be related, but they definitely differ. The noun is normally reserved for a smaller, clearly defined territory (like the glamour industries), whereas nearly everything (from war, to drones, to media brands) could probably be glamorized, so that an audience could perceive or define such entities as glamorous. All definitions will be summarized in a mathematical formalization as suggested by George Spencer-Brown (1972).

We define *glamour* (noun) as the impression or illusion of a fascinating extraordinariness (Fig. 1). To be successful, glamour needs a punctum and presents an idealized picture. It's a surface and design phenomenon, a sort of magic or trick that makes costs and complications disappear (or at least to be hidden). It survives behind a veil of overdrawn aesthetics that reveals only partial truths: a vacation at an Amalfi coast beach is never as unmarred by difficulties as in a travel brochure. The glamour of battle as it is advertised by military organizations all over the world, edits out the boredom and blood. And the pomp and circumstance of a *James Bond* Royal Premiere comes together with annoying journalists and the experience of a

Fig. 1 Defining "glamour" (noun)

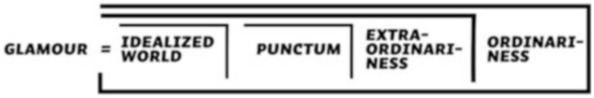

Fig. 2 Defining "glamorize" (verb)

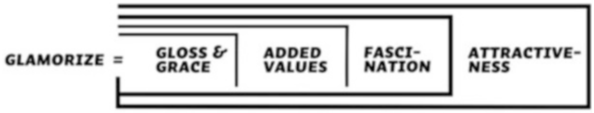

Fig. 3 Defining "glamorous" (adjective)

holiday-season queue at *Disneyland*. The recipient/consumer blocks out or suspends such truths in exchange for an idealized version of the world: that's how the glamour of *Hollywood* and *Bollywood*, a *Hermes* shop window or a Leni Riefenstahl Nazi propaganda film are produced.

To *glamorize* a brand, an event, a person or a product adds (hedonic and/or social) values through gloss and/or grace to make the entity appear fascinatingly attractive (Fig. 2). Gloss and grace, attractiveness and fascination arise (among other processes) out of the appearance of being distant and effortless. In other words: glamorization needs what Baldessare Castiglione calls *sprezzatura* (Castiglione, 1959); the graceful nonchalance of Daniel Craig's *James Bond* wearing a suit; the glossy finish of a *Playboy* picture gallery. The book design of *Merve* that combines and coordinates distance and effortlessness (see below). The surplus value that's produced through a glamorization process does not refer to the utilitarian function an entity might perform. Rather, superiority is created through hedonic editing and social processes that generate (among others) aesthetic, linking, and prestige values (Cova, 1997; Holbrook, 1995).

Something or somebody *glamorous* (adjective) is not just full of glamour, fascinatingly attractive, or the result of a glamorization process. The adjective signifies an air of (vulgar) allure in the capitalistic context of an *attention economy* (Fig. 3). In a silicon-chipped era where information is abundant and the recipient's capacity to process and store information remains limited, the incitement and seduction of attention has turned into an overriding objective of organizations. And it's especially the business of media companies and brands to collect as much attention as possible, either to get paid or to sell the attention to the advertising industry or to alliance partners. The *via regia* to get wealthy through recognition is to create brands that seem to be outstanding and irresistible, fascinating and attractive. Adding a twist of allure creates attention and affection—and the belief of being "glamorous".

3 A New Genre of Media (Brands)

Contrary to glamour, branding and brand management, media and even media brands are top priorities in the market of academic and managerial publications. Therefore scientists and managers are confronted with numerous theories, ideas and suggestions that compete for their attention. Instead of giving a summary or personal comments on this complex and confusing literature I will just cherry-pick a few important ideas and suggest definitions by following the Spencer-Brown logic already applied in the former chapter.

The A-journal literature characterizes brands simply as a "collection of perceptions held in the mind of the consumer" (Fournier, 1998, p. 345). This definition clarifies that a brand has no objective existence at all, that it cannot act or communicate—except through the activities of brand holders and owners. One of the main jobs of brand managers, one of their unavoidable tasks is to brand their products, or in other words to make goods or services identifiable, differentiate them from those of the competitors and link them to mental brand networks through the application of names, terms, signs, symbols or design elements. Such a logo, or brand as verb is an absolute must in most industries, including the media. As a *search attribute* it supports consumers in anticipating future experiences and attachments and lowers their search costs (Darby & Karni, 1973; Klein & Leffler, 1981). Therefore all media (products) are branded. But for sure, not all branded media products can count as (strong) brands. While the former concept is about production, the latter is about perception, or—speaking now in the language of postmodern marketing—about the bricolage of a "consumer as producer" (Firat, Dholakia, & Venkatesh, 1994, p. 52).

When our article suggests a glam component as an extra in the perceived collection of brand attributes, we *enrich* the brand concept with *cultural* and social *aspects* (see also Ots & Hartmann, 2015). The simple psychological interpretation by Fournier, its focus on *image* and mindshare is too limited to embrace and understand the social and aesthetic needs of our time: glamour has a price, even for brand theory. Media companies especially, whose offerings are social and cultural products per se, have to pay that price. However, they will significantly profit from deeper and broader concepts such as linking and connectivity, shaping and mirroring society, cultural expressions and every-day cultural activities. These characterize not only media, but also brand relationships.

Adding the glamorous media brand (GMB) to a list of (media brand) genres and applying the glam factor has a positive effect not only for media companies, but also for their consumers:

- Judging something to be glamorous signals it out as something worthy of everyone's attention. It might create awareness and vivid, favorable, strong, and unique associations (Keller, 1993) that produce a valuable, exploitable asset as a precondition for a comparative and competitive advantage (Hunt & Morgan, 1995). Adding such an aesthetic component differentiates the brand not only from the *engineered brand*, but also from its possible substitution through *algorithms*. Both competitor concepts focus on one aspect, namely *reliability*.

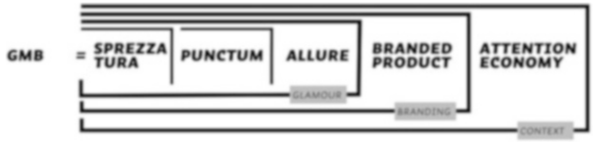

Fig. 4 The concept of the "glamorous media brand" (GMB)

In the first case (a), strong brands count as assurance that the brand's promise will be fulfilled through a translation of brand identity into operational standards that are delivered throughout all brand experiences. The second case (b) deals with the assurance that satisfying experiences are determined by a deep knowledge of the consumer, her lifestyle and culture. The new philosophy of "dataism" makes not only the classical approach to science—hypothesize—model—test—obsolete (Anderson, 2008), but perhaps this also applies to the risk-free, information-efficient brand: why should companies invest in brand design and communication—which is as Luhmann (1995, p. 144) prominently stated always resource-demanding and risky—when petabytes of consumer and context data together with better and better analytical tools transform our ability to predict and to offer individualized experiences?

But there is something that cannot be replaced or substituted by algorithms, data and engineered brands. And this is (the) *it* (Roach, 2007), the *extra,* the *punctum,* the *symbolic rainbow-moment* that stands out. If brands were more than reliable mechanisms of a promise-management then aesthetic associations and experiences not only become valuable, but even glamorous in themselves. In other words: glamour and other ornamental aesthetics are an answer to competing concepts (big data, algorithms, individualization) that better fulfill the consumer's quest for assurance and create offerings that promise a confirmation (or positive disconfirmation) of expectations (see Fig. 4)

- Not only media companies communicate their values or points of difference through brands, consumers also express their self-concepts and identities through brand preferences (see also Scherer, 2015; Förster, 2015). The purchase of glamorous (media) experiences, products or services might rub off (Park & Roedder John, 2010) and give the consumer access to a displaced ideal, to an untainted version of reality. So glamour represents a special case of what Grant McCracken (1990) calls *displaced meaning*. This theory explains what economists or politically correct upholders of consumer protection dismiss as irrational, fantastic or escapist: that goods could serve as a bridge, a link to the lifestyle that people dream about. Hopes and ideals remain alive—even in the face of impressive grounds for pessimism

4 Summary

Let me sum up these ideas in three hypotheses that will guide us through the following chapters.

An aesthetic component such as glamour could strengthen a (media) brand in the capitalistic game of differentiation and adaptation.

Glamour, like authenticity, beauty, or cuteness adds valuable beliefs that significantly improve the competitiveness of a company. Therefore we label this resource as *strategic*.

Of course such a belief is not communicable through classical advertising. Glamour will only be perceived if it's supported by actions. Brands are made by deeds, not words. And glamorous brands are made by pictures and punctums and not stories and strategies.

A punctum could add magical, glamorous qualities, shape the brand and make it extra-ordinary.

Although the branding literature does not to my knowledge so far apply or exploit the punctum theory, authors like Stephen Brown are on a similar track when they claim that great brands offer something special, something impalpable, a "certain something—call it *je ne sais quoi*—that competitors conspicuously lack" (Brown, 2005, p. 164). This extra makes them literally *extra*-ordinary. They provide what its competitors, the over-engineered, also-ran brands provide (the brand's points-of-parity) plus something extra as well—an add-on—a real point of difference. Such an element is not only difficult to (pre-)define but also difficult to elicit and to produce. Therefore brand management needs new directions.

Managing glamour is the art of managing paradoxes.

Glamorous brands are full of paradoxes: glamour is grammar and magic, producible and non-producible, silent and loud. Like a rainbow, glamour just appears—and disappears. Suggesting paradoxes in brand management might be unusual (think about the consistency imperative in brand management) but it might work—not just as a reverse psychology marketing gimmick (Sinha & Foscht, 2007), but as a concept that mirrors the paradoxical times of glam capitalism.

In the following three chapters we will be focusing on management aspects of media brands, which we have derived from our discussion on glamour and branding. We will select some important ideas to suggest interesting directions for (media) brand management, whether aesthetic glamorous components are integrated in the brand's identity or not.

5 The Price of the Glam: Comments on Brand Equity

It was Milton Friedman who stated in 1975 that "there's no such thing as a free lunch". Everything comes with a price tag on it, and so this applies to the glamorous aspect of a media brand. If glamour added value to the product, increased the brand's attractiveness and perhaps even the consumer's willingness to pay, the economics of glamour may work as intended.

The price for being more glamorous is giving up brand control. Activities like customer and third party integration, co-production, co-communication, and co-consumption, brand hacking and hijacking, twisting and jamming (Cova & Cova, 2001; Vargo & Lush, 2005; Wipperfürth, 2005) could be read as a nightmare for brand engineers who still dream of a risk-free, control-everything, and yes: unglamorous blueprint for running brands. But our dataist, hyperaestheticized, liquid, glam modernity (Bauman, 2000; Ivanov, 2011) offers another, a less discussed challenge for (media) brand managers. Interpreting glam as the *re-entry* (Spencer-Brown, 1972) of *magic into brand management*, asks for a growing space of uncertainty and ambiguity, for a (media) brand management that is not only concerned about complexity (integrating experiences, subbrands, brand partners, actions) but also about designing and controlling the brand as a nonlinear, non-trivial, paradoxical system. The consequence: less predictability and more unforeseeability, Markov-like brand experiences instead of a serial brand production, a variety of exemplars and beliefs instead of one brand core. As it is probably impossible to outguess the quality and extra-ordinariness of the next experience if a punctum defines a brand's aesthetic quality and equity, managers not only need an aesthetic literacy, but also an (aesthetic) mentality that makes them invest in *brand preenactments* (Kuka, Gasteier, & Bluemelhuber, 2014) and in a broad variety of glamorous signals as a condition for the production of glamour.

The value (equity) of such a GMB lies not only in the consumer's memory of future experiences and in information acquisition cost reductions, but also in a direct experience of hedonic and social surplus-values. If those were strong and could be integrated into the mental brand network, then glamour could be perceived as a defining element of that brand, not just for a moment, but for the longer term. As such an image can fade away very much like a rainbow (see my introduction), glam production is a continuous process, again, a *paradox* that makes brand equity management so challenging.

Merve is a German publishing house and media brand that succeeds in the discipline of managing paradoxes, perhaps because they accept and play with them. *Merve* is a competitor to very serious publishers of elitist philosophical, sociological and cultural literature, and their black text-styled books. They succeed, and create customer and brand equity by making the author's works clearer and more accessible—with the weapons they have: a simple design, white spaces for reader's margin notes, and a cocktail of texts and pictures that crosses the language of thinking with the language of the visible (see Fig. 5).

It's the look and feel of a cheap paperback (and speaking in monetary terms: it's really cheap), that promises a reachable and readable content, although it will be a tough challenge for the average reader to decipher the ideas and texts. Yes, some philosophy, sociology and economy books are infinitely difficult—but *Merve* makes them appear accessible, not awesome; easy, not expensive; glamorous, not grave. Only those dualities create the brand equity and—that's my interpretation now—the glamour of *Merve*.

Fig. 5 The design of Merve

6 Glam Style: Comments on Brand Design

The perception (and creation) of a brand's style could be driven by two processes, either through repetition of always the same elements and/or through extraordinary single experiences (Whitehouse, 1996). Just one magical moment, one sensation of a punctum could update the consumer's brand knowledge (Anderson, 1981) with the consequence that managers and scientists probably have to update their strategies and policies to enable and support such incidents. An accepted strategy that might conjure a magical moment is the *strategy of experimentation* (Beinhocker, 1999): trying things out, following what works, and unsentimentally killing off processes that do not succeed. Designing glam brands—their experiences, brand elements, and style—is not only about the creation of coherence, but also about the creation and elicitation of single moments that are fascinatingly attractive as they offer grace and gloss. "*Make a punctum possible*" could serve as the corresponding imperative.

The following example finds such an extra, such a glam component in a magazine's core domain, namely the integration of advertising into an overall experience: *Butt Magazine* is a "wonderful fashion, culture and art magazine". With those words *American Apparel* spokesperson Ryan Holiday (cited in Lewis, 2009) once described a magazine that understood itself as the most admired and influential gay-interest publication of the last decade. Yes, it's by, for and about homosexuals, you'll find slightly gritty naked guys, sometimes even photographed by Wolfgang Tillmans, and—believe it or not—interviews (isn't that also the trick with another glam magazine like *Playboy*?) with glamorous stars like Gore Vidal or Mark Jacobs.

Partnering with photographer-cum-fashion-designer-cum-artist Hedi Slimane and filmmaker Bruce LaBruce, brand alliances with *AceHotels* and *American Apparel*, and the unique visual concept (recycled, pink paper, black and white photographs that follow the intimacy of a photo album) may add a twist of glamour.

Fig. 6 Adidas advertising in Butt magazine

But our interest in *Butt* is derived from another, a more fundamental aspect: photo spreads in lifestyle magazines normally look like their ads. With *Butt*, it was the other way around. As *Butt* didn't have a marketing department, advertisers like *Adidas* or *Tom Ford* kept approaching them on their own with ads that fitted the magazine's style (see Fig. 6). And if advertisers didn't have any pictures that shared the *Butt* aesthetics, then it was the *Butt* designers who created (logo) ads for those clients.

Such an approach integrates content and advertising into one experience and stands in sharp contrast to hundreds of other well (and sometimes even over-) designed magazines, in which advertising still follows its own CD-standards and so pollutes the media product's/brand's aesthetics. Our small, pocket-sized gay quarterly that transformed into an internet only magazine in 2013, stood out of the crowd when they replaced visual pollution through ads (Serres, 2008) by a kind of glamorous media art. Such a post-heroic gesture of cooperation and coordination (between the magazine makers and its sponsors/advertisers) fulfills the advertiser's and the magazine's aesthetic responsibility and paradoxically leads to a heroic result: the *perception of glamour*!

7 About Logos and Holos! Comments on (Brand) Identity

Together with several cultural critics we argue that identity is not assumed in the depth of a personality, but is based superficially—on "the glamour of the modern personality" (Ferguson, 1999, p. 11). Such a façade-only interpretation of identity justifies an expression of (brand) personalities in superficial signs, in brand elements or secondary cues that could elicit a punctum and a unique alluring appearance. Furthermore, such an identity is. . .

- Probably borrowed—especially when we analyze (media) brands, as those normally appearing in the format of brand alliances. Take *Kiefer Sutherland* playing *Jack Bauer* in *24*, a *FOX* production running on my *Iad* via the *Netflix* app: at least six brands (or branded products) compete for my attention and create my overall experience. All of those provide secondary associations (Keller, 1993) and create an opportunity for a glam component to rub off and be transferred to another brand (assuming that the brands, their products and overall images fitted together: Simonin & Ruth, 1998)
- Liquid and dynamic. In a Baumanesque world, where nothing keeps its shape, and social forms are constantly changing at great speed and radically transform the experience of being human, identities—once being perceived or at least labeled as being stable, fixed, and consistent—will have to mirror the consumer's obligation in (being) spontaneous and inconsistent (Bauman, 2004; Lipovetsky, 2005). Especially the visual system, once the most static brand component, is now redefined too: *logos* become *holos*, a holistic, flexible ID system that could count as the beating heart at the center of a brand (van Nes, 2013). Media brands like *MTV*, *Google* and *AOL* are the core exemplars of such a dynamization of superficial identity. Identities that count on a glam component will have also have to give way to looser and more provisional identities that are subject to constant change and renegotiation

How the brand identity, and its (glam) component are valued depends on taste and aesthetic norms: although glamour might be universal, its manifestations and perceptions vary from era to era, (sub-)culture to (sub-)culture, and person to person. Some people might perceive the elegant simplicity of an *Apple* or *Braun* appliance, a *Prada* costume or the *Eso* hotel *Cerro Paranal* as glamorous, others the baroque excess of *Goldman Sachs*, the *Gucci* style, or the *Gramercy Park Hotel*. For some *Playboy*, *Paris Hilton* and *Pinterest* might be glamorous; others regard them as vulgar or outdated media brands. And when glamour acumen and glamour literacy are not distributed equally, the aesthetic component's share in the brand's identity cannot be fixed.

Based on these observations I would like to suggest the following hypothesis:

> Although identity is a surface phenomenon, is probably borrowed from other brands and is open for renegotiations, an identity needs commitment and authenticity to succeed.

To accept the dubiousness, ambiguousness and mysteriousness of a glam brand the audience probably needs the impression that the brand's stature within that (glam) community is deserved (Holt, 2002). The brand should not be devaluated as a parasite that appropriates and exploits the glam culture, but be perceived as part of a movement. The most important and shining example of glam-esteem and authenticity is not a magazine called Glamour, it's Condé Nast's French edition of the *Vogue* magazine that is perceived as *the* voice of the fashion industry that best reflects (and coproduces) the cultural zeitgeist: as *Vogue* still enjoys its role of a "style guide, trend-former, and cultural weathervane" (Gundle, 2008, p. 379) it is still *the* magnet for fashion photographers, models, make-up artists, designers, and journalists. And an authentic promise to its readers to be part of a global glam culture.

In other words: it might be easy to create glamorous media brands but to produce real glamour is a challenging endeavor. It not only asks for aesthetic literacy and updated management tools but also for the belief that this status is earned, not just produced. This makes the glam component not just a supplement (Holert & Munder, 2004), but a *strategic asset*.

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Research Note: Audience Perspectives on the Perceived Quality of Pure Play Distribution: A Cross-Platform Analysis

Ronen Shay

Abstract

This study examines adopters and non-adopters of pure play distribution across, print, audio, video, and gaming platforms through the lens of the Consumer Based Brand Equity (CBBE) model's seven dimensions of perceived quality. It attempts to mobilize brand management scholarship to better predict the likelihood of a consumer engaging in a pure play distribution transaction, and addresses the unique considerations associated with pure play media branding. Pure play products refer to media content sold as digital files and while the appeal for a media firm to engage in pure play distribution stems from economic efficiency, the increase in choice and availability offered to audiences has not produced a consistent level of consumer acceptance across all media platforms.

Keywords

Brand equity • Microsoft • Perceived quality • Pure play • Sony • Technology adoption

1 Introduction

The digital distribution of pure play media products via the Internet has enabled consumers to decide for themselves whether it is important to own a physical copy of their media products or not. Pure play products are media content retailed as digital files that can be downloaded or streamed from the Internet, and are not available from the digital distributor in a physical form like a Blu-Ray or paperback book (Ha & Ganahl, 2004). The benefit for a media firm to engage in pure play distribution stems from the ability to generate revenue from not only mainstream hit

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content, but from a high-volume of low demand products, since retailors are no longer constrained by the physical limitations of a brick and mortar retail location (Anderson, 2006). From a consumer's perspective pure play distribution offers convenience, à la carte pricing, and a greater variety of media products to choose from (Anderson, 2006).

Understanding when a media consumer is willing to engage in a pure play retail transaction is crucial to maintaining the perceived quality of one's brand. In the summer of 2013, *Microsoft* was surprised to find that video game consumers continued to show interest in owning physical copies of their games that they can share with their friends, and a console that would function without a connection to the Internet, both of which are not supported capabilities of a traditional pure play distribution system (McShea, 2013). The aforementioned challenges *Microsoft* had with understanding their consumers, ultimately weakened their core brand associations of value and fun, while simultaneously strengthening rival console developer *Sony*'s brand message of, "putting gamers first" (McShea, 2013). Current academic literature addresses pure play retail from a diffusion of innovations perspective (Lee, Brown, & Lee, 2011; Lin, 2009; Wei, 2001), and while exploring the factors that affect the rate of adoption is crucial to understanding consumers' purchase intentions; existing research does not ultimately address the brand implications of non-adopters. Non-adopters remain viable sources of customer-based brand equity because their status as non-adopters is contextually dependent on their latent thoughts and feelings on the ownership of physical media products, which may not remain static from transaction to transaction.

The Consumer Based Brand Equity (CBBE) model explains that a consumer's perception of the overall quality or superiority of a product compared to alternatives that achieve the same purpose ultimately influences their willingness to engage with a brand (Keller, 2008). Accordingly, should pure play distribution and brick and mortar media retail be assessed by consumers along the seven dimensions of perceived quality, an understanding of when a media consumer is willing to engage in a pure play retail transaction may be identified. The identification of the aforementioned theorized relationship would have practical implications for both media and brand managers looking to strategically position themselves to earn revenue from pure play adopters, while simultaneously maintaining a positive brand image with non-adopters that may engage in pure play distribution in a future transaction. Further implications exist for brick and mortar retailers who are interested in maintaining their existing consumer base, or forecasting their future market potential.

The purpose of this chapter is to assess consumers' attitudes and preferences towards pure play distribution, and how those perspectives can be synthesized through the application of CBBE model's seven dimensions of perceived quality to potentially identify what parameters must be present for a consumer to engage in a pure play media transaction. First, an empirical answer to the question of whether non-adopters of pure play media are mutually exclusive from adopters will be established in order to ensure the dynamic role of non-adopters as differential sources of brand value is not subjectively assumed, but objectively established.

Second, multiple regression analysis will be used to answer whether perceived quality can be applied as a multidimensional quantitative construct to predict a consumer's willingness to engage in a pure play media transaction. This will also establish which dimensions of perceived quality should be the focus of media branding initiatives on different platforms, and may lead to new empirical applications of the CBBE model when studying pure play media markets. Finally, a baseline measure of consumer acceptance of pure play distribution across platforms will be established to demonstrate that brand managers can extract market intelligence from consumers in order to maintain their brand's perceived quality while strategically positioning themselves for future growth.

2 Stages of Consumer Adoption

An individual's decision to adopt or reject pure play distribution can be traced through Rogers (2003) five stages of diffusion; a continuum of experiences a customer goes through upon first encountering a disruptive innovation. The five stages are (Rogers, 2003), (1) knowledge: at this stage the consumer encountered the innovation for the first time, but is unfamiliar with the technology, and is not actively seeking out new information about the product; (2) persuasion: at this stage the consumer is persuaded that the innovation may prove of use to them and thus begins actively seeking information about the product; (3) decision: having acquired information about the technology during the 'persuasion' stage, consumers now make a decision of whether to adopt or reject the innovation by assessing the strengths and weaknesses of the product; (4) implementation: should the consumer decide to adopt the technology, they will first do so in a limited capacity to assess its usefulness in different situations. This may require the consumer to seek out further product information in order to inform themselves on how better to integrate the technology in their lives; and (5) confirmation: at this stage the consumer reaffirms their decision to adopt the technology, by assessing whether they made the correct decision.

From a consumer's perspective non-adoption is encouraged by any technology that creates an inconsistency with a person's pre-conceived notions of how that product should be consumed and distributed (Baran & Davis, 2012; IEE, 2005). These inconsistencies when contextually applied to pure play distribution could explain why some individuals choose to purchase physical books, as the idea of a print media product not being tangible is inconsistent with that consumer's pre-conceived notion of how print media should be delivered (Baran & Davis, 2012). Opportunities for the introduction of inconsistencies can happen at any stage of the five stages of diffusion, and generally leads to rejection and ultimately non-adoption (Rogers, 2003). An example of an inconsistency that can occur during the confirmation stage is buyer's remorse, where after assessing personal feelings on a transaction consumers realize that they should have gone about acquiring their product differently (Rosenzweig & Gilovich, 2011).

The success of pure play distribution across the print, audio, video, and gaming platforms is heavily dependent on the reduction or elimination of the cognitive inconsistencies associated with no longer owning a physical copy of one's media (Bilton, 2013). Music and video have achieved a variety of success in this department by implementing social networking functionalities to emulate the physical sharing of music through shared playlists (Sony, 2013), and video through user generated ranking schema (e.g., *Netflix*'s new genre category "This is what's popular on Facebook"). Print and gaming have faced greater challenges as there is a tangible element to flipping the pages of a book that cannot be simulated in a digital environment (MacMillan, 2007), and the sharing of pure play video games is currently not supported (McShea, 2013). While the aforementioned challenges may limit the diffusion of pure play distribution on certain platforms, the argument could be made that the feedback loop that exists in contemporary media markets maintains the relevance of non-adopters both as potential future consumers and opinion leaders. Furthermore, as a single customer can easily choose to download an mp3 and then later purchase a physical paperback book, should brand managers continue to perceive non-adopters as mutually exclusive from adopters? In order to ensure the dynamic role of non-adopters being proposed is not subjectively assumed the following research question is proposed:

RQ1: Are non-adopters of pure play media (books, magazines newspapers, television, movies, music, and video games) mutually exclusive from adopters, or are there dynamic consumers that regularly consume both physical and pure play copies of their media?

3 Perceived Quality and the CBBE Model

Understanding which factors affect a consumer's perceived superiority of a distribution system will allow firms to strategically create positive brand equity to mitigate cognitive inconsistencies consumers feel towards pure play distribution (Keller, 2008). The CBBE model explains that a consumer's latent beliefs about the perceived quality of a product in comparison to alternatives that accomplish the same goal, influences their willingness to engage with a brand (Keller, 2008). Accordingly, measuring a consumer's beliefs about the perceived quality of pure play distribution will ultimately reveal latent attitudes that are affecting their behavior.

The CBBE model has identified the seven following dimensions for measuring perceived quality (Keller, 2008): (1) performance: how well the primary characteristics of the product operate; (2) features: secondary product features that complement the primary characteristics; (3) conformance quality: whether the product is free of defects and meets specifications; (4) reliability: consistency of product performance over time; (5) durability: expected life of the product; (6) serviceability: ease of maintaining the product should problems arise; and (7) style and design: appearance and feel of the product. The dimensions of perceived quality have been successfully applied in a variety of studies that assess consumer response to brand extensions of technology firms (Story & Loroz, 2005), brick and mortar store brands (Yang, 2012), as well as overall consumer-based brand equity (Severi & Ling, 2013). Ultimately, perceived quality is the appropriate scale for measuring a consumer's preference between the functional alternatives of pure play distribution and brick and mortar retail, as it is theoretically supported by the CBBE model and empirically supported by the aforementioned studies, demonstrating the reliability and validity of its dimensions. As such, the following research question is posited to establish which dimensions of perceived quality should be the focus of pure play media branding initiatives on different media platforms:

RQ2: Does perceived quality predict the likelihood of a consumer engaging in a pure play distribution transaction? Do certain dimensions of perceived quality have unique relationships with specific media platforms?

While the CBBE model provides standardized dimensions by which to measure perceived quality, it does maintain that differences in brand equity ultimately manifest themselves based on consumers' individual experiences with different products over time (Keller, 2008). This provides insight into the continued existence of functional alternatives to pure play distribution, as ultimately some consumers will have had such positive experiences with the physical ownership of their media products, they would rationally want to continue their familiar usage (Bilton, 2013). The convergence paradigm can be used to further reconcile the continued existence of functional alternatives, as it explains that old media no longer becomes obsolete, but actually interacts with new media in unexpected ways, maintaining their existence on the basis of fulfilling some core human demand the level of which differs from consumer to consumer (Jenkins, 2008) (e.g., the need to own and collect a physical comic book). Accordingly, older media platforms become a node in a larger communication system, where their social status may rise or fall (Jenkins, 2008). Understanding in what scenarios each distribution method is preferred would provide media brand managers with useful information on how best to strategically position their content on different platforms, and potentially lead to the development of hybrid distribution strategies that do not alienate non-adopters, but understand and accept their preferences by allowing consumers to choose either a physical media product or engage in a pure play transaction. In an effort to establish a baseline measure of consumer acceptance of pure play distribution across media platforms the following research question is proposed:

RQ3: What preferences do consumers have towards pure play distribution across media platforms?

4 Methods

4.1 Procedure

As the identification of latent behavioral characteristics is an appropriate use of survey methodology (Babbie, 2007), an online questionnaire was developed in order to assess the seven dimensions of *perceived quality* as the independent variables: (1) performance, (2) features, (3) conformance quality, (4) reliability, (5) durability, (6) serviceability, and (7) style and design; and *likelihood to engage in a pure play media transaction* as the dependent variable. As this is a cross-platform analysis of books, magazines, newspapers, television, movies, music, and video games the aforementioned independent and dependent variables will be assessed for each respective platform.

The survey instrument was developed using the Qualtrics Research Suite, and after receiving approval from the local Institutional Review Board the questionnaire was administered to a student sample at a southeastern university. Subjects were drawn from undergraduate classes, and received course credit for participation. The questionnaire was sent to the students via email by their respective professors, and informed consent was obtained from all participants. While a convenient sample faces severe limitations in generalizability and representativeness (Babbie, 2007), the purposive benefits of using a sample from a demographic that has likely to have formulated opinions on pure play distribution justifies using a convenient sample to ensure study completion. It is recommended that further research be conducted using a national random sample, as to substantiate the generalizability of any potential results beyond a student population.

Having acquired an original data set of 207 students, descriptive statistics will first be used to address RQ 1; multiple regression analysis will then be used to test whether the dimensions of perceived quality acting as independent variables can be used to predict the likelihood of a consumer engaging in a pure play distribution transaction (dependent variable). A separate regression analysis will be conducted for each platform. Multiple regression analysis was appropriately selected to answer RQ 2 as the purpose is to see if a collection of metric independent variables can be used to predict a single metric dependent variable (Hair, Black, Babin, & Anderson, 2010). Finally to address RQ 3 a cross-platform comparison of a respondent's preference for a physical or pure play book, magazine, newspaper, television program, movie, music and video game will be conducted.

4.2 Operational Definitions

Adoption/Non-adoption of Pure Play Distribution The measures for current ownership/purchasing of both physical and digital copies of books, magazines, newspapers, movies, television, music, and video games, were assessed by a dichotomous scale ("yes" = 1 and "no" = 0).

Consumer Demographics For this study, gender was assessed by a dichotomous scale. Age was measured on an interval scale in years (e.g. 22). Race was assessed using the categories of American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian, Black or African American, Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, White, and other (Ha & Stoel, 2009). Income was assessed using twelve categories that ranged from under \$20,000 to \$120,000 or more. The categories increased in increments of \$10,000 (e.g., \$20,000–\$29,999; \$30,000–\$39,999, etc.). Employment was assessed using the categories of not currently in paid employment, working part time paid employment (less than 35 h per week), working full time paid employment (35 or more hours per week), and other forms of paid employment. Education was assessed using the categories of Did not finish High School, High School Diploma, Professional Certificate, Associate Degree, Bachelor's Degree, and other. Major was assessed using the categories business administration, journalism/communications, liberal arts/sciences, and other programs/majors.

Likelihood of Media Ownership/Transaction Potential future ownership/purchasing of both physical and digital copies of books, magazines, newspapers, movies, television, music, and video games was measured on a five-point Likert scale where "5" meant "Very Likely" and "1" meant "Very Unlikely".

Platform Preference Platform preference was assessed by asking a respondent whether they agreed or disagreed with a statement that indicated a preference for either a physical or pure play copy of books, magazines, newspaper, movies, television programs, video games, and music when given the option to choose. Responses were assessed using the categories, disagree, no preference, agree, and not applicable/I do not use that type of media.

Seven Dimensions of Perceived Quality (1) Performance, (2) features, (3) conformance quality, (4) reliability, and (5) durability of pure play media were measured by a respondent's agreement or disagreement to a specific statement on a five-point Likert scale where "5" means "Strongly Agree" and "1" means "Strongly Disagree." Likert scaling was selected due to the unambiguous nature of the response categories (Babbie, 2007). If respondents were allowed to input their own original text it would be impossible to judge the relative strength of agreement across each case (Babbie, 2007). (6) Serviceability of both physical and pure play copies of media were assessed on a dichotomous scale ("If there was a problem or defect with a physical/digital copy of media, I would be able to get my copy serviced or replaced" = 1 and "I would not be able to get my copy serviced or replaced" = 0). (7) Style and design is a multidimensional construct assessed across two dimensions: (a) I prefer the design of digital only media; and (b) I prefer the style of digital only media. The dimensions were assessed using the categories disagree, no preference, and agree. The composite variable constructed was dichotomous with ("I do not prefer the style and design of digital only media" = 0 and "I prefer the style and design of digital only media" = 1). The composite was constructed by classifying all respondents who indicated they agreed to both dimensions as one group, and those who disagreed with one or both dimensions as another group.

5 Findings

Consumer Demographics Approximately 66 % of the respondents ($N = 207$) were female, and 34 % were male. The mean age of the respondents was 21. Approximately 81 % were between the ages of 19–21 with the remaining 19 % between 22 and 28. Approximately 77.2 % of respondents were White, 8.7 % were Black or African American, and 14.1 % were other races. Approximately 90 % of respondents indicated their income was under $20,000. Approximately 50.2 % of respondents indicated their highest level of education completed was a high school diploma, 40.1 % had an associate degree, 9.2 % had a bachelor's degree, and one respondent had some college experience. Approximately 63 % of the respondents indicated that the college program/major they were enrolled in was journalism and communications, 16 % in liberal arts and sciences, 10 % in business administration, and 11 % in other programs/majors. Approximately 51 % of respondents indicated they were not currently in paid employment, 45 % were working part time paid employment (less than 35 h per week), and 4 % had other forms of paid employment.

RQ1 Are non-adopters of pure play media (books, magazines newspapers, television, movies, music, and video games) mutually exclusive from adopters, or are there dynamic consumers that regularly consume both physical and pure play copies of their media?

Adoption/Non-adoption of Pure Play Distribution Approximately 46 % of the respondents indicated they currently purchase both *pure play* and *physical copies* of movies, 41 % for books, 34 % for music, 18 % for video games, 17 % for television, 12 % for magazines, and 6 % for newspapers (Table 1). The existence of consumers who engage in the purchase of both pure play and physical copies of their media products empirically challenges the perception that non-adopters of pure play media are mutually exclusive from adopters.

Likelihood of Media Ownership/Transaction Approximately 38 % of the respondents indicated they are likely or very likely to purchase both *physical and digital* copies of movies in the future, 34 % for books, 26 % for music, 16 % for television, 15 % for video games, 15 % for magazines, and 9 % for newspapers (Table 2). The variance observed between those who currently purchase pure play and physical media products, and those who are likely or very likely to in the future empirically supports the dynamic role of non-adopters proposed.

Table 1 Frequency of respondents that currently engage in the purchase of pure play and physical copies of their media products ($N = 207$)

	Books (%)	Magazines (%)	Movies (%)	Music (%)	Newspapers (%)	Television (%)	Video games (%)
Pure play	47	18	78	85	20	71	24
Physical copies	72	38	55	39	16	21	35
Both	41	12	46	34	6	17	18

Table 2 Frequency of respondents that are likely or very like to engage in the purchase of pure play and physical copies of their future media products ($N = 207$)

	Books (%)	Magazines (%)	Movies (%)	Music (%)	Newspapers (%)	Television (%)	Video games (%)
Pure play	43	21	81	82	26	76	22
Physical copies	67	36	44	29	16	22	28
Both	34	15	38	26	9	16	15

RQ2 Does perceived quality predict the likelihood of a consumer engaging in a pure play distribution transaction? Do certain dimensions of perceived quality have unique relationships with specific media platforms?

Seven Dimensions of Perceived Quality Audience perspectives ($N = 207$) on pure play distribution were assessed along the seven dimensions of perceived quality using a regression analysis to test whether a linear equation could be used to predict the likelihood of a consumer engaging in a pure play distribution transaction. A significant regression equation was obtained for each platform tested (see Table 3) supporting the notion that perceived quality can be used to help predict the likelihood of a consumer engaging in a pure play distribution transaction. Furthermore, media brand managers operating in a pure play environment should be aware that unique relationships exist between certain dimensions of perceived quality and specific media platforms, as outlined below.

Summary of Statistically Significant Dimensions of Perceived Quality The best predictor of engaging in a pure play *book* transaction was (7) Style and Design, followed by (3) Conformance Quality. The best predictor of engaging in a pure play *magazine* transaction was (7) Style and Design, followed by (4) Reliability. The single best predictor of engaging in a pure play *movie* transaction was (1) Performance. The best predictor of engaging in a pure play *music* transaction was (1) Performance, followed by (2) Features. The best predictor of engaging in a pure play *newspaper* transaction was (4) Reliability, followed by (7) Style and Design. The single best predictor of engaging in a pure play *television* transaction was (1) Performance. The best predictor of engaging in a pure play *video game* transaction was (7) Style and Design, followed by (2) Features.

Table 3 Summary of regression analyses for significant variables predicting pure play transactions ($N = 207$)

	B	SE B	β	Sig.
Music				
(1) Performance	0.548	0.111	0.348	0.000
(2) Features	0.172	0.074	0.161	0.021
$R^2 = 0.198$; Adjusted $R^2 = 0.169$; ($p < 0.01$), $df = 7$				
Video game				
(2) Features	−0.161	0.076	−0.180	0.036
(7) Style and design	0.994	0.331	0.203	0.003
$R^2 = 0.145$; Adjusted $R^2 = 0.115$; ($p < 0.01$), $df = 7$				
Television				
(1) Performance	0.249	0.115	0.164	0.032
$R^2 = 0.107$; Adjusted $R^2 = 0.075$; ($p < 0.01$), $df = 7$				
Movie				
(1) Performance	0.601	0.109	0.412	0.000
$R^2 = 0.171$; Adjusted $R^2 = 0.142$; ($p < 0.01$), $df = 7$				
Newspaper				
(4) Reliability	0.327	0.124	0.198	0.009
(7) Style and design	0.733	0.293	0.172	0.013
$R^2 = 0.079$; Adjusted $R^2 = 0.047$; ($p < 0.05$), $df = 7$				
Magazine				
(4) Reliability	0.254	0.127	0.148	0.047
(7) Style and design	0.822	0.280	0.202	0.004
$R^2 = 0.079$; Adjusted $R^2 = 0.046$; ($p < 0.05$), $df = 7$				
Book				
(3) Conformance quality	0.248	0.109	0.167	0.024
(7) Style and design	0.760	0.312	0.166	0.016
$R^2 = 0.1$; Adjusted $R^2 = 0.069$; ($p < 0.01$), $df = 7$				

RQ3 What preferences do consumers have towards pure play distribution across media platforms?

Summary of Mode Measurements of Platform Preference Approximately 84 % of the respondents ($N = 207$) indicated they prefer a *physical copy* of a *book*. Approximately 53 % of the respondents indicated they prefer a *physical copy* of a *magazine*. Approximately 50 % of the respondents indicated they prefer a *pure play* copy of a *movie*, as opposed to a physical home video. Approximately 38 % of the respondents indicated they prefer *pure play music*. Approximately 59 % of the respondents indicated they prefer a *physical copy* of a *newspaper*. Approximately 43 % of the respondents indicated they have *no preference* between *pure play television and physical copies of television programs* (in Fig. 1 this was combined with the 2.4 % that indicated the question was not applicable to them as they do not use that type of media). Approximately 39 % of the respondents indicated they have

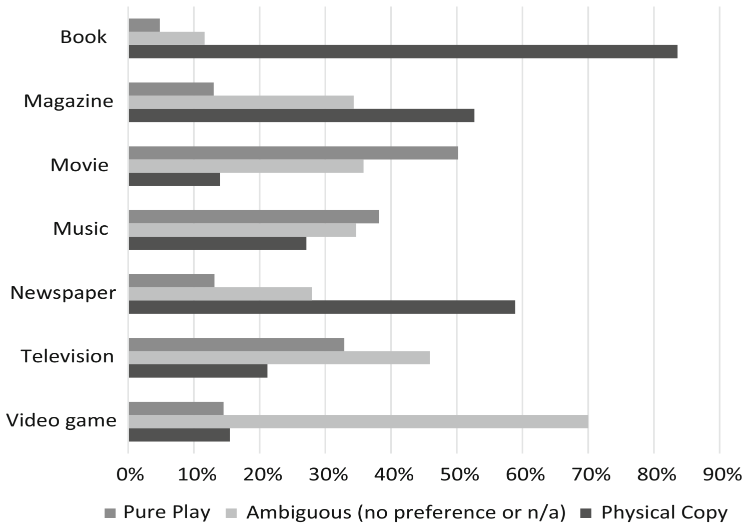

Fig. 1 Summary of *platform preference* by media type ($N = 207$)

no preference between *pure play video games* and *physical copies of video games* (in Fig. 1 this was combined with the 30.9 % that indicated that the question was not applicable to them as they do not use that type of media).

6 Discussion and Conclusion

RQ1 looked to determine whether non-adopters of pure play books, magazines, newspapers, television, movies, music, and video games are mutually exclusive from adopters, or whether dynamic consumers that consume both exist. The findings reveal that every single platform featured consumers who currently purchase both physical and digital copies of their media products with movies (46 % of respondents), books (41 %), and music (34 %) leading the charge. Furthermore the variance demonstrated by those who currently purchase both pure play and physical media products, and those who are likely or very likely to in the future provides additional evidence for the dynamic role of non-adopters proposed. This confirmatory finding empirically supports the notion that non-adopters of pure play technologies remain viable sources of customer-based brand equity because their status as non-adopters is contextually dependent on each individual transaction. Accordingly, brand managers must give consideration to the idea that a consumer's acceptance or rejection of pure play technology from transaction to transaction may be in conflict with their overarching brand message.

This was the case when *Xbox One* was looking to foster positive brand associations with their implementation of digital-only gaming initiatives (McShea, 2013). Instead of appearing as if they were adding brand value through the direct distribution of new games to consumer's homes, consumers felt they were removing value as a result of the technological restrictions of pure play distribution (e.g., no sharing games) (McShea, 2013). While *Microsoft*'s overarching plan for their *Xbox* division may be to eventually become digital only, by treating adopters of pure play distribution mutually exclusive from non-adopters, they successfully alienated both consumers who exclusively purchase physical copies of games, and those who fluctuate between physical copies and pure play. In this study, 35 % of respondents indicated they currently purchase physical copies of their video games, while 18 % of respondents indicated they purchase both types. Instead of choosing to alienate these customers brand managers that find themselves in a similar situation should look to implement a hybrid distribution system that introduces new consumers to pure play distribution, while continuing to offer physical products until such a time that consume sentiment does not conflict with desired brand associations. This will increase the likelihood of maintaining a positive brand image with non-adopters in the interim.

Brand managers looking to expedite this process should use the appropriate dimensions of perceived quality to focus and enhance their pure play media branding initiatives. The findings from RQ2 provide specific insights into the unique considerations associated with different pure play media platforms. For example, engaging in a pure play music transaction is heavily dependent on (1) performance and (2) features. This could be in reference to enhanced digital audio quality (i.e., performance), and the popularity of ripping, burning, and sharing music, which could be considered secondary features. A pure play video game transaction is heavily dependent on (7) style and design. This maintains face validity as it is likely a consumer will want some kind of added design elements in order to opt out of owning a physical copy of a game. A pure play television transaction is heavily dependent on (1) performance. Real market events are consistent with this result, as pure play television distributors like *Netflix* and *Hulu* are causing larger volumes of *cord cutters* and *never cords* to form by offering a substitutable service that performs at the same or greater quality (Edwards, 2013; Serrano, 2009). A pure play movie transaction is heavily dependent on (1) performance. This is consistent with the aforementioned results regarding television, and could be a requirement for acceptance of pure play video in general. A pure play newspaper transaction is heavily dependent on (4) reliability, and (7) style and design. Brand managers of electronic newspapers should look to ensure they maintain the integrity of their journalism (i.e., reliability), while simultaneously presenting their content in an attractive way (i.e., style and design). A pure play magazine transaction is heavily dependent on (4) reliability, and (7) style and design. This is consistent with the aforementioned results regarding newspapers, and could be a requirement for acceptance of pure play non-fiction print transactions. Finally, a pure play book transaction is heavily dependent on (3) conformance quality and (7) style and design. Grassroots brand managers that may not be able to invest in all seven dimensions of perceived quality, should look to focus on the aforementioned factors when dealing with student populations. Doing so will allow for strategically positioning branded content to encourage pure play adoption.

While perceived quality did prove to have a predictive relationship with a consumer's likelihood of engaging in a pure play transaction, further research should be conducted to see if the predictive power and unique relationships identified remain consistent on a mass generalizable scale. Accordingly, it is recommended that future studies use a national random sample so they can be inferential in nature, instead of exploratory. Despite these limitations consideration should be given to using the methodological framework of this study as a foundation for future empirical assessments of perceived quality in a pure play environment. Additionally the successful application of perceived quality as a predictive scale for pure play media adoption may warrant additional investigations into new and contemporary applications of other CBBE model constructs.

Finally, RQ3 looked to assess the similarities and differences among consumer preferences towards pure play and physical media products across platforms. The findings of this study demonstrate that print media is generally preferred in physical form (84 % for books, 53 % for magazines, and 59 % for newspapers); and that video is more acceptable in a pure play form (50 % movies, 39 % for video games and 33 % for television), followed by music (38 %). An unexpected result was that the majority of respondents (44 %) indicated they have no preference between pure play television and physical copies of television programs. This supports the media branding 3.0 notion (see Chan-Olmsted & Shay, 2015) that consumers are becoming less concerned with platform specific parent brands, and are more likely to respond to integrated content, brand storytelling, and experiential marketing. The findings of RQ3 also highlight the importance of extracting marketing intelligence from consumers prior to positioning a brand for pure play distribution.

Establishing a baseline measure of consumer acceptance of pure play distribution will ensure that core brand associations of new product lines are not in conflict with consumers' pre-conceived notions of how media should be consumed and distributed. Ultimately, as media firms continue to roll out digital distribution strategies at a time when web 3.0 technologies continue to empower consumers, the potential for innovations to be throttled by non-adopters will continue to exist. Accordingly, it is only by understanding the consumer better that brand managers can hope to mobilize non-adopters as a positive sources of brand equity, as the feedback loop that exists in contemporary media markets maintains their relevance both as opinion leaders and potential future consumers.

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Part III

The Product Perspective: Media Brands as Branded Content

Emerging Industry Issues and Trends Influencing the Branding of Media Content

Walter S. McDowell

Abstract

Rarely can one media firm possess a piece of equipment, computer software, organizational structure, business model or distribution platform that cannot be copied by rivals. On the other hand, exclusive and legally protected branded *content* is far more likely to offer a genuine competitive advantage. This chapter looks at emerging trends and issues influencing the branding of media content from an industry perspective. Using the overlapping lenses of technology, economics and regulation, the chapter consolidates hundreds of contemporary industry trade articles published in the U.S into a parsimonious "literature review" of basic themes. The work concludes with a recommendation that academics routinely study industry trade articles as a means to keep their research and teaching agendas relevant to the real world of media brand management.

Keywords

News brands • Multiple platforms • Business models • Streaming services • Audience behaviour

1 Industry Issues and Trends Influencing the Branding of Media Content

To withstand the daily barrage of audience choices, media brands today are challenged to generate extraordinary content that will exploit new technologies, defy imitation, thwart competition, promote audience loyalty, attract advertisers, renew subscribers, deserve copyright protection and at the end of the day, make

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money! Addressing these challenges and recognizing that too often academic researchers lose touch with real-world media practitioners, this chapter looks at emerging issues and trends influencing the branding of media content from an industry perspective.

Of all the assets a media firm may possess, rarely can it boast a piece of equipment, computer software, organizational structure, business model or distribution platform that cannot be copied readily by rivals. Conversely unique *content*, possessing an easily recognized and highly respected brand name, is far more likely to be immune from competitive attack. This chapter consolidates hundreds of contemporary industry trade articles published in the U.S into a "literature review" covering for the most part 7 months (October 2013–April 2014) with a few exceptions. No doubt the issues and trends revealed in this chapter will be displaced quickly by new industry challenges and therefore a more enduring goal of this chapter was to demonstrate how this glut of information can be curated into a parsimonious grouping of useful themes. This informal processing is similar to a qualitative content analysis in that the author conducted "a data reduction and sense-making effort that takes a volume of qualitative material and attempts to identify core consistencies and meaning" (Patton, 2002, p. 453) without necessarily counting incidences.

For this endeavor the term *content* refers to professionally created media products distributed to audiences with the goal to make money through various business models, most notably advertising and subscription. Article references offer specific periodical examples taken from a much larger database. Many referenced articles do not explicitly use the term *brand*, but they still are noted because of their implied brand-related topics.

1.1 Coping with Convergence

A recent trade publication headline asserts "Content, Under Pressure: Production and Distribution Continue to Converge" and indeed the notion of media convergence is never far away from conversations among media professionals (Holloway, 2014). Digital technology has been the primary catalyst for generating an unprecedented amount of media content that is available to audiences anywhere, anytime, via any platform displayed on any device. Inexorably the partitions separating one medium from another are disappearing quickly. Today content providers must be "platform agnostic" and focus on ways to take advantage of this convergence (Woodrooffe & Levy, 2012). One innovative example is the recognition that the computer tablet increasingly has become the 'first screen' for many pre-school-age viewers. As a response, *Walt Disney* has made the initial nine episodes of an upcoming prominent kids' series "Sheriff Callie's Wild West" available on mobile devices *first*, before distributing it to cable outlets (Barnes, 2013).

Content itself may be influenced by the platform selected. A research executive states that "The average web user today accesses the internet on multiple platforms and has different *value drivers* for each platform and access method" (Goodman, 2013). That is, the identical content may not be appreciated in the same manner across all platforms. In particular content providers are paying close attention to how audiences make use of small 7- to 10-in. tablets and 4-to 6-in. smartphones. For example one article proclaims that "…the entire creative world is now focusing on delivery of short-form content for an audience. Every pundit in mobile is examining how long someone will actually watch content on mobile devices" (Krechman, 2013). The challenge is to somehow accommodate the technology without losing the brand. A few years ago BBC television executive Rosie Allimonos anticipated the onrush of multiple platforms and warned that "If you're going to extend a show in any way, you have to figure out (first) what its DNA is, what its essence is as a brand. Then you can carry that over to different platforms and decide if there is anything new to be added to the mix." (Levy, 2011).

1.2 More Streaming Opportunities Change Audience Behavior

Considerable press coverage has been focused on video and audio Internet-based *streaming*, offering serious competition to cable and satellite pay TV services. Dozens of start-up streaming companies are expected to join established services, such as *Netflix, Hulu, You Tube* and *Pandora*, in exploiting this relatively new distribution tool (Cohan, 2013). One industry journalists asserts "With its new array of online options for viewing media—not to mention the increasing amount of original content created for online audiences—the internet has become a disruptive influence on the traditional television business, plain and simple" (McMillan, 2013).

The physical and social environment for experiencing streamed content is changing rapidly with the introduction of big-screen, high definition (HD) "smart TVs." These devices encourage audiences to break away from small-screen computers, typically ensconced in dens or bedrooms, and move to larger *family rooms* that foster group interactions associated more often with conventional TV/cable viewing (Friedman, 2014; Wang, 2013). Branding professionals cannot ignore this transformation in audience behavior. Streamed content is no longer handicapped by screen size.

1.3 Increased Time-Shifted Viewing and Birth of the Binge

When 7-day, time-shifted data are added to "live" TV ratings, some programs nearly double their audience size. One media observer has proclaimed that "This is clearly shaping up as the season of the DVR" (Fitzgerald, 2013). In addition, major broadcast and cable networks now make old episodes of prime-time programming available on-demand through several distribution technologies, including cable and Internet streaming. Audiences are taking advantage of time-shifting opportunities to experience program content at their convenience. The time-honored strategies of program scheduling (e.g. lead in, tent poling, stripping and counter programming) are fading away quickly. This means that to attract audiences programs today must rely more on their stand-alone audience brand equity and less on clever scheduling.

Time-shifting also has stimulated an audience-viewing phenomenon called *binge viewing* in which individuals watch dozens of archived episodes of one program in one sitting. Online streaming firms are credited with inventing the "binge-a-thon", particularly *Netflix,* which typically offers all episodes of its newly created original series, such as "*House of Cards*", for a nominal fee (Adalian, 2013). Media branding researchers need to investigate whether time-shifted over-indulgence of content can hurt the long-term attraction and equity of the brand.

Another burning question is how can advertising-based content providers make money from these stored program inventories? One article headline states "Comcast Tests New Ad Tech to Help Networks Capture Binge Viewers" and indeed the firm is testing new technology that will insert up-to-date commercials into past episodes of TV shows (Faughnder, 2013).

1.4 Print Media Increase Video Content

Conventional print media continue to introduce moving video into their website presentations. From *Rolling Stone* and *People Magazine* to *The New York Times* and *Forbes*, these media brands are integrating videos within text articles (Cohan, 2013). According to one media consultant, print media are doing this "because they are at a point in their business where they are trying to figure out how to extend their brand and content onto every platform. They understand that this is a must for survival" (Sokoloff, 2013). In an effort to engage its loyal readers, *Cosmopolitan* magazine has gone a step further by introducing live streamed video of its weekly editorial pitch meeting, where "Online audiences are invited to spend almost an hour on a Tuesday afternoon watching editors awkwardly giggle while kicking around story ideas in a conference room" (Bloomington, 2013). As long-standing print media brands become more video oriented, brand managers need to be careful not to violate their brands' consumer-based equity, which may be rooted in the written word and credible journalism.

1.5 The "Second Screen" and Social Media

Among the most talked about topics among industry publications is the "second screen" use of social media, such as *Twitter* and *Facebook,* to engage TV audiences. Simultaneously interacting with more than one item of media content comes under the rubric of *media multitasking*, which typically involves audiences using laptops, tablets or smart phones while watching television. For example, researchers have found nearly 100 million tweets per month related to TV programming (often associated with binge viewing), all generated within 3 hours of each telecast, if not during the telecast itself (Hughes, 2013). Obviously astute brand managers should capitalize on this second screen audience interaction. From a brand monetizing perspective, an advertising agency executive observes that "*Twitter* has spent much of the past year touting its symbiotic relationship with TV, promoting its ability to harness data and insights for advertisers to reach those viewers" (Sloan, 2014).

1.6 Research Drives Content Decision Making

A major movie producer states that "People are interested in a smarter, more accurate way to decide what to make and at what level.... Studios are all about the numbers. Instead of throwing money at a film or an actor and hoping for the best, there is a better, more analytic way to determine beforehand if a film (or TV show) is worth making, and at what specific dollar value" (Donahue, 2013). Now more than ever quantitative audience research drives content decision making, which in turn influences brand marketing strategies. A research buzzword found in many industry publications is "Big Data", referring to the acquisition of massive amounts of audience information that requires highly sophisticated database software tools. (Mandese, 2014a). This "ultra-granular" audience information enables companies to deliver specialized content and advertising messages to individuals based on what they've bought, what they've browsed, what they've clicked on in an email, what they've shared on *Facebook*, and so on. For example, *Netflix* uses the data collected from the viewing habits of its users to help recommend new movies and also to craft original television series (Weiss, 2014). As audience research techniques become ever-more sophisticated, content creators and distributors need to have their brands responsive to this newly acquired knowledge.

Although much content is now available on multiple distribution platforms, advertisers are reluctant to allocate significant budgets to these non-conventional "screens" because of a lack of reliable audience data. One insightful headline reads "Marketers Eager to Spend on Multiple Screens but Want Better Cross-Screen Metrics (Whitney, 2013). This is more of a business-to-business branding challenge.

1.7 Continued Consolidation of Media Ownership

As competition becomes more intense within a marketplace, a kind of natural selection occurs favoring the large synergistic organizations that can share resources and cross promote a family of niche brands. A media analyst notes that "Despite the hyper-fragmentation of the media marketplace, five suppliers still represent a critical mass of Madison Avenue's media-buying power." In particular, *Comcast, Disney, CBS, Time Warner* and *Google* control almost half of all national advertising revenue in the U.S. (Mandese, 2014b).

On a smaller local scale television station ownership has experienced unprecedented disruption in recent years with hundreds of stations being acquired by big group owners. For example, *The Tribune Company* recently agreed to pay $2.7

billion for 19 local stations, making it one of the largest groups of local affiliates in the United States (Stelter & Haughney, 2013). Whether examining media conglomerates or broadcast station group owners, the top-down "parent" or "portfolio" brand can influence dramatically the content creation and distribution of subsidiary brands.

This ongoing consolidation of media ownership in which the big get even bigger runs contrary to the new-age economic theory of the long tail, which foresees a golden era in which small-scale creative talent flourishes as never before. Digital technology supposedly has made music, books, movies and many other goods economically viable on a much smaller scale but reality has come crashing in on many new small enterprises. Research shows that relying on blockbuster hits and best sellers—popular brands—remains the most viable means for making profits. The reason? A professor of economics speculates that "today's tighter schedules have made people more reluctant to sift through the growing avalanche of options confronting them. Many consumers sidestep this unpleasantness by focusing on only the most popular entries" (Frank, 2014).

1.8 In Search of Viable Business Models

Either directly or indirectly, many articles addressed the nagging problem of making money or "monetizing" content through various Internet-based business models. For instance, *Facebook* has introduced a new ad video format that plays automatically when users check their news feeds (Lafayette, 2013). Advertising on the Internet has become more intrusive with some media critics complaining about ad clutter, such as "All Those Commercials on HuluPlus" (Martin, 2013).

Meanwhile thousands of media entrepreneurs have flooded the internet with content using *You Tube* owned by *Google*. These content producers permit *Google* to sell advertising that will appear on their sites in return for a hefty 45 % share of the revenue. The only problem according to one analyst is that "YouTube is uploading video content so quickly it can't sell enough ads to fill all the potential commercial slots" (Kaufman, 2014). Although a few content makers have gotten rich using *You Tube*, the vast majority have experienced disillusionment with the promise of long tail economics. As mentioned earlier, overabundance of choice ironically can become curse for small entrepreneurs that cannot push their brands into the marketing spotlight.

Audiences are expressing another kind of disillusionment with a business model by "cutting the cord" with their current Pay TV content services. Thousands of U.S households are cancelling subscriptions with cable, satellite and telco video providers and opting for less-expensive "Over the Top" streamed video content (Diallo, 2013). Underlying this abandonment is the fact that despite the hundreds of channels available, the typical U.S household watches regularly only about a dozen. Media branding professionals must remember that mere channel capacity does not assure adequate audience attraction to all channels.

1.9 News Brands Struggle to Survive

News brands in particular continue to struggle with obsolete business models, suffering dramatic losses in both subscriber and advertiser revenues. The sad result has been cutbacks, layoffs, buyouts and bankruptcies (Kohut, 2013). To offset diminishing advertising dollars, some well-established newspaper services are experimenting with a hybrid or "freemium" online business model in which a limited number of news items are offered free but eventually the website visitor will encounter a threshold or "pay wall" requiring a subscription or short-term usage fee (Gillette, 2013). Naturally, strong brands can make this idea work more effectively than lesser brands can. Audiences are reluctant to pay a premium price for "generic" news and information that can be acquired elsewhere for free. That is, in order to make money the branded news source must offer exceptional value.

Another problem facing news organizations is the influence of social media on the ways news content is gathered, disseminated and consumed. A media analyst explains that instead of professional journalists doing all the work, "News can be broken on *Twitter* by the participants in, or observers of a particular event. The journalist often becomes an interpreter, reacting to events. . ." (Jewel, 2013). Competing social media, such as *Facebook*, are now becoming "more Twitter like" in providing audience-generated news coverage (Delo, 2013).

At first user-generated content seemed like a great idea for engaging audiences and cultivating loyalty but there is a downside to all this audience participation, especially for news organizations. Exchanges among audience members must be controlled or "moderated" diligently by the website host. One media consultant cautions that "Unmoderated comments that contain insults, libelous claims, swear words and similar content will create a bad impression with well-behaved visitors and damage the site's brand and image." (Bateman, 2013).

1.10 "Native Advertising" Invades Media Content

For decades most respected media organizations maintained a management firewall between news content and advertising, but revenue problems have caused this wall to be breached (see Matteo & Zotto, 2015). Today many news organizations are succumbing to the controversial practice of "native advertising" which, for a price, allows advertisers to introduce their own long-form story content with subtly embed marketing messages. Prominent news brands, such *as Forbes, New York Times* and *MSNBC*, have entered this domain (O'Malley, 2014). The core issue is whether audiences truly recognize that a paid-for section of a publication or newscast is perceived as separate and distinct from surrounding content (Sass, 2013). Branding professionals should be concerned about possible effects of native advertising on the perceived credibility of a news brand. As one industry critic states "Billions of banner ad impressions may annoy readers, but they don't misdirect users by disguising the source of the message—and this is exactly what native does. If publishers and marketers aren't careful, they are going to poison the well of digital ad communications by breaking consumer trust" (Tso, 2013). And trust is at the core of any successful brand.

1.11 The Growth of Original Program Content on Cable and Online

Cable is losing its long-standing imagery as a place for old broadcast network reruns and is investing millions of dollars in creating original content not seen elsewhere. With 180 scripted original series scheduled for the 2014 season, an industry observer claims that "More important than numbers is the perception that cable is the place to turn for quality. It started with "*The Sopranos*," and continues with awards and critical attention showered on the likes of "*Mad Men*," "*Homeland*" and "*Breaking Bad*" The idea is reinforced when many of television's key creative minds argue that cable is the place to be" (Bayer, 2014). Of course original series are high risk ventures. Unlike established successful rerun brands, new unfamiliar branded content requires far more brand marketing effort and investment. An industry article states that "As *A&E* has made the push into running only original programming during primetime, its branding has naturally followed suit. A new tagline, 'Be Original' served as a literal proclamation of the new outlook" (Sanders, 2014).

Also, broadcast and cable are not the only sources of original content these days. For example, *Amazon*, which earned its brand equity from selling books and other retailed items, is now exploring original content pilots for its lesser-known streaming service (Baysinger, 2013). An intriguing question is can the *Amazon* brand be extended to just about anything?

1.12 Widening the Content Niche

A growing branding strategy intended to attract larger audiences is to widen the content niche. An example is the impressive audience growth of *The History Channel*, which seldom emphasizes conventional history topics, but instead, has stretched the brand to include hit programs, such as "*American Pickers*" and "*Pawn Stars*." The network's contrived slogan is now "making history every day." The widening of a niche, however, can jeopardize the perceived uniqueness of a brand by blurring its image. An audience researcher complains "How do you differentiate a cable brand? Viewers never know what to expect or which network they're watching. They all look the same and stand for nothing. 'Rebranding'... ends up being short on substance and big on window dressing" (Gunelius, 2013).

1.13 Protecting Branded Content Keeps Getting Harder

Converged multi-platform distribution of content creates nagging legal issues concerning copyright protection. Never before has there been such widespread and immediate access to such a broad array of creative content and never before has it been so easy to illegally copy and distribute multiple perfect copies of content to audiences. Are the laws keeping pace with technology? Greg Walden, Chairman of the House Communications and Technology Subcommittee bemoans "In the on-demand world of the Internet and mobility, the statutes that govern the video marketplace are blissfully ignorant of the changes that have taken place around them (Johnson, 2013).

Aside from Internet and mobility issues another problem garnering headlines for months has been broadcast retransmission consent for cable operators. In simple terms television broadcasters want to be paid by cable operators for the "retransmission" of program content to subscribers. Although the federal law covering retransmission consent was passed in 1992, cable companies didn't pay such fees and local stations didn't seriously begin demanding them until recently. The battle over these fees has sometimes gotten so heated that TV stations have been blacked out on local cable for lack of a consent deal (Friedman, 2013). From a branding point of view this controversy underscores the importance of protecting content through copyright and licensing.

2 Conclusion

In an overcrowded media marketplace, the best way to nurture a sustainable competitive advantage over rivals is to provide audiences with extraordinary branded *content*. This task is easier said than done and the best means of appreciating the ongoing efforts is to regularly scrutinize industry trade periodicals.

Realizing that this chapter is merely a perishable snapshot of ongoing topics, scholars need to keep abreast of the weekly tidal wave of industry activities. One way to prevent drowning is to employ techniques similar to those used in more formal qualitative content analyses. This "data reduction" at first may seem burdensome and time consuming but eventually, as the reader becomes more familiar and comfortable with the exercise, the processing accelerates and becomes almost effortless. And just as routine physical exercise often becomes a pleasurable experience, so "reading the trades" can become entertaining as well as enlightening.

Over time recurring themes typically will emerge and many scholars save pertinent articles electronically, filing them under ongoing themes or creating new themes when appropriate. From a teaching perspective, real-world case studies mirroring lecture or text topics can enhance the classroom experience for students. From a research perspective, a collection of similar articles can identify fresh topics for academic study.

Finally, routinely analyzing industry trade articles in a systematic way should encourage inter-disciplinary teaching and research opportunities. No single professor has a total grasp on all the intertwined technological, economic and regulatory aspects of media brand management; so let us tear down the artificial walls separating academic departments and *converge our thinking*!

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Branding Media Content: From Storytelling to Distribution

M. Bjørn von Rimscha

Abstract

In the context of production, it is sometimes claimed that content development and creation could and should learn from branding. I will argue that essentially it is the other way round. When content creation has been made more standardized the content becomes "brandable". Subsequently, branding handbooks and marketers are adopting simplified concepts of storytelling. In this sense, branding can be regarded as the commercialized version of standardized storytelling. Changes in the value chain of media production and distribution lead to the question of who shall be responsible for branding. Drawing from a study with audiovisual producers in Europe, it is illustrated that producers are reluctant to accept the branding of content as part of their changing job role. Thus, it is concluded that actually the content should not be branded at all, but rather that the distribution should be.

Keywords

Formulaic storytelling • Periodic table of storytelling • Content brand • Distribution brand • Wholesale brand • Branding competences

1 Formulaic Storytelling as Content Branding

Deriving from the available 'how-to literature' in screenwriting, one could assume that screenwriting is not all that creative. Some follow the idea of Campbell's (1949) and Vogler's (1992) "monomyth" (Clayton, 2007), that traces all stories back to one culturally universal quest of a hero. This hero is reluctant when he gets the call to adventure, but then he is encouraged by a mentor. He has to fight enemies

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to eventually reach the innermost cave where he receives the (material or immaterial) elixir that can solve the problem. Conclusively, the hero must make sure that this gift reaches his home world to restore order. Others believe that the monomyth can be differentiated further. They identify certain patterns such as the three-act structure (Field, 1984; McKee, 1997; Root, 1979), that can be traced back to Aristotle. McKee furthermore relates to Goethe's seven topic matters, Polti's (1895) list of 36 dramatic situations and Metz's (1968) eight syntagmas. Other authors forgo high profile testimonials and simply list "master plots" (Tobias, 1993) or "master characters" (Schmidt, 2001) which have proven successful.

In some respect, screenwriting textbooks thus resemble journalism textbooks: the guidelines for novices of the profession are the result of content analysis distilling successful elements of existing content. In that context master plots can be regarded as analogous to news values (Galtung & Ruge, 1965; Lippmann, 1922). On the one hand they reproduce professional standards; on the other hand they indicate consumer demand. Since recipients have also learned what to expect, both from news and from fiction, patterns of news values and story elements are self-perpetuating.

From this perspective, screenwriting resembles a package deal at a fast-food restaurant. Writers can choose a burger, a side, a salad and a beverage. They do have options as they can choose between e.g., 10 burgers, four sides, three salads and 10 beverages, and they can even choose their favorite sauce and decide whether they want ice in their drink. However, it will always be a fast food menu. In terms of storytelling this concept is taken to the extreme with the "periodic table of storytelling" (Harris, 2014). In analogy to the periodic table of chemical elements Harris list 176 story elements, such as 21 different heroes, 28 villains or 14 structures. Taking the analogy with chemistry even further, he suggests every story could be represented as a molecule that is a combination of certain story elements. Just as in chemistry some elements go together well while others do not. Furthermore, some story elements are more popular than others, so Harris provides a proxy measure for their popularity. A writer hoping to maximize his or her audience can use this information and might create a popular "classic hero" to fight a popular "manipulative bastard" rather than an unpopular "tragic hero" struggling with an unpopular "obstructive bureaucrat" as antagonist.

Storytelling by the "chemistry book" clearly has its upsides. The task for the writers is somewhat easier, and the resulting stories are more accessible for the audience as well as for those people in the industry who decide which stories to produce and turn into a media product. Thus storytelling by the book fits well with a strategy of "high concept" production of stories that can easily be summarized, whose originality can be conveyed briefly, and that consequently can easily be marketed (Wyatt, 1994).

Over the years, this approach to storytelling has been criticized from two directions. In the tradition of Horkheimer's and Adorno's (1969) critique of the "culture industry" a first group of observers believe that high concept would lead to dull stories that reproduce stereotypes. The result would be a depleted narration because for producers it would get difficult to appreciate more innovative and complex projects (Kapur, 2005). "All novelty or originality is subsumed under the conventions informing all mass market cultural representations—film, television, journalism, politics—assurances that what is to be seen and heard is the simplest, least threatening, and most easily assimilable of what has been decided we need to know" (Kolker, 1988, p. ix).[1] A second route of criticism relates to a certain level of cultural imperialism since the proposed monomyth or story elements might not be completely culturally universal. Thus, storytelling by the chemistry book would result in a cultural closure excluding other potentially interesting and enriching perspectives (Clayton, 2007).

Essentially storytelling using patterns and tested concepts serves the same function as branding. It reduces complexity; it guides expectations and it addresses issues resulting from the experience good characteristic. Putting the commercial aspect first, the possibility space for stories is reduced. Of the 176 story elements put forward by Harris, quite a few could be considered 'box-office poison' and thus should be avoided by writers of mass-market content. Hence, from a branding perspective the number of useable elements is much smaller. Formulaic storytelling can be seen as about halfway between free creativity and the set elements in a brand bible.

The limited set of brandable story elements can be used to create "branded entertainment". This concept has been introduced as a possible solution both for the funding problems of media producers and for the problems of marketers to reach their bored audience. More generally speaking, narration has been rediscovered as a powerful way of conveying messages: journalistic (Früh & Frey, 2014), or political (Lilleker, 2014) as well as commercial. Thus, some observers believe advertising and entertainment would have to converge to survive (Baetzgen & Tropp, 2013; Donaton, 2004). While branded entertainment describes essentially the result of this convergence, the expression can be read from two perspectives. From the content perspective it is merely a new word for high concept formulaic storytelling. From the advertising perspective it is the continuation of product placement strategies, when the brand becomes part of the storyline or even the starting point of a story. In fact, the longer formats of branded entertainment allow for more complex story lines than those of 30 seconds spots. However, marketers will not make use of the whole spectrum of potential story elements but rather stick to a set of proven formulas.

Even beyond branded entertainment, the concept of storytelling using archetypes has gained much attention in the literature on marketing (Dietrich & Schmidt-Bleeker, 2013; Fog, Budtz, & Yakaboylu, 2005; Gutjahr, 2013, pp. 149ff), commercial communication (Hilzensauer, 2014; Littek, 2011; von Matt, 2008), and even as a general management tool (Denning, 2006; Thier, 2010; Wentzel, Tomczak, & Herrmann, 2012). Regularly in these approaches, the idea of mythic

[1] While this criticism is widely shared, some authors argue it would be disproportionate since other quality aspects would be neglected and the quality of the media products from comparative periods would be exaggerated ex post (Nelson, 2013; Schauer, 2007).

structures in brand stories is simplified. Fog et al. (2005, pp. 37ff) for example presents a "fairy-tale model" of storytelling with just six character templates and one standard storyline. Gutjahr (2013) claims that all good stories should have a happy ending. He lists 13 archetypes that would help turn the product, the company founder or the brand as a whole into myths consumers could be bound to. Dietrich and Schmidt-Bleeker (2013) describe that the advertising industry has perverted and reduced the concept of storytelling to the notion that boring marketing messages would become less annoying when wrapped into a story. To overcome this they suggest brands should not *tell* the story but should *be* the story told by consumers. While they acknowledge the power of the consumer to interpret the brand, still this means marketers have to work with a reduced set of potential narrative elements.

An abstract understanding of branding the content reveals that the concept is not new at all. Formulaic storytelling has been around since ancient times. The only new thing about it is that the scope of potential stories has been more and more reduced. When media content is branded, it necessarily has to become repetitive to some extent in order to allow for a reliable brand. When non-media brands become content providers (Rose, 2013) recipients (consumers) should not expect too much in terms of storytelling. At the end of the day, these companies want to sell products or services rather than stories.

But what about the producers? How do they perceive the concept of branding and how willing are they to engage in this? To answer these questions the following section will provide some insights from a study of audio-visual producers in Europe, who are quite reluctant to step up their efforts in terms of branding.

2 Branding Distribution or Branding the Content?

Media brands come in a great variety. Some media brands are *distributor brands*. These brands can promise ease of use in accessing more or less any content (e.g., *Amazon*, *Youtube*) or they can promise to offer a reliable service in selecting a certain flavor of content (e.g., special interest TV broadcasters such as *DMAX* in Germany). Siegert refers to this type of brands as "umbrella brands" (Siegert, 2001, pp. 142–144). A second type of media brand is the *wholesale brand* on the procurement market for distributors. If, for example, a German speaking TV broadcaster such as *RTL II* wants to buy the rights to Asian or Bollywood movies it will most likely turn to *RapidEyeMovies* which has built a strong brand as a rights trader in this segment. Finally, media brands can be *content brands*. In this case, a single show is the brand. Obviously one-off productions are less likely to become brands since there are no recurring elements that could become brand elements. Thus, branded content is most likely a series, a serial, a recurring show or a (movie) franchise. Alternatively, individual shows can become "temporary brands" or they can be bundled to "sequential brands" (Siegert, 2001, pp. 147–148).

These three types of media brands along the value chain point to the question: who should be in charge of creating and nurturing the media brand? Obviously, in the traditional value chain a production company cannot be in charge of the distributor brand as an umbrella brand. But possibly the distributor wants to have a say in the creation and management of the brand of shows he has commissioned. Esch and Langner (2003, pp. 250–251) identify the "rigor of the brand management" as the most important aspect of branding in supply chains.

Rigor can be achieved more easily if the procured product is fairly standardized and if the supplier is fully funded. In the relation of *RedBull* to the producer of the actual soft drink, as an example, these conditions are clearly met. However, the relationship between the TV broadcaster and TV producers shows all characteristics of a principal agent problem (Fröhlich, 2010, pp. 87–91). There is an inherent uncertainty in the process since the use value of the resulting product in not known by the time the contract is closed. The two have asymmetric information: while the broadcaster has more information about the potential audience, the producers have more information about the necessary aspects of the production process. They also have divergent objectives: while broadcasters want to maximize the audience, at least some producers also pursue creative or cultural goals (von Rimscha & Siegert, 2011). Furthermore, many broadcasters no longer fully fund a commissioned production. They allow the producers to retain certain rights, e.g., the rights to license the program abroad, but in return they only pay for a share of the budget. This reinforces the problem of divergent objectives. Besides potential artistic objectives, the producer has another reason to be distracted from the briefing of the broadcaster, since the demands of foreign markets might again differ.

Generally speaking producers are in a less powerful market position than distributors (Lantzsch, 2008; von Rimscha, 2008). While distributors can easily commission alternative producers, producers have to deal with the fact that the distributors constitute the bottleneck in the value chain. Therefore, even without the level of control and standardization as in the example of *RedBull,* distributors usually can enforce their will and brand when commissioning. The situation gets different when distributors buy the license to show ready-made content that a producer has created at his own risk. Here the influence on the producers is limited and only indirect. The rigor of the brand management in this case is executed through a thorough selection process and the proper marketing.

Added to this, in recent years the market structures of audiovisual production in Europe have changed considerably: (1) technological changes allow for faster and cheaper production and numerous alternative receiving devices have emerged. This could result in an empowerment of the producers who no longer completely rely on the distributors but can reach the audience directly using the internet as a means of content delivery. To do so successfully they would need to master the technology, but probably more importantly they would also need to match the broadcasters in terms of brand awareness among the audience. (2) Economic changes such as the mentioned retreat of the total buy-out contract have led to new financing structures. Thus, producers have to learn how to sell their product abroad and to do so to build brand awareness among potential buyers of program rights. (3) Regulatory changes at the European level (Audio-Visual Media Services Directive of the EU) have led to a convergence of advertising regulation towards a lowest common denominator.

Advertising formats integrated into the editorial content became legal; in some countries for the first time ever. Product placements could replace dwindling revenues for broadcasters from spot advertising; however, they could also serve as a means of production funding. When advertising is to be already included in the development phase of a production, the producers need to build brand awareness among the advertisers. In this context, brand awareness could replace quantitative performance figures since they are not available before a show has been aired. Taken together, changes in three different aspects of the market framework all result in a potential benefit from investments in branding activities on the part of production companies. But just because there is a potential, it is not necessarily utilized. While producers are proud of the creativity of their content, they often show considerable inertia in terms of organizational innovations. Therefore, the question for the following section is: how do producers rate the relevance of branding, and how are activities in this context embedded in the organization?

2.1 Methodology

Only a few studies have looked into the changing relationship between broadcasters and producers. Rott and Zabel (2009) have assessed different possible adaptations of the business model for production companies in Germany. Using interviews with industry representatives ($n = 41$) they found that broadcasters are willing to use new distribution technologies such as streaming. However, they do not want to share them with producers. If producers were willing to gain direct access, they would have to find new customers. Thus, broadcasters and producers become direct competitors. However, in her interviews with producers Przybylski (2010) found only limited interest of producers in self-distribution. There is some willingness to open up to advertising. Neither of the two studies have explicitly investigated the role of branding in potential business model adaptations.

Our study of European producers thus comprised aspects of the preparedness and the willingness for branding activities as well as business model changes and the necessity of dynamic capabilities (Naldi, Wikström, & von Rimscha, 2014; von Rimscha, Wikström, & Naldi, 2014).

We combined expert interviews with industry representatives ($n = 6$) with a standardized survey of managing directors of production companies in eight European countries including Croatia, Germany, Ireland, Norway, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom. These countries represent different market sizes, different levels of concentration and broadband penetration and different regulatory traditions, where some countries (UK & IE) are regarded more producer friendly since they traditionally allow producers to retain more rights.

The production companies were identified using the membership database of the respective national industry associations. We generated 154 completed questionnaires out of 1,383 contacts (response rate 11.1 %). While the useable answers are somewhat skewed towards smaller companies with a larger share of one-off productions, the most important players in each market are represented.

2.2 Results

While the producers indicated that on average 12 % of the productions included some sort of advertising within the program, the producers did not actively promote this.

TV distribution is expected to stagnate (−0.1); growth is expected to derive from online (1.8) and mobile distribution (1.4 on a scale from −3 "strong decrease" to 3 "strong growth"). Despite this, producers are reluctant to invest and engage in any form of self-distribution. One German interviewee told us that even though his company is one of the biggest independent producers in his country, the output of his company alone would not be enough to stock their own branded online channel.

Furthermore, the results show that producers invest neither in a b2c brand profile towards the audience nor in a b2b brand profile towards the broadcasters or advertisers. Essentially, they want to keep doing what they perceive as their core competence: producing content. Changes in the industry structure mostly just mean exchanging old masters for new ones. Producers will provide their service for new players such as online aggregators rather than for broadcasters.

Productions without any funding from advertisers are predominantly (77 %) initiated by the producers themselves. In the rising number of advertiser-funded programs, the producers are gradually reduced to operating units with broadcasters and advertisers initiating 45 % of the shows. In terms of distribution, producers do not believe they can gain from self-distribution. They expect a market that is more competitive than the broadcasting procurement market they are used to. The expected beneficiaries of the development are telecommunication operators and online platforms and aggregators such as *Google* and *Apple*.

Producers are prepared to adjust their products to the needs of online distribution (e.g., shorter episodes) but they do not want to sell them on their own account. They lack either the equity capital or the will to take the risk of an unsolicited production. That said, the great majority (88 %) acknowledges that they have to adjust their business model in some way. For 42 % this includes the necessity of a marketing division, but 76 % hope to muddle through with ingenious all-rounders who are expected to contribute ever more skills to the company. Building a brand does not seem to be important to the producers.

Summarizing these results, we can see that (1) producers are somewhat skeptical of the concept of branding in the first place and (2) they consider it to be a marketing tool in the distribution of a finished product. We found no significant differences between the sampled countries.

2.3 Discussion

The findings suggest that in most of the European markets, producers have no experience in the marketing and distribution of their productions; they rather consider their core competence as creatively interpreting the brief for a commissioned production. The rejection of branding is sometimes not based on economic considerations for the best division of labor along the value chain, but rather grounded in divergent objectives. In the interviews, some producers reacted with incomprehension or rejection to the idea that the product itself could be a brand. Certainly, this is not representative of the industry as a whole, but it once again shows that even on the level of managing directors a creative and cultural motivation is an important counterpart to the motive of profit maximization.

From the producers' perspective, branding media content is a task for distributors. It is not so much about branding individual content but offering a reliable and predictable slate of content. If we reduce branding to this notion of coping with the challenges of an experience good, the question arises whether branding is a sustainable strategy for media distributor brands. Brands help to match audience expectations and content characteristics. However, brands are not the only means to do this. A powerful alternative are algorithms, as any user of streaming services can tell. After some initial training, the software is surprisingly good in suggesting audio or video content we might like. It is not perfect, but neither is the match between a brand and the audiences' taste. Especially when it comes to mass market content, content that tries to please most people most of the time, a brand does not seem very valuable anymore. The same matching performance can be achieved more easily and at lower cost, since programming an algorithm is faster and cheaper than building a brand. One of the advantages of brands for producers and distributors is that they create a distinction between two offerings that are more or less the same and thus justify a price premium. An algorithm debunks this distinction as superficial and thus reduces the value of a brand. Although an algorithm can also start with a random selection of content, it is usually more useful if the user provides some insight into his or her preferences.

The current situation, where producers just produce and broadcasters build a brand around commissioned and bought content, could thus be overthrown. In a new setting (1) distribution platforms would compete for the performance of their algorithms rather than for their brands and (2) producers would need to find a way to make their products known. Also for them branding would not be an option, because only if their product is different and new would they be recognized.

Thus, we can answer the question 'Who shall brand media content?' with two words: no one—at least in the context of entertaining audiovisual content. Distributors should save the money they spend on branding since algorithms are more efficient in fulfilling the need for matching content and audience interests. At the same time, producers should concentrate on their conventional core competences in creative production instead of trying to take over branding from distributors who do not benefit from it that much anymore.

3 Implications

The two aspects of media content branding presented in this chapter demonstrate the paradox of media branding. On the one hand branding is a strategy of differentiation. Companies use branding to differentiate themselves from competitors who offer almost the same products with limited quality difference. At the same time brands are meant to convey reliability and continuity. In the media business products do differ a lot in quality (no matter how it is defined) but there is a need for reducing uncertainty about the quality. On the distribution level of television, the situation is different. Since almost no broadcaster has any in-house production capacity for entertainment content, all broadcasters rely on the output of the same producers for commissioned or ready-made content. Therefore, on the distribution level differentiation through branding is needed to compensate for a limited differentiation in terms of content. However, on the production level there is no need to differentiate with a brand since the content needs to be different from that of the competitors anyway. The need for reliability and continuity does not have to be conveyed by a brand since in the "people business" (Manning, 2005) of TV production this is done by personal relations in networks. Branding in the production context could only be relevant if it is understood as a measure to create a corporate or network culture that guides internal or network processes (see Siegert, 2015). However, broadcasters expect producers to streamline their products to fit with their distributor brand. Thus the productions are getting ever more "high concept" and interchangeable and thus in turn reproduce the need to differentiate. In a way, media branding is trying to solve a problem which it recreates itself. If brands were not used to level out quality differences at the production level one would not need brands to create differentiation at the distribution level.

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Native Advertising, or How to Stretch Editorial to Sponsored Content Within a Transmedia Branding Era

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Abstract

The present article aims to shed light on the broader paradigm change that has led to native advertising as a revenue model for the publishing business recently. The early emergence of native advertising is thus described in the light of branded content and brand culture strategies, a set of marketing practices that modify firms' branding through a fresh editorial approach. The development of the native advertising concept is further problematized as a manifestation of the intertwined and blurring lines between communication and information, i.e., between marketing and journalism practices. We finally discuss potential implications of this type of sponsored content and some managerial recommendations.

Keywords

Native advertising • Sponsored content • Content marketing • Media strategies • Brands • Branding • Media business models

1 A Transmedia Branding Perspective and Our Approach

Branding concerns the management of brands and is the strategic base of marketing. It is a discipline that has substantially evolved throughout the years exhibiting different phases: at first branding was product-oriented, then the concept of corporate branding was introduced in the literature and more recently the door opened up

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to other sub-genres of the discipline such as emotional branding, sensorial branding or personal branding. As for the latter, personal branding takes into account both the phenomena of brands being anthropomorphized and humans being branded. Focusing on the recent evolution of marketing and communication practices which sees traditional media branding blurring with content marketing as well as interactive and transmedia storytelling (Jenkins, 2006), we believe we are in the age of *transmedia branding* where media are being branded and brands are being mediatized.

Through leading contributors such as Chan-Olmsted (2006, 2011), Tungate (2004), McDowell and Batten (2005), McDowell (2006), Siegert (2008) and Ots (2008), the media management literature has so far considered media branding as the management of media firms' brands. Within this paper we aim at enlarging the academic discourse on media branding and add a new perspective where transmedia storytelling is applied to brand advertising activities. Looking at the phenomenon not only from the media management perspective, but also that of pure brand management, finally we discuss the concept of native advertising.

We begin by delineating the present communication realm and highlighting the phenomenon of what we call transmedia branding. Then, the focus is set on *native advertising* as a hybrid concept at the intersection between marketing and journalistic practices. We will show both chronologically and conceptually, the roots and development of native advertisements in order to discuss the implications of such sponsored content as well as offering some managerial recommendations. To conclude the paper, we propose a tentative classification of the existing hybrid information content offers which currently merge commercial and journalistic objectives. Our objective is to observe the concept of native advertising as a manifestation of the intertwined and blurred lines between communication and information, and at the same time as a reaction of legacy media to a new communication reality on one hand, and as an aspect of increased media market competition fueled by mediatized brands on the other.

2 Contextual Background

Declining circulation, decreasing advertising revenues and an unfavorable economic climate characterizes the evolution of the complex competitive environment in which traditional media firms are operating.

The product and service offering is extremely fragmented, notably because market entry barriers have significantly lowered. The dematerialization of the economy due to digitalization has led to the collapse of national borders, making foreign media products easily accessible. Existing competitors are able to diversify and new players can enter the game at a lower cost. Besides the traditional range of competitors, unsuspected forms of rivalry have emerged within the media industry market. They come directly from the former main revenue source for media firms: advertising brands (also see Sommer, 2015).

Under these conditions a paradoxical situation can be observed. Media outlets are experiencing declining profit margins and are seeking new revenues streams at the boundary of, or even outside, their core activities of content creation. At the same time, commercial product and service companies with big or small brands outside the media environment are experimenting with content production in order to increase their visibility, while expanding their scope of action to possibly generate additional revenues.

What appears as a recent direction taken by the advertising sector is however the result of a media environment transformation started about 30 years ago. The exponential increase of media broadcasting platforms, from public to private channels followed by the rise of satellite television and of the Internet, has significantly boosted consumer access to media content. To the detriment of both consumers and advertisers, this evolution heavily increased the amount of advertisements people were exposed to, and consequently reduced the efficacy of commercial messages in their traditional forms. Indeed, while exposure to media and advertising increased, the leisure time available to media consumers remained the same. As a result advertisers were forced to seek new and more effective solutions to market their products. The nature of advertising changed (Nebenzahl & Secunda, 1993) with one of the most observed developments being content-led marketing strategies (Lieb, 2011).

In the following sections we will track the change of advertising practices starting from the phenomenon of brands transforming into media—touching upon topics such as content marketing, corporate media, brand content or brand journalism—to move on to activities delineating brands as transmedia cultural agents (Bô, Guével, & Lellouche, 2013) and provoking responses from media companies such as native advertising.

3 When Commercial Brands Become Media

Since the turn of this century, and thanks to the capabilities offered by new technologies, any firm or individual can become a medium. Current information technology together with the explosion of social networks allows for the easy creation of content and the quick diffusion of it on what is called owned media. Product and service companies are going beyond mere corporate publishing activities and, disclosing *branded content* on their platforms or on third parties channels, they are directly competing with traditional media for audience attention. We see them creating and sharing their original content on corporate WebTV, *YouTube* channels, *Facebook* fan pages, *Twitter* accounts, on *Pinterest* or on branded weblogs. Most companies have stretched their communication tactics so far that in many cases, by creating their own media platforms, they are actually bypassing traditional media outlets. The establishment of a new price category within the *Cannes Lions* festival in 2012 named "Branded Content and Entertainment" is proof of the importance gained by such branded media initiatives.

Responding and adapting to the loss of the effectiveness of classical brand messages, marketers are now transforming into potential publishers. Some brands are even becoming effective media companies. They produce content, adopt the look and feel of traditional content providers, and progressively invade the editorial space (Guével & Bô, 2009) We can observe firms embracing content as a key strategy to drive consumers into their brand world and brand experience. One of the most typical examples in this regard is probably the *Coca-Cola* company: with its *Coca-Cola* Content Strategy 2020 it gave birth to its new magazine-like corporate website. Further examples are *Intel* and *Red Bull*. Intel created a dedicated newsroom featuring top headlines, latest news, main events and corporate information from *Intel* around the world. *Red Bull* has gone further and enlarged its business scope from pure energy drink production to original content production launching the *Red Bull Media House*. With more or less dedication, every firm is now evolving in this direction by extending their brand communication to any possible social network.

Obviously, the quality of the content produced by commercial brands varies and the activities range from opportunistic one-shots to well thought-out strategies, depending on the vision of the people in charge. Nevertheless, a *communication paradigm shift* seems to be taking place. Whatever the degree of its integration within the company and the professionalism with which it is produced and diffused, content can now be directly managed by brands. While originally active in any type of industry other than broadcasting or publishing, commercial brands are emerging as competitive content providers and sourcing additional revenues from the information or entertainment business.

The way people consume media products as well as new emerging lifestyles also seem to play a distinctive role in this trend reversal. In particular, the internationalization of content consumption—linked to the technology enabled accessibility of consumers to foreign news and entertainment providers—has contributed to the unbundling of media products and led to collateral implications in terms of branding.

4 Unbundled Media and Post-modern Marketing

The way cultural goods are consumed and distributed today has radically changed compared to 10 or 15 years ago. Historically, information and entertainment content was bundled, i.e. linked to the medium through which they were distributed and hence tightly attached to their respective corporate media brand. TV programs were viewed according to the program schedule; news articles reached the reader through printed newspapers. The prefabricated packaging of media products contained everything, from content to advertising. Media brands and sub-brands, like channels and programs were encapsulated within each other.

Nowadays, thanks to technological developments, consumers can access content bypassing any preconfigured bundling by providers. Indeed, single songs can be downloaded on *iTunes* or streamed on *Spotify*, episodes of series are separately available to watch on *YouTube* or *Netflix*. Articles can be read directly on your tablet via newspapers' websites, RSS feeds, or purchased in online kiosks, while TV programs can be replayed on the channels' websites or through platforms like *Apple TV*. Content is not limited by the physical borders of media carriers anymore. We can directly and exclusively access exactly what we are interested in. There is no need to watch an entire TV news show while it is being broadcast, as we can find it any time later online, broken down by topic, location or date.

This fragmentation of media products is linked to an atomization phenomenon that has boomed since the early exchanges of audio files on peer2peer networks such as *Napster* or *Kazaa* in the late 1990s. Price per unit, access "on demand" and digital distribution—to name just a few features enabled by technology—have changed the rules of the game for most if not every media brand. Media products can now be consumed in bits, always further away and distinguished from their mother brand. This is the reason why brands such as *HBO* or *Canal* + begin not to think in terms of channels anymore but rather promote their programs separately as individual brands (Mattiacci & Militi, 2011). In line with this evolution, Chan-Olmsted (2011) highlighted a possible trend towards a decreasing value of corporate or channel brands, even though the combined value of a program brand, when linked to its parent brand, might be considerably higher compared to its individual value.

At this point—considering the combined effect of current low entry barriers in terms of content production and diffusion costs, the ineffectiveness of traditional ads as well as consumers' accessibility to an infinite number of information and entertainment sources—we understand how commercial brands could find sufficient room to invade the media space: *Through their content marketing and brand journalism initiatives, brands are turning into media,* as Tom Foremski foresaw back in 2009.[1]

Nevertheless, this evolution appears to be only a symptom of a more fundamental transformation in the way brands position themselves and relate to their environment in the twenty-first century. Looking at these events through post-modernist lenses we can see the relationship between commercial brands and the consumer move from being product based to becoming service oriented (Grönroos, 2000; Vargo & Lusch, 2004). The traditional transactional approach, according to which the value of products was at the core of the relationship, is being substituted by a service oriented approach where emotions represent the relational component (Vargo & Lusch, 2008). Far away from the functional prism we believe that emotion enhancing experience is now at the base of post-modern consumerism and, in the current evolution, content seems to be an integral part of that experience of relating consumers to commercial brands.

Within this post-modern perspective we can observe the *intertwined evolution of marketing and journalism practices*: editorial and promotional content are starting to blend and blur the lines between strategic communication and journalistic information. The recent technological evolution has extended the scope and quickened the pace at which the merger between the two domains is happening.

[1] http://www.zdnet.com/blog/foremski/every-company-is-a-media-company/715

5 When Media Become Commercial Brands

5.1 The Importance of Media Branding

Legacy media companies have been trying to adapt to cope with technological changes in content production and with new content consumption behavior. Technological innovation has increased the number of potential content providers and accessibility to content for media consumers. Evolving within an attention driven economy (Davenport & Beck, 2001; Goldhaber, 1997), the fight for audience attention and loyalty has become harder than ever for media firms. Branding activities have therefore substantially gained consideration in the media industry. *Strong media brands allow to better face competitive rivalry and sustain differentiation strategies within this highly fragmented media universe* (Picard, 2005a). The consolidation waves that characterized the recent developments of the industry and gave birth to the present media conglomerates represent ample evidence of this,[2] and not only within the private sector. A convergence trend has been taking place in the public sector as well.[3] According to Picard (2005b) strong media brands further help reinforcing geographic diversification strategies. That is one of the reasons why we see brands like National Geographic expanding and multiplying their channels all around.

5.2 Brand Oriented Media Diversification Strategies

In order to cope with the challenging economic conditions since the turn of the century, legacy media brands have started to diversify their portfolio of activities more proactively (Chan-Olmsted & Chang, 2003). Traditional horizontal integration as well as some organic growth outside the scope of original media businesses can be observed. In Switzerland *Tamedia* and *Ringier*, the market leaders, have both invested outside of their initial range of activity. With the arrival of the web, Swiss publishers—as with most traditional publishers in developed countries—have lost their supremacy over certain advertising sectors, particularly job and real estate classified ads. In order to compensate, *Tamedia* has created a dedicated digital department and invested in online companies such as directories and real estate portals, job and car selling platforms, some other small classifieds platforms, and in further promising sectors such as fashion sites or IPTV. For *Ringier* the adopted diversification logic is similar. *Ringier Digital* operates within online marketplaces for job offers and other classified ads such as real estate and cars. Besides the digital marketplaces, which are a logical extension of newspapers' lost

[2] Comcast/NBCUniversal, LLC, The Walt Disney Company, News Corp. Ltd./twenty-first Century Fox, Time Warner Inc., Viacom Inc./CBS Corp., Sony Entertainment, Bertelsmann SE & Co. KGaA, Vivendi S.A.

[3] Radio Canada, BBC, SSR SRG.

revenues, the diversification strategy of *Ringier* extends to e-commerce, digital marketing and online business services as well as event management, ticketing or talent management.

At an international level, *National Geographic* used the strength of its brand to expand the print magazine business to target more specific customer segments—*National Geographic Kids, National Geographic Little Kids, National Geographic Traveler, National Geographic Adventure, National Geographic Explorer* plus the local language editions for each title—and further extend it by launching branded television channels such as *Nat Geo Music, Nat Geo Junior, National Geographic Channel HD, National Geographic Adventure, Nat Geo Wild*, and *Nat Geo Mundo*.

Other media companies choose different routes into diversification, which at first glance might appear as less immediate. Through its conference arm, *The Economist Events*, *The Economist* started to organize debates, industry conferences, management oriented events and roundtables around the world. Senior editors of *The Economist Group* chair the events. The Group is also building on its business-to-business arm, *The Economist Intelligence Unit*, who provides country, industry and management analysis. Within the *Business Intelligence* unit the *Business Research* branch delivers custom research.

The New York Times also follows a similar path and organizes events, global conferences and debates. Those activities offer custom marketing solutions to advertisers and represent an alternative way to further engage and bind readers to the brand. *Le Monde* in France is developing in this direction too. Besides its vast range of conference and event management businesses in the US, UK, Italy, Japan and Germany, *Wired* went a step further and opened up a business consulting program in early 2012. *Wired Consulting* is offering to its clients workshops, trends presentations, bespoke projects, and customized event curation.

These are only a few of the current practices being implemented by media companies to exploit their brand equity and diversify their activities. However, the increasing pressure to look for additional revenue sources and synergies is pushing media firms towards new business territories that put them at risk of "crossing the line". As mentioned above, we observe a multiplication of diversification strategies in order to position news media brands not only into informational content sectors but also within unrelated businesses such as travel, shows, or consumer goods. Being experiential goods by nature, news media products can indeed be attached to a broad range of other products that could benefit from the projected image of the media brand. Yet, this is not the only direction that news media firms are following to explore new revenue sources. A new revenue model is emerging directly within the more traditional news business of information.

6 Native Advertising, or When Media Become Advertisers

6.1 The Concept of Native Advertising

Fearing being cut out by the current disintermediation process, legacy media companies are trying to regain the supremacy—and with it the associated revenues—they used to enjoy in terms of content creation. In response to the profusion of content marketing and brand journalism initiatives developed by advertisers, who directly create and diffuse their own content, traditional publishers have started to propose their own brand-related content offerings: they developed hybrid techniques that mix editorial and promotional content to help brands distribute information rich advertising. This new tactic is called native advertising. Publishers have already been creating dedicated business units for this such as *BrandConnect* at the *Washington Post* or *BrandVoice* at *Forbes*. However, *Fortune* and an increasing number of others publishers, most recently *The New York Times*, also have their own native advertising formula. This practice has concrete implications and raises a series of questions, but first let us define it.

Native advertising emerged as a buzzword in 2013. The concept is however quickly gaining importance amongst practitioners and being increasingly applied as a communication tactic. This rapid evolution has not allowed the development of a unanimous definition or conceptualization for this practice yet. Thus, we will now try to delineate the concept by categorizing it according to the different forms it could assume. Despite some subtle variations, a common and characteristic trait of native advertising is that the *advertisement is embedded in its digital environment*. Basically, the advertising content is integrated within a platform so that the user experience related to that specific interface is not impacted or disturbed. This way advertising is perceived as non-pervasive and hence primarily identified as informative content rather than traditional advertising. Native advertisements are promotional messages, produced for advertisers, supposedly interesting, relevant and engaging enough to be proposed as editorial content. Since those *tailored brand messages are published in the same place where standard news content is located*—following the same format, style and tone typical of the medium in which they appear—they are *called native*.

6.2 Founding Principles of Native Advertising

The concept represents a form of sponsored content and takes its roots from custom publishing, ambient advertising and advertorial. Ambient promotional communication techniques take advantage from the context, i.e., the environment in which an advertisement is displayed, adopting its form, content style and technology (Hutter & Hoffmann, 2014; Lugmayr, 2007; Shankar & Horton, 1999). This is basically a definition of clever advertising. Indeed, it is not new to consider advertising as a morphing entity. Ad formats, with variable degrees of success, have always adapted to or played with the form of the medium they used as support

(Karimova, 2014). The distinction between a full printed advertisement page in a newspaper and an advertorial is representative of how sophisticated the integration between advertising and editorial content could be (Van Reijersdal, Neijens, & Smit, 2005). Native advertising follows the same logic of trying to best integrate advertising with editorial.

Some might argue that native advertising is nothing more than a fancy new word—pleasing advertisers and marketers—to name the well-known tactic of advertorial. Some have claimed, as did Frédéric Filloux,[4] that native advertising is simply "an upgrade, the digital version of an old practice". It is true, it resembles advertorial. A distinction exists though: native advertising, sometimes called sponsored content, differs from traditional advertising, custom publishing, as well as from classical advertorials because it goes further than replicating the features of the support on which it is placed. *A native advertising strategy is based on the adoption of the look-and-feel, the visual design, the usability and the ergonomics of the publisher's website*. A recent development of the practice even sees commercial brands directly posting sponsored commentaries and opinion pieces alongside the news publishers' opinion content.[5] On top of that, it is *audience-centric*, a characteristic that distinguishes it further from traditional advertising which has originally focused on brand messages. Sponsored content is also playing in another league than custom publishing, i.e., the editorial custom content created by publishers for advertisers. First, custom publishing focuses on dedicated printed products developed for clients, while native advertising concerns web-based and/or app-based media only. Additionally, the publishers at the source of custom publications are in general not legacy news media entities with a journalistic mission. Hence, this shift in form, function and actors involved also has direct implications for the substance.

6.3 Beyond Advertorials

With native advertising, the logic adopted is somehow similar to the one present in classical advertorials. However, transposed to the web, the idea reaches new dimensions. Native advertising includes custom content produced by advertisers, as well as content produced by journalists themselves. This might already have been the case in the printed press. Yet, the similarity between native ads and classical advertorials remains limited. Indeed, the logic adopted is different and digitalization has drastically changed the approach towards editorial content. Sponsored content and editorial content run next to each other on the website or mobile application, and are sometimes hardly distinguishable from each other in terms of format. Furthermore, the *advertising becomes social*. The sponsored content can—and is meant to—be *shared* via *social networks like any other 'standard' news*

[4] http://www.mondaynote.com/2013/04/21/whats-the-fuss-about-native-ads/

[5] http://www.washingtonpost.com/pr/wp/2014/11/19/the-post-launches-new-native-ad-feature-brandconnect-perspective/

article (Fulgoni & Lipsman, 2014). This transfer might make the reader lose sight of the source of the message if inadequately labeled. Without clear disclaimers, evaporated in the information circulation, readers could easily consider it ‘objective’ news. This is crucial and is against the journalistic principle of separation between editorial content and advertisements.

The banner advertisements that started to pop up around the web when news media went online are still present, and are the symbols of old advertising practices. However, the advertising paradigm has now changed. We moved *from the logic of interruption*, at the base of traditional advertising strategies, *to that of seamless integration*. Here the notion of utility as service or entertainment is the core of the current advertising mentality.[6]

As Sharethrough[7] sums it up, native advertising is a “form of paid media where the advertising experience follows the natural form and function of the user experience in which it is placed”. *Native ads fit into the flow of a site' s presentation, even when they are clearly demarcated as ads*. Exactly when taking full advantage of every aspect of the medium in which it is embedded, advertising becomes native. What was once true for product placement in television through sight, sound and motion, is now true for web-based media as form, function and social aspects such as “shareability/spreadability” are incorporated into promotional messages. This reinvention of online advertising, pushed forward by social networks like Facebook, contributed to the promotion of the advertisement as a valuable service and definitely not as a source of disturbance anymore (Amez-Droz, 2013; Tutaj & van Reijmersdal, 2012).

6.4 Birth and Current Forms of Native Advertising in Journalism

The platform ramifications of the practice range from search engines and social networks to content producers directly, touching media sectors such as entertainment as well as journalism (see Fig. 1). If we look back at where the tactic emerged, the adoption of native advertising by some of the major actors involved can probably be considered as milestones in the diffusion of the practice. Indeed, actors include *Google, Facebook, Buzzfeed, Forbes* and *The Washington Post*.

The premises of native advertising are to be found amongst the pure players on the web. A first primitive form of modern native advertising is probably represented by *Google*’ sponsored links, *Adwords*, which were launched in 2000. Those are the links appearing sometimes in a light pastel rose-colored box, above or next to standard search results, and leading you to paid content or advertising. Such links are not only sponsored but also targeted, that is they appear on a search result page according to a specific search query. Given the relatively low tolerance toward advertising amongst web users (Cho & Cheon, 2004; Tutaj & van Reijmersdal,

[6] Service-dominant logic (Vargo & Lusch, 2004).

[7] http://www.sharethrough.com/nativeadvertising/

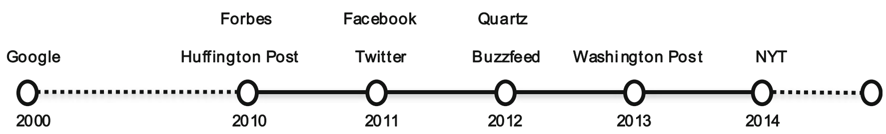

Fig. 1 Chronological overview of media agents starting to offer native advertising

2012), the idea behind *Google*' sponsored links was to try to generate positive externalities by pulling along targeted promotional messages. The sponsored links are traced back according to identified keywords and are supposed to bring an added value to the customer (Amez-Droz, 2013). This concept fits perfectly into the definition of native advertising that we have delineated above. Sponsored links are contextual, embedded, and have the look and feel of non-commercial content; fitting the rest of what is simultaneously appearing on the screen—the search results—they look natural and hence native, without necessarily being hidden.[8]

Nonetheless, the native advertising concept fully emerged with social networks. In January 2011 *Facebook* introduced *Sponsored Stories*, turning updates into advertisements. Soon after all major social media companies followed with similar ideas. Currently, the most renowned ones are: *Twitter*'s Promoted Tweets, *Pinterest*'s Promoted Pins, *Tumblr*'s Radar and Spotlight, *StumbleUpon*'s Paid Discovery, *WordPress* blog's Promoted Videos or *Yahoo*'s Stream Ads. Recently *LinkedIn* has also been providing brands with native advertising possibilities.

Facebook, Twitter and *Google* are to be considered from a similar perspective, and their use of native advertising leads to comparable implications. Indeed, the search engine and the social networks are not directly producing their own content, but work as pipes with external sources producing the content, most of which is user-generated. A real paradigm change happened during the first quarter of 2012, when BuzzFeed started its native advertising offering with its "sponsored posts". We were no more in the presence of a platform serving as a hub for externally produced content offered as native advertising. BuzzFeed is an online publisher, i.e., a content producer that directly produces the content for its native advertising offerings. This represents a further degree in the shift towards the adoption of native advertising by editorial entities.

As far as entertainment sites are concerned, native advertising is well incorporated (*Cheezburger, CollegeHumor, BuzzFeed* mostly until its reorientation[9]) and is way less controversial than when it concerns legacy news organizations. Implications are in fact critically different when it comes to journalism compared to entertainment.

The creation of a native advertising offering by a traditional legacy media company has been much discussed. When *Forbes* launched its initiative and integrated sponsored content in its advertising strategy, it was the first old-school

[8] The Google sponsored links (Adwords) emerging in search engine results seem less intrusive than for instance the advertising appearing within Gmail which is not context-oriented.

[9] http://www.wired.co.uk/news/archive/2013-10/16/buzzfeed-jonah-peretti

publisher and major news site to do so. The program started undisclosed already in 2010 and was called *AdVoice*. The initiative was then renamed in early 2013 into its current denomination: *BrandVoice*. Since then, other editorial platforms, online news publishers and even legacy newspapers, have followed and adopted the native advertising model. Amongst the followers we find: *The Washington Post, Fortune, Mashable, Fast Company, Lagardère Interactive, The Atlantic Group, Gawker Media, Business Insider, The Huffington Post, Le Monde* and *The New York Times*. They have all integrated native advertising offerings amongst their line of services. The most striking case is probably the *Washington Post*, it being the first major U.S. newspaper to embrace native advertising.

6.5 Variations in Native Advertising Content Production

In practice, different players are applying different strategies. In Fig. 2 we have tried to map out the different tactics adopted by publishers to generate new revenues through brand-related content. From a combination of desk research and observations a series of emblematic cases emerge. They highlight news media firms caught in the trade-off between fighting a structural crisis and therefore pursuing new commercial opportunities, and respecting ethical issues that inevitably accompany profit-oriented media behavior.

Native advertising strategies range from *Forbes' Brand Voice* letting external marketers write, edit and publish the material, to other players writing advertising stories internally. Some companies even make their editorial employees write the native advertisements. This is the case at *Mashable* or *Mental Floss* for example.[10] The reason is simple: they are considered the ones who best reflect the tone of the magazine and hence make advertising all the more native. Nonetheless, the majority of players set up a separated team outside the newsroom to write and edit the custom content, justifying with this move the integrity of their editorial teams. The marketing team or dedicated freelancers receive a list of customizable topics, on which the team will then work to develop native advertising stories. The value added here is the storytelling expertise of staff which is leveraged on behalf of interests often versed in the art of press releases but not in engaging storytelling.

In order to understand the size and the acceleration that native advertising is assuming within legacy news publishers it is worth mentioning that, since launching the activity, *The New York Times* has increased the staff of its Times Brand Studio up to 35 from nine in June 2013 and one third of the advertising department has recently been replaced with younger and digital savvy employees.[11,12] Through this emerging practice news media organizations have

[10] http://adage.com/article/media/publishers-enlist-editorial-staffers-ad-content/244025/?utm_source=Media=feed=Feed:+AdvertisingAge/Media

[11] http://www.niemanlab.org/2014/09/native-advertising-is-growing-at-the-new-york-times/

[12] http://www.themediabriefing.com/article/meredith-kopit-levien-beyond-native-advertising-at-the-new-york-times

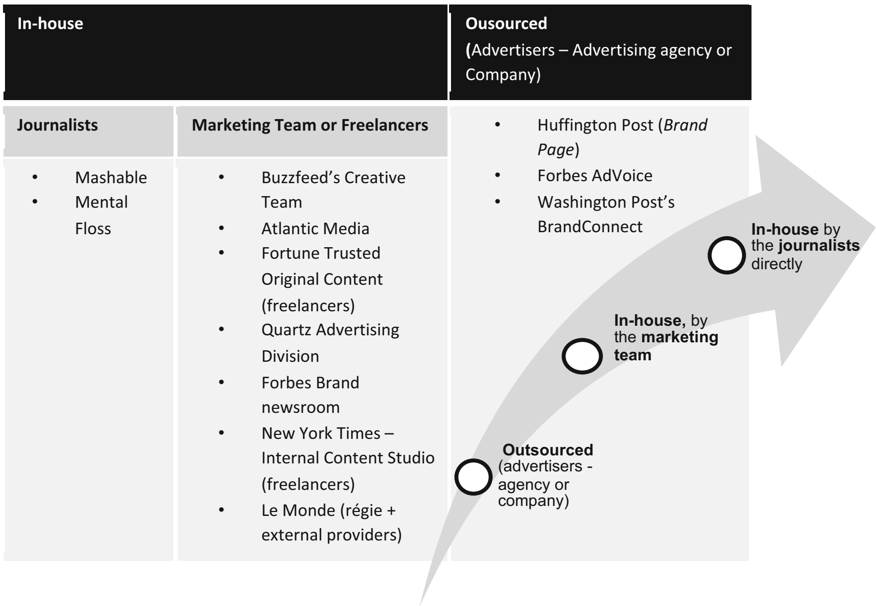

Fig. 2 Categorization of native advertising content production

the opportunity to regain control over their own business.[13] Indeed, commercial brands often skip advertising agencies and directly deal with the publishers that are now offering a full advertising service ranging from consultancy to ad creation and web integration. This requires a considerable investment in technology and above all in adequately skilled staff. At *BuzzFeed* the design studio employs 50 people. At *Quartz* the so called "creative team" selling and producing native ads represents nearly half of the total staff.[14]

7 Implications and Conclusions

When an information media group like *Ringier* or similar decides to mutate and switch to being an entertainment group, having its information portals act as entry doors for monetizing the rest of its content, the idea is finally not very different from that of *Coca-Cola* or *Red Bull* adopting their content-oriented strategies.

Indeed, media portals represent an entry door to the brand universe, be it a media brand itself or any other company. We see content strategies being adopted by brands, no matter what industry they are in. Legacy media have always been content-based firms, but they are now developing in other sectors around it. Firms

[13] http://www.mondaynote.com/2014/09/21/brace-for-the-corporate-journalism-wave/
[14] http://www.mondaynote.com/archive/archives.php?t=the-quartz-way-2

operating in other industries than media work the other way round: they are active first in their specific sector, and most recently investing in content production in order to make their core activity more relevant, more desirable, and more prestigious. This makes native advertising fully coherent from an advertising brand perspective. From the other viewpoint, i.e., the media hosting native advertising, it might not be as evident.

Since marketing techniques have incorporated Internet mechanisms and play with them in order to retain customers' attention, many corporate brands' online initiatives lead to brand specific information and entertainment content. This has increased competitive rivalry in the audience attention market and pushed legacy media to change. Seeing commercial brands transmitting information content directly, information media have understood the underlying principles and, in their quest for new revenue models, now host on their websites an increasing amount of content putting forward big advertisers' interests. Commercial brands seem very interested by this development as they believe that advertising through news firms' sites increases the content quality of their messages and diminishes the risk of being perceived as manipulating brand.

The operation is not without consequences. The most clamorous example so far resides in the scandal that a native advertisement about the *Church of Scientology* engendered when it appeared on the *Atlantic*. The article, which celebrated the worldwide expansion of the church, was marked with a yellow banner that identified it as sponsored content. Otherwise, it looked just like any other article on the *Atlantic* site. As soon as the sponsored post appeared a wave of criticism rose among journalists and on social media. The *Atlantic* quickly decided to remove the article and replaced it with a notice saying that the company had "temporarily suspended this advertising campaign pending a review of our policies that govern sponsor content and subsequent comment threads."[15] This episode gave reason to other media running native advertising campaigns, such as the *Washington Post*, not to allow their readers to post comments below sponsored content articles. They feared the same debacle of social bashing that followed the publication of the *Scientology* sponsored post.

Thinking in terms of advertising revenues and hence in terms of branding for other companies, news media might not have sufficiently considered the impact of native advertising experiments on their own brand. Indeed, in stretching their activity into unfamiliar places such as native advertising media companies risk a devaluation of their own brand. Journalists and news titles are assessed on the basis of their reputation and objectivity. To generate positive feedback they should be trusted by the public for telling interesting but true stories, that is where the journalistic value resides. By blending media genres such as editorial and advertising, not disclosing affiliations or disclosing them less transparently, news media risk lowering the standards and irrevocably damaging their media brand equity.

[15] http://www.businessweek.com/articles/2013-01-15/the-atlantic-the-church-of-scientology-and-the-perils-of-native-advertising

Given their resemblance with a piece of news, native advertisements should be clearly identified as such and thus allow the reader to easily distinguish an advertisement from a news article. However, not distinguishing advertising from news is exactly the idea that native advertising has been tackling. If the reader does not think about content in terms of a promotional message, her or his barriers of reception become lower and advertising tolerance increases (Tutaj & van Reijmersdal, 2012). This effect is significantly important in an attention economy where consumers' brains have developed mechanisms to skip advertising and avoid being influenced by the infinite brand alerts to which they are exposed every day.

If journalists are quite skeptical towards native advertising, in order to keep advertising revenues flowing publishers are increasingly willing to experiment. Even after the *Scientology* scandal and acknowledging that they got ahead of themselves, the *Atlantic* remained for instance "committed to and enthusiastic about innovation in digital advertising".[16] Together with content marketing, native advertising has further proved to be the way to financial stability for some small digital native news companies. Just to name an example, for *Talking Points Memo*[17]—a liberal political news site based in Washington D.C.—native advertising represents a million dollar business. Their direct advertising sales increase about 50 % year over year and include brand sponsored campaigns that run on the site for weeks or even months with content changed multiple times. Such advertisements usually have large formats, called Forum ads, and drive one third of interaction rates and about 50 % of content read rates. According to the online survey that *Talking Points Memo* submits to its audience each year, readers are overwhelmingly democrats and correspond to the average web user in terms of age, 60 % of them are male, and 50 % have advanced college degrees. Brand advertisers know that through this site they are reaching a small but well targeted and influential crowd. As a direct consequence, at *Talking Points Memo* native advertising produces about four times the revenues collected through non-content marketing ads. One rule is strictly applied though and it concerns the clear disclosure of native advertisements and the separation between editorial and business operations—including content marketing and native advertising.

Native advertising is further driving growth at companies such as *Quartz* and *Vice Media* whose business model heavily if not exclusively relies on it by serving a small number of advertisers with high yield campaigns.[18] However, if on the one hand native ads seems to represent an effective chance to monetize digital advertising and thus an essential element of the future news media business model, we believe that the reputational damage that news media firms could encounter by offering native advertising might be big enough to destroy their existence as

[16] http://www.businessweek.com/articles/2013-01-15/the-atlantic-the-church-of-scientology-and-the-perils-of-native-advertising

[17] http://www.niemanlab.org/2014/11/the-newsonomics-of-talking-points-memos-native-advertising-shift/

[18] http://www.mondaynote.com/archive/archives.php?t=the-quartz-way-2

journalism agents. A direct even if unintended effect of this practice is the audience perception of the advertisement as an endorsement for the forwarded message by the media firm. This could result in the audience losing faith in the publisher as a credible source of news. What we recommend here to publishers that still wish to embark on this type of innovation is to clearly identify native advertising operations as such in order to maintain a strict 'Church-State'—editorial and sales operations—separation. What newspapers have been doing so far in this regard is to work with freelancers or with an internal but dedicated team of journalists producing native advertising content. Sometimes they even outsource the native advertising business. In order to avoid any possible confusion, and for this practice to be 'safe', native advertisements should not pop up as results on online searches linked with the newspaper brand. The same holds true for social media and other social feeds. Of course, two fundamental questions arise here: (1) would native advertising in this case still be as effective as advertisers expect? And (2) what is the long-term impact of native advertising on news media if those recommendations are not followed? Trying to find an answer to these questions will be an interesting subject for future research.

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Innovating and Trading TV Formats Through Brand Management Practices

Sukhpreet Singh and John Oliver

Abstract

Television formats form a major cultural export and yet, there is no protection under copyright law. Format copycats or imitators freely develop game, reality and talent shows based on successful format ideas. Despite this, the format industry has developed an ingenious and complex suite of market based practices that are allowing a thriving format industry to appear. This chapter discusses how TV format makers use brand management practices, in the absence of any legal solutions, to innovate and trade in their products. These include a number of practices such as: developing and managing the format brand identity, developing localized brand extensions and leveraging the producers brand reputation.

Keywords

TV formats • Television • Brand management • Media brands • Branding • Corporate brands • Brand innovation • Brand protection • Brand extension • Format rights

1 Introduction

Television formats are a major cultural export with the international size of the market estimated to be more than €9 billion (FRAPA, 2011), and where European nations such as UK and the Netherlands are at the fore-front of format innovation

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and trade—UK alone accounts for nearly half of all format hours broadcast worldwide! While innovating and trading in formats is a lucrative business, a substantial part of format market fails to monetize due to the prevalence of format imitation or copycatting [see Singh and Kretschmer (2012) for a fuller discussion on format imitation]. Formats, unlike television programmes such as drama or a sitcom, are not neatly protected by formal intellectual property regulation regimes, and where regulatory mechanisms such as copyright are of particular importance for the regulation of most types of television production and signals, formats unfortunately fall into what the legal commentators call the 'negative space of copyright'.

Television programmes are exchanged as cultural products in most parts of the world today. Of the numerous types of television programmes traded globally, popular ones include sitcoms, sports and business news programmes, family dramas, and the now ubiquitous television 'format' in various genres of reality, factual, game-show, and quiz. Moran and Malbon (2006, p. 20) defined a television format as the "set of invariable elements in a programme out of which the variable elements of an individual episode are produced". Fundamentally, formats constitute processes of systematization of difference within repetition, tying together 'television systems', 'national television industries', 'programme ideas', 'particular adaptations', and 'individual episodes of specific adaptations'. If a television programme is successful in one country's TV market, its format is sold the world over, keeping the core idea and the structure same but localizing according to cultural tastes and sensibilities. Other types of television programming, including drama or variety is too expensive for risk averse television executives. Examples of a television formats include: game shows (*Who Wants to be a Millionaire*; *Deal or No Deal*), reality TV (*Big Brother*; *I am a Celebrity*; *Wife Swap*), entertainment (*Idols*; *X-Factor*; *Strictly Come Dancing*) and factual programmes (*Grand Designs*).

To offer a degree of stability of governance in such uncertain markets, the industry has evolved to devise ingenious market based approaches to the regulation of trade in formats. These utilize a complex mix of strategies based on (1) formalizing and transacting know-how, (2) distribution dynamics and norms based industry conventions and (3) brand management (Singh, 2010). *In this chapter, we articulate in detail, strategies and tactics from the 'brand management' group of strategies in innovating and trading television formats*. Central to a well-developed brand management strategy for a television format is (a) the creation of a formalized brand and design identity, (b) localizing the format to align with particular cultural, linguistic or operational requirements of a local market, (c) innovating the format to align with audiences' changing needs in each localized market, and (d) creating brand extensions and correct merchandising tie-ups.

2 TV Formats and Branding

The development of an interdependent global economy gave rise to the concept of the ‘TV format brand’. The emergence of new economies (in Asia, Eastern Europe and Latin America) and the creation of large open markets (EU, NAFTA, and others); worldwide broadcasting deregulation by governments (resulting in increased Foreign Direct Investment by western companies in emerging markets); increased competition and creation of oligopolistic networks (such as the vertically integrated *Viacom*, *Newscorp* and *Liberty Global*); and technological developments (control over how the audiences consume media); all led to an increased fragmentation of television products consumption (Bellamy & Chabin, 2002; Sinclair, Jacka, & Cunningham, 1996). Picard (2003) noted that media firms adopted the notion of branding, following the integration of the media and communications industries at the end of the twentieth century, which had produced a fragmentation in audiences and their viewing habits. Malmelin and Moisande (2014) develop this further to conclude that having a strong brand in such highly competitive conditions can be regarded as a strategic asset for media firms. Thus, the branding of TV formats has been inevitable for television programme makers and distributors.

Brands also act as a means to build loyalty, differentiate programmes and ultimately develop trust in a media firm. De Chernatony and McDonald (2003) simplified the complex entity of a brand as a cluster of functional and emotional values with the functional being what the customers receive and the emotional how they receive it.

Hence, a brand exists to help consumers differentiate between various goods or services and choose the right alternative; an option not existing when goods and services are sold as a commodity.

Historically*, branding in television* was thought of in terms of design, logo, channel idents and other visual or aural aspects of ‘on-air marketing’ which broadcasters used to engage with audiences. Lambie-Nairn (1997), considered one of the pioneers of television branding in the UK, laid emphasis on the broadcaster’s channel brand to evolve a clear and attractive brand identity to effectively convey the nature and rationale of programming. Gaggio (1999) had proposed broadcast branding, especially in interactive TV environments which offered scope for multiple channels, to be a separation of a channel from its competition using a distinctive and relevant on air personality. Heyer (1999) argued that branding channels in an era of audience fragmentation gave the advertisers a good fit for offering their own brands as the channel brands usually had pre-established loyalty and connection with a particular type of audience.

One of the most important elements of building a brand is through the brand identity which must be defined and managed as the brand continues to grow. Stipp (2012) noted that a strong brand identity is essential for corporate financial success and long-term growth. The use of graphic identity ‘bibles’, identity charters, books of standards and visual identity guides, all help firms forward the key message or core substance of their brands (Kapferer, 2000). Thus, the deepest values of a brand are represented to the outside world through codes of outward recognition. Format developers have come to understand that if they wish to present viewers with a recognizable format in the midst of close imitations, they need a consistent brand identity which will help the format create a lasting brand image in viewer's minds and thus an imitation will not be able to occupy this space, leading to better exploitation opportunities for the original format. Indeed, Lis and Post (2013) posit that creating a strong brand identity and image in the mind of audiences is the primary reason for them to consume specific television format content. Already we see a paradigm shift in multi-channel digital television where content creators such as format makers make greater profits than the content conduit i.e., the broadcaster. This position is further amplified when we see the exponential growth of smart IPTV (internet protocol enabled televisions) where there are no traditional broadcasters but online video shop windows such as *Hulu*, *Netflix*, *Amazon Prime Video* or *Flipps*, thereby increasing the importance of a developed format brand identity (see also McDowell, 2015).

3 TV Formats and Brand Extensions

Riezebos (2003) provided certain advantages of embarking on a branding strategy; such as financial (higher sales, higher margins and guarantees of future income); strategic (strong position in relation to competition, less dependence on any one supplier, and, ability to attract highly skilled managerial and technical staff); and finally managerial (ability to introduce brand extensions or endorsements and potentially exploit its brands in the international market).

Since service brands, such as television programming, are based on a series of performances, they run the risk of being considered as commodities (McDonald, de Chernatony, & Harris, 2001). To overcome this, programme brands are made tangible—so that customers can be presented with a favourable set of perceptions. For example, the *BBC* regularly produces books and memorabilia of their major programmes brands—this helps to build an enhanced relationship with the viewer. Children's channels are particularly keen on extending their programmes brands in other domains. Such channels have destination viewers (not casual surfers but viewers who seek a programme or channel for a particular programme). Even the *BBC*'s presence in the children's programme market gives it very strong brands (*Postman Pat*, *Peppa Pig*, *Mike the Knight*) and the brand presence is fortified by being available for the children across media platforms (see Paus-Hasebrink & Hasebrink, 2015). These brands are licensed into various consumer goods domains to maximise the presence of the brand and earn additional revenues.

From a format developer's point of view, brand extensions and merchandising can provide ancillary benefits which help build a format brand and also protect it from imitators. Extending the format into consumer goods such as children's merchandising in water bottles, lunch boxes, school events, and other cultural goods such as 'branded quiz shows', 'video and computer games', books and 'behind the scenes' documentaries on DVDs—all of these creates an atmosphere where a potential imitator is dissuaded from entering the same brand space in the market.

4 TV Formats Brand and Channel Fit

The digital multi-media, multi-channel world of today presents format producers with a number of key challenges that can be overcome with the development of branding strategies. Some of the key challenges include how to address: the strategic shift of television viewing from a time based paradigm to a content based paradigm; advertiser brands shifting from borrowing value from existing content and appealing to a captive audience, to creating advertisements with the inherent value of content and more recently, the global distribution of television content due to developments in IPTV platforms. Whilst value is created by using programme concepts such as advertiser funded programming, advertorials, shopping channels, interactive sites and gaming propositions the role of branding in a digital media world is now a strategic consideration.

In marketing television products, a brand has a special meaning for viewers. It is represented as positioning the programme in terms of values, viewers associations, distinct markings, a logo, graphic guidelines, programme packaging, and a general look. *As such, the programme brand acts as a contract and promise of quality between a broadcaster and its viewers* (see Siegert, 2015 or Lobigs, 2015). The fit between the broadcaster and programme's brand identity reassures viewers in so far as it acts as a way for them to situate themselves in contemporary media.

A television format has to carve out a visual niche as it competes with its carrier's (the broadcaster) visual appeal. A format with a well-defined visual brand identity stands a better chance at being successful if there is a clear fit between the format and its carrier; alternatively, a lack of fit can lead to cognitive dissonance in the viewer's mind (Singh, 2004).

5 Producer's Corporate Brand and Reputation

The corporate brand has been identified to assist in safeguarding and differentiation of a media firm's products. *Corporate brands help to maintain credibility of product differentiation in the face of imitation and homogenization of products and services, and as Chan-Olmsted (*2011*) noted, they are strategic assets that help media firms compete in online and offline media markets and provide extra economic value to the company's products and services*. Further, while product brands mainly target consumers, corporate brands enter and stay as images in the minds of organizational and community members, investors, partners, suppliers and other stakeholders (Hatch & Schultz, 2003). Fournier (1994) had earlier claimed that there is a great need for the comfort and reassurance of a long-term relationship when the consumer experiences greater insecurity, therefore the presence of a corporate brand identity is valuable as it provides a certain degree of trust as audiences value media brands that have longevity.

Historically, corporate branding was rarely used by commercial television broadcasters, who essentially targeted product advertising at mass audiences. However, the emergence of new media delivered a multi-channel world which compelled broadcasters to establish a clear brand identity to attract audiences and build loyalty (Chan-Olmsted & Kim, 2001). This attempt at building a clear identity and trust is also important for a production house in the business to business market space where it is engaging with a broadcaster. This is because production houses specialize in making a programme or format, but do not usually have access or the distribution infrastructure to reach viewers. A consciously developed brand identity of the production house and a resultant reputation evolved over time ensures that broadcasters and their representatives (often known as buyers in the industry) trust the production house to deliver innovative new TV formats that will be successful in the market place.

From a formats developer's viewpoint, a producer with a developed corporate identity will be able to outperform format imitators simply because of the reputation and trust of the corporate brand has with TV format buyers. For example, a *BBC* format will less likely be imitated since it will instantly be recognized as 'an imitation of the *BBC*'. Thus, television buyers are less likely to buy the imitation, if other factors such as availability and price are kept aside for a moment.

6 TV Format Brand Innovation

Innovating the brand can help to protect formats and their ideas from being copied by close competitors. Where the original creator of the product or service keeps innovating and recreating the successful elements of a brand, either by maintaining its leadership in performance or increasing its benefits, it gives copycats a moving target (Kapferer, 2000). Though the first innovator in a market runs the risk of becoming the 'absolute' reference for the innovation, therefore having its innovation copied, first mover advantages outweigh loses from being a sitting target. For example, *Celador* UK continually kept innovating its world famous format *Who wants to be a Millionaire*, sold to more than 104 countries, through a centralized UK based consultancy system, localized innovations, and brand extensions (or spin-off) programming (FRAPA, 2011).

There can be several strategic advantages accruing to a format maker by embarking on a branding strategy. A differentiated and valuable brand in the eyes of the consumers has little to fear from competing brands as a strong brand creates 'consumer inertia' which acts a barrier for consumers to change their buying habits easily (Riezebos, 2003). De Chernatony and McDonald (2003) speak of brands existing at various levels in a certain hierarchy, i.e., at the generic, expected, augmented and potential levels. At the generic level, brands identify only functional and descriptive values of the product and hence this can give rise to a lot of 'me-too' competitors. At the expected level, though brands again seek to address certain functional values (such as motivation to buy), it offers more opportunity to differentiate oneself from the competition by offering a reasonable satisfaction to differing motivations. The real opportunity to gain a competitive foothold over competition arrives with the brand moving on to the augmented level—here the producer add certain benefits which are not available with any other closer competitor, thereby providing a greater respite from competition, at least till the time the competition catches up at each stage. When augmentation becomes standard, the search for the potential level kicks in. This involves going back to the drawing board and completely re-engineering the brand's main offerings, thus, format makers need to 'keep the target moving' through brand innovation rather than seek to protect status quo. Here, imitation is a given and the best way in which a branded format can survive is to keep innovating and adding additional elements to attract newer viewers towards itself and away from similar competitors. The requirement is to beat the imitators at their own game. Further, speed is essential in branding. Since brands are well-known entities, a format originator/distributor should not wait for copycats to materialise—a proactive strategy is to launch in as many markets, as fast as possible, to protect formats from copycats.

7 Discussion

This chapter argues that in the absence of a television format right under copyright law, producers need to develop a brand management strategy in order to successful protect and exploit their TV format. The key elements of a successful brand strategy should include: (a) the creation of a formalized brand and design identity, (b) localizing the format to align with particular cultural, linguistic or operational requirements of a local market, (c) innovating the format to align with audiences' changing needs in each localized market, and (d) creating brand extensions and correct merchandising tie-ups.

A format brand consists of a set of propositions which a brand manager creates around a television programme such as a game show, a reality show, etc. These propositions are expressed across several planes, for example 'personality' or 'tonality' or 'attributes' describing the values and the core benefits of the programme to the audience while trying to differentiate it from competitors. Format brand managers manage the brand by analysing all 'touch points', such as the on-screen broadcast, the online activity and the ancillary activity, where an audience member interacts with the brand, so that the consumer proposition recognized earlier is consistently communicated at each point. Format brand managers insist that format buyers persistently follow brand guidelines, communicated through style guides and format bibles. They ask producers to seek approvals before deviating from these in local productions. Since a brand identity provides a perceivable difference to similarly propositioned products within the same market, a format with a developed brand identity has a better potential to be recognized by buyers and audiences—giving it 'a sheath of protection' through which imitators cannot attack. Imitation of a branded format is easily noticeable and traceable in the format industry.

Market research ensures that format brands remain relevant for a territory's viewers by using focus groups with audiences and surveys with broadcasters. This can lead to changes in format elements such as type of contestants, the show's hosts and judges, the structure of the show, audition methods, etc. Such responsiveness to audiences' changing needs leads to reinvigoration of the format brand as time progresses. This keeps formats abreast of imitators by constantly innovating and adapting them.

Localizations have been shown to be used by format managers to create the right perceptions in and achieve better reception from licensee territory audiences. Several types of localisations have been identified—cultural, visual, nationalistic and business (Singh, 2010). Cultural localisations, respecting the fact that different cultures respond to different sets of emotions and decision making patterns, modify a format to reflect the same. Examples include patterns of public display of affection, threshold and style of humour, notion of politeness vs. rudeness, linguistic style, religious sensitivity, as well as the on-screen acceptance of glamour. Visual localisations appear due to differences in visual stimuli such as acceptability of certain colours. Nationalistic localisations induce loyalty based feelings in those territories where nationalistic overtones help position the local version as truly local, though in some territories the opposite is done to avoid any negative connotations with a nation's or a region's history. Business localisations modify a format's prize mechanism due to affordability of a licensee or due to the territory's established scheduling and programme length patterns. Although an indigenous imitator is capable of intrinsically incorporating a few localizations, it cannot pre-empt the original's planned localisations and may replicate too much of an original, just to be true to a successful format. Thus, localisations work eventually in an original's favour by defeating an imitation.

A format brand can be licensed and extended into online and mobile interactivity, live events, and merchandising partnerships across diverse consumer product categories such as children's toys, board games, books, DVDs, and cosmetics. The need to spread the risk of investing in a format with multiple revenue generation 'touch points' as well as its propensity to generate audience loyalty across these touch points benefits the format brand. Such a calibrated approach to driving format synergies cannot be easily replicated by an imitator.

Corporate brands of format developers are trusted by buyers and this trust cannot easily be replicated by imitators. Originating from a well branded corporate developer assists a format in being protected. Further, buyers at trade fairs associate certain format genres with a certain country; for example positive attributes accrue to UK and the Netherlands that are known in the industry as innovators of formats in a certain genre. Moreover, countries such as USA which have an accrued positive brand value for popular culture, gain from nation branding in format genres such as musical talent shows and reality television, which uses objects of American music or celebrity culture. Here, a format's American version may sell better than even a locally produced version. Other nations are known to utilize skills and expertise such as language, programming or engineering, perfected in unrelated traditional industries, to market their format to buyers. The above brand values cannot be simply imitated by a licensee territory imitator.

Finally, format promotions are considered a legitimate tactic of protecting formats. Handing out promotional materials and organizing events around the launch of a format helps to identify the true originator of a format. This legitimizes a format brand as belonging to a certain developer and thereby stamps a mark of ownership on the format in the eyes of the trade community. Any subsequent attempt by an imitator to promote a similar format is considered an imitation in the industry, and seen in conjunction with the complex mix of strategies (referred to earlier in the chapter), it deters format imitations.

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Research Note: Nostalgia as the Future for Branding Entertainment Media? The Consumption of Personal and Historical Nostalgic Films and Its Effects

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Abstract

Nostalgia is increasingly and successfully used as a means to brand entertainment media. However, there is a significant gap in empirical investigations which consider the effects of different types of nostalgic responses to films. Hence, the contribution of this chapter lies first in answering the question of which films evoke which type of nostalgia in media recipients. In our investigation of 41 movies released between 2010 and 2013 we found that not only well-known and old, but also relatively unknown and very recent film stimuli are capable of evoking personal and/or historical nostalgia. Secondly, our main studies ($n = 217$) reveal that personal and historical nostalgia through films have significant positive effects on attitudes towards the media brand, buying intentions, affective response, and mood. The results of our study help to apply both kinds of nostalgia to media branding to gain competitive advantages in times of digitalization, saturated media markets, and media crises.

Keywords

Personal and historical nostalgia • Movies • Media branding • Media content • Media management • Audience measurement • Media psychology • Entertainment media

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1 Introduction

Nostalgia—i.e., the sentimental longing for the past—(Davis, 1979) is used increasingly as a means to differentiate media products and media brands. For example, the nostalgic, silent, black-and-white movie *The Artist* won five Oscars in 2012, including the award for best movie. Moreover, *Argo* deals with the hostage crisis in Iran in 1980 and took the best picture as well as the film editing Oscar in 2013. In addition, *12 Years a Slave* went home with three Oscars in 2014. Successful series such as *Boardwalk Empire* reenact the 1920s. *Starsky and Hutch*, *The Green Hornet*, and *Spiderman* from the 1960s and 1970s are continuously adapted to the big screen, attracting media recipients. The examples show that films can be or develop into *nostalgic media brands* on the content level (e.g. story, actors, black-and-white) and producer level (e.g. *Disney*, *Warner Bros*.). But what are the (motives and) effects of personal and historical nostalgia being 'omnipresent' in entertainment media, such as films?

This question represents a significant research gap because extant (empirical) nostalgia studies are largely not from the media context (e.g. Muehling & Pascal, 2011) and do not often distinguish between personal and historical nostalgia (e.g. Holbrook, 1993). However, personal nostalgia relates to autobiographical memories *"The way I was"* whereas the latter refers to an era even before someone's birth *"The way it was"* and consequently contains more cultural knowledge and remembrances (Stern, 1992, p. 16). Hence, the distinction between personal and historical is highly needed because the effects for media brands 'using' the one or other can differ greatly, which was shown at least in the advertising context (e.g. Marchegiani & Phau, 2010a, 2010b, 2012; Muehling & Pascal, 2012). All in all, we can say that the (motives and) effects of the consumption of personal and historical nostalgic films and media brands are so far underresearched. Therefore, our quantitative surveys aim to provide insight into the gratifications and effects of personal and historical nostalgic film content as branding strategy for entertainment media for the first time. More precisely, based on mood management theory (Zillmann, 1988) and attribution theory (Kelley, 1973) our research questions are as follows:

RQ1 How do age, gender, educational background, media usage frequency, involvement, nostalgia proneness, and mood impact the level of personal and historical nostalgia that is evoked through films?

RQ2 How do personal and historical nostalgia influence attitudes towards the brand and buying behavior, word-of-mouth, and re-experience intentions with regard to films?

RQ3 How do personal and historical nostalgia affect affective response and mood after the consumption of films?

Results and implications e.g. on consumer behavior are particularly useful for *media brand management*, media marketing, and media producers. Nostalgia should receive more attention since it could influence brand awareness, attitudes, sales, and customer loyalty positively. Moreover, researchers coming from the social psychological field attribute an increasing relevance to nostalgia at the level of the individual because in the present unstable, turbulent times of financial, economic, and educational crises, society tends to return to traditional values. Correspondingly 'retro' is a trend and nostalgia as a form of escapism from negative emotions and stress can be observed (e.g. Sedikides, Wildschut, Routledge, Arndt, & Zouh, 2009; Wildschut, Sedikides, & Cordaro, 2011).

2 Theoretical Background

2.1 Definition and Differentiation of Personal and Historical Nostalgia

Nostalgia can be defined as a yearning for yesterday (Davis, 1979) and is a bittersweet or wistful emotion, feeling, or mood, with primarily positive functions for individuals (Baker & Kennedy, 1994; Belk, 1990; Wildschut et al., 2011, Wildschut, Sedikides, Routledge, Arndt, & Cordaro, 2010, 2011). Nostalgia elevates positive affect, self-regard, social connectedness, and existential meaning (e.g. Hepper, Ritchie, Sedikides, & Wildschut, 2012); nostalgic memories are idealized, highly emotional, and consistent. Nostalgia can be learned through socialization, and is felt frequently in everyday life (Stern, 1992; Wildschut, Sedikides, Arndt, & Routledge, 2006). Holbrook and Schindler's (1991, p. 330) definition from marketing describes it as "a preference (general liking, positive attitude, or favorable affect) towards objects (people, places, or things) that were more common (popular, fashionable, or widely circulated) when one was younger (in early adulthood, in adolescence, or even before birth)."

Historical nostalgia (=H.N.) is a preference or yearning for people, places, or things from a distinct time or decade in the past, even before one's birth. H.N. memories do not include one's experiences, but viewing a past era (e.g. the 1960s or 1970s), attitude toward life, society, or circumstances from that time as superior to the present (Stern, 1992). Consequently, H.N. refers more to cultural knowledge and remembrances stored in the semantic part of memory where knowledge and factual information is saved to comprehend contexts (Tulving, 1972). Popular media examples that elicit H.N. include the movie *12 Years a Slave* or the English television series *Downton Abbey*, which depicts the lives of an aristocratic family and their servants at the beginning of the twentieth century.

Personal nostalgia (=P.N.) is a yearning for the lived past, referring to experienced emotional memories (e.g. childhood or first love). Autobiographical memories are more about *"the way I was"* than *"the way it was"* (Stern, 1992, p. 16). Media content that deals with topics such as birthday parties, graduations, weddings etc. elicit P.N. Personal nostalgic memories are encoded in, stored in, and retrieved from individual episodic memories, part of long-term memory that stores self-relevant information (e.g. what one's own wedding was like). A media example is the movie *Dirty Dancing*. Such personal nostalgic media content and brands help to build, rehab, and give continuity to the person's own identity (Belk, 1990; Sedikides, Wildschut, Gaertner, Routledge, & Arndt, 2008). Various disparities between P.N. and H.N. emphasize a need for differentiation in respective contexts.

2.2 Nostalgia in Media, Mood Management, and Attribution

Little empirical research has been done on nostalgia in media contexts; particularly lacking are studies on the two different nostalgia types in and through media. Holbrook (1993) and Holbrook and Schindler (1994, 1996) elucidate consumer patterns of cultural products and their relationships with nostalgia proneness. Their studies demonstrate that young adult preference peaks for film stars, popular music, and (older) films form at the ages of about 14, 24, and 27, respectively. A positive attitude toward the past leads to a shift of preference peaks toward earlier years, but they do not measure nostalgic responses, distinguish between personal and historical nostalgia or investigate actual films, so there is little accord with our approach. Regarding films, a theoretical exploration of how nostalgia (personal and historical) is present in the German Heimat film genre was published recently (Ludewig, 2011). Nostalgia is assumed to fulfill basic needs for grounding in a movie context, but the book lacks empirical findings. It stems from the cultural sciences and thus does not use a media psychological or management perspective. Moreover, we can build on studies from marketing, but although new scales for the two nostalgia types have been developed recently (Marchegiani & Phau, 2007, 2011a), they largely suffer from measurement limitations (e.g. Baker & Kennedy, 1994; Barrett et al., 2010; Chou & Lien, 2010; Pascal, Sprott, & Muehling, 2002) and call for further research on nostalgia (Muehling & Pascal, 2011, 2012; Muehling & Sprott, 2004) that would allow us to direct and evaluate (nostalgic) media content more easily.

Our research is underpinned by mood management as well as attribution theory bridging media and management research streams. Using the uses and gratifications approach from communication sciences, recipients choose certain media products, content, or brands to fulfill their needs such as information, social identity, and entertainment (Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch, 1974; Katz & Foulkes, 1962; McQuail, 1994; McQuail, Blumler, & Brown, 1972; Severin & Tankard, 1997). According to mood management theory, that is, a specification of uses and gratifications and prevalent for the entertainment media in this case films, media preferences and selection depend on the recipients' aim to maximize positive mood (Zillmann, 1988). Correspondingly, nostalgic media consumption is based on its high (er) aptitude for escaping from everyday life, coping with stress and negative affect compared to non-nostalgic media. This assumption can also be supported by studies coming from the social psychological field that ascribe those positive functions to nostalgia (e.g. Batcho, 1995, 2007; Batcho, DaRin, Nave, & Yaworsky, 2008; Sedikides et al., 2009; Wildschut et al., 2011). Furthermore, nostalgia helps to form, maintain, and rehabilitate identity, which could be another reason why audiences are attracted to it (Wildschut et al., 2006, 2010, 2011) [see Paus-Hasebrink and Hasebrink (2015) as well as Ots and Hartmann (2015)]. Applying attribution theory (Kelley, 1973), we can state that the audience likely attributes higher, positive subjective value or quality and (self) relevance to nostalgic media because e.g. for personal nostalgia they recognize a content in a series of observations which are stable over time and relate it to positive emotional and autobiographical memories. In the case of historical nostalgia the content is not necessarily recognized or familiar, but attributions result from positive associations to the era (e.g. 1960s) and/or the cultural relevance and high credibility (e.g. slavery) that again forces elaboration processes (Petty & Cacioppo, 1981, 1986). Those attributions induce beliefs, expectations, motivations, and attitudes leading to certain behavior, in our case media preferences, selection, customer loyalty, and affective response or enjoyment (ibid.; Kelley & Michela, 1980).

However, since extant studies on nostalgia lack the media context and at least in advertising found disparities in P.N. and H.N. effects it is reasonable to examine empirically which effects of nostalgia occur with movies and whether they are similar when compared to advertising. Hypotheses derived from these theories and the states of the art summarized above are the following:

- H1 The level of P.N. and H.N. evoked through movies is higher for older (25+) compared to younger individuals (18–25) (Batcho, 1995; Davis, 1979; Holbrook & Schindler, 1996).
- H2 The level of P.N. and H.N. induced through movies is higher for females compared to males (Holbrook, 1993).
- H3 High education leads to more P.N. and H.N. through movies compared to lower education (Schweiger, 2007).
- H4 Negative mood impacts the level of P.N. and H.N. aroused through films positively, contrary to positive mood (Wildschut et al., 2006, 2011).
- H5 High involvement results in more P.N. and H.N. through movies compared to low involvement. The impact on P.N. is stronger than on H.N. (Muehling & Pascal, 2012; Suckfüll, 2007).
- H6 High media usage frequency leads to more P.N. and H.N. through films.
- H7 Nostalgia proneness influences P.N. and H.N. through films positively (Holbrook, 1993).
- H8 P.N. and H.N. affect the attitude towards the movie and behavioral intentions (=buying, word-of-mouth, re-experience) positively. P.N. has a higher impact than H.N. (e.g. Muehling & Pascal, 2011).
- H9 P.N. and H.N. influence the affective response to the movie positively; P.N. more than H.N.
- H10 P.N. and H.N. through films impact mood positively.

3 Methods and Analyses

The studies were conducted using online surveys from 446 demographically heterogeneous German subjects (e.g. age = 18–56; with different educational backgrounds) from May to August 2013 in favor for quasi-representativeness.

After testing for outliers according to the outlier labeling rule (Hoaglin & Iglewicz, 1987; Hoaglin, Iglewicz, & Tukey, 1986), we calculated ANOVAs and regressions in SPSS.

3.1 Pretest 1 and 2

To answer the question of which up-to-date popular films evoke which type of nostalgia in media recipients we pretested ($n = 229$) online a film pool of the 41 best movies released between 2010 and 2013 (top three US-Box-Office; ratings between 7.0 and 10.0, diverse genres, incl. remakes, etc. see Appendix). Each respondent was randomly exposed to six rotating film titles, posters, and short descriptions for at least 30 s (=seven groups). Afterwards, the individuals responded to familiarity, popularity, personal and historical nostalgia scales (only the item with highest factor loading), and demographics.

In sum, 217 respondents (m = 116, f = 101) between 18 and 55 ($M_{\text{age}} = 26$) participated in our first pretest (*see Appendix for the complete results of the pretests*). *The Muppets* ($M_{\text{P.N.}} = 3.47$) and *Toy Story 3* ($M_{\text{P.N.}} = 3.23$) evoked the highest level in personal nostalgia and were selected for the primary studies. Regarding H.N. the stimuli *The King's Speech* ($M_{\text{H.N.}} = 4.62$) and *Chico & Rita* ($M_{\text{H.N.}} = 4.54$) showed highest means.

However, H.N. means were not fully satisfying and we assumed the values would improve by including the complete H.N. scale. Therefore, we conducted a second pretest ($n = 12$; m = 6, f = 6; $M_{\text{age}} = 48.33$). The second pretest was identical to the first one except that we used the official film trailers of *The King's Speech*, *Chico & Rita*, complemented by *Hyde Park on Hudson* and *Titanic in 3D* and the complete H.N. scale. Those were selected for the main studies as inducing the highest H.N. levels.

3.2 Primary Studies

Each respondent was randomly exposed to the two rotating P.N. or H.N. film trailers (=2 × 1 between subjects design) for 2–3 min that were selected through the pretests after they had answered the global mood scale. After the stimulus the individuals again responded to mood, personal and historical nostalgia scales, affective response to brand, attitude toward the movie (story), behavioral and purchase intentions, nostalgia proneness, media usage frequency, (cognitive and affective) involvement, genre preferences, and demographics.

Again, 217 respondents between 18 and 56 ($M = 28$) participated in our main study online surveys (m = 104, f = 113) from which 112 rated the P.N. stimuli (*The Muppets* $M_{\text{P.N.}} = 3.8$; *Toy Story 3* $M_{\text{P.N.}} = 4.1$) and 105 participants rated the H.N. stimuli (*Hyde Park on Hudson* $M_{\text{H.N.}} = 3.1$, *Titanic* in 3D $M_{\text{H.N.}} = 3.9$). The greater part was higher educated (A levels 47 %, master or bachelor degree 40 %); only a minority of 13 % had a lower education.

The ANOVAs in SPSS revealed the following:

- *Age* impacts personal but not historical nostalgia significantly. Thus, H1 can be supported for P.N. (*The Muppets* $F(1, 110) = 7.32$, $p < 0.05$; *Toy Story 3* $F(1, 110) = 16.97$, $p < 0.05$) but not for H.N. (*Hyde Park on Hudson* $F(1, 103) = 0.12$, $p > 0.05$; *Titanic* in 3D $F(1, 103) = 0.36$, $p > 0.05$).
- Results speak for no *gender* differences (*personal nostalgia* $F(1, 110) = 0.16$, $p > 0.05$; *historical nostalgia* $F(1, 103) = 2.68$, $p > 0.05$).
- Descriptively it seems as if *educational background* tends to influence historical nostalgia, but not personal nostalgia (*personal nostalgia* $F(1, 110) = 0.41$, $p > 0.05$; *historical nostalgia* $F(1, 103) = 2.49$, $p = 0.088$).
- *Mood* and *involvement* do also not affect personal and historical nostalgia through films significantly *(mood P.N.:* $F(1, 110) = 1.29$, $p > 0.05$; *mood H.N.:* $F(1, 103) = 0.49$, $p > 0.05$*; involvement P.N.:* $F(1, 110) = 0.71$, $p > 0.05$; *involvement H.N.:* $F(1, 103) = 0.68$, $p > 0.05$).

Also the regression's results with *involvement* as a dependent variable to answer if personal or historical nostalgia alter the involvement speak for non-significance (*involvement P.N.:* $R^2 = 0.003$, $\beta = 0.053$, $p > 0.05$; *involvement H.N.*: $R^2 = 0.004$, $\beta = 0.066$, $p > 0.05$). All in all, *involvement* seems to play an inferior role. The same applies for *media usage frequency* (*media usage frequency P.N.:* $F(1, 110) = 0.49$, $p > 0.05$; *media usage frequency H.N.:* $F(1, 103) = 0.49$, $p > 0.05$) and *nostalgia proneness* (*nostalgia proneness P.N.:* $F(1, 110) = 0.07$, $p > 0.05$; *nostalgia proneness H.N.:* $F(1, 103) = 0.51$, $p > 0.05$). Hence, Hypotheses H2, H3, H4, H5, H6, and H7 cannot be supported.

To investigate the impact of personal and historical nostalgia on *attitude, buying intention, positive word-of-mouth intention, intention to re-experience, affective response,* and *mood after the consumption,* linear regressions in SPSS were calculated (Table 1). We find that personal and historical nostalgia through film does have significant positive effects on the attitude toward the movie or film brand, the intention to buy the movie, the affective response to the movie and the mood (after the movie). Thus, H8, H9, and H10 are supported. Comparing the effects of the two types of nostalgia on attitudes towards the movie or film brand, their positive impact is quite outbalanced in the film context. This finding is contrary to prior advertising research, showing that personal nostalgia through advertising has stronger positive effects on attitudes towards the brand than historical nostalgia (e.g. Marchegiani & Phau, 2011a). Buying intentions and the intention to recommend and re-experience the film or film brand are influenced positively as well, and according to our hypotheses more strongly by personal nostalgia compared to H.N. With regard to the affective response to the film and the mood after the film's consumption, historical nostalgia leads partly to stronger positive effects.

Table 1 Impact of personal and historical nostalgia on attitude, buying intention, positive word-of-mouth, intention to re-experience, affective response, and mood

	Film stimuli	N	H8a: Attitude		H8b: Buying intention		H8c: Word-of-mouth		H8d: Intention to re-experience		H9: Affective response		H10: Mood (after)	
			R^2	Beta	R^2	Beta	R^2	Beta	R^2	Beta	R^2	Beta	R^2	Beta
Personal nostalgia	The Muppets	112	0.201	0.448*	0.338	0.582*	0.062	0.250*	0.087	0.295*	0.242	0.492*	0.090	0.300*
	Toy Story 3	112	0.176	0.420*	0.222	0.471*	0.057	0.238*	0.056	0.236*	0.211	0.459*	0.080	0.284*
Historical nostalgia	Hyde Park on Hudson	105	0.148	0.384*	0.127	0.356*	0.041	0.203*	0.020	0.140[a]	0.364	0.603*	0.225	0.475*
	Titanic in 3D	105	0.190	0.436*	0.159	0.398*	0.033	0.182[a]	0.024	0.154[a]	0.159	0.398*	0.096	0.309*

Note *$p < 0.05$
[a]Not significant

4 Discussion and Implications for the Branding of Content

This article aims to identify and concretize influence variables on P.N. and H.N. in a media context and, above all, the effects of personal and historical nostalgic contemporary films or film brands. To summarize, we can state that we derived relevant findings regarding *age* (H1), g*ender* (H2), *educational background* (H3), *mood* (H4), *involvement* (H5), *media usage frequency* (H6), and *nostalgia proneness* (H7) through a more differentiated approach concerning personal and historical nostalgic films and film brands. We find no significant effects of *gender*, *educational background, mood*, *involvement*, *media usage frequency*, and *nostalgia proneness* on P.N. or H.N., but of *age* on P.N. Therefore, attention should be paid to the customers' age in the case of personal nostalgia to detect target group adequate film content/brands resulting in high P.N. levels. Considering the variable *involvement* our findings are crucial because in the marketing context higher involvement for nostalgic ads compared to non-nostalgic ads explained (more) positive consumer responses (Muehling & Pascal, 2012). However, in the case of personal or historical nostalgic films or film brands *involvement* seems to play an inferior role.

Personal and historical nostalgia effects on *attitude, buying intention, affective response,* and *mood* after consumption are highly significant. The personal nostalgia effects exceed those of historical nostalgia regarding buying, word-of-mouth, and re-experience intentions. However, on affective response (H9) and mood (H10) historical nostalgia's influence is partly stronger. These results are very relevant because extant studies from marketing mainly come to the conclusion that personal nostalgia is superior to historical nostalgia (Marchegiani & Phau, 2011a; Muehling & Pascal, 2011, 2012). The effects of the two nostalgia types on attitudes towards a film or film brand are outbalanced, which is why we come to the conclusion that in the movie context both nostalgia types are valuable marketing instruments.

Because this study examines for the first time such a huge sample of contemporary highly ranked film stimuli (41, Top 3 US-Box-Office, 2010–2013), with 446 heterogeneous respondents in all, we can derive media management implications of high value. First of all, our goal is to strengthen the awareness of the more or less neglected phenomena of personal and historical nostalgia. Media management should keep in mind that personal and historical nostalgia have far-reaching positive consequences regarding attitudes, buying intentions, word-of-mouth, intention to re-experience, affective response, and mood. Nostalgia fosters customer engagement, interaction, and participation in the form of word-of-mouth. Nostalgia, especially personal nostalgia gives meaning and personal relevance to media brands and thereby enhances brand awareness, remembrance, and value. There are of course other key success factors to consider such as stars, genres, content, budget, and marketing. Though P.N. and H.N. do not guarantee success, they may largely contribute to it. Thus, there is a positive relationship between the use of this growing and deeply ingrained human need and economic values. Hence, personal and historical nostalgic content can better, and with lower risks, be produced and continued or recycled, e.g. through prequels and sequels, because consumers are less likely to respond with boredom, negative affect, or psychological reactance. Good examples are *The Muppets* or *Toy Story 3* which are still liked by consumers and successfully make a profit at the cinema. *Toy Story 3* even broke all animation movie records with its highest box-office takings of 940 million US dollars.[1] Correspondingly, personal and historical nostalgia are promising instruments with which to foster media brands and line extensions i.e., besides sequels, ancillary markets such as merchandising (=consumer products) or theme parks.

Interpreting the results from pretesting in more detail, nine out of 41 films in the filmpool (22 %) evoked a moderate level of personal or historical nostalgia ($M < 4.69$). This means that almost one quarter of the movies are nostalgic, prevalently personal nostalgic (with two exceptions) and animation movies (e.g. *Despicable Me, Tangled, How to Train your Dragon, Marvel's the Avengers, Chico & Rita*). Four out of those nine productions stem from *Disney* and its subsidiary *Pixar* so that for those media brands personal nostalgia seems to be a relevant brand value or even core brand value that they specialize in. P.N. forms a source of their success story bearing in mind *Disney* masterpieces such as *Tarzan, The Beauty and the Beast, The Lion King, Peter Pan, The Jungle Book*, or *Bambi* and computer animated *Pixar* productions such as *Monster Inc, Toy Story, Cars*, and *Finding Nemo*. (Personal) nostalgic movies also play a role in the portfolios of the media brands *Dreamworks* (*How to Train your Dragon, Shrek, Antz*), *Warner Brothers* (*Harry Potter, Batman, Superman*), and *Universal* (*Despicable Me, The Hulk, American Pie*). The success of *Paramount Pictures* is based on mainly historical nostalgic productions such as *Titanic, The Godfather, Once Upon a Time in the West*, and *Forrest Gump*. This is particularly true for the indie labels *Paramount Vantage* and *TOBIS* (e.g. *No Country for Old Men, There Will be Blood, 12 Years a Slave*, and *American Bullshit*). In the film lists of *Universal* can be found the historical nostalgic examples *Gladiator, The Mummy*, and *Ray*.

As mentioned above, animation movies evoke personal nostalgia in media recipients due to their visualization mode, because they remind them of their own lived past and childhood. To maximize P.N. content should be produced or remade that stems from the target group's teenage or childhood days and/or is widely recognized. However, even if the movie itself is relatively unknown, meaning that not (yet) many people have watched it, the recognition value alone already leads to positive effects. Another interesting result was that animation movies are able to evoke historical nostalgia as well (e.g. *Chico & Rita*) and even better than apparently more historical movies (within our filmpool) such as *The King's Speech, Django Unchained*, or *Fetih 1453*. Thus, to evoke historical nostalgia we do not necessarily need a drama or specific story and characters which have a relationship to real history. Since historical nostalgic animation movies seem to be quite rare they could represent an attractive market gap.

Furthermore, for media management it is important to know that not only old but also new brands, movies, contents, and characters/actors can elicit both types of nostalgia. New productions that resemble old ones (e.g. *The Artist*) and thereby are associated to a past era can elicit H.N., meaning that they do not have to be original or stem from a distant past. Our study revealed that unknown as well as well-known

[1] http://www.moviepilot.de/news/erfolgreichster-animationsfilm-aller-zeiten-107689

stimuli can be used as cues for H.N. This was shown by using some very recent movies in our survey that had not yet been released in Germany.

5 Limitations and Further Research

In summary our studies contribute to the research gaps mentioned in extant studies to examine recent, unknown, less popular stimuli, and also stimuli with moderate nostalgia levels (Marchegiani & Phau, 2010a; Muehling & Pascal, 2012). We identify the relevance of personal and historical nostalgia in the movie context, different presentation modes are used (short description with film poster vs. trailer), and we improve the sample representativeness by not surveying students (e.g. Marchegiani & Phau, 2012; Muehling & Pascal, 2011). Besides this, we include hitherto neglected consequences and audience responses such as affective response (e.g. Marchegiani & Phau, 2011b).

One limitation of our sample is that it partly suffers from a lack of representativeness, especially with regard to the subsamples with higher age (50+), lower education, and rare media usage. This leads to a comparison of more or less unequal, small subsample means. Therefore the results referring to those hypotheses (H1, H3, H6) should be interpreted carefully and require further study. Additionally, there is need for further research e.g. concerning nostalgia proneness showing no significance, which could be due to measurement limitations. Hence, in future studies a more recent and reliable scale should be used.[2] Another limitation regarding the variable mood before the stimulus that showed no significance could be explained by low variance. Thus, future studies could manipulate the mood before the stimulus positively and negatively to solve this problem.

Further directions for future research are in examining different genres, for example a comparison between nostalgic comedies and dramas, no animation movies, but "normal" feature films (for P.N.), or series, and the motives of personal and historical movie consumption. Other media products should be dealt with, e.g. video games because the video game industry adapts game classics such as *Pac-Man* to new video game consoles and handheld devices (e.g. smartphones and tablet PCs) attracting a lively gamer subculture, the retro gamers (Suominen, 2007, 2012). Research questions to be considered could include identification, repeat and binge viewing (see McDowell, 2015), and cross platform behavior (see contributions by Doyle, 2015 and Shay, 2015). Different kinds of media brands on various levels, such as the media company itself like *Disney*, the movie as an own brand (e.g. *The Muppets*), the content and its features (e.g. *The Artist*), or the actors (e.g. *Charlie Chaplin, Marilyn Monroe*) could be of high interest too, to concretize nostalgic cues and their effects. Thus, personal and historical nostalgia can be used more effectively as a competitive advantage in the contemporary era of digitalization, saturated media markets, and media crises.

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[2] http://www.southampton.ac.uk/nostalgia/materials/Southampton%20Nostalgia%20Scale%20_2_.pdf

Appendix

Table 2 Results pretest 1

Stimuli pretest 1 ($n = 217$)	n	$M_{P.N.}$ "Memories of good times from my past"	$M_{H.N.}$ "Positive feelings about a time before I was born"	$M_{Popularity}$ "I like the movie"	$M_{Familiarity}$ "I know the movie"
Shutter Island	19	5.74	5.79	2.63	3.21
Kick-Ass	19	5.26	5.89	3.74	4.63
Prometheus	19	6.00	6.11	4.42	5.00
The Hobbit: An Unexpected Journey	19	4.89	4.95	2.37	2.95
Silver Linings Playbook	19	5.47	6.21	4.21	5.74
Warrior	19	5.84	6.21	4.16	5.95
Despicable Me	29	4.28	5.48	3.24	4.72
Tucker and Dale vs. Evil	29	5.52	5.79	4.21	4.93
The King's Speech	29	5.62	**4.62**	3.86	5.10
Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows: Part 2	29	4.17	5.55	3.17	3.38
Crazy. Stupid. Love.	29	5.28	5.93	3.97	5.48
The Fighter	29	5.48	5.31	3.97	5.59
Tangled	33	4.30	5.27	3.91	4.94
The Cabin in the Woods	33	6.18	6.52	4.85	6.33
Fetih 1453	33	5.88	5.27	4.73	6.76
The Hunger Games	33	5.67	6.12	3.85	4.27
Midnight in Paris	33	5.06	5.33	4.48	6.00
Drive	33	5.52	6.06	3.91	5.21
How to Train Your Dragon	35	4.69	5.66	3.66	4.37
Pitch Perfect	35	5.09	5.83	4.46	5.29
Zero Dark Thirty	35	6.20	6.34	4.83	5.77
The Dark Knight Rises	35	5.20	5.80	2.83	2.91
The Intouchables	35	4.91	5.94	**1.91**	**2.43**

(continued)

Table 2 (continued)

Stimuli pretest 1 ($n = 217$)	n	$M_{\text{P.N.}}$ "Memories of good times from my past"	$M_{\text{H.N.}}$ "Positive feelings about a time before I was born"	$M_{\text{Popularity}}$ "I like the movie"	$M_{\text{Familiarity}}$ "I know the movie"
Ted	35	4.80	5.91	3.09	3.23
RockStar	34	5.41	5.41	4.82	6.59
Argo	34	5.62	6.15	4.15	5.65
The Muppets	34	**3.47**	4.29	4.21	5.65
The Skin I Live In	34	5.85	5.85	4.47	6.41
The Avengers	34	4.21	5.53	2.97	4.00
Black Swan	34	5.24	5.76	3.35	3.56
True Grit	28	5.93	5.36	4.29	5.54
Chico & Rita	28	5.29	**4.54**	4.54	6.89
Inception	28	5.07	5.39	2.07	2.79
Django Unchained	28	6.32	5.68	2.54	3.57
Rango	28	5.21	5.18	3.71	4.64
Moneyball	39	4.92	5.36	4.08	5.18
Lincoln	39	5.46	4.82	4.21	5.15
Toy Story 3	39	**3.23**	5.64	3.38	4.41
Les Misérables	39	5.64	5.23	4.10	5.36
War Horse	39	5.64	5.64	4.90	5.72
The Social Network	39	5.10	6.08	3.54	3.62

Note 1 = totally agree, 7 = totally disagree, bold = highest means

Table 3 Results pretest 2

Stimuli pretest 2	n	$M_{\text{P.N.}}$ "Memories of good times from my past"	$M_{\text{H.N. total}}$	$M_{\text{Popularity}}$ "I like the movie"	$M_{\text{Familiarity}}$ "I know the movie"
The King's Speech	12	5.08	3.17	3.25	4.25
Chico & Rita	12	5.42	3.47	5.50	6.83
Hyde Park on Hudson	12	4.83	**2.62**	3.00	5.92
Titanic in 3D	12	5.33	**2.42**	**2.75**	**2.33**

Note 1 = totally agree, 7 = totally disagree, bold = highest means

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Part IV

The Communication Perspective: Media Brands as Marketing Communication and Co-creation

Media Brand Cultures: Researching and Theorizing How Consumers Engage in the Social Construction of Media Brands

Mart Ots and Benjamin J. Hartmann

Abstract

In this chapter we acknowledge the branding process as an interplay between brand owners, consumers, popular culture, and other stakeholders. This interdependence between management practices and the external environment is becoming increasingly evident, not the least in the field of media. In a world of social and participatory media, consumers are given more and more opportunities to interact with, and through, their favorite brands. On the one hand these interactions may be signs of deep and sincere appreciation, while at the same time making brands more and more difficult to control or direct from a managerial point of view. This has led brand managers and researchers to identify a need for new insights into the cultures of brands. The research on consumer culture that has evolved over the past decades has the power to provide guidance. This chapter offers an introduction to researching and theorizing how consumers engage in the social construction of media brands and points out a handful of promising research areas.

Keywords

Media brands • Consumer culture • Brand culture • Brand meaning • Value co-creation • Consumption • Brand symbolism • User practices

1 Introduction

Brands are symbols laden with meanings. They are lighthouses through which we signal who we are and what we aspire to be. They are the ties that bind social groups and organizations. They are a means for judging the people we meet. Brands, in

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short, are the road signs we use to navigate our social lives. Brands are of course also practical, time-saving and risk minimizing and all that, but central to the *cultural view on branding* is the notion that we do not select brands merely based on their utility, on what they can do; we also choose certain brands for their symbolic value, what they mean and communicate. In the seminal article 'Symbols for sale', written over 50 years ago, Sidney Levy exposed consumer rationality in brand selection as nothing more than a myth. Rather than the practical, rational, economic reasons for buying, in the face of choice, consumers are more likely to choose things that make them 'feel good'.

> In the broadest sense, each person aims to enhance his sense of self, and behaves in ways that are consistent with his image of the person he is or wants to be [. . .] In this sense, all commercial objects have a symbolic character, and making a purchase involves an assessment—implicit or explicit—of this symbolism, to decide whether or not it fits. Energy (and money) will be given when the symbols are appropriate ones, and denied or given parsimoniously when they are not (Levy, 1959, p. 117).

Most likely you will have been in a situation where you have chosen to read or view something or become member of a certain online community partly based on what other people will think, rather than letting your choice obey your first instinct—maybe something that will make you look smart and sophisticated, cool and stylish, or skilled and knowledgeable. This behavior is however not limited to a few occasions, but rather something that to various degrees influences our everyday choices. The consumption of media is to a large extent a social activity that we share with others, which makes it powerful as a symbolic vehicle. It allows us to connect to other people, discussing yesterday's football match or the latest season of a TV series for example. The magazine of your choice, whether it is *Elle, Newsweek, ComputerWorld, Guitar Player, Iron Man Magazine, Food & Wine*, or *Country Homes & Interiors* says something about you. Likewise a businesswoman who reads a certain newspaper (such as the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* or the *Financial Times*), may signal that she is serious, knowledgeable and updated, and it may provide a personal feeling of confidence. The newspaper, the Swiss watch or the designer shoes, may in a sense be thought of as amulets that in the right circumstances give strength to their wearers.

We may not necessarily aim to communicate with the choice of our brands on purpose, we might just follow our interests, professions, and hobbies—but to others, the brands we consume send symbolic messages. The brands we consume also communicate something to ourselves. In that sense the media brand serves to construct an identity. But there are many more dimensions of this symbolism; some of it to be discussed on other chapters of this volume (see Blümelhuber, 2015; Natterer, 2015; Scherer, 2015). In some cases, brands are so strong that they develop their own fan cultures and consumption practices (see Paus-Hasebrink & Hasebrink, 2015). Even though media brand management literature has largely neglected it, some of the most studied fan cultures evolve around media brands like *Star Trek, Star Wars* and *Lord of the Rings*—brands around which fans can invest their time, money, family ceremonies, and personal identities. Many authors observe the tension between traditional brand management and the consumer driven brand manifestations that tend to evolve around brands with a high consumer engagement or cult status (e.g., Fournier & Lee, 2009; Holt, 2004; Langer, 2004; Thompson & Arsel, 2004). Lately, brand management practices are starting to explore ways to embrace consumer creativity rather than suppressing it, but many companies are still having a hard time understanding how they can influence consumer creativity in ways that benefits both parties.

2 Theoretical Perspectives on Brand Cultures

The general consensus appears to be that strong brands are decisive components for the success of companies in dynamic and competitive marketplaces (e.g., Aaker, 1995), and that these brands can and should be strategically managed (e.g., Kapferer, 2004; Keller, 1998). Therefore, Keller (2003) argues that the realization of branding as a main management concern has been resulting in the "need to inform practicing managers of concepts, theories, and guidelines from consumer research to facilitate their brand stewardship" (p. 595). The idea of branding has widened from consumer brands to include corporations as brands (Aaker, 2004; Balmer, 2001; Balmer & Gray, 2003; Harris & de Chernatony, 2001; Hatch & Schultz, 2001, 2003; Urde, 2003), countries as brands (Kotler & Gertner, 2002), monarchies as brands (Greyser, Balmer, & Urde, 2006), and branding issues in business marketing (e.g., Blombäck, 2005; Kotler & Förtsch, 2006), and not the least, media brands.

The media branding field is by tradition rooted in a normative, positivist view of brands, which is only emphasized by recent literature reviews and research outlooks (e.g., Malmelin & Moisander, 2014). In response to this, this chapter will introduce research on media brand cultures and the symbolic meaning of media brands. We will discuss why some brands despite (or even because of) limited advertising resources can have a tremendous power of attraction on their users, taking their relationship with the brand way beyond behavioral loyalty to strong emotional attachment, or even fandom. At the core of this research lies two important observations.

Firstly, brands are not merely chosen based on a certain quality/price level or functional brand characteristics that people analyze as giving the best value. Rather, *brands are purchased and consumed because they "fit" into people's lives, aspirations and practices of everyday living*. If we choose to illustrate our identity projects with the metaphor of a bird's nest, each brand is another little twig that we add to a seemingly eclectic bricolage of symbols and symbolic goods that eventually make up our selves.

Secondly, brand management is increasingly difficult because of the interconnectedness of people. If managers ever lived in the illusion that they could design the brand image of their choice, this illusion is now gone. Many business schools around the world still teach brand management with the underlying ideology that it is the brand manager who exerts control over the brand's meaning and whose job it is to fill it with meaningful content in order to attract a strategically important target group through positioning the brand in the competitive landscape. However, this dated philosophy is questionable as it becomes increasingly clear that *brands exist in the nexus of a variety of market participants, who all contribute as authors to a brand* (Holt, 2004). While this holds true for the majority of brands, it is particularly evident in the realm of media brands. Thus, *brand management practices and theories need to be adapted to the notion that brand meanings grow, not as one-directional managerial processes, but as social and cultural constellations between various stakeholders in the public domain.*

By now we have established that consumers use brands as offered resources (Arnould & Thompson, 2005; Holt, 2002) and that consumption itself serves as a resource of meaning creation (Elliott, 1997). Behind these thoughts lies the idea that in contemporary consumer culture, “meanings must be channeled through brands to have value” and that therefore, “brands will be more valuable if they are offered not as cultural blueprints but as cultural resources, as useful ingredients” (Holt, 2002, p. 81, 83). Authors like Holt (2002, p. 80) maintain that these aspects are relevant for the understanding of brands and branding, because “consumer culture is the ideological infrastructure that undergirds what and how people consume, and sets the ground rules for marketers’ branding activities.” In other words, while brands are negotiated in the public realm, brand managers need to carefully adjust their activities so as they resonate with the consumer culture in which the brand is situated.

But what is consumer culture? The idea of consumer culture takes its starting point in the realization that consumption of some sort and form permeates our life to the extent that it becomes almost impossible to participate in everyday life without consumption (Slater, 1997). Dramatizing this, Baudrillard (1998/1970, p. 90) argues that even “the rejection of consumption (. . .) remains the very ultimate in consumption”. The idea here is that even those activities that are supposedly about rejecting consumption are in fact all about consumption. If we choose not to be a member of a certain social network (e.g., because only uncool people are members), not to read a certain newspaper (e.g., because it is the yellow press), not to use a certain app (e.g., because it leaves digital traces of personal data) we are consuming the idea of not consuming these brands. Such anti-consumption serves as differentiation that is achieved through the consumption of signs that are attached to a certain way of behaving (Baudrillard, 1998/1970). In other words, a certain way of consuming (or not consuming) becomes itself a consumable sign that offers meaning. Only this time, it offers meaning not only on the basis of ‘what’ is consumed, but also ‘how’ (Holt, 1997). Thus, consumption is seemingly all over the place. As Slater (1997, p. 15) puts it: “all the world is consumable experience.” To capture this permeation and importance of consumption in contemporary societies, researchers use the term consumer culture:

> The notion of ‘consumer culture’ implies that, in the modern world, core social practices and cultural values, ideas, aspirations and identities are defined and oriented in relation to consumption rather than to other social dimensions such as work or citizenship, religious cosmology or military role. [. . .] Thus, in talking of modern society as a consumer culture,

> people are not referring simply to a particular pattern of needs and objects—a particular consumption culture—but a culture of consumption (Slater, 1997, 24; original emphasis).

A consumer culture, or culture of consumption, is held together by the things we consume and the practices in which we consume these things. Naturally, brands are then of key importance in the operation of consumer culture and they must be understood only in relation to it. Because of this, the resonance of a brand with existing consumer cultures becomes not an option, but a strategic necessity for survival and success.

This becomes particularly important for media brands. While some media brands are resonating quite nicely with contemporary consumer cultures, others have more difficulty. For example, paper-based newspapers were once a given and ordinary facet of everyday life, but are now becoming more and more like dinosaurs. Of course there might be past management issues contributing to the situation. But one of the key reasons for many of the problems newspaper brands face today lies not purely in the changed technology itself, but in a fundamental problem in how these brands resonate with today's culture of consumption. They become less embedded in contemporary consumer culture as they drift further away from core social practices. Other media brands, on the other hand, celebrate maintained success or have found ways to resonate with consumer culture again, such as brands in the music industry.

It would be too easy to attribute the success and failure of media brands purely to the recent technological changes, and how well brands can re-dress themselves from material to immaterial costumes. Magaudda (2011) offers an approach for how to understand the dynamics of consumer culture with regard to this issue specifically for media brands. Analyzing three technologies involved with contemporary music listening practices (*iPod*, external hard drive, and vinyl), he concludes that materiality 'bites back' as in the course of dematerialization or digitalization, musical material objects actually gain importance in the practices that consumers engage in when listening to music. For media brand managers involved with struggles over digitalization versus materialization, this means that there is a need to consider not merely their own brand, but also to understand how the brand is situated within the daily life of consumers and their practices, in which the brand is consumed.

So, rather than being a separate perspective on brands, consumer culture theory suggests a conglomerate of various perspectives (Arnould & Thompson, 2005) that advocate the idea that in order to understand brands and their operation, we need to consider the consumer cultural contexts in which brands operate.

3 Brand Meanings

The frame of consumer culture informs us to contextualize the consumption of brands. One important facet of this context is the construction of identity that takes place through the consumption of certain brands and not others. It is well established that possessions are important parts of the extended self (Belk, 1988). The more we feel that we lack the personal qualities to fill a certain role, the more likely we are to use products and brands to reinforce our aspirations. There are in other words huge opportunities for brands who manage to understand how they fit into the identity constructions of their buyers and users—like the aspiring business man who carries the *Financial Times*, or the aspiring advertising creative who carries his *Apple* notebook at all times. This way, stretching beyond their economic functionality and value, some brands are important to us in what they tell us—they are goods to think with, "goods to speak with" (Fiske, 1989, p. 34). Consumption is from this perspective an important cultural practice (Baudrillard, 1998/1970) where we use products and brands as the building blocks of identity projects. In fact, we are all in a sense symbolic projects (Thompson, 1995), and we continuously create ourselves while furnishing our lives with brands and other symbolic materials.

Sherry (1987) describes this process of brand selection as creating our own 'brandspaces'. These are our own small universes of brands that have a deep meaning to us, brands that we have developed strong relationships with, brands which play important parts in our lives. Fournier (1998) explores brand loyalty as a sometimes intimate and personal relationship where users think of a few brands as centrally important parties in their lives, almost like friends or family members that they cannot see themselves living without. The practices of reading the same morning newspaper at breakfast every day, watching a TV series that is airing for very long time, or watching a certain evening newscast, may indeed develop into such deep relationships over time, resulting in feeling of loss or even grief when they are taken away. Sometimes this is manifested in fan protests or outrage when a TV show is ended or a certain product brand is terminated. In some cases they even start their own fan media or carry on brand lines that the manufacturers have long cancelled as in the case of the *Apple Newton* (Muñiz & Schau, 2005; Schau & Muñiz, 2006).

In and through various rituals of everyday life, people interact with their brands (McCracken, 1988), and it is by understanding and intervening in these rituals that firms and products may exert indirect influence over consumers. Commercial companies are increasingly understanding this and trying to stimulate people into providing platforms for interaction with their favorite brands through brandfests, customer clubs, forums, and communities (Fournier & Lee, 2009; McAlexander, Schouten, & Koenig, 2002; Muniz Jr & O'Guinn, 2001).

Several studies have discussed that brand meanings are highly contextual (Arnould, Price, & Moisio, 2006) and need to be understood in time and space. For example, brands gain meaning in and through the practices in which they are consumed (Epp & Price, 2010; Truninger, 2011). Also, depending on who you ask, a brand may mean quite different things. Brand selection may for instance be a reaction against the dominant, the mainstream, or a refusal of other peoples taste (Bourdieu, 1984; Holt, 1997). Subcultures need to define what they are by clarifying what they are not i.e., a revolt manifested through cultural symbols—consumer brands. It may be teenagers versus their parents, the nerds versus the sports jocks, or as several studies have shown, consumer resistance to brands like

Coca Cola or *Starbucks* that are perceived of as being too culturally dominant (Askegaard & Csaba, 2000; Thompson & Arsel, 2004).

4 Brand Culture

As the last sections recognized the importance of understanding the symbolic meaning of brands, this section will dig deeper into brand culture, how brand meanings are constructed and how they evolve in the public realm.

Traditionally, the players in the cultural production process can typically be understood to be in three camps: producers of cultural products, intermediaries diffusing those cultural products, and finally consumers experiencing cultural products (Kozinets, 2001; Lash & Urry, 2002; McCracken, 1988; Venkatesh & Meamber, 2006; Wright, 2005). Fiske (1989), however, distinguishes between those cultural products created by the cultural industry as a part of capitalist society—which he calls mass culture—and those cultural products that transpire from consumers employing mass cultural products as resources in their own meaning-creation processes, which he calls popular culture. Here, particularly, these meaning-creation processes on the consumer side come to the fore in fandom, which has been ascribed productive qualities, with fans reworking and twisting meanings (Fiske, 1992). However, the notion of brand culture does not regard the productive qualities of the enthusiast as a form of second-hand production, following the brand managers' first-hand production of meaning. Rather, it becomes a core feature of the brand culture. Thus, the divide between production (by brand managers) and post-production (by fans) becomes increasingly unbearable, because brand meaning and brand culture are essentially produced through the combined collective efforts of all parties involved.

Research on brand culture therefore starts from the notion that brand meanings are *not* constructed by advertising professionals, marketers, or strategists at the drawing board or in a corporate meeting room. Rather, brands are constructed in the public domain, where individual consumers, brand owners, stakeholders, and popular culture collectively negotiate what associations and meanings are connected to brands and how these are interpreted. As Holt (2004) states, *one can think of the brand as 'the culture of the product'*. Products may have trademarks and logos, but without the customers' and other stakeholders' real experiences and inputs they are just empty material markers, 'devoid of meaning'. A brand needs authors who can fill it with meaning, and from this perspective brands are cultural symbols, co-constructed, and bound in time and space (Bengtsson & Östberg, 2006). In this process brand owners may advertise their products, media firms may for instance engage in self-promotion, or spread the word about the brand and what it represents in other ways. *Consumers* produce meaning for themselves by consuming and owning branded products, *important stakeholders* recommend and review the product, and not least *popular culture* (of which media plays an important part) influence the process by putting brands on the center stage of attention, recognizing brands, their ads, or their followers as part of a cultural phenomenon in itself (Holt, 2004). Thus, brands cannot be owned or controlled by firms alone, and this realization has been made painfully clear to more and more companies trying to leverage social media for marketing and branding purposes. A recent example is the infamous #MyNYPD twitter campaign for the New York City Police Department in spring 2014, where the public was encouraged to share pictures of themselves with police officers—only that the posted pictures did not reveal the friendly relationship that the brand owner had envisioned. On the contrary the hashtag became a forum for citizens to share their experiences of police brutality. In fact, a substantial body of research has explored how brands as symbols may be integrated into particular consumer subcultures filling them with completely different meanings from that which the corporate brand owner had initially intended (Kozinets, 2001; Muniz Jr & O'Guinn, 2001). For that reason, understanding how brands are socially constructed is central for all those interested in the area of brand management.

A notion related to brand culture is the notion of the brand cult, which captures the sometimes extreme devotion that consumers have towards particular brands. For example, this is evident in studies on music groups (Doss, 1999), TV series and movies (Kozinets, 1997, 2001), or wrestling (Ragas & Bueno, 2002).

The brand cult is an extreme form of brand loyalty that results in a brand culture characterized by religiosity, as demonstrated by Belk and Tumbat (2005) in the case of the *Mac* enthusiast, or O'Guinn and Schau in the case of the *Apple Newton*. Interestingly, after Apple discontinued the device, a community of loyal Newton lovers kept it alive, fulfilling all the important tasks of brand management to the extent of developing a strong form of brand religiosity. As Belk and Tumbat (2005) show, the religiosity that develops around such cult brands is deeply dependent on myths. Myths are so powerful, because they leave imaginary space for consumers, and offer a sense of direction and heritage. The Apple brand is particularly characterized by surrounding myths that consumers employ to romanticize their beloved brand. In theoretical terms, this desire for romance, specialness, mythical and mystical is often referred to as "enchantment".

Langer (2004) describes how *Disney* essentially operates in a business of branded enchantment. *Disney*, as one of the largest media brands, has developed a brand culture based on enchantment, however, this also creates problems. The announcement that *Disney* will now stand for Lucasfilm's *Star Wars* has caused major uproar and riots among *Star Wars* enthusiasts. Although the brand culture of *Star Wars* is itself characterized by ample room for imagination as the productive communities of *Star Wars* aficionados demonstrate, *Disney*'s brand culture of enchantment somewhat frightens the *Star Wars* community. They fear the '*Disney*-fication' of *Star Wars*.

Media brand cultures are not developed in a strategic white paper, but are created and shaped by enthusiasts, such as research on *X-files* lovers or *Star Trek* suggests (Kozinets, 1997, 2001). Taken to the extreme, these enthusiasts are capable of producing their own 'wikimedia' (Kozinets, 2007). Fiske (1989) has long described how the use of mass cultural products as resources that consumers use, manipulate, and undermine in their own production processes as a basic, but far from trivial, process in popular culture. Brand cultures in the realm of media brands particularly depend on this creative work, and brand managers should recognize how the culture of the brand they intend to manage is dependent on enthusiasts demanding enough room for imaginative and enchantment processes. This participatory element of brand culture is evident in a variety of industries ranging from ‘citizen journalists’ producing content for media organizations (Banks & Deuze, 2009; Banks & Humphreys, 2008; Bruns, 2008; Deuze, Bruns, & Neuberger, 2007; Jenkins, 2006; Wardle & Williams, 2010) to consumers who are involved through internet technologies in the production and innovation processes of motorcycles, pharmaceutical products, aircraft such as *Boeing*’s dreamliner, *Nike* shoes, and musical instruments (Fuller, Jawecki, & Mühlbacher, 2007; Jawecki & Fuller, 2008; Jeppesen & Frederiksen, 2006; Sawhney, Verona, & Prandelli, 2005).

5 Conclusion and Future Outlook

In this chapter we have offered an introductory overview of alternative theories, philosophies, and concepts that can help in elucidating media brands beyond the traditional positivist frame. If the aim is to understand media brands so as to inform managerial decision making, it is first necessary to understand the role and operation of brands in consumer culture. Brands are neither merely chunks of information that ease our decision processes, nor are they purely strategic assets that managers use to exploit market share and make a profit. Rather, brands are constructed and managed in collective efforts in which a variety of market participants contribute. The notion of brand culture captures this co-creation process.

While being increasingly acknowledged in the fields of marketing and consumer research, research in media branding currently lags behind in applying these insights. Given these latest theoretical developments in the operation of brands, brand management has to be re-defined, remedying the idea that brands can be managed by the push of a button or turning certain knobs in the right amount in the right direction.

Thus, more research is needed that specifically explores media brands with regard to the following issues:

1. *Management of media brand cultures*. The brand culture should be understood as a strategic asset, and rather than brand management we should refer to brand culture management. An oxymoron in itself, but it points out that the culture of a brand deserves more attention than the brand in isolation. There is however a lack of insight into how this is integrated into managerial processes and practices. Continued copyright lawsuits against fans of brands raise questions about the degree of control that corporations can and should exert over consumers and their brand engagement
2. *Media brands are first and foremost social shells*. They do not merely mediate between the brand owners and their customers (like an advertisement being read

by a consumer) but rather between a range of parties that collectively shape consumer culture. Thus, a question of key concern becomes the following. How can we understand the production of brand meaning when media brands provide the context rather than the content of consumer engagement? Media can be regarded as technical shells (such as *Facebook*), or content providers (like traditional newspapers), but from a brand culture perspective, media brands are essentially cultural platforms

3. *Methodological consequences for studying media brands*. Brand management is a social science and the social must be at the center of attention. The social is best captured through a variety of research designs (e.g., netnography, interviews, observation) in addition to traditional measuring. If aiming to understand how media brands work, close investigation of the consumer cultural processes involved in the operation of brands is necessary—this also implies turning to methodologies that can attend to the various different actors that partake in brands and their roles, negotiations, and contestations
4. *The conceptual boundaries of media brand cultures*. As most brands in one way or the other live their life in and through media, it is relevant to take one step back and ask: What is it that makes a media brand a media brand? This question has previously been asked from the corporate perspective, but not from the consumer's perspective. In what ways are media perceived as similar or essentially different as cultural phenomena than other brands that create their own media, or leverage social media strictly for promotion purposes? The results of such an inquiry may also offer insights into the general debates on brands and their consumption.

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Marketing Communication of Media Brands: A Literature Review

Stefan Weinacht

Abstract

Marketing literature provides a wide range of recommendations on how to do marketing communication. However these cannot be adopted on a one-to-one basis by media brands. This article gives a literature review on what has been written on the communication of media brands. It is focused on communication goals, media messages, media platforms and selected instruments of communication. Because it is in these aspects that media brand communication differs most from any other brand communication.

Keywords

Marketing communication • Media promotion • Media messages • Literature review

1 Introduction

Scholars have found a number of reasons why media managers should add the ideas of media branding to their communicative work: changes in media value chains, multicasting and multiple distribution outlets (Chan-Olmsted, 2006; Eastman, 2000), the characteristics of immaterial goods (Picard, 2004), intensified competition (McDowell, 2011; Ots, 2008) and in the consequences of Web 2.0 for media companies' relationship to consumers (Chan-Olmsted, 2011; McDowell, 2011). Therefore media content, products, platforms and companies need to be differentiated by brand management (Siegert, 2008) "to build strong and long lasting bonds with their audiences—to connect to existing and potential viewers, listeners or readers in ways that are relevant and unique" (Ots, 2008, p. 2).

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Research on the communication of media brands does not have a long tradition. However, the number of publications has reached a critical mass and is constantly rising. Some of the crossroads reached by research questions are already apparent. So the crucial question of this article is: what has been achieved so far and what offerings to related areas of research have been collaborative concerning the marketing communication of media brands? Only one attempt to give an overview of current research on "media promotion" is known (Eastman, 2000). However the term "brand" is rarely used in this book. As most of the articles on the marketing communication of media brands have been published later, a new literature review focusing on publications from 2000 onwards seems appropriate. Malmelin and Moisander (2014) presented a research agenda for brands and branding in media management but did not go into detail concerning media brands' communication.

Media goods are seen as consumer goods with the characteristics of services. The first question to arise is: do all rules for consumer goods with the characteristics of services apply to the media? McDowell (2006) pointed out that much literature on consumer goods can easily be used but that there are some distinctions such as (1) media brands are not particularly price sensitive; (2) risk reduction is almost irrelevant to media users, (3) competing media brands are easily accessible, (4) the benefits of media brands are intangible, and (5) media can be utilized as communication tools for self-branding (also Ots, 2008). McDowell (2006, p. 242) concluded: "Frozen peas do not have such an advantage." Therefore the unique setting of media brands that can be both products and communication tools at the same time will be one of the main topics of this article.

General communication management requires strategy (goals, positioning, style, a message), activities (target groups, platforms, instruments), and resources (time, budget, staff) (Bruhn, 2010; Merten, 2013). General management scholars suggested processes of managing that can easily be adapted by communication scholars. However, there are some areas of competence which can be usefully claimed by media and communication scholars—not only when talking about the media industries but also communication management in general. These are (1) communication goals, (2) media messages, (3) media platforms and (4) selected instruments of the communication mix. These particular topics will be at the center of the following analysis. The aim of this article is to give an overview of the literature which deals with these aspects of media brand communication management and to point out whether it links to other fields of communication studies.

The phenomenon to be discussed is the literature on the communication of media brands. So the underlying phenomenon is the communication of media brands. This construct will be understood as communication in terms of marketing communication, promotion and public relations. "Media" will only mean mass media such as newspapers, magazines, radio, television and those parts of online communication that reach a dispersed audience. Finally the term "media brands" requires further explanation.

With almost every article in marketing literature comes a new definition of the term "brand" or its management functions. As Tropp (2014, pp. 319–324) has shown, definitions can be clustered along the simple and linear communication process into those focusing on the product, the communicator, the instruments and the receiver. He adds a "communication-oriented approach" that takes all steps of the communication process into account. Finally he derives a definition: the brand is a unique, emotionally charged semantic network that emerged from communication on an object of public communication (i.e. organization, company, product, service). This network is represented by plenty of consistent communicative offers which profoundly reduces complexity. These communicative offers include all materialized semiotics—such as TV spots, advertisements, logos, melodies, brand names in newspaper articles and so forth—that activate this specific semantic network for the construction of meaning entirely or partially, consciously or unconsciously (Tropp, 2014, p. 324).

2 Media Brands and Their Communication: A Systematic Literature Review

2.1 Methodology

As stated above, the aim of this article is to give an overview of the literature which discusses the communication management of media brands and to point out whether it offers connections to other fields of communication studies. This can be achieved by a systematic literature review (Kornmeier, 2007). To identify the relevant literature all books and articles were collected that had the terms *media & brand, media & branding, media & brand & management, communication & management, Public Relations & media* and their German equivalents either in their title or their keyword list. Secondly those publications that dealt with media brands and their communication were chosen. They were identified based on their abstracts (articles) or list of contents (books). Only in some cases was a deeper look inside needed to find out whether the publication included at least a chapter on media brand communication. Step three took these papers' bibliographies as the starting point of a snowball enquiry. This non-probabilistic sampling method reflects the explorative aim of this study (Berekoven, Eckert, & Ellenrieder, 2009; Przyborski & Wohlrab-Sahr, 2010).

To identify papers mainly dealing with aspects of communicating media brands it was noted whether they discussed (a) promotionally driven changes of the product that influence the semantic appearance to the user or (b) possibly harm editorial credibility (Weinacht, 2009). A good example to illustrate the difference is made in an article by Krebs and Reichel (2014), which asks: "do media brands keep up to their promises in quality?" The authors report on a content analysis that tests whether quality standards that were claimed in the marketing communication of a brand, were fulfilled by the product. As the empirical work concerns the product, not its communication, this article was not included in this sample.

In case a study did not mainly focus on marketing communication but referred to marketing communication in part, only the relevant sections were included in the analysis. The analysis itself was carried out as a qualitative, structuring and typifying content analysis (Mayring, 2003). The coding schemes included: (1) author's name, year of publication, article title to identify the paper, (2) the theoretically deduced main topic communication goals, media messages, media platforms and selected instruments of the communication mix, (3) complemented by the relevant aspect of the paper and the media references to communication: subject and object of communication. Additionally the chosen method was documented. The selected articles were explored on a descriptive level focusing on their main topics and then identifying repeatedly investigated questions. This approach should empirically distill the sub aspects of the four main topics.

2.2 Communication Goals

There are many typologies of communication goals in general marketing literature. One very common and basic differentiation names cognitive, affective and conative goals (Bruhn, 2010). As a very rough assignment these can be linked to the concepts of brand awareness, brand image and brand loyalty (McDowell, 2004a, 2006). Finally, communicative techniques can be added to attain goals such as naming and explaining media brands (Weinacht, 2009), using trailers/teasers, corporate design, staff and contexts of editorial content on media brands (Bleicher, 1994; Engels, 2005; Gehrke & Hohlfeld, 1996; Siegert, 2001a) or reflective communication in other media and services such as newspaper TV listings (Breyer-Mayländer & Werner, 2003; Engels, 2005; Gehrke & Hohlfeld, 1996). Table 1 shows the combination of types, goals and techniques.

The second aspect of media branding communication goals that is frequently highlighted is the outstanding chance of self/cross/media promotion, both in editorial content and in commercials, because usually there is no media price to be paid for these forms of promotion (McDowell & Battan, 2005). Promotion in commercials should be seen as a form of advertisement and therefore might not appear very trustworthy to the audience. Promotion in editorial content can be different. That is why the focus will be on this aspect.

A few points regarding the terms: self, cross and media-promotion. The term self-promotion is mainly used by studies based on system theory (Siegert, 2008), but taken by itself it excludes all forms of media promotion that do not have an identity of platform and object in their presentation, for example all sorts of cross-promotion between affiliated media products. The term cross-promotion is often

Table 1 Goals of media brand communication

Type	Goal	Techniques
Cognitive	Brand awareness	Naming and explaining media brands
Affective	Brand image	Use of trailer/teaser, corporate design, staff and contexts of editorial content on media brands
Conative	Brand loyalty, brand commitment, brand trial	Reflective communication in other media and services such as program sheets, teasers etc.

used in the context of multimedia and multichannel-branding strategies (Chan-Olmsted, 2011) and therefore logically excludes self-promotion and taken on its own presumes a bilateral presentation which can rarely be monitored in combination but only be analyzed on an aggregated data level. Therefore this article proposes the term media promotion as including self, affiliated and cross-promotion through the word “media” and points to the marketing-intention through the word “promotion”.

The literature review of the outstanding chance of media promotion in editorial content (Chan-Olmsted, 2011; Siegert, 2001a, 2008) has shown five subaspects of interest to communication scholars:

- Editorial credibility (Porlezza, 2006; Rössler, 2001; Siegert, 2000, 2001b; Weinacht & Hohlfeld, 2007)
- Avoiding reactance by using below the line instruments (Friedrichsen & Friedrichsen, 2004)
- Targeting a mass audience instead of opinion leaders, internal audiences (Knobloch, 2003)
- Suitable for publicity, information, persuasion (not so much appreciation) (Hunt & Grunig, 1994)
- Techniques: highlighting positive news and concealing negative news on own/affiliated companies; vice versa with competitors (Linke & Pickl, 2000; Malik, 2004)

The third aspect of communication goals that is emphasized in extant research is the conflict of aims between media promotion in editorial content on the one hand and reactance, public interest and editorial reasons for media presentation on the other (Malik, 2004; Siegert, Gerth, & Rademacher, 2011; Weinacht, 2009). Siegert et al. (2011) have cast this problem into the increasingly quoted *MBAC-Model* that discusses the influence of media, brands, actors and communication on decision making by journalists and media managers.

So what conclusions can be drawn for media promotion in editorial content? Firstly studies on media branding deliver criteria to test (a) the quality of the media industry’s marketing communication. Secondly they discuss (b) normatively motivated critique of media quality based on the assumption of market driven communication rather than journalistic ethics. And thirdly they deliver (c) case studies on the media industries to the intersectoral discussion of marketing communication.

The quality of media marketing communication (a) is only interesting to scholars of media management. But the assumed clash of normative goals and marketing aims (b) should be interesting for scholars in media systems and journalism studies: offensively including marketing aims into the set of reasons for news selection (news factor: economic goals of the publisher?) might still sound provocative to the ears of many journalism scholars. Finally, the case studies of the media industries (c) might be of interest to scholars of media psychology and media effects.

2.3 Media Messages

A major part of media brand communication literature focuses on media messages that are relevant for media branding strategies. To describe media messages that can be used to carry media brand messages Table 2 gives a typology for the formal description of media brand communication in editorial content taken from Weinacht (2009, p. 30). It follows the question of: who presents whom, in which relationship, and with what constitutive criteria? In this way the subject (in the context of a formal description, the term platform seems more appropriate), the object, the reference, its chronological order and its characteristics such as contents, context, semiotics and rating can be documented. Finally, categories for consideration are given in the third column. Using this typology every instance of media branding within media content should be recordable.

The analysis of studies that examine the content of media advertisements and editorial content with regard to media brand messages reveals five perspectives: (1) typologies of media brand presentation with regards to content, (2) strategic capabilities of media messages, (3) functions, (4) usage in campaigns, and (5) effects.

Table 3 gives an overview of typologies that describe the different forms of content transmitted with the presentation of media brands within media content. While Table 2 shows a typology to describe media brand presentation formally, this analysis shows papers that offer typologies of the content of these presentations. In fact, most publications focus on aspects of media promotion in general, some concentrate on the presentation of television brands and by far most of the typologies published so far are descriptive without quantification of the various types.

Table 2 Typology for the formal description of media brand messages

Construct	Variable	Categories
Who?	Platform/ subject	Medium, department/show/film, article/scene, statement
Presents whom?	Object	"The media"/media system, media organization, product, staff
In which relationship?	Reference type	Self referential, internal/external intra-media reference, internal/external inter media reference
	Chronological order	Oriented towards the past, actual, oriented towards the future
With what constitutive criteria?	Aspect	Media policy, law, economy, reception, effects, studies, engineering, VIPs, history, education, training, consumers, production, program, journalism, PR et cetera
	Context	Informative, entertaining
	Semiotics	Written language, spoken language, symbolic/visual, by sounds, by figure
	Rating	Positive, ambivalent, negative, without rating

Table 3 Typologies of media brand presentation with regards to content

Author(s), year	Aspect	Platform	Object	Empiricism
Siegert (2001b)	Typology of media promotion	Diverse	Diverse	–
McDowell and Battan (2005)	Ad configuration	Ads	TV	–
Wolff (2006)	Brand promises	Diverse	TV	Case studies
Weinacht and Hohlfeld (2007)	Typology of media promotion	Diverse	Diverse	–
Siegert (2008)	Typology of media promotion	TV	TV	Quantitative content analysis
Weinacht (2009)	Typology of media promotion	Diverse	Diverse	Quantitative content analysis
Förster (2011a)	Typology of media promotion	Diverse	TV	–

Table 4 Studies on strategic capabilities

Author(s), year	Aspect	Platform	Object	Empiricism
Hashmi (2000)	Repurposing, brand extension, promotion	Online	TV	Group discussion
Chan-Olmsted and Kim (2001)	Use for branding news	Online	TV	Quantitative survey
Lin and Jeffers (2001)	Use for brand loyalty	Online	TV, radio, newspapers	Quantitative survey
Siegert (2001a)	Types of media branding strategies	Diverse	Diverse	–
Althans and Brüne (2004)	Types of media branding strategies	Diverse	Magazines	–
Althans and Brüne (2005)	Strategies for consumer- and ad market	Diverse	Magazine	Case study
Norbäck (2005)	Cross-promotion	Diverse	Diverse	–
Berkler (2008)	Brand functions	Consumers	Diverse	Quantitative survey

The second aspect some articles are concerned with are the strategical capabilities of media messages. These papers take the managers' point of view and thereby focus on the first step of brand communication (see Sect. 2.1). As Table 4 shows, some work has been done on online communication.

The third group of studies examines the functions of media brands and takes the target group's and thus the recipients' point of view (Table 5). Against the background of today's marketing approaches that are driven by the ideas of customer relationship management, brand loyalty and brand commitment, it should be a close step from consumers' functions to managers' goals. But in the articles reviewed here this step is rarely taken.

By far the most publications on media brand communication describe the messages that are used to communicate media brands in campaigns. Again the

Table 5 Studies on the functions of media-brand communication

Author(s), year	Aspect	Platform	Object	Empiricism
Ots and Wolff (2007)	Value perceptions	Media buyers	Diverse	Qualitative survey
Berkler (2008)	Brand functions	Consumers	Diverse	Quantitative survey
Bode (2010)	Brand functions	Diverse	Diverse	Qualitative survey
Gerth, Russi, and Siegert (2012)	Functional values and brand personality	Consumers, media professionals	Newspapers, TV	Quantitative survey

focus on the object of communication becomes apparent while the channel used to transmit the message seems to be of not much importance to scholars (Table 6). This is all the more surprising in times of flourishing programs in communication management in general, channel management and especially social media management. It is also apparent that television is the preferred object of studies of media brands. Most of this literature is based on content analysis. One group of articles published in 2006 is based on expert experience and theoretical work.

The last cluster of articles examines the effects of media brand communication. Table 7 shows all papers that examine the effects of communication policy. (A far more comprehensive approach to all the effects that might be realized by media brands is taken by Förster, 2015.) The table illustrates that most work on the effects of media brands communication used adverts as a stimulus and again examined television as the means of promotion.

To sum up, in the analysis of studies examining the content of media advertisements and editorial content with regard to media brand messages five perspectives were found: typologies of media brand presentation with regard to content, the strategic capabilities of media messages, functions, use in campaigns and effects. The platforms of media brand communication are rarely central to the studies reviewed here (apart from studies on effects). Television is the preferred object of investigation. Moreover, empirical studies are dominant with a predominance of qualitative methods. That might reflect the analytical problem of differentiation being the main aim of practitioners and generalization being an aim of scientists.

Studies on media messages within the communication of media brands deliver criteria to test (a) the quality of the media industry's marketing communication and (b) normatively motivated critique on media quality that could be adopted by journalism studies. They also deliver (c) case studies from media industries that might be interesting to scholars in persuasive communication or PR studies.

Table 6 Studies on content

Author(s), year	Aspect	Platform	Object	Empiricism
Chan-Olmsted and Park (2000)	Content online	Online	TV	Quantitative content analysis
Walker (2000)	Sex and violence	Ads	TV	Quantitative content analysis
Gantz and Schwartz (2000)	Promotion in children's programming	Ads	TV	Quantitative content analysis
Eastman and Billings (2000)	Promotion in and about sports programming	Ads	TV	Quantitative content analysis
Buchman (2000)	Local news promotion	Ads	TV	Quantitative content analysis
Ferguson (2000)	TV station websites	Online	TV	Quantitative content analysis
Siegert (2001c)	Use of self-promotion	TV	TV	Quantitative content analysis
Kim, Sharma and Setzekorn (2002) cited in Chan-Olmsted (2006)	Building brand equity online	Online	B2C retailers	
Chan-Olmsted and Ha (2003)	Content online	Online	TV	Quantitative survey
Baumgarth (2004a, b)	Brand management, brand image transfer and branding	Diverse	Diverse	Case studies
McDowell (2004b)	B2B advertising	Ads	TV	Qualitative content analysis
Blömer (2005)	Use of media promotion	Diverse	TV	Case study
Ferguson and Adams (2006)	Local television promotion	Diverse	TV	–
Eastman (2006)	Design (formal content)	Diverse	Diverse	–
Ferguson (2006)	Network television promotion	Diverse	TV	–
Klein (2006)	Cable marketing and promotion	Diverse	TV	–
Masiclat and Klein (2006)	New media promotion	online	Diverse	–
Avery and Dickson (2006)	Promotion of public television and radio	Diverse	TV, radio	–
Bellamy and Chabin (2006)	Global promotion and marketing of television	Diverse	TV	–

(continued)

Table 6 (continued)

Author(s), year	Aspect	Platform	Object	Empiricism
Wolff (2006)	Brand promises	Diverse	TV	Case studies
Reinemann and Huismann (2007)	Use of ads and citations	Diverse	Diverse	Quantitative survey
Siegert (2008)	Use of media ads and self-promotion	TV	TV	Quantitative content analysis
Weinacht (2009)	Typology and usage of media promotion	Diverse	Diverse	Quantitative content analysis
Förster (2011b)	Usage of media promotion	Diverse	TV	Case studies
Klimmt, Krämer, and Weinacht (2012)	Media staff	TV	TV	Quantitative content analysis

2.4 Media Platforms

In the theoretical section of this article media platforms were claimed to be the communication scholars' stronghold. The analysis has so far shown little interest in platforms, so this section will try to correct this if possible. Table 8 presents a typology of platforms for media brand communication in the mass media. The lines of this table follow the logic of content analysis and make a distinction between different analyzers; the columns draw a very unsubtle differentiation between the main functions of platforms (Weinacht, 2009). The entries in fields are exemplary.

Search results on literature focusing on the platforms of media brand communication are disillusioning. Almost every empirical study includes some references to platforms as a necessary basis for their analysis, but almost none go into any depth. There are however some studies on currently "new" channels in online/mobile communication. There were no studies that mainly examined the advantages and disadvantages of print or broadcasting media under different circumstances of media brand communication (Table 9).

Is there no use in such questions? On the one hand this lack of studies might be a reaction to the assumption that the media brand experience is associated with products and not platforms. On the other hand the usability of distribution platforms is getting more and more important for the choice of converging media offers. This could mean that the technological aspect of media platforms will become a major point. Up to now most work has been done on strategic aspects of "new" channels, with some on the effects that might be achieved (see also Wolter, 2015).

These studies help to examine (a) the quality of the media industry's marketing communication. They also can be taken as (b) case studies from media industries and be compared to content studies of any kind (i.e. media journalism). However, as the technical aspect has not been examined, the assumed connection to media engineering seems to be out of reach.

Table 7 Studies on effects

Author(s), year	Aspect	Platform	Object	Empiricism
Perse (2000)	Theory of ad effects	Ads	TV	–
Eastman and Bolls (2000)	Different contents and different audiences	Ads	TV	Quantitative survey
Bellamy and Traudt (2000)	Brand awareness	–	TV	Quantitative survey
Adams and Lubbers (2000)	Critical comments and ticket sales of theatrical movies	Diverse	Movies	Comparison of quantitative content analysis and ticket sales
Newton and Potter (2000)	Complex vs. simple radio promos	Ads	Radio	Quantitative survey
McDowell (2002)	Perceived market rankings	Ads	TV	Experiment
Walker and Eastman (2003)	Effectiveness of programs of different genres, familiarity, and audience demographics	Ads	TV	Comparison of quantitative content analysis and program rating
McDowell (2007)	Brand equity and credibility	Ads	TV	Quantitative survey
Chan-Olmsted and Cha (2008)	Brand images	Consumers	TV	Quantitative survey
Eble (2012)	Follow-up communication and performance indicators	Social media	Online	Quantitative content analysis

Table 8 Studies on media platforms

	Information	Entertainment	By product need	Advertisement
Product	Programs	Fan magazines	Search engines	Corporate publishing
Special feature	Media shows	Anniversary issue	–	–
Contributions	Meta communication	Media gags in comedy shows	Imprint	Trailer
Statements	Citations	Allusions to media products	Station identity	Roll bar announcing program

Table 9 Studies on new media platforms

Author(s), year	Aspect	Platform	Object
Chan-Olmsted and Jung (2001)	How television networks compete in the age of the Internet (strategy)	Online	TV
McGovern (2001)	Uniqueness of online branding	Online	Diverse
Tarkiainen et al. (2008)	Online brand extensions and brand loyalty (effect)	Online	Magazines
Chan-Olmsted (2011)	Challenges and opportunities 2.0 (strategy)	Online-/social-media	Diverse
Weber (2012)	Austrian newspapers online (strategy)	Online	Newspapers
Wolter and Fantapié Altobelli (2012)	Literature review on economic and branding effects (effect)	Social media	Print
Wolter (2014)	Web 2.0-Fanpages: effects on print-brands, brand relationship and different types of fans	Social media	Print

2.5 Selected Instruments of the Communication Mix

Surprisingly the instruments of the communication mix, such as advertisements, sales promotion, direct marketing, sponsoring, face-to-face communication, fairs, event marketing, social media, internal communications (Bruhn, 2010) have to be added to the list of general management strongholds. Because the communication of media brands follows the lines of general business studies and market psychology (Newton, 2006), little work has been found within media brand literature that has bothered to differentiate between public relations and product placement (surreptitious advertising) (Newton, 2006; Weinacht, 2009). These papers examine media brands as objects of investigation and deliver (a) conclusions to discussions of the quality of the media industry's marketing communication and (b) case studies from the media industries. The latter might be interesting to PR studies or entertainment law (chances, challenges and constraints).

3 Conclusions

Research on the marketing communication of media brands is up to now based on the planning logic and insights derived from general business studies and market psychology. It mainly delivers criteria to test the quality of the media industry's marketing communication (media branding approach). It also provides criteria to test normatively motivated critique on media quality based on the assumption of market driven communication instead of journalistic ethics (the communication science approach, see also Krebs and Siegert, 2015). Finally research on the communication of media brands delivers case studies from the media industries as an object of investigation to some areas of communication studies such as journalism studies, PR, persuasive communication and media systems. This

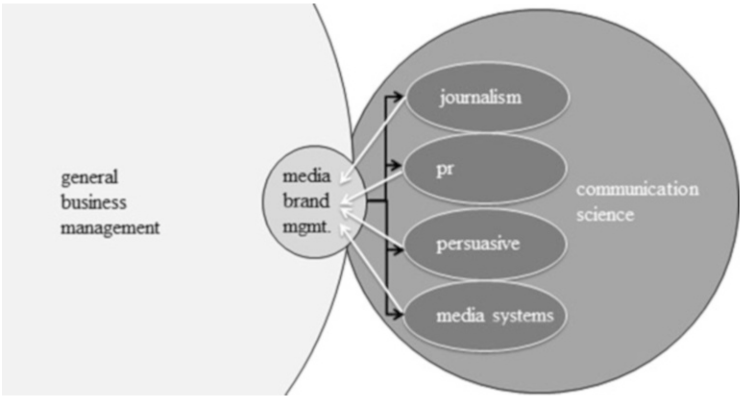

Fig. 1 Media brand management as an interdisciplinary field

appears to be quite a narrow range within the variety of studies in mediated communication.

Is there a link to other fields of communication science? There might not be much interest in studies that take media brand management as an object of investigation. There might be more interest, if media brands were taken as platforms to examine general theories such as news factors in media journalism, agenda setting effects, U&G and so on (Fig. 1) (Some of the articles in this book already realize this idea: Berz uses the approaches named above to model her study on media brands' effects, Greuling & Treptow use mood management, whilst Scherer and Förster show many more links to research into general media effects.). The immediate challenge is occurring in all evolving research areas: the more unique the object of investigation is, the better the legitimation of the research and the worse its connectivity.

From the scientific discussion perspective we need:

(a) Definitions of brands and brand management that reach beyond concepts which include pretty much everything there is
(b) A comprehensive investigation of the theories and models used in communication sciences—especially in research on the communicator and the effects of communication—that emphasizes links and integrability into the communication management of media brands

From the point of view of applied brand communication we obviously should test all models that start from the presumption that insights from general business studies can be simply assigned to media brand management. These suggestions are not derived from an idealistic Humboldtian point of view. This is a pragmatic argument from the perspective of self-marketing for media brand studies.

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Research Note: News Magazines' Social Media Communication and Their Effect on User Engagement

Verena Friedl and Kati Förster

Abstract

The aim of this study is to investigate how news magazine brands use social media communication. It will be further examined how social media activities affect user engagement. A closer look is taken at both extant literature as well as leading European and U.S. news magazine brands. We give a detailed investigation into which types of content and which communication styles actually drive user engagement on social media by analyzing the social media activities of *Time* magazine and *Spiegel Online*. The present study thus aims to provide important insights into key success factors for news magazines' social media communication.

Keywords

Social media • User engagement • Case study analysis • Key success factors • News magazines

1 The Role of Social Media Management for Magazines

Hong (2012, p. 69) finds that "newspapers' adoption of social media is positively associated with an increase in their online readership, and this association increases in the size of the newspapers' social media networks". Undoubtedly, news magazines interaction possibilities have also considerably changed through social media, in turn leading to a transformation of communication behavior (Baruah, 2012; Uitz, 2012), helping them to create brand communities and thus to establish a closer relationship between users and the brand (Baruah, 2012; Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). In this context, knowing how social media communication affects user

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engagement in brand communities is crucial for several reasons: firstly, providing the ‘right’ content and utilizing appropriate communication styles builds brand awareness and improves brand attitude (Schivinisky & Dąbrowski, 2013). Moreover, as Zailskaite-Jakste and Kuvykaite (2013) showed, consumer engagement has a positive impact on brand equity. Given this, it is essential to identify the key drivers for user engagement in media brands’ social media communication.

The aim of this chapter is thus to investigate which forms of social media, which types of content and which communication styles affect consumer engagement on social media platforms by analyzing and comparing social media presences of leading U.S. and European news magazines. In other words, the present study thus provides important insights into key success factors for the social media communication of news magazines brands. After a comprehensive literature review the results of a comparative case study of two magazines’ social media presences will be presented. Based on the social media best practices of these magazines, key success factors for social media communication of news magazines brands will be derived.

2 Theoretical Background

2.1 User Engagement as a Key for Social Media Communication

News consumption is increasingly becoming a shared social experience: 64 % of users indicate that they appreciate the possibility of easily sharing content with other users, whereas this number increases to 84 % when solely considering the younger audience between 18 and 34 years (Hermida et al., 2012). Leung (2013, p. 997) states that social media helps users to satisfy basically “five socio-psychological needs: showing affection, venting negative feelings, gaining recognition, getting entertainment, and fulfilling cognitive needs”. To provide some examples, while *Facebook* can currently be regarded as the best channel to connect with people, to share and receive updates and thereby satisfying social and affection needs, *Twitter* provides a user with social recognition through having a certain number of followers. Overall, there is strong evidence that the more gratifying users find the evaluation of content creation and sharing on social media the more they will engage in these practices (Lee & Ma, 2012; Leung, 2013).

Thereby, user engagement is seen as a key performance indicator for social media communication. The term has been described as “the collective experiences that readers or viewers have with a media brand” (Davis Mersey et al., 2010, p. 40). Besides its social characteristic, Porter et al. (2011, p. 83) focus on the consumers’ gratification motive and accordingly define user engagement as “the community members’ demonstrated willingness to participate and cooperate with others in a way that creates value for themselves and for others”. This broad definition logically also includes sharing, which refers to the “extent to which users exchange, distribute, and receive content” (Kietzmann et al., 2011, p. 245).

Social networking platforms and their communication tools demonstrate that the forms of user engagement can be various in nature. To start with, on *Facebook* the weakest form is the 'like' and thereby showing agreement with the content. Further, users can become more active in the news production process by sharing the information with their friends or by commenting on the news and discussing the media content (Hille & Bakker, 2013). *Google+*, the second most influential social network in Europe and the U.S. (Statista, 2014), has very similar features when compared to *Facebook*. The main difference is that users indicate that they like a news update by clicking on the so-called '+1' button. On *Twitter* users can follow a magazine in order to ensure receiving every news update. Hereby one important fact is highlighted by Kwak et al. (2010, p. 591) who clarifies that "a user can follow any other user, and the user being followed need not follow back". Again, users can like a tweet, mention a twitter user, comment or share the content by retweeting the news immediately to all the followers in their social network. Despite users being given these powerful tools to engage with a magazine, one thing is important: to be considered by news magazines. Having a presence on *Facebook*, *Google+* or *Twitter* is not enough to ensure user engagement since "participation is not the mere result of offering opportunities but is also dependent on active 'participation' from the medium itself" (Hille & Bakker, 2013, p. 666). It is thus important to keep in mind that the medium itself has to be a stimulator for user engagement and through that is responsible for the implementation of an appropriate social media communication strategy.

Moreover, continuously measuring user engagement in the context of a magazine's social media presence is important for several reasons. To begin with, measuring user engagement enables the determination of the value of growth in a magazine's readership. An ongoing measurement is essential to be able to diagnose red flags signaling that the shared experience around a magazine's news updates is not that successfully created (Davis Mersey et al., 2010; Hermida et al., 2012). This might have far-reaching effects on the financial performance of a magazine. Not only are readers less able to identify with a low level of dialogue on a magazine's social media presence, but also advertisers feel less attracted to invest. This is because a high level of user engagement comes along with a greater likelihood that the reader is exposed to ads on social media and thus magazines with a highly engaged readership are considered more effective in terms of advertising (Davis Mersey et al., 2010).

Uitz (2012) classifies user engagement into brand awareness, brand engagement and word of mouth. Concerning social networks the relevant metric for brand awareness is the number of fans, while brand engagement includes the number of comments and likes and word of mouth names the number of shares. In contrast, Cabiddu et al. (2014) base their measurement of user engagement on metrics accounting for average likes and shares per post. As Murdough (2009) states, it is also important to look at qualitative indicators such as the topics discussed and the sentiment shown within the community.

2.2 Drivers to Enhance User Engagement on Social Media

According to the literature a *well-balanced content strategy* can be considered as one success factor in view of magazines' effective management of social media activities. Providing interesting and relevant content and choosing the right formats are not only valuable to attract readers but also to satisfy the audience's needs and to keep the interaction level high. Kim, Sin, and Tsai (2014, p. 177) address the question of how to effectively use social media and suggest that social media can only be utilized to their full potential if organizations keep in mind to act both as "responsible and effective content creators and consumers".

In view of the specific types of content and formats, academic literature highlights that both the informative as well as the entertainment value of content can be a driver for engagement behavior on social media (Kim, Sung, & Kang, 2014). Sturgill et al. (2010) conducted a more detailed study on the content and format preferences of young adults in online news media. Accordingly, young adults are interested in having a variety of news that should have its focus around 'hard news' such as international and national events, politics and economics. Moreover, respondents preferred a mix in tone and subject matters such as stories with humor, breaking news, human interest and the practical. Also, entertaining topics and stories dealing with either geographical or personal proximity managed to attract young adults (Sturgill et al., 2010). Regarding appropriate news formats, results illustrate that pictures and slideshows have a positive influence on the attractiveness of news content for readers. On the contrary, videos were not that popular with young adults. Reasons for that were the long loading times, commercials preceding video content and the often low informative value of the video compared to the amount of time spent watching this news format (Sturgill et al., 2010). While commercials and low informative value are still valuable arguments, given a wave of technological improvements and innovations, such as faster internet connections etc., buffer times might not be an audience constraint anymore. It is also important that social media presences should not be duplications of print editions of magazines but instead feature frequent updates to ensure the quality and coexistence of print editions (Martin, 2013).

Besides an appropriate content strategy the *communication style* is very important to stimulate a fruitful conversation and keep the dialogue flowing in a self-sustaining way. "In social media, people are talking, so the key is to listen more and talk less" (Nair, 2011, p. 47). Consequently, companies need to create value for both sides and should therefore consider that their brand is now "an active agent in the social space" participating in a two-way conversation (Nair, 2011, pp. 47–48). In order to be successful in social media Kim, Sung and Kang (2014, p. 21) suggest choosing an "honest, authentic, reliable and transparent" communication style. Furthermore, dialogue should be open and authentic (Brown et al., 2007).

According to Pentina and Tarafdar (2014), magazines should include "features such as social tagging and linking among information sources" to provide a basis for discussion and thus create social meaning (p. 221). Consequently, it is essential to provide readers with 'URLs' that can be easily integrated into users' dialogues and thus enhance the likelihood of sharing and debating content (Martin, 2013). This also means that negative comments do not necessarily pose a threat to brands but should rather be seen as a stimulator of discussion within a community (de Vries et al., 2012). However, de Vries et al. (2012) find that providing highly interactive substances such as the publishing of a question negatively affects the users' willingness to engage within social media. Instead, to deepen conversations with the audience academic literature highlights the opportunity of encouraging editorial staff to represent the news organization by using individual social media profiles (Lysak et al., 2012). Nevertheless, it is crucial for a media brand to speak with different voices representing one news organization to ensure consistency and coherency (Macnamara & Zerfass, 2012).

3 Methodology

The aim of this study is to explore how news magazine brands' social media communication affects consumer engagement. A case study analysis has been conducted to test the success drivers discussed above in a real-life context (Shuttleworth, 2008). Two leading international news magazines (*Time* and *Spiegel Online*) have been analyzed regarding their social media activities and their impact on user engagement. The magazine brands were chosen due to the similarity in their characteristics. Both news magazines are published on a weekly basis, publish similar content and can be regarded as leading news magazines on their respective continents. Moreover, both feature, apart from their print editions, very strong online news presences which increasingly utilize social media. A comparison between *Time* and *Spiegel Online* is also interesting due to the fact that *Time* emerges from the U.S., a nation where smartphone penetration has a considerably higher level than in Europe and—moreover—most important social media networks have their origins in the U.S. Therefore, one might assume that *Time* magazine is more experienced in terms of social media management and is better able to engage with its target audiences than its German counterpart, a presumption that will be examined in the course of this study. However, while case study analysis gives illustrative data about real-life phenomena and thereby contributes by providing valuable insights about the subjects of interest, a downside of this method is the lack of the generalizability of its outcomes (Zainal, 2007).

3.1 Measurement

Derived from the literature, indicators have been developed to measure user engagement and its key drivers (Table 1). User engagement is measured in numbers of likes, shares and comments to be able to compare its effectiveness (Uitz, 2012). As the literature review has shown that the number of likes represents a low level of user engagement, this indicator will only be used for minor comparisons in order to draw an overall picture of the news magazines' social media performance. Besides

Table 1 Measurement

Independent variables	Dependent variables
1) Content • Amount and frequency of content creation • Topics Business, entertainment, health, science, sports, technology, politics (incl. law), living (incl. travel, career, education, religion etc.) • Formats Text, link, picture, video etc. and combinations	*User engagement* • Likes/+1/favorites (only of minor importance due to low effectiveness of this variable) • Shares/retweets • Comments, conversations
2) Communication style • You, we, topic of proximity, quote, question, mention, hashtag, curiosity news, # of things of interest	

the use of quantitative measures (Cabiddu et al., 2014) the analysis will also look into more qualitative aspects as suggested by Murdough (2009) with a focus on content, sentiments and relationships.

Content has been investigated by analyzing the amount and frequency of content creation, the topics addressed in news posts and the formats utilized.

Nine major communication styles were identified based on patterns within the news magazines' social media communication practices: (1) 'We' can be understood as a way of connecting and thus showing that there is some closer bond between the magazine and the readership. (2) The 'You' style can be interpreted as some form of direct communication between the user and the magazine. Therefore, this communication style is often phrased as a call for action or a statement that highlights the topic's relevance for the user. (3) Another way to directly address a user is the promotion of news content as a topic of proximity. This is because the reader is usually very responsive to personally or geographically close themes and is thus more willing to share such contents. In addition, consumers' interest can be attracted by stating some newsworthy quote (4) or by posting a question (5) and thereby proactively demanding the users' responses. In the context of social media it is further crucial to adapt to online communication behaviors and thus for example make use of a 'Mention' (6) or 'Hashtag' (7) to link content to other relevant people's social media profiles or facilitate content search. (8) Last but not least, there is the way of phrasing something in a very exciting way to make users curious about the details of the news content. Similar to this strategy one can already take a step further and phrase news updates in the style of 'seven ways to be successful in your job' and thus make people curious about these rules, guidelines or facts the readers need to know about something (9). Social media postings that qualified for several communication styles were counted more than once.

3.2 Data Set

Facebook, Google+ and *Twitter* were chosen for analysis, because those are the only social media tools the two news magazines have in common. Furthermore, due to the differences in the sizes of the magazines and because content creation ability varies massively some key criteria were set up: (1) Social media content had to be gathered for at least two subsequent full days. (2) The number of data sets collected had to exceed a minimum of 50 data sets per social media platform per magazine to ensure better comparability. As a result, in the case of *Spiegel Online* data was gathered for *Facebook*, *Twitter* and *Google+* for August 6 and 7, 2014. While the same was true for *Time*'s *Facebook* and *Twitter* channel, to obtain the required datasets *Time*'s activities on *Google+* were collected from July 17 until August 7, 2014. Altogether, this approach resulted in a total data sample of 608 data sets.

3.3 Description of the Cases

Time is the leading U.S. news magazine which is published on a weekly basis. It is an international news magazine and as such available in various region-specific editions. *Time* has also gained recognition for its special annual issues, e.g. 'Time Person of the Year' (Time, 2014a) and 'Time 100' (Time, 2014b) featuring the most influential people of the current year (Encyclopædia Britannica, 2013). The magazine brand is currently facing a challenging time marked by declining circulation and print advertising revenues (Matsa, 2014). *Time* states that it reaches a weekly audience of 18.7 million as well as a number of 24 million multi platform unique users from which 11 million access using mobile devices (Time Inc, 2014).

Der Spiegel is Germany's leading independent news magazine and can also be considered as the most prestigious news magazine brand in Europe (Spiegel Online, 2011). The brand is renowned for its investigative journalism, its detailed background information and exclusively and carefully researched high-quality stories and is made available in about 172 countries around the world (Spiegel QC, 2014a; Spiegel Online, 2011). *Spiegel Online*, the online portal of *Der Spiegel*, was established in 1994 and successfully launched the world's first online presence of a news magazine, thereby being even 1 day earlier than the famous *Time* magazine (Spiegel Gruppe, 2014). When looking at its print circulation, it becomes apparent that *Der Spiegel* is also currently facing a challenging time marked by a steady decline in sales figures. Contrastingly, *Spiegel Online* performs well and is able to attract about 6.92 million readers a week, which is a very promising figure given that this represents almost twice the number of each of its competitors *Focus Online* and *Stern.de* are able to realize (ACTA, 2013; Spiegel QC, 2014b).

At the moment *Time* features several social media presences. Besides *Facebook*, *Google+* and *Twitter*, *Time* is also active on the photo and video sharing platform *Instagram*, the video-sharing platform *YouTube* as well as on the microblogging platform *Tumblr*. As can be seen in Table 2, *Time*'s *Twitter* presence scores the most followers, ranking before *Facebook* and *Google+*. However, when looking at

Table 2 Time's top three social media presences

Platform	Fan/follower base (08/11/2014, 4:25 pm)	Fan/follower base (07/30/2014, 7:05 pm)	Change (%)	Website
Twitter	6,037,239	5,997,425	0.66	twitter.com/TIME
Facebook	5,947,296	5,794,913	2.63	facebook.com/time
Google+	5,528,005	5,448,849	1.45	plus.google.com/ +TIME

Table 3 Spiegel online's social media presences

Platform	Fan/follower base (08/11/2014, 4:30 pm)	Fan/follower base (07/30/2014, 7:10 pm)	Change (%)	Website
Facebook	715,074	706,631	1.19	facebook.com/ spiegelonline
Twitter	372,803	368,387	1.20	twitter.com/ SPIEGELONLINE
Google+	173, 934	172,372	0.91	plus.google.com/ +SPIEGELONLINE

the growth figures over a period of about 2 weeks this ranking is reversed with *Facebook* showing the most promising growth rate of almost 3 %. This trend is also supported by findings of *Digiday* stating that *Time* has managed to considerably grow its *Facebook* likes from March to June 2014 by over 44 % (Moses, 2014).

Spiegel Online has social media profiles on *Facebook*, *Twitter* and *Google+*. For the German online news magazine *Facebook* is the most important social medium as it exhibits a fan base which is almost double the number of its *Twitter* followers. This prioritization is also mirrored in the news magazine's growth rate of its social media audience which suggests that *Spiegel Online's Facebook* presence is well managed. Thus, over a period of about 2 weeks the news magazine features the same organic growth rates of 1.2 % (Table 3) for its considerably bigger *Facebook* audience than it is able to achieve for *Twitter*.

4 Results

4.1 User Engagement

As illustrated in Fig. 1, *Time* magazine shows a leading performance throughout all three social media channels concerning the level of user engagement achieved. *Spiegel Online* has a very strong *Facebook* presence that is almost able to reach as many likes per post as *Time* does. An even stronger indicator for its well-established *Facebook* profile is the average number of comments *Spiegel Online* is able to

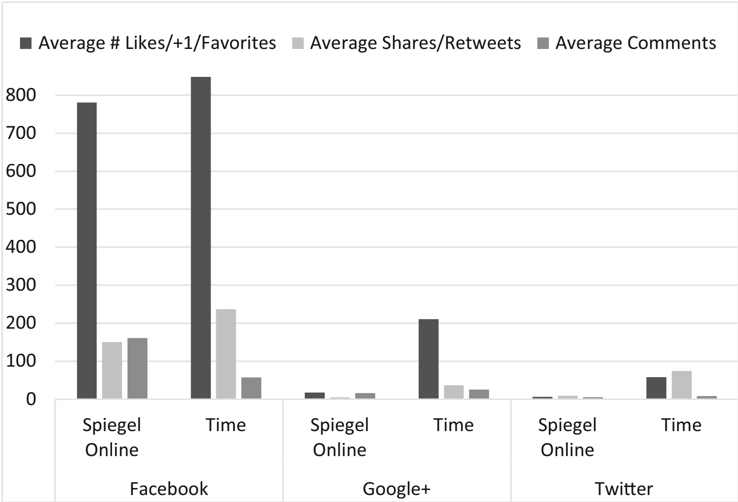

Fig. 1 User engagement

achieve on *Facebook*. With 161 average comments per news update on this channel this is almost three times the number *Time* is able to reach. In comparison, *Time* seems to be considerably better able to attract a higher user engagement on *Google+* and *Twitter*. However, for a meaningful comparison one also has to consider *Time*'s greater ability to attract users since its readership is, depending on the social media platform utilized, at least six times bigger than *Spiegel Online*'s followership.

4.2 Content

The results further indicate that *Spiegel* is publishing a considerably smaller number of news updates via its social media presences than *Time*. In detail, *Spiegel Online* generally releases one post on *Facebook* and *Google+* about every hour, while it provides a news update to its *Twitter* followers every 20 minutes. In comparison, *Time* tweets every 10–15 minutes and updates *Facebook* at least three times an hour. However, its presence on *Google+* is weak since the news magazine only posts six entries a day on average.

Spiegel Online has its overall thematic focus on political aspects (83 news updates). Thereafter rank living (53 posts) as well as technology and business with a little less than 30 updates over the period of observation. In contrast, *Time*'s political news updates also feature the greatest stake in its total news mix. However, content priorities are considerably different for *Time*, as after politics with 99 total posts ranks entertainment (79 posts), followed by living (60). Findings also indicate that *Time* mainly uses *Twitter* for posting news in the categories of politics, living and entertainment. *Facebook,* on the other hand, is *Time*'s preferred

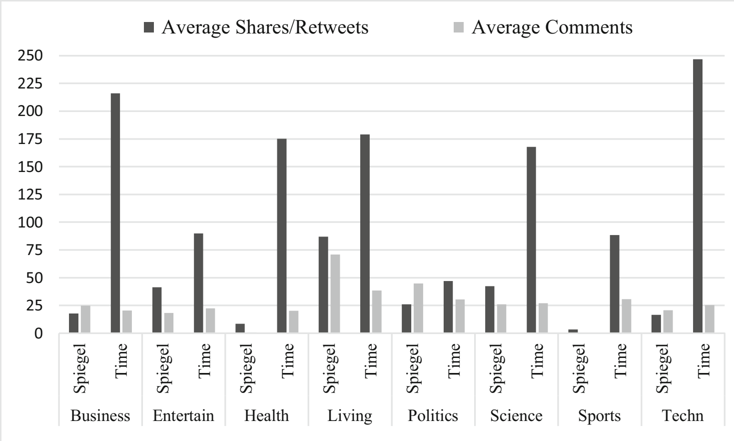

Fig. 2 Content and user engagement

choice regarding the release of news in business and technology, while its generally underutilized profile on *Google+* receives the majority of its updates from politics. In contrast, *Spiegel Online* utilizes *Twitter* for all kinds of news updates and publishes the majority of posts for every news category via this channel. Health and sports news were solely found on *Twitter*, while *Facebook* is a strong channel when it comes to science topics, whereas *Google+* has a strong second position in technology.

After having a look at the content creation preferences of the two magazines, it is essential to include the user perspective and thus to investigate which content categories were able to drive user engagement (Fig. 2): *Spiegel Online's* social media audience showed the highest average numbers of *shares and retweets* for the topic of living (87 shares). Science was able to achieve 42 shares, followed by entertainment with an average of 41 shares per post. In comparison, *Time*'s three most frequently shared topics were technology (247), business (216) and then living which accounted for an average of 179 shares per news post in this category. Considering *comments*, *Spiegel*'s most popular theme categories were living with 71 comments per news update posted, while politics ranked second (45) and science third (26). Hereby *Time* was able to successfully stimulate discussion with its content in the areas of living (38), sports (31) and politics with an average of 30 comments per news post.

This comparison shows that while *Time* magazine is better able to drive sharing behaviors with its content on social media, *Spiegel Online* is more successful at initiating discussion around its topics.

Besides choosing an appropriate topic, visualizing this theme in an appealing way is also key in terms of stimulating consumer engagement on social media. Thus, the data sample has been examined accordingly in order to find out which formats and designs are utilized by *Time* and *Spiegel Online* in terms of presenting

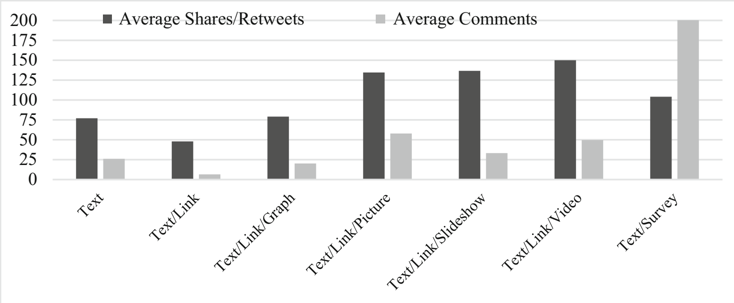

Fig. 3 Content formats and user engagement

their news updates on the various social media channels. The different content formats found were text-only (T), a text-based survey (T/Su) as well as format mixes combining text and link (T/L), text/link/graph (T/L/G), text/link/picture (T/L/P), text/link/slideshow (T/L/Sl) and text/link/video (T/L/V). Both *Spiegel Online* and *Time* mainly communicate on *Twitter* by using the text/link format that is also the most frequently used format in this study. The second most utilized design is a mix of text/link and a picture which both magazines use for the majority of their *Facebook* and *Google+* conversations. Third rank text/link/video formats which, although only being a small stake compared to overall content creation, are especially well applied by *Time* across all three social media channels. It is also important to mention that despite having almost the same content on *Facebook* and *Google+, Spiegel Online* uses different pictures for identical topics on both channels. Despite this differentiation in approach, *Spiegel Online* does not yet employ the format of slideshows on its social media channels.

Figure 3 shows that video content represents the most powerful stimulus concerning users' willingness to share content in social media. Also slideshows and pictures turn out to have a massive impact on sharing. Similar results reveal the readership's motivations for leaving comments. While in the case of *Spiegel* one text/survey post resulted in more than 1,000 comments, in general picture formats as well as video content were considerably better able to foster discussion on the three social media channels *Spiegel Online* and *Time* are utilizing.

4.3 Communication Style

Time most frequently uses the 'You' communication style followed by the usage of quotes and mentions. Thereafter follow more emotionally phrased strategies such as 'Curiosity News' and '# of Things of Interests'. In comparison, a large proportion of *Spiegel Online*'s social media communication features hashtags. Other tools applied include mentions and questions as well as directly communicating by using the 'You' approach. This clearly highlights that *Spiegel Online* chooses a more

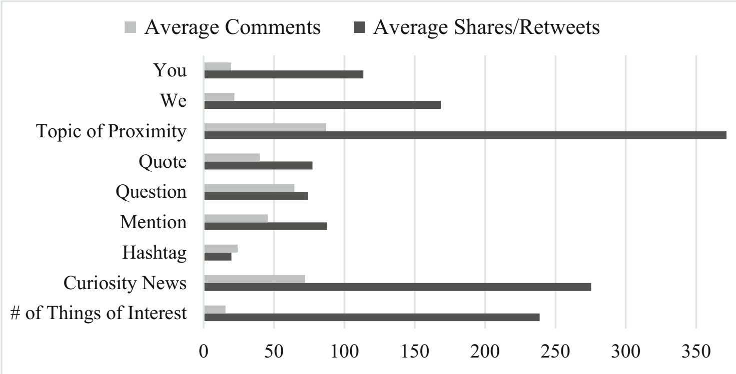

Fig. 4 Communication style and user engagement

informative way of communicating its content than *Time* magazine which opts for a more emotional way of communicating news updates on social media.

Figure 4 shows the impact of communication styles on user engagement. Evidently, the average number of shares/retweets per news update can be most strongly enhanced by using communication styles such as topics of proximity, curiosity news, '# of Things of Interest' as well as connecting efforts in terms of the 'We' approach. Furthermore, topics of proximity and curiosity news have the strongest effect on the average number of comments per news update. Summing up, while shares and retweets—and therefore overall reach—is very susceptible to more emotional and curiosity trigged communication styles, the number of comments and thus discussion can be boosted by utilizing communication styles that facilitate information seeking and enable the gauging of opinions.

5 Discussion

The analysis of the news magazines' social media communication reveals valuable insights. Firstly, the news magazines' utilization of social media channels shows different stages of maturity: while *Time* has already established comparably large social media readerships on *Twitter, Facebook* and *Google+*, *Spiegel Online* features a relatively strong *Facebook* channel compared to its other two social media presences. Given the fact that *Time* currently only puts a major effort into pushing its *Facebook* presence and thus especially the smaller platforms (e.g. *Instagram, YouTube, Tumblr*) suffer from unsufficient content creation one might consider that *Spiegel Online*'s approach of concentrating on a few platforms is the better solution in terms of ensuring ongoing interaction with its audience and satisfying customer expectations.

Secondly, topic selection is important for engaging users. While *Time*'s current news mix rather facilitates sharing due to the dominance of content that features higher entertainment values, *Spiegel Online*'s fact-based and information driven approach has a stronger effect on the news updates' ability to achieve comments and thus foster discussion. Regarding the formatting of content, *Time* shows an excellent performance in terms of positively influencing user engagement by choosing picture and video-based formats for its news updates. In comparison, *Spiegel Online* exhibits an acceptable but not as sophisticated formatting capability and could further increase its usage of photo and video content as well as start to feature slideshows to create more appealing news content.

Thirdly, the 'right' way of communicating topics is a further key determinant of user engagement on social media. Both news magazines are making use of the identified styles but show different priorities in terms of their utilization. Besides the typical American behavior of directly addressing consumers with 'You', *Time* uses those communication styles that capitalize on users' entertainment seeking and take advantage of feelings dealing with curiosity and personal proximity. *Spiegel Online*, in contrast, heavily bases its communication on informative practices thereby employing hashtags, mentions and questions. Similar to its performance on content creation, *Time*'s emotional approach has a stronger effect on sharing whereas *Spiegel Online*'s strategy achieves better results regarding users' commenting behavior and thus successfully nurtures dialogue.

Overall, it can be concluded that while *Time*'s social media management activities are appropriate motivators to convince users to share news content in their social networks, the magazine fails in terms of capitalizing on those identified contents that stimulate comments and foster discussion. Consequently, *Spiegel Online*'s social media activities can be considered as more valuable when dealing with the question of how to enhance user engagement on an overall level.

6 Implications for Research and Practice

The present study provides important insights into ways to enhance the level of user engagement and thus build brand awareness, and to positively affect brand equity. Overall, for a news magazine it is important to consider some crucial guidelines in order to successfully enhance the level of user engagement on its social media platforms. First, it is important to know the target group very well, to consider users' social media usage behavior as well as to listen to the consumer to understand their motives and preferences regarding news consumption on social media. Concerning channel-specific decisions magazines should rather decide on a lower number of utilized channels and thus ensure that they are able to devote enough time and resources to actively engage with a community and provide valuable content. Evidence from our study suggests that content creation should focus on an informative as well as entertaining news mix but with a clear focus on hard news to ensure a sufficient stimulation of users' commenting behaviors. These comments should also be communicated in a way that attracts the user by utilizing styles that capitalize on proximity as this helps to facilitate information sharing and sense making. In addition, relationship-building efforts should be of high importance and thus be pursued by always acting in a value-adding way as well as showing active participation within a media brand's community. In general, social media efforts and user engagement should be continuously monitored and measured in order to be able to evaluate a news magazine's performance and change direction in the case of unsatisfactory results.

A number of limitations should be mentioned: first, generalization of the results is not possible since only two magazines are compared. Another weakness of this study is that the data sample is limited. With a view to future research, the magazines' social media activities should be compared over a longer period to achieve more reliable results, a cross-industry analysis should also be conducted to find out if the suggested strategies to enhance user engagement of news magazines are also applicable to other types of magazines (fashion, lifestyle etc.). Future research should also pay attention to the activity level of the readership in order to shed light on the question of which fractions of the overall audience are participating in the user engagement practices of liking, sharing and commenting on social media.

To sum up, a news magazine brands' ability to involve its users by providing value-adding content as well as establishing closer relationships by actively participating in the news community is key to a magazine's success on social media. The practical insights on *Time*'s and *Spiegel Online*'s social media activities clearly show that having a news community on social media requires far more than setting up a variety of social media profiles and providing up-to-date news content to its readership. Instead, news magazines have to reconsider their communication approach in order to create value for the community and thus change their roles from being traditional news providers to establishing themselves as proactive news facilitators and connectors who participate actively in their brand communities.

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Part V

The Consumer Perspective: Media Brands as an Audience Construct

The Groucho Marx Dilemma in Media Branding: Audience as Part and Signal of Media Brands

Helmut Scherer

I don't care to belong to any club that will have me as a member.

Groucho Marx

Abstract

This chapter deals with the idea that a target group evaluates the media on the basis of their respective users. It is important for the recipients to know about their fellows. They want to identify with them; they do not want a possibly negative user image to reflect on themselves. Thus, users become an integral part of a media brand. This assumption is based on three theoretical approaches: social distinction, impression management and social identity. A literature overview shows that media use represents a means of social distinction and that other persons are judged on the basis of their media use. These results in the following implications for media branding: Media companies should try to control their audience's image of their media brands. A marketing strategy that is very blatantly focused on a large range may be risky because it endangers the exclusivity of the media brand and its potential for distinction.

Keywords

Audience • Audience construction • Audience image • Fellow-audience • Impression management • Social capital • Social distinction • Social identity

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1 Introduction

The key idea of this chapter was stimulated by a study I published some years ago with some colleagues: "Does Media Consumption Make You Popular" (Scherer, Naab, Niemann, & Adjei, 2012). This study was about Anna. She was a young well-educated woman with a profile on a social network where, among other fields of interest, she described her favorite television formats. We had a 'crime Anna', a 'comedy Anna', a 'soap Anna', an 'information Anna', and—it was an experimental study—a control Anna who displayed no television-related information. Our results showed that Anna was judged more or less likeable in the different experimental conditions, so the knowledge of her television preferences influences other people's judgments. From there, it was only a small step to invert the research question. If people are judged on the basis of their media use, wouldn't it be a plausible hypothesis that media are judged on the basis of their audiences?

Media reach various social groups differently, so that user groups are socio-demographically divergent. These differences play a central role on the advertising market. Media invest large sums in marketing studies to gain reliable data on their public. These results are then used as central arguments for marketing strategies. However, the composition of the audience itself may also play a role in the audience market. Hartmann and Dohle (2005) show that media users create an image of their fellow-audience. Media brands are expected to control all consumer-relevant communication concerning their brand. That should also apply to controlling the image of their audience.

Fürst (2014) shows that it has become a very common advertising strategy in the audience market to include constructions of the media's audiences. She identifies eight different types of audience constructions in media advertisements: generalized audience, dominant audience, number-based audience, growing audience, interacting audience, influenced audience, target-group audience and exclusive audience. These strategies may be divided into two basic dimensions. It is obvious that most of these constructions focus on the magnitude of the audiences, and she revealed some plausible arguments for what the rationale of this advertising strategy might be. We will concentrate on the other strategy, that which focuses rather more on the quality and the composition of the audience, i.e., on the last two audience constructions: the target-group audience and the exclusive audience. We assume that these strategies may be more successful in contemporary media markets.

In the consumer research we find the idea of brand communities (Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001). This idea is also applicable to media brands. This means that the perception of the audience is relevant for other users of the media brand because the use of a specific media generates a feeling of membership with a certain group, namely the other members of the audience. A person is not only a media user but a member of a club. However, do we really want to be a member of this club? This essentially depends upon how we evaluate the other club members, and if everyone is invited to join the club, it is really no privilege to become a member—which in turn will raise the serious question of whether it is desirable to join the audience.

You don't have to be as celebrated as Groucho Marx who didn't want to join any club that wanted him as a member, but a certain kind of exclusivity is probably appreciated by a lot of people.

The aim of this chapter is thus to analyze the relevance of the audience image from the audience's perspective to find a basis for a more elaborated understanding of media branding. There are three related concepts that are helpful to analyze these processes: social distinction, impression management and social identity. With social distinction we describe the fact that we try to differentiate ourselves from others who belong to specific social groups, which is typically related to a feeling of superiority. By distinguishing ourselves from some groups, we automatically integrate ourselves into a specific group and thus develop a social identity. Social distinction is associated with typical behaviors that function as social symbols (see also Ots & Hartmann, 2015). These symbols show our typical lifestyle and are used by others to identify us as a member of a social group. If this behavior is mostly conscious and motivated, it is called impression management.

2 Theoretical Background

The importance of an individual's membership with a social group is illustrated by the concept of social identity (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). Accordingly, we gain self-esteem from membership of a specific group and judge others by associating them with social groups (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). By presenting ourselves as individuals, we also reveal our membership of specific social groups. It is even possible that we use specific means to demonstrate our membership of a specific social group. This necessarily involves a—frequently deliberate—differentiation from other social groups. As an example, if I wear the football scarf of *FC Bayern Munich*, everybody will know I'm a fan of the team, and that at the same time I'm no great follower of *Borussia Dortmund* [another German football club]. However, membership in a specific group thus almost necessarily involves social distinction.

In every society, there are several social groups, which differ with regard to some distinctive attributes and also aim at differentiating themselves with regard to some selected attributes. According to Bourdieu (1982), these differences occur because individuals are born into a specific social environment and therefore acquire distinctive resources and competences, named capitals. Bourdieu identifies three important forms of capital: economic capital, cultural capital and social capital. Economic capital is defined by a person's monetary resources. Cultural capital is divided into "incorporated" and "institutionalized". The first are the person's abilities, competences and knowledge, for example knowledge of historical and political facts, or of literature or music. The second is based on the academic qualifications a person may acquire by attending school or university. Social capital, according to Bourdieu (1982), is the totality of social relations within families and among friends that can help the individual to strengthen the other forms of capital. The more capital a social group has at its disposal, the higher is its position in the social hierarchy, and the lifestyle of its members is therefore very special and exquisite (Bourdieu, 1982).

The possession of these forms of capital determines a person's position in society and this also shapes a person's habitus. The habitus can be understood as a system of patterns of belief, thinking, and acting. These patterns are learned in processes of socialization. The habitus determines a person's lifestyle by influencing that person's tastes and preferences. This means that specific social positions are marked by typical cultural and consumer practices and symbolic lifestyle objects. However, in modern societies there are many similarities in the consumer preferences of different social groups. Consequently, different social groups do not differ in consuming different goods, but in how they consume these goods (Holt, 1998; Mehus, 2005). Bourdieu (1982) regards the habitus as a kind of constraint caused by the total amount of capital and the capital structure of the individual. Taste evaluations are therefore not subjective but socio-structurally determined forms of aesthetic evaluation and unconscious means of distinction from other (lower) social classes.

Bourdieu's assumptions show how taste can be described as a culturally formed judgment, and also how a specific judgment of taste can be used by others as a means of social distinction. Bourdieu (1982) regards such behavior neither as motivated in a narrower sense of meaning, nor as haphazard. Rather, it necessarily results from a person's position in the social environment. There are however, social-psychological approaches describing the importance of cultural practices, and thus of media use, for social distinction. In these approaches a strategic use of symbolic means has been assumed: impression management and symbolic self-completion. For one's own identity formation and to emphasize one's own style, specific individuals or groups always use specific means of differentiation or distinction (Thomas, 1992). According to Schulze (1993), these instruments are, among others, taste in music, hairstyle, preference for certain dishes, practices of everyday life and art. The consumer market serves as an indication of distinction to set oneself apart from others and to accentuate one's own identity. Thus, a specific judgment of taste can be used for social distinction. In this context, symbolic self-completion is the use of specific symbols and the performance of self-symbolizing actions to support a specific self-definition (Brunstein & Gollwitzer, 1996; Cialdini et al., 1976; Mummendey, 1995; Richardson & Cialdini, 1981; Tedeschi, Lindskold, & Rosenfeld, 1985; Wicklund & Gollwitzer, 1982).

"Impression Management is the conscious or unconscious attempt to control images that are projected in real or imagined social interactions" (Schlenker, 1980, p. 6).[1] Impression management is aimed at gaining approval of and affection from others, and thus a feeling of belonging to specific groups. In the process, some

[1] I have to admit that I have some problems applying the term management to an unconscious behavior. Management always implies a strategic and rational approach. But one may argue that the attempt to control one's own image in everyday life is to some extent habitualized so that not every related behavior is really planned and deliberated.

individuals try to control the impression they make on others and to influence it to their advantage (Bolino, Kacmar, Turnley, & Gilstrap, 2008; Mummendey, 1995). Persons using impression management aim at gaining social approval. By using specific symbols they demonstrate identification with a specific group. Of course, means of impression management can only be those the individual is able to control, such as clothing, appearance or hairstyle.

The concept of impression management, the concept of symbolic self-completion and the concept of habitus are of course distinct. However, I do not think that they are incompatible, but that they may be integrated. The basic difference is that impression management argues from the individual's perspective, whereas the concept of habitus mainly deals with the reproduction of social structures of distinction. Based on the explanation model of the so-called micro-macro transition which is also often described as Coleman's Boat, it is possible to establish a connection (cf. Coleman, 1990; Opp, 2009). The basic idea is formulated by Opp (2009, p. 31): "Hypotheses on individual actions [...] can be applied to formulate hypotheses on collectives or their attributes". Even if Bourdieu ultimately aims at the explanation of social conditions, he does make statements on individual behavior. Impression management on the other hand, aims at explaining individual behavior while extensively dismissing social preconditions and consequences. Instead it regards individual impetus and behavior in a particularly detailed manner. On this level, both sides become compatible. In other words: The results of impression management and of symbolic self-completion can be interpreted in the context of the concept of habitus, and thus extend its empirical basis and theoretical importance.

A last difference remains: the motivation of distinctive behavior. When using impression management, the behavior may be motivated. As a rule, one can even assume that it is motivated. According to Bourdieu, behavior is not individually motivated but—based on one's own social position—inevitable. However, inevitability and motivation do not categorically exclude each other. If you are starving, you'll have a motive to eat. You are doing this consciously and purposefully but nevertheless inevitably. Certainly, motives of self-presentation are connected to the social position—the former are even the result of the latter. As far as the concept of habitus is concerned, motivation is in the end unimportant, as long as we want what we are supposed to want.

What is the role of media use in this context? According to Bourdieu (1982), media use is self-evidently a part of our lifestyle and thus an expression of habitus. Whereas people with a lower cultural capital prefer easily understandable entertainment, intellectuals appreciate more sophisticated brain work and thus show their particularly high amount of cultural capital. Reading the *Figaro* or the yellow press is one of the subtle differences.

3 Media Use as an Expression of Social Status

It is almost a platitude that different social groups are characterized by different media use. Actually, quite similar arguments are found in some studies on the importance of media in the context of Bourdieu's ideas. Schönbach and Lauf (1998) as well as Schönbach, Lauf, McLeod, and Scheufele (1999) observe a power of distinction in newspapers in the USA, referring not so much to specific papers but to their reception itself. At the time of their study they observed that reading is less connected to a specific lifestyle in Germany. This however, is only an interpretation of the authors and is not really proven by the results. They only show that newspaper use can be better explained by demographic characteristics in the USA than in Germany. Some studies with similar arguments consider the different media use of different socio-demographic groups as evidence for media use as an expression of habitus. For example, Holbrock, Weiss, and Habich (2004), pp. 110–111) observe that for many offerings so-called geo-demographic clusters with a high cultural and a high economic capital differ in their media use from those with low values for both forms of capital. For the USA and on the basis of a correspondence analysis, Hove et al. (2007) are able to prove a connection between the use of different media and position in the social environment. Konig, Rebers, and Westerik (2006) find comparable results for the use of TV series in the Netherlands. Similar results are found in various studies on the reception of sport events (Mehus, 2005; White & Wilson, 1999; Wilson, 2002). According to those studies, formally low-educated (as an indicator for lower social capital) men attend altogether more sport events and also watch them more often on television than formally higher educated (high social capital) men (Mehus, 2005). Wilson (2002) shows that formally low-educated people prefer auto racing and motorcycle racing. The authors interpret these results as an expression of a specific habitus and lifestyle manifesting itself in a general consumption of sport as well as a differentiating function showing the preference for specific forms of sport. The approach of Haferkamp and Herbers (2012) is slightly different. Their object of study is the browser game *FarmVille*. They presume that a high or a low degree of capital allows for the drawing of conclusions on the motivation to play, because successful persons (those with high economic capital) regard competition orientation as quite natural. This hypothesis, however, cannot be confirmed.

I think that this research strategy is somewhat unsatisfactory. There are two problems in the argumentation of these studies. Firstly, simple demographic characteristics are put on a level with the different forms of capital. It should be critically questioned whether these indicators are too crude, particularly where cultural capital is concerned. When, for example, 50 % of the pupils of 1 year pass their high-school diploma in Germany, it is necessary to ask whether the differences in the cultural capital are sufficiently explained by formal education.

More important though, is the second objection. Is it possible to interpret the simple use of a medium by a specific social group as an expression of habitus or means of social distinction? This can be affirmed because every act of consumption may be regarded as an "indication of distinction" (Meyen, 2007, p. 342).

Nevertheless, this research practice remains unsatisfactory. Principally, each form of social differentiation in media use would then have to be interpreted as a social distinction. We then, however, have to question the substantiality of this hypothesis. The concept of social distinction empirically becomes rather arbitrary and thus even theoretically irrelevant. What then, would we have to gain? We would simply find a new classification for well-known results without really coming any closer to a verification of the distinction hypothesis. Of course, these results a not entirely insignificant. The differences between the socio-demographic groups are necessary, but in no case a sufficient precondition for the adequacy of using Bourdieu's ideas concerning media use.

Other studies analyze the motivation of media users. Some of those studies try to gain data on the users by qualitative methods. With qualitative guided interviews, Meyen (2007) identifies different types of media users and is thus able to comprehensively show that specific media are used to demonstrate and maintain one's own position within society. This applies for those media users who consciously choose prestigious offerings as well as for those who are not satisfied with the media and consciously distance themselves from the presented content.

Other studies use quantitative methods and directly ask for specific media offerings connected to social motives. Döring (2002) verifies the public use of ringtones and mobile phone logos. A general trend orientation combined with the demand for an individual style is responsible for their download behavior. Being distinction symbols of a generally accessible pop culture, ringtones and logos are used for deliberate self-presentation and intergroup distinction (Trepte, Ranné, & Becker, 2003, on PDAs). Especially for adolescents, mobile phones function as a means of self-symbolization and demonstration of status and personal style preferences (Krause, Klimmt, & Schneider, 2004). Hou (2010) is able to show that the desire to be popular among one's friends is an important motive for playing the online game *Happy Farm*.

We find an interesting, more indirect approach in the study by Zhou (2011). This study analyzes whether the subjective perception of one's own social status is influenced by media use. It can be shown that in China newspaper reading, listening to radio news, internet use and the use of international television is positively related to the perception of one's own status, even if the objective status is controlled. This is also true for the adoption of new media technologies like mobile phones. Zhou writes (2011, p. 146), "This suggests that in China nowadays, the mobile phone is a symbol of economic, cultural, and overall social status."

4 Media Use and the Evaluation of Others

In the previous section, it was asked whether people use media for social distinction. However, distinction is a two-sided concept. The successful use of media for distinction can only be guaranteed when those who are supposed to notice the distinction are able to make the association. The use of media for symbolic self-completion does not necessarily imply that this is a successful strategy. Attempts to use media for impression management can only be effective if information on one's own media use is employed by others for their judgments (Gollwitzer, Bayer, & Wicklund, 2002; Trepte, 2002). A prerequisite for the successful use of symbolic capital therefore is that it is recognized by others (Meyen, 2007, p. 339). Jandura and Meyen (2010) emphasize the effectiveness of media use to acquire symbolic capital. Whosoever uses a specific media offering, can be sure (or has to be afraid that) the symbolic capital connected with it will at least to some degree become part of his/her image (Jandura & Meyen, 2010, p. 214). According to the authors, the collective knowledge about media offerings guarantees the signalling effect of media use on the social position of the user and his/her attitudes and merits. This is plausible because using media is an important pastime, easy to observe and therefore relevant for the expression of personality.

Regarding their peers, adolescents use music preference as an indicator for social impression management (Knobloch, Vorderer, & Zillmann, 2000). In qualitative interviews with addressees of attempts at self-presentation via ringtones and logos of mobile phones, Döring (2002) verifies positive effects on the affective attitude towards the actors, as well as critique of the use of these means when perceived as being excessive. This indicates that information on personality traits may also lead to rejection. Individuals aiming at impressing other people are not only dependent on choosing a specific subject. They also have to decide whether information on their media use will have a positive effect or whether it might be better to remain concealed. At this point, we should also again mention the study on Anna (Scherer et al., 2012), the starting point of this article.

In another study, we chose a different, more indirect approach (Scherer, Schmid, Lenz, & Fischer, 2009). We compared visitors of an art house cinema with visitors of a multiplex cinema center. The members of the art house audience said that they did not feel they had much in common with the members of the cinema center audience and that they could not imagine having interesting discussions with them. In contrast, the members of the mainstream cinema audience judged themselves as very similar to the art house audience. They think: *We all belong to the big family of movie goers*—and they believed that they could have interesting discussions with them.

Obviously, it is a severe threat for the art house aficionado to be identified as a mainstream cinema goer, and consequently be judged as a person not worthy to talk to. If this is true for other media, we will have to consider that from the consumer's perspective the audience of a medium is an *important part of the brand.*

5 Conclusions and Implications for Media Branding

If we summarize all of the above, we can draw three central conclusions:

Firstly: Different social groups are characterized by different media use. This may be a well-known fact and thus a rather commonplace finding; against the background of the concept of habitus, however, it is possible to interpret these results differently. Even so, it is wrong to believe that there is much to be gained from a simple rephrasing of the result in Bourdieu's terminology. It helps relatively little when we simply rephrase the known fact that mainly people with a higher formal education read quality newspapers and instead say that the use of quality newspapers depends on high cultural capital. The social significance of this individual behavior is rather more important.

Secondly: People use media to convey to others an image of their personality. In doing so, they communicate which social groups they belong to, and which they distance themselves from. Consequently, media are used for distinction. They serve symbolic self-completion and thus impression management.

Thirdly: The media use of individuals is one of the attributes that can be employed to judge others. Thus we are socially evaluated on the basis of our media use. Apparently, the dichotomy of being similar/dissimilar plays a central role in this process. We appreciate those similar to us and rather reject those dissimilar to us. So, it does make a difference whether we differ from each other or not. Hence, the personal social consequences of our media use are evident.

These conclusions lead to an important implication for media branding. The key question for media branding is how media may influence the image of their audiences. If they fail to convey a positive image of their audience to the public, they may also fail on the audience market, and the harder they struggle the bigger the risk of failure. They will probably give the implicit message to their target group: "We will accept anyone." But that is not what anyone wants. So media companies will probably end up like the *Friar's Club of Beverly Hills* that upon asking Groucho Marx to prolong his membership received a telegram from him saying:

> I don't care to belong to any club that will have me as a member.

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An Audience-Centered Perspective on Media Brands: Theoretical Considerations, Empirical Results and 'White Spaces'

Kati Förster

Abstract

In an audience perspective a media brand can be understood as a construct carrying all the connotations of (potential) recipients comprising cognitive, emotional, conscious or unconscious associations towards specific media formats, personae, genres, channels etc. Audience-centered media brand study has successfully stimulated research, but is largely isolated from communication science and other related disciplines. The aim of this article is to review and structure audience-centered research on media brands and to uncover 'white spaces' in this field of interest. In applying a multi-level approach of audiences, the chapter not only considers extant theoretical and methodological approaches in audience theory, but also presents a flexible framework for different interpretations of media brands' functions and effects.

Keywords

Media brands • Audience theory • Brand personality • Brand extension • Symbolic media consumption • Participation

1 Media Brand Management in an Interactive Environment

From social media via interconnected multiple platforms, to web-based, on-demand services—the 'brandsphere' for media has changed dramatically as a result of digitalization and interactive technologies. Chan-Olmsted (2011, p. 3) puts it as follows: "The branding efforts in the media industries will became more complex when the world of marketing is turned upside down by the arrival of Web 2.0, with social media acting as a new means of connecting with consumers personally,

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interactively, and collectively." Consequently, with the turn from passive recipients to active audiences, brand strategies have also had to change significantly (Mitchell, 2001). This development has led to a modified function of a brand manager, who is no longer seen as a 'guardian' but as a 'host' of a brand (Christodoulides, 2009).

In fact, the Internet and its related technologies have upset the information asymmetry that worked in favor of brand managers for many years. With the new empowered consumers who interact with brands and their peers and who create their own content, a more participative approach to branding is needed. Among others, Chan-Olmsted (2011) thus conceives the key for media branding in formulating audience centered branding programs. Mooney and Rollins (2008) also suggest that modern branding is all about engaging consumers more richly, deeply and meaningfully to develop brand participation. So, the question occurs, if and how research on media branding has provided theoretical and empirical answers to these challenges up to now.

Thus, the aim of this article is to review and structure audience-centered research on media brands, and to uncover 'white spaces' in media brand research.

2 Media Brands as an Audience Construct

When looking at media products as media brands from an audience perspective, we should first clarify the definition and nature of the construct. So, what is a media brand? In fact, the efforts to define the term *media brand* seem to be an ongoing battle in the literature between communication and marketing scholars, further complicated by discussions between marketing and public relations (McDowell, 2006). The American Marketing Association proposes a brand be understood as "a name, term, sign, design, or a unifying combination of them intended to identify and distinguish a product or service from its competitors" (Kotler, Bliemel, & Keller, 2007, p. 509). We here see a recipient centered definition which assumes that a brand is all the stronger the better it can be identified and distinguished by consumers. The same applies to media brands. Chan-Olmsted (2006) goes even further and proposes that brands add thoughts and feelings that are designed to enhance the value of a product beyond its product category and functional values. To sum up, from an audience's perspective, we may understand a (media) brand as a construct carrying the audience's associations in terms of cognitive, emotional, stylistic, conscious and unconscious significations.

This directly leads us to the next question: What exactly do we mean when speaking about audiences? Bird (2003, p. 4) characterizes the audience as an "ever-changing, fluid concept" and also Moores (1993, p. 2) states: "The conditions and boundaries of audiencehood are inherently unstable". Audience research, especially reception studies, has developed from different research traditions, such as critical communications, feminist theory, microsociology and literary reception-aesthetics (Livingstone, 1998) providing diverse paths to conceptualize and—as a consequence—to empirically examine audiences. Among others, Livingstone (1998, 2013) suggests that audiences can be theorized on different levels. Research on a micro level respects the individual agent and provides information about media usage patterns in everyday life. At a meso level, analyses focus on patterned interactions relating to social groups, while on the macro level audiences are understood as the public. So, the question occurs to what extent media branding research has applied these different levels up to now. Furthermore and in more detail, how can we define the functions of media brands at these different levels, which theoretical approaches and methods have been applied and what research disciplines are involved?

To identify the different core themes, a literature review on (audience centered) research with a focus on media brands has been made. Single studies are taken to illustrate the main streams at the different audience levels (for a systematic literature review please see also Krebs & Siegert, 2015). The following discussion will thus not provide a complete overview on extant literature, but it aims to point up the main research interests, theoretical approaches and methodologies applied in this area of inquiry.

2.1 Micro Level

The audience at the micro level represents an individual perspective on the media demand side, with a focus on the empirical analysis of perceptions, associations and attitudes towards media brands, or respective media branding strategies (see also Shay, 2015). Audience centered research on media brands at this individual level mainly employs theoretical approaches and empirical findings from non-media brand research. Therefore, the main focus is to test the feasibility of scales, concepts and theories in a media branding context. Two main areas can be identified at the micro level when reviewing research on media brands from an audience perspective (Table 1).

Firstly, the field of media brand research includes a number of empirical studies on media brand personality, its dimensions, antecedents, effects and interdependencies with self-concepts. Aaker defines brand personality as "the set of human characteristics associated with a brand" (1997, p. 347). It has been assumed that consumers choose the product they perceive as having a desirable (brand) personality (Aaker, 1999; Ahuvia, 2005; Belk, 1988) to express and validate their identity (Aaker, 1997; Berger & Heath, 2007). Thus, it has been hypothesized that a self-congruent brand reflects who the consumer actually is or who the consumer would like to be (Mälar, Krohmer, Hoyer, & Nyffenegger, 2011). Applied to media, this implies that audiences feel the need to reaffirm their perceptions of self-concepts by choosing compatible media brand personalities. The major issue of brand personality research is to provide an instrument to measure brand associations with human characteristics, preferably standardized. Nevertheless, the most vital criticism in regard to brand personality scales is that dimensions and indicators depend on the cultural context, since every language has its own vocabulary with untranslatable meanings. But most of the studies on media brand personality are limited to the American audience and are

Table 1 Audience centered media brand research at a micro level

Author (year)	Main theories and concepts	Main variables/measures	Method
Chang and Chan-Olmsted (2010)	Media brand extensions	IV: parent brand (pb) familiarity, pb attitude, pb portfolio quality variance, perception of subbrands, perceived fit, innovativeness, channel repertoire; DV: brand extension attitude	Survey $n = 301$
Chan-Olmsted and Cha (2007)	Media brand personality	Brand personality dimensions, differences among news brands	Survey $n_1 = 113$ $n_2 = 265$
Chan-Olmsted and Cha (2008)	Media brand personality	Antecedents: audience's motivations, demographics, political and media profile, network affiliation, preferences; IV: brand personality; DV: attitude towards the brand, brand usage, brand loyalty	Survey $n_1 = 113$ $n_2 = 165$
Förster and Kleinen-von Königslöw (2013)	Media brand emotions, brand personality	IV: television brand emotions; DV: television brand personality	Survey $n = 498$
Förster and Zeilinger (2012)	Media brand personality, self-concepts	IV: self-concepts, brand personality; DV: social brand identification	Survey $n = 502$
Habann, Nienstedt, and Reinelt (2008)	Media brand extensions	IV: pb strength, pb experience, involvement, price perception, product fit, image, image fit; DV: brand extension attitude, buying intention	Survey $n = 174$
Ha and Chan-Olmsted (2001)	Media brand extensions	IV: exposure to network websites (treatment); DV: brand extension acceptance, perceived quality, image, usage, interactivity perception, flow experience	Experiments $n = 252$
Horppu et al. (2008)	Media brand extensions	IV: parent-brand level experiences with a women's special interest magazine; DV: website satisfaction, website trust, website loyalty	Survey $n = 867$
Kim, Baek, and Martin (2010)	Media brand personality	News brand personality dimensions	Survey $n = 229$
McDowell (2004)	Media brand personality	Brand associations, differentiation	Free association $n = 166$
Nienstedt, Huber, and Seelmann (2012)	Congruence theory	IV: actual congruence, ideal congruence, credibility, brand relationship; DV: loyalty	Survey $n = 736$
Sung and Park (2011)	Media brand personality	Cable network brand personality dimensions	Survey $n = 355$
Tarkiainen et al. (2009)	Media brand extensions	IV: loyalty towards magazine's websites; DV: loyalty towards printed magazine brand	Survey $n = 3{,}009$

(continued)

Table 1 (continued)

Author (year)	Main theories and concepts	Main variables/measures	Method
Tarkiainen et al. (2014)	Media brand extensions, Double Jeopardy	IV: offline and online market shares and penetration of magazines; DV: online loyalty	Secondary analyses

lacking in comparative analyses, both for different media categories and language areas. Moreover, studies on media brand personality have revealed some peculiarities compared to non-media brands. Considering another major conceptual restriction, namely the focus on positive aspects of brand personality associations whilst disregarding negative brand-related associations held by consumers (Bosnjak, Bochmann, & Hufschmid, 2007), the results imply that media brands require (1) an adapted brand personality scale, (2) an application in a specific language domain, and (3) an inclusion of negative brand associations.

Secondly, media brand extensions and their perceptions by individuals or potential consumers have been the object of a number of studies in regard to media brands. Brand extensions are a common type of strategy (also) used by media companies to transfer the awareness and brand perceptions of consumers to a new product (Chang & Chan-Olmsted, 2010). Some of the studies investigating brand extensions in a media context adopt a consumer-based framework to empirically test the factors affecting the success of *cable network* brand extensions (e.g. Chang & Chan-Olmsted, 2010; Ha & Chan-Olmsted, 2001). Moreover, *magazine* websites have been treated as brand extensions of their offline parent brands. Different studies have been conducted to investigate the relationship between the offline magazine brands (e.g. in terms of experiences, loyalty, market share, penetration) and the online magazine brand (Horppu, Kuivalainen, Tarkiainen, & Ellonen, 2008; Tarkiainen, Ellonen, & Kuivalainen, 2009; Tarkiainen, Ellonen, Ots, & Stocchi, 2014).

The application of theoretical approaches stemming from non-media brand research has successfully stimulated research on media brands. However, this research has led to the development of a peripheral zone of media management research largely isolated from media reception studies within communication science. We must thus ask if it is possible and desirable to better connect this research area in future. This in fact would require an enlargement of this research area with a deeper integration of established communication science theories.

2.2 Meso Level

Audience research at the meso level focuses on patterned interactions relating to social groups (Livingstone, 1998). Maffesoli (1990) characterizes these social groups as ‘tribes’ within consumer cultures, meaning shared lifestyles, (media) preferences, or (genre) interests. Media have a specific role in these tribes. As previous research has shown, individuals use media (in terms of ownership, usage and knowledge) to increase their cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1983, 1985, 1986). Also Scherer, Naab, Niemann, and Adjei (2012) found that genre preferences act as means to increase or decrease one's social capital. Hence, media consumption can be regarded as an attempt to accumulate a symbolic profit (Mörth & Fröhlich, 1994; Park, 2009). In other words, audiences utilize those (media) symbols that are appropriate, to signal a certain form of lifestyle in order to strengthen their cultural and social capital.

This has also been a subject of research in related disciplines. Elliott and Wattanasuwan (1998, p. 134) put it as follows: "All voluntary consumption carries, either consciously or unconsciously, symbolic meanings; if the consumer has choices to consume, he or she will consume things that hold particular symbolic meanings." Thus, consumption practices partially determine the social self, which is in turn a result of an active creation process (e.g. Dittmar, 1992; Giddens, 1993; Holt, 2002).

We can thus construe the functions of media brands—at a meso level—as being symbols in socio-communicative relationships (Carpentier, 2012; Park, 2009). This is connected to collective forms of media consumption and socially negotiated interpretations within certain lifestyle groups or tribes. Media brands here act as social 'glue', as embodied carriers of shared meanings about symbols within and between social groups. Berkler (2008) addressed this aspect of the prestige function of brands that mirrors the aspiration to belong to a supposed user group or to draw distinctions towards a perceived out-group. Moreover, Förster, Kleinen-von Königslöw, and Baumann (2014) explored the use of (popular) media genres in everyday media practices, and uncovered their symbolic meanings for identity practices of affiliation with in-groups, and distinction towards out groups (Table 2).

Compared to the individual level, media branding research at the group level is rather rare. One reason can be seen in the necessity to apply different empirical methods (such as experiments, ethnography, projective techniques). Moreover, studying media brands at a meso level requires interdisciplinary approaches including social psychology, sociology and cultural theory. Evidently, interdisciplinarity is always connected to an appreciation of differing perspectives, theories and methods, but also to obstacles emerging through these differences. Nevertheless, the relevance of this perspective increases as social processes of meaning construction are finally decisive for creating a strong (media) brand.

2.3 Macro Level

At the macro level we look at audiences as the public or as citizens. Munch and Smelser (1987, p. 357) specify the macro level "as referring to those structures in society (groups, organizations, institutions, and cultural productions) that are sustained (however imperfectly) by mechanisms of social control and that constitute both opportunities and constraints of individual behavior and interactions." When taking this Cultural Studies perspective—as one possible view—we can

Table 2 Audience centered media brand research at a meso level

Author (year)	Main theories and concepts	Main variables/measures	Method(s)
Berkler (2008)	Prestige function	IV: complexity reduction, risk reduction, identification, prestige; DV: differentiation, preference, loyalty	Survey n = 2,700
Förster (2012)	Social identity, social capital	IV: cognitive centrality, ingroup affect, ingroup ties, intergroup relations; DV: size of the network, strength of ties, resources	Survey n = 495
Förster et al. (2014)	Symbolic resources	IV: genre preferences; DV: gender associations, likability, personal similarity, similarity with friends[a]	Media diaries, content analysis, n = 59;[b] experiment, projective techniques, n = 450
Scherer et al. (2012)[c]	Impression management	IV: genre preferences for comedy, crime, politics, soaps; DV: likability[d]	Survey, experiment, n = 562 (female)

[a]A construction technique has been applied in the study asking the respondents to describe a person having specific genre preferences (using fictive media diaries), both with open associations and standardized questions
[b]In sum, 15,000 instances of media use situations were analyzed using content analysis
[c]Scherer and colleagues did not explicitly use a media branding framework
[d]'Genre preferences' refer to oneself and to a fictive person (Anna). 'Likability' measures how likable Anna is perceived

understand a media brand as a place of cultural struggle (Winter, 2001) proceeding from extant societal power relations.

Up to now, this perspective has been given little consideration by media branding scholars [as valued exceptions see Lobigs (2015), Russ-Mohl and Nazhmidinova (2015) as well as Siegert (2015)]. This is particularly true when considering literature with an explicit reference to media brands. In fact, in many publications these themes are addressed, but without using a media branding frame and—therefore—without translating the findings into implications for media branding strategists. However and undoubtedly, it opens up interesting and important perspectives for further research. As an example, recent research has contributed to audience participation in convergent institutional settings (e.g. Bruns, 2005; Carpentier & De Cleen, 2008; Deuze, 2007). Nowadays, audience members are not only recipients of media content but (also) producers, even more so with the advent of social media. Production is extensively guided by a prior assessment of audience response, thus making processes of production and reception reciprocally structuring, although not necessarily with equal power. Hence, participation can manifest itself in a co-deciding on content or organizational policies by the production and the reception side with—more or less—equal powers. From a dialectical media branding view, we must ask what consequences participation has for media brands in a convergent 'brandsphere' and—furthermore—how participation as a socially and politically desirable goal can be incorporated in contemporary media branding approaches.[1]

This clarifies an important aspect or possible obstacle for research on media branding at this macro level: when approaching this level, one has to consider that research on audiences at the macro level intersects with other macro level theories, such as the economic and political (Livingstone, 1998). Also Carpentier (2012) argues that all participants are embedded in a democratic logic. Hence, to strengthen the societal perspective in media branding research their role for transparency, validation and integration within the public (Kleinen-von Königslöw, 2010) could be considered in more detail. Undoubtedly, the integration function of mass media is one of the big questions in communication research (Vlašić & Brosius, 2002). However, there is a broad consensus that mass media contribute to the cohesion of a society through sharing themes, opinions or simply 'must-know-catchphrases'. On the one hand, mass media convey values and norms, which are important for the formation of public opinion and public debate (Vlašić, 2004, 2012). On the other hand, entertainment content also has an important integrating role (Vlašić & Brosius, 2002).

This leads us to another, more general aspect, namely to the question of how television may serve its public as citizens. Syvertsen (2004) argues that broadcasters increasingly neglect to serve the public as citizens (the public as members of a democratic society) in favor of serving them as consumers (the public as buyers keen to consume products and services). Also Steemers (2002) claims that broadcasters not only fail to address their democratic role, but also their cultural role in regarding their audiences as consumers. Dahlgren (2000) distinguishes four dimensions of these media-society links: civil, political, social and cultural. Without question, research on television news and current affairs predominantly implies that serving the public as citizens means the provision of news and political information. But Syvertsen (2004), declares that media serve people in a variety of ways. As an example, the provision of family programs provides opportunities for different generations to be together, serving the public as citizens in a *social* sense. Moreover, entertainment programs could be seen as means to serve the public as social or *cultural* citizens. What does this broad understanding of citizenship for media branding research imply? Research on media brands and their role as 'campfires' within society, for example, might contribute new perspectives. This can refer to different levels in a media brand's architecture, which typically consists of the corporate or channel brand (e.g. *BBC1*) as well as its sub-brands with genre (e.g. news on *NBC*), format (e.g. *Tatort* on *ARD*), and persona brands (e.g. *David Letterman* on *CBS*) (Wolff, 2006). Hence, we could ask: How do

[1] It has to be mentioned, that participation and co-creation can be attributed to the micro and also the group level (e.g. individual perception and motivation to co-create, co-creation as part of a group identity). On the macro-level it is, indeed, connected with economic and political questions.

media brands—and the respective activities to establish strong media brands—serve the public as civil, political, social and cultural citizens?

To sum up, the question is: how do media brands serve as 'societal glue', and should this fundamental integration function be considered in more detail in media branding research? In fact, as recent research has stated, media brands perform several functions for both media companies and for recipients; they are communicators, symbols, and information memories. Berkler (2008) has suggested the various purposes a media brand fulfills in the recipient's decision process, i.e. cognitive relief functions and activating functions. While cognitive relief addresses a brand's function to rationalize search and decision efforts for the recipient through complexity and risk reduction, identification as a self-centered goal as well as prestige as a socially determined aspect, are activating components used for self-definition purposes. But does this not fall too short neglecting the specific characteristics and responsibilities media have in society? In integrating the macro perspective media branding research could closely connect to communication science tradition and, moreover, add new perspectives in regarding economic processes and logics.

3 Media Branding Research at Its Crossroads

Research on media brands has successfully applied theoretical concepts from diverse research traditions. It is now time to reflect and to determine the current position of media branding research. Studying media brands as an audience construct requires diverse approaches including psychology, sociology, economics, political and cultural theory, to name just the most important ones. The audience centered perspective of the media as media brands provides a construct that condenses the perception of audience(s) at different levels of aggregation. Evidently, there is an excessive weight of research at the micro level, applying theoretical considerations stemming from non-media brand research and primarily using quantitative research methods. Research on media branding at the meso level is rather sparse, and also the macro level has, up to now, been rarely considered.

As the literature review has revealed, media branding research at the micro level primarily applies approaches stemming from non-media brand research. This has formed a research field widely independent of other disciplines. At this level research can be described as multidisciplinary characterized by little interaction or collaboration across disciplines (Choi & Pak, 2006). In other words, concrete research questions are investigated with separate methodologies and concepts and researchers maintain their own disciplinary roles.

At the meso level we found a stronger integration of related disciplines, such as sociology and social psychology. As recent research has shown, media brands serve as symbols of a certain lifestyle, and to define the borders of tribes. Overall, media and their brands move from being mere intermediaries to instances that relatively autonomously stage realities as symbolic markets (Mörth & Fröhlich, 1994) or create markets for symbols with potentials for distinctional gains in cultural and social contexts. Thus, it requires an interdisciplinary access to the respective research questions, as interdisciplinarity involves an integrative, reciprocal action of different disciplines with shared goals, often connected to a blurring of disciplinary boundaries (Choi & Pak, 2006). This working *between* several disciplines has the potential to create new knowledge or perspectives and is the basis for establishing a new discipline (Choi & Pak, 2006).

Finally, as the literature review showed, the macro level of audiences has not been much considered yet by media branding research. Especially against the background that consumers act as co-developers, and that innovation and product development depend on external consumer communities (Jeppesen & Molin, 2003), consensual notions of strategic media (brand) management are challenged. Moreover, the diminishing corporate control over the creative media-making process changes the professional identity of media work towards a more clearly articulated responsive and interactive position with the public. Or as Jenkins puts it: “Media companies are learning how to accelerate the flow of media content across delivery channels to expand revenue opportunities, broaden markets and reinforce viewer commitments. Consumers are learning how to use these different media technologies to bring the flow of media more fully under their control and to interact with other users” (2004, p. 37). A transdisciplinary approach is needed when looking at media products as brands at this macro level. Transdisciplinarity means working across and beyond single disciplines, taking a holistic, transcendental and integrative approach (Choi & Pak, 2006). In particular, the integration of the societal function of media would allow a closer connection to key research areas of communication science.

Media branding is an area of interest where inter- and transdisciplinarity opens up its dynamics, and where in turn disciplines keep shifting and evolving by integrating diverse approaches and methods. Generally, the view of media branding from an audience perspective does not only consider extant theoretical approaches in audience theory, but additionally, presents a flexible framework for different interpretations of the functions and effects of media brands. It helps to structure and integrate the current multitude of unrelated or loosely related theories, concepts and empirical findings from different scientific disciplines. At the same time, by considering media as brands, related disciplines can profit from a better integration of economic processes and logics, and thereby respond to the vital reproof of several authors (e.g. Budd & Steinman, 1989; Müller, 1993).

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Media Brands in Children's Everyday Lives

Ingrid Paus-Hasebrink and Uwe Hasebrink

Abstract

Media brands are the result of the interplay between the marketing strategies of media companies directed at children, and children's practices related to these strategies and the respective media offers. After an outline of recent theoretical work on children as part of consumer culture, this paper sheds light on central aspects of marketing strategies that set out to establish media brands in the everyday lives of children. With regard to the other side of the interplay, children use media brands in order to gain orientation in the confusing world of products and services, to position themselves within their peer group, to distinguish themselves from other groups, and to acquire resources for coping with the challenges of their everyday lives. Against this background the article discusses media brands as an issue of societal concern.

Keywords

Children • Media brands • Consumer culture • Developmental tasks • Children's and parents' relationships

1 Introduction

The societal meta-process of mediatization (Krotz & Hepp, 2013) has not only changed the everyday lives of grown-ups but also brought about far-reaching changes in the lives of children. Today, the media are omnipresent companions

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of children's everyday lives—at home and at school, as material and as non-material cultural forms of expression. As such the media also belong to the most decisive and influential agents of socialization—next to family, school, and peer-group. From earliest childhood onwards, young people are confronted with an ensemble of media and media content, which for former generations was scarcely conceivable. In short, today's childhood is deeply mediatized.

In addition, as a consequence of commercialization and of children and adolescents being discovered and addressed as a target group for consumer products, childhood increasingly turns into a self-determined as well as market-oriented form of life. Therefore, the phase of growing up manifests itself not only as a mediatized but also as a consumer childhood. Children are addressed as active and supposedly competent media users and regarded as future consumers in a globalised media compound system (Paus-Hasebrink, Neumann-Braun, Hasebrink, & Aufenanger, 2004). "Over the past few decades, children have become increasingly important both as a market in their own right and as a mean to reach adult markets" (Buckingham, 2013, p. 54). Referring to Buckingham (2011), Kambuta (2012) points out that consumption cannot be seen as an isolated act but as embedded within complex social relationships between children and marketers; rather it is 'jointly constructed'. Thus children are a central prerequisite for markets, and vice versa children can only select what markets actually offer them. It is not just through advertising and marketing that children are constructed as consumers: most parts of their everyday lives, e.g., education, leisure and welfare services are also widely commercialized (Buckingham, 2013). In this sense children are part of consumer culture,[1] a part of "a particular interconnected system of commercially produced images, texts, and objects that particular groups use—through the construction of overlapping and even conflicting practices, identities, and meanings—to make collective sense of their environments and to orient their members' experiences and lives" (Kozinets, 2001, p. 68). This system includes that consumers are regarded as always being tempted by the promises of the products in the marketplace (Featherstone, 1990; Hamilton, 2012).

Following this the present paper highlights media brands as a result of the interplay between marketing strategies of media companies directed at children on the one hand and children's practices related to these strategies and the respective media offerings on the other hand. In a first step it describes the central marketing strategies that aim at establishing media brands in the everyday lives of children. By far not all brands offered tap the pulse of what children want and thus obtain the status of a relevant brand. Therefore in the second step the focus will be on children's practices related to media brands and how they define some products as *their personal* media brands. It will be discussed how they use media brands as a means to get orientation in the confusing world of consumption, to

[1] The term 'consumer culture theory' refers to "a family of theoretical perspectives that address the dynamic relationship between consumer actions, the marketplace, and cultural meanings" (Arnould & Thompson, 2005, p. 868).

position themselves within their peer group or to distinguish themselves from other groups, to acquire resources for coping with the many challenges of their everyday lives. Finally the article will discuss media brands as an issue of societal concern.

2 Media Brands as a Result of Marketing Strategies and Consumer Culture

It is not a new phenomenon that the whole range of marketing strategies that have been developed to reach adult target groups are applied to young audiences, too. In this chapter we are not going to repeat the general marketing strategies of media companies that are analyzed in other contributions to this handbook (e.g., Doyle, 2015; Baumann, 2015; Rohn, 2015). Instead we will highlight some recent trends that are particularly relevant for children's media markets; in doing so we provide the background for the following discussion on how children respond to media brand related strategies within their everyday lives.

In general terms children's media environment is particularly *commercialized*. In the last two decades "the size of children's market appears to have grown significantly. The range of commercial products and services available to them has massively expanded, and they are being targeted as consumers at an ever younger age. Marketing now increasingly addresses children directly: it occurs through a much wider range of media, and in a wider range of settings, some of which have hitherto been largely insulated from the operations of the market" (Buckingham, 2011, p. 83).

With regard to children it is particularly hard to distinguish between *media brands and other consumer brands*: both sides are *converging* (see Matteo & Dal Zotto, 2015). On the one hand marketing activities for children's products very early started to implement famous media characters in order to raise attention by offering fun and entertainment. On the other hand media companies are interested in establishing close links to consumer products in order to offer a consumer-friendly environment for marketing messages. Furthermore they use their most popular media figures in order to develop a broad range of merchandising products that can be regarded as media-branded consumer products. One specificity of the media market for children can be seen in "the interplay among toys, commercials, and animated programs to create the 'lingua franca of young children' (Seiter, 1993, p. 7) stemming from these business practices" (Sigismondi, 2009, p. 155). Thus, talking about media brands for children has to take into account consumer culture in general (see also Ots & Hartmann, 2015).

Media brands for children are becoming increasingly *cross media*. In line with the general development of converging cross media environments (Diehl & Karmasin, 2013) children's media brands are not based on single media products anymore. Although most of them originate from a specific kind of medium, e.g., a book, a TV series, a computer game or a cartoon, they tend to be distributed across a broad range of platforms and products in order to be potentially available at any time, at any place, and in any form (Hasebrink & Paus-Hasebrink, 2013, p. 36). This phenomenon goes beyond the traditional model of "a carefully designed and managed 'shelf life' [of audiovisual content, IPH, UH], including theatrical release, home entertainment, Video on Demand (VOD) and Pay Per View (PPV), Pay TV, network TV, cable TV, and ancillary domestic and international markets" (Sigismondi, 2009, p. 156). Talking about media brands for children today has to refer to complex bundles of activities across different media and other products that aim at offering their target group an entire symbolic world. In this respect interactive websites and mobile applications that allow for online participation and communication about the media brand with the respective fan community have become an important constituent of marketing strategies.

Media brands for children are particularly *globalized*. In many national markets the best known media brands for children are offered by global players. While most of these are located in the United States, e.g., *Walt Disney* or *Nickelodeon*, there are also a number of examples of companies from other parts of the world that have successfully created global brands, e.g., *Pokémon* or *Dragonball* (Sigismondi, 2009).

Marketing strategies for children's media can be distinguished according to the *specific target group* they address. A first important distinction is related to the question of whether the strategies are targeted at the children themselves or rather at their (grand)parents—the latter being important, because parents tend to buy books, games or merchandising articles of media brands that *they* think are good for their children (see Sect. 3.3 for the particularities of parents' and children's brands). A second important distinction refers to the basic characteristics of the children addressed. Although the group of children seems to be small compared to all adults, due to fast personal development it is a key challenge for marketing strategies to properly define the exact age for their target group: if it is too old, the brand and how it is communicated might be regarded as too 'childish'; if it is too young, the brand might be regarded as too demanding. Another relevant characteristic is gender. According to several studies (e.g., Götz & Lemish, 2012; Paus-Hasebrink, Lampert, Hammerer, & Pointecker, 2004; Paus-Hasebrink, Neumann-Braun et al., 2004) boys can select from a far broader range of media offerings with a higher number of merchandising products than girls (see Sect. 3.2 for a discussion of gender-specific brand-related practices).

3 Media Brands as Part of Children's Everyday Practices

As outlined above, media brands are the product of the interplay between media companies' strategies directed at children and their parents, and children's media related practices. In order to understand this interplay the following sections will take the theoretical perspective of developmental tasks as the starting point (Sect. 3.1). Within this perspective particular practices of girls and boys will be discussed (Sect. 3.2). Furthermore media brands are intensively negotiated between parents and children (Sect. 3.3). They play a crucial role in establishing and developing peer-group relations (Sect. 3.4). And they may serve as requisites that can help with coping with the severe challenges of everyday life (Sect. 3.5).

3.1 The Role of the Media in Coping with Developmental Tasks

Against the theoretical framework of developmental tasks (Havighurst, [1953] 1972) children grow up and learn to deal with age-specific challenges that they encounter in their everyday lives. Following Havighurst, development is conceived of as a learning or working process. In order to cope with the relevant developmental tasks related to the different stages of age and the various daily life experiences, young people seek to acquire expertise. Hence the process of growing up is built on dealing un/successfully with developmental tasks, for example building stable social relationships with peers and dealing with the self. "Erving Goffman describes 'the presentation of self in everyday life' (1959) as a perpetual process of social performance" (Skaar, 2009, p. 251). Developmental tasks—closely linked to children's age, gender and social background—shape their perception and action when dealing with their environment.

Studies show that children use media to acquire a view of the world, to build contacts with peers and friends, and to deal with the self (Paus-Hasebrink, 2010; Subrahmanyam & Šmahel, 2011). As agencies of symbols and meanings media offer children orientation and the potential for identification (Lemish, 2007; Livingstone & Bovill, 2001; Paus-Hasebrink & Kulterer, 2014). The internet in particular offers a wide range of opportunities for self-presentation. When using "the Internet the self is presented without bodily presence (. . .), the presentation of the self requires resources to mediate not only the setting and appearance but also the manners, the dramatic realization" (Skaar, 2009, p. 252).

Media can have a supporting function for children's socialization and further the development of social understanding (Livingstone, d'Haenens, & Hasebrink, 2001; Paus-Hasebrink & Kulterer, 2014). This "means they can offer children stimuli and suggestions for an active engagement with themselves and their surroundings" (Charlton & Neumann, 1986, p. 32). Marsh et al. showed that implementing "popular culture, media and/or new technologies into the communications, language and literacy curriculum has a positive effect on the motivation and engagement of children in learning" (Marsh et al., 2005, p. 6).

As outlined above (media) brands seem to be almost omnipresent in children's life worlds (Mariţa & Lepădatu, 2012), in the form of cuddly toys, posters, stickers, motifs on T-shirts or toothbrushes. Children utilize media brand products for orientation in the confusing world of consumption, for integration into a peer-group or to distinguish themselves from others. Media brands offer young people the opportunity to define him or herself. They are helpful in giving everyday life structure, and support children in severe social living conditions with symbolic material that can help to compensate un-fulfilled needs for trust and assurance by their parents or a lack of self-confidence in their peer groups. In the following sections these functions will be discussed in more detail.

3.2 Particular Developmental Tasks According to Age and Gender

The role of media brands changes with age. An important step is marked by the entry into kindergarten when children try to find their position in their peer-group and search for material for their own identity construction. This goes along with cognitive development: "Theory of mind and executive functioning are both significant predictors of the ability to form mental representations of brands. Children's brand symbolism understanding shows a significant link with theory of mind. It is concluded that 3–5 year olds have emerging knowledge of brands that are relevant in their lives" (McAlister & Cornwell, 2010, p. 203). In the following years multimedia brands and their respective 'media heroes' reach their highest popularity. Roughly around the age of 12–14 years, when children find themselves at the transition to becoming a teenager, lifestyle products and real stars from sports or pop music gradually replace media brands and fictional media heroes (Paus-Hasebrink, Lampert et al., 2004).

As far as age is concerned, an empirical study by Paus-Hasebrink, Neumann-Braun et al. (2004) has revealed a phenomenon that can be called the "rejuvenation" of media brands. This phenomenon is the result of particular mutual perceptions of younger and older children: on the one hand children of any age admire children who are a bit older than themselves; they would like to be like them and therefore tend to turn to the media brands of these older children. On the other hand children of any age tend to regard younger children as 'childish' and therefore try to demonstrate that they are different—this also applies to the media brands they prefer. As a result of this phenomenon, media brands that have been originally targeted at and embraced by a specific age group will lose their original target group once younger users begin to use them. The previous target group then feels provoked to search for new media offerings for older children. At the time of the above mentioned study this phenomenon could be clearly illustrated by the sequence of the then popular media brands *Pokémon*, *Dragonball* and *DragonballZ*: the average age of the users of these three brands continuously decreased over several years.

On closer inspection of media preferences gender specific differences can be observed for the choice of products or favorite characters. Götz and Lemish (2012) conducted a world-wide study on children's favorite media characters and media heroes. They were able to show that boys' and girls' preferred media characters differ in the extreme. While boys usually prefer male characters from strange worlds with a competitive task, girls rather prefer realistic female characters, such as protagonists from daily soaps, in order to work with their own identity (Paus-Hasebrink, 2014). Young girls especially like anime figures which are cute and tiny, e.g., most figures from *Digimon* or *Picachu* from *Pokémon*; older girls for example choose the female protagonist in *Harry Potter*, Potters friend *Hermione*. They especially point out aesthetic and social aspects to explain why they prefer these characters (Paus-Hasebrink, Lampert et al., 2004). Beyond symbolic work on topics such as fighting, physical strength and training in fighting techniques the rivalry regarding merchandising products linked with their relevant media brands is gaining importance in the context of peer-groups.

Based on their study on children's brands Nairn, Griffin, and Wicks (2008, p. 633) conclude that "the process by which the children designate brands as 'cool' or 'uncool' was highly complex and contested, deeply gendered, and imbued with symbolic group membership display rituals". They also point out that some brands can stimulate hateful and violent feelings. "For example boys accounted for their vehement rejection of Barbie in terms of the doll's association with girls and femininity: 'I think it's all about little girls, princesses' (Year 6, private school, boys group); 'I'll tell you why it's sick. It's for girls' (Year 3, private school, boys group)" (Nairn et al., 2008, p. 633). Furthermore, Nairn et al. provide evidence that even girls use *Barbie* in the case of "rejection of hyper-femininity, as epitomised by 'girly girls'" (2008, p. 637). The authors point out that "in this way the children's talk about everyday consumer objects served to reinforce the traditional distinction between masculinity and femininity, and policed the path to heterosexual 'normality'". Against this background one can identify the existence of specific *boys' brands* and *girls' brands*.

3.3 Media Brands in the Context of the Parent–Child Relationship

The media play a relevant role in the relationship between parents and children. They serve as a topic for communication within the family and are relevant as an instrument in the context of education strategies, for example as an instrument of regulation, as gratification or as punishment. With regard to media brands parents and children have diverging perspectives. In the framework of the previously mentioned study on media brands *children's brands* and *parents' brands* have been identified (Paus-Hasebrink, Lampert et al., 2004). Parents' brands are regarded benevolently by the parents and usually evaluated as suitable for children and of educational value. It is often the parents themselves who buy these products for their children. Classical parents' brands include, for example, the most famous TV formats *Sesame Street*, *Bob the Builder*, or at the level of TV stations *KiKa* in Germany (a public service channel for children). In how far children adopt parents' brands as their own largely depends on the parental (media) education behavior.

Children's brands are multimedia products which offer children the opportunity to address their own ideas, wishes and interests. They serve in establishing borders with their parents' perspectives and give children the feeling of being independent and autonomous. Children construct their own brands in opposition to their parents. Particularly in families with permissive educational strategies, children's media brands dominate the spectrum of children's media usage. At the time of the study the well-known TV anime formats *Dragonball* and *DragonballZ* (*DBZ*) marked a children's brand that was not accepted by most parents. *DBZ* offers a media product for boys especially to symbolically express their wish to be strong and successful, primarily in the context of peer groups.

3.4 Media Brands as a Means to Position Oneself Within the Peer Group

Media brands serve as a means for inclusion and exclusion in children's peer groups and friendship. Skaar showed that "brands reinforce a tendency to social exclusion and inclusion, dissimulation and conformism" (2009, p. 263). They provide a symbolic basis for children to negotiate social relationships: "Acceptance or rejection of specific brands serves to symbolise rites of passage or group membership" (Nairn et al., 2008, p. 633). Children for example in the classroom tend to compare themselves to each other and seek to gain attention from their classmates. In this context media brands with a high acceptance within a peer group or an inner circle of friends serve as a kind of "currency" to set out one's own position and to mark one's own status. A study by Skaar (2009) showed that the opportunity to produce a self-presentation on *Piczo*, an online network for young people,[2] depends on the child's social standing in the classroom. "Consequently, the children's use of branded resources to copy commercially produced fun and coolness enforced the social competition among them" (Skaar, 2009, p. 262).

Because of their high relevance and high publicity among children popular media brands offer children topics for debates and conflicts. Media brands serve as objects for collecting and swapping between children; if children like the same brands as their peers they feel integrated into the group. Media brands symbolically help them consolidate their relationships to show proximity and friendship and to mark borders with other groups.

3.5 Media Brands as Guarantees in Everyday Life

In the framework of the already mentioned major study on media brands conducted by Paus-Hasebrink, Lampert et al. (2004) 36 children were selected for qualitative case studies. Among them six children, five boys and one girl, are of particular interest regarding their specific brand relations. In these cases the children's favorite media brand provides orientation and assistance in their confusing everyday life. In taking the perspectives of their heroes they gain the kind of attention and appreciation they often miss in real-life social relationships. Media brands, e.g., heroes, provide information on the various facets of highly intense brand relations and their relevance for the filial I, self and social references within the contexts of both family and peer-group.

These six children construct the clearly branded product as their own "brand", by bestowing a status upon their favorite media symbols and protagonists that turns them into guides and companions. By doing so, these figures sometimes become more important than real persons such as parents, peers or friends. These children regard themselves as fans of a branded hero, which already hints at a relationship

[2] The network was closed in 2013.

characterized by high emotional and affective attachment towards the object, star or program in favor. Even if these children are referring to one and the same series, *DragonballZ*, they do so with different motives and aims, which are influenced by their age, their gender and especially their demanding life-world circumstances (Paus-Hasebrink, Lampert et al., 2004). Within their families they usually find few reference points for orientation. And even worse, many families where media products and brands rise in importance also lack a clear concept regarding (media) education behavior, which is often characterized by contradictions and confusion on the parents' or the mother's side. With the help of multimedia brands and merchandising products—these children display overall high media consumption—they seek to establish a stable self-concept. This may be due to the lack of attractive male role models in the real world: five of the six children live with single-parent mothers. Or they want to get the desired spot within their peer-group, to explicitly distinguish themselves from children of the same age, or to compensate for the dreaded outsider position that is often combined with painful injury to personal feelings, by identifying with the omnipotent heroes.

All of these children live in problematic everyday life contexts, in which their media brands provide them with orientation and help in various different ways. The emotional-affective attachment to the characters does not only allow them to actively and intensively deal with their situation, but also to feel strong and successful. By looking at the world from the perspective of their heroes they are gaining the attention and the respect they are missing in real-life social relationships.

With this in mind, the children's intensive engagement with the series can be described as a constructive form of self-socialization. Nevertheless, the intense forms of media brand relations presented here have to be regarded as problematic because they go along with a lack of critical distance from the media products. Moreover, in the age-span of 6–13 the children are right in the middle of developing their identity, where they need clear and immediate relationships that are shaped by the feeling of social and emotional security and trust. Therefore, media-pedagogical support that individually addresses the children, their families and their specific needs and demands seems to be the most useful solution (Paus-Hasebrink, Lampert et al., 2004).

4 Media Brands for Children as an Issue of Societal Concern

This chapter has discussed media brands as the result of media companies' strategies directed at children and of children's practices of relating themselves to media offerings. As an integral part of consumer culture and of socialization processes media brands are closely linked with a wide range of societal issues and stakeholders' interests. At this point only some of these issues and interests can be touched upon.

From a media companies' perspective children as consumers who buy media products themselves or motivate their parents to buy their favorite brands are obviously a relevant market. Beyond that, establishing media brands for children is also a relevant investment in the future, since the personal preferences and tastes that have been developed during childhood and adolescence also influence the consumption patterns of adults.

As recent developments show, successful media brands for children have been established as cross media brands that are characterized by continuous and consistent presence across a wide range of channels, products and services. Online and mobile communication services and applications are playing a crucial role in providing permanent access to the preferred brand. One consequence might be that the diversity of brands to which children feel attached might decrease to the extent to which single brands set out to broaden their functionalities in order to provide a full-service offering.

Branding strategies in the digital world are linked with particular risks that go beyond traditional concerns in the mass media era, for instance misleading forms of advertising. Today, children are increasingly addressed individually, their personal data are used for marketing activities; thus questions of privacy and data protection become a relevant issue regarding media brands for children.

Media brands are play a major role in children's social relationships; they provide symbolic material that can be used for social integration as well as for distinction, for inclusion as well as for exclusion. Against this background media offerings for children have to be critically observed and discussed with regard to their potential to exclude or even discriminate against certain groups of children. This is particularly relevant with regard to children from socially disadvantaged families who cannot afford to take part in some parts of today's commercialized consumer culture and, as a consequence, might suffer from social exclusion within their peer-group.

Since today's societies, at least in the Western world, are deeply commercialized, this is necessarily also true for childhood (Buckingham, 2011). Nevertheless, most societies have been trying to establish social spaces that are not or at least less commercialized in order to provide at least some options for experiences that are less dominated by market related considerations. In this respect public service media of all kinds, not only in television and radio, but particularly in the world of online services and mobile applications, have an important role to play in order to create spaces that allow children to build their social relationships and their identity independent of the logic of the market.

The dominant role of some globally distributed media brands for children has been observed over years. This trend has been fueled by the advent of the global communication infrastructure provided by the internet. As research in other media related areas has shown this cannot be understood just as a proof of the hegemony of a few cultures or of the commercial dominance of a few companies. On the one hand the global distribution of media products for children requires a lot of 'localizing' on the producers' side. On the other hand children in different parts of the world deal with these products based on their specific cultural, social and personal background and thus create different media brands.

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Media Brand Loyalty Through Online Audience Integration?

Juliane A. Lischka

Abstract

This chapter discusses the question of whether audience members become loyal toward a media brand when sharing, liking or commenting on online media content—or are loyal readers more inclined to write comments on online articles or to like and share them? The aim is to answer this chicken-egg causality dilemma of the audience integration-loyalty relationship on a theoretical basis. Therefore, the concept of attitude-behavior consistency, the theories of reasoned action and planned behavior, involvement theory, uses and gratifications theory, and current research are reviewed. In conclusion, audience integration can be defined as behavioral dimension of loyalty and affects gratifications obtained that determine satisfaction, which in turn determines loyalty and future gratifications sought.

Keywords

Audience • Audience participation • Online distribution • Loyalty • Satisfaction • Branding • Uses and gratification • Involvement • Media • Facebook

1 Introduction

When regarding media products as brands, the concept of media brand loyalty is closely connected. Loyalty towards products or services is an important marketing goal for companies, since loyal buyers or users increase the profitability and brand value of the company according to Aaker (1996). Loyal customers re- and cross-purchase, accept price increases, and are more likely to recommend a service or product to others. Therefore, loyalty is relevant for relationship management—and

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ultimately for developing a sustainable competitive advantage (Dick & Basu, 1994; see the overview on loyalty as indirect marketing outcome in Tropp, 2011).

With web 2.0 and social media, companies (are forced to) open up, interactively engage with customers, and even integrate customers into what were once internal processes. That is, customers become co-creators of the product design, advertising or the corporate identity (See-To & Ho, 2014; Theunissen, 2014; Thompson & Malaviya, 2013). One benefit of integrating customers is a potential increase in brand loyalty (Bloemer & Kasper, 1995; Flint, Blocker, & Boutin, 2011).

For media brands, a loyal audience (that can be sold to advertisers) is crucial and gains greater importance in an online environment where switching costs are low. Online, the audience can be integrated into the supply chain of content production. Audience comments and user-generated content (UGC) can be used within the value chain of a news outlet, e.g., when prioritizing topics (Kang, 2010; Ots & Karlsson, 2012).

Audience integration is defined by two behavioral dimensions according to Hille and Bakker (2013); (1) sharing or liking articles on social media or via email, i.e., *audience distribution* and (2) creating UGC or comments on journalistic articles, i.e., *audience participation* (see left side of Fig. 1). Audience integration features offered by online compared to offline media brands "have expanded the range and scope of our interactions with media content" (Sundar & Limperos, 2013, p. 505). When integrating users online, they spend more time with the media brand, have more touch points, deal more intensively with the media brand, and personally connect stronger to the brand (Czolkoss & Schmid-Petri, 2012). Audience integration can increase the user satisfaction with a brand (Christodoulides, Jevons, & Bonhomme, 2012) and therefore should be able to increase loyalty as well. However, the chicken or the egg causality dilemma remains: *are more loyal customers the ones who participate in content creation and distribute content online or does participating/distributing lead to an increase*[1] *in loyalty towards the media brand?*

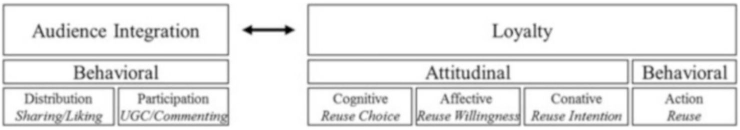

Fig. 1 Audience integration and loyalty dimensions (*Source* Compiled by the author)

[1] It should be noted that audience participation may not be exclusively positively related to loyalty: dissatisfied and less loyal readers may *vent their anger* when commenting on journalistic articles. This behavior might rather be a result of psychological arousal through perceived news content and could be similar to letters to the editor. On this matter, Smith, McLeod, and Wakefield (2005) indicate that letters to the editor are likely to reveal extreme positions. However, a negative relation will remain mostly disregarded in this chapter since the aim is to reveal the *direction* of causality between loyalty and audience integration.

To approach the relation between audience integration and loyalty, satisfaction serves as a link. A satisfying experience with the brand is considered as a necessary antecedent for loyalty (e.g., Oliver, 1999). Therefore, firstly the relation between customer loyalty and satisfaction and also involvement theory are reviewed. Secondly, uses and gratifications theory is applied to relate media brand loyalty and satisfaction with audience integration. Further, the motivators of audience integration are discussed in relation to involvement theory and uses and gratifications theory, and empirical results of the relation between loyalty and audience integration are presented. The chapter concludes with a summary of theoretical and empirical connections between loyalty and audience integration.

2 Loyalty and Satisfaction

Loyalty can be defined as a *behavioral* or *intentional* response to *attitudes*, e.g., as "the strength of the relationship between an individual's relative attitude and repeat patronage" (Dick & Basu, 1994, p. 99). The concept of loyalty is often broadened to attitudinal, i.e., cognitive, affective, and conative, dimensions when referring to "the degree to which customers intend to repeat their purchases in the future (intention of future behavior), express a positive attitudinal willingness toward the provider (affective loyalty), and consider this provider the sole option for future transactions (cognitive loyalty)" (Picón, Castro, & Roldán, 2014, p. 747). The dimensions of loyalty are visualized on the right side of Fig. 1.

Behavioral *media* brand loyalty can take other attendance forms than repeat purchase, such as spending more time watching a channel or programs and visiting a media brand website more often. The term *reuse* combines cost-involving and free forms of reutilization a media brand. On the cognitive dimension, users regard a media brand as the best alternative to fulfill their needs. On the affective dimension, users prefer a certain media brand and are willing to reuse it. On the conative dimension, users express a reuse intention, which is expected to transfer to the actual reuse behavior. One could argue that audience distribution and participation are elements of the behavioral media brand loyalty dimension since both are ways of *reusing* online features of a media brand.

Satisfaction is regarded as *necessary antecedent* of loyalty (e.g., Kotler, Keller, Brady, Goodman, & Hansen, 2012, see overview in Hennig-Thurau & Klee, 1997; Suh & Youjae, 2006). Oliver (1999, p. 42) distinguishes between loyalty as "an attained state of enduring preference to the point of determined defense" and satisfaction as "a fairly temporal post-usage state for one time consumption or a repeatedly experienced state for ongoing consumption that reflects how the product or service has fulfilled its purpose" (Oliver, 1999, p. 41). In this view, Oliver (1999) regards satisfaction as an essential ingredient of or as transforming into loyalty. Oliver (1980) defines satisfaction as a function of expectation and expectancy (dis) confirmation, which in turn leads to a revision of attitudes and purchase intention. If an outcome is poorer than expected, satisfaction decreases. This then leads to degrading attitudes and a decline of repurchase intention (Oliver, 1980). Because satisfaction is an "overall evaluation of personal consumption experience" (Suh &

Youjae, 2006, p. 146), it represents the influence of the total past experience of customers. Online media brand satisfaction thus includes all past visits of the media website and all experiences with its media content though social media websites or other online channels. The nature of media content being an experience or confidence good exacerbates the ability of recipients to evaluate their consumption experience to a full extent. Therefore, evaluating the satisfaction with a media brand may be harder and, in turn, building up stable loyalty towards a media brand may take longer than with non-confidence goods. In an online environment where switching costs are low, establishing satisfied and loyal users is not easier. Therefore, Adams (2006) underlines that the perceived value of the content and services as well as the pace and degree of fulfilling the needs of users are relevant for online media brands.

The rationale for the *satisfaction* → *loyalty* causality (→ = *to positively affect*) is based on the concept of attitude-behavior consistency and the theories of reasoned action and planned behavior (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980, 2005; Lutz, 1977). That is, *attitudes guide behavior*, and past behavior may forecast future behavior by affecting intentions (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1977; Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). When post purchase evaluations are satisfying, this may lead to a repurchase behavior.

According to Oliver (1980, 1999), a simplified *satisfaction* → *loyalty* causality sequence consists of (1) *expectation* → (2) *purchase* → (3) *post purchase (dis)confirmation*; *post purchase satisfaction/attitude/intention* → (4) *repurchase*. Since loyalty comprises attitudinal as well as behavioral dimensions, loyalty dimensions are contained in steps (3) and (4), respectively.

The relation between satisfaction and brand loyalty is however "not simple and straightforward" (Bloemer & Kasper, 1995, p. 311), and customer satisfaction is not sufficient to predict loyalty. The satisfaction-loyalty relation is influenced by *internal*, i.e., product characteristics, service quality, promotion mix, and costs, and *external* factors, i.e., switching costs, marketplace situation, perceived value, commitment, and trust (Yoo & Bai, 2013; see Morgan & Hunt, 1994 for the commitment-trust model of relationship marketing).

Yet various studies confirm the satisfaction-loyalty causality sequence using longitudinal designs. Lariviere, Keiningham, Cooil, Aksoy, and Malthouse (2014) show in a panel study that a change in the affective (pleasure of being customer of the brand), calculative (perceived payoff to be a customer of the brand), and normative commitment (perceived similarity of values) is positively related to a change in the customers' share of wallet, which can be regarded as a dimension of behavioral loyalty. Results of Johnson, Herrmann, and Huber (2006) indicate that *early* repurchase and recommendation intentions are driven by *cognitive* perceptions of overall value, i.e., performance *beliefs*. They conclude that "loyalty intentions are a function of perceived value early in the life cycle" (Johnson et al., 2006, p. 122). Later, with more consumer experience, affective attitudes toward maintaining the relationship become more important for repurchase and recommendation intentions. That is, *later-stage affective* attitudes mediate the effects of performance beliefs on purchase intentions. Overall, their findings support that *attitudes → (intentional) behavior, which is in line with the concept of* attitude-behavior consistency.

However, the longitudinal studies reported did not allow for a reverse impact of loyalty towards assumed causes and are thus not truly dynamic. Therefore, a causal relation suggested by the theories of reasoned action and planned behavior are found, but is not sufficiently dynamically proven over time. Interestingly, Shankar, Smith, and Rangaswamy (2003) argue that the relation between satisfaction and loyalty is *reciprocal*, i.e., satisfaction reinforces loyalty *and* vice versa. Yet their study did not differentiate between attitudinal and behavioral dimensions of loyalty. There is no discrepancy with the theories of reasoned action and planned behavior, when assuming that satisfaction and the attitudinal dimension of loyalty may reinforce each other. Shankar et al. (2003) did not use longitudinal data to reveal dynamic relations between satisfaction and loyalty.

A more dynamic theoretical approach explaining the relation between a customer and a brand is offered by involvement theory. The involvement-commitment model (Fig. 2) proposes that ego involvement, i.e., whether the product is related to the self-concept of the consumer, positively affects purchase involvement, i.e., whether a consumer cares about what brands to consume, which in turn positively

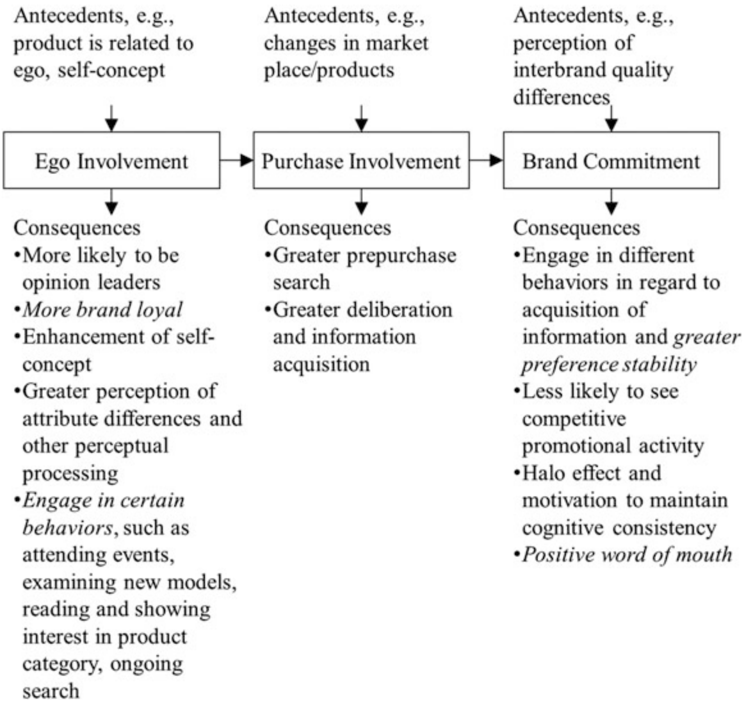

Fig. 2 Involvement-commitment model with antecedents and consequences [*Source* Beatty et al. (1988, p. 153). Examples of antecedents are reduced. Attitudinal and behavioral dimensions of loyalty are printed in *italics*. Italics by the author]

affects brand commitment, i.e., preference and loyalty towards the brand, resulting in preference stability and positive word of mouth (Beatty, Homer, & Kahle, 1988).

Previous research shows that commitment, trust, and product involvement also serve as predictors of word of mouth (Kumar, Pozza, & Ganesh, 2013). Consequences of ego involvement are an increase in brand loyalty and *engaging in certain behaviors*, such as attending events, reading and showing interest in the product category, or ongoing search (Beatty et al., 1988). This relates to the concept of brand experience, which is described as "subjective, internal consumer responses (sensations, feelings, and cognitions) and behavioral responses" and is found to increase loyalty (Sahin, Zehir, & Kitapçı, 2011, p. 289).

Hence, the involvement-commitment model does not differentiate between attitudinal antecedents and behavioral outcomes but allows attitudinal and behavioral consequences to occur after each of the three steps. The outcomes of involvement and commitment are loyalty-related attitudes *and* behaviors. The first stage of ego involvement, as well as the last stage of brand commitment may *lead to* loyal attitudes and behavior, but also to participating and distributing behaviors. That is, audience integration may rather be *accompanied by* an increase in loyalty than being an antecedent. Instead, ego involvement can be treated as antecedent of loyalty. Brand commitment itself may well represent an attitudinal dimension of loyalty. Therefore, ego involvement may play a relevant role for disentangling the audience integration-satisfaction loyalty relation, which is discussed in the following section.

3 Audience Integration, Loyalty and Satisfaction

Research on online communities has revealed that audience integration positively affects brand commitment (Casaló, Flavián, & Guinalíu, 2008), consumer-based brand equity (Christodoulides et al., 2012), recommendation behavior, brand image of the community sponsor, intention to continue community membership (Woisetschläger, Hartleb, & Blut, 2008), and brand trust, which in turn has a positive effect on brand loyalty (Hur, Ahn, & Kim, 2011; Laroche, Habibi, & Richard, 2013) and on participation in the community activities (Casaló et al., 2008). Casaló et al. (2008) remark that the level of satisfaction with interactions positively affects trust—and trust has a positive effect on participation. Likewise Chung (2008) shows that the perceived credibility of online news also positively affects the use of interactive features. On the other hand, audience participation can increase the credibility of an online media brand (Kim, 2012). Horppu, Kuivalainen, Tarkiainen, and Ellonen (2008) confirm that users' satisfaction and trust determine their loyalty for a Finnish consumer magazine web site. Oyedeji (2007) finds that perceived media outlet quality, brand associations, and brand loyalty can explain about three quarters of the variance in media channel credibility. These studies reveal that audience integration, credibility, satisfaction, and loyalty are strongly interdependent. Hence, not only satisfaction and loyalty (Shankar et al., 2003) but also the concepts of audience integration, trust, satisfaction, and loyalty may be reciprocal. Lischka and Messerli (forthcoming) test satisfaction and trust as mediators of audience integration and loyalty. Their results reveal that sharing tends to increase satisfaction, which in turn enhances loyalty. In contrast, commenting reduces satisfaction and trust, but directly improves loyalty.

Uses and gratification theory can explain antecedents and outcomes of online audience integration and relate audience integration to loyalty and satisfaction. Interactive features can lead to an increase in the *gratifications obtained* by the use of online media brands. Uses and gratifications theory proposes that media use and media choice depend on *gratifications sought* by the audience and lead to a certain level of gratifications obtained after the media use (Katz & Blumler, 1974). The degree of accordance of sought and obtained gratifications affects future media use—that is, the behavioral dimension of loyalty. This attitude-behavior relation can also be based on the concept of attitude-behavior consistency and the theories of reasoned action and planned behavior.

When relating gratifications to the satisfaction-loyalty relation, obtained gratifications correspond to post purchase (dis)confirmation and post purchase satisfaction, attitude or intention. Ko, Cho, and Roberts (2005) argue using the example of interactive advertising that gratifications obtained, which result from perceived fulfillment of usage motivation or gratifications sought, create satisfaction with the usage experience. Chung and Nah (2009) uncover that the use of interactive features is positively associated with perceived satisfaction toward a community news site. Similar to the concept of satisfaction with purchase experience including all experiences with a product, satisfaction towards a media brand includes all experiences with its content. How satisfying experiences with the content are, is determined by the concordance of gratifications sought with gratifications obtained. In the case that this concordance is high, a high level of satisfaction and revisiting can be expected. When the gratification sought was not obtained, users may rather avoid reusing the online news outlet. Hence, "the extent to which an individual perceives GO [gratification obtained, JL] should contribute to his/her attitudes and future intention to seek similar experiences in the same medium" (Yoo, 2011, p. 74). These relations are displayed in Fig. 3.

Sundar (2004) argues that interactivity can also cause negative effects through over-stimulation of the user leading to negative evaluations. In an experiment

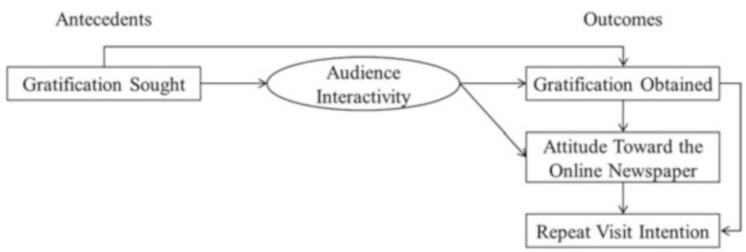

Fig. 3 Audience interactivity, gratifications, and repeat visit intention [*Source* Compiled by the author based on Yoo (2011, p. 81)]

conducted in 2000, interactive features were found to be rated as significantly more participatory, involving, and immediate than non-interactive conditions, but also generated significantly more confusion and frustration (Bucy, 2004). Still, interactive features are appreciated by website visitors, even though they remain unused quite often (Larsson, 2011). In addition, Larsson (2011) reveals that newspaper websites offering interactive features are visited significantly more often. Today, interactive features may be regarded as less confusing as they have become more common among news websites. In this manner, Hunt, Atkin, and Kowal (2013) argue that familiarity with interactive features on a website influences its use. Although a low number of audience members use interactive features, Chung and Yoo (2008) suggest that more people should exercise interactivity on an online site, because they are more likely to acquire favorable attitudes toward the site and to have a greater intention to visit the site at a later occasion.

According to uses and gratifications theory, online media brand reuse, i.e., the behavioral dimension of loyalty, depends on the level of satisfied gratifications. If audience integration increases the satisfaction in gratifications sought then media brand loyalty will increase as a result. Hence, audience integration is a *mediating* variable of the relation between gratifications sought and obtained and, initially, *precedes* satisfaction and loyalty towards the media brand. Subsequently, since obtained gratifications affect future gratifications sought, an increase in audience integration can also *follow* an increase in loyalty. The resulting reuse experience in turn affects loyal behavior in the next step. Therefore, a *reciprocal relation* between the level of audience integration, satisfaction, and loyalty may occur.

However, previously reviewed literature regards audience integration as a byproduct of media used as a means of seeking gratifications. Yet there may be distinct motivations that trigger audience integration. In order to understand such motivations, the two dimensions of audience integration according to Hille and Bakker (2013), distributing and participation, are discussed in the following.

In general, Berger and Iyengar (2013, p. 573) argue that "Written communication provides the opportunity to refine communication, and self-enhancement concerns drive people to use that opportunity to talk about more interesting products and brands." Berger and Milkman (2012) investigate why readers share, i.e., distribute, news articles via email with others. Their content analysis of the most often shared articles from the *New York Times* in combination with an experiment reveal that positive and negative emotions potentially arouse readers (awe, amusement, anxiety, and anger) and lead to sharing. Also practical utility, interest and surprise are positively connected to sharing. They argue based on Homans (1958), who considers social behavior as an exchange of goods, that certain content characteristics of articles offer social exchange value, which can be related to the socialization motivation to use online news investigated by Yoo (2011). That is, the sender expects that certain content may help others, it supports the sender's self-enhancement as the sender appears knowledgeable to others, or the sender aims to generate reciprocity and to deepen social connections (Berger & Milkman, 2012). In addition, sharing with one or many people affects what senders share. When sharing with many, senders are self-focused and avoid content that may make them look bad. Whereas, when sharing with only one person, senders chose content that is useful to the other (Barasch & Berger, 2014). Hence, senders share content for self-presentation and self-enhancement or target the content to the receiver.

Audience participation, i.e., commenting, involves the disclosing of one's own ideas to an unfamiliar public and an unfamiliar online community of commenting voices, whereas the sender as well as the community members can remain anonymous. Readers may comment on articles because they want to discuss matters of personal interest or want to make abusive comments (Canter, 2013; Singer, 2009). Canter (2013) finds that for online comments in two UK regional newspapers, the dominant reason why readers comment online is to express a personal opinion on a story. A secondary motivation is to interact with other readers. Compared to the social activity of sharing articles with familiar people, social self-enhancement within the writer's familiar social environment through generating reciprocity and deepening social connections cannot be achieved by commenting. Still, the writer of a comment may appear knowledgeable to anonymous others, which may enhance the sender's self-concept. Thus, *for commenting, there is no benefit for social relations but a rather egocentric self-enhancement benefit* (e.g., "Others read my thoughts and may find me clever").

Connecting Berger and Milkman's (2012) and Canter's (2013) findings to the involvement-commitment model (Fig. 2), sharing of articles, a social transaction activity between a dyad or a small group of familiar people, and commenting, a social transaction activity between unfamiliar users, enhances the self-concept and social relations of the sender/commenter. The fulfillment of the enhancement in turn determines satisfaction and loyalty towards the media brand as suggested by uses and gratifications theory. In the first step of Fig. 2, the arousing characteristic of an article may be related to the reader's self-concept. The social activity of sharing, liking or commenting on an article, which can be regarded as *engaging in certain behaviors* within the model, may be perceived beneficial for the sender as it enhances the sender's self-concept and social relations. According to the involvement-commitment model and uses and gratifications theory, a possible causal sequence according to the involvement-commitment model may be *arousal → ego involvement/social value → sharing/liking of articles → gratifications obtained → satisfaction/loyalty*.

These results suggest that in the context of the involvement-commitment model and uses and gratifications theory audience integration increases website satisfaction, trust and other attitudes toward the media brand, which in turn increases loyalty, i.e., *audience integration → gratifications obtained → satisfaction/trust/commitment → loyalty*. Hence, audience integration may increase loyalty through a greater level of gratifications obtained because participation offers a more intense and credible media experience.

4 Conclusions for the Audience Integration-Loyalty Relation of Media Brands

According to the theories of reasoned action and planned behavior, an attitudinal change *precedes* a behavioral change. Therefore, *attitudinal* antecedents and the *attitudinal* dimension of loyalty precede the *behavioral* dimension of loyalty. According to uses and gratifications theory, the level of gratifications obtained through media use determines the satisfaction with a media brand, which *precedes* the revisiting of a media site, i.e., the behavioral dimension of loyalty, and future gratifications sought. Audience integration affects the level of gratification obtained. Therefore, it is initially an antecedent of loyalty and can later result from loyalty. First, since satisfaction is "the overall evaluation of personal consumption experience" (Suh & Youjae, 2006, p. 146), the experience with integration activities determines audience satisfaction through obtained gratifications of social value, self-concept or ego enhancement according to the involvement-commitment model. In turn, satisfaction transfers into loyalty.

The following conclusions and suggestions for future research derive.

- The theories of reasoned action and planned behavior proposes that attitudinal dimensions of loyalty can precede audience integration behavior. Hence, audience integration can also be defined as an element of the behavioral dimension of loyalty. Sharing articles online is a recommending behavior and returning to the website in order to make a comment (re-commenting) is a reuse behavior.

  Future research should clearly differentiate between attitudinal and behavioral dimensions of loyalty, systematically subclassify the behavioral dimension of online media brand loyalty (e.g., re-visiting, re-commenting, recommending/sharing, re-purchasing etc.), and analyze the relations between these loyalty dimensions
- Involvement theory, especially the involvement-commitment model, proposes that loyalty is accompanied by audience integration behavior. Arousal, social (exchange) value, and ego involvement lead to audience participation.

  Uses and gratifications theory proposes that audience integration is a means to gratifications obtained, which affects satisfaction and in turn loyalty. Hence, audience integration determines the degree of satisfaction in gratifications sought. Yet obtained gratifications and loyalty determine future use and gratifications sought. With this, a change in loyalty can precede a change in audience integration because gratifications sought have changed. To conclude, audience integration can precede *and* follow loyalty, but there is no direct causality since a direct connection between audience integration and loyalty does theoretically not exist. Instead, audience integration determines gratifications obtained. When returning to the chicken-egg image, the chicken is not audience integration but it is satisfaction that lays the egg, i.e., loyalty. Audience integration is rather the forage the chicken consumes to "produce" an egg.

Future studies employing longitudinal designs and allowing dynamic relations between online audience integration, media brand satisfaction/trust/commitment, and media brand loyalty will be very insightful.

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Research Note: Generating Social Buzz for Media Brands: Conceptualizing Social Network Word of Mouth

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Abstract

Marketing managers of traditional media brands are facing a challenging communication reality today. Reaching magazine brand users has become more complex since the number of communication platforms and channels is ever-rising. In this environment one of the oldest communication techniques, word of mouth (WOM), has been revived and is leading media brands to highly benefit from the concept of amplified WOM, also known as buzz marketing. The opportunities of buzz marketing extended with the increasing dissemination of social network sites (SNS). This study examines how media managers can use SNS, in particular Facebook fanpages, to generate positive WOM about traditional media brands. Using the example of four magazine brands in the German market the author explores the value of buzz marketing and brand fans for media brand communication and sheds light on the main drivers generating online and offline WOM.

Keywords

Media brand communication • Buzz marketing • Social network word of mouth (SNWOM) • Facebook fanpages • Brand-relationship management • eWOM behavior • Brand advocates • Crossmedia • Engagement

1 Introduction

The importance of marketing communication strategies for developing strong media brands is undeniable and media managers and researchers have been covering the field for several years (e.g. Frey-Vor, Siegert, & Stiehler, 2008). Compared

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to other industries, marketing communication of media products is considerably more complex since it is addressing two markets—media consumers and advertisers (Martin, 2013). Especially for companies offering traditional media products like magazines, marketing communication has become even more complex, due to digitalisation processes and the development of Web 2.0 resp. 3.0 (Chan-Olmsted, 2011, 2014). Media fragmentation, expanding personal communication technologies, rising marketing literacy of consumers and increasing advertising clutter have resulted in a *rethinking of traditional marketing communication strategies* (Kirby & Marsden, 2005). In this context, marketers have rediscovered one of the oldest communication tools: word of mouth (WOM) (Carl, 2006). Particularly within today's social media world, marketers value WOM as a fast and inexpensive technique to reach the mass consumer market. *Buzz marketing communication* has become a credible alternative to traditional marketing campaigns, which rely on mass-media advertising (Mourdoukoutas, 2013). For media managers this development does not only imply even more competition in the advertising market, but also the necessity to explore new marketing communication strategies to strengthen the position of their brands in the long-run.

Some of today's leading media brands, according to Interbrand's Best Global Brands Ranking (2014), like Google or Facebook, have basically grown based on the *concept of buzz marketing or amplified WOM*. "Google also grew to a $1-billion revenue company without spending anything on consumer advertising." (Seba, 2006, p. 71). The main advantages of WOM are a higher credibility of the content and a more precise selection in the information process (Esch, 2009). Previous research related to the media industry has demonstrated several positive effects of WOM, e.g. impact on moviegoers' consumer behavior or peer recommendations for magazines (Kim, Park, & Park, 2013; Martin, 2013). With the advent of Web 2.0 and especially social network sites (SNS), buzz marketing has moved into a new dimension of communication between the consumer and media brand. The interactivity allows users to easily share branded content and offers new ways for crossmedia marketing communication strategies (Martin, 2013).

For media managers who are investing time and money in *building brand relationships* and communication strategies via SNS, like *Facebook fanpages*, fundamental questions arise: how can *social network word of mouth (SNWOM)* be conceptualized for media brands? Do traditional media brands have the power to *generate buzz* and how important is the brands' content? Are *fans of media brands* potential influencers of other consumers? What are the key dimensions to motivate fans to generate buzz? Currently, research about buzz marketing for traditional media brands has not been the subject of many studies. Furthermore, only a few traditional media companies have observed the power of their well-established brands for WOM, offline as well as in SNS. Some, such as the brands in this study, already use *Facebook fanpages* to communicate with their target groups. However, measurement concepts to monitor SNWOM potential and effectiveness do not exist so far. To understand the new marketing communication techniques, consolidated findings from a scientific approach are necessary and will be provided in this conceptual and empirical research project.

2 Theoretical Background

2.1 Buzz Marketing for Media Brands

In the new communication environment attention is increasingly focusing on the *concept of buzz marketing*. Esch (2014) defines buzz marketing as *techniques to generate WOM*. Buzz marketing builds on virality and digital communication possibilities. Moreover, it aims at spreading positive conversation about a brand, product or service in an informal setting. WOM or "buzz" defined as "informal communication among consumers about products and services" (Liu, 2006, p. 74) has been observed as a marketing tool in the movie industry by several researchers, but hardly in the context of media brand-relationship management. Preliminary findings have shown that it can have a positive impact on box office revenue. Thus, it is proven that *online WOM (eWOM)* plays an important role in explaining the consumer behavior of moviegoers (Kim et al., 2013). Chu and Kim operationalized SNS users' engagement in eWOM by identifying three specific behaviors: opinion seeking, opinion giving and opinion passing and observed the impact of potential influence factors. They found that trust and informational influence are positively associated with SNS users' overall eWOM behavior (Chu & Kim, 2011).

Media managers are actually facing the problem that traditional concepts are limited when it comes to integrating *brand fans* into their marketing communication strategy (Wolter & Fantapié Altobelli, 2014a). Identifying potential *brand advocates* and measuring the success of a fanpage with respect to the brands' strength to generate buzz, requires a sound information base. Chu and Kim (2011) deliver a useful concept to measure SNWOM by linking well-established WOM measurement with SNS specific dimensions. The idea of opinion seeking behavior is reflected by the dimension following Flynn, Goldsmith, and Eastman (1996), defining opinion seekers as consumers with a tendency to search for information when making purchase decisions. Since SNS users can take on different roles, the concept of opinion leadership is integrated as well. It is represented by the users' ability to influence others' attitude and behavior. Due to the digital environment of SNS, facilitating forwarding/passing behavior (Sun, Youn, Wu, & Kuntaraporn, 2006), the multidirectional communication dimension is added by opinion passing (Chu & Kim, 2011, p. 65).

However, given the specific characteristics of media brands, the question arises whether the concept can be adapted to make a contribution to the specific product category. Hence the first research question is:

RQ1: How can SNWOM be conceptualized in order to manage the buzz for media brands?

2.2 Fanpages as Buzz Marketing Tool for Media Brands

Social networks have become an integral part of today's media landscape. Due to this development media managers have to shift their concept from managing their brands as channels to a "brand immersion experience that includes cohesive, all-encompassing activities to involve the consumers wherever they are." (Chan-Olmsted, 2011, p. 7). SNS like *Facebook fanpages* offer marketers new prospects ". . . delivering brand-related content that consumers will share with one another as a way of extending the reach for a message and to add an implicit consumer endorsement of the brand associated with the content." (Keller & Fay, 2012, p. 1).

Traditional media brands started to use SNS to communicate with potential recipients, but so far usually without a clear strategy (Weidlich & Vlaši, 2011). Media brands, such as the German monthly news magazine *FOCUS*, have been transferred into SNS, because the management discovered the platform as a new way for marketing communication in a *crossmedia* world. SNS contribute to building lasting user brand-relationships with digital target groups and spark interest for the printed product (Wolter, 2013). *Facebook fanpages* can be useful for marketers to generate product-related buzz, because besides becoming friends with other members users can also become a 'fan' of a brand on so-called fanpages. Clicking the 'like' button on a brand's fanpage is signalling the user's relationship to a certain brand within the *Facebook* community (Wolter & Fantapié Altobelli, 2014a). Being a fan of a brand becomes a visible part of the personal profile and automatically provides users with fanpage content in their personal newsfeed (Jahn & Kunz, 2012). Brand-related content can be integrated in the form of texts, images and video or applications such as product configurations. Fanpages are a promising channel for marketing communication and interaction (Wolter, 2013). Unlike brand communities, where the relationship among followers of a brand is the prime focus, fanpages are characterised by the relationship between brand and user, which offers the opportunity to get in contact with non-fans (Wolter & Fantapié Altobelli, 2014a).

Since brand managers are facing continuously more pressure to develop effective marketing communication strategies, it is highly relevant for them to know if spending time no and budget for building up fanpages contributes to their desired marketing goals (Martin, 2013). A study by Wolter and Fantapié Altobelli (2014a) showed that fans, especially engaged fans, have a stronger tendency to spread offline WOM and SNWOM. In another study, Wolter and Fantapié Altobelli (2014b) observed that entertaining and informative brand characteristics affect *fanpage engagement*. Fans of entertaining media brands are motivated to actively engage with the brand on Facebook by different influence factors, compared to fans of informative brands.

For media companies, managing brand portfolios with diverse content foci, the question arises if communication strategies via fanpages are suitable and advantageous for every type of media brand. Particularly, this study takes into consideration whether fanpages are a valuable buzz marketing tool for entertaining and informative magazines. This will be examined by the second research question:

RQ2: Do fans of entertaining and informative magazine brands differ in terms of their intention to generate SNWOM?

2.3 Managing the Buzz of Media Brands

Successful management of brand communication in SNS relies on thorough information about which characteristics of the brand and the fanpage drive the *engagement* of users' intention to generate WOM offline and in SNS. Previous research has shown that building a strong brand, in terms of credibility, likeability and other traditional brand equity dimensions, will result in several positive effects, like higher brand loyalty or greater willingness to spread positive WOM about the brand and influencing others in their buying and usage decisions (e.g. Brown, Broderick, & Lee, 2007, p. 4).

But are these marketing mechanisms also relevant for communication strategies in SNS? Former research shows that Web 2.0 communication follows different rules compared to one-direction marketing, but knowledge about drivers of buzz in SNS is still fragmentary (Chu & Kim, 2011). Hence, from the perspective of media managers it is questionable which brand dimensions they should focus on to generate buzz of media brands in SNS and offline. This leads to the following research question:

RQ3: Is the intention of Facebook fans to generate offline WOM and SNWOM influenced by different brand dimensions?

Since developing brand equity is a cost and time consuming task, it is important to find out if traditional brand dimensions are also relevant for generating SNWOM. To conceptualize the brand strength between media brand and user this study focuses on perceived traditional and SNS related brand value elements. With regard to the results of Davidson, McNeill, and Ferguson (2007), loyalty is a central factor for the success of magazine brands, hence loyal readers show higher levels of purchase intention towards the magazine. Based on the model of Jahn and Kunz (2012), the author integrated attitudinal brand loyalty as another dimension of brand strength, which consists of brand likeability and brand commitment. Brown et al. (2007) identified credibility of the source as a substantial success factor of communication within online communities; hence it was added as a third component in this study. Since Wolter and Fantapié Altobelli (2014b) identified the perceived self-concept value and hedonic and functional value of the fanpage as key drivers of the fans' *engagement* to interact with their brand on *Facebook fanpages*, these variables were also included in this study.

Brown et al. (2007) emphasize that "Existing interpersonal communication theories may be inappropriate to describe eWOM behavior, since they have tended to focus on face-to-face interaction" (p. 3). In this study, the author assumes that due to the different relevance of social-relationships in offline and SNS communication, users' intention to generate SNWOM and offline WOM is also influenced by

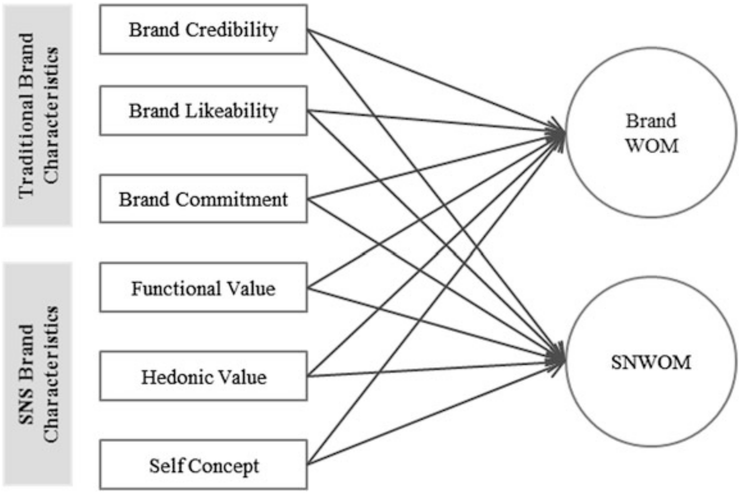

Fig. 1 Conceptual framework

various dimensions of the brand and the fanpage. To gain knowledge about the main drivers and differences in generating offline WOM and SNWOM, the author postulates the following research questions:

RQ4: How do brand credibility, brand loyalty and brand commitment as well as self-concept value, hedonic and functional value impact on the WOM behavior of Facebook fans?

RQ5: How do brand credibility, brand loyalty and brand commitment as well as self-concept value, hedonic and functional value impact on the SNWOM behavior of Facebook fans?

The conceptual framework of the influence factors and the target variables are summarized in Fig. 1.

3 Methodology

3.1 Design and Procedure

The study data was gathered from an online survey, including Facebook fans and non-fans of four established magazine brands. The survey was conducted in cooperation with the German publishing company *Hubert Burda Media*. Aris and Bughin (2009, p. 57) describe the company as "... an innovative media organization with diverse operations consisting of magazines, Internet projects, radio (...) at the heart of this organization is a family-owned printing and publishing business (...) which early diversified into other media." The authors point out the relevance

Table 1 SNWOM measurement (Chu & Kim, 2011)

Dimension	Items
Opinion seeking	• I've often received hints for new magazines on Facebook • I like to get my friends' opinion on Facebook before I buy a new magazine • I prefer reading magazines when I have gotten my Facebook friends' opinion on them
Opinion giving	• I often persuade my Facebook friends to read magazines I like • My Facebook friends pick their magazines based on what I have told them • On Facebook, I often influence my friends' opinions about magazines
Opinion passing	• When I receive information on magazines by a friend via Facebook, I will pass it along to my other Facebook friends • On Facebook, I like to pass along interesting information about magazines from one Facebook group to another • I tend to pass along my Facebook friends' positive reviews of magazines to other Facebook friends

for the company of developing crossplatform and new business strategies in order to ensure a strong position in the German market in the long-term (Aris & Bughin, 2009). The investigated brands *FOCUS, ELLE, InStyle* and *SuperIllu* (brand profiles see Table A1 in Appendix) have been selected in close consultancy with the management of *Hubert Burda Media* and are based on the following premises: (1) they have a different content focus (hedonic/informative), (2) they are crossmedia positioned (print, online, SNS), (3) they have a mutual traditional brand core: print, and (4) their brand transfer into social network sites is still in the early stages of development.

For data collection, the author recruited participants directly via the *Facebook fanpages* of the four brands. The participants were approached by a link to an online survey, and incentives were used to attract participants. A pre-test of the questionnaire was carried out with academics and business experts in order to check the content, conclusiveness and comprehension. The survey was conducted between December 2012 and February 2013.

3.2 Measurement

The constructs of the present study are based on well-established measures from brand and communication research. Using eWOM in SNS from Chu and Kim (2011) adjusted to the media industry and in particular for managing fanpages of magazine brands, *SNWOM* is operationalized as depicted in Table 1 using a seven-point Likert scale.

To analyze the influence of the brand content and the engagement of the user-brand relationship on the fans' intention to generate SNWOM (RQ2), the author compared two brands with different content foci. The monthly news magazine brand *FOCUS* served as the object of investigation for an informative media brand. The entertaining media brand was represented by the fashion/lifestyle magazine brand *InStyle*. Moreover, *fanpage usage intensity* was used to differentiate active

Table 2 Measurement of brand characteristics and SNS brand characteristics

Characteristic	Item(s)
Brand credibility	To what extent do you agree with the following statements. The brand . . . • . . .is linked to competence and professionalism • . . .delivers what it promises • . . .is trustworthy • . . .is a brand to trust in • . . .doesn't pretend to be something that it's not
Brand likeability	• I think (brand X) is good • I think positively about (brand X) • I like (brand X)
Brand commitment	(1) I feel I am a part of the (brand X) (2) I support the (brand X) actively (3) I interact with the (brand X)
Functional value	The content of the brand X fanpage is. . . • . . .helpful for me • . . .useful for me • . . .functional for me • . . .practical for me
Hedonic value	The content of brand X fanpage is. . . • . . .fun • . . .exciting • . . .pleasant • . . .entertaining
Self-concept value	What does it mean for you, to be a fan of brand X on Facebook? • I express myself and my opinion by sharing/liking/commenting on the content of the brand X fanpage • Being a fan of brand X says a lot about me • I use the brand X fanpage to present myself on Facebook

and passive fans. It was measured by the frequency fans visited the fanpage ("How often do you visit the InStyle/FOCUS fanpage?").[1]

In order to uncover the differences between offline WOM and SNWOM behavior (RQ3), offline WOM was also included in the questionnaire. Based on the concept of Christodoulides, Jevons, and Bonhomme (2012) *offline WOM* is reflected in this study through the items: (1) I recommend the brand (XY) to other people. (2) I recommend the brand (XY) to people, who seek my advice concerning magazines. (3) I say positive things about the brand (XY) to other people.

For analyzing brand-based and fanpage-based influence factors on SNWOM and offline WOM the present study used traditional brand characteristics (*credibility, likeability* and *commitment*) following the concept of Jahn and Kunz (2012). SNS brand characteristics are conceptualized as *perceived hedonic value* and *functional value* of the fanpage based on Jahn and Kunz (2012), as well as self-concept value in regard to Christodoulides et al. (2012) (see Table 2).

[1] The scale included: several times daily, daily, several times a week, once a week, 2–3 times a week, less than 2–3 times a month, have not revisited the fanpage since the registration.

The scales have been checked regarding their reliability and quality of an internal consistency (Churchill, 1979). The total sample of the survey was 2,086 completed questionnaires of magazine media-fans and non-fans. Due to the nature of the brands within this study the sample mainly consisted of female respondents (81.2 %). Several age groups were included, whereas 61 % of the participants were aged between 20 and 39. Furthermore, 43 % of the participants were employed and 77 % declared having a high school or university degree.

4 Results

To answer the first research question in the present study, i.e. how SNWOM can be conceptualized in order to manage the buzz for media brands, the internal consistency of the media-specific concept was measured.

The results reveal Cronbach's alpha values higher than 0.7 which is satisfactory for analysis following Bagozzi and Yi (1988). The lowest value shows for the construct of opinion seeking (0.733), which is nevertheless still a modest reliability. This implies that the questions on opinion giving (Cronbach's alpha = 0.903) and passing (Cronbach's alpha = 0.888) worked well, whereas the items of opinion seeking should be reconsidered. The overall Cronbach's alpha value for SNWOM is relatively high with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.926.

Gathering knowledge about the value of fanpages as buzz marketing tools for media brands and the relevance of the content was done as a next analysis step in the study. Overall the comparison of passive and active fans shows that a higher *engagement* of fans, measured by the time spent on the fanpage, leads to a significant higher intention to seek, give and pass opinions about the brands. The opinion passing behavior has to be especially underlined as the outcome of an active user-brand relationship on the fanpage since active fans show a significantly higher intention to pass along their opinion about the magazine brand on Facebook (*see* Table 3).

Comparing the two different brands, representatives of entertaining (InStyle) and informative (FOCUS) magazines, the results show that fans of the informative media brand tend to mostly pass on their opinion, compared to their seeking and giving behavior. Passing behavior is also the highest mean for the entertaining brand fans, but overall their SNWOM behavior seems to be more balanced, which means they act as opinion seekers, givers and passers at the same time. The results are summarised in Table 3.

To investigate if the intention of Facebook fans to generate offline WOM and SNWOM is influenced by different brand dimensions, traditional brand characteristics and SNS specific characteristics have been involved in the analyses. The contrasting juxtaposition of WOM and SNWOM (see Table 4) indicates that SNWOM and WOM are driven by diverse brand characteristics, except for brand commitment and self-concept value.

The next analysis step was conducted to identify the key drivers of WOM and SNWOM. To test the relevance of the supposed influence factors, a linear

Table 3 Comparison of content foci and fan engagement

	Passive			Active			
SNWOM	M	N	SD	M	N	SD	Sig
Informative brand content (FOCUS)							
Opinion seeking	1.71	42	.96	2.37	114	1.43	0.006**
Opinion giving	1.67	42	1.21	2.34	114	1.68	0.019*
Opinion passing	2.04	42	1.36	3.14	114	1.81	0.001**
Entertaining brand content (InStyle)							
Opinion seeking	1.60	101	.97	2.43	150	1.34	0.001**
Opinion giving	1.51	101	.94	2.48	150	1.57	0.001**
Opinion passing	1.70	101	1.09	2.64	150	1.75	0.001**

m mean, *N* number of subjects, *SD* standard derivation, *sig* asymptotic significance
**$p < 0.01$; *$p < 0.05$

Table 4 Key drivers of WOM and SNWOM

	WOM			SNWOM		
	B	β	Sig	B	β	Sig
Traditional brand characteristics						
Brand credibility	0.168	0.107	0.001**	−0.048	−0.038	0.207
Brand likeability	0.685	0.411	0.001**	−0.204	−0.151	0.001**
Brand commitment	0.353	0.329	0.001**	0.129	0.148	0.001**
SNS brand characteristics						
Functional value	−0.011	−0.009	0.709	0.131	0.141	0.001**
Hedonic value	0.048	0.039	0.128	0.073	0.074	0.022*
Self-concept	0.068	0.060	0.003**	0.348	0.379	0.001**

Note. Corr. $R^2 = 0.183$ (WOM). Corr. $R^2 = 0.157$ (SNWOM). **$p < 0.01$. *$p < 0.05$

regression analysis was calculated. Functional value of the fanpage is also highly significant for spreading branded content within Facebook. The credibility of the brand is not significant for SNWOM behavior and brand likeability is significant but negative. On the other side WOM in the real world is driven by brands, which are high in credibility, liking and commitment, whereas function and hedonic value are not significant. A high perceived self-concept value of the fanpage will be regarded with positive WOM about the brand in the offline and online world of fans.

5 Discussion and Implications

Social network sites (SNS) provide an attractive tool for marketing communication strategies in a media reality, which is characterized by expanding ad clutter and media fragmentation. *Facebook fanpages* in particular offer an attractive platform to generate brand-related WOM within SNS as well as offline. Managing buzz implies the strategic process of activating consumers to freely create and spread brand-related content within their established SNS and also in real world conversations. Scientific investigations of media brands, questioning the whys and hows of buzz marketing techniques are still scarce. The present study sheds light on fundamental questions about generating buzz, concerning the management of media brands based on an empirical analysis of magazine brands in the German market.

A basic concern which media managers currently face, is the lack of suitable concepts to measure SNWOM since traditional WOM constructs do not cover the interactivity of the Web 2.0 environment. This study has adjusted a measurement approach from Chu and Kim (2011) for eWOM in SNS. The construct of social network word of mouth (SNWOM) outlined here can be used by media managers to identify potential opinion seekers, opinion givers and opinion passers within their fanpage community on Facebook. At the same time SNWOM can be used for further research, applicable to various media brands and other markets.

With a comparison of the brands' content foci and engagement levels it was possible to show that for both brands the activation of the fan community is crucial to generate buzz. Comparing the SNWOM behavior of entertaining media brand fans and informative media brand fans indicates that the content foci has an impact on the intention to generate buzz. Active fans of the informative brand are most likely to show passing behavior, whereas the active entertaining brand fans also show the behavior of opinion leaders in SNS. Since the general intention to generate SNWOM is still relatively low for the investigated brands, it is important to gather knowledge about the key drivers of SNWOM. The comparison of possible influence factor analysis on SNWOM and offline WOM illustrates that the marketing mechanism differs. Marketers who aim at generating buzz in SNS need to concentrate on strategies to enlarge the perceived self-concept value of the fanpage and the commitment towards the brand. In accordance with the study of Brown et al. (2007) the present results underline that marketers have to understand what is relevant for fans in the different environments in order to design an engaging communication strategy for a media brand. Results show that within SNS the perceived value of the fanpage as well as the social interaction with the brand is valued by users in form of a higher intention to generate buzz than traditional brand characteristics. This goes in line with Carl (2006) who states that "... effective WOM and buzz marketing is not rooted in the marketing of a particular brand, product, or service, but rather is based in the everyday relationships and conversations of people discussing other matters." (p. 630). For marketing managers that means a rethinking of focusing on communication strategies which aim solely at traditional brand equity scales, which underpins the results of Nienstedt, Huber, and Seelmann (2012). They also identified differences in the impact within print and online brand relationships, which is an important fact for media communication management (Nienstedt et al., 2012). The negative effect of perceived brand likeability, found in this study, is an issue that requires further consideration. The multidimensional construct of tie strength could be a useful approach to gain further knowledge about this. It can be assumed that weak ties, defined by weak user-brand relationships, lead to a higher communication flow within SNS.

Appendix

Table A1 Brand profiles (German market)

	InStyle	ELLE	Focus	SuperIllu
Number of participants	999	526	387	276
Type of media	Star-fashion magazine	Fashion magazine	News magazine	Family magazine
Frequency of publication	Monthly	Monthly	Weekly	Weekly
Reach in 2013 in m[a]	1.48 (+7.25)	0.67 (+6.35)	4.54 (−11.08)	2.89 (−14.24)
Gross advertising revenues (2012 in m[b])	51.56 (+5.6)	37.91 (−1.9)	116.54 (+4.1)	19.87 (−1.3)
Geographical range	International	International	National	National
Year of first publication	1999	1988	1993	1990
Official homepage	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Presence in social setworks	Facebook, Twitter, Google+	Facebook, Twitter	Facebook, Twitter, Google+	Facebook, Twitter
Number of "likes" on (Date: 06.05.2013)	37,138	35,605	77,442	5,166
Core competences	Fashion, beauty, stars	Fashion	Politics, economy, science and technology	Entertainment, politics, economy, German history
Functional use	Entertainment	Entertainment	Information	Entertainment, information

Note. [a]Reach in ma 2013 Press I (+/−change in % in comparison to ma 2012 Press I). [b]Gross advertising revenues 2012 (+/− change in % in comparison to 2011). (*Source*: pz-online.de; Facebook (2014))

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Part VI

The Value Perspective: Media Brands Between Societal Expectations, Quality and Profit

Media Branding and Media Marketing: Conflicts with Journalistic Norms, Risks of Trial and Error

Stephan Russ-Mohl and Rukhshona Nazhdiminova

Abstract

This contribution analyzes why media companies are "late bloomers" in the field of branding and marketing. Thereafter, it focuses on different instruments of media branding and media marketing and the ethical conflicts which may arise between branding (as a long term strategy to create and to improve brand value and to preserve journalistic values) and "trial and error" marketing efforts which may—particularly in the "upper quality segment" of media markets—work at short term but endanger journalistic credibility, and thus, brand value. The major research question for this article is: how can the branding perspective within media support professional and ethical journalistic values, and do some marketing efforts conflict with a branding strategy?

Keywords

Media brands • Media marketing • Journalistic values • Journalism ethics • Market-driven journalism • Commercialization • News consumers • Media economics

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1 The Neglect and Evolution of Branding in the Media Industries

1.1 Introduction: Why News Media Don't Show Up in the Top Rankings of Brands

In the 2013 Forbes List of the 100 most valuable brands worldwide we find eight large high-tech companies that are, at least partially, engaging in "new" media. Only three of the top brands are "old media": *Disney* (rank 17), *Fox* (rank 46) and *Thompson Reuters* (rank 50). Thompson Reuters is nowadays much more a service provider to banks and financial industries than a news agency for mass media. Neither *The New York Times* nor the *BBC* nor *CNN* show up in the list.

This means: no brand that is known for its core activity in high-quality journalism is among the top 100. Besides the methodological weaknesses always connected with these kinds of rankings, the reasons can vary. We have come up with at least three plausible explanations for this:

1. In media companies, particularly in the traditional print media industries, strong brands were seen as the "natural" outcome of good journalism. Media companies with a focus on high-quality journalism have therefore been "late bloomers" concerning communication policy, brand consciousness and brand management. For example a recent study about brand management of media companies summarizes that a set-up where the top management is responsible for brand management and where the strength of the brand is being measured continuously among the relevant target groups has "rarely been established/implemented in Swiss media companies" (Häuptli, 2013).
2. If there was branding at all, it was focused not on the media company as an umbrella brand, but on the media products: *The Sun*, *The Times, The Wall Street Journal* (News Corp.), *Die Welt* and *Bild* (Springer) or *Tages-Anzeiger* and *20 Minuten* (*Tamedia,* the largest private Swiss media conglomerate) are highly visible brands, but none of the three mother companies are.
3. The picture changes immediately when looking at the entertainment sector: as Anthony Young (2013) pointed out in *Advertising Age*, eight of the ten most-liked *Facebook* brands, excluding celebrities, are media brands. For example, *Fox*'s *Family Guy* has over 50 million "likes".[1] Thus another reason why journalistic brands do not make it into the top 100 might be that—compared to entertainment—the market for news and high-quality journalism is simply too small. Branding is oriented towards markets, and news markets as well as advertising markets are mostly regional or national, while a huge share of the entertainment market is international.

[1] In fact cable networks have led the way in innovation of social-media platforms. As an example, *MTV* worked with *Twitter* to originate custom interactive experiences for its *Video Music Awards*, like an *MTV* Twitter Tracker site that encouraged viewers to tweet about celebrities.

1.2 The Evolution of Media Branding

For many decades media companies did not apply to themselves what they sold to their most important customers: advertising to sell branded products, communication to create and stabilize brand value were unique selling propositions of media companies to their clients, but they themselves did not try out these 'recipes for success'. This is surprising only at a first glance. There are at least two obvious explanations: besides the already mentioned strong, even dogmatic belief held in newsrooms that "high quality journalism" would simply succeed for itself, media companies did not need to be brand-conscious. As most of them had monopolies or shared oligopolistic market power, marketing and branding efforts were superfluous. For them, advertising was the major source of income. Their market power allowed them to exploit advertisers and to make the highest possible profits (with the exception of casinos and brothels) without sacrificing part of their own revenues for marketing or branding.

Besides that, news was never really considered as a "product" to market. In contrast, it was strongly positioned as a public service (Deuze, 2005; Whittle & Cooper, 2009), and journalists, academics and even many media managers heavily supported such a positioning and defended it against "commercialization" (Bogart, 1995; Underwood, 1993; McManus, 1994; for an overview Russ-Mohl, 1994). Ads were perceived by journalists and by parts of the public as an annoying yet unavoidable "evil"—a form of "tax" that the public had to pay to make journalistic service possible. Purists like the founders of the leftist-alternative *tageszeitung (taz)* in Germany were dreaming of truly "independent" print media "liberated from advertising". Thus, the very idea of marketing and branding news media was counterintuitive. Public broadcasters in Europe such as the *BBC* reinforced and strengthened this perception of journalism as a public service. In a large part of the public, as well as in journalists' eyes the mere idea of "selling" news used to create a cognitive dissonance—putting it in the range of questionable ethics.

However, the overall situation has changed since the 1980s in three waves. The *first phase* of conscious media branding started in Europe with the privatization of broadcasting. Since then, there has been limited but fierce competition in TV and radio markets, and certainly branding had a big impact on the more successful competitors. However, this branding competition focused much more on entertainment than on news and information offers. The *second phase* was initiated with the arrival of the Internet: suddenly, existing monopolistic or oligopolistic structures in the media system were broken up. Most newsrooms had to almost overnight deal with competitors who were just one mouse click away. Thus the need to position media products and to create distinguishable brands increased. Presently we are living through the *third phase*: it has become obvious that search engines like *Google*, social networks like *Facebook* and *Twitter*, and advertising platforms like *Craigslist* will take most of the online advertising. Thus current branding and marketing strategies will have to increase users' willingness to pay for news analysis.

At this stage, experts in any other field of marketing would have been talking about repositioning the brand or even the type of product altogether. In the case of the news industry, considering the scale of the problem, we need to talk about repositioning the perception of news in general. The perception of news as a service needs to be moved from the public to the commercial domain, and people will have to learn that they themselves have to pay for the news they want—if they don't want to be taxed for news provided directly by disguised government agencies that might take over the news industry completely in the future.

The former CEO of *Styria* in Austria, Horst Pirker, a rare pioneer of branding among newspaper publishers, summarized 9 years ago: "The strength of a brand even affects the willingness to pay—one of the most critical questions in the digital world. Last but not least it depends on the strength of the brand whether and to which extent there is a willingness to pay for content" (as quoted in: Washietl, 2012/2013, 56).

1.3 The Chinese Wall: Separating Editorial Content from Advertising

As long as media companies were highly profitable enterprises, a crutch worked well: the so-called "Chinese Wall" which separated "Church from State", i.e. newsrooms from the business units of media companies, and thus the public service provided by journalists from the profits generated by media managers. This demarcation has become very porous recently (Russ-Mohl, 2009). Only a few years ago, one of the pioneers of new, intelligent forms of newspaper marketing, Mark Willes from the Times Mirror Group which by then was publishing the *Los Angeles Times*, became the victim of scandal because he wanted to tear down the Chinese Wall "with a bazooka" (Russ-Mohl, 2009, pp. 242–243). Since then, the world has significantly changed: for example, the editor of the Italian version of *Wired*, Ferrazza (2013), declared recently, "The distinction between journalists, marketing and business side no longer exists. Fortunately, it does no longer exist. Whoever propagates it is not up to date or is an idiot".

Ferrazza's statement is still inane and dangerous—but it obviously has become "socially acceptable" in the news industry without any further differentiation which would be urgently needed here. Tearing down the wall in the bottom market segment may be an ethical problem, but economically it seems to work. Free newspapers and other free media have been a tremendous success story in recent years. As they are completely dependent on advertisers it is very likely that these advertisers will also be treated favorably by the newsrooms. A recent study (Porlezza, 2014) has shown clearly that this is the case in Switzerland.

However, credibility still does count in the upper market segment—and a clear separation of editorial content from advertising may be particularly important if the audiences are expected to pay for the news product (see Lobigs 2015; Siegert 2015).

1.4 Branded News, Decreasing Ethical Standards?

At a first glance, this subtitle looks provocatively stupid: why should the branding of a news outlet have a negative effect on ethical standards? To the contrary, branding goes along with a promise to meet certain quality criteria, and thus should support efforts to maintain ethical professional standards. Nevertheless, being the coronary discipline of marketing, branding is based on marketing efforts, and—as we shall see—not all marketing instruments which may be applied to generate (short-term) profits will also support (long-term) branding strategies. Yet luckily, most media professionals understand by now that the news industry is also a form of business. Mastering marketing and branding in a new media world is inevitable for news media professionals.

2 Instruments of Media Branding and Their Effects on Journalistic Credibility and Media Brand Images

In this section we will examine the marketing instruments used by news media to increase revenue. We will analyze whether they are ethical, and how they affect a news brands' image, particularly in the upper media market segment.

2.1 Pricing Policy

2.1.1 Pricing for Audiences: Paid Content and Free Samples

Pricing policy is certainly one of the most important marketing instruments. The price of a product or service should address the target group clearly: particularly in the elitist upper market segment, recipients may want to distinguish themselves by agreeing to higher prices than average. "It has always been a little bit more expensive to have an exquisite taste", went the advertising for the once famous cigarette brand *Atika* in Germany. Similarly media like *The Wall Street Journal*, the *The Financial Times* or the *The Economist* have successfully built their brands in the high price market segment.

As news media have to increase their revenues from audiences, they need to rethink their pricing strategy. The first and foremost problem is that by now most online readers perceive the news as a free public service. Yet this service is provided mostly by private companies and, if not financed by advertising, certainly cannot be free of charge. A repositioning of journalism as a (paid) service may be crucial to keep the news industry ethical, alive and financially independent from advertisers as well as governments. To reposition the provision of news analysis from a "free" to a paid service, many media companies are now extensively using one of the basic pricing tactics to enlarge a brand—providing free samples. This approach has for decades proven to be effective for tangible products (e.g. free pieces of chocolate) as well as for more abstract services (e.g. computer games). A specific challenge for the media industry has been to decide which articles should serve as the free sample and which should stay behind the paywall. *The New York Times* left it up to the user to choose, thus making sure that they have the best testing experience possible.

Is the technique ethical? Definitely yes. There is no ethical problem involved in pricing policy—as long as prices reflect the production costs and calculated profit rates remain within reasonable limits.

Does the instrument affect the brand image? Distributing "free samples" too generously may undermine the positioning of a media brand particularly in the upper market segment. High prices, on the other hand, are a sign of high quality in this market segment and can therefore boost the brand image.

2.1.2 Pricing for Advertisers

The advertising fees which can be charged will be highly determined by the brand image and by the "value" of the audiences which the brand is exposing to advertisers. Pricing strategies certainly have to be rethought as competition increases and as the number of advertising service providers continuously rises on the Internet.

Is the technique ethical? As advertising was in itself widely, and for a long time, considered an undesirable manipulative "brainwashing" activity (Packard, 1957), high pricing of such services raised no ethical questions. However, it depends on whether or not payment affects the journalistic content. If it does, there is clearly an ethical problem. If not, charging for advertising does not create an ethical problem for journalism.

Does the instrument affect the brand image? At a first glance, advertising pricing has no effect on the brand image. However, if the content can be influenced by advertisers in some way and if that information becomes public knowledge, then the impact on the brand image will be negative.

2.2 Product Policy

Media managers tend to radically cut back their newsroom staff and thus endanger the *content quality* of their media products. On the other hand they have invested a lot in outfit and design since *USA Today* revolutionized the US newspaper market in the early 1980s.[2]

[2] Functionality and thus the format counts. Whether a broadsheet "automatically" signals high journalistic quality compared to a tabloid format, is to a certain degree a question of habits and cultural tradition. Whoever has been trying to read a broadsheet in a fully occupied plane or on a windy balcony is at least aware that in some situations broadsheets are not very reader friendly—the big format is mostly a tribute to the "other", more important customers of the print media, the advertisers.

2.2.1 Product Policy for Audiences: Brand and Line Extensions

However, most media managers probably became aware of the challenges of brand management when they started to think about brand extension and collateral products. In the German-speaking world this happened later than elsewhere. It can be associated with two success stories:

1. the most successful online extension of a news medium has been *Spiegel online,* founded by the weekly newsmagazine *Der Spiegel*.
2. One of the quality newspapers, the *Süddeutsche Zeitung,* was saved from bankruptcy in 2003/2004 because of a successful brand extension into the selling of books, CDs and other carefully chosen products (Lutz, 2007).

Looking back, both of them are in themselves amazing stories of media branding—and both represent a specific approach to brand extension.

Vertical line extensions within the publishing industry were nothing new—the national and international siblings of *Bild* and *Auto-Bild,* of *Readers' Digest* (in the lower print market segment) and of *Brigitte, Stern, Geo* and *National Geographic* (in the upscale segment) are examples dating far back into the last century (Sjurts, 2005). However the line extension of *Der Spiegel* into web-based publishing was remarkably different—simply because a weekly publication surpassed all publishers of daily newspapers. While dailies would have been much better equipped to get this going, their sleepy and cautious publishers were too slow to fill the new market niche.

Looking backwards, *Spiegel online* was nevertheless a risky maneuver. It might rather have cannibalized than stabilized the dwindling print circulation of *Der Spiegel*. The lower editorial quality of the website might also have damaged the reputation and thus the brand of the print version. A more recent example is *The Economist*. The news magazine launched a radio application for *iPad* and *iPhone*. The content on the app is updated every weekday morning, and users can download it and listen to the content in offline mode. The radio app is a complementary product with an added value (easier consumption), though it certainly cannot replace the complex print or online edition.[3] In a converging media world with manifold distribution channels, line extensions across traditional market segments become increasingly important. Here the other German success story comes in and is similarly spectacular: the brand extensions and collateral products of *Süddeutsche Zeitung* became a huge success, being copied manifold times since. Using their brand, media companies sell all kind of goods and services which correspond more (books, CDs, videos, training and education offers) or less (wine, umbrellas, T-shirts, travel experiences) with their own product.

[3] Similarly the *Daily Telegraph* is selling brochures with puzzles, crosswords, sudokus and other types of information, such as an immigration guide or a collection of unpublished letters to the editors. These are nice niche products and have no interference with the editorial content.

More recently, the Scandinavian media group *Schibsted* started to use its news website, which they claim holds to the "highest journalistic standards", to attract clicks to its other digital services, including a service for house pets, a dating service, and a career service (Di Salvo, 2014). *The Economist,* the *Handelsblatt,* and the *Franfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* conduct economic conferences. The *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* organises conferences besides selling branded products such as backpacks, T-shirts and mugs.

Is the technique ethical? Horizontal brand extensions are certainly more delicate than vertical line extensions: too little thought and attention may have been given to the potential damage of journalistic credibility. As media are credence goods, the brands have the function of creating trustworthiness. "If the credibility is put at risk by activities which have not been well reflected, a collateral damage may be caused which is difficult to repair" (Häuptli, 2013, p. 24). In the case of *Süddeutsche Zeitung* and many other media brands which engaged in similar selling of collateral products, the demarcation between editorial content and advertising has clearly been discarded. The sales success has been achieved, partially, because the newsroom (and not just the advertising department) actively promoted the new products and thus published early forms of "native advertising".

Does the instrument affect the brand image? If the extension is well conceptualized and does not conflict with the core values of the brand the impact can be positive. On the contrary, extensions that harm the credibility and/or quality of the content or do not match the desired brand image, may cause damage to the core business.

2.2.2 Product Policy for Advertisers: Hidden Advertising: Advertorials, Native Advertising, Product Placement

For a long time, the so called "publireportages" or "advertorials" were used as an instrument to camouflage advertising and to present it in the costume of editorial content. More recently, "native advertising" has become the new buzzword for the same strategy (see also Matteo and Dal Zotto 2015), applied particularly in online publishing. Since even *The New York Times* started to experiment with it, it has been intensely discussed in branch publications (Edmonds, 2014; Ellis, 2014; Lüthi, 2014; Taube, 2014). All these forms of "hidden" product or message placement clearly conflict with the traditional ethical codes of journalism—they affect the credibility of the editorial content and thus the brand value of a media brand.

However, if readers don't recognize native advertising as advertising, this proves that the question of ethics has not been thoroughly thought through: in the long run journalistic credibility may deteriorate as a consequence of increased native advertising and increased copy-pasted PR.[4]

[4] Cole and Greer (2013) proved in an experiment what media practitioners have known instinctively for years: readers trust material written in a journalistic format more than they trust advertising. Even if an article is clearly marked as advertorial or sponsored, it doesn't change the readers' perception about the subject presented in the article very much. From an advertiser's point of view it sounds almost as an invitation to use that style of publication more frequently in

Is the technique ethical? All forms of sponsored content remain an ethical problem—though a clear notification of users certainly reduces potential problems. Whether forms of hybrid advertising that look like editorial content become a success or destroy editorial credibility also depends, of course, on the market segment in which the core brand is positioned.

Another form of making advertising more attractive is to place advertisements close to corresponding editorial text (e.g. an ad of a yogurt next to editorial content about the positive impact of milk products on health). This kind of ad placement certainly raises ethical questions: is this a manipulation of the readers' perception of the advertised product? Are the readers falsely led to believe that this particular brand of yogurt is associated with the positive health impact described in the article? Might some readers speculate that the editorial content has been published only to support the advertiser? Such questions inevitably arise, and this is the reason why in the "good old days" of highly profitable newspapers and broadcasters, advertisements were placed elsewhere, certainly not juxtaposed to related editorial content.

On the other hand, this is certainly a milder form of manipulation—compared to advertorials, native ads or product placement. It can also be argued that in such cases the advertisement and editorial content complement each other, creating a win-win situation for the reader also. The business model of search engines and social networks is simply built on this "win-win situation", and as long as no legislator is regulating their behavior, it does not make much sense to stipulate in a completely unrealistic way that the publishers of news sites should behave differently. Thus, sometimes the normative power of the factual may also help to rethink professional norms.

Does the instrument affect the brand image? Credibility is one of the core elements of brand image in the upper segment of the news industry. Damage will have a direct impact on the brand value.

their marketing mix. From a journalistic standpoint, however it raises even more questions about ethics and potentially decreasing credibility. These research results certainly challenge what some media professionals considered an acceptable ethical compromise—even by clearly marking the sponsored material as such, in the long run the damage for the brand can be great. Howe and Teufel (2014, pp. 78–90) tried to find out how native advertising affects credibility in different age groups. They claim that the type of advertising will have minimal effect (less than 10 % variation in attitude between those who saw a banner and those who were exposed to a native ad) on the readers' perception of credibility. Yet, according to this study, not surprisingly participants noticed advertising less when it was presented in the form of native advertising than when it was presented as banner advertising. Younger participants were more likely to spot advertising in general, including native advertising. The younger participants also evaluated news media generally as less credible than their older counterparts. Another study confirms—once again not surprisingly—early research which (Baerns, 2004; Baerns & Lamm 1987) conducted long ago: the effect of sponsored content is dubious. Those who realize the difference bypass it right away, or they find it significantly less credible than "real journalism". And those who don't recognize it right away but find out about the sponsored content later, feel cheated (Disselhoff, 2014; Lazauskas, 2014).

2.3 Communication Policy: Advertising and PR for Media Brands, Media Journalism, and Media Partnerships

There are many ways in which marketing and branding can be influenced by communication policies. What all of them have in common is that they "work" quite differently in the media industries compared to other branches.

The most obvious instruments of communication policy are *advertising and public relations*—the two fields where the media branch is among the late bloomers. The potential effects of both instruments are strongly influenced by the specific conditions of the media industry: advertising in one's own media is simply less costly than elsewhere. However, advertising elsewhere will not only create more visibility for own media products, it will also nourish some competitors.

Similarly, those responsible for public relations may find easy access for their messages in the newsrooms of their own media company (though even there, "real" journalists will dislike being abused as "loudspeakers" for their PR departments), while competitors may be very hesitant to provide free publicity by picking up press releases from other media companies.

The most neglected element of communication strategy is media journalism, the coverage of media and of journalism by journalists and by the media. This is strange, because at least in the upper market segment media journalism might be an important element for differentiating a news medium, and if it is done in an "enlightening" way, it may also increase the users' willingness to pay for quality journalism.

The media have, for decades, covered everything except themselves. Anyone who wanted to know how journalism "works", what problems reporters and editors have to deal with and which ethical and professional standards determine the selection of news and research, would have had little chance to learn the essentials from television or newspaper sources. After a brief period of expansion, media journalism has again been drastically decimated. In terms of communication policy, this has been a similar capital mistake as in the field of pricing policy to offer for free online what publishers still intended to sell in print. Editors in chief and media managers seem ferociously determined to saw off the very branch they are sitting on. They are depriving themselves of the only platform from which the media can communicate credibly with a broader public about the profession. Where such information is omitted there is no chance for the public to develop its own standards for quality.[5]

A huge segment of the media market seems to function like a "market for lemons" (Russ-Mohl, 2006)—an expression used by economist Akerlof (1970) to describe markets where buyers have much less information about product quality

[5] To put it more pointedly: the most plausible reason why so many youngsters consult free sheets and free websites instead of subscription news sites of a high profile may be that nobody has taught them what the extra value of a quality news site might be, and why it might be worth spending 2.50 Euros on a newspaper rather than on a cup of coffee.

than sellers. This results in severely distorted competition: in such markets, sellers tend to offer goods of relatively low quality, the so-called "lemons". As buyers cannot judge the quality of these goods, they are less and less willing to pay for them. Ultimately, this leads to a situation where those interested in offering better and hence more expensive goods no longer have an incentive to produce. In the end, bad quality rules and the good vanishes. Can such a trend be turned around? Publishers who still believe in the survival of high-quality journalism are advised to communicate the "difference" loudly and clearly, simply by making quality an issue of journalistic coverage and reflection. PR and advertising alone won't work. What would be urgently needed are media outlets that offer a regular platform for the debates and negotiations on topics such as the media itself and the standards of journalistic quality.[6]

In a similar way the media might be able to create a demand for high-quality journalism. Instead of promoting only their own publication or TV/radio channel (Weinacht, 2009), they should offer in-depth coverage of the media and of journalism. Without this, audiences will continue to be left quite clueless as to what constitutes journalistic quality and what does not. We know of only a few newspapers that are excelling in this respect, among them the *Guardian* and *The New York Times*. *The New York Times* applies communication policy as a marketing approach much more strategically than other media brands. For years, it has simply provided first-class journalism which informs readers about the media industry and the importance of journalists' work, and which reflects the critical situation in which the "old" media are finding themselves. Additionally, its public editor discusses controversial cases from *The New York Times* coverage and, thus, builds trust and provides insights into the inner workings of newsrooms. Similarly, top editors engage in dialogue with their readers and thus have, most probably, increased the willingness to pay for a branded media product. Both are unique in the world of news.

Moreover, *sponsorships and media partnerships* are also well-known instruments for businesses and non-profit institutions to communicate about their brands. Public events, such as concerts, world championships or fairs are an obvious example. Unlike other sponsorships, which are most often expressed in the form of financial (or other kind of material) assistance, media partnerships

[6] In this light, it is surprising how many publishers and media managers refuse to see that exactly what they had offered to advertisers in the past (and quite profitably so)—an "environment" of high-quality journalism to promote products and services by advertising—could serve equally well to secure their own future. Manufacturers of cars, fashion goods, or computers can all expect their ads to be more effective if combined with media content that attracts the attention of a large audience and deals directly or indirectly with the products promoted. They are also well aware of this relationship; they know their products are more likely to be perceived positively if they advertise through "serious" channels where the content is created by independent journalists with a firm belief in journalistic quality and with the resources, professional skills and ethics to offer such quality.

usually promise specific public attention provided by the media partner. Most frequently, the media involved promise to cover an event more extensively.

Carefully selected partnerships can strengthen a news media's brand. So, *The Economist* and other newspapers like the *Handelsblatt* or the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* are frequent partners at renowned, economics related conferences. Thus they are communicating to their audiences that the newspaper is highly appreciated by experts in the field (cf. Matteo & Dal Zotto 2015). On the other hand, poor selection of partners can damage the brand image.

Ethical questions arise when media start to cover an event or activity in which they are media partners: are they indicating their partnership clearly in the article? Can or will they cover the negative aspects, if such exist? And finally, should they be covering this event at all, given that they might have a certain bias due to the partnership? One of the safest ways to provide ethical support in a media partnership is to disseminate information in the form of sponsored advertising. This is, once again, what *The Economist* has been doing. Another way would be to state in the article(s) that the news medium is a media partner of the event. One problem, however will remain: intelligent readers will assume a bias even in case that the reporters and editors have complete "independence" concerning the coverage of the event. A specific form of partnership consists of placement: in a physical reality it was clear that newspapers had to be present at every newspaper stand and kiosk around the city (or country, if it is a national edition). In today's virtual reality, placement of a product is a vaguer notion. Print copies are not as popular as they used to be, and all news is put on the Internet before it appears at the kiosk around the corner.

Yet, placement of a product to make it more available for potential readers has not lost its importance. In fact newspapers have to become even more creative now and make it a part of their promotion strategy. A first example of such mix of placement and promotion would be the partnership in which *Starbucks* and *The New York Times* engaged u), another example would be educational projects which try to "anchor" newspapers in classrooms, i.e. school projects.[7]

Are these techniques ethical? The answer here is as sibylline as lawyers like it: it depends. It depends on the content of the advertising, the PR messages, the media journalism provided, and on the choice of partners. If media journalism is to serve "enlightenment" and not just to be considered a long arm of the PR department of the media company it has to meet the specific challenge of covering competitors in a fair way—a challenge rarely met by newsrooms. Media partnerships will always endanger journalistic independence.

[7] For example, *The New York Times* makes its content available at a discount rate or for free in schools for the younger generation. Coming to a school is obviously a matter of placement, and it is also a way to promote the newspaper to teenagers and to form their taste in news selection. The brand of the newspaper is also subconsciously associated with education and search for information.

Do the instruments affect the brand image? Most likely yes. But whether it will be a positive or a negative effect depends on how wisely media journalism is exercised and partnerships are selected.

2.4 Distribution Policy: Bundling and Unbundling

In a convergent digital media world, the traditional boundaries of distribution such as geographic regions or limited frequencies to distribute radio and television programs no longer exist. Nevertheless, the product distribution channels are part of a branding strategy. Bundling and unbundling are obviously two contrary strategies of product distribution.

Bundling, the practice of joining and selling related or unrelated products together, has always been at the heart of the news industry, as print media or TV news shows inevitably bundle different news into one news product. Similarly, bundling has been a success in other branches for a long time—for example, *McDonalds* burgers and *Coke* soft drinks have been bundled to meals which are offered at attractive prices. In the media industry, a more recent and vivid example of bundling and thus co-branding is *The New York Times*' alliance with *Starbucks*: Users get access to a higher number of free newspaper articles while sipping their overpriced latte or cappuccino inside the Starbucks lounges.[8]

Unbundling amounts to the opposite strategy. An existing product/service which—like newspapers, magazines or access to pay TV—has so far been primarily sold as bundles is now divided into separate products/services and sold independently from each other. Unbundling is becoming particularly important for the news sites of print media, as information is getting more abundant than ever and people become more selective. Even if someone was interested in only one section he or she would have to buy the whole newspaper, and so far newspapers have approached online subscriptions with the same logic. Even now most news websites don't offer the option of buying a 1-day access or only one of many sections. When

[8] It is hard to tie independent online content to a physical product of a completely different nature, thus the bundling here comes in a slightly unusual form. The readers get access to more articles for just being in the café. Starbucks, in terms of brand image, is a match for *The New York Times*—both sides support each other's brand reputation and benefit from each other: Starbucks is a place where educated youth and busy professionals come to get their snack and drink, and *The New York Times* wants to reach out exactly to this target group. Lonely customers, surfing the net and reading news to fill their solitude are not a rarity in *Starbucks* lounges, and the *NYT* is ready to capture their attention during that time-slot. The extra revenue from content distribution at Starbucks is not directly correlated to the amount of food and drink purchased in the coffee shops. The cooperation between the two partners is conducted on a different level: the newspaper benefits indirectly by positioning its brand in an attractive, suitable environment, while *Starbucks* gains by attracting readers to spend more time and money in their cafés. Neither the editorial team of *The New York Times* feels the pressure to positively cover *Starbucks*, nor does *Starbucks* oblige itself to sell subscriptions.

it comes to paid content, one either subscribes for at least a month, or one doesn't subscribe at all.

However, this situation will be changing as soon as one mouse click-micropayments arrive. According to Paul Dinulescu, the founder of the *Niuzly* platform, it is not that people don't want to pay for content but rather "they are averse to pay through the channels currently offered to them" (as quoted in: Guerrini, 2014) and to buy packages they don't need.

At first glance unbundling might be seen as a simple marketing and pricing measure that does not have much effect on branding. However, looking at subscription news websites, unbundling content might add much to the usability of the site, and that in turn might have a positive impact on brand visibility. Unbundling a news product will require some calculation in terms of pricing and, perhaps, another effort of rethinking the business model as demand for some offers will be higher than for others.

Is the technique ethical? There is no obvious ethical dilemma either in bundling newspapers with other products, or unbundling existing news packages.[9]

Do the instruments affect the brand image? In cases of bundling the "other" partnering product or service needs to be carefully selected in accordance with the desired brand image. As for unbundling, the effect will most likely be positive. Unbundling will make the news website more customer-friendly for those who are interested in individual articles or sections.

3 Conclusions

To summarize, media branding supports journalistic and ethical values if it is done intelligently: if newsrooms do not endanger their credibility and engage too obviously in hidden advertising and in self-promotion. Branding and marketing, particularly in the upper quality segment, needs to foster the credibility of the newsroom—otherwise it might become self-defeating. This includes effective complaint management. As recent studies have shown, media managers and journalists devote surprisingly little attention to this problem (Fengler et al., 2014; Porlezza & Russ-Mohl, 2013), though such attention would clearly support a branding strategy to increase credibility in the upper market segment (Russ-Mohl, 2013).

What consequences does a "market-driven" view have for the public sphere? First of all, we should not walk into the trap of leftist criticism. What McManus (1994) and many other media critics have described as "market driven journalism" has little to do with well-functioning markets. From an economist's perspective we

[9] Except that unbundling may increase the debates inside the newsroom about fair pay: should finally click rates determine journalist's compensations? But this question has nothing to do with branding. Unbundling will, however, provide new opportunities to individual journalists to create their own communities and to brand themselves under the umbrella of their media brand.

should be aware that a "market driven" approach is a customer driven approach. There is simply no barrier between "markets" and "us", the consumers who express their demands in a market economy. However, we should not be too surprised if, due to discrepancies of education, income, and personal interests, only a small group of citizens will demand high quality journalism and will be willing to pay for it. Maybe, there never was, and certainly there is no longer "a single" public sphere. There are rather many fragmented, overlapping public spheres. Thus, the answers concerning branding and marketing will vary from market segment to market segment.

The other half of the truth consists of the fact that we, the recipients or consumers, do not at all behave rationally—even when we opt for "rational ignorance" (Downs, 1957). Marketers, brand managers as well as many journalists know very well how to manipulate our instincts and thus our demands (Schönbach, 2009; as a "classic": Packard, 1957). Habermas' vision (1981) that the public sphere might serve as a domain for deliberative discourse without any form of dominion ("herrschaftsfreier Diskurs") has always been utopian.

In the future, we will increasingly talk about users and consumers instead of audiences, and of manifold public arenas instead of *the* public sphere. There is even a sign of hope related to this. Consumers tend to pay for products and services they use, citizens expect to get everything for free (Hamilton, 2004).

Advertising will no longer support expensive high-quality journalism. It has become obvious that "there is no free lunch"—to quote Milton Friedman (1975). Media economists know, of course, that there was never a free lunch for media consumers: they were, and still are simply paying the bill for their free media consumption at the cashier of their supermarkets, or wherever else they buy branded, advertised products or services.

The recent success stories of paid content, at least for media products with an impressive "branding record" like the *The Wall Street Journal*, the *The Economist*, *The New York Times* as well as the German *Bild-Zeitung*, provide some evidence that branding efforts can be "worthwhile". While failures of "paywalls" like the one at the *San Francisco Chronicle* may demonstrate that without good product quality, branding and charging efforts will most probably fail.

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Market Driven Media Brands: Supporting or Faking High Journalistic Quality?

Gabriele Siegert

Abstract
According to New Institutional Economics, media brands are not only a means of differentiation and valuable resources, but also institutional arrangements that allow media companies to profit from the production of high quality journalism. From this perspective, media brands promise journalism of high quality, and media brand reputation provides an economic incentive to produce it. However, it remains unclear whether a gap between the promise of quality from media brands and the product would be recognized and whether the possible reactions of the audience would be threatening to media management. According to Neoinstitutionalism, a media brands' promise of quality might be a way to cope with both market and societal expectations in order to achieve legitimacy. From this perspective, it is highly probable that media brands are only giving the appearance of high quality journalism.

Keywords
New institutional economics • Neoinstitutionalism • Market-based view • Resource-based view • Media brand reputation • Product differentiation • Legitimacy • Quality promise • High quality journalism • Environmental expectations

1 Introduction

The following chapter analyzes media brands with regard to their contribution to the functioning of modern democratic societies by producing high quality journalism. To begin with general assumptions: on the one hand, media brands are the

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result of the marketing strategies of media companies, which try to differentiate themselves from their competitors. On the other hand, media brands could also be the result of the audience's patterns of media use that could transform average media content into a preferred brand, e.g. by evolving a fan base from the media content, which is then managed accordingly (see Paus-Hasebrink & Hasebrink 2015). Neither the audience nor the media companies primarily support high journalistic quality because of its role in debate and decision making in democratic societies. Nevertheless, we might think of media brands in combination with this role because high journalistic quality could be the result of the market behavior of media companies, audiences, and market organization. But is this really the case?

The following paper will raise mainly theoretical considerations for whether media brands support the production of high journalistic quality and therefore contribute to the functioning of modern democratic societies, or whether they do not because they are only creating the illusion of high quality journalism. In both cases, the arguments refer to institutions: the pro-side combines New Institutional Economics theory (NIE) with market- and resource-based views of media production, and argues that media brand reputation as institutional arrangement makes high quality production profitable. The contra-side refers to sociological Neoinstitutionalism and argues that a media brand's commitment to high quality journalism is most of all a ritual to address societal expectations in the same way as CSR is a ritual for other industries.

Both perspectives begin from media market weaknesses and their consequent problems. Media markets are well known for their tendency to monopolies, market failure, and ignorance of societal expectations concerning the content and quality of media products, although the literature evaluates the effects slightly differently (see e.g. Bagdikian, 2004; Croteau & Hoynes, 2001; Hamilton, 2004; Heinrich, 2001; Picard, 2004; 2005; Siegert, 2001b, 2003). This tendency arises from certain characteristics of media products and markets, namely economies of scale, insufficient protection of intellectual property rights, uncertainty of the input–output relation in media production, two-sided market constellations and various principal-agent constellations between market participants.

1.1 Agency Problems and Quality Dilemma

One of the main weaknesses of the media market is the fundamental quality dilemma or quality trap. It concerns the quality of media products, in particular media coverage, and most of all how the diffuse quality characteristics and the information asymmetry between market participants play a crucial role.

Initially, media consumers cannot assess content quality and the invested efforts of media companies beforehand, and consequently cannot use the information for their selection. This applies to journalistic information in particular, where often the quality cannot be assessed at all. Therefore, media content is an experience good when it comes to entertainment content, and a credence good when it comes to journalistic content (see also Lobigs 2015). *The principal-agent constellation* *between media consumers and media companies consequently leads to adverse selection and moral hazard.*

In addition, a second principal-agent constellation is important for media branding; that is the relationship between media companies and content suppliers or employees. Media production is not only a multidimensional and complex activity, which combines various mutually connected processes and areas of responsibility, it also depends strongly on the performance of the persons involved who might follow slightly different objectives than the media company. And their performance such as the background work, selection and investigation, and the effective workload remain mostly invisible, and can therefore not be 100 % controlled, even by the media company, as scandals such as the one concerning *New York Times* reporter Jayson Blair in 2003 show.[1] *The principal-agent-constellation between media companies and suppliers or employees also leads to adverse selection and moral hazard.*

To solve, or at least to ease adverse selection and moral hazard problems, screening, signaling, monitoring, incentives, credibility, and in particular brands and reputation usually come into play (see Chap. 2).

1.2 Two Kinds of Quality Promises

When facing the question of whether media brands support journalism of high quality or not, we have to differentiate between two kinds of quality promise. Firstly, the phrase "quality promise" refers to the general promise all media brands give in relation to the general characteristics of their products which aim at fulfilling the audience's expectations, e.g. the informative or entertaining character of the offered content, or the complexity of the stories (see also von Rimscha, 2015). If consumers expect sensational images and brief stories about confidential aspects of stars' everyday life, the quality promise addresses exactly that—as is the case with many tabloids such as *The Sun* or the *Bild-Zeitung*.

Secondly, a media brand could also promise journalism or news coverage of high quality, which means journalism that adheres to professional journalistic culture, e.g. it selects important issues, frames issues suitably and gives the right context; i.e. journalism that aims at professional journalistic norms, such as objectivity, impartiality and topicality. In this case, a media brand is a "quality promise"

[1] Jason Blair, a New York Times reporter, faked over 30 articles on news events: "The reporter, Jayson Blair, 27, misled readers and Times colleagues with dispatches that purported to be from Maryland, Texas and other states, when often he was far away, in New York. He fabricated comments. He concocted scenes. He lifted material from other newspapers and wire services. He selected details from photographs to create the impression he had been somewhere or seen someone, when he had not. And he used these techniques to write falsely about emotionally charged moments in recent history, from the deadly sniper attacks in suburban Washington to the anguish of families grieving for loved ones killed in Iraq." (Barry, Barstow, Glater, Liptak, & Steinberg, 2003) The NYT needed weeks to discover the fakes.

of high journalistic quality. In the following we refer to this kind of media brand as a "quality news brand".

The latter media brand quality promise also addresses societal expectations that the media should have a positive social and political impact. Expectations that the media e.g. should inform citizens about important topics, report critically on politics and the economy, and be an arena for debate (e.g. Anderson, 2007; McNair, 2007; McQuail, 1997) and that consequently well-informed citizens might make enlightened choices. However, although market-driven media brands take a customer driven approach, we have to take into account that media companies have a policy or at least tendency to meet customers' needs with the lowest investment of resources possible. Therefore, we cannot be sure whether market driven media brands lead to high quality journalism—at least in niche markets—and will therefore have a positive impact or not on society and politics.

2 Media Brands Support High Journalistic Quality

As described above, media brands ease the quality dilemma and might therefore play a significant social role, in particular when we consider the adequate supply of high quality journalism to the citizens, and refer to theories about the deliberative function of publicity (e.g. Chambers, 2001; Cook, 2005; Curran, Iyengar, Brink Lund, & Salovaara-Moring, 2009). In the following chapter we argue that media brands and media brand reputation address more than one problem in media markets, in particular the agency problems, and are able to counterbalance media market weaknesses.

2.1 Media Brands as Product Differentiation Strategy

We start with the well known and most used approach on media branding: the market-based view. Porter (1980) distinguishes between two generic types of strategies: cost leadership and product differentiation. The latter is a strategic option to differentiate from competitors with regard to contents, develop market oriented competitive advantages and therefore keep competition low: "A company can outperform rivals only if it can establish a difference that it can preserve. It must deliver greater value to customers or create comparable value at a lower cost, or do both" (1996, p. 62). In the literature it is widely agreed upon that branding is a promising product differentiation strategy for media (see e.g. Baumgarth, 2004; Caspar, 2002; Chan-Olmsted, 2006, 2011; Chan-Olmsted, Cho, & Yim, 2013, Förster, 2011a, 2011b, McDowell, 2006, 2011; Ots, 2008; Siegert, 2001a, 2004; Siegert, Gerth, & Rademacher, 2011; Swoboda, Giersch, & Foscht, 2006).

This strategy is based on media brand identity, which includes all of the attributes the brand owner addresses to the media outlet, in particular thematic orientation, economic aspects, and work/presentation style (see Siegert et al., 2011); such as topic selection, geographical orientation, editorial position, the way topics are usually processed and presented and the amount of background investigation, journalistic style, the nature of the language used, treatment of visual images, the price-performance ratio, or the structure of financing from sales. Hence, every media brand is some kind of promise of quality regarding these attributes.

In addition, media brand strategy fits very well with two out of four strategic choices involving quality and performance (Picard, 2004, p. 62). It particularly applies to the *quality leadership strategy as the strategic choice that first of all invests in high journalistic quality and focuses on reputation*. Therefore, it makes perfect sense that those media companies that want to be quality market leaders choose branding as the strategy to differentiate their media outlets from those of their competitors.

Media companies communicate the differentiating aspects of their brand identity (self-perception) to target groups aiming to influence their attitudes and behavior. On the other hand media consumers benefit from media brands and their reputation by reducing transaction costs, i.e. searching and information costs. In this constellation, media brands and media brand reputation are the economically relevant versions of credibility and reliability. Therefore, they work as an essential orientation for media consumers, and in the best case influence their media selection and media use correspondingly. Altogether, media consumers respond to the "offer" by building up a brand image; their perception of what the brand is like. Although media consumers have an increasing share in creating the brand in the age of web 2.0, which is referred to in the literature as co-creation (e.g. Christodoulides, 2009; Johansen & Andersen, 2012; Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004; Vallaster & von Wallpach, 2013), consumers at all times had a share in creating the brand. In the ongoing relationship, the brand promise meets brand expectations and brand behavior meets brand experience.

The match between a brand's promise and its actual behavior or—from an audience's perspective—between the induced expectations and the actual experience builds up media brand reputation. This reflects the match between brand identity and brand image. *A media brand is thus a continuous, reliable, and credible market signal and is supposed to ease the information asymmetry between media companies and media consumers. Media brand reputation is a measure of how well a media company in fact performs and produces according to the given promise*; it fulfills the existing expectations of media consumers about the outlet on offer. People get what they expect and in that way gain orientation in the jungle of offers. In doing so, media brands address the already mentioned principal-agent constellation between media consumers and media companies, and the consequent adverse selection and moral hazard problems.

2.2 Media Brands as Valuable Strategic Resources

However, media brands contribute not only from a market-based view to the value of a media company but also from a resource-based view. Following the literature on that perspective (see e.g. Barney, 1986, 2001; Peteraf, 1993; Wernerfelt, 1995),

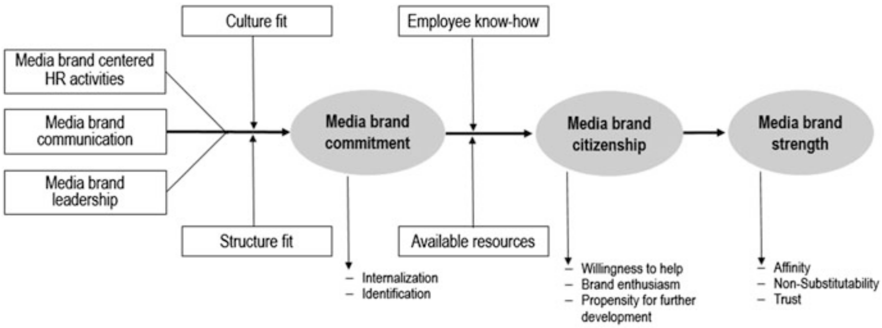

Fig. 1 A holistic model for internal media brand management (on the basis of Burmann & Zeplin, 2005; Burmann, Zeplin, & Riley, 2009)

competitive advantages are achieved by looking inside the company and concentrating on resources that are valuable, rare, hard to imitate and hard to substitute. *A brand is a very valuable, hard to imitate and hard to substitute property-based resource of strategic relevance even for media companies* (see e.g. Habann, 2000, 2001). In pursuing (brand centered) human resource activities, brand communication and leadership, successful media brands are not only tools for marketing communications but lead to brand culture and brand behavior within an organization (see Fig. 1). *An established brand thus symbolizes the company's system of values and standards* and works as a kind of social mechanism that is able to swear employees and suppliers to those values and standards.

In the case of media companies, the brand additionally symbolizes the system of journalistic and ethical values (Siegert, 2001a, pp. 199ff). Referring to Sylvie (2007), basic journalistic values are crucial to journalistic work and decision making within newsrooms. In contrast to Sylvie, we argue that the media brand identity includes journalistic, organizational, and social values. The media brand's inherent system of values and standards provides specifications for processing and solving the problems raised in media production and reduces uncertainty in decision-making processes. *Media brands ease the aforementioned quality dilemma in media production, because they are supposed to align the production process with the brand identity*. In particular, media branding refers to the role of employees in media production, which is even more important than in other industries. In every industry employees play a crucial role "... due to the fact that all sources of brand identity are based on the decisions and actions of employees." (Burmann & Zeplin, 2005, p. 282) A media brand swears employees and suppliers to the standards regarding content and presentation and to its ethical orientation, which is crucial when we think of high quality journalism news brands: "Employees' personal morals become tied to the organization as they are expected to enact the corporate morals (Weick, 1995) ..." (Aggerholm, Andersen, & Thomsen, 2011, p. 106).

Altogether, an established media brand is the corporate identity and corporate culture of the corresponding media outlet or the media company behind it. It therefore addresses the principal-agent relationship between media companies and content suppliers or employees, as well as the problems of adverse selection and in particular moral hazard.

2.3 Media Brands as Institutional Arrangements

As we have seen, a media brand addresses in particular the characteristics of media content as an experience or credence good and the various principal-agent constellations between market participants. Starting from the assumption that media brands have the potential to support the production of journalism of high quality, media brand reputation allows the responsible media company to make a profit from it. Why? The explanation and economic basis of this argument are described in the article by Lobigs (2015) and should therefore be outlined only briefly.

Due to the fact that quality news brands have an audience which has expertise in various areas of news coverage, e.g. business and politics, at least parts of the audience (specialized audience segments) are able to assess the quality of the corresponding media coverage. Therefore, they are able to recognize if media companies' news brands only proclaim content of high quality and in fact offer poor quality. In the mentioned principal-agent constellation the less-informed market side, the media consumer, becomes partly well-informed and could react accordingly to deception, that means, stop using the outlet (exit-strategy).

Based on this it would cost quality news brands more to lose parts of their audience through cheating thereby disappointing them with content of poor quality, than it would cost them to invest in journalism of high quality. As a consequence, media brand reputation helps media markets to work properly without massive regulation—at least in niche markets. Overall, the media would than produce sufficient coverage of high quality, which is essential for deliberation.

Of course, two constraints have to be taken into account here: Firstly, due to lower subscription prices and lower cost per mille prices the revenues of online media brands are limited at present, and there are serious doubts whether they will ever come up to print revenues. This will at least challenge the institutional arrangement of media brand reputation and the motivation of news brands to produce high quality journalism. Secondly, the size of the niche markets where media brand reputation works as an institutional arrangement to address the information asymmetry (markets for high quality journalism) may be too small. This might be the case in countries with small media markets. Because general news is not a global but a national and regional business, the size of such a niche market might be so small that revenues will not be sufficient to keep quality news brands going, even if the audience acknowledges the quality.

3 Media Brands Fake High Journalistic Quality

Although the institutional arrangement of "media brand reputation" might be successful in producing high quality journalism, the critical observer of media change might have doubts because of the behavior of the media industry in recent years. Since the financial crisis struck the media industry via shrinking advertising investment, we have seen a dramatic decline of journalistic quality even in quality news brands (see the examples in Russ-Mohl & Nazhdiminova 2015). However, the decline has continued even though advertising revenues and the profits of media companies have started to recover since 2010, as a recently published article by Seufert (2013) shows for the German media. In fact, the financial resources to produce high quality journalism seem to be there, but media companies might not have invested them accordingly.

3.1 The Decline of High Quality Journalism and Ineffective Exit-Threats

Most articles (see e.g. Chan-Olmsted, 2006, 2011; Förster, 2011a, 2011b; McDowell, 2006, 2011; Ots, 2008; Siegert, 2001a; Siegert et al., 2011) argue that media companies aim at product differentiation and that therefore media branding is a promising strategy. However, there is more than one reason why media companies might aim for imitation rather than differentiation, or at least at risk reduction, by doing what many other media companies already do.

Economies of scale and high first-copy costs of media production, which in the case of failure are lost completely (i.e. sunk costs), make imitation in media markets more likely than innovation. Insufficient protection of intellectual property rights also pushes imitation strategies (Lobigs, Spacek, Siegert, & Weber, 2005; Siegert, Weber, Lobigs, & Spacek, 2007). Herd behavior of media managers and chief editors might support homogenous strategies and isomorphism as well. Not to forget that *vertical product differentiation, e.g. a media brand strategy, needs more resources* (e.g. Bogart, 2004; Lacy, 1992; Lacy & Simon, 1993, p. 102; Litman & Bridges, 1986) whereas market success and return on investment are by no means guaranteed. Based on the Hotelling positioning model (Hotelling, 1929) there are market constellations where it is most likely that "more of the same" is the result of strategic media management (Lang, 2004, p. 110).

Nevertheless, media companies aim at being unique in the mind of the customer. If product differentiation in terms of unique selling proposition (USP) is too costly or too risky to realize, a unique communicating proposition (UCP) might work as well. Communicating the credibility of the source—that is the brand—should influence the selection, reception and interpretation of the content. The assessment of the content itself, in particular in case of journalistic information, depends on the assessment of the source. If the source is valued as trustworthy and credible, the content is more trustworthy and credible than vice versa. To make things worse, media use is habitual behavior; we are used to it and it takes a long time to change a favorite habit, e.g. reading the morning newspaper, even though we might be disappointed at the quality of the coverage.

To advertise the media outlet as a trustworthy and credible brand without investing too much in the factual media production might work for a while. The huge investments by media companies to advertise their outlets seem to be an indicator for the extension of just such a management strategy. Therefore, it is reasonable to argue that although some news brands promise high quality journalism, they do not produce it. However, the market reaction might not be a threat to them—for the following reason.

Although media brands could profit by producing journalism of high quality, some of them only advertise their outlets as quality brands, and yet others are under extreme financial pressure, prioritizing budget cuts and cost savings over quality improvements. However, *in the particular case of news brands, it is crucial for the content quality to finance solid journalistic investigation*. Even worse, in their case massive cost cutting in the editorial department can lead to reputation risk problems: the quality of the media coverage decreases slowly whereas the news brand still signals “quality”, and the audience still relies on that promise. If the brand’s promise and the factual media coverage continue to differ, it may nevertheless last for a while, until individual media consumers find out that the content is not up to the promised quality. Because journalistic content is a credence good it is difficult to evaluate, even the already mentioned expert audience of quality news brands only has expertise in certain areas. Therefore, it would take a lot of factual errors, curious framings or inaccurate references within the reader’s own area of expertise before he or she realizes that the journalistic quality of their preferred brand is declining.

Thus, it may last long until consumers decide against their preferred news brand, choose the exit-strategy and switch to another news brand. However, it might in fact be difficult to realize such a switchover. Most media markets are highly concentrated (e.g. Just, 2009; Sánchez-Tabernero & Carvajal, 2002), and many citizens do not have a choice, e.g. because there is only one newspaper to cover a certain city or region. Therefore, in some cases, there might not be an alternative to switch to—the audience has no choice. On the other hand, if there is a choice, media consumers cannot be sure that they will not be “betrayed” a second time, as they may have news brand expectations but no news brand experience. Nevertheless, if a certain number of media consumers choose the exit-strategy and switch to another media outlet, news brand reputation starts to decline. However, news brands are not in a rapid free fall; the erosion of established brand reputation is a relatively slow process. In the media business it is even slower because it is not obvious how other consumers will know about the exit of expert audience members (do you know if the circulation of your newspaper goes down?) and free copies of the outlet might cover the loss for a certain amount of time.

Altogether, there are good reasons why the decline of high quality journalism remains undetected, and that in the case that poor journalistic quality is detected the possible reaction of consumers remains ineffective. The described development is interrupted by publicly proclaimed commitments by media companies to high standards of journalistic quality. Those publicly proclaimed statements might also lead the audience to doubt the ongoing decline of journalistic quality.

3.2 Societal Expectations and Decoupling

Media companies are not the only companies that are confronted with societal expectations, i.e. to have some kind of a positive impact. Moreover, they are not the only ones reacting with public statements about their degree of engagement. Other industries and companies face expectations in terms of ethical standards and norms such as equal opportunities or sustainable development, which are well-known and described in the corporate social responsibility (CSR) literature (Carroll, 1991; Carroll & Buchholtz, 2006; Margolis & Walsh, 2001; Matten & Moon, 2008; Orlitzky, Schmidt, & Rynes, 2003; Waddock, 2008). However, a neoinstitutionalistic approach, in particular in the tradition of the original work of Meyer & Rowan (1977), gives a different and very convincing explanation for that behavior—decoupling.

In general, Neoinstitutionalism is an approach which deals with the links between organizations and society (for an overview see: Greenwood, Oliver, Sahlin, & Suddaby, 2008; Jepperson, 2002; March & Olsen, 2006; Powell & DiMaggio, 1991a, 1991b; Zucker, 1987). Organizations are not taken as rationally acting entities that invest resources in the most efficient way to achieve given objectives, but rather as social constructions that focus on external norms and value systems to achieve legitimacy. In this perspective, *legitimacy is the core objective of every organization*. Therefore, companies can be seen as organizations that are heavily influenced by their environment because a company's construction is based upon its institutionalized expectations. *The organization acts and structures itself according to the expectations of its environment*: "Organizations that incorporate societally legitimated rationalized elements in their formal structures maximize their legitimacy and increase their resources and survival capabilities" (Meyer & Rowan, 1977, p. 352).

However, companies are not embedded in a single environment but in many, each having particular expectations regarding the company's behavior. Some of these expectations might be in competition or even in conflict with each other (Scott, 1991; Sparrow, 2006). Following Patten (1992), *economic legitimacy is monitored by the market and social legitimacy is monitored by public policy processes*. In the case that a company's value system differs in fact or in public opinion from either the market's or/and the society's value systems, the company has to face a threat to its legitimacy. Although it is up to the organization to decide which expectations are answered and with what change of organizational structure, *conflicting expectations lead to a decoupling of structures and procedures* (Meyer & Rowan, 1977; Scott, 1991). Usually companies are expected to incorporate means of rationalization (e.g. accounting practices), to respect social and legal norms (e.g. equal opportunities), and to reflect upon ethical standards (e.g. sustainable development). Decoupling allows organizations to answer some environmental expectations with formal structures, whereas factual activities align with other expectations. Therefore, organizations tend to decouple their core activities and decision making from formal representation and ritual enactment. Although decoupling is not easy to prove empirically, there are some studies to show the gap between word and deed concerning sustainability (e.g. Cho, Guidry, Hageman, & Patten, 2012; Cho & Patten, 2007; Clarkson, Li, Richardson, & Vasvari, 2008; Clarkson, Overell, & Chapple, 2011) or other areas of environmental expectation (e.g. Beverland, 2005; Crilly, Zollo, & Hansen, 2012; Fiss & Zajac, 2006; Westphal & Zajac, 2001). Whereas companies often claim to correspond to standards of sustainable production or working conditions, in many cases they do not act that way.

3.3 The Decoupling Strategy of Media Brands

The theoretical argument of decoupling seems to fit perfectly with what actually happens in the media industry and with traditional news brands. In the following, we use this argument for quality news brands only. We do not focus on media brands as an institution (as in Chap. 2) or the way the media influence organizations (e.g. Cook, 2006; Donges, 2006; Sandhu, 2009). Instead we look at various environments and their influence on news brands as organizations. The similarity of media companies to companies from other industries is that both must adapt to market expectations on the one hand, and the expectations of society on the other. That means—as mentioned above—establishing rationalized processes e.g. accounting practices, and perform accordingly (e.g. increase shareholder value) as well as to respect social and legal norms (e.g. equal opportunities) and reflect upon ethical standards (e.g. sustainable development). However, media companies differ from other companies in that they are additionally confronted with expectations concerning their contribution to the functioning of modern democratic societies. They are expected to inform, investigate, criticize or be an arena for debates from day one. These expectations are not the same or of the same intensity in different cultures and countries. Nevertheless, we would argue that the core of societal expectation on media is the same for every country.

Furthermore, fulfilling all of the aforementioned functions for society, in particular producing political news coverage of a quality essential for public deliberation seems to be the biggest challenge for media companies and their news brands. However, media companies act in a similar way to other organizations. *They ritually commit themselves to high quality journalism in order to respond to expectations of the societal and political environment, although they are no longer willing or able to produce this high quality journalism.* In doing so they try to achieve, and in particular, maintain legitimacy, especially in European countries, where public service media are well established and where there is an ongoing discussion about the impact of media on society. Brüggemann, Esser, and Humprecht (2012) found similar results when they discerned the internal reactions of German media companies to the crisis (cost cutting in resources and editorial operations, and creating new offerings), and external reactions (complaining, *campaigning* and going to court).

However, having to maintain a ceremonial conformity with societal and political expectations leads to *a gap between the formal structure* of media companies and their *actual work activities*. In looking at media companies we find *two dimensions of organizational life*: on the one hand the factual core activities and decision making processes—the doing side (deeds—performance)—and this dimension is more and more characterized by means of rationalization only. On the other hand, the formal structure of responding to non-market environmental expectations—the communicating side (words—disclosure)—and this dimension more and more is characterized by strategic (brand) communication to achieve and maintain legitimacy. *Media companies no longer feel themselves committed to actually produce the high quality journalism they promise, but they have to promise it*. Even more, taking the high first-copy costs of quality journalism into account, they will probably not produce high quality journalism. Instead they will, as Crilly et al. (2012) put it, fake it or muddle through.

Thus, following this line of argument, media brands, in particular news brands are primarily clever communication strategies not only in marketing the product but in adapting to the pre-existing expectations of the non-market environment, and news brands by no means guarantee the production of high quality journalism which might usefully contribute to public debate.

4 Conclusion

This paper has considered media brands, particularly quality news brands, going beyond the management and strategy perspective. It has discussed media brands with regard to their contribution to the functioning of modern democratic societies by the production of high quality journalism. The paper has questioned whether media brands support high journalistic quality, or whether they only fake it. Both perspectives begin from the weaknesses of the media market and its consequent problems and proceed to argue on the basis of institutionalism.

On the one side, based on New Institutional Economics, media brands are a clever strategy to differentiate a media outlet from its competitors and a valuable and hardly imitable resource with which to build competitive advantage. Most of all, media brand reputation is an institutional arrangement that allows media companies to make a profit out of producing high quality journalism—at least in niche markets. From this perspective, news brands in particular support high quality journalism.

On the other side, it remains unclear whether the quality promise, even of news brands, can be controlled, and if a gap between promise and production is recognized the possible reaction of consumers becomes a danger for media management. Based on Neoinstitutionalism the media brand quality promise is a way to cope with the contradictory expectations of the market and social environments to achieve legitimacy. Media companies still commit themselves to high standards of journalistic quality because society expects them to. From this perspective, it is highly probable that media brands, and even quality news brands, do not support journalism of high quality but actually fake it.

As a theoretical starting point there are arguments for both perspectives. Whether the reality of news brand production is in fact heading toward journalistic quality or not, is an empirical question. Firstly, it has to be investigated to what extent the quality promises of news brands meet and reflect societal expectations. Secondly the quality promises of news brands (disclosure) have to be compared to the reality of the produced content (performance), considering various influences in the decision-making of media companies as we suggested with the MBAC model (Siegert et al., 2011). So far there is little empirical evidence for either argument (see Krebs 2015). Therefore, more empirical studies are required to shed light on media branding research at the crossroads.

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An Economic Theory of Media Brands

Frank Lobigs

Abstract

Information economics suggests that there are fundamental quality dilemmas which affect media markets. This chapter examines whether the hypothesis that media branding can overcome these dilemmas by establishing quality reputation mechanisms can be supported by the economic theory of reputation. Building on this examination this chapter presents a basic economic theory of media brands. Above that it provides insights into the economics of media product bundling, as well as into the very special economics of journalism. However, unlike the standard economic theory of reputation, which is solely based on information economics and game theory, the economic theory of media brands must also take institutional economics into account. The chapter closes with an application of the outlined theory to the question of how the development of the internet affects journalistic media brands.

Keywords

Economic theory of media brands • Economics of journalism • Quality dilemma of the media • Journalism paradox • Journalism as a credence good • Media brand reputation • Media bundling • Audience segmentation

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This contribution is an extended and updated version of a talk given at the EAEPE annual conference 2003 together with Bernd Bracht (cf. Lobigs & Bracht, 2003). However, the original development of the theory was already delivered in a diploma thesis by the author in 2002 (cf. Lobigs, 2002). A theoretically elaborate presentation of the economic theory of media brands in general, and of journalistic quality brands in particular, has been provided in German in Lobigs (2004). However, the exemplary theory application in Sect. 4 is also conceptually an entirely new extension for this contribution to the "Handbook of Media Branding". The author thanks Bernd Bracht for substantially tidying up some of the English in the original conference presentation.

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1 The Quality Dilemma of the Media

From economic theory it is well known that markets of information goods possess virtually all the economic properties that could cause problems for market transactions (Varian, 1998, 2003). Mass media markets are a perfect example: here (1), increasing returns to scale as well as (2) insufficient protection of intellectual property rights both lead to dramatic difficulties for media competition as well as for the management of media firms (cf. Doyle, 2013). Additionally, media management and media users are confronted with a problem with information following from Arrow's famous "information paradox" (Arrow, 1971, p. 148). This paradox results from the problem that a consumer of information cannot tell beforehand what information she will actually get for her money. This is because if she already knew, she obviously would not need to get the information anyway.

But if you have to buy something without knowing what it will actually be like you naturally might fear being taken advantage of: the seller might deliver too low a quality for too high a price. And by the time you have reassured yourself about the quality you have received, it will be too late. Now assume there will be no punishment for selling low quality at a high price. Would you buy? You would rather not, even when trading high quality for a suitable price would actually make both of you better off.

Information economics would say that the two of you—the buyer and the seller, the principal and the agent—are caught in a trap, because both of you are confronted with a fundamental problem of *moral hazard*. You may also call this trap a *quality dilemma*, as it is usually called in game theory, as the quality trap exactly displays the structure of a well-known game called the *one-sided prisoner's dilemma* (Rasmusen, 2006).

Information economics now says that in the presence of moral hazard problems, reputation mechanisms are required to make satisfying market transactions possible (Stiglitz, 2000). As far as mass media markets are concerned, Shapiro and Varian (1999) in their famous bestselling book "Information rules" are all optimistic about that: they suggest that most media producers overcome these problems by building up media reputation (Shapiro & Varian, 1999, pp. 5–6). If this was true then media reputation from the viewpoint of New Institutional Economics would function as a typical institutional market arrangement (cf. Furubotn & Richter, 2005) which can solve the quality dilemma immanent in mass media markets. But is it actually true?

As this article will show it certainly can only be true if media brands' core function is to bear the quality reputations required to overcome the quality dilemmas of the media. But firstly, let us now take a brief look at the standard economic theory of quality reputation.

2 The Standard Economic Theory of Quality Reputation

The central idea of the standard economic models of quality reputation originates from an influential article by Klein and Leffler published in 1981. Formalized treatments were subsequently given by Shapiro (1983), Allen (1984), Tirole (1988; cf. also Furubotn & Richter, 2005) and Rasmusen (2006). These treatments are too complex to be presented here. However, the gist of the models can be expressed with reference to very basic concepts of dynamic game theory.

Assuming games that are involving infinitely repeated quality dilemmas—which, as remarked before, display the structure of a one-sided prisoner's dilemma—quality reputations according to these models can rest upon self-enforcing implicit contracts between consumers and sellers. These implicit contracts state that consumers continue to buy the products of a specific seller as long as this seller in the counter-move continues to deliver high quality goods and thereby maintains his reputation as a high quality seller.

If a seller should ever cheat on his customers by delivering only poor quality for a high quality price, the implicit contracts contain the threat that all former customers of the cheating seller will subsequently terminate the business relationship and start buying somewhere else. Using terminology from game theory, customers are expected to follow a *trigger*, a *grim* or an *exit threat strategy*, respectively.

The standard models prove that under certain conditions, *subgame perfect reputation equilibria* exist, whereby such exit threats can credibly deter all the sellers from cheating. In such states of reputation equilibria the sellers continuously maintain their high quality reputation simply because this is a superior profit maximizing strategy. More precisely: the discounted expected profits from future business with regular customers are bigger than the one-time profit the sellers could get by cheating their customers once.

3 Application Problems and Proposals for Theory Extensions

At first sight it seems obvious that the standard models of quality reputation should also be applicable to mass media markets. After all it is a common feature of mass media products that production and consumption are continuously repeated in a strict periodical sequence. So you find dailies and weeklies in the print and mobile-app media markets as well as in broadcasting schedules, and also in the digital world TV and film entertainment is still dominated by series and sequels. Furthermore, customer relations between media consumers and media brands are typically long lasting, often building on subscriptions that are prolonged virtually 'forever' if not canceled at some stage by the customer. And last but not least: people love to talk about what they have seen and heard through the media and do so almost daily. Such word-of-mouth communication between consumers facilitates comparisons between competing offers and this may strengthen exit threats.

And yet there are several problems that preclude a direct application of the standard reputation models to mass media markets. I will now look at these problems of applicability one by one—and for each of them outline how economic reputation theory could be extended in order to solve the problem.

3.1 The Infinity Problem and Media Brands

If actors have finite time horizons, the reputation equilibria of the standard models can be destabilized using the very logical concept of backward induction (cf. Rasmusen, 2006). The models therefore implicitly assume that actors have infinite time horizons. It is all too obvious that this is not the case.

This infinity problem is a general problem for the standard reputation models. Kreps (1990a, 1990b) however, has proven that this problem can be overcome if it is not the producer himself who is the bearer of quality reputation but the tradable—and therefore in principle infinite—firm's name which is attached to products. If therefore, by selling the firm—i.e. the reputation bearing name—the producer is able to sell future reputation profits at any time, then infinite time horizons indirectly enter the game again.

It is now very plausible to suggest that in mass media markets media brands may function as such tradable—and in principle infinite—reputation bearing names. This would in any case also account for the often considerably large amounts of money that are charged for goodwill in media acquisitions and mergers.

One might now argue that media brands are not immortal. The opposite is true: since competition in many media markets is fierce, many new media brands are doomed to be killed off in their early stages despite having been launched very recently. TV formats are a good example: many of them vanish—almost without having appeared on the screen. And they are then infinitely dead—and not alive. Hence we have to deal with a second difficulty, another infinity problem. But this one is relatively easy to deal with. As Benoit and Krishna (1985, 1987) have generally proven, reputation mechanisms which are stabilized by credible exit threats are also possible, assuming *uncertainty* about the last period of the repeated game. Such conditions are certainly brought about by dynamic competition in mass media markets.

3.2 The Information Paradox Problem and Media Brand Cultures

In general, the standard reputation models assume *complete implicit contracting*. Though the contracts need not be explicit they still have to be complete. This means that everyone is supposed to be fully informed about what is promised by implicit contracts, right from the start. This is an elementary assumption of the standard reputation models. Unfortunately, due to Arrow's information paradox, it cannot be met in mass media markets. Actually, to know precisely what is promised by any information good would mean knowing all the information before it has been produced, delivered and consumed. That would indeed be paradoxical.

Kreps (1990a, 1999) is concerned with a similar problem in his article "Corporate Culture and Economic Theory"—acknowledged by Furubotn and Richter (1997, p. 333) as an essential article for the overall development of the new institutionalist theory of reputation. Kreps examines a crucial issue of New Institutional Economics (NIE), that is, whether reputation mechanisms could work in *relational contracts* which are necessarily incomplete, not because of an information paradox but as a result of unforeseen contingencies. However, Kreps' reasoning is also applicable to our problem, as he argues that the incompleteness of the implicit contract does not make reputation building impossible if the implicit contract provides principles that can be generally used as guidelines for the determination of an appropriate standard of quality. Combined with the reputation mechanism by which these principles are enforced, they then form institutional arrangements that are necessary to overcome the moral hazard problems of relational contracts (see also Furubotn & Richer, 1997). According to Kreps, a set of such principles valid for a specific firm is called the firm's *corporate culture*.

It is now very straightforward to interpret the creative principles of entertainment genres and TV formats as well as the professional norms of the journalistic press as types of just such institutional cultures. With proper reference to Kreps' concept of "corporate culture" these sets are indicated here as *media brand cultures*.

3.3 The Signaling Problem and Media Brand Advertising

The standard reputation models are based on the assumption that all actors involved could perfectly anticipate the firms' reputation profits. Thus consumers are supposed to be familiar with their cost and profit structures, a severe and unrealistic requirement. Indeed, Klein and Leffler (1981) have already admitted that this is not very likely. More realistically, consumers are usually totally ignorant about the potential reputation profits of firms. Thus reputation mechanisms are bound to fail just because there is no clear cut signal indicating the potential value of reputation. Hence this problem is called the *signaling problem*.

However in 2001 Rasmusen and Perri extended the Klein-Leffler/Shapiro-reputation models using the tools of game theory, examining whether reputation mechanisms can also work under the more realistic assumption that consumers are not perfectly informed about the cost structures of firms. They discovered that reputation building is still possible if firms credibly signal expected reputation profits by conspicuously incurring sunk costs. Theoretically, there are several ways to reach this goal.[1] Probably the most obvious one—besides boasting huge

[1] The theoretical economist usually connects signaling with *adverse selection*—and not *moral hazard*—as for instance in the fundamental article on signaling in job markets by Spence (1973). In the respective models signaling can also be achieved by conspicuously sinking

editorial departments—is spending on advertisements (cf. Kirmani & Rao, 2000). Apparently this is the method of choice in mass media markets. Massively advertising media brands does not only credibly *signal* expected reputation gains, but it also serves to communicate the content of the respective media brand's culture. Unsurprisingly, one key feature of the media industry is spending huge amounts of money on advertising; in fact, there is no other sector that spends more on it in absolute figures or as in relation to return (cf. e.g. Nielsen, 2013).

3.4 The Bundling Problem and Exit Threats by Specialized Audience Segments

Studies in information and digital economics—particularly by Bakos and Brynjolfsson (1999, 2000)—have impressively shown that the *bundling* of several information goods into one package which is then sold for a single price, can be a very profitable strategy for media firms.[2] And indeed, you find bundling in media markets wherever it is technically possible: by definition, newspapers and magazines constitute bundles. Cable TV programs are also almost exclusively sold on a subscription basis as program bundles.

The standard reputation models, however, assume that it is not a bundle of different goods, but a single good that is repeatedly sold. But it is certain that bundling would rule out reputation mechanisms if the complexity of the composite good precluded clear exit threats.

There is another plausible yet simple extension of reputation theory that might explain the quality reputations of mass media brands, including where bundling occurs. For this purpose, the heterogeneity of mass media audiences needs to be taken in account: not everyone is equally interested in everything. A media audience might rather be roughly categorized in such a way that for each kind of bundled information goods there are specific *audience segments* that are (1) *particularly interested*, or (2) *quite*, *marginally* or *not interested at all*. Now concerning the quality of the respective kind of information good, exit threats could at least originate from those audience segments that are particularly interested in the specific kind of information good. After all, it is reasonable to assume that these

resources—"burning money" so to say. Different ways to perform this have been proposed: advertising (cf. e.g. Nelson, 1974), special pricing schedules, or the choice of high-cost locations for production (cf. Haucap, Wey, & Barmbold, 1997).

[2] The reason being that the bundling of several information goods under quite unrestrictive conditions allows firms to capture almost the entire consumer surplus. Without bundling this would only be possible by a first degree price discrimination, which under normal conditions is not at all feasible, since it would require firms to know the individual reservation price of each customer. Bundling however, can lead to a "procrustean price discrimination" that "operates on a 'one-size-fits-all' principle" (Bakos & Brynjolfsson, 1999, p. 1619). By reducing the diversity of consumer valuations, bundling brings about the convergence of reservation prices so that in the end consumer surplus can be exploited almost to the full if firms choose a price near to the resulting general reservation price.

audience segments would turn to a competitor who has done better in their particular field of interest. Provided that these specialized audience groups are just big enough to hurt a media firm's profits significantly by leaving, the overall quality of the entire bundle can thus be assured by efficient reputation mechanisms.

Please note that in this case—and this is a very interesting economic feature of mass media markets—considerable *mutual consumption externalities* result from the existence of specialized audience segments. Since the specialized audience segments enforce overall quality, everyone benefits from their existence.

3.5 The Journalism Paradox Problem and Exit Threats by Expert Audience Segments

But let us turn to the last problem: it is mainly focused on journalistic media and—with reference to Arrow's famous *information paradox*—I call it the *journalism paradox* problem (cf. Lobigs, 2013, p. 59). Fundamentally, the standard reputation models assume traded goods to be *experience goods*. Experience goods, according to Nelson (1970), are goods the quality of which cannot be observed by the consumer prior to purchase but only after consumption. Indeed, concluding from Arrow's paradox, recipients cannot feel secure about mass media quality prior to consumption. But when Shapiro and Varian (1999) state that mass media are generally experience goods they are only partly right: this is true only for entertainment media, it is simply wrong for the general journalistic media.

Shapiro and Varian do not consider an additional paradox as inherent to journalism alone: to assess the quality of journalistic news coverage, media users would not only need to consume the reports themselves but—beyond that—they would first need to acquire an independent knowledge of the objective *facts* concerning the reports. But if they already knew the facts, why should they then buy and consume the reports at all? People rather typically consult journalistic products to gain information concerning relevant facts that they just would not discover elsewhere. Knowing only the reports however, they cannot fully ascertain the quality of the informational content.

Consequently, because of this *journalism paradox*, journalistic media in the terminology of information economics do *not* qualify as *experience goods* but rather as *credence goods*. Credence goods are, according to Darby and Karni (1973, pp. 68–69), goods "which cannot be evaluated in normal use. Instead, the assessment of their value requires additional costly information".

Just ask yourself how costly this additional information will be for the man in the street who wants to assess the quality of the news coverage in his newspaper independently. Costs would obviously be prohibitively high (cf. McManus, 1992).

And simply to rely on media outlets to monitor and control each other for reasons of journalistic competition, ceteris paribus, would not help at all: the competition argument in this case ends up in the well known aporia of an infinite regress suggested in Juvenal's famous question *"Sed quis custodiet ipsos custodes?" (Who guards the guardians?)*.

But how would reputation ever work if consumers are largely incapable of assessing a product's quality even after using it, that is, if the product is as such a *credence good*? Usually this would not be at all possible! The extension of the theory of media brands outlined in this chapter, that eventually also appreciates the credence good characteristic of journalistic media, follows from the line of argument of the preceding subchapter to a large extent.

Again, it starts out from a rather rough categorization of audience segments. Now however, this categorization refers to the different issues that are continuously covered by a journalistic media product. For each of these issues two audience segments are distinguished: the segment of the (1) merely *generally interested* and the segment of (2) *experts* respectively.

The *generally interested*—as the term already suggests—show some general interest in news on the respective issue but they cannot tell if the quality of media coverage is up to the professional norms of journalism. Thus for them journalistic reports on the issue are *credence goods*.

The *experts* are confronted with the issue in a professional context. Sooner or later—and very often at the latest in the course of the next working day—they become informed of all the relevant news on the issue independently of news coverage by the media. Nevertheless, they are highly interested in being fully informed about news on 'their issue' as soon as possible, and so are also keen for journalistic news on the issue—despite the fact that eventually, they are going to be informed about this news anyway in the course of their professional life. Hence, journalistic reports are for them *experience goods*.

Since the experts also have good reasons to be particularly interested in the news in question—having up-to-date information is important for their professional careers—we can now refer back to the line of reasoning concerning the enforcement of media reputations by specialized audience segments, as already pointed out above in Sect. 3.4. Thus, mutual consumption externalities could also result from existing specialized audience segments in markets for journalistic media.

To conclude: expert audience segments can effectively enforce the quality promises of journalistic media brands. However, it is not only the experts who benefit from media brand reputation, but also media firms, the entire audience, and, last but not least, society as a whole. However, since the experts essentially do nothing but pursue their own self interest, we witness here a very special manifestation of the invisible hand of the market in its full beneficial sense.

But it is important to note that the market mechanism described above would not work without a *professional journalistic culture*. The central question is: how can the experts' control of journalistic quality become representative and effective for the whole audience? The answer being: simply through journalistic norms. The experts' control is only representative because the norms of *objectivity* and *impartiality* are the main professional principles that define journalistic culture and quality in the implicit contracts between journalistic media and their audiences. And it is only the fundamental journalistic norm of *topicality* that allows for the integration of expert segments into the overall audiences for journalistic quality media.

If journalistic culture is enforced by brand reputation mechanisms, then both components form the institutional arrangement of *journalistic media brand reputation*. Finally, journalistic media brand reputation plus the institution of market competition constitutes the institution of *workable journalistic competition*.

Using NIE terminology, this institution of workable journalistic competition overcomes the quality dilemmas in news media markets by reducing the *transaction costs* of quality journalism:

- *Agreement costs* are massively reduced by referring to the traditional professional norms of journalism in the implicit contracts on quality.
- *Monitoring costs* are massively reduced as quality controlling by experts is performed quasi en passant in normal professional life.
- *Enforcement costs* eventually disappear completely because reputation mechanisms effectively prevent implicit quality contracts ever being violated.

4 Exemplary Application: Journalistic Media Brands in the Digital World

The coming hardships for news media outlets in the digital world have been investigated thoroughly in a number of international reports (e.g. Anderson, Bell, & Shirky, 2012; Currah, 2009; Downie & Schudson, 2009; Kleis Nielsen, 2012; Levy & Kleis Nielsen, 2010). They have almost all focused on two obvious problems for the digital transformation of news media: the implosion of online advertising revenues and the users' striking lack of willingness to pay for journalistic content provided by online media. Both problems add up to a serious revenue problem for traditional news media, and there is an unprecedented and accelerated consolidation of press publishers and of editorial departments taking place (e.g. for the case of Germany Lobigs, 2014). If one acknowledges that quality news media need substantial economies of scale (because of the high fixed costs of newsrooms), consolidation of the industry seems to be not only indispensable, but also an appropriate way to maintain a quality news supply, although, diversity certainly would suffer (cf. Lobigs, 2014).

In contrast, it has rarely been examined how digitisation and the development of the internet will also affect the efficiency of news media branding. However, building on the theory of news media brands outlined in the preceding subchapters, a rather disconcerting implication can be inferred.

As argued in Sect. 3.5, the supply of quality journalism can be made possible by quality brand reputations if for all relevant fields of news coverage there are not only generally interested members of the audience, but also specific expert audience segments that provide credible exit threats in the case that quality expectations are not met. However, such exit threats can only be effective in the establishment of quality brands if all of the expert groups each represent an amount of revenue which is at least so large that the withdrawal of the group would hurt the publisher economically—even after the deduction of the additional editorial costs due to high quality production in the field of interest.

Formally the following inequality must be fulfilled:

$$\frac{n_e(a_e+p)}{i} > \frac{c_{qe}}{i}$$

According to this inequality the net present value (NPV) of revenues directly attributable to the respective group e of n_e experts—expressed here in a very simplified approximate calculation using the NPV formula for the perpetual annuity with i as discount rate—must exceed the NPV of additional editorial costs that are directly attributable to a steady production of high quality journalism in the respective field of interest c_{qe}. Attributable revenues are the advertising value of each expert a_e and the annual *subscription price p* that the experts, like all subscribers, have to pay.

Now let us consider the effects of digitisation on the relevant parameters of the given inequality.

Thinking first back to the 'old world' of traditional print media before the rise of the internet it is very plausible to assume that back then the parameters of the left-hand side of the inequality quite easily could take on values sufficiently high to satisfy this central condition for securing effectiveness of high quality brand reputations in all relevant fields of news coverage:

- Since expert groups for professional purposes depended strongly on high quality newspapers and magazines their willingness to pay substantial *subscription prices p* was pronounced.
- For the same reason the potential of expert subscriptions could be exploited almost to the full and, moreover, exit threats were highly credible—which taken together means that values for n_e could have been quite large measured against the overall size of the various expert groups.
- Finally, since advertising customers could reach expert groups not only very precisely, but at the same time also almost exclusively by only a very few high quality print media, values of a_e were luxuriously strong. The per capita value alone for job advertisements could often already come close to the distribution price in the 'good old days' of traditional providers of high quality journalism media brands.

In the digital online world these 'good old days' are unfortunately over. The favourable conditions of the old print world have lost their validity and are replaced by developments that depress the very same parameters that had been pushed up so effectively in the analogue era:

- Two key challenges from the online world that traditional media face that have been described thoroughly in communication science in recent years are the *fragmentation* of audiences and the cutting out of news media middleman referred to as *disintermediation*. The research on both key trends clearly shows that for expert audiences they are particularly severe: especially when it comes to their own field of expertise news media that also cater to the needs of the generally interested public are getting more and more dispensable for more and more professionals from all relevant areas of society. This fact means that those universal journalistic quality media will face a shrinking number of experts n_e from whom credible exit threats originate that are apt to enforce implicit contracts on journalistic quality concerning every field of interest e.

- Along with the quantity component n_e the price elements p and a_e in the digital world will also deteriorate. The cost per mille (CPM) prices journalistic online offerings can achieve clearly only come to a very small fraction of the comfortable thousand contact prices (TCP) that traditional media were used to in the analogue world. So a_e is strongly depressed in the digital world. Concerning the subscription price p the situation is to be considered as similar if not worse. In particular, there seems to be a vanishingly low willingness to pay for journalistic online offerings that address the generally interested in every relevant field of news coverage alongside the respective expert audiences. Noteworthy subscription prices seem to be rather more possible for online offerings that cater to the professional information needs of expert groups *exclusively*. However, such specialist journalistic offerings obviously do not solve the quality dilemma of journalism for a broader interested public.

Taken together it seems clear that it will get more and more difficult to satisfy the given inequality for whatever field of news coverage, as the digital transformation of the news industry advances in the future. Therefore in coming years journalistic quality brand reputations will only be sustainable because of *print* revenues attributable to expert audience segments—which are clearly shrinking but which will still remain far more important than the corresponding digital revenues—on the one hand, and any radical forms of editorial cost consolidation that might compensate revenue losses, on the other.

However, in contrast to what one might think at first glance, in this transformation phase of the next few years the consolidation of editorial costs can be a necessary and suitable weapon in defending journalistic quality brand reputations. This is always the case, when the “larger-than relation” between the left-handed and right-handed side of the fundamental inequality on page 380 can be strengthened through the consolidation measures that are taken, be they editorial cooperations, mergers of newsrooms or editorial departments, the multiple exploitation of digital journalistic content, or any other measures that are apt to extend the cost reducing scale effects of journalistic services. For instance in Germany there still seems to be considerable potential for such kinds of cost consolidation (cf. Lobigs, 2014), and therefore potential mergers and acquisitions that could foster them should not be rejected too hastily because of the very traditional doctrine of maintaining as much supplier diversity as possible at no matter what costs. In the end, even a very high diversity of only pseudo-journalistic news offerings will obviously be of no help if reputation mechanisms that allow for the preservation of effective journalistic quality brands are about to break down completely.

5 Conclusion

There are two paradoxes leading to quality dilemmas in mass media markets: Arrow's information paradox and the journalism paradox. As outlined in this chapter, economic theory can explain how these dilemmas can be overcome by brand reputation mechanisms. To achieve this end, it is essential to extend the standard economic theory of reputation, which is solely based on information economics and game theory, to include straightforward arguments derived from New Institutional Economics. However, the emerging economic theory of media brands does not only provide new basic insights into essential aspects of media branding but also into the economics of media product bundling as well as into the very special economics of journalism.

The probably most interesting economic feature of media branding that is revealed by this rigorous economic reasoning is the utmost importance of mutual consumption externalities between different segments of media audiences. The economic theory of media brands thus also provides a basis for a special theory of media marketing and branding based on media bundling and on audience segmentation. Whereas general marketing theory views market segmentation essentially as a tool for addressing the different consumer segments in a suitable differentiated way by separated product offerings (e.g. Wedel & Kamakura, 2000), media marketing must also take the signaling value and the beneficial consumption externalities of audience segments into account. The theory of media management and media economics has so far tended to neglect the manifold strategic and tactical as well as societal implications of this very special aspect of mass media markets.

The very brief theory application in the preceding subchapter was meant to emphasize the importance of those implications with regard to an exemplary relevant question in the context of media digitisation. By analysing a central prerequisite for effective journalistic quality brands it has been shown that maintaining such quality brands will be sharply aggravated in the digital world of the future. For media policy the analysis suggests that it would be well advised to reconsider the traditional doctrine of diversity maximization without concern for the necessary conditions of effective journalistic quality branding. The old doctrine might be obsolete in the brave new world of the digital media. Rather, the primary focus should be on the question of how effective quality branding of news media could be effectively supported in the future.

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Research Note: News Media Branding and Journalistic Quality: Contradiction or Compatibility?

Isabelle Krebs

Abstract

Facing increased competition and changing user behavior news media outlets increasingly have to pursue branding strategies to stay successful in the market. But the role of traditional news media as democratic institutions and the associated expectations impede branding measures as well as reservations against branding on the journalist's side. This contribution is an attempt to further investigate news media branding. Referring to existing models it suggests the integration of societal functions as well as journalistic quality in the brand identity of news media brands. The production of contents should reflect these values in order to achieve successful branding to create a strong news brand. Expert interviews, audience survey and content analysis have been conducted to investigate the performance of news media brands regarding the fulfillment of societal functions and the journalistic quality.

Keywords

News media brands • News media branding • Journalistic quality • Expert interviews • Audience survey • Content analysis

1 Introduction

Based on the role of traditional media as democratic institutions, news media fulfill important social and political functions within modern societies (Burkart, 2002; Weaver, Beam, Brownlee, Voakes, & Wilhoit, 2007)—above all the dissemination of information and social observation. At the same time media organizations have to be profitable and the intensified market orientation of media companies is

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challenging to the adherence of journalistic values. Media companies are confronted with the challenge to maintain the quality promise of their brands and to be economically successful (Siegert, Gerth, & Rademacher, 2011). Hence media organizations operate within an area of conflict between economic and journalistic goals, and the relations between journalistic and economic competition are complex. Without economic success media organizations cannot maintain their journalistic standards and perform on the market. Particularly in times of crisis the journalistic performance of the mass media can be at risk due to cutbacks in journalistic production. According to Siegert et al. (2011) hard news is especially endangered by cutbacks due to high labor costs. As a consequence news media companies have developed a strong brand orientation.

Media brands thereby operate as a positioning tool which helps to address certain characteristics of media products (McDowell, 2006; Siegert, 2001b). Quality signaling in particular is highly relevant for news media outlets: on the one hand expectations for the fulfillment of societal functions and of producing high-quality journalism are higher for news production compared to entertainment formats. On the other hand traditional news media have been struggling over recent years with decreasing revenues and a rising number of competitors within the online sector. Signaling that their competences and quality are different from their competitors therefore became essential. Here media branding can deliver highly relevant options to stabilize the market position of media companies and their outlets in the audience and advertising market. Despite these important functions news media branding is also discussed critically. Here aspects such as the commercialization of journalism and tabloidization (e.g. Jarren & Meier, 2001) have to be taken into account. But according to McManus (1994) quality orientation and market orientation are not principally incompatible.

Given the importance of news media for society and their increasing engagement in branding, this area of research is still underrepresented. A look into media brand research reveals a lack of studies on the connection between content quality and media brands. Authors particularly refer to the implicit quality promise of media brands and the effect of media brand reputation on the market (e.g. Lobigs, 2005; McManus, 1994). Reputation mechanisms in general can foster performance and quality in media markets. Quality reputation can operate as an incentive for media companies to produce high quality if the consumer demand exists. This especially applies to news production where the recipients expect high journalistic quality, therefore it can be economically rational for media companies to produce high-quality journalism (Lobigs, 2004, 2005; Siegert, Rademacher, & Lobigs, 2008). But only if media brands are really a quality signal for the produced content can expectations of the recipients be addressed convincingly. In addition, traditional (news) media not only have to serve a certain purpose and fulfil the audiences' expectations (Blumler & Katz, 1974) but also have to fulfill societal functions.

Thus this article is an attempt to further explain how news media brands should integrate societal functions and a quality mission in their brand identity to credibly position their brands on the market. Hence, the questions are, whether news media brands fulfill their societal functions and whether media managers and editors in chief are aware of the importance of media branding, and if they have implemented the quality promise as an element of their product, i.e. in producing content of high journalistic quality. Both aspects can be seen as the foundation of successful news media branding. The chapter thus combines research results from different studies concerning societal and content-related performance to address the following research questions:

RQ1: Is there a fit between the self and public perception concerning the fulfillment of societal functions of news outlets?
RQ2: Does the positioning of news media brands relate to the quality of their news coverage?

The goal of this article is to theorize societal functions and journalistic quality as inherent part of the brand identity of news media brands. It will be elaborated how news media branding can be implemented in adherence with these values and journalistic quality. In a second step, based on two studies, this article investigates whether news media brands fulfill their societal functions and produce journalistic quality in order to further evaluate the particularities of news media branding.

2 News Media Branding

2.1 Brand Positioning and the Societal Functions of News Media Brands

Manifold functions of media brands have been specified within research (e.g. Siegert, 2001a). Brands are a way to differentiate from competitors. Thereby the self-definition of a media brand is based on its brand identity and corresponds with the self-perception of the brand at an organizational level (e.g. Siegert et al., 2011). The positioning of a media brand on the market is rooted in the self-perception of the brand and manifests itself in the content produced and the brand communication. The public perception of news media brands is reflected in the brand image which is created as a result of the communication of and about the brand as well as the contents produced. The brand identity needs to be defined internally and strategies to position it need be developed that lead to the best possible match between brand identity (self-perception of the brand) and brand image (perception of the audience) (Aaker, 1996) in order to achieve a high-profile brand and competitive advantage.

When focusing on news media brands several particularities have to be taken into account. In general, the signaling of quality per se is not defined in a normative way—quality can refer to different types of content (e.g. entertainment or news) and to different quality standards. But for news media outlets quality signaling is of specific relevance as they have to fulfill functions within democratic societies. These societal functions can be described as a requirement of the media system on the one hand, and the actual performance of media organizations on the other.

Referring to democratic theory, aspiration and performance should be widely consistent (McQuail, 1992). For news media, the fulfillment of societal functions can be thus seen as an elementary part of their performance. In more detail, according to Curran (2005) the primary democratic tasks of the media are to inform, scrutinize, debate and represent. These societal functions can thus be seen as a substantial part of the brand identity of news media brands that should be the fundament of every news media brand—regardless of whether it is a quality or tabloid news outlet.

As mentioned before, branding measures can be considered as successful if the self-perception of the brand and the public perception are coherent. Hence, news media branding with its inherent commitment to fulfill societal functions can be considered as successful if these functions are perceived by the audience to a satisfactory extent.

2.2 Brand Positioning and Journalistic Quality

With their signalling function, brands can provide reliability and orientation for the audience as well as for the advertising industry (Siegert, 2001a). Furthermore, "aside from easing the cognitive workload, strong brands reduce risk and uncertainty for consumers" (McDowell, 2006, p. 230). According to Gerpott (2006) media brands can reduce uncertainties about the quality of the content and enhance consumer trust, which has a positive influence on the number of recipients and can stabilize it over time. Thus media brand reputation can counterbalance the weaknesses of the market because disenchanted quality expectations and reputation impairment are more "expensive" than producing journalism of a high quality standard (Lobigs, 2005; see also Lobigs, 2015).

Concerning the journalistic quality of news media brands it is also of importance to specify the journalistic quality of the content. At the same time, this contribution does not strive for a definition of journalistic quality as normative output or a recapitulation of debates on journalistic quality. It is assumed that traditional news media have the task to fulfill important functions for society and also that there are quality criteria (e.g. Schatz & Schulz, 1992) which can be applied to news media content. Formal and content-related quality criteria are widely discussed and operationalized differently in the literature (Schatz & Schulz, 1992; Weischenberg, Malik, & Scholl, 2006; Wyss, 2002).

For this contribution the recurring quality criteria of diversity, professionalism and relevance are investigated based on Schatz and Schulz (1992). Diversity is not only a widely acknowledged quality criterion but is also described as one of the most important. Diversity is operationalized in forms of content related diversity, e.g. diversity of topics, actors and sources, as well as structural diversity, e.g. types of programs and program sectors. Based on assumptions concerning journalistic quality, value orientation in media organizations and discourse quality (i.e. Ruß-Mohl, 1992; Schatz & Schulz, 1992; Steenbergen et al., 2003; Weaver et al., 2007) news media brands that are committed to journalistic quality should also produce diverse content. The quality criterion of "professionalism" is more variable and can be related to formal and content-related quality. The operationalization of the quality criterion of professionalism is generally regarded as complicated. Nevertheless following Schatz & Schulz there are requirements especially for information and news outlets that are based on acknowledged journalistic values, such as impartiality and correctness. In a broad understanding, professionalism can also refer to aesthetic and creative criteria which include comprehensibility of the content presented. Based on studies on the brand personality (Baumgarth, 2009; Kim, Baek, & Martin, 2010) and quality criteria of media content (Schatz & Schulz, 1992), a self-definition of the media brand's personality as professional and a high commitment to professionalism should correlate with more aspects of professionalism on the content side. High professionalism can refer to higher source transparency and the use of professional language to ensure comprehensibility (e.g. Jarren & Vogel, 2011; Schatz & Schulz, 1992). There is a need to contextualize the assessment of this quality criterion (e.g. Ruß-Mohl, 1992). It is assumed that these particularly formal aspects should reflect differently in various types of media brands with reference to the quality press and tabloidization (e.g. Jarren & Vogel, 2011; Landmeier & Daschmann, 2011). More visualization and simplistic language as characteristic of tabloidization for example can therefore represent a professional self-definition and the professional work of a tabloid news brand. In addition, with reference to discourse quality, topics within public debates in particular can only be discussed if diverse accounts are outlined, and therefore we assume that a quality assessment always has to be contextualized, i.e. for different types of media, target groups and genres (Ruß-Mohl, 1992).

A study which outlines an attempt to further explain why the quality oriented production of news contents can be rational for media companies comes from Siegert et al. (2011). The authors developed a framework, the MBAC model ("media, brands, actors and communication"), which helps to understand brand based decision making in media organizations and the outcomes of the organizations' behavior in a competitive environment. It is argued that decision making is strongly driven by the brand identity (Aaker, 1996) of either media companies or single media outlets and quality orientation is an element of the brand identity. The model explains the relationship between brand positioning, the brand image and reputation. The model also addresses the tensions between the editorial and business sides of news production where journalists aim at professionalism and the production of quality content, while managers are oriented towards economic goals. Following the MBAC model, this implies for news media that content quality as a core element of news coverage can only be sustained if based on brand identity and is actively maintained. The model incorporates the internal and external functions of media brands in the media brand positioning: within organizations brands provide orientation and stability as a factor of professionalization. Furthermore, brands provide orientation for decision making concerning production processes, recruiting and cooperation. It is argued that media which signal the quality of their news coverage through their brands and recipients can thus expect high-quality coverage.

Nevertheless, brand positioning can only be successful if consistency of brand identity and media product is created. If carried out successfully, damage to reputation, due to the disappointment of recipients' quality expectations and image of the media can be prevented. The latter in particular can lead to a decline in the customer market and therefore cause adverse economic effects for the media company (Siegert et al., 2008). Consequently, it can be rational for decision makers in news media companies to pursue the production of high-quality content, at least for quality news media brands.

2.3 Modelling News Media Brands, Societal Functions and Journalistic Quality

Derived from the assumptions about news media brands and their necessary commitment to fulfill societal functions and deliver journalistic quality, the following simplified model is an attempt to illustrate the relationship of these dimensions and to sum up the statements made in the sections above (Fig. 1).

Based on Siegert et al. (2011) it is assumed that decision making is strongly brand-identity driven and that the quality mission or the commitment to journalistic quality is a core element of news media brands and therefore of the brand identity. Moreover, the fulfillment of societal values is part of the self-commitment of news media brands and therefore (if implicit or explicit) can be seen as a core element of brand identity as well. This integration of societal functions into brand identity also allows a broader investigation of news media brands. Despite the fact that journalistic quality is difficult to define and also can't be applied in the same way for different types of news media brands (elite vs. tabloid news), the fulfillment of societal functions is a fundamental part of the news media performance and thus should be integrated in the news media brand identity.

These values in addition to journalistic quality reflect in the produced content of the news media brand and subsequently in the positioning of the brand in the market. In addition, the communicated values of the brand through measures of branding are part of this positioning. These communicated values can be

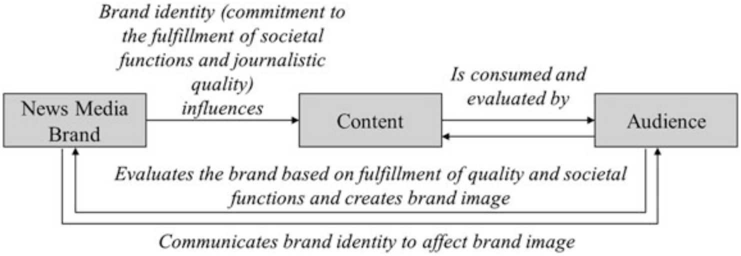

Fig. 1 Relationship between news media brands and the perception of the audience

investigated by using content analysis of the communicated brand mission or the news brand's advertising. Another possibility, as used in the following investigation, is to analyze the media managers' and editors' self-perception in representing the brand identity. The produced content is consumed and also evaluated by the audience. The audience evaluates the brand on the fulfillment of the quality mission and of the societal functions as well as the communicated brand identity. These factors make up the brand image for the audience.[1] As for successful branding; a coherent brand image is required, a consistency of the communicated brand image (based on the brand identity) and content necessary to create a strong brand. Therefore, in a next step the self and public perception on the fulfillment of societal functions and the correlation of the brand positioning and the quality of content are investigated.

3 Method

In the following, the results of two studies will be presented to address the research questions. The first study focuses on the fulfillment of societal functions of news media brands. The second study deals with the question of whether news media brands keep their promise of quality, and therefore if their brand positioning correlates with the actual content produced.

The findings presented in this paper stem from research conducted within an interdisciplinary research project.[2] Based on a multi-method approach including expert interviews with media representatives (media managers and senior editors), audience survey and content analysis, news media brands in six European countries (Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, Switzerland and the UK) were investigated. The sample of media brands consisted of leading national and regional daily and weekly newspapers, including quality and tabloid press, free dailies and TV news programs, including public as well as private TV outlets ($N = 100$). The selection was based on a high reach of the media brand in each country as well as having an information/news focus. The data was collected in a 4-month period between November 2010 and February 2011.

Firstly the method applied for both studies will be briefly described followed by a synopsis of the results found in each study.[3] The performance of societal functions of media brands was investigated within a first study combining interviews with

[1] Besides the aforementioned factors there are also influence factors, e.g. communication about the brand (including communication within other media, and peer communication) that shape the image of the brand which are not investigated in this paper.

[2] The Swiss National Science Foundation generously funded the project 'Challenges to democracy in the 21st century' as one of its National Centers of Competence in Research (NCCR). For further information, see www.nccr-democracy.uzh.ch

[3] Due to the synoptic character of this contribution, method description and the presentation of results, is only brief and reduced to core statements. For more details refer to Krebs et al. (2012a, 2012b) and Krebs and Reichel (2014).

media managers of news media brands and audience survey (Krebs et al. 2012a, 2012b). The investigations were based on interviews with media managers and senior editors ($N = 58$) as well as a representative audience survey in six European countries. The audience survey was a two-wave panel study, composed of a regional (Nr) sample (metropolitan area of each country) and a national (Nn) sample: Denmark (Nr = 749; Nn = 1,489), France (Nr = 741; Nn = 1,495), Germany (Nr = 741; Nn = 1,482), Italy (Nr = 738; Nn = 1,459), Switzerland (Nr = 748; Nn = 1,523) and the UK (Nr = 740; Nn = 1,494). The audience answered the same questions as the media professionals—rated on five point Likert scales—to enable a comparison of the perception of the audience and media professionals. The latter rated their own media outlets and consumers rated their favorite newspaper and TV news brands.

We investigated the fulfillment of societal functions by using items which stem from journalist surveys (Weaver et al., 2007; Weischenberg et al., 2006): "provides analysis and interpretation of complex problems", "investigates claims and statements made by the government" "provides information quickly", "stays away from stories where factual content cannot be verified", "provides entertainment and relaxation", "is an adversary of public officials by being constantly skeptical of their actions"; "is an adversary of businesses by being constantly skeptical of their actions"; "gives ordinary people a chance to express their views on public affairs"; "motivates ordinary people to get involved in public discussions of important issues"; "points people toward possible solutions to society's problems"; "helps me to cope in a complex world" and "contributes to shaping public opinion". Media professionals additionally answered questions about organizational goals (Demers, 1996; Weaver et al., 2007) to investigate the positioning of the brand. Descriptive statistics and ANOVA comparison tests were used.

The focus of the second study lies on the performance of the media brands (Krebs & Reichel, 2014). To answer the overall research question, we combined the expert interviews and the content analysis of the matching brands. Due to non-availability of some news media brands within the content analysis, only 40 expert interviews were used in this study. For the content analysis news articles ($N = 8{,}987$) and TV reports ($N = 462$) of the matching brands on the topic of unemployment[4] were coded. From the expert interviews questions on organizational goals, societal functions, brand personality and additionally questions on components of a good story were used ("well-executed professional work" and "perform public service, address key issues") (Baumgarth, 2009; Kim et al., 2010; Weaver et al., 2007; Weischenberg et al., 2006). Furthermore, the experts were asked about the importance of brands and branding (Baumgarth, 2009; Hankinson, 2001).

[4] The topic of unemployment has been chosen within the project context, based on the presumption that the topic is part of public debates across all countries and therefore comparability is given.

For the investigation of relevance, experts were asked to rank the relevance of the topic of unemployment compared to other topics. Real unemployment rates were included to match "internal" self-definition by the managers with "external" pressure of the topic. Harmonized unemployment rates from the OECD for the year 2010 (year of survey) were used[5]. Furthermore formal and content-related quality criteria were selected from the content analysis. For the investigation of the performance of the media brands we focused on the quality criteria for diversity, professionalization and relevance, based on Schatz and Schulz (1992). The data were aggregated at the media brand level. For the criteria of diversity we operationalized diversity of speakers (number of individual speakers per article), diversity of types (number of different article types e.g. reports, reportages, commentaries used), and the diversity of frames (presence of frame components). One frame is composed of four frame components (aspect, consequences, causes and responsibilities and measures/treatments) based on Entman (1993). Frame components are used in this paper to investigate the content-related diversity.[6]

Professionalization is operationalized by transparency of sources (recognizability of sources), number of counterarguments used (number of counterframes) and style of language[7], as well as usage of visualizations in the articles. Professionalization can have a different meaning for the quality press compared to tabloids and free dailies. Therefore based on assumptions of the MBAC model (Siegert et al., 2011) and concerning quality press and tabloidization (e.g. Jarren & Vogel, 2011; Landmeier & Daschmann, 2011), sub-segments for quality and tabloid news media were composed to analyze the different media brand types; quality media ($N = 25$), tabloid press media ($N = 15$). To investigate the quality criterion relevance, the quantity of coverage (total number of news articles) as well as the diversity of frames were included because if a topic relevant to society is displayed there should be more coverage in number and a more diverse coverage. Relevance is a relational quality dimension that only gains in importance within a (societal) reference system (Schatz & Schulz, 1992), therefore unemployment rates are included as described above. We used descriptive statistics and correlations (Pearson) to analyze the data.

[5] Source: http://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?QueryId=38900 (20.10.12).

[6] The concept of framing is used here due to the project context. For this paper we therefore operationalized frames and frame components only to investigate content-related diversity.

[7] Style of language was coded in contrastive pairs (on a 5 scale semantic differential "1- matter-of-factly to 5- casual", "1—serious language to 5- slang", "1- sober/plain to 5—metaphoric" and "1-distanced to 5 personalized").

4 Results

4.1 Findings on Brand Positioning and the Societal Performance of News Media Brands

Results indicate that media professionals are aware of the importance of journalistic goals and assess them as more important than economic goals. Rated on a 5-point Likert scale editors in chief and senior media managers overall rated the goal "producing journalism of high, above average quality" ($M = 4.60$, $SD = 0.70$) higher than the goal of earning "high, above-average profits" ($M = 3.60$, $SD = 1.40$). This also applies when splitting into media types, print media and TV. Here also journalistic goals are rated higher then economic goals by newspaper managers ($M = 4.49$, $SD = 0.80/M = 3.98$, $SD = 0.90$) as well as TV managers ($\mathrm{M} = 5.00$, $\mathrm{SD} = 0.00/\mathrm{M} = 2.31$, $\mathrm{SD} = 2.0$). These results indicate that TV news formats especially—from the public as well as from the private sector—pursue primarily quality oriented goals. The rather high standard derivation for the assessment of economic goals can be due to the fact that our sample included mostly public TV news formats—which have no obligation to be profitable—and could indicate that some of the commercial TV news outlets in our sample primarily pursue economic goals. Nevertheless, the agreement on the importance of journalistic goals is distinctive and media representatives thereby highlight the importance of producing high-quality journalism.

In a next step, the supply side and the demand side were merged concerning the societal functions as a pivotal element of (news) media. Results show that news media brands overall perform at a satisfying level, while media representatives rate the extent of their fulfillment slightly higher than the audience. Media professionals emphasize the fulfillment of functions like "contributes to shaping public opinion", "stays away from stories where factual content cannot be verified" and "helps readers/viewers to get along in a complex world". The only function that was rated higher by the audience than the media professionals was "provides entertainment and relaxation", which was at the same time the function rated the lowest by media professionals. This could be an indicator that the self-understanding of news media professionals tends rather to professionalism in journalism than to entertaining aspects of news coverage. ANOVA analysis revealed no significant differences for the latter though, but revealed significant differences between the perception of the audience and the media professionals concerning 6 of the 12 items investigated, e.g. "provides analysis and interpretation of complex problems" and "investigates claims and statements made by the government".

Overall we can find that media professionals see their brands more in the light of the traditional functions of journalism than the consumers. More significant differences between the perception of professionals and audience have been revealed for newspapers. Overall a fit between self and public perception can be attested for the societal functions, which means that the investigated news media brands perform on a satisfying level concerning their fulfillment of societal functions.

More detailed analyses are integrated to describe the brand positioning. Asked about their newspapers and programs, all responding media professionals (entirely) agreed that they consider their outlets a "strong brand". In addition, when positioning themselves in the advertising market the brand and the quality of journalism is important. So according to the media representatives, the most important argument used when presenting their papers/programs to advertisers is first and foremost the good reputation of the brand (86 %), followed by investments in the editorial department and quality of journalism (both 75 %). These results highlight the importance of branding to media professionals and that they are positioning their outlets (also on the advertising market) over the brand and brand related attributes. At the same time the journalistic quality is also emphasized within the positioning.

4.2 Findings on Brand Positioning and Journalistic Quality

To analyze the relationship between the positioning of the media brands studied (based on the perception of the media professionals) and the actual performance, the quality criterion *diversity* (on the content side) was tested. Results show significant correlations between the perceived goal of producing journalism of high, above average quality and the diversity of speakers ($r = 0.371$; $p < 0.05$), as well as the number of frame components used ($r = 0.362$; $p < 0.05$). Also the fulfillment of the function "provides analysis and interpretation of complex problems" significantly correlates with the diversity of speakers ($r = 0.371$; $p < 0.05$) and the number of frame components used ($r = 0.383$; $p < 0.05$). There are no correlations with the diversity of types. Therefore results indicate that pursuing journalistic work of high quality correlates with a more diverse news coverage overall.

In the next step the quality criterion *professionalization* was investigated. Analyses showed, that the investigated professionalization items on the expert side do not correlate ($r = 0.017$, *n.s.*) and therefore a self-definition of the media brands' personality as professional and a high commitment to "well-executed professional work" do not relate. Further analyses revealed some significant correlations indicating that the perceived professionalism relates closely to the aspects of professionalism in the content. Although there were no correlations found concerning the transparency of sources at an overall level, a professional brand personality correlates significantly with language that is more matter of fact ($r = -0.340$; $p < 0.05$) and serious ($r = -0.273$; $p < 0.05$) and with less use of tables within the visualization ($r = -0.604$; $p < 0.01$). Only for the sub-segment of tabloid press brands does a professional self-image correlate negatively with the transparency of sources ($r = -0.540$; $p < 0.05$), which means the more the brands define themselves as professional the less transparent the sources used are.

We can also find correlations with visualization through photographs ($r = 0.565$; $p < 0.05$), tables ($r = -0.678$; $p < 0.01$) and caricatures ($r = -0.537$; $p < 0.05$). In other words, the more professional the self-image of the tabloid brands is, the more photos and less tables and caricatures can be found in the content. No correlations can be found for quality news brands. At the overall brand level well-executed professional work also correlates with counterframing ($r = 0.412$; $p < 0.05$) and a tendency toward a more distanced language ($r = -0.290$; *n.s.*), i.e. brands that are more committed to well-executed professional work integrate more differing perspectives in their content and also use a more professional, less personalized, language. For tabloid press brands we can also find a significant correlation with counterframing ($r = 0.930$; $p < 0.01$). The inquiry into the more process-like, professional working practices is therefore no sufficient indicator for the formal elements of media coverage.

Overall the findings indicate that the brand personality reflects rather more informal aspects of language and visualization than those aspects that refer more strictly to the content quality of the coverage. Surprisingly the sub-segment of quality media brands showed no significant results, although over 70 % of all media representatives of quality news media brands defined themselves as a professional brand, compared to only 27 % of media representatives from the tabloid sub-segment who shared that opinion. Therefore the tabloid media brands in our study performed more in line with the perceived brand personality than the quality news media brands did and even more "professional" or in line with the definition of professionalism for a tabloid brand.

Results further showed that there is neither a correlation between the perceived relevance of the topic (unemployment) and the quantity of the news coverage nor the perceived relevance and the diversity of types. This also applies for the sub-segments. So if media managers attest high importance to the topic of unemployment this assessment does not reflect in the media brands' content concerning quantity and diversity of types. The function "perform public service and address key issues" as an aspect of good political reporting significantly correlates with the diversity of types as well as the quantity of news coverage. In contrast to our expectations, the item shows only negative correlations with the diversity of types on an overall level ($r = -0.482$; $p < 0.01$) and for the sub-segments of tabloid brands ($r = -0.638$; $p < 0.05$) and quality brands ($r = -0.417$; $p < 0.05$). We also found negative correlations with the quantity of the news coverage ($r = -0.660$; $p < 0.05$).

For the objective relevance (unemployment rate) we found a significant correlation with the quantity of news coverage for quality media brands ($r = -0.417$; $p < 0.05$) as well as a tendency for the overall brand level. This means overall media brands in general and quality brands have higher coverage when the unemployment rate is higher and the topic is more socially relevant. Overall this means that for the quality criterion *relevance*, that the outside pressure of a topic has a stronger influence than the self-definition, whereas the commitment to perform public service and address key issues even has a negative influence on the diversity of types.

5 Discussion

Overall the results of our studies showed that the representatives of the news media brands studied are aware of the importance of branding and the brand. At the same time they want to produce quality content. The news media brands perform on a satisfying level overall and the self and the public perception are matched with regard to societal functions. The audience rates the entertainment function of the brands higher than the professionals and they also evaluate the news as less professional. Furthermore, the positioning of news media brands relates only partly to the quality of the news coverage. These results could imply that brands are still perceived more as a marketing instrument, which has a stronger correlation with formal, "visual" aspects of the content but still lacks an influence on the editorial side (e.g. strong external influence, news values). Our results also could imply that brands have an overall function as quality signals, but not in a normative way.

For the media brands investigated in this study these results are good news. The satisfying fulfillment of societal functions as a core element of the performance of traditional news media, can be seen as an important factor for success in the market. However the missing reflection of brand positioning in the content could be a danger to the latter and therefore hinder further success. If media brands do not keep their implicit promise of quality, which they communicate through their brands, customer loyalty can be endangered. Measures of branding can only work successfully if the product—the news content—complies with the expected quality. These assumptions apply particularly to traditional news media brands within the quality press segment. Here expectations of quality content are even higher. The rather weak performance of the quality news media brands in our second study therefore reveals that these brands should put more effort into the harmonization of the editorial and business side. Notably, these results could reflect a problematic relationship to branding within news media outlets in the high quality segment.

Traditional news media, which face increased competition due to digitalization and are struggling on the market, have to put more effort into their branding to be able to face both the new and old competitors in the market. For traditional news media branding indeed should be seen as a possibility to foster their credibility and not as a sellout of values. But due to the fact that higher expectations in traditional news media (and their performance) can apply, it is fundamental that the promised (and expected) quality is also produced. To foster the success of news media brands therefore it is inevitable that brand management penetrates the business as well as the editorial side and that the brand positioning is also reflected in the content. Also the content quality needs to be actively maintained, because conflicting journalistic and economic goals can affect the brand. Within the organization an active integration of a commitment to fulfilling societal functions and to journalistic quality into the brand identity can also help to foster the compatibility of news media branding and traditional journalistic values. By doing so the brand can work as a sign and proof of quality and branding, especially the brand positioning, can help to foster success in the media market.

For further research it would be also be of great interest to investigate how much influence the brand actually has on the evaluation of content quality by the audience. Especially from an organizational perspective, the actual impact of the brand on content evaluation is of great interest in order to evaluate the actual success potential of branding and its limits. Moreover, there is a lack of research on the specific effect of the brand on the success of media organizations and outlets compared to other factors. This also applies for different types of media, especially when investigating in connection with media brand quality where quality expectations can be higher for news formats, especially in the high quality segment compared to entertainment formats where the brand is signaling quality on a non-normative level. Here it is possible that consumers' quality expectations are lower for entertainment products, and therefore branding could play an even more important role as a decisive factor within media selection processes.

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