
20 Years of Research on Media Brands and Media Branding

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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 Spanish¹ and a certain number of publications is indispensable for a meta-analysis, we finally included

¹The 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

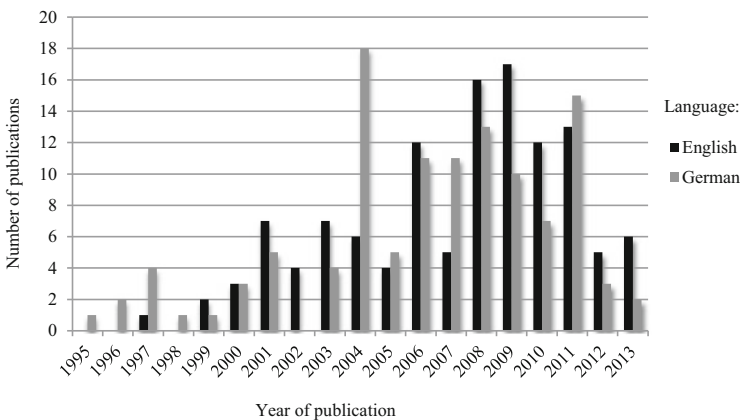


Fig. 1 Publication output of media brand research from 1995 to 2013

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, Jiynd, & 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

^aThe 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

^aThe 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
Grainje (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

^aThe 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

^aThe 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

^aThe 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

^aThe 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
Oyedeki (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

^aThe 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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