Media Branding from an Organizational and Management-Centered Perspective

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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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