

Diskussionspapiere

Menschen – Märkte – Medien – Management

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RIGOR AND RELEVANCE

Enforcing dialogue between media management research and practice





Abstract

There is a strong demand in media management to strengthen the bridge between theory and practice. Following the debate on rigor and relevance, the approach of engaged scholarship and arguments from our community, we see the need to develop a research agenda in dialogue with practice. Therefore, we explore the following questions: Which topics do media managers consider relevant to research? How can these issues be contrasted with the research agendas proclaimed by media management research?

To answer these questions, we first summarize current issues in media management research through a literature review. Second, current issues in media management practice are captured based on an online survey with German media managers ($N=46$). Finally, the two perspectives are contrasted to develop relevant questions for media management research and practice.

Keywords:

rigor and relevance, media manager, practice perspective, media management



1. Introduction

Cross-innovation as a central issue of WMEMC 2021 is assumed to be an essential driver in the context of media. According to Ibrus (2019), cross-innovation has to be reflected in terms of 'innovation', 'innovation systems' and 'sectoral innovation'. Based on its emergence within the context of the European Union Interreg program, cross-innovation was defined as "collaborative and user-driven innovation that happens across sectoral, organizational, technological and geographic boundaries" (Ibrus, 2019, p.31). Our argumentation starts right at this point, more precisely, where cross-innovation can happen across the boundaries of science and practice. By the following, we assume in line with the ideas described above, that innovation does not necessarily have to evolve in one system (e.g., a firm, a nation, or a scientific discipline), but can also take place in *social interaction between different systems* (e.g. organizations of science and practice in media management). Hereby, we very much rely on the idea that "innovation is an interactive process where different kinds of knowledge are combined through communication within and across organizational borders" (Chaminade, Lundvall & Haneef, 2018, p.1) and assume this communicative process as rather complex (Gossel, 2021).

We believe that media management research benefits from cross-innovation and thus collaboration with practice. We have learned that there is a strong need to bridge between theory and practice (Rohn & Evens, 2020; Ibrus & Rajahonka, 2019; Lowe & Picard, 2020). Believing that the ideas of cross-innovation are a fruitful background, we assume the debate on *rigor and relevance* to be noted in this context when applicable knowledge for science and practice of media organizations shall be developed in cross-innovation processes. In recent years, our field of research is fundamentally changing due to the development, dissemination, and use of new media (Albarran et al., 2018; Picard & Lowe, 2016; Rohn & Evens, 2020). Since arguments of our community have become stronger, calling for us to listen and interact with practice (e.g. Winter & Buschow, 2017; Rohn & Evens, 2020), we find a need not only for a translation between the two worlds, but for setting and developing a research agenda in dialogue – and this is how we suggest that cross-innovation can come to existence at the intersection of science and practice of media management.

With this contribution, we want to share with the media management research community first steps of a research project, in which we aim to build a science-and-



business community on issues of media management research. In our paper, we will focus on our very first step, which addresses the following questions:

- Which topics do media managers consider relevant to research?
- How can these issues be juxtaposed with the research agendas proclaimed by media management research?

This paper is structured as follows. In a first step, we summarize recent and relevant aspects of the rigor and relevance debate [section 2]. In a second step, we open a two-dimensional analysis. On the one hand [section 3], we sketch current issues on the media management research agenda, based on a literature review. On the other hand [section 4], we capture current issues of relevance of media management practice, based on a qualitatively oriented, survey based empirical study with German media managers. Finally [section 5] we juxtapose both perspectives to come up with new and relevant issues for media management research and practice and discuss our results [section 6].

2. Rigor and relevance

The debate about rigor and relevance has accompanied academic research in many disciplines for decades (Van de Ven & Johnson, 2006, p.802). Rigor refers in a broader sense to following the accepted rules of scientific work and in a narrower sense to the methodological acuity of empirical investigations. Rigor „is used to refer to the degree to which a work follows prescribed procedures for conducting research and producing results.“ (Simon 2004, p. 2).

(Practical) relevance on the other hand refers to (1) a selection of topics which are interesting to practitioners, or (2) research findings that are actionable to practice (Simon 2004, p. 2). Or – mapped onto the terms of a research model: In relevant research „the dependent variables represent outcomes that practitioners are interested in achieving, and the independent variables represent factors that can be manipulated by practitioners.“ (Varadarajan 2003, p. 368).

Traditionally, rigor and relevance have been treated and seen as opposites: either research follows the principles of rigor *or* it is relevant to practice. This tradeoff often found its expression in the combative "rigor *versus* relevance" (e.g. Davenport & Markus, 1999). However, researchers started recognizing that *versus* is a "false dichotomy that in most instances is socially constructed" (Gulati 2007, p. 777) and were asking "Why would we choose only one?" (Mentzer, 2008) and how to



overcome “the trade-off between rigor and relevance” (Kieser & Nicolai, 2005). Lack of practical meaning is not due to “too much” rigor, but - as Vermeulen (2005) already points out - because initial questions lacked relevance. “Asking questions that are of importance to reality, while not making concessions in terms of rigor in developing theory and empirical evidence, would provide most value. Relevance is then found in the question, rigor in the method applied to provide the answer.” (Vermeulen, 2005, p. 979) Even earlier, Anderson et al. (2001) called for “pragmatic science” that combines methodological rigor with practical relevance. However, their call for relevance remained at the level of asking relevant questions.

Building on this insight, practical suggestions were published to achieve relevance while still ensuring scientific rigor. For example, Gulati (2007) summarizes a five-step process towards relevant research, leading to the call for researchers to be “bilingual interpreters” for practitioners and to actively collaborate with them (p. 780-781). Similarly, Van de Ven & Johnson (2006, p. 810) note that “scholars can significantly increase the likelihood of advancing knowledge for theory and practice when they interact with practitioners ...”. Building upon this observation, they propose a concept of “engaged scholarship”. This concept goes far beyond a mere call for cooperation between scholars and practitioners by demanding very specifically four activities of engaged scholarship:

- “(1) confront questions and anomalies existing in reality,*
- (2) organize the research project as a collaborative learning community of scholars and practitioners with diverse perspectives,*
- (3) conduct research that systematically examines not only alternative models and theories but alternative practical formulations of the question of interest, and*
- (4) frame the research and its findings to contribute knowledge to academic disciplines and to one or more domains of practice.” (Van de Ven & Johnson, 2006, p. 815)*

As can be easily seen, engaged scholarship does not neglect scientific rigor. On the contrary, rigor is clearly reflected in all four activities. Thus, relevant research does not abandon the perspective of science and its standards, and it contributes primarily to the body of academic research. Overall, however, the concept of engaged scholarship does not play in the model world of “bridge building” and “transferring” between theory and practice, but is rather a holistic approach of knowledge production, “leveraging the likelihood of creative understanding by combining the unique insights of scholars from different disciplines and practitioners with different



functional experiences related to a given problem.” (Van de Ven & Johnson, 2006, p. 816)

In the recent debate in media management research, Picard & Lowe (2016) demanded: “It is clearly important that scholarship in our field be able to more thoroughly understand and more usefully describe developments in media and markets, interpret and clarify underlying factors that influence the dynamics of complex change, understand the experience and results of organisational adaptation and resistance, and advance theory that is particularly pertinent to management practice in and for media organisations today.” (p. 62). Achtenhagen (2016) in her reply to Picard & Lowe (2016) is referring to the concept of engaged scholarship and attributes particular importance to this concept when it comes to implementing the demands of Picard & Lowe (2016), namely to achieve “scientific diversity and research of theoretical rigor and practical relevance” (Achtenhagen 2016, p. 120). However, this proposal (necessarily due to the format of a short debate contribution) remains vague. How exactly can the concept of engaged scholarship be implemented in media management research? On the one hand, it is quite clear that methodological rigor is important alongside theoretical rigor. It is also quite clear how rigor can be achieved - and concretely improved in our field. Picard & Lowe (2016) already make numerous suggestions in this regard, which are constructively taken up and further developed by Achtenhagen (2016).

On the other hand, the question arises as to how engaged scholarship can be specifically promoted in media management research to find and work on *relevant* topics and to achieve *relevant* results. Starting such a process from scratch is likely to be doomed to failure. Our first starting point is therefore the recent and actual topic agenda of media management research.

3. Research view: Current research agenda in science

When it comes to jointly developing research programs in the sense of engaged scholarship, it is obviously not very helpful to look only and in isolation at the current needs of practice. If we assume, on the one hand, that the topics of media management research currently being addressed also strive for practical relevance and, on the other hand, that the needs of practice are accessible to a (rigorous) scholarly approach, it seems promising to first look at these two perspectives individually to then juxtapose both perspectives in a synthesis step and to propose new research programs from this. Therefore, this chapter will recapitulate the current state of media management research of the last three years. In particular, we analyze



two journals – JOMBS and JMM as proposed by Albarran (2018, p. 6) – as well as the latest edited volume Rohn & Evens (2020).

Guiding for the structure of this elaboration are categories according to Albarran (2018, p. 6ff.), complemented by the category *technologies*, inspired by Voci et al.'s (2019) elaboration on media ventures. In total, of the 143 studies found, we were able to gain full access to the full papers of 62 papers.

The leading question for this analysis was:

What is currently being researched in media management studies?

Table 1

Current research agenda in science

CATEGORIES	SOURCES	TOPICS
MANAGEMENT STUDIES	e.g. Eigler & Azarpour (2020); Ekberg (2020); Maijanen (2020)	Media management suffers from development of theories (Albarran 2018, p. 12). Therefore, need to harvest theoretical approaches in new research fields (e.g. social media, virtual worlds, big data). (ibid.)
NEWSPAPER STUDIES	e.g. Li & Thorson (2018); Grönlund et al. (2020); Edge (2019); Lorentz (2019)	Mainly combinations of business issues journalistic issues, such as transformation/balancing journalistic and revenue mission.
LEADERSHIP (including corporate boards, stakeholders and mergers)	e.g. Achtenhagen et al. (2018); Coffey (2018); Harker (2020); Kosterich & Weber (2018); Nölleke-Przybylski et al. (2019); Wilczek (2019); Ollkonnen (2018)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ownership - venture capital financing - ambidexterity and uncertainty in organizations - corporate responsibility and strategy
NEWS AND NEWS MANAGEMENT	e.g. Bachmann et al. (2019); Park et al. (2020); Gade (2018); Cook (2020); Lischka (2020); Kosterich (2020)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - quality of journalism - trust of journalism - transparency of journalism - digitisation on revenue models and value chains - work of journalists/news workers
AUDIENCE STUDIES	e.g. Palomba (2020); Kordyaka, Jahn & Niehavs (2020); Ferreira & Zambaldi (2019); Ji & Hanna (2020); Kim (2018); Krouwer, Poels & Paulussen (2019); Harms, Bijmolt & Hoekstra (2019); Wang & Chan-Olmsted (2020); Bange, Moisander & Järventie-Thesleff (2020); Kalsnes & Krumsvik (2019); Xiao, Wang & Chan-Olmsted (2018); Marino & Lo Presti (2019); Guo (2020); Álvarez-Monzoncillo, Haro Rodríguez & Picard (2018); Tropp & Baetzgen (2019)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - brand loyalty - perception consumer for media organizations' branding - trust - behaviour of consumers
ENTREPRENEURSHIP STUDIES	e.g. Klaß (2020); Horst et al. (2020); Konieczna (2020); Villi et al. (2020); Hitter (2020); Rau & Ehlers (2020); Will, Gossel & Windscheid (2020)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - open innovation - the communication of entrepreneurs via digital media - metropolitan magazines



		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - cooperation between science and practice - impact of emerging technologies on start ups
TECHNOLOGIES	e.g. Chan-Olmsted (2019); Will, Gossel & Windscheid (2020); Fagerjord & Kueng (2019)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Artificial Intelligence - impact of emerging technologies on start ups - influence of technologies during whole value chain
MULTIPLATFORM STUDIES	e.g. Chyi et al. (2019)	Not too many papers have been found. When research has been done in this area, it has mostly focused on the audience's perspective rather than the media organization's perspective (see audience studies).
TELEVISION STUDIES	e.g. Mooney, Burdon & Kang (2018); Malthouse & Lee (2020); Lowe & Maijanen (2019); Raats (2020)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - creativity/idea generation - online video consumption or collaborations between representatives and policymakers
MOTION PICTURE INDUSTRY	e.g. Kim (2019); Notarajan et al. (2018); Park (2019)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - marketing - distribution
MARKET STRUCTURE VARIABLES	e.g. Zabel et al. (2020)	Hardly any papers could be classified.

Note: own presentation.

Management studies

As Albarran (2018, p. 12) pointed out in his introduction, media management research suffers from the development of new theories. Therefore, he asks to harvest theoretical approaches in new research fields, such as social media, virtual worlds, or big data (ibid.). The field would thus benefit from studies that test new theoretical assumptions and challenge existing thinking (ibid.). This is also reflected in the analysis of the current management studies. However, examples that follow his approach are e.g. Ekberg (2020), Maijanen (2020), and Eigler & Azarpour (2020).

Newspaper studies

Furthermore, Albarran (2018, p. 10) summarizes, the newspaper industry is facing a number of challenges. The future of journalism is both an economic and a social issue (ibid.). Thus, on the one hand, there are business issues (e.g. digital subscriptions) and, on the other hand, journalistic issues (e.g. fake news) subjects of research. When analyzing the current newspaper studies, it is striking that especially the link between these two topics is usually taken up, such as the transformation and balancing of the journalistic and revenue mission by Li & Thorson (2018).

Leadership research

The digital transformation of media organizations is also reflected in leadership research. In addition to topics such as ownership (e.g. Achtenhagen et al., 2018; Coffey, 2018; Harker 2020) or venture capital financing (e.g. Kosterich & Weber,



2018), the focus is also on leadership strategies in connection with uncertainties (e.g. Nölleke-Przybylski et al., 2019; Wilczek, 2019).

For instance, Nölleke-Przybylski et al. (2019) look at patterns of ambidextrous strategizing and organizing in cross-border media activities in the wake of media change.

News and news management

Studies on the topics of news and news management deal on the one hand with the content itself and on the other hand with the work of journalists and news workers. In the area of content, topics such as perception of quality (e.g. Bachmann et al., 2019), trust (e.g. Park et al., 2020), and transparency (e.g. Gade, 2018) of journalism are addressed. With regard to news management, the digitalization of revenue models and value chains in journalism (Cook, 2020) as well as the reorganization of employees in news management (Kosterich, 2020) has been researched.

Audience studies

In the literature analysis, it is striking that by far the most papers were found in the area of audience studies. Hereby, research can be found primarily on topics, such as brand loyalty (e.g. Palomba, 2020; Kordyaka, Jahn & Niehavs, 2020; Ferreira & Zambaldi, 2019), consumer for media organizations' branding (e.g. Wang & Chan-Olmsted, 2020; Bange, Moisander & Järventie-Thesleff, 2020), perception (e.g. Ji & Hanna, 2020; Kim, 2018; Krouwer, Poels & Paulussen, 2019; Harms, Bijmolt & Hoekstra, 2019), trust (e.g. Kalsnes & Krumsvik, 2019; Xiao, Wang & Chan-Olmsted, 2018), or behaviour of consumers (e.g. Marino & Lo Presti, 2019; Guo 2020; Álvarez-Monzoncillo, Haro Rodríguez & Picard, 2018; Tropp & Baetzgen, 2019). In the literature analysis, it is striking that by far the most papers were found in the area of audience studies.

Entrepreneurship studies

In addition, issues of entrepreneurship studies are on the rise. Aspects such as open innovation (e.g. Klaub, 2020), the communication of entrepreneurs via digital media (e.g. Horst et al., 2020), metropolitan magazines (e.g. Konieczna, 2020; Villi et al., 2020), or the cooperation between science and research (e.g. Hitter, 2020; Rau & Ehlers 2020) are currently analyzed.

Technologies

As Albarran (2018, p. 12) has already articulated, new technologies will create new multifaceted research fields for media management researchers. In the course of the last few years, a few of these new questions have already been investigated. For example, Chan-Olmsted (2019) examined the benefits of artificial intelligence (AI),



the role of AI in the context of the value chain, and the challenges of incorporating cognitive technologies in this industry.

Multiplatform studies

The few existing papers within the context of multiplatform studies mostly focused on the audience's perspective (see audience studies) rather than the media company's perspective. An example that focuses on the perspective of media organizations is the study by Chyi et al. (2019) on the topic of operating models of transnational news management.

Television studies

In the field of television studies, topics such as creativity/idea generation (e.g. Mooney, Burdon & Kang, 2018), online video consumption (e.g. Fuduric, Malthouse & Lee, 2020), public service mission (e.g. Lowe & Maijanen, 2019) or collaborations between representatives and policymakers (e.g. Raats, 2020) are issues of current debate.

Motion Picture Industry

The main topics on the research agenda in the Motion Picture Industry are marketing and distribution as works of Kim (2019), Natarajan et al. (2018), and Park (2019) show. For instance, Kim (2019) focuses on brand extension strategies in the US-film industry, examining most successful types of adaptations at the global box office (ibid.).

Market structure variables

Market structure variables papers were rarely observed. One study found was by the Zabel et. al. (2020) research group, which conducted a quantitative survey of video producers on the topic of location decisions.

In summary: Although the rather narrow scope (two journals and one edited volume) and time frame (three years) limit the value of this review and brief overview of the results of media management research, it has nonetheless shown an impression of the breadth and diversity of the research agenda of our community. Thus, it will be interesting to learn whether this agenda provides points of contact for those open questions and problem areas that are currently on the agenda of media managers in practice.



4. Practical View: Research agenda in practice

4.1. Method

To grasp perspectives of media managers in practice, we focus in a first step on media managers who work for German daily and/or weekly newspapers ($N \approx 800$), based on members of the BDZV Bundesverband Digitalpublisher und Zeitungsverleger e.V. (engl.: Federal Association of Digital Publishers and Newspaper Publishers e.V.). With help of *R web scraping* (R package *rvest*), the existing, publicly accessible database from BDZV including names of media managers, names of media organizations, and email-addresses was exported. With the survey tool *unipark*, an online survey was programmed. This survey included demographics (media managers, media organizations) and questions on innovation units of media organizations and their strategy. In addition, an open question on potential research issues from the practitioners' perspective has been included, which is the focus of this paper. Other scales, including entrepreneurial orientation, entrepreneurial passion, innovation orientation, and organizational learning, were collected, but are not in the focus of this analysis. *Data collection* was proceeded via automated individualized invitation emails (invitation: Dec 14, 2020; reminder: Jan 12, 2021; field time: Dec 14, 2020 – Jan 31, 2021). *Data analysis* was proceeded with help of MaxQDA according to descriptive statistics (demographics) and rules of qualitative content analysis (open questions).

Limitations of the data are the one-sidedness of the respondents in terms of industry sector (digital and newspaper publishers) and nation (Germany), the challenge of identifying the correct contact persons and their potential multiple roles in the company, timing challenges (pandemic, end of the year) and sample size.

4.2. Data

Of the ≈ 800 media managers contacted, 50 completed the questionnaire. After cleaning the data set, with regard to aspects such as a valid declaration of consent, response time, response tendencies, and consistency, a total sample of $N=46$ resulted.

Demographic of persons

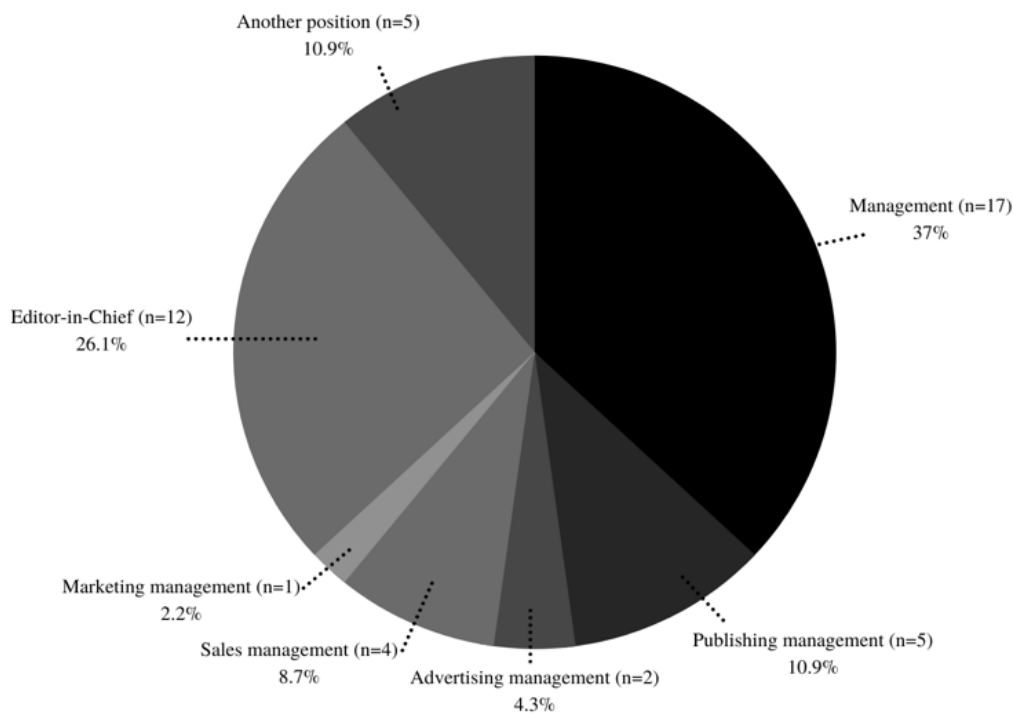
In total, 43 male (93.5%) and 3 female (6.5%) media managers, aged between 30 and 66 years, participated. On average, the respondents had already been working

as media managers in general for 19.71 years and in the respective organization for 13.54 years. In this context, 33 respondents held one management position, 12 respondents held two management positions and one respondent held three management positions simultaneously.

To get the most accurate answers possible, the respondents were asked to select one management position from whose point of view they would like to answer the survey. For this reason, the questionnaire was answered from the following positions (see figure 1):

Figure 1

Perspective according to respondents' management position



Note: own presentation, $N = 46$.

Demographic of enterprises

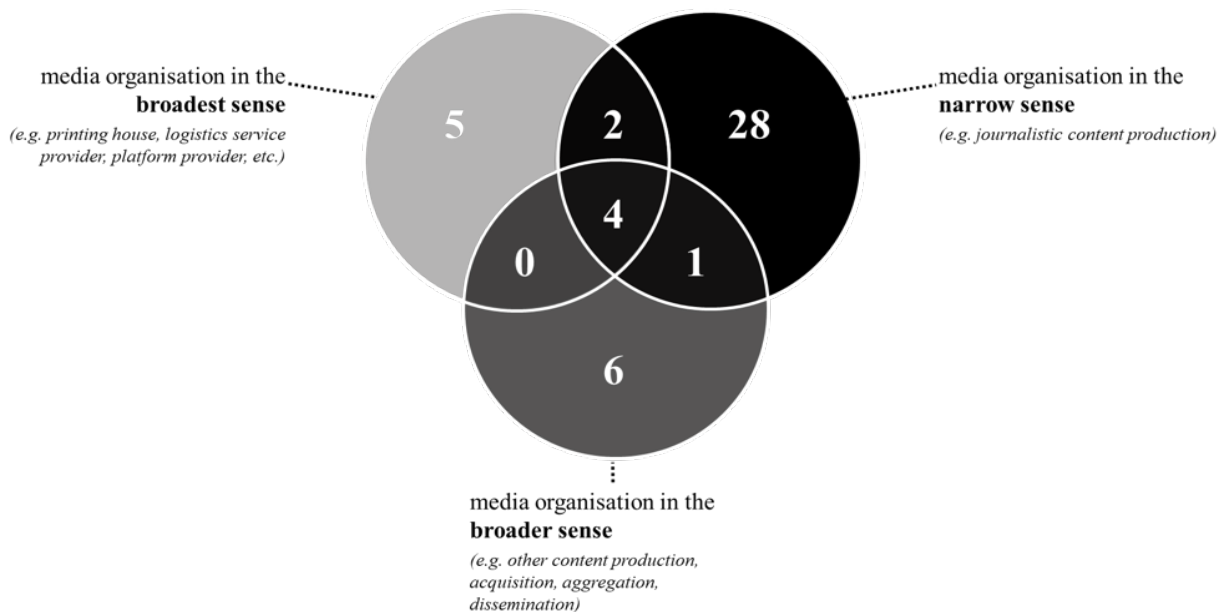
The media managers interviewed were for the most part employed in medium-sized organizations ($n=27$, 58.7%) that operate primarily in the German market ($n=40$,

86.7%). As described in figure 2, the organizations were described by the media managers as follows, according to Voci et al. (2019, p. 45–46):

- 76.1% of the respondents (n=35) stated that they work in a media organization in the narrow sense (e.g. journalistic content production). 80% of these organizations (n=28) were only classified as media organizations in the narrow sense. One organization (3.5%) was designated as a media organization in both the narrow and broader sense (e.g. other content production, acquisition, aggregation, dissemination). Two organizations (7%) were classified as media organizations in the narrow and broadest sense (printing house, logistics service provider, platform provider, etc.). Four organizations were classified in all three categories.
- If the organization could not be described in the narrow sense (23.9%, n=11), then it was either an organization in the broader (13%, n=6) or broadest sense (10.9%, n=5).

Figure 2

Allocation of surveyed media organizations in line with classification of Voci et al. (2019, p. 45f)

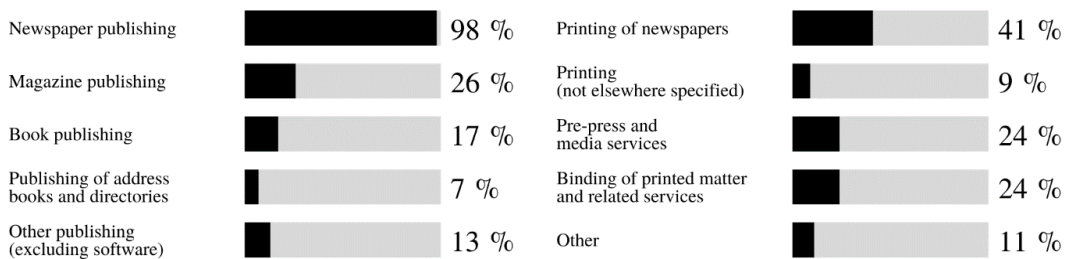


Note: own presentation, N = 46. Circles represent the types (media organizations in the narrow, broader, broadest sense). The lighter a circle's color is, the further it is from a media organization in the narrowest sense. Furthermore, the intersections can be seen through the overlaps of the circles. For example, based on the common intersection of the three circles, it can be noted that n=4 (8.7%) media organizations can be defined in all three media organization types according to Voci et al. (2019, p. 45–46).

Most media managers stated that they work in media organizations that publish (98%, n=45) and/or print newspapers (41%, n=19) (figure 3).

Figure 3

Respondents according to the affiliation of the media organization to economic sectors



Note: own presentation, *N* = 46.

4.3. Research impulses from a practitioner's perspective

The media managers were asked which research topics they would put on the research agenda for the next 5 years. The answers were deductively classified into the categories according to Albarran (2018, p. 11-12) and complemented by the category *technologies* for later comparison. Hints and ideas relating to the categories Newspaper Studies, Leadership, Audience Studies, Entrepreneurship, and Technologies were found. These research impulses have been summarized in questions (see table 2 below):

Table 2

Research impulses from a practitioner's perspective

CATEGORIES	RESEARCH IMPULSES
LEADERSHIP (including corporate boards, stakeholders and mergers)	What changes and what staff skills are needed to cope with the changes of the next 5 years? (25) What is the optimal organizational structure? (38) What qualifications do employees need? (25, 38) How do media organizations find good employees? (25, 38) What must an employer in a rural region offer qualified employees? (38)



<p>NEWS AND NEWS MANAGEMENT</p>	<p><u>News:</u></p> <p>What will the ideal reading offer of an editorial office look like in the future? (11) How can it be ensured that editorial offices remain critical despite increasing digitalisation? (23, 34) What modern forms of presentation of news/information are needed (podcast/moving image)? (22) What are key performance indicators for digital journalism? (27) How can relevant coverage contributions be generated? (12) How can markets for digital products be developed? (12) What opportunities are there for digital publications? (32) Which journalistic contents will be relevant in which social milieus in the future? (22, 30) What new formats can be developed that differentiate themselves from Fake News? (3) On which channels will editorial offices publish in the future? (9)</p> <p><u>News management:</u></p> <p>How must education for digital journalists look like in the future? (43) What will editorial offices look like in the future? (43) Customer-centric offer How do news succeed in serving user interests and what tools does an editorial team need to do this? (3, 9)</p>
<p>ENTREPRENEURSHIP STUDIES</p>	<p>What product technologies or architectures could help SMEs to meet customer expectations? (15) How are digital business models evolving for local media houses? (5) How is local commerce developing in the area of digitalisation? (1)</p>
<p>AUDIENCE STUDIES</p>	<p><u>User behaviour:</u></p> <p>What is the media usage behaviour of readers? (14) How does reader behaviour differ between print and digital? (40) Which devices do readers use? How much time do they invest daily in using them? At what times of day do they consume media? What products/services do readers want? (40) Which content and media forms are relevant for which target group? (9, 22, 26, 38) How are socio-demographic characteristics and the perception of content relevance related? (5) How do recipients and their communication behaviour in the different age groups change with increasing digitalisation? (34) Is there one product for all (scalable) or are there many, individual products? (22) How will recipients inform themselves in the future? (44) What causes today's core readership of print newspapers to switch to digital offerings? (2, 33, 38) How do recipients check the credibility of sources or what seals of quality can there be online? (44) What is the advertising behaviour of readers? (40)</p> <p><u>Willingness to pay from the audience's point of view:</u></p> <p>How much are readers willing to pay for content? How much should a print, ePaper or Plus subscription cost? (20, 33, 38) What kind of content are readers willing to pay for? (4, 16, 20, 23,33, 38) How can access barriers be reduced, especially for older people? (11) For which content are younger target groups willing to pay for content? (16) What could economic models for audience-oriented media look like? (8)</p>
<p>NEWSPAPER STUDIES</p>	<p>What future services should publishers offer? (37) What structures will media companies have in the future? (43) What alternative revenue sources/revenue models are suitable for media companies? (14) What could individualisation of content for customers look like? (41) To what extent does the advertising effectiveness of a print supplement differ from a digital campaign with comparable monetary input? (33) Will the newspaper be sustainable in print in 5-10 years? (1) Change processes in newspaper publishing houses. (25) Success factors research (20, 38) What is the readiness of local businesses for digitisation? (42) How can quality journalism be refinanced in the long term by the private sector against the background of the transformation of our industry? (24) What are the future strategies for newspapers? (32) How can the media fulfil their information mandate in the face of increasing pressure from the market and the lack of monetisation in the digital world? (28)</p>



	<p>Will content be shared via a journalistic platform (similar to a "Spotify for journalism") in the future? (41)</p> <p><u>Local Journalism:</u></p> <p>Is local journalistic content also relevant in the digital context or to be regarded as a unique selling point? (29)</p> <p>What are the success factors for digitally prepared local journalism? (5, 11, 42)</p> <p>What are the potentials and prerequisites of digital local journalism in rural areas? (8)</p> <p>How can delivery logistics in rural areas be optimised? (10)</p> <p><u>Paid content from a media company perspective:</u></p> <p>What business/pricing models for news/information products are feasible? (8, 22)</p> <p>Where (and in what form) is monetisation via advertising revenues conceivable? (3, 26)</p> <p>How can payment channels and billing for digital services be simplified and accelerated? (10)</p> <p>How can users be tied to digital (local) journalistic brands? (8)</p>
<p>TECHNOLOGIES</p>	<p>What technologies can support the current transformation in media companies? (27)</p> <p>What tools and techniques can be used for digital media? (8)</p> <p>How can editorial work and production be automated? (15, 18)</p> <p>What is telepresence? (18)</p> <p><u>Artificial Intelligence (AI):</u></p> <p>What is AI? (14,18)</p> <p>How can artificial AI be used for processes and systems? (35)</p> <p>How can AI be used for content? (35)</p> <p>What are the fields of application and opportunities for AI? (15)</p> <p>How can AI relieve editorial work? (4)</p> <p><u>Holography:</u></p> <p>What is Holography? (18)</p> <p>Can newspapers be replaced by playout formats on Smart Slides or Holograms? (3)</p>

Note: own presentation, formulation of questions based on respondents' statements on the questions (question "Practice-oriented research"), numbers in brackets refer to the cases considered, which were numbered from 1-46.

In table 2 we have summarized the practitioners' advice and impulses with the help of qualitative analysis. However, this result is not the overall result of this paper, it rather forms the second pillar after the literature review. In the following step, both perspectives – research agendas in scientific and practical discourse - are now juxtaposed.

5. Science and practice: Juxtaposition of research agendas

With the aim of developing new and relevant questions for media management research and practice, we have, on the one hand, compiled an overview of current research questions in media management research (see section 3). On the other hand, we asked media managers for research impulses (see section 4). By the following, we combine and juxtapose these two perspectives (see table 3).



Table 3

Juxtaposition of research agendas

CATEGORIES	MM RESEARCH	PRACTICE
NEWSPAPER STUDIES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - mainly combinations of business issues journalistic issues, such as transformation/balancing journalistic and revenue mission 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - future strategies, structures, and success factors - change processes - digitalisation in (especially local) newspaper publishing houses
NEWS AND NEWS MANAGEMENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - quality of journalism - trust of journalism - transparency of journalism - digitisation on revenue models and value chains - and work of journalists/news workers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - reading offer of an editorial office (with focus on aspects such as forms of content presentation, channels, success factors, relevance of -local- content and the individualisability of content) - work and education of journalists
LEADERSHIP (including corporate boards, stakeholders and mergers)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ownership - venture capital financing - ambidexterity and uncertainty in organizations - corporate responsibility and strategy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - change processes - the optimal organizational structure - employees' qualifications in the digital transformation - acquisition of qualified employees - what an employer in a rural region must offer qualified employees
AUDIENCE STUDIES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - brand loyalty - perception especially of native advertisement - consumer for media organizations' branding - trust - or behaviour of consumers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - media use and behaviour (influence of factors such as demographics (especially age), end devices, media forms, time of day of use, credibility of sources and the individualisation of offers) - what causes the current core readership of print newspapers to switch to digital offerings - willingness to pay (for what, how much) - how can access barriers reduced
ENTREPRENEURSHIP STUDIES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - open innovation - the communication of entrepreneurs via digital media - metropolitan magazines - or the cooperation between science and practice - impact of emerging technologies on start ups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - digitalisation of business model (in relation to local media organization)
TECHNOLOGIES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Artificial Intelligence - impact of emerging technologies on start ups - or influence of technologies during whole value chain 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - technological support in the transformation of media organizations or, in particular, in editorial work and in the fulfilment of customer expectations - Artificial Intelligence (opportunities and fields of application e.g. processes, systems, content, editorial work) - Holography - Telepresence

Note: own presentation, sources to bullet points can be found in section 3 and 4.



Due to digitalization and new market participants, media managers are forced to master the balancing act between digital growth and change management. For this reason, further research regarding future strategies, structures, and success factors of (local) media organizations is particularly desired from the practice side. In current *newspaper research*, we could mainly observe that the focus is on the combination of business and journalistic issues, such as transformation and balance between journalistic and revenue-oriented mission (e.g. Li & Thorson 2018; Grönlund et al. 2020; Edge 2019; Lorentz 2019). In reconciling the two perspectives, we therefore see potential especially in further business research on strategies and structures of media organizations. For example, we can envision questions such as: *How can media organizations in future balance between potentially conflicting purposes (e.g. economic, journalistic, sustainable, social) – or – how can they handle multidimensional ambidexterity? How can media organizations constantly renew themselves – or – how can organizing/ change/ innovation be processed – to ensure their future existence?*

This need for research also coincides with the open questions of practitioners in the field of *leadership research*. In the comparison, we observe that the focus could be placed even more on aspects such as uncertainties in organizations, corporate strategies, and human resources. Moreover, since the media managers from our sample mainly worked in newspaper publishing houses, research in a local context can be an interesting impulse for the newspaper industry.

Questions around the topic of human resources can also be found to a certain extent in the area of *news and news management*. This is because the digital transformation also influences the work of journalists and news workers. In practice as well as in research, this is therefore an important topic that also offers a lot of research potential in the future (e.g. change of work and education of journalists). But not only the staff changes, but also the content (including e.g. forms of presentation, channels, etc.). When comparing the two perspectives, it is noticeable that current research is more concerned with quality criteria of journalism (e.g. transparency and trust of content). Practitioners, however, have formulated questions directly about content and its forms of presentation. For this reason, we see further gaps to research here. Research could therefore analyze how the reading offer of an editorial office (with a focus on aspects such as forms of content presentation, channels, success factors, relevance of -local- content, and the individualizability of content) could look like.



In addition, we can also see differences between the two perspectives in the field of *audience studies*. Specifically, media organizations face the challenge that their target groups have changed or expanded (geographically as well as socio-demographically), especially due to media convergence. Moreover, the shift from older to younger target groups has changed the reading behavior as well as the willingness to pay (especially for digital products) of the readers. Furthermore, a shift to customer-centered media offers is demanded by the readers. Therefore, media managers see the new technologies as great possibilities to process markets and contents according to the target group. In the comparison with the scientific papers, we hence see potential in further research into media perception and behaviour. Since the topic of willingness to pay was repeatedly raised in our questionnaire, but not found in the literature, we see a need for further research here, too.

According to the data, media managers seem to be challenged by issues related to innovation and entrepreneurship. The development of new business fields, the diversification of the media offers as well as the long-term transformation into digital business models are seen as difficulties. But they also see room and courage for innovation and new digital business models in their media organizations. Due to this, the media managers see a need for further research in the area of digital business models (possibly with a local focus). In comparison with the current research literature, studies on the topic of e.g. open innovation (e.g. Klaub, 2020) or the cooperation between science and practice (e.g. Hitter, 2020; Rau & Ehlers, 2020) can be found. In view of this, we therefore see a field of tension in the area of new digital business models. We could imagine research questions such as: *What could be new digital business models for media organizations? How can new digital business models be developed for local media houses?*

Such new digital business models require a wide range of resources, such as *technologies* or IT-know-how. In media organizations, however, there is a lack of these points in some cases. This is also reflected in the formulated research impulses. For example, media managers are interested in which technologies can support them in the transformation of media organizations (especially in editorial work) and in meeting customer expectations. Chan-Olmsted (2019), for example, fills this research need with her work on AI. In addition, the impact of technologies on the value chain (e.g. Will, Gossel & Windscheid, 2020; Fagerjord & Kueng, 2019) has also been investigated. Basically, however, we have not yet found too many papers in the literature in the context of technologies. For this reason, we would like to appeal to the community that more questions should be analyzed in this area. Since



technologies have an influence on all areas of research through digitalization, we can imagine very wide-ranging questions here.

No research impulses by practitioners could be classified for the categories *management studies*, *market structure variables*, *multiplatform studies*, *motion picture industry*, and *television studies*. For this reason, it is difficult to derive impulses for further research in these fields. Since the sample was developed through a newspaper industry mailing list, it can be assumed that they have not formulated any research impulses for other industries, such as the film or television industry, because of this. Furthermore, management topics tended to be classified in the category newspaper studies.

6. Conclusion

Referring back to the above introduced rigor and relevance debate, we start our conclusion by reminding that the concept of engaged scholarship was developed as an answer to the problem of the lack of relevance of scientific research results – in general, and obviously in media management research. Engaged scholarship understands the gap between theory and practice as a problem of knowledge production and proposes to address this gap in cooperation between science and practice. The first step of this cooperation is then for researchers to address the questions and anomalies that exist in reality (Van de Ven & Johnson, 2006, p. 815). We have made this first step in this paper by systematically confronting current issues in media management research and current issues in media practice to interpretatively synthesize potentially exciting research topics and issues for both sides. In principle, this approach has proven to be suitable: the juxtaposition stimulates constructive engagement with phenomena and resulting questions of media practice in the sense of engaged scholarship.

However, this step is only the first of the four phases of engaged scholarship. For the further steps, it is suggested (Van de Ven & Johnson, 2006, p. 815) to - secondly - organize research projects to deal with the developed questions as collaborative learning communities of science and practice. We all know that this step is incomparably more difficult than the previous one. Therefore, in our survey of media managers, we asked very specifically whether there was interest in cooperation with research institutions in principle. In fact, 32 out of 46 of the media managers said they were interested in such cooperation. Thirdly, it is about not only looking at issues through a single theoretical lens, but applying alternative theories, models,



and methods to the same issue. In this respect, the media management community is fortunate not to remain pigeonholed like some other research fields, but to unite researchers from a wide variety of disciplinary, theoretical, and methodological backgrounds. In this respect, our community is predestined for multi-focal research projects in the sense of engaged scholarship. Finally, and fourthly, there is the question of appropriate presentation and dissemination of the knowledge gained, not only in our own community, but also (back) into practice, to which the collaborative learning communities can make a decisive contribution.

If cross-innovation (Ibrus, 2019) helps to advance the required bridge between theory and practice in media management research (Rohn & Evens, 2020; Lowe & Picard, 2020), and if innovation is an interactive communicative complex process across and within organizational borders (Chamide et al., 2018), this paper has shown how this communicative process can be started between science and practice of media management to produce a valuable source of inspiration for research. We see this as a first impulse on how the dialogue between media management research and practice can be shaped and strengthened. In this respect, the present study should only be seen as the first part of a larger process; follow-up communication (e.g. workshops and Q&A sessions to further develop the issues and joint research projects) with practitioners and academics are planned to help foster fruitful learning communities in the sense of engaged scholarship in the long run.



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