Linda Saulīte

NEWS MEDIA BRANDING IN THE 21ST CENTURY MEDIA BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT

Doctoral Thesis

RIGA TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY

Faculty of Engineering Economics and Management
Institute of Business Engineering and Management

Linda Saulīte

Doctoral Student of the Study Programme "Management Science and Economics"

NEWS MEDIA BRANDING
IN THE 21st CENTURY MEDIA BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT

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Scientific supervisor
Professor Dr. oec.
DENISS ŠČEULOVS

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Professor Dr. Renata Korsakienė
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DECLARATION OF ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

I hereby declare that the Doctoral Thesis submitted for the review to Riga Technical University for the promotion to the scientific degree of Doctor of Science (Ph. D.) is my own. I confirm that this Doctoral Thesis had not been submitted to any other university for the promotion to a scientific degree.

Linda Saulīte………………………………………………….(signature)
Date: ………………………

The Doctoral Thesis has been written in English. It consists of an Introduction, 4 chapters, Conclusions, 56 figures, 43 tables, 10 appendices; the total number of pages is 217, not including appendices. The Bibliography contains 291 titles.

ANOTĀCIJA

Digitalizācijas ietekmē mediju nozare ir piedzīvojusi ievērojamas pārmaiņas. Dažādu tehnoloģisko platformu, īpaši sociālo mediju platformu attīstība ir radījusi jaunus ieradumus mediju satura patēriņā. Platformas ir radījušas iespēju auditorijai patērēt saturu vietā un laikā, neatkarīgi no paša medija. Analizējot auditorijas satura patēriņa ieradumus balstoties uz auditorijas vecumu, dati apstiprina, jo jaunāka ir auditorija, jo vairāk mediju un ziņu mediju saturs tiek patērēts sociālo mediju platformās. Auditorijai vecumā no 15-24 gadiem (Z paaudze) mediju satura un ziņu patēriņš ir atkarīgs no platformas un laika, dodot priekšroku globāliem un sociāliem medijiem un daudz mazāk laika veltot nacionāliem ziņu medijiem un to saturam. Sekojoši nacionālajiem ziņu medijiem rodas izaicinājums nākotnē nodrošināt un piesaistīt auditoriju. Lai arī platformu attīstība radījusi medijiem un ziņu medijiem iespēju ātri un efektīvi sasniegt auditoriju un izplatīt saturu, tā arī veicinājusi pieaugošu konkurenci ar pašām platformām un saturu tajās. Minētais satura patēriņš pēc pieprasījuma veicina mediju zīmola asociāciju un attiecīgu zīmola kapitāla samazināšanos. No zīmola vadības aspekta, digitalizācijas radītās izmaiņas nozīmē izaicinājumu veidot un noturēt spēcīgas nacionālā ziņu mediju zīmola asociācijas, lai nodrošinātu zīmola atšķirtspēju un kapitālu platformu vidē, īpaši auditorijai vecumā no 15–24 gadiem.

Promocijas darba pētījuma aktualitāte ir saistīta ar izaicinājumiem, ar kuriem saskaras nacionālie ziņu zīmoli esošajā mediju satura patēriņa vidē. Pētījuma mērķis ir noskaidrot, kā attīstīt un stiprināt nacionālo ziņu mediju zīmola unikalitāti un zīmola kapitālu pašreizējā mediju biznesa vidē no Z paaudzes uztveres aspekta un izstrādāt metodiku ziņu zīmola unikalitātes un zīmola kapitāla attīstībai.

Lai sasniegtu promocijas darba mērķi, tiek analizētas ziņu patēriņa tendences, to ietekme uz ziņu mediju zīmolu attiecināšanu. Zīmola kapitāla un zīmola unikalitātes teorijas tiek izmantotas, lai izveidotu teorētisko ietvaru empīriskajam pētījumam par nacionālo ziņu mediju zīmola unikalitātes veidošanos un tā ietekmi uz zīmola kapitālu. Promocijas darba pētījums sniedz atbildes uz to, kā un kādi ziņu mediju zīmola atribūti veicina zīmola unikalitātes un zīmola kapitāla attīstību, kā arī to, kā unikalitāte ietekmē ziņu mediju zīmola kapitālu. Pamatojoties uz pētījuma rezultātiem, izstrādātā ziņu mediju zīmola vadības metodika pielietota un aprobēta nacionāla ziņu mediju zīmola vadības pieejās.

Promocijas darbs rakstīts angļu valodā. Promocijas darbs ietver ievadu, četras daļas, secinājumus un priekšlikumus, izmantoto 291 avotu bibliogrāfisko sarakstu. Darbā ir 43 tabulas un 56 attēli. Darba apjoms ir 217 lapas, neieskaitot 10 pielikumus.

ABSTRACT

The media industry has experienced significant transformation due to digitalization. The development of various technological platforms, especially social media platforms, has created new habits in consuming media content and news. Analysing audience content consumption based on generations, the data confirms that the younger the audience, the more media and news media content is consumed on social media platforms. For the audience aged 15–24 years (Generation Z), media content and news consumption depend on the platform and time, with a preference for global and social media and much less time devoted to national news media and their content. Consequently, significant challenges arise for the national news media regarding the possibilities of securing and attracting an audience in the future and advertising revenue. Although the development of platforms has created an opportunity for media and news media to reach audiences and distribute content quickly and efficiently, it has increased competition with the platforms and their content. On-demand content consumption contributes to decreasing media brand associations and a corresponding decrease in news media brand equity. From a branding perspective, building and maintaining strong national news media brand associations is challenging to ensure brand distinctiveness and equity in the platform environment, especially for audiences aged 15–24.

The topicality of the Doctoral Thesis research is related to the challenges national news brands face in the existing media content consumption environment. The research aims to ascertain how to develop and strengthen the brand uniqueness and brand equity of the national news media in the current media business environment as perceived by Generation Z and to develop a methodology for strengthening the brand uniqueness and brand equity of the news media.

To achieve the goal of the Thesis, news consumption trends and their impact on news media brand attribution are analysed. Brand equity and brand uniqueness theories are used to create a theoretical framework for assessing national news media brand uniqueness and its impact on brand equity. The research answers how and which news media brand attributes contribute to the development of brand uniqueness and brand equity, as well as how uniqueness affects news media brand equity. The developed methodology of news media branding was applied and approved in national news media branding approaches based on the research results.

The Doctoral Thesis has been written in English. It comprises an introduction, four chapters, conclusions, recommendations, and a list of references of 291 sources. It has been illustrated with 43 tables and 56 figures. The volume of the Thesis is 217 pages, excluding 10 annexes.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Contents of the Thesis

Introduction

The 21st century business environment is characterised by extensive digital transformation: the rapid development of e-commerce, the transformation of marketing into digital marketing, the digital banking and virtual financial instruments in the banking sector, and brand new categories such as online resource-sharing platforms and others. Digital transformation is changing the business paradigm by creating new categories of companies that have never been seen before. Digitalisation has a significant impact on the internal and external processes of companies. As a result of the digital transformation, the media business environment has undergone significant changes. Currently, the content of almost all media is available and consumed in digital form, and the traditional form has become secondary or is gradually disappearing. The most vital factors contributing to the transformation of the media business environment are the generational changes in media consumers or audiences, their expectations, and content consumption habits, which also shape the change in demand. Digitisation has changed the production, storage, distribution, and consumption of content from analogue to digital and fundamentally changed media content consumption habits. This influences the demands of the consumer or audience, the value of the media brand and branding, and the appeal of media to advertisers and investors alike.

Following audience traffic and content consumption channels, a growing amount of advertising spending went into the digital environment in 2022, reaching 56 % of total advertising spending worldwide. The globally projected increase in advertising spending in the digital environment in 2022 compared to 2021 is 15 %. About 30 % of digital advertising spending goes to search engines and the same percentage to social media platforms. In 2021, 25 % of overall advertising expenditures in the Latvian advertising market were allocated to national digital media, a 10 % increase from 2020. In 2022, it was estimated that digital advertising would account for close to 50 % of the total advertising market in Latvia. Like the worldwide advertising market, national media advertising volume is smaller because most of the spending (more than half) is allocated to search engines and social media platforms. In the face of intense competition and content saturation, media branding and its significance within the digital media environment are more crucial than ever. The success of media brands in the digital environment is a crucial factor in the overall sustainability of the media industry. In the 21st century, where advertising is a major source of funding for media organisations, the ability to attract and retain audiences and establish a strong and visible brand in the digital environment is essential for the viability of the media industry. This requires developing and implementing

innovative brand management strategies and presents challenges for media organisations in the current media business environment. National media on the market must compete fiercely with a powerful newcomer – platforms – for audiences and advertising money. Consumer-produced content is another part of a competition that is unprecedented. Consequently, powerful and distinguishable media branding is important when it comes to attracting an audience, advertising, and investment. In contrast, the shift toward distributed news consumption has the opposite effect and undermines the attribution and recognition of news media brands, thus making the media brand less unique.

Nowadays, there are six generations on the market whose media consumption patterns are changing as a result of digitalisation. Generation X, Millennials, and Generation Z are the most active consumers of digital media. Among the aforementioned mentioned generations, Generation Z influences and determines the media transformation the most. Already the biggest generation globally in terms of population size and fast becoming the most important consumer segment in many industries, this generation places greater emphasis on the content consumption experience than the media itself and the brand that produced the content. In the future national digital media will have to confront the difficulty of securing and attracting this specific audience while remaining appealing to advertisers and investors. Knowledge of Generation Z media consumption patterns and media branding for this audience is vital to the media industry because it is the foundation upon which the future development of the industry's business environment will be built. The literature review indicates that there has been an increasing interest among academics in studying Generation Z; however, much of this research has focused on various aspects of this generation rather than explicitly examining the relationship between news media branding and Generation Z. This gap in the literature is noteworthy given the growing importance of brand attribution and the significant role that Generation Z plays as a media audience.

Digitalisation is inherently accompanied by new approaches to how the media attracts and retains its audience and customer in the digital environment. It is reasonable to assume that news media organisations face both challenges concerning brand attribution and a pressing need to establish and maintain strong brands in the digital media environment to ensure their viability. According to the literature, brand equity is established through the creation of strong, favourable, and unique brand associations. It is generally accepted as a measure of brand strength. However, research on brand equity measurement in digital media environments is limited, and there is a significant lack of academic literature on the topic of *news media* brand

equity. The lack of academic research on the attributes of news media brands, particularly those related to the content consumption experience and their impact on brand and brand equity, further emphasises the importance of this Thesis research within the field of media branding.

In view of these factors, the purpose of this Doctoral Thesis research will be to examine national news media branding in the media business environment of the 21st century, with a focus on the Generation Z audience.

The **topicality** of this research is centred on the challenges national news brands face in the media business environment, including preference among younger audiences, low brand attribution, and a lack of distinctiveness. Given the influence of news media brands on factors such as credibility, audience loyalty, consumption volume, and financial performance, this research is relevant in terms of both marketing and economic considerations within the media industry.

The **research aim** is to ascertain the most appropriate ways to build brand uniqueness and strong brand equity for news media within the current media business environment as perceived by Generation Z.

To achieve the goal, the following **objectives** are set:

- To identify and evaluate news media brand attributes that create strong, favourable news media brand associations for Generation Z.
- To examine the impact of each attribute on the uniqueness of a news media brand as perceived by Generation Z.
- To assess the impact of news media brand uniqueness on brand equity as perceived by Generation Z.
- To develop a methodology of news media branding in the 21st century media environment, which helps to strengthen news media brand associations, uniqueness, and brand equity.

The **research questions** are:

1. What are the most important attributes of news media brand which create strong and favourable associations with news media brand by Generation Z?
2. How and which attributes of news media brand contribute to developing news media brand uniqueness as perceived by Generation Z?

In this research, the author understands the term "uniqueness" as customer perception of the brand being superior or more distinctive compared to competitor brands that can be formed

either through unique brand attributes, unique associations, or a combination of both. (See pp. 79–88 of the Doctoral Thesis).

3. How does news media brand uniqueness impact news media brand equity as perceived by Generation Z?

The **research object** is a news media brand and news media brand equity as perceived by Generation Z.

The **research subject** is the impact of news media brand uniqueness on news media brand equity.

The following **hypotheses** are established:

H1. The combination of category-shared and experience-related attributes of news brand significantly influences news media brand uniqueness.

H2. Content consumption experience-based attributes of news media brand significantly influence news media brand uniqueness.

H3. News media brand uniqueness significantly influences news media brand equity.

The Doctoral Thesis employs generally accepted theoretical **research methods**, such as analysis and synThesis, deduction, analysis and compilation of information, grouping, comparison, graphical representation, and quantitative data processing, including statistical analysis. The informative base of the study consists of scientific literature, international and local publications, methodological literature, information and reports produced by national and international institutions of the European Union, the Republic of Latvia, and other relevant materials. The theoretical framework of the research is based on an academic literature review – a narrative literature overview using conceptual review, document analyses methods, and a review of theories to determine the theoretical framework for the Thesis research, establish the existence of the research topicality, justify the relevance of the study, and identify gaps in the literature so that the Thesis research objectives can be formulated. Quantitative research is based on a survey method. Multiple linear regression and decision tree tests are used to test hypotheses and answer research questions using SPSS and RapidMiner software.

The Doctoral Thesis **research theoretical background** is based on academic literature on brand equity, customer-based brand equity (Farguhar, 1989; Aaker, 1991; Keller, 1993; 2009; Kapferer, 1992; Vázquez, 2002; Netemeyer, 2004; Pappu, 2005; Clow & Baack, 2005; Christodoulides *et.al.,* 2006; Shamim & Butt, 2013; Farjam & Xu, 2015), brand experience (Brakus, 2009; Addis & Holbrook, 2001; Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004; Schmitt, 1999), brand uniqueness concepts (Snyder & Fromkin, 1977; Krishnan, 1996; Netemeyer, 2004; Aaker,

1996; Sharp & Dawes, 2001; Christodoulides, 2010; Romaniuk & Gaillard, 2007; Zaggl & Hagenmaier &, Raasch, 2018), media theories and media branding (Doyle, 2010; 2015; Picard, 2005; 2008; 2011; 2018; Jenkins, 2008; Kung, 2008; Chan-Olmsted, 2006; 2007; 2011; 2015; Siegert, 2011; 2015; Ots, 2008), media brand equity (Bakshi *et al.,* 2014; 2016; Malmelin & Moisander, 2014; Chan-Olmsted & Cha, 2008; McDowell, 2004; Fichter, 2008; Ha & Chan-Olmsted, 2004; McCauley & Nesbitt, 2003; Nienstedt *et al.,* 2012; Victoria-Mas *et al*., 2018; Chan-Olmsted *et al.,* 2013; Ots & Wolff, 2008; Oyedeji, 2007; Siegert *et.al.,* 2015) analyses, secondary data analyses on media consumption trends in Latvia, and Generation Z news media usage trends.

Limitations consist of several aspects. The study does not examine the media business environment from the perspective of advertisers, investments, or other stakeholders. Due to the limited scope of the Doctoral Thesis, issues about the application of various types of investments and media business development activities were not addressed. The scope of the Doctoral Thesis is limited to the analysis of the content consumption experience attributes of news media brands. The author consolidates various content-related factors into a single attribute: content that matches the audience's interests. This study focuses on Generation Z as a news media audience, as this generation has the greatest impact and influence on media transformation among the eight distinct generations that make up media audiences today.

The Doctoral Thesis's research **scientific novelty**:

1. For the first time, a new approach for *grouping news media attributes* is presented, which could be applied to measuring news media brands' uniqueness and brand equity. It contributes to further research on news media branding in a new media environment.

2. Based on the Thesis research, the *methodology of news media branding* is developed and validated within Latvian companies, which includes media brand experience as a dominant characteristic that helps news media brands strengthen brand associations in the current media environment and determines the significance of news media attributes and impact of uniqueness on brand equity.

3. A new approach to *understanding of news media brand uniqueness* is established within the Thesis research based on analyses of unique attributes and the perceived uniqueness of a news media brand.

4. For the first time, the approach of evaluating the impact of *non-content-related brand attributes* and brand uniqueness on news media equity is revealed.

5. The relationship and impact between news media brand attributes, brand associations, and brand equity have been found by exploring the theoretical aspects of news media brand equity.

6. The approach to measuring the *strength of news media brand associations* based on the significance of brand attributes, usage, engagement, and frequency is developed.

7. The Thesis research provides an approach to *strengthen news media brand attribution* in the current media environment, which is essential for media business, as the developed methodology of news media branding supports the growth of the attractiveness of advertising spending to national news media.

The practical contribution of the Doctoral Thesis research to the media business environment:

1. The methodology of news media branding enables business owners and managers to assess, measure and implement brand attributes to establish, maintain and develop strong and distinctive news media brands in the 21st century media environment.

2. The research results allow practitioners to understand better and pay attention to the significance of content consumption experience: content packaging, branding, assessability and audience engagement with the content.

3. The developed methodology was assessed and integrated into news media branding strategies to strengthen national news brands and grow appeal to advertisers. References from the Chairman of the Board of Delfi.lv and the Commercial Director Tv3.lv confirming the practical contribution to the industry are included in Appendix 6 of the Thesis.

4. The research results have been approved and included in study materials of study programmes and courses devoted to marketing and digital transformation in higher educational institutions.

Theses put forward **for defence***:*

1. Grouping of news media attributes by content and consumption experience-related characteristics makes it possible to identify and develop appropriate news media branding approaches.

2. The results of the analysis of the brand uniqueness development can help news media owners-managers and employees to develop a better understanding of the brand attribution development challenges and opportunities.

3. It is possible to create a methodology of news media branding suitable for national news media, which can be successfully used for news media brand uniqueness and brand equity development in the 21st century media business environment.

Structure and volume of the Doctoral Thesis. The Doctoral Thesis consists of an introduction, four main chapters, conclusions, and recommendations. The volume of the Thesis is 217 pages, excluding appendices. 56 figures and 43 tables illustrate the content of the Thesis. The Thesis has 10 appendices. The bibliography contains 291 reference sources.

Chapter 1 of the Thesis defines the research area and examines the changes in the media environment resulting from digitalisation, digitalisation's influence on the media business environment and media, particularly news media content distribution and consumption. Based on an analysis of these patterns, it was established that Generation Z is the most typical digitalisation-characteristic media audience. This audience's primary content consumption trends were analysed, and generational significance was determined in media audience analyses. The effect of these changes on the media brand and branding was evaluated, resulting in two major trends among media brands: the necessity for a strong media brand and for maintaining the distinctiveness of media brands. As a result of these analyses, the research topicality, aim, and research questions were formulated with a focus on the Generation Z audience.

In Chapter 2 of the Thesis, the formulated research problem was studied within notions of news media brand equity, the conceptual basis for brand distinctiveness, and the brand experience. The brand association framework was analysed based on brand association theories related to brand equity concepts. As a result of this analysis, a conceptual framework of news media brand associations and distinctiveness and their influence on news media brand equity and three research hypotheses were formulated. The theoretical foundation for the empirical study was designed after the second part of the Thesis.

Chapter 3 of the Thesis explains the methods and methodology of the quantitative research. The data analysis of quantitative study and results are provided, along with the explored and confirmed research questions and hypotheses. The importance of the news media attributes in establishing strong and positive brand associations was determined. The strength of brand association score assessment approach was developed. The influence of brand attributes on news media brand uniqueness was investigated. The impact of brand uniqueness on brand equity was assessed, examined, and verified. All research questions were addressed,

and the three hypotheses were validated, except the first hypoThesis, which was not validated for the news media brand tv3.lv.

Chapter 4 of the Thesis presents the *methodology of news media branding*. It describes the Thesis research findings and proposed methodology approbation within the news media "Delfi" and the media and communication agency "Dentsu Latvia". The Thesis research findings were presented, and an analysis of the proposed methodology was discussed with the Board of the Latvian Advertising Association and the media organisation "TV3 group".

The research was conducted from 2017 to 2022, and data approbation was made by presenting the progress and results of the research at ten international academic conferences, in seven internationally recognised scientific publications indexed in SCOPUS database, and in conference proceedings and anonymously peer-reviewed scientific articles published in international journals and available in other databases and encyclopedias.

Topics of the Doctoral Thesis presented at **scientific conferences**:

1. *Riga Technical University 63rd International Scientific Conference "Scientific Conference on Economics and Entrepreneurship" (SCEE'2022),* academic report "How To Make News Media Brand Distinctive In A Multi-Platform Environment?", October 13, 2022, Riga Technical University, Riga, Latvia.

2. *26th World Multi-Conference on Systemics, Cybernetics and Informatics: WMSCI 2022*, academic report *"*What Is The Uniqueness Of Media Brand? The Audience Perspective", July 12–15, 2022, Orlando, Florida, USA.

3. *"Society of Open Innovation: Technology, Market, and Complexity (SOI*)", academic report "The Impact on Audience Media Brand Choice Using Media Brands Uniqueness Phenomenon", July 6–9, 2022, Swansea University, Wales, UK.

4. *"Scientific Conference on Economics and Entrepreneurship SCEE'2021",* academic report "The Role Of Audience Segments On Media Consumption",– 62nd International Scientific Conference of Riga Technical University, October 14-15, 2021, Riga, Latvia.

5. *"Society of Open Innovation: Technology, Market, and Complexity (SOI*)", academic report "The Influence of Non-Product-Related Attributes on Media Brands' Consumption", Riga Technical University 2021, July 12–15, 2021, Online & Offline, Daegu, Korea.

6. *The 24th World Multi-Conference on Systemics, Cybernetics and Informatics (WMSCI 2020)*, academic report "Trends in Media Branding: Case of Latvia - the Younger Audience in Focus", September 13–16, 2020, Orlando, Florid, USA.

7. *The 2018 AABS (Association for the Advancement of Baltic Studies) Conference at Stanford University: The 100th Anniversary of Baltic Independence,* academic report "Media Digitalization Impact on Media Branding in Latvia", Stanford University, June 1–3, 2018, Stanford, USA.

8. *"Media Management in the Age of Big Data and High-tech"* EMMA (European Media Management Association) conference, tacademic report "Is There A Future For Local Media Brands? Media Digitalisation Impact On Media Branding In Latvia. The Younger Audience In Focus", June 14–15, 2018, Warsaw, Poland.

9. *2nd Riga Readings in Social Sciences (RRSS) "Baltic Sea Region: One Hundred Years On",* academic report "Media Digitalisation Impact On Media Consumption In Latvia. Emerging Trends In News Consumption Among The Younger Audience (15-24-year-olds)", University of Latvia, Faculty of Social Sciences, November 22–23, 2018, Riga, Latvia.

10. *The Baltic States at 99: Past, Present and Future. The 12th Conference on Baltic Studies in Europe*, academic report "Media Digitalisation Impact On Media Branding In Latvia", University of Latvia, June 19–21, 2017, Riga, Latvia.

Approbation of the Thesis research results in publications

Scientific articles indexed in the Web of Science and/or Scopus database:

1. Saulīte, L., & Ščeulovs, D. (2022). The Impact on Audience Media Brand Choice Using Media Brands Uniqueness Phenomenon. *Journal of Open Innovation*: *Technology, Market, and Complexity,* 8(3), 128. https://doi.org/10.3390/joitmc8030128

2. Saulīte, L., Ščeulovs, D., & Pollák, F. (2022). The Influence of Non-Product-Related Attributes on Media Brands' Consumption. *Journal of Open Innovation: Technology, Market, and Complexity,* 8(3), 105. https://doi.org/10.3390/joitmc8030105

Publications in conference proceedings indexed in Web of Science and/or SCOPUS:

3. Saulite, L., Sceulovs, D. (2022). What Is the Uniqueness of a Media Brand? The Audience Perspective. In N. Callaos, E. Gaile-Sarkane, S. Hashimoto, B. Sánchez (Eds.), *Proceedings of the 26th World Multi-Conference on Systemics, Cybernetics and Informatics: WMSCI 2022*, Vol. II, pp. 125–129. International Institute of Informatics and Cybernetics. https://doi.org/10.54808/WMSCI2022.02.125

4. Saulite, L. (2022). The Role of Audience Segments on Media Consumption. Scientific –Conference on Economics and Entrepreneurship Proceedings, SCEE'2021, 100–112. https://doi.org/10.7250/scee.2021.0010

5. Saulīte, L., Januševska, G., Andersone, I., & Ščeulovs, D. (2020). Trends in Media Branding: Case of Latvia – The Younger Audience in Focus. In: *The 24th World Multi-Conference on Systemics, Cybernetics and Informatics (WMSCI 2020): Proceedings*. Vol. 3, United States of America, Florida, 1–31 August 2020. Winter Garden, Florida: International Institute of Informatics and Systemics (IIIS), 98-102. ISBN 978-1-950492-45-9.

Publication (anonymously reviewed) in a journal with an international editorial board indexed in other databases:

6. Saulite, L. (2022).News Media Brand Equity in a New Media Environment. *Economics and Business,*36(1) 199–210. https://doi.org/10.2478/eb-2022-0013

Encyclopedia articles/entries:

7. Saulīte, L., Ščeulovs, D., & Pollák, F. (2022, July 20). The Media Brand Theoretical Framework. In *Encyclopedia*. https://encyclopedia.pub/entry/25328

Other activities and projects:

Chair at Special Session 13. Challenges and New Perspectives of Business, Technology and Management, SOI & DEMI of the UNINA 2023 Conference, July 12–15, 2023, University of Naples Federico II, Naples, Italy.

Project: ESF project "Strengthening the academic staff of Riga Technical University in areas of strategic specialisation" No. 8.2.2.0/18/A/017, dated 26.11.2022

19th Annual BMDA Conference "Is the World Really Burning-out? Mastering New Reality" October 7–8, 2022. Online.

1. News media brand equity and uniqueness in the 21ˢᵗ century media business environment

In addition to the changes in business models and processes, digital transformation significantly impacts how companies interact with their customers. With the increasing use of social media and other online platforms, companies can connect with their customers in real-time and gather valuable data on their preferences and behaviours. This allows companies to tailor their products and services better to meet the needs and desires of their customers. As a result, digital transformation is a significant force shaping the business environment of the 21st century. It is driving new technologies' development, changing how companies operate and creating new opportunities for growth and innovation.

The transition from traditional media platforms, such as television and print, to digital platforms, such as social media, streaming services, and online news websites, has been a significant effect of digital transformation on the media sector. This has led to a decline in traditional forms of advertising, such as print ads and commercial breaks on television, as more and more people consume media online.[1] The rise of social media and other digital platforms has also made it easier for individuals to create and distribute their own content, leading to increased content and viewpoints in the media business environment.[2] Digital transformation of the media industry has significantly impacted how media is produced, distributed, and consumed and continues shaping the industry.

Traditional sources of news distribution, such as print newspapers and television news shows, have been overtaken by internet platforms as part of the digital transformation of the media sector. This has led to the growth of online news media, as well as the use of social media and other digital platforms to distribute news and information.[3] The rise of digital news has had a few consequences for the media industry. One major concern is the spread of misinformation and fake news online, which can be difficult to distinguish from reliable sources.[4] In addition, the decline in traditional forms of advertising has made it difficult for news media to generate

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[1] Dentsu Global. (2022). Dentsu Digital Ad Spends Forecast. [accessed July 23,2022]. Available at https://www.dentsu.com/news-releases/dentsu-ad-spend-forecast-july-2022-release

[2] Wilding, D., Fray, P., Molitorisz, S. & McKewon, E. (2018). The Impact of Digital Platforms on News and Journalistic Content, *University of Technology Sydney*, NSW. [accessed September 3,2021]. Available at . https://www.uts.edu.au/sites/default/files/2018-12/CMT%20News%20Report.pdf

[3] Ibid, p.9

[4] Tsfati, Y. *et al.* (2020). Causes and consequences of mainstream media dissemination of fake news: literature review and synthesis. *Annals of the International Communication Association*, 44(2), 157–173. https://doi.org/10.1080/23808985.2020.1759443

the revenue needed to support their operations, leading to a decline in the number of journalists and the quality of journalism.

The transformation processes that have shaped the media business environment during the past two decades have been extensive and consequential. Digitalisation has created an environment in which previously existing structures of media business models, audience interactions, and value propositions have undergone significant transformations. Implications of digitalisation in the media sector have been widely studied by academics and professionals in various fields, such as media economics and management, sociology, and marketing (Picard, 2005, 2010; Doyle, 2013; 2015; Napoli, 2011; Ots, 2008; Malmelin & Moisander, 2014; Siegert *et al*., 2015; Bolin, 2012). Academics' interest and focus on the impact of digitalisation on the media vary. Despite this, there is consensus among academics that the media has been transformed, and a media business environment of the 21st century has emerged.

1.1. The 21st century media business environment

Digitalisation has profoundly impacted the environment in which media operate, creating questions regarding the definition of "media" as the lines between content, news, platforms, and audiences have blurred and been incorporated by social media and other platforms.[5] According to mass media communication theories,[6] mass media (plural) refers to the organised means of communicating openly, at a distance, and to many people in a short time. The early mass media (newspapers, magazines, phonograms, cinema, and radio) grew swiftly to formats that are still mostly recognisable today. The arrival of television during the mid-20th century primarily brought about changes in scale and diversification.

The most important characteristics of mass communication seventy or more years ago are still at the forefront today:

- their ability to reach the entire population quickly and with largely the same information, opinions, and entertainment;
- their universal appeal;
- their ability to arouse both hopes and fears in equal measure;

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[5] Picard, R. (2018). *The Rise and Expansion of Research in Media Economics.* Communication & Society, 31(4), 113-119.

[6] McQuail, D. (2010). *McQuail's mass communication theory,* 6th. ed (6th. ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

- their presumed relationship to sources of societal power; the belief that they have a significant impact and influence.[7]

There are many ongoing changes due to media digitalisation: mass communication on a large scale. The unidirectional flow of public information continues unabated, although it is no longer only conveyed by 'traditional' mass media. In addition, new players have entered the media environment, altering traditional mass media and establishing new media. Scholars argue that digitalisation and subsequent adjustments in the media environment are a natural progression in media evolution.[8] Technological advances have attracted many new competitors to the media environment, thus generating new forms of content and expanding the number of ways to obtain news, information, and entertainment.[9] Thus, establishing media environment studies as an exciting though challenging subject of study.

Scholars in the field have recently adopted the term "media environment", but its precise meaning is still unclear. However, it can be generally described as a cultural phenomenon that sustains communication.[10] [11] Lasswell's (1948) influential linear mass communication model defines the medium (media) as a channel on which and where communication messages are transmitted to the audience. Although Lasswell's model receives both considerable interest and critique among scholars,[12] the Thesis author believes that Lasswell's model structurally defines the understanding of the definition of *"media environment"* – the environment where and how communication messages are delivered to receivers. Recognised as one of the most influential communication models, later adapted and developed by numerous scholars, Lasswell's model defines the five elements of the media environment: [13]

1. **Who?** The communicator or sender of the message;
2. **What?** The content of the message;

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[7] McQuail, D. (2010). *McQuail's mass communication theory,* 6th. ed (6th. ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

[8] Küng, L. (2017). Reflections on the ascendancy of technology in the media and its implications for organisations and their leaders. *The Journal of Media Innovations,* 4(1), 77–81. https://doi.org/10.5617/jmi.v4i1.3171

[9] Ibid, p.79

[10] Meyrowitz, J. (1997). Shifting Worlds of Strangers: Medium Theory and Changes in "Them" Versus "Us"*. *Sociological Inquiry,* 67, 59–71. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1475-682X.1997.tb00429.x

[11] Guins, R. (2014). The Present Went This-A-Way: Marshall McLuhan's Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man @ 50. *Journal of Visual Culture,* 13(1), 3–12. https://doi.org/10.1177/1470412913509466

[12] Sapienza, Z.S., Iyer, N., & Veenstra, A.S. (2015). Reading Lasswell's Model of Communication Backward: Three Scholarly Misconceptions. *Mass Communication and Society*, 18, 599 - 622.

[13] Lasswell, H. D. (1948). *The structure and function of communication in society.* In L. Bryson (Ed.), Communication of ideas ,37–51. New York: Harper and Row.

3. **Where?** The medium or media content delivered;

4. **To whom?** The receiver of content or audience.

5. **With what effect?** The impact of message or content upon the audience.

Lasswell's classic communication theory formula is "*who says what, how, and to whom*" or *"who says what through which channel to whom"*; aspects are generally referred to as source, content, channel, and recipient.[14] This model covers the fundamental elements of communication and provides a framework for a schematic representation of media communication activities; other fields (such as marketing) use it as a theoretical basis.[15] [16] Each media environment element defines well-defined research areas across the media management field.

This Thesis research area is designed and focused on two elements of the media environment defined by Lasswell (1948): Where or **Media** and To Whom or **Audience** (See Fig. 1.1)**.** As mentioned in the limitations of this Thesis, media environment from the perspective of advertisers, investments, or other stakeholders are out of scope of this study. Based on the literature review, the media business environment research focuses on the mentioned elements of media and audience analyses. Therefore**, c**ontrol analyses (first environment element – Who?), content analyses (second element – What?), and effect analyses (the fifth element – With what effect?) are beyond the scope of this research. As mentioned in the limitations of this Thesis, **the** media environment from the perspective of advertisers, investments, or other stakeholders is out of the scope of this study. Based on Lasswell's communication model and its application to various fields of study, the author of this Thesis specifies the research scope of the media business environment given in Figure 1.1 of this Thesis section.

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[14] Lasswell, H. D. (1948). *The structure and function of communication in society.* In L. Bryson (Ed.), Communication of ideas ,37–51. New York: Harper and Row.

[15] Duncan, T., & Moriarty, S. E. (1998). A communication-based marketing model for managing relationships. *Journal of Marketing*, 62(2), 1–13.

[16] Hsieh, J., Hsieh, Y., & Tang, Y. (2012). Exploring the disseminating behaviors of eWOM marketing: Persuasion in online video. *Electronic Commerce Research,* 12(2), 201-224.
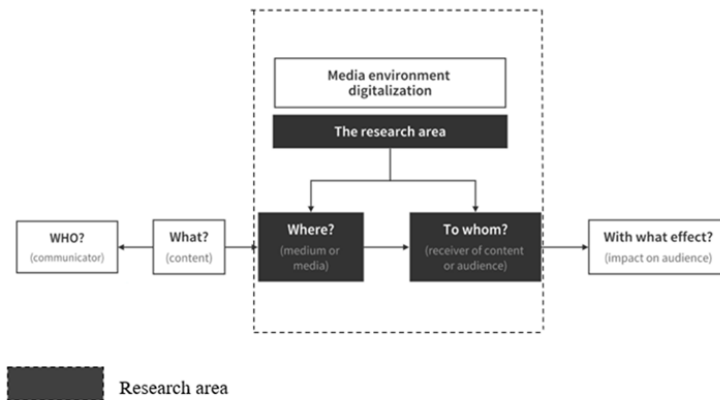
Fig. 1.1. Research scope based on the Lasswell (1948) communication model (created by the author).

Digitalisation brings about a profound transformation in how audiences access and consume media content, particularly news.[17] Historically, people had access to news through direct contact with media organisations. However, in the 21st century, consumers increasingly arrive via *"distributed"* means of discovery - news is discovered via platform products and services such as search engines and social media platforms. The transition from a media environment dominated by direct discovery to one increasingly defined by distributed news consumption has several potentially essential effects on the flow of communication. Based on the literature review, presented in-depth in the following Thesis sections, the author of this Thesis presumes that traditional communication models based on Lasswell's acknowledged theory have undergone substantial changes in the media business environment of the 21st century, predominantly in the area between two aspects outlined in Thesis' scope: media and audience.

Several researchers have found that this changed environment in how news and media content is delivered and consumed by audiences has influenced audiences' attribution of news media brands.[18] In the context of this research, news media brand attribution is whether people can remember where they get their news when the content arrives via different platforms other

[17] Doyle, G. (2015). Multi-platform media and the miracle of the loaves and fishes. *Journal of Media Business Studies,* 12(1), 49-65.

[18] Kalogeropoulos, A., Fletcher, R., & Nielsen, R. K. (2019). News brand attribution in distributed environments: Do people know where they get their news? *New Media & Society,* 21(3), 583–601, https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444818801313

than directly from the media channel. In other words, it depends on the degree to which audiences associate content consumed on different platforms with the specific news media that produced it. Understanding news brand attribution is crucial for media and communication studies, because news media brands are important source cues and heuristics for how people receive information.[19] [20] The news media brand enables media differentiation, which is crucial, although the news media operate in an environment that is changing due to digitalisation and platforms.[21] This allows consumers to differentiate between a specific brand and its competitors.[22] Numerous academics argue that low levels of brand attribution for news brands in the current media environment may endanger the industry's long-term economic foundations and that news brand attribution is crucial for information processing and media evolution.[23] There is consensus between academics and media sector professionals that the media's environment has changed, and the move to media delivery across many platforms has necessitated a new way of thinking instead of primarily focusing on producing and distributing content. How to create and maintain connections with an audience is now of paramount importance.[24] McQuail (2010) states that it is now much more challenging to discern these numerous media from one another than in the past. The content is now distributed across different channels, reducing the original media brand uniqueness, content form and content consumption experience. The regulatory system across media is already blurred, recognising, and promoting more similarities between media content and the brand.[25] Consequently, it is reasonable to suppose that media are both encountering difficulties in brand attribution and a growing need to sustain and establish strong brands in the media environment of this century.

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[19] Iyengar, S., & Hahn, K.S. (2009). Red media, blue media: evidence of ideological selectivity in media use. *Journal of Communication* 59(1): 19–39.

[20] Turner, J. (2007). The messenger overwhelming the message: ideological cues and perceptions of bias in television news. *Political Behavior* 29(4): 441–464.

[21] Athey, S., Mobius, M.M., & Pál, J. (2017). The Impact of Aggregators on Internet News Consumption. *Microeconomics: Search; Learning; Information Costs & Specific Knowledge; Expectation & Speculation eJournal.*

[22] Chan-Olmsted, S. M.. (2006). *Competitive Strategy for Media Firms.* Routledge, New York, USA. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781410617408

[23] Kalogeropoulos, A., Fletcher, R., & Nielsen, R. K. (2019). News brand attribution in distributed environments: Do people know where they get their news? *New Media & Society,* 21(3), 583–601, https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444818801313

[24] Doyle, G. (2015). Multi-platform media and the miracle of the loaves and fishes. *Journal of Media Business Studies,* 12(1), 49-65.

[25] McQuail, D. (2010). *McQuail's mass communication theory,* 6th. ed (6th. ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

The following section of the Thesis presents in-depth analyses of brand attribution, news media branding challenges in a changing media environment, and platforms' roles. The author of the Thesis states that as a result of digitalisation, the transformation of media organisations, particularly news media, is driven by two factors: how media content is distributed and consumed by audiences and the subsequent influence on media brand attribution.

Based on the literature review, the author argues that scholars pay less attention to media branding research, especially news media, despite the growing significance of branding capabilities and the impact of digitalisation on the media environment. Many academics have focused on media business models and revenue techniques in the current media environment.[26] Numerous studies emphasise the importance of social media platforms in content distribution tactics,[27] [28] the impact of digitalisation on media content and news agenda-setting,[29] and the media's quality and capacity to innovate.[30] Less attention is given to media branding in the current media environment, specifically news media branding. Within the conceptual framework of the Thesis, the author identifies two specific study aspects:

- a news media **brand** aspect - the media;
- the news media **content consumption** aspect - the audience.

The author of this Thesis identifies the scope of the study as the evolution of news media content consumption and news media brands in the 21st century media environment. The argumentation behind the research focus on news media is the importance of news in society and its normative purpose. As analysed in the following section, the news media is experiencing a major transformation due to digitalisation.

The gap in the scientific literature's attention on news media from a branding perspective, the role of news media in society, and the transformation of news due to digitalisation provide a solid foundation for the research focus aspects of this Thesis.

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[26] Evens, T., Raats, T., & Von Rimscha, M. B. (2017). Business model innovation in news media organisations – 2018 special issue of the European Media Management Association (emma). *Journal of Media Business Studies,* 14(3), 167–172. https://doi.org/10.1080/16522354.2018.144516 4

[27] Ju, A., Jeong, S. H., & Chyi, H. I. (2014). Will social media save newspapers? Examining the effectiveness of Facebook and Twitter as news platforms. *Journalism Practice,* 8(1), 1–17.

[28] Nielsen, R. K., & Ganter, S. A. (2017). Dealing with digital intermediaries: A case study of the relations between publishers and platforms. *New Media & Society,* published Online First at http://journals. sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/1461444817701318

[29] Diez-Gracia, & A. Sánchez-García,P. (2022). The news gap in the 'triple digital agenda:' The different interests of media, audience and networks. *Communication & Society,* 35(1), 63-80.

[30] Evens, T., Raats, T., & Von Rimscha, M. B. (2017). Business model innovation in news media organisations – 2018 special issue of the European Media Management Association (emma). *Journal of Media Business Studies*, 14(3), 167–172. https://doi.org/10.1080/16522354.2018.144516 4

The author of the Thesis provides a conceptual research framework within the aspects in Figure 1.2.

Media environment
digitalization

The research area

| WHO? (communicator) | What? (content) | **Where?** (medium or media) | **To whom?** (receiver of content or audience) | With what effect? (impact on audience) |

Brand of news media ← → **News media content consumption by audience**

Research area
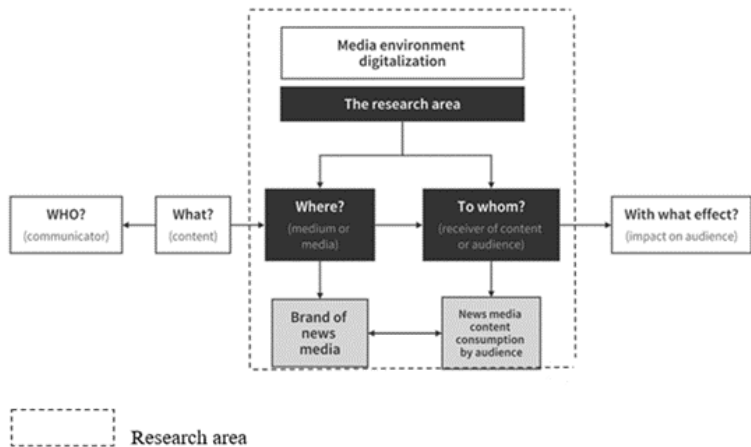
Fig. 1.2. Based on the Lasswell communication model, a research scope focusing on news media brands and news media content consumption (created by the author, based on the Laswell communication model (1948).

Media Environment Digitalization

The scholars' interest in the changing media environment and its effect on media, audience relationships, content production and distribution expands in this research field. However, the Thesis author believes that the academic focus has not been on defining the term *"media environment"*. Instead, the expanding studies focus on describing the changing media environment due to digitalisation without a consensus on the definition of the current media environment. Content analyses demonstrate that scholars' description of the media environment of this century varies across literature over the last twenty years. Scholars named the media

environment a *convergent* media market [31] [32], *the new media* market [33] [34] [35] [36] [37], *high-choice* media environment [38], *multi-platform, multi-channel, multi-media, and cross-platform* media market.[39] Based on analyses, the author of this Thesis concludes that media management studies have always been a profound and extensive field of research.The same pattern can be observed in media environment studies. Scholars have diversified and broad approaches, such as focusing on content distribution strategies, audience fragmentation and others, to study the media environment of this century. Comprehensive aspects such as changes in audience perspectives, media operational models and journalism, and political and social studies have preoccupied prominent media field scholars in the last two decades.[40] Numerous authors define and focus on *new media* – media developed due to digitalisation. Based on the content analysis of the description of the media environment, the dominant descriptions grouped (see Table 1.1) of the current media environment in scholars' works focused on media studies in the last twenty years.

[31] Jenkins, H. (2006). *Convergence Culture: Where Old and NewMedia Collide.* New York: University Press

[32] Singer, J. B. (2009). Convergence and divergence. *Journalism,* 10(3), 375–377. https://doi.org/10.1177/1464884909102579

[33] Ohme, J., Albaek, E. H.,& De Vreese, C. (2016). Exposure Research Going Mobile: A Smartphone-Based Measurement of Media Exposure to Political Information in a Convergent Media Environment. *Communication Methods and Measures* 10, 135–148.. doi:10.1080/19312458.2016.1150972

[34] Napoli, P. M.. (2010). Revisiting 'mass communication' and the 'work' of the audience in the new media environment. *Media, Culture & Society,* 32(3), 505–516. https://doi.org/10.1177/0163443710361658

[35] Livingstone, S. (2002). *Young people and new media: Childhood and the changing media environment. / S. Livingstone.*

[36] Jensen, J. F. (2008). The Concept of Interactivity - revisited: Four New Typologies for a New Media Landscape. In J. Masthoff, S. Panabaker, M. Sullivan, & A. Lugmayr (Eds.), *Proceeding of the 1st international conference on Designing interactive user experiences for TV and video* , 129-132). Association for Computing Machinery.

[37] Metzger, M.J., Flanagin, A.J., Eyal, K., Lemus,D.R., & Mccann,R.M. (2003). Credibility for the 21st Century: Integrating Perspectives on Source, Message, and Media Credibility in the Contemporary Media Environment, *Annals of the International Communication Association*, 27:1, 293-335, DOI: 10.1080/23808985.2003.11679029

[38] Karlsen, R., Beyer, A., & Steen-Johnsen, K. (2020). Do High-Choice Media Environments Facilitate News Avoidance? A Longitudinal Study 1997-2016. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media,* 64(5), 794-814.

[39] Doyle, G. (2010). From Television to Multi-Platform: Less from More or More for Less? Convergence: The International Journal of Research into New Media Technologies, 16(4), 431–449. https://doi.org/10.1177/1354856510375145

[40] Picard, R. (2018). The Rise and Expansion of Research in Media Economics. Communication and Society, 31, 113–119. https://doi.org/10.15581/003.31.4.113-119

Table 1.1

Descriptions of the current media environment in scholars' works in the last twenty years
(created by the author)

The description of the media environment in the 21st century	The scholars on the changing media environment
1	**2**
Convergent media market	Jenkins, (2006); Kopecka-Piech, (2012);[41] Murdok, (2000);[42] Quinn, (2005);[43] Singer, (2009); [44] Fagerjord, (2003); [45] Doudaki, Spyridou, (2015) [46]
New media environment	Napoli, (2010); Livingstone, (2002) Jensen, (2008); Kalbfleisch, (2003); Metzger *et al.,* (2003);[47] Booth (2010)[48]
High-choice media environment	Karlsen *et al.,* (2020); Bentivegna, Boccia Artieri, (2020) [49]
The multi-platform and cross-platform media market	Doyle, (2010;2015); Sattelberger, (2015);[50] Thurman, (2018);[51] Lischka *et al.,* (2018);[52] Chy, Chadha, (2012);[53] Jenkins, (2008)
The multichannel, multimedia media market	Chan-Olmsted, (2011); Napoli, (2011); Bolin, (2007)[54]

[41] Kopecka-Piech, K. (2012). Converging Media Spaces: Introducing an Emergent Field of Studies. *Studia Humanistyczne AGH*, 11, 3, 77-91.

[42] Murdock, G. (2000). *Digital futures: European television in the age of convergence*. (By pages 35-58). SAGE Publications Ltd, https://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781446220344

[43] Quinn, S. (2005). *Convergent Journalism*. New York, United States of America: Peter Lang Verlag. Peter Lang Inc., International Academic Publishers.

[44] Singer, J. & Quandt, T. (2009). Convergence and Cross-Platform Content Production. In: Wahl-Jorgensen, K. & Hanitszch,, T. (Eds.), *The Handbook of Journalism Studies.* (pp. 130-144). New York: Routledge. ISBN 9780805863420

[45] Fagerjord, A. (2003) . Rhetorical Convergence: Studying Web Media. *In Digital Media Revisited: Theoretical and Conceptual Innovation in Digital Domain (pp. 293–325).* MIT Press.

[46] Doudaki, V., & Spyridou, L.-P. (2015). News content online: Patterns and norms under convergence dynamics. *Journalism*, 16(2), 257–277. https://doi.org/10.1177/1464884913517657

[47] Metzger, M. J., Flanagin, A. J., Eyal, K., Lemus, D. R., & McCann, R. M. (2003). Credibility for the 21st century: Integrating perspectives on source, message, and media credibility in the contemporary media environment. In P. J. Kalbfleisch (Ed.), *Communication yearbook 27* (pp. 293–335). Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Publishers.

[48] Booth, P. (2010). *Digital Fandom: New Media Studies*. Peter Lang Publishing.

[49] Bentivegna, S., & Boccia Artieri, G.(2020). Rethinking Public Agenda in a Time of High-Choice Media Environment. *Media and Communication* 8, 6–15.. doi:10.17645/mac.v8i4.3166

[50] Sattelberger, F. (2015) Optimising media marketing strategies in a multi-platform world: an inter-relational approach to pre-release social media communication and online searching, *Journal of Media Business Studies*, 12:1, 66-88, DOI: 10.1080/16522354.2015.1027117

[51] Thurman, N. (2018) Newspaper Consumption in the Mobile Age: Re-assessing multi-platform performance and market share using "time-spent". *Journalism Studies* 19.10 (2018): 1409-1429.

[52] Lischka, J. A., Siegert, G.,& Krebs,I. (2018). Marketing and branding.In *Handbook of Media Management and Economics ,* 159-175.

[53] Chyi, H.I., & Chadha, M. (2012).News on new devices: Is multi-platform news consumption a reality? *Journalism Practice* 6.4 , 431-449.

[54] Bolin, G. (2007). *Media Technologies, Transmedia Storytelling and Commodification* (237–248).

Table 1.1 Continued

1	2
Distributed media enviroment	Kalogeropoulos *et al.,* (2019)[55]

Although scholarly study aspects vary by discipline, the author of this Thesis states that scholars are increasingly focusing on platforms as important digitalisation drivers, concurring that the media industry is facing new demands imposed by those platforms.[56] The common theme is that new media are created due to digitalisation, including social media platforms, online media and others. Both practitioners and academics agree that significant changes in how *media content is produced, distributed, and consumed* are behind the most substantial changes in the media environment. Social media platforms such as Facebook, YouTube and others play a crucial role. As mentioned in well-established media and audience relationships, a third participant has emerged during the 21st century in the form of *platforms*, which have become a significant channel of media content distribution and consumption.

Two primary technological aspects have changed the media environment.[57] Firstly, the internet evolved as a means of communication. Secondly, digital technology's inherent interactivity and immediacy have changed all media's production and financial structures. Incorporating digital technology - platforms into media production and distribution has become widely spread and fundamentally changed how audiences consume media content. Nowadays, platforms can be considered the new entrants in the media environment.

Multi-platforms and content consumption on-demand as the 21st century media environment

The expansion of platforms has been a fundamental catalyst for media content distribution and consumption and has significantly changed media in the media environment of the 21st century. Digitalisation and the convenience of access have increased audience time spent on different platforms (digital technologies that emerged due to digitalisation). Platforms facilitate redefining existing markets by enabling the exchange of digital products and

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[55] Kalogeropoulos, A., Fletcher, R., & Nielsen, R. K. (2019). News brand attribution in distributed environments: Do people know where they get their news? *New Media & Society,* 21(3), 583–601. https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444818801313

[56] Vial, G. (2019). Understanding digital transformation: A review and a research agenda. *The journal of strategic information systems : incorporating International Information Systems,* 28(2) .

[57] Kaul, V. (2012). Changing Paradigms of Media Landscape in the Digital Age. *J Mass Communicat Journalism* 2:110. doi:10.4172/2165-7912.1000110

services.[58] As a result, a fundamental shift in media consumption has occurred: media and information usage has primarily shifted online.[59] Now media consumption across the globe is increasingly happening in digital formats. The audience, particularly the younger audience, demands a content consumption experience that is mobile, modular, variable and does not depend on a platform, device, or media channel.[60]

In academic studies of the definition of platforms in the media context, the definition of the social media platform is dominant, and the lack of precise categorisation is evident. Some authors define those as new *media technologies* [61] and *multi-sided platforms.*[62] A multi-sided platform is an intermediate entity that enables direct connections between diverse user groups and demonstrates network effects across or within these user groups. In the current state, the enormous variety of behaviours, features, and affordances observed at the user level is not captured by definitions.[63] [64] It can be concluded that the definition of media platforms is often invented and described in connection with *social media platforms* such as Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube. Those platforms are closely associated with multi-platform expansion and following content distribution and consumption behaviour. New chances for content distribution, consumption, and branding have emerged thanks to the evolution of social media platforms. For example, Facebook and Twitter have become major platforms for news distribution and consumption.[65] [66] In the opinion of the author of the Thesis, multiple uses and interpretations of the term *"multi-platform"* can generate definitional problems. In the context

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[58] Tiwana, A., Konsynski, B.R., & Bush, A.A. (2010). Research Commentary - Platform Evolution: Coevolution of Platform Architecture, Governance, and Environmental Dynamics. *Inf. Syst. Res.,* 21, 675-687.

[59] Newman, N., Fletcher, R., Kalogeropoulos, A., & Nielsen, R.K. (2019). Reuters Digital News Report 2019. Oxford: *Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism,* University of Oxford.

[60] Jenkins, H. (2006). *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide*; New York University Press: New York, NY, USA.

[61] Kaul, V. (2012). Changing Paradigms of Media Landscape in the Digital Age. *Journal of Mass Communication and Journalism,* 2, 1-9.

[62] McMullan, J. (2020). A new understanding of 'New Media': Online platforms as digital mediums. *Convergence*, 26(2), 287–301. https://doi.org/10.1177/1354856517738159

[63] Fox, J., & McEwan, B. (2017). Distinguishing technologies for social interaction: The perceived social affordances of communication channels scale. *Commun. Monogr.,* 84 (3), pp. 298-318. 10.1080/03637751.2017.1332418

[64] Papacharissi, Z., & Mendelson, A. (2011). Toward a new(er) sociability: Uses, gratifications, and social capital on Facebook. In S. Papathanassopoulos (Ed.), *Media Perspectives for the 21st Century* , 212–230. Routledge. https://doi-org.resursi.rtu.lv/10.4324/9780203834077

[65] Bergström, A., & Belfrage, J. M.. (2018). News in Social Media. *Digital Journalism*, 6(5), 583–598. https://doi.org/10.1080/21670811.2018.1423625 5

[66] Rhee, L., Bayer, J. B., Lee, D. S., & Kuru, O. (2021). Social by definition: How users define social platforms and why it matters. *Telematics and Informatics*, *59*, 101538. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tele.2020.101538

of the current research area, *"multi-platform"* refers to an approach in which media concentrate on developing products and services to distribute them across multiple platforms. A multi-platform approach means that new content ideas can be explored in the context of a wide range of distribution possibilities, not only print or linear television.[67] Some authors define multi-platform as media convergence and distributed environment.[68] A multi-platform approach necessitates the exploration of new content concepts across multiple delivery platforms, as opposed to only print, radio or linear television.[69] [70] Numerous past studies have explored the inability of media and communications companies to adapt to changing technologies, focusing on their responses to digitalisation and the internet. [71] [72] [73] Based on academic literature analyses, the author of the Thesis summarises and groups (see Table 1.2) the multi-platform implication of media content consumption and consequences in scholars' studies.

Table 1.2

Media content consumption and consequences in multi-platforms studies (created by the author)

Content consumption aspects	Scholars
in the context of media and digitalisation	Doyle, (2010; 2015); Parker, (2007); Küng, (2008).
in the context of newspaper media	Goyanes, Dürrenberg, (2014);[74] Bakshi *et al.,* (2014; 2016)
in the context of broadcasting media	Doyle, (2010); Malmelin, Moisander, (2014)
media content consumption changes in the context of news media	Chyi, Chadha, (2012);[75] Spyridou *et al.,* (2013);[76] Kalogeropoulos *et al.,* (2019)

[67] Doyle, G. (2010). From Television to Multi-Platform: Less from More or More for Less? *Convergence,* 16(4), 431–449. https://doi.org/10.1177/1354856510375145

[68] Jenkins, H. (2006) . *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide;* New York University Press: New York, NY, USA,.

[69] Doyle, G. (2010). From Television to Multi-Platform: Less from More or More for Less? *Convergence,* 16(4), 431–449. https://doi.org/10.1177/1354856510375145

[70] Parker, R. (2007). Focus: 360-degree commissioning. *Broadcast*, p. 11.

[71] Dennis, E., Warley, S., & Sheridan, J. (2006). Doing digital: An assessment of the top 25 US media companies and their digital strategies. *The Journal of Media Business Studies*, 3(1), 33–63.

[72] Gershon, R.A. (2008). *Telecommunications and Business Strategy* (1st ed.). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203877241

[73] Küng, L. (2008). *Strategic management in the media: From theory to practice*. SAGE Publications Ltd, https://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781446280003

[74] Goyanes, M., & Dürrenberg, C. (2014). A taxonomy of newspapers based on multi-platformand paid content strategies: Evidences from Spain. *International Journal on MediaManagement*, 16(1), 27–45.

[75] Chyi, H.-I., & Chadha, M. (2012). News on news devices. *Journalism Practice,* 6(4), 441–439.

[76] Spyridou, L.-P., Matsiola, M., Veglis, A., Kalliris, G., & Dimoulas, C. (2013). Journalism in a state of flux: Journalists as agents of technology innovation and emerging news practices. *International Communication Gazette,* 75(1), 76–98. https://doi.org/10.1177/1748048512461763

The results of the literature review show that scholars have focused on multi-platforms and their implications on media environment studies. However, the context of such analysis is typically limited to a certain industry, such as those examining the experiences of newspaper publishers[77] [78] and other media.[79] Numerous authors have investigated the impact of multi-platforms on television production and viewing. [80] [81] Earlier research demonstrates how multi-platform delivery has affected media content consumption patterns.[82] [83] Scholars agree that multi-platforms have not only created new ways of distributing media content to the audiences but that the introduction of platforms and rising multi-platform content distribution tactics have also created a previously unheard-of media content consumption pattern: ***on-demand content consumption,*** which is a fundamental change in the media environment of this century. Previously media content has never been consumed at other times and on other platforms, as determined by media channels – TV, print, radio, or any other media channel. Now platforms have entered this well-established communication flow and brought several significant consequences to the media environment. The author of the Thesis argues that content consumption change is a considerable modification of Laswell's communication model presented previously. Due to digitalisation, *new dimensions of media-audience communication flow have emerged*. The author of the Thesis concludes and offers adjustments to the media element of Lasswell's model, defining it as the transformed media environment of the 21st century due to the emergence of platforms and areas of change within this research focus (see Fig. 1.3).

[77] Goyanes, M., & Dürrenberg, C. (2014). A taxonomy of newspapers based on multi-platform and paid content strategies: Evidences from Spain. *International Journal on Media Management*, 16 (1), 27–45. doi:10.1080/14241277.2014.900498

[78] Bakshi, M., & Mishra, P. (2016). Structural equation modelling of determinants of consumer-based brand equity of newspapers. *Journal of Media Business Studies*. 13. 1-22. 10.1080/16522354.2016.1145912.

[79] Champion, K. (2015). Measuring Content Diversity in a Multi-Platform Context. *The Political Economy of Communication,* 3(1). Retrieved from http://polecom.org/index.php/polecom/article/view/51/241

[80] Doyle, G. (2010). From Television to Multi-PlatformLess from More or More for Less?. Convergence: *The International Journal of Research Into New Media Technologies*. 16. 431-449. 10.1177/1354856510375145.

[81] Malmelin, N., & Moisander, J. (2014). Brands and branding in media management—Toward a research agenda. *International Journal on Media Management,* 16(1), 9–25. doi:10.1080/ 14241277.2014.898149

[82] Chyi, H.-I., & Chadha, M. (2012). News on news devices. *Journalism Practice,* 6(4), 441–439.

[83] Spyridou, L.-P., Matsiola, M., Veglis, A., Kalliris, G., & Dimoulas, C. (2013). Journalism in a state of flux: Journalists as agents of technology innovation and emerging news practices. *International Communication Gazette,* 75(1), 76–98. doi:10.1177/1748048512461763
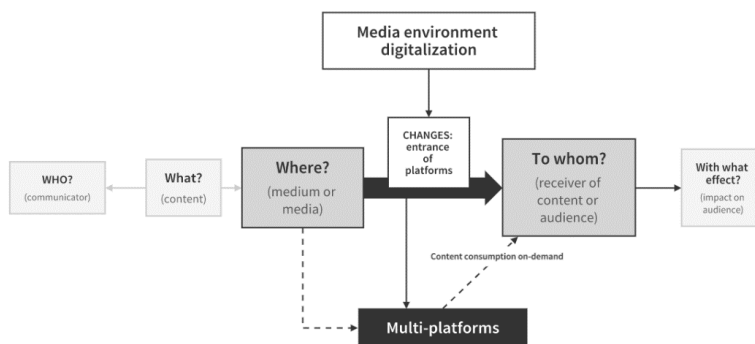
- research area

Fig. 1.3. The 21st century media environment (created by the author, based on Lasswell's (1948) communication model).

According to literature analysis, this on-demand and platform media content consumption has been defined as *convergence* in media. Jenkins (2006) defines "media convergence" as the interplay between traditional and new media that is incorporated into "convergence culture".[84] As a result of digitalisation, Murdock (2000) identifies three degrees of convergence in the media: the technology level (communication systems), the content level (cultural forms), and the economic level (related to companies, employers and the media market).[85] According to Jenkins (2006), convergence is the traffic flow of content across many media platforms, cooperation across different media sectors, and the migration behaviour of audiences in search of desired entertainment experiences.[86] Those technological advancements let audiences consume media content whatever they want and on the platform of their choosing. In literature, it is defined as content consumption on demand.[87] For example, video-on-demand (VOD) is one of the results of media convergence, uniting television and movies or audio visual

[84] Jenkins, H.(2006).*Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide*; New York University Press: New York, NY, USA.

[85] Murdock, G. (Ed.) (2000). *Digital futures: European television in the age of convergence*. SAGE Publications Ltd, https://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781446220344

[86] Jenkins, H.(2006).*Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide*; New York University Press: New York, NY, USA.

[87] McKelvey, F., & Hunt, R. (2019). Discoverability: Toward a Definition of Content Discovery Through Platforms. *Social Media + Society,* 5(1). https://doi.org/10.1177/2056305118819188

content with technology.[88] Now technologies and digitalisation allow audiences to approach and consume media content independently from media channel programming schedules, platforms, and geography. As a result, media content consumption via multi-platforms and on-demand has increased globally, in Latvia, among all age groups, and significantly among younger audiences (see Appendix 1).

In conclusion, the platform's development has created a media environment where media content distribution and consumption have changed to multi-platform and on-demand content distribution and consumption. Scholars and practitioners agree that the current media environment is fundamentally reshaping the **news industry.**[89] News production, packaging, distribution, and consumption may be undergoing one of the most significant changes.[90] Undoubtedly, digital technologies are transforming traditional mass media, developing new media entrants and introducing new ways of media content consumption and distribution. Platforms affect media content consumption in a broader context. There is also a significant shift in how the audience *accesses and finds news*.[91] From one perspective, platforms enable the distribution of content to a broad audience, ensuring the mass media's core function - rapidly disseminating information to a large audience. On the other hand, numerous scholars have emphasised the difficulties faced by media organisations in responding to the shifting competitive environment, audience behaviour, and revenue structures. As summarised in Figure 1.4., based on literature and secondary data analyses, media and news media content consumption have changed due to platforms becoming additional elements to content flow between media and audience.

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[88] Pradsmadji, S. I., & Irwansyah, I. (2020). Media Convergence in the Platform of Video-on-Demand: Opportunities, Challenges, and Audience Behaviour. *Jurnal ASPIKOM*, *5*(1), 115. https://doi.org/10.24329/aspikom.v5i1.491

[89] Kalogeropoulos, A., Fletcher, R., & Nielsen, R. K. (2019). News brand attribution in distributed environments: Do people know where they get their news? *New Media & Society,* 21(3), 583–601. https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444818801313

[90] Nguyen, A. (2008). The contribution of online news attributes to its diffusion: An empirical exploration based on a proposed theoretical model for the micro-process of online news adoption/use. *First Monday.* https://doi.org/10.5210/fm.v13i4.2127

[91] Kalogeropoulos, A., Fletcher, R., & Nielsen, R. K. (2019). News brand attribution in distributed environments: Do people know where they get their news? *New Media & Society*, 21(3), 583–601. https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444818801313

Fig. 1.4. The impact of media environment digitalisation on news media content consumption (created by the author, based on a literature review).

The Thesis author is of the opinion that focusing on news media as a research area is vital as the news media are distinct from consumer goods and other media products. By fulfilling their normative purpose, news media impact society and generate revenue [92] and, in the meantime, face challenges in the form of increased competition from social media platforms. The author of the Thesis presumes that the evaluations of digitalisation's effect on the media environment illustrate the importance and relevance of in-depth research on news media in an evolving media environment and its outcomes.

1.2. News media in the 21st century media business environment

As discussed, the media environment consists of media that produce and distribute content to audiences. In this century, this environment has been influenced by platforms. Platforms have changed how media content is distributed and consumed by the audience creating multi-platform and on-demand distribution and consumption of content. Based on academic literature, news media face considerable changes in this media environment. In the same way that new technologies are altering the nature of news production and distribution, they are also altering how consumers consume news.[93] The scholars agree that the most significant change to news media is *news consumption via platforms*. News media is defined as

[92] Picard,R.G. (2005) Unique Characteristics and Business Dynamics of Media Products, *Journal of Media Business Studies,* 2:2, 61-69, DOI: 10.1080/16522354.2005.11073433.

[93] Tewksbury,D. (2003). What Do Americans Really Want to Know? Tracking the Behavior of News Readers on the Internet, *Journal of Communication*, Volume 53, Issue 4, 694–710, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1460-2466.2003.tb02918.x

media that deliver daily news and event reports to society [94] [95] and provides entertaining and informative content.[96] The news media have a dual function: informing the public and pursuing financial success.[97] According to Reuter's research (2017), the most significant change has been the growth of news accessed via social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter. Over half (51 %) of the research sample respondents in the United States now get news via social media – five percentage points up from 2016 and twice as many as accessed in 2013.[98] The platforms provide a diverse array of other innovative utilities to news users: they can personalise their news experience in any way they desire, obtain as much news as they need from any corner of the globe, explore topics of interest in as much depth as they desire; get all existing communication formats in the same news package; broadcast their own news and opinions to potentially millions of people in cyberspace.[99] Some scholars define the new news media environment as a high-choice environment where the audience has more freedom and choice to select and consume news media content. [100] As previously mentioned, a significant shift for media is that creative output is not merely the content itself but also the platforms on which it emerges.[101] For example, in 2016, Facebook generated 30 % of the visits to 37 American and European news websites.[102] In early 2018, Facebook was the leading social media traffic

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[94] McKewon, E. (2012). Talking Points Ammo. The use of neoliberal think tank fantasy themes to delegitimise scientific knowledge of climate change in Australian newspapers. *Journalism Studies,* 13, 277–297. doi:10.1080/1461670X. 2011.646403

[95] Doyle, G. (2015). Multi-platform media and the miracle of the loaves and fishes. *Journal of Media Business Studies*, 12(1), 49-65, https://doi.org/10.1080/16522354.2015.1027113

[96] Rohn, U., & Baumann, S. (2015). Media brands in social network sites: Problems German media companies have faced and lessons they have learned. *Journal of Brand Strategy*, 4(1), 70–82.

[97] Gerth, M.A., & Siegert, G. (2012). Patterns of Consistence and Constriction. *American Behavioral Scientist 56,* 279–299.. doi:10.1177/0002764211426326

[98] Newman, N. *et al.* (2017). Reuters Institute Digital News Report 2017. Available at SSRN: https://ssrn.com/abstract=3026082

[99] Nguyen, A. (2008). The contribution of online news attributes to its diffusion: An empirical exploration based on a proposed theoretical model for the micro-process of online news adoption/use. *First Monday.* https://doi.org/10.5210/fm.v13i4.2127

[100] Van Aelst, P. *et al.* (2017). Political communication in a high-choice media environment: A challenge for democracy? *Annals of the International Communication Association*, 41(1), 3–27. https://doi.org/10.1080/23808985.2017.1288551

[101] Küng, L. (2017). Reflections on the ascendancy of technology in the media and its implications for organisations and their leaders. *The Journal of Media Innovations,* 4(1), 77–81. https://doi.org/10.5617/jmi.v4i1.3171

[102] Myllylahti, M. (2018) An attention economy trap? An empirical investigation into four news companies' Facebook traffic and social media revenue, *Journal of Media Business Studies, 15*:4, 237-253, DOI: 10.1080/16522354.2018.1527521

source.[103] In Latvia, 31 % - 38 % of the audience access news content through social media platforms (see Appendix 1 of this Thesis). [104]

According to secondary data analyses, younger groups are much more likely to use social media and digital media as their primary news source. In comparison, older groups cling to the habits they grew up with (TV, radio, and print). A third of 18–24-year-olds (33 %) now say social media platforms are their primary source of news – that is more than online news sites (31 %) and more than TV news and printed newspapers put together (29 %).[105] While exposure to news on social media is often incidental, the past few years have seen the growth of aggregation services that are more of a destination for news. 65% of news users access the news via search (25 %), social media (23 %) and other indirect sources. Only 32 % of all news access within researched countries is direct access.[106] People in Scandinavia and the UK are more likely to go directly to a website or app. By contrast, social media are a hugely popular starting point for news consumption in Latin America and some Central and Eastern European countries.

The author of the Thesis summarises that the younger the audience, the more news is consumed via:

- social media platforms;
- on-demand;
- mobile.

A Reuters (2019) study shows that younger audiences differ from older generations in what they do and their fundamental attitudes regarding what they desire from the news.[107] This generation is primarily motivated by progress and life satisfaction, reflected in their news preferences. They still need and want to absorb the news. However, they do not necessarily view traditional media as the best or only option. According to secondary data analyses and literature review, the author argues that changes in news media consumption have developed an entirely new media audience – Generation Z, born in a digital age. The media environment

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[103] Ibid, p. 237

[104] TVNET (2022). Online survey *News Portals Brands and Usage Habits*, Norstad, Latvia, Target audience: 18-55, read news, Sample: nationally representative, n=1036

[105] Newman, N. *et al.* (2017). Reuters Institute Digital News Report 2017. *Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism* Available at SSRN: https://ssrn.com/abstract=3026082

[106] Ibid

[107] Galan, L.,Osserman, J.,& Parker, T.& Taylor, M. (2019). How Young People Consume News and the Implications for Main-stream Media; *Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism*, Oxford University: Oxford, UK

of this generation has never been more different than it is now, with digital, social media platforms, and on-demand content consumption prevailing. Media consumption is a significant influence in establishing generational identity. It may even serve as a foundation for the emergence of each generation's unique characteristics.[108] Numerous studies have studied generational differences in media consumption. The younger a person was when a significant historical or fundamental event occurred, the more immense its influence on their lives.[109] Therefore, it is safe to assume that for Generation Z, digital technologies and the availability of media consumption access points and devices fostered the development of connected consumption and media experiences. As this generation is the largest generation around the globe (see Table 1.3), its influence on many sectors, including media consumption, is undeniable. This generation now exhibits previously unheard-of news media content consumption patterns, raising this generation's significance in media audience analyses. Based on literature analysis, the author of this Thesis concludes that this generation is of considerable interest to academics. However, research focused on news media branding, and Generation Z is uncommon despite the growing actuality of brand attribution and the significance of this generation as a media audience.

1.2.1. Generation Z and news media

News media and young people view the role and value of news differently. This audience wants news brands to create useful, entertaining, and enjoyable products.[110] Based on the literature analysis, the author of the Thesis summarises generation classification and current global population weight between generations in Table 1.3.

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[108] Kalmus, V., Masso, A., & Lauristin, M. (2013). Preferences in media use and perception of inter-generational differences among age groups in Estonia: A cultural approach to media generations. *Northern Lights: Film & Media Studies Yearbook,* 11(1), 15–34. https://doi.org/10.1386/nl.11.1.15_1

[109] Kalmus, V., Masso, A., & Lauristin, M. (2013). Preferences in media use and perception of inter-generational differences among age groups in Estonia: A cultural approach to media generations. *Northern Lights: Film & Media Studies Yearbook,* 11(1), 15–34. https://doi.org/10.1386/nl.11.1.15_1 i

[110] Galan, L.,Osserman, J.,& Parker, T.& Taylor, M. (2019). How Young People Consume News and the Implications for Main-stream Media; *Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, Oxford University:* Oxford, UK

Table 1.3

Six generations divided by age and population by age [111]

Generation name	Generation period (years to born)	Generation age (in the year 2022)	Generation in total global population (mill. people)	Generation weight in total global population (%)
Pre Boom	Till 1946	77+	295 264 753	3.7
Baby Boomers	1946–1964	58–76	976 569 396	12.4
Generation X	1965–1980	42–57	1 692 677 971	21.4
Generation Y	1981–1996	41–26	1 765 948 025	22.3
Generation Z	**1997–2012**	**25–10**	**1 856 200 249**	**23.5**
Generation Alpha	From 2013	Till 9	1 318 676 502	16.7
Total world population (mill. people)			**7 905 336 896**	**100 %**

Generation Z is the largest generation globally (see Table 1.3). Many scholars agree that representatives of this generation will bring about many changes across all industries, including media and news media consumption. The difficulty for news media is that these companies and their products play a minor role in this generation's lives. The results suggest that Generation Z heavily utilizes mobile technologies and social media platforms. Unsurprisingly, they prefer tailored material and consume media on demand. Generation Z is different from other generations in that it is the first to grow up wholly during the digital era. They are tech-savvy, mobile-first, and have high standards for spending their time online. More news media companies' content is consumed via social media platforms, and the mobile environment follows a multi-platform trend. Rozukalne's (2012) research finds that media content is a constant and simultaneous companion in the daily lives of young people.[112] Most young people's news media consumption is ritualized and full of media routines; young people enthusiastically and constantly absorb content from various media brands. The younger demographic requires mobile, platform-independent, interactive, and on-demand media consumption. Social media platform usage has been growing yearly, exceeding the use of national news media in the online environment.[113] According to the literature review, the rise of social media has had the most significant impact on the generational identity of Generation Z. The prevalence of social media platforms has strengthened the competitive attitude of this

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[111] United States Census Bereau: International Data Base World Population by Ahe and Sex/Web, [accessed on September 20,,2022], available
https://www.census.gov/datatools/demo/idb/#/country?COUNTRY_YEAR=2022&COUNTRY_YR_ANIM=20 22

[112] Rožukalne, A. (2012). Young people as a media audience: From content to usage processes. *Central European Journal of Communication*., 5(1 (8)):105-20.

[113] Dentsu Aegis Network Latvia. (2021). *Consumer Connection System Latvia*, consumer media usage proprietary research, unpublished, 2012-2021.

generation, who seek to compare their life to those of their online peers.[114] Numerous kinds of research show that the younger generation prefers to use global or international media brands over national news media (see Appendix 1 of this Thesis).[115] Reuters' (2019) study also revealed three key aspects determining this generation's attitude towards news media. These are the moment of consumption, the person, and the medium.[116] Many scholars conclude that for younger audiences, the source of content (or **brand of media) or news is less significant**. News and media content consumption is about a content experience on a certain platform or moment.

Based on the literature review and secondary data analysis (Appendix 1), it is possible to conclude that various content access points and platforms increase the significance of the **news consumption experience**, especially for Generation Z. Before digitalization, it was clear that news consumption was limited to the dedicated moment when the audience turned on a television or radio station or opened a newspaper.[117] Digitalization and platforms make it possible to extend this experience to multiple moments with different audience needs, platforms, and expectations. Therefore, Generation Z's relationship with news media depends on the moment. This generation's content consumption is pulsating and consistent; this consistency, not the content, defines young people's media consumption.[118] The Thesis author concludes that the significant change due to digitalization is that content is vital for the audience. How this content is experienced or consumed via various platforms and moment is also significant.

Generation Z is not specifically passionate about news and national news media, prioritising social media platforms and other mobile applications for entertainment and socialising. This does not mean young consumers do not value traditional or new media brands. On the contrary, most of them have a leading news brand they turn to for breaking news or when something needs to be verified. Still, their news media brand choice is often impacted by

[114] Laor, T., & Galily, Y. (2022). Who'S clicking on on-demand? media consumption patterns of generations Y & Z. *Technology in Society,* 70, 102016.

[115] Kalmus, V., Masso, A., & Lauristin, M. (2013). Preferences in media use and perception of inter-generational differences among age groups in Estonia: A cultural approach to media generations. *Northern Lights: Film & Media Studies Yearbook,* 11(1), 15–34. https://doi.org/10.1386/nl.11.1.15_1

[116] Galan, L., Osserman, J., Parker, T., & Taylor, M. (2019). How young people consume news and the implications for mainstream media. *Flamingo and Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism*, Oxford University,UK.

[117] Galan, L., Osserman, J., Parker, T., & Taylor, M. (2019). How young people consume news and the implications for mainstream media. *Flamingo and Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism*, Oxford University,UK.

[118] Rožukalne, A. (2012). Young people as a media audience: From content to usage processes. *Central European Journal of Communication*. 5(1 (8)):105-20

early parental influence, and the consumption format is almost always digital.[119] [120] The Reuters research suggests that most young people passively keep up with the news by consuming it where they are most present: on social media platforms and mobile phones. The move from traditional news sources to social media platforms influences how people consume news and their overall attitudes. They consume a combination of several media, use each platform or topic briefly, and perceive their content as a continuous stream of small, distinct pieces. Many consumers - especially younger ones - have increasingly started to depend on trustworthy sources in recent years.[121] One reason is that young people have gradually become more aware of reliable sources of news content and the value of quality journalism.

The author of the Thesis concludes that the analyses confirm that news for younger audiences is not as significant as news for older audiences. The author of the Thesis summarizes that younger audiences consume news, but they do so online, on-demand, and via multiple platforms, thereby elevating the significance of news content and the *experience of content consumption* (see Fig. 1.5).
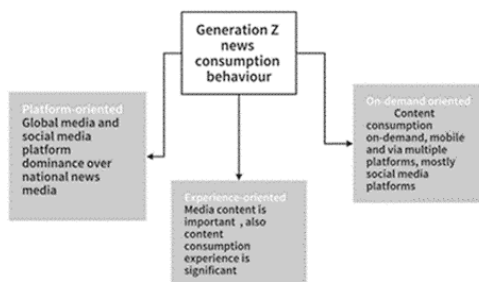
Fig. 1.5. Grouping of the features of Generation Z's news and media content consumption (created by the author, based on Galan *et al*.,2019; Rožukalne,2012; Laor, Galily, 2022).

As the author of the Thesis discussed before, news consumption in online form increases in all age groups, including Generation Z. In Latvia, the percentage of people consuming news online is even higher than in European Union (EU) countries (see Appendix 1). However, trust

[119] Galan, L., Osserman, J., Parker, T., & Taylor, M. (2019). How young people consume news and the implications for mainstream media. *Flamingo and Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism*, Oxford University,UK.

[120] Dentsu Aegis Network Latvia. (2021). Consumer Connection System Latvia, consumer media usage proprietary research, 2012-2021

[121] Galan, L., Osserman, J., Parker, T., & Taylor, M. (2019). How young people consume news and the implications for mainstream media. *Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism*, Oxford University,UK.

in the news has declined over the years. The author of the Thesis suggests that the previously mentioned consumption patterns are responsible for the decline in news media brand attribution and, consequently, trust.

1.2.2. Trust as news media brand attribution in the 21ˢᵗ century media business environment

While news consumption is increasing among all age groups, trust in the news has declined over the years.[122] The latest data on audience attitudes and behaviour towards news media in European Union (EU) countries shows that television is the main news source for people in the EU and Latvia; 75 % and 51 % of respondents used TV as a news source respectively. Online news sources are the second most popular news source in the EU and Latvia: 43 % and 45 % of respondents used online news as a news source. Social media platforms are used by 26 % of respondents in the EU and 41 % of respondents in Latvia as a source of news. The younger the audience, the more news sources are online news and social media platforms. Among the 15 to 24 years old age group, social media platforms have been the source of news for 46 % of the respondents during the past seven days [123], and 34 % of the respondents of this age group used YouTube and other video platforms to access news (see Table 1.4). Older respondents tend to have a preference for using the website of the news source (mentioned by 46 % of 40 to 54 years old vs 33 % of 15 to 24 years old), while younger respondents are more likely to read articles or posts that appear in their online social networks (mentioned by 43 % of 15–24 years old vs 24 % of 55+ years old).

At the same time, the highest trust in the news was given to national TV media news – 49 % of respondents in EU countries and 51 % in Latvia. This is followed by print and commercial TV news at the EU and national levels. Only 11 % of EU and 12 % of Latvia respondents affirmed trust in online news media. Social media platforms as news sources have won the trust of only 5 % of respondents in the EU and 12 % of respondents in Latvia. Younger respondents more frequently trust online news platforms and social media channels.

The Thesis author concludes that although social media platforms and online news are widely used as news sources or channels for audiences, the **trust in those channels is low.** In contrast, news consumption on social media platforms and online is high but trust here is low.

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[122] European Parliament. Directorate General for Communication. & Ipsos European Public Affairs. (2022). *News & media survey 2022*. Publications Office. https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2861/023298

[123] European Parliament. Directorate General for Communication. & Ipsos European Public Affairs. (2022). *News & media survey 2022*. Publications Office. https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2861/023298

The following table summarises the data discussed by EU countries, Latvia and news-obtaining channels or sources (see Table 1.4).

Table 1.4

News access sources and trust in the news for audiences in EU countries and Latvia, 2022 [124]

Description	Television, %	Online news, %	Radio, %	Social media platforms, %	Written media (including online versions), %
Source of news (channel via news consumed)					
EU countries	75	43	36	26	21
Latvia	51	45	28	41	9
Trust in news					
EU countries	49 (public TV) 27 (private TV)	11	49 (public) 27 (private)	5	39
Latvia	51 (public TV) 15 (private TV)	12	51 (public) 15 (private)	12	21

Globally, trust in news is also declining.[125] While this varies across countries globally, levels of trust in news on social media, search engines, and messaging apps are consistently lower than audience trust in information in the news media more generally.[126] Despite relatively reduced trust in news on platforms, many have good attitudes towards them, notably Google and YouTube. However, negative attitudes towards journalism are pervasive, and social media is one of the most frequently cited places where news and journalism are criticised.[127] The trust gap between news in general and news on platforms is more significant for some services (Facebook) and smaller for others (Google) and varies by country and audience (younger, college-educated, politically interested people are more likely to trust news both on and off platforms).[128] Based on data analysis, the author of the Thesis details that social media platforms, despite being the dominant source of news, also play a part in reducing trust in news. Guess *et al.* (2019) found that Facebook was a key distribution platform for what they label

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[124] European Parliament. Directorate General for Communication. & Ipsos European Public Affairs. (2022). *News & media survey 2022*. Publications Office. https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2861/023298

[125] Fisher,C. (2016). The trouble with 'trust' in news media, *Communication Research and Practice*, 2:4, 451-465, DOI: 10.1080/22041451.2016.1261251

[126] Alverne, C.M. *et al.* (2022).The trust gap: how and why news on digital platforms is viewed more sceptically versus news in general. *Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism*. https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/sites/default/files/2022-09/MontAlverne_et_al_The_Trust_Gap.pdf

[127] Ibid, p.6

[128] Alverne, C.M. *et al.* (2022).The trust gap: how and why news on digital platforms is viewed more sceptically versus news in general. *Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism*. https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/sites/default/files/2022-09/MontAlverne_et_al_The_Trust_Gap.pdf

untrustworthy websites.[129] In addition, research has found that fake news stories on Twitter diffuse farther and faster than truthful news items.[130] Academics debate the reasons behind the declining trust in news. Media trust is often discussed in the relevant literature alongside related concepts such as media credibility and trustworthiness.[131] [132] Numerous academic works are dedicated to increasing scholars' interest in the reasons behind decreasing trust in the news despite increasing news consumption. A recent study has demonstrated that levels of media trust vary depending on whether the topic is news in general, news that people consume, or digital and social media news.[133] Trust differs depending on whether the reference is to an indefinite referent or a specific news source.[134] Media trust may also vary based on whether it relates to national versus local media, individual news organisations, and the coverage of specific themes.[135] While in-depth analyses of media trust are beyond the scope of this research, the Thesis author believes that the vital reason for this is that the implication of the shift to **distributed consumption** (or news consumption via multi-platforms and on-demand) through search, social, and aggregators relates to the **decreasing level of attribution** and recognition for news media brands.

As confirmed in numerous studies, the author of the Thesis concludes that the attribution of source or news media brands is increasingly low in a multi-platform media environment. News brand attribution refers to the extent to which news consumers correctly attribute the content they have accessed to the news brands that produced them (e.g., *BBC, New York Times*).[136] Reuters' (2019) research on news media brand attribution found that accessing news

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[129] Guess, A., Nagler, J., & Tucker, J. (2019). Less than you think: Prevalence and predictors of fake news dissemination on Facebook. *Science Advances*, 5(1), Eaau4586.

[130] Vosoughi, S., Roy, D., & Aral, S. (2018). The spread of true and false news online. *Science,* 359(6380), 1146–1151. https://doi.org/10.1126/science.aap9559

[131] Engelke, K., Hase, V., & Wintterlin, F. (2019). On measuring trust and distrust in journalism: Reflection of the status quo and suggestions for the road ahead. *Journal of Trust Research*, 9. 66-86. 10.1080/21515581.2019.1588741.

[132] Otto, K., & Köhler, A. (2018). Trust in Media and Journalism. In: Otto, K., Köhler, A. (eds) *Trust in Media and Journalism.* Springer VS, Wiesbaden. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-658-20765-6_1

[133] Newman, N., Fletcher, R., Kalogeropoulos, A., & Nielsen, R. (2019). Reuters Institute Digital News Report 2019. In Digital News Report (1–156). *Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism.*

[134] Strömbäck, J. *et al.* (2020). News media trust and its impact on media use: toward a framework for future research. *Annals of the International Communication Association* 44, 139–156.. doi:10.1080/23808985.2020.1755338

[135] Ibid, p. 140

[136] Kalogeropoulos, A., Fletcher, R., & Nielsen, R. K. (2019). News brand attribution in distributed environments: Do people know where they get their news? *New Media & Society*, 21(3), 583–601. https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444818801313

directly is associated with a significantly higher rate of correct news brand attribution than distributed discovery via search engines or social media.[137] Younger audiences are more likely to appropriately attribute the source of news they have discovered across several platforms. When people access their primary (or favourite) news brand, regardless of how they acquired the news (directly, through search, or through social), the likelihood of their attributing the news to that brand is significantly increased.

Based on secondary data analysis and a literature review, the author of this Thesis concludes that news consumption occurs increasingly via multi-platforms and on-demand, raising the question of how this new news media environment affects news media in the brand aspect and how this content consumption affects audiences (see Fig.1.6).
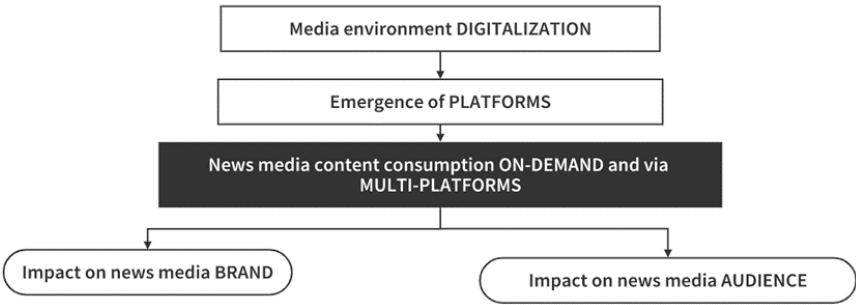
Fig. 1.6. Defined research area on the impact of news content consumption on the brand and audience. (created by the author, based on a literature review).

Literature analyses demonstrate that the transformed media environment has implications for news media's brand and brand attribution. Therefore, the following section of this Thesis explores the previously defined study field of **news media in the brand aspect.**

1.3. Brand of news media in the 21st century media business environment

Before analysing news media brand aspects, it is vital to examine how scholars define media brands. The term *"media brand"* appears to be the subject of an ongoing debate among communication and marketing researchers, further complicated by arguments between

[137] Kalogeropoulos, A., Fletcher, R., & Nielsen, R. K. (2019). News brand attribution in distributed environments: Do people know where they get their news? *New Media & Society,* 21(3), 583–601. https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444818801313

marketing and public relations professionals.[138] The challenge discussed by academics is how media items should be considered brands. Several methods define a brand depending on the product, customer, or financial perspective: [139] [140]

- a promise to the consumer;
- a value proposition;
- a place in the consumer's mind;
- a grand idea.

Brand and brand strength are related to brand equity models, widely recognised as definitions and structures of brand power in the consumer's mind. Chan-Olmsted (2006) proposes that media brands add thoughts and emotions needed to enhance the value of a product beyond its product category and functional attributes.[141] Brands provide information about the quality of content experience and credence of good media content.[142] The scholars agree that brands primarily assist customers in navigating the vast media titles and programmes available and that media brands are market signals. They express the credibility and quality of media products and advise consumers on what to expect from a specific programme, title, or product.[143] Picard (2018) states the fundamental question of how researchers define media. Decades ago, the term "media" was commonly used to refer to content creators and packagers. Still, the emergence of platforms, social media, and other intermediates and distributors due to digitalization has complicated the categorization. To define the field, it is necessary to agree on what characteristics make something media or not.[144] Previously traditional media content was produced in obsolete technical, economic, political, and informational settings.

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[138] McDowell,W.S. (2006) Confrontation or Conciliation? The Plight of Small Media Brands in a Zero Sum Marketplace, *Journal of Media Business Studies,* 3:2, 1-22, DOI: 10.1080/16522354.2006.11073439

[139] Reca, Á.A. (2006). Issues in Media Product Management. In A. B. Albarran, S. M. ChanOlmsted. & M. O. Wirth (Eds.), *Handbook of Media Management and Economics.* New York & London: Routledge

[140] Keller,K.L. (2009) Building strong brands in a modern marketing communications environment, *Journal of Marketing Communications*, 15:2-3, 139-155, DOI: 10.1080/13527260902757530

[141] Chan-Olmsted, S.M. (2005). *Competitive Strategy for Media Firms: Strategic and Brand Management in Changing Media Markets* (1st ed.). , Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781410617408

[142] Krebs,I.,& Siegert, G. (2015). 20 Years of Research on Media Brands and Media Branding,Springer Books, in: Siegert,G.,Förster,K., Chan-Olmsted, S.M., &Ots,M.(ed.), *Handbook of Media Branding*, edition 127, 33-49, Springer, Berlin/Heidelberg, Germany

[143] Siegert, G., Förster, K., Chan-Olmsted, S.M., & Ots, M. (Eds.) (2015). *Handbook of Media Branding;* Springer: Berlin/Heidelberg, Germany, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-18236-0

[144] Picard, R. G. (2018). The Rise and Expansion of Research in Media Economics. *Communication & Society,* 113–119. https://doi.org/10.15581/003.31.35674.

The scholars conclude that today to evolve and prosper, media must revisit the roots of their operations to ensure that they provide:

- the core value that customers seek;

- their products and services in ways that are unique or distinctive and appropriate for the current media environment.[145]

The author of the Thesis argues that the term brand of media extends beyond previously existing definitions. However, in the context of this Thesis research, the author approaches media as mass media and news media defined previously. Despite platforms becoming essential participants in the media environment described before, the author's research on the media brand focuses on media as mass media.

From an audience perspective, a media brand is a construct that carries the audience's cognitive, emotional, stylistic, conscious, and unconscious associations.[146] The author of the Thesis argues that in a media environment where the audience is more in control of where and when they access media content, the brand as a construct of audience associations is a vital concept to explore and develop. As analysed by numerous authors, the impact of news consumption via platforms is decreasing trust in news. Scholars argue that the potential problems connected with low brand attribution are apparent in the current media environment.[147] Since news content on social media platforms coexists with numerous other sorts of information, audiences cannot always be relied upon to distinguish between content generated by news media, that of individual users, and the platform itself. This, in turn, might make it harder for people to develop and maintain clear brand associations to ensure high brand attribution.

News media brand associations and uniqueness in the media environment

The literature review demonstrates that one of the most fundamental shifts that changed the media environment is that multi-platform and on-demand content consumption **dilutes**

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[145] Picard, R. G. (2011). Mapping Digital Media: Digitization and Media Business Models. London: *Open Society Fundations*

[146] Förster, K. (2015). An Audience-Centered Perspective on Media Brands: Theoretical Considerations, Empirical Results and 'White Spaces'. In G. Siegert, K. Förster, S. M. Chan-Olmsted, & M. Ots (Eds.), *Handbook of Media Branding* (pp. 281–293). Springer International Publishing. http://link.springer.com/10.1007/978-3-319-18236-0_19

[147] Kalogeropoulos, A., Fletcher, R., & Nielsen, R. K. (2019). News brand attribution in distributed environments: Do people know where they get their news? *New Media & Society*, 21(3), 583–601. https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444818801313

media brand associations.[148] [149] [150] On the one hand, concerning content delivery, there is more contact between brands and better receptivity to consumer needs when media brand content is obtainable through multiple platforms.[151] On the other hand, multi-platform content delivery weakens brand associations for news media brands.[152] The increasing fragmentation of audiences, the emergence of distribution platforms, and the progress of technology that allows the time and platform to shift in response to the audience's immediate needs have all combined to create an environment in which the value of media brands or channel branding may be diminished. According to Keller, as there is more dynamism in content across multi-platforms, the brand identity of the content source *(media brand)* becomes less relevant, especially when the content itself has unique brand associations.[153] According to Jenkins, audience access to more content distributors has increased the proportion of media brand users who do not care about where their media content comes from.[154] According to Brakus and Schmitt, many media consumers no longer care which media brand distributes the material to them; it is all about the *consumption experience,* which determines consumer brand loyalty among rival content providers.[155] These findings correlate with the impact of consumer experience on brand and brand equity within other industry sectors. Media convergence has diminished the differentiation between various communication channels.[156] Based on the literature review in the previous sections, the author of this Thesis concludes that the new media environment has created an environment where news media associations decrease, and brand distinctiveness is

[148] Chan-Olmsted, S. (2011). Media Branding in a Changing World: Challenges and Opportunities 2.0. *Int. J. Media Manag.*,13, 3–19. https://doi.org/10.1080/14241277.2011.568305

[149] Siegert, G., Förster, K., Chan-Olmsted, S.M., & Ots, M. (Eds.) (2015). *Handbook of Media Branding*; Springer: Berlin/Heidelberg, Germany, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-18236-0.

[150] Chan-Olmsted, S.M., & Shay, R. (2015). Media Branding 3.0: From Media Brands to Branded Entertainment and Information. In: Siegert, G., Förster, K., Chan-Olmsted, S., Ots, M. (eds) *Handbook of Media Branding.* Springer, Cham. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-18236-0_2

[151] Chan-Olmsted, S.M. (2011). Media Branding in a Changing World: Challenges and Opportunities 2.0. *Int. J. Media Manag.*,13, 3–19. https://doi.org/10.1080/14241277.2011.568305

[152] Chan-Olmsted, S.M. (2011). Media Branding in a Changing World: Challenges and Opportunities 2.0. *Int. J. Media Manag.*,13, 3–19. https://doi.org/10.1080/14241277.2011.568305

[153] Keller,K.L. (2009). Building strong brands in a modern marketing communications environment, *Journal of Marketing Communications*, 15:2-3, 139-155, DOI: 10.1080/13527260902757530

[154] Jenkins, H. (2006). *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide*; New York University Press: New York, NY, USA,.

[155] Brakus, J. J., Schmitt, B. H., & Zarantonello, L. (2009). Brand Experience: What is It? How is it Measured? Does it Affect Loyalty? *Journal of Marketing,* 73(3), 52–68. https://doi.org/10.1509/jmkg.73.3.052

[156] Malmelin, N., Moisander, J. (2014). Brands and Branding in Media Management—Toward a Research Agenda. *The International Journal on Media Management.* 16. 9-25.10.1080/14241277.2014.898149.

low. According to Keller (2003), the current media environment promotes a high point of parity, and the **brand's point of differentiation is low**.[157] The Thesis author concludes that the impact on news media brands is decreasing media brand associations and uniqueness within the research scope, as summarised in the following Figure 1.7.
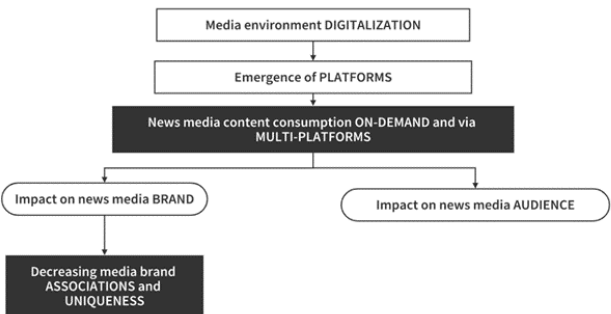
Fig. 1.7. The impact of media environment digitalization on the brand of news media (created by the author, based on Keller, 2009; Chan-Olmsted, 2011;2015; Jenkins, 2006).

The findings enable the author of the Thesis to conclude that the current media environment encourages the decline of news media brand associations. As a result, news media are enduring a decline in brand strength and uniqueness in a multi-platform environment. The importance of media brand strength was discussed before and is undeniable. According to literature analyses, increasing content oversaturation and competition from platforms requires even stronger media and news media brands to be competitive and attract audiences. The current media environment demands a reassessment of how strong news media brands form and how brand distinctiveness evolves. As brand equity models are widely recognised as definitions and structures of brand strength, the author presents a literature overview and content analyses on *news media brand equity* and news media brand equity theoretical aspects in the following section 1.4.

1.4. Brand equity theoretical aspects and news media brand equity

Recently, the academic field has witnessed increasing interest in the brand equity concept, which is crucial to researchers, academics, and business managers. Increasing efforts are being made to introduce and define brand equity as the definition and structure of the *brand*

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[157] Keller, K. (2009). Building strong brands in a modern marketing communications environment. *Journal of Marketing Communications.* 15. 10.1080/13527260902757530.

strength construct. Brand equity is essential for supporting customers in processing information, especially when overloaded with information. [158] Technological advances and the introduction of the internet have changed how the world interacts and communicates, directly related to brand communication with the audience. This new environment has completely changed the audience's impact on brands' marketing efforts and communication. Thus, much research from the last 20 years has been dedicated to determining how brands and branding can or should be managed in the current environment.[159] [160] [161] Established approaches to branding that focus on mass media methods appear unsuited for a market where social media platforms have replaced brand platforms and networks, and the audience has access to vast information about companies, brands, and products.

Brand equity theories

Although researchers and marketers have approached the concept differently over the last 30 years since the concept was first introduced, there is a consensus that brand equity should be determined through marketing outcomes distinctively assigned to a brand.[162] Thus, brand equity is connected to the fact that different effects are seen in marketing a service or product due to its brand versus if that brand did not associate with that same product or service.[163] If one considers the changing communication environment, then is it correct to assume that, from today's perspective, brand equity relates to the outcome that results from any experience with a product or service, regardless of its marketing or brand content unrelated to the marketing. Over the years, scholars have defined brand equity from different perspectives. For example, one of the earliest brand equity authors, Farquhar (1989), named brand equity as added value endowed

[158] Krishnan, B.,& Hartline, M. (2001). Brand equity: Is it more important in services?. *Journal of Services Marketing.* 15. 328-342. 10.1108/EUM0000000005654.

[159] Chan-Olmsted, S. M. (2011). Media branding in a changing world: Challenges and opportunities 2.0.*Int. J. Media Manag*.2011,13, 3–19, DOI: 10.1080/14241277.2011.568305

[160] von Rimscha, M. B., Verhoeven, M., Krebs, I., Sommer, C., & Siegert, G. (2018). Patterns of successful media production. *Convergence,* 24(3), 251–268. https://doi.org/10.1177/1354856516678410

[161] Siegert, G., Förster, K., Chan-Olmsted, S. M., & Ots, M. (Eds.). (2015). *Handbook of Media Branding.* Springer International Publishing. http://link.springer.com/10.1007/978-3-319-18236-0

[162] Aaker, D. (1991). *Managing Brand Equity: Capitalising on the Value of a Brand Name*; The Free Press: New York, NY, USA,

[163] Keller, K. L. (1993). Conceptualizing, Measuring, and Managing Customer-Based Brand Equity. *Journal of Marketing*, 57(1), 1–22. https://doi.org/10.2307/1252054

by the brand to the product.[164] [165] Simon and Sullivan (1993) defined it as the difference in cash flow between a corporate product with a brand name and an identical product without a brand name.[166] According to Keller (1993), brand equity is the effect of brand knowledge on consumer response to a brand's marketing. The effect occurs when the brand is known, and the consumer has favourable, strong and unique brand associations.[167] Achieving brand equity is a primary objective that may be accomplished by increasing target consumers' positive associations and feelings.[168] Lassar, Mittal, and Sharma (1995) defined brand equity as an increase in a product's perceived utility and desirability due to its brand name.[169] Based on scientifically assessed attribute levels, Park and Srinivasan (1994) distinguished between overall and multi-attribute brand preferences.[170] Yoo (2000) defined brand equity as the distinction between consumer preference for a branded and unbranded product with similar attributes.[171] Similarly, Ailawadi (2003) defined brand equity as the outcomes that occur with a product's brand name versus those that would occur if the product did not have a brand name.[172] According to Vázquez (2002), brand equity is a benefit that consumers connect with the use of a brand. [173] According to Clow and Baack (2005), brand equity is a set of characteristics that gives a brand a unique position in the market, enables a company to charge a premium price and maintain a larger market share than would have been possible with an unbranded product, as well as allowing a company to charge a premium price. Based on literature analyses, the author of the Thesis

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[164] Farquhar, P. H. (1989). Managing brand equity. *Marketing Research,* 1(3), 24–33

[165] Farjam, S., & Hong-yi, X. (2015). Reviewing the Concept of Brand Equity and Evaluating Consumer- Based Brand Equity (CBBE) Models. *International Journal of Management Science and Business Administration*, 1, 14-29.

[166] Simon, C.I., & Sullivan, M. (1993). The measurement anddeterminants of brand equity: a financial approach. *Marketing Science,* Vol. 12, Winter, 28-52.

[167] Keller, K. L. (1993). Conceptualizing, Measuring, and Managing Customer-Based Brand Equity. *Journal of Marketing*, 57(1), 1–22. https://doi.org/10.2307/1252054

[168] Falkenberg, A.W. (1996). Marketing and the wealth offirms. *Journal of Macromarketing,* Vol. 16 No. 1, pp. 4-24.

[169] Lassar, W.M., Mittal, B., & Sharma, A. (1995). Measuring customer-based brand equity. *Journal of Consumer Marketing,* 12, 11-19.

[170] Park, C.S., & Srinivasan, V. (1994). A survey-basedmethod for measuring and understanding brand equity andits extendibility. *Journal of Marketing Research,* Vol. 31, 271-88.

[171] Yoo, B., Donthu, N., & Lee, S. (2000). An examination of selected marketing mix elements and brand equity. *J. of the Acad. Mark. Sci.* 28, 195, https://doi.org/10.1177/0092070300282002

[172] Ailawadi, K. L., Lehmann, D. R., & Neslin, S. A. (2003). Revenue Premium as an Outcome Measure of Brand Equity. *Journal of Marketing,* 67(4), 1–17. https://doi.org/10.1509/jmkg.67.4.1.18688

[173] Vázquez, R., del Río, A. B., & Iglesias, V. (2002). Consumer-based Brand Equity: Development and Validation of a Measurement Instrument. *Journal of Marketing Management,* 18(1–2), 27–48. https://doi.org/10.1362/0267257022775882

summarises the different definitions of brand equity among scholars (see Table 1.5) and groups them into three main aspects based on the approach of scholars and provides a measurement of brand equity in scholars' works.

Table 1.5

Brand equity definitions, perspective, and proposed framework for accessing brand equity (created by the author)

The scholars on brand equity	Brand equity definitions	Perspective on the brand equity concept	Framework of Measurement
1	2	3	4
Farquhar, (1989)	Brand equity is the increased value a brand imposes on a product.	Financial value	
Aaker, (1991)	Brand equity is a collection of brand assets and liabilities associated with a brand, its name, and its symbol that increase or decrease the value of a product or service to a company and its customers.	Consumer-mindset	Brand association Brand loyalty Brand awareness
Keller, (1991)	Brand equity is the effect of brand knowledge on customer response to a brand's marketing. The effect occurs when the brand is well-known, and the consumer has positive, strong, and unique brand associations.	Consumer-mindset	Brand awareness Brand associations Brand image
Simon., Sullivan, (1993)	The difference in cash flow between a corporate product with a brand name and an identical product without a brand name.	Financial value	Market value
Park., Srinivasan, (1994)	Brand equity can be divided into attribute-based and non-attribute-based components. The attribute-based element of brand equity captures the impact of brand-building activities on the consumer's attribute perceptions. The non-attribute-based element of brand equity captures brand associations unrelated to product attributes.	Product value	Brand attribute and non-attributes-based components Market share Profit margin
Lassar *et al.,* (1995)	Brand equity is an increase in a product with perceived utility and desirability due to its brand name.	Consumer-mindset	Brand performance, Brand value, Social image, Trustworthiness, and commitment.
Yoo, (2000)	Brand equity is the distinction between consumer preference for a branded and unbranded product with similar levels of attributes.	Consumer-mindset	Brand associations Brand awareness Quality Brand loyalty
Ailawadi, (2003)	Brand equity is the outcomes that occur with a product's brand name versus those that would occur if the product did not have a brand name.	Product value	Price premium
Vázquez, (2002)	Brand equity is a benefit that consumers connect with the use of a brand.	Product value Consumer mindset	Product functional utility Product symbolic utility Brand name functional and symbolic utility

Table 1.5 Continued

1	2	3	4
Clow., Baack, (2005; 2014)	Brand equity is a collection of traits that gives a brand a unique position in the market, enabling a company to charge a premium price and maintain a more significant market share than would have been feasible with an unbranded product. It allows the firm to set a premium price.	Financial value Consumer mindset	Price premium Brand recognition Brand domination

These authors established brand equity as a collection of characteristics that distinguish a brand in the marketplace.[174] Significant brand equity unquestionably boosts the likelihood of a brand growth plan's success, preserves competition, and serves as a strong entry barrier for competitors. Stahl (2012) defined brand equity as the power of the brand name.[175] Scholars have defined brand equity from different angles: product value, financial value and consumer-based value; providing various frameworks to assess brand equity, agreement on brand equity as the construct of brand strength and importance to the customer is unquestionable. There is agreement that brand equity is key for **brand uniqueness** and **differentiation** among competitors.[176] [177] In fiercely competitive markets, brands should differentiate themselves. Scholars agree that digitalization with technologies, mobile commerce, and social media clearly enhances this development.[178] [179] [180] Among the other perspectives, the brand is a construct of the audience's mind and associations gaining attention from brand equity experts from the academic and business fields. One of the most cited is The Marketing Science Institute's (MSI 1989) statement that brand equity can be viewed by customers *"...as both a financial asset and as a set of favourable associations and behaviours*."[181] Moreover, brand equity is widely

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[174] Clow, K. E., & Baack, D. (2005). *Concise encyclopedia of advertising.* New York, NY: Haworth Press

[175] Stahl, F., Heitmann, M., Lehmann, D. R., & Neslin, S. A. (2012). The Impact of Brand Equity on Customer Acquisition, Retention, and Profit Margin. *Journal of Marketing,* 76(4), 44–63. https://doi.org/10.1509/jm.10.0522

[176] Capron, L., & Hulland, J. (1999). Redeployment of Brands, Sales Forces, and General Marketing Management Expertise following Horizontal Acquisitions: A Resource-Based View. *Journal of Marketing,* 63(2), 41–54. https://doi.org/10.1177/002224299906300203

[177] Keller, K. L. (1993). Conceptualizing, Measuring, and Managing Customer-Based Brand Equity. *Journal of Marketing*, vol. 57, no. 1, 1–22. JSTOR, https://doi.org/10.2307/1252054

[178] Kahn, B. E., Inman, J. J., & Verhoef, P. C. (2018). Introduction to Special Issue: Consumer Response to the Evolving Retailing Landscape. *Journal of the Association for Consumer Research*, 3(3), 255–259. https://doi.org/10.1086/699389B.E.

[179] Grewal, D., Roggeveen, A.L.,& Nordfält, J. (2017). The future of retailing *J. Retail.,* 93 (1) , 1-6

[180] Troiville, J., Hair, J.F., & Gérard Cliquet, G. (2019). Definition, conceptualization and measurement of consumer-based retailer brand equity, *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services,* Volume 50, 73-84, ISSN 0969-6989, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jretconser.2019.04.022

[181] Christodoulides, G., & De Chernatony, L. (2010). Consumer-based brand equity conceptualisation and measurement: a literature review. *International journal of market research,* 52(1), 43-66.

researched from a financial performance perspective; focusing on brand equity from a consumer perspective is essential. This focus is not on undermining brands' financial value but on how marketing and branding activities influence consumer behaviour and minds and how this impact strengthens brand equity elements.[182] Academics and business managers concur that the current media environment provides customers more opportunities to interact, engage, respond, and become involved with brand marketing and communication. This media environment grants customers more influence over brand marketing results and brand equity. The author of this Thesis argues that it is logical that research into brand equity elements in the media branding context from the consumer or audience perspective is applicable and practical. Previously discussed changes in news consumption and the increasing importance of audience content consumption experience support focusing on brand equity from the consumer aspect.

1.4.1. Customer-based brand equity

The audience, i.e., consumers, increasingly control the new media environment.[183] As a result, consumers have more options and can choose from different media and platforms. Audiences also have greater options about whether and how they want to consume content. Scholars in the marketing literature state that one of the benefits of substantial brand equity is consumers' responses, behaviours, and marketing communication effectiveness.[184] A comprehensive and cohesive brand equity model is needed to understand how individual communication types impact brand building and substantial brand equity.

Consumer-based brand equity concentrates on how consumers perceive the brand.[185] [186] The three acknowledged models of customer-based brand equity are those of Keller (1993), Aaker (1991), and Kapferer (1992).[187] Aaker and Keller define brand equity from a consumer perspective based on consumers' *memory-based brand associations.* Aaker (1991) defines

[182] Faircloth, J. B., Capella, L. M., & Alford, B. L. (2001). The Effect of Brand Attitude and Brand Image on Brand Equity. *Journal of Marketing Theory and Practice, 9*(3), 61–75. http://www.jstor.org/stable/40470049

[183] Siegert, G., Förster, K.,&Chan-Olmsted, S.M.., & Ots, M. (Eds.) (2015). *Handbook of Media Branding;* Springer: Berlin/Heidelberg, Germany,.

[184] Keller, K.L. (2009). Building strong brands in a modern marketing communications environment. *Journal of Marketing Communications*. 15. 10.1080/13527260902757530.

[185] Keller, K.L. (1993). Conceptualizing, Measuring, and Managing Customer-Based Brand Equity.*J. Mark*.1993,57, 1–22

[186] Pappu, R., Quester, P.G.,& Cooksey, R.W. (2005). Consumer-based brand equity: Improving the measurement–empirical evidence.*J. Prod.Brand Manag*.,14, 143–15

[187] Kapferer, J.N. (1992). *Strategic brand management: New approaches to creating and evaluating brand equity.* New York: The Free Press.

brand equity as a set of assets linked to a brand, its name, and its symbol that add to or subtract from the value of a product or service to a firm or its customers. These assets can be grouped into four main categories: name awareness, brand loyalty, perceived quality, and brand associations.[188] Keller (1993) defines *consumer-based brand equity* as the differential effect of brand knowledge on consumer responses to brand marketing. He conceptualizes brand knowledge as an associative memory model with two components: brand awareness (recall and recognition) and brand image (perceptions of a brand as reflected by the brand's associations in consumers' memory. Keller argues that positive brand equity occurs when the consumer is familiar with the brand and holds *favourable, strong, and unique brand associations* in his or her memory. This occurs when consumers sense that a brand has attributes and benefits that satisfy their demands and consider these *attributes to be unique* from those of competitors and that they are maintained over time as part of the brand's image.

Keller's definition incorporates characteristics described by Aaker, but goes into greater detail on levels of customer brand associations as the primary concept that defines other dimensions of customer-based brand equity. According to Keller (1993), there are three types of associations:

- attributes (features that characterize products or services);
- benefits (a personal value that consumers attach to the product or service attributes);
- attitudes (consumers' overall evaluations of brand attributes and benefits, which often form the basis for their behaviour).[189]

Keller and many other marketing experts use the expectancy-value model,[190] which suggests that users will be satisfied if the brand attributes match their desired gratifications (or benefits) and that a positive evaluation (or attitude) of these attributes will influence their behaviour regarding the brand (e.g., loyalty, time investment, purchasing).[191] Branding literature is dominated by Keller's and Aaker's conceptualizations of brand equity, which have fairly distinct elements.

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[188] Christodoulides, G., de Chernatony, L. (2010). Consumer-based brand equity conceptualisation and measurement: a literature review. *International journal of market research,* 52(1), 43-66.

[189] Keller, K.L. (1993) Conceptualizing, Measuring, and Managing Customer-Based Brand Equity. *Journal of Marketing,* 57, 1-22. http://dx.doi.org/10.2307/1252054

[190] Rayburn, J. D., & Palmgreen, P. (1984). Merging uses and gratifications and expectancy-value theory. *Communication Research*, 11(4), 537–562. https://doi.org/10.1177/009365084011004005

[191] Netemeyer, R., Krishnan, B., Pullig, C.,Wang, G., Yagci, M., Dean, D., Ricks,J., & Wirth, F. (2004). Developing and validating measures of facets of customer-based brand equity. *Journal of Business Research*. , 57. 209-224. 10.1016/S0148-2963(01)00303-4

Based on the literature review, the author of the Thesis concludes that in the news media brand context, positive brand equity occurs if media attributes are perceived as beneficial to the audience and create and hold strong and unique brand associations. However, the previously established impact of the media environment on a news media brand shows that audiences' content-consuming behaviour encourages the exact opposite – obscuring the uniqueness and associations of news media brands. The literature review confirms that media brand associations are crucial to substantial brand equity. In that case, investigations of how brand associations are established and strengthened are essential. The types of brand associations that condense factual information can be categorized into *product- and non-product-related attributes*.[192] Product-related attributes directly form from the brand product or service characteristics, whereas non-product-related associations form via brand usage, experience, feeling, user image and price. The author of the Thesis concludes that even though these brand equity approaches were developed and adopted decades ago, the evolving media environment has placed them in a prominent position to build and retain significant media brand equity through a consumer-centric strategy. Unfortunately, not much research on how the interactive and online environment forms brand equity has been done in the last ten years. However, this does not mean traditional branding approaches are no longer valid. A "brand" is a universal concept regardless of the setting. What changes online is the enactment of the brand.[193] Therefore, it is postulated that how brand equity is created online differs from traditional contexts.[194] Online brand equity is a relational type of intangible asset co-created through the interaction between consumers and the e-tail brand.[195] There are three essential aspects to this definition:

- Firstly, online brand equity, similar to other consumer-based brand equity, denotes an intangible asset that reflects the connection between a brand and its consumers;
- Secondly, brand equity is co-created rather than unilaterally 'forced upon' consumers through associations;[196]

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[192] Keller, K.L. (1993) Conceptualizing, Measuring, and Managing Customer-Based Brand Equity. *Journal of Marketing,* 57, 1-22. http://dx.doi.org/10.2307/1252054

[193] Christodoulides, G., de Chernatony, L., Furrer, O., Shiu, E., & Abimbola, T. (2006). Conceptualising and Measuring the Equity of Online Brands. *Journal of Marketing Management*. ;22(7-8):799-825. doi:10.1362/026725706778612149

[194] Ibid, p.799-825

[195] Ibid, p.799-825

[196] Vargo, S. L., & Lusch, R. F. (2004). Evolving to a New Dominant Logic for Marketing. *Journal of Marketing,* 68(1), 1–17. https://doi.org/10.1509/jmkg.68.1.1.24036

- Thirdly, this intangible asset arises from consumers' interactions with the e-tail brand both online (e.g., digital experience) and offline (e.g., fulfilment).[197] This perfectly confirms the analyses done in previous sections that discussed the importance of media content consumption experience in forming brand associations.

Scholars believe there is no universal measure for brand equity and that the market sector and the life stage of the brand need to be accounted for when selecting an appropriate measure to assess brand equity.[198] [199] Brand equity is the ingredient and the outcome of the value-creation process.[200] This enables the author of this Thesis to confirm this research's relevance and underscores the necessity to examine how media, especially news media, brand strength or equity arise in a multi-platform environment. The new media environment changed this value-creation process in media and audience relationships; therefore, it is vital to understand how brand equity is approached in a new media environment. Scholars agree that brand equity is difficult to measure. Interbrand and Young & Rubicam widely used proposed methods, including customer surveys measuring their beliefs and attitudes towards the brand.[201] Young & Rubicam define four significant dimensions to measure customer beliefs: differentiation in the market, relevance to consumer lifestyles, the esteem consumer holds for the brand, and the perceived degree of knowledge the customer possesses of the brand. Bill Moran and Interbrand's Brand Valuation models include a brand's market share and financial analyses.[202] As mentioned, the most recognised across the industry and academic fields are the Aaker and Keller brand equity models.[203] Based on literature analyses on the news media brand

[197] Christodoulides, G., de Chernatony, L., Furrer, O., Shiu, E., & Abimbola, T. (2006). Conceptualising and Measuring the Equity of Online Brands. *Journal of Marketing Management*. ;22(7-8):799-825. doi:10.1362/026725706778612149

[198] Mourad, M., Ennew, C., & Kortam, W. (2010). Descriptive evidence on the role of corporate brands in marketing higher education services. *Service Science, 2*(3), 154-166.

[199] Baker, C., Nancarrow, C., & Tinson, J. (2005). The Mind versus Market Share Guide. *International Journal of Market Research*, 47(5), 523–540. https://doi.org/10.1177/147078530504700505

[200] Aggarwal Sharma, A., Rao, VR., & Popli, S. (2013). Measuring consumer-based brand equity for Indian business schools. *Journal of Marketing for Higher Education*. 2013;23(2):175-203. doi:10.1080/08841241.2013.866609

[201] Farris, P. (2006). *Marketing metrics : 50 metrics every executive should master* / Paul W. Farris ... [et al.]. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Wharton School Publishing., section 4 Product and Portfolio management, p115-128

[202] Farris, P. (2006). *Marketing metrics : 50 metrics every executive should master* / Paul W. Farris ... [et al.]. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Wharton School Publishing., section 4 Product and Portfolio management, p115-128

[203] Christodoulides, G., & de Chernatony, L. (2010). Consumer-based brand equity conceptualisation and measurement: a literature review. *International journal of market research*, 52(1), 43-66.

aspects, the author of the Thesis summarises and illustrates the development model of news media brand in audience minds via *attribute-based brand associations* (See Fig.1.8).
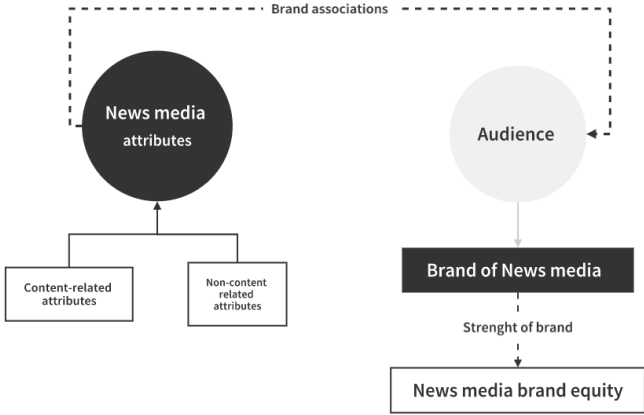
Fig. 1.8. Brand attribute-based news media brand equity model (created by the author as novelty of this research, based on the brand equity theories of Aaker[204] and Keller[205]).

To summarise, brand equity and customer-based brand equity concepts are widely researched and are the subject of strong interest from academics. From a branding and brand management standpoint, the studies of the brand association formation process, especially in the new media environment, and its impact on brand equity constitute crucial research. An exciting paradox is that even though a media environment provides more contacts or touchpoints with the brands*, oversaturation and multi-platforms decrease news media brand association.* The critical question from scholars and practitioners is how strong, favourable, and unique associations develop in multi-platform and on-demand consumption environments. News media brand equity is significant both from a media organization and audience perspective. The author of this Thesis questions how strong associations and uniqueness are built in the current media environment. While customer-based brand equity constructs developed years ago are still appropriate and widely used in measuring brand strength in media brands, particularly the news media brand aspect, the challenge of the importance of non-product attributes connected with brand experience and usage is increasingly significant. As

[204] Aaker, D. (1991). *Managing Brand Equity: Capitalising on the Value of a Brand Name;* The Free Press: New York, NY, USA,.

[205] Keller, K.L. (1993) Conceptualizing, Measuring, and Managing Customer-Based Brand Equity. *Journal of Marketing*, 57, 1-22. http://dx.doi.org/10.2307/1252054

discussed in the previous section of the Thesis, the news media brand content distribution and consumption strongly impact the media brand attribution and distinctiveness in a multi-platform environment. In the following section, the author of the Thesis explores the brand equity of news media and its effect on various brand outcomes to illustrate the significance of news media brand equity.

1.4.2. News media brand equity

In today's media environment, brand management assumes new significance and merits fresh perspectives.[206] Consumer-based brand equity has been studied in various fields like consumer goods,[207] [208] financial services,[209] and retail.[210] [211] [212] However, the concept has not been widely explored from a media branding perspective. One of the leading explanations could be the insufficient professional development of marketing and corporate communication strategies within news media organisations. News media historically focused on the content, not so much on marketing and brand building via different attributes. Most media companies emphasise product (content) promotion over brand building and communication.[213] [214] Based on the literature review, the author concludes that focus on news media brand equity, especially online news media brand equity, is quite rare in the existing literature. In their studies, scholars

[206] Nienstedt, H. W., Huber, F., & Seelmann, C. (2012). The influence of the congruence between brand and consumer personality on the loyalty to print and online issues of magazine brands. *International Journal on Media Management*, 14(1), 3–26.

[207] Netemeyer, R., Krishnan, B., Pullig, C., Wang, G., Yagci, M., Dean, D., Ricks, J., & Wirth, F. (2004). Developing and validating measures of facets of customer-based brand equity. *Journal of Business Research.* 57. 209-224. 10.1016/S0148-2963(01)00303-4

[208] Buil, I., de Chernatony, L. & Martínez, E. (2008) A cross-national validation of the consumer-based brand equity scale, *Journal of Product & Brand Management*, Vol. 17 No. 6, 384-392. https://doi.org/10.1108/10610420810904121

[209] de Chernatony, L., Harris, F., & Christodoulides, G. (2004) Developing a brand performance measure for financial services brands, *The Service Industries Journal,* 24:2, 15-33, DOI: 10.1080/02642060412331301232

[210] Choi, L., & P. Huddleston, P. (2014). The effect of retailer private brands on consumer-based retailer equity: comparison of named private brands and generic private brands *Int. Rev. Retail Distrib. Consum. Res.,* 24 (1), 59-78.

[211] Anselmsson, J., Burt, S., & Tunca, B. (2017). An integrated retailer image and brand equity framework: Re-examining, extending, and restructuring retailer brand equity. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services,* 38, 194–203. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jretconser.2017.06.007

[212] Troiville, J., Hair, J.F., & Gérard Cliquet, G. (2019). Definition, conceptualization and measurement of consumer-based retailer brand equity, *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services,* Volume 50, 73-84, ISSN 0969-6989, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jretconser.2019.04.022.

[213] Ots, M. (2008). *Media Brands and Branding,* Jönköping. International Business School: Jönköping, Sweden, ISBN 91-89164-82-2.

[214] Victoria-Mas, M., Lacasa-Mas, I., & Marimon, F. (2018). Assessing the consumer-based brand equity of news media firms: A new validated scale. Journal of Media Business Studies, 15(3), 214–235. https://doi.org/10.1080/16522354.2018.1522199

do highlight the advantages of media brand equity on different media brand outcomes. For example, McDowell (2011) and McDowell and Sutherland (2000) have examined concepts such as brand loyalty, brand trust, brand effect, and brand equity in the context of newspapers and news organizations. The scholars highlight the market advantages enjoyed by news media outlets with high customer-based brand equity (see Table 1.6).[215] [216] [217] According to most academics, audience satisfaction and consumption positively correlate with news media companies' customer-based brand equity,[218] media credibility, news quality, and audience loyalty.[219] It is argued that content credibility has always been a significant factor in news credibility and media success prediction.[220] In this context, media channel credibility refers to audiences' perceptions of a news channel's honesty, as opposed to the integrity of individual journalists and sources, media organizations, or news content.[221] Credibility has a direct positive impact on media brand equity, and loyalty derives from strong brand equity.[222] Based on the literature review, the author concludes that strong brand equity is essential for news media to achieve credibility and loyalty. In addition, media brand studies demonstrate that brand equity can assist a company in achieving its commercial objectives.[223] Many scholars agree that news media branding is considered an ideal tool for differentiation and

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[215] Bakshi, M.,& Mishra, P. (2016). Structural equations modelling of determinants of consumerbased brand equity of newspapers. *Journal of Media Business Studies*, 13(2), 1

[216] Ha, L., & Chan-Olmsted, S. M. (2004). Cross-media use in electronic media: The role of cable television web sites in cable television network branding and viewership. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media,* 48(4), 620–645.

[217] Nienstedt, H. W., Huber, F., & Seelmann, C. (2012). The influence of the congruence between brand and consumer personality on the loyalty to print and online issues of magazine brands. *International Journal on Media Management*, 14(1), 3–26.

[218] Ha, L., & Chan-Olmsted, S. M. (2004). Cross-media use in electronic media: The role of cable television web sites in cable television network branding and viewership. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media,* 48(4), 620–645.

[219] Oyedeji, T.A. (2007). The Relation Between the Customer-Based Brand Equity of Media Outlets and Their Media Channel Credibil-ity: An Exploratory Study. *Int. J. Media Manag*, 9, 116–125. https://doi.org/10.1080/14241270701521725

[220] Bakshi, M., & Mishra, P. (2016). Structural equations modelling of determinants of consumerbased brand equity of newspapers. *Journal of Media Business Studies,* 13(2), 1.

[221] Bucy, E. P. (2003). Media credibility reconsidered: Synergy effects between on-air and online news. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, 80(2), 247–264. doi:10.1177/ 107769900308000202

[222] Nienstedt, H.W., Huber, F., & Seelmann, C. (2012). The influence of the congruence between brand and consumer personality on the loyalty to print and online issues of magazine brands. *International Journal on Media Management*, 14(1), 3–26. doi:10.1080/14241277.2011.602033

[223] Malmelin, N., & Moisander, J. (2014). Brands and branding in media management—Toward a research agenda. *International Journal on Media Management,* 16(1), 9–25. doi:10.1080/ 14241277.2014.898149

distinctiveness.[224] [225] News media brands offer enhanced value propositions about the content, interaction, and consumption experience their audiences might anticipate.[226] There is consensus among academics that news media brands can be viewed as credibility and quality indicators.[227] [228] [229] Additionally, media brands increase product value.[230] In this regard, a news media brand is a construct that reflects emotional, cognitive, stylistic, conscious, and unconscious signals for a news medium.[231] News media brands serve as formative characteristics of media communications and influence the process of news elaboration. Specifically, news media consumers encode, store, and retrieve news from branded media sources more efficiently than from unbranded media sources. Credible news media brands evoke stronger arousal responses, enhancing the efficiency of knowledge storage and retrieval.[232] In the context of technology, audiences desire media brands to give individualised engagement options.[233] Engagement protects consumer-news media brand relationships in the contemporary multi-platform

[224] Chan-Olmsted, S.M., & Cha, J. (2007) Branding Television News in a Multichannel Environment: An Exploratory Study of Network News Brand Personality, *International Journal on Media Management*, 9:4, 135-150, DOI: 10.1080/14241270701632688

[225] Doyle, G. (2015). Brands in international and multi-platform expansion strategies: Economic and management issues. *In Handbook of media branding* (pp. 53–64).

[226] Ots, M. (2008). *Media Brands and Branding,* Jönköping. International Business School: Jönköping, Sweden ISBN 91-89164-82-2.

[227] Kalogeropoulos, A., Fletcher, R., & Nielsen, R. K. (2019). News brand attribution in distributed environments: Do people know where they get their news? *New Media & Society,* 21(3), 583–601. https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444818801313

[228] Laaksonen, S. M., Falco, A., Salminen, M., Aula, P., & Ravaja, N. (2019). Brand as a cognitive mediator: Investigating the effect of media brands as a structural feature of textual news messages. *Journal of Product & Brand Management*, 28(1), 1–14. https://doi.org/10.1108/ JPBM-01-2017-1394

[229] Krebs, I. (2017). Does the brand affect the quality perception of news articles?–An experimental study on news media brands in Switzerland. *Journal of Media Business Studies*, 14(4), 235–256. https://doi.org/10.1080/16522354.2017.1282753

[230] McDowell, W. (2011). The brand management crisis facing the business of journalism. *International Journal on Media Management,* 13(1), 37–51.

[231] Siegert, G., Förster, K., Chan-Olmsted, S.M., & Ots, M. (Eds.) (2015). *Handbook of Media Branding;* Springer: Berlin/Heidelberg, Germany, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-18236-0

[232] Laaksonen, S. M., Falco, A., Salminen, M., Aula, P., & Ravaja, N. (2019). Brand as a cognitive mediator: Investigating the effect of media brands as a structural feature of textual news messages. *Journal of Product & Brand Management*, 28(1), 1–14. https://doi.org/10.1108/ JPBM-01-2017-1394

[233] Chan-Olmsted, S., & Shay, R. (2015). Media Branding 3.0: From Media Brands to Branded Entertainment and Information. In G. Siegert, K. Förster, S. M. Chan-Olmsted, & M. Ots (Eds*.), Handbook of Media Branding* (pp. 11–32). Springer International Publishing. http://link.springer.com/10.1007/978-3-319-18236-0_2

environment.[234] [235] It is considered that news media brands have a strong interest in online engagement since it builds trust and increases brand loyalty[236] and usage.[237] The Thesis author summarises that scholars from different aspects commonly agree that a strong news media brand is essential for credibility, audience involvement, and uniqueness. However, based on content analyses, it is uncommon for scholarly works to analyse the strength of a media brand as a brand equity construct (see Table 1.6). Often, scholars focus on the brand of media. Nonetheless, branding and brand significance to media and news media continue to be the focus of scholarly inquiry. In Table 1.6, the author of this Thesis summarises the effect of brand and brand equity of media on news media outcomes and specifies the scholars' research framework in relation to the news media brand effect.

Table 1.6

Brand and brand equity effect on the news media in academic studies (created by the author)

Scholars	Brand and brand equity effect on the news media in academic studies	Studies Framework: Media Brand	Studies focus
1	2	3	4
Chan-Olmsted, Cha (2007, 2011, 2015); Doyle, (2015)	Tool for differentiation and distinctiveness	Media brand	Brand effect on news media outcomes
Ots, (2008)	Content, interaction, and consumption experience their audiences might anticipate	Media brand	Brand effect on media outcomes
Kalogeropoulos, (2019); Krebs, (2017); Laaksonen, (2019)	Indicators of credibility and quality	Media brand	Brand effect on news media outcomes
Siegert, (2015)	Emotional, cognitive, stylistic, conscious, and unconscious signals.	Media brand	Brand effect on media outcomes
Baumann, (2015)	Enhanced value proposition	Media brand	Brand effect on news media outcomes
Ha, Chan-Olmsted, (2004)	Audience satisfaction and consumption	Media brand	Brand effect on media outcomes
McDowell, (2011) McDowell, Sutherland, (2000)	Increased brand loyalty and brand trust	Media brand	Brand and brand equity effect on media outcomes
McDowell, (2006)	News media product value	Media brand	Brand effect on media outcomes

[234] Davidson, L., McNeill, L., & Ferguson, S. (2007). Magazine communities: Brand community formation in magazine consumption. *International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy*, 27 (5/6), 208–220. https://doi.org/10.1108/01443330710757249

[235] Doyle, G. (2015). Brands in international and multi-platform expansion strategies: Economic and management issues. *In Handbook of media branding* (pp. 53–64).

[236] Krebs, I., & Lischka, J. A. (2019). Is audience engagement worth the buzz? The value of audience engagement, comment reading, and content for online news brands. *Journalism,* 20(6), 714–732. https://doi.org/10.1177/1464884916689277

[237] Mersey, R. D., Malthouse, E. C., & Calder, B. J. (2010). Engagement with online media. *Journal of Media Business Studies,* 7(2), 39–56. https://doi.org/10.1080/16522354.2010.11073506

Table 1.6 Continued

1	2	3	4
		Studies Framework: Media Brand Equity	
Oyedeje, 2007	Credibility, product quality	Media brand equity	Brand equity effect on media outcomes
Oyedeji, (2007), Nienstedt, (2012)	Media credibility, news quality, and more audience loyalty	Media brand equity	Brand equity effect on media outcomes
Malmelin, Moisander, 2014	Commercial objectives	Media brand equity	Brand effect on media outcomes
Bakshi, Mishra, (2016)	Credibility, quality	Media brand equity	Accessing brand equity construct
		Studies Framework: Product value	
Laaksonen, (2019)	More efficient encoding, storing, and retrieving of news media	Product value	Brand effect on media outcomes

According to the literature, credibility, quality, uniqueness, brand trust and loyalty and audience satisfaction and increased consumption of the news media brand are highlighted in scholars' work researching the importance of news media brands and brand equity. However, the Thesis author concludes that how news media brand equity is built is a topic that has been less explored in the corresponding literature. Most scholars do not attempt to measure or examine the construct of media and news media brand equity. The author of this Thesis reviewed existing scholarly studies elaborating on news media brand equity and how brand equity is assessed in these studies.

Due to the lack of consensus in the relevant literature regarding the definition of customer-based brand equity and its relatively recent application to the news media, existing research on the equity of news media brands has utilised a single theoretical framework, either Keller's (1993) or Aaker's (1991) (see Table 1.7). The issue is that the studies do not focus on validation or construct dimensions of the model and present only a handful of characteristics that influence the brand equity concept of a media brand. However, with the growing relevance of marketing imperatives and the shifting preferences of a younger target audience, other aspects have become crucial to media success. In an increasingly competitive media environment, news media brands may be more important than ever to maintain and grow customer-based brand equity. This offers a potential methodology for customer-focused research into media management in a new media environment. Based on the literature review, the Thesis author agrees that despite 20 years of media brand research, studies on the customer-

based brand equity of news media brands remain under-represented. There is no universally agreed definition of this construct.[238] In a recent study on news media brands and their selection in multi-platform environments, the scholars state that credibility and reputation significantly influence selection preferences. To maintain a strong position in the media environment, media managers should prioritise brand-building efforts.[239] The importance of a strong brand has been corroborated. However, the author of the Thesis questions whether media branding research provides a much-required framework of news media brand equity.

Bakshi *et al.* (2014) examined the brand equity of news media and found that packaging, entertainment, ideological congruence, and localisation are the most important attributes for attracting an audience to news media.[240] In the recent work by María Victoria-Mas, Ivan Lacasa-Mas & Frederic Marimon (2018), confirmatory factor analysis was used to analyse news media brand associations - functional associations, experiential associations (tone and packaging), and symbolic associations that construct news media brand customer-based equity.[241] These scholarly studies confirmed those association significances and positive correlation to news media brand equity. The author of this Thesis argues that these studies' results, even few, are crucial as previous studies primarily do not measure, categorize or conceptualize the news media attributes that create strong and positive brand associations and build brand equity. According to the discussed customer-based brand equity concepts, strong, favourable, and unique associations contribute to developing strong brand equity. In that case, in-depth research must be conducted to determine which news brand attributes generate strong and favourable associations. These two latest works, including Oyedeji's (2007) earlier work,[242] try to conceptualize the dimensions of news media brand attributes that correlate with news media brand equity in a new multi-platform media environment. Nguyen's (2008)

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[238] Krebs, I., & Siegert, G. (2015). 20 years of research on media brands and media branding. In G. Siegert, K. Förster, S. Chan-Olmsted, & M. Ots (Eds.), *Handbook of media branding* (33– 49). Berlin: Springer International Publishing

[239] Schwab, R., Krebs, I., & Bachmann, P.. (2022). Information Competition in Disruptive Media Markets: Investigating Competition and User Selection on Google. *Digital Journalism*, 1–22. https://doi.org/10.1080/21670811.2022.2076138

[240] Bakshi, M., Khan, B. M., & Mishra, P. (2014). The effect of content credibility on consumerbased brand equity: The case of Indian television channels. *International Journal of Indian Culture and Business Management*, 8(3), 329–344. doi:10.1504/IJICBM.2014.060364

[241] Victoria-Mas, M., Lacasa-Mas, I., & Marimon, F. (2018). Assessing the consumer-based brand equity of news media firms: A new validated scale. Journal of Media Business Studies, 15(3), 214–235. https://doi.org/10.1080/16522354.2018.1522199

[242] Oyedeji, T.A. (2007). The Relation Between the Customer-Based Brand Equity of Media Outlets and Their Media Channel Credibility: An Exploratory Study. *Int. J. Media Manag.*, 9, 116–125. https://doi.org/10.1080/14241270701521725

comprehensive research on online news media focuses on news media attributes; however, his study does not apply the brand equity concept.[243] The literature analyses conclude that studies attempting to conceptualize news media brand equity are rare. As discussed, most authors' studies focus on brand and brand equity effects on media and news media. Few authors try to assess how and which brand associations construct news media brand equity (Table 1.7).

Table 1.7

News media brand equity conceptualization in academic literature (created by the author)

Scholars	Measures to access customer-based brand equity construct	Keywords	Research method	News media type	Brand equity theoretical model
Bakshi *et al.,* (2014, 2016)	Localisation, Ideology, Credibility, and Entertainment	Consumer-based brand equity; credibility; packaging; localisation; entertainment; newspaper	Structural Factor analyses Focus groups, Exploratory analyses	Newspapers (India)	Aaker (1991)
Victoria-Mas *et al.,* (2018)	Functional, experimental, symbolic brand associations	News media brands, brand equity, media management; media firms, journalism	Confirmatory factor analyses, Exploratory analysis	Newspapers (Spain)	Keller (1993)
Oyedeji, (2010)[244]	Brand equity impact on credibility, brand extensions	Brands, brand extension, brand management, brand equity, media, online credibility	Mixed-design experiment, Structural Equation Model, Exploratory analyses	TV-cable news (United States of America)	Aaker (1991), Keller (1993)
Oyedeji, (2007)	Perceived quality, brand association, brand loyalty, awareness as brand equity and its impact on credibility	Brand equity, media, online credibility	Structural equation modelling. Exploratory analyses	Two TV media brands (United States of America)	Aaker (1991), Keller (1993)
McDowell, Sutherland, (2000)	Brand equity effect on programme ratings	Brand equity	Case study, exploratory analyses	Three TV stations (United States of America)	Keller (1993)

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[243] Nguyen, A. (2008). The contribution of online news attributes to its diffusion: An empirical exploration based on a proposed theoretical model for the micro-process of online news adoption/use. *First Monday,* 13(4). https://doi.org/10.5210/fm.v13i4.2127

[244] Oyedeji, T. A. (2010). The Credible Brand Model: The Effects of Ideological Congruency and Customer-Based Brand Equity on News Credibility. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 54(2), 83–99. https://doi.org/10.1177/0002764210376312

Those studies use exploratory, and most use structural factor analyses based on either Aaker's (1991) or Keller's (1993) customer-based equity theoretical models. Based on literature analyses, the author concludes that news media brand is significant in various vital news media brand outcomes such as credibility, quality, trust, loyalty, distinctiveness, audience satisfaction and consumption. As previously discussed, brand equity is built based on strong, favourable, and unique associations. However, in this multi-platform, oversaturated world, there is a gap in the literature regarding how those associations of news media brands are formed and contribute to news media brand equity. Focusing on brand associations and how they develop is crucial if media brands are to successfully confront high competition and a low point of differentiation. Additionally, the news brand uniqueness should be identified. The lack of academic research into news media brand associations, especially non-content related, and their effect on brand distinctiveness and brand equity, as well as the confirmed need for strong media brand equity in an oversaturated multi-platform media environment, validates the relevance of the Thesis research for the media branding field. However, there are gaps in the academic literature about which and how news media brand associations contribute to the brand uniqueness and strength of the news brand among younger audiences, as in the previously discussed case of Generation Z. Many studies examine how media consumption has changed due to technological development and the emergence of multiple platforms. There is no research examining the effect of consumption-related experience on the strength of news media brands and their distinctiveness in academic domains. This is especially important for national news media brands, which are currently facing intense competition from social media platforms and simultaneously experiencing low significance in the lives of younger audiences. Two theoretical approaches - cognitive psychology and signalling theory in information economics - have contributed to the development of consumer-based brand equity.[245] The majority of research is grounded on cognitive psychology and focuses on memory structure (Aaker 1991, 1996; Keller 1993) or associations; however, little research is focused on how these associations are formed regarding news media brands, what uniqueness is, and how these associations contribute to brand equity. Based on the literature review and secondary data analyses on news consumption, the author of the Thesis concludes that the way the audience develops news media associations has fundamentally changed due to the changing media environment. The author

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[245] Christodoulides, G., & De Chernatony, L. (2010). Consumer-based brand equity conceptualisation and measurement: a literature review. *International journal of market research,* 52(1), 43-66.

concludes that content consumption experience is vital in developing strong news media associations.

1.4.3. News media brand association as a construct of the content consumption experience

According to scholars (see Table 1.6), news media brand strength or, as defined broadly in the literature, "brand equity" is vital in a new media environment. Brand equity occurs when the consumer is familiar with the brand and has memories of some favourable, strong, and unique brand associations. As the author of the Thesis concluded previously, the existing content distribution and consumption environment has been transformed (see Figure 1.9). Platforms dominate the new media environment. In this context, platforms affect not only the previously described attributes of the news media brand, but also the formation of news media brand associations. Based on a literature review, the author of the Thesis offers this new aspect of the idea of news media brand equity. The author emphasises the significance of platform consumption experience in forming news media brand associations. The secondary data analysis on the news consumption of Generation Z also highlighted the relevance of consumption moments and experiences for this audience. In the following figure, the author proposes *the novelty of this research* and illustrates the changes in news media brand association development due to digitalization (see Figure 1.9).
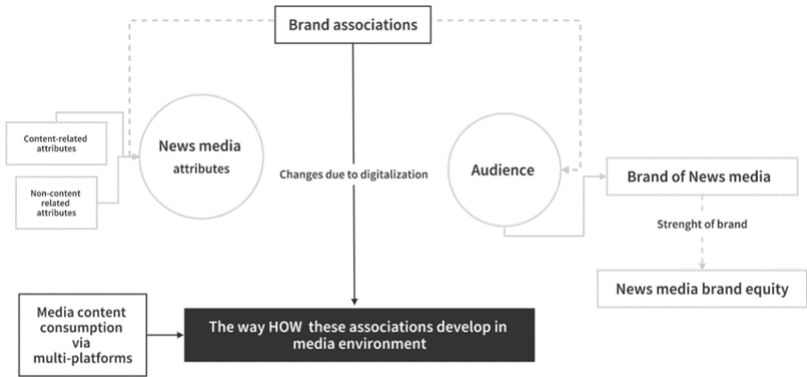
Fig. 1.9. Effect of digitalization effects on news media brand associations construct, based on theories of news media brand equity (Aaker[246], Keller[247]), (created by the author, novelty of this research).

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[246] Aaker, D. (1991). *Managing Brand Equity: Capitalising on the Value of a Brand Name;* The Free Press: New York, NY, USA,.
[247] Keller, K.L. (1993) Conceptualizing, Measuring, and Managing Customer-Based Brand Equity. *Journal of Marketing*, 57, 1-22. http://dx.doi.org/10.2307/1252054

Numerous scholars agree that consuming media content on-demand and via social media platforms has increased the importance of the audience.[248] Consumers emerging in a new media environment are considered active participants. Because of digitalization, the audience can now share, like, produce and promote media content.[249] Some scholars even discuss the term *"consumption"* as being misrepresentative in the new media environment. The term *"consumption"* in academic studies describes watching, listening, and reading media content.[250] The new media environment developed much more possibilities for audiences to interact with media content. The term *"experience"* became more dominant among media economics and management scholars to describe how audiences engage with media content.[251] [252] A media experience is interpreted as the consumption of experience goods, while the assumption is that certain goods cannot be anticipated or compared to prior consumption.[253] Scholars also state that consumers create value for themselves while experiencing media content where consumers differentiate between brands based on associations instead of rational constructs from extensive knowledge.[254] Given the audience's interactivity (consumption, participation, and reaction to news media content), the audience has become a crucial part of forming media brand association via content engagement and distribution (via content shares, likes, comments and other involvement). Today's audience has more power to shape media brands than ever before. Interactivity and accessibility, through different ways of experiencing media content, have increased the impact of the consumption experience as a part of media brand association. These *consumption experience-related* associations may become increasingly important in a highly competitive, fragmented, and interactive media environment. Placed within the innovation

[248] Chan-Olmsted, S.M., & Shay, R. (2015). *Media Branding 3.0: From Media Brands to Branded Entertainment and Information.* In G. Siegert, K. Förster, S. M. Chan-Olmsted, & M. Ots (Eds.), *Handbook of Media Branding* (pp. 11–32). Springer International Publishing. http://link.springer.com/10.1007/978-3-319-18236-0_2

[249] Peil, C., & Sparviero, S. (2017). *Media Convergence Meets Deconvergence.* Palgrave Macmillan Cham. 10.1007/978-3-319-51289-1_1.

[250] Albarran, A. B. (2010). *The Media Economy* (1st ed.). New York, NY: Routledge.

[251] Napoli, P. M. (2016). The Audience as Product, Consumer, and Producer in the Contemporary Media Marketplace. In G. F. Lowe & C. Brown (Eds.), *Managing Media Firms and Industries* (pp. 261–275). Springer International Publishing. http://link.springer.com/10.1007/978-3-319-08515-9_15

[252] Peil, C., & Sparviero, S. (2017). Media Convergence Meets Deconvergence. In S. Sparviero, C. Peil, & G. Balbi (Eds.), *Media Convergence and Deconvergence* (pp. 3–30). Springer International Publishing. http://link.springer.com/10.1007/978-3-319-51289-1_1

[253] Picard, R., Nordqvist, M., & Pesämaa, O. (2010). Industry Associations as Change Agents: The Institutional Roles of Newspaper Associations, *Journal of Media Business Studies,* 7(3):51-69.

[254] Peil, C., & Sparviero, S. (2017). Media Convergence Meets Deconvergence. In S. Sparviero, C. Peil, & G. Balbi (Eds.), *Media Convergence and Deconvergence* (pp. 3–30). Springer International Publishing. http://link.springer.com/10.1007/978-3-319-51289-1_1

diffusion theory framework, media brands can promote a rapid spread in terms of communication facilitators and attributes.[255] Rarely noticed in other innovations, including conventional mass media, is the internet consumer experience's high social presence or interpersonal advantage.

Technology has increased the engagement and social pervasiveness of content consumption. Numerous studies classify all capabilities under the term interaction. According to a few academics, interactivity entails providing clients with technical control over content choices. For others, however, it facilitates communication between users and between users and journalists.[256] Steward et al. (2002) recognise interactivity as the combination of content and human interaction.[257] Despite variations in defining interaction, the aspect of interpretation remains the same: the user-centric perspective or audience experience with the news media brand content. In numerous studies on media audiences, the uses and gratification theory served as the research foundation. Aspects of how media consumption provides different gratification aspects for audiences have been extensively studied.[258] [259] The Thesis author believes that a gap in the literature regarding how these newly introduced media attributes, such as interactivity and overall experience, provide gratification for audiences and how consumption experience contributes to the strength and distinctiveness of news media brands. Digitalization has offered a never-before-seen opportunity to deliver and consume media and news products. The author of this Thesis questions how an audience's distinctive media content experience influences brand associations and distinctiveness. Numerous experts believe that, due to the fragmentation of the news media market, competition among news media has intensified dramatically, compelling media managers to continually search out new ways to differentiate their media

[255] Nguyen, A. (2008). The contribution of online news attributes to its diffusion: An empirical exploration based on a proposed theoretical model for the micro-process of online news adoption/use. *First Monday*, 13(4). https://doi.org/10.5210/fm.v13i4.2127

[256] Nguyen, A. (2008). The contribution of online news attributes to its diffusion: An empirical exploration based on a proposed theoretical model for the micro-process of online news adoption/use. *First Monday*, 13(4). https://doi.org/10.5210/fm.v13i4.2127

[257] Stewart, D. W., Pavlou, P., & Ward, S. (2002). Media influences on marketing communications. *In Media effects* (363-406). Routledge.

[258] Shao, G. (2009), Understanding the appeal of user-generated media: a uses and gratification perspective, *Internet Research*, Vol. 19 No. 1, 7-25. https://doi.org/10.1108/10662240910927795

[259] Ruggiero, T. E.. (2000). Uses and Gratifications Theory in the 21st Century. *Mass Communication and Society,* 3(1), 3–37. https://doi.org/10.1207/s15327825mcs0301_02

brands.[260] [261] The author of the Thesis asserts that in a media environment that deludes media brand associations and, in the meantime, requires brand distinctiveness among fierce competition, two vital aspects of a new media environment exist. Firstly, the necessity for the strength of news media brand associations. Second is the necessity for brand distinctiveness.

Based on the literature analysis, secondary data analyses, and theoretical aspects of media branding, the author of the Thesis finds that the digitization of the media environment has brought about two fundamental changes for news media brands. Within the specified field of study, the author of the Thesis defines the impact on the brand and audience:

- Decreasing news media brand associations and uniqueness in a media environment;
- The increased significance of news media content consumption experience

Based on the literature review, the author summarises the findings focusing on the defined research in Figure 1.10.
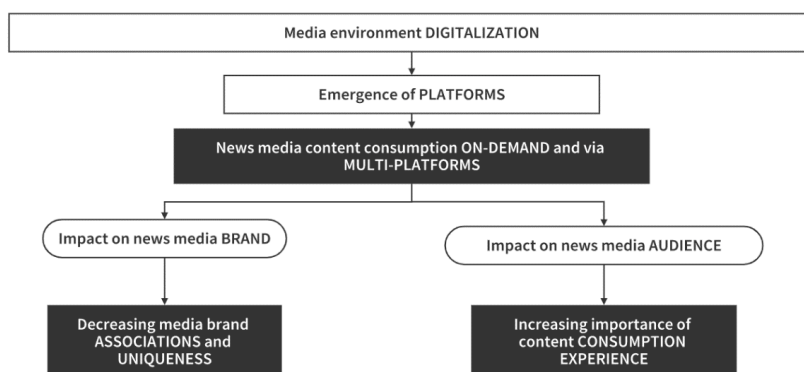
Fig. 1.10. Impact of digitalization on news media brands and audience in the media environment of the 21 st century (created by the author, novelty of this Thesis research).

Two clear digitalization implications of media branding can be underlined:

- Firstly, the challenge of building and maintaining strong brand attribution in the 21st century media business environment;

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[260] Krebs, I. (2017). Does the brand affect the quality perception of news articles?–An experimental study on news media brands in Switzerland. *Journal of Media Business Studies,* 14(4), 235–256. https://doi.org/10.1080/16522354.2017.1282753

[261] Laaksonen, S. M., Falco, A., Salminen, M., Aula, P., & Ravaja, N. (2019). Brand as a cognitive mediator: Investigating the effect of media brands as a structural feature of textual news messages. *Journal of Product & Brand Management,* 28(1), 1–14. https://doi.org/10.1108/ JPBM-01-2017-1394

- Second is the challenge of developing and maintaining media brand distinctiveness, considering the importance of content consumption experience in forming brand associations and distinctiveness.

News media have been transformed due to digitalization, and the author of the Thesis questions whether some recently established new media attributes strengthen news media brand associations and contribute to brand equity and distinctiveness. The author of the Thesis argues that the challenging question for news media brands is how to ensure brand attribution by providing brand distinctiveness in a multi-platform environment and brand equity. The framework to assess news media brand equity and distinctiveness is reviewed and discussed in section 2 of this Thesis.

2. News media brand equity and uniqueness in the 21st century media business environment

The younger audience is platform, on-demand and experience-driven. A helpful question arises regarding whether content consumption and associations developed by these consumption experience moments are significant in creating and building distinctiveness and equity in news media. The author of this Thesis questions what lies behind media brand usage and preferences if content across national news media is similar or even more the same. The new environment added unseen attributes of media and news media brands, which let brand association form in new ways.

The research interest in the significance of media brand associations other than content related has arisen only in recent years. This shift towards necessity and new aspects of news media branding has been exciting and entirely new. For decades, content and quality have been the driving force behind media brands, especially news media brands.[262] However, most studies examining the impact of media brands on quality perception are rooted in journalism studies and lack a media brand-management viewpoint. Instead, research focuses on evaluating media content's quality, with an emphasis on the ability of consumers to identify single quality criteria.[263] The brand is merely explored as an additional element of influence or is not referred to directly as a brand.[264] Numerous media management studies concentrate on the ideology and content of media firms and their effect on media brands. Content has been the driving force behind media organizations at both operational and management levels for many years.[265] The author of this Thesis argues that a current media environment requires a re-evaluation of *consumption experience-related attributes* introduced by digitalization. The analyses of which attributes influence news media content consumption, audience preference, and media brand distinctiveness and strength are vital. This shift is especially significant because the new generation entering every industry encompasses all sectors and aspects of life, including the media market. The media consumption process reflects young people's quests; what remains

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[262] Malmelin, N., & Moisander, J. (2014). Brands and branding in media management—Toward a research agenda. *International Journal on Media Management,* 16(1), 9–25. doi:10.1080/ 14241277.2014.898149

[263] Bachmann, P., Eisenegger, M., & Ingenhoff, D. (2022). Defining and Measuring News Media Quality: Comparing the Content Perspective and the Audience Perspective. *The International Journal of Press/Politics,* 27(1), 9–37. https://doi.org/10.1177/1940161221999666

[264] Krebs, I. (2017). Does the brand affect the quality perception of news articles? – An experimental study on news media brands in Switzerland. *Journal of Media Business Studies*, 14(4), 235-256.

[265] Urban, J., & Schweiger, W. (2013). News quality from the recipients' perspective. *Journalism Studies*, 1–20. doi:10.1080/1461670X.2013.856670

constant is the intensive use of many different media and their goals, while media content varies.[266] The importance of speed, availability and practical application is more critical for this audience than the content itself. [267] In this setting, the importance of the atmosphere and experience established by content consumption is more significant than its quality. Younger audiences use media non-selectively, paying little regard to its carrier (medium or media platform), author, or owner.[268] In the opinion of young people, parts of media content are more significant than media organisations and media brands.[269] The author of this Thesis concludes that the relevance of research defining how news media brand distinctiveness, strong associations and a strong brand are formed in multi-platform settings for younger audiences is undeniable.

2.1. Attribute-based brand associations as news media brand equity construct

Other scholars confirm the relevance of the brand equity models proposed by Keller and Aaker and the importance of brand associations in building substantial brand equity. Yoo, Donthu, and Lee (2000) reported that brand associations and awareness positively affect brand equity development. Their research demonstrates that brand associations (brand image) positively affect brand equity.[270] Thus, academic research confirms that reviewing, analysing, and controlling brand associations can positively impact brand image and build brand equity. Identifying and utilising knowledge essential to a decision is a vital part of human intelligence, according to Anderson (1983). He identifies numerous knowledge structures in the brain that contain certain facts or associations.[271] Aaker (1991) defines brand associations as "...anything linked in memory to a brand."[272] Keller (1993) proposes a conceptual model of brand associations that includes brand attributes, advantages, and attitudes. The brand attributes, or

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[266] Rožukalne, A. (2012). Young people as a media audience: From content to usage processes. *Central European Journal of Communication* 5.08, 105-120.

[267] Ibid, p.105-120.

[268] Ibid, p.108.

[269] Ibid, p. 117-119.

[270] Yoo, B., Donthu, N.,& Lee, S. (2000). An Examination of Selected Marketing Mix Elements and Brand Equity. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science,* 28, 195-211. https://doi.org/10.1177/0092070300282002

[271] Anderson, J.R. (1983). A spreading activation theory of memory, *Journal of Verbal Learning and Verbal Behavior*, V (3), 261-295, ISSN 0022-5371, https://doi.org/10.1016/S0022 5371(83)90201-3

[272] Aaker, D.A. (1991). *Managing Brand Equity.* The Free Press, New York.

association type, are tangible and intangible characteristics and physical traits.[273] Despite being the most objective or concrete level of relationship, attributes are perceptual. Even though attributes are the most physical level of association, an attribute's meaning or substance is decided by how the customer perceives it.[274] The importance of brand associations is also stressed by O'Cass and Lim,[275] who found that consumers use such associations to differentiate brands. In addition, numerous studies indicate that altering brand associations might affect brand equity (i.e., the commercial worth of the brand) and the customer's future brand purchasing behaviour.[276] [277] In other words, brands with powerful and distinctive associations are more competitive and achieve greater financial returns.[278] It is worth defining more precisely how brand associations form. Keller (1993) describes the consumer's memory as a function of a set of nodes and links of the various associations related to a brand. Information is stored in nodes that are linked to other node sets in the brain. When a consumer retains information, the level of processing and engagement will impact the robustness of the inter-node links. It is hypothesised that through spreading activation, the subsequent associations impact customer purchase behaviour. According to Anderson (1983), spreading activation transfers important information into working memory and makes it available for decision-making.[279] Acquired through the firm's marketing mix or product use, brand associations add to and ultimately shape the consumer's perception of the brand.[280] Keller states that ***unique, strong, and favourable associations*** should create a positive brand image that will bias

[273] Keller.K.L. (1993). Conceptualizing, measuring, and managing customer-based brand equity. *Journal of Marketing*, 57 (1), 1-22.

[274] Camarrone, F., & Van Hulle, M. M. (2019). Measuring brand association strength with EEG: A single-trial N400 ERP study. *PloS one*, 14(6), e0217125. https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0217125

[275] O'Cass, A., & Kenny, L.(2002). The influence of brand associations on brand preference and purchase intention: An Asian perspective on brand associations. *Journal of International Consumer Marketing* 14.2-3, 41–71.

[276] Malär, L., Nyffenegger, B.,Krohmer, H., & Hoyer, W. D. (2012). Implementing an intended brand personality: A dyadic perspective. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science,* 40(5), 728–744. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11747-011-0251-8

[277] Krishnan, H.S. (1996). Characteristics of memory associations: A consumer-based brand equity perspective. *International Journal of Research in Marketing*, 13, 389-405.

[278] Brown, S., Kozinets, R. V., & Sherry, J. F. (2003). Teaching Old Brands New Tricks: Retro Branding and the Revival of Brand Meaning. *Journal of Marketing,* 67(3), 19–33. https://doi.org/10.1509/jmkg.67.3.19.18657.

[279]Anderson, J.R. (1983). A Spreading Activation Theory of Memory. *Journal of Verbal Learning and Verbal Behavior,* 22, 261-295. http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S0022-5371(83)90201-3

[280] Keller, K.L. (1993). Conceptualizing, measuring, and managing customer-based brand equity. *Journal of Marketing*, 57 (1), 1-22.

consumer brand behaviour towards brand equity enhancement.[281] According to the existing literature, brand associations' number, valence, and uniqueness influence consumer brand response.[282] [283] It is essential to remember that the degree of distinctiveness might affect the impact of favourability and the number of associations.[284] Favourability and quantity of associations may have a more favourable influence if customers regard a brand as distinctive. Romaniuk and Nenycz-Thiel argue that the overall number of associations a customer has with a brand depends on the consumer's knowledge and experience.[285] The favourability of a brand association indicates how negatively/positively a consumer evaluates an association.[286] Brand managers recognise that creating favourable brand associations is essential to brand equity.[287] In other words, the degree to which customers consider a brand's products to be distinctive and unique from its competitors influences the brand's equity by either increasing it (if regarded as unique and distinct) or decreasing it (if not perceived as unique and distinct).[288] Similarly, if consumers' experience of the product is expressly connected to the brand, it will affect the brand's equity (either positively or negatively), whereas otherwise, it will have no effect.[289] Based on literature analyses, the author argues that the question about the importance of the news media brand's distinctiveness in the aspect of strong and favourable associations becomes more significant.

Customers form distinct associations with a brand over time. Certain links relate to the characteristics and benefits of the brand. In contrast, others relate to the distinctive customer

[281] Keller, K.L. (1993). Conceptualizing, measuring, and managing customer-based brand equity. *Journal of Marketing*, 57 (1), 1-22.

[282] Bennett, R., Haertel, C.E., & McColl-Kennedy,J.R. (2005). Experience as a moderator of involvement and satisfaction on brand loyalty in a business-to-business setting. *Industrial Marketing Management,* 34 (1) , 97-10.

[283] Spears, N., Brown, T.J., & Dacin,P.A. (2006). Assessing the corporate brand: The unique corporate association valence (UCAV) approach. *Journal of Brand Management*, 14 (1/2), 5-19.

[284] Romaniuk, J., & Gaillard, E. (2007). The relationship between unique brand associations, brand usage and brand performance: Analysis across eight categories. *Journal of Marketing Management,* 23 (3–4) , 267-284

[285] Romaniuk,J., & Nenycz-Thiel,M. (2013). Behavioral brand loyalty and consumer brand associations. *Journal of Business Research*, 66 (1), 67-72.

[286] Keller, K.L. (1993). Conceptualizing, measuring, and managing customer-based brand equity. *Journal of Marketing*, 57 (1), 1-22.

[287] Christodoulides, G., & de Chernatony, L. (2010). Consumer-Based Brand Equity Conceptualisation and Measurement: A Literature Review. *International Journal of Market Research*, 52(1), 43–66. https://doi.org/10.2501/S1470785310201053

[288] Netemeyer, R., Krishnan, B., Pullig, C.,Wang, G.,Yagci, M., Dean, D., Ricks,J., &Wirth, F. (2004). Developing and validating measures of facets of customer-based brand equity. *Journal of Business Research. ,* 57. 209-224. 10.1016/S0148-2963(01)00303-4

[289] Sood, S., & Keller, K. (2012). The Effects of Brand Name Structure on Brand Extension Evaluations and Parent Brand Dilution. *Journal of Marketing Research.* 49. 373-382. 10.2307/41714432.

experiences of the brand.[290] According to the semantic memory associative network model, information about a brand may relate to knowledge about a product category and other brands within the category.[291] The brand gets increasingly representative of its product category as the number of associations increases. Therefore, for a brand to be appropriately classified as a member of the product category, it must share numerous common associations. However, it must also have distinctive connections that differentiate it.[292] In addition, consensus on a brand's attributes is essential to brand strength.[293] Several researchers emphasise the importance of unique brand associations, suggesting using the set of unique brand associations compared to other brands in the product category as an indicator of brand equity.

Two approaches can be used to achieve brand differentiation:

- The first is when the consumer perceives that a brand offers something that other brands do not or that the brand is unique;
- The second is brand superiority, in which the consumer knows that other brands possess the same attribute but views one brand as better than the rest.[294]

The uniqueness of brand associations plays a crucial role in building a strong brand, and the current multi-platform environment works the opposite. In that case, the author of the Thesis concludes that it is worth analysing more profoundly how scholars and practitioners define and construct the brand's distinctiveness and whether technological advances have created new aspects in building unique brand associations.

To summarise, scholars agree that brand associations formed through different brand attributes – product or non-product related positively affect brand equity. Thus, the literature review confirms that reviewing, analysing, and controlling brand associations can positively impact brand image and build brand equity. Studies have recognised the importance of unique brand associations from the customer's point of view. Media brands are experience brands, and multi-platform content consumption improves and diversifies this consumption experience. The author of the Thesis proceeds to question how different content consumption experiences

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[290] Anderson, J.R. (1996). *The Architecture of Cognition*, 1st ed.; Psychology Press: London, UK.

[291] Nedungadi, P. (1990). Recall and Consumer Consideration Sets: Influencing Choice without Altering Brand Evaluations. *J. Consum. Res.*, 17, 263–276.

[292] Park, C. S., & Srinivasan, V. (1994). A Survey-Based Method for Measuring and Understanding Brand Equity and Its Extendibility. *Journal of Marketing Research,* 31(2), 271–288. https://doi.org/10.2307/3152199

[293] Mühlbacher, H., Raies, K., Grohs, R., & Koll, O. (2016). Drivers of brand strength: Configural paths to strong cognitive brand equity, *Journal of Business Research*, Elsevier, vol. 69(8), 2774-2780

[294] Dhar, R., & Sherman, S.J. (1996). The Effect of Common and Unique Features in Consumer Choice. *J. Consum. Res.,* 23, 193–203.

influence news media brand associations and how unique audience associations are formed. This prompts the author of the Thesis to conclude that not only quantity, consensus, and valence of the brand associations are essential for the brand, but also the brand's distinctiveness from an audience point of view is crucial.

The author summarises the concept of attribute-based brand associations on brand equity based on the literature review in Figure 2.1
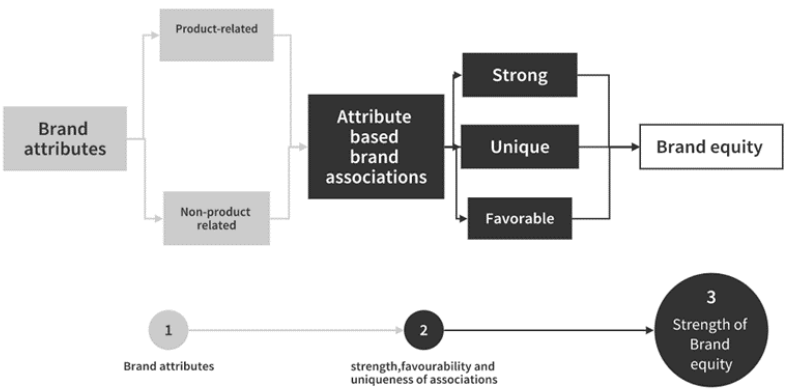
Fig. 2.1. The concept of attribute-based brand associations as a brand equity construct (created by the author and adapted from the brand equity theories of Keller, Aaker, Yoo, Donthu, Lee, and Andersen).

Brand equity is becoming increasingly customer-based and building brand associations through various marketing activities is crucial. In that case, the author argues how the current media environment responds to this brand equity model. Now the media environment gives consumers more control over information and the content they consume, engage, and even create and share. The role of the audience or consumers in building brand associations is undeniable. However, from a branding perspective, this requires careful research into the audience perspective and involvement of brand associations and brand uniqueness development, specifically regarding news media and younger audiences.

There is a gap in the literature on news media distinctiveness studies. The author concludes that research into media and news media content as a differentiator and brand strength establishment is widely explored. However, non-product (non-content) related associations, such as content consumption experience, lack academic focus. Furthermore, if

multi-platforms delude media brand associations and distinctiveness, the lack of literature defining news media uniqueness underlines the relevance of the Thesis research.

2.2. Brand uniqueness as a brand associations construction

As discussed previously, the importance of unique associations on various brand outcomes, including brand equity, is strongly supported by numerous scholars, works and practitioners across different sectors. Brand ***uniqueness*** is defined as "*the degree to which customers feel the brand differs from competing brands – how distinct it is relative to competitors.*" [295] Based on the literature review, the Thesis author concludes that there is no unified terminology for the term, as many academics use distinctiveness to describe brand uniqueness. In contrast, others even use point of difference.[296] [297] [298] Nevertheless, the idea and concept are the same – the brand or company or individual distinctiveness compared to other brands or companies. While essential, it goes without saying that brand distinctiveness can only happen in comparison. The distinctiveness of brands within a market decrease as the number of brands increases. This is likely due to the increasing number of competitors, which increases the likelihood that a brand may share most attributes with another brand. Therefore, as markets increase in the number of brands, the perceived level of distinctiveness between brands will decline.[299] That is why brand distinctiveness becomes even more significant and challenging to achieve in highly competitive markets. The concept of uniqueness is rooted in the fundamental theory of uniqueness developed by C.R. Snyder and H.L. Fromkin in 1977.[300] The authors empirically establish why people need to perceive themselves as different and unique compared to their social group. Many researchers utilised the developed concept by mentioning authors –

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[295] Netemeyer, R., Krishnan, B., Pullig, C.,Wang, G.,Yagci, M., Dean, D., Ricks,J., &Wirth, F.Developing and validating measures of facets of customer-based brand equity. *Journal of Business Research. ,* 2004, 57. 209-224. 10.1016/S0148-2963(01)00303-4

[296] Keller,K.L. (2009). Building strong brands in a modern marketing communications environment, *Journal of Marketing Communications*, 15:2-3, 139-155, DOI: 10.1080/13527260902757530

[297] Romaniuk, J., Sharp, B., & Ehrenberg, A. (2007). Evidence concerning the importance of perceived brand differentiation. *Australasian Marketing Journal*, 15(2), 42-54.

[298] Sharp, B., & Dawes, J. (2001). What is differentiation and how does it work?. *Journal of Marketing Management*, 17(7-8), 739-759.

[299] Romaniuk,J., & Gaillard,E. (2007). The relationship between unique brand associations, brand usage and brand performance: analysis across eight categories, *Journal of Marketing Management*, 23:3-4, 267-284, DOI: 10.1362/026725707X196378

[300] Fromkin, H.L.,& Snyder, C.R. (1980). The Search for Uniqueness and Valuation of Scarcity. In Social exchange (pp. 57-75). Springer US.

individual demand for uniqueness and variables influencing it as the basis for measuring brand distinctiveness, especially during the last decade when social network sites allowed more opportunities for self-expression and identification.[301] The author of the Thesis concludes that the advantages of brand uniqueness have been widely researched in the literature. The literature identifies brand ***uniqueness*** as one of the essential concepts in consumer behaviour and a crucial aspect of brand equity, which allows products to distinguish themselves from a vast array of similar competitors.[302] [303] Aaker (1996) states that uniquely perceived brands are typically more straightforward for people to recall, which increases brand awareness, preference, and price premium. Distinctiveness benefits consumer choice, brand equity, and new product acceptability.[304] These benefits show that enhancing the perceived uniqueness of a brand is an effective and crucial strategy for sustaining and enhancing brand performance. The author of the Thesis believes that when developing the concept of uniqueness, two aspects should be considered: uniqueness versus perceived uniqueness and optimal level of uniqueness.

2.2.1. Brand uniqueness versus perceived uniqueness

Firstly, it is essential to note that differentiation and distinctiveness are frequently confused and used interchangeably. However, unique attributes in and of themselves do not bring value to the consumer in the sense of difference. Instead, they facilitate easy and automatic brand recognition across all consumer touchpoints. Essentially, these branding strategies do not necessarily need to be utilized but are significant in highly competitive or high-choices marketplaces.[305] There are two ways to develop brand differentiation. The first is a consumer's perception that a brand offers something other brands do not or brand uniqueness. The second is brand superiority, in which the consumer is aware that other brands possess the same attribute

[301] Abosag, I., Ramadan, Z. B., Baker, T., & Jin, Z.. (2020). Customers' need for uniqueness theory versus brand congruence theory: The impact on satisfaction with social network sites. *Journal of Business Research,* 117, 862–872. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2019.03.016

[302] Christodoulides, G., & de Chernatony, L. (2010). Consumer-based brand equity conceptualisation and measurement: a literature review. *International journal of market research,* 52(1), 43-66.

[303] Netemeyer, R., Krishnan, B., Pullig, C., Wang, G.,Yagci, M., Dean, D., Ricks,J., &Wirth, F. (2004). Developing and validating measures of facets of customer-based brand equity. *Journal of Business Research. ,* 57. 209-224. 10.1016/S0148-2963(01)00303-4

[304] Aaker, D.A. (1996) Measuring Brand Equity across Products and Markets. *California Management Review,* 38, 102-120. http://dx.doi.org/10.2307/41165845

[305] Romaniuk,J., & Gaillard,E. (2007). The relationship between unique brand associations, brand usage and brand performance: analysis across eight categories, *Journal of Marketing Management*, 23:3-4, 267-284, DOI: 10.1362/026725707X196378J

but perceives one brand as superior.[306] Developing consumer impressions of a brand's distinctiveness is only one method for achieving brand differentiation.[307] Academics and practitioners handle uniqueness ideas differently. One alternative emphasis is distinctiveness, which suggests that a consumer links only one brand with a given attribute instead of shared associations, in which numerous brands are connected with the attribute.[308] The second one is a unique attribute belonging only to a certain brand.

The author of the Thesis concludes that distinguishing between unique brand attributes or features and perceived uniqueness or unique associations is essential when approaching brand uniqueness. Firstly, distinguishing between novel/unique attributes and unique associations is essential. Unique attributes are exclusive to a specific brand, making comparisons to other brands inappropriate. Unique associations or perceived uniqueness are discovered from the perspective of a single customer and occur when a consumer associates only one brand with a certain attribute, regardless of whether other brands possess that characteristic. It reflects what the consumer perceives as opposed to what the brand gives.[309] Thus unique associations are not obligatory to involve the existence of a unique attribute of a certain brand. In Figure 2.2, the author summarises and illustrates the distinction between unique associations and attributes based on the literature overview. *Brand uniqueness can be formed either through unique brand attributes, associations, or a combination of both.*

[306] Sharp, B., & Dawes, J. (2001). What is Differentiation and How Does it Work ?. *Journal of Marketing Management.* 17. 739-759. 10.1362/026725701323366809.

[307] Pechmann, C., & Ratneshwar, S. (1991). The Use of Comparative Advertising for Brand Positioning: Association Versus Differentiation. *Journal of Consumer Research,* 18(2), 145–160. http://www.jstor.org/stable/2489551.

[308] Romaniuk,J., & Gaillard,E. (2007). The relationship between unique brand associations, brand usage and brand performance: analysis across eight categories, *Journal of Marketing Management*, 23:3-4, 267-284, DOI: 10.1362/026725707X196378

[309] Ibid, p.267-284
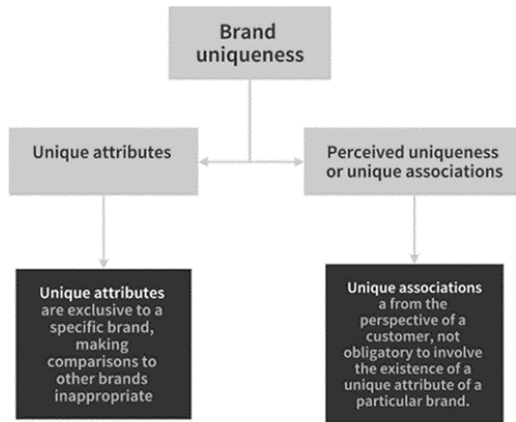
Fig. 2.2. Understanding of news media brand uniqueness. Distinguishing between unique attributes and perceived uniqueness (created by the author, novelty of this research).

The author of the Thesis concludes that associations can be either shared with competitors or unique to the brand. Shared attributes and associations are category-relevant or category-characteristic functional.[310] Unique attributes are the ones that own a certain brand only compared to category brands. Perceived uniqueness suggests that the consumer links just one brand with a specific attribute, even though numerous brands may provide the same attribute. The apparent brand distinctiveness may result from a specific experience with that brand's offering or exposure to advertising that communicates the unique attribute.[311] Perceived uniqueness is the distinguishing characteristic of a brand that sets it apart from other brands.. [312] It means having a solid point of difference. It indicates the degree to which a brand stands out in order to be easily observed., recognised, and recalled over competing brands.[313] [314]

[310] Romaniuk,J., & Gaillard,E. (2007). The relationship between unique brand associations, brand usage and brand performance: analysis across eight categories, *Journal of Marketing Management*, 23:3-4, 267-284, DOI: 10.1362/026725707X196378

[311] Ibid, p. 273-280.

[312] Dwivedi, A., Nayeem, T., & Murshed, F. (2018). Brand experience and consumers' willingness-to-pay (WTP) a price premium: Mediating role of brand credibility and perceived uniqueness. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 44, 100–107. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jretconser.2018.06.009

[313] Keller, K. L. (2008). *Strategic brand management : building measuring and managing brand equity* (3rd ed.). Pearson/Prentice Hall.

[314] Netemeyer, R., Krishnan, B., Pullig, C., Wang, G., Yagci, M., Dean, D., Ricks,J., &Wirth, F.(2004). Developing and validating measures of facets of customer-based brand equity. *Journal of Business Research. ,* 57. 209-224. 10.1016/S0148-2963(01)00303-4

Obtaining perceived uniqueness for brands is even more crucial. Establishing innovative, unique characteristics can be expensive, time-consuming, and challenging to produce in a way that competitors cannot replicate. *The Economist* (2009) states that uniqueness is rare, and it is not easy to produce a continual stream of products with unique characteristics.[315] Nevertheless, distinguishing between those is crucial when defining and building brand distinctiveness.

The author of the Thesis argues that this distinguishing is essential when researching news media brand distinctiveness. The Thesis research focuses not on defining unique attributes of the news media brand but on how the combination of media brand attributes, whether unique or category-shared, contributes to perceived brand distinctiveness. The author of the Thesis believes that it is essential to distinguish these aspects. Unique attributes of media brands, especially news media brands, often use the content as brand distinctiveness for differentiation. The content as a category fundamental shared attribute has not decreased in significance. Technologies fundamentally change content availability and consumability. Content availability and similarity face challenges as news media brand differentiators. The author of the Thesis questions whether content can continue to develop unique associations for news brands. Different studies state that current environments change audience focus from content and the media brand to the moment of consumption independently of time, platform, and brand. Technological advances and digitalization raise the significance of redefinition of brand distinctiveness in multi-platform and content consumption on-demand media environments. Undeniably, the contents in terms of quality, discourse, credibility, and richness are essential shared or prime news media category attributes. The author of the Thesis questions how a set of attributes, including shared and unique, contribute to media brand distinctiveness. The author believes it is essential to approach the distinctiveness of a news media brand as a choice set of media attributes – both category-dominant or shared and unique attributes belonging to a single brand. This assumption is well-rooted in many findings, including the fundamental optimal distinctiveness theory.[316] According to the optimal distinctiveness model, social identities derive from a fundamental tension between two competing social needs—the need for inclusion and a countervailing need for distinctiveness and individuation.

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[315] The Economist. (2009). *Unique selling proposition*. The Economist Group Limited, London, [accessed August 1,2022]. available at https://www.economist.com/news/2009/11/18/unique-selling-proposition

[316] Leonardelli, G.J., Pickett, C., & Brewer, M.B. (2010). Chapter 2 - Optimal Distinctiveness Theory: A Framework for Social Identity, Social Cognition, and Intergroup Relations. *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology,* 43, 63-113.

2.2.2. Optimal brand uniqueness

Many scholars also highlight the importance of the optimal balance of brand attributes and associations between shares or category primary and unique associations and unique attributes, which forms brand uniqueness. Concerns about achieving brand distinctiveness as a primary objective have been raised.[317] The notion of optimal distinctiveness demonstrates that the decisive factor in brand selection is the attribute's attractiveness within the choice set. However, brand positioning research indicates that an exclusive emphasis on uniqueness may result in undesirable effects.[318] Building unique associations typically comes at the expense of reinforcing other attributes that reflect general category benefits. This can reduce the brand's salience by weakening the links to attributes that consumers may use more frequently as cues to retrieve brands for consideration.[319] [320] [321] Associations with other brands are far more widespread in most categories, specifically those with greater competitors. Scholars agree that ensuring the brand is recognised for category-relevant features before focusing on its distinctiveness is crucial.[322] This suggests that unique associations may be a temporary consequence of situation-specific accessibility with a shared associations. [323] Keller, Sternthal and Tybout (2002) see category competencies as areas where a brand must display and communicate that the brand is competent to meet those requirements and only focus on unique attributes.[324] Keller defined associations as brand performance associations, brand imagery associations and consumer insights associations. Brand performance associations are the functional ones fulfilling category needs (value/price, reliability, effectiveness). Other academics define those as utilitarian attributes. In the current context of uniqueness, the author of this Thesis defines those as shared associations. Brand imagery associations are the ones

[317] Romaniuk, J., & Gaillard, E. (2007). The relationship between unique brand associations, brand usage and brand performance: analysis across eight categories. *Journal of Marketing Management*, 23(3-4), 267-284.

[318] Reidenbach, R. E., & Grimes, S. (1984). How concept knowledge affects concept evaluation. *Journal of Product Innovation Management*, 1(4), 255-266.

[319] Sharp, B., Dawes, J. (2001). What is Differentiation and How Does it Work ?. *Journal of Marketing Management*. 17. 739-759. 10.1362/026725701323366809

[320] Romaniuk, J., & Sharp, B. (2004). Conceptualizing and measuring brand salience. *Marketing Theory,* 4(4), 327–342. https://doi.org/10.1177/1470593104047643

[321] Barwise, P., & Meehan, S. (2004). *Simply better : winning and keeping customers by delivering what matters most.* Boston (Mass.): Harvard business school press.

[322] Keller, K.L. (2008) *Strategic Brand Management: Building, Measuring and Managing Brand Equity*. 3rd Edition, Pearson Prentice Hall, Upper Saddle River.

[323] Ibid

[324] Keller, K. L., Sternthal, B., & Tybout, A. (2002). Three questions you need to ask about your brand. *Harvard business review*, 80(9), 80–125.

formed through consumer experience with the brand. Those associations are experience-based. In literature, many scholars agree that these associations form the perceived distinctiveness of the brand. Consumer insight associations are when brands build differentiation strategies based on consumer insights. While this is effective, it is advisable to rely on those only if the first two are ineffective, because consumer mindset, needs, and values change.[325] Scholars agree that brands should first clearly define a frame of reference within the category needs and ensure strong shared attributes are in place. The scholars name it a point of parity.[326] Only then should points of difference or unique associations be developed. The Thesis author concludes that it is crucial to note that combinations of brand association characteristics may explain brand strength better than individual association characteristics. Different paths to strong cognitive brand equity may exist.[327] Single brand association qualities are less successful at predicting brand strength than causal combinations of association attributes. The predictive configurations depend on the product category involvement and brand knowledge of the customers. Many scholars showed interest in the right balance of shared and unique associations or experience-related associations that contribute to brand strength or equity. Consumers should be able to categorise a brand before creating unique associations. Successful positioning combines links to a product category and distinctive attributes.[328] Studies imply that the distinctiveness and conformity arguments in markets with significant competitive and institutional factors should be important. Thus, a corporation confronts a trade-off between conforming and differentiating.[329] Based on literature analyses, the author of this Thesis concludes that understanding and finding the optimal balance of associations is crucial for brands, especially those operating in highly competitive environments like news media brands. Many unique associations support brand strength as much as few non-unique associations.[330] Furthermore, studies found that unique associations are only related to brand strength in combination with

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[325] Keller, K. L., Sternthal, B., & Tybout, A. (2002). Three questions you need to ask about your brand. *Harvard business review*, 80(9), 80–125.

[326] Ibid, p. 80-100.

[327] Mühlbacher, H., Raïes, K., Grohs, R., & Koll, O. (2015). Drivers of brand strength: Configural paths to strong cognitive brand equity. *Journal of Business Research*. 69. 10.1016/j.jbusres.2015.11.013.

[328] Punj, G., & Moon, J. (2002). Positioning options for achieving brand association: A psychological categorization framework. *Journal of Business Research*. 55. 275-283. 10.1016/S0148-2963(00)00165-X.

[329] Deephouse, D. L. (1999). To Be Different, or to Be the Same? It's a Question (And Theory) of Strategic Balance. *Strategic Management Journal,* 20(2), 147–66. JSTOR, http://www.jstor.org/stable/3094023..

[330] Romaniuk, J., & Gaillard, E. (2007). The relationship between unique brand associations, brand usage and brand performance: analysis across eight categories. *Journal of Marketing Management,* 23(3-4), 267-284.

either high involvement or high familiarity.[331] This led the author of the Thesis to formulate the first hypothesis of the Thesis:

H1. The combination of category-shared and experience-related attributes of news brand significantly influences news media brand uniqueness.

Based on the literature review, the author of the Thesis concludes that the combination of attributes is broadly discussed in several studies involving the theory of optimal distinctiveness. Scholars have highlighted how corporations aim to be unique to achieve a competitive edge by establishing precious, uncommon, and imitable resources and staking a unique competitive position.[332] Given this conformity versus distinction dichotomy, scholars have argued that companies must pursue ways that produce optimal distinctiveness — a positive stakeholder view that this tension has been adequately resolved.[333] [334] Consumers seek both conformity and uniqueness in product customization.[335] Consumers prefer to conform in their selections of product attributes that provide utilitarian rewards, but they seek distinctiveness in attributes that provide hedonic benefits.[336] The Thesis author highlights that this supports the previous studies, where consumer experience-based associations are the key source of perceived uniqueness. The author of the Thesis hypothesizes that audiences evaluate strengths and conformity in category shares attributes or category-characterized attributes and look for distinctiveness or form unique attributes from news media hedonic experiences or consumption experiences. The literature supports this assumption. Strong consumer experiences can establish key differentiating associations in the consumers' minds and shape perceptions of

[331] Romaniuk, J., & Gaillard, E. (2007). The relationship between unique brand associations, brand usage and brand performance: analysis across eight categories. *Journal of Marketing Management,* 23(3-4), 267-284.

[332] Zhao, E.Y., & Glynn, M. A. (2022). Optimal Distinctiveness: On Being the Same and Different. *Organization Theory*, 3(1). https://doi.org/10.1177/26317877221079340

[333] Durand, R., & Kremp, P.A. (2016). Classical deviation: Organizational and individual status as antecedents of conformity. *Academy of management Journal* 59.1 (2016): 65-89.

[334] Zuckerman, E.W. (2016). Optimal distinctiveness revisited:an integrative framework for understanding the balance between differentiation and conformity in individual and organizational identities. *In Handbook of Organizational Identit*y, Pratt, M.G., Schultz, M., Ashforth, B.E., Ravasi, D. (eds). Oxford University Press, Oxford, UK.

[335] Zaggl, M.A., Hagenmaier, M. A.,& Raasch, C. (2019). The Choice between Uniqueness and Conformity in Mass Customization. *R&D Management,* 49 (2), 204-221.

[336] Ibid, p.204-220

distinctiveness relative to competitive offerings.[337] Furthermore, consumer experience positively and significantly impacts perceived distinctiveness.[338]

To summarise, based on the literature overview, the author of the Thesis believes that brand distinctiveness plays a significant role in establishing strong brand equity. The literature distinguishes between unique brand attributes and perceived uniqueness built via associations not necessarily connected with some unique and novel brand attributes. The consensus on brand uniqueness is relevant in literature. Academic studies discuss the optimal level of distinctiveness for a brand and company to succeed, agreeing that shared and unique associations should be present. Category fundamentals or functional attributes should be in place for the brand to be considered by consumers, while unique associations distinguish brands from competitors and contribute to brand equity. Studies show that customers form brand distinctiveness through customer experience with the brand, and evaluating a brand based on the consumer experience has gained popularity. The Thesis author argues that it is plausible that the experience framework is the most efficient way to consider managing news media as a brand. Media as experience goods has established a concept in literature. In addition, the customer experience-based strategy lends itself to a broader integrated marketing perspective for media brands. Contacts are anything that influences the customer's experiences. Contact information may be integrated into the product itself. Before, after, and during product use, contacts are possible. The goal is to define a certain set of encounters that have the desired effect on the experience. Content may also be considered contacts. Any content element can be considered a contact that can be developed to give the brand-required experience(s).[339] Based on the findings, the author of the Thesis suggests that from a media brand viewpoint, media brand content and content consumption experience could be a significant foundation for establishing the news media brands' distinctiveness and brand equity. In addition, the literature lacks a study on the development of media brand distinctiveness that is not content-related.

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[337] Romaniuk, J., & Gaillard, E. (2007). The relationship between unique brand associations, brand usage and brand performance: analysis across eight categories. *Journal of Marketing Management,* 23(3-4), 267-284.

[338] Dwivedi, A., Nayeem, T., & Murshed, F. (2018). Brand experience and consumers' willingness-to-pay (WTP) a price premium: Mediating role of brand credibility and perceived uniqueness. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 44, 100–107. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jretconser.2018.06.009

[339] Calder, B., Malthouse, E., & Ots, M. (2008). Media brands and consumer experiences. In *Media Brands and Branding*, 89–93.

Many scholars' works prove that consumer experience with a brand has a positive effect and significance on brand strengths outcomes.[340] [341] [342] However, the current media consumption and its experience put the brand experience in an entirely new dimension. Furthermore, there is a gap in the literature studying how content consumption experience influences media brands and news media brand equity. The following section explores the literature on customer experience and its influence on brand equity to confirm the Thesis focus on news media content consumption experience from a brand distinctiveness and equity perspective.

2.3. Brand equity as consumer experience construct

Consumer experience has been approached both as a process (noun) and an outcome (verb). Consumer experience is the aggregate of feelings, perceptions and attitudes formed during the entire decision-making and consumption chain process involving an integrated series of interactions with people, objects, processes, and environment, leading to cognitive, emotional, sensory, and behavioural responses.[343] The essential difference between the two concepts is the nature of the experience. While service experience refers to customers (or any actor), consumer experience focuses on customers as experienced actors. In contrast, consumer experience is typically regarded as the customer's internal and subjective reaction.[344] It focuses on consumer engagement, appraisal, interpretation, and subjective response to holistic interaction. Therefore, it is possible to define media content consumption experience as consumer experience in a media brand context.

Based on the literature overview, the author of this Thesis concludes that the importance and effect of consumer experience have been well-researched and confirmed in academic work. Scholars agree that emotional and cognitive clues based on experience-based associations lead

[340] Huang, C. (2017). The impacts of brand experiences on brand loyalty: Mediators of brand love and trust. *Management decision : MD*, 55(5), 915–934.

[341] Ebrahim, R., Ghoneim, A., Irani, Z., & Fan, Y. (2016). A brand preference and repurchase intention model: the role of consumer experience. *Journal of Marketing Management,* 32(13-14), 1230–1259. https://doi.org/10.1080/0267257x.2016.1150322

[342] Ramaseshan, B., & Stein, A. (2014). Connecting the dots between brand experience and brand loyalty: The mediating role of brand personality and brand relationships. *Journal of Brand Management,* 21(7-8), 664–683. https://doi.org/10.1057/bm.2014.23

[343] Jain, R., Aagja, J., & Bagdare, S. (2017). Customer experience – a review and research agenda", *Journal of Service Theory and Practice*, 27(3), 642-662. https://doi.org/10.1108/JSTP-03-2015-0064

[344] Meyer, C., & Schwager, A. (2007). Understanding Customer Experience. *Harvard business review.* 85. 116-26, 157.

to brand associations.[345] According to Holbrook and Hirschman, consumer experiences comprise hedonic attributes such as enjoyment, fantasy, and emotions, and generate actual customer value.[346] Schmitt and Rogers have also comprehensively described the consumer experience from emotional and rational perspectives.[347] Shamim and Butt's (2013) research examines how brand equity, attitude, and credibility are changed by brand experience and highlights the significance of customer experience in brand equity development.[348] Customer experience increases customer loyalty [349] and is the ideal basis for brand differentiation.[350] Smilansky noted in 2017 that brand experience must be communicated across all touchpoints to amplify its influence.[351] This highlights the importance of consumer experience in developing brand equity. Numerous experts acknowledge that consumer experience is an appealing idea.[352] Interaction and experience with the brand can drastically change consumer perceptions of a brand and, as a result, dramatically erode its equity.[353] In a similar context, Dayal and his colleagues (2000) contend that the distinctions between the brand and the experience in an online context are so blurry that, from the customers' perspective, the brand is the experience and the experience is the brand.[354] The author of this Thesis argues that this confirms, from a media standpoint, the significance of this consumption experience or consumer experience with the news in the context of news media as content consumed in an online environment. Audience experience with media brand content via multi-platforms

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[345] Beig, F. A., & Nika, F. A. (2019). Brand Experience and Brand Equity. *Vision,* 23(4), 410–417. https://doi.org/10.1177/0972262919860963

[346] Holbrook, M.B., & Hirschman, E.C. (1982). The experiential aspects of consumption: Consumer fantasies, feelings, and fun. *Journal of Consumer Research* ,9, 132–140.

[347] Schmitt, B.H., & Rogers, D.L.(2008). *Handbook on Brand and Experience Management;* Edward Elgar Publishing: Northampton, MA, USA.

[348] Shamim, A., Butt, M.M. (2013). A critical model of brand experience consequences. *Asia Pacific Journal of Marketing and Logistics*, 25, 102-117.

[349] Brakus, J. J., Schmitt, B. H., & Zarantonello, L. (2009). Brand Experience: What is It? How is it Measured? Does it Affect Loyalty? *Journal of Marketing,* 73(3), 52–68. https://doi.org/10.1509/jmkg.73.3.052

[350] Schmitt, B.H., & Rogers, D.L.(2008). *Handbook on Brand and Experience Management;* Edward Elgar Publishing: Northampton, MA, USA.

[351] Smilansky, S. (2017). *Experiential marketing: A practical guide to interactive brand experiences*. Kogan Page Publishers.

[352] Novak, T. P., Hoffman, D. L., & Yung, Y.-F. (2000). Measuring the Customer Experience in Online Environments: A Structural Modeling Approach. *Marketing Science,* 19(1), 22–42. http://www.jstor.org/stable/193257

[353] Müller, B., & Chandon, J-L. (2004). The Impact of a World Wide Web Site Visit on Brand Image in the Motor Vehicle and Mobile Telephone Industries. *Journal of Marketing Communications* 10,153-165.

[354] Dayal, S., Landesberg, H., & Zeisser, M. (2000). Building digital brands. The McKinsey Quarterly, 2, 42–51.

unquestionably builds brand association. The Thesis author questions how strong and unique these associations can be developed and whether these associations contribute to developing strong and unique news media brands.

Any assessment of media diversity must also consider the proliferation of online media brands. While analysing media brands, several researchers differentiate between legacy news media and online news brands, arguing that online news brands are media born due to technological progress and the emergence of the internet. Most modern definitions of "online" communication emphasise the existence of an interactive computer network as the defining characteristic.[355] Legacy news media brands are long-established news brands that have launched online news versions to compete with the internet. Nguyen (2006) research states that the preference for native online news brands has been more or less driven by the medium's relative advantages over older or traditional news media, defined across six dimensions: the convenience of use, immediacy, content richness, news on demand, multimedia content format, and participation opportunities. The immediacy and information richness are the most crucial technological factors among them.[356] In addition to the attributes of online news, the Nguyen study indicates that three additional sets of factors have a significant influence on how online news is embraced, used, and incorporated into daily life: (1) social locators (education, income, employment status, job types, sex, age and living areas); (2) news orientation and behaviours (news wants, news reliance, the general delight of following the news, news usage habits, and news exchange habits); and (3) Internet experience.[357] The author of this Thesis concludes that the literature firmly supports the significance of consumer experience, citing several variables that may affect the online customer experience, including platform design, engagement level, personalisation, emotional states, and even prior experience. Bleier (2019) developed a paradigm for the online customer experience that includes informativeness, entertainment, social presence, and sensory appeal as essential experiential factors.[358] The experience as a whole offers breadth, immediacy, multimedia and on-demand services, searchability,

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[355] Nguyen, A. (2008). The contribution of online news attributes to its diffusion: An empirical exploration based on a proposed theoretical model for the micro-process of online news adoption/use. *First Monday,* 13(4), 1-24.

[356] Nguyen, An (2008). *The Penetration of Online News: Past, Present and Future.* Saarbrücken , Germany: VDM Verlag Dr. Muller Aktiengesellschaft & Co. KG.

[357] Ibid

[358] Bleier, A., Harmeling, C. M., & Palmatier, R. W. (2019). Creating Effective Online Customer Experiences. *Journal of Marketing,* 83(2), 98–119. https://doi.org/10.1177/0022242918809930

participation, and interactivity.[359] This confirms that new touchpoints and branding are created to deliver a seamless, appropriate, and positive consumer experience through a multi-platform and interactive media environment.

The author of the Thesis argues that literature and studies from various fields confirm consumer experience significance and positive outcomes on various brand aspects, including brand equity. Suppose that consumer experience is crucial for brand equity and distinctiveness. In that case, the focus is on how this experience influences the development and enhancement of news media brand distinctiveness and whether indirect and non-product-related consumer experiences have become more important in this environment than before. The author of this Thesis regards today's media brand audience experience as no longer being a direct or indirect product experience. Instead, it is a nonlinear, mobile, and multi-platform experience.

The literature research confirms a correlation between positive brand associations and brand equity. The previously discussed correlation between brand experience or consumer experience and brand distinctiveness points to the need to manage and operate brand equity building in a more complex process. The literature review shows that consumer experience is crucial in brand equity building. In that case, the Thesis author states that this branding stage should be measured with the same importance as consumer thoughts, feelings, and knowledge about the brand—which can usually happen before brand or product consumption. Significantly noteworthy is to measure whether experience with a news media brand or content consumption-related experience of news brand content has the same positive impact on brand distinctiveness and equity as in other categories. Suppose companies create unique online experiences geared to help achieve their objectives. In that case, they will increase their online presence and gain a competitive advantage.[360] The author of this Thesis believes that the same rules apply to news media brands.

Digitalization affects the way news media content is consumed. Therefore, audience experience may play a critical role in brand associations and perceived distinctiveness, especially for the experience- and platform-driven younger audience.[361] The Thesis author argues that building and maintaining strong, favourable, and unique brand associations involves

[359] Nguyen, An (2008). *The Penetration of Online News: Past, Present and Future.* Saarbrücken , Germany: VDM Verlag Dr. Muller Aktiengesellschaft & Co. KG.

[360] Veríssimo, M., & Menezes, N. (2016). Social media as a tool to enhance customer experience in hospitality industry. *Revista Portuguesa de Marketing*, 34.

[361] Saulīte, L., Ščeulovs, D., & Pollák, F.. (2022). The Influence of Non-Product-Related Attributes on Media Brands' Consumption. *Journal of Open Innovation: Technology, Market, and Complexity,* 8(3), 105. https://doi.org/10.3390/joitmc8030105

managing and measuring consumer experiences with the brand in ways never before conducted. These findings strongly support the development of the second hypothesis of this Thesis:

H2. Content consumption experience-based attributes of news media brand significantly influence news media brand uniqueness.

The author of this Thesis believes that it is critical to define and understand news media attributes, both consumer experience - and product-based, to fully embrace their associations and impact on news brand perceived distinctiveness or unique associations. However, attributes and related associations are category-based, and their classifications vary across academic fields. In the following section, the author of the Thesis analyses news media brand attribute classification and provides a grouping of news media brand attributes in the current media environment.

2.4. News media brand attributes as news media brand uniqueness and brand equity framework

According to the literature review, the uses and gratification theory in media research focuses on understanding why and how people use media to comprehend media's impact on individuals.[362] This idea assumes the following regarding the link between media and audience: From mediated experiences, audience members accidentally build perceptions of the meanings and values of a medium. These views convert into expectations, which push audience members to return to the same medium in search of a certain set of gratifications. Scholars concur that medium consumption then becomes the focus of conventional media studies.[363] The media richness theory proposes that audiences choose communication technologies based on the attributes of the medium.[364] Expectancy-value theoretical framework, uses and gratification models, customer-based equity framework adapted to the media element, examine the relationship between media and audiences by exploring the relationships between the media's

[362] Pisani, J. R. (1985). Mass Communication Theory. McQuail, Denis. London: Sage Publications, 1983. *Journal of Advertising*, 14(4), 62–63. https://doi.org/10.1080/00913367.1985.10672976

[363] Lee, A.M. (2011). Is the Medium the Message? Predicting Popularity of Top U.S. News Sites with Medium-Specific Features. *12th International Symposium on Online Journalism.* Vol. 1. 2011.

[364] Daft, R. L., & Lengel, R. H.(1984). Information Richness: A New Approach to Managerial Behavior and Organizational Design. *Research in Organizational Behavior*, Cummings, L.L., Staw,B.M. (eds.), JAI Press, Homewood, IL, 191-233.

attributes and the functions they serve. [365] Initiated by Martin Fishbein, the expectancy-value theory is a social-psychology concept that has been explored extensively and utilised across fields to explain behavioural outcomes. According to this perspective, each object possesses unique attributes for each person who forms an attitude. This inclination results from the individual's conviction that the object possesses this trait and his/her emotional judgement of that characteristic.[366] As this expectancy-value approach develops into a theory of reasoned action, attitudes are seen as the direct driver of an individual's intention, which is the direct driver of behaviour.[367] The adoption rates of innovations and new technology depend on how individuals assess their common attributes. There are a variety of typologies for these attributes, and different researchers have viewed them from distinct perspectives. They are cost-related, benefit-related, structural, and uncertainty- or information-related in the field of economics. Perceived usefulness and usability are the two most influential factors in information systems.[368] In the media context, different scholars approach brand attribute categorization differently while mostly agreeing on several categorizations. Several authors define the gratifications and benefits behind media consumption: social companionship, economic gain, self-improvement, entertainment, escape, fame, aesthetics,[369] problem-solving, persuading others, relationship maintenance, status-seeking, and personal insight, [370] but without a focus on news consumption from the audience's point of view and a grasp of online news consumption habits and impacts, there is a deficiency. The author of this Thesis concludes that for news media brands to exist and prosper as unique news mediums, research must acknowledge their capabilities and strong attributes that generate favourable associations and strengthen brand equity and distinctiveness.

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[365] Nguyen, A. (2008). The contribution of online news attributes to its diffusion: An empirical exploration based on a proposed theoretical model for the micro-process of online news adoption/use. *First Monday,* 13(4). https://doi.org/10.5210/fm.v13i4.2127

[366] Ajzen, I., & Fishbein, M. (1970). The prediction of behavior from attitudinal and normative variables. Journal of Experimental Social Psychology, 6(4), 466–487. https://doi.org/10.1016/0022-1031(70)90057-0

[367] Ibid, p. 466- 487.

[368] Nguyen, A. (2008). The contribution of online news attributes to its diffusion: An empirical exploration based on a proposed theoretical model for the micro-process of online news adoption/use. *First Monday,* 13(4). https://doi.org/10.5210/fm.v13i4.2127

[369] Grace-Farfaglia, P., Dekkers, A., Sundararajan, B., Peters, L., & Park, S. (2006). Multinational web uses and gratifications: Measuring the social impact of online community participation across national boundaries. *Electronic Commerce Research*, 6, 75-101. 10.1007/s10660-006-5989-6.

[370] Flanagin, J.A., & Metzger, M. (2001). Internet use in the contemporary media environment. *Human Communication Research*. 27. 153 - 181. 10.1111/j.1468-2958.2001.tb00779.x.

According to literature analyses, the precise attributes and benefits of news media brands and products have been explored from various theoretical viewpoints, most unrelated to branding theory.[371] According to Keller (1993), the attributes might be of two types: product-related (components necessary for delivering the product or service) and non-product-related (external aspects of the product or service that relate to its purchase or consumption, such as price, packaging, or user and usage imagery). These brand attributes offer different benefits: functional benefits and experiential benefits (related to the experience of using a product or service and satisfying experiential needs), as well as symbolic benefits (the more extrinsic advantages of product or service consumption that are linked to underlying needs for social approval or personal expression and self-esteem).[372] Regarding symbolic benefits, research into uses and gratification has identified three demands met by media goods (surveillance, entertainment, and personal and social identification). The Thesis author concludes that scholars have no common agreement on categorising group attributes in the media field. Therefore, it is possible to define *product-related attributes* as functional or utilitarian. In contrast, non-product-related attributes are consumer or consumption experience and user imagery,[373] hedonic associations often connected with experience, not product features.

Many scholars assert that the most powerful and strong news media brand associations are emotional rather than functional.[374] [375] [376] Emotional brand associations are linked to abstract and intangible news media attributes. In recent news media branding research, users' functional associations with journalistic excellence (not simply product-related or tangible) are likely essential for news brand equity.[377] The Thesis author believes that in the current context

[371] Victoria-Mas, M., Lacasa-Mas, I., & Marimon, F. (2018). Assessing the consumer-based brand equity of news media firms: A new validated scale. *Journal of Media Business Studies,* 15(3), 214–235. https://doi.org/10.1080/16522354.2018.1522199

[372] Keller, K.L.(1993). Conceptualizing, Measuring, and Managing Customer-Based Brand Equity. *Journal of Marketing,* 57 (1), 1–22. https://doi.org/10.2307/1252054

[373] Victoria-Mas, M., Lacasa-Mas, I., & Marimon, F. (2018). Assessing the consumer-based brand equity of news media firms: A new validated scale. *Journal of Media Business Studies,* 15(3), 214–235. https://doi.org/10.1080/16522354.2018.1522199

[374] McDowell, W. S. (2004). Exploring a free association methodology to capture and differentiate abstract media brand associations: A study of three cable news networks. *Journal of Media Economics*, 17(4), 309–320.

[375] Ots, M. (2008). *Media Brands and Branding,* Jönköping. International Business School: Jönköping, Sweden, 2008. ISBN 91-89164-82-2

[376] Ari,S.A.,& Bughin, J. (2009). *Managing media companies : harnessing creative value* (2nd ed.). John Wiley & Sons.

[377] Bakshi, M., & Mishra, P. (2016). Structural equations modelling of determinants of consumerbased brand equity of newspapers. *Journal of Media Business Studies*, 13(2),1.

of multi-platform and on-demand news media consumption, it is necessary to consider news media attributes identified during the last two decades. Several studies focus on news media attributes.[378] The six attributes have been defined for consideration: interactivity, organization, control, channel, textuality, and content.[379] Similarly, Lee (2011) identifies five overarching medium-specific features or process gratifications that affect average consumers' experiences with online news consumption: interactivity; immediacy; multimedia, information availability and usability.[380] However, the Thesis author argues that the attribute definition in the aforementioned scholars' work is not connected with news brand distinctiveness or equity measurement. In recent years, localization, ideology, credibility, and entertainment have been defined as news media brand associations or attributes to measure brand equity, while scholars have different definitions of news media features or attributes [381] [382] [383] [384] contributing to brand equity. As mentioned previously, Bakshi & Mishra (2016) define localization, ideology, credibility, and entertainment as benefits that contribute to news media brand equity. Credibility is firmly linked with strong media brand equity.[385] One of the latest works on news media brand equity was employed by Keller (1993) and Picard's (2010) attribution classification framework by grouping attributes as functional, experiential, and symbolic. The scholar's study focuses on the measurement of news brands' customer-based brand equity, resulting in strong evidence that functional associations (related to journalistic quality and basic utility of the products), experiential associations (related to content tone and packaging of the editorial products); and symbolic associations (related to reliability, ideology, and identity of the brand).[386] The results

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[378] McDowell, W. S. (2004). Exploring a free association methodology to capture and differentiate abstract media brand associations: A study of three cable news networks. *Journal of Media Economics*. 17(4), 309–320

[379] Eveland, W.P. (2003). A "Mix of Attributes" Approach to the Study of Media Effects and New Communication Technologies. *Journal of Communication* 53, 395–410.. doi:10.1111/j.1460-2466.2003.tb02598.x

[380] Lee, A. M. (2011). Is the medium the message? Predicting popularity of top US news sites with medium-specific features." *12th International Symposium on Online Journalism.* Vol. 1. 2011.

[381] McDowell, W. (2011). The brand management crisis facing the business of journalism. *International Journal on Media Management*, 13(1), 37–51.

[382] McDowell, W. S. (2004). Exploring a free association methodology to capture and differentiate abstract media brand associations: A study of three cable news networks. *Journal of Media Economics,* 17(4), 309–320.

[383] Ots, M. (2008). *Media brands and branding.* Jönköping: Jönköping International Business School, Ark Tryckaren AB.

[384] Oyedeji, T. A. (2007). The relation between the customer-based brand equity of media outlets and their media channel credibility: An exploratory study. *The International Journal on Media Management*, 9(3), 116–125.

[385] Ibid, p.116-123.

[386] Victoria-Mas, M., Lacasa-Mas, I., & Marimon, F. (2018). Assessing the consumer-based brand equity of news media firms: A new validated scale. *Journal of Media Business Studies,* 15(3), 214–235. https://doi.org/10.1080/16522354.2018.1522199

indicate that the three dimensions equally determine journalistic brands' or news brand customer-based brand equity. Within these dimensions, each category of associations has the same importance. The study measures and empirically validates Keller's (1993) conceptualization of brand equity. It specifies specific dimensions and measurements for brands in the news media industry. This study demonstrates that the customer-based brand equity of news brands relies on three distinct types of associations (functional, experiential, and symbolic).[387] These findings concur with Keller's description of news media brands as a specific case. The author of this Thesis concludes that the unique characteristic of customer-based brand equity for new media brands is that attributes valued by news media audiences define associations. These are based on the three distinct demands they aim to fulfil through media consumption (surveillance, entertainment, and personal and social identification).

Grouping of news media attributes

The author of the Thesis considers the studies of news media brands from a branding perspective, well-established attribute-based association concepts in literature firmly group news media brand associations as functional or utilitarian (or content-related) and experimental or non-product related or hedonic or experience-based associations. While scholars disagree on whether the consumer experience is strictly product or non-product-related, in this research context, the Thesis author defines non-product-related attributes such as usage imagery and user imagery as consumer experience-based brand attributes. Regarding news media category or shared traits, the content itself, from various perspectives and legitimacy, is identified as fundamental or functional brand characteristics.

In comparison, distinct characteristics form usage-based, consumer experience-based imagery associations. The functional associations of news media brands correlate to the product-related attributes that satisfy basic demands or category bases, which are surveillance needs in the news media market.[388] [389] For example, Picard (2010) defines content accuracy, reliability, fairness, and completeness of content as attributes that provide category needs.[390]

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[387] Ibid, p. 214-220.

[388] Lin, C., Salwen, M. B., & Abdulla, R. A. (2005). Uses and Gratifications of Online and OfflineNews: New Wine in an Old Bottle? In Salwen, M.B., B. Garrison.B., & Driscoll,P.D. (Eds.),*Online News and the Public* (221–236). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

[389] Kim, J.H., Kim, M., & Nam, Y. (2010). An Analysis of Self-Construals, Motivations, Facebook Use, and User Satisfaction. *International Journal of Human–Computer Interaction,* 26, 1077 - 1099. 10.1080/10447318.2010.516726.

[390] Picard, R. G. (2010). *Value creation and the future of news organizations: Why and how journalism must change to remain relevant in the twenty-first century*. Lisbon: Media XXI.

However, there are other dimensions that characterise content quality. To satisfy fundamental informational needs, news media brand studies require another type of attribute: Attributes concerning the usefulness of editorial products (e.g., accessibility or cheapness).[391] Scholars concur that content and credibility are the most important criteria for satisfying fundamental needs and expectations from news media companies.

Based on literature analyses, Figure 2.3 shows the scholars' classification of news media brand attributes grouped by the author of the Thesis in a summarised concept of two main attribute groups: *product-related* (content-related) and *non-product-related* (non-content-related) news media brand attributes.
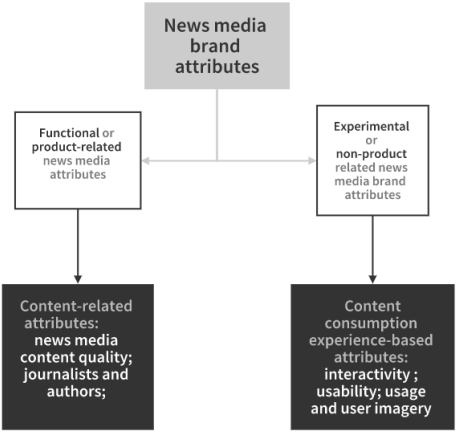
Fig. 2.3. Approach for grouping news media attributes based on scholars' classification in academic studies (created by the author, novelty of this research).

The author of the Thesis believes that research should examine whether non-product-related attributes connected to a brand's packaging of editorial products (readability or usability, user imagery) can produce brand equity for consumers. While recent studies are crucial to media, especially the news media branding field, there are gaps in the literature regarding how news media brand associations contribute to so much-needed brand distinctiveness and whether it significantly correlates with strong brand equity of new media, especially given how news media consumption has changed due to digitalization and younger audience consumption behaviour. Considering that academics agree that consumers seek distinctiveness in hedonic

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[391] Fichter, C., & Jonas, K. (2008). Image Effects of Newspapers How Brand Images Change Consumers' Product Ratings. *Journal of Psychology.* 216. 10.1027/0044-3409.216.4.226.

brand attributes as experience-based, the Thesis author concludes that perceived distinctiveness and its impact on brand equity in news media brand construct should be validated. Therefore, those insights lay the foundation for the following hypothesis of this research:

H3. News media brand uniqueness significantly impacts news media brand equity.

Academics concur that digitalization and following multi-platform content distribution and consumption have fundamentally altered how media connect with their audience. However, the author questions how strong, unique, and favourable associations are created and maintained if the point of parity is high, and the brand associations delude in a multi-platform media environment. As discussed before, unique brand associations are the elements that help consumers distinguish a certain brand from other brands available on the market. In addition, according to scholarly consensus, emotional and cognitive cues from experience-based associations produce brand associations. According to Shamim and Butt's study of the relationship between consumer experience and brand equity, brand attitude, and brand credibility, consumer experience directly impacts all these factors. In addition, consumer experience considerably impacts brand equity and other factors, such as brand associations and awareness. Nevertheless, studies focusing on the consumer experience with news media content are still very limited in the literature.

Importance of news media branding in the 21st century media business environment

According to literature analyses, theories are still being developed that identify, determine, and analyse the relationships between the concepts that drive media brands. In the face of intense media development and increased industry competition, media brands rely on consumer marketing principles, such as branding, to differentiate themselves from competitors. Due to the audience's involvement in terms of consumption, engagement, and response to a media brand, the audience becomes a vital part of media brand association construction, product development, and content distribution. Therefore, it is assumed that the audience's role in forming media brand associations and strengths changed in these new aspects. The author of the Thesis thinks that these non-product-related or experience-based associations are becoming increasingly important in a highly competitive media environment. The author of the Thesis contends that this consumption experience provides significant distinctiveness of news media brands in the media environment of the 21st century.

The literature overview indicates that the news delivery vehicle or platform on which the audience consumes news is vital to the content experience, mainly when news media or the continuous production of media products is emphasised. Content and quality have been the

driving force behind media brands, especially news media brand strengths. However, the increasing fragmentation of audiences, and the development of news distribution channels, contribute to an environment in which the value of a media brand is declining, and the brand identity of the content source (media brand) is becoming less significant. This represents a significant shift in media brands. The author of the Thesis states a question about what differentiates and distinguishes news media brands when most of their content is identical. This is especially important for a younger, platform- and experience-oriented audience. In a world where multi-platform delivery expands, associations with the news media brand and the content experience become more vital.

In 1964, Marshall McLuhan famously invented the phrase "the medium is the message" in his work *Understanding Media: Extensions of Man.*[392] This means that the content and the medium (in this research context – platforms) are intertwined, so the central message or effect is not in the content it carries but in how it is presented. Each medium is a unique environment whose extensive use transforms people and culture. The idea is that changes to a communication medium have a far more profound effect than anything that occurs on the communication channel or at the message level of the media. McLuhan states that communication media tend to shape the content and character of the message.[393] McLuhan's theory is still practical for analysing building brand associations in the platform-dominating news media environment. The medium theory emphasises the medium as opposed to what it delivers or how the audience consumes information. A medium goes beyond radio, television, and newspapers. Instead, it is the symbolic context in which any communicative action takes place. The medium theory focuses on the distinctive qualities or media type of each medium.[394] This means the focus is on specific features and how they differentiate the medium from other media. While McLuhan's works have been analysed because of his insights and limitations,[395] the long-lived medium theory considers the growing customer and platform's impact on how and where content is experienced. The author of the Thesis argues what medium variables (in this research context - platforms and related content consumption experiences via platforms), rather than the content, differentiate one brand from another and form the basis for customer usage and preference.

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[392] McLuhan, M. (1994). *Understanding media: The extensions of man.* MIT press.

[393] Ibid

[394] Ibid

[395] Meyrowitz, J. (2008). Morphing McLuhan: Medium Theory for a New Millennium,2,*Keynote.*

The demand has been present for media brands to continuously create news media products for years - improving content according to audience preferences and product positioning. The author of the Thesis questions whether it is enough when audience content consumption experience extends beyond direct product (content). Without the shrinking importance of content, the topic of the escalating importance of other media attributes, such as experience-based or consumption-based, arises.

The author of the Thesis concludes that in addition to the need for news brand association management in a new media environment, the significance of branding and media brand management is reflected in the positive effects of brand equity on various media outcomes, ranging from media trust or credibility to media brand perception (see Table 1.6). This outcome highlights the need for news media organizations to focus on brand building through content-related and consumption experience-related attributes to ensure brand distinctiveness and brand equity. Significantly, this is vital for national news media brands competing with global media and social media platforms regarding audience usage and preference. As previously discussed, Generation Z and their news consumption trends represent the challenges national news media face due to digitalization and changes in media content consumption behaviour.

Given that branding is not merely an option but a strategic prerequisite for the success of media, a deeper understanding of news media branding in a changing media environment is required.[396] [397] [398] [399] [400] The growing importance of medium (in this research context – multi-platforms) and the changed medium environment support the research's relevance concerning news brand equity and media brand distinctiveness. This research Thesis focuses on national news media brands born due to technologies and legacy media online brands. The study focuses on how utilitarian and hedonic attributes or product-related (content-related) and content

[396] Riskos, K., Hatzithomas, L., Dekoulou.,E., & Tsourvakas,G. (2021). The influence of entertainment, utility and pass time on consumer brand engagement for news media brands: a mediation model. *Journal of Media Business Studies*, DOI: 10.1080/16522354.2021.1887439

[397] Malmelin,N., & Moisander,J. (2014). Brands and Branding in Media Management—Toward a Research Agenda. *International Journal on Media Management,* 16:1, 9-25, DOI: 10.1080/14241277.2014.898149

[398] Chan-Olmsted, S., & Shay, R. (2015). Media Branding 3.0: From Media Brands to Branded Entertainment and Information. In G. Siegert, K. Förster, S. M. Chan-Olmsted, & M. Ots (Eds.), *Handbook of Media Branding* (pp. 11–32). Springer International Publishing. http://link.springer.com/10.1007/978-3-319-18236-0_2

[399] Krebs, I., & Siegert, G. (2015). 20 years of research on media brands and media branding. In *Handbook of Media Branding*; Siegert, G., Förster, K., & Chan-Olmsted, S., & Ots, M., Eds.; Springer International Publishing: Berlin/Heidelberg, Germany,33–49.

[400] Ots, M. (2008). *Media Brands and Branding,* Jönköping. International Business School: Jönköping, Sweden. ISBN 91-89164-82-2.

consumption experience-related attributes contribute to the perceived distinctiveness of news media brands. Additionally, it investigates how uniqueness contributes to news media brand equity as perceived by Generation Z.

The following section describes the methods and methodology of designing and conducting quantitative research and delivers research findings and results.

3. The research of new media brand uniqueness and brand equity in the 21st century media business environment

This chapter describes the study's methodological choice, research design procedure in depth and research findings and results. It has primarily relied on the philosophical attitude and the research problem to influence the methodology selection. It discusses explicitly why the explanatory method research design is deemed acceptable for the study. Additionally, the chapter outlines the protocols for data collection, analysis, and reporting. Finally, the chapter presents quantitative research results and findings on news media attribute importance, contribution to news media brand distinctiveness and its impact on brand equity as perceived by Generation Z.

As previously noted, media consumption has evolved across all age groups, but Generation Z's approach to content consumption and news brands is even more platform- and experience-oriented. News brands are not significant in the lives of younger audiences; therefore, determining which attributes are significant for this audience and how brand distinctiveness and equity develop in the minds of Generation Z in a new media environment is crucial for ensuring the legacy and importance of national news media brands in the minds of future audiences. These aspects provide the decisive and actual research goal, which is to determine how to develop news media brand uniqueness and brand equity in the current media environment, as perceived by Generation Z. In accordance with the defined research objectives, questions and hypotheses, the Thesis research is based on the quantitative research and analyses of its results are presented in this section of the Thesis.

3.1. Thesis research conceptual framework and methodology

Before describing quantitative research methodologies and procedure, the author presents the conceptual framework of the Thesis research. The author uses a sequential research design and provides the Thesis conceptual research framework based on the literature review and developed theoretical framework for further quantitative research (see Fig. 3.1).
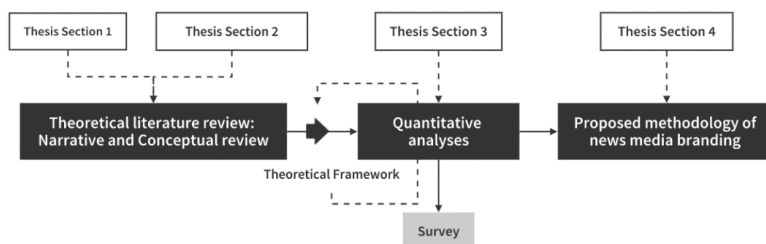
Fig. 3.1. The conceptual research framework (based on a sequential research design, created by the author).

The author of the Thesis describes the main findings and their application to Thesis research based on the methods employed (see Table 3.1).

Table 3.1

Summary of main findings based on the methods employed and their application to the Thesis research (created by the author)

Method	Main findings	Application of findings to the research of Thesis
1	2	3
Theoretical literature review: Narrative literature review:	Deluding brand association and news media distinctiveness in a multi-platform environment due to digitalization.	Confirmation of research topicality and definition of research goals.
	Exploration of brand equity concepts and their application to news media brands.	Development of a theoretical framework for conducting quantitative research on news media's distinctiveness and brand equity in a current media environment.
	Gaps in the literature on news media brand equity and distinctiveness in a current media environment.	Bases for the relevance of research, a theoretical framework for quantitative research. A quantitative examination of non-content related news media brand attribute significance to brand distinctiveness and equity.
Theoretical literature review: Narrative literature review	Importance of content consumption experience to the associations' strength, favourability, and news media brand uniqueness.	The foundation for developing a research hypothesis. Development of a survey to measure the influence of those attributes on the distinctiveness and equity of the news media brand.
	Exploration and distinction of brand uniqueness and perceived uniqueness definitions.	Incorporation of the concept of perceived brand uniqueness into a theoretical framework as the foundation for the construction of a research hypothesis.
Conceptual literature review	Definition and grouping of news media brand attributes.	Applied into survey design to measure and examine news media attribute importance, contribution to brand distinctiveness and brand equity.

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Table 3.1 Continued

1	2	3
Secondary data analyses	Changes in consumer news consumption and their impact on the attribution and distinctiveness of news media brands.	Confirmation of the significance of news media brand attributes connected to content consumption as a foundation for the formulation of a research hypothesis.
	Generation Z news consumption behaviour: on-demand, platform and experience-driven.	Confirm the veracity of the Generation Z research focus and its incorporation into the survey design.
Quantitative research: survey	Both content-related and content-consumption-related news media attributes contribute to brand distinctiveness. News media brand uniqueness affects brand equity, and its impact is significant	Results applied for developing the methodology of news media branding are presented in Section 4 of this Thesis.

Whereas the theoretical part of the Thesis research is based on narrative literature review to define and design a theoretical framework, the following research is based on quantitative research. The author of the Thesis designed and implemented quantitative research to achieve research objectives, answer research questions, and test hypotheses based on a theoretical framework derived from a review of the literature.

3.2. Quantitative research conceptual framework: research design and methods

Several strategies for measuring the effectiveness of brand associations have been proposed.[401] Traditionally, marketers resort to questionnaires, focus groups and in-depth interviews.[402] In line with the theory of spreading activation,[403] in his study, Krishnan characterised brands as clusters of associations structured in a (semantic) network, with nodes representing brands, products, or attributes connected to other nodes based on their degree of association.[404] For conducting the present quantitative research study, the author of this Thesis has employed a survey as the quantitative research method and adopted positivism philosophy as it benefits the investigator to identify the actual content of the research study (see Appendix 3). Human interests are mainly autonomous of the researcher and excluded from the positivism

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[401] Low,L. S., & Lamb, C.W. (2000). The measurement and dimensionality of brand associations. *Journal of Product & Brand Management,* 9.6, 350–370.

[402] Park,C.S., & Srinivasan,V. (1994). A survey-based method for measuring and understanding brand equity and its extendibility. *Journal of marketing research* 31.2, 271–288

[403] Anderson, J. R. (1983). A spreading activation theory of memory.*Journal of verbal learning and verbal behavior.* 22.3, 261–295.

[404] Krishnan, H. S. (1996). Characteristics of memory associations: A consumer-based brand equity perspective. *International Journal of research in Marketing* 13.4, 389–405.

ideology.[405] This concept enables the author to determine the cause-and-effect relationship between the research variables. In this work, the Thesis author has utilized a deductive methodology to examine existing theories and model new aspects of branding theory elements, and measure news media attribute impact and contribution to brand distinctiveness and equity. The deductive method is linked to quantitative research and positivism philosophy.[406] The author acquired the deductive method information regarding media brand attributes and distinctiveness research variables. Using a deductive approach, the Thesis author provided recommendations to strengthen the brand's distinctiveness and brand equity in a multi-platform context, thereby illustrating the quantitative data relevant to the research questions.

Quantitative Research Design

The research design is employed to address the research questions and test hypotheses for this study. The said research design is derived from questions that directly determine the stated aims of this Thesis. These questions result from the discrepancies between the theory provided in Sections 1 and 2 of the Thesis and the analysis and conclusions of secondary data. Research design presents precise processes for determining the outcomes of a study.[407] A research design is a complete plan designed for the methodical preparation of numerous research mechanisms. The three most distinctive research designs are exploratory, descriptive, and explanatory.[408] Exploratory research design facilitates the identification of obstacles to survival and the acquisition of more information about the topic of investigation. Explanatory research examines the relationship between independent and dependent variables. The descriptive research then focuses on the actual participants of the investigation. The framework of an explanatory research permits qualitative methods to address "how" and "why" questions based on the sources of the cause-and-effect connection.[409] The author of the Thesis used the explanatory research design because it allowed the author to more precisely consent to the evidence and tactics related to the research issue (see Appendix 3). By adopting this research design, the researcher examined the variables by collecting data related to the study and its topic

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[405] Sorde Marti, T., & Mertens, D. M. (2014). Mixed Methods Research With Groups at Risk: New Developments and Key Debates. *Journal of Mixed Methods Research*, 8(3), 207–211. https://doi.org/10.1177/1558689814527916

[406] Ibid, 207-211.

[407] Merriam, S. B., & Tisdell, E. J. (2015). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation*. John Wiley & Sons.

[408] Weyant, E. (2022). Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches, 5th Edition, *Journal of Electronic Resources in Medical Libraries*, 19:1-2, 54-55, DOI: 10.1080/15424065.2022.2046231

[409] Ibid

– relationships between media brand attributes, brand distinctiveness and brand equity. The explanatory research design benefits the researcher by discovering plenty of statistics about the strategies that could be used and used to engage the audience with the media brand and grow brand equity. The study was explanatory because it explained the factors contributing to media brand distinctiveness and brand equity and confirmed the research hypotheses.

A quantitative survey will be employed to examine brand attributes comprehensively, as brand associations are attribute-based. Brand associations are the attributes of a brand that come into consumers' minds when the brand is discussed.[410] The detailed quantitative research analyses are based on the developed theoretical framework - customer-based brand equity model and brand associations framework and a review of the literature on brand distinctiveness and the consumer experience effect on brand outcomes and brand equity (see Figure 3.2).
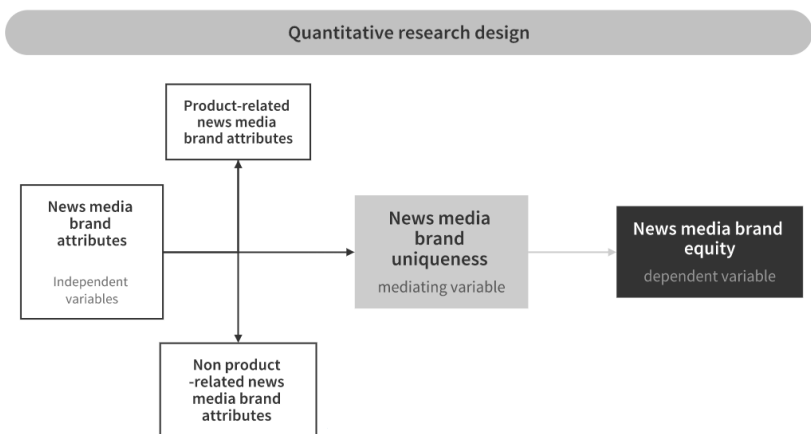
Fig.3.2. The conceptual framework of the quantitative research – survey (created by the author).

Firstly, after analysing the media attributes' significance for each news media brand selected, the strength of strong and favourable brand associations will be determined.

Secondly, the impact of brand associations on brand uniqueness will be determined. Considering the consumer experience, brand associations, and the importance of distinctiveness in the branding discussed in the literature review, decision-making tree modelling methodology and regression analyses will answer how brand distinctiveness forms brand associations and which brand attributes play the most significant role in its development. The research critically

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[410] Keller, K.L.(1993). Conceptualizing, Measuring, and Managing Customer-Based Brand Equity. *Journal of Marketing.* 57, 1–22.

evaluates a quantitative investigation's findings to determine the strongest influences between brand associations and uniqueness, focusing on consumption experience-related experience associations. Multiple linear regression analyses were used to confirm or not the hypotheses of this research. The proposed study design would survey 15 to 24-year-old consumers to understand the importance of 14 media brand attribute-based associations and their impact on uniqueness and brand equity.

The third part of the data will consist of statistical studies to identify how brand associations contribute to media brand uniqueness and how uniqueness impacts brand equity as perceived by Generation Z.

As a result, the ***methodology for news media branding*** in a new media environment that establishes and strengthens media brand uniqueness and, consequently, media brand equity is presented and described in Section 4 of this Thesis.

This research aims to conceptualize customer-based brand equity based on a definition elaborated by a marketing author Keller applied to national news media brands. The main aim of the research is to design and validate a scale that measures this concept. For this purpose, the definition of customer-based brand equity and its application to news media brands are discussed in the theoretical framework, which also includes an extended explanation of each of the specific dimensions of news media brands and the measures chosen to validate the scale presented in this research (see Appendix 3).

The author summarised the quantitative research (survey) process in three steps according to the first three objectives (see Figure 3.3).

Step 1 of the analysis based on *Research Objective 1 is to identify and evaluate* news media brand attributes that create strong, favourable news media brand associations for Generation Z.

In Step 2, according to *Research Objective 2,* each news media brand attribute's impact on the news media brand uniqueness is examined.

In Step 3 of the research, according to *Research Objective 3,* an analysis of the news media brand uniqueness impact on news media brand equity as perceived by Generation Z is performed.
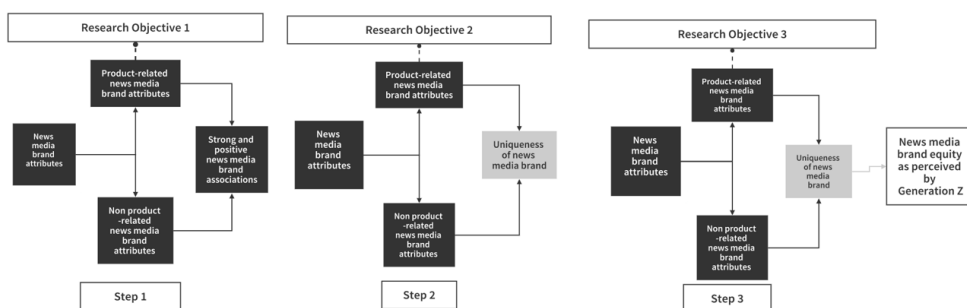
Fig.3.3. Quantitative research steps according to research objectives (created by the author).

3.2.1. Quantitative research methods: Procedure of data collection and analyses

In this Thesis subsection, the author justifies the research setting and sample and explains data collecting and analytic methods and procedures.

Procedure of Data Collection: research sample and data sources

The data collection method is one of the most vital aspects of a research study. Secondary and primary data are two broad classifications that can be applied to various information types. Secondary data are information other researchers have already provided and collected to perform prior investigations and build ideas about other topics.[411] Secondary data possess qualitative and quantitative qualities, and their application in descriptive and explanatory research is apparent. Primary data refers to data acquired by researchers using various methods and procedures, such as interviews, surveys, observations, and experiments, in order to obtain the most valuable data.

In this Thesis research, secondary data such as media consumption dynamics from 2014 to 2021 in Latvia and global data were analysed, and media usage and social media usage in different sociodemographic groups were analysed to justify the relevance of the research, problem and media usage and engagement in Latvia by the Generation Z audience. As a result, the author confirmed the relevance of the research aims and objectives described in Section 1 of this Thesis. The secondary data were also provided during the developed methodology approbation and used later in this Thesis section to support research findings and the

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[411] Crowther, D., Lancaster, G. (2008). *Research Methods* (2nd ed.). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780080943442.

development of the conceptual framework of news media brand attributes in a new media environment.

As mentioned, quantitative research (survey) was carried out to answer the research questions and test hypotheses defined by the author of this Thesis based on secondary data analyses and a literature review. Quantitative data collection methods employ quantitative and statistical data analysis approaches, such as descriptive statistics, frequency distribution analysis, and regression analysis.[412] The data analyses section describes the statistical methods of this quantitative research analysis.

Research Sample

In this Thesis research context, ***Generation Z is an audience of 15-24 years old,*** as the audience's interest in news increases with age. Therefore, Generation Z representatives younger than 15 years old are beyond the scope of this Thesis research. Quantitative research was carried out from April 1 – May 6, 2022, when Russia's war against Ukraine caused an intense situation across many countries, including Latvia, increasing people's news consumption considerably. The research population for this study comprised all people in Latvia aged 15–24 years. Eligibility criteria outline research participants' traits to be included in the population sample.[413] [414] In this study, the participants' criteria were a certain age group and people living in Latvia. To answer the research questions, test hypotheses and reach the research goal, quantitative research was carried out by defining the research sample.

The research sample was designed using the official data of a defined population in Latvia in 2021. The population is 173,659 people aged 15–24 living in Latvia [415] based on the sample size calculation formula.[416] The formula $Z\alpha/2$ is the critical value of the normal distribution at $\alpha/2$, with a confidence level of 95 %, α is 0.05 and a critical value of 1.96. MOE is the margin of error, p is the sample proportion, and N is the population size. The author chooses a 95% confidence level and a 4.9 % margin of error. Typically, a margin of error is

[412] Bryman, A., & Bell, E. (2011) . *Business Research Methods.* 3rd Edition, Oxford University Press, Oxford.

[413] Onwuegbuzie, A.J., & Collins, K.M. (2007). A Typology of Mixed Methods Sampling Designs in Social Science Research. *The Qualitative Report,* 12, 281-316..

[414] Polit D. F., & Hungler B. P. (1995). *Nursing research : principles and methods* (5th ed.). Philadelphia Pa.

[415] Central Statistics Bureau of Latvia, IRS030. (2022). *Population at the beginning of year and population change and key vital statistics in regions, cities, towns and municipalities 1967 – 2022, https://data.stat.gov.lv/pxweb/en/OSP_PUB/START__POP__IR__IRS/IRS030/*

[416] Qiu, S.-F., Zou, G.,& Tang, M.-L. (2014). Sample size determination for estimating prevalence and a difference between two prevalences of sensitive attributes using the non-randomized triangular design. *Comput. Stat. Data Anal*. 77, 157–169.

calculated for one of three degrees of confidence: 99 %, 95 %, or 90 %. The level of 99 % is the most conservative, while the level of 90 % is the least conservative. The 95 % confidence level has been the most usual. Therefore, 95 % of the time, the "actual" percentage for the entire population will be within the margin of error surrounding a poll's reported percentage if the confidence level is 95 %. The margin of error corresponds to the 95 % confidence interval radius. Based on the formula and statistical practice, the research sample was defined as n = 400, with an error margin of 4.9 %. The respondent sample was distributed accordingly to ensure a representative sample across country proportions between respondents living regions, demographics, and gender. A total of 15–24-year-olds were separated into 15–19-year-olds and 20–24-year-olds based on age parameters. This is because respondents in the broader age range of 15 to 24 varied substantially regarding education, interests, and media usage patterns. The corresponding sample size design verifies natural distribution in all populations and protects against data's uneven representation.

Skewness and Kurtosis tests were performed to test data distribution for dependent variables and measured factors. Coefficients for both tests range from −1.0 to +1.0, indicating acceptable data distribution for further analysis. The first respondent criteria were to identify whether the respondent uses news media in the Latvian language at least once per week - the reason behind the criteria was to reach those respondents who were regular Latvian news media users. As the respondents had to answer ten end-choice questions representing their news media brand experience, only media users were selected to be able to evaluate their media consumption experience. Therefore, from the perspective of the news media audience, a user who consumes media at least once per week can be considered a regular media user. Table 3.2 shows the sample size distribution between respondent gender, sub-age group, region and region, and settlement type. This distribution allows confirming the respondent weights accurately.

Table 3.2

The sample size distribution, survey, Latvia, April–May 2022

		Planned	Achieved
		Count (persons)	Count (persons)
1	**2**	**3**	**4**
All respondents		400	400
How often do you read news in the Latvian language, e g visiting news portals, using their mobile apps or seeing their posts on social media?	Several times a day		111

Table 3.2 Continued

1	2	3	4
	At least once a day		129
	Several times a week		84
	At least once a week		76
	Less often		0
Age groups	15 –19	200	192
	20–24	200	208
Gender	Male	200	194
	Female	200	206
Region	Riga region	200	199
	Other	200	201
Region detailed	Rīga		157
	Pierīga		42
	Vidzeme		71
	Kurzeme		57
	Zemgale		40
	Latgale		33
Settlement type	Rīga		157
	Large city		69
	Small town		119
	Rural area		55

Data collection methods

To reach the research objectives to determine the importance of news media brand attributes that create strong and favourable news media brand association for Generation Z, examine the effect of each association on a media brand distinctiveness and consequently on brand equity and propose new implications of media brand distinctiveness in a new media environment and brand equity as perceived by Generation Z, the quantitative survey was developed accordingly. The survey questions were based on choice scenarios and could be divided into two parts. Part D's questions surveyed the sample size structure and applicability to the respondents' group. The respondents were asked how often they use news media brands to determine respondents who use certain news brands once per week. For example, if, for question D2, the respondent chose the answer less often, the survey was finished for this person as not applicable to the criteria. After the respondents were correctly characterized and weighted, the ten questions A1–A10 were applied to measure the following:

- Respondents' choice and usage of certain news media, questions A2–A4;
- The frequency of usage; the news media access points, questions A7; A8;

- The engagement with certain news media, question A4;
- The importance of 14 selected news media brand attributes and evaluation of these attributes towards selected news media brands and used and engaged news media brands, questions A1; A9;
- The importance of 14 selected media brand attributes and evaluation of these attributes to not use and engage with news media brands, question A10;
- Respondents' evaluation of selected news media brands regarding brand equity as perceived by the respondent, question A5;
- Respondents' evaluation of selected news media brands regarding the level of news media distinctiveness, question A6.

In Appendix 3, the Thesis author details the question's structure and answers design, using the semantic differential scale approach and extending the standardized approach from a 5- or 7-point scale to a 10-point scale to increase accuracy for selected sample size respondents. The semantic differential technique was developed by Charles E. Osgood, who designed it to measure the connotations of words or concepts.[417] Attitudes are often measured using self-report measures, such as the semantic differential, in which a person scores the target on bipolar evaluative dimensions, such as how good/bad or favourable/unfavourable it is. When using a semantic differential scale, the researcher must calculate and provide Cronbach's alpha coefficient to ensure internal consistency and reliability. Internal consistency reliability refers to the extent to which items on an instrument are consistent within themselves and with the overall instrument. Cronbach's alpha measures the internal consistency reliability of an instrument by assessing how each item in the instrument relates to the other and the overall number of questions.[418] The author performed Cronbach's alpha test to ensure data validity. All tests are described further in this article's data and analyses section.

As categorized in Table 3.3, 16 variables were tested for each media: 14 attributes, brand equity perceived by respondents, and news media brand distinctiveness. The selected fourteen media brand attributes represent content-related and non-content-related media brand attributes. The selected media brand attributes can be a product or content-related and non-product or non-content-related. Different media attributes form the perceived value of the media, which is

[417] Lavrakas, P. J. (Ed.) (2008). *Encyclopedia of survey research methods.* (Vols. 1-0). Sage Publications, Inc., https://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781412963947

[418] Cronbach, L. J. (1946). Response Sets and Test Validity. Educational and Psychological Measurement, 6(4), 475–494. https://doi.org/10.1177/001316444600600405

known to influence consumers' brand attitudes. This research defines brand attitude as a learned predisposition to respond in a consistently favourable or unfavourable manner towards the brand.[419] Therefore, all brand attributes form brand associations. The non-content-related brand association were measured and connected to comprehend how content consumption experience influences news media brand association and whether these attributes contribute to news media brand distinctiveness. Accordingly, a more comprehensive exploration of these attribute groups applied and content attributes consolidated under three content-related attributes characterising news media brand attributes is discussed in this Thesis Section 2.4.

Table 3. 3

The news media brand content-related and non-content-related brand attributes grouping
(created by the author, novelty of this Thesis research)

Content (product) related (functional/shared/product)	Non-content (product) related (experience-based/non-product/unique/usage and user imagery) attributes
Content matches my interest	My friends use it too
Credible	Engage celebrities in their projects
I like their authors, journalists	Users can engage in content creation
	Use attractive special formats, e.g., blogs, podcasts, videos
	Posts interesting content on social networks
	In social media, use relevant features, e.g., video, live stories etc.
	Leading news media
	Looks nice, attractive
	Present on platforms which I use (e.g., YouTube or my favourite social networks)
	Their posts often generate a lot of views, reactions, and reposts
	Looks distinctive, unique

The eight news media brands in the Latvian language were selected for this questionnaire, based on monthly and weekly media audience data with the highest number of real users in all measured populations aged 7–74 from 1 January 2022 to 31 January 2022.[420] One of the news media brands was rebranded as tv3.lv from skaties.lv. Consequently, the audience data is displayed per the new brand identities. The brand identified in the survey during data collection is tv3.lv. The research survey was conducted online in Latvian from 1 April 2022 to 7 May 2022. As mentioned in the previous section, the target group was people

[419] Faircloth, J.B., Capella, L.M., & Alford, B.L. (2001). The Effect of Brand Attitude and Brand Image on Brand Equity, *Journal of Marketing Theory and Practice,* 9:3, 61-75, DOI: 10.1080/10696679.2001.11501897.

[420] Gemius, S.A.(2022). gemiusAudience, 2022-00-01–2022-01-31 (7-74 y.o.).Latvia.[accessed March 5, 2022].Available online: https://rating.gemius.com/lv/

aged 15–24 who read news online in the Latvian language at least once a week using any platform (e.g., news portal, mobile app, or social media). The fieldwork was conducted using the global market survey company Intra Research's proprietary online panel database.

The number of invitations sent out was 3588, non-respondence was 2809, started interviews 779, screened out or respondents not applicable (e.g., not in a specific age group or using news media in the Latvian language less than once per week). The quota-fills count was 68 respondents that fit the already fulfilled age or demographic sample group. Drop-outs reached 127, and complete interviews reached 400 respondents; the research survey calculated the necessary sample size. Data distribution analyses were performed to ensure data validity, and the normal distribution of data ensured quantitative survey and data reliability. Additionally, the respondent sample was distributed accordingly to ensure a representative sample across country proportions between respondents living regions, demographics, and gender. 15–24-year-olds were separated into 15–19- and 20–24-year-olds based on age parameters. This is because respondents in the broader age range of 15 to 24 varied substantially regarding education, interests, and media usage patterns.[421] The corresponding sample size design verifies natural distribution in all populations and protects against data's uneven representation. This distribution allows for confirming the respondent weights accurately. The first respondent criteria were to identify whether the respondent uses news media in the Latvian language at least once a week — the reason behind the criteria was to reach those respondents, who were regular Latvian news media users. As the respondents had to answer ten end-choice and multiple-choice questions representing their news media brand experience, only media users were selected to be able to evaluate their media consumption experience. Therefore, from the perspective of the news media audience, users who consume media at least once per week can be considered regular media users.

Procedure of Data Analyses

To fulfil the research objectives, different statistical tests have been applied. The software of SPSS and RapidMiner was used to run the tests efficiently. All invalid responses were purged, and SPSS software was used to prepare and analyse the data. Three tests are specifically used: excel cross-table mean analyses, multiple linear regression tests, and decision tree tests. The analyses were performed in 3 steps to answer the research questions and test the research hypotheses (see also Figure 3.3):

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[421] Dentsu Aegis Network Latvia. (2021). Consumer Connection System Latvia, Consumer Media Usage Proprietary Research, 2012–2021. Unpublished.

Step 1: In the first phase, to answer the research question, - *what are the most important attributes of news media brand which create strong and favourable associations with news media brand* - the cross-table in Excel format was utilised to determine the mean of all 14 media brand attributes among the selected 8 news media brands (question A1). Respondents measure all attributes in the mentioned 10-point semantic differential scale, where 1 is very poor, and 10 is excellent for each news media brand. For questions A2-A4, a similar cross-table approach was used to determine the mean of each news media brand's consumption and engagement. The means for each news media usage frequency, access point, and brand attribute valuation were determined to measure brand engagement and frequency (questions A7-A9). Calculations based on cross-tables were used to evaluate each news media brand's perception on a uniqueness scale and brand equity (questions A5-A6). This first step of analysing makes it possible to evaluate the mean of each news media brand in different evaluation aspects: 14 brand attributes, uniqueness, and brand equity. The data analyses determine news media brand consumption frequency, access points and engagement by the audience. This allows us to answer the question of which news media brand attributes build favourable and strong news media brand associations, and the determination of the means will validate the selection of the news media brands with the highest attribute evaluation in the subsequent statistical studies for the multiple linear regression and decision tree techniques. The means comparison will assist the research of media brands and their respective brand attributes and provide information regarding the importance of each attribute for the selected audience. The first step justifies the selection of three news media brands with the highest mean levels in all media attributes, uniqueness and brand equity. The next step is for statistical analyses to test hypotheses and analyse the relationship between media attributes (associations), news media brand uniqueness and brand equity. Based on the data, the author analysed the importance of each news media attribute and news media attribute evaluation by the audience. The strength of news media brand association formation score and strength of brand associations scores were calculated for each news media brand to describe brand association strength and favourability by the Generation Z audience.

Step 2: In Step 2, multiple linear regression analyses and the decision tree method were performed to answer the research question - *How and which attributes of news media brand contribute to developing news media brand uniqueness as perceived by Generation Z?*

For steps 2 and 3 of the analyses, three news media brands were selected: **delfi.lv; tv3.lv** and **lsm.lv** (see Figure 3.4). The selection behind those brands is the evaluation by the respondents of the survey in step 1 analyses.
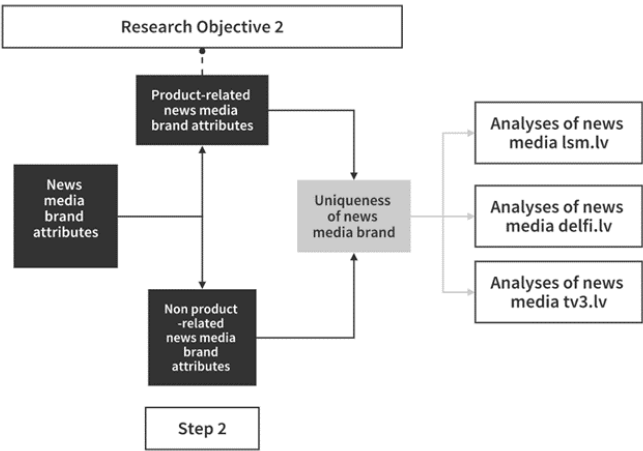
Fig. 3.4. Selected news media brands for step 2 of survey analyses (created by the author).

Two statistical methods were used for all research analyses: multiple linear regression and Decision tree tests**.** The Decision tree method was used to answer the research question. Multiple linear regression is carried out to determine the impact of the independent variables on the dependent variables research[422] and test the first two hypotheses of this research. It is essential to differentiate between independent and dependent variables to analyse the data. For this step, the data set under consideration for this research and the dependent variable is news media brand distinctiveness.

On the other hand, the independent variables are all 14 brand attributes. Therefore, the dependent variable is brand distinctiveness, the factors respondents answered in question A6 on a 10-point scale where 1 is similar to other news media brands and 10 means unique and distinctive. All independent variables are on a mentioned 10-point scale, where 1 is very poor, and 10 is excellent. News media attributes are considered significant when statistical significance is lower than **0.05.** Cronbach's alpha tests are done to ensure reliability for all media attributes. This test, developed by Lee Cronbach in 1951, measures reliability or internal

[422] Mahbobi, M. & Tiemann, T. K. (2015*). Introductory Business Statistics with Interactive Spreadsheets.* Victoria, B.C.: BCcampus. https://opentextbc.ca/introductorybusi

consistency.[423] This test supports seeing if semantic differential scale surveys are reliable. These questions measure latent variables—hidden or unobservable variables, such as a person's conscientiousness, neurosis, or openness. These are very difficult to measure in real life. Cronbach's alpha will tell us how closely related a set of test items are as a group. None of the media attributes was lower than **0.9** of this coefficient, ensuring applicability for the models. For the total model strength evaluation, R-square coefficients were applied. The R-square value determines that the independent variables can determine the dependent variable. R-square values close to 0.5 were considered high or good for regression tests in the social sciences to value the model strength. Detailed calculations of these tests are available in Appendix 7 of this Thesis.

Additionally, a correlation analysis of the attribute ratings was performed before statistical tests to exclude closely related model factors. Multicollinearity exists anytime an independent variable in a multiple regression equation is substantially associated with one or more additional independent variables. Multicollinearity is an issue since it diminishes the statistical significance of an independent variable. The results and findings section will describe specific attributes excluded for each news media brand model in the results and findings section. The summary of data reliability and validity tests is summarised in Table 3.4.

Table 3.4

Summary of statistical tests to ensure data quality and reliability (created by the author)

Coefficients and tests	Reasoning	Criteria
Significance	To determine the impact of media attributes and distinctiveness	Lower than 0.05
R2	Test strength	Close to 0.5, higher than 0.3
Accuracy coefficient	Test strength (Decision tree method)	Higher than 70%
Cronbach's Alpha tests	Reliability	No lower than 0.9

Decision tree tests were performed to establish the relationship between media attributes and media brand distinctiveness. Tests used the following respondent base: Delfi.lv N = 340, Tv3.lv N = 226, and Lsm.lv N = 199. Multiple linear regressions were performed to test the hypotheses of this research. For multiple linear regression, SPSS software was used.

In addition to multiple linear regression, the Decision tree test was performed to find the predicted relationships between news media brand attributes and brand distinctiveness. A Decision tree is supervised machine learning used to categorize or make predictions based on how a previous question was answered. A model is a form of supervised learning, meaning that

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[423] Cronbach, L. J. (1946). Response Sets and Test Validity. *Educational and Psychological Measurement, 6*(4), 475–494. https://doi.org/10.1177/001316444600600405.

the model is trained and tested on a data set containing the desired categorization. The model is a non-parametric method of supervised learning used for classification and regression. The objective is to develop a model capable of predicting the value of a target variable using simple decision rules learned from the data attributes. A tree is comparable to a piecewise constant approximation.[424] Similarly, the dependent variable is brand distinctiveness.

On the other hand, the independent variables are all 14 brand attributes. All independent variables were on a 10-point scale, where 1 was very poor, and 10 was excellent. For dependent variables for brand distinctiveness, the factors respondents answered in question A6 on a 10-point scale, where 1 was similar to other news media brands and 10 meant unique. In this research, the continuous variable decision tree was applied. A continuous variable decision tree is one without a simple yes or no answer. It is also known as a regression tree because the decision or outcome variable depends on other decisions farther up the tree or the type of choice involved. A continuous variable decision tree benefits from the fact that the outcome can be predicted based on multiple variables rather than on a single variable, as in a categorical variable decision tree. Therefore, this method allows us to precisely measure how and which combination of media attributes contributes to news media brand uniqueness. Continuous variable decision trees are used to create predictions. The tree structure's simple flowchart is one of the fastest methods to identify significant variables and relationships between two or more variables. The media attributes significance based on weight coefficients. These dependent variables were remodelled in binominal form (yes/no unique) to the valuations 8–10 on the referred to scale and assigned a "unique" value.

On the other hand, independent variables evaluate 14 brand attributes of news media. Similar data accuracy of model strengths coefficients was applied. The media attributes significance based on weight coefficients. The accuracy coefficients were applied for tests strength—the choice of attributes based on weighted means and the higher choice. For Decision tree tests, RapidMiner software was used.

Statistical tests were used to analyse news media brands with the highest means of evaluating news media attributes by respondents.

Step 3. In the final step, a similar sequent statistical approach was used to answer the research question - *How does news media brand uniqueness impact news media brand equity as perceived by Generation Z* - and test the final hypoThesis.

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[424] Breiman, L. (1984). *Classification and Regression Trees* (1st ed.). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.1201/9781315139470

For step 3 of the analyses, 3 news media brands were selected: delfi.lv; tv3.lv and lsm.lv (see Figure 3.5). The selection behind those brands is the evaluation by the survey respondents in step 1 analyses.
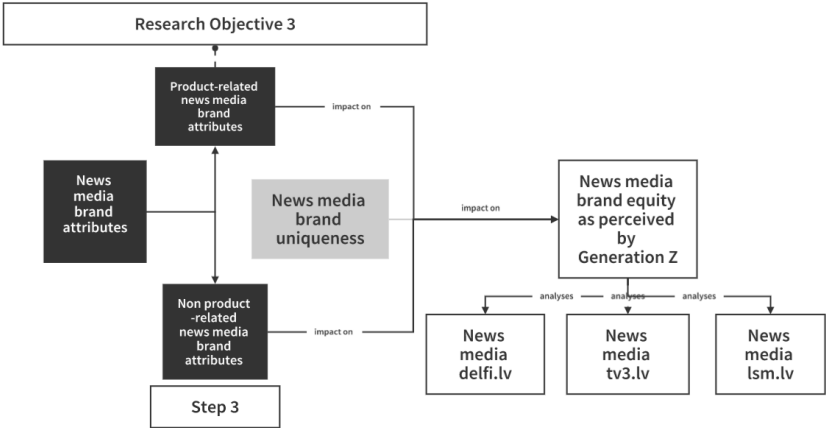

Fig.3.5. Selection of three news media brands for step 3 of survey analysis (created by the author).

Multiple linear regression and Decision tree techniques were applied to determine how media brand distinctiveness and other media brand attributes impact news media brand equity. For this step, the data set under consideration for this research and the dependent variable is brand equity. On the other hand, the independent variables are all 14 brand attributes. Dependent variables were evaluated in survey question A5 on a mentioned 10-point scale, where 1 *"I just know them by the name"* and 10 means *"This medium is very important for me."* The answer to the question makes it possible to define the declared perception of the news brand as brand equity, strongly supported by analyses and concepts of equity discussed in the literature review sections. Similar data accuracy and model strength coefficients described in Table 3.4 were applied to doing statistical tests. For multiple linear regression, SPSS software was used.

In addition to multiple linear regression and testing hypotheses, the Decision tree technique was used to find the relationship between media distinctiveness and attributes to brand equity. The Decision tree model predicts how uniqueness and different media attributes contribute to brand equity. The dependent variable is brand equity, the factor respondents answered in question A5, on a 10-point scale where 1 *"I just know them by the name"* and 10 means *"This medium is very important for me"*. This dependent variable was remodelled in the binominal form where valuations 8-10 in mentioned scale assign a value of "very important to

me". On the other hand, independent variables are evaluated in 14 brand attributes, including news media distinctiveness. The news media attributes significance is determined based on weights. The choice of attributes is based on weighted means, with the highest chosen. For decision tree modelling, RapidMiner software was used.

3.2.2. Summary of quantitative research steps: research objectives, methods and expected outcomes

The following table summarises (see Table 3.5) each statistical test and analysis performed to answer research questions, test hypotheses, and deliver expected outcomes.

Table 3.5

Summary of the quantitative research framework analyses (created by the author)

Research question/ hypoThesis	Research objective	Method of statistical tests	Software	Variables for Linear regression analyses	Expected outcomes
1	2	3	4	5	6
1. What are the most important attributes of news media brand which create strong and favourable associations with news media brand by Generation Z?	To identify and evaluate news media brand attributes that create strong, favourable news media brand associations for Generation Z.	The quantitative survey, determination of means	Cross-table excel.	The author's scoring approach	News media importance declared by the audience; Strength of News media brand associations formation score; total strength of news media associations score
H1. The combination of category-shared and experience-related attributes of news brand significantly influences news media brand uniqueness.	To test the assumption that both fundamental and experience-related attributes contributions to brand uniqueness.	Multiple linear regression	SPSS	Independent All 14 brand attributes Dependent: Brand uniqueness for news media: **delfi.lv; tv3.lv** and **lsm.lv**	Assumption holds or the assumption has been violated
2. How and which attributes of news media brand contribute to developing news media brand uniqueness as perceived by Generation Z?	To examine the impact of each attribute on the uniqueness of a news media brand as perceived by Generation Z.	Decision Tree	Rapid Miner	Independent All 14 brand attributes Dependent: Brand uniqueness for news media: **delfi.lv; tv3.lv** and **lsm.lv**	Predict and evaluate the relationship of media attributes that contribute to news media brand uniqueness development

Table 3.5 Continued

1	2	3	4	5	6
H2. Content consumption experience-based attributes of news media brand significantly influence news media brand uniqueness.	To test the assumption that content consumption experience-related attributes contribute to brand distinctiveness.	Multiple linear regression	SPSS	Independent: All 14 brand attributes Dependent: Brand uniqueness for news media: **delfi.lv; tv3.lv** and **lsm.lv**	Assumption holds or the assumption has been violated
3. How and which attributes of news media brand contribute to developing news media brand uniqueness as perceived by Generation Z?	To examine the impact of each attribute on the uniqueness of a news media brand as perceived by Generation Z.	Decision Tree	Rapid Miner	Independent All 14 brand attributes Dependent: Brand uniqueness for news media: **delfi.lv; tv3.lv** and **lsm.lv**	Predict and evaluate the relationship of media attributes that contribute to news media brand uniqueness development
H3. News media brand uniqueness significantly influences news media brand equity	To test the assumption that the news media brands' distinctiveness significantly influences brand equity.	Multiple linear regression	SPSS	Independent: All 14 brand attributes Dependent Brand equity for news media: **delfi.lv; tv3.lv** and **lsm.lv**	Assumption holds or the assumption has been violated

Reliability and Validity

Reliability is defined as the extent to which research may be replicated. To achieve the criteria for precision in quantitative or qualitative research, it is vital that the researcher meticulously documents the study procedure.[425] The section describes the methodology employed, the general research design, and the dependent and independent variable measures. The method for determining the sample size and the data source utilised in the quantitative analysis; the data analysis and testing methods; the assumptions and procedures of the tests for determining the model's variables. Before running the data in the statistical tests, the data character is checked in Cronbach's Alpha and other tests mentioned in the previous subsection (see Table 3.4). In addition, the required tests, such as R-squire and accuracy coefficients, are applied as described before. This Thesis' quantitative research looks to pose less threat to external validity. This is because there are minimal issues with data availability, sample size,

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[425] Kirk, J., & Miller, M. L. (1986). *Reliability and validity in qualitative research.* SAGE Publications, Inc., https://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781412985659

and data quality. The author's trust in the conclusions and inferences regarding the causal relationship between variables/events constitutes internal validity. This research assumes that the relationship between the dependent variable and independent factors is grounded in theory and actual research. In addition, several control factors that affect the dependent variable are also added to models based on empirical research. Finally, external validity was obtained by survey timing observation. Nevertheless, possible limitations are described in the introduction to this Thesis.

The following sections of the Thesis, 3.3, 3.4 and 3.5, describe analyses and findings in each quantitative research step.

3.3. The first step of quantitative research data analysis

In the **first research step**, as described in the previous section, to reach research objective 1, the first analysis of survey data determined the means of each attribute for each news media brand and analysed the importance of each attribute to the audience. Firstly, the importance of each of the 14 attributes of the audience where measured. As summarised in Table 3.7, the two content-related attributes, *content that matches my interest* and *credibility*, are the news media attributes with the higher importance, with mean values measured at **7.4** for *content matches my interests* and **7.7** for *credibility*. This supports the factor of content as the news media product and credibility of the news media as the basis or category fundamental, shared factor in choosing the brand. As discussed by many scholars, product or category-relevant attributes are essential for brands to be considered by consumers.[426] If the main reason for consuming news media content is to be kept updated, these two attributes are primary for building strong and favourable brand associations, but let's look at how consumption experience-related attributes contribute. As the research focus is on non-content-related or, in this study, defined as content consumption experience-related attributes, the significance of non-content-related attributes is determined. It is seen that the following highest important attribute is *news media presence on social media platforms the audience use.* This attribute was weighted **6.9** by the audience, **7.4** for the female demographic group, and **7.0** for the 15–19 years old audience. This confirms that being available on multi-platforms and on-demand is

highly important for the news media brand. Data confirm accessibility as a significant media attribute, previously noted by scholars[427] (for more details, see Appendix 1).

To summarise, news media's content and credibility are the more critical attributes (see Table 3.6). However, how the audience experiences the content is highly important. Being present on social media platforms, having an attractive, unique, and nice content delivery form, and leadership associations are essential attributes for news media brands in a new media environment to create strong and favourable brand associations.

Table 3.6

The importance of each news media attribute, as evaluated by the audience, 15–24 years old, Latvia (created by the author)

News media attributes	Attribute importance evaluation by respondents, mean
Content matches my interests	7.4
Credible	7.7
I like their authors, journalists	6.3
My friends use it too	5.7
Engage celebrities in their projects	5.8
Looks distinctive, unique	6.2
Users can engage in content creation	5.6
Use attractive, special formats, e.g., blogs, podcasts, video	6.1
Posts interesting content on social media	6.5
In social media, use relevant features, e.g., video, live stories etc.	6.2
Leading news media	6.5
Looks nice, attractive	6.6
Present on platforms which I use, e.g., YouTube or my favourite social media	6.9
Their posts often generate a lot of views, reactions, reposts	6.0

As discussed in the first Thesis section, one of the main changes in news consumption due to digitalization is distributed news consumption. Therefore, the Thesis author analysed the news access and consumption points to examine secondary data findings and confirm the audience's multi-platform and on-demand news consumption for Generation Z.

Media brand content access points

If social media presence is important, it is worth investigating how the audience accesses a specific media brand's content. Data from survey question A8 allows us to analyse the media brand content access points. Table 3.7 shows the audience-stated media brand content access points. Direct news media webpage access was proportionally highest for all mentioned news media brands. News media brands nra.lv and la.lv had the highest direct website content access percentage of 79 % and 70 %, respectively. The next more usual access point was Facebook.

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[427] Lee, A.M. (2011). Is the Medium the Message? Predicting Popularity of Top U.S. News Sites with Medium-Specific Features. *12th International Symposium on Online Journalism.* Vol. 1.

Facebook, as a news media brand content access and consumption point, is for news media brands tv3.lv, with 51 %, very close to this news media brand direct website access rate (58 %), and la.lv, with 47 %. The mobile app as an access point is the next access point for almost all news media, closely followed by Instagram as an access point. After direct website visits, the author assumes that the audience access points are distributed between social media platforms and other access points. This confirms previously discussed scholars' studies in literature, and that multi-platform and on-demand content consumption were present for this audience, and the risk of a decrease in brand associations is quite significant, as more than four platforms can be used. In literature analyses on multi-platform and on-demand content consumption, data on how many access points were used by the audience were not observed; nevertheless, the research findings confirm that more than four platforms were used to access and consume news media content by the younger audience.

Table 3.7

Evaluation of news media brand access points among audiences aged 15 to 24 years in Latvia in 2022, % of respondents (created by the author)

Platforms to access news media brand content	% of delfi.lv audience	% of diena.lv audience	% of jauns.lv audience	% of la.lv audience	% of lsm.lv audience	% of nra.lv audience	% of tv3.lv audience	% of tvnet.lv audience
Another social platform	1	3	0	0	1	3	2	1
Facebook	37	38	32	47	37	34	51	39
Instagram	19	22	15	20	21	20	27	17
Mobile app	31	28	28	20	21	17	34	23
Tiktok	18	38	15	17	9	15	22	19
Twitter	7	28	11	13	11	15	11	11
Website	66	53	68	70	67	79	58	68
Youtube	6	19	9	7	5	5	21	9

This data strongly confirms the relevance of the research objectives. News media branding on their website is straightforward and practised brand management, but if the brand access points are so frequently outside the news media brand platform, how do they create these brand associations and distinctiveness? How can it be a unique and strong brand outside its platform and deliver these associations across multiple access points? What are the strengths of the news media brand in forming associations outside of its platform? The following analyses attempt to answer these questions.

Strength of Brand association formation

Brand attributes are fundamental for strong, favourable brand associations.[428] The previous section analysed and determined the most important ones. However, brands need the strength to form these associations with the audience. Therefore, not only is determining which ones are most important but there is also a need to analyse the strength of each news media to form these associations. Therefore, brand associations are attribute-based, and the strengths of those attributes define the brand associations' strengths.[429][430][431]

How attributes are delivered to the audience is essential. To have a chance to form associations, the audience ought to be in contact with those brand attributes. The more frequent the brand contact, the stronger associations become.[432] Strength and favourability develop from brand engagement. The more engaged the audience is with the brand, the more favourable these associations are. Before analysing each news media brand's attribute strength, the author developed the brand association formation score to determine its strength in contacting and engaging the audience with their brand to form strong and favourable associations. The approach is partly based on the multi-attribute utility theory. In a multi-criteria environment, decision-making problems are represented by a decision-maker who evaluates a set of alternatives and strives to make an optimal decision considering all the relevant elements (so-called criteria or attributes). One technique to accomplish this is by independently evaluating the decision-values maker for a set of influential traits and weighting them according to their relative importance. The more significant characteristics are expected to have a stronger influence on preferences or decisions. Using the Multi-Attribute Utility Theory, it is possible to combine the significance respondents ascribe to various attributes with their evaluations of those attributes.[433] Therefore, three measures are analysed to build a score: brand usage, frequency, and brand engagement. The news media brand was then measured by giving the score depending on its brand usage, frequency, and engagement. The brand is assigned a score

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[428] Keller, K.L. (1993). Conceptualizing, Measuring, and Managing Customer-Based Brand Equity. *Journal of . Marketing,* 57, 1–22.

[429] Ibid, p.18.

[430] Aaker, D. (1991). *Managing Brand Equity: Capitalising on the Value of a Brand Name;* The Free Press: New York, NY, USA.

[431] Park,C.S., & Srinivasan,V. (1994). A survey-based method for measuring and understanding brand equity and its extendibility. *Journal of marketing research* 31.2, 271–288.

[432] Park,C.S., & Srinivasan,V. (1994). A survey-based method for measuring and understanding brand equity and its extendibility. *Journal of marketing research* 31.2, 271–288.

[433] Jansen, S. J. T. (2011). The Multi-attribute Utility Method. In S. J. T. Jansen, H. C. C. H. Coolen, & R. W. Goetgeluk (Eds.), *The Measurement and Analysis of Housing Preference and Choice* (pp. 101–125). Springer Netherlands. http://link.springer.com/10.1007/978-90-481-8894-9_5

between 1 and 8; eight news brands have been investigated. A score of 8 is awarded to the brand with the highest usage. If second place is in usage, a score of seven is awarded. As follows, the least used will be scored 1 point. The brand association formation strength score is determined by the total scores of the three measured elements with the highest totals.

Using data from survey questions A2–A4, the author analysed every news media's usage, frequency, and engagement. This research defines engagement as following the news media brand on social media platforms. Different social media platforms are highly used content access points; therefore, the audience, as fellows, is crucial for news media brands. Additionally, the frequency of news media brands is crucial. As discussed before, the news media product is low involvement and continuous. Attracting the audience daily and weekly is essential from a news brand management perspective, as is attracting advertising and strengthening brand association. The strengths of brand association depend on brand frequency. The more a brand is used, the stronger the associations become.[434]

For the first data used, the author analysed brand consumption. The most used news media brands by this audience were **delfi.lv, tvnet.lv, tv3.lv,** and **lsm.lv**. These news media brands have the highest percentages of recent use and following on social media.

To assign frequency scores more precisely, the author used data from the survey's A7 question regarding audience response for each media usage frequency. A total of five choices were given: *several times a day, at least once a day, several times a week, at least once a week, or less often than once a week*. The scores were assigned from the highest to the lowest amount of audience visits to the news media several times a day, adding at least once a day and once a week. A news media with a higher percentage of the audience with these three frequency behaviours would be assigned a score of 8, with the following media then assigned according to the scoring approach described. Table 1.5 in Appendix 3 shows that the higher frequency of audience visits was for **delfi.lv** and tv3.lv - 69 %, followed by tvnet.lv - 66 %; la.lv - 62 %; lsm.lv - 60 %; jauns.lv and diena.lv - 59 % and nra.lv - 53 %. The highest proportions of the audience that use and follow social media are for brands delfi.lv and tv3.lv. The author of this research defines this as engagement. The delfi.lv news media brand is the leader in all aspects, in terms of *ever used, used recently*. Despite following the second, tvnet.lv in the *ever used* and *recently used* categories, tvnet.lv is fourth after lsm.lv and tv3.lv in terms of engagement. The engagement scores were assigned based not on the audience following these brand percentages

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[434] Keller, K.L. (2008). *Strategic Brand Management: Building, Measuring and Managing Brand Equity*. 3rd Edition, Pearson Prentice Hall, Upper Saddle River.

but a higher percentage between audience usage and following. This allows for determining more precisely between usage and following on social media. The higher proportion of followers from the brand audience, the higher engagement with the brand. Delfi.lv leads with 46 %, followed by tv3.lv with a high 36 % in third place in terms of usage; then, lsm.lv with 31 % leaves tvnet.lv, and the second-used brand was only in fourth place with 28 %. The summary of scores is provided in table 3.8.

Table 3.8

The brand association formation score summary for each of the 8 news media brands, audience aged 15–24 years, Latvia, 2022 (novelty of this research, created by the author)

News media brand Score	tvnet.lv	delfi.lv	jauns.lv	la.lv	nra.lv	lsm.lv	tv3.lv	diena.lv
Consumption score	7	8	4	2	1	5	6	3
Frequency score	6	8	3	5	1	4	8	3
Engagement score	5	8	4	1	2	6	7	3
Brand associations' formation strength scores	18	24	11	8	4	15	21	9

The ***associations' formation strength*** score allows for analysing the brand's strength to deliver associations to the audience. In this aspect, the two strongest brands are delfi.lv with 24 scores, highly scored in all three elements, and tv3.lv with 21 scores. The research data clearly show that consumption volume is not the only aspect defining brand association formation strengths. For example, although it was the second-most used brand, tvnet.lv was only third in frequency and fourth in engagement, therefore low in brand association power score despite being the second-most used medium. This supports the significance of engagement and frequency of the brand to develop strong associations discussed in the previous section of this Thesis.[435]

On the other hand, despite being the third-most used brand, tv3.lv was number one in frequency and second engagement, thus reaching a high-power score, despite a lower consumption score. This analysis can support news media brands in finding improvement areas

[435] Chan-Olmsted, S., & Shay, R. (2015). Media Branding 3.0: From Media Brands to Branded Entertainment and Information. In G. Siegert, K. Förster, S. M. Chan-Olmsted, & M. Ots (Eds.), *Handbook of Media Branding* (pp. 11–32). Springer International Publishing. http://link.springer.com/10.1007/978-3-319-18236-0_2

and aspects of delivering and forming associations with this audience, considering associations' formatting points—their media brand access points.

Strength of news media brand associations

After analysing the importance of media attributes and association formation strength scores, each news media brand's total attribute strength was analysed. The author used data from survey question A9, which asked respondents to measure on a scale of 1 to 10 for each news media in 14 media attributes (see Table 3.9).

News media attributes/strength evaluation by audience aged 15–24 years, mean calculations, Latvia, 2022 (created by the author)

Attributes	delfi.lv attribute strength	diena.lv attribute strength	jauns.lv attribute strength	la.lv attribute strength	lsm.lv attribute strength	nra.lv attribute strength	tv3.lv attribute strength	tvnet.lv attribute strength
Credible	6.7	6.1	5.7	5.9	7.1	6.0	6.7	6.2
Leading news media	6.8	5.8	5.7	5.8	6.9	5.4	6.7	6.3
Content matches my interests	6.7	5.8	5.7	5.8	6.6	5.4	6.5	6.2
Looks nice, attractive	6.7	5.7	5.6	5.6	6.5	5.5	6.7	6.0
Their posts often generate a lot of views, reactions, reposts	6.6	5.6	5.7	5.6	6.3	5.6	6.5	6.1
Posts interesting content on social networks	6.5	5.7	5.8	5.5	6.4	5.6	6.7	6.0
Engage celebrities in their projects	6.3	5.7	5.6	5.4	6.0	5.4	6.6	5.8
I like their authors, journalists	6.2	5.6	5.6	5.4	6.3	5.3	6.4	5.8
Looks distinctive, unique	6.3	5.5	5.5	5.3	6.4	5.3	6.5	5.7
Present on platforms which I use (e.g. Youtube or my favourite social networks)	6.2	5.4	5.3	5.3	6.2	5.3	6.4	5.7
In social media, use relevant features, e.g. video, live stories etc.	6.4	5.4	5.3	5.1	6.0	5.2	6.3	5.7
My friends use it too	6.5	5.4	5.4	4.9	6.1	5.1	6.3	5.7
Content matches my interest	6.7	5.8	5.7	5.8	6.6	5.4	6.5	6.2
Users can engage into content creation	5.9	5.4	5.3	5.2	5.6	5.2	6.3	5.5

The matching scoring is applied to each news media brand's attribute strengths. Firstly, each attribute importance score was assigned from values 1 to 14, as there were 14 media attributes measured. The most important one received a score of 14, and the least important received a score of 1. Then, each news media brand was assigned a score depending on the rating level for each attribute. For example, a score of 8 was granted to the news media brand with the highest score in this attribute evaluation, as eight news media brands were analysed. The brand score was then multiplied by the attribute score to determine the strength of the news brand in this attribute, as seen in Table 3.10.

Table 3.10

News media assigned attribute importance calculation ratings to 15- to 24-year-old audiences, Latvia, 2022 (created by the author)

Attribute	Attribute importance, mean	Importance score assigned
The content matches my interests	7.4	13
Credibility	7.7	14
I like their authors, journalists	6.3	8
My friends use it too	5.7	2
Engage celebrities in their projects	5.8	3
Looks distinctive, unique	6.2	7
Users can engage in content creation	5.6	1
Use attractive special formats, e.g. blogs, podcasts, videos	6.1	5
Posts interesting content on social networks	6.5	10
In social media, use relevant features, e g video, live stories etc	6.2	7
Leading news media	6.5	10
Looks nice, attractive	6.6	11
Present on platforms which I use (e.g. Youtube or my favourite social networks)	6.9	12
Their posts often generate a lot of views, reactions, reposts	6.0	4

To evaluate each news media brand's associations strength score, the author examines the news brand attribute strength scores by multiplying the attribute score by the brand score to determine the strength of the news brand in this attribute.

Scoring the attribute and brand evaluation accordingly, the research shows that lsm.lv led with the highest power score in *credibility*, closely followed by delfi.lv and tv3.lv. As described in Table 3.9, the second-most important attribute, *content matches my interests*, delfi.lv, had the highest score among others, followed by lsm.lv and tv3.lv, accordingly. In order to directly analyse the content-related attributes, the highest score was lsm.lv with 259 scores, followed by delfi.lv with 250 scores and tv3.lv with 240 scores. The weights and evaluation of experience-based attributes, non-content-related attributes, or how the audience consumes the media brand product, i.e., content, add another valuable aspect to this study. The highest experience-based attribute score was evaluated for the tv3.lv brand, followed by delfi.lv and lsm.lv with 471 scores, which was a direct opposite sequence to that of the content-related score. Adding all attribute scores for each brand, the highest total brand's attribute power score was for **tv3.lv** with 781 scores, second was **delfi.lv** with 771 scores, and third was **lsm.lv** with 730 scores. The second-most visited news brand in Latvia tvnet.lv, with the second-highest unique users' audience volumes, comes only fourth both in content- and content-experience-related brand attributes. The author concludes that this allows us to assume that news media brand content consumption or usage is insufficient to create strong and favourable brand associations and build brand distinctiveness and equity.

Moreover, it confirms the necessity for engagement, as discussed in the literature. This confirms that even news media brands with high monthly users need to ensure brand engagement to increase brand association formation scores and attribute strength scores. Lsm.lv had higher content-related attribute scores with high credibility, but the low-frequency score, therefore, cannot strengthen the experience-related attributes sufficiently to keep the leading position in the total attribute strength score. Again, this underlines the need for brand contact frequency in a multi-platform environment and leads to the importance of consumption experience, confirming many scholars' findings on the effect of consumer experience on brand associations. The tv3.lv consumption score was lower than that of delfi.lv, and tvnet.lv, which succeeded in having the highest consumption experience-based attributes scores and the highest total attribute power score of the news media brand. Again, even with lower consumption, the news media brand may have stronger and more favourable brand associations if the association formation score is high and, therefore, let form and strengthen consumption experience-based attributes. delfi.lv, the news brand with the highest monthly audience in all age groups, including 15–24-year-olds, with the highest formation power score and second highest content-related attribute scores, lost out to tv3.lv in experience-based attributes scores, thus landing in second place for the total attribute power score. This prompts the author to conclude that *content experience is important in forming brand associations in a new media environment*. While detailed brand scores are described in Appendix 3, Table 3.11 summarises the strength of news media brand associations' scores, total content-related and product-non-related or experience-related associations in this research context as the novelty of this Thesis.

Table 3.11

The strength of news media brand associations scores to a 15 to 24 years old audience in Latvia in 2022 (novelty of this research, created by the author)

News media Attribute scores	tvnet.lv	delfi.lv	jauns.lv	la.lv	nra.lv	lsm.lv	tv3.lv	diena.lv
1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**8**	**9**
Consumption score	7	8	4	2	1	5	6	3
Engagement score	5	8	4	1	2	6	7	3
Frequency score	6	8	3	5	1	4	8	3
Brand associations' formation strength	**18**	**24**	**11**	**8**	**4**	**15**	**21**	**9**

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Content-related attribute score	175	250	72	96	63	259	240	140
Total strength of brand associations	**535**	**771**	**301**	**263**	**237**	**730**	**781**	**414**

The attribute power or strength of news media brand associations scores in this study should only be considered indicative since scoring was based solely on mean ranking and did not account for the mean level of each attribute relative to other attribute means. In addition, the author applied brand scores based on ranking without considering the variance in attributes means between brands. Sometimes, the attribute evaluation resulted in a slight difference between brands, such as 0.1 or 0.4, but the rating focused on the brands' order. Nonetheless, this equation significantly influenced how media branding attributes influence brand association formation. Firstly, the author does not explicitly claim that experience-based attributes are more significant than content-based attributes; the existing scoring mechanism does not allow such an assumption. However, the presented analyses suggest the importance of frequency and engagement in forming associations. Secondly, experience-related or non-product-related brand attributes are essential for establishing strong and favourable brand associations. This research step made it possible to answer the first research question. The next question is how news media brand attributes contribute to news media brand uniqueness and whether the higher total strength of news media brand associations score delivers higher brand distinctiveness.

3.4. The second step of quantitative research data analysis

Before proceeding to the following research step regarding how news media attributes contribute to news media brand uniqueness development and testing the first two hypotheses, the author analysed how the respondents evaluated each news media brand in terms of distinctiveness and equity.

News media brand uniqueness and brand equity evaluation by Generation Z.

In survey question A5, the audience evaluated each news media brand on a scale from 1 to 10, where 1 means *"Very similar to other news media"* and 10 means *"Unique, distinctive".* As discussed in the literature review, this can be assumed as perceived uniqueness

or unique associations that are not necessarily connected with some unique brand attribute.[436] The role of a unique attribute – *look distinctive, unique* – will be analysed in the following statistical tests. As discussed before, perceived uniqueness or unique associations are crucial for the brand as developing unique attributes is costly, challenging, and often copied by competitors. As the news media brand distinctiveness is often developed through content – ideology, ethics, and other dimensions,[437] the uniqueness associations are even more vital in a news media environment where content is oversaturated and content is considered as a functional attribute, not a unique experience factor. The author analysed the means for each media brand to calculate the ranking and comparison between media brands. Table 3.13 summarises the evaluation of all news media brands. The news brand **tv3.lv** had the highest mean—**6.3**. The respondents evaluated this media as the most unique and distinctive, especially in the 20–24-year-old age group. The tv3.lv brand had the highest indicative attribution and indicative experience-based attribution power scores. In the next step, the author used multiple linear regression analyses to test the first two hypotheses and decision tree modelling to analyse how these attributes contribute to news media brand distinctiveness.

However, even at this stage, it is already possible to assume that strong and favourable experience-based attributes, frequency, and engagement are crucial for forming brand distinctiveness. The subsequent highest distinctiveness evaluation means were assigned to **delfi.lv** and **lsm.lv**—**6.1**. Both these news brands had the second/third-highest attribution power scores. Even the lsm.lv frequency had lower scores, high content, and non-content-related attributions connected with high evaluation in brand uniqueness. delfi.lv was a strong favourite in all attributes and brand distinctiveness. The author explains that the relationship studies were conducted in the subsequent research stage; however, it was based on the assertion that experience-based attributes, engagement, and frequency positively influence news brand distinctiveness. **tvnet.lv**, the second-most used news media brand in Latvia, lands in only fourth place in both brand's attributes strength score evaluation and distinctiveness. Similar ratings were given to the distinctiveness of four other news brands, with a mean score of **5.3.** Intriguingly, despite obtaining the lowest brand attribute scores in content-related and overall attribute power scores for nra.lv, nra.lv, jauns.lv, la.lv, and diena.lv all received comparable brand distinctiveness ratings (see Table 3.12).

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[436] Romaniuk, J., & Gaillard, E. (2007). The relationship between unique brand associations, brand usage and brand performance: analysis across eight categories. *Journal of Marketing Management,* 23(3-4), 267-284.

[437] Graham, G.Greenhill, A.Shaw, D., & Vargo, C.J. (2015). *Content is King: News media management in the digital age.* New York: Bloomsbury Academic. http://dx.doi.org/10.5040/9781501312731

Table 3.12

News media uniqueness, as evaluated by a 15 to 24 years old audience in Latvia, 2022
(created by the author)

	News media	tvnet.lv	delfi.lv	jauns.lv	la.lv	nra.lv	lsm.lv	tv3.lv	diena.lv
		Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean
All respondents by age, gender, region		**5.7**	**6.1**	**5.3**	**5.3**	**5.3**	**6.1**	**6.3**	**5.3**
Age groups	15–19	5.8	6.0	5.2	5.0	5.1	6.1	6.1	4.9
	20–24	5.7	6.1	5.5	5.5	5.4	6.2	6.5	5.6
Gender	Male	5.8	6.0	5.6	5.1	5.0	5.6	6.1	5.5
	Female	5.6	6.1	5.2	5.4	5.5	6.5	6.5	5.2
Region	Riga region	5.6	6.0	5.2	5.3	5.1	6.3	6.2	5.1
	Other	5.8	6.1	5.5	5.3	5.6	6.0	6.4	5.5

To analyse how news brand distinctiveness impacts news media brand equity, the author analyses how the respondents evaluated each news media brand in the aspect of brand equity perceived by respondents. In survey question A6, the audience evaluated each news media brand on a scale from 1 to 10, where 1 means *"I just know them by the name"* and 10 means *"This medium is very important for me".* The author defines this brand's importance as media brand equity as perceived by respondents in this research. Brand equity is the brand's importance or closeness in the audience's minds. It is formed from brand awareness, brand association, and loyalty (usage, frequency, engagement). Declared brand importance involves all mentioned brand equity elements, including audience needs and attitude. Therefore, audience evaluation on that scale combined with deep attribute and distinctiveness analyses allow the author to define this as media brand equity, strongly supported by academic literature analyses in previous chapters. The author analysed the mean for each media brand to calculate the ranking and comparison between media brands. The data shows (see Table 3.13) that the news media brand is evaluated with higher brand equity of **delfi.lv** with a mean of **6.8.** The following brand is **lsm.lv** with a slightly lower mean - **6.7,** and the **tv3.lv** brand follows a mean of **6.3.** Delfi.lv received the high importance evaluation in all audience age groups, both 15-19 years old and 20-24 years old, with slightly higher scores in the audience from the Riga region. The brand importance of lsm.lv is highly rated by a female audience compared to a male

audience, whereas tv3.lv receives significantly higher importance from the audience from regions rather than Riga region and an older audience aged 20–24 years compared to 15–19-year-old age group. Tvnet.lv was evaluated in fourth place regarding brand importance with a mean of **6.1** (see Tab.3.13).

News media brand equity as evaluated by a 15- to 24-year-old audience in Latvia, 2022
(created by the author)

	News media	tvnet.lv	delfi.lv	jauns.lv	la.lv	nra.lv	lsm.lv	tv3.lv	diena.lv
		Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean
All respondents by age, gender, region		6.1	6.8	5.7	5.4	5.3	6.7	6.3	5.5
Age groups	15-19	6.1	6.7	5.6	5.5	5.0	6.7	5.9	5.6
	20-24	6.2	6.8	5.8	5.3	5.5	6.7	6.7	5.5
Gender	Male	6.3	6.8	6.1	5.4	5.2	6.3	6.0	5.9
	Female	6.0	6.7	5.4	5.4	5.4	7.0	6.6	5.3
Region	Riga region	6.0	6.9	5.3	5.1	5.0	6.9	5.9	5.3
	Other	6.3	6.6	6.1	5.8	5.8	6.5	6.7	5.8

Adding distinctiveness measures and brand equity evaluation to brand association construction and attributes power score allowed the author to evaluate the relevance of brand attributes, their influence on brand distinctiveness, as well as their relation to brand equity. Nevertheless, statistical tests should be performed to answer research questions and test hypotheses.

delfi.lv delivers the highest brand equity evaluation with the highest consumption, frequency, and engagement score. Delfi.lv also received the highest evaluation in content-related attributes, coming only slightly after lsm.lv in credibility evaluation by the audience. It is possible to assume the relationships between content-related attribute strengths and brand equity and leadership by analysing the brand attribute: *leading news media*. The highest evaluation for this attribute is for lsm.lv, delfi.lv and tv3.lv. **lsm.lv** received the second-highest brand equity evolution, 6.7; even the brand attributes power score landed lsm.lv in third place after Delfi.lv and tv3.lv. The third highest brand equity score is allocated to the **tv3.lv** brand – 6.3. Despite receiving the highest brand distinctiveness evaluation, if analysing brand equity within audience structure, there are significant variances in the evaluation of tv3.lv brand equity within age groups and region audience living.

For example, the 15–19-year-old age group evaluated tv3.lv brand equity as 5.9, whereas the 20–24 age group scored it as 6.7 (see Appendix 3). The difference between those can be explained by frequency scores if comparing these age groups, again confirming frequency importance. In the 15–19-year-old age group, the percentage of using tv3.lv media several times per day, at least once per day or at least several times per week is 64 % compared to 73 % in the 20–24 years old age group. For the lsm.lv brand, the frequency percentage between age groups is the opposite. For 15–19 years old, this is 64% compared to 57 % for 20–24 years old. For tv3.lv, brand equity differs by the audience and regional residence. The audience in the Riga region evaluated tv3.lv brand equity at 5.9 mean, but for the audience in other regions - it was 6.7. As there is no significant variance in the evaluation of attributes and frequency scores among these two groups, the assumption can be made that this audience in the regions values the brand distinctiveness of tv3.lv a bit more highly than the Riga region audience and that a higher audience share from the regions follows the tv3.lv brand compared to Riga region audiences.

Moreover, the tv3.lv brand is only one among seven other studied brands that received a proportionally higher social media follower percentage from the regional audience than the Riga region audience. In addition, Delfi.lv received a very high equity evaluation, which means – 6.9 from the audience living in Riga. The regional preference of the audience may explain this, but it cannot be confirmed without deeper each media content analysis and audience split by regions. The brand equity leaders delfi.lv and lsm.lv receive a much more even evaluation in all age groups and audience living regions. These insights assume that *associations' evenness* is essential to developing brand equity. While this aspect is not broadly researched in the literature, this assumption can be strengthened by testing the first hypoThesis of this research.

To summarise the findings from this research phase, the author states that news brand usage is not enough to build strong, favourable, and unique brand association and equity. Brand usage frequency and engagement are crucial to shaping and developing strong and positive associations. Content-related attributes are the basis of news brand choice and significantly influence brand equity even when the frequency is lower, as in the case of lsm.lv brand, the highest evaluated in brand attributes. The author states that consumption experience-based attributes are crucial to form brand uniqueness and equity in a new media environment where media content access points exceed four. The audience demands content delivery via social platforms and requires content to be delivered appropriately, attractively and on demand.

A great example is the tv3.lv brand, where the highest consumption experience-related attribute score ensured the highest distinctiveness evaluation by the audience, despite being in third place in terms of content-related attribute evaluation. The highest experience-based attribute significance evaluated by the audience is for attributes - *posts interesting content on social media, use relevant features, e.g., video, live stories etc., leading news media, looks nice, attractive, distinctive, present on platforms which I use (e.g., YouTube or my favourite social networks).* On the other hand, despite the assumptions that user engagement in content creation is highly valued by younger audiences and peer impact is high, the media brand attributes as - *Users can engage in content creation, my friends use too, and media involves celebrities in content creation* - received the lowest scores of importance by the audience.

The news media brand with the highest brand equity **delfi.lv** measured almost the highest scores in attribute evaluation but was not rated the highest in distinctiveness or leadership but received the highest brand equity evaluation mean. The author concludes that brand equity is built from consistency in strength among all brand attributes. Not necessarily being the strongest one, but consistent across all attributes. When a brand has more considerable differences among attribute evaluation or strength, the brand association can be unique or leading depending on the attribute, but consistency in attribute strength delivers more substantial equity. A shining example of the necessity to possess both the power to form and strengthen associations is the news brand tvnet.lv. According to monthly, weekly, and daily audience data, Latvia's second most used news media is evaluated only fourth in terms of distinctiveness, importance, and leadership.

Lack of engagement scores, lower content-related attribute strength and experience-related attribute strength deliver only fourth place in distinctiveness, equity, and leadership.

The importance of news media attributes is determined, and the first research question is answered. The following research focuses on how these attributes interact and contribute to news media brand distinctiveness. As the data shows, the role of attribute strength can influence brand distinctiveness and brand equity differently. The author uses multiple linear regression to test hypotheses and the Decision tree tests to answer the second research question, explain relationships between attributes and media brand distinctiveness, and find the highly significant news media brand attributes to it as perceived by Generation Z.

Therefore, this research step justifies the selection of three news media brands with the highest mean levels in all media attributes, uniqueness, and brand equity for the next step of statistical analyses between media attributes (associations), distinctiveness and brand equity.

The media brand distinctiveness tests will describe how brand associations contribute to distinctive associations in the audience's mind.

News media brand attributes and uniqueness in the 21st century media business environment

In this research step **(step 2),** multiple linear regression analyses and the decision tree method were performed to answer the research question - How do these associations contribute to the development of news media brand uniqueness?

Two statistical tests were used for all research analyses. The author chose three news media brands with the highest evaluation scores in attribute strength, distinctiveness, and equity to perform tests - delfi.lv, lsm.lv and tv3.lv. The basis for each model is respondents who have ever used the corresponding news media brand. Accordingly, delfi.lv N=340, tv3.lv N=226, lsm.lv N=199. Before tests, multicollinearity analyses were performed to exclude closely related model factors. From the brand lsm.lv, the attributes *Content matches my interests* and *Posts interesting content on social networks* are excluded as these attributes have high correlation coefficients with other attributes. The tv3.lv attributes exclude *Credible* and *Leading news media.*

3.4.1. Delfi.lv brand attributes and uniqueness in the 21st century media business environment

To test the first two hypotheses, the author performed multiple linear regression analyses to see whether and how non-content-related media attributes impact brand distinctiveness. The linear regression-obtained analyses and significance details data are described in Appendix 4. So, these hypotheses were tested.

H1. The combination of news brand category-shared and experience-related attributes significantly influences news media brand uniqueness.

H2. Content consumption experience-based attributes of news media significantly influence news media brand uniqueness.

Multiple linear regression analyses confirmed both hypotheses. H1 that the combination of news brand shared, and experience-related attributes significantly influence the uniqueness of news media brands. The H2 hypoThesis assumes that news media brand consumption experience-based brand attributes significantly contribute to brand uniqueness. Four media brand attributes influenced brand distinctiveness, significance, or *p*-value below 0.05. These attributes are one content-related attribute or shared and three non-content-related attributes or unique in the first hypoThesis context, thus confirming the research hypoThesis that experience-related brand attributes significantly contribute to brand distinctiveness. The

attribute with the highest significance (0.011 *p*-values) is *looks distinctive and unique*. Therefore, the contribution to uniqueness is high (0.187 unstandardized B) if these associations are strong and favourable. For example, the following attribute playing significance is *I like journalists, authors* content-related attribute or category-shared (*p*-value 0.026, unstandardized B 0.164), and *users can engage in content creation*, which is a non-content-related brand attribute (*p*-value 0.022, unstandardized B 0.146). Table 3.14 illustrates the linear regression analyses, the significance of each media brand attribute, and the impact on delfi.lv distinctiveness. One of the media brand attributes—*the presence of the platforms I use* - showed a high significance level (0.009). However, the contribution regarding distinctiveness presented with −0.183, leading the author to infer that this attribute is not confirmed to influence media brand distinctiveness.

Table 3.14

Delfi.lv brand attribute impact on brand uniqueness, Coefficients a, b*, multiple linear regression tests (created by the author)

News media brand attributes	Unstandardized B	Significance,p-value
Credible	0.130	0.068
Leading news media	0.054	0.448
Content matches my interests	0.037	0.657
Looks nice, attractive	0.078	0.334
Their posts often generate a lot of views, reactions, reposts	0.003	0.964
Posts interesting content on social networks	0.094	0.207
Engage celebrities in their projects	−0.037	0.588
I like their authors, journalists	0.164	0.026
Looks distinctive, unique	0.187	0.011
Present on platforms which I use (e.g. Youtube or my favourite social networks)	−0.183	0.009
Uses attractive special formats, e.g. blogs, podcasts, videos	0.081	0.277
In social media, uses relevant features, e.g. video, live stories etc.	0.018	0.803
My friends use it too	0.100	0.093
Users can engage into content creation	0.146	0.022

***The coefficient a:** dependent variable: delfi.lv. Please evaluate these portals on a scale from 1 to 10 where 1 means "I just know them by the name", and 10 means "This medium is very important for me". **The coefficient b:** selecting only cases of which delfi.lv: Which of these news media you ever used? – checked

The first test confirms hypotheses that delfi.lv both content-related (shared or fundamental) and experience-related attribute significance to the development of delfi.lv uniqueness associations.

The Decision tree model shows how different brand attributes contribute to news media brand distinctiveness and makes it possible to answer the *second research question* of this

Thesis. The Decision tree method shows how one attribute contributes to the next and forms audience choice accordingly. One continuous variable decision tree benefit is the ability to predict the outcome based on several variables, as opposed to a single variable, as in a categorical variable decision tree. Predictions are made using Decision trees with continuous variables. The tree structure's simple flowchart structure is one of the fastest methods for identifying significant variables and relationships between two or more variables. The media attributes significance based on weight coefficients. These dependent variables were remodelled in binominal form (yes/no unique) to the valuations 8–10 on the referred to scale and assigned a "unique" value.

On the other hand, independent variables evaluated 14 brand attributes of news media. Similar data accuracy of the model strength coefficients described was applied. The media attributes significance based on weight coefficients. For test strength, the accuracy coefficients were applied—the choice of attributes, based on weighted means, the higher the choice. The root node is the node that starts the graph. A regular decision tree evaluates the variable that best splits the data.[438] In this research, the root node is the media attribute that is more likely to be a starting point for the audience to form associations of brand uniqueness with attributes of increasing significance in association formation. The root node, or starting point, is the basis for building uniqueness, and the following attributes increase in weight as distinctiveness is formed.

None of the attributes is less significant, but each has a distinctive association-forming effect on significance. For instance, the root node is vital but has the least weight in forming uniqueness and does not determine whether uniqueness is generated. This is not the case with other attributes with greater weights. Other attributes increase in significance during the formation process of associations. The overall importance of an attribute in a decision is computed as follows - through all the splits for which the feature was used and measure how much it has reduced the variance or Gini index compared to the parent node. The sum of all importance is scaled to 100.[439] This means that each importance can be interpreted as a share of the overall model importance. The model weighs each attribute weight based on given attribute evaluation data in this decision process. In the delfi.lv test, four attributes were selected as more significant to form media brand distinctiveness.

[438] Breiman, L. (1984). *Classification and Regression Trees* (1st ed.). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.1201/9781315139470
[439] Breiman, L. (1984). *Classification and Regression Trees* (1st ed.). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.1201/9781315139470

Table 3.15 shows how four attributes contribute to brand distinctiveness.

Table 3.15

Delfi.lv brand attributes that significantly contribute to brand uniqueness as perceived by the 15–24-year-old audience, Latvia (Decision tree test, created by the author)

Delfi.lv brand attributes	Weight, Decision tree test
I like authors, journalists	0.293
Users can engage in content creation	0.244
Looks distinctive, unique	0.236
Uses attractive special formats, e.g., blogs, podcasts, videos	0.228

The root node or attribute — *use of attractive special formats, e.g., blogs, podcasts, and videos* — is essential but less critical than others for influencing distinctiveness directly. If the audience has strong and favourable associations with this attribute, then the strength of the attribute -*users can engage in content creation* - is significant. If this attribute is strong, favourable, and associated with the audience of delfi.lv, the brand's uniqueness will be formed. If these associations are not strong and favourable enough, brand distinctiveness is not formed, and no other attributes will be able to form it.

To summarise, strong and favourable attractive special formats and user engagement directly contribute to brand distinctiveness. Figure 3.6 illustrates the Decision tree test and each attribute's influence. If the audience does not have strong and favourable associations, then delfi.lv *uses attractive special formats, such as blogs, podcasts, and videos*, while distinctive attributes, i.e., *unique look*, significantly influence brand uniqueness formation. If the audience associates the delfi.lv look as distinctive and unique, the power of likeness of their *authors' and journalists'* associations is significant. If these associations are strong and favourable, brand distinctiveness is formed. Thus, even delfi.lv did not have strong and favourable special interactive format associations, i.e., the strength of a distinctive, unique look and the authors could successfully build distinctive associations. Authors' and journalists' associations are influential if other experience-based associations are not strong enough. However, only provided that distinctive and unique looks are strong and favourable enough. These associations are essential to forming brand distinctiveness: user engagement in content, the distinctiveness of look and journalists, and authors.

On the other hand, if distinctive, unique-look associations are not strong and favourable, unique associations are not built enough, i.e., above 8+. This is because no other associations have enough weight for its formation. The model shows the importance of experience-based

attributes and demonstrates content-related attribute power to form brand distinctiveness, even though some experience-related attributes are not strong enough. Figure 3.6. illustrates the significance and order of the delfi.lv brand attributes in the audience's decision-making process when evaluating the distinctiveness of the delfi.lv brand.

Fig.3.6. Delfi.lv brand uniqueness as perceived by the 15- to 24-year-old audience, Latvia (Decision tree test, Rapid Miner software).

The audience highly evaluated those attributes; however, others were evaluated higher. Nevertheless, the strength and favourability of these attributes formed delfi.lv distinctiveness. The test represents a high accuracy rate: 75.74 %; the author states that the test predicts how delfi.lv distinctiveness was influenced with 75.74 % accuracy. Interestingly, even the attribute - *users can engage in content* - was not evaluated by the audience as very high in importance; this attribute plays a significant role in forming delfi.lv brand distinctiveness. Both in stated importance by the audience and from both models' analyses, a distinctive and unique look is an important attribute, even though special formats are not strong enough. Authors' and journalists' associations are essential, too, especially if a special attractive format use and distinctiveness of look are not strong and positive enough.

To summarise, the four brand attributes significantly contribute to delfi.lv brand distinctiveness: *associations of special format use, distinctive and unique look, user engagement in content creations, and delfi.lv authors and journalists*. All associations increase in importance sequentially if some associations are not met in the audience's minds. The stronger and more favourably these attributes are built, the more substantial the brand distinctiveness. The analyses confirm non-content-related attribute significance. Three of the four attributes are non-content-related or experience-related.

3.4.2. Tv3.lv brand attributes and uniqueness in the 21st century media business environment

The author analysed the tv3.lv news brand with a similar approach. Multicollinearity analyses showed that the two attributes are highly linearly related. Multicollinearity occurs when the model includes multiple factors that correlate to the target variable. To avoid reducing dependent variables – distinctiveness and brand equity, the *leading news media* and *credible* attributes were excluded from the analyses.

Then, starting with the Decision tree test, tv3.lv brand distinctiveness was determined, and research question number two was answered. Four attributes are significantly involved in forming tv3.lv brand distinctiveness: *my friend also uses; attractive formats; content that matches my interest,* and *posts interesting content on social networks*. The highest weight is for the attribute – *my friends use it too* (see Table 3.16).

Table 3.16

Tv3.lv media brand attributes contributing to brand uniqueness as perceived by the 15 to 24 years old audience, Latvia (weights, Decision tree test, created by the author)

Tv3.lv brand attributes	Weight, Decision tree test
My friends use too	0.382
Uses attractive special formats	0.226
The content matches my interest	0.210
Posts interesting content on social networks	0.182

In the tv3.lv test, the *interesting content on social media platforms* predictably is the starting point for forming distinctiveness (see Figure 3.7). This attribute is essential but with the lowest weights to determine the formation of brand distinctiveness. If these attributes are strong and favourable to the audience, *my friends it use too* is evaluated. Even though this attribute's declared importance is low, this attribute plays a significant role. Suppose this attribute is strong and favourable, attribute *content matches my interest* is significant. If this association is strong and favourable, brand uniqueness is formed. It is not formed if content associations are not strong enough and no other attributes are considered. If the association - *posting interesting content on a social network* - is strong but *my friend it too* weak, then the *use of special attractive formats* attribute strength is crucial. If these *uses* associations are strong and favourable, brand uniqueness is formed. If these associations are not strong enough, it is not formed.

Conversely, if the associations that tv3.lv *posts interesting content on social networks* are not strong and favourable enough, the attribute strength – *my friends use it too* - is

significant. If these associations are strong, uniqueness will be formed. If not strong and favourable, it will not be formed.
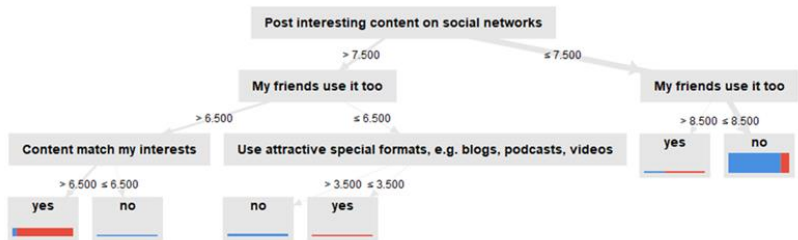
Fig.3.7. Tv3.lv brand attribute impact on delfi.lv brand uniqueness (Decision tree test, RapidMiner software).

The data shows that even attributes – *my friends use it too* – in stated importance received low evaluation. In brand distinctiveness formation, this attribute plays a significant role. The strength of this association is crucial when *interesting content on social media* is weak. When this attribute is strong, and the friend attribute is weak, the strength of the *attractive special format* attribute determines brand distinctiveness formation. On the other hand, if friends' attributes are strong, then "*content matches my interest*" determines the formation of it. The friends attribute the highest weight to forming tv3.lv brand distinctiveness. *Special formats* are the following most significant when distinctiveness formatted.

Similarly, as in the delfi.lv test, the content consumption experience-related attributes are essential, but the content-related attribute is the most significant even though all experience-based associations are strong and favourable. The evaluation of the tv3.lv attribute – *posts interesting content on social networks* – received the highest evaluation from the audience among other attributes of tv3.lv and the highest among other news media brands. The strength of this tv3.lv attribute could be the basis on which tv3.lv is evaluated as the most distinctive among other news media brands. The crucial part of tv3.lv brand uniqueness is the user imagery attribute – associations whether my friend uses the new tv3.lv brand.

To test the first two hypotheses, the Thesis author performed multiple linear regression analyses.

The first hypoThesis is **not confirmed** in the case of tv3.lv, as significance levels below the p-value of 0.05 are for experience-related attributes (Appendix 4). This shows that for tv3.lv news media, only content consumption experience-related attributes contribute to brand distinctiveness. Furthermore, while the decision tree test showed content-related attribute

significance, multiple linear regression analyses show the low significance of this attribute. Accordingly, the second hypoThesis is confirmed.

User engagement and content popularity are the two most significant brand attributes to brand distinctiveness. The *"Friends use it too"* attribute is also significant to it formation. The tv3.lv brand was evaluated highly in all mentioned attributes by the audience. It is worth noting that attribute contribution to brand distinctiveness formation does not necessarily relate with stated attribute importance. This assumes that even attributes with low-importance values can contribute significantly to brand uniqueness. It also answers the research questions regarding the significance of experience-related or non-content-related attributes to news media brand distinctiveness in a new media environment.

3.4.3. Lsm.lv brand attributes and uniqueness in the 21st century media business environment

The third news media with the highest brand association strength (power) score is the news media brand **lsm.lv.** Although consumption volume in terms of frequency and the total audience is lower than that of other news media brands like tvnet.lv; la.lv and jauns.lv; lsm.lv brand associations are strong and favourable from the audience - it even has the strongest and most favourable content-related brand associations among other researched news media brands. Content-consumption-related or experience-related associations were measured more strongly for delfi.lv and tv3.lv news brands, leaving lsm.lv in third place when it comes to measuring total brand association power.

Nevertheless, the audience evaluated lsm.lv brand distinctiveness level right after tv3.lv, and similar to delfi.lv. On brand equity strength, lsm.lv received the second higher evaluation after delfi.lv, which confirms the value and strength of the lsm.lv brand in the minds of the audience. Moreover, in the attribute – *leading news media*, the audience evaluated these associations of lsm.lv news brand with the highest scores, with a mean of 6.9. These data give a grounded base for analyses on which and how brand associations form brand distinctiveness and how it contributes to brand equity, answering the last two research questions and testing all three hypotheses. Similarly, to avoid multicollinearity, two attributes were excluded from the tests - "*Content matches my interests"* and *"Posts interesting content on social networks."*

Firstly, using the Decision tree approach, the ***research question*** of how news media brand attributes contribute to brand uniqueness by Generation Z was answered. Five of fourteen lsm.lv brand attributes have the highest weight to lsm.lv brand distinctiveness (see Table 3.17).

These are: *look distinctive and unique; my friends use it too; engage celebrities in their projects; I like their authors and journalists; present on platforms I use.*

Lsm.lv media brand attributes contributing to brand uniqueness as perceived by the 15 to 24 years old audience, Latvia (weights, Decision tree test, created by the author)

Lsm.lv brand attributes	Weight, Decision tree test
Looks distinctive, unique	0.326
My friends use too	0.186
Engage celebrities in their projects	0.186
I like their authors, journalists	0.152
Present on platforms which I use	0.148

The attribute – *look distinctive, unique* – has the highest weight among other attributes. If the audience associates strongly and favourably enough that lsm.lv is present on platforms the audience use, the distinctive and unique look becomes significant (see Figure 3.8). The brand distinctiveness is formed if the audience has strong and favourable associations that lsm.lv looks distinctive. No other associations not obligatory are necessary to form the brand's uniqueness. On the other hand, if the audience does not have strong enough associations that lsm.lv is present on the platforms they use, journalists and authors are the first significant brand association to forming brand distinctiveness. Suppose the audience has a strong and positive attitude towards authors and journalists associated with lsm.lv brand, evaluating whether his or her friends use lsm.lv too, is significant. Brand distinctiveness is built if the audience has strong and positive associations with friends using lsm.lv. If these associations are weak, then it is not formed. No other association can influence this. Therefore, even though the audience strongly favours lsm.lv authors and journalists, the brand uniqueness is not sufficiently formed if there are no strong – *friends use it too* – associations. This is interesting as the stated importance of this attribute, among others, was low. These findings confirm that even though separately rated as being of lower importance, these associations can still play a significant role in forming brand uniqueness, depending on the strength of other attributes. However, if the presence on platforms and favourable authors and journalist associations are weak, the distinctive and unique look of lsm.lv can still influence the formation of lsm.lv uniqueness. If the audience has strong and favourable distinctive look associations with lsm.lv, the strength of associations in whether lsm.lv engages celebrities in its projects is crucial, as it decides whether it is formed or not. Brand uniqueness is formed if these associations are strong and favourable enough.

Despite weak associations of lsm.lv being present on platforms and weak authors' favourability, brand distinctiveness can still be formed if distinctive look and celebrity engagement associations are strong and favourable. It is not formed if weak associations of lsm.lv are present on platforms, weak authors' favourability, and weak distinctive look associations. No other associations can contribute to this if these three associations are not strong enough (see Figure 3.8).
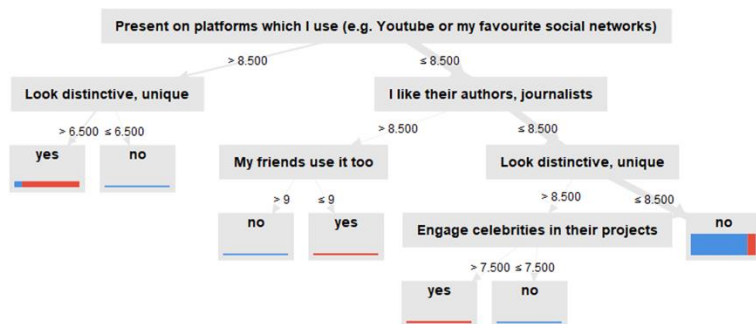
Fig.3.8. Lsm.lv brand attribute impact on lsm.lv brand uniqueness (Decision tree test, RapidMiner software).

The test has a high accuracy percentage – 76.77 %, confirming these five attributes' contribution to the lsm.lv brand distinctiveness. Building a solid and favourable brand presence on social or other platforms and developing strong, distinctive look associations let the lsm.lv brand develop brand distinctiveness more straightforwardly. Nevertheless, the distinctive look is essential in forming it and is crucial to the lsm.lv brand distinctiveness.

To test the first two hypotheses, linear regression analyses were performed. Brand attributes that significantly contribute to brand uniqueness are the *favourability of authors and journalists* and *a distinctive, unique look* (see Appendix 4).

The high significance of these attributes, with a p-value of 0.002 and 0.003, confirms both hypotheses as these attributes present both content-related and experience-related associations. They support the Decision Tree test findings and highlight the importance of content-related and content consumption or non-content-related brand associations.

The lsm.lv news brand distinctiveness is built via a distinctive look, authors and journalists, as well as associations that *my friends use this media too* and lsm.lv *engage celebrities in their content projects,* play a significant role in forming brand distinctiveness if associations that lsm.lv is *present on different platforms* are not strong and favourable enough.

Similarly, to test the third hypoThesis and answer the third research question, lsm.lv brand equity model using the Decision tree method and multiple linear regression was performed.

3.5. The third step of quantitative research data analysis

In the third step of the research, a similar sequent statistical approach was used to answer the research question of how news media brand uniqueness impacts media brand equity. Multiple linear regression and decision tree techniques were used to answer the third research question and test the third hypoThesis. For this step, the data set under consideration for this research and the dependent variable is brand equity (importance). On the other hand, the independent variables are all 14 brand attributes. Dependent variables were evaluated in survey question A5 on a 10-point scale, where 1 ***"I just know them by the name"*** and 10 means "***This medium is very important for me."*** Similar data accuracy and test strength coefficients described previously were applied to building those tests.

Firstly, the **research question -** How does news media brand uniqueness impact news media brand equity as perceived by Generation Z? – was answered.

In addition, to multiple linear regression, the decision tree test was performed to find the impact and contribution of news media brand distinctiveness and attributes to brand equity. The decision tree model predicts how brand uniqueness and different media attributes contribute to brand equity. The dependent variable is brand equity, the factor respondents answered in question A5, on a 10-point scale where 1 "I just know them by the name" and 10 means "This medium is very important for me. This dependent variable was remodelled in a binominal form, where the valuations 8-10 on the referred to scale assigned a value of "very important to me". On the other hand, independent variables are evaluated in 14 brand attributes, including news media distinctiveness. Similar data accuracy of model strengths coefficients was applied. The media attributes significance based on weight coefficients. For test strength, the accuracy coefficients were applied. The choice of attributes based on weighted means the highest chosen.

3.5.1. Delfi.lv brand uniqueness and its impact on brand equity as perceived by Generation Z

Delfi.lv received the audience's highest brand equity evaluation scores from the given audience. Similarly, the attributes with the highest significance rates were calculated.

Uniqueness, content, journalists and authors, attractive look, and *leading news media associations* are significant in building brand equity (see Table 3.18).

Delfi.lv media brand attributes contributing to brand equity as perceived by the 15 to 24 years old audience, Latvia, (weights, Decision tree test, created by the author)

Delfi.lv brand attributes	Weight, Decision tree test
Uniqueness	**0.327**
The content matches my interest	0.177
I like their authors, journalists	0.168
Looks nice, attractive	0.166
Leading news media	0.163

The Delfi.lv brand distinctiveness has the greatest impact on brand equity. If the audience perceives delfi.lv as unique, and these associations are strong and favourable, the strong and favourable associations of delfi.lv as *leading news media* are significant. If these associations are strong, substantial brand equity is built. If leading news media associations are weak, brand uniqueness again is significant. Strong brand distinctiveness leads to brand equity even with weak leading media associations. If it is weak, substantial brand equity or importance is not built. As the test is developed with a high accuracy rate of 71.4 %, the author can confidently state strong brand equity for delfi.lv is derived from brand uniqueness (see Figure 3.9). Brand leadership associations are essential, but brand distinctiveness can positively influence brand equity, even if leadership associations are weak. If the audience has weak brand distinctiveness associations with delfi.lv brand, the *look nice, attractive* attribute is significant. If these associations are strong, brand equity is formed. If the associations of nice and attractive look associations are weak, the authors and journalists are very significant. If these associations are weak, no substantial brand equity is formed. No other associations cannot influence this. If *authors' and journalists'* associations are strong and favourable, the *content matches my interests* is evaluated and significant. If *content matches my interests* strongly, solid brand equity will be formed. Once again, content is crucial to brand equity strength. No substantial brand equity is formed if the content attribute is weak, and no other associations can influence it.
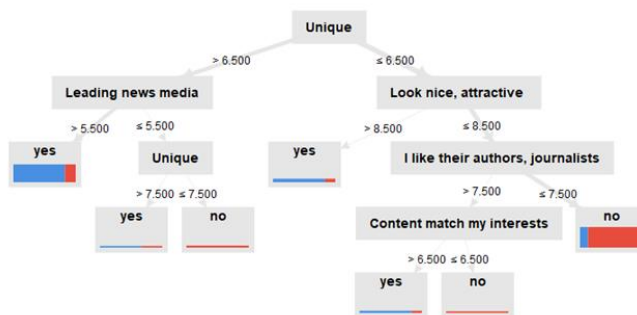
Fig.3.9**.** The impact of delfi.lv brand uniqueness and attributes on delfi.lv brand equity (Decision tree test, RapidMiner software).

Brand distinctiveness, content, authors, and attractive look are essential to building delfi.lv brand. When these associations are weak, no substantial brand equity can be formed. The author performed multiple linear regression analyses to test the third and final hypoThesis of the research: *H3. News media brand uniqueness significantly influences news media brand equity.*

This analysis confirms the hypoThesis. The brand uniqueness of delfi.lv significantly contributes to delfi.lv brand equity. The high significance (0.000 *p*-values) to brand equity is delfi.lv brand distinctiveness. The contribution is high (0.386 unstandardized B; 0.380 standardized B) if these associations are strong and favourable (Appendix 4).

The multiple linear regression analysis shows the significance of delfi.lv media brand *uniqueness* and brand equity. This confirms decision tree test findings on brand uniqueness weight on brand equity. Credibility is the second attribute that strongly contributes to brand equity. P-value is 0.003, while unstandardized B is 0.179 and standardized B is 0.166. These findings confirm many scholars' previous studies on the impact of media credibility on brand equity. This also supports the previously discussed role of category fundamental or functional attribute significance in brand choice, confirming credibility as a significant media brand category attribute.

By analysing the news media brand with the highest audience-reported brand equity, the author could determine how brand uniqueness evolves for this news brand and how brand distinctiveness and other attributes impact brand equity. The data also confirms the optimal uniqueness concept argued in Section 2 of this Thesis.

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These findings confirm the importance of the perceived distinctiveness of media brands and how these unique associations form through newly created brand associations like content engagement, formats, and accessibility, developed by digitalization. When category-shared attributes like content and credibility are established, how this content is distributed via multiple access points is essential. The new media environment has brought about new brand attributes for media companies that should be carefully evaluated and applied. How content is delivered and packaged is now just as important as the content itself.

Being the leading news media significantly impacts brand equity. The research demonstrates the high significance of the relationship between brand uniqueness and brand equity, leading media associations' role, and content-related attributes' significance. Credibility is the strong driver of brand equity. This attribute is essential for content-related associations; from a different perspective, consumption experience-based associations such as design, format, and audience engagement play a crucial part in establishing distinctiveness: the stronger these associations, the greater the brand equity. The research shows that consumption experience is crucial for developing a strong and distinctive news media brand in a new media environment, confirming other scholars' findings on brand experience's role in different categories. From a brand management perspective, social media presence, employment of relevant formats, and user engagement are vital for brand differentiation.

Content-related associations are unquestionably significant for media brand choice. The form in which content is presented and distributed to the audience plays a vital role for Generation Z. Content delivery and packaging bring so desired strong brand associations and confirm the consumption experience-related formation of uniqueness. Similarly, previous scholars argued that hedonic experiences create unique associations; the same is true in the news media market. To strengthen the findings, the author performed similar statistical tests to test hypotheses and answer research questions for two more highly evaluated news media brands: **tv3.lv** and **lsm.lv.**

3.5.2. Tv3.lv brand uniqueness and its impact on equity as perceived by Generation Z

Like the analyses for delfi.lv, in addition to linear regression, the Decision tree test was used to find the impact of media brand distinctiveness on brand equity. The decision tree test predicts how brand distinctiveness and different media attributes contribute to brand equity. Just as in the delfi.lv brand equity test, the dependent variable is brand equity, the factor respondents answered in question A5, on a 10-point scale where 1 "I just know them by the name" and 10 means "This medium is very important for me. This dependent variable was

remodelled in a binominal form were to the valuations 8-10 in mentioned scale assigning a value of "very important to me".

On the other hand, independent variables are evaluated in 14 brand attributes, including the news media brand uniqueness. Similar data accuracy of model strengths coefficients was applied. The media attributes significance based on weight coefficients (see Table 3.19). For model strength, the accuracy coefficients were applied. The choice of attributes is based on the weighted mean, where the highest is chosen. Test accuracy reaches a high of 76.99 %, which means that 76.99 % out of 100 % of tv3.lv brand equity correlates with these three brand attributes: *content matches my interests, unique, and I like their authors, journalists.*

<div align="right">Table 3.19</div>

Tv3.lv media brand attributes and brand uniqueness contributing to brand equity as perceived by the 15–24 years old audience, Latvia (weights, Decision tree test, created by the author)

Tv3.lv brand attributes	Weight, Decision tree test
The content matches my interest	0.369
Uniqueness	**0.319**
I like their authors, journalists	0.312

The brand attribute – *content matches my interests* – received the higher weight in building tv3.lv brand equity for the audience. If the audience associates tv3.lv as being a unique media, then the attribute – *I like their authors and journalists* – is significant. If audience associations of this attribute are strong, tv3.lv brand equity is built. On the other hand, the audience associates tv3.lv brand as unique, but the attribute – *I like their authors, journalists* – is not strong, and brand equity will not be built. Therefore, even tv3.lv is recognised as a unique news media brand by the audience; the strength of the likeness of authors and journalists is whether strong brand equity will be formed. This gives solid bases for tv3.lv brand attribute strength strategies from a brand management perspective. Just as data previously showed how the tv3.lv brand distinctiveness formed, in addition to these attributes, the **authors and journalists** should be part of strong and favourable association building tactics. However, if the audience does not have enough strong associations with the tv3.lv brand as distinctive, the attribute – *content matches my interests* – becomes significant. The strong and favourable associations of the audience about the tv3.lv brand that the content is in line with my interests will strengthen the brand equity of tv3.lv. If these associations are not strong and favourable enough, neither *unique* nor *content matches my interest* - strong brand equity is not built (see Figure 3.10).

The tv3.lv brand equity test demonstrates that even though brand distinctiveness can be built through consumption experience-based attributes, strong content-related or category-fundamental attributes are needed to build strong brand equity.
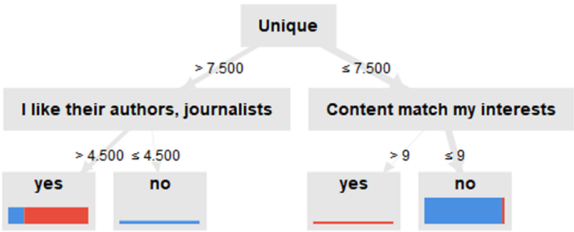
Fig. 3.10. The impact of tv3.lv brand uniqueness and attributes on tv3.lv brand equity
(Decision tree test, RapidMiner software).

The Thesis author performed multiple linear regression analyses to test the third hypoThesis. Content experience-related associations are significant for this audience – *brand presence on platforms audience use, content on these platforms and user imagery associations like – my friends use it too*. According to the linear regression test, four tv3.lv brand attributes strongly correlate with brand equity: *uniqueness; content matches my interest, posts interesting content on social networks, and present the platforms I use.*

Both tests confirm the significance of brand uniqueness to brand equity. Once again, underlining how significant content experience-related associations are for this audience – *brand presence on platforms audience uses, content on these platforms, and user imagery associations like – my friends use it too*.

According to linear regression, four tv3.lv brand attributes strongly correlate with brand equity: *uniqueness, content matches my interest, posts interesting content on social networks, and present the platforms I use.* Therefore, the third hypoThesis is also confirmed in the case of tv3.lv (Appendix 4). Furthermore, linear regression shows that the tv3.lv brand distinctiveness significantly contributes to brand equity. The P-value is 0.000. The contribution to brand equity is lower than in the case of delfi.lv, unstandardized B is 0.279, standardized B 0.295. Posting interesting content on social networks is the second strongest association contributing to brand equity. "*Content matches my interests*" associations are also vital to brand equity in this model and presence on social platforms.

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Both tests confirm the significance of brand distinctiveness to substantial brand equity. Nevertheless, once again, how significant are content experience-related associations for this audience – *brand presence on platforms audience uses, content on these platforms and user imagery associations like – my friends use too*. Like delfi.lv, tests confirmed that strong and favourable content-related attributes are essential to brand equity. Although the leading news media and credibility were significant associations for the uniqueness and brand equity of delfi.lv, in the case of tv3.lv brand distinctiveness and equity tests, these attributes were excluded to avoid multicollinearity and, therefore, the risk of undermining model accuracy. Finally, similar analyses were performed for a third news media brand: lsm.lv.

3.5.3. Lsm.lv brand uniqueness and its impact on equity as perceived by Generation Z

This news brand's distinctiveness among the audience is high and declared equity is measured highly by the audience. Similarly to the previous two news media brands delfi.lv and tv3.lv, the Decision tree and linear regression methods were applied to analyse how brand distinctiveness contributes to lsm.lv brand equity.

Firstly, the Decision tree test shows how brand distinctiveness and other brand associations contribute to building lsm.lv brand equity. The high accuracy of the test – 77.78 % allows predicting that in 77.78 % of cases out of 100 %, these five associations contribute to developing lsm.lv brand equity (see Table 3.20).

Table 3.20

Lsm.lv media brand attributes and brand uniqueness contributing to brand equity as perceived by the 15 to 24 years old audience, Latvia (weights, Decision tree test, created by the author)

Lsm.lv brand attributes	Weight, Decision tree test
Their posts often generate a lot of views, reactions, reposts	0.222
Uniqueness	**0.209**
Users can engage in content creation	0.192
In social media, use relevant features	0.191
Leading news media	0.186

These attributes are the associations that lsm.lv *content posts generate many views, reactions and reposts*; associations lsm.lv brand uniqueness, associations that *users can engage in content creation*, and associations that lsm.lv is *leading news media* and use relevant features on social media platforms. If the audience does not strongly associate lsm.lv as the leading news media, the strength of brand distinctiveness association is essential. If these associations are strong enough in the audience's minds, the strength of associations about lsm.lv content popularity or engagement is essential. Substantial brand equity is formed if these associations

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are strong and favourable – the audience strongly associates lsm.lv content as *content that often generates many views, reactions, and reposts* (see Figure 3.11). If these associations are weak, no substantial brand equity is formed. Therefore, associations, whether lsm.lv content is popular or evaluated by the audience, are significant in forming brand equity even if uniqueness is strong. On the other hand, if associations of lsm.lv brand uniqueness are low, the brand equity will not be formed strongly enough, and no other brand attribute can contribute strongly enough to change that.
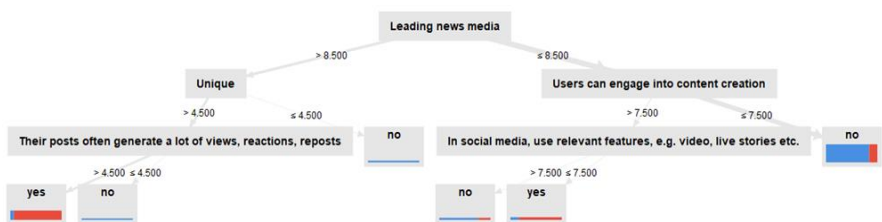
Fig.3.11. The impact of lsm.lv brand uniqueness and attributes on lsm.lv brand equity
(Decision tree test, RapidMiner software).

If associations of lsm.lv as leading news media are not solid and favourable enough, the strength of whether users can engage in content creation is crucial. If these associations are weak, no substantial brand equity is built. This is because no other association can strongly influence brand equity formation. On the other hand, if users' associations can engage in content creation are strong and favourable, the strength of associations, whether lsm.lv use relevant features of formats on social media, is crucial. If these associations are strong and favourable, solid brand equity is formed. If these associations are weak, brand equity is not formed strongly enough, and no other attributes can contribute strongly enough to the formation process. Brand distinctiveness is crucial in brand equity building if the association of lsm.lv as the leading news media are strong. However, if leading news media associations are weak, user engagement and usage of relevant feature associations play a significant role in brand equity building. Strong and favourable leading news media associations, brand distinctiveness and content popularity or value are vital elements of lsm.lv brand equity. Consumption-related attributes such as formats and user engagement can also contribute to strong brand equity if previously mentioned associations are weaker in some audience minds.

Multiple linear regression analyses show the highest significance of lsm.lv brand equity is with its brand ***uniqueness***. In addition, credibility associations are highly significant to strong brand equity. P-values 0.000 and 0.008 show a high contribution of these attributes: unstandardized B 0.408 and 0.248. The contribution of lsm.lv brand distinctiveness to brand equity is the highest among the analysed three news media (Appendix 4).

The analyses confirm the hypothesis and demonstrate credibility and significance for strong news media brand equity. The more brand distinctiveness and credible associations the audience has with lsm.lv, the higher the brand equity created in the audience's minds.

Lsm.lv brand distinctiveness is a crucial element for solid brand equity, and it is created via a distinctive look, lsm.lv authors and journalists, and whether the audience's friends use this media brand too, as well as a presence on different platforms and celebrity engagement.

3.6. The quantitative research results summary: news media brand attributes, brand uniqueness and equity as perceived by Generation Z

The summary of quantitative research results according to research objectives detailed in Table 1.2 of Appendix 5.

Consumption experience-related and content-related brand attributes and news media brand uniqueness

If all three news media brands are analysed based on the results of the Decision tree, as this method is used for analysing attribute contribution and relationships with brand distinctiveness, the news media brand attributes with the highest weight among all three brands are: *My friends use it too* (the highest weight); *look distinctive and unique* (second highest); *use attractive, special formats* and *I like their authors and journalists* (Appendix 4).

The determination of those attributes is based on summarising the weight of each attribute on brand uniqueness for all three brands obtained through the Decision tree method. Not all three brands have all of those attributes contributing to brand distinctiveness, but all have at least three. Therefore, it assumes that at least three of those attributes should be present to form brand distinctiveness. Moreover, it is essential to point out that unique attributes – *look distinctive and unique* – are present in those attributes.

Therefore, this confirms that combined with unique associations, unique attributes benefit overall brand uniqueness. Analyses also demonstrate that, while the brand distinctiveness of each brand is formed differently, the impact of non-content-related brand attributes is significant if the brand category's fundamental attributes are strong (Appendix 4).

Another significant insight is that although the attribute – *my friends use it too* - is rated low in declared importance by the audience, it is vital when contributing to perceived uniqueness. While it is not reliable to assume that experience-related attributes are more significant than content-related ones, this research scope is not in-depth content-related attribute analyses; therefore, experience-related attributes are explored more deeply, including volume. Nevertheless, it is correct to assume that the tv3.lv brand distinctiveness is significantly contributed to by the audience's experience with the brand's content. The following table summarises news media brand attributes' contributions to brand uniqueness and equity using the Decision Tree and multiple linear regression analyses (see Table 3.21).

Table 3.21

The summary of news media attributes contributing to brand uniqueness of delfi.lv; tv3.lv and lsm.lv (Decision tree method, multiple linear regression analyses)

News media	delfi.lv	tv3.lv	lsm.lv
	news media brand attributes	news media brand attributes	news media brand attributes
Decision tree tests	**I like authors, journalists** Users can engage in content creation Looks distinctive, unique Uses attractive formats (video, blogs etc.)	**My friends use it too** Uses special attractive formats The content matches my interests Posts interesting content on social networks	**Looks distinctive, unique** My friends use it too Engage celebrities in their projects I like authors, journalists Present on platforms I us
Multiple linear regression tests	**Looks distinctive, unique** I like authors, journalists Users can engage in content creations	**Users can engage in content creation** The posts generate a lot of views, reactions, and reposts My friends use it too	**Looks distinctive, unique** I like authors, journalists

News media brand uniqueness and attributes and news media brand equity

If similarly analysing distinctiveness and other attributes contribute to brand equity, the attributes with the most significant weight to brand equity are *uniqueness* (the highest weight), *content that matches my interests* (second), *I like authors, journalists* and associations of *leading news media.* The influence of brand distinctiveness on brand equity is confirmed and explained, but two content-related attributes are also significant, and leadership associations are essential to building strong brand equity (see Table 3.22, Table 3.23). While forming experience-related attributes is significant, brand equity requires solid category or shared fundamentals, supporting numerous scholars' findings previously discussed in the literature review.

Table 3.22

The summary of news media attributes contributing to news media **brand equity** (Decision tree method, multiple linear regression analyses, created by the author)

News media	delfi.lv	tv3.lv	lsm.lv
	News media brand attributes	news media brand attributes	news media brand attributes
Decision tree tests	Uniqueness The content matches my interests I like authors, journalists Looks nice, attractive Leading news media	Uniqueness The content matches my interests I like authors, journalists	Uniqueness Looks nice, attractive The posts generate a lot of views, reactions, and reposts Users can engage in content creation In social media, use relevant features
Multiple linear regression tests	Unique Credible Leading news media	Unique Posts interesting content on social network The content matches my interest Present on social platforms	Unique Credible

In linear regression analyses, attribute - *credibility* – shows a significant contribution to brand equity. Therefore, it is possible to confirm that brand distinctiveness is significant for building brand equity; nevertheless, it can only happen if the fundamental category or content-related attributes deliver strong and favourable associations. These findings supplement numerous scholars' studies on the importance of news media content. The quality of the content is a core element in maintaining a sustainable brand positioning in the market.

Strength, favourability, and evenness of news media brand associations

While scholars in some studies argue that the volume of brand associations correlates with brand distinctiveness and brand equity strengths, the current research data do not show this trend in this framework. Nevertheless, it is impossible to assume that the volume of associations does not correlate with the brand's strength. However, current studies do not show that fewer or more brand associations lead to higher brand uniqueness. For example, four attributes contribute to the distinctiveness of the delfi.lv and tv3.lv brands, respectively, while six contribute to the lsm.lv brand distinctiveness. However, tv3.lv has higher brand distinctiveness than the other two brands. Although on the other hand, five attributes contribute to the brand equity of delfi.lv and lsm.lv (see Table 3.24), and three attributes contributed to that of tv3.lv, as delfi.lv and lsm.lv have a higher brand equity rating from the audience, it is possible to infer that attribute amounts do contribute to brand equity. Nevertheless, an in-depth research is required to confirm that kind of thinking. The following table summarises attributes present in news media brand analyses: Decision tree and Multiple linear regression analyses.

Table 3.23

News media brand attributes contribute to **brand uniqueness** (Decision tree method, multiple linear regression analyses, created by the author)

News media	delfi.lv	tv3.lv	lsm.lv
Decision Tree tests	4 attributes	4 attributes	6 attributes
I like authors, journalists	●		●
Users can engage in content creation	●		
Looks distinctive, unique	●		●
Use attractive formats (video, blogs etc.)	●	●	
My friends use too		●	●
The content matches my interests		●	●
Post interesting content on social networks		●	
Engage celebrities in their projects			●
Present on platforms I use			●
Multiple linear regression tests	3 attributes	3 attributes	2 attributes
Looks distinctive, unique	●		●
Users can engage in content creations	●	●	
I like authors, journalists	●		●
The posts generate a lot of views, reactions, and reposts		●	
My friends use too		●	

Five attributes contribute to the brand equity of delfi.lv and lsm.lv (see Table 3.24), three attributes contributed to that of tv3.lv, as delfi.lv and lsm.lv have a higher brand equity.

Table 3.24

News media brand uniqueness and attributes contributing to news media **brand equity**. Examples of delfi.lv; tv3.lv and lsm.lv news media brands (Decision tree method, multiple linear regression analyses, created by the author)

News media	delfi.lv	tv3.lv	lsm.lv
1	2	3	4
Decision Tree tests	5 attributes	3 attributes	5 attributes
Uniqueness	●	●	●
The content matches my interests	●	●	
I like authors, journalists	●	●	
Looks nice, attractive	●		●
Leading news media	●		
The posts generate a lot of views, reactions, and reposts			●
Users can engage in content creation			●
In social media, use relevant features			●

Table 3.24 Continued

1	**2**	**3**	**4**
Multiple Linear regression tests	3 attributes	4 attributes	2 attributes
Unique	●	●	●
Credible	●		●
Leading news media	●		
Posts interesting content on social network		●	
The content matches my interest		●	
Present on social media platforms		●	

The strength and favourability of associations are significant to brand distinctiveness and equity as analysed by the mean levels of all eight news brands. Moreover, it can be assumed that evenness among all brand attribute strengths and favourability is essential. Therefore, it is possible to assume that the more audience associations with the news media brand, the higher the brand distinctiveness and equity will be. The three brands with the strongest and most favourable associations also demonstrate evenness in all attributes, while tvnet.lv, the fourth news brand according to brand distinctiveness and equity, shows weaker and more uneven associations (see Appendix 3). The four other brands with weaker and less favourable associations, lower brand distinctiveness and equity, demonstrate uneven brand associations.

Summary of research hypothesis tests and results

The research hypotheses were confirmed in delfi.lv and lsm.lv analyses, whereas the first hypoThesis was voided in tv3.lv analyses. Content-related attributes did not significantly contribute to tv3.lv brand uniqueness (see Table 3.25). While the content analyses are beyond the scope of this research, this highlights interesting aspects in further research of tv3.lv content ideology, given audience uses and gratification and expectations from this news brand.

Table 3.25

The summary of research hypotheses confirmation for three news media brands (multiple linear regression tests, created by the author)

Hypotheses	**delfi.lv**	**tv3.lv**	**lsm.lv**
H1. The combination of category-shared and experience-related attributes of news media brand significantly influences news media brand uniqueness	Confirmed	Not confirmed	Confirmed
H2. Consumption experience-based attributes of news media brand significantly influence news media brand uniqueness	Confirmed	Confirmed	Confirmed
H3. News media brand uniqueness significantly influences news media brand equity	Confirmed	Confirmed	Confirmed

Summarising the findings of this research, the author of the Thesis assumes that strong, favourable, and even news media brand associations contribute to brand uniqueness and equity,

and content consumption experience-related associations obtained via multiple platforms significantly contribute to news brand uniqueness. Even brand attributes contributing to news media brand distinctiveness may differ across news media, category shared, or content-related attributes and content-consumption attributes are significant to news media brand uniqueness and brand equity

4. The methodology of news media branding in the 21st century media business environment

Quantitative research and secondary data sources confirm the significance of the content experience to news media brand distinctiveness. Therefore, the news media branding methodology in a new media environment is crucial for establishing powerful, positive, and unique news media brand associations. Furthermore, as analysed previously, digitalization created new brand attributes non-existing before, requiring reassessment of brand building. Several methods can be used to apply the discussed findings to news media decisions regarding developing the attributes mentioned above and their contribution to brand distinctiveness and brand equity. The Multi-Attribute Utility theory framework,[440] Decision Making Matrix,[441] the Decision Plan Nets Method,[442] Pugh Matrix,[443] and Business Model Canvas method[444] [445] form a solid combination of methods for assessing the conceptual framework of news media brand attributes and branding strategies. Compensatory decision-making requires that a high value on one attribute can compensate for a low value on one or more other qualities. In contrast, a non-compensatory selection technique argues that a highly valued attribute cannot compensate for a weakly rated attribute. Consequently, evaluating an attribute above or below a desired threshold involves rejecting an alternative.

In contrast to the majority of previous approaches, the Decisions Plan Nets Method allows the responder entire freedom of choice in determining which attributes are most important, which attribute levels are acceptable, and which attribute level combinations produce the desired result. Consequently, it is utilised extensively in the exploratory phase of consumer

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[440] Jansen, S. J. T. (2011). The Multi-attribute Utility Method. In S. J. T. Jansen, H. C. C. H. Coolen, & R. W. Goetgeluk (Eds.), *The Measurement and Analysis of Housing Preference and Choice* (pp. 101–125). Springer Netherlands. http://link.springer.com/10.1007/978-90-481-8894-9_5

[441] Mardani, A., Jusoh, A., Md Nor, K., Khalifah, Z., Zakwan, N., & Valipour, A.. (2015). Multiple criteria decision-making techniques and their applications – a review of the literature from 2000 to 2014. *Economic Research-ekonomska Istraživanja,* 28(1), 516–571. https://doi.org/10.1080/1331677x.2015.1075139

[442] Goetgeluk, R. W. (2011). The Decision Plan Nets Method. In S. J. T. Jansen, H. C. C. H. Coolen, & R. W. Goetgeluk (Eds.), *The Measurement and Analysis of Housing Preference and Choice* (pp. 57–73). Springer Netherlands. http://link.springer.com/10.1007/978-90-481-8894-9_3

[443] DeCarlo,N., Samuel, P., & Silverstein D. (2012). Technique 40. Pugh Matrix. *In Innovator's Toolkit - 50 Techniques for Predictable and Sustainable Organic Growth*. 2nd ed.,1-2, John Wiley & Sons.

[444] Weill, P., & Vitale, M.R. (2001). Place to Space: Migrating to Ebusiness Models; *Harvard Business School Press*: Boston, MA, USA, 2001;ISBN 978-1-57851-245-4.

[445] Salwin, M., Jacyna-Gołda, I., Kraslawski, A., & Waszkiewicz, A.E. (2022). The Use of Business Model Canvas in the Design and Classification of Product-Service Systems Design Methods. *Sustainability* 14, 4283.. doi:10.3390/su14074283

research. In addition, this method depicts the individual choice rules that can be implemented in knowledge-based decision support systems.[446] The Pugh Matrix is a criteria-based decision matrix which uses criteria scoring to determine which of several potential solutions or alternatives should be selected.[447] This approach allows for organising various criteria or features of the solution in a structured way for easy comparison. While none of these methods can be used appropriately in a news media attribution framework on its own, the combination of these ideas could be applied effectively to the recommended framework of news media brand experience that contributes to brand distinctiveness and equity. Considering the empirical study findings and insights from secondary data provided in the first section of the Thesis, this section of the dissertation presents the news media brand attributes assessment as a methodology of news media branding for evaluating the distinctiveness and equity of news media. This approach aims to comprehensively analyse brand attributes to strengthen news media brand attribution in the current media business environment.

4.1 The methodology of news media branding for uniqueness and equity development in the 21st century media business environment

The methodology possesses brand attributes significance, effectiveness, tactical development, and news media brand experience measurement that contributes to news media brand distinctiveness and equity.

The methodology consists of **seven steps** (see Figure 4.1).

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[446] Goetgeluk, R. W. (2011). The Decision Plan Nets Method. In S. J. T. Jansen, H. C. C. H. Coolen, & R. W. Goetgeluk (Eds.), *The Measurement and Analysis of Housing Preference and Choice* (pp. 57–73). Springer Netherlands. http://link.springer.com/10.1007/978-90-481-8894-9_3

[447] DeCarlo,N., Samuel, P., & Silverstein D. (2012). Technique 40. Pugh Matrix. *In Innovator's Toolkit - 50 Techniques for Predictable and Sustainable Organic Growth*. 2nd ed.,1-2, John Wiley & Sons.
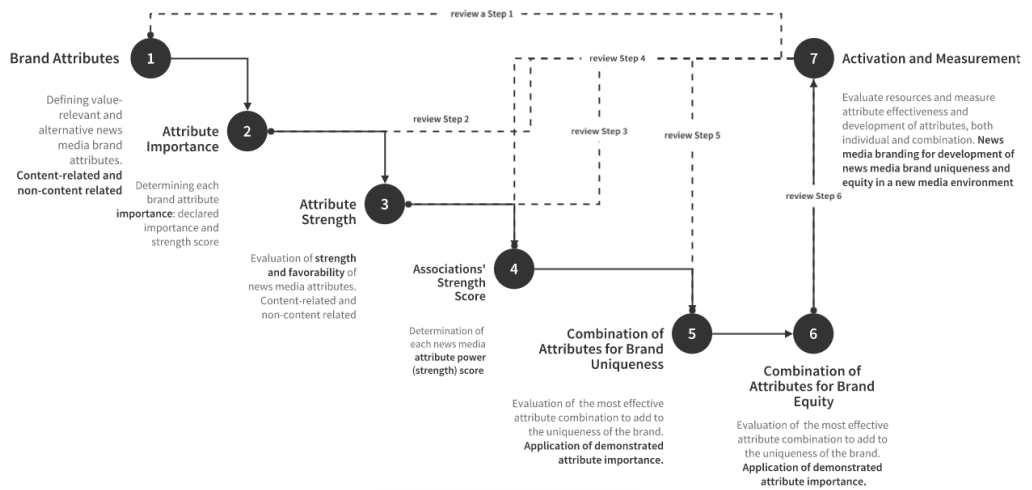
Fig. 4.1. The news media branding methodology in the 21st century media business environment (created by the author, novelty of this research).

In Step 1 (Brand Attributes), focus and identifying the news media attributes are essential (see Figure 4.1). Definition and choice of attributes proposed by the Thesis author in Table 1.1 (see Appendix 3). Therefore, the Thesis author recommends using the attributes employed in this research as findings confirm their influence and importance in forming news media associations, brand distinctiveness and brand equity. Nevertheless, using a broad classification of content-related attributes across academic and professional literature and the fact that content-related attributes are not explored deeply in this research, the author recommends defining content-related attributes more comprehensively, possibly using the content-related attribute descriptions named in section 2 of this Thesis. While attribute categorization and formulation vary across academics and professionals, defining and focusing on brand experience-related attributes with the same diligence as category-essential attributes such as content quality, ideology and other news media attributes is essential.

In Step 2 (Attribute Importance), determining the importance of each attribute is significant (see Figure 4.1.).The author of the Thesis proposes to measure attribute importance based on a semantic differential decimal scale, measuring attribute importance on a scale from 1 to 10, which effectively measures audience attitudes and is often used in attitude measurement

in social sciences.[448] The author of the Thesis recommends using declared importance by the audience described in the findings of this research combined with secondary data insights (Appendix 1). Attribute importance may differ for different demographic groups. Therefore, audience surveys are essential to perform. Therefore, news media managers and representatives recommended conducting surveys in different demographics to understand their target audiences' attitudes towards mentioned attributes. Different methods to measure attribute importance include the free associations model, concept maps, surveys, and others. The methodology defines brand distinctiveness and equity in a new media environment, where changes resulting from digitalization are analysed in Section 1 of this Thesis. The given attribute importance demonstrates suitability for all audience groups, also supported by data discussed in Section 2 of the Thesis.

The Thesis author supports the questionnaire structure developed during this research. The leading customer and brand research company Kantar Latvia deploys and effectively uses these scales in customer attitude surveys. The Thesis author suggests applying and analysing the demonstrated importance of the attribute in the later stages of this methodology. After evaluating attribute importance, attribute strength scores were calculated using this research's proposed association power score approach.

Similarly, different demographic target audiences can demonstrate different attribute scores. The score application is based on assessment and is indicative. Therefore, using the mentioned multi-attribute theory framework, it is suggestive to calculate each attribute weight together to power score. The weight of the attribute is calculated as follows: attribute strength (power) score divided by total attribute scores. For example, the attribute's total score in this research is 105. Attribute – *My friends use it too* – power score 2 applied in this research context. This attribute weight is 2/105=0.019. As previously mentioned, this approach is simple yet indicative, but demonstrated importance should also be applied in later stages. The Thesis author included a question in the quantitative survey measuring the importance of given attributes not to use or follow the news media brand. The results confirm research findings of declared importance of attributes: content related attributes: *credibility; content matches my interests; I like journalists, authors; looks nice and attractive; leading news media* – are the important ones to news media choice and usage (see Table 4.1.) Nevertheless, the attribute – *my friends use it too* – demonstrates the lowest importance of not choosing or using media in

line with the low declared importance. This research result demonstrates that this attribute is essential to forming brand distinctiveness, confirming attribute power score and weight evaluation in later stages.

Table 4.1

News media attribute importance to unfollowing or not using news media, defined by the audience, 15 to 24–year–olds (created by the author)

News media attributes	Importance (mean) as evaluated by respondents
Content not matches my interest	6.8
Not credible	7.2
I do not like their journalists, authors	5.9
My friends do not use it	4.8
Does not engage celebrities in their projects	4.9
It does not look distinctive, unique	5.5
Users cannot engage in content creation	5.1
Does not use attractive special formats	5.4
Does not post interesting content on social networks	5.8
In social media, do not use relevant features	5.1
Not a leading news media	5.9
It does not look nice or attractive	6.0
Not present on platforms I use	5.6
Their posts do not generate a lot of views, reactions	5.5

Therefore, media brand managers and policy managers should conduct careful analyses of the importance of a certain brand attribute to the audience.

In Step 3 (Attribute Strength) (see Figure 4.1), the news media attribute assessment of strengths and favourability is performed. The news media can perform this step in the following way:

- Apply results from this research for a specific target group;
- Perform its audience survey;
- Evaluate it internally and analyse data that help assess each attribute's strength: audience engagement; usage; frequency; semantic analyses; several data metrics connected with content readership, time spent on the website; page views per visit and other analytic data.[449]

Focus on both content-related and consumption experience-related attributes should be applied. For example, the volume and engagement of news media social media followers on

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[449] Farris, P. (2006). *Marketing metrics : 50 metrics every executive should master* / Paul W. Farris ... [et al.]. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Wharton School Publishing.

social media data[450] can be used to analyse the strength and favourability of brand attributes. Gemius Audience Insight data allows us to analyse several attribute strengths.[451] Audience surveys are the most efficient way to fully explore different aspects of attribute strength and favourability of associations. Given this Thesis, an empirical research questionnaire could be applied to different demographic target audience groups. Attribute strength, favourability and evenness should be measured based on the methodology template presented in this Thesis (see Table 1.1. in Appendix 5).

In Step 4 (Strength of Associations' Score) (see Figure 4.1), the news media associations' strength score is evaluated based on the methodology given in this Thesis by computing each attribute's strength score and measuring the news media strength of each attribute (Appendix 3). Even though attribute strength scores were determined based on a comparison of eight news media brands in this study, it is possible to give values to each attribute for a single news media brand utilising this research's data on each attribute's importance. The strength or power scores of a brand's attributes can be evaluated by grading them against one another. Using the same 14 attributes as an example, the attribute with the greatest rating would receive 14 and the one with the lowest rating would receive 1. For instance, if the expressed importance of the attribute *credibility* is the highest, this attribute gets 14 points. 14 points applied if a given attribute was also determined to be the strongest for a certain brand. Then the power score is 14 multiplied by 14 = 196. In this case, the significant thing is to measure the strength, favourability and evenness of attributes as discussed in the findings section. Current research data could be applied as a news media industry average (see Table 4.2). For instance, if a news brand evaluates its attributes and the strongest attributes are rated at 5.9 on a 10-point semantic scale, they should not be perceived as strong. The following table summarises the average declared importance of each news brand attribute. It demonstrates the average assessment level of all news media brands.

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[450] Farris, P. (2006). *Advertising media and web analytics* .In Marketing metrics : 50 metrics every executive should master / Paul W. Farris ... [et al.]. 263-303, Upper Saddle River, NJ: Wharton School Publishing.

[451] Gemius, S.A.(2022). gemiusAudience, Latvia. [accessed May 4,2022]. Available online: https://rating.gemius.com/lv/

Table 4.2

News media brand attribute importance and assessment of 8 news media attributes by the audience, 15 to 24–year–olds, Latvia (created by the author)

Brand attributes	Average assessment of all news media brands	Declared importance of brand attribute
1	2	3
Credible	6.3	7.7
Leading news media	6.2	6.5
The content matches my interest	6.1	7.4
Looks nice, attractive	6.0	6.6
I like their authors, journalists	5.8	6.3
Their posts often generate a lot of views, reactions, reposts	6.0	6.0
Engage celebrities in their projects	5.9	5.8
Looks distinctive, unique	5.8	6.2
Present on platforms which I use	5.7	6.9
Uses attractive special formats	5.7	6.1
In social media, use relevant features	5.7	6.2
Posts interesting content on social networks	6.0	6.5
My friends use it too	5.7	5.7
Users can engage in content creation	5.6	5.6

Analysing and comparing attribute strength and favourability with the provided data enables the evaluation of attribute level relative to the market mean. Nonetheless, demographic group disparities must be considered. This step is exploratory and aims to comprehend the importance of news media attributes in a new media environment - multi-platform setting, evaluate the specific brand status of attributes, and identify the significant yet, for instance, deficient or improvement-required attributes. This reveals what is crucial but may lack news media brand-side focus, power, or specific strategies. Consumption experience-based attributes and their strength should be precisely determined. In this step, the news media brand managers may clearly determine the weakness and strength of their brand in a new media environment and proceed with the following steps to develop brand distinctiveness and equity based on the brand attribute framework.

When each attribute's power score is applied, it is possible to evaluate each attribute's strength based on this attribute's declared importance. However, as shown by the research data analyses, attributes contributing to brand distinctiveness can be differently evaluated by the audience and not necessarily the most important ones. Therefore, in Step 5 and Step 6, an assessment of demonstrated attribute importance to brand equity and distinctiveness should be applied.

In Step 5 (Combination of Attributes for Brand Uniqueness) (see Figure 4.1), evaluation and selection of the most effective attribute combination that contributes to a strong and favourable brand experience and distinctiveness are performed.

Firstly, an assessment of demonstrated importance attributes such as - *looks distinctive, unique; I like journalists, authors; My friends use it too and Uses special formats* – should be performed. Then, using either the strength (power) scores of an attribute or the optimal combination that adds to a given brand's distinctiveness is determined. While the importance of the combination of attributes, their strength, and their desirability is confirmed by the testing hypoThesis of this study, when determining the most important ones, it is vital to keep in mind the significance of consumption experience-related attributes in establishing brand uniqueness. As previously stated, category-fundamental or product-related (content-related) attributes such as objectivity, credibility, content quality, power, and favourability are initially significant.

Next, the weights and strengths of the possible combinations of the attributes must be assessed to determine the most effective one. The combination of attributes may vary among news media organisations, and this Thesis research confirms that various, but effective, attributes create the news media brand distinctiveness. In this step, the media managers could and should reassess the evaluation and choice of attributes in previous steps. Then, if needed, adjustments in the previous steps should be performed. Also, the weaker attributes should be identified, and tactics to strengthen them should be developed in **Step 7**.

In Step 6 (Combination of Attributes for Brand Equity) (see Figure 4.1), similar attribute combination analyses should be done regarding brand equity development. As analysed before, brand uniqueness is significant, but product-related (content-related) attributes also contribute significantly to brand equity. In addition, as discussed in this Thesis's first section, many academics and scholars state that category-related brand associations should be strong and favourable for consumers to consider and choose the brand. Therefore, news media category-related or functional attributes should be precisely evaluated. So, once again, deciding on a combination of attributes should be noted.

The Thesis author proposes to deploy brand equity forming attributes such as *credibility, content matches my interest*, *uniqueness, I like authors and journalists* and social media platform presence-related attributes. While Thesis research confirms the significance of news media brand distinctiveness impact on news media brand equity, it is recommended to apply this step in the proposed framework methodology.

Similarly, as in Step 6, the media managers could and should reassess the evaluation and choice of attributes in previous steps. Then, if needed, adjustments should be made to the previous steps.

Step 7 (Activation and Measurement) (see Figure 4.1) activates and measures the developed branding approach. The evaluation of resources and tools to measure and develop attributes should be analysed and decided based on the Business Canvas Model approach. While previous steps allowed us to answer the crucial question of what and why these attributes are essential for a news brand by determining, evaluating, and deciding on brand attribute strength, necessary developments, and the most desired attribute combination or value proposition to the customer, the final step clearly defines how and what resources needed to deploy development of brand distinctiveness and consequently equity in the new media environment and how the audience will experience the news media brand. While content-related attribute development concerns content, authors, journalist and editorial office decisions, content consumption experience attributes require a different focus. The final, essential step impacts how the brand is constructed or experienced across several platforms and how well attributes establish associations. The previous steps and the final phase of the news media attribute approach clarifies the distinction between news media brand content distribution strategy and news media brand experience in a new media environment that contributes to news media brand distinctiveness and equity.

In the seventh and final step of the methodology of the Thesis, the author proposes the following activation and measurement of the branding.

Activation and Measurement of the proposed branding steps (see Figure 4.2).

Firstly, **tactics of attribute development** should be clearly defined. Individual brand attributes should be selected. Significant to brand distinctiveness are the following (but not only) attributes:

- *Looks distinctive and unique;*
- *I like journalists and authors;*
- *My friends use it too;*
- *Uses special formats.*

Three of four attributes require a content consumption experience approach or how content is packed, distributed, and consumed by the audience. As most of the consumption experience-related attributes build associations through a multi-platform environment, decisions regarding platform presence and selection should be made. For example, if an

attribute – *my friends use it too* – is significant, what strategies will news brands deploy to develop these associations? The following questions should be answered:

- What kind of tools are needed, and what kind of approaches are applied?
- Will user engagement, discussion, and contribution be encouraged?
- Will communities be formed?

These tactical decisions could be different, but each tactic of content consumption experience-related attribute development should be decided and employed. These tactics can be integrated into brand marketing and self-promotion, content strategies, sponsorships and partnerships, social responsibility tactics and other brand activities. Each named attribute should possess determined and measured tactics of attribute development and development of attribute strength and significance. While these tactics could be varied across news media, tactics should be incorporated into the company's brand strategy without diminishing content consumption experience-related attribute importance in a new media environment. While these aspects of branding are still evolving for continuously creating media brands, a new media environment gives the audience's experience with the content on various platforms the same significance as the brand content itself.

Secondly, the selection of the platform must be assessed and determined. Then, news media brand audience usage of a certain platform should be analysed based on platform usage data in the country. Moreover, all decisions should be tested and optimized based on data. For example, the higher share of the delfi.lv audience on platform *TikTok* is not young people, as one can infer based on platform data, but older demographic groups – 25–39-year-old consumers.[452] Following the acknowledged insights, the brand should not be resistant to distributing content freely on multiple platforms. Attention should be paid to content branding on different platforms.

Thirdly, the necessary resources within the news media organisation should be allocated. Platform native and platform skills are needed to develop and realise content curation, distribution and engagement across different platforms. Professionals with certain skills on each platform's unique characteristics should be employed for this branding task. Knowledge of how the audience approaches and engages with the content on platforms and how new media brand content should be developed accordingly and delivered to the audience is essential. This distinguishes between content creation and packaging in the following critical framework step.

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[452] Delfi AS. (2022). Interneta ziņu portālu atpazīstamības un novērtējuma regulārā izpēte.Norstad, w7: February 15.-17.

Fourthly, there is news media content packaging. Again, it is crucial to approach this aspect not just as content distribution: sharing and placing content on different platforms, but the content must be adjusted and prepared natively, respecting the platform's unique characteristics and audience expectations, which is called **content packaging**. Format selection for each content makes it possible to build associations necessary for multi-platform settings, confirmed in this Thesis research findings on the significance of the following news media brand attributes: *special, appropriate formats; easy to use and look attractive and distinctive.* In this step, *content branding* is essential. Whether it is a brand's visual language: brand colours, fonts, logos, audio: voice or sound, it should be carefully investigated and applied to every content piece. As discussed in previous sections, media brand attribution via multi-platforms are much lower. Consequently, content branding is vital in addition to positive experience attributes such as formats. The news media brand and brand content consumption experience *measurement system* should be defined. A new media environment also develops opportunities to effectively measure brand and branding success in relation to various outcomes. The key performance indicators must be determined to measure the effectiveness of attribute development and its effect on audience experience with the brand.[453] These indicators may include social media metrics,[454] data from the brand's website, and brand and business metrics.[455] All measuring indicators can be categorised into three groups: media metrics (how effectively brand attributes reach and interact with the audience), audience behaviour metrics (how brand and brand communication influence audience attitude), and business and brand metrics.[456] Table 4.3 summarises groups of indicators, possible and available metrics, as well as possible and available data sources.

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[453] Farris, P. (2006). *Advertising media and web analytics* .In Marketing metrics : 50 metrics every executive should master / Paul W. Farris ... [et al.]. 263-303, Upper Saddle River, NJ: Wharton School Publishing.

[454] Ibid, 263-303

[455] Ibid, 263-303

[456] Farris, P. (2006). *Marketing metrics : 50 metrics every executive should master* / Paul W. Farris ... [et al.]. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Wharton School Publishing.

Table 4.3

Step 7. Measurement of proposed branding steps. News media branding effectiveness measurement metrics. (created by the author, novelty of this research)

Defined metric section	Measurement	Examples of metrics	Possible data sources
Audience behaviour metrics	Brand website Social media data	Monthly/weekly brand website users, visits, page views, time spent on site Social media follower data, sentiment analyses	1st and 2nd party data: Website analytic tools; Google data, Gemius Audience data[457]
Brand and business metrics	Brand and business data	Brand awareness and usage and preference. Brand image measurements: attributes evaluation; brand attribution; loyalty, brand uniqueness Business performance data	1st party data: company data, financials and other 2nd party data: analytics 3rd party data: surveys
Media effectiveness metrics	Social network performance, other platform performance Content performance	Reach, engagement data (likes, shares, comments, followers), content impressions, views, readership, shares	2nd party data: Platform data sources 1st party data: Brand content tracking data

To measure given metrics, different time intervals are required as not all of the metrics can be measured and analysed simultaneously. The metrics with the quickest response are media metrics or channel and content effectiveness metrics. For example, immediately following brand communication, measuring audience reaction to a specific message, channel effectiveness, and content performance are possible.[458] These timings can be measured immediately following transmission. Then, between weeks and months, it is feasible to measure how specific communication and content packaging or brand experience frameworks influence audience behaviour towards the brand, such as brand usage, engagement, and other metrics measure audience behaviour.[459] Changes in brand and business metrics typically take longer to demonstrate.[460] After a while, typically six months or twice a year, it is possible to analyse the impact on the brand metrics and even longer on brand financial measures. The company's data signals regarding financial performance, secondary data in the form of various analytical tools, and survey data illustrate brand image, awareness, usage, and preference performance.[461]

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[457] Gemius, S.A.(2022). gemiusAudience, Latvia. [accessed May 4,2022]. Available online: https://rating.gemius.com/lv/

[458] Farris, P. (2006). *Marketing metrics : 50 metrics every executive should master* / Paul W. Farris ... [et al.]. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Wharton School Publishing.

[459] ibid

[460] ibid

[461] Varshneya, G., Das, G., & Khare, A. (2017). Experiential value: A review of research methods. *Marketing Review* (Helensburgh, Scotland), 17(2), 179-197.

While news media brands can adapt and use additional metrics and effectiveness measurements, the concept of news media brand attribute and content experience framework evaluation would be the same. The various data sources allow us to measure the effectiveness of the news media brand attribute framework and, therefore, its effect on brand-related metrics such as brand awareness, usage, and preference. Consequently, news media brand distinctiveness and equity let be measured by combining the metrics described above.

The Thesis author summarises the seventh and final step of the methodology provided in Figure 4.2.
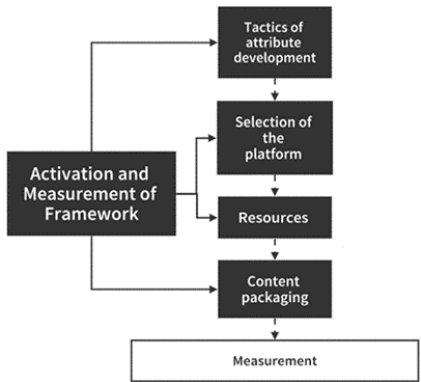
Fig. 4.2. The 7th step of the branding methodology. Activation and Measurement. (created by the author).

The final measurement step allows us to access and effectively understand where and why optimization of any previous steps is needed. Finally, in Step 7, we can evaluate the effectiveness and possible optimization and required adjustment of attribute choice, importance, or combination in previous steps.

4.2. The summary of the methodology of news media brand branding in the 21st century media business environment

This Thesis research finding confirms certain news media attribute impact on brand distinctiveness and equity. In that case, measuring those attribute effectiveness via media, audience and brand, and business-related data allows effective management of news media brand uniqueness and equity in a new media environment. Figure 4.3. summarises all steps

required to design, execute, and measure the news media branding that contributes to developing media brand distinctiveness and brand equity in a new media environment.
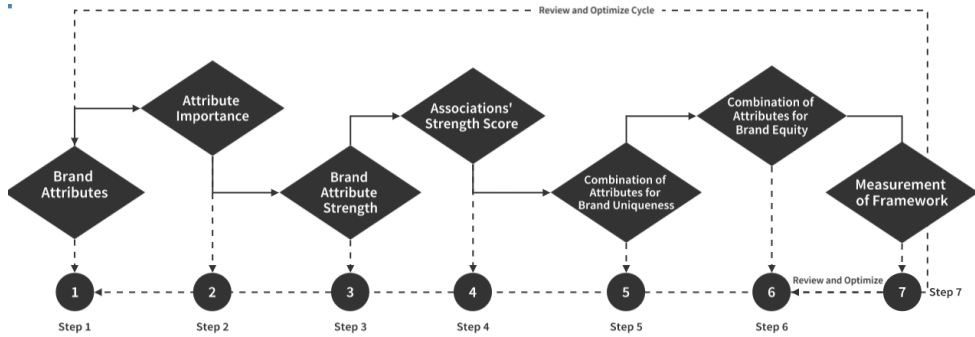
Fig. 4.3 **The methodology of news media branding** for the development of brand uniqueness and brand equity (created by the author, novelty of this research).

Steps 1–3 determine and evaluate the importance and news brand attribute strength and favourability. This phase enables news media brands to analyse and understand which attributes are significant and which of their own attributes are strong, missing or need improvement. The focus should be paid to content consumption experience-based brand attributes.

Steps 4–6 are about adjusting, adding significance, and analysing the attributes contributing to news media brand distinctiveness and equity. Finally, the Thesis research findings should be applied when an optimal combination of attribute strategies is selected. For example, some news media brands can decide to explore more attributes connected with user imagery and some usage imagery; nevertheless, a combination of content-related and content consumption experience-related attributes is vital as content consumption experience significantly contributes to news media brand distinctiveness and equity.

Step 7 is designing this new media branding to deliver a brand experience to audiences. The step consists of tactics of attribute development, employment to create and maintain strong and favourable brand associations, selection of platforms where news media will be present; human resources and skills needed and applied; news media content packaging and branding, and measurement of effectiveness.

The final measurement step allows us to access and effectively understand where and why optimization of any previous steps is needed. Finally, in Step 7, can evaluate the effectiveness and possible optimization and required adjustment of attribute choice,

importance, or combination in previous steps. The review and optimisation cycle are possible and continuous in any step of this methodology.

A methodology template developed by the Thesis author (see Appendix 5) could help to navigate (guide) in branding development, optimization, and re-evaluation as a roadmap for news media organizations.

The proposed methodology for news media branding lets news media managers assess the media branding and adjust or invent any needed changes over time. In addition, the methodology makes it possible to explore news media brand attributes and their importance from the audience's perspective and understand news media strengths and weaknesses from a media brand attribute perspective. Finally, the proposed methodology enables us in practice to understand, develop and measure the news media brand uniqueness in a new media environment. While content quality, credibility and other aspects of content are an undeniable product of news media and fundamental for a category, content consumption experience-related attributes are significant. The methodology lets practically develop those attribute framework within the news media. The proposed methodology can be developed within news media organizations by news media responsible managers, brand managers and policymakers depending on the organization structure. In addition, external consultants and agencies can be involved in framework development. Engagement of research companies carrying consumer, brand and market research would benefit the development of these methodology steps where applicable. Although the current methodology has been developed for news media, especially national media, the proposed approach can be transferable to other industries with intense competition and low product involvement characteristics.

Similarly, news media are continuous-creation media with low product involvement facing fierce competition from other content sources and platforms. Brands from other industries could apply branding methodology and consumption experience-related attribute significance to establish brand distinctiveness and equity. From the perspective of other industry products, the proposed methodology should be applied to product marketing and communication strategies in a multi-platform environment. News media is a brand communication channel that plays a dual role in society – delivering news and carrying and delivering brand messages via brand advertising.[462] Nevertheless, the same connotations

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[462] Krebs, I., & Siegert, G. (2015). 20 years of research on media brands and media branding. In G. Siegert, K. Förster, S. Chan-Olmsted, & M. Ots (Eds.), *Handbook of media branding* (pp. 33– 49). Berlin: Springer International Publishing

developed in a new media environment on brand attribution and the importance of consumer experience contribute to other industry brands' product marketing and advertising.

4.3. Approbation of the methodology of news media branding within Latvian companies

To evaluate the developed methodology's effectiveness, the findings and proposed methodology were presented, analysed, and applied to two companies:

- the leading and biggest national news media JSC Delfi (Part 4.3.1);
- communication and media agency Dentsu Latvia (Part 4.3.2).

In addition, the findings and methodology were presented and discussed with the Board of the Latvian Advertising Association (Part 4.3.3). This public organization represents Latvia's advertisers, media channels, and advertising and media agencies.

4.3.1. Presentation and discussion of the research findings and methodology at the leading and biggest national news media JSC Delfi

The research results, methodology and discussion were resented and applied to the leading national news media JSC Delfi. The in-depth expert interview with Mr Konstantīns Kuzikovs, CEO and Board Chairman of the news media JSC Delfi followed the quantitative survey data analysis and methodology development. Mr Konstantīns Kuzikovs has been JSC Delfi CEO and Chairman of the Board since 2013.

JSC Delfi is owned by the Ekspress Grupp and operates news media businesses in all three Baltic States under the brand name Delfi. In Latvia, JSC Delfi operates the news media portal **delfi.lv** in the Latvian language and **rus.delfi.lv** in Russian. Delfi.lv was the first national online news media to be established on 26 November 1999, offering news in Latvian. Rus.delfi.lv, offering news in the Russian language, opened a year later, in 2000. Delfi.lv has the biggest editorial office delivering news in the online environment. This news media has the most extensive online national news media audience, reaching more than 900 000 unique users monthly.[463] Delfi.lv is the most used national news media online in all demographic groups, including 15-24-year-olds, i.e. Generation Z[464]. These Thesis research findings also demonstrate that delfi.lv has one of the highest brand distinctiveness and equity levels evaluated by the audience, as well as the high delfi.lv brand attribute evaluation by Generation Z.

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[463] Gemius, S.A.(2022). gemiusAudience, Latvia. Available online: https://rating.gemius.com/lv/
[464] Ibid

The research results in the approbation interview were structured as follows. Firstly, Mr Kuzikovs was presented with research objectives, issues, and challenges. However, no research results were presented to avoid researcher influence and the impact of the research results on the expert's perspective. The expert then addressed how delfi.lv tackled its brand strategy and content strategy, highlighting the company's primary challenges, objectives, goals, and vision, as well as its approach to content distribution, brand attribution and multi-platforms. To illustrate and support the narrative, various delfi.lv data were provided, both internal and survey data relevant to the research topic. These insights are used as secondary data to confirm the proposed methodology's effectiveness and applicability. Subsequently, these Thesis research findings were presented, and a debate involving various researcher queries was generated regarding these results. The news media brand delfi.lv demonstrated the highest brand equity among the 15-24 year old audience.

News media brand attributes and their importance by the audience, proposed methodology Steps 1–5

Under a commission from JSC Delfi, Kantar Latvia performed a survey at the beginning of **2022** that validates the conclusions of this Thesis. Delfi.lv had the highest **brand awareness** – 87 % of all audiences – and the highest **usage of online news media** – 57 % of all audiences. Regarding news media attributes evaluated by audiences in Latvia, the most significant ones are *objective information* and *credibility*. This supports both findings from this research and previously discussed scholars' findings. It also confirms the conclusions and research of numerous academics that content *objectivity, diversity, and credibility* are category essentials for news media brands and should be strong and positive for audience consideration. These findings indicate that content ideology and trustworthiness have a strong relationship with brand preference and equity. While content objectivity or neutrality and credibility are significant for all audiences, more than other demographic groups, these two attributes are more significant for a younger audience, i.e., 18–29 years old, according to Kantar Latvia studies.[465] Mr Kuzikovs also confirmed that delfi.lv content strategy is deeply rooted in a five-year strategy based on company values, goals, and broader impact on society - qualitative journalism, diversity of information and different aspects.[466] JSC Delfi mission is the foundation of a strong society comprised of engaged, self-reliant individuals with easy access to comprehensive, high-

[465] Delfi JSC. (2022). Interneta ziņu portālu atpazīstamības un novērtējuma regulārā izpēte.TNS Latvia, w7: February 15.-17.

[466] Kuzikovs, K. (August 8,2022). *News media branding in the 21st century media business environmen*t.(Interviewed by L.Saulite).

quality information presented in a modern manner about the most significant matters of the day and the ability to discuss opinions and ideas openly. The mission of the news media brand is to set the public agenda and promote societal changes that result in a more decisive, more accountable, and more inclusive society. Based on strategy (reviewed every other year), the company defines who they are: *qualitative, extensive, modern, cheerful, neutral, the leading; all for Latvia professionals.* What is significant is that these definitions demonstrate integrity via everyday brand operations.

Firstly, according to the analysis of this Thesis, these characteristics are first and foremost genuine and reflected in the content and operations of delfi.lv.

Secondly, these attributes play a significant role in brand distinctiveness and equity, such as *Authors, Journalists, and Look distinctive; Leading media, Usage of attractive formats, and Users can engage in content creation.*

The subsequent important news media attributes evaluated by the audience according to Kantar Latvia data are:

- *Quick updates of the news (or immediacy as named in some academics works);*
- *Easy-to-use news webpage;*
- *Diversity and relevance of content;*
- *Qualitative journalism;*
- *Ease to use on different platforms;*
- *Modern media;*
- *Qualitative video content;*
- *Leading news media*;

For the younger audience, i.e., 18–29-year-olds, the two most important attributes are:

- *Credibility*;
- *Objective information*;

Followed by *immediacy, easy-to-use webpage, easy to use on multi-platforms, qualitative journalism* and *modern media.* On the other hand, if modern and easy to use on multiple platforms are vital attributes of news media for the younger audience, older audiences (50–60 years old) evaluate it as least significant. Interestingly, while in two significant aspects, the younger audience gives the highest rating to lsm.lv news media, the delfi.lv brand is strongly linked with being modern, user-friendly across several platforms, and a leader in its industry. This once again validates the outcomes of this dissertation's research on consumer experience-related associations' strengths and positive contributions to the brand's distinctiveness and

equity. While lsm.lv usage is below that of the closest competitor to delfi.lv, i.e., tvnet.lv, lsm.lv and delfi.lv rated the highest in all news brand attributes.

While the audience regularly uses (at least once per week) delfi.lv (57 %), tvnet.lv (33 %) and lsm.lv only 24 %, the youngest audience preference is different – delfi.lv – 57 %, lsm.lv 30 % and tvnet.lv 25 %[467] , which indicates that attribute strength and favourability are significant for brand distinctiveness and equity. Even though brand awareness can be high, it is not enough for brand distinctiveness and equity.

Importance of news media content consumption experience – content packaging and resources, proposed methodology Steps 5–7

Interestingly, while consumption experience and multi-platform experience are undeniable for the younger audience, the JSC Delfi representative confirms previously discussed Reuter Institute research indicating that parental – family habits and brand usage – have a significant impact on the media choices of the younger audience. This is a significant point of agreement with generation theory. Therefore, brands should not abandon their current audience's usage patterns and expectations but should add new ones to meet the requirements and expectations of the future generation. This is supported by the CEO of JSC Delfi reflection on how the attempt to create a sub-brand and content specially curated for younger audiences did not succeed because this audience wants the same things as others – news, information and opinions. However, this audience also expects a more interactive, easy-to-use multi-platform experience.

The data confirms that a younger audience's most used delfi.lv content is tasty.lv – recipes and food news, closely followed by entertainment and news (national and global). These findings significantly challenge the notion that younger people are primarily interested in light and humorous content. On the contrary, this audience appreciates and expects objective news of high quality, given in a manner that corresponds to how this audience consumes content. The manner of consumption does not represent an attitude of superficiality. As mentioned in the previous section, the younger audience verifies news trustworthiness more than other demographic groups.[468] JSC Delfi expert confirms that the multi-platform experience of the audience is essential for brand uniqueness as most news video content and other content is also

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[467] Delfi AS. (2022). Interneta ziņu portālu atpazīstamības un novērtējuma regulārā izpēte.Norstad, February 15.-17.

[468] Delfi AS. (2022), Latvia,unpublished data

packaged and prepared specially for each of the platforms on which delfi.lv is present – Facebook, TikTok, Instagram, etc.

As seen in Appendix 10, each platform's distinctiveness and characteristics are considered without losing core brand associations. More importantly, this is done by employees who are native and well-educated about platform specifics and audience expectations towards the content on these platforms. This is important because the original content from the brand webpage is not just shared on platforms but specially curated and produced by a dedicated team to make it successful. The success of this approach is evident – delfi.lv video content (different programs) is viewed on their own platform 11889 times in one week, while the same content reaches 341 998 views on social platforms in the same period.[469] Instagram and Facebook are the leaders in audience reach. The content reached 1.4 million views in one month, delivering more than 1 million views within the next four weeks, demonstrating that multi-platforms prolong the content life cycle.

Branding methodology effectiveness measurement

JSC Delfi representative confirmed the relevancy and applicability of measurement metrics of attribute efficiency proposed in the methodology developed within the framework of this Thesis. Media efficiency metrics such as us views, shares, likes, and reach are primary metrics used by news media to measure content effectiveness on different platforms. Social media audiences – followers, viewers, and users – are analysed accordingly. Of course, daily, weekly, and monthly visits to news media webpages, page views, time spent on a webpage, and audience traffic sources are part of measurement metrics. The research company Kantar Latvia measures the brand-related metrics of delfi.lv and its competitors annually. Analyses of these data are performed every year or bi-annually. Company business analyses based on various financial, market share data, advertising revenue dynamics and industry-specific measurements: journalism quality awards; brand love index.

Delivering content to different platforms across the internet instead of keeping content exclusively to the brand's own webpage or platform has been challenging for most media for some time now. Suppose the content has been a driving force and differentiator of the media brand for many years. How is it easily given away? The JSC Delfi CEO agrees that this has been a crucial question of media managers over the last ten years. The less successful ones in this multi-platform, interactive environment are the brands resistant to distributing their content

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[469] Delfi AS. (2022), Latvia,unpublished data

freely across platforms, reflecting their fear of losing their audiences and content exclusivity. Mr Kuzikovs states:

"Yes, there are concerns and opinions that if Delfi distributes its content across other platforms and its audience consumes it there, the audience will not visit the Delfi website. The audience is indeed on several platforms, but it will remain here; we must get to them. The question then becomes how the brand is represented, followed by how we can monetise the content outside of our own platform."

This is consistent with the scholarly belief that a brand should be developed across multiple platforms and that content branding is essential for media brands. Keeping content only on the media brand's platform would not change audience multi-platform consumption. Instead, it would reduce the brand's capacity to contact the audience and build brand associations. Moreover, the next concern for media brands is how to integrate and sell advertising on this content, as advertising is a crucial component of every news media brand's business model.

Agreeing on attributes that contribute to brand uniqueness and equity in connection with this Thesis research, it is also confirmed that one of the significant delfi.lv attributes – *users can engage in content creation* – is vital for the brand. As a result of this situation, the delfi.lv comments area was initially restricted to registered users and was closed in February. In addition, data indicate that the number of page views declined, indicating a decline in audience participation and leading us to conclude that writing, reading, and reflecting on audience comments are integral to the news experience. Moreover, these connections are experience-related and add to the Delfi.lv brand distinctiveness. Therefore, how they are developed and maintained is crucial to favourability.

In conclusion, the instruments and approaches to develop and maintain news brand attributes are marked. Strong value-based content and brand strategy are essential for a powerful brand and audience choice. *Neutrality, credibility, immediacy, and user-friendliness* are crucial for all target demographics. How content is distributed and experienced is vital for all audiences, especially younger ones. Multi-platform behaviour will continue, mainly if it targets the younger generations. Therefore, content should be supplied where the audience is, and brand association should be developed through this content experience wherever possible. When curating content for diverse platforms, allocating the right resources and talents is vital, considering each platform's specific qualities and opportunities. The news brand's distinctiveness and equity framework should investigate all facets of the branding of multi-

platform news media, especially experience-based ones. The Thesis research findings' usefulness and applicability to national news media branding are confirmed by Mr Kuzikovs, CEO and Chairman of the Board of JSC Delfi, in the reference in this Thesis Appendix 6.

4.3.2. Presentation and discussion of the research findings and methodology at the communication and media agency Dentsu Latvia

Dentsu International (formerly Dentsu Aegis Network) is a global media and digital marketing communications organisation headquartered in London, United Kingdom. It is a wholly-owned subsidiary of the Japanese advertising and public relations corporation Dentsu. Its primary services include brand communications strategy via digital creative execution, media planning and buying, sports marketing and content production, brand tracking and marketing analytics. It employs 35.000 people across 145 countries.[470] In Latvia, Dentsu International is represented by SIA Dentsu Latvia, operating under four agency brands: the media agency Carat; media agency DentsuX; digital performance and e-commerce agency iProspect and social media and digital creative agency Isobar. 43 employees currently work for the agency group in Latvia specialising in media communication and analyses, consumer and audience research, media data analyses, media planning and executing, digital performance and e-commerce marketing, social media platform strategies, tactics and brand communications. Dentsu Latvia provides services to over 100 clients, including media analyses, media data analyses and strategies, media planning and brand communication execution in the media environment, audience and consumer analyses, and social media strategies and executions for various brands' advertising and marketing communications. This agency network has operated in Latvia since 1996. More than one hundred local, regional, and global clients from various industries such as the banking and finance sector, fast-moving consumer goods (FCMG), telecommunication, retail, and e-commerce companies are supported and served in their brand and product communication and advertising across media and social media platforms. Among the biggest clients whose brand and product communication strategies and plans the agency Dentsu Latvia executes are Bite Latvija, Printful, Stockmann, Citadele Bank, DEPO, Narvesen, Paulig, Santa Maria and others. Given its experience in a variety of industry brand and products communication planning and execution in the media environment, including multi-platform strategies and expertise in media and media effectiveness, the Dentsu Latvia agency serves as a suitable company to apply the findings and proposed methodology of this Thesis in its communication strategies and plans for clients. Furthermore, analyses of the proposed

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[470] Denstu Latvia. (2022). Dentsu International , company internal data, unpublished.

methodology and findings by agency experts greatly benefit methodology and research findings approbation.[471]

Firstly, the research findings and proposed methodology were presented, analysed and discussed with the Strategy and MarTech Director of Dentsu Latvia, Mr Kristaps Safranovs, who is responsible for media analytics, communication strategy development and measurement and is the Head of the Isobar agency brand. The Isobar agency develops and executes agency clients' brand and product advertising on different social media platforms.

The media environment and its dynamics from a brand communication perspective

Mr Safranovs agrees with the media environment trends in Section 1 of this Thesis. Multi-platform and on-demand media content consumption is present in all media audience demographic groups.[472] This media environment creates a fragmented and intensive information environment, where the brands have more communication points and opportunities to connect with their customers, making it more difficult for brand communication to be visible and memorable in an oversaturated environment. Those changes were confirmed by agency consumer research analysing media effectiveness regarding audience reach and brand contact. The effectiveness of media declined in terms of the ability to generate brand contact and brand action effect on the audience.[473]

The media market in Latvia has changed in recent years. Although television has been the dominant advertising and communication channel for years, during the past seven years, online media and social media platforms have become increasingly dominant both in audience usage aspects and brand advertising investments and brand and product communication focus. Television, both linear and time-shifted, and online media, including national news media, service aggregate media, and social media platforms, are the most used media for brand and product advertising and communication in Latvia in 2022. While Mr Safranovs agrees that social media platforms are expanding and growing in Latvia, he estimates that national news media acquire approximately 40–50 % of their advertising market share from digital investments in Latvia. Brand and product advertising and communication have become more

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[471] Ibid

[472] Safranovs, K. (September 21, 2022*). News media branding in the 21st century media business environment*. (Interviewed by L.Saulite).

[473] Dentsu Aegis Network Latvia. (2021). Consumer Connection System Latvia, consumer media usage proprietary research, 2012-2021

digital, interactive and platform oriented. Approximately 40 % of brand advertising investments are in digital media and social media platforms.[474]

Brand attributes and associations in a media environment, integration of the proposed methodology in brand social media communication strategy development and execution

The social media agency Isobar, part of the Dentsu Latvia network, develops and executes clients' brand and product communication and advertising campaigns on social media platforms. With five years of experience, the agency serves more than 60 communication campaigns for clients from FCMG, retail, banking, and other sectors. Mr Safranovs confirmed the growing demand for social media platform brand presence, brand experience strategies on those platforms and measurement of the effectiveness tactics. As a result, more and more clients are integrating brand and product communication strategies on social media platforms as an integral and crucial part of brand marketing, especially when the target audience is a younger demographic. Nevertheless, brand communication campaigns on social media platforms are integral to every brand media communication plan regardless of the target audience's demographics. What differs among target group demographics is the proposition of brand communication invested in social media platforms versus other media channels.

Platform availability, interactivity and communication opportunities have expanded in recent years, increasing the importance of brand communication effectiveness in terms of platform choice and presence, formats, and measurement. Mr Safranovs named the following brand attributes as being important for effective brand communication and advertising in the social media platform environment:

- *Strong and appropriate brand message;*
- *Appropriate platform selection;*
- *Attractive use of platform-appropriate formats* such as interactive formats (gif, video, live streams and others;
- *Presence on platforms using unique platform propositions and audience expectations;*
- *Audience engagement* opportunities and encouragement;
- *Attractive visuals* exploring each platform's distinctiveness;
- *Influencers' involvement* if product and brand suitable;
- *Defined measurement metrics (key performance indicators)* and metric analyses.

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[474] Ibid

The essential attribute for efficient brand communication is creative material – format, visual branding – development and applicability for each social media platform. At the Isobar agency, two designers work on adapting, creating and optimising different creative concepts and formats for effective brand communication and presence on different media platforms. This confirms the part of the Thesis author's proposed methodology related to vital content packaging, research findings, and JSC Delfi expert's feedback on the importance of appropriate content curation for each platform. The brands applying those attributes when developing communication campaigns have higher efficiency in media metrics: audience reach, engagement and brand metrics: preference, usage, and brand action. The following process design was developed using the proposed methodology, and the brand attribute framework application was determined. As a result, developing the client's brand or product campaigns are simplified and applied in **five steps**.

Firstly, after receiving the client campaign brief detailing the campaign brand or product, campaign aim, target audience, budget and timing, the agency's task is to develop and execute a successful communication campaign across social media platforms. The summary of the campaign development process and the most effective step in the process, where the Thesis author's proposed branding methodology is effectively applied, is described in Figure 4.4.

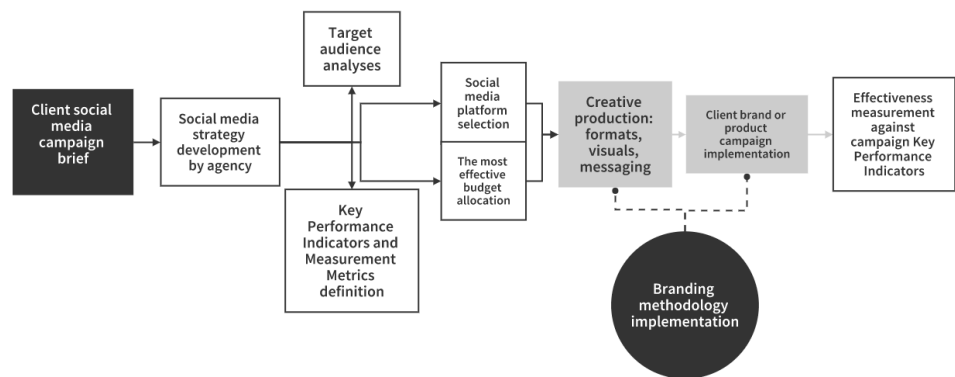Fig. 4.4. The conception and implementation of a brand or product communication campaign on social media platforms and the implementation of a proposed branding methodology (created by the author, novelty of this research).

The first step, in most cases, is an analysis of the target audience. It includes audience demographics, the number of people in a particular target audience group, media consumption

habits, the most used social media platforms by the target audience, audience lifestyle and other essential aspects necessary to understand better where and how the brand should communicate with its audience. In addition, defining Key Performance Indicators (KPI) for a brand or product campaign is vital in this step. These metrics may differ depending on the campaign goal – product awareness, product sales awareness and others. The precise definition of the KPI of the campaign makes it possible to successfully define social media and campaign effectiveness measurement metrics. These metrics show whether the campaign has attained its goals based on platform selection, budget allocation, brand attribute development and implementation as described in the following process steps.

The second step is based on the insights and data acquired during the first step. This step is to select the most appropriate social media platforms for campaign implementations, considering target audience analysis and KPI's. Then, consider the given campaign aim, target audience and KPI's, selected social media platforms, and the advertising budget allocated across them. This step defines the decision on the most effective brand attribute development and selection for implementing a campaign. Various brand attributes are developed during the following step to enable the audience to experience brand or product communication and advertising across selected social media platforms.

The third step is developing the necessary brand attributes for campaign implementation. From the brand or product messages, texts, and visuals to different formats to show and deliver campaign communication, such as short videos, advertising banners, and pictures. During this step, the Thesis author developed and proposed a brand attribute framework that may be applied to explore content consumption-related brand attribute effectiveness for a specific platform. For example, attributes like *Users can engage in content creation; My friends use it too; Engage celebrities in content creation,* can guide brand managers and marketing managers' decisions on campaign implementation techniques, e.g., influencers' involvement in the brand or product campaign or involving the audience in content creation via different tactics. The proposed methodology allows us to approach this step to define brand or product-related attributes and evaluate how the audience across multiple platforms will experience the brand or product communication. The importance of audience consumption experience of brand content is confirmed throughout academic literature and this Thesis's findings. While the Thesis focuses on the younger audience, the findings confirm the necessity of content branding across multi-platforms. During this step, the branding methodology supports content branding decisions to ensure strong and favourable brand or

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product campaign associations that are vital for successful campaign implementation. While campaign KPI's may differ across various campaign aims, the strength of communication and advertising lies in strong and favourable brand or product associations in the audience's minds. Content branding approaches differ across different social media platforms; therefore, agency teams' skills and knowledge of each platform's unique characteristics in terms of effective formats and audience expectations are essential to developing successful content and content branding.

The findings of this Thesis and proposed methodology are transferable to other industries where product content consumption experience via social media platforms is essential, showing higher brand communication efficiency. For successful brand communication on social media platforms, product-related attributes like product quality and promise should first be in place. How the audience experiences the product or brand communication on various platforms contributes to and develops brand attractiveness and distinctiveness. It is especially crucial for the fast-moving goods sector, which is characterised by intense competition and low product involvement. Then the brand communication and presence on social media platforms could improve brand competitiveness and distinctiveness. While these assumptions should be validated in empirical research, the Thesis author assumes that the proposed methodology can be applied to other industries rather than just the news media sector.

The fourth step is implementing a brand or product campaign across selected platforms in each timing and budget framework. This step is a tactical process, often connected with the advertising campaign setup process, data analytics set-up process, and creative materials distribution across selected social media platforms. During this step, campaign analytics and optimization often take place to ensure effectiveness. In addition, any changes during the campaign implementation are usually performed to increase campaign visibility, content branding and other aspects.

The fifth step is the process's final step, which occurs after the brand or product communication campaign is finished. The precise analysis of campaign effectiveness against defined campaign aims and KPI's is performed using measurement metrics defined in the first step of the process. This step analyses the effectiveness of selected platforms and developed brand attributes.

Brand attributes and their measurement in the 21st century media environment

From an agency perspective, the efficiency of brand communication and advertising on different platforms, mainly social media platforms, has been measured based on media and audience behaviour metrics like audience reach, engagement (likes, shares), content views, and traffic to the brand website. While clients measure the brand and product communication and advertising connected with brand metrics: awareness, preference, loyalty, conversion, and business metrics such as sales in terms of volume and value, those metrics take a longer time to develop and measure. Moreover, those metrics are not always shared with the agency and attributed to certain communication channels, and the social media platform is rarely analysed. To summarise, Mr Safranovs agreed that Thesis research findings are valuable and applicable for brand association development in a new media environment, mainly on social media platforms for brands from other industries. The branding methodology was applied to the most recent client product social media communication strategies, adding increased media metric effectiveness. As brand measures such as distinctiveness and equity require more time to build and measure, the methodology efficacy on these brand objectives has not yet been verified in agency practice; nonetheless, media effectiveness results have shown favourable consequences. The reference in Appendix 6 describes the summary of Mr Safranovs' feedback, Thesis research findings, and developed methodology.

4.3.3. Presentation and discussion of the research findings and branding methodology with the Board of Latvian Advertising Association.

The Thesis research findings and proposed methodology were presented and discussed with the Board of the Latvian Advertising Association on September 14th, 2022, at the office of the Latvian Advertising Association, Artilerijas street 3-k2. The Latvian Advertising Association is a public organization that unites advertisers, media, and agencies. The association aims to promote the development of Latvia's advertising and media industry. The Latvian Advertising Association has existed for 25 years, and significant results have been achieved. Since the time of its founding, the association's main task has been to organise the advertising market - improving the quality of advertising, creating a positive image of advertising in society, and fighting against the development of disproportionate legal norms that would limit advertising and its placement in the media. Achievements and areas of activity of the association:

- Development of the Advertising Law and active participation in the creation of legislative norms;
- Implementation of the self-regulation system;

- Development of the Code of Ethics, creation of the Council of Ethics and practice of the Code of Ethics;
- Development and implementation of good practice regulations in the media and advertising market;
- Regular collection of industry statistics;
- Cooperation with similar organizations outside Latvia;
- Work with public procurement;
- Participation in increasing the quality of professional education in the sector;
- Work in the Communication Industry Expert Council and membership of the Latvian Media Ethics Council.

The association's board is comprised of seven members representing the news media, television media industry, outdoor media industry, print and online media, media agencies, creative and social media agencies and advertisers.

During the board meeting, the Thesis author presented and discussed the Thesis research findings and proposed methodology. As a result, the board members confirmed the research findings' practical innovation and contribution to the media. In addition, the board members noted the following aspects:

The relevance of the research to the industry, specifically national news media. The relevance of the research was confirmed by television, print and news media representatives:

- The media house TV3 Group representative assessed the branding methodology as significant. As a result, the research findings and proposed methodology were presented to the TV3 media representatives, and the methodology will be incorporated into news media tv3.lv branding strategies. The reference from TV3.lv Marketing Director is provided in Appendix 6 of this Thesis.
- Transferability of the findings and methodology to other industries and branding sectors. The reference by the Head of the creative and social media agency Isobar Latvia in Latvia is provided in Appendix 6 of this Thesis.
- The contribution of the Thesis research results in branding strategies for other media, such as television and print.
- Importance of research results on the education of the media industry participants, such as media, media brand managers, advertisers, audiences, and others.

The reference by the chairman of the board confirming the research results' relevance and usefulness to the industry is provided in Appendix 6 of this Thesis.

Conclusions and recommendations

Conclusions

1. The 21st century digital media environment requires new media brand equity-building approaches. To succeed, news media must establish a strong and consistent brand, especially within digital platforms. The lack of research on this topic highlights the importance of media branding research overall.

2. National media brands must compete fiercely with a powerful newcomer - platforms - for audiences and advertising money. Consumer-produced content is another part of a competition that is unprecedented. Consequently, powerful and distinguishable media branding is important for attracting an audience, advertising, and investment. Digitization has significantly impacted media organizations and their relationship with audiences. A strong and distinctive media brand in the digital environment is important to attract audiences, advertising and investment. This is especially important in a media environment characterized by intense competition and the need to adapt to changing audience preferences.

3. Distributed news consumption deludes brand associations and is behind low news media brand attribution in multi-platform environments. This aspect stresses the significance of strong brand associations contributing to news brand uniqueness and equity, ensuring vital news media qualities – credibility, audience loyalty, readership, and financial performance.

4. Content and credibility are the most important attributes for news media brands to consider to build and maintain strong, positive brand associations with Generation Z. However, the audience's experience of the content is also crucial. News media brands should focus on attributes such as their presence on social media, the attractiveness and uniqueness of their content delivery form, and leadership associations to establish favourable brand associations.

5. Generation Z, the audience of news content, values relevance and credibility when forming associations with news media brands. These attributes are considered the most important when evaluating news media brands. Additionally, a news media brand's presence on social media platforms commonly used by this audience is also a crucial attribute. Consumption of news content by Generation Z representatives is relevant to their interests and credibility when forming strong associations with news media brands.

6. Generation Z also values news media brand attributes such as appearance, presentation, and interesting content on social media. However, the attributes "my friends used it too" and "users can engage in content creation" were rated as having lower importance. These findings suggest that, while not prioritized by this audience, these attributes may still be relevant for news media brands seeking to establish unique brand associations.

7. The news media brand attributes with the most significant impact on uniqueness are *"my friends use it," "look distinctive and unique," "I like journalists, authors",* and *"use attractive, special formats."* The presence of at least three of these attributes is necessary for news media brands to establish their uniqueness, according to the research. While not all the studied brands may possess these attributes, they possess at least three.

8. It is important to note that the *"look distinctive and unique"* attribute is unique in and of itself. This suggests that having unique attributes can contribute to the overall uniqueness of a news media brand. Therefore, it is vital for news media brands to consider unique associations and attributes to establish a unique brand. This research presents a new approach to understanding news media brand uniqueness based on analyses of unique attributes and the perceived uniqueness of a news media brand. This approach allows for a more comprehensive understanding of the factors contributing to a news media brand's distinctiveness and can be used for branding strategies.

9. Multiple linear regression analyses support the hypoThesis that a combination of category-shared and experience-related attributes significantly influence the uniqueness of news media brands, except for tv3.lv. Therefore, it can be inferred that the tv3.lv brand's uniqueness is significantly influenced by the audience's experience with the brand's content.

10. The impact of non-content-related brand attributes related to the content consumption experience is significant to brand uniqueness when the brand's fundamental or product-related attributes are strong. Therefore, news media brands can differentiate themselves by focusing on attributes related to the audience's experience consuming content and developing strong fundamental or content-related attributes. It is important to note that each brand's uniqueness is formed differently, and news media brands should consider a range of attributes to establish brand uniqueness.

11. Grouping news media attributes into categories based on content-related and non-content-related can facilitate news media brand owners and brand managers in identifying and developing effective news media branding strategies. The analysis of

brand uniqueness development can provide insights into the challenges and opportunities of developing brand attribution, aiding news media owners, managers, and employees in building a strong and unique news media brand.

12. The news media brand attributes with the greatest influence on brand equity are brand uniqueness, content that matches the audience's interests, and associations with leading news media and the brand's authors and journalists. Uniqueness has the highest weight, followed by content-related attributes and leadership associations. These findings indicate that news media brands should focus on uniqueness, strong content-related attributes, and leadership associations to build strong brand equity.

13. Brand uniqueness significantly impacts news media brand equity. Specifically, uniqueness has the highest weight contributing to the brand equity of delfi.lv, and the second highest weight for the brand equity of tv3.lv and lsm.lv. These findings support the hypoThesis that brand uniqueness is crucial in determining news media brand equity.

14. The approbation of the methodology confirms its practical utility and effectiveness, particularly in its ability to effectively categorize news media brand attributes for the purpose of branding.

15. Content branding is essential for media brands, as it helps owners and brand managers of news media to differentiate them from competitors and establish a unique brand. While maintaining content on a single platform may not necessarily alter audience consumption habits, it can hinder a brand's ability to reach and engage with the audience. Thus, a multi-platform approach is advisable for news media brands to maximize their reach and strength.

16. Parental and family habits and brand usage significantly influence the media choices of younger audiences (especially news media). This aligns with the findings of generation theory, which suggests that one generation's habits and expectations can impact future generations' media choices. Therefore, brands should not abandon the usage patterns and expectations of their current audience but should consider adding new ones to meet the requirements and expectations of future generations.

17. Generation Z prefers high-quality, impartial news presented in a format that aligns with their individual content consumption preferences. Additionally, this demographic group tends to possess a heightened level of discernment in evaluating the credibility and trustworthiness of news sources. As such, it is crucial for news media organizations to

consider the characteristics and tendencies of Generation Z when developing strategies to address this audience.

18. Developed *methodology of news media branding* that is suitable for national news media and can be effectively used to enhance news media brand uniqueness and brand equity in the 21st-century media business environment. This methodology can help national news media brands to identify and prioritize important attributes, evaluate attribute strength and favourability, define an optimal attribute combination, and develop a brand experience approach that includes tactics for attribute development, platform selection, resource allocation, content branding, and effectiveness measurement. As a result, it *strengthens news media brand attribution* and increases the competitiveness of national media in attracting advertising volumes, ensuring sources of media financing and sustainable development of media business.

19. The successful approbation of the developed methodology by Latvian media business company representatives demonstrates its applicability and effectiveness for the national media industry and its potential for transferability to multi-platform branding strategies in other businesses from different industries. These findings suggest that the methodology of branding is a valuable resource for developing effective branding strategies in a variety of contexts.

Recommendations

For news media managers, marketing, and brand managers:

1. To deliver a seamless and satisfying experience for younger audiences, news media need to pay attention to content consumption-experience-related brand attributes. These attributes, which relate to the experience of consuming news, should be prioritized to enhance audiences' overall satisfaction and build brand equity. This may involve investing in user experience design and ensuring that content is easily accessible and enjoyable for all platforms.

2. The importance and certain news brand attribute strength and favourability of the news brand should be analysed and determined. This enables news media brands to analyse and understand which attributes are significant and which of their own attributes are strong, missing or need improvement. The focus should be paid to consumption experience-based brand attributes.

3. Optimal attribute combinations should be applied in news media branding strategies. The media managers should analyse and apply a combination of content and non-

content related brand attributes to develop and maintain brand uniqueness and equity.

4. News media brand experience via attribute combination should be designed based on the proposed *methodology of news media branding*. The methodology blocks can help develop, create, and execute tactics of attribute development, employment to create and maintain strong and favourable brand associations, selection of platforms; resources needed and applied; content packaging and branding and finally, measurement of effectiveness.

5. The designed *methodology of news media branding* is the roadmap for brand development, optimization, and re-evaluation. It enables media brands to adjust or invent any needed changes over time. The observation of news media brand experience effectiveness on brand uniqueness and equity should be monitored over time via consumer surveys, company data sources via media metrics, audience behaviour data and company internal data, including financial and business data.

6. Considering news media brand equity's impact on credibility, quality, audience loyalty and, therefore, the financial performance of the news media, branding strategies should be incorporated in yearly business planning and media organizations' business development plans.

7. News media brand management becomes increasingly complex as it must be managed across multiple platforms, directly impacting brand attribution and distinctiveness in a digital, multi-platform environment. Thus, it is essential to analyse and apply the proposed branding methodology to develop demand for national news media, considering audiences and advertisers.

For academics, researchers, and scholars in the media management field:

8. To understand the facets of media and news media brand equity and its impact on different brand outcomes, it is crucial to study and evaluate non-content-related brand attributes based on theoretical concepts of brand equity.

9. Consumer experience theories should be incorporated into the research of news media brand, and brand equity as content experience across various platforms significantly impacts media brand uniqueness and brand equity.

10. To effectively research brand uniqueness in the news media, it is recommended to utilize brand distinctiveness and customer-based brand equity theories. This

combination allows for a comprehensive examination of the impact of a brand's unique characteristics and consumer perceptions on brand equity.

11. The brand equity aspects in the new media environment should be incorporated and developed in educational materials and study programmes focusing on brand management and media studies.

12. Consumer-based brand equity theories can be applied to examine the impact of content-consumption-related brand attributes on the distinctiveness and equity of a news media brand. These attributes, related to the content or product being consumed, can be studied through consumer experiences and perceptions. The resulting insights can inform branding and positioning strategies for news media organizations.

13. Brand distinctiveness is significantly influenced by experience with brand content across multi-platforms for younger generations. Therefore, theories exploring consumer experience should elaborate on generations' research and its impact on brand outcomes.

14. Brand uniqueness theories can be utilized to investigate media brand distinctiveness, which is becoming increasingly important in the rapidly evolving media environment. These theories can transfer knowledge about the factors that contribute to a brand's uniqueness and how they impact its equity. This knowledge can be helpful for media organizations seeking to establish a strong and unique brand.

For news media policy makers and editors:

15. The news media content, quality, credibility, authors and journalists, and other relevant industry attributes are vital for news brand success, audience use, and preference. Therefore, content policies and strategies should be developed, maintained, and observed over time.

16. The younger audience applies more critical thinking when considering news trustworthy. This audience needs the same quality, neutrality, and diversity of news as other demographic groups; the behaviour of how this audience approaches and consumes news differs from other demographic groups. Thus, multi-platform content distribution strategies should be developed with the same diligence and importance as news media content policies and strategies.

17. Credibility is the essential news media attribute defined by the audience. This news media attribute's precise strategy and integrity should be developed and executed daily to develop and maintain news media brand equity.

18. While content, quality, credibility, and other content-related factors are essential and often used as a driving force in news media brand associations, close cooperation between the editorial office and media marketing or brand managers is suggested. How content is packaged and distributed became an essential aspect of news media brand distinctiveness and equity in a new media environment.

For social media managers, brand managers, and agencies:

19. The proposed branding methodology could be transferred to developing consumer experience in multi-platform, especially social media platform settings for brands from other industries. Applying category-specific product attributes and product consumption experience-related attributes connected to product experience in a multi-platform environment can successfully guide branding decisions for brands from different industries.

20. Product-involvement, competition environment should be considered as the proposed methodology developed for a low-involvement brand operating in a highly competitive environment.

Future research

Future research on news media branding in the new media environment should examine the role of brand distinctiveness and equity in different demographic groups of audiences. Considering other attributes and aspects that may contribute to these concepts is advisable. This can provide a more comprehensive understanding of brand distinctiveness and equity in the news media business environment and inform news media organisations' branding and positioning strategies. The audience has multiple demands and behaviours in relation to the news, including being kept up to date, investigating a topic in greater depth, and being entertained. These factors are beyond the scope of this study; consequently, additional research is advised. Finally, the most important research topic is how media brand equity and brand uniqueness influence audience news media preference and usage. This research reveals that news media with the highest levels of distinctiveness and brand equity are not necessarily the most widely used. However, if analysing younger audiences, **15–24-year-olds**, the news media's real user data shows different trends. The most used news media is **delfi.lv**, closely

followed by **lsm.lv** news media. **La.lv** and **tv3.lv** are the third and fourth-rated news media based on real user data in May 2022.[475] The data suggest that brand uniqueness and equity positively relate to news media consumption and preference. However, studying other factors influencing news consumption can provide media organizations with insights and tactics for attracting and retaining an audience. Understanding what drives news consumption habits and how to engage and retain audiences effectively can help media organizations build a loyal audience over time.

Considering the relationship between the aim of the Thesis research as evidenced in the research questions, hypotheses, objectives, research methods used, findings, and a theses presented for defence, it is feasible to assert that the dissertation's objectives have been achieved.

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[475] Gemius, S.A.(2022). gemiusAudience, 2022-05-01–2022-05-30 (7-74 y.o.).Latvia. Available online: https://rating.gemius.com/lv/ (accessed on June 6, 2022).

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APPENDICES

RIGA TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY

Faculty of Engineering Economics and Management

Institute of Business Engineering and Management

Linda Saulīte

Doctoral Student of the Study Programme "Management Science and Economics"

NEWS MEDIA BRANDING
IN THE 21st CENTURY MEDIA BUSINESS
ENVIRONMENT

Multi-platforms and on-demand media content consumption as media environment of the 21st century

Scientific supervisor

Professor Dr. oec.

DENISS ŠČEULOVS

Riga 2023

A fundamental shift in media consumption has occurred: media and information usage largely shifted to the online sphere.[476] Media consumption across the globe is increasingly happening in digital formats. The increased number of devices capable of supporting digital media and increased internet access speed has allowed consumers to access the media content of their choice, be it information, entertainment, or social activity, anytime, anywhere.[477] The audience, especially the younger audience, demands a content consumption experience that is mobile, modular, variable and does not depend on a specific platform, device, or outlet.[478] Significant trends in media content consumption include increasing time spent in the online environment, consumption on mobile devices, time-shifted viewing, and on-demand consumption.[479] These trends, more than ever, influence traditional or legacy media and all media sectors, including news media and online news media brands. According to the latest data from the global overview report, there are 4.95 billion internet users, which is 62.5 % of the population.[480] Internet users have grown 4 % yearly, according to a report. The number of internet users has grown in the last ten years is more than 100 %. Active social media users are 4.62 billion or 58.4 % of the population, growing by 10.1 % in 2021 compared with the previous year.[481] As seen in Figure 1.1, social media users grew by more than 100 % compared to 2012 to 2022. However, it is essential to note that users may not represent unique individuals.[482]

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[477] Westcott, K., Arbanas, J., Downs, K., Arkenberg, K.,& Jarvis, D (2021). .Digital Media Trends, 15th ed.; Courting the Consumer in a World of Choice. *Deloitte Insights,* 16 April 2021. Available online: https://www2.deloitte.com/us/en/insights/industry/technology/digital-media-trends-consumption-habits-survey/summary.html (accessed on 1 June 2021)

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[480] Kempt, S. (2022). *Digital 2022: global overview report.* Available https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2022-global-overview-report

[481] Ibid

[482] Ibid

220
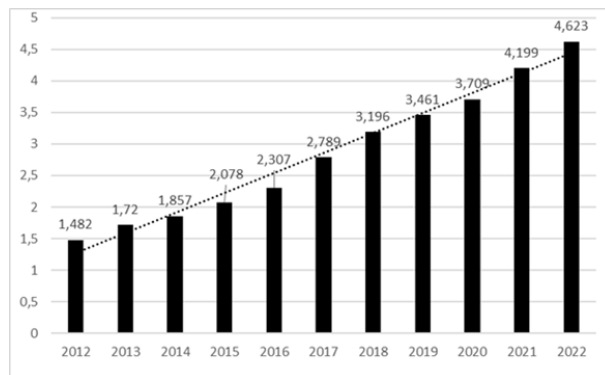
Fig.1.1 Number of social media users (in millions) globally, January 2012 -2022.[483]

The average daily time spent on the internet is 6 hours and 58 minutes by a user, where 92.1 % access it via mobile phones. While the average time spent on social media is 2 hours and 27 minutes, increasing by 6.2 % in 2021. Similarly to global trends, social media usage is growing in Latvia. 77 % of all 15 to 64 y.o. Latvian audiences can be reached daily in 2021 on different social media platforms, compared to only 4 9% in 2012. [484](see Figure 1.2.)
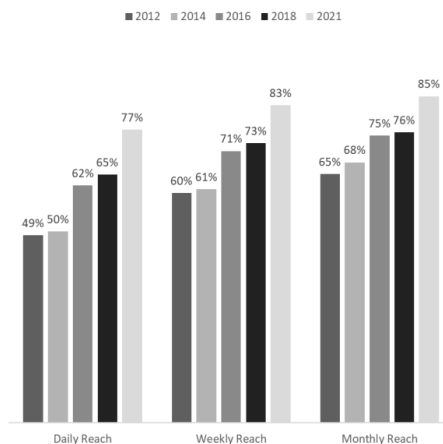
Fig. 1.2. Social media daily, weekly, and monthly reach for individuals 15 to 64 y.o., years 2012-2021, Latvia[485]

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[483] Kempt, S. (2022). *Digital 2022: global overview report.* Available https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2022-global-overview-report

[484] Dentsu Aegis Network Latvia.(2021). Consumer Connection System Latvia: Consumer Research Quantitative Data 2012–2021.

[485] Ibid

Internet users in Latvia grew by 3.2 % in 2020 and are estimated to number 86.9 % of the population. In the audience aged 16 to 24, this percentage is 97.9 %, reaching 99 % at the end of 2021.[486] According to Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia data, 99 % of the population in the age group 16 to 24 y.o use the internet regularly in Latvia in 2021, just growing more than 1 % from 2011 as internet usage in this age group has been high over the years. For this younger audience, the most popular activities are spending time on social media, instant messaging, and email platforms.[487] In addition, 81.7 % of all internet users read news media and print or online magazine versions. While the news, print and online media consumption are high for a younger audience over time – 71.7 % of this age group consumed those media content online in 2021, the highest percentage consuming media online is for the age group 35 – 44 y.o. 84 % of this age group access those media online. As seen in Figure 1.3, media consumption via the internet has increased over the last ten years in all demographic groups in Latvia.

Fig. 1.3. News media, online print and magazine usage online by individuals at the beginning of the year (per cent of the total population within the corresponding group) 2004 – 2021, in
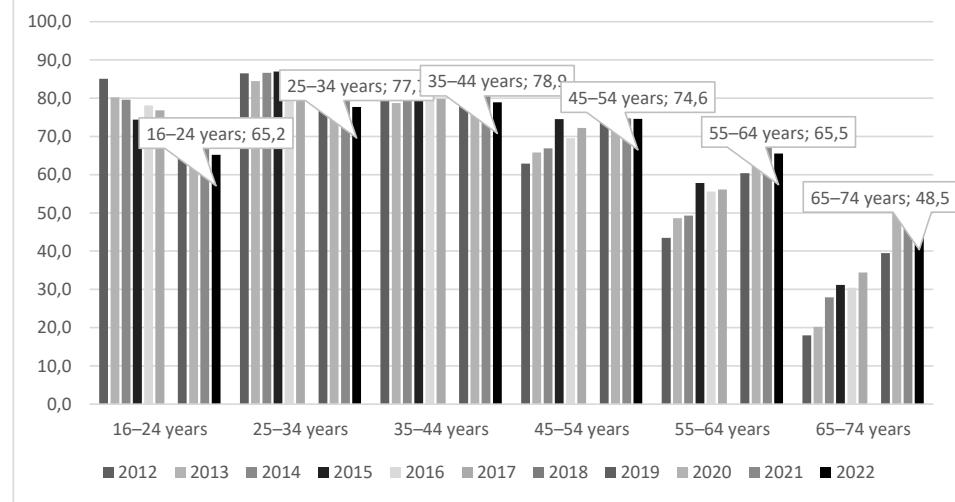
age groups and statistical regions (Riga, Pierīga, Vidzeme, Latgale, Kurzeme and Zemgale), Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia.[488]

[486] Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia, DLM020.(2022). Purposes for internet usage by individuals at the beginning of year (per cent of total population within the corresponding group) 2004 – 2022, [assesed September 4, 2022], available https://stat.gov.lv/en/statistics-themes/information-technologies/computers-and-internet/tables/dlm020-purposes-internet?themeCode=DL

[487] Dentsu Aegis Network Latvia.(2021). Consumer Connection System Latvia: Consumer Research Quantitative Data 2012–2021.

[488] Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia, DLM020.(2022). Purposes for internet usage by individuals at the beginning of year (per cent of total population within the corresponding group) 2004 – 2022, accessed September 4, 2022, https://stat.gov.lv/en/statistics-themes/information-technologies/computers-and-internet/tables/dlm020-purposes-internet?themeCode=DL

Following this, content consumption from traditional forms like TV, Radio, and Print moves to the online environment. If we compare the share of time spent by media type, online media content consumption increased from 27 % in 2014 to 44 % in 2021.[489] (see Figure 1.4).
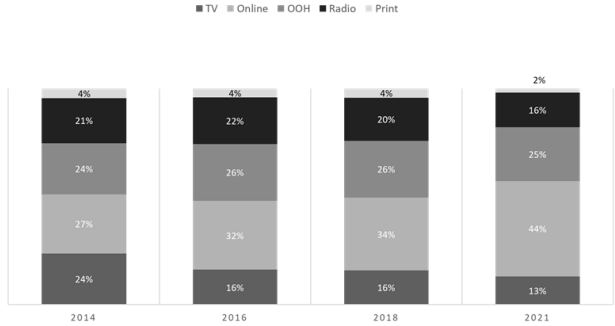
Fig. 1.4. Share of time spent with the media type from 2014 to 2021: ages 15–64, Latvia.[490]

For younger audiences, online news consumption has decreased over the years (Figure 1.2); however, social media usage increased, following the trends globally (see Figure 1.5).
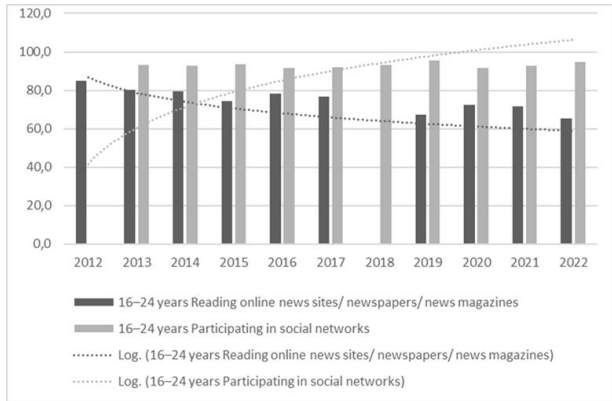
Fig. 1.5. News consumption online and social media platforms usage in the age group 16 to 24 years old, individuals at the beginning of the year (per cent of the total population within the corresponding group) 2012 – 2021, statistical regions (Riga, Pierīga, Vidzeme, Latgale, Kurzeme and Zemgale), Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia.[491]

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[489] Dentsu Aegis Network Latvia.(2021).Consumer Connection System Latvia: Consumer Research Quantitative Data 2012–2021.

[490] Ibid

[491] Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia, DLM020.(2022). Purposes for internet usage by individuals at the beginning of year (per cent of total population within the corresponding group) 2004 – 2022, accessed September 4, 2022, https://stat.gov.lv/en/statistics-themes/information-technologies/computers-and-internet/tables/dlm020-purposes-internet?themeCode=DL

223

Compared to European Union countries, younger audiences (16 to 29), the trend is similar; social media usage has increased over the years, while news consumption has slightly decreased in Latvian audiences (see Figure 1.6).
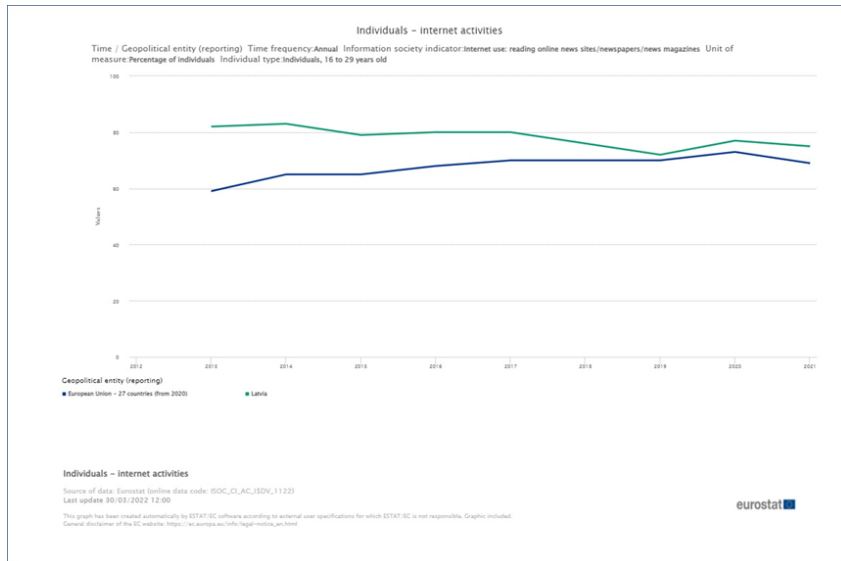
Fig. 1.6. Online news media usage, individuals 16-29 years old (percentage from individuals), from 2012-2021, European Union – 27 countries and Latvia.[492]

     The Thesis author concludes that content consumption increasingly happens in an online environment. Growing social media usage, especially in younger audiences, confirm in this Thesis section 1.1. and 1.2 scholars' findings that media and news media content consumption increasingly occurs via multiple platforms, mainly social media. Accessibility and technologies increased audiences' time with media, but how the audience consumes media content changed from traditional to online. The convenience of access increased consumers' time spent on different media platforms. However, the consumption medium transformed from traditional or legacy media brands to online environments. This trend is closely associated with multi-platform expansion and following content distribution and consumption behaviour. The most significant developments that affect how media content is supplied, delivered, and consumed are the move from consuming information and content on traditional or legacy media to an

[492] Eurostat. (2022). Internet use, Individuals - internet activities, Individuals - internet activities [ISOC_CI_AC_I__custom_3940731] Available. https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/bookmark/3eb722c2-79c1-4a02-836f-eaeaf79c4ae6?lang=en, (assessed September 4, 2022).

online environment, multi-platform media content consumption on-demand, content consumption via social media platforms.

These developments have led to new content distribution methods and the convenience of access points on different platforms. Different platforms, such as social media platforms, and aggregate news platforms, have also created new ways of media content distribution and consumption concerning the amount, distribution and consumption platforms, consumption device, time, and attitude. As discussed before, new platforms have appeared due to digitalisation. In addition, new chances for content distribution, consumption, and branding have emerged thanks to the evolution of social media platforms. The biggest platforms or social network sites are Facebook, with 2.91 billion active users globally.[493] Youtube follows closely with 2.56 billion users globally, with Whatsapp and Instagram as the third and fourth most popular social platforms. The expansion of platforms played a fundamental catalyst in media content distribution and consumption and significantly changed media brands in the new interactive online environment.

Furthermore, multi-platforms not only created new ways of distributing media content to the audiences, but the introduction of platforms and rising multi-platform content distribution tactics also created a previously unheard-of media content consumption pattern: on-demand content consumption.

Media content consumption on-demand

Due to the multi-platform content distribution and consumption, all media audience segments observed on-demand content consumption patterns. In the television (TV) audience analyses, the content consumption patterns of this audience, the time-shifted viewing and video-on-demand content consumption are growing globally and in Latvia. Time-shifting viewing is the recording of programming to a storage medium to be viewed or listened to after the live broadcasting. Linear TV content consumption means that the audience watches a TV program on the channel it is presented on at its scheduled time. In terms of daily reach, Linear TV audience reach decreased from 81 % in 2012 to 65 % in 2021. The monthly and weekly reach decreased slightly less[494]. The younger the audience, the less this audience linearly consumes TV content. In 2021 70 % of the audience age group, 15 to 24 y.o., is reached weekly

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[493] Kempt, S. (2022). *Digital 2022: global overview report.* [Accessed September 12,2022]. Available https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2022-global-overview-report

[494] Dentsu Aegis Network Latvia. (2021). Consumer Connection System Latvia: Consumer Research Quantitative Data 2012–2021.

via Liner TV, reaching 79 % of this audience in 2012. Increasing audience data on time-shifted and on-demand TV content viewing shows that the audience needs not a device, platform or outlet-dependent media content consumption. TV content consumption on-demand is growing in all age group audience segments.

The younger the audience, the higher content usage is on-demand. In 2021 weekly reach of this age group was 70 % compared to 4 7% in 2014. For all 15 to 64 y.o. audience in Latvia's weekly reach consuming media content on-demand is 51 % in 2021, compared to 32 % in 2014 (see Figure 1.7).

TV on-demand

	2014	2016	2018	2021
All 15-64	31%	40%	42%	51%
15-24	47%	53%	54%	70%
25-34	39%	48%	50%	61%
35-44	32%	42%	52%	53%
45-54	23%	33%	34%	44%
55-64	16%	25%	28%	33%
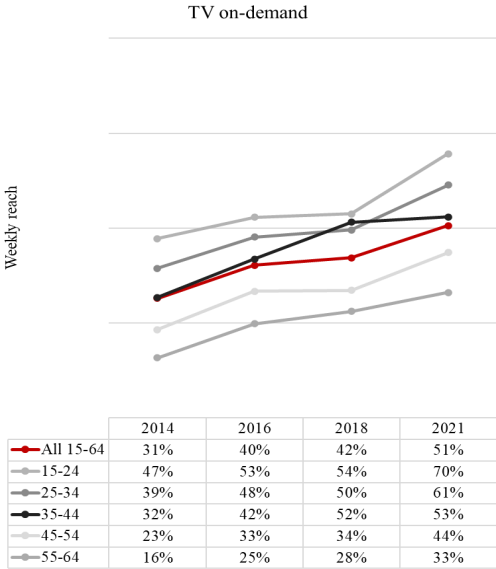
Fig. 1.7. Television (TV) on-demand weekly reach by ages groups, Latvia, 2014 – 2021, base: all 15 – 64.[495]

Content consumption on-demand also increases in radio media audiences. Radio media audience reach remains stable over time with growing audience share streaming music on paid or free platforms - 28% of all audience streaming music daily in 2021 compering to 16 % in 2016. Content consumption via streaming platforms depends on the age group where younger audiences 15–24 y.o. consumes content at a significantly higher level – 55 % of this age group consume weekly content, while others were below 40 % in 2021. See Figure 1.8.

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[495] Dentsu Aegis Network Latvia.(2021). Consumer Connection System Latvia: Consumer Research Quantitative Data 2012–2021.

	15-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64
Free	57%	40%	25%	17%	10%
Paid	55%	25%	17%	7%	3%
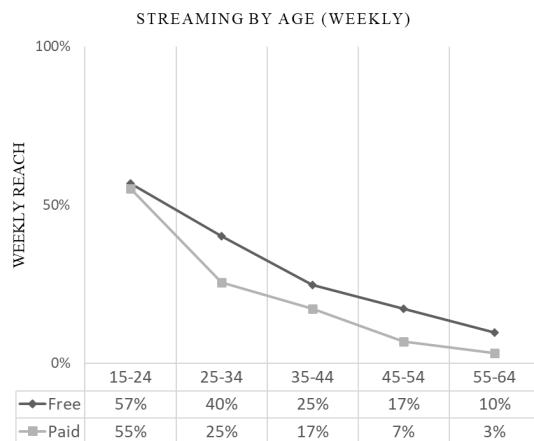
Fig. 1.8. The radio streaming weekly reach by age groups, Latvia, 2021, base: all 15– 64. [496]

Similarly, news consumption happens on demand and via social media platforms. According to news media TVNET survey in 2019, 33 % of respondents – news media audience – accessed TVNET news via social media (see Figure 1.9). For Delfi.lv news media – 30 % of all respondents accessed news via social media platforms. For news media jauns.lv this percentage is even higher – 43 %.
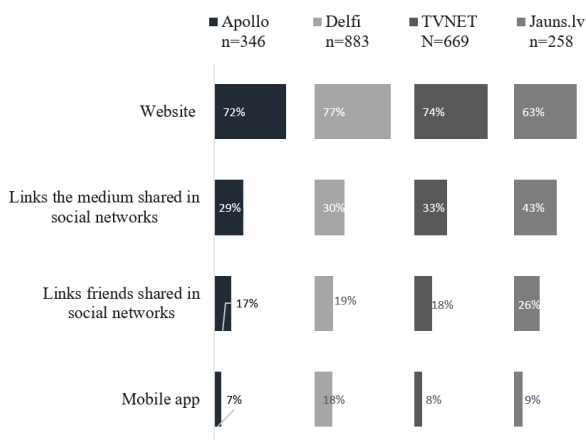
Fig. 1.9. The way of accessing news of particular news media, Latvia, 2019, (Norstat and TVNET, online survey, Latvia, 2019).[497]

[496] Dentsu Aegis Network Latvia.(2021). *Consumer Connection System Latvia: Consumer Research Quantitative Data 2012–2021.*

[497] TVNET. (2019). *Online survey News Portals Brands and Usage Habits*, Latvia, Target audience: 18– 55, read news, Norstad, Sample: nationally representative, n=1036

In 2022, the percentage of media audiences accessing news via social media platforms is even higher. For example, in 2022, 35 % of respondents of the TVNET audience accessed TVNET news via social media platforms, whereas direct access to the new media website decreased from 74 % to 71 % (see Figure 1.10). Similar trends are seen for audiences accessing the news of apollo.lv, delfi.lv and jauns.lv news media.
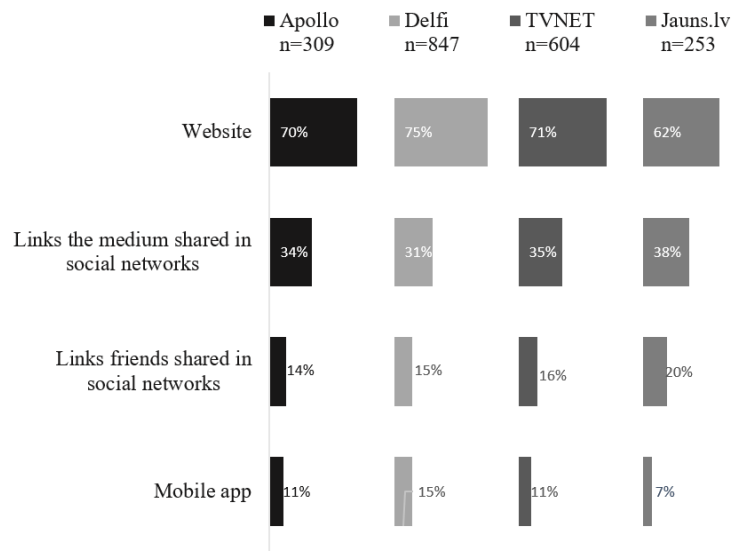
Fig. 1.10. The way of accessing news of particular news media, Latvia, 2022,(Norstat and TVNET, online survey, Latvia, 2022).[498]

Analysing social media platforms as news assessed by demographics for each discussed news media brand shows that the younger the audience, the higher percentage of them accessing news via social media platforms (see Figure 1.11).

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[498] TVNET. (2022). *Online survey News Portals Brands and Usage Habits*, Latvia, Target audience: 18– 55, read news, Norstad, Sample: nationally representative, n=1036
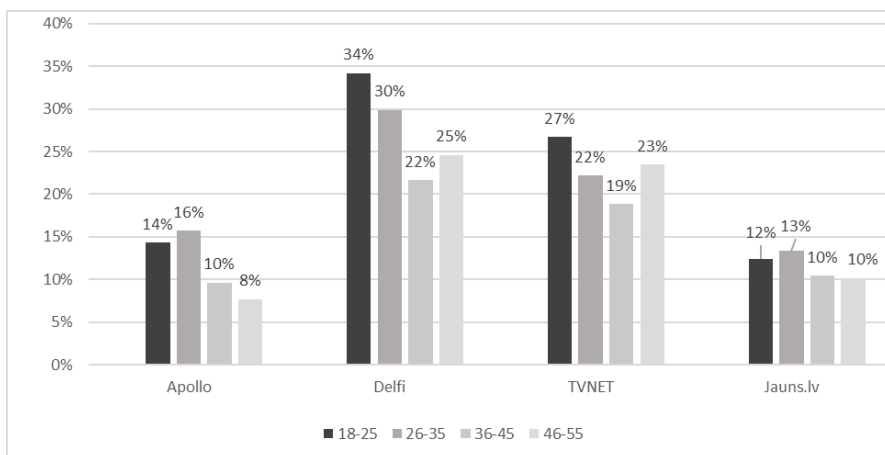
Figure 1.11. Percentage of audience accessing news via social media platforms of particular news media by demographic, Latvia, 2022, (Norstat and TVNET, online survey, Latvia, 2022).[499]

However, also older audience tends to access news via social media platforms confirming previously discussed changes n news distribution and consumption. According to scholars' studies in section 1 of this Thesis, distributed news consumption is confirmed in all age groups, and data analyses in Latvian news media audiences support these findings. Similar trends globally are described in research by the Reuters Institute (2017), demonstrating that online and social media platforms are the primary news sources, especially for younger audiences (see Figure 1.12).[500]

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[499] TVNET. (2022). *Online survey News Portals Brands and Usage Habits, Latvia,* Target audience: 18− 55, read news, Norstad, Sample: nationally representative, n=1036

[500] Newman, N., Fletcher, R., Kalogeropoulos, A., & Nielsen, R. (2019). Reuters Institute Digital News Report 2019. In Digital News Report (1–156). *Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism.*
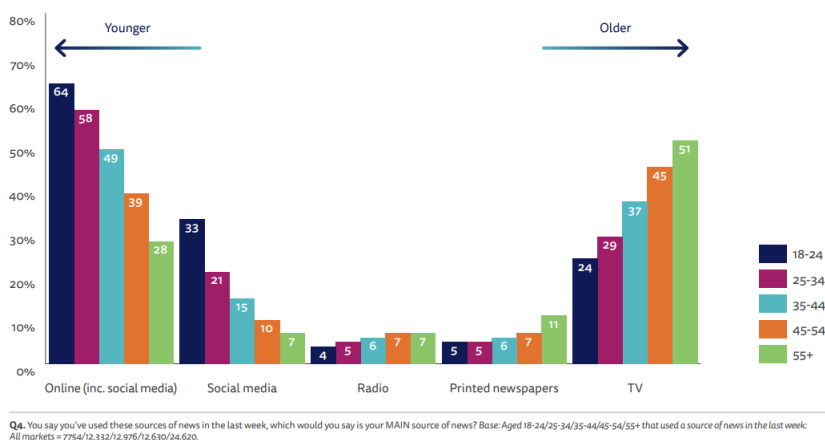
Fig.1.12. Main sources of news by demographic groups, 36 countries, 2017 (Reuters Institute Digital News Report 2017).[501]

Those data confirm the scholarly findings discussed in section 1 of this Thesis that news consumption increasingly happens via multi-platforms, mainly social media platforms. The author of the Thesis concludes that while the increasing use of global social media platforms offers media brands possibilities to distribute content and connect with their audiences; however, this has created new obstacles and competition for national news media against platforms. For example, according to the advertising audience, there are 1.2 million active Facebook users in Latvia.[502] While the most popular national online news media delfi.lv has a monthly audience of 833 135 real users.[503] Social media platforms and other platforms strengthen the competitive climate for media and news media, and global media brands make the atmosphere even more competitive for national news media in a multi-platform setting. In the following section, the author of the Thesis examines the new media environment characteristic in greater depth, highlighting the issues encountered by news media, especially national news media, in a multi-platform setting, as previously described.

Generation Z and news media, the role of generations.

With the media advancements of the preceding decades, especially the advent of the internet and digital and online media production and companies, a great deal of media study

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[501] Newman, N., Fletcher, R., Kalogeropoulos, A., Levy, D.,& Nielsen, R. K. (2017). Reuters Institute Digital News Report 2017. Available at SSRN: https://ssrn.com/abstract=3026082

[502] META (2022). Advertising data in Latvia,unpublished. (assessed September 21,2022).

[503] Gemius, S.A.(2022). gemiusAudience, 2022-00-01–2022-01-31 (7-74 y.o.).Latvia. Available online: https://rating.gemius.com/lv/ (accessed on 5 March 2022).

has centred on how various social groups, including age groups, have adopted new services and digital technologies.[504] The generational theory has never been a prominent feature in media research.[505] However, there has recently been an increasing interest in generational factors in media and audience studies.[506] Researchers in psychology, sociology, literature and political science use the term "generation" to refer to different age cohorts' distinct social and awareness patterns.[507] The simplest explanation of the generation notion pertains to the biological characteristics of a generational group, namely birth year. According to the psychological definition, "generation" refers to a specific period in a person's lifecycle. From a life course viewpoint, age is also dynamic, with several stages that have distinct characteristics that impact media use in conjunction with other social factors that form life phases.[508] These periods and events have an effect on our behaviour, including our media consumption. In contrast to the objective notion of a cohort, a statistical sample based on divisions of biological ages, life course, life phase, and generation attempts to represent the social dynamics of the individual in relation to the social setting by combining a matrix of the life course, life phase, and generation on a sample of biological ages.[509]

Mannheim identifies 'fresh contact,' or the moment when an individual encounters a novelty of some type, as a fundamental ingredient in the formation of generational experience.[510] [511] As young people lack experience relative to older people, fresh contacts will have a stronger impact on the young than on the old, and subsequent experience tends to acquire its meaning from this initial set, whether it appears as confirmation or fulfilment.[512] Following Mannheim's focus on the relevance of fresh contact, it may be hypothesized that the

[504] Bolin, G., & Skogerbø, E. (2013). Age, generation and the media. *Northern Lights: Film & Media Studies Yearbook,* 11(1), 3–14. https://doi.org/10.1386/nl.11.1.3_2

[505] Ibid, p.3-14

[506] Haddon, L., & Mante-Meijer, E. (2012). *Generational Use of New Media* (E. Loos, Ed.) (1st ed.). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315584270

[507] Colombo, F., & Fortunati, L. (2011). *Broadband Society and Generational Changes.* Berlin, Germany: Peter Lang Verlag.

[508] Timonen, T.,& Conlon,C. (2015). Beyond Mannheim: Conceptualising how people 'talk' and 'do' generations in contemporary society, *Advances in Life Course Research,*Volume 24,2015,Pages 1-9,ISSN 1040-2608, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.alcr.2015.03.001

[509] Ibid, p.1-9.

[510] Ibid, p.1-9.

[511] Bolin, G., & Skogerbø, E. (2013). Age, generation and the media. *Northern Lights: Film & Media Studies Yearbook*. 11. 10.1386/nl.11.1.3_2.

[512] Ibid

media technology and content encountered during one's formative years will serve as the foundation for all subsequent media experiences.[513] This is how media generations are thought to develop, with common experiences connected to specific media technologies or content.[514] This let foundation the actuality of Thesis research to focus on the younger audience, Generation Z and how digital technologies and changes in media consumption developed an entirely new media audience and what media brand attributes influence their choice and attitude toward the media brands, especially news brands. Members of Generation Z are financially responsible and motivated and believe that the only way to get ahead is to work independently and earn their place in the world.[515] [516] Generation Z was born into the digital age, but Generation Y grew up seeing the internet's innovations. For them, the emergence of social media is the most significant effect of the internet.[517] The rise of social media has had the most significant effect on the generational identity of Generation Z. The prevalence of social media platforms has strengthened the competitive attitude of this generation, who seek to compare their life to those of their online peers.[518] On social media, Generation Z individuals like to produce and share content that displays them in a positive light and is intended exclusively for their defined target audience. Mobile connectivity has made smartphones a requirement for them. The younger generation will consume more on-demand content than the older generation.[519] Numerous kinds of research show that the younger generation uses global or international media brands over national or local ones.[520]

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[513] Gumpert, G., & Cathcart, R. (1985). Media grammars, generations andmedia gaps, *Critical Studies in Mass Communication*, 2: 1, 23–35

[514] Bolin, G., & Skogerbø, E. (2013). Age, generation and the media. *Northern Lights: Film & Media Studies Yearbook*. 11. 10.1386/nl.11.1.3_2.

[515] Villa, D., & Dorsey.J. (2017). The state of Gen Z 2017: meet the throwback generation. Austin: *The Center for Generational Kinetics*.

[516] Laor, T., & Galily, Y. (2016). Who'S clicking on on-demand? media consumption patterns of generations Y &Z, Technology in Society, Volume 70,102016, ISSN 0160-791X, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.techsoc.2022.102016.

[517] Ibid, p.2-7.

[518] Ibid, p. 2-7.

[519] Ibid, p.2-7.

[520] Kalmus, V., Masso, A., & Marju.L. (2013). Preferences in media use and perception of inter-generational differences among age groups in Estonia: A cultural approach to media generations. *Northern Lights: Film & Media Studies Yearbook*. 11. 10.1386/nl.11.1.15_1

Media consumption is a significant influence in establishing generational identity and may even serve as a foundation for the emergence of each generation's unique characteristics.[521] The usage patterns of various media technologies and channels and opinions on the benefits and dangers of the internet reveal significant age-related differences in how individuals connect to these technologies.[522] Numerous studies have studied generational differences in media consumption. The younger a person was when a significant historical or fundamental event occurred, the larger its influence on their life.[523] Therefore, it is safe to assume that for Generation Z, digital technologies and the availability of media consumption access points and devices fostered the development of connected consumption and media experiences, including the use of various platforms, as an integral part of their daily lives, behaviours, and the formation of their social and individual identities. According to the logic of the concept of media generations, comparable and shared media experiences during formative years link individuals and serve as the basis for generational identity.[524]

As mentioned, an increasing number of consumers, especially the younger audience, prefer and consume more global and social media platforms than national media, especially national news media. Much research has been conducted on this generation, and many agree that these people will bring about many changes across all industries, including media and news media consumption. Generation Z is different from other generations because they are the first to grow up wholly in the digital era. They are tech-savvy, mobile-first, and have high standards for spending their time online. More news media companies' content is consumed via social media platforms, and the mobile environment follows a multi-platform trend. Rozukalne's (2008) research finds that media content is a constant and simultaneous companion in the daily lives of young people.[525] Most young people's media consumption is ritualised and full of media routines; young people enthusiastically and constantly absorb content from various media outlets.[526] The younger demographic requires mobile, platform-independent, interactive, and

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[521] Kalmus, V., Masso, A., & Marju.L. (2013). Preferences in media use and perception of inter-generational differences among age groups in Estonia: A cultural approach to media generations. *Northern Lights: Film & Media Studies Yearbook.* 11. 10.1386/nl.11.1.15_1

[522] Ibid

[523] Ibid

[524] Bolin, G., & Skogerbø, E.(2013). Age, generation and the media (2013). *Northern Lights: Film & Media Studies Yearbook.* 11. 10.1386/nl.11.1.3_2.

[525] Rožukalne A. (2012). Young people as a media audience: From content to usage processes. *Central European Journal of Communication*, 5(1 (8)):105-120

[526] Ibid, p.112-120.

on-demand media consumption. Social media platform usage has been growing yearly and exceeds the usage of national media in the online environment.[527]

In Latvia, the share of audience visits to national media websites decreased by 12 % over the past seven years, versus the share of audience visits for international media brands and social media platforms increased by 14 % over the same period (see Figure 1.13).
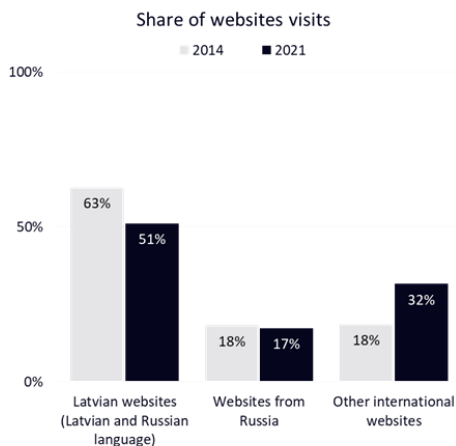
Fig. 1.13. Share of audience visits to news websites by language. Individuals 15 to 64 y.o., years 2014 and 2021, Latvia. [528]

The share of visits to national news media has decreased in the past seven years, while the number of visits to global websites and social media platforms has grown notably. This confirms that social media platforms create great possibilities for media to deliver content and reach audiences but also cannibalise the national news media audience. Therefore, to understand the media consumption patterns of younger audiences, it is worth analysing content consumption in this particular age group based on language and global platforms versus national news media.

A younger audience, 15–24 years old, used traditional media less than average and preferred online media content. In addition, this audience chose global or international media and social media platforms. International media brands had the highest share of audience visits from younger audiences (see Figure 1.14).

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[527] Dentsu Aegis Network Latvia. (2021). Consumer Connection System Latvia: Consumer Research Quantitative Data 2012–2021.

[528] Ibid
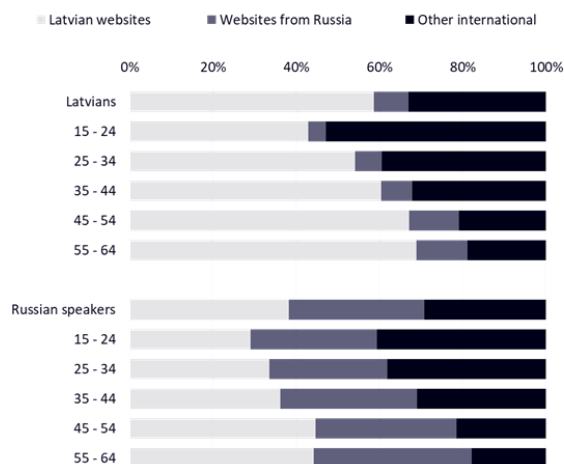
Fig. 1.14. Share of audience visits to news websites by language and demographics. Individuals 15–64 y.o., 2021, Latvia.[529]

Those data let the Thesis author conclude that younger audiences prefer global media brands over national ones and increasingly access news online and via social media platforms.

Generation Z and news media

Youngsters still want the news media to link their environment to the world, but they do not think that traditional media are the best way to do that. As a result, the news media are now fighting for attention, and there is a high-level consumption of news through social media. [530] This is a crucial aspect for the news and national news media as the medium and moment of consumption for this audience is more significant than others. For younger audiences, media content is secondary because it may be received through various mediums at various times and locations. As discussed previously, the author states this aspect puts the future of national news media at risk – whether these media will have an audience in the future.

More extensive research recently conducted by the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism (2019) found that younger viewers differ from older generations in what they do

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[529] Dentsu Aegis Network Latvia.(2021). Consumer Connection System Latvia: Consumer Research Quantitative Data.

[530] Galan, L., Osserman, J., Parker, T., & Taylor, M. (2019). How young people consume news and the implications for mainstream media. *Flamingo and Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism*, Oxford University,UK.

and their fundamental attitudes regarding what they desire from the news.[531] This study reflects the influence of digitalisation media and media consumption abundantly. This generation is primarily motivated by progress and life satisfaction, reflected in their news preferences. They still need and desire to absorb news, but they do not necessarily view traditional media as the best or only option.

News media and young people view the role and value of news differently. This audience wants news brands to create useful, entertaining, and enjoyable products.[532] The results suggest that Generation Z heavily utilises mobile technologies and social media platforms. Unsurprisingly, they prefer tailored material and consume media on demand. The difficulty for news media is that these companies and their products play a minor role in this generation's lives.

The Reuters study also revealed three key aspects determining this generation's attitude to news media. These are the moment of consumption, the person, and the medium.[533] These form key takeaways:

- **The news experience should be easy and accessibl**e, such as on Facebook, Netflix, or other social media platforms. Social media platforms are a growing platform for content consumption, including media and news media content. Generation Z is likelier to turn to social media platforms and messaging apps (57 %). Generation Z's news sources include Facebook (37 %), Google (33 %), and YouTube (31 %) to obtain trending news. Facebook is equally popular as a first destination for the older generation, while Instagram has become the first news destination for younger audiences in the last few years; [534]

- News media brands must provide **stories in a way that is in line with the expectations of this audience and deliver them in moments when they are open to the news.** This calls for using formats native to mobile and social media platforms. The influence of the news consumption moment on what a person is looking for in the news is critical when determining the role and effects of news media consumption;

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[531] Galan, L., Osserman, J., Parker, T., & Taylor, M. (2019). How young people consume news and the implications for mainstream media. *Flamingo and Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism*, Oxford University,UK.

[532] Ibid

[533] Ibid

[534] Ibid

- How **news media deliver their stories may need to change**, including addressing negativity, stereotypes, diversity, and how news brands present themselves and their content on third-party platforms.

To summarise, digitalisation has created new relationships with media and news media, especially for Generation Z. First, multi-platform development has created new content distribution and consumption opportunities. Second, various consumption points and platforms increase the significance of the news consumption experience, especially for Generation Z. Before digitalisation, it was clear that media and news media consumption were limited to the dedicated moment when the audience turned on a television or radio station or opened a newspaper. [535] Digitalisation and multiple platforms allow extending this experience to multiple moments with different audience needs, platforms, and expectations. Generation Z's relationship with news media depends on the moment. In that case, the person and the medium, then the significance of understanding the moment and medium as part of media brand associations, confirms the role of the consumption experience, especially for Generation Z. This generation's content consumption is pulsating and consistent; in fact, it is this consistency, not the content, that defines young people's media consumption.[536] The significant change due to digitalisation is that content is vital for the audience, but also how this content is experienced or consumed via various platforms and moments. This means creating more native formats for mobile and social platforms and integrating this approach into assets and platforms to ensure a seamless content experience across platforms. Finally, news formats should be more visual and easier to consume to attract the interest of a younger audience. By efficiently addressing these variables, news media can generate rich content and increase engagement with younger audiences. Influencing the type of content, the audience might be looking for, these moments also relate to how and where the audience is accessing the news and, therefore, the medium.[537]

The Thesis author summarises that Generation Z is not particularly passionate about news and national news media, prioritising social media platforms and other mobile applications for entertainment and socialising. This does not mean young consumers do not value traditional or new media brands. Most of them have a leading news brand they turn to for

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[535] Galan, L., Osserman, J., Parker, T., & Taylor, M. (2019). How young people consume news and the implications for mainstream media. *Flamingo and Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism*, Oxford University,UK.

[536] Rožukalne, A.(2012). Young people as a media audience: From content to usage processes. *Central European Journal of Communication.* , 5(1 (8)):105-120

[537] Galan, L., Osserman, J., Parker, T., & Taylor, M. (2019). How young people consume news and the implications for mainstream media. *Flamingo and Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism*, Oxford University,UK.

breaking news or when something needs to be verified, but their brand choice is often impacted by early parental influence, and the format of consumption is almost always digital. The Reuters research (2019) suggests that most young people passively keep up with the news by consuming it where they are most: on social media platforms and mobile phones. This shift from conventional news sources to social media affects how they consume news and their overall attitudes—combining many media consumption, using each medium or topic for a brief time, and perceiving their content as a continuous stream of small, distinct bits. However, the news is part of their lifestyles and is more often accessed through social media platforms and mobile phones. Therefore, strong news media brands play an important role in direct and dedicated news consumption. The more dedicated the news consumption, the more often direct access to the news media website is observed. The Thesis author concludes that the analyses confirm that news for younger audiences is not as significant as older ones; nevertheless, they consume news, but the way they consume news is online, on-demand and via multi-platforms, increasing the significance of not only news content but also the experience of content consumption.

The younger audiences check the news credibility more than other age groups. For the age group 18 to 25, news media credibility is even more critical than for other demographic groups.[538] Interestingly, Generation Z favours news outlets established before 2000 twice as much as emerging media companies.[539] While generation differences in media and news media consumption differ, the significance of the research is far more behind consumption as the role of generation as media audience is vital. The Thesis author concludes that while digitalisation brought new possibilities for media to connect with their audiences, the changes in the way how content is approached and consumed in a new media environment, especially for younger audiences, require deeper analyses of how media brands and brand perception are influenced.

To understand how technologies create new media audiences and what is significant for this audience, examining how media consumption experiences create different types of associations and whether shared media experiences positively impact Generation Z's brand choice and strength is essential. Technological progress created new media consumption habits and a new audience with previously nonexistent behaviour and attitudes toward media companies and distinct expectations. Understanding how this audience chooses the media, what media brand attributes are significant for Generation Z, and what makes a media brand unique

[538] TVNET. (2022). Online survey News Portals Brands and Usage Habits, Latvia, Target audience: 18 to 55, read news, Norstad, Sample: nationally representative, n=1036

[539] Galan, L., Osserman, J., Parker, T., & Taylor, M. (2019). How young people consume news and the implications for mainstream media. *Flamingo and Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism*, Oxford University,UK.

and strong in Generation Z will allow the media brand to approach this new media audience more effectively and embrace technology opportunities to build audience preference and choice.

The Thesis author proposes that it could support national news media strategies to attract and engage younger audiences. It is no longer sufficient to adapt to the audience's demands; it is essential to comprehend their attitudes, expectations, and what makes them favour the media brand. As previously discussed by numerous scholars, innovations and significant developments of specific historical events have a profound effect on generation formation and identity; therefore, media should have no illusions that Generation Z's media consumption habits will revert to or significantly resemble those of older audiences as they age. Several academics questioned whether younger audiences would adopt the media consumption patterns of the older generation. Although academics and practitioners may hypoThesise this, the current level of generalisation theory and relevant research allows us to anticipate that these developed consuming behaviours will persist even beyond the age barriers that determine generations. Changes in content consumption and the growth of younger audiences need a focus on the value of media brands and how they are experienced and perceived through multi-platform and on-demand consumption.

RIGA TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY

Faculty of Engineering Economics and Management

Institute of Business Engineering and Management

Linda Saulīte

Doctoral Student of the Study Programme "Management Science and Economics"

NEWS MEDIA BRANDING
IN THE 21ˢᵗ CENTURY MEDIA BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT

News media brand equity theoretical aspects. Customer-based brand equity concept defined by Keller (1993)

Scientific supervisor

Professor Dr. oec.

DENISS ŠČEULOVS

Riga,2023

Brand equity models are widely recognised as definitions and structures of brand strength. Recently, the academic field has witnessed increasing interest in the brand equity concept, which is crucial to researchers, academics, and business managers. Increasing efforts are to introduce and define brand equity as the definition and structure of the brand strength construct. The advancement of technology and the introduction of the internet changed how the world interacts and communicates, directly related to brand communication with the audience. This new environment has completely changed the audience's impact on brands' marketing efforts and communication. Thus, much research from the last 20 years has been dedicated to determining how brands and branding can or should be managed in the current environment.[540] In a market where social media platforms have succeeded brand platforms and networks, and where the public has access to large amounts of information about companies, brands, and products, traditional branding strategies that emphasise mass media tactics appear to be inappropriate. Therefore, fresh perspectives and perspectives are required to comprehend branding principles in this rapidly evolving communication and audience context.[541] Although researchers and marketers have approached the concept differently over the last 30 years since the concept was first introduced, there is a consensus that brand equity should be determined through marketing outcomes distinctively assigned to a brand.[542] Thus, brand equity is connected to the fact that different effects are seen in marketing a service or product due to its brand versus if that brand did not associate with that same product or service.[543] If we consider the changed communication marketplace, where the audience could encounter much information regarding products and services on various platforms, then is it correct to assume that, from today's perspective, brand equity relates to the outcome that results from any experience with a product or service, regardless of its marketing or brand content unrelated to the marketing. Different scholars defined brand equity from different angles (see section 1 of this Thesis); agreement on brand equity as the construct of brand strength and importance to the customer is unquestionable. In fierce competition markets, brands should differentiate themselves. Among the other perspectives, the brand is a construct of the audience's mind and

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[540] Chan-Olmsted, S. (2011). Media branding in a changing world: Challenges and opportunities 2.0. *Int. J. Media Manag.,* 13, 3–19.

[541] Siegert, G., Förster, K., Chan-Olmsted, S.M., & Ots, M. (Eds.) (2015). *Handbook of Media Branding;* Springer: Berlin/Heidelberg, Germany.

[542] Aaker, D.(1991). *Managing Brand Equity: Capitalising on the Value of a Brand Name;* The Free Press: New York, NY, USA.

[543] Keller, K.L. (1993). Conceptualizing, Measuring, and Managing Customer-Based Brand Equity. *J. Mark.* 1,57, 1–22.

associations gaining attention from brand equity experts from the academic and business fields. Also, brand equity is widely researched from a financial performance perspective; focusing on brand equity from a consumer perspective is essential. This focus is not on undermining the financial value of brands but on how marketing and branding activities influence consumer behaviour and minds and how this impact strengthens brand equity elements.[544] Both academics and business managers concur that the altered communication, information, and marketing marketplace provides customers with more opportunities to interact, engage, respond, and become involved with brand marketing and communication, thereby granting customers more influence over brand marketing results and brand equity. Consequently, it is successive that research of brand equity elements in the media branding context from the consumer perspective is applicable and effective in today's marketplace, especially in previously discussed changes in the media consumption aspect and the increasing importance of consumer or audience experience in forming brand associations.

A comprehensive and cohesive brand equity model is needed to understand how individual communication types impact brand building and substantial brand equity. The three acknowledged models of customer-based brand equity are those of Keller (1993), Aaker (1991), and Kapferer (1992). [545] Keller (1993) defines consumer-based brand equity as the differential effect of brand knowledge on consumer responses to brand marketing.[546] He conceptualises brand knowledge as an associative memory model with two components: brand awareness (recall and recognition) and brand image (perceptions of a brand as reflected by the brand's associations in consumers' memory). Brand awareness defines the power of the brand node in consumer memory and the facility with which the brand leaps to the consumer's mind, while the brand's image reveals brand association types with varying degrees of abstraction that form the differential reaction to brand equity.[547] Keller argues that positive brand equity occurs when the consumer is familiar with the brand and holds favourable, strong, and unique brand associations in his or her memory. [548] If applied to media and news media brands, positive brand

[544] Faircloth, J. B., Capella, L. M., & Alford, B. L. (2001). The Effect of Brand Attitude and Brand Image on Brand Equity. *Journal of Marketing Theory and Practice*, 9(3), 61–75. http://www.jstor.org/stable/40470049

[545] Farjam, S., & Xu, H.(2015). Reviewing the Concept of Brand Equity and Evaluating Consumer-Based Brand Equity (CBBE) Models.*Int. J.Manag. Sci. Bus. Adm.*,1, 14–29.

[546] Keller, K.L. (1993). Conceptualizing, Measuring, and Managing Customer-Based Brand Equity.*J. Mark.*,57, 1–22.

[547] Ibid, p.1-22.

[548] Ibid, p.1-22.

equity occurs if audience media attributes are perceived as beneficial to the audience, creates and hold strong brand associations, and the audience holds unique associations of media or news media brand. Keller's definition includes aspects Aaker describes but goes into further depth on levels of customer brand associations as a central concept that determines other dimensions of customer-based brand equity. According to Keller (1993), there are three types of associations: [549]

- **attributes** (features that characterise products or services),
- **benefits** (a personal value that consumers attach to the product or service attributes),
- **attitudes** (consumers' overall evaluations of brand attributes and benefits, which often form the basis for their behaviour)

Fig. 2.1. display customer-based brand equity concept developed and introduced by Keller (1993).
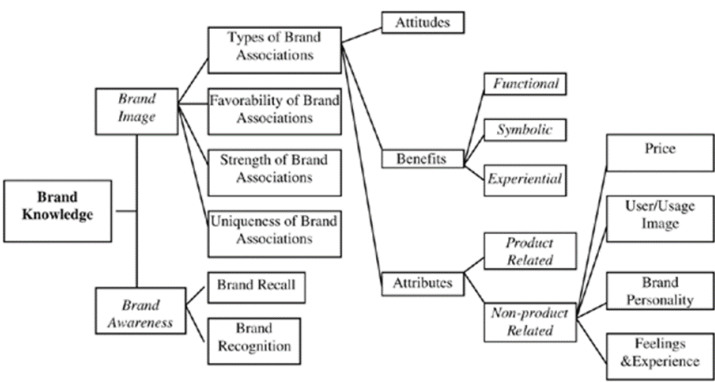
Fig. 2.1. Customer-based brand equity concept defined by Keller (1993).[550]

Keller and many other marketing experts use the expectancy-value model[551], which suggests that users will be satisfied if the brand attributes match their desired gratifications (or benefits) and that a positive evaluation (or attitude) of these attributes will influence their

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[549] Keller, K.L. (1993) Conceptualizing, Measuring, and Managing Customer-Based Brand Equity. *Journal of Marketing,* 57, 1-22. http://dx.doi.org/10.2307/1252054

[550] Ibid, p.1-22.

[551] Palmgreen, P., & Rayburn, J. D. (1985). A comparison of gratification models of media satisfaction. *Communication Monographs*, 52(4), 334–346. https://doi.org/10.1080/03637758509376116

behaviour regarding the brand (e.g., loyalty, time investment, purchasing).[552] These two conceptualisations of brand equity by Aaker (1991) and Keller (1993) between customers with moderately different aspects predominate in the branding literature.[553] If the research confirms that media brand associations are a crucial component and aspect of substantial brand equity, then investigations of how brand associations are established and strengthened are essential. The types of brand associations that condense factual information can be categorised into product- and non-product-related attributes.[554] Product-related attributes directly form from the brand product or service characteristics, whereas non-product-related associations forms via brand usage, experience, feeling, user image and price. Even though these brand equity approaches were developed and adopted decades ago, the evolving marketplace and digitalisation have placed them in a prominent position to build and retain significant media brand equity through a consumer-centric strategy.

Researchers believe that there is no such thing as a universal measure for brand equity and that the market sector and life stage of the brand must be taken into account when selecting an appropriate measure to evaluate brand equity, as it is both the ingredient and the result of the value creation process.[555] Nonetheless, this confirms the relevance of this Thesis's research and underscores the necessity to examine how media, particularly news media, brand strength or equity arises in online, multi-platform contexts and how consumer experience adds to media brand associations and distinctiveness.

To summarise, brand equity and customer-based brand equity concepts are widely researched and experience strong interest from academics. From a branding and brand management standpoint, the studies of the brand association formation process, particularly in the new and interactive communication marketplace, and its impact on brand equity are crucial research. An exciting paradox is that even though a new interactive environment provides more contacts or touchpoints with the brands, oversaturation and multi-platforms decrease brand

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[552] Netemeyer, R., Krishnan, B., Pullig, C.,Wang, G.,Yagci, M., Dean, D., Ricks,J., & Wirth, F. (2004). Developing and validating measures of facets of customer-based brand equity. *Journal of Business Research*. , 57. 209-224. 10.1016/S0148-2963(01)00303-4.

[553] Farjam, S., & Hongyi, X. (2015). Reviewing the Concept of Brand Equity and Evaluating Consumer-Based Brand Equity (CBBE) Models. *The international journal of management science and business administration* 1, 14–29.. doi:10.18775/ijmsba.1849-5664-5419.2014.18.1002

[554] Keller, K.L. (1993). Conceptualizing, Measuring, and Managing Customer-Based Brand Equity. *Journal of Marketing, 5*7, 1-22. http://dx.doi.org/10.2307/1252054

[555]Aggarwal Sharma ,A., Rao, VR., & Popli, S. (2013). Measuring consumer-based brand equity for Indian business schools. *Journal of Marketing for Higher Education*. 2013;23(2):175-203. doi:10.1080/08841241.2013.866609

associations. The critical question from scholars and practitioners is how strong, favourable and unique associations develop in multi-platform and on-demand news consumption environments. While customer-based brand equity constructs developed years ago are still appropriate and widely used in measuring brand strength in media brands, particularly the news media brand aspect, the challenge of the importance of non-product attributes connected with brand experience and usage is increasingly significant. As discussed in the first section of this Thesis, the news media brand content distribution and consumption strongly impact the media brand attribution and distinctiveness in a multi-platform setting. The Thesis author concludes that considering those effects and the increasing importance of content consumption experience, the essential question arises about how news media brand equity is built in a multi-platform setting.

News media brand equity's significance on various vital news media brand outcomes such as credibility, quality, trust, loyalty, distinctiveness, audience satisfaction and consumption are confirmed in various scholarly works (see subsection 1.4.2. of this Thesis). As previously discussed, brand equity is built based on strong, favourable and unique associations. However, in this multi-platform, oversaturated world, there is a gap in the literature regarding how strong, favourable and unique associations of news media brands are formed. Furthermore, focusing on brand associations and how they develop is crucial if media brands confront high competition and a low point of differentiation. Additionally, the uniqueness of the news brand should be identified. The lack of academic research on news media brand associations, especially non-content related, and their effect on brand uniqueness and brand equity, as well as the absolute need for solid media brand equity in an oversaturated multi-platform marketplace, validates the relevance of the Thesis research to the media branding field. However, there are gaps in the academic literature about which and how news media brand associations contribute to the uniqueness and strength of the news brand among younger audiences, as Generation Z previously discussed.

Many studies examine how media consumption has changed due to technological development and the emergence of multiple platforms. However, there is no research examining the effect of consumption-related experience on the strength of news media brands and the uniqueness of academic domains. This is especially important for national news media brands, which are currently facing intense competition from social media platforms while simultaneously experiencing low significance in the lives of younger audiences. Therefore, news media, which are low-involvement products with high importance in society in terms of

political, economic, and cultural influence and compete with a considerable amount of information supply across the marketplace, are essential for revising and implementing branding strategies applicable in this new environment, however, media and especially news media brand equity has not to be explored research topic across branding literature. The dominant stream of research is grounded in cognitive psychology, focussing on memory structure[556] [557] or associations. Yet, little research is focused on how these associations are formed regarding news media brands, what uniqueness is and how these associations contribute to brand equity.

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[556]Aaker, D.(1991). *Managing Brand Equity: Capitalising on the Value of a Brand Name;* The Free Press: New York, NY, USA.

[557] Keller, K.L. (1993). Conceptualizing, Measuring, and Managing Customer-Based Brand Equity. *Journal of Marketing*, 57, 1-22. http://dx.doi.org/10.2307/1252054

RIGA TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY
Faculty of Engineering Economics and Management
Institute of Business Engineering and Management

Linda Saulīte

Doctoral Student of the Study Programme "Management Science and Economics"

NEWS MEDIA BRANDING IN THE 21st CENTURY MEDIA BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT

Survey design and brand associations strength scores and news brand attributes

Scientific supervisor
Professor Dr. oec.
DENISS ŠČEULOVS

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Table 3.1

Survey questionnaire structure (created by the author)

The question	Respondents choice	
D1. Age	o continue if the age is 15-24	o
D2. How often do you read news in the Latvian language, e.g. visiting news portals, using their mobile apps or seeing their posts on social media?	o Several times a day o At least once a day o Several times a week o At least once a week o Less often	o
D3. Gender	o Male o Female	o
D4. Region	o Riga o Pieriga o Kurzeme o Vidzeme o Zemgale o Latgale	o
D5. Settlement type	o Riga o Large city o Small town o Rural area	o
The question		
A1. Please evaluate the importance of these factors for media where you follow news and actual information Scale: 1=Not important at all; 10=Very important	1. The content matches my interests 2. Credible 3. I like their authors, journalists 4. My friends use it too 5. Engage celebrities in their projects 6. Looks distinctive, unique 7. Users can engage in content creation 8. Use attractive special formats, e.g. blogs, podcasts, videos 9. Posts interesting content on social networks 10. In social media, use relevant features, e.g. video, live stories etc. 11. Leading news media 12. Looks nice, attractive 13. Present on platforms which I use (e.g. Youtube or my favourite social networks) 14. Their posts often generate a lot of views, reactions, and reposts	

Table 3.1. Continued

A2. Which of these news media have you ever used? (multiple-choice question)	o tvnet.lv o delfi.lv o jauns.lv o la.lv o nra.lv o lsm.lv o tv3.lv o diena.lv o None of them
Ask A3 - A6 about media marked in A2 A3. Which of these media have you used during the last two weeks, e.g. visiting their website, using a mobile app or seeing their posts on social media?	o tvnet.lv o delfi.lv o jauns.lv o la.lv o nra.lv o lsm.lv o tv3.lv o diena.lv o None of them
A4. Which of these media do you follow on social networks?	o tvnet.lv o delfi.lv o jauns.lv o la.lv o nra.lv o lsm.lv o tv3.lv o diena.lv o None of them
A5. Please evaluate these portals on a scale from 1 to 10, where 1 means "I just know them by the name" and 10 means "This medium is very important to me."	o tvnet.lv o delfi.lv o jauns.lv o la.lv o nra.lv o lsm.lv o tv3.lv o diena.lv o None of them
A6. Please evaluate these portals on a scale from 1 to 10, where 1 means "Very similar to other news media" and 10 means "Unique, distinctive."	o tvnet.lv o delfi.lv o jauns.lv o la.lv o nra.lv o lsm.lv o tv3.lv o diena.lv o None of them

Table 3.1 Continued

Ask A7-A8 about media marked as used in A3 **A7.** How often do you usually use these media, e.g. visiting their website, using a mobile app or seeing their posts on social media? The scale of choice : Several times a day At least once a day Several times a week At least once a week Less often than once a week	▪ tvnet.lv ▪ delfi.lv ▪ jauns.lv ▪ la.lv ▪ nra.lv ▪ lsm.lv ▪ tv3.lv ▪ diena.lv
A8. How do you access these media? Multiple-choice question	o Go to the website directly o Using mobile application o Looked at their content on Instagram o Looked at their content on Facebook o Looked at their content on Tiktok o Looked at their content on Twitter o Looked at their content on Youtube o Looked at their content on another social platform

Table 3.1 Continued

Ask A9 about media marked in A2 **A9.** Please evaluate how good are each of these media in each of these factors Scale: 1=Very poor; 10=Excellent **Attributes:** 1. The content matches my interests 2. Credible 3. I like their authors, journalists 4. My friends use it too 5. Engage celebrities in their projects 6. Looks distinctive, unique 7. Users can engage in content creation 8. Use attractive special formats, e.g. blogs, podcasts, videos 9. Posts interesting content on social networks 10. In social media, use relevant features, e.g. video, live stories etc. 11. Leading news media 12. Looks nice, attractive 13. Present on platforms which I use (e.g. Youtube or my favourite social networks) 14. Their posts often generate a lot of views, reactions, and reposts	▪ tvnet.lv ▪ delfi.lv ▪ jauns.lv ▪ la.lv ▪ nra.lv ▪ lsm.lv ▪ tv3.lv ▪ diena.lv
A10. Please evaluate the importance of these media factors for media for you to unfollow the media or not use Scale: 1=Not important at all; 10=Very important	1. Not credible 2. I do not like their authors, journalists 3. My friends do not use it 4. Does not engage celebrities in their projects 5. It does not look distinctive, unique 6. Users cannot engage in content creation 7. Does not use attractive special formats, e.g. blogs, podcasts, videos 8. Does not post interesting content on social networks 9. In social media, do not use relevant features, e.g. video, live stories etc. 10. Not a leading news media 11. Does not look nice, attractive 12. Not present on platforms which I use (e.g. Youtube or my favourite social networks) 13. Their posts do not generate a lot of views, reactions, or reposts 14. The content does not match my interests

Table 3.2

News media brand attribute scoring approach proposed by the author of the Thesis. (based on attribute importance as evaluated by audience 15 to 24 y.o, Latvia, created by the author)

News media attributes	delfi.lv	diena.lv	jauns.lv	la.lv	lsm.lv	nra.lv	tv3.lv	tvnet.lv
The content matches my interests	6.7	5.8	5.7	5.8	6.6	5.4	6.5	6.2
Brand score assigned	**8**	**4**	**2**	**4**	**7**	**1**	**6**	**5**
Credibility	6.7	6.1	5.7	5.9	7.1	6	6.7	6.2
Brand score assigned	**7**	**4**	**1**	**2**	**8**	**3**	**7**	**5**
Brand score assigned	**6**	**4**	**4**	**2**	**7**	**1**	**8**	**5**
I like their authors, journalists	6.2	5.6	5.6	5.5	6.3	5.3	6.4	5.8
My friends use it too	6.5	5.4	5.4	4.9	6.1	5.1	6.3	5.7
Brand score assigned	**8**	**4**	**4**	**1**	**6**	**2**	**7**	**5**
Engage celebrities in their projects	6.3	5.7	5.6	5.4	6.0	5.4	6.6	5.8
Brand score assigned	**7**	**4**	**3**	**2**	**6**	**2**	**8**	**5**
Look distinctive, unique	6.3	5.5	5.5	5.3	6.4	5.3	6.5	5.7
Brand score assigned	**6**	**4**	**4**	**2**	**7**	**2**	**8**	**5**
Users can engage in content creation	5.9	5.4	5.3	5.	5.6	5.2	6.3	5.5
Brand score assigned	**7**	**4**	**3**	**2**	**6**	**2**	**8**	**5**
Use attractive special formats, e.g. blogs, podcasts, videos	6.2	5.6	5.3	5.1	6.1	5.3	6.3	5.6
Brand score assigned	**7**	**4**	**3**	**1**	**6**	**3**	**8**	**5**
Post interesting content on social networks	6.5	5.7	5.8	5.5	6.4	5.6	6.7	6.0
Brand score assigned	**7**	**3**	**4**	**1**	**6**	**2**	**8**	**5**
In social media, use relevant features, e g video, live stories etc	6.4	5.4	5.3	5.1	6.0	5.2	6.3	5.7
Brand score assigned	**8**	**4**	**3**	**1**	**6**	**2**	**7**	**5**

Table 3.2 Continued

News media attributes	delfi.lv	diena.lv	jauns.lv	la.lv	lsm.lv	nra.lv	tv3.lv	tvnet.lv
Leading news media	6.8	5.8	5.7	5.8	6.9	5.4	6.7	6.3
Brand score assigned	**7**	**4**	**2**	**4**	**8**	**1**	**6**	**5**
Look nice, attractive	6.7	5.7	5.6	5.6	6.5	5.5	6.7	6.0
Brand score assigned	**8**	**4**	**3**	**3**	**6**	**1**	**8**	**5**
Present on platforms which I use (e g Youtube or my favourite social networks)	6.2	5.4	5.3	5.3	6.2	5.3	6.4	5.7
Brand score assigned	**7**	**4**	**3**	**3**	**7**	**3**	**8**	**5**
Their posts often generate a lot of views, reactions, reposts	6.6	5.6	5.7	5.6	6.3	5.6	6.5	6.1
Brand score assigned	**8**	**3**	**4**	**3**	**6**	**3**	**7**	**5**

The Table 3.3. summarises how each news media scored based on attribute evaluation. To evaluate each news media brand attribute score, the author analyses the news brand strength of news media brand associations by multiplying the attribute score by the brand score to determine the strength of the news brand in this attribute.

Table 3.3

News media attribute calculation based on the brand score assigned and attribute importance as evaluated by audience 15 to 24 y.o, Latvia (created by the author)

News media attributes	delfi.lv	diena.lv	jauns.lv	la.lv	lsm.lv	nra.lv	tv3.lv	tvnet.lv
The content matches my interests	6.7	5.8	5.7	5.8	6.6	5.4	6.5	6.2
Brand score assigned	8	4	2	4	7	1	6	5
Attribute score	13	13	13	13	13	13	13	13
Attribute strength score	104	52	26	52	91	13	78	65

Table 3.3 Continued

News media attributes	delfi.lv	diena.lv	jauns.lv	la.lv	lsm.lv	nra.lv	tv3.lv	tvnet.lv
Credibility	6.7	6.1	5.7	5.9	7.1	6	6.7	6.2
Brand score assigned	7	4	1	2	8	3	7	5
Attribute score	14	14	14	14	14	14	14	14
Attribute strength score	98	56	14	28	112	42	98	70
I like their authors, journalists	6.2	5.6	5.6	5.5	6.3	5.3	6.4	5.8
Brand score assigned	6	4	4	2	7	1	8	5
Attribute score	8	8	8	8	8	8	8	8
Attribute strength score	48	32	32	16	56	8	64	40
My friends use it too	6.5	5.4	5.4	4.9	6.1	5.1	6.3	5.7
Brand score assigned	8	4	4	1	6	2	7	5
Attribute score	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Attribute strength score	16	8	8	2	12	4	14	10
Engage celebrities in their projects	6.3	5.7	5.6	5.4	6.0	5.4	6.6	5.8
Brand score assigned	7	4	3	2	6	2	8	5
Attribute score	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Attribute strength score	21	12	9	6	18	6	24	15
Looks distinctive, unique	6.3	5.5	5.5	5.3	6.4	5.3	6.5	5.7
Brand score assigned	6	4	4	2	7	2	8	5
Attribute score	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7
Attribute strength scores	42	28	28	14	49	14	56	35
Users can engage in content creation	5.9	5.4	5.3	5.2	5.6	5.2	6.3	5.5
Brand score assigned	7	4	3	2	6	2	8	5
Attribute Scores	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Attribute strength scores	7	4	3	2	6	2	8	5
Use attractive special formats, e.g. blogs, podcasts, videos	6.2	5.6	5.3	5.1	6.1	5.3	6.3	5.6
Brand score assigned	7	4	3	1	6	3	8	5
Attribute scores	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
Attribute strength scores	35	20	15	5	30	15	40	25

Table 3.3 Continued

News media attributes	delfi.lv	diena.lv	jauns.lv	la.lv	lsm.lv	nra.lv	tv3.lv	tvnet.lv
Posts interesting content on social networks	6.5	5.7	5.8	5.5	6.4	5.6	6.7	6.0
Brand score assigned	7	3	4	1	6	2	8	5
Attribute score	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10
Attribute strength score	70	30	40	10	60	20	80	50
In social media, use relevant features, e g video, live stories etc	6.4	5.4	5.3	5.1	6.0	5.2	6.3	5.7
Brand score assigned	8	4	3	1	6	2	7	5
Attribute score	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7
Attribute strength scores	56	28	21	7	42	14	49	35
Leading news media	6.8	5.8	5.7	5.8	6.9	5.4	6.7	6.3
Brand score assigned	7	4	2	4	8	1	6	5
Attribute score	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10
Attribute strength score	70	40	20	40	80	10	60	50
Looks nice, attractive	6.7	5.7	5.6	5.6	6.5	5.5	6.7	6.0
Brand score assigned	8	4	3	3	6	1	8	5
Attribute score	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11
Attribute strength score	88	44	33	33	66	11	88	55
Present on platforms which I use (e g Youtube or my favourite social networks)	6.2	5.4	5.3	5.3	6.2	5.3	6.4	5.7
Brand score assigned	7	4	3	3	7	3	8	5
Attribute score	12	12	12	12	12	12	12	12
Attribute strength score	84	48	36	36	84	36	94	60
Their posts often generate a lot of views, reactions, reposts	6.6	5.6	5.7	5.6	6.3	5.6	6.5	6.1
Brand score assigned	8	3	4	3	6	3	7	5
Attribute score	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
Attribute strength score	32	12	16	12	24	12	28	20

The author summarises the calculated attribute strength score for each news media brand in Table 3.4.

Table 3.4

The summary of news media brand attribute power scores: content-related and content consumption experience-related attributes as evaluated by audience 15 to 24 y.o., Latvia (created by the author)

News media brand attributes	delfi.lv	diena.lv	jauns.lv	la.lv	lsm.lv	nra.lv	tv3.lv	tvnet.lv
Content-related attributes								
Credibility	98	56	14	28	112	42	98	70
The content matches my interests	104	52	26	52	91	13	78	65
I like their authors, journalists	48	32	32	16	56	8	64	40
Content-related power score	250	140	72	96	259	63	240	175
Content consumption experience-related attributes								
My friends use it too	16	8	8	2	12	4	14	10
Engage celebrities in their projects	21	12	9	6	18	6	24	15
Looks distinctive, unique	42	28	28	14	49	14	56	35
Users can engage in content creation	7	4	3	2	6	2	8	5
Use attractive special formats, e.g. blogs, podcasts, videos	35	20	15	5	30	15	40	25
Posts interesting content on social networks	70	30	40	10	60	20	80	50
In social media, use relevant features, e g video, live stories etc	56	28	21	7	42	14	49	35
Leading news media	70	40	20	40	80	10	60	50
Looks nice, attractive	88	44	33	33	66	11	88	55
Present on platforms which I use (e g Youtube or my favourite social networks)	84	48	36	36	84	36	94	60
Their posts often generate a lot of views, reactions, reposts	32	12	16	12	24	12	28	20
Content consumption experience-related attributes	521	274	229	167	471	174	541	360
Total strength of news media brand associations, Score	**771**	**414**	**301**	**263**	**730**	**237**	**781**	**535**

In Table 3.5. the author summarises the survey data to measure engagement with particular news media. First, the data gathered from the survey questionnaire, questions A3-A4, as described in Table 3.1. of this Appendix. Then the Thesis author calculated the percentage of all respondents who ever used particular news media, used recently, following on social

media. Then calculations of the percentage of respondents who used recently from ever used particular news media and followed media on social media platforms were calculated. Those calculations served as the basis for applying consumption, engagement and frequency scores described in detail in Table 3.6. Consumption in this research context is the usage of certain news media content. Frequency is the percentage of respondents who used news media recently, and engagement here is defined as following news media on different social media platforms.

Table 3.5

News media usage, usage frequency and engagement as evaluated by respondents 15 to 24 y.o., Latvia (created by the author)

News media	Ever used, % of respondents	Used recently, % of respondents	Follow news media on social media platforms, % of respondents	Used recently, % of respondents of Ever used	Follow news media on social media platforms; % of respondents of Ever used
tvnet lv	71	36	20	51	28
delfi lv	85	66	39	78	46
jauns lv	44	19	10	40	23
la lv	31	12	4	39	13
nra lv	20	8	3	40	15
lsm lv	50	29	15	58	30
tv3 lv	57	27	20	47	35
diena lv	34	8	6	24	18

The consumption score is calculated based on the percentage of ever-used particular news media, and the frequency score is applied based on recently used percentage levels. The engagement score is applied based on the percentage levels of respondents following particular news media on social platforms based on criteria ever used particular news media. The score calculation and application approach are the same in applying and calculating brand attribute power scores.

In Table 3.6. the author of the Thesis summarises calculated news media attribute power scores and the evaluation of each news brand's uniqueness and equity by respondents.

Table 3.6

The summary of news media brand associations strength scores and news media uniqueness and equity based on evaluation by audience 15 to 24 y.o., Latvia (created by the author)

News media attribute scores	tvnet.lv	delfi.lv	jauns.lv	la.lv	nra.lv	lsm.lv	tv3.lv	diena.lv
Consumption score	7	8	4	2	1	5	6	3
Frequency score	6	8	3	5	1	4	8	3
Engagement score	5	8	4	1	2	6	7	3
Brand associations' formation strength score	18	24	11	8	4	15	21	9
Content-related attribute score	175	250	72	96	63	259	240	140
Non-content-related attributes score	360	521	229	127	174	471	541	274
Total strength of associations, score	535	771	301	263	237	730	781	414
Uniqueness, mean	5.7	6.1	5.3	5.3	5.3	6.1	6.3	5.3
Brand equity, mean	6.1	6.8	5.7	5.4	5.3	6.7	6.3	5.5

Research Philosophy

According to the literature, various research approaches might be employed[558] Research philosophy determines the nature of the investigated facts. Research philosophy is the researcher's view of how data or information about a phenomenon should be analysed, obtained, and utilised in the research study.[559] Research philosophy is a set of beliefs that govern the study in terms of methodologies and distinct research approaches. Positivism, interpretivism, and realism are three possible research approaches based on three distinct epistemological positions.[560] These methodologies allow researchers to collect and analyse data using a variety of techniques. Positivism is an epistemological perspective based on objectivity, a logical method, and rationality that seeks general conclusions by developing a hypoThesis and statistically testing it.[561] Positivism emphasises the objective analysis of data, while interpretivism emphasises the subjective analysis of data. Realism emphasises the application of data analysis. Positivism encourages researchers to separate their ideas from the objectivity of their conclusions by employing statistical methods. In its examination of the world, positivism incorporates statistical and quantitative research methods, such as surveys. These procedures are based on objective outcomes and prohibit researchers from evaluating the data based on their personal judgments.[562] The author of the Thesis used positivism to conduct the present research study since it aids the researcher in identifying the actual component of the research study. Human interests are largely independent of the researcher and are omitted from positivism.[563] This concept enables the author to determine the cause-and-effect relationship between the research variables.

Research Approach

The research approach implies the findings' complete validity.[564] Therefore, the term research approach' refers to the collection of reliable and effective data to conduct the study and accept the evaluated facts systematically. There are two types of research methods

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[558] Creswell, J.W., & Plano Clark, V.L. (2011). *Designing and Conducting Mixed Methods Research.* 2nd Edition, Sage Publications, Los Angeles.

[559] Marshall, C. , & Rossman, G.B. (2014). *Designing Qualitative Research.* Sage Publications, New York

[560] Bryman, A., & Bell, E. (2011). *Business Research Methods.* 3rd Edition, Oxford University Press, Oxford.

[561] Cohen, L., Manion, L., & Morrison, K. (2002). *Research methods in education*. Routledge.

[562] Bryman, A., & Bell, E. (2011) . *Business Research Methods*. 3rd Edition, Oxford University Press, Oxford

[563] Ibid

[564] Creswell, J.W. , & Plano Clark, V.L. (2011). *Designing and Conducting Mixed Methods Research*. 2nd Edition, Sage Publications, Los Angeles.

distinguished. First, there are inductive and deductive approaches. The inductive approach refers to forming a new concept based on study data.[565]

In contrast, the deductive method relies on the prevalent theory upon which the investigation is based. The author has utilised a deductive methodology to examine existing theories and propose new aspects of branding theory elements in this work. The deductive method is linked to quantitative research and positivist philosophy.[566] The author acquired information regarding the research variables of media brand attributes, uniqueness, and brand equity by using the deductive method. Using a deductive approach, the Thesis author provides recommendations to strengthen the brand's uniqueness and equity in a new media environment, thereby illustrating quantitative data relevant to the research questions and hypotheses. The deductive method enabled the development of a fresh concept of media brand uniqueness in a new media environment and its effect on media brand equity.

News media attributes and their grouping proposed by the author of the Thesis

The Thesis research proposes a framework to understand whether the fourteen dimensions of media brand attributes at the consumer level directly impact consumer-based brand equity, determined by strong, positive and unique brand associations. Attributes selected and formulated based on the literature review and grouping presented in section 2.4 of this Thesis. The literature review demonstrates that the consumer experience with the brand is increasingly important for building brand associations, especially for younger audiences; the Thesis focuses on analyses of consumption experience-related brand associations. The literature on news media brand equity is used to complete this classification. This way, different news media attributes and benefits that may generate customer-based brand equity are identified, allowing us to determine the items to measure every construct dimension. To analyse the impact of these prospective dimensions on the news media brand equity and uniqueness, the attributes of news brands outlined by the literature on experiential associations are collected as items for the scale's validation. While the scholars recognise different dimensions of media brand associations discussed in the literature review sections of this Thesis, the Thesis research focuses on experiential associations as they are consumption experience-related. Keller defined

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[565] Bryman, A. , & Bell, E. (2015) *Business Research Methods.* Oxford University Press, Oxford.

[566] Saunders, M. N., Gray, D. E., Tosey, P., & Sadler-Smith, E. (2015). *Concepts and theory building. A guide to professional doctorates in business and management*, 35-56.

brand attributes that form brand associations as product and non-product related[567]. According to Keller, non-product-related attributes are user and usage imagery, brand identity, feelings, experience and price. Combining both Keller's (1993)[568] and Picard's (2010)[569] approaches to brand attributes, the Thesis author defined eleven non-product or consumption-related usage and user imagery attributes and three product-related attributes or category-shared or functional attributes of news media brands (see Figure 3.1). These attributes include three dimensions described previously. The amount of attributes selected is based on a review of scholars' studies in media attribute measurement (see Table 1.7 in Thesis subsection 1.4.2). The research conceptual framework focus is designed to measure the strength and favourability of these attributes and their impact on media brand uniqueness and brand equity.

The literature review on news media brands from a branding perspective, well-established attribute-based association concepts in literature firmly group news media brand associations as functional or utilitarian (or content or product-related related) and experimental or non-product related or hedonic or experience-based associations. While scholars disagree on whether the brand experience is strictly product or non-product-related, in this research context, non-product-related attributes such as user imagery and user imagery are defined as experience-based brand attributes. Regarding news media categories or shared attributes, the content from various perspectives and legitimacy are identified as fundamental or functional brand characteristics. At the same time, distinct characteristics form usage-based, experience-based imagery associations. Scholars concur that content and credibility are the essential criteria for satisfying fundamental needs and expectations from news media companies. Therefore, to test the first hypoThesis of this research, in this research context, content-related attributes are defined as category-shared attributes and non-product attributes are defined as content consumption experience-related attributes (see Figure 3.1). Literature analyses strongly support this definition.

Thus, research should examine whether non-product-related attributes connected to a brand's packaging of editorial products (readability or usability) can produce brand uniqueness and equity for consumers in addition to product-related attributes related to a media brand's content tone, quality, credibility, and other attributes content dimensions.

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[567] Keller, K.L. (1993) Conceptualizing, Measuring, and Managing Customer-Based Brand Equity. *Journal of Marketing,* 57, 1-22. http://dx.doi.org/10.2307/1252054

[568] Ibid, p.1-22.

[569] Picard, R., Nordqvist, M., & Pesämaa, O. (2010). Industry Associations as Change Agents: The Institutional Roles of Newspaper Associations, *Journal of Media Business Studies,* 7(3):51-69.
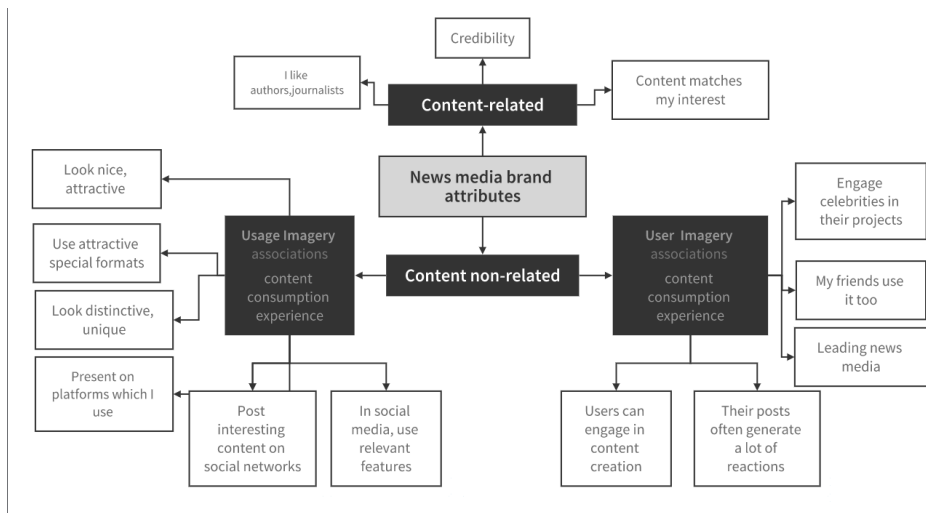
Fig. 3.1. The fourteen news media brand attributes are grouped by content-related and content-non-related. (created by the author)

Importance of news media attributes based on survey analyses

Credibility and *content much my interest*, two higher evaluated media brand attributes (see Figure 3.2.). In attribute—content *much my interests* - delfi.lv leads with **6.7**, then lsm.lv **6.6**, and tv3.lv with **6.5** (see Figure 3.2). *Credibility* is the first and most important attribute. News media lsm.lv lead, with a high **7.1** score, then delfi.lv and tv3.lv follow with **6.7**. (Picture 1.2) If look at content-consumption-related attributes, the most important one is *present on the social media platform I use,* of which tv3.lv rated the highest—**6.4**, followed by delfi.lv and lsm.lv—**6.2**. The next most important attribute are *looking nice and attractive*; the highest evaluations go to delfi.lv and tv3.lv—**6.7**, followed by lsm.lv—**6.5**. The next most important attribute to the audience *is posting interesting content on social media platforms*; the highest evaluation goes to tv3.lv, followed by delfi.lv—**6.5** and lsm.lv—**6.4**.

The following two higher-rated attributes of importance are *looking nice and attractive*, evaluated at **6.6** on average, *posting interesting content on social networks* with **6.5** means, and *leading news media* at **6.5** on average. This gives a basis for the assumption that content itself and the look of how content is presented is essential for this audience. Delivering this content on-demand is essential, as well. Having *leadership associations* is highly valued by this audience, especially for the age group 20–24. *Look distinctive and unique* was valued as **6.2** importance, with an even higher mean in the age group 15–19 years old—**6.4**. Two attributes

with the lowest importance mean are pretty surprising, as, in the literature analysed before, these attributes were often presumed to the higher importance. These two are: *my friend used too*, with a **5.7** importance mean, and *users can engage in content creation*, with a **5.6** importance score (see Figure 3.2).

		Content Matches My Interests	Credible	I Like Their Authors, Journalists	My Friends Use It Too	Engage Celebrities in Their Projects	Look Distinctive, Unique	Users Can Engage into Content Creation	Use Attractive Special Formats, e.g., Blogs, Podcasts, Videos	Post Interesting Content on Social Networks	In Social Media, Use Relevant Features, e.g., Video, Live Stories etc.	Leading News Media	Look Nice, Attractive	Present on Platforms Which I Use (e.g., Youtube or My Favourite Social Networks)	Their Posts Often Generate a Lot of Views, Reactions, Reposts
		Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean
All respondents		7.4	7.7	6.3	5.7	5.8	6.2	5.6	6.1	6.5	6.2	6.5	6.6	6.9	6.0
Age groups	15–19	7.4	7.8	6.3	5.7	5.9	6.4	5.6	6.2	6.7	6.1	6.3	6.6	7.0	6.1
	20–24	7.4	7.6	6.2	5.7	5.7	6.1	5.6	6.0	6.4	6.3	6.7	6.7	6.8	5.9
Gender	Male	6.9	7.0	6.0	5.6	5.6	6.2	5.5	5.7	5.9	5.9	6.0	6.2	6.3	5.7
	Female	7.8	8.3	6.5	5.7	6.0	6.3	5.7	6.5	7.1	6.5	7.0	7.0	7.4	6.3
Region	Riga region	7.3	7.8	6.3	5.6	5.7	6.1	5.5	5.9	6.3	6.1	6.6	6.7	6.9	5.8
	Other	7.4	7.5	6.2	5.7	5.9	6.3	5.7	6.3	6.8	6.4	6.5	6.5	6.9	6.2

Fig.3.2. The importance of each news media attribute, as evaluated by the audience, 15–24 years old, Latvia (created by the author).

The leading news media attribute the higher score evaluated to lsm.lv—**6.9,** then delfi.lv—**6.8** and tv3.lv—**6.7.** For *looks distinctive and unique*, the highest attribute evaluation was for tv3.lv—**6.5,** followed by lsm.lv—**6.4** and delfi.lv—**6.3.** On average, the higher evaluation of all attributes was for tv3.lv—6.5, delfi.lv—6.4, and lsm.lv—6.3. (Figure 3.3).

	Delfi.lv	diena.lv	jauns.lv	la.lv	lsm.lv	nra.lv	tv3.lv	Tvnet.lv
Credible	6.7	6.1	5.7	5.9	7.1	6.0	6.7	6.2
Leading news media	6.8	5.8	5.7	5.8	6.9	5.4	6.7	6.3
Content matches my interests	6.7	5.8	5.7	5.8	6.6	5.4	6.5	6.2
Look nice, attractive	6.7	5.7	5.6	5.6	6.5	5.5	6.7	6.0
Their posts often generate a lot of views, reactions, reposts	6.6	5.6	5.7	5.6	6.3	5.6	6.5	6.1
Post interesting content on social networks	6.5	5.7	5.8	5.5	6.4	5.6	6.7	6.0
Engage celebrities in their projects	6.3	5.7	5.6	5.4	6.0	5.4	6.6	5.8
I like their authors, journalists	6.2	5.6	5.6	5.5	6.3	5.3	6.4	5.8
Look distinctive, unique	6.3	5.5	5.5	5.3	6.4	5.3	6.5	5.7
Present on platforms which I use (e.g. Youtube or my favourite social networks)	6.2	5.4	5.3	5.3	6.2	5.3	6.4	5.7
Use attractive special formats, e.g. blogs, podcasts, videos	6.2	5.6	5.3	5.1	6.1	5.3	6.3	5.6
In social media, use relevant features, e.g. video, live stories etc.	6.4	5.4	5.3	5.1	6.0	5.2	6.3	5.7
My friends use it too	6.5	5.4	5.4	4.9	6.1	5.1	6.3	5.7
Users can engage into content creation	5.9	5.4	5.3	5.2	5.6	5.2	6.3	5.5

Fig.3.3. News media attribution evaluation by audience 15–24 years old, mean calculations, Latvia, 2022 (created by the author).

The following picture demonstrates how the respondent evaluates even attributes for each news media brand (see Figures 3.4. and 3.5). The evenness of attribute strength is crucial for overall associations' favourability and strength. News media with stronger and favourable brand associations such as delfi.lv, lsm.lv, and tv3.lv, demonstrate more even attribute evaluation (see Figure 3.4). On the other hand, according to respondents, news media with lower association strength and favourability demonstrate more uneven attribute strength and favourability (see Figure 3.5). News media such as nra.lv, jauns.lv, and others demonstrate uneven attribute strength.
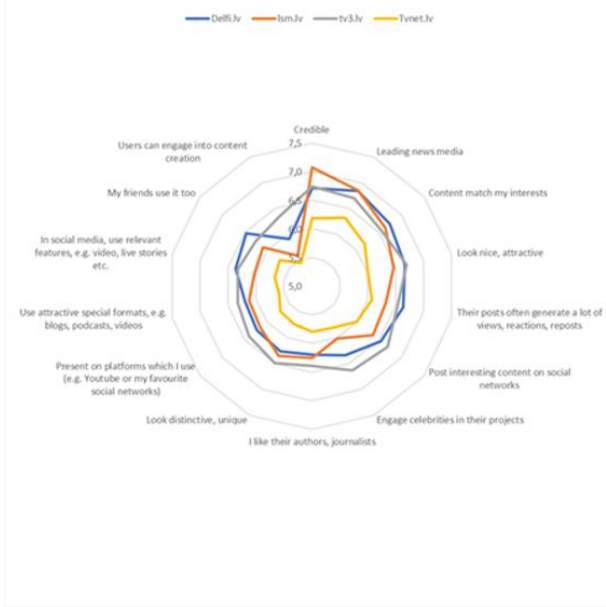
Fig.3.4. News media delfi.lv, lsm.lv, tv3.lv and tvnet.lv attribute evaluation by respondents 15–24 y.o., Latvia (created by the author).
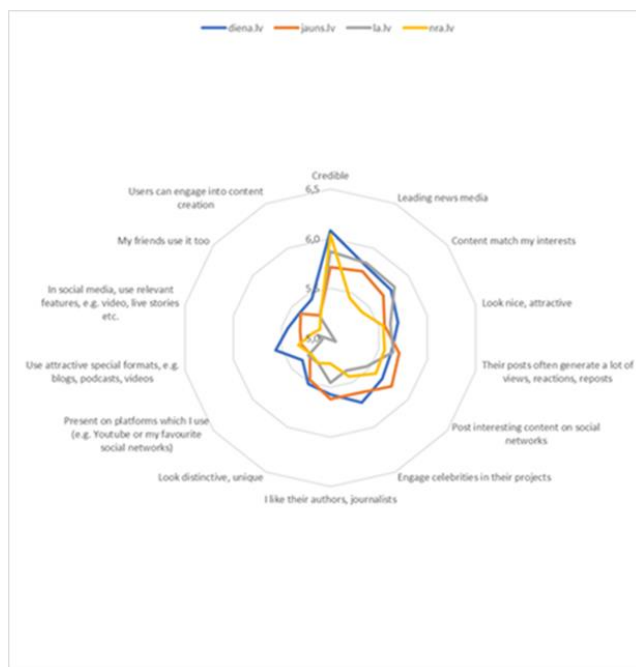
Fig. 3.5. News media diena.lv, jauns.lv, la.lv and nra.lv attribute evaluation by respondents 15–24 y.o., Latvia (created by the author).

RIGA TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY

Faculty of Engineering Economics and Management

Institute of Business Engineering and Management

Linda Saulīte

Doctoral Student of the Study Programme "Management Science and Economics"

NEWS MEDIA BRANDING
IN THE 21st CENTURY MEDIA BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT

The impact of news media brand attributes on the uniqueness and equity of news media brands.

Scientific supervisor
Professor Dr. oec.
DENISS ŠČEULOVS

Riga,2023

The Thesis author performed multiple linear regression tests to validate the Thesis research hypoThesis and answer research questions. The three news media brands were selected for multiple linear regression analyses to determine which attributes significantly impact news media brand uniqueness and equity and test the impact of uniqueness on news media brand equity. The news media brands selected for the tests are delfi.lv, lsm.lv and tv3.lv

The Figure 4.1. demonstrates results on attribute impact on delfi.lv brand uniqueness. A significance level below 0.05 confirms attribute impact on brand uniqueness. Three attributes significantly impact delfi.lv brand uniqueness: *I like their authors and journalists*; *looks distinctive and unique*, and *users can engage in content creation* (see Figure 4.1).

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	95,0% Confidence Interval for B	
	B	Std. Error	Beta			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
(Constant)	0,465	0,423		1,098	0,273	-0,368	1,297
The content matches my interests: Delfi lv	0,037	0,082	0,032	0,444	0,657	-0,125	0,198
Credible: Delfi lv	0,130	0,071	0,123	1,833	0,068	-0,010	0,270
I like their authors and journalists: Delfi lv	0,164	0,073	0,143	2,237	**0,026**	0,020	0,308
My friends use it too: Delfi lv	0,100	0,059	0,099	1,687	0,093	-0,017	0,217
Engage celebrities in their projects: Delfi lv	-0,037	0,068	-0,034	-0,542	0,588	-0,171	0,097
Look distinctive, unique: Delfi lv	0,187	0,073	0,166	2,555	**0,011**	0,043	0,330
Users can engage in content creation: Delfi lv	0,146	0,064	0,133	2,295	**0,022**	0,021	0,272
Use attractive special formats, e g blogs, podcasts, videos: Delfi lv	0,081	0,075	0,072	1,089	0,277	-0,065	0,228
Post interesting content on social networks: Delfi lv	0,094	0,075	0,083	1,264	0,207	-0,053	0,242
In social media, use relevant features, e g video, live stories etc.: Delfi lv	0,018	0,073	0,016	0,249	0,803	-0,125	0,161
Leading news media: Delfi lv	0,054	0,072	0,051	0,760	0,448	-0,086	0,195
Look nice, attractive: Delfi lv	0,078	0,082	0,067	0,948	0,344	-0,084	0,239
Present on platforms which I use (e g YouTube or my favorite social networks): Delfi lv	-0,183	0,069	-0,171	-2,642	0,009	-0,319	-0,047
Their posts often generate a lot of views, reactions, and reposts: Delfi lv	0,003	0,077	0,003	0,045	0,964	-0,147	0,154

Coefficients a, b
a. Dependent Variable: Delfi lv: Please evaluate these portals on a scale from 1 to 10, where 1 means Very similar to other news media and 10 means Unique, distinctive
b. Selecting only cases for which Delfi lv: Which of these news media have you ever used?
= Checked

Fig.4.1. delfi.lv attribute impact on brand uniqueness, Coefficients a,b multiple linear regression test (created by the author).

Similarly, delfi.lv attribute and uniqueness impact on brand equity were tested. The uniqueness of delfi.lv brand, credibility, and leading news media attribute significantly impact delfi.lv brand equity (See Figure 4.2).

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	95,0% Confidence Interval for B	
	B	Std. Error	Beta			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
(Constant)	0,110	0,359		0,307	0,759	-0,596	0,817
Delfi lv: Please evaluate these portals on scale from 1 to 10 where 1 means Very similar to other news media and 10 means Unique, distinctive	0,386	0,047	0,380	8,218	**0,000**	0,294	0,479
Content matches my interests: Delfi lv	0,106	0,070	0,091	1,522	0,129	-0,031	0,243
Credible: Delfi lv	0,179	0,061	0,166	2,961	**0,003**	0,060	0,298
I like their authors, journalists: Delfi lv	0,063	0,063	0,054	1,006	0,315	-0,060	0,186
My friends use it too: Delfi lv	0,077	0,050	0,075	1,533	0,126	-0,022	0,177
Engage celebrities in their projects: Delfi lv	-0,048	0,058	-0,043	-0,828	0,408	-0,162	0,066
Look distinctive, unique: Delfi lv	0,026	0,062	0,022	0,409	0,683	-0,097	0,148
Users can engage into content creation: Delfi lv	-0,037	0,054	-0,033	-0,687	0,493	-0,145	0,070
Use attractive special formats, e g blogs, podcasts, videos: Delfi lv	0,002	0,063	0,002	0,035	0,972	-0,122	0,127
Post interesting content on social networks: Delfi lv	-0,004	0,063	-0,003	-0,061	0,951	-0,129	0,121
In social media, use relevant features, e g video, live stories etc.: Delfi lv	0,001	0,062	0,001	0,023	0,982	-0,120	0,123
Leading news media: Delfi lv	0,125	0,061	0,115	2,069	**0,039**	0,006	0,245
Look nice, attractive: Delfi lv	0,080	0,070	0,068	1,150	0,251	-0,057	0,217
Present on platforms which I use (e g YouTube or my favorite social networks): Delfi lv	-0,003	0,059	-0,003	-0,056	0,955	-0,120	0,113
Their posts often generate a lot of views, reactions, reposts: Delfi lv	0,074	0,065	0,062	1,134	0,258	-0,054	0,201

Coefficients a, b
a. Dependent Variable: Delfi lv: Please evaluate these portals on scale from 1 to 10 where 1 means I just know them by name and 10 means This medium is very important for me
b. Selecting only cases for which Delfi lv: Which of these news media have you ever used? = Checked

Fig.4.2. delfi.lv attribute and brand uniqueness impact on brand equity, Coefficients a,b multiple linear regression test (created by the author).

The Figure 4.3. demonstrates results on attribute impact on lsm.lv brand uniqueness. A significance level below 0.05 confirms attribute impact on brand uniqueness. Two attributes significantly impact delfi.lv brand uniqueness: *I like their authors and journalists*; *looks distinctive and unique*. (see Figure 4.3).

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Std. Error	Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	95,0% Confidence Interval for B	
	B			Beta			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
(Constant)	1,016		0,507		2,002	0,047	0,015	2,017
Credible: lsm lv	0,190		0,102	0,187	1,867	0,063	-0,011	0,391
I like their authors, journalists: lsm lv	0,297		0,093	0,275	3,203	**0,002**	0,114	0,480
My friends use it too: lsm lv	-0,073		0,084	-0,074	-0,877	0,382	-0,238	0,092
Engage celebrities in their projects: lsm lv	-0,042		0,094	-0,039	-0,448	0,655	-0,227	0,143
Look distinctive, unique: lsm lv	0,310		0,101	0,286	3,065	**0,003**	0,110	0,509
Users can engage into content creation: lsm lv	0,107		0,090	0,102	1,191	0,235	-0,070	0,283
Use attractive special formats, e g blogs, podcasts, videos: lsm lv	-0,076		0,114	-0,066	-0,665	0,507	-0,301	0,149
In social media, use relevant features, e g video, live stories etc.: lsm lv	-0,080		0,113	-0,069	-0,708	0,480	-0,302	0,143
Leading news media: lsm lv	-0,137		0,107	-0,130	-1,279	0,203	-0,347	0,074
Look nice, attractive: lsm lv	0,077		0,096	0,071	0,800	0,424	-0,112	0,266
Present on platforms which I use (e g YouTube or my favorite social networks): lsm lv	0,122		0,091	0,116	1,340	0,182	-0,058	0,301
Their posts often generate a lot of views, reactions, reposts: lsm lv	0,110		0,100	0,101	1,099	0,273	-0,087	0,307

Coefficients a,b

a. Dependent Variable: lsm lv: Please evaluate these portals on scale from 1 to 10 where 1 means Very similar to other news media and 10 means Unique, distinctive

b. Selecting only cases for which lsm lv: Which of these news media have you ever used?
= Checked

Fig.4.3. lsm.lv attribute impact on brand uniqueness, Coefficients a,b multiple linear regression test (created by the author).

Similarly, lsmlv attribute and uniqueness impact on brand equity were tested. The uniqueness of the lsm.lv brand and credibility significantly impact lsm.lv brand equity (See Figure 4.4).

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	95,0% Confidence Interval for B	
	B	Std. Error	Beta			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
(Constant)	0,648	0,463		1,399	0,163	-0,266	1,563
lsm lv: Please evaluate these portals on scale from 1 to 10 where 1 means Very similar to other news media and 10 means Unique, distinctive	0,408	0,066	0,394	6,153	**0,000**	0,277	0,538
Credible: lsm lv	0,248	0,093	0,236	2,668	**0,008**	0,065	0,431
I like their authors, journalists: lsm lv	0,066	0,086	0,059	0,768	0,443	-0,104	0,236
My friends use it too: lsm lv	0,020	0,076	0,020	0,265	0,792	-0,129	0,169
Engage celebrities in their projects: lsm lv	-0,112	0,085	-0,100	-1,322	0,188	-0,279	0,055
Look distinctive, unique: lsm lv	0,027	0,094	0,024	0,288	0,774	-0,158	0,212
Users can engage into content creation: lsm lv	0,128	0,081	0,118	1,571	0,118	-0,033	0,288
Use attractive special formats, e g blogs, podcasts, videos: lsm lv	-0,167	0,103	-0,141	-1,620	0,107	-0,371	0,036
In social media, use relevant features, e g video, live stories etc.: lsm lv	-0,067	0,102	-0,056	-0,653	0,514	-0,268	0,135
Leading news media: lsm lv	0,173	0,097	0,159	1,780	0,077	-0,019	0,364
Look nice, attractive: lsm lv	0,067	0,087	0,060	0,774	0,440	-0,104	0,238
Present on platforms which I use (e g YouTube or my favorite social networks): lsm lv	0,077	0,083	0,071	0,930	0,354	-0,086	0,240
Their posts often generate a lot of views, reactions, reposts: lsm lv	0,063	0,090	0,056	0,693	0,489	-0,116	0,241

Coefficients a, b

a. Dependent Variable: lsm lv: Please evaluate these portals on scale from 1 to 10 where 1 means I just know them by name and 10 means This medium is very important for me
b. Selecting only cases for which lsm lv: Which of these news media have you ever used? = Checked

Fig.4. 4. lsm.lv attribute and brand uniqueness impact on brand equity, Coefficients a,b multiple linear regression test (created by the author).

The Figure 4.5. demonstrates results on attribute impact on tv3.lv brand uniqueness. A significance level below 0.05 confirms attribute impact on brand uniqueness. Three attributes significantly impact tv3.lv brand uniqueness: *My friends use it too*; *their posts often generate a lot of views, reactions, reposts*, and *users can engage in content creation* (see Figure 4.5).

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	95,0% Confidence Interval for B	
	B	Std. Error	Beta			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
(Constant)	0,494	0,532		0,928	0,355	-0,555	1,543
Content matches my interests: tv3 lv	-0,025	0,091	-0,022	-0,270	0,787	-0,204	0,154
I like their authors, journalists: tv3 lv	0,065	0,087	0,057	0,743	0,458	-0,107	0,237
My friends use it too: tv3 lv	0,181	0,080	0,168	2,254	**0,025**	0,023	0,339
Engage celebrities in their projects: tv3 lv	-0,048	0,087	-0,041	-0,554	0,580	-0,221	0,124
Look distinctive, unique: tv3 lv	-0,032	0,095	-0,027	-0,336	0,737	-0,220	0,156
Users can engage into content creation: tv3 lv	0,280	0,084	0,240	3,343	**0,001**	0,115	0,446
Use attractive special formats, e g blogs, podcasts, videos: tv3 lv	0,032	0,101	0,027	0,316	0,753	-0,168	0,232
Post interesting content on social networks: tv3 lv	0,136	0,091	0,116	1,492	0,137	-0,044	0,315
In social media, use relevant features, e g video, live stories etc.: tv3 lv	-0,060	0,097	-0,050	-0,615	0,539	-0,251	0,132
Look nice, attractive: tv3 lv	0,159	0,100	0,134	1,585	0,114	-0,039	0,357
Present on platforms which I use (e g YouTube or my favorite social networks): tv3 lv	-0,036	0,089	-0,032	-0,411	0,682	-0,211	0,138
Their posts often generate a lot of views, reactions, reposts: tv3 lv	0,250	0,095	0,224	2,626	**0,009**	0,062	0,438

Coefficients a, b
a. Dependent Variable: tv3 lv: Please evaluate these portals on scale from 1 to 10 where 1 means Very similar to other news media and 10 means Unique, distinctive
b. Selecting only cases for which tv3 lv: Which of these news media have you ever used? = Checked

Fig.4.5. tv3.lv attribute impact on brand uniqueness, Coefficients a,b multiple linear regression test (created by the author).

Similarly, tv3.lv attribute and uniqueness impact on brand equity were tested. The uniqueness of the tv3.lv brand, *content that matches my interest*, *presence on platforms* and *posting interesting content on social media platforms* significantly impact tv3.lv brand equity (See Figure 4.6).

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	95,0% Confidence Interval for B	
	B	Std. Error	Beta			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
(Constant)	0,083	0,464		0,179	0,858	-0,831	0,997
tv3 lv: Please evaluate these portals on scale from 1 to 10 where 1 means Very similar to other news media and 10 means Unique, distinctive	0,279	0,060	0,295	4,674	**0,000**	0,161	0,396
Content matches my interests: tv3 lv	0,219	0,079	0,207	2,774	**0,006**	0,063	0,375
I like their authors, journalists: tv3 lv	0,092	0,076	0,086	1,215	0,226	-0,058	0,242
My friends use it too: tv3 lv	-0,012	0,071	-0,012	-0,172	0,863	-0,151	0,127
Engage celebrities in their projects: tv3 lv	0,095	0,076	0,086	1,249	0,213	-0,055	0,245
Look distinctive, unique: tv3 lv	0,059	0,083	0,052	0,711	0,478	-0,105	0,223
Users can engage into content creation: tv3 lv	0,064	0,075	0,058	0,862	0,390	-0,083	0,212
Use attractive special formats, e g blogs, podcasts, videos: tv3 lv	-0,005	0,088	-0,004	-0,054	0,957	-0,178	0,169
Post interesting content on social networks: tv3 lv	0,236	0,080	0,214	2,964	**0,003**	0,079	0,393
In social media, use relevant features, e g video, live stories etc.: tv3 lv	0,002	0,085	0,001	0,020	0,984	-0,165	0,168
Look nice, attractive: tv3 lv	-0,144	0,088	-0,129	-1,641	0,102	-0,317	0,029
Present on platforms which I use (e g YouTube or my favorite social networks): tv3 lv	0,195	0,077	0,181	2,528	**0,012**	0,043	0,347
Their posts often generate a lot of views, reactions, reposts: tv3 lv	-0,116	0,084	-0,110	-1,377	0,170	-0,282	0,050

Coefficients a, b
a. Dependent Variable: tv3 lv: Please evaluate these portals on scale from 1 to 10 where 1 means I just know them by name and 10 means This medium is very important for me
b. Selecting only cases for which tv3 lv: Which of these news media have you ever used? = Checked

Fig.4.6. tv3.lv attribute and brand uniqueness impact on brand equity, Coefficients a,b multiple linear regression test (created by the author).

RIGA TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY

Faculty of Engineering Economics and Management
Institute of Business Engineering and Management

Linda Saulīte

Doctoral Student of the Study Programme "Management Science and Economics"

NEWS MEDIA BRANDING IN THE 21st CENTURY MEDIA BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT

The summary of quantitative research results and methodology template

Scientific supervisor
Professor Dr. oec.
DENISS ŠČEULOVS

Riga,2023

Table 5.1

The template for the methodology of news media branding assessment (created by the author)

Step 1. determination of attributes	Step 2. Attribute declared importance	Industry average (Generation Z)	Step 3. Attribute power score	Attribute weight	Step 4. News brand attribute strength and favourability	Industry average	Attribute the power score of the news brand	News brands attribute evenness	Step 5. Contributing attribute (uniqueness)strength and favourability	Step 6. Contributing attribute (uniqueness)strength and favourability	Step 7. Optimal combination for brand uniqueness and brand equity	Brand experience framework: tactics, platforms, resources, packaging and measurement
The content matches my interests	x	7.4	x	x	x	6.1	x		x	x	x	
Credibility	x	7.7.	x	x	x	6.3	x		x	x	x	
I like authors, journalists	x	6.3	x	x	x	5.8	x		x	x	x	
Leading news media	x	6.5	x	x	x	6.2	x		x	x		
Present on social platforms I use	x	6.9	x	x	x	5.7	x		x	x		
Posts interesting content on social platforms	x	6.5	x	x	x	6.0	x		x	x		
Looks nice, attractive	x	6.6	x	x	x	6.0	x		x	x		
Looks unique, distinctive	x	6.2	x	x	x	5.8	x		x	x	x	
Uses special formats (video, etc.)	x	6.1	x	x	x	5.7	x		x	x		
Uses relevant formats on social media	x	6.2	x	x	x	5.7	x		x	x		
My friends use it too	x	5.7	x	x	x	5.7	x		x	x	x	
Users can engage in content creation	x	5.6	x	x	x	5.6	x		x	x		
Engage celebrities in content	x	5.8	x	x	x	5.9	x		x	x		
Post generates many reactions (like, share, etc.)	x	6.5	x	x	x	6.0	x		x	x		
x – action for each of steps							x	x	x	x		

Table 5.2

Summary of the quantitative research framework analyses and research results (created by the author)

Research question/hypoThesis	Research step	Research objective	Method of statistical tests	Software	Variables for Linear regression analyses	Expected outcomes	Research results
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. What are the most important attributes of news media brand which create strong and favourable associations with news media brand by Generation Z?	1	To determine and evaluate the importance of news media brand attributes that create strong, favourable news media brand associations for Generation Z	The quantitative survey, determination of means	Cross-table excel,	The author's scoring approach	News media importance declared by the audience; News media brand associations formation strength score; total news media associations strength score	News media attribute importance is determined and assessed for each news media brand. In addition, brand associations' strength was calculated for each **8 news media brands.**
H3. News media brand uniqueness significantly influences news media brand equity	3	To test the assumption that the uniqueness of news media brands significantly influences brand equity	Linear regression	SPSS	Independent: All 14 brand attributes Dependent: Brand equity	Assumption holds or whether the assumption has been violated	The hypoThesis was confirmed for **delfi.lv, lsm.lv** and **tv3.lv** news media

Table 5.2 Continued

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
H1. The combination of category-shared and experience-related attributes of news brand significantly influences news media brand uniqueness.	2	To test the assumption that both shared and unique contributions to brand uniqueness	Linear regression	SPSS	Independent: All 14 brand attributes Dependent: Brand uniqueness	Assumption holds or whether the assumption has been violated	HypoThesis confirmed for delfi.lv and **lsm.lv**, not confirmed for **tv3.lv**
2. How and which attributes of news media brand contribute to developing news media brand uniqueness as perceived by Generation Z?	2	To examine the impact of each attribute on the uniqueness of a news media brand and how these attributes contribute to a news media brand's uniqueness as perceived by Generation Z	Decision Tree	Rapid Miner	Independent: All 14 brand attributes Dependent: Brand uniqueness	Predict and evaluate the relationship of media attributes that contribute to news media brand uniqueness development	News media attributes with the most significant impact on brand uniqueness were determined for **delfi.lv** , **tv3.lv** and **lsm.lv** news media brands.
H1.Content consumption experience-based attributes of news media brand significantly influence news media brand uniqueness.	2	To test the assumption that content consumption experience-related attributes contribute to brand uniqueness	Linear regression	SPSS	Independent: All 14 brand attributes Dependent Brand uniqueness,	Assumption holds or whether the assumption has been violated	The hypoThesis was confirmed for **delfi.lv, lsm.lv** and **tv3.lv** news media
3. How does news media brand uniqueness impact news media brand equity as perceived by Generation Z?	3	To determine the impact of uniqueness on news media brand equity as perceived by Generation Z	Decision Tree	RapidMiner	Independent: All 14 brand attributes Dependent Brand equity	Predict and evaluate the impact of uniqueness on news brand equity	Brand attributes and brand uniqueness impact on news media brand equity were assessed for **delfi.lv, tv3.lv** and **lsm.lv** news media

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Linda Saulīte

Doctoral Student of the Study Programme "Management Science and Economics"

NEWS MEDIA BRANDING
IN THE 21st CENTURY MEDIA BUSINESS
ENVIRONMENT

References

Scientific supervisor
Professor Dr. oec.
DENISS ŠČEULOVS

Riga,2023

Rīga, 2022. gada 5.decembris

Atsauksme par promocijas pētījuma rezultātu praktisko novitāti un lietderību nacionālo ziņu mediju zīmolvedības kontekstā:

News Media Branding in the 21st Century Media Business Enviroment

Linda Saulīte

Rīgas Tehniskā Universitāte, Inženierekonomikas un vadības fakultāte, Uzņēmējdarbības inženierijas un vadības institūts

Atsauksme sastāv no divām daļām:

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2. daļa: Atsauksmes apliecinājums ar parakstiem

1. daļa: Informācijas lapa

Informācija par doktoranti un pētniecisko procesu:

Promocijas pētījuma **mērķis:**

Noteikt nacionālo ziņu mediju zīmola unikalitātes attīstību un ietekmi uz zīmola vērtību pašreizējā mediju vidē no paaudzes Z (vecumā no 15-24 gadiem) aspekta

Promocijas **pētījuma metodes:**

- literatūras par zīmola unikalitāti un zīmola vērtības teorētiskā analīze
- mediju vides digitalizācijas un tās ietekme uz ziņu mediju satura patēriņa izmaiņām teorētiskā analīze
- mediju patēriņu izmaiņu sekundāro datu analīze
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- Lēmumu koku konstruēšanas metode ziņu mediju zīmola atribūtu ietekmes noteikšanai uz zīmola unikalitātes attīstību
- Lēmumu koku konstruēšanas metode ziņu mediju zīmola atribūtu un zīmola unikalitātes ietekmes noteikšanai uz zīmola vērtības attīstību
- Multiplās lineāras regresijas metode pētījuma kvantitatīvā pētījuma hipotēžu apstiprināšanai
- Iegūto rezultātu analīze un teorētiskā interpretācija
- Promocijas pētījuma prezentācijas un nodošana aprobācijai sociālo mediju aģentūrai

Isobar Latvia:

Tikšanās un prezentācijas ilgums: aptuveni viena stunda, laiks: 21.09.2022 pulksten 12:00

Informācija un konfidencialitāte: Iegūtā informācija tiks izmantota promocijas darba rezultātu analīzes procesā, atsaucoties uz saskaņotajiem informācijas avotiem

2. daļa . Atsauksme par promocijas pētījuma rezultātu praktisko novitāti un lietderību nacionālo ziņu mediju zīmolvedības kontekstā

ISOBAR Latvia vārdā apliecinu Lindas Saulīte promocijas darba rezultātu aprobāciju un praktisko novitāti, integrējot to zīmolvedības stratēģijās.

Promocijas darbā iegūtie rezultāti ir pārnesami un efektīvi pielietojami dažādu zīmolu zīmolvedības stratēģijās satura vadībai dažādās sociālo mediju platformās. Promocijas darba praktiskā novitāte ir piedāvātais zīmolu atribūtu grupējums, kā arī pieeja zīmola asociāciju spēka aprēķināšanā. Izstrādātā metodika pielietota un efektīvi nodrošina sekojošus zīmola komunikācijas rezultātus: auditorijas iesaiste, sasniedzamība, komunikācijas atpazīstamība un atcerēšanās. Metodikas izstrādātais ietvars ļauj operatīvi piemērot katru metodikas soli un novērtēt efektivitāti. Promocijas darba rezultātu aprobācija apliecina rezultātu piemērojamību dažādu zīmolu komunikācijas stratēģiju izstrādē.

Ar cieņu,

Kristaps Safranovs

ISOBAR Latvia vadītājs

Rīga, 2022. gada 5.decembris

Atsauksme par promocijas pētījuma rezultātu praktisko novitāti un lietderību nacionālo ziņu mediju zīmolvedības kontekstā:

News Media Branding in the 21st Century Media Business Environment

Linda Saulīte

Rīgas Tehniskā Universitāte, Inženierekonomikas un vadības fakultāte, Uzņēmējdarbības inženierijas un vadības institūts

Atsauksme sastāv no divām daļām:

1. daļa: Informācijas lapa par pētniecisko procesu un promocijas darba rezultātu aprobāciju un prezentāciju

2. daļa: Atsauksmes apliecinājums ar parakstiem

1. daļa: Informācijas lapa

Informācija par doktoranti un pētniecisko procesu:

Promocijas pētījuma **mērķis:**

Noteikt nacionālo ziņu mediju zīmola unikalitātes attīstību un ietekmi uz zīmola vērtību pašreizējā mediju vidē no paaudzes Z (vecumā no 15-24 gadiem) aspekta

Promocijas **pētījuma metodes:**

- literatūras par zīmola unikalitāti un zīmola vērtības teorētiskā analīze
- mediju vides digitalizācijas un tās ietekme uz ziņu mediju satura patēriņa izmaiņām teorētiskā analīze
- mediju patēriņu izmaiņu sekundāro datu analīze
- kvantitatīvo datu aptauja nacionālo ziņu mediju atribūtu, unikalitātes un zīmola vērtības noteikšanai
- Lēmumu koku konstruēšanas metode ziņu mediju zīmola atribūtu ietekmes noteikšanai uz zīmola unikalitātes attīstību
- Lēmumu koku konstruēšanas metode ziņu mediju zīmola atribūtu un zīmola unikalitātes ietekmes noteikšanai uz zīmola vērtības attīstību
- Multiplās lineāras regresijas metode pētījuma kvantitatīvā pētījuma hipotēžu apstiprināšanai
- Iegūto rezultātu analīze un teorētiskā interpretācija

Promocijas pētījuma prezentācijas un nodošana aprobācijai ziņu medijam **TV3.lv:**

Tikšanās un prezentācijas ilgums: aptuveni viena stunda, laiks: 28.09.2022 pulksten 12:00

Informācija un konfidencialitāte: Iegūtā informācija tiks izmantota promocijas darba rezultātu analīzes procesā, atsaucoties uz saskaņotajiem informācijas avotiem

2. daļa . Atsauksme par promocijas pētījuma rezultātu praktisko novitāti un lietderību nacionālo ziņu mediju zīmolvedības kontekstā

TV3 vārdā apliecinu Lindas Saulīte promocijas darba rezultātu prezentāciju, diskusiju un praktisko novitāti, integrējot to ziņu mediju zīmolvedības stratēģijās.

Promocijas darbā iegūtie rezultāti papildina jau izstrādātās satura zīmolvedības stratēģijas tv3.lv satura vadībai dažādās platformās. Izstrādātā metodika ļauj izprast un izstrādāt efektīvas stratēģijas ziņu zīmola stiprināšanai platformās, kā arī paaugstināt zīmola unikalitāti. Metodika efektīvi paaugstina iesaistes, lietošanas un lojalitātes rādītājus auditorijas aspektā. Promocijas darba rezultāti var tikt integrēti dažādās satura izplatības platformās un to aprobācija stiprina nacionālo ziņu dienesta konkurētspēju, attiecīgi pozitīvi ietekmē nacionālo mediju reklāmas piesaisti un to apjomus. Izstrādātā zīmolvedības metodika stiprina ziņu zīmola unikalitātes attīstību un zīmola vērtību dažādās satura izplatīšanas un patēriņa platformās, ko apliecina tv3.lv iekšējie efektivitātes mērījumu rādītāji.

Ar cieņu,
Ginta Salmane
SIA All Media Group komercdirektore

Rīga, 2022. gada 24. novembris

Atsauksme par promocijas pētījuma resultātu praktisko novitāti un lietderību nacionālo ziņu mediju zīmolvedības kontekstā:

News Media Branding in the 21st Century Media Business Environment

Linda Saulīte

Rīgas Tehniskā Universitāte, Inženierekonomikas un vadības fakultāte, Uzņēmējdarbības inženierijas un vadības institūts

Atsauksme sastāv no divām daļām:

1. daļa: Informācijas lapa par pētniecisko procesu un promocijas darba rezultātu aprobāciju un prezentāciju

2. daļa: Atsauksmes apliecinājums ar parakstiem

1. daļa: Informācijas lapa

Informācija par doktoranti un pētniecisko procesu:

Promocijas pētījuma **mērķis:**

Noteikt nacionālo ziņu mediju zīmola unikalitātes attīstību un ietekmi uz zīmola vērtību pašreizējā mediju vidē no paaudzes Z (vecumā no 15-24 gadiem) aspekta

Promocijas **pētījuma metodes:**

- literatūras par zīmola unikalitāti un zīmola vērtības teorētiskā analīze
- mediju vides digitalizācijas un tās ietekme uz ziņu mediju satura patēriņa izmaiņām teorētiskā analīze
- mediju patēriņu izmaiņu sekundāro datu analīze
- kvantitatīvo datu aptauja nacionālo ziņu mediju atribūtu, unikalitātes un zīmola vērtības noteikšanai
- Lēmumu koku konstruēšanas metode ziņu mediju zīmola atribūtu ietekmes noteikšanai uz zīmola unikalitātes attīstību
- Lēmumu koku konstruēšanas metode ziņu mediju zīmola atribūtu un zīmola unikalitātes ietekmes noteikšanai uz zīmola vērtības attīstību
- Multiplās lineāras regresijas metode pētījuma kvantitatīvā pētījuma hipotēžu apstiprināšanai
- Iegūto rezultātu analīze un teorētiskā interpretācija

Promocijas pētījuma rezultātu prezentācija un diskusija Latvijas Reklāmas Asociācijas valdes sanāksmē.

Tikšanās un prezentācijas ilgums: aptuveni divas stundas, laiks: 14.09.2022 no pulksten 15:00-17:00

Informācija un konfidencialitāte: Iegūtā informācija tiks izmantota promocijas darba rezultātu analīzes procesā, atsaucoties uz saskaņotajiem informācijas avotiem

2. daļa . Atsauksme par promocijas pētījuma rezultātu praktisko novitāti un lietderību nacionālo ziņu mediju zīmolvedības kontekstā

Reklāmas Asociācijas valdes vārdā apliecinu Lindas Saulīte promocijas darba rezultātu prezentāciju, diskusiju Latvijas Reklāmas Asociācijas valdes sēdē un rezultātu praktisko novitāti mediju un reklāmdevēju industrijā Latvijā.

Promocijas darbā iegūtie rezultāti ir vērtīgs ieguvums industrijas konkurētspēja stiprināšanā, dodot praktiskas vadlīnijas medija zīmolvedības stratēģijas izstrādei un realizācijai daudz platformu vidē. Izstrādātie statistiskie testu modeļi ļauj izprast un praktiski pielietot dažādu mediju zīmola atribūtus zīmola unikalitātes, atšķirības un vērtības stiprināšanā. Izstrādātā metodika ir izraisījusi interesi Latvijas sabiedrisko mediju vadībai, potenciālai tālākai aprobācijai šo mediju zīmolvedības stratēģijās. Promocijas darba rezultāti ir īpaši aktuāli , jo pēta jauniešu auditoriju, kura ir grūti sasniedzama nacionālo mediju kontekstā. Izstrādātā metodika ļauj nacionālajiem medijiem stiprināt savu konkurētspēju šis auditorijas vidū un nodrošināt spēcīgāku zīmola atpazīstamību, iesaisti un lietojamību. Izstrādātā metodika ļauj izvērtēt un praktiski pielietot satura pieredzes aspektu un tā nozīmi zīmola asociāciju attīstībā.

Ar cieņu,
Baiba Liepiņa
Latvijas Reklāmas Asociācijas valdes priekšsēdētāja

Rīga, 2022. gada 24. novembris

Atsauksme par promocijas pētījuma rezultātu praktisko novitāti un lietderību nacionālo ziņu mediju zīmolvedības kontekstā:

News Media Branding in the 21st Century Media Business Environment

Linda Saulīte

Rīgas Tehniskā Universitāte, Inženierekonomikas un vadības fakultāte, Uzņēmējdarbības inženierijas un vadības institūts

Atsauksme sastāv no divām daļām:

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2. daļa: Atsauksmes apliecinājums ar parakstiem

1. daļa: Informācijas lapa

Informācija par doktoranti un pētniecisko procesu:

Promocijas pētījuma **mērķis:**

Noteikt nacionālo ziņu mediju zīmola unikalitātes attīstību un ietekmi uz zīmola vērtību pašreizējā mediju vidē no paaudzes Z (vecumā no 15-24 gadiem) aspekta

Promocijas **pētījuma metodes:**

- literatūras par zīmola unikalitāti un zīmola vērtības teorētiskā analīze
- mediju vides digitalizācijas un tās ietekme uz ziņu mediju satura patēriņa izmaiņām teorētiskā analīze
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- Multiplās lineārās regresijas metode pētījuma kvantitatīvā pētījuma hipotēžu apstiprināšanai
- Iegūto rezultātu analīze un teorētiskā interpretācija

Promocijas pētījuma prezentācijas un nodošana aprobācijai ziņu medijam **Delfi.lv:**

Tikšanās un prezentācijas ilgums: aptuveni viena stunda, laiks: 05.08.2022 pulksten 13:00

Informācija un konfidencialitāte: Iegūtā informācija tiks izmantota promocijas darba rezultātu analīzes procesā, atsaucoties uz saskaņotajiem informācijas avotiem

2. daļa . Atsauksme par promocijas pētījuma rezultātu praktisko novitāti un lietderību nacionālo ziņu mediju zīmolvedības kontekstā

AS DELFI vārdā apliecinu Lindas Saulīte promocijas darba rezultātu prezentāciju, diskusiju un praktisko novitāti, integrējot to ziņu mediju zīmolvedības stratēģijās.
Promocijas darbā iegūtie rezultāti papildina jau izstrādātās satura zīmolvedības stratēģijas AS DELFI satura vadībai dažādās platformās, ieskaitot sociālo mediju platformas. Izstrādātie statistisko testu modeļi ļauj izprast un izstrādāt vēl efektīvākas pieejas ziņu zīmola vērtības stiprināšanai un turpmākai attīstībai, paaugstinot gan satura iesaistes, skatījumu un izplatības rādītājus. Lai arī pētījuma fokuss ir jauniešu auditorija, uzskatam, ka promocijas darba rezultāti var tikt integrēti , uzrunājot arī citas demogrāfiskās grupas dažādās satura izplatības platformās. Promocijas darba rezultātu aprobācija ziņu medijos dod iespēju stiprināt nacionālo ziņu mediju konkurētspēju auditorijas piesaistē un dažādu biznesa modeļu stiprināšanā. Izstrādātā zīmolvedības metodika stiprina ziņu zīmola unikalitātes attīstību un zīmola vērtību dažādās satura izplatīšanas un patēriņa platformās, ko apliecina delfi.lv iekšējie zīmola mērījumu rādītāji.

Ar cieņu,
Konstantīns Kuzikovs
AS DELFI valdes priekšsēdētājs

RIGA TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY
Faculty of Engineering Economics and Management
Institute of Business Engineering and Management

Linda Saulīte

Doctoral Student of the Study Programme "Management Science and Economics"

NEWS MEDIA BRANDING
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Glossary of used terms in the Thesis

Scientific supervisor
Professor Dr. oec.
DENISS ŠČEULOVS

Riga,2023

The definitions and terminology used in the media industry's professional and academic literature vary from author to author and sector to sector, and diverse perspectives are used in the terminology and literature. As a result, some terminology lacks consensus across professional and academic fields; hence, the author of this Thesis has developed and provided a glossary of terms used herein, complete with explanations and definitions when applicable and available.

Term	Explanation
Audience	Any group of people who receive and consume media content. In this research, the audience is any large group of people exposed to or following the same media and media content.
Audience reach	The capability of media to disseminate content and information to as many people as possible.
Brand associations' strength score	In this research context, the author of the Thesis uses this term to describe a measurement approach to the strength of news media brand associations as perceived by a particular audience.
Brand uniqueness	Customer perception of the brand being superior or more distinctive compared to competitor brands. Uniqueness can be based on unique or novel characteristics the brand has or perceived via customer perception of being unique or superior, even if the brand does not possess any unique or novel characteristics. Brand uniqueness can be formed either through unique brand attributes, unique associations, or a combination of both. In literature is also defined as perceived uniqueness.[570]
Brand distinctiveness	Based on literature analyses, brand distinctiveness is often used interchangeably with brand uniqueness describing the same meaning. In the context of this research, distinctiveness is used interchangeably with uniqueness.
Convergence	In the context of this research, convergence is approached as internet and technology-driven interconnectivity between platforms that deliver a complete and thorough media content consumption experience.[571]
Content distribution	Approaches and ways how and where media content is supplied and delivered to audiences.
Consumer experience	Consumer experience with a brand or product in any way, including advertising, product experience, and service experience.
Consumption experience	Regarding usability, engagement, and other factors, consumer experience with media content in online environments, including social media platforms, websites, and other platforms. In the context of this research, consumption experience is every interaction consumers have with news media content.
Content consumption	Usage of media content and any media-supplied information. Consumption can be digital via online media websites and social media platforms, analogue via broadcasting and transmitting such as television and radio, and analogue via reading like print media.
Content-related attributes	News media attributes are directly connected with media content, e.g., content quality, richness, credibility, and journalists.
Digital technologies	All technologies for creating, processing, transmitting and using digital goods fall under the umbrella of information, communication, and media technologies, such as social media, mobile, analytics, and embedded devices.[572]
Digital transformation	Digital transformation is utilising digital technology to build new — or adapt current — business processes, culture, and consumer experiences to satisfy evolving company and market needs.

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[570] Romaniuk,J., & Gaillard,E. (2007). The relationship between unique brand associations, brand usage and brand performance: analysis across eight categories, *Journal of Marketing Management,* 23:3-4, 267-284, DOI: 10.1362/026725707X196378

[571] Jenkins, H. (2006). *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide.* NYU Press. http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt9qffwr

[572] Berger, S., Denner, M.-S., & Röglinger, M. (2018). The Nature of Digital Technologies - Development of a Multi-Layer Taxonomy. *ECIS.*

Digitalisation	The adoption or increase in digital or computer technology use by an organisation, industry, or country.[573] Describes the economic, social, and cultural effects of growing computer assistance, new media and communication platforms, and the convergence of media infrastructure towards universal communication platforms.[574]
Experience-related attributes	News media attributes directly connect to how news media content is packaged, delivered, and consumed by the audience, e.g., the usability of content, interactivity, availability on social media platforms, and different formats like video and live video.
Key Performance Indicators	A quantifiable measure is used to evaluate a communication campaign or brand communication to meet desired performance objectives.
Media	In this research context, media is approached as a variety of mass communication media methods that reach a large audience.[575] These communication tools utilise numerous channels, including television, radio, print, and digital media. Rapid transmission of information to a large number of geographically separated individuals. Media audiences may be heterogeneous in nature, large in number and scattered within a vast boundary of space. In this sense, media refers to mass media that produce and distribute various information and content, including journalistic material.
Media brand	The name, logo, and other brand elements of particular media. For example, Twitter is a social media brand. Delfi.lv is a national news media brand.
Media brand association	Media brand associations are associations the audience holds about particular media. The media audience's associations with a particular media brand are formed based on media brand attributes.
Media brand attributes	The specific characteristics of news media include their content and quality, credibility, usability, journalists and authors, and distribution mechanisms.
Multi-platforms	In a strategic approach, media organisations create or assemble products and services to deliver and distribute content propositions across various channels[576]. Multi-platforms are various platforms where the media distribute, and the audience consumes media content such as social media platforms and search engine platforms like Google.
National news media	Media organisations produce and distribute content in a particular language, generally the official language of the state concerned. In the perspective of this Thesis, national news media are news media that produce and distribute material in Latvian in an online environment and have their own brand domain and webpage.
New media	Due to digitalisation and Internet accessibility, new forms of media have emerged. These media are established due to digitalisation and provide two-way communication, audience participation, and interaction.[577] This includes online news media, as well as social media platforms.
New media environment	In this research context, a new media environment is described as the media environment changed due to digitalisation. Conditions influenced by digitalisation in which media operate, including but not limited to media business models, journalism, content distribution and audience relationships.
News	Information or reports on current global, regional, or national happenings. Information may encompass political, social, entertainment, sport, and technology-related topics.
News media	The news media are mass media whose primary purpose is to report the news to the public or a specific audience.
Social media platforms	Social media platforms are a collection of Internet-based applications based on the conceptual and technological foundations of Web 2.0 that permit the creation and exchange of user-generated content.[578] Examples of social media platforms are Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter, etc.

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Online news media	The news media that distribute editorial and other content via the internet, as opposed to via print or broadcast, are known as online news media.
On-demand content consumption	On-demand content consumption refers to the use of content across many platforms whenever the consumer wants to consume media content, independent of the media's website, channel, or programming platform, as well as the time of the broadcast[579].
Platforms	A digital platform provides a (technological) basis for delivering or aggregating services/content from service/content providers to end-users[580]. Platforms can be marketplaces such as Apple App Store and Google Play, service-based such as Spotify, and Netflix, social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube, as well as other types like Google and News Aggregate platforms. The notion of a platform can be handled from technical and non-technical perspectives. Within the framework of this Thesis, platforms treated as media platforms, such as social media platforms, are characterised by the direct network effect, which indicates that a platform becomes more appealing to users as the total number of users on the same side of the platform increases. Direct network effects are typical for social networks and communication services like Facebook, LinkedIn, WhatsApp, and Skype.[581]
Traditional or legacy media	Legacy or traditional media is media established before the internet and digitalisation, often limited to one-way communication. Print, Radio, and TV are examples of traditional or legacy media.
Usage imagery	Associations that audiences obtain based on news media content usage or consumption. Usage associations can be based on platform experience, the day and time the audience consumes content, content interactivity, formats and other usage experience.
User imagery	User imagery is the brand imagery association related to the type of person who uses the brand.[582] For example, media audience associations that their friends use this media brand or associations that older or younger people use media brands.
Video on demand	Consuming media video content independently from broadcast time and platform and consuming the content via different platforms according to the audience's chosen time.

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RIGA TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY

Faculty of Engineering Economics and Management
Institute of Business Engineering and Management

Linda Saulīte

Doctoral Student of the Study Programme "Management Science and Economics"

NEWS MEDIA BRANDING
IN THE 21st CENTURY MEDIA BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT

Branding multi-platform approach, delfi.lv

Scientific supervisor
Professor Dr. oec.
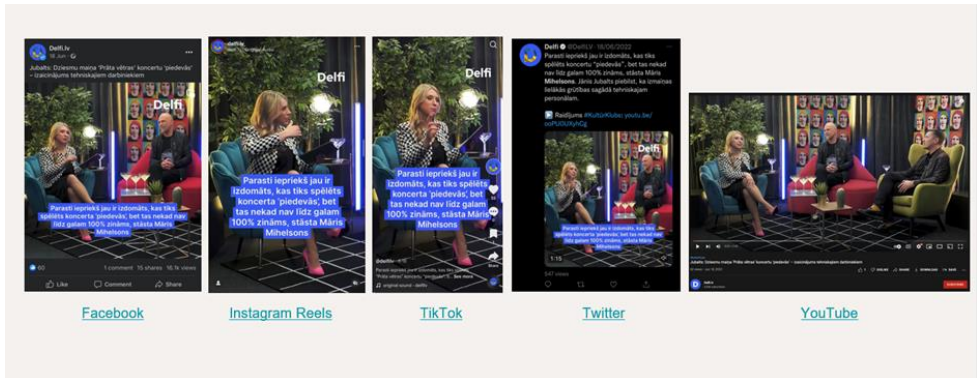DENISS ŠČEULOVS

Riga, 2023

Fig. 10.1. Example of delfi.lv news branding for content consumption experience across multiple social media platforms (delfi.lv internal data).

Linda Saulīte was born in 1976. She obtained a Bachelor's degree in Economics from the University of Latvia (1998), an MBA degree from the Riga Business Institute of Riga Technical University (2003), and an Executive MBA degree from the Stockholm School of Economics in Riga (2005). She has been the Manager of the Marketing Department at news media TVNET and IT company Tilde. Since 2015, she has been the CEO and board member in the communication and media agency Dentsu Latvia. She studied business administration at the Harvard Business School (USA) Executive Education and graduated from the Swedish Management Institute (Sweden) educational program Corporate Social Responsibility and Business Management. Her research interests relate to media brand management and brand uniqueness and brand equity management in the digital environment.