The Media Brand Theoretical Framework

Subjects: Business

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Due to technological developments, new media content consumption patterns have emerged. New dynamic, interactive, and multiplatform marketplaces have changed how media brands deliver content and how audiences consume it. The main catalysts of change are multiple platforms, on-demand content consumption, and social media platforms. The increasing use of global social networks offers media brands possibilities to distribute content and connect with their audiences, all while creating new challenges and competition in local media. These changes have brought about possibilities of broadening media audiences, as well as challenges.

media branding   news media brands   media brand attributes   consumer-based brand equity

1. Need for Brand Equity—Advancement in Technology and a Changed Communication Market

People have witnessed increasing interest in the brand equity concept in recent decades, as this is crucial to researchers, academics, and business managers. There are increasing efforts to introduce and define brand equity and research it in the changing marketplace where brands and audiences meet. The advancement of technology and the introduction of the internet changed the way the world interacts and communicates, which is 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 multimedia environment [1][2][3]. Established approaches to branding that focus on mass media methods appear unsuited for a market where social media networks have replaced brand platforms and networks, and the audience has access to a vast quantity of information about companies, brands, and products. Therefore, new outlooks and viewpoints are needed to understand branding principles in this swiftly changing communication and audience context [4]. Entirely new perspectives should be developed in branding to build, develop, and maintain a strong brand.

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 [5]. Thus, brand equity is connected to the fact that different effects are seen in the marketing of a service or product due to its brand versus if that brand did not associate with that same product or service [5][6]. If the changed communication marketplace is considered, where the audience could encounter a lot of 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 encounter with a product or service, regardless of its marketing or of brand content unrelated to the marketing. There are many different perspectives on brand equity, but academics agree that brand equity can be described from a financial or a marketing point of view. In the marketing point of view, two definitions of brand equity prevail. These is firm-based brand equity or consumer-based brand equity. Consumer-based equity is about consumer awareness and perception of the

brand that is directly influenced by company marketing activities [6][7]. Firm-based brand equity focuses on the financial value directly influenced by the brand and brand strength [8]. Among other perspectives, the concept of a brand as a construct of the audience's mind and associations is gaining attention from brand equity experts in both the academic and business worlds.

2. Consumer-Based Brand Equity

The audience, i.e., consumers, increasingly control the new media and information environment [4]. 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. Many authors in the marketing literature state that one of the benefits of substantial brand equity is consumers' response, behaviours, and marketing communication effectiveness. For example, consumers may be more willing to accept further communications from a brand, respond to this communication more openly or favourably, and have a more remarkable ability to recall the brand communication or have related cognitive or perceptual responses later. Therefore, brand equity plays a principal role in marketing communication and its effects, either as an aim or as an intermediary to other targets [9].

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 [10]. The three acknowledged models of customer-based brand equity are those of Keller (1993), Aaker (1991), and Kapferer (1992) [6].

Two conceptualisations of brand equity between customers with moderately different aspects predominate the branding literature. Aaker divided brand equity assets and liabilities into five categories: brand loyalty, name awareness, perceived quality, brand associations, and other proprietary assets [5]. Keller differentiated between two crucial brand elements, perceived as a point of difference from brand equity and equivalent to the assets and liabilities of brand equity defined by Aaker: brand awareness and brand image [6]. 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 [6]. The types of brand associations that condense concrete information can be categorised into product- and non-product-related attributes [6]. Customer-based brand equity happens when the consumer is familiar with the brand and has some favourable, solid, and unique brand associations in their memory. The authors draw attention to the unique brand attributes that are key elements in building substantial consumer-based brand equity. The difference in Keller's model is related to the consumer's brand knowledge memory structure, which embodies brand awareness and brand image. Many scholars agree that customer-based brand equity influences how customers react to the brand's marketing and therefore influences the brand's marketing effects.

Nevertheless, the researchers hypothesise that, in a new, intensive, and oversaturated online communication marketplace where customers have access to immediate, on-demand, and multiplatform-fuelled multiperspective brand information, brand marketing efforts should be widened and should include interacting with customers in any brand content. The main difference is that, 20 years ago, companies were in control of their marketing and brand messages via chosen channels; today's marketplace allows customers to choose when, where, and what to do with the brand content even more, so the audience has become a part of brand marketing, whether intentionally or, often, unintentionally. The authors believe that this stresses the importance of the consumer experience of multiple communication platforms as a crucial part of brand equity development. Scholars and business managers have researched and confirmed the consumer experience with a brand product or service and its impact on a positive brand–customer relationship. However, a multiplatform and interactive marketplace where customers experience

brand content—marketing or nonmarketing—has a new dimension in the consumer experience aspect. Today's interactive environment expands the definition of consumer experience as consumers can see, read, and watch intentional or unintentional brand content anywhere. Even if it is not directly product-related or brand-advertised, every content consumption experience can be attributed to brand associations. This suggests that the consumer experience today is not only product-related or service-related but also related to the medium, audience, and context. The research focuses on whether the consumption experience, especially non-product-related, has more significance in forming brand associations.

3. Consumer Experience and Brand Equity

A dynamic, interactive marketplace has changed the way consumers and brands communicate and developed a competitive environment with a growing amount of marketing activities for goods and services. As a result, branding has evolved from recognising to building and establishing an emotional bond with the consumer. This emotional bond may create a unique brand value for consumers. Therefore, the brand story should be presented and communicated through an interactive approach to build and strengthen a unique brand image in customers' minds, which creates a unique customer experience [10].

The importance and effect of consumer experience have been well researched and confirmed in academic work. Holbrook and Hirschman stated that consumer experiences include hedonic attributes such as fun, fantasies, and feelings [11]. Schmitt and Rogers have also comprehensively described the consumer experience from emotional and rational perspectives [12]. Brand experience occurs when consumers approach or accept brands [13]. The brand experience should be communicated through all contact points to amplify the effect [10]. Shamim and Butt's work provides detailed analyses of how brand equity, attitude, and credibility are shaped by brand experience [14]. This emphasises that consumer experience plays a crucial role in brand equity development.

Furthermore, it confirms that new touchpoints and branding are created to deliver a seamless, appropriate, and positive consumer experience through a multiplatform and interactive marketplace. Suppose that the consumer experience is crucial for substantial brand equity. In that case, the focus is on how this experience influences the development and enhancement of positive, solid, and unique brand associations in a dynamic, interactive marketplace and whether indirect and non-product-related consumer experiences have become more important in this marketplace than before.

4. Consumer Experience and Brand Associations

Consumer feelings, thoughts, experiences, beliefs, and emotions related to a brand are together termed brand associations [5][6]. A brand association can also include brand attitudes, emotional elements, and objective benefits [6][15]. As agreed before, unique brand associations are elements that help consumers distinguish a particular brand from other brands obtainable on the market [15].

Brand association can be described as a concept or correlation established by a brand in a customer's mind. Scholars agree that emotional and cognitive clues based on experience-based associations lead to brand associations [11]. In addition, experience with the brand or service builds experience-based associations [16]. Shamim and Butt's research on how the brand experience or the consumer experience influences brand equity and brand attitude and credibility proved that brand experience directly influences all of these elements [14]. Furthermore, brand experience substantially influences brand equity and other elements such as brand associations and brand awareness [11].

Brakus and Keller agree that brand-connected experiences are likely to become a part of a consumer's long-term memory in the form of brand associations. These associations can significantly build attitudes such as brand preference, credibility, satisfaction, and loyalty [14][16]. Biedenbach and Marell's study results show that experience influences brand association more than brand awareness [17]. However, the literature provides only a small number of studies investigating the relationship between brand experience and brand equity [18]. Therefore, it is essential for future scholars to focus on the relationship between a brand or consumer experience and brand equity. Brand experience or consumer experience and brand equity relations are essential concepts in branding where brand equity is a long-term way of building brands, whereas brand experience is compounded and comprehended by consumers. The literature confirms that brand equity is a growing and developing concept and is an essential part of solid brand building in a new, interactive, internet-based communication marketplace. In this marketplace, the customer and audience have more control through consuming, engaging, and responding to brands' communication and marketing efforts as technological advancements in recent years have changed the communication marketplace. Interactive, digital, multiplatform, and multichannel communication prevails in all aspects of branding. Although the customer-based brand equity model introduced 30 years ago seems to fit the changing marketplace ideally, the consumer experience has changed. Today's consumer experience is no longer a direct or indirect product experience but a nonlinear, mobile, and cross-platform experience with a product or brand in very different environments.

While 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 equity points to the need to manage and operate brand equity building in a more complex process. If the literature research shows that brand experience plays a crucial role in brand equity building, 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.

Furthermore, the authors believe that technological progress and digitalisation affect brands' consumer experience and play a critical role in brand associations.

Therefore, building and maintaining strong, favourable, and unique brand associations involves managing and measuring consumer experiences with the brand in ways never before conducted. In addition, the authors propose a model where consumer experience, especially non-product-related, is measured as part of brand associations. If consumer experience influences brand equity, the conceptualisation approach of consumer-based brand associations suggests an effective way to measure and deliver the consumer's signs.

Furthermore, by managing the brand associations via marketing communications and activities, the brand has the opportunity to build the desired brand image, thereby strengthening brand equity [6]. This is especially important for digital marketing, which has received less academic study and is enriched by different kinds of communication elements and activities that were not even possible several years ago. Furthermore, as mentioned above, consumers are playing a more significant role in creating the meaning of brands in the new interactive marketplace.

Recent scholarly works confirm that consumer experience impacts brand associations and, therefore, a reinvention of the consumer experience in the brand equity context is needed. The question of how the type, strength, and uniqueness of all brand associations produced by different communication platforms influence brand strength should still be explored. Increasing the number of communication platforms where brands and consumers meet, such as social media platforms, instant messaging apps, mobile content usage, and digital content consumption, will make indirect consumer and non-brand-related experiences essential for developing brand associations.

The correlation between these would help brands with understanding and building strong brand equity in a new, interactive, and customer-led marketplace. Furthermore, scholars agree that technological advancement and convergence have brought about both new opportunities and challenges for brand marketing and brand equity building in a changed interactive marketplace where consumer experience and interaction with brand content play an increasingly critical role.

5. Consumer Experience and Medium: The Importance of Media Brands

With more and more content and information being accessed via different platforms and channels, the consumer experience becomes more and more significant. In this case, a question arises about the significance of the medium as an aspect of media brands or vehicles of brand messages to the audience. Technology's advancement and the digital environment have fundamentally changed the environment where brands, consumers, and content meet. Famously, in 1964, Marshall McLuhan invented the phrase "the medium is the message" in his work Understanding Media: Extensions of Man [19]. This means that the content and the medium are intertwined, so the central message or effect is not in the content it carries but in the way it is presented [19]. Each medium is a unique type of 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 [20]. McLuhan's theory is still practical today for analysing building brand associations in the customer-led interactive medium marketplace. Medium theory focuses on the medium rather than what it conveys or how the audience receives information. A medium is not simply radio, TV, newspaper, etc. Instead, it is the symbolic environment of any communication action. The medium theory focuses on each medium's particular characteristics or each type of media [21]. This means that the focus is on specific features and how they make the medium different from other media. What variables of the medium, rather than the content, differentiate one brand from another and form the basis for customer choice? Without diminishing the role of content, long-lived medium theory and brand equity—elements discussed previously—take into account the growing customer impact on how and where communication is experienced. Translating medium variables to today's branding theories and brand elements, the authors define these variables as non-product-related brand attributes that create strong, unique, and favourable media brand associations.

The idea of media brands being both product brands and generators of consumer brands' culture and communication is an important research field. It adds complexity to the study of media and media branding, powerful platforms that power social life, debate, and consumer participation [22]. This provides important research on how changes in the environment influence media brands and how non-content-related brand attributes build media brand uniqueness. If the content itself is only a part of the audience experience, then non-content-related variables or associations become more significant, especially in the oversupplied, multiplatform-fuelled media products market.

It is uncertain whether traditional branding approaches from consumer brand perspectives can be applied to media branding. Media brands and products have been of academic interest for many years, but from the brand's perspective, media brands have received less attention in relation to management, audience, and social and cultural influence [23][24]. Although the effectiveness of marketing and brand advertising is often researched, media brands differentiate themselves from consumer brands in various ways. Furthermore, the characteristics of media products vary considerably since they experience significantly different business environments [22]. Picard defined two major categories of media products and services:

- Single-creation media products;

- Continuous-creation media products.

Single-creation media products are creative ideas-driven products based on unique individual content, such as movies, music, games, or books [22]. The core competence of media brands producing single-creation products is content creation. Their brand management aspect is often project-driven brand management. Due to each product's uniqueness, media companies must invest significantly in marketing and sales activities to capture consumers' attention, inform them about the content of the product, and convince them to consume it [22]. As a result, the market for these products is risky and experiences high failure rates. From a consumer point of view, these products could be categorised as high-involvement products.

Continuous-creation media products are concept-driven products that demand the ongoing creation of changing content, provided within a context that exhibits continuity. Magazines, newspapers, television series, and news media are examples of the continuous creation of media products. Managing these products requires structured and coordinated processes and process management approaches. The main differences from the perspective of the media brand lie in the focus: media brands producing single-creation products focus on managing failure, whereas media brands with continuous-creation products focus on enhancing their products and processes and lean on the success already achieved [22]. Producers of continuous-creation products can focus on enhancing content within ongoing products by researching audiences' likes and repositioning any similar and substitutable products. This distinction between media products is significant as a different focus from a branding perspective could be applied. This research focuses on news media, as news media are different from consumer goods, and other media products such as news media are society-influencing products that generate income by fulfilling their normative role [4]. Today, the news media play a crucial role in everyday life, influencing political, economic, and societal processes. The increasing volume of information sources, aggregate platforms, and social media has created information and content creditability and source reputation crises. Increasing levels of fake news and disinformation have led to demand for high-equity media brands within the digital marketplace. Media products are more visible and much more integrated into the daily lives of individuals than in many other industries [22]. The increasing digitisation of news is fundamentally reshaping the news industry. The changing news media environment has created a problem for media brands: how to build and maintain brand preference and usage in a highly competitive marketplace. Especially if the news content is, as in many cases, identical or at least similar across media outlets. This raises the important question of whether those seeking to build media brand equity should continue focusing on improving content only. 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. Whether in the interactive, digital, or oversaturated content market, is it enough that consumer experience extends beyond direct product experience?

The importance of branding and media brand management is also reflected in the positive effects of brand equity on various media outcomes, from the media's trust or credibility to media brand perception [25].

Higher levels of brand equity based on customers increase the credibility of media brands with their audiences [25]. Therefore, a direct impact of customer-based brand equity on media brand credibility suggests that news media that take purposeful brand-building actions and consequently increase their brand equity may find a corresponding improvement of their credibility with audiences. This outcome highlights the need for news media organisations to focus on brand building through content-related and non-product-related attributes. Furthermore, the interactive online environment and the changes in content consumption behaviours mentioned above require new ways to build strong and positive brand associations, especially if the focus is on a younger audience. The importance of consumption experience in building strong and favourable brand

associations was previously confirmed.

The application of general branding principles to media branding is a recent development. Therefore, theories that recognise, determine, and explore the relationships between the concepts that influence media brands are still evolving. However, in the face of intense media expansion and increasing competition in the industry, media brands rely on consumer marketing principles, particularly branding, to differentiate themselves from the competition [4].

It is crucial for media branding studies to focus specifically on news media brands, as they are inherently different from nonmedia brands [22]. Theories explaining the relationship between consumer brands and their consumers may not sufficiently explain the relationship between media brands and audiences. More and more studies show that the delivery vehicle or platform where the audience consumes media products is crucial for the content experience, especially if the focus is on news media or the continued creation of media products.

It is confirmed that the news media have a significant influence in today's fragmented, interactive, nonlinear marketplace. If news media differ from the production of other media brands from an economic perspective, it is in the fact that news media brands operate a fixed-cost economics [4]. Fixed-cost economic media types are broadcasting services, movies, TV programming, and news media. Unit-cost media examples are books, magazines, newspapers, and physical forms of recorded media [4].

To conclude, news media today can be described as low-involvement, continuous creation of products operating in fixed-cost economics where media brand and the consumer experience highly influence consumer behaviour. In addition, news media operate in a highly competitive environment. Interestingly, Picard [22] stated that media companies face less direct competition than other companies. Nevertheless, media products have faced intense competition in the last 10 years: information and news clutter, social platforms' role, and dominance have changed consumer roles and behaviour.

One of the media's unique properties is that, in multiple reuses of media content, particularly for the continuous creation of media products, this content value is perceived as more worthy than the original use [26]. The value of the media product has been broadly studied from a financial and economic point of view, but the area of media content reuse and value impact on brand equity has not been explored in depth. This is a significant aspect of media branding in a new, digital, and interactive marketplace. If the researchers assume that media brand associations and brand equity influence consumer experience across all access points, how do news readership, shares, and engagement with news brand content influence brand associations? If the value increases with multiple reuses, how can media brands take advantage of this fact to build strong, positive, and unique brand associations? To summarise, media brands differ from consumer brands in terms of supply and demand aspects, impact, and relationship with the audience and operate in a highly competitive and significantly oversupplied multiplatform-fuelled interactive environment. 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 important for revising and implementing branding strategies applicable in this new environment.

Due to digitalisation and convergence, media boundaries have dissolved and are no longer effective [4]. In addition, the audience is fragmented and divided into smaller and smaller target groups. This is an example of the law of diminishing returns, whereby more choice does not directly lead to more consumption. The result is a zero-sum market where the number of brands within a product category increases while the number of potential customers remains the same [27]. Obtaining a market share from direct competitors is the only way to attract more customers

[27][28]. This reinforces the importance of strong media brand equity to compete in the marketplace.

6. Multiplatform Consumption as Catalysts for Media Brands

As discussed above, technological advancements have brought about profound changes to brand building in a new interactive online marketplace. The fundamental catalyst of these changes is the availability of content distribution and consumption. New ways of distributing and consuming media content through different channels and platforms have created unique challenges for media branding. The multiple platforms are also behind the importance of media branding today. Multiple platforms as catalysts that allow the audience to access media content on different platforms, at different times, and in different formats, with social media platforms increasingly becoming the point of media consumption and experience, have determined the three main aspects of media branding [1][2][4][29]. These are:

- The audience's growing relevance as a component of the media brand;

- The growing significance of point of consumption and content consumption experience for brand associations;

- The diluting of media brand associations due to multiplatform content consumption.

The consumption of media content on-demand and via social platforms has increased the importance of audiences as a part of media branding. Given the audience's interactivity (consumption, participation, and reaction to a media brand), the audience has become a crucial part of media brand association forming, product development, and content distribution. Therefore, it is assumed that the audience's role in forming media brand associations has changed. Undoubtedly, 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 experience of consumption, forming associations between media brands. It is possible that these non-product-related associations are becoming increasingly important in a highly competitive, fragmented, and interactive marketplace characterised by information and media content oversupply. The researchers propose that the brand consumption experience can be a point of distinctiveness in an oversaturated media market.

Moreover, multiplatform consumption dilutes brand associations [1][2][4]. On the one hand, with respect to content delivery, there is more contact between brands and better receptivity to consumer needs when media brand content is obtainable through multiple platforms [1]. On the other hand, multiple delivery channels and platforms can weaken brand associations for media brands [1]. The increasing fragmentation of audiences, the emergence of distribution channels, 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. Additionally, Keller stated that, as there is more dynamism in content across multiple platforms, the brand identity of the content source (media brand) becomes less relevant, particularly when the content itself has unique brand associations [9]. 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 [2]. According to Barkus 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 [16]. These findings correlate with the impact of consumer experience on brand equity within other industry sectors.

This new aspect of the media branding field requires new strategies in media branding and attention to building and strengthening media brand equity in a changing environment. From a branding standpoint, this emphasises the significance of bolstering media brand associations to ensure that brand messages are not limited to certain platforms, such as news media web pages, but are accessible to audiences wherever they choose to consume their material. Multiplatform usage and content consumption on-demand weaken brand associations and enhance the audience's role in creating associations. The content consumption experience is an important part of media brand associations and, therefore, strong brand equity, as can be seen in **Figure 1**.
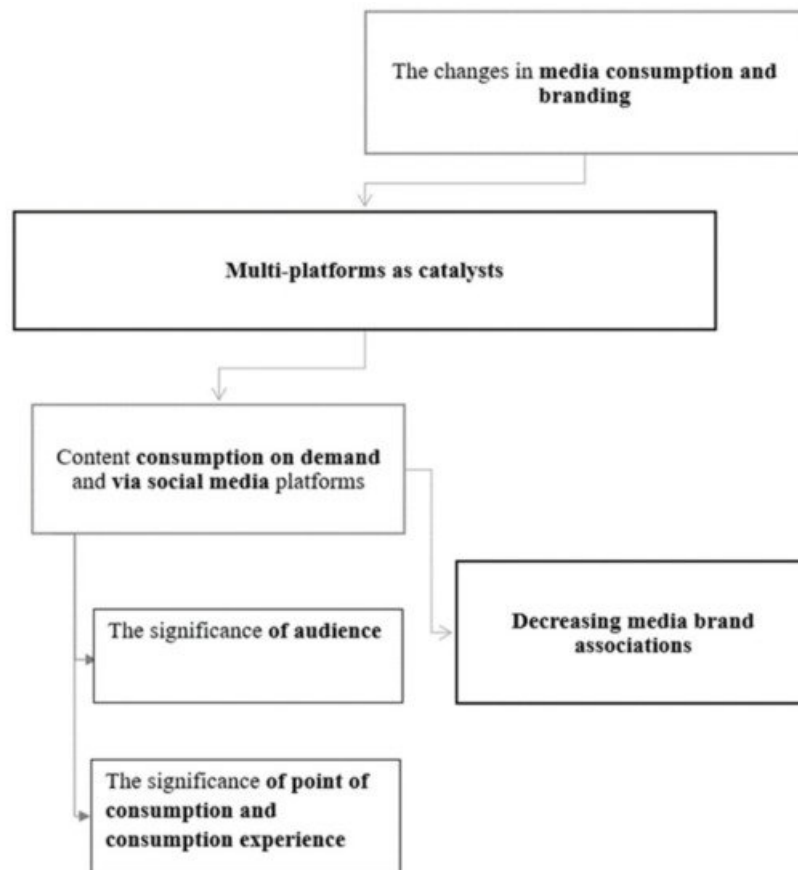

Figure 1. Consumption changes and their effect on media branding.

These three developments point to the importance of the strength of media brands across all audiences. Building strong, positive, and unique media brand associations is essential in this changed, interactive, fragmented, and saturated marketplace. Chan-Olmsted noted the dominance of content consumption on demand. From this perspective, on-demand branding could respond to how consumers perceive the value of concrete media platforms at different times and settings [1]. Thus, media content can be designed, merged, and distributed through multiple platforms to be appropriate to the audience's needs [1]. This confirms that increasing content consumption on-demand and the interactivity of the media supply and demand market can improve the consumption experience as part of building media brand associations.

Only in recent years has the question about the significance of brand associations other than content related arisen. This shift towards necessity and new aspects of news media branding has been exciting and entirely new. For decades, content and content quality have been the driving force of media brands, especially news media brands. However, previously analysed shifts in media consumption and technological developments require building strong non-content-related brand associations across all distribution and consumption points. This shift is especially significant because the new generation entering every industry encompasses all sectors and aspects of life, including the media market. This is Generation Z, which does not know and has never experienced the world of information consumption without digital and multiplatform

elements.

7. Generation Z and the News Media

Generation Z, which includes persons born between 1996 and 2010, and whose oldest members are only 25, accounts for 32% of the world's population, or 2.47 billion people out of a total population of 7.7 billion [30]. 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 are different from other generations because they are the first to grow up wholly in the digital era. They are tech-savvy and mobile-first and have high standards for spending their time online. More extensive research recently conducted by the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism (2019) found that younger audiences are different from older groups in terms of what they do and their core attitudes about what they want from the news [31]. This generation is primarily driven by progress and enjoyment of their lives, which also translates into what they look for in the news. They still need and want to consume news, but do not necessarily see traditional media as the best or only way to achieve that.

To summarise, news brands and young people have different perspectives on the role and value of news. This audience expects news brands to make their product helpful, engaging, and fun [31]. The data indicate that Generation Z is very reliant on mobile technology and spends a lot of time on various social media networks. Not surprisingly, they use media on demand and prefer personalised content. The challenge for news brands is that these brands and their products play a minor role in the lives of this generation.

The Reuters study also revealed three key aspects that determine this generation's attitude to news media. These are the moment of consumption, the person, and the medium [31]. These inform the researchers' takeaways:

(i) The news experience should be easy and accessible, such as on Facebook, Netflix, or other social media platforms. Social media networks are a growing platform for content consumption, including media and news media. Generation Z is more likely to turn to social media networks 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 [31]. This again confirms the importance of tangible media brand equity for all audiences.

(ii) News media brands must provide stories in a way that it 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.

(iii) 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.

Digitalisation has created new relationships with news media, especially for Generation Z. First, multiplatform development has created new content distribution and consumption challenges for media brands, particularly for news media brands—first of all in terms of access points and the social media platform experience for the audience, which is especially significant for Generation Z. The second is moments of consumption or consumption experience. 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 [31]. Digitalisation and multiple platforms now allow people to extend this experience to multiple moments with different audience needs, platforms, and expectations. The authors theorise that 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 means creating more native formats for mobile and social platforms and integrating this approach into assets and platforms. Third, visual formats and on-demand audio podcasts resonate greatly with this audience. News formats should be more visual and easier to consume to attract the interest of a younger audience.

News formats, tone of voice, and content are valued by the news brand depending on the consumption moment, the medium, and the individual [31]. By efficiently addressing these three variables, news brands can successfully generate resonant 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 [31].

To summarise, Generation Z is not particularly passionate about news brands, prioritising social media platforms and other mobile applications for entertainment and socialising. This does not mean that young consumers do not value traditional brands. Most of them have a leading news brand they turn to for breaking news, or when something needs to be verified, but their choice of brand is often impacted by early parental influence, and the format of consumption is almost always digital [29][31]. The Reuters research suggests that most young people keep up with the news passively by consuming it where they are most: on social media platforms and their mobile phones. This shift from conventional news sources to social media affects how they consume news and their overall attitudes.

However, the news is part of their lifestyles and is more often accessed through social media platforms and mobile phones. 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. Interestingly, many consumers—especially younger ones—say they started to depend more on reputable sources last year [29][31]. One reason for this is that young people have gradually become more aware of reliable sources of news content and the value of quality journalism. Interestingly, Generation Z favours news outlets established before 2000 twice as much as emerging media companies [31].

As a result, news brands have become increasingly concerned about 'attribution' or brand associations, ensuring that content is appropriately assigned to the brand that created it in a fragmented, multiplatform-driven global news environment [4][31].

The developments in media brand consumption in terms of consumption, brand associations, Generation Z's usage of news media brands, and the increasing importance of strong media brand equity underscore the need for analyses of strong brand attributes that contribute to media brand equity.

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