

Original Article

Managing Brands as Contemporary Media Competencies: Mutual Teaching and Learning

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Abstract - This contribution asks how far the evolution of media and brands has changed branding as media competence. It provides the view that brands integrate the multi-layered aspects of media competencies. Media competence is a popular expression that is often used when discussing the management and use of publishing media. Applied to social media, these competencies are currently frequently mentioned. They mean both the ability to use such media from the perceivers' point of view (e.g., questions regarding the access to relevant information or the healthy volume of media consumption) include the media-ability and, thus, requirements that product brands face (e.g., efforts required to allow brands to become shareable). Media competence is multi-dimensionally analyzed and discussed, e.g., in marketing and media management, leadership, communication science, as well as in other disciplines. Here it focuses on the need to understand brands as mutual learning and teaching institutions in order to synchronize corporate and social values. Successful brands depend on both the acceptance of the community, the coordination of corporate supplies to the demands of their customers, and their presence and acceptance within relevant media.

Keywords — branding, brand management, brand-education, education, media competences

I. INTRODUCTION

A. EVOLVING MEDIA, EVOLVING COMPETENCES

Media include a broad range of ideas and views. Perrin & Ehrensberger-Dow state: "In communication, a medium can be anything that contributes to someone being able to convey something to someone else – even the air that carries the sound waves of speech." [1] Thus, currently, media is often understood as technical equipment for communication and/or for the production, dissemination, and storage of media and/or content. Another view of the idea of media is the focus on journalistic and/or economic processes of production and publication of information. More recently, since the advent of social media, this view needs to be enlarged by the personal as well as the mass and interactive communication enhanced by social media [2].

Comparing the media nowadays with that of the pre-web 1.0 era media, the media competencies, from a user's and content provider's point of view, have become enlarged: Analogue media (e.g., classic mass media like TV, newspapers) shaped the pre-web 1.0 media era. With the rise of digital media, it has become more and more interactive (web 2.0), and intelligence made the semantic web (web 3.0) become popular. All in all, mass media changed from one-way communication to real-time dialogue platforms, which include the opportunity for users to provide content [3]. In addition, media has become mobile, and the analysis of selected users or big data provides insights into individual needs so that content providers are able to address customers individually. Micro-marketing with a specific segment became a reality [4]. This little view on the change of media leads to the question of how far the evolution of media and brands have changed branding as media competencies, if it is accepted that branding centrally means to provide and communicate brand values and, thus, crucially depends on media and are even brands themselves. The applied method is the literature review.

II. VIEWS OF MEDIA COMPETENCES

Competence can be understood as a combination of the knowledge, skills, and attitudes deemed essential for performing a task within a specific context." [5] Pöttinger distinguishes three dimensions of media competence [6]:

- Competence to perceive: the ability to understand information, media structures and recognize their impacts
- Competence to use: the ability to use media devices and contents appropriately
- Competence to act: the ability to present oneself with as well as in the media

A brief look at selected contributions from the broad literature of cross-academic (digital) media competencies reveals the multi-facet requirements created by different views on media that need to be bundled within one set of requirements of contemporary branding (see tab1):



Tab.1: Selected views on media competence

Selected media competence views and approaches [authors]
<p>Marketing Science: Social media competence as marketing activities [7] Marketing Science: Power of consumers using social media: Examining the influences of brand-related user-generated content on Facebook [8]</p>
<p>Media science: Media competence as communication skills in the era of interpersonal media like smartphones and disappearing barriers of non-mediated communication and mediated communication [9] Media science: Big data, using digital media, dataveillance, and trust in publishers [10]</p>
<p>Psychology: The media equation: people treat computers, TV, and new media like real people and places [11] Psychology: information seeking and a form of relaxing entertainment as motivating factors for social media engagement [12]</p>
<p>Arts: Aesthetics rising from beauty to reputation [13] Arts: Design features influencing interactions with brand postings on social media like Facebook [14]</p>
<p>Information science: Specialized and advanced competence for work and creative expression, technology-mediated communication and collaboration, and privacy and security as major digital competencies [15] Information Science: Digital fluency is the ability to reformulate knowledge and produce information to express oneself creatively and appropriately in a digital environment [16]</p>
<p>Didactics/media pedagogy: Media competence as digital skills including digital competence as the technical use of ICT lasting until a broad understanding as knowledge application or 21st-century skills [17] Didactics/media pedagogy: Social media as an educational environment; Facebook’s effects on culture, language, and education [18]</p>
<p>Sociology: The digital media as the emergence of mass self-communication offering an extraordinary medium to organize social movements [19] Sociology The role and impact of media on society [20]</p>

Of course, there are many more examples to be mentioned, which impact branding. The ongoing discussion about media competencies includes how far individual skills, knowledge, and values are impacted by social processes, especially by smart and social media [21]. Hereby the view of media with regards to its role within society and its related competencies changed dramatically. Baacke retraces the evolution and finds that the attitude towards media changed. In the 1960s, the risks involved in the socialization and education of kids and teens within media pedagogy were emphasized and are still present. Today also the benefits are emphasized and are at least twofold as far as the perception

of media content on the one hand and the production of content on the other is regarded. The media already in the 1990s became a “second public”[22].

III. BRANDS AS CONTEMPORARY MEDIA COMPETENCES

The evolving meaning of branding is frequently discussed and reviewed (e.g. [23], [24]). In the 1870’s, brands were not new but confined to a few selected branches, like patent medicine or tobacco. Brand development was the task of the corporate owner and/or the top management. Advertising and packing were popular branding measures. The idea of the brand starts as a way of signifying the owner of a product, and brands became central to marketing (by about the 1920s) [25]. Since about the 1980’s the meaning of emotions and values, beyond the function of the product or other brand objects, were emphasized in order to gain brand loyalty. Since the rising popularity of the internet and especially of social media and mobile devices, the locus of many companies’ brands has shifted from the real to the virtual world [26]. Brand management faces a shift within the information. The information asymmetry between consumers and firms that for several years worked in favor of brands was suddenly reversed. Command and control branding became outdated [27].

Corporations need to synchronize corporate with societal values [28]. Brands incorporate the continuing evolution of stakeholder claims into brand values, stories, and design by serving as a dialogue platform: interactive branding. Brand meaning is a relational and communal term that expresses the inside-out and outside in the competency of branding. Thus brands themselves, but also communication instruments include branding media competencies. They are media themselves as they exchange brand values with stakeholder claims. Brands use communication tools to organize this ongoing exchange.

Managing this meaning over time is complex, dynamic, and multi-determined [29]. Digital branding in the age of currently popular influencers today requires the community brand paradigm, i.e., group dynamic consumption in different social contexts [30]. Thus, outside-in marketing, so-called inbound marketing, becomes popular [31] and frames branding 3.0. Since the rising significance of social media, effective brands have become the mirror of community values as the communities themselves evolve brand content. Here it becomes obvious that branding today is an application of marketing 3.0/4.0, which emphasizes the (social) values of communities (marketing 3.0) and applying digitization (marketing 4.0). [32].

Digitization represents many impacts for contemporary media competencies as the shift to inbound marketing indicates: search engine marketing, social media marketing, real-time marketing, the “mobile and voice-first” trends and many more popular marketing techniques [33] emphasize that digitality becomes brand reality. Digitality describes that technological-driven digitization becomes part of social

culture. Gere explains that digitality is a culture impacted by digital social networks, fostering networking, cooperation, communication, and participation [34]. The real-time technical competence, on the one hand, is enabled by digital marketing techniques, but it is also socially reinforced by the expectations of social media users, who expect timely (re-)actions from companies [35]. Digitization as digitality emphasizes the didactic relevance for the mutual teaching and learning of brand values which impact media competencies today.

IV.A LANDSCAPE OF BRAND RELEVANT MEDIA COMPETENCES

Ferrés and Piscitelli provide media competencies distinguished by requirements regarding analysis (e.g., media perception of content) and of using media (e.g., requirements of media production)[36]. Perrin and Ehrensberger-Dow additionally emphasize media competency as every day and/or crisis competencies [37], which means that dynamics such as flexibility and real-time become specific requirements of media competencies at the latest since the occurrence of social media. In the further development of those and the views of media competencies mentioned above, the following table provides an overview of important brand-related media competencies (user and provider view – see tab2).

Tab.2: A Landscape of media competences

Media Competence Dimensions	Exemplary Media Competence Areas	
	Media User	Media Provider
Language & information competence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understanding content (texts, messages, stories...) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understand and adopt the language of different target groups Ability to provide information Express oneself
Communication competences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Converging communication competencies of (non-) mediated interpersonal communication 	
Technological competences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Technologic know how to use devices (e.g., TV, smartphone, social media platforms) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Handle and/or provide technological innovations Use a broad range of media to address target groups
Media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Know-how to 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Know-how to

Production and Publishing processes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> use media by providing content Awareness of effects of viral processes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> publish media, e.g., print, audio, video Digital media and platform provider abilities
Content competences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Perceive information Understand information Learn information Evaluate information 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide and manage content Manage publication Information, entertaining, visual competences Turning linear programs into content on demand
Data competences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understand that the use of media also means providing data for analysis by the media provider 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Know-how to analyze big and/or individual data alongside the customer journey Control media outcomes Measure media perception
Stakeholder management competences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Social networking with others to mutually experience group dynamics 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recognizing the values and power and, thus, relevance of stakeholders/stakeholder groups
Social and/or cultural competences,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Experiencing/ regarding values trends 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adopting corporate and product management to currently valid values
Participation & interaction competences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Turning from media consumption to user-generated content Communication and/or social interaction with other users and/or content 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organize presence within selected and/or relevant media Interact with people and diverse collectives in environments that are increasingly plural and multicultural.

	providers	
Cooperation competences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The community paradigm as interaction beyond relational competences ▪ Carry out collaborative work via connectivity and the creation of platforms for social networks ▪ Crowdsourcing as cooperating with communities 	
Discussion and negotiating competences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Discuss and negotiate currently crucial values ▪ Understand and use appropriate platforms/events (e.g., exhibitions, congresses) 	
Situational competences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Technological and social real-time expertise, e.g., answering social media requests, crisis communication 	
Agile competences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Participation and interaction within media dialogues as a technologic (e.g., using social media) and social (e.g., the acceptance of real-time dialogues by the brand management) aspect ▪ Transferring and executing discussion into (brand) management 	
Learning & teaching competences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Learn communicated values engaged in media discussion and demonstrate stakeholder power to change media content and, thus, corporate behavior 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Learn and negotiate stakeholder demands ▪ Understand social media, congresses, fashion shows, and/or exhibitions as negotiation platforms

The table indicates the broad range of media competencies contemporary branding includes/requires. The following will especially select and refer to learning and teaching competencies of branding in the digital age, as they frame and retrace the shift of branding: Branding once meant media publishing and content creation today. Today it is also knowledge management, i.e., the shift from branding 1.0 to 4.0, which emphasizes didactics as a crucial media competence of branding.

V. BRANDS

MEDIA COMPETENCE AS DIDACTICS

The probably most visible discussion about the congeniality of branding and education beyond the building of brand knowledge is to be found within knowledge management. Fuller et al. state: “One of the major motivations to interact with a brand community is knowledge exchange. Frequent social interactions of community members provide opportunities to learn. Therefore, it can be expected that a stronger identification with the community is positively associated with brand knowledge.” [38] There are many examples to be found, where corporate communications mean education and, thus, knowledge management: Internal communication as providing information, the development of mission statements as the initiation of understanding corporate priorities within management, the translation and adoption of brand messages for different stakeholders, brands as stored brand knowledge, advertising as storytelling as applied didactics by transferring news by narrating, campaigning as process-related dramaturgy following steps of information, understanding, and acceptance, and many more [39].

Didactics is characterized as the science of teaching and learning, whereas pedagogic analysis questions upbringing. Thus, didactics are often understood as one area of pedagogy [40]. The idea of education fundamentally changed in the last century parallel to the understanding of educating brand values: The “school as a factory paradigm” education with standardized tests at set points and with students being compared with each other before being sent out onto the market. Today education needs to prepare students to succeed in a creative society. Four categories of educating theories can be distinguished [41]. They are to be seen as streams of discussions, which are not isolated, but influence each other (e.g. [42], [43]) and, thus, shape contemporary media competencies of branding:

- **Educational theories:** teaching as educational encounters of selected teaching tasks and the learning generation popularly discussed in the 1950’s. The teacher defines the selection, arrangements, and explication of classes related to the knowledge of students. Methods of teaching are less important here.
- **Learning and teaching theories:** Since about the 1960s, they have argued from the teacher’s point of view and focused on the psychological process of learning. The teacher is the “lecturing intelligence”. The applied teaching is to be measured and controlled. Instead of “educational encounters”, teaching becomes a “rational task-related teaching-learning process”.
- **Communicative-interaction theories:** They are understood as a counter-reaction to the theories mentioned above. They focus less on the content or planning questions but on the impact of social interaction within the classroom. Classes become social interaction; education turns from “instruction” to “interaction”.
- **Constructivist theories:** Due to these theories,

knowledge isn't real but constructed. Teachers can't instruct learning but initiate learning processes. Teaching and learning become decoupled when self-learning processes become the focus of didactics.

In the following, it will be retraced that brands as education develop congenially with the development of education. Selected branding approaches are matched with the above-introduced education approaches. Of course, the matching can't be that precise as there are sometimes interdependent aspects. Nevertheless, it should become obvious that branding applies and retraces the development of education (see tab. 3):

Tab.3: Applying education theories to selected approaches of branding

Brand education: Approaches of Knowledge Transfer
Brand education as teaching as educational encounters
Brand names tell the consumers many things, not only by the way it sounds but, more importantly, via the body of associations it has built up and acquired as a public object over a period of time[44]
Brand-building to create brands as unique entities that certain consumers really want, based on a special combination of physical, functional, and psychological values. Brand communication as clear and evocative expressions of what the brand should be seen to offer and what it should be seen to be [45]
Brand education as rational task-related teaching-learning-process
Brands as key-performance related teaching indicators measured with copy-testing or eye-tracking within the 1920s [46]
The brand's consumers select as an expression of something about the customer and the product/corporation. Brand identity provides an understanding of the lasting inner values. The discussion about brand· identity consequently is related to the identity of both customers and the organization [47]
Brand awareness as a need to establish recall and recognition within the "bombardment" with marketing messages[48]
Brand knowledge as a specific brand value-category, e.g., of consulting or research corporations[49]
Brand education as interaction, communication, mutuality
Brand narratives refer to stories that marketers tell about their brand: narrative advertisements tend to be more effective than argument advertisements[50]
Celebrity endorsers in advertising by using associative learning principles[51]
Rebranding as a new corporate brand understanding and getting brand stakeholder buy-in, e.g., by co-creation[52]
Brand education as constructivism
Brands as self-teaching of values to establish a brand identity appreciating innovation and diversification [53]

Post-internet branding: Brands sociability and shareability as facilitating conversations around the brand[54]
Brands as experiential marketing by providing tangible, physical, and interactive experiences, e.g., with events, showrooms, providing sensory, emotional, cognitive, and relational values to the consumer[55]
Purpose-driven brands as "raison d'être" [56]

The medi competence "transferring" brand messages changed into "transferring" and "synchronizing" values. Lately, brands as "educational encounters" become enlarged by mutual education, e.g., powerful brands also depend on self-teaching and are, thus, applying constructive education to grow, for example, into "purpose-driven" brands.

VI. DIDACTIC PRINCIPLES APPLIED TO BRANDING

To increase the success of learning, several didactic principles can be mentioned (e.g. [57],[58],[59]). Brand communication and its methods and tools implicitly or explicitly apply these principles, as the following table exemplifies. Examination of brand literature reveals much research on brand learning, often focused on selected items, which serve "evidence-based education" (see tab. 4):

Tab.4: Didactic principles applied to branding

Educative principles	Examples applying to brand management
Principle of elementary reduction: Reduction of complex topics to facilitate learning without distortion of the truth.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The nucleus of a brand is the brand identity, highly condensed within a stable meaning to reduce the complexity of perception [60] ▪ The distinct and semantically attractive name of the brand, its claims, and slogans to gain attention and to assist (unaided) the recall processes [61] ▪ integrated brand communications, including family brands to impact brand knowledge structure [62]
Principle of illustration: Addressing perception conceptually and presenting details conclusively to increase learning effectivity and memory performance.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Brand as perceptual symbols gaining selective attention, focussing, e.g., on the design and/or style of products [63] ▪ Storytelling: Training sessions come alive when learners start telling their own stories, and those stories are memorable and that they facilitate the transmission of knowledge [64]
Principle of motivation: Motivation within education means	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Brands in product placement as entertaining aspects of movies [65] ▪ Brands' sociability and shareability, facilitating conversations around

stimulating the readiness to learn.	<p>the brand. Consumers participate in social networks to derive power from one another[66]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Branded humorous content congruent videos, e.g., on YouTube, act as a positive primer to the concepts being taught [67] ▪ Brands as advergames, i.e., videogames designed around a brand to provide brand entertainment [68]
Principle of self-teaching: The students start to organize themselves without the direction of the lecturers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Brand experience: Product-related experience has a greater influence on self-assessed knowledge judgment than stored product-class information [69] ▪ Branded social campaigns as touchpoint: They provide additional opportunities for encouraging ongoing interaction between the consumer and the brand story[70]
Principle of relational mutuality: Education as a network-based process of mutuality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Branded content, social media branding, crowd branding, crowd-cultures as evolving brands [71] ▪ Brands as parasocial interaction to facilitate learning by experience [72] ▪ Purpose-led brand as “outside-in” education of brand values[73]

The selected examples in the view of the brand as didactic showcase the broad expertise of media competencies that impact contemporary branding. Storytelling to accelerate social media engagement is just one popular example which documents the shift from “command and control” (branding 1.0) to digital interactive brand value negotiations (branding 4.0).

VII. BRANDING 4.0 AS DIGITAL MUTUAL TEACHING AND LEARNING COMPETENCE

To summarize, the discussion of brand management essentially has always been a media competence, as media is the major platform for transferring and synchronizing brand values. Due to the change of media from impersonalized one-way-mass media to digital interactive dialog communities, the media competencies have also changed. Looking back, branding 4.0 becomes a (digital) agile learning and teaching framework for brand management, which represents just two contemporary media competencies of successful brands. The process of learning controlled by public relations is mutually conceptualized: inside-out and outside-in. The inside-out process of brand education is shaped by the traditional paradigm of brand planning:

- **Inside-out education:** The traditional derivation of target groups by planning strategic objectives, the

conceptualization of brand values and messages, and its campaigning, e.g., within an advertisement or digital social media marketing following the planning cycle of management.

- **Outside-in education:** Referring to brands as aesthetic-driven social movements and brands as steady actualizing social systems makes branding media competencies become agile.

Values and digitization broaden the claims of brand communities that have arisen in the age of digitality, i.e., a socio-cultural environment for brands that are digitally impacted. Agility, originally driven by IT project management, became a social demand of brand communities. Transferring the knowledge of brand values has always been a core media competence, which evolved from “educational encounters” to “mutual learning systems”. The current popularity of purpose-driven brands demonstrates that the formerly inside-out competency needs to be enlarged by outside-in competence. The community paradigm forces brand communities to teach corporations which values brands need to represent. That means brands educate their communities and vice versa: “brand-u-cation”[74].

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