
EDITORIAL

The Challenges of Media Management Research

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When the topic of media management was discussed at a Westminster Papers in Communication and Culture (WPCC) meeting in 2015, it was understood that disruption had become a new norm. Disruption is thought to be something to be managed and adapted to on a daily basis. The constant challenge to perform at one's best and balance stakeholders' interests is today equally felt by key media players and new entrants, both industry and academia. This issue on managing disruptiveness as the new norm could be expected to generate stimulating contributions to the field. Organisations at every level are affected as revealed by events and through the issues raised in this journal issue. To name just two – the Netflix-disruption of the film industry, or the impact of digitalisation on music artists.

No longer an emerging field, academic research into media management has justified itself as being as vitally important to media companies as the knowledge of how to write a story or a film. Media management embraces two separate scholastic traditions: 1) communication and cultural studies; 2) business and management studies. In a way, this field is interdisciplinary by its nature. There is a lot to be done in terms of working through a diversity of paradigms. Some media scholars associate the word 'management' with negative connotations – 'suits' and bureaucrats. For others, it is a neutral term stretching from ideas of self-empowerment to the understanding of how things work at micro- and macro-levels. The standards for knowledge contribution in this relatively new field are shaped by the scholastic community itself as well as by industry dynamics. Organisationally, the media management scholarly community has moved beyond the early stages of its development just as the field it is centred around has advanced. Newcomers always face a greater mortality risk. They have to come up with a strategy, or, 'an integrated set of decisions and actions made in order to meet the business objectives' (Dal Zotto, 2005, 213). Progressing, the newcomers build their reputations and work to ensure they perform strongly. As such organisations mature, external pressure tends to rise. Internal deficiencies may be managed through creating a mission and inspiring followers (Sánchez-Taberner, 2006; Kotter, 2012). Choosing a strategic direction and situating it within a broader industry environment becomes a priority for established firms (Küng, 2008; Doyle, 2013; Wirtz, 2011; Lowe and Brown, 2016). As far as the media management community is concerned on the other hand, many of the first professional associations were formed between 2003 and 2012. These associations have experienced an increase in individual and institutional members such as universities and media companies. Moreover, distances don't seem to matter. For instance, despite being a European

organisation, the European Media Management Association (EMMA) accepts and attracts the attention of scholars from all over the world. This June, Japanese scholar Akio Torii won the best paper award for his research on public service broadcasters at the EMMA conference in the University of Porto, Portugal. Just a few weeks before, in May, leading scholars gathered for the World Media Economics and Management Conference (WMEMC) at the Gabelli School of Business, Fordham University in New York State. In late October, Korea University hosted the International Media Management Academic Association (IMMAA) Conference in Seoul. Following the logic of such organisational dynamics, a vibrant media management academic community has entered a mature and established phase. The pulse of knowledge is circulating among established institutional clusters and professional associations, and its reach is widening. The community is now facing a challenge in terms of its output. The pressing questions are, how to research an ever-changing reality? How is it possible to be better prepared to analyse emerging trends? What kind of output is expected from media management scholarship by the industry? Is it possible to combine econometrics research with the likes of classic sociology? What's the best way to form media management schools' programmes or curricula when the market reality is so dynamic? There are a vast number of questions to address, and the professional community has to come up with the answers. Nevertheless, being involved in what is being shaped is an incredible opportunity. As the academic media management community transforms and grows, there is a hope that it keeps its original pioneering spirit (Westley and Mintzberg, 1989).

An attempt to view up-to-date industrial challenges and present academic arguments on how to prepare for them has resulted in a wide range of research papers. It is evidenced by the rich spectrum of conceptual backgrounds and media industries covered in this issue. Castulus Kolo of Macromedia University is concerned about the future of newspaper publishing. Using German regional and national newspapers as a case in point, the author has put forward a quantitative model to assess the viability of the newspaper publishing sector. With assumptions running to 2024, this model is potentially applicable to other international markets. Marlen Komorowski and Simon Delaere from Vrije Universiteit Brussels (VUB) focused on the video game industry. The only completely digital native sector within the media industry is also transforming. The two researchers argue that massively multiplayer online role-playing games (MMORPGs) operate under a trade-off between a large player-base and value creation per user. Sabine Baumann and Tim Hasenpusch from Jade University reconfigured Böhm, Mensch and Materzok's framework (2012) to differentiate between hybrid TV and multi-screen. They tested their own framework on Germany's private broadcaster ProSiebenSat.1. The authors demonstrated that clear concepts and definitions help identify opportunities for value creation. According to Dan Zhang from the University of Westminster, social media are more of a useful tool than a competitor for UK professional media. Zhang examined full product ranges of UK business-to-business (B2B) publishing revealing that they optimise their publishing cycles in response to greater competitive forces. In fact, the publishers in his research spend more time adjusting to revenue pressure and faster-paced deadlines than to social media. Sara Monaci from Torino Polytechnic examined how digital convergence shapes content creation. Digital intermediaries tend to act as gatekeepers rather than sponsors (Fuchs 2010, Scholz 2012, Terranova 2012, cited in Monaci, 2016). Nevertheless, audio-visual online co-creation platforms like Tongal and Userfarm support users with legal protection and economic rewards. Elena Vartanova, Andrei Vyrkovsky, Mikhail Makeenko, and Sergey Smirnov from Lomonosov Moscow State University gained primary access to the higher levels of media organisations in Russia. Subscriptions and micropayments are slowly catching on there. An advertising-driven revenue model is expected to prevail in the next ten years for Russian broadcasters and print media alike. A book review by Andrew

Lockett of the University of Westminster Press focused on wider publishing business ecology. The review brought together arguments from Lothar Müller's *White Magic: The Age of Paper* and Alexander Starre's *Metamedia: American Book Fictions and Literary Print Culture*. The mixed ecology of print and digital, which the review examines, can be related back to the personal experiences of scholars engaged in academic publishing.

Media management scholarship is challenged by the necessity to create value by responding promptly and efficiently to changes within specific media markets and organisations. Scholarship finds itself negotiating the demand for serving the industry and the necessity to create value for the public by contributing to knowledge about the media. Media industries, first and foremost, expect prompt analysis to help them make better decisions. And academia is aware of that. Furthermore, scholars are affected by a competitive academic environment. Lozano (2013) notes that 'journal hierarchies are breaking down', and academics can benefit from many open-access peer-reviewed publishing venues now available. A recent study by McLaughlin et. al. (2015) on improving scholarship through peer-review suggests that journals in the area are still looking for theoretically strong pieces. The reason for that – the study explains – is that these papers receive the most citations. Indeed, theorising a relatively new, applied discipline, such as media management, is a double challenge. For instance, the field of media management still has to clarify many of its concepts and definitions. Alongside that, scholarship seeks to apply its theory to real situations in a highly volatile and uncertain environment. When analysis is focused on disruptions, 'the key to high calibre research with relevance for industry lies, ironically, in slowness, in deep reflection,' said Professor Lucy Küng in an interview for this issue reflecting on the challenges ahead for media management studies (itself constantly disrupted).

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Competing Interests

The author has no competing interests to declare.

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