

2 Theoretical foundation in relevant fields of research

This chapter provides the theoretical foundation in relevant fields of research. Due to the fact that part of this study is exploratory and because it combines findings from brand research, media research and social media research, it is necessary to expand on the theoretical foundation of all fields. Chapter 3 will draw upon this theoretical foundation and concretises it when necessary.

The chapter presents a literature review as well as application examples for the research fields of brand management, television branding, as well as social media and relevant neighbouring fields of study. Section 2.1 provides an overview of branding theory. The orientation of the study in brand theory and management is introduced and relevant terms are defined. The identity-based brand management approach, which serves as a theoretical framework for this study, is outlined. Section 2.2 applies branding theory to media brands in general in section 2.2.1 and to television brands in particular in section 2.2.2. It concludes with section 2.2.3, which puts emphasis on serialised television content as the product category this study investigates. Section 2.3 introduces concepts of brand related communication. It focuses on concepts that are relevant for social media communication or that can be considered related concepts. Section 2.4 provides a literature overview of social media research. It concludes by proposing a categorization scheme for social media that takes into account the tools' relevance for brand communication and suggests ways of application in a television branding context.

At the end of this chapter, the reader will have a comprehensive overview of branding and brand management theory. Media branding will have been introduced with particular focus on television branding in serialised formats. Relevant concepts in brand related communication will have been introduced and will have provided an overview of interactive marketing and brand communication, brand communities, user innovation, user generated content and word-of-mouth communication. Section 2.5 transfers the findings gathered in the previous sections into real-life application examples with regard to serialised television content and attempts to bring the concepts brand, social media and television together.

2.1 Literature review: Branding and brand management theory

In their meta-study on media brands and media branding that analyses articles published in the *International Journal on Media Management*, the *Journal of Media Business Studies*, and the *Journal of Media Economics*, Malmelin and Moisander (2014) find that “the research on brands and media brands draws on the basic concepts and models that have been introduced in the literature on marketing and marketing communication” (e.g. Aaker 1991; 1996; Keller 1993). Also, the research on media brands lacks theoretical coherence (Malmelin & Moisander 2014) and an empirically tested taxonomy for media brands (Förster 2011, p. 15). Therefore, this section investigates brands in general first, before section 2.2 applies branding theory to media brands.

This section outlines the development of branding and the changing understanding of what a brand is, from signalling function to a managerial concept. The identity-based brand management approach is introduced as theoretical foundation of this study, and the consumer-brand relationship as the key concept within the framework is described.

2.1.1 Orientation in brand management theory

German brand companies’ sales of branded products and services add up to a gross value of about EUR 900 billion per year (Markenverband 2011; 2013). Due to the fact that brands add significant value to a firm’s assets, brand management is considered an important task in both business-to-business and business-to-consumer markets (Kapferer 2008, p. 2). However, over time, both the definition of what a brand is and of how it should be managed has undergone profound changes. The development of the resource-based view of the firm in the 1980s and of brand equity research, in combination with significant changes in market dynamics and structures, led to “a reconfiguration of managerial and academic perceptions on the role and importance of brands in strategy formation” (Joao Louro & Vieira Cunha 2001, p. 849).

The central purpose of a brand is to make a distinction. Historically, brands were created to identify the owner or the source of a product (Kapferer 2008, pp. 10–11). The brand served as a physical sign that informed the consumer about the origin of a product, about who had produced it, and it guaranteed stable or improved quality of the product (Esch 2005, p. 18). In the middle ages, guilds used symbols similar to today’s brands to identify the creator of a product (Leitherer 2001, p. 62). During the Renaissance, brands were used to support the new trade routes that were no longer regional, where a branded product raised trust, not yet in the

brand, but in the firm the brand identified (Leitherer 2001, p. 64). The concept of a branded product as a manufacturer's brand evolved no sooner than the 19th century and after industrialisation had led to a loss of personal relationships between producers and buyers due to greater regional distance (Leitherer 2001, p. 57). At that time, brand management was nevertheless not yet a managerial concept aiming at contributing to the firm's success (Meffert & Burmann 2005, p. 22).

Dedicated brand management arose in the early 20th century and focused on product orientation, interpreting the brand as a set of features determining the defining characteristics of a product (Meffert & Burmann 2005, p. 23). For consumers, such manufacturer-branded products were clearly identifiable, which facilitated re-purchase if the product had been satisfactory or avoidance if it had not (Low & Fullerton 1994, p. 176). The approach to managing a brand was instrumental in nature and focused predominantly on naming, packaging, and traditional advertising (Meffert & Burmann 2005, p. 23). Many brands were only locally or regionally distributed; however, improvements in transportation and communication as well as in production processes gradually allowed for a wider distribution (Low & Fullerton 1994, p. 175).

Starting in the middle of the 20th century, brands were increasingly conceptualised as focal platforms for articulating and implementing a firm's strategic intent. Brand management, at that time, was "enacted through the creation, development and communication of a coherent brand identity" (Joao Louro & Vieira Cunha 2001, p. 860). Although this supply-oriented approach to brand management succeeded in stressing the importance of the concept of the brand as more than the sum of its parts, it over-emphasizes the firm's input in brand marketing activities as the exclusive determinants of brand meaning, since the role of consumers as active co-creators of brand significance is largely ignored (de Chernatony & Dall'Olmio Riley 1998, p. 421).

From the mid-1970s on, brand management became more demand and consumer oriented. Many markets were experiencing saturation tendencies, consumers became increasingly price-sensitive, technological innovations were quickly imitated, and consumers were facing information overload due to the number of brands on the market (Meffert & Burmann 2005, p. 25). The then evolving view on brand management emphasized consumer response to

brands as crucial and regarded the consumer as central to the construction of brand meaning (Joao Louro & Vieira Cunha 2001, p. 864). The firm's input activities were managed using feedback from consumers by analysing the brand image in order to change identity, making thorough market research crucial (de Chernatony & Dall'Omo Riley 1998, p. 426).

On this basis, the identity-based brand management approach evolved in the 1990s. It balances brand identity and brand image so that brand value and meaning are created through collaboration between organisations and consumers (Joao Louro & Vieira Cunha 2001, p. 865).

Source	Definition
Ogilvy 1951	The brand is the consumer's idea of a product.
Aaker 1991, p. 7	A brand is a name and/or symbol (such as a logo, trademark, or package design) intended to identify the goods or services of either one seller or a group of sellers, and to differentiate those goods or services from those of competitors. A brand thus signals to the customer the source of the product, and protects both the customer and the producer from competitors who would attempt to provide products that appear to be identical.
Kotler 1991, p. 442 as cited in Keller 1993, p. 2	A brand is "a name, term, sign, symbol, or design, or combination of them which is intended to identify the goods and services of one seller or group of sellers and to differentiate them from those of competitors".
Burmann, Blinda, & Nitschke 2003, p. 3	A brand is a bundle of benefits with specific features that, in the eyes of relevant target groups, permanently differentiate it from other bundles of benefits that satisfy the same basic needs. ²
Kapferer 2008, p. 11	"[A] brand is a name that influences buyers, becoming a purchase criterion."
Keller 2008, p. 5	"A brand is [...] more than a product, because it can have dimensions that differentiate it in some way from other products designed to satisfy the same need."

Table 2-1: Brand definitions

Source: Own design

Table 2-1 shows a selection of modern definitions of what a brand is. Conceptualisations of brands and brand management evolved from the one-dimensional approach, which focused on the role of brands as legal instruments or as visual identification and differentiation, towards "multidimensional views emphasizing holistic conceptions of brands comprising functional, emotional, relational and strategic dimensions"; in particular, it was the emergence of the resource-based view that provided the conceptual foundations "for linking brands and brand

² Translated from German. Original definition: "Die Marke ist ein Nutzenbündel mit spezifischen Merkmalen, die dafür sorgen, dass sich dieses Nutzenbündel gegenüber anderen Nutzenbündeln, welche dieselben Basisbedürfnisse erfüllen, aus Sicht relevanter Zielgruppen nachhaltig differenziert."

management to the development of sustained competitive advantage” (Joao Louro & Vieira Cunha 2001, p. 851).

This study follows the definition by Burmann et al. (2003) and defines a brand as a bundle of benefits with specific features that, in the eyes of relevant target groups, permanently differentiate it from other bundles of benefits that satisfy the same basic needs.

2.1.2 The identity-based brand management approach

The identity-based brand management approach was developed in the 1990s, the most important contributions being the works by Kapferer (1992), Aaker (1996), and Meffert and Burmann (1996) (Burmann, Blinda, & Nitschke 2003, p. 1).

Joao Louro and Vieira Cunha (2001) describe identity-based brand management as falling under a relational paradigm of brand management. A paradigm, as defined by Deshpandé (1983, p. 101) with reference to Kuhn (1962), “is a set of linked assumptions about the world which is shared by a community of scientists investigating that world”.

In contrast to older brand management approaches, the identity-based brand management approach aims at a comprehensive integration of supply and demand oriented perspectives by relying on two dominant strategic management paradigms: the market-based view, and the resource-based view of the firm (Barney 1991; Burmann & Meffert 2005a, pp. 38ff.; Porter 1996; 1998).

Hence, identity-based brand management exceeds the one-dimensional outside-in focus of the perception of the brand by the consumer (brand image), and attributes equal importance to the inside-out perspective, i.e. the self-image of the brand, or brand identity (de Chernatony 1999; Burmann & Meffert 2005a, p. 51; Burmann, Meffert, & Feddersen 2007, p. 4; Burmann, Meffert, & Koers 2005, p. 8). This is consistent with one of the fundamental demands of strategic management according to which a sustainable, successful strategy requires a combination and integration of both market and resource orientation (Burmann & Stolle 2007, pp. 5f.).

Brand image approaches start their analyses with the recipient side of the brand and investigate how external stakeholders perceive the brand; in contrast, brand identity approaches focus on the sender of brand communication (Kapferer 2008, p. 174). Brand

identity is the way in which a company aims to position itself or its products, while brand image is the way the consumer perceives the outcomes of this attempt (Kotler, Keller, Brady, Goodman, & Hansen 2009, p. 426). While brand identity represents the internal self-perception of the brand (“Selbstbild”), brand image stands for the external perception of others (“Fremdbild”) (Burmamnn & Meffert 2005a, p. 44). Hence, brand image is both the result and the interpretation of brand identity; brand identity precedes and therefore represents the basis for brand image (Kapferer 2008, p. 174).

2.1.2.1 Brand identity

Brand identity expresses the defining characteristics of a brand from a self-image perspective. Burmann and Zeplin state that, “like a person, a brand needs to have a credible identity in order to be trusted” (2005, p. 280). The dimensions of brand identity have been conceptualised in a number of ways (cf. Table 2-2).

Aaker 1996, p. 79	de Chernatony 1999, p. 166	Kapferer 2008, p. 183
brand identity system	dimensions of brand identity	brand identity prism
brand as product brand as organisation brand as person brand as symbol	brand vision brand culture brand positioning brand personality brand relationship brand presentation	physique personality culture self-image reflection relationship

Table 2-2: Dimensions of brand identity

Source: Own design, adapted from Burmann & Zeplin (2005, p. 280)

This study follows the conceptualisation of brand identity as put forward by Burmann and Meffert. Their identity-based brand management approach focuses on the six dimensions of brand heritage, brand management competences, brand values, personality, vision and performance (Burmamnn et al. 2003, pp. 18ff.; Burmann & Meffert 2005a, pp. 58-64; Burmann et al. 2007). The six dimensions of brand identity can be described in detail as follows:

1. **Brand heritage** is the basis of brand identity and makes use of the brand’s history. It provides authenticity and credibility for all other activities and comprises geographic, cultural, and institutional facets.
2. **Brand management competences** comprise the organisational capabilities to efficiently manage the brand.

3. **Brand values** reflect the general convictions of management and staff and embody emotional components of brand identity.
4. **Brand personality** is “the set of human characteristics associated with a brand” (Aaker 1997, p. 347). Gilmore’s theory of animism (1919) suggests that in order to facilitate interaction with objects, humans tend to anthropomorphize those objects, i.e. to assign human character traits to them. The theory of animism can be transferred to branded objects (Aaker 1997; Fournier 1998) and is particularly relevant for social media communication, which per se makes the brand more approachable due to interactivity.
5. **Brand vision** refers to the long-term development of the brand and serves as motivational factor for internal target groups.
6. **Brand performance** is “the total of activities displaying functional and symbolic consumer benefits in order to position the brand” (Arnhold 2010, p. 36). The fundamental quality of brand performance determines in which way a brand can be used by the consumer and which functional benefits it will have (Burmans & Meffert 2005a, p. 60).

Brand identity as a management concept serves two purposes: Firstly, brand identity allows for a positioning of the brand with regard to external target groups (Meffert, Burmann, & Kirchgeorg 2008, p. 372). Secondly, since consumer-brand interaction takes place at all consumer-brand touchpoints, many of which are determined by employees from all corporate departments, the positioning against the backdrop of the internal perspective is of utmost importance (Burmans & Zeplin 2005, p. 281).

2.1.2.2 Brand image

Brand image is a multidimensional attitude construct (Trommsdorff 2009, p. 155) which represents the individual, subjective brand associations in the minds of relevant consumers. It therefore is the result of individual perception and decoding of all signals coming from the brand (Burmans & Meffert 2005a, p. 52). While brand identity can be actively shaped by brand management processes, brand image develops in the minds of external target groups with a time lag and over a longer period of time. Brand image, therefore, represents a market response model (Burmans et al. 2007, p. 5).

A precondition for the development of brand image is brand awareness (Burmam & Meffert 2005a, p. 53). Brand awareness is the ability of a potential customer to recall a brand, i.e. retrieve it from memory when given the product category, or to recognize it, i.e. to confirm prior exposure to the brand when presented with it (Aaker 1991, p. 61; Keller 1993, p. 3; Keller 2008, p. 54). According to the identity-based brand management approach, brand image consists of three components (Meffert et al. 2008, pp. 365ff.; Burmann & Stolle 2007, pp. 82ff.):

1. **Brand attributes** represent all descriptive elements a consumer associates with a brand, like price or origin, but also the perception of typical users or buyers of the brand.
2. **Brand personality associations** represent the personality traits consumers associate with the brand.
3. **Brand benefit associations**, both symbolic and functional, are the result of brand attributes and brand personality associations. Functional brand benefit associations comprise all physical or functional features of a brand, while symbolic brand benefit associations address all additional benefits that go beyond the functional level. Brand benefit associations, hence, are of highest relevance for purchase behaviour.

Brand managers can neither directly access nor control the image of the brand. Also, part of the definition of brand image, namely subjectivity, prevents the construct from being directly controlled by the corporation (Burmam & Stolle 2007, p. 3). This implies that active management of the brand is only possible through the management of brand identity, which in turn influences brand image. Ultimately, therefore, “the power of a brand lies in the minds of customers” (Keller 2009, p. 143).

2.1.2.3 Consumer-brand relationship as a link of brand identity and image

The two concepts of brand identity and brand image are not completely independent, but interact with each other. While the specific characteristics of the brand identity dimensions brand vision, brand personality and brand values primarily determine the symbolic brand benefit associations, brand performance primarily determines the functional brand benefit associations (Burmam & Meffert 2005a, p. 65). Figure 2-1 illustrates that the consumer-brand relationship links the two concepts of brand identity and brand image and therefore

represents a crucial success factor in the framework of identity-based brand management (Burmam & Meffert 2005b, p. 75; Meffert et al. 2008, pp. 367f.).

Brand identity (management concept)

Brand image (market response concept)

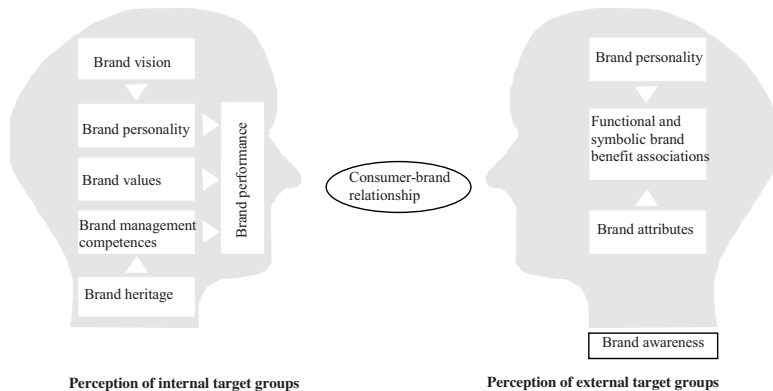


Figure 2-1: Identity-based brand management

Source: Own design based on Arnhold (2010, p. 39); Meffert et al. (2008, pp. 359, 361, 364)

According to Fournier (1998, p. 344), brands “can and do serve as viable relationship partners”, so that the relationship between consumer and brand forms the basis for the economic value of a brand (Burmam 2005, p. 256). Drawing upon Fournier’s conceptualisation (1994, p. 29), a relationship can be described as consisting of three basic elements: interdependence, temporality, and “some form of emotional or substantive bond”. Two concepts that are crucial to understanding relationships are relationship commitment and trust. Relationship commitment refers to an exchange partner’s desire and effort to maintain a relationship (Moorman et al. 1992, p. 316; Morgan & Hunt 1994, p. 23). Trust is a major determinant of both relationship commitment and relationship quality (Moorman et al. 1992, p. 315; Morgan & Hunt 1994, p. 24).

According to Fournier’s conceptualisation, brand relationship quality (BRQ) is a property of the relationship between a person and a brand, not a characteristic of either the person or the brand. It is dynamic, changes over time, and is not defined as an objective characteristic, but as perceived by the individual (Fournier 1994, p. 125). BRQ evolves through interaction between the brand and the consumer, who are both considered to be relationship partners.

Fournier therefore introduces the concept of the brand as a “relationship partner” (BARP), in which the brand is seen as personified, as a member of a relationship dyad, i.e. as part of a one-to-one relationship, and as an active contributor to the relationship, which means that marketing actions are considered as behaviours executed on the part of the “brand-as-partner” (Fournier 1994, pp. 14ff.).

As part of those brand behaviours, Fournier identifies traditional marketing tools such as television advertising, sponsorships and sales, but also service calls and customer complaint handling (1994, p. 21). It is notable that social media communication on behalf of the brand seems even more suitable as behaviour executed by the brand as a relationship partner than traditional promotional and communicative strategies because it is more direct, more interactive and more personal, thereby appearing even more strongly like behaviours on the part of the brand.

Consumer-brand relationships, thus, are two-dimensional concepts emphasizing the active role of the consumer. The identity-based brand management approach therefore seems particularly suitable for research on branding with social media, where brand communication enters a direct and measurable feedback loop with consumer reactions, leading to responses and traceable changes in the way consumers interact with brands. The consumer-brand relationship construct therefore, in addition to brand loyalty, serves as a key brand-related construct in the conceptual model. It will further be elaborated on in section 3.1.2, where it will be conceptualised with regard to this study.

2.2 Media branding as reference point of this study

Having introduced the relevant concepts in branding theory, this section outlines media branding in general (2.2.1), television branding in particular (2.2.2), and concludes with a section on serialised television content as object of investigation of this study (2.2.3).

2.2.1 Literature review: Media branding

Media brands are omnipresent today. In the 2014 Interbrand *Best Global Brands* ranking, four of them are among the 100 most valuable brands: Disney (#13), Facebook, which is counted as a technology brand (#29), Thomson Reuters (#57), Discovery (#67), and MTV (#80) (Interbrand 2014). Hence, Disney is more valuable than Amazon (#15) or Nike (#22), and all of them but MTV are more valuable than Tiffany & Co. (#71), Burberry (#73), or Starbucks (#76). In Germany, the market and media study *best 4 planning* now includes a section on media brands, where it ranks the most used media brands independent of carrier medium, i.e. print, online, and mobile combined (Schröder 2014).

Despite media brands' presence in the media landscape, media branding has only relatively recently been applied to media products on a strategic basis. No sooner than the 1990s did media companies begin to seriously consider managing media products as brands (Habann, Nienstedt, & Reinelt 2008, p. 25), or did radio and television broadcasters develop a profound interest in brand management (McDowell 2006a, p. 42). Before, competition on media markets had been very weak, also because media products based on different technologies were marketed and sold on separated markets (Chan-Olmsted 2006, p. 59), which is changing with "partitions separating one medium from another" disappearing (McDowell 2006b).

Hence, lacking a strategic approach, media brands have to a wide extent evolved gradually and without dedicated planning or management effort behind them. Due to their role of structuring consumers' lives and supporting orientation and identification, media content has, however, in many cases been institutionalised as a brand by the consumers and without management strategy (Siegert 2013, p. 215). Brands like the German news programme *Tagesschau*, for instance, have resided in the minds of consumers before they were deliberately planned as such (Siegert 2001, pp. 97f.).

Today, media markets face harsh within and between media competition due to a large supply of content that is distributed via media that cannibalize each other (cf. 1.1; McDowell 2006b).

While consumers' attention is scarce, that of available content is not. Media companies can no longer rely on dominant brands and have to compete for an audience's attention (Stipp 2012, p. 109).

These changes have also sparked academic interest and led to an increase in media brand research that does, however, still require further strengthening of the theoretical foundations, a focusing on the strategic nature of media brands, and "empirically well-grounded and theoretical sophisticated studies on the challenges of brand management in the media field" (Malmelin & Moisander 2014, p. 17).

2.2.1.1 Definition and unique characteristics of media branding

A brand has been defined as a bundle of benefits with specific features that, in the eyes of relevant target groups, permanently differentiate it from other bundles of benefits that satisfy the same basic needs. (cf. 2.1.1). Media brands "offer value propositions about what their customers can expect in terms of type of content, interactivity, and user experience" (Ots 2008, p. 3). Siegert (2013, p. 215) defines a media brand as media organisations, media products, or media offerings such as programmes, broadcasts, or titles that are implicitly or explicitly managed according to branding objectives. Media brand management can hence be regarded as "a strategic management process to maximize the long-term value of a brand" (Chan-Olmsted 2006, p. 59). According to the identity-based brand management approach as introduced in section 2.1.2, successful media brand management leads to broad consistency between brand identity as mapped out by the media company and brand image as perceived by the consumer. Hence, all brand communication should be aimed at convergence between media brand identity and media brand image.

2.2.1.2 Brand functions in media management

Media brands are appropriate to position a media company both on the market for content and on the market for consumers, as well as to differentiate itself from the competition (Siegert 2002, p. 192). Independent of the ultimate choice of branding strategy and target, brands have several functions. De Chernatony and Dall'Omo Riley (1998, p. 426) identify twelve functions of a brand: the brand as a legal instrument that signals ownership, as a logo, as a company with recognisable corporate name and image, as a memory shortcut, as a risk reducer that gives customers confidence that their expectations will be fulfilled, as an identity-system, as an image in the consumers' minds, as a value system, as a personality, as a

relationship, as adding value in the form of non-functional extras, and as an evolving entity which undergoes an evolutionary change process, gradually shifting its meaning from the firm to the consumer. Media brands fulfil the same functions as consumer brands, but since their relevance is strongly referring to the unique characteristics of media products, their functions need to be discussed against the background of media management.

For consumers, media brands perform a signalling function in various ways: Since media products are experience or credence goods (Siegert 2013, p. 215; Wirtz 2006, pp. 31f.), consumers encounter difficulty assessing their quality prior to purchase and encounter relatively high risk during the decision making and purchasing process. One of the key functions of media brands therefore is to compensate for intangibility, to help consumers identify the source of a product, and to decrease uncertainty about the quality of the product (Chan-Olmsted 2006, p. 58; Siegert 2001, p. 121). The brand therefore performs a signalling function for the consumers and other stakeholders (Kotler et al. 2009, pp. 428f; Siegert 2013, p. 215). Media brands perform structuring and orientation functions and facilitate and accelerate consumer decision making by creating mental short-cuts, thus reducing cognitive effort for consumers (McDowell 2006b; Siegert 2013). Media brands support consumers in remembering what distinguishes one media brand's offering from that of a competitor (Ots 2008, p. 2), thereby providing orientation and allowing consumers to identify "the brands that are compatible with their needs and expectations" (Chan-Olmsted 2011, p. 4) despite abundant choice.

For media companies, brands allow for differentiation of an intangible product that is easy to imitate despite harsh competition, empowerment of audiences and abundant choice (Chan-Olmsted 2006; McDowell 2006b; Siegert 2013). A lot of media products being continuous production products, i.e. serialised content, branding them is crucial to realize decreases in marketing spendings since "these products tend to require lower marketing and sales costs because they are able to create habitual use patterns" once established (Picard 2005, p. 62). In addition, a branded media product is more likely to be part of consumers' relevant set (Chan-Olmsted 2006, p. 67), increases consumer satisfaction and loyalty (Ots 2008, p. 2), and allows companies to charge a premium price (Chan-Olmsted 2006, p. 67).

For advertisers, media provide an environment in which they present their own brands and want to reach consumers (Calder & Malthouse 2008). Media brands serve as a familiar, credible symbol for advertisers and can allow for positive brand image transfer from the media brand to the advertised brand.

2.2.1.3 Branding strategies in media management

Since media brand architectures are becoming more complex in a digitised, multi-channel world and because brand management serves more detailed purposes, it is crucial to define and differentiate the levels on which media brands operate. Kotler et al. (2009, p. 436) provide an overview of brand architecture strategies applicable to brands in general:

1. Individual names: many individually named brands within a company's portfolio;
2. Blanket corporate, family, or house name: corporate, family, or house brand is used across a range of products or services;
3. Separate family or house names: different brand names target different consumer segments or parts of the company's product portfolio;
4. Corporate name in combination with individual product name: image transfer from the corporate brand name to the individual product names is attempted.

Due to the fact that there is no separate empirically tested taxonomy for media brands (Förster 2011, p. 15), these brand architecture strategies can be transferred and applied to media branding. Table 2-3 gives an overview of brand architecture strategies; in reality, mixed approaches can often be detected.

With regard to television, in addition to the umbrella brand (channel), there are sub-brands like genre brands (e.g. access prime time crime serials on *Das Erste*), programme brands (e.g. *Tatort*, *Game of Thrones*), but also personal brands of actors, presenters, or hosts (Förster 2011, p. 15). These brands frequently co-exist and are of equal importance, but have different aims.

Brand architecture strategy	Individual names	Blanket corporate, family, or house name	Separate family or house names	Corporate + individual product name
General branding	Procter & Gamble owns the brands Gillette, Pampers, Wella, etc.	Apple and IBM use their corporate name for all products.	Beiersdorf owns the Nivea and tesa brand families, both of which comprise a full product range.	Adidas uses brand names adidas Originals, adidas NEO, etc.
Media branding	ProSiebenSat.1 owns free TV brands SAT.1, ProSieben, kabel eins, sixx, and other brands.	The VOGUE brand is used consistently internationally – all international editions are branded equally.	Gruener+Jahr owns several brand families, e.g. GEO or stern.	ZDF uses the house brand as well as brand extensions such as ZDFneo or ZDFmediathek.

Table 2-3: Branding strategies, general and media

Source: Own design, partly adapted from Kotler et al. (2009, p. 436)

Branding media products can be achieved by dedicated naming, logo, design and brand development efforts, but also by merchandising products, as well as by celebrity endorsers.

2.2.1.4 Relevant concepts in media brand research

In their meta-study, Malmelin and Moisander (2014) identify five different approaches to conceptualizing brands and branding in the context of media management: brand as product, brand as extension, brand as identity, brand as differentiation, and brand as equity. Due to the focus of this study, a sixth approach is added, i.e. brand as part of social media communication.

Brand as product

This approach regards the brand as a branded product or service, as studies by Nienstedt, Huber, and Seelmann (2012, p. 4) or Chan-Olmsted and Cha (2008, p. 41) have conceptualized it (Malmelin & Moisander 2014, p. 13). Another view on brands as product is research in ingredient branding (Lis & Post 2013).

Brand as extension

Media companies can stretch their brands “across media channels and delivery formats”, by “windowing, modifying, and re-issuing content in order to increase lifespan”, and by “creating new revenues by turning content into products and services” (Ots 2008, p. 4). A number of studies have investigated media brand extensions (Chang & Chan-Olmsted 2010; Chan-Olmsted & Cha 2008; Doyle 2006; Habann, Nienstedt, & Reinelt 2008).

Völckner and Sattler (2006, p. 18) define brand extensions as the “use of established brand names to launch new products”. They serve as “an attempt to leverage the equity of an established brand by *extending* the brand name to a new product” (McDowell 2006b, p. 235; italics in original).

Prior research has found the perceived similarity or fit between the parent brand and the brand extension and the perceived quality of the parent brand to be key determinants of brand extension success (Völckner, Sattler, Hennig-Thurau, & Ringle 2010). Successful brand extensions are competitive assets and help reduce consumers’ perception of risk (McDowell 2006b, pp.230; 235).

Well-known examples for media brand extensions are *Der Spiegel* with its various brand extensions, including further print magazines such as *Spiegel WISSEN* or *Spiegel GESCHICHTE*, as well as *Spiegel Online*, *Spiegel TV*, and the iPad App. An example from television is the BBC with its brand extensions operating on a global basis. Apart from its various TV and radio channels and online offerings produced for the UK market, the brand has been extended and applied to international markets and adapted to local tastes, for instance by employing native presenters.

Brand as identity

This perspective “refers to the distinctive characteristics and outward expression of a brand” and is closely related to brand personality (Malmelin & Moisander 2014, p. 14). Siegert, Gerth, and Rademacher (2011) put forward a comprehensive model with media brand identity at its core (cf. Figure 2-2).

The MBAC model conceptualises the role of media brands for “media managers within the constraints of rather complex environment” and consists of structures, external and internal actors, and their behaviours (Siegert et al. 2011, p. 55). Drivers are identified on the basis of the structure-conduct-performance (SCP) model (Bain 1959) and new, media brand specific drivers have been added. Since an elaboration on the model would go beyond the scope of this study, the reader should refer to Siegert et al. (2011) for details.

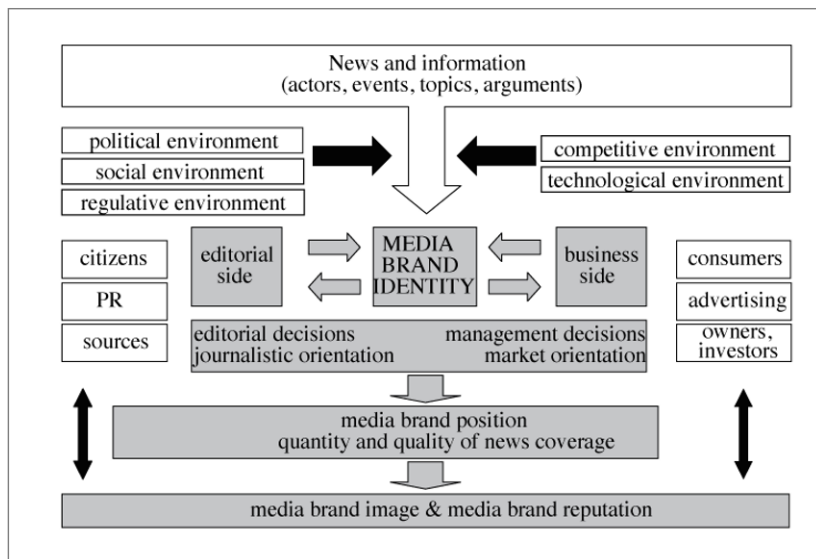


Figure 2-2: The media, brands, actors, and communication (MBAC) model

Source: Own design, adapted from Siegert et al. (2011, p. 56)

For media brands, the brand identity approach has been pursued via a focus on brand personality. This has been investigated by Nienstedt, Huber, and Seelmann (2012), who examined congruence between consumers' perception of their own personality and their perception of brand personality and detected positive effects of congruence on the brand relationship and brand loyalty. Chan-Olmsted and Cha (2008) investigated factors that shape the brand personality of a television network news product and found that its perceived brand personality contributes to consumers' attitude, usage, and loyalty of the news brand.

Brand as differentiation

It has been stated in 2.2.1.2 that brands allow for differentiation of media products that are mostly intangible, thereby allowing for consumer attention despite harsh competition and abundant choice (Chan-Olmsted 2006; McDowell 2006b; Siegert 2013). This perspective hence understands branding as a "strategic practice of eliciting positive consumer attitudes toward the brand, increasing consumption, and strengthening brand loyalty" (Malmelin & Moisander 2014, p. 15).

Brand as equity

Brand equity has been defined above as the added value of a brand (Farquhar 1989, p. 24). Media brand specific studies have been conducted (e.g. McDowell & Sutherland 2000; Ots & Wolff 2008; Oyedemi 2007). This approach regards the brand “in terms of a specific asset” and “describes the relationship between brand and consumer” (Malmelin & Moisander 2014, p. 15).

Brand as part of social media communication

Although a number of studies on social media in a branding context exist to date (e.g. Arnhold 2010; Laroche, Habibi, & Richard 2012; cf. 2.3.4 for a literature overview on user generated content; cf. 2.3.5 for a literature overview on electronic word-of-mouth; cf. 2.5 for an overview on social media for brand related communication in a television context), studies on media branding in a social media environment (e.g. Chan-Olmsted 2011; Lis & Berz 2011) are still scarce. Social media and web 2.0 technologies (cf. 2.4 for definitions and classification) have altered branding efforts in the media industries and make brand management more complex (Chan-Olmsted 2011, p. 3). Consumers’ empowerment and control necessitate even stronger branding activities in order for brands to be consistent through all channels and consumer touchpoints and to not lose their distinctive features when in contact with consumers.

To add to the current state of research on media branding and social media is one aim of this study. The following section therefore investigates serialised television brands in more detail, before relevant concepts in brand related communication and social media are examined in detail.

2.2.2 Literature review: Television branding

Television brands are a sub-category of media brands. The following section goes into detail with television brands in particular and investigates branding strategies applied to this distinct case. With “increasing program choices, the distinctiveness of a media brand, the ability to clearly state what the viewer can expect to find at any time of day, and viewers’ feelings that the network is designed for their needs”, branding has become a strong asset for television companies (Stipp 2012, p. 116).

Traditionally, viewers used to only be able to “communicate” with broadcasters via ratings, which can be regarded as the currency that measures the value of a given format (Plake 2004,

p. 36). Today, it has become easier to gain customer feedback via channels such as social media, which allow broadcasters to directly communicate with their audience. Nevertheless, measuring the success of a programme has become more difficult. Due to technological change, viewers can watch programmes online, record content and watch it later, use a multitude of devices and increasingly escape programme scheduling by watching content on DVD or Blu-ray, by subscribing to services that enable access to a wide range of content, such as Netflix or Hulu, or by purchasing content online and downloading it directly to their devices.

While the supply of media content increases constantly, the demand side, i.e. the audience, is limited. However, because imitation is limited by copyright, there is monopolistic competition and oligopolistic market structure, which allows broadcasters to profit from economies of scale (Radtko 2010, p. 41). Media products are characterised by high first copy costs: While their production underlies high fixed costs, i.e. producing the original is very expensive, the costs for all copies are comparatively low (Siegert 2002, p. 182). Despite the fact that consumers can today produce their own content cheaply or free of charge online, television content is better protected from competition by non-professional producers than, for instance, the publishing industry, because producing a high-quality programme entails higher costs and hence barriers to entry than self-publishing a novel.

Also, television companies can generate economies of scope and engage in fixed cost depression by using the same content several times. Branding is an important way of labelling formats that are repeated later: It provides orientation for viewers and makes it easy to communicate and market a format in a consistent way that attracts the target audience. Since television consumption is characterised by non-rivalry, i.e. there are almost no marginal costs of an additional viewer, branding and promotion activities can prove highly economically viable: If communication strategies work, they are particularly cost-efficient since a bigger audience brings higher revenue, but is associated with almost no additional costs (Heinrich 2010, p. 515), as long as the increase in audience size has not yet been accounted for in the costs for advertising.

In this highly competitive environment, it is crucial for media companies to determine a distinct brand identity and to transform it into a corresponding brand image, which

communicates unique selling propositions (USP). Differentiation in this case is the key for success: If consumers do not perceive differences in products, they are more likely to switch between them. Consumers with a high parity perception tend to be less loyal than consumers with a low parity perception (Iyer & Muncy 2005, p. 223).

This section investigates television brands and television branding. 2.2.2.1 outlines relevant literature on business dynamics within which television brands operate, 2.2.2.2 gives a brief overview of branding strategies, and 2.2.2.3 will then provide a cursory outline of studies focusing on television brands.

2.2.2.1 Framework und business models

Commercial television operates on a two-sided market. Broadcasters need to deliver engaging content in order to reach relevant target groups, and then sell this target group's attention to advertisers. A mutual dependence evolves between advertiser-supported television and advertisers, resulting in content not being the primary business model, but only a means to an end (cf. 1.1).

Since this study focuses on the German market, this section will pay particular attention to television branding in Germany. The most important public service broadcasters in Germany are ARD and ZDF, the market leaders in commercial television are RTL, Sat.1 and ProSieben (Hein 2014; cf. Figure 2-3).

An elaborate overview of the television landscape in Germany and, for comparison, other countries such as the US, where many imported programmes broadcast in Germany are produced, goes beyond the scope of this study and would add to the object under investigation to a limited extent only. Also, since the television market has been undergoing profound changes in the last decade, the discussion of markets, competition, regulation, strategy, and innovation is a research topic in its own right. Therefore, the reader should refer to other comprehensive sources for a profound elaboration on these topics (e.g. Karstens & Schütte 2010; Plake 2004; Radtke 2010; Weil 2011).

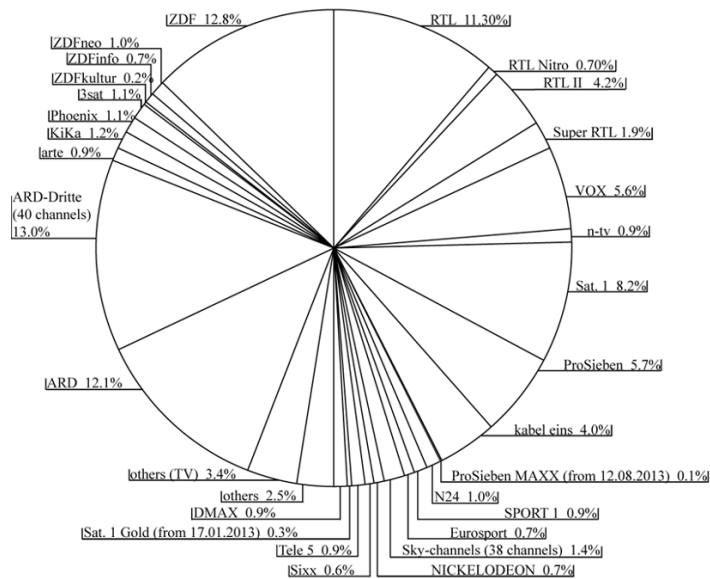


Figure 2-3: Market shares of German channels, daily average 2013

Based on all viewers and all channels, Monday-Sunday, 03:00-03:00, overall viewing: 221 minutes

Source: Own design, based on AGF/GfK (2014)

For detailed elaborations on and examples of current television branding and programming for selected German channels, refer to Hirsch and Förster (2011) with regard to ZDF, to Aumüller (2011) and Weil (2011) with regard to RTL, and to Hofstätter (2011) and Weil (2011) with regard to ProSieben.

The US television market is also of relevance when investigating television in Germany because of the popularity of American films and television programmes in Germany. Stipp (2012) provides a historical analysis of television branding in the United States. Blumenthal and Goodenough (2006) provide a comprehensive overview of regulation, history, the market landscape and the competitive environment in the United States, as do McDowell (2006a) and Chan-Olmsted (2006, esp. pp. 76-105). Chan-Olmsted, Cha, and Oba (2008) investigate the export of video media products like film and television programmes from a US perspective and determine host country factors affecting export volumes. De Bens and de Smaele (2001) investigate this phenomenon from a European perspective, finding that while American series

and serials are nevertheless less popular than domestic ones, American films are predominant in prime time over European productions. This finding should, however, be challenged nowadays, American serialised content being very popular (cf. 2.2.3).

Bignell (2004) provides an overview of television studies from a UK perspective. Mark and Swann (2011) provide a brief outline of the regulatory and competitive framework in which British television operates. Swann and Förster (2011) analyse the BBC in detail, with emphasis on the BBC as a brand, and Mark (2011) outlines brand management of the British channel ITV.

The following sections refer to television management and television brands in a German context, if not otherwise indicated.

2.2.2.2 Branding strategies for television brands

Branding strategies for media content have been developed and applied at a broader scale in recent years. One example for this tendency with reference to television brands is the increased formatting of programmes in order to position content with regard to the target audience (Siegert 2002, p. 193). For instance, in 2008, ZDF combined all its Sunday evening documentary brands, which are now broadcast under the *Terra X* umbrella brand, one of the most successful documentary series on German television (Hesse 2008).

Programme planning and communication policy function as the positioning strategies a channel uses to communicate the intended brand identity to the consumer in order to create the desired unique image (Förster 2011, p. 26). Television content is repeated a lot, which reduces the number of individual formats and supports positioning of the remaining formats through higher broadcast frequency.

Programme planning

The most important instruments of programme planning are the programme profile, the programme scheme and the programme portfolio (Förster 2011, pp. 15ff.).

The programme profile refers to the composition of the entire programme, i.e. the amount of time dedicated to individual categories such as entertainment, information, and the diversity of the programme. A channel's programme planning mirrors its strategy and positioning (Swann & Förster 2011, p. 82).

The programme scheme describes the organisational composition of the programme and can be described as a timetable that includes all scheduled programmes (Karstens & Schütte 2010, p. 129). The success of a programme scheme is determined by two factors – timing/day parting³ and positioning⁴ (cf. Förster 2011, pp. 17-19; Karstens & Schütte 2010, pp. 134ff.; Verspohl 2008, pp. 78-82).

With regard to the programme portfolio Förster (2011, p. 20) suggests that common portfolio analyses are not suitable for television brands and instead proposes three criteria for the assessment of a channel's profitability: the success of the programme, measured by ratings; the proportion of own and third-party productions the programme contains (Förster suggests that own productions are better suited for developing brand image); and the time span over which a programme has been running, which is supposed to allow for conclusions concerning willingness to innovate or readiness to assume risk.

Communication policy

In addition to programme planning, channels attempt to support their brand and product policy by a strategic communication policy (Heinrich 2010, p. 509). Park (2004, p. 94) points out that promotion can be aimed at advertisers (sales promotion) or viewers (audience promotion). This study focuses on audience promotion, because the research question is concerned with audience retention and ultimately, attracting an audience is a requirement to attract advertisers. Key tools are identified by Förster (2011, p. 21) as corporate design, on-air as well as off-air communication.

Corporate design is a complex concept ensuring recognition and representation of the brand promise and can therefore be regarded as equally important as a channel's programme portfolio (Karstens & Schütte 2010, p. 224). It communicates the logo, the colours and the claim of a channel or programme brand, which enhances recognition value. While programmes are running, the channel logo is displayed in one of the corners of the TV screen, which connects the logo and the programme in the consumer's mind (Förster 2011, p. 22).

³ Vertical programming takes account of the daytime, i.e. programmes that appeal to the same target group are broadcast after one another to optimize audience flow and prevent viewers from switching channels. Horizontal programming takes account of the course of the week and aims at conditioning viewers until they are used to watching specific programmes at a specific time every day.

⁴ Consumer oriented programme planning strategies like lead-in, lead-off, and lead-out; programme oriented programme planning strategies focusing on the position of a programme in relation to other programmes; competition oriented planning strategies focusing on the programme schedule of the competition.

On-air communication addresses a channel's target audience within the medium in which the content is presented (Park 2004, p. 94). On-air communication is a retentive strategy which targets existing viewers and aims at creating loyalty (Eick 2007, p. 157). Tools include programme trailers, image trailers, as well as teasers.⁵ On-air communication is a viable strategy to promote individual programmes, but less suitable to strengthen the channel brand.

Off-air communication is a communicative effort in other media, while cross-promotion is communication in other media of the same network (Park 2004, p. 94). It is an acquisitive strategy aimed at new audiences, which usually makes use of other media such as print media like magazines or newspapers, radio, billboards and teletext, but also cinema and merchandising, in order to reach those audiences (Eick 2007, p. 157; Förster 2011, p. 24). Off-air communication includes all online and social media measures, which will be discussed in section 2.5 in more elaborate detail. It is notable that this study investigates how social media, i.e. an off-air strategy which, according to this categorization, is assumed to be an acquisitive strategy, does in fact work as an audience retention strategy.

With regard to identity-based brand management, programme planning and communication policy serve as connecting elements between sender and recipient, thereby bringing brand identity and brand image together (Förster 2011, p. 26). They can hence be regarded as shaping the consumer-brand relationship, which is the connecting factor between brand image and brand identity in identity-based brand management (cf. 2.1.2). This is in line with Fournier's view on marketing and communication actions as brand behaviours executed by the brand as a relationship partner (Fournier 1994; cf. 2.1.2.3).

2.2.2.3 *Literature review of research on television branding*

While "the main focus of brand research has clearly been on television" (Malmelin & Moisander 2014, p. 14), there is, to the knowledge of the author, no separate meta-study on the field of television branding. This section will therefore outline relevant literature on business dynamics within which television brands operate. Table 2-4 provides an overview of studies on television branding. The overview is not a systematic meta-study, but a selection of research applicable to this study. Studies included in this overview were identified by own literature research or, if indicated, adapted from the overview provided by Malmelin and Moisander (2014).

⁵ For a detailed description, refer to Eick (2005, pp. 158-162) and Park (2004, p. 131).

Article	Research focus and, if applicable, key findings
Chang & Chan-Olmsted 2010	Investigation of variables affecting viewers' attitudes toward cable network brand extensions. Parent brand attitude, brand portfolio quality variance, perceived number of previous brand extensions, perceived fit, and innovativeness were found to significantly affect attitude toward brand extensions.
Chang & Ki 2005*	Classification and development of predictors of box office performance for theatrical movies. Brand-related variables were found to be not as important as expected, neither brand power of actors nor directors being strong enough to affect the box office success of theatrical movies.
Chang, Bae, & Lee 2004*	Examination of factors influencing the evaluation of brand extensions of the Discovery network. Perceived fit between the original Discovery channel and extended channels, evaluation of the original Discovery channel, and perceived quality variance of the Discovery channels were found to be predictors of brand extension success.
Chan-Olmsted 2011	Outline of challenges and opportunities for media branding in a web 2.0 environment with particular focus on television brands.
Chan-Olmsted & Cha 2007	Investigation of the perceived differences among television news brands by adopting the construct of brand personality. Broadcast network news was perceived to be more traditional and liberal than cable network news.
Chan-Olmsted & Cha 2008	Investigation of antecedents and effects of brand images for television news. Findings suggest that an audience's attitude toward an affiliated television network, perceived importance of anchors, and use of television as a news source support building the personality of a network news brand. Perceived brand personality was found to contribute to viewers' attitude, usage, and loyalty of the news brand.
Chan-Olmsted & Jung 2001*	Examination of U.S. television networks' strategies in an environment of digitization, focusing, among other factors, on television brands.
Chan-Olmsted & Kim 2002	Investigation of viewers' perceptions of public television in comparison to competing cable networks. Findings suggest that public television holds a positive brand image and the popularity of comparable cable networks does not dilute the brand perception of public television.
Coffey & Cleary 2011*	Comparative content analysis of new and traditional news spaces, i.e. the ticker space and the screen space. It was found that, proportionally, more promotional content occurs within the traditional video content space than in the ticker space.
Förster 2011	Analysis of television brands, e.g. brand personality, brand promise, programme planning and communication policy.

Ha & Chan-Olmsted 2004	Investigation of internet users' usage of cable television website features. Findings suggest that increased usage positively predicts viewer and subscriber loyalty.
Lis & Post 2013	Analysis of television show consumption. Findings provide evidence that brand image is the driving for viewers' motivation to consume specific television content.
Nysveen, Thorbjørnsen, & Pedersen 2005*	Investigation of the influence of additional online television content on brand knowledge, brand satisfaction, direct relationship investments, and indirect relationship investments. Findings provide evidence that online channel additions positively impact all four brand relationship dimensions.
Stipp 2012	Historical analysis of branding of television networks in the United States.
Sung & Park 2011*	Development of a theoretical framework for cable network personality dimensions and a scale to measure them. Results suggest that audiences perceive cable networks to have five distinct brand personality dimensions, i.e. excitement, warmth, intelligence, controversy, and ruggedness.

Table 2-4: Literature overview of research on television branding

Source: Own design, if indicated (*) partly adapted from Malmelin & Moisander (2014)

Table 2-4 shows that research on branding in a television context covers a variety of topics, from historical and descriptive analyses of branding to studies on brand personality, brand image and other brand related constructs. Most noteworthy for this study, however, are the findings on brand extensions (Chang & Chan-Olmsted 2010; Chang, Bae, & Lee 2004) and, in particular, websites and online content as an extension of a television brand (Ha & Chan-Olmsted 2004; Nysveen, Thorbjørnsen, & Pedersen 2005). Ha and Chan-Olmsted (2004) find evidence that increased usage of website features positively predicts viewer and subscriber loyalty to the television brand, and Nysveen et al. (2005) provide evidence that additional online television content positively impacts brand knowledge, brand satisfaction, direct relationship investments, and indirect relationship investments. These findings will be revisited for the derivation of hypotheses in chapter 3.

Having outlined television branding and brand management, the next section goes into detail with serialised television content, which is the object of investigation of this study.

2.2.3 *Serialised television content as object of investigation of this study*

In recent years, television has been discovered to be a sophisticated narrative medium. At the latest since serials like *Mad Men* or *Homeland* have received critical acclaim, serialised formats are increasingly regarded as highbrow entertainment.

From a branding perspective, seriality facilitates creating loyalty toward the branded product because viewers who are curious about the succession of the plot are more likely to watch again. As pointed out in section 1.2.2, loyalty and seriality are closely connected concepts. Firstly, viewers of serialised television content are very likely to further pursue the content because they will wish to solve the riddles presented during the plot. Secondly, having previously assessed the quality of the content and knowing what to expect, all episodes of a series or serial after the first are no longer mere experience products. Thirdly, seriality facilitates the building of a routine because episodes can usually be watched at the same point in time every day or week. Fourthly, by encountering the same characters over and over again increases the likelihood of viewers building parasocial relationships, i.e. one-sided relationships between media users and the media consumed or media figures (Ballantine & Martin 2005; Gardner & Knowles 2008). Arguably, viewers are even more likely to be loyal to a serialised television brand if the content is complex and sophisticated. The following sections will therefore deal with modern serialised content, how it has evolved and how it is consumed.

The emergence of “quality TV” started with more sophisticated programming in the 1980s and 1990s (Jahn-Sudmann & Kelleter 2012, p. 205; Thompson 1996, p. 12).⁶ The innovations made in storytelling in the 1980s were used as a basis by the programmes of the 1990s and the new kinds of serialised formats established after the millennium, which further expanded the role of plotlines that stretched across episodes and seasons (Mittell 2006, p. 33; Mittell 2010).

This led to an increased awareness by critics and academia and spiked interest that had previously been reserved to literature (Kelleter 2012a). Narratively complex quality TV, as well as the emergence of other sophisticated serialised publishing products, such as graphic novels, has led to increased interest in seriality and serialisation (Denson 2011).

These changes in serialised formats entail changes in consumer behaviour and lead to a more participatory culture among viewers of programmes. Kelleter (2012b, p. 14) argues that popular seriality is often public in nature: Although viewers watch the programme alone, a virtual community develops and individuals sharing an interest in a certain programme tend to

⁶ For a detailed account of the emergence of quality TV during that age, as well as a comprehensive description of what elements quality TV is composed of, refer to Thompson (1996).

feel belonging. This is facilitated by the internet. While *Twin Peaks* fans were avid users of Usenet boards as early as the 1990s (Jenkins 1995, as cited by Mittell 2010), social media have given rise to even more active participation and interaction.

Narratively complex television hence “encourages, and even at times necessitates, a new mode of viewer engagement” (Mittell 2006, p. 38): With regard to the fact that modern quality TV applies high standards to both content and form, viewers do no longer only have the narrative universe as subject-matter, but increasingly also the decoding process. This demands both increased media literacy and awareness with regard to narratology from viewers (ibid., p. 39).

What distinguishes serialised media products from finished works is the fact that recipients often try to – and in fact do – influence the story. This has been the case with serialised novels or book series (e.g. Sherlock Holmes), and is not different for television serials. Nowadays, tools like social media enable viewers to directly interact with producers and writers, which allows for instant feedback as well as for the expression of wishes and expectations concerning future plot developments. Viewers are encouraged to communicate about the complex narrative environments long-running serials are often set in and that loyal viewers have invested time and effort into (Kelleter 2011, p. 74; Kelleter 2012b, p. 24). This entails that serials and series, by per se engaging viewers, are well-suited to create loyalty with channels, as well as to address target groups and retain audiences, thereby serving advertisers (Weber & Junklewitz 2008, p. 13).

Non-narrative serialised content profits from this as well. Viewers of formats such as *Germany's Next Topmodel* or *The Voice of Germany* can discuss their favourite candidates, comment on episodes and criticize developments not anticipated or liked. In the case of *The Voice of Germany*, where the audience can actually vote for the candidates, they can also try to influence other viewers' voting behaviour. Viewers of magazine programmes such as the German format *Galileo* can communicate their interests, comment on their favourite topics, and engage in community behaviour with other viewers with whom they have shared interests.

2.2.3.1 Definition: Series and serials

The focus of this study is on brands in the context of serialised television content. Although channel brands are not completely neglected, the research focuses on format brands, in particular on the recurring format of television series and serials.

In general, a series or a serial can be regarded as an established frame within the programme scheme (Hickethier 1992, p. 13). Apart from this similarity, television series and serials have to be distinguished from each other. In contrast to a series, which lacks an overarching storyline and consists of self-contained episodes, a serial is similar to a serialised novel: A new episode continues where the previous one ended (Plake 2004, p. 146). Williams (2003, p. 57) points out that for a series, the continuity “is not of an action but of one or more characters.”⁷

Since many examples for series and serials named in this study are of American origin, but the study itself focuses on Germany, it seems worthwhile to clarify terminology in both German and English languages. Kelleter (2012b, p. 26) points out that for the English terms “mini-series”, “series” and “serial”, the German conventional terms “Mehrteiler”, “Serie” and “Sendereihe” have been coined by Mikos (1992). Today, series and serials are usually both referred to with the German term “Serie”.⁸

However, this clear distinction is increasingly being abandoned: Many modern programmes are serials insofar as part of the plot is continued without interruption between episodes, and series insofar as they consist of recurring situations repeating or alluding to one another, thereby combining elements of both (Jahn-Sudmann & Kelleter 2012, p. 215; Mittell 2006, p. 33). On *Grey's Anatomy*, for instance, which possesses more features of a series, episodes contain self-enclosed storylines referring to patients, supplemented by overarching storylines for the doctors. Conversely, serials like *Six Feet Under* frequently contain elements of a series, such as every episode's introductory scene in *Six Feet Under* that prominently features the “casualty of the week”.

⁷ For a thorough discussion of the properties of a series, cf. Weber & Junklewitz (2008).

⁸ For an overview of terminology and examples in both German and English (USA), refer to Bock (2013, p. 33).

2.2.3.2 Narrative complexity

From a production perspective, innovative narrative forms and complex storytelling are directly related to the realities of television programming and broadcasting, shifts in the television industry having reinforced strategies of complexity (Mittell 2006, p. 31). Kelleter (2012a) argues that the emergence and success of complex programmes categorized as quality TV is directly related to them being produced by American cable and pay television channels: Cable serials often run for 12 to 13 episodes of almost one hour length, not interrupted by commercial breaks, while traditional network serials usually run for about 23 episodes of one hour length with a net airtime of 39 to 42 minutes due to commercial breaks. Traditional formats therefore often need two internal cliff-hangers (Seiler 2008, p. 6), leading to fragmented story arcs, where innovative cable serials enable sophisticated storytelling and consistent plotlines.

This narrative complexity in modern quality TV, which is defined by Mittell (2006, p. 32) as “a redefinition of episodic forms under the influence of serial narration”, improves conventional formats by putting more emphasis on narration instead of episodic storytelling. Mittell mentions programmes like *The X-Files*, *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, *Angel*, and *The Sopranos* as examples for complex programmes that “oscillate between long-term arc storytelling and stand-alone episodes” (ibid., p. 33). Another example is the mystery format *Supernatural*, where about three self-enclosed episodes are usually followed by a so-called mythology episode expanding on the story arcs of the main characters. With this format, producers hope to allow casual viewers to be able to watch most of the episodes without being too familiar with the mythology (Sullivan 2007).

However, narrative complexity is not restricted to complex drama programmes but can also enrich formats like sitcoms, which belong to the earliest serialised formats on television (Kelleter 2012c, p. 204). Elements of narrative complexity can also be detected in non-fictional formats that make use of the loyalty-building features of serials.

Serialised content such as magazine programmes, (talent) shows and reality television in the form of formats such as *Germany's Next Topmodel* or *The Voice of Germany* follow the dramaturgy of fictional serials insofar as they run for seasons of a limited amount of episodes. There is an overarching storyline within the seasons – viewers know that one candidate will win the respective contest eventually. Conflicts between and developments of candidates are

carefully set in scene, thereby increasing suspense as the season advances and creating cliff-hangers for the episodes to follow. This can be used to create emotion and positively impact the consumer-brand relationship.

2.2.3.3 *New strategies: Rewatchability and narrowcasting*

Two managerial strategies are associated with American innovative cable channels such as HBO: “rewatchability” and “narrowcasting” (Kelleter 2012a). Due to subscription revenue, the dependence of (American) cable channels on ratings is less pronounced than that of the networks, so that they can “narrowcast”, i.e. address distinct target groups more directly (ibid.). While in traditional broadcasting models, seriality required regular and consistent viewing of a programme and rewatching was limited to reruns (ibid.), “rewatchability” refers to the fact that serialised content is increasingly produced with the deliberate objective to re-distribute the content in the form of DVD boxes or downloads after the first airing, thus enhancing quality and complexity (Kelleter 2012a; Mittell 2010).

While television serials differed from other publishing products such as magazines or books with regard to their intangibility, the possibilities for collecting and archiving programmes have made serialised television content a product that can stand on the bookshelf next to other representative publishing products (Jahn-Sudmann & Kelleter 2012, p. 211).⁹ This also challenges branding strategies: Holistic brand designs need to be developed that operate along the whole value chain of the content.

In addition, DVD boxes have led to profound changes and viewing behaviour. Viewers can consume the content on their own terms, rather than be dependent on schedules and programming decisions of broadcasters (Kompere 2006, p. 336). Firstly, viewers control the time they take to watch single episodes by making interruptions, fast-forward and rewind. Secondly, viewers can choose how to watch. When consumed independently of the television schedule, episodes can be watched in much shorter intervals (“binge watching”). These developments in viewer behaviour have started to affect television programming. Especially for sophisticated American quality TV programmes not appealing to the masses, traditional airing strategies of German translations often have only limited success because the viewers

⁹ For a thorough analysis of the changing relationship between television and home video brought about by the DVD box set, refer to Kompere (2006).

they target tend to order foreign DVD boxes or watch the programmes online (Hein 2012a). When the critically acclaimed HBO serial *Game of Thrones* was broadcast by RTL2 in March 2012, the channel therefore chose an event programming strategy and aired the complete first season, consisting of 10 episodes of one hour length, in only three days. Being a daring programming strategy, it proved successful: The channel received above-average ratings for *Game of Thrones* (Hein 2012b), and repeated the schedule with the second season in March 2013.

Serialised content such as magazine programmes, (talent) shows and reality television are only affected by these developments to a limited extent. They are usually not purchased and watched on DVD, and not re-watched. However, viewers of formats such as *Germany's Next Topmodel* or *The Voice of Germany* who miss episodes can watch content online, or consume additional content. This requires awareness: Availability of content in different formats needs to be communicated and branding strategies need to be extended to these formats.

2.2.3.4 Innovation, brand identity, and outbidding

For serialised programmes to get re-ordered by channels or networks, they need to constantly innovate. However, in order to create novelty, they have to make surprising changes, while they cannot change too profoundly in order to not damage brand identity (Jahn-Sudmann & Kelleter 2012, p. 207; Kelleter 2011, p. 73).

In order to succeed in this process, serialised formats have to keep telling the same again, but differently. In theory running eternally, serials need to suggest that they strive towards a conclusion, which they then repeatedly withhold in order to retain audiences (Kelleter 2012b, p. 27). To not lead to fatigue, serials often revert to strategies Jahn-Sudmann and Kelleter (2012, pp. 215ff.) call “outbidding”: intraserial outbidding refers to a serial’s attempt to outperform itself, interserial outbidding means that innovative concepts are developed in order to outperform the competition. However, the latter are usually quickly imitated by competitive formats, so that a new cycle of outbidding is unavoidable.

With regard to serialised magazine programmes, such as the German information magazine *Galileo*, which is broadcast daily, strategies such as outbidding do not refer to narrative content and storytelling, but to the stories presented on the programme. In order to retain audiences, content needs to fit into a closely defined framework and not differ too much. At the same time, content needs to have an aspect of novelty about it.

What lies at the core of this is the fact that serialised television content as a media product with commercial objectives does not only compete with alternative options, but also with itself. Quality standards need to be upheld or excelled in order to stay in consumers' relevant sets.

2.3 Relevant concepts in brand related communication

After concepts of branding have been introduced, concepts of brand related communication relevant for social media brand communication will be outlined. Mangold and Faulds (2009) identify two key roles of social media in the corporate context. Firstly, brands can use social media to communicate with consumers. Secondly, social media enable consumers to communicate with one another and can therefore be used by companies and brands to monitor and influence customer communication. In this respect, social media are a “technological extension of traditional word-of-mouth both marketer influenced and organic” (Myers 2012, pp. 51f.). However, in contrast to traditional processes in which messages were spread, users are now able to reach a far bigger audience, as are companies. Using social media, they can share information with thousands of users at a time.

This chapter opens with an introduction to interactive marketing and brand communication. In the sections that follow, brand communities, user innovation, user generated content, and electronic word-of-mouth are discussed. Although the realm of digital branding touches on a plethora of additional concepts, the chapter decidedly focuses on concepts that are related to social media communication, or that are crucial to understanding the dynamics of social media interaction from a branding perspective. In order to not go beyond the scope of this study, only the mentioned concepts, which are relevant for the theoretical background against which the conceptual model will be built, are included.¹⁰

2.3.1 *Interactive marketing and brand communication*

Interactive marketing can be described as part of relationship marketing. Regardless of the employment of technology, relationship marketing can be regarded as an exchange system, while interactive marketing reflects the potential of participatory media such as social media for customer dialogue and interaction (Arnhold 2010, p. 51).

Relationship marketing, which acknowledges the active role of the brand as well as that of the consumer, has been suggested to be the marketing strategy of the future (Casaló, Flavián, & Guinalíu 2008, p. 19; Andersen 2005). Berry and Parasuraman (1991, p. 133) suggest that “relationship marketing concerns attracting, developing, and retaining customer relationships”, while Evans and Laskin (1994, p. 440) define relationship marketing in a

¹⁰ For a comprehensive overview of related concepts, cf. Arnhold (2010, pp. 64ff.).

similar way as “a customer-centered approach whereby a firm seeks long-term business relationships with prospective and existing customers”.

Associated positive outcomes of relationship marketing for the firm are assumed to include greater profitability, increased consumer loyalty, and long-term alliances with customers, all of which are supposed to result in competitive advantage (Grossman 1998, p. 27; Evans & Laskin 1994, p. 440). However, consumers can equally benefit from the development of a relationship, for instance through more simplified buying associated with less risk as well as through rewards or loyalty programmes (Grossman 1998, p. 36).

The relationship between a customer and a brand refers to both the processes of personal and social identification that customers associate with the core values signalled by the brand, as well as “the associated reduction of uncertainty and trust benefits of sticking to a particular brand” (Andersen 2005, p. 47). Morgan and Hunt (1994, p. 21) identify ten discrete forms of relationship marketing:

1. relational exchanges between manufacturers and suppliers;
2. relational exchanges between service suppliers;
3. strategic alliances between firms and their competitors;
4. alliances between firms and non-profit organisations;
5. partnerships for joint research and development;
6. long-term exchanges between firms and customers;
7. relational exchanges of working partnerships, e.g. channels of distribution;
8. exchanges involving functional departments;
9. exchanges between firms and their employees;
10. within-firm relational exchanges involving business units.

The plethora of relationship forms this list comprises indicates that the definitions for relationship marketing provided above are insufficient. They all focus on the partners being a firm and a customer of some sort, and therefore come short of exchange relationships where the distinction between buyer and seller is not clear-cut. The list above shows that relationships do not necessarily evolve between the firm and a customer, but between partners in the business process. In addition, Olsen (1993, p. 578) argues that by purchasing brands, customers renew the relationships they have with those products as well as the relationships

they have with the people who introduced those products to them. Relationship marketing should therefore rather be described in more general terms as the establishment, development, and maintenance of successful relational exchanges (Andersen 2005, p. 41; Morgan & Hunt 1994, p. 22).

Due to the interactivity it provides, the internet is widely regarded as a suitable medium to build and manage consumer-brand relationships (Thorbjørnsen, Supphellen, Nysveen, & Pedersen 2002, p. 18). Interactivity has been described in various ways. Bezjian-Avery, Calder, and Iacobucci (1998, p. 23) define interactive marketing as “the immediately iterative process by which customer needs and desires are uncovered, met, modified, and satisfied by the providing firm”, and Deighton (1996, p. 151) sees interactivity as “a tool that allows good marketing to become good conversation”. Based on these approaches to interactive marketing, Thorbjørnsen et al. (2002, p. 19) put forward the definition of interactive marketing as being “an iterative dialogue where individual consumers’ needs and desires are uncovered, modified and satisfied to the degree possible”. Bezjian-Avery et al. (1998, p. 24) further point out that the fundamental difference between traditional and interactive marketing lies in the role of the consumer: While traditional marketing leaves the consumer in a passive state, interactive marketing grants the consumer an active role in the processing of and reacting to information.

A relationship approach to marketing is a crucial step in identity-based brand management. Not only do both the company’s and the consumer’s perspective play important roles in managing the brand, but also does the consumer-brand relationship lie at the core of connecting both concepts. Interactivity allows for direct communication between the two, facilitating the harmonisation of brand image and brand identity as intended by management, as well as the swift reaction to deviations in the brand image.

To investigate how social media can be used for interactive brand communication, six of the twelve brand functions identified by de Chernatony and Dall’Olmio Riley (1998, p. 426) serve as a suitable framework.¹¹ The selected brand functions play a decisive role in consumer-brand communication and can particularly easily be achieved via social media branding strategies.

¹¹ Brand functions identified in section 2.2.1.2 referred to the brand as a legal instrument, a logo, a company with recognizable corporate name and image, a memory shortcut, a risk reducer, an identity-system, an image in the consumers’ minds, a value system, a personality, a relationship, as adding value in the form of non-functional extras, and as an evolving entity (De Chernatony & Dall’Olmio Riley 1998, p. 426).

1. **The brand as a risk reducer:** Social media offerings related to a brand reduce perceived risk for potential consumers because they can interactively engage with it prior to the actual purchase or usage decision, thereby getting a first impression as to whether the product will meet expectations. While the brand promise itself reduces risk, the supporting social media strategy makes this promise more credible and comprehensible. This is particularly meaningful for media brands as experience products. With regard to serialised television brands, social media can help reduce perceived risk prior to watching a first episode. Later, once a consumer has started watching and knows what to expect with regard to product quality, social media can support reassurance that the product is actually worth consuming.
2. **The brand as an identity system:** According to identity-based brand management, brand identity consists of six dimensions: brand heritage, brand management competences, brand values, personality, vision and performance (Burmamann & Meffert 2005a, pp. 58-64; Burmann et al. 2007). Brand heritage makes use of the brand's history. Social media can be used to communicate and display important steps in the evolution of the brand, making use of multimedia options via various channels. With regard to serialised television brands, this might also refer to the evolution of content and what the brand stood for throughout the lifetime of the serialised content. Brand management competences address the capability of the organisation to efficiently manage the brand. Depending on a brand's aspirations, management techniques need to reflect those claims: A technology-savvy, high-end brand has to communicate correspondingly. Brand values reflect the general convictions of management and staff and embody emotional components of brand identity. With regard to this internal dimension of identity-based brand management, the degree of brand commitment is important (Burmamann et al. 2005, p. 10). Social media facilitate commitment and active participation in the brand management process. Brand vision refers to the long-term development of the brand. Due to their importance, the remaining two dimensions, brand performance and brand personality, are discussed as separate brand functions.
3. **The brand as a personality:** Brand personality is "the set of human characteristics associated with a brand" (Aaker 1997, p. 347). Social media tools open up possibilities for two-way communication companies can use to complement advertising in broadcast style. This can help to identify and exploit new customer segments that are

hard to reach by traditional advertising. Social media strategies support brand communication in an unobtrusive way consumers may not at once identify as advertising. This helps build a brand personality and makes the brand more approachable for customers. With regard to serialised television brands, social media can be used to not only promote brand personality for the television brand itself, but also to enable consumers to engage with actors or character fan pages, which makes the brand more approachable and adds human facets to it.

4. **The brand as an image in the consumers' minds:** According to the identity-based brand management approach, brand image develops in the minds of external target groups and represents the individual, subjective brand associations in the minds of relevant consumers. A prerequisite for brand image to evolve is brand awareness (Burmann & Meffert 2005a, p. 53). Social media, with their ability to stimulate brand related conversations and to promote the creation of brand related user generated content, blur the boundaries of the outside-in and the inside-out perspective and move the brand towards a desirable state of convergence between brand identity and brand image. They also increase brand awareness, for instance for new serialised content, since being mentioned on social networks leads to more conversations about the brand and to more links to the corporate or brand website. For instance, this might lead to viewers having heard about a foreign programme on social media before it is available on the German market, which facilitates and accelerates the building of brand image.
5. **The brand as a relationship:** While communication becomes more customer initiated, exploiting the two-way communication opportunities offered by social media tools means that feedback channels can be incorporated into brand communication more easily. Brand controlling is facilitated by those feedback channels since reactions to brands can be detected more easily. The relationship dimension this opens up is a crucial success factor because the consumer-brand relationship links the two concepts of brand identity and brand image. With regard to serialised television content, this might even mean that viewers' reactions to episodes are taken into account when deciding how to continue the plot and to position the brand.
6. **The brand as adding value in the form of non-functional extras:** This brand function refers to the brand identity dimension of brand performance. Brand performance determines in which way a brand can be used by the consumer and which functional benefits it will have (Burmann & Meffert 2005a, p. 60). Brands can play a

part in defining identity if customers transfer attributes of a brand to their own identity, and support the expression of group membership. Social media serve the formation of individual and group identity by providing transparency about a person's preferences or activities. Being part of the online conversation about a brand supports belonging and puts the individual in touch with like-minded others. As mentioned in section 2.2.3, serialised television content is increasingly consumed in a participatory, public way. Viewers still watch the programme alone, but discuss it afterwards in a virtual community that shares an interest in a certain programme.

The following sections provide insights into concepts that are related to both interactive marketing and brand communication, as well as social media communication.

2.3.2 *Brand communities*

A brand community is a group of individuals who can be described as fans of a particular brand and who voluntarily relate to each other on behalf of their interest in that brand (Andersen 2005, p. 40; Casaló, Flavián, & Guinalíu 2008, p. 21; Muniz & O'Guinn 2001, p. 412).

Traditionally, research into customer-brand relationships has focused on a "customer-brand dyad" (McAlexander, Schouten, & Koenig 2002, p. 38). Muniz and O'Guinn (2001) established a new approach to brand community research by extending and transforming this model into a "customer-customer-brand triad". Within their model, the existence and meaningfulness of the community are inherent in the customer experience, not in the brand around which that experience revolves (McAlexander et al. 2002, p. 39). Also, in Muniz' and O'Guinn's model, "community is no longer restricted to geographic co-presence of members", but depends on the presence of three attributes of community, namely shared consciousness, rituals and traditions, and a sense of moral responsibility (2001, p. 412). A brand community, in their view, can be defined as a "specialized, non-geographically bound community, based on a structured set of social relationships among admirers of a brand" (ibid.). The situational framework in which these communities operate centres around the consumption of a brand, i.e. a good or a service, while the elements building the community include its members, their relationships and "the sharing of essential resources either emotional or material" (Laroche, Habibi, & Richard 2013, p. 77).

Due to the fact that brand communities are not restricted by geographic boundaries, the development of the internet served as “an infrastructure for communication and information exchange”, thereby providing an impetus for overcoming space and time constraints (Andersen 2005, p. 40). Brand communities have traditionally been called virtual brand communities (Casaló et al. 2008, p. 20). Today, most brand communities are online communities, predominantly based on or closely connected to social media offerings.¹² Therefore, with regard to “the motivations for joining social media and brand communities for both people and brand managers, the concepts of social media and brand communities have become closer to each other” (Laroche et al. 2013, p. 77).

The reasons why consumers join online communities – internet self-efficacy, collective self-esteem, and need to belong (Gangadharbatla 2008) – are discussed in section 2.4.1.4 with regard to social networking sites.¹³ The benefits of brand communities from a brand or corporate point of view is that they allow for the “creation and negotiation of meaning” (McAlexander et al. 2002, p. 38), as well as for facilitated information sharing, the perpetuation of history and culture of the brand, and that they provide assistance to consumers (Muniz & O’Guinn 2001, p. 427). Hence, communities are of great relevance for marketers and brand managers for a variety of reasons:

1. Casaló et al. (2008) find that participation in a virtual community has a general positive influence on consumer commitment to the brand around which the community is centred. Active participation in virtual brand communities may lead to higher levels of individuals’ loyalty to the brand (Andersen 2005, p. 41). In addition, they find trust in a virtual community to have a positive and significant effect on members’ participation in the virtual community activities.
2. In their ethnographic study, McAlexander et al. (2002, p. 50) find data strongly indicating “a long-term, lasting impact of relationship-building efforts”. They conclude that for some customers, the expectation of developing relationships motivates initial product acquisition: They purchase a branded product with the support of other community members who “serve as brand missionaries, carrying the marketing message into other communities” (ibid., p. 51).

¹² This notion will be referred to again in section 2.5, when the use of social media for brand related communication in a television context is discussed, and in sections 3.1.3 and 3.1.4, where hypotheses with regard to the social media programme are derived.

¹³ For a comprehensive review of the social media and brand community literature on consumers’ incentives to join brand communities, also refer to Laroche et al. (2013, p. 77).

3. Muniz and O'Guinn (2001, p. 427) suggest that brand communities affect brand equity. Following Aaker's conceptualisation of brand equity as consisting of the four components perceived quality, brand loyalty, brand awareness, and brand associations (Aaker 1991; Keller 1993), they state that brand communities directly affect all four of these components.
4. The rise of brand communities is consistent with the tendency towards a more relationship-oriented approach to marketing and branding (Muniz & O'Guinn 2001, p. 427). Brand communities are in line with the broadening definitions of brand loyalty and the rise of the concept of brand relationship (ibid.; Fournier 1998; Olsen 1993).
5. Laroche et al. (2013, p. 81) find that brand communities based on social media strengthen the consumer-brand relationship and enhance brand loyalty by providing benefits to their members, by facilitating information sharing and by enhancing customers' bonds with one another.

Despite the positive implications, community research highlights obstacles as well. Thorbjørnsen et al. (2002) find that online communities are particularly effective in building a consumer-brand relationship for consumers who consider themselves inexperienced with regard to the internet, but less so for experienced users. Hence, brand communities are not equally suitable for all consumer groups and their employment for branding purposes needs to be assessed with regard to the consumers the community is supposed to target.

Also, membership in a brand community might not always be deliberate, or even conscious. Brands used in very specific circumstances, which elicit high involvement with their particular group of users, might seem to inspire strong communities, when it is actually the usage situation that does. For instance, owners of *Polar* or *Garmin* sports watches often wear the watches in everyday situations, signalling their self-conception as athletes and their implicit membership in the athletic community, not their membership in a *Polar* or *Garmin* brand community.

Moreover, reaching and maintaining a critical mass of users is a general problem for all communities (Becker, Clement, & Schaedel 2010, p. 166). In order to be beneficial for existing users, newly established communities need to quickly attract and retain new users. Communities set up by brands or companies themselves hence need to be managed actively in

order to grow. This is more difficult for brand communities operated entirely by fans or consumers, which forces them to convince users due to their relevance.

2.3.3 *User innovation*

Although not a direct part of brand management, user innovation does provide insights into consumers' preferences and needs. Also, it offers the opportunity to integrate consumers into the brand or product creation process, thereby strengthening involvement and loyalty. This "affects the prospects of establishing positive market relationships" because devoted users engage in "consumption-related activities and share their knowledge with others" (Andersen 2005, p. 39).

Innovation can be defined in various ways, depending on the lens through which it is investigated. Definitions of innovation may focus on the novelty of the product or service, on the first-time use or application of the idea, on new process management and other aspects.¹⁴ According to Schumpeter, innovation is characterised by a process of "creative destruction" (1942), where the development of new products leads to the replacement of traditional offerings. Innovation can therefore be regarded as the market launch of a product that is either new or significantly improved and that cannot coexist with the established product, but replaces it on the market.

According to Roberts' (1987, p. 3) market oriented definition, innovation equals invention plus exploitation. Dosi (1988, p. 222) describes innovation as "the search for, and the discovery, experimentation, development, imitation, and adoption of new products, new production processes and new organisational set-ups". This search takes place under uncertainty, which is due to insufficient information, but also unknown solution procedures to technological and economic problems, as well as unknown consequences of the innovative approach (ibid.). Innovations can be incremental or radical (Habann 2003, p. 19): While incremental innovations refer to the improvement of existing products or of processes for existing target groups, radical innovations mean the launching of a new product that targets new markets.

Freeman (1988, p. 6) points out that innovation cannot be defined solely on the basis of resources and knowledge of the company: Environmental influences as well as economic

¹⁴ For a sound overview of definitions of and approaches to innovation, refer to Hauschildt and Salomo (2001, pp. 6f.).

circumstances affect the innovation process as well. Similarly, Chesbrough (2003) argues that focusing on closed innovation, an approach that relies solely on corporate R&D capabilities, is no longer a viable option. Instead, open innovation, (or user innovation, in von Hippel's (1986) nomenclature) is a model in which "firms commercialize external (as well as internal) ideas", and which makes them more successful (Chesbrough 2003, p. 36).

Quite frequently, innovation happens in online communities, similar to brand communities, in which users have the opportunity to contribute their ideas and sometimes even see them implemented (von Hippel 2001). A current example is Haribo, which lets consumers vote for their favourite additions to the traditional package of their *Gold-Bear Gummi candy*, called *GOLDBÄREN FAN-edition* (Gummi Bear fan edition). On an especially designed website¹⁵ or on Haribo's Facebook page¹⁶, consumers could choose between two new flavours every week for six weeks in the spring of 2014. The winning flavour of every week was then added to the special edition, for sale in July 2014.

Von Hippel argues that most innovations developed by users are created by what he calls "lead users" (1986). Lead users are members of the user population who have two distinguishing characteristics. Firstly, they recognize important market trends or develop new needs early, thereby experiencing needs that many users will experience at a later point in time. Secondly, they "anticipate relatively high benefits from obtaining a solution to their needs", which gives them an incentive to innovate (ibid., p. 22). With reference to an online social network, Goldenberg, Han, Lehmann, and Hong (2009) found that there are actually two different types of lead users, which they call "hubs": innovative hubs, who have a greater impact on the speed of the adoption process, and follower hubs, who have a greater impact on the total number of adoptions. This implies that if the different kinds of lead users can be identified, they can be addressed for either innovation or marketing communication purposes.

User innovation as a concept is similar to what is meant by the buzzword "crowdsourcing". Christodoulides, Jevons, and Blackshaw (2011, p. 103) define crowdsourcing as "the ability to tap the positive creativity of enthusiastic amateurs in problem solving". They also suggest that being involved in the production process enhances consumers' likelihood of engaging with the brand (ibid., p. 106), which is underpinned by the Haribo example.

¹⁵ <https://goldbaeren-fan-edition.de>

¹⁶ <http://www.facebook.com/haribo>

Marketing and brand managers need to understand these motivations, consequences, as well as the user structure in order to make use of user innovation and user generated content. In order to satisfy users' needs for a sense of community, it appears useful to embed innovation into brand communities.

2.3.4 *User generated content*

What unites all concepts introduced above is that they require consumer co-creation. Interactive marketing and brand communication would not be interactive without a response reaction from consumers.

Brand communities have been described above as fans of a particular brand related to each other on behalf of their interest in that brand, implying that by engaging with or communicating about that brand, community members create content. User innovation explicitly demands the contribution of ideas and content as well as knowledge sharing.

In accordance with the OECD (2007) definition, Christodoulides et al. (2011, p. 101) define user generated content (UGC) as "consumers creating content that is made available through publicly accessible transmission media such as the Internet, reflects some degree of creative effort, and is created for free outside professional routines and practices". Daugherty, Eastin, and Bright (2008, p.16) describe user generated content as media content created by the general public. Hence, three basic requirements for UGC can be postulated:

- public accessibility and publication;
- "some degree of creative effort" (Christodoulides et al. 2011, p. 105);
- creation in a non-professional environment and/or for non-professional reasons.

It is notable that these definitions do not explicitly refer to UGC in a branding context. Although UGC can be created for any reasons, a number of studies have shown its effectiveness with regard to branding purposes. Christodoulides, Jevons, and Bonhomme (2012) show that UGC has an effect on consumer-based brand equity via involvement, which, in a circular feedback loop, subsequently affects consumers' co-creation efforts. Boyle (2007) developed a process model of brand co-creation highlighting the impact of brand co-creation on brand loyalty. Muniz and Schau (2007, p. 35) review the literature on consumer co-creation and enumerate terms such as "homebrew ads", "folk ads", "open source branding", and "vigilante marketing" for brand-related UGC, all of which they view as "unpaid

advertising and marketing efforts, including one-to-one, one-to-many, and many-to-many commercially oriented communications, undertaken by brand loyalists on behalf of the brand". Christodoulides et al. (2012, p. 54) add the terms brand-related UGC, consumer generated media (CGM), and consumer generated content (CGC) to the list of expressions used for UGC that is created with a brand focus.

Arnhold (2010, p. 33) defines brand related UGC, which she calls user generated branding (UGB), as "the representation of the voluntary creation and public distribution of personal brand meaning undertaken by non-marketers outside the branding routines and enabled by multimedia technology". She then proceeds (*ibid.*, pp. 127ff.) to distinguish between sponsored and non-sponsored UGB, where non-sponsored UGB refers to "the management of naturally occurring unprompted brand related UGC", while sponsored UGB means "the management of prompted or stimulated brand related UGC". This distinction is in line with the concept of owned, earned and bought media, where owned media are communication outlets such as corporate websites owned by the company or brand, paid media is paid-for advertising, and earned media refers to coverage on news outlets and includes online discussions or social media engagement.

With regard to branding, UGC leads to a loss of control, because consumers can interact with brands and by contributing content alter meaning. Brand managers' tasks need to encompass that loss of control: In order to not lose their defining characteristics when in touch with consumers and UGC, brands need an even stronger foundation.

Becker et al. (2010, p. 168) note that users' motivation to "engage in value creation is especially remarkable from an economic perspective, as most user-generated Web features can be considered as public goods". In fact, Daugherty et al. (2008) found out that ego-defensive sources (i.e. the pursuit to minimise self-doubts) and social functional sources (i.e. users wanting to spend time with others and experience a sense of community) predominantly motivate users to create UGC.

Christodoulides et al. (2012, p. 56) provide an extensive overview of studies tapping into the research area of motivating factors for creating brand-related UGC. Table 2-5 displays an extract from their findings. In their study, Christodoulides et al. (2012) provide evidence that consumers' perceptions of co-creation, community, and self-concept have a positive impact

on their involvement with UGC, which in turn has a positive impact on consumer-based brand equity.

While the aforementioned distinction between sponsored and non-sponsored UGC seems noteworthy in order to clearly distinguish between possible forms of UGC, it is difficult to investigate the effects of both separately. Firstly, it cannot be assumed that users can always clearly distinguish between the two. While it might be clear that UGC is sponsored, i.e. prompted, if it is created on the Facebook page of a company, this is not the case if content is forwarded to and presented on private blogs.

Factor	Authors	Description
Co-creation	Burmam & Arnhold (2008) Christodoulides (2009) Daugherty, Eastin, & Bright (2008) Kozinets, de Valck, Wojnicki, & Wilner (2010) Kristensson, Matthing, & Johansson, (2008) Muniz & Schau (2007) OECD (2007) Pralhad & Ramaswamy (2004) Smith (2009) Trusov, Bucklin, & Pauwels (2009) Uncles, East, & Lomax (2010)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social benefit function • Risk reduction
Empowerment	Berthon, Pitt, & Campbell (2008) Burmam & Arnhold (2008) Dhar & Chang (2009) Grégoire, Tripp, & Legoux (2009) Muniz & Schau (2007) OECD (2007)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Change perceptions • Influence others • Feelings of power and control • Engage online • Reveal personal information • Complement traditional media • Request greater choice
Community	Burmam & Arnhold (2008) Christodoulides (2009) Daugherty, Eastin, & Bright (2008) Gangadharbatla (2008) Kozinets, de Valck, Wojnicki, & Wilner (2010) Krishnamurthy & Dou (2008) Muniz & Schau (2007) OECD (2007) Smith (2009) Uncles, East, & Lomax (2010) von Hippel (2001)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge-sharing • Advocacy • Social connections • Wanting to be heard • Interaction • Collaboration • Social networking
Self-concept	Berthon, Pitt, & Campbell (2008) Burmam & Arnhold (2008) Daugherty, Eastin, & Bright (2008) Kozinets, de Valck, Wojnicki, & Wilner (2010) Krishnamurthy & Dou (2008) Muniz & Schau (2007) OECD (2007) Smith (2009) von Hippel (2001)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal documentation • Self-expression • Creativity • Social function • Self promotion • Identity shaping • Ego defensive function

Table 2-5: Motivating factors for creating brand-related UGC

Source: Own design, based on Christodoulides et al. (2012, p. 56)

Secondly, it is difficult to define what exactly is a prompt. Is it only a clearly addressed message, asking consumers to participate, or also a commercial that leads to the production of UGC, even if that was not its original purpose?

Thirdly, for a lot of content, it is not even clear if it is of corporate origin. Author blogs, for instance, are frequently run by authors without support of media companies or publishing houses, but despite their individual and private look-and-feel, they do have distinct professional purposes. Also, if actors promote themselves and the films or serials they participate in on their own social media channels, this serves a marketing purpose, but it can partly be regarded as private conversation, too. Hence, due to the blurring of the boundary between corporate and private communication and assuming that viral effects and electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) processes make the sponsored/non-sponsored distinction a problematic one, it is not explicitly made in this study.

Having outlined concepts interactive marketing as well as brand communication and UGC as the outcome of consumer co-creation, the last section of this chapter deals with electronic word-of-mouth, which can be regarded as a particular form of consumer co-creation focusing on information processing and sharing.

2.3.5 Electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM)

Word-of-mouth (WOM) can be described as “the process of conveying information from person to person” (Jansen, Zhang, Sobel, & Chowdury 2009, p. 2169). Word-of-mouth (WOM) communication has always been an important part of consumer communication and behaviour because people seek advice and recommendations from others if they lack information or if they perceive high involvement or high (financial) risk when making their purchase decision.

Word-of-mouth advertising has been part of marketing research for a long time as well (e.g. Dichter 1966; Sheth 1971). With the rise of the internet, this form of communication has started to also take place in the online environment, online or electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) becoming an increasingly important influence of consumer opinion. From a brand perspective, the most important difference between WOM and eWOM is the fact that online reviews or recommendations are accessible to a larger number of users, which affects consumer opinion and in its wake product performance much more strongly.

Hennig-Thurau, Gwinner, Walsh, and Gremler (2004, p. 28) define eWOM communication as “any positive or negative statement made by potential, actual, or former customers about a product or company, which is made available to a multitude of people and institutions via the Internet.” Word-of-mouth processes can be used for marketing and branding purposes; marketing by eWOM is often called viral marketing. Motives for participation in viral marketing campaigns can be extrinsic or intrinsic in nature, where the former refer to incentive programmes such as vouchers, and the latter mean motives of impression management, such as increasing one’s own personal network or self-presentation (Schulz, Mau, & Löffler 2007, pp. 7f.).

Social media tools are a powerful means to spread eWOM; Twitter in particular is well-known for its capability to quickly and efficiently spread information (cf. section 2.4.1.5 for Twitter with reference to social media brand communication). Especially the retweeting function allows messages to “cascade down from one user’s follower network to another’s”, thereby transforming it from information to word-of-mouth (Kaplan & Haenlein 2011, p. 107).

In the last decade, eWOM has been extensively researched (e.g. Brown, Broderick, & Lee 2007; Burton & Khammash 2010; Dellarocas 2003; Godes & Mayzlin 2004; Godes & Mayzlin 2009; Hennig-Thurau et al. 2004; Trusov et al. 2009), partly with a direct focus on the consumer reaction or on the impact eWOM has on sales (e.g. Chevalier & Mayzlin 2006; Kozinets et al. 2010), and a plethora of findings have shed light on how eWOM affects consumer decision making.

The former group of studies focuses on definitions, antecedents, and the measurement of WOM and eWOM, as well as consumers’ motivations to engage in it. For instance, in a study concerning eWOM on Usenet for new television shows during the 1999-2000 season, Godes and Mayzlin (2004) found that online conversations are “an easy and cost-effective opportunity to measure word of mouth” (p. 545). Motivations to engage in eWOM communication include “consumers’ desire for social interaction, desire for economic incentives, their concern for other consumers, and the potential to enhance their own self-worth” (Hennig-Thurau et al. 2004, p. 37). Chu and Kim (2011) developed a conceptual framework identifying social relationship factors and their relations with eWOM on social

networking sites. Their study indicates that trust, normative influence, tie strength and informational influence are all positively associated with a social networking site's users' overall eWOM behaviour on their favourite site.

The latter group covers various aspects with regard to the concepts of WOM, eWOM and consumer behaviour. Chevalier and Mayzlin (2006) investigated customer reviews on Amazon.com and Barnesandnoble.com. They found that customer reviews tend to be positive and that the relative sales numbers of books are related to the number of reviews the books have received. Kozinets et al. (2010) show that eWOM "does not simply increase or amplify marketing messages; rather, marketing messages and meanings are systematically altered in the process of embedding them" (p. 71). This shows that consumers make active use of informational or promotional content instead of being mere transmitters of these messages. In a study on WOM communication referring to television programmes, Romaniuk (2007) found the effect of WOM to be asymmetrical: Positive WOM was four times more common than negative WOM and was found to have a positive impact on those it reached. By comparison, the effects of negative WOM were not only small, but also insignificant. In contrast, Anderson (1998), who researched the relationship between customer satisfaction and word-of-mouth, found evidence that highly dissatisfied customers engage more than highly satisfied customers, making crisis management and immediate response to complaints and problems vital – especially on the internet, where word spreads much more quickly. This is in line with the results of another study that found brand crises to change consumer perceptions not only of the brand immediately affected, but of the entire product category (Dahlén & Lange 2006). Brands are hence becoming increasingly vulnerable and require swift and determined reactions to negative consumer responses.

Cheung, Luo, Sia, and Chen (2009) investigated the role of credibility for eWOM processes. They found that both informationally and normatively based determinants affect perceived eWOM credibility, which in turn "is found to have a significant impact on subsequent adoption" (p. 33). Winning consumers' trust is crucial for product adoption, meaning that brands need to be credible themselves, and have credible brand ambassadors in order to be trusted.

Although eWOM seems to be a viable alternative to other forms of communication and a powerful tool to encourage consumers to buy a brand, there are also problems and risks

attached to it. Fitzsimons and Lehmann (2004) found that recommendations do not always lead to positive reactions. If advice goes contrary to individual choice tendencies, it can lead to the activation of a reactant state and the refusal of the recommendation. Also, companies must not assume that their marketing messages run through eWOM processes unaffected. As Kozinets et al. (2010) found out, consumers may alter messages. Also, eWOM cannot solely be regarded as an indicator or forecasting tool for future performance. Being endogenous in nature, i.e. frequently an outcome of past behaviour, not of planned or future actions, high eWOM activity may be a sign of high sales in the past, not in the future (Godes & Mayzlin 2004, p. 546). Godes and Mayzlin (2004) stress this dual nature of eWOM by arguing that it is both a driver and an outcome of consumer behaviour.

Having introduced concepts of brand related communication relevant for social media brand communication, the next section deals with social media research. After an outline of types of social media offerings and an overview of usage motivations and gratifications, social media offerings will be categorized with regard to brand management purposes in section 2.4.3. The concepts introduced in this section will be revisited in this context and connected to social media research.

2.4 Literature review: Social media research

This section explores the field of social media research. To revisit research results in this field is crucial because firstly, practitioners' knowledge and recommendations about social media marketing and branding seem abundant. A systematic, research oriented view on the field therefore seems necessary. Secondly, for the development of the model, gratifications obtained from using social media accompanying serialised television content need to be identified. This section therefore starts with a cursory outline of the types of social media offerings that exist to date, derives usage motivations and gratifications from the literature and concludes with an attempt to categorize social media offerings with regard to brand management purposes.

Kaplan and Haenlein (2010, p. 61) name web 2.0 as the technological and ideological foundation of social media. The term web 2.0 refers to websites providing content that gets richer as the number of people using the website increases, thereby exploiting the power of user contribution, collective intelligence, as well as of network effects (Ganley & Lampe 2009, p. 266). While web 2.0 can be perceived as a technological precondition for social media, UGC is the result of people's interaction with social media. Social media can hence be defined as "a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of User Generated Content" (Kaplan & Haenlein 2010, p. 61).

The success of social media platforms depends on the size and growth of the networks. Positive network externalities are a crucial factor in enhancing the value of the network for all users, because the value of joining a network, real or virtual, depends on the number of others already in that network (Shapiro & Varian 1999, pp. 174, 183). Although the functionality of a network is independent of real-life connections between the members of the virtual network, research has shown that loyalty to the network does depend on real-life ties: Users who are invited by people with whom they share pre-existing social relationships tend to stay longer and be more active in the network (Lento, Welser, Smith, & Gu 2006).

In practice, the term "social media" refers to a plethora of tools and types of websites, each of which serves a distinct purpose and operates according to specific rules and terms of usage. Although Facebook, Flickr, YouTube, Twitter and Tumblr can clearly all be described as social media of some sort, they differ significantly in the functionality they offer and in the

way they are made use of. Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) propose a classification scheme for social media that allows for a systematic categorization of social media tools. Since an investigation into social media touches on both dimensions, they categorize alongside media research and social processes.

With regard to the media research dimension, Kaplan and Haenlein rely on social presence theory and media richness theory. According to social presence theory (Short, Williams, & Christie 1976), media differ in their degree of social presence, which is the acoustic, visual, and physical contact between the communication partners.¹⁷ The higher the social presence, the stronger the social influence the communication partners have on each other's behaviour (Kaplan & Haenlein 2010, p. 61). For the second part of the media dimension, Kaplan and Haenlein refer to media richness theory (Daft & Lengel 1986), according to which media differ in the degree of richness they possess. This means that the amount of information that can be transmitted in a given time interval differs between media types.

The social processes dimension of the classification scheme is self-presentation/self-disclosure. Self-presentation refers to people's desire to present themselves and control others' impressions of them, while self-disclosure is "the conscious or unconscious revelation of personal information" (Kaplan & Haenlein 2010, p. 62). For instance, the main reason why people create a personal webpage, which can be regarded as the predecessor to the personal profile on a social media network, is the wish to present themselves (Schau & Gilly 2003).¹⁸ This kind of self-presentation can be achieved through self-disclosure, which is the aptitude an individual has for revealing personal information to others (Collins & Miller 1994).

Combining the two dimensions of "social presence/media richness" and "self-presentation/self-disclosure" results in a categorization as visualized below.

¹⁷ Social presence is influenced by the intimacy (ranging from interpersonal to mediated) and the immediacy (ranging from asynchronous to synchronous) of a medium, meaning that mediated (e.g. telephone conversation) and asynchronous communication (e.g. e-mail) exhibits a lower degree of social presence than interpersonal (e.g., face-to-face discussion) and synchronous (e.g., messenger apps) communication.

¹⁸ Consumers use self-presentation strategies to construct digital collages representing the self (Schau & Gilly 2003, p. 390). This aims at controlling the impressions of others, at repressing personal information or replacing it with modified and more desirable information that is more congruent with the ideal self, but it also aims at creating an image of oneself that is consistent with one's personal identity (Kaplan & Haenlein 2010, p. 62; Schau & Gilly 2003, p. 387).

		Social presence/ Media richness		
		Low	Medium	High
Self- presentation/ Self- disclosure	High	Blogs	Social networking sites (e.g. Facebook)	Virtual social networks (e.g. Second Life)
	Low	Collaborative projects (e.g. Wikipedia)	Content communities (e.g. YouTube)	Virtual Game worlds (e.g. World of Warcraft)

Figure 2-4: Categorization of social media

Source: Own design, adapted from Kaplan & Haenlein (2010, p. 62)

With respect to the dimension of social presence/media richness, applications such as collaborative projects and blogs score lowest, since they are usually text-based and therefore allow for only a relatively simple exchange of information. However, blogs score higher on the dimension self-presentation/self-disclosure because collaborative projects are usually content driven, while blogs can also be personal diaries, or serve purely private purposes.

Social networking sites such as Facebook and Google+, but also professional networks such as LinkedIn or Xing, as well as content communities like the video platform YouTube or the photo platform Flickr, score higher on the dimension social presence/media richness because they make use of a combination of text, pictures, and videos. While content communities usually show rather low levels of self-disclosure, social networking sites are often explicitly used to disclose information about oneself.

The highest level of social presence/media richness is achieved by virtual games and social worlds, such as World of Warcraft or Second Life. Second Life, created and operated by Linden Lab, has existed since June 2003 (Linden Lab 2013) and claims to be the most popular virtual world on the internet (Linden Lab 2014). World of Warcraft is the world's most subscribed to massively multiplayer online role-playing game (MMORPG), with approximately 10 million subscribers in 2013 (Business Wire 2013). Both types of platforms require a very high level of social presence/media richness, but while virtual social worlds also score high on the dimension self-presentation/self-disclosure, virtual games do not, since they are structured by the rules of the game, thereby controlling users' behaviour.

The following sections attempt to provide an overview of the various forms of applications, organised by the categorization scheme provided by Kaplan and Haenlein (2010), and revisits relevant research about them. Virtual social networks and virtual game worlds will be excluded from the analysis because they are of only marginal relevance for branding

communication. Microblogging will be added as a category that does not fit into any of the other categories.

2.4.1 *Investigating social media tools*

2.4.1.1 *Collective/collaborative projects*

Collaborative projects allow many users to participate in the simultaneous creation of content. One kind of such collaborative projects are wikis, the most well-known of which is the online encyclopaedia Wikipedia. A wiki is a web-based software that allows all users of a page to change its content by editing the page online in a browser (Ebersbach, Glaser, Heigl, & Dueck 2006, p. 12). This makes wikis a simple and easy-to-use platform for collaborative work. Wikis consist of a loosely structured set of pages that are linked to one another and to external internet resources in multiple ways (Godwin-Jones 2003, p. 15).

The word “wiki” derives from the Hawaiian “wiki wiki” which translates into “to hurry” and alludes to the tools’ quick and easy editing process (Wheeler, Yeomans, & Wheeler 2008, p. 989). Wikis can be used by anybody to publish content or share knowledge, including text, images, and hyperlinks. Existing content can be edited at any time, and since wikis provide a page history, it is possible to view any prior changes to the page and, if necessary, revert to an earlier version.

There are two different purposes wikis can serve. Firstly, they may be used as tools in a closed work group, where only selected members have access. Secondly, they can be made accessible and usable for potentially everybody. Wikis can be utilized as knowledge management tools, for open, web-based content management, or as project-oriented collaboration platforms.

In his research on *Lostpedia*, a wiki platform dedicated to the television serial *Lost*, Mittell attempted to analyse how a the wiki “functions as a place for the aggregation of fan creativity, what limits and boundaries are placed on that fan-generated content, and what rationales underlie those policies and preferences” (2009, [no page]). He concludes that *Lostpedia*’s core purpose is that of a shared archive performing the dual function of on the one hand being a catalogue of canon and on the other hand a site of original creativity for fans, thereby overcoming and blurring the boundaries between “fiction and truth, canon and fanon” (ibid.).

Other forms of collaborative projects are social bookmarking sites, such as Delicious, Diigo, or StumbleUpon, which allow for the storage and sharing of web bookmarks. Users can bookmark their favourite web pages, tag them, and make their lists of bookmarks public.

Although collective or collaborative projects are highly convenient tools for users of all kinds and preferences, they are hard to utilize for brand communication. However, the technological foundation, i.e. wikis and similar platforms, can be used to encourage consumers to participate in a creative effort aimed at further developing and enhancing the brand experience, and they might be suitable for user innovation processes.

2.4.1.2 Content communities

Content communities enable the sharing of content between users. In content communities, the focus is on the content a user contributes, not on the users themselves. Therefore, users do usually not create a detailed individualized personal profile page. There are content communities for a variety of media types, among them text (e.g. BookRix for self-published books), photos (e.g. Flickr), videos (e.g. YouTube), or even presentation slides (e.g. Slideshare).

Founded in February 2005 (YouTube 2014a), YouTube is arguably one of the most important and widely used content communities with more than 1 billion unique users visiting each month (YouTube 2014b). It allows any internet user to watch and registered account holders to also share originally created videos. Companies can use YouTube to upload promotional videos or employ it for viral campaigns. Especially for media companies, YouTube bears the risk of being used as a platform for the illegal sharing of copyright-protected materials: Recent episodes of popular television programmes are often uploaded to YouTube shortly after they have been aired. On the one hand, this creates the challenge for networks to put an end to copyright infringing behaviour. On the other hand, the sharing of and commenting on YouTube videos strengthens the ties of communities centring around the television content, thereby providing a powerful tool for brand relationship management.

With regard to the Uses and Gratification approach, Haridakis and Hanson (2009) analysed the motives users have to watch videos on YouTube and to share them afterwards on other social networking sites. Just as for television, the main motives to watch YouTube videos are information and entertainment. Taking into account that a lot of the content posted to YouTube is original TV content, this is hardly surprising (ARD-Forschungsdienst 2011, p.

117). What distinguishes media consumption on YouTube from watching classic, linear television is the fact that YouTube provides the opportunity to share and discuss the content, and to recommend it on other platforms.

2.4.1.3 Blogs

On blogs (originally called weblogs), individuals and organisations can present content to a broader audience and in antichronological order. The latest addition (or post) is usually presented on the top of the page. What distinguishes blogs from static websites is that they contain elements of social networks: Users can usually subscribe to them via RSS or e-mail alerts, and entries can be shared, commented on, or reblogged.

Blog entries can contain text, images, and video. The content presented can be purely private, but often, blogs are used to present creative ideas or expert knowledge. To date, there are many different blogging platforms, most of which are free of charge in their basic versions. Wordpress, for instance, offers a free version with restricted functionality, which is popular with private users. There is also a premium version available, with the possibility to choose domain names, and a software solution with enhanced features that requires users to host the blog or website themselves. Other well-known services that are free of charge are Blogger, Blogspot, or Tumblr. Tumblr, which was launched in March 2007 (Milstein, Chowdhury, Hochmuth, Lorica, & Magoulas 2008, p. 26), is a blogging service that encourages comparatively short posts and uses a follower model similar to Twitter's. There are no user profiles, meaning that members of the network do not have to disclose personal information to become part of the network. On their blogs, users can post text, pictures, or video content. The content, which can also be created on other sites and then included into Tumblr, can be spread and referenced to ("reblogged") within the network by other users who have subscribed to the account providing it.

While blogs used to be clearly distinguishable from other social media tools in the early days of web 2.0, it is becoming increasingly difficult to differentiate them from content communities. While the difference between a text-based private journal and a YouTube channel is still clear cut, it is difficult to draw the line between blog and content community for Tumblr, where users upload or link to photo or video content originally uploaded to Flickr or YouTube, sometimes making the creative effort to make changes to the original content,

sometimes just sharing something they like and want to show their followers. Another tool that blurs the boundary between blog and content community is Pinterest. Pinterest is a pinboard-styled social photo sharing website that allows users to create and manage theme-based image collections. The boards, which are sets of pins grouped into a specific topic, can be filled with images found online using the “Pin It” button, or uploaded from users’ computer. The service, which allows for sharing, “liking” and reproducing the content, combines features of blogging platforms as well as that of common content communities.

According to Nardi, Schiano, Gumbrecht, and Swartz (2004), there are five major motivations why people blog: documenting one’s own life, providing commentary and opinions, expressing emotions, articulating ideas through writing, and forming and maintaining community forums. Huang, Shen, Lin, and Chang (2007) separate blogging into an interaction and a content gathering function and find interaction to be motivated by users’ desire for self-expression and documenting their own lives, as well as by commenting, while motivating factors for content gathering are commenting, forum participation, and information seeking. These motivations can be adapted to blogs run by companies and by groups. Corporate and brand blogs facilitate customer support or participation, while blogs run by brand supporters or fan groups are used for interaction with likeminded individuals or to engage in a shared creative effort. In their study with corporate blogs, Hsu and Tsou (2011) found out that information credibility has a significant positive association with customer experiences, which means that the credibility of information on a blog is critical in online environments. Customer experiences, in turn, were found to have a significant and positive association with purchase intention.

Engaging with customers via blogs can be a powerful way of influencing consumer behaviour. Interactivity creates the impression of a one-to-one relationship with the individual or brand behind the blog, which positively influences attitude toward the website and might ultimately enhance attitude towards the brand (Thorson & Rogers 2006). Yet, this strategy does not come without risks. Firstly, disappointed customers might use the blog as a space to post their complaints. Secondly, once companies encourage their employees to be active on blogs, it becomes harder to control communication and to ensure compliance (Kaplan & Haenlein 2010, p. 63).

2.4.1.4 Social networking sites

Social networking sites (SNS) are websites that connect participating users by linking their profile pages. Networks such as Facebook or Google+ are primarily used for private communication, while LinkedIn or Xing are specifically designed to develop and maintain business contacts. In accordance with Boyd and Ellison (2007), SNS are defined as web-based services that allow individual users to (1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) establish a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view connections made by others within the system.

The usage of social networking sites is rapidly increasing across all age groups. By 2010, 40 percent of all German internet users had a profile on at least one social networking site (Frees & Fisch 2011, p. 154); by 2013, it were 46 percent (ARD/ZDF-Onlinestudie 2013a). However, teenagers and young adults between 14 and 29 are significantly more active: In 2010, 71 percent of them had an account on an SNS (Frees & Fisch 2011, p. 154), while in 2013, 87 percent of those aged 14-19 and 80 percent of those aged 20-29 had (ARD/ZDF-Onlinestudie 2013a). Teenagers join SNS for a variety of reasons, such as to stay in touch with friends met frequently as well as with friends rarely seen in person, to make plans with friends, to make new friends, as well as to flirt (Lenhart & Madden 2007). Valkenburg, Peter, and Schouten (2006) found that the frequency with which the young age group uses SNS influences their social self-esteem and well-being. Applying the Uses and Gratifications approach to friend-networking sites, Raacke and Bonds-Raacke (2008) found that the vast majority of college students are using friend-networking sites for reasons such as making new friends and locating old friends.

For SNS users in general, existing literature names various factors that influence the adoption of SNS. An empirical study by Sledgianowski and Kulviwat (2009) showed that an individual's perceptions of playfulness, critical mass of other users, normative pressure, his or her trust in the site, its usefulness, and ease of use significantly affect the intention to use an SNS. Gangadharbatla (2008) found that internet self-efficacy, collective self-esteem, and need to belong all have positive effects on attitudes towards SNS. *Internet self-efficacy*, also referred to as internet confidence, describes people's confidence in their own ability to "successfully understand, navigate, and evaluate content" (Daugherty, Eastin, & Gangadharbatla 2005, p. 71). Thus, the more competent and confident a user feels with regard

to handling the technology, the more likely he is to become an active member of an online social network.¹⁹ *Collective self-esteem* is described as the aspect of an individual's self-concept that derives from that individual's interaction with others and the social groups that the individual is a member of (Crocker & Luhtanen 1990). *Need to belong* refers to people's endeavours with regard to the contact with other people and their striving for social acceptance and the love of others (Gangadharbatla 2008, p. 8).²⁰ SNS, which enable conversations and information sharing, the expression of opinions as well as the possibility to gain social approval, address this need to belong. Also, they provide a platform to influence other users. However, Trusov, Bodapati, and Bucklin (2010) found that although users typically have numerous connections to other site members of a network, only a fraction of those contacts actually influences a user's site usage: On average, approximately one fifth of a user's contacts actually have an impact on his or her activity level on the network.

One of the most widely used social networks is Facebook. Launched in February 2004 (Facebook 2014), Facebook is a web-based service that allows people to create profiles and build connections with other members of the network. Those profiles may contain photos, status updates, links to other websites, as well as lists of contacts and personal interests. Users can add others to their personal network by invitation, which makes the two users "friends". By 31 December 2012, Facebook had 1.06 billion monthly active users (618 million daily active users on average in December 2012), as compared to 845 million monthly active users on 31 December 2011 (483 million daily active users on average in December 2011) (Facebook 2013, p. 5). In 2010, the average Facebook user had 130 friends (Facebook 2010).

On Facebook, communication with friends and other users is possible through private messages, public messages on each others' profile pages, or by a chat tool. Users can create interest groups or join groups created by others, as well as play games, which are usually integrated into the platform by external service providers. In addition to the personal profiles, Facebook also hosts "groups" and "pages". Facebook groups provide a place for smaller groups of private users to share common interests, discuss issues, express opinions, and post photos (Chu 2011, p. 31). The four primary reasons for participating in groups within Facebook are socializing, entertainment, self-status seeking, and information seeking (Park,

¹⁹ This corresponds to the notion of "ease of use" in the study by Sledgianowski and Kulviwat (2009).

²⁰ This corresponds to the critical mass of other users, as well as normative pressure as mentioned by Sledgianowski and Kulviwat (2009).

Kee, & Valenzuela 2009). In addition to groups founded for private matters, groups can also be brand or product related and open to anybody who wants to join. This opens up new opportunities to build consumer-brand relationships and viral advertising platforms, as well as to positively influence brand perceptions and purchasing decisions (Chu 2011, p. 30). However, public profiles of companies, brands, celebrities or NGOs (non-governmental organisations) usually use Facebook pages to communicate with consumers.

Facebook pages differ from Facebook groups in that they are official profiles of organisations, interest groups, clubs, or brands. As of 31 December 2012, there were more than 50 million pages with ten or more “likes” (Facebook 2013, p. 5). Page owners can post updates, ask and answer questions and receive general feedback from their users. If users want to connect with a page, they can “like” it and Facebook pushes stories published by the page owner to the subscriber’s news feed. On other networks such as Google+, there are similar structures in place that allow for the creation of profiles that are not those of private users. Users can also “like” individual posts, comment on posts, or share the content found on the page with their friends, which increases the page’s exposure on the SNS.

Facebook has become the biggest relationship-marketing provider for many brands (Neff 2010). Like other industries, large media companies have recognized the potential of SNS like Facebook to help them reach their audience and deepen relationships (Carter 2009b). However, while Facebook pages work very similar to traditional owned media like corporate websites and the migration from websites to Facebook pages provides advantages to managing the consumer-brand relationship, pages are in fact owned by Facebook.

Advertising on Facebook is highly attractive for marketing purposes because it provides very clearly defined target groups, thereby guaranteeing advertisers to reach the relevant target groups. Advertisements can be placed on Facebook via a cost-per-click model, and Facebook Insights provides statistics and analytics, such as user growth and demographics, consumption of content, click-through rates and average costs per click.

What makes this form of advertising more attractive than traditional forms is that SNS users not only embrace advertising-related content, but actively promote it if they find it engaging (Taylor, Lewin, & Strutton 2011). In their study on the popularity of brand posts on brand pages, de Vries, Gensler, and Leeflang (2012) found evidence that brand posts with

interactive characteristics such as video content receive higher numbers of “likes”, while posts with interactive characteristics such as a question receive more comments. However, Lipsman, Mud, Rich, and Bruich (2012) highlight the importance of evaluating the individual importance of the pages’ fans, because mere counts of the number of engagements fail to address the potential as well as scope of social media brand impressions²¹ (p. 52).

While SNS aim at boosting their advertising revenues, they “encounter the severe risk that members will feel exploited if the sites suddenly appear overrun with ads” (Zeng, Huang, & Dou 2009, p. 1). While personal profiles are public in that they are broadly accessible, they are also private in presenting the personal identity (Schau & Gilly 2003, p. 390). Therefore, consumers may develop a negative attitude toward social media advertising and abandon SNS because of what they perceive as excessive advertising (Taylor, Lewin, & Strutton 2011). Whether SNS users accept the amount of advertising on the network or perceive it as an intrusion into their private sphere depends on a number of factors, one of which is the social identity of the community members: The stronger their social identity, the more likely they seem to be to develop group intentions to accept advertising in online communities (Zeng, Huang, & Dou 2009, p. 9). However, despite increasing scepticism in the face of the ongoing commercialisation of social networks, to date, users have not started to abandon networks such as Facebook because of data protection issues or excessive advertising.

Another issue marketers need to consider is that users explicitly take into account that what they disclose about themselves is openly visible to other users, and present themselves according to the specific audiences they want to address, such as friends, family, or even potential employers (Schau & Gilly 2003, p. 390). Hence, the users targeted are people consciously communicating their personality, if not even actively marketing themselves (Casteleyn, Mottart, & Rutten 2009, p. 440).

2.4.1.5 Microblogging

Microblogging tools, usually associated with Twitter, are a mixture of a blogging platform and a social networking site. Since Twitter is in fact the only noteworthy example of the category, this section focuses on Twitter only. Despite the fact that Twitter, compared to other social media tools, plays an only marginal role in Germany, findings are relevant because in the US, Twitter is widely used for marketing and branding purposes (see below). Also,

²¹ Social-media brand impressions are defined as a unit of branded content (Lipsman et al. 2012, p. 41).

Twitter usage in Germany has been increasing over the last years, from 3 percent of German online users in 2010 to 7 percent in 2013 (ARD/ZDF-Onlinestudie 2013b). Also, possibly due to the fact that data on Twitter is easily available, a lot of social media studies focus on Twitter. Since it can be assumed that findings can at least partly be transferred to social media in general, investigating Twitter seems worthwhile.

Twitter was launched as a private beta version in March 2006, as a public beta version in August 2006 (Milstein et al. 2008, p. 3), and incorporated in April 2007 (Twitter 2014). The service enables users to create and read posts called “tweets”. Tweets are displayed on their author’s main Twitter home page and contain up to 140 characters. This makes a standard microblog post the approximate length of a newspaper headline and subhead (Milstein et al. 2008, p. 10), which results in a message that is “asynchronous”, “noninvasive” as well as “easy to both produce and consume” (Jansen, Zhang, Sobel, & Chowdhury 2009, p. 2170). The linguistic study conducted by Jansen et al. for tweets containing brand related content found that tweets share more characteristics of natural language sentences than of shorter forms of expression like web search queries (2009, p. 2180).

A user’s tweets can be subscribed to by other users, which is called “following”. When users follow another account, Twitter pushes tweets posted by that account onto the user’s main home page. Hashtags, which are words or phrases prefixed with “#”, enable grouping posts together by topic or type. To mention, address, or reply to a specific user, his username can be prefixed by “@”.

Users can access Twitter via the website or by external application clients, both for computers and mobile devices. This makes it difficult to assess the actual number of users or of tweets sent. According to Twitter (2014), there are 241 million monthly active users, 76 percent of active users use the mobile version, and 500 million tweets are sent per day.

McFedries (2007) suggests that one goal for users of microblogging services is enhancing one’s online presence. In fact, users’ motives on Twitter can be roughly categorized into information sharing, information seeking, and friendship-wise relationships, the main intentions being daily chatter conversations, sharing information or URLs and reporting news (Java, Song, Finin, & Tseng 2007).

While Twitter was initially predominantly used for private purposes, it became more professional at a later stage of its development (Milstein et al. 2008). When incorporating links and retweets, Twitter becomes increasingly similar to an RSS feed or a news content aggregator, which makes it attractive for uses other than purely personal status updates. Twitter paid justice to this development in 2009: In the early years, Twitter used to prompt user comments with the question “What are you doing?”, which users mostly answered with personal status updates. On 19 November 2009, to react to the fact that people, organisations, and businesses had started to ignore the original question, but were posting all kinds of content, Twitter changed the prompt to “What’s happening?” (Twitter 2009).

This change in user behaviour differentiates Twitter from social networking sites. While Facebook has for many users remained a largely personal and private sphere, Twitter users connect with people they have never met in person and share observations on their surroundings, information, or opinions regarding certain topics (Kwon & Sung 2011, p. 4; Milstein et al. 2008). The more loosely connected way in which Twitter works is due to the fact that any user can follow any other user’s tweets without permission – the default of all Twitter messages is public, which means that they can not only be read, but also commented on by everybody. Also, since Twitter users usually do not provide a detailed personal profile, the network remains more anonymous.

Not only do users extend their social networks to people they will never actually meet, but also do they willingly connect with brand managers and marketers. For companies, the interconnectedness of Twitter users “provides a distinctive channel for marketing communication” (Carter 2009a; Kwon & Sung 2011, p. 6). The interactive features of Twitter, which allow for conversations and exchange within a loosely connected network of likeminded consumers, also makes Twitter a touchpoint between marketers and consumers that a traditional corporate website cannot provide. This enables managers to use Twitter from pre-purchase activities such as marketing research, to purchase related communications such as brand-reinforcing messages or sales promotions, and to post-purchase contacts, such as customer services (Kaplan & Haenlein 2011, pp. 108ff.).

Microblogging is a new form of eWOM²² (Jansen et al. 2009, p. 2170) and thereby provides a viable alternative for companies to explore as part of their overall branding strategy (ibid., p.

²² See section 2.3.5 for an in-depth description of electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM).

2186). In fact, over a third of all Twitter users are 35 years and older, with an above- average annual household income (Kaplan & Haenlein 2011, p. 106). Obviously, this target group is highly interesting for marketers, which adds another reason to why companies use Twitter for part of their marketing and branding strategies. In their study on the use of Twitter for eWOM as a means for brand communication, Jansen et al. (2009, p. 2184) found out that of all tweets analysed, almost 20% mentioned a corporate or product brand. Of those, about 20 percent expressed a sentiment or an opinion concerning that brand, 80 percent did mention a brand but did not express any emotions towards it. This suggests that Twitter is also used to seek information, as well as to ask and answer questions about brands.

A study conducted by Kwon and Sung (2011, p. 5; cf. 2.1.2.1) suggests that Twitter also enhances brand personality perceptions due to the fact that it allows for brand anthropomorphism, which refers to the association of the brand with human characteristics. This means that due to company-customer interactions with a human voice, long-term and personal relationships may be encouraged and consumers' attachment to the brand strengthened. The study found out that of all brands analysed, about half had human representatives, meaning that global brands make use of Twitter to initiate and maintain relationships with consumers and to post emotionally loaded content. In contrast, although brand names were regularly mentioned in tweets and tweets often contained embedded links, product or company related information was posted less frequently (Kwon & Sung 2011, p. 13). If provided at all, informational cues were more common in original tweets, while more anthropomorphism variables occurred in replies and in retweets, which suggests that if consumers engage in conversation, brand managers make an effort to give the brand a human voice.

To date, there has not been much research on how television networks and channels make use of Twitter for their brand communication (cf. 2.5). In practice, however, large television companies have already recognized the potential of Twitter in their brand relationship activities (Carter 2009b).

2.4.2 Gratifications obtained from using social media

Having reviewed relevant social media tools, this section provides an overview of usage motivations against the theoretical backdrop of Uses & Gratifications (U&G) research.

According to Katz, Blumler, and Gurevitch (1974, p. 20), U&G research is concerned with “(1) the social and psychological origins of (2) needs, which generate (3) expectations of (4) the mass media or other sources which lead to (5) differential patterns of media exposure (or engagement in other activities), resulting in (6) need gratifications and (7) other consequences, perhaps mostly unintended ones”. As an expansion of the concept of gratifications, Palmgreen, Wenner, and Rayburn (1981) elaborate on the evidence that suggests gratifications sought and gratifications obtained need to be treated separately. They argue that gratifications sought can be viewed as “the seeking of a valued outcome mediated by the expectancy of obtaining that outcome, while a gratification obtained may be viewed as the perceived outcome of engaging in a particular behavior” (p. 473). Table 2-6 displays social media gratifications for different types of social media investigated by other studies. Interestingly, complemented by social interaction functions particular to social media, these gratifications resemble gratifications that prior studies have identified as being obtained from television. For television and video content, a plethora of studies that deal with gratifications users obtain exist to date, many of them naming entertainment and information seeking as core gratifications (e.g. Cha & Chan-Olmsted 2012; Haridakis 2002; Haridakis & Hanson 2009; Kim & Rubin 1997; Logan 2011; Palmgreen & Lawrence 1991; Papacharissi & Mendelson 2007).

Gratifications	Type of social media	Source
shared archive catalogue of canon site of original creativity for fans	Collective/collaborative projects (study on <i>Lostpedia</i> , a wiki platform dedicated to the television serial <i>Lost</i>)	Mittell (2009)
→ information organisation, content creation		
information entertainment (identified by factor analysis: convenient entertainment, interpersonal connection, convenient information seeking, escape, co-viewing, social interaction)	content communities (U&G study on users' motives to watch videos on YouTube and to share them on other SNS)	Haridakis & Hanson (2009)
→ entertainment and information seeking, interpersonal connection		
motivations for interaction: users' desire for self-expression, documenting of their own lives, and commenting; motivations for content gathering: commenting, forum participation, and information seeking	blogging	Huang, Shen, Lin, & Chang (2007)
motivations: documenting one's own life, providing commentary and opinions, expressing emotions, articulating ideas through writing, forming and maintaining community forums	blogging	Nardi, Schiano, Gumbrecht, & Swartz (2004)
→ social interaction function		
interacting with friends (young users) checking up on children (older users)	SNS (Facebook)	Brandtzæg, Lüders, & Skjetne (2010)
belonging networking/keeping in touch information management (being up to date)	SNS	Busemann, Fisch, & Frees (2012)
pastime connection sexual attraction utilities and upkeep establish/maintain old ties accumulation social comparison channel use networking	SNS (exploratory factor analysis of gratifications obtained from Facebook)	Foregger (2008)

socializing entertainment self-status seeking information	SNS (factor analysis of needs for participating in Facebook groups)	Park, Kee, & Valenzuela (2009)
pastime affection fashion share problems sociability social information	SNS (factor analysis of gratifications obtained from Facebook)	Quan-Haase & Young (2010)
making new friends locating old friends	SNS (Facebook)	Raacke & Bonds-Raacke (2008)
→ mainly social interaction function, also entertainment and information seeking		
motives: information sharing, information seeking, and friendship-wise relationships main intentions: daily chatter and conversations, sharing information or URLs, and reporting news	microblogging (Twitter)	Java, Song, Finin, & Tseng (2007)
enhance one's online presence	microblogging	McFedries (2007)
→ socializing & information seeking		

Table 2-6: Overview of social media gratifications

Source: Own design

For German viewers, Dehm and Storll (2003) identify five central experience factors that form the basis of viewers' expectations of a positive viewing experience. These are emotionality, orientation, balance, pastime, as well as social experience.²³ In a later study, Dehm, Storll, and Beeske (2006) confirmed these experience factors for internet usage, arguing that having become a common and mainstream media option, expectations toward the television experience can be transferred to internet usage experiences. Other studies have also found no significant differences in motives for media use between users of television and online streaming video (Haridakis & Hanson 2009; Logan 2011), suggesting that gratifications users obtain from television and social media are in fact very similar.

2.4.3 Categorizing social media

To conclude the section on social media, a categorization scheme will be provided in order to classify social media with regard to their brand management related relevance. Having reviewed social media tools above, it is obvious that the categorization scheme for social

²³ Original terminology is German (Emotionalität, Orientierung, Ausgleich, Zeitvertreib, Soziales Erleben).

media as put forward by Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) is not fully suitable for the tools existing today and that a new scheme is needed. This is due to a number of reasons.

Firstly, microblogging tools like Twitter do not fit into the schedule. Although they carry the term “blog” in their name, these applications are a mixture of blogs and social networking sites and need their own category. The existing scheme does not allow for this. Secondly, the assumption that blogs score low on the media richness dimension seems outdated. Most of today’s blogs make use of pictures, videos and sound, either to add to the text or even as the main form of expression. Some blogging platforms, e.g. Tumblr, blur the boundaries of blogs, content communities, and social networking sites. Thirdly, and crucially for this study, the categorization by Kaplan and Haenlein does not include any reference to the potential application of any of the social media tools with regard to branding purposes.

Arnhold (2010, pp. 65ff.) provides an overview of phenomena related to social media and ranks them according to the brand focus they provide (Figure 2-5). In her framework, users who innovate, collaborate, or spread the word can, at a more brand-centred stage, become users who join networks, who create content and eventually generate brand related content.

Her framework seems more suitable to incorporate a wider range of social media tools and the usage situations that apply. It also puts the phenomena that take place in a social media environment into perspective and includes the brand as a reference point. However, it lacks a clear differentiation between the levels on which those phenomena operate, i.e. it falls short of clearly distinguishing between input factors and their corresponding outcomes: According to the definition provided above, web 2.0 can be described as the ideological and technological precondition for social media to exist and be made use of, while user generated content is the result of people’s interaction with social media. While user innovation, eWOM or community building are communication processes developing as a result of the opportunities social media tools provide users with, UGC and UGB are results of the interaction via those opportunities of communication and should therefore not be placed on the same scale.

Brand focus					
low			high		
User innovation	Collective intelligence	Word-of-mouth	Communities	User Generated Content (UGC)	User Generated Branding (UGB)
Prosumers Lead users Open Source	Wisdom of crowds	WOM eWOM	Brand related online communities		
users as creators and innovators	users as collaborators	users disperse information	user networks	users generating content	users generating brand related content

Figure 2-5: Social media applications for branding purposes

Source: Own design, adapted from Arnhold (2010, p. 65)

As a consequence of the fact that both categorization schemes seem helpful but not entirely fitting for the purposes of this research, an extended combination of both seems appropriate. Figure 2-6 attempts to merge all aspects required to analyse social media against the backdrop of branding purposes. It includes the social presence/media richness and self-presentation/self-disclosure dimensions as suggested by Kaplan and Haenlein (2010), and expands the categorization by an assessment of social media tools’ potential for brand related application and forms in which this may occur. It adds the relevant concepts in brand related communication introduced in section 2.3, thereby arriving at a comprehensive categorization.

Being tools based on the foundations of web 2.0, all of the social media tools enable user generated content production (cf. 2.3.4).

In this design, collaborative projects score low on both the social presence/media richness and the self-presentation/self-disclosure dimensions. As noted in section 2.4.1.2, their potential for brand related application is low. With regard to usage in branding context, they are restricted to a user innovation context (cf. 2.3.3).

	Collective/ collaborative projects	Microblogging	Blogs	Content communities	Social Networking Sites
Examples	Wikipedia	Twitter	Blogs	YouTube Flickr	Facebook LinkedIn MySpace
Social presence/ Media richness	low	either / or			high
Self- presentation/ Self- disclosure	low	either / or			high
Potential for brand related application	low	medium			high
Usage in branding context	UGC	UGC	UGC	UGC	UGC
	user innovation	user innovation	user innovation	user innovation	user innovation
		brand communication	brand communication	brand communication	brand communication
			brand community	brand community	brand community
		eWOM			eWOM

Figure 2-6: Categorization of social media applications for branding purposes

Source: Own design

Microblogging, namely Twitter, provides possibilities to score either high or low on both the social presence/media richness and the self-presentation/self-disclosure dimensions, depending on the media options embedded and the kind of information dispersed. Twitter has a medium potential for brand related application. On the one hand, it might to a limited extent also be used for user innovation in the form of market research and for eWOM purposes (cf. 2.3.5). It can be used for brand communication (cf. 2.3.1), but hardly for brand community building (cf. 2.3.2).

Blogging and content communities also provide possibilities to score either high or low on both the social presence/media richness and the self-presentation/self-disclosure dimensions, depending on the media options embedded and the kind of information dispersed. Blogs and content communities have a medium potential for brand related application. On the one hand, they can be used for user innovation, brand communication and also brand community building (cf. 2.3.3, 2.3.1, 2.3.2). On the other hand, it is difficult to initiate eWOM processes (cf. 2.3.5). While users can display opinions and review products, these tools are not as well-suited as Twitter to spread these opinions.

SNS score high on both the social presence/ media richness and the self-presentation/ self-disclosure dimensions. As noted in section 2.4.1.4, their potential for brand related application is high. They are useful tools for all forms of concepts in brand related social media communication, i.e. UGC, user innovation, brand communication, brand community, and eWOM. This is one of the reasons why for this study, a focus on SNS seemed particularly suitable. As will be elaborated on in chapter 4, the empirical analysis presented in this study particularly focuses on Facebook.

Having discussed brand related communication, the use of social media, and having combined them in a new, comprehensive framework, the following section attempts to bring brand, social media and television together before chapter 3 unites these topics in a model framework.

2.5 Using social media for brand related communication in a television context

Previous sections have defined the thematic scope of this study. Section 2.2 has dealt with media brands in general and television brands in particular. The dynamics of seriality have been discussed and it has been outlined why and how seriality and loyalty are two concepts that closely relate to each other. Section 2.3 has introduced relevant concepts in brand related communication that touch on or are inherent to social media brand communication. Section 2.4 has introduced social media tools and provided a literature review on social media research. It has concluded with a categorization scheme classifying social media with regard to their brand management related relevance, thereby attempting to combine all relevant aspects of sections 2.3 and 2.4 (cf. 2.4.3).

This section attempts to bring brand, social media and serialised television content together. Chan-Olmsted (2011) emphasizes the importance of media branding in a web 2.0 environment with particular focus on television brands and discusses both challenges and opportunities. However, to the knowledge of the author, to date, no comprehensive empirical study investigating the overlap of media brand research, social media research and serialised television brands exists.

The following sections – 2.5.1, 2.5.2, 2.5.3, and 2.5.4 – will therefore approach this niche of using social media for brand related communication in a television context from a rather practical vantage point.

It will be shown how social media are already used by television companies for branding purposes. A plethora of examples exist of how social media tools have been employed in the context of television, most of which focus on Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube as the most widely used. Before engaging in them, it is crucial to strategically identify ways in which social media campaigns can serve branding purposes, because brand campaigns such as groups and interactive experiences on social networking sites “should be a means to an end rather than an end in itself” (Christodoulides et al. 2011, p. 105).

In this study, all communicative messages dispersed via channel-owned social media tools aiming at viewer retention and acquisition have been defined as the social media programme for the serialised TV brand. The following sections will therefore not focus on pure UGC, but

will, if applicable, include examples where social media are employed not directly by the television company, but by relevant brand ambassadors such as actors.

To support branding of serialised television content, social media can be used in four different ways: As a channel for advertising on-air programmes, to strengthen the consumer-brand relationship, as a way of viewer interaction during the programme, or as a medium to harness the creative power of audiences. Each of these strategic targets will shortly be outlined below.

This section will conclude with a specification of the research gap in 2.5.5, resulting from the divergence of how social media are already used for branding purposes as shown in sections 2.5.1, 2.5.2, 2.5.3, and 2.5.4, and the apparent lack of research in that field.

2.5.1 Advertising on-air programmes to create brand awareness

Advertising of on-air programmes aims at creating awareness for a television brand. In order to create loyalty in a final step, viewers need to be made aware that a serialised programme brand exists and subsequently be reminded to watch it again or to pick it up once more after it has been interrupted by the end of a season.

There are plenty of examples for the advertising of on-air programmes. For instance, German networks ProSieben, RTL and Sat.1 all have a Twitter channel via which they regularly promote the programme for the evening. Another example is the Facebook page of ZDF, <http://www.facebook.com/ZDF>. There, the broadcaster informs users where to find content that they missed when it was aired via links to its “Mediathek”, or it gives programme updates and promotes shows, films, serials or any other content that is about to be broadcast.

A study conducted by Lin and Peña (2011) found that currently, television companies employ Twitter predominantly to publicize their on-air programmes and to “optimize relationships with their consumers by using distinct relational messages” (2011, p. 24). Their content analysis of 1,350 individual tweets posted by nine networks’ official programme accounts in three genres (e.g. @TrueBloodHBO, for the drama series *True Blood* which was at the time aired on HBO) came to the following conclusions: Firstly, television companies post more task-oriented than socio-emotional tweets. They use Twitter to promote their programmes, escalate viewership, and increase popularity among viewers. The second, and hardly surprising finding is that television companies post more positive than negative socio-emotional tweets. As a result, it can be noted that television brands strategically make use of

Twitter to “inform their viewers, direct their attention to upcoming shows and events, and generate buzz about specific televised events” (Lin & Peña 2011, p. 26). Thus television companies seem to develop a strategic and tactical approach towards Twitter with regard to their brands, akin to consumer goods brands.

2.5.2 *Strengthening the consumer-brand relationship*

Once viewers were aware of the serialised television brand and have started watching it, another important task of social media campaigns is to strengthen the consumer-brand relationship.

The study by Lin and Peña (2011) also found that in the sample of tweets used, socio-emotional messages got retweeted more often than task-oriented communication. If retweeting is accepted as an indicator for popularity and influence, this suggests that socio-emotional messages are considered more important by followers.

To achieve an emotional response, it is often tried to engage audiences. One example is the American premium cable television company HBO and its communication strategy around the critically acclaimed television serial *True Blood* as well as the medieval fantasy serial *Game of Thrones*. For *True Blood*, HBO operated a Twitter account named @TrueBloodHBO, which was used to promote upcoming seasons of the serial, to announce DVD releases, but also to retweet, reply to and comment on users’ tweets concerning the serial. HBO also posts favourite quotes as well as information concerning the cast and the shooting of new material. On Facebook, they operated an official *True Blood* Facebook page²⁴ which they used to post promotional pictures, to ask users questions and create polls, and to spread information about the serial. On YouTube, they operated a channel dedicated solely to *True Blood* related material such as promotional trailers, previews and short videos of selected *True Blood* scenes, all presented in an official, HBO and *True Blood* branded environment.²⁵ The official website²⁶ offered screen savers and wallpapers for download, merchandise for purchase and special scenes not aired during the programme. Also, HBO created websites with community pages for the “American Vampire League” as well as the “Fellowship of the Sun”, two fictitious rivalling organisations playing a major part in the

²⁴ <http://www.facebook.com/TrueBlood>

²⁵ <http://www.youtube.com/trueblood>

²⁶ <http://www.hbo.com/true-blood>

story, for the season in which they occurred.²⁷ For *Game of Thrones*, HBO offered similar content, including an official website,²⁸ a Facebook page, a Google+ page, a YouTube channel,²⁹ a Twitter as well as a Tumblr account.³⁰ During the months of the year when no new episodes were aired (*True Blood* seasons consisted of ten to twelve episodes aired between June and August; *Game of Thrones* seasons consisted of ten episodes aired between March/April and June), HBO is able to keep in touch with its audience and thus succeeded in nurturing the consumer-brand relationship.

Another example for the use of social media to improve the consumer-brand relationship is the American drama television serial *The Vampire Diaries*, which was broadcast on The CW Television Network. A typical network serial, *The Vampire Diaries* seasons consisted of 22 to 23 episodes, broadcast between September/October and May. For new episodes, producers and cast created buzz, mainly on Twitter, which led to very active interaction with the audience, both related to the serial and to general conversations about the shooting, the actors and other topics. Instead of working against users who infringed copyright, executive producer Julie Plec frequently shared links to videos on YouTube that included footage used by fans to create their own versions of scenes and storylines. Other examples include general interaction between the cast and the fans. On 9 November 2011, 4:37 p.m. MET, actor Paul Wesley tweeted “Hi everybody”.³¹ At 5:25 p.m., he tweeted “Wait did me just saying hi incite a trending topic?” in response to the many reactions following his tweet.³² At 5:54 p.m., Wesley tweeted “Still trending!??? (is this a glitch?)“, due to the fact that “Hi Paul” was still a worldwide trending topic on Twitter.³³ The fact that those phrases trended worldwide indicates that the community of fans of the serial is not restricted to American viewers. Many viewers from other countries partake in the conversation; the German community tends to both engage in conversations with the American cast and crew, as well as in discussions referring to the German adaptation.

When ProSieben announced on 25 August 2011 via Twitter that, due to disappointing ratings for the first episodes of the second season, *The Vampire Diaries* would be transferred to

²⁷ www.americanvampireleague.com; www.fellowshipofthesun.org; now redirect to www.hbo.com/true-blood

²⁸ www.hbo.com/game-of-thrones

²⁹ Facebook: www.facebook.com/GameOfThrones; Google+: <http://plus.google.com/+gameofthrones>; YouTube: www.youtube.com/GameofThrones

³⁰ Twitter: [@GameOfThrones](https://twitter.com/GameOfThrones); Tumblr: <http://gameofthrones.tumblr.com>

³¹ <https://twitter.com/paulwesley/status/134293440119836672>

³² <https://twitter.com/paulwesley/status/134306574117249024>

³³ <https://twitter.com/paulwesley/status/134312869285208066>

Sixx,³⁴ incomprehension and harsh complaints by viewers followed.³⁵ Possibly due to the complaints, when the serial's third season started in March 2012, it was aired both on Sixx and ProSieben.³⁶

Social media strategies for television brands can hence be used for interactive brand communication (cf. 2.3.1) and serve many of the purposes brand communities (cf. 2.3.2) do. Social media make the brand as well as cast, crew, and also fictitious characters approachable and support relationship building.

2.5.3 Viewer interaction

According to Tony Wang, former General Manager of Twitter UK, 80 percent of viewers already use a second screen like a laptop, a smartphone or a tablet while watching TV, and 72 percent of them communicate on social media channels about the programme currently running, frequently encouraging other users to switch on a programme they would not have been interested in otherwise (Majica, Mielke, & Wirth 2012). Another study comes to the conclusion that slightly more than half of German television viewers make use of a second screen (36th WWW-Benutzer-Analyse W3B³⁷ as cited by Schwegler 2013). Second screen usage decreases channel hopping (Paperlein 2013), but it remains unclear how attentive viewers actually are when using it. Schwegler (2013) states that in their study, only about 10 percent were using the second screen for something related to the programme they were watching, the rest was using other features like browsing, e-mail, or games on their device. Research needs to examine consumers' motivations for second screen usage contrast findings to media companies' assertions as to how and how much viewers use a second screen.³⁸

However, to provoke viewer interaction during the programme, television companies want viewers to be engaged by the second screen, not distracted by it. The reality talent show *The Voice of Germany* provides an example of how this can be achieved. The television channels ProSieben and Sat.1 aired the first season of *The Voice of Germany* from November 2011 to

³⁴ <https://twitter.com/ProSieben/status/106727786206605312>

³⁵ For instance <https://twitter.com/ProSieben/status/107375817063018496>

³⁶ <https://www.facebook.com/ProSieben/posts/140007396115946>; <http://www.vampirediaries-news.de/index.php/vampire-diaries-staffel-3-ab-15-maerz-auf-sixx-und-ab-19-maerz-auf-prosieben-in-deutschland/>

³⁷ 69,282 respondents representative for German internet users

³⁸ An unpublished MA thesis found social interaction, exerting influence and information as key usage motives (Wirdemann, J. (2014). *Erfolgsdeterminanten von Second-Screen-Angeboten auf mobilen Endgeräten* [Success factors of second screen offerings on mobile devices] (Unpublished MA thesis). Johannes Gutenberg-Universität, Mainz.

February 2012. There was an integrated online campaign surrounding the show: It had its own website with information and promotional material as well as social media plug-ins that led to the Facebook page of the show and the individual Facebook profiles of all contestants. Only two weeks into the season, 180,000 users liked *The Voice of Germany* on Facebook, with 56,600 talking about it, and some of the candidates had more than 1,000 fans (Weber 2011). To accompany the online content, viewers could download an app for iOS as well as for Android to use mobile versions of the website and access additional content.³⁹ Users of the apps could communicate with friends who were also watching the show, play games and take part in the votes, which made the experience a very social one. The music presented during the shows was downloadable from iTunes while the show was still running, and later into the season, music sales counted towards the contestants' scores for the finals.⁴⁰ The channels operated an official Twitter account called @TheVoiceGermany and had at an early stage established the hashtag “#voice” (later changed to “#TVOG”), which accompanied all messages posted about the show. During airtime, viewers were asked questions or encouraged to discuss on Twitter, using the hashtag. The answers to those questions, or also general comments posted by viewers – who their favourite candidates were, which songs they preferred, how much they liked the show – were then superimposed on the screen and seen on TV. The presenters frequently referred to the messages or included viewers' questions while interviewing the candidates, giving them the impression of being an active part of the show, not a passive audience.

Similar activities of interaction have also been used by ARD and ZDF. The *Tatort* episode *Der Wald steht schwarz und schweiget*, aired on 13 May 2012 on Das Erste, did not present the viewers with a complete solution, but they had to find the murderer themselves online.⁴¹ With *Wer rettet Dina Foxx?*, ZDF pursued a similar approach, showing a film where a character was innocently arrested and the viewers had to find the real murderer online.⁴²

Campaigns like these blur the boundaries between on-air and off-air communication, because they can start with either and merge into the other at any time. Social media actually enable viewers to participate and engage with their brands, thereby improving the consumer-brand relationship as well.

³⁹ <http://www.the-voice-of-germany.de/apps>

⁴⁰ <http://www.the-voice-of-germany.de/musik-downloads>

⁴¹ <http://www.daserste.de/unterhaltung/krimi/tatort/specials/tatort-plus-100.html>

⁴² <http://www.zdf.de/das-kleine-fernsehspiel/wer-rettet-dina-foxx-13099690.html>

2.5.4 Harnessing the creative power of audiences

The fourth way to use social media for television is to harness the creative power of audiences by engaging in collaboration between the audience and the producers. It can be described as a method of user innovation (cf. 2.3.3) and includes the viewer at a much earlier stage of the brand management process than the other strategies.

However, according to Carter (2009b), this method is only rarely used because copyright issues might result and because producers prefer having control over their content. In the case of serialised content, audiences are included indirectly in the development of the series/serial if the story arcs and the characters are adapted to the audience's preferences or if plot developments embrace feedback from the audience (cf. 2.2.3; 2.3.5).

Since this strategy is negligible in a television branding context, it will not be further elaborated on at this point.

2.5.5 Specification of the research gap

As a result, it can be stated that social media strategies are already widely used in a television context for a number of reasons, including branding objectives. However, many strategies still have a rather experimental status: Although it seems to be common knowledge that social media strategies "do some good", it remains largely unknown which particular positive outcomes can be expected and achieved.

Partly, this is due to the fact that the usage of supporting social media tools has not been sufficiently researched, as illustrated by the fact that knowledge about how much and in what manner television viewers make use of a second screen is still relatively scarce and differs greatly with regard to the source claiming the numbers.

Also, as shown above, when taking a closer look at effects on the brand, it is not always possible to clearly separate the levels on which brands operate in the television context (for the notion of ingredient branding in a television context, cf. e.g. Lis & Post 2013). Social media strategies might positively affect the programme brand, the channel brand, or other brands involved such as that of the producers, directors, or actors. It therefore seems necessary to develop a comprehensive explanatory model that incorporates branding related

constructs, social media related constructs, as well as television related constructs. The model should aim at addressing a universal success factor.

As stated above, to the knowledge of the author, no empirical study examining the phenomenon of managing serialised television brands with social media strategies exists to date. A number of studies on social media in a branding context exist to date (e.g. Arnhold 2010; Boyle 2007; Christodoulides et al. 2012; Laroche et al. 2012; Muniz & Schau 2007), but studies on media branding in a social media environment (e.g. Chan-Olmsted 2011; Lis & Berz 2011) are still scarce.

To add to the current state of research on media branding and social media is one aim of this study. It will take a first step towards closing that research gap by identifying how social media branding strategies affect brand loyalty, and how relevant that influence is in comparison to other potential influencing factors. As noted before, brand loyalty for the television brand is chosen as the success factor because price and willingness to purchase are not viable outcome variables in a model designed for free commercial television. This allows for the focusing on usage and choice related factors, such as continued viewing of a programme.

The key research questions were defined as:

1. Which drivers – social media related, TV related, and/or related to the social environment – are most important for a consumer's relationship with the serialised television brand?
2. How do social media influence the image of the serialised television brand?
3. Which conditions drive social media usage as well as attitude toward the social media programme for the serialised television brand?
4. Which aspects of the social media programme for the serialised television brand are particularly important for users?

To answer the research questions, chapter 3 deals with the development of the conceptual model. The conceptualisation of the constructs as well as the derivation of hypotheses are presented by construct. Section 3.2 presents the final model and an overview of hypotheses.

Chapter 4 will then provide a specification of the model, and in chapter 5, results will be presented.

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