

Managing Innovations in Content Driven Media. Limitations and Challenges for Research: the Case of Location-based

The here proposed contribution to IMMAA 2022 is addressing one of the core questions pointed out in the call for papers (IMMAA, 2022): “What can academia and industry learn from each other? And what does this mean for media management education, the translation of scientific knowledge into practice, and the media management research agenda?”. Location-based services (LBS) are used here as a blueprint for media management research (by focusing on improved distribution of news content) being directly linked to societal issues. Following Donders et al. (2018; cf. also Kostovska et al., 2021 with conceptualizing an ecosystem for media management research) the example is quite suitable for to explain challenges in shaping business models for commercial media facing digitalization. The advantage by choosing this example is obvious. Firstly and to start with Raper et al. (2007) the field is widely developed and all argumentative structure could be based on a sound foundation in international literature (e.g. Masters, 2014; Basiri et al., 2015; Heinemann & Gaiser 2014; Fang et al., 2016; Luo et al., 2014; Banerjee & Dholakia, 2008; Bruner & Kumar, 2007; Leek & Christodoulides, 2009; Butcher, 2011; Unni & Harmon, 2007; Skeldon, 2011; Gidofalvi et al., 2008; Xu, Oh & Teo, 2009; Mazaheri et al., 2010; Xu et al., 2011, Molitor et al., 2012), of exceptional relevance regarding newsroom management and locative news are some additional sources (e.g. Nyre et al., 2012; Schmitz Weiss, 2013 and 2014; Westlund, 2013; Øie, 2012; Ali et al., 2019;). Secondly the Author will be able to rely on own data representing the full range of empirical approaches to practice-oriented media management. Here, specifically: 1. content analytic coverage of current usage opportunities; 2. concrete user research using UTAUT (Venkatesh et al., 2003) with stratified sampling; 3. three waves of focus group discussions (different foci) evaluated using reductionist content analysis; 4. A global market analysis using theoretical sampling; 5. An international Delphi study (two iterations) with academics and practitioners; 6. A design sprint conducted with the journalistic startup Cluster to develop sound use scenarios.

Four major outcomes will be discussed as hypotheses to further facilitate (applied) media management research with practical implications:

1. Unclear structures in the industry

For digitally entangled technologies, the range of applications often are comparable broad. This means that – as a media manager – you have to look for particularly innovative applications not in your own but rather in other, unrelated industries. The chosen example (LBS) exemplifies a huge lack of (market’s) transparency. It has been challenging to extract best practices, which is indispensable for proper application development in applied settings. Methodologically interesting: research answered to these challenges by using alternative data sources: professional newsletters. Those allowed to extract cases of LBS products, firms using LBS in some way or developers working on LBS solutions by applying a process of theoretical sampling.

2. Management’s preferences in the two-sided environment for media markets

As empirically demonstrated years ago (*Authors*, 2000), an economic bias of the editorial staff can still be assumed today. This also ensures that management-related innovations arrive with a delay in everyday journalistic life. In addition, conflicting preferences between editorial staff and general management can still be identified in some markets relevant for the proposal presented here: this has the consequence, that in relation to the two-sided markets served, innovations are often only or at least firstly implemented in the advertising market. This applies in particular to the selected example.

3. Slow diffusion of media innovations

LBS are rarely used in media production and distribution (Nyre, 2012; Westlund 2013; Schmitz Weiss, 2013). Accordingly, the Authors are able to refer to a slow observed diffusion rate in the industry – applying the concept of diffusion introduced by Rogers (2003). Media industries implemented the innovation (here: LBS) slower than assumed at the beginning of the research project chosen as an

example here. The content analysis of news apps of German legacy media organizations showed, that the diffusion of innovative LBS approaches is eminently slow – which is in line with the findings of Schmitz Weiss (2013). This at the same time leads to the fact, that managers in the industry, have a limited understanding of the concept and the meaning of LBS. Focus group discussions with managers from legacy media organizations showed (ibid.), that they can barely be seen as experts in the field and most probably would not be able to give any new insights into the topic.

4. Hypothetical audience research

There are challenges in impact- and audience research, too. The subject is poorly known by survey participants, and since there are still only a few media products using localization technology for news delivery, scholars have to keep their research either on a general level, or – when going more into detail –, default to hypothetical questions. This means: One can research on motives, intentions and actual behaviour of media innovation's use fairly well, when it comes to use applied solutions (e.g. for localized media) he will face huge limitations. In the given case Since most of the participants (*Authors*, 2017) never used media outlets incorporating some sort of localization technology, one can either ask for an interest in LBS relying to (news) media, describing a hypothetical platform with distinct functions. The other option is to measure the general interest in local news and events as well as the general usage of any kind of LBS and then combine those measures to estimate an interest in localized news media applications. Both options come along with validity flaws as well as with problematic assumptions. Finally, that means that one can hardly give advice to media managers about need and acceptance of localized media applications. Another challenge lies in processes of prototyping – far away of being sufficient to convince practical media management.

All in all – LBS are able to perfectly exemplify the challenges of innovation-management in media business.

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