

Rigor versus relevance: Enforcing dialogue between media management research and practice

Topic: Strategic management

Abstract

(Counted words: 464)

Cross-innovation does not have to be something that occurs between scientific disciplines, but can also take place between different domains, such as science and practice. There is a strong need to bridge between theory and practice (Rohn & Evens, 2020; Ibrus & Rajahonka, 2019; Lowe & Picard, 2020). When it comes to the question of applicable knowledge for media organizations, the debate on rigor versus relevance arises repeatedly. This ongoing debate began decades ago in general management research (Gulati, 2007) and has been taken up in media management research (Achtenhagen, 2016; Picard & Lowe, 2016). Without recapitulating the different positions here (e.g. Vermeulen, 2005; Van de Ven & Johnson, 2006; Klein et al., 2006), we argue, similarly to Van de Ven and Johnson (2006), that distinct types of knowledge in academia and practice as well as a knowledge transfer problem can also be assumed in media management research. As in recent years arguments of our community have become stronger, calling for us to listen and interact with practice (e.g. Winter & Buschow, 2017; Rohn & Evens, 2020), we find a need not only for a translation between the two worlds, but for setting and developing a research agenda in dialogue. This is even more important as our field of research is fundamentally changing due to the development, dissemination and use of new media (Albarran et al., 2018; Picard & Lowe, 2016; Rohn & Evens, 2020).

Against this background, we want to share with the media management research community first steps of a long-range research project, in which we aim to build a science-and-business community on issues of media management research. In our paper, we will focus on our very first step, which addresses the following questions: What challenges and chances do media managers in practice encounter that can be researched in our field? How can these issues be juxtaposed with the research agendas proclaimed by media management research? Referring to common definitions of media management (Albarran et al., 2018; Kaltenbrunner et al., 2013; Buschow & Winter, 2014; Altmeyen et al., 2014), we focus in our first panel on media managers who work for German daily and/or weekly newspapers ($N \approx 800$), based on members of the Bundesverband Digitalpublisher und Zeitungsverleger e.V. (engl.: Federal Association of Digital Publishers and Newspaper Publishers e.V.). An online questionnaire with explorative focus will be in the field by 11/2020. In our presentation at the WMEM conference, we want to illustrate the impulses received from practice and to juxtapose these practice-based research needs with the research agendas of our field.

Assuming media management practice as a valuable, underestimated and not exhaustively explored source of inspiration for research, we hope to provide the media management research community with impulses on how to enforce the dialogue between media management research and practice.

Keywords: relevance, media manager, practice perspective, media management.

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