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Media Brand Trust Effects on Digital Advertising - towards a Conceptual Model

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Zusammenfassung

Während globale Werbeausgaben kontinuierlich steigen und wissenschaftliche Publikationen Beweise für den Einfluss des Medienumfelds auf den Werbeerfolg präsentieren, wird das Verständnis für das Vertrauen in Medienmarken und die Möglichkeit dieses zu managen und zu messen immer relevanter. Entgegen der Relevanz dieses Bereiches gibt es weder eine stichhaltige Definition der Medienmarke, noch eine etablierte Methode das Vertrauen in Medienmarken und damit verbundener Einflüsse des Halo Effects in der digitalen Werbeindustrie zu messen. In dieser Publikation wird ein Beitrag zur Medienforschung und -praxis präsentiert, der ein konzeptuelles Modell des Vertrauens in Medienmarken entwickelt und einen Ausblick auf weiter Forschungsvorhaben im Rahmen der Entwicklung einer Media Brand Trust Scale aufzeigt. Die Skala wird für Medienmarken und Werbetreibende entwickelt, um das Vertrauen in die Marke zu messen und die Mediaplanung zu optimieren. Der Beitrag fokussiert die Definition des Konstrukts "Medienmarke" basierend auf einer umfassenden Literaturrecherche, die Erforschung der Media Economics Theory zur Beschreibung von Konsumenteneffekten und die Untersuchung der Verbindung dieser Effekte mit bewussten und unbewussten Reaktionen von Konsumenten auf Werbekontakte im Rahmen der Forschung zur Verhaltensökonomie und Psychologie. Abschließend wird ein konzeptuelles Modell präsentiert, das die Effekte von Vertrauen in Medienmarken auf digitale Werbekampagnen darlegt.

Keywords: Medienmarke, Vertrauen in Medienmarken, Konzeptuelles Modell, Konsumentenwahrnehmung

Summary

As advertising spending is growing continuously and research provides evidence for the impact of the environment on advertising effectiveness, understanding, measuring, and managing trust in media brands has become crucial to media brands and advertisers alike. However, there is neither a timely, theoretically sound definition and conceptualization of a media brand nor an established mode of measuring media brand trust and accompanying halo effects in the digital advertising technology industry. Thus, this study aims at contributing to media research and practice by proposing an integrated conceptual model of media brand trust and at showing avenues for a research agenda to establish a related media brand trust scale that can also be used by media, agencies and advertisers to measure advertising effectiveness and, subsequently, manage media planning. First a (re-)definition of the construct 'media brand' based on an extensive literature review is developed. Second, drawing on media economics theory, audience effects on media brand trust are explained. Third, these effects are connected to behavioral economics and psychology to investigate subconscious and conscious consumer level responses to ads embedded in digital media. Finally an integrated conceptual model is created that can explain media brand trust effects on digital advertising.

Keywords: Media Brands, Media Brand Trust Scale, Conceptual Model, Consumer Perception, Media Processing

Introduction

While global advertising spending is continuously growing (Guttmann, 2020), trust in media hit an all time low in recent years (Edelman, 2021). Considering the well-documented halo effect of the media environment on advertising effectiveness (Stipp, 2018; Liu-Thompkins, 2019; The Global TV Group, 2021), understanding, measuring, and managing trust in media brands is increasingly crucial to advertisers and media brands alike. However, there is neither a timely, theoretically sound definition and conceptualization of a media brand nor an established mode of measuring media brand trust and accompanying halo effects in the digital advertising technology industry. Hence, by building on an extensive systematic literature review (SLR), this contribution aims at developing a new conceptual model that links media brand trust with perceptual, affective, and cognitive dimensions of the digital ad exposure process and derives theoretical insights on the role of the creative, the media context, and the fit between the two ('halo effect') in driving ad effectiveness.

Before being able to develop an understanding of the foundations and dimensions of trust in media and media brands and its impact ad effectiveness, a thorough analysis and a potential re-definition of the construct 'media brand' is required.

In the next step, drawing on theories from behavioral economics and psychology to subconscious and conscious consumer level responses to digital advertisements are investigated. Cognitive theories developed and presented by Karla Evans & Anne Treisman (2004), and Daniel Kahnemann (1973, 2011) suggest that humans respond to external stimuli based on three systems. These systems are sensual responses such as hearing or seeing (System 0), implicit and unconscious mental reactions (System 1), and the explicit reaction based on experience and cognitive activity (System 2). Based on these theories, ads placed in a digital media environment are never perceived and processes autonomously, but 'in-context'. Accordingly, the halo effect, describing the significant impact the environment has on the perception of an ad experienced in that setting (Stipp, 2018; Liu-Thompkins, 2019), explains a large portion of variance in advertising effectiveness. This effect allows an ad to 'borrow' significant levels of trust from the media environment in which the ad appears. Therefore, it is relevant for media brands, as well as advertising brands, to take account of factors influencing consumers' perception based on the different systems, to analyze audience responses and to understand the interconnected influences on customer perception based on ad, environment and the fit between both (Liu-Thompkins, 2019).

With this consideration, this study aims at structuring, reviewing, and linking the fragmented areas of media brand trust dimensions and digital ad effectiveness, resulting in an integrated conceptual model. Specifically, an extensive SLR was conducted to explore the following aspects of media brand trust and digital ad effectiveness: definition of media brands today, measurement and conceptual dimensions of media brand trust, and digital ad effectiveness in such a context. In line with these three aspects, three different search strategies are pursued. After synthesizing the findings, a new and integrated conceptual model will be derived that aims at explaining media brand trust effects on digital advertising.

Research Overview and Methodology

The literature review started with pre-defining relevant themes clustered in three main areas 1) 'Defining Media Brands', 2) 'Trust in Media Brands', and 3) 'Ad Exposure and Context Effects'. These three themes were chosen representing the influences on consumer interaction with media brands and the associated ad effectiveness.

Media brands as the central element of this research underwent a radical evolution in recent decades due to the emergence of the internet and novel possibilities of media distribution connected to this. While traditionally media operated on a unidirectional broadcasting approach, digital opportunities allow for bidirectional communication and the aggregation of contents from various sources (Hess, 2014). These developments generated the demand for changing media business models which requires the development of a timely media brand definition, adjusted to today's media landscape and modern consumer-media interactions (Voci et al., 2019). Resulting from this demand, the first research question to be explored is the following:

RQ1: What is a timely definition of media brands?

Resulting from this disruptive media landscape and the rate at which new media brands emerge in the digital

environment, consumers are confronted with content from various sources on a daily basis and are continuously required to evaluate information from partly unknown or aggregated sources. Providing evidence for an information to be reliable, trust in media brands becomes more and more important in that environment, supporting consumers in their evaluation and influences the interaction with media and embedded advertisements (Malthouse et al., 2007). Since currently available publications on trust in consumer-brand interactions mostly revolve around brands in general (e.g. Munuera-Aleman et al., 2003) or news media in specific (e.g. Kohring & Matthes, 2007), the second research question focuses on the definition of media brand trust and its implications for media brands and advertisers. The second research question thus is framed as following:

RQ2: How to conceptualize and measure media brand trust? What are relevant media brand trust dimensions?

Connecting these definitions with the research on media properties, the final research question will be centered around the general perception of media content and the global impact of media context and advertisements on consumer response. Research on psychology provides valid explanations for the process of human perception, which can be linked to the holistic impact of media exposures (Daniel Kahneman 1973, 2011; Stipp, 2018). As human perception can, according to Daniel Kahneman, be separated into different systems working subsequently and processing different aspects of the available information, this is relevant to the research presented on context effects, providing evidence for the global impact of context, ad and the fit between both on advertisement effectiveness. Analyzing the influence of media brand trust on consumer responses and the connected impact on the holistic exposure to media as based on psychological theories, the final research question is:

RQ3: How to structure the process of digital ad exposure from a behavioral science perspective? What is the impact of the creative itself, the digital media environment in which it is placed, and the fit between the two on ad effectiveness?

Guided by these themes and the initial literature covering some seminal studies in the field, a keyword analysis was conducted considering both English and German literature. According to Walsh & Downe (2005), the systematic review can be defined as a 'qualitative meta-synthesis', due to its aim of

developing an explanatory theory or model which could explain the findings of a group of similar qualitative studies'. The literature review was conducted based on the database Google Scholar, which besides providing a single entry point to research from multiple databases also enables the researcher to track and connect publications through time and across different books and journals. For scholarly work, the focus was on peer-reviewed articles published from 2000 onwards. This limitation was chosen based on the rapid evolution of digital services after the collapse of the 'Dotcom Bubble' in early 2000 leading to the introduction of major digital evolutions such as Facebook (2004) and YouTube (2005), disrupting the traditional media landscape and building the foundation for today's media environment. The initial search phase generated a long list of 4,252 sources, which were reviewed for concrete applicability and later filtered by duplicates and screened for contributions to the three main areas introduced above by abstract and conclusions, resulting in a short list of 29 publications. Resulting from the general variety of topics being relevant for the determination of a comprehensive conceptual model, the publications evaluated in this article stem from a broad set of journals such as Psychology and Marketing, the Journal of Marketing, the Journal of Advertising, the Journal of Advertising Research and the Journal of Interactive Marketing.

The articles focussing on defining the concept of 'Media Brands' were selected based on their timely, i.e. up-to-date and adjusted to the ever evolving media landscape, contribution to recent developments of media brands, resulting from the digitalization of media. All publications in that area are based on literature reviews themselves, allowing the presentation of a comprehensive approach on media brand definitions in the literature available as of yet. Articles observing the concept of 'Media Brand Trust' were selected based on their significant contribution to the area based on quantitative research and statistical reviews. Given the expanding scope of media brands today, research focussed on 'Brand Trust', 'Media Brand Trust', and also 'News Media Trust' was observed and integrated into the SLR underlying the conceptual model developed in this article. Finally, the search on 'Ad Exposure and Context Effects' was based on literature from psychological research on human cognition and scientific approaches on the 'Halo Effect'. This area particularly integrated publications from a broad set of areas, combining articles from research on marketing (e.g. Palmatier et al., 2006; Malmelin & Moisander, 2014; Mal et al., 2018) with

research on psychology (Sharma, 2000; Evans & Treisman, 2004; Kahneman, 2011).

The review of 'Media Brand Definitions' resulted in a set of 5 publications, 'Trust in Media Brands' was analyzed by 8 articles, and 'Ad Exposure and Context Effects', combining psychological research with publications directed towards media effects (especially the 'Halo Effect'), was examined based on 16 sources.

In the subsequent qualitative analysis, relevant coding schemes were developed through an abductive process of interpretation (Dubois & Gadde, 2002). Since there were no existing systematic analyses of the relevant topic and especially associations between the areas involved in the review, the analysis initially started on the descriptive level. Thus, the three areas of interest ('Media Brands', 'Media Brand Trust', 'Consumer Perception and Context Effects') were examined on a separate individual level and later connected in an overarching perspective. Based on this general observation the sources were analyzed through a 'compare and contrast approach' as suggested by Walsh & Downe (2005). In the following sections, the main findings of the analysis are presented, using the processes proposed by Dubois & Gadde (2002) and Walsh & Downe (2005) in order to elaborate on the development of the conceptual MBTS model.

Literature Review Results

The changing definition of Media Brands

Despite the omnipresence of media and media brands in everyone's daily lives there is a lack of a tangible definition of the construct that keeps up with time. While categorizing brands into media or non-media was relatively straightforward before the emergence of the internet, the radical change in ways and modes of consuming media today complicated the verbalization of a comprehensive definition.

Since the introduction of the internet to the broader public in the early 90s, traditional media brands created an online presence while new digital-only media companies emerged with new business models connected to a recent push for industry convergence. These developments in the media sector eventually are 'confusing both the media industry and thinking about it' (Voci et al., 2019). While traditional media was characterized by a unidirectional broadcasting approach, online channels allow media brands bidirectional communication, aggregating multimedia

content with low entry barriers for companies and consumers themselves to participate in the provision of co-created content (Hess, 2014). One of the most recent developments resulting from these traits of consumption is so-called 'homeless media', describing media brands distributing content without owned channels by hosting and monetizing it on third-party platforms such as Facebook's Instant Articles or Snapchat's Discover (Marconi, 2015). Additionally, due to the availability of digital offers across borders and the interweaving of media on a global scale, definitions of media brands need to take cultural differences and national differences based on public or private media systems into account, to be able to be applied on an international basis. All those developments combined led to a miscellaneous media environment where content provided by companies and consumers competes with ads from brands from all branches for the attention of consumers (Nelson-Field, 2020).

Due to this ever-evolving and fluctuating environment for media brands to participate in, it is almost impossible to determine a theoretically sound definition for the construct 'media brand', as well as to determine which brands to perceive as media brands today (Voci et al., 2019). This challenge to overcome definitory barriers and to come up with a comprehensive and internationally applicable definition can be observed in the publications aggregated in this chapter, which all present their own definition of media brands based on different conceptualizations such as consumption categories (Chan-Olmsted, 2011), external functions of the brand (Malmelin & Moisander, 2014), intrinsic functions of the brand (Voci et al., 2019), cultural relevance as platforms (Ots & Hartmann, 2015), or communicative approaches (Hess, 2014). Based on these conceptualizations of media brands and the respective traits attached to the construct, the conceptual model to be developed in this article will be designed based on the following definition: Media brands are characterized as distributing self-produced and co-created content in a multidimensional environment, serving as or communicating through platforms for the aggregated provision of multimedia content to brands and consumers in the market.

Based on several aspects of this definition, media brands occupy a much bigger share of consumer's lives today. By providing a platform to take part in the process of content generation, the role of users has shifted from mere consumers to contributors, actively

influencing the content distributed through media. Additionally, by aggregating multimedia contents, instead of only providing media of one type (i.e. written texts in newspapers, spoken word on radio, audiovisual content on TV), media brands operate on a much broader scale, further raising their importance to consumers. This elevated significance of media brands substantiated the importance of their specific analysis in terms of trust and its implications for consumer-brand interactions.

The construct of trust in media

Despite of the growing awareness for the importance of fully understanding consumer-brand relationships in developing marketing and behavioral theories (Shocker et al., 1994), as well as its implications for other relevant areas like brand loyalty and brand equity, the lack of research on trust has only gained attention in recent decades (Munuera-Aleman et al., 2003). While frameworks on the relationship between consumers and brands mostly revolved around factors such as commitment, intimacy, interdependence, and brand partner quality (Fournier, 1998), Munuera-Aleman et al. (2003) identified the lack of consumer's trust in articles available up until that time. Even though the research on understanding and measuring brand trust and its implications gained traction since the introduction of the trust measurement scale by Munuera-Aleman et al. (2003), research still has some way to go in determining valid measurements of trust based on precise definitions of concepts and research designs (Engelke et al., 2019). In addition to the scarcity of literature on the role of trust in marketing generally, existing research on trust is largely centered around trust in brands (e.g. Munuera-Aleman et al., 2003; Palmatier et al., 2006; Mal et al., 2018; Ebrahim, 2019), with only some exceptions examining trust in journalism and news media (e.g. Kohring & Matthes, 2007; Fisher, 2016; Engelke et al., 2019; Strömbäck et al., 2020).

By summarizing the available studies on trust in brands and (news) media, the following dimensions were extracted, serving as a starting point for developing a new scale on media brand trust: (1) transparency (Kang & Hustvedt, 2013; Mal et al., 2018), (2) ability (Mal et al., 2018; Ebrahim, 2019), (3) integrity (Palmatier et al., 2006; Mal et al., 2018; Ebrahim, 2019), (4) intentionality (Munuera-Aleman et al., 2003), (5) credibility (Palmatier et al., 2006; Fisher, 2016), and (6) honesty (Palmatier et al., 2006; Ebrahim, 2019). An overview of all quoted publications and the respective dimensions can be found in the appendix.

The process of digital ad exposure and context effects

Daniel Kahneman (1973, 2011) described human thinking based on two systems. While System 1 is engaged with intuitive and subconscious tasks, System 2 is described as overthinking and reflecting on the decisions of System 1. System 2 can thus be described as the more logical and deliberate way of thinking. As Kahneman's model relies on the brain's response to information already available to the brain, it leaves out the area of gathering those impressions which is preceding the handling of those impulses. Karla Evans & Anne Treisman (2004) embraced this gap and came up with the theory of 'Perceptual Processing', described as 'largely unconscious [... process, allowing] for the rapid, global, and highly efficient categorization of items and events in a visual scene' (Marois et al., 2004). In line with the denomination chosen by Daniel Kahneman, this theory on 'Perceptual Processing' (Evans & Treisman, 2004) can be referred to as System 0 (Görtz et al., 2021). Combining both attributions to the theory of human thinking allows us to draw a holistic picture consisting of the sensual absorption of stimuli (System 0), the fast and unconscious processing of those impressions (System 1), and the conscious and logical overthinking of first intuitions (System 2).

Comparing this aggregation of theories stemming from cognitive psychology with the theory introduced by Yingxu Wang et al. (2006), observing human perception from an informatics and human computing perspective, unambiguous parallels can be drawn. Yingxu Wang et al. (2006) presented a model on human perception based on the six layers of (1) 'Sensation', (2) 'Memory', (3) 'Perception', (4) 'Action', (5) 'Meta Cognitive Functions', and (6) 'Higher Cognitive Functions'. Establishing the reference to the model of System 0, 1, and 2, these layers can be separated accordingly. In line with System 0, 'Sensation' can be described as the input-oriented senses, while 'Memory' provides working space and buffers emotions for the actions to be conducted. System 1 can be compared to the layers of 'Perception', representing the subconscious areas of life functions, as well as 'Action', encompassing all motor controlled functions. Finally, System 2 was already described as the conscious and cognitive level above and can thus be related to the final layers of 'Meta Cognitive Functions' working on the cognitive process of attention and 'Higher Cognitive Functions' engaged with processes such as recognition and problem solving. While the

model presented by Yingxu Wang et al. (2006) approached the topic from a completely different angle, eventually the layered model can smoothly be related to the System 0, 1, and 2 approach resulting from cognitive theory. This highlights the validity of the cognitive models presented and allows this contribution to rely on those theories for attributing the concept of trust to certain areas in the human perceptual process.

Finally, referring to these theories on human perception to the process of media consumption and the impact of trust on these interactions can best be approached by analyzing the separate layers one by one. Exposed to media, humans will first unconsciously respond through System 0, gathering impulses to be processed in the brain (Evans & Treisman, 2004). These stimuli will then, still unconsciously, be handled by System 1, intuitively reacting to the impressions and providing first emotional conclusions to the mind. Eventually, impressions gaining conscious attention will be treated by System 2, which finally connects cognitive information and deliberate thoughts with the media input (Kahneman, 1973, 2011).

In line with different stages in the brain interacting with external stimuli, consumers exposed to advertisements never see them in isolation but always in a context determined by the current environment. The context interfering with the perception of an ad can for example be 'a television program, magazine, website or social media feed' (Stipp, 2018). This general perception of ads being placed in an environment provides the foundation for consumer response being based on the three elements context, ad and content-ad congruence.

Research on the impact of context effects on the response to advertisement exposures has been around since the late 1950s (Schwerin, 1958) and matured through the emergence of online advertisements and its more interactive nature (Liu-Thompkins, 2019). A current major trend in the digital advertising industry is actually concerned with 'contextual targeting', i.e. placing ads according to their fit with the surrounding website content. This way of targeting is gaining importance since established ways of data-driven audience targeting will no longer be available when Chrome, Safari, and Firefox stop supporting third party cookie tracking by 2022/2023 (Shields, 2021). From then on, only digital tech giants like Google, Facebook, and Amazon will effectively be capable of using audience targeting powered by their unique first-party-

data and user logins. While research on context effects is largely based on studies applying neuroscience-based methods, deepening the understanding of underlying processes in the human brain, according to Stipp (2018) these effects can be summarized in two groups, attention transfer, and priming/halo effects. Attention transfer describes the correlation between attention on content and advertisement recall (Stipp & Snyder, 2017), priming/halo effects on the other hand are rather concerned with the impact of emotional and cognitive responses to the context on the perception of advertisements (Stipp, 2018). As presented by Malthouse et al. (2007), these effects can be connected to trust in the environment, permitting the combination of context effects and media brand trust as aimed for in this contribution. Several studies from Integral Ad Science also state that the 'quality' of the environment is largely determined by the amount of trust that the user attaches to website content (IAS, 2019, 2020). Following these reviews on context effects and connecting them to the importance of trust in the medium as introduced by Malthouse et al. (2007), the assessment of advertisements in a media environment always needs to be analyzed from a holistic perspective and connected to theories on human perception. While congruity and ad perception have an impact on consumer response, due to the significant impact of context perception on advertisement effectiveness, it is of major importance to evaluate the environment an ad is placed in which is directly linked to the impact of media branding and media brand perception.

Development of a Conceptual Process Model of Digital Ad Experience and the Crucial Role of Media Brand Trust

Definition and Dimensions of Trust in Media Brands

As described in section 3.1 on the presentation of a timely definition of the construct 'media brand', recent developments connected to the emergence of the internet and its implications for traditional and emerging business models led to the diversification of the way media brands interact with consumers. This heterogeneity of products and operations complicates the observation of today's media environment increasingly and poses the foundation for the requirement of a valid conceptualization as developed in this contribution.

In contrast to traditional media brands, mostly engaged in generating content and distributing it through owned channels, modern media brands operate in a totally

different environment. While today's media brands can still be generating their own content, working in an informing or entertaining fashion, they all need to take into account the diversified media landscape made up of owned channels and platforms aggregating content from various sources (Hess, 2014). Operating in this area leads to consumers being exposed to media brands not only in settings controlled by the brand itself, but also in situations aggregating articles and advertisements from several sources in one view, presented on a platform managed by an external company (Langner et al., 2013). Emerging from this situation is the demand for an understanding of the influences of context perception and consumer response to the environment on the interaction with media content. Accordingly, trust, as one of the most relevant determinants of (media) brand success (Kang & Hustvedt, 2013), is pivotal for managerial evaluations of media outlets and the implication of distributing contents through external platforms. Measuring and managing trust in such an environment can only be successful by taking account of all its constituting dimensions. As a result of the literature review (1) transparency (Kang & Hustvedt, 2013; Mal et al., 2018), (2) ability (Mal et al., 2018; Ebrahim, 2019), (3) integrity (Palmatier et al., 2006; Mal et al., 2018; Ebrahim, 2019), (4) intentionality (Munuera-Aleman et al., 2003), (5) credibility (Palmatier et al., 2006; Fisher, 2016), and (6) honesty (Palmatier et al., 2006; Ebrahim, 2019) were identified as potential dimensions of trust. Improving the perception of these facets of trust from a managerial point of view leads to an increase in customer loyalty (Palmatier et al., 2006), brand equity (Munuera-Aleman et al., 2003), purchase intention and overall market performance (Kang & Hustvedt, 2013).

Examining the construct of trust in such a disaggregated manner permits the analysis of the different influences on consumer perception for each dimension in particular. Transparency, for example, is of major relevance for (news) media brands in particular, as they possess a certain degree of social responsibility due to the connection of media and politics as described by Gal Ariely (2015). Since consumers need to rely on the quality of processes operating in the background instead of merely trusting that a certain product will be satisfying, media brands are asking consumers not only to trust their transparent communications but also their 'unobserved intentions to act in a socially responsible manner' (Kang & Hustvedt, 2013). Following this delineation, not only transparency, but also a brand's intentions are of major

importance for the establishment of trust. This association of intentionality and transparency can even further be expanded by credibility, based on the contribution presented by Munuera-Aleman et al. (2003), framing the importance of those dimensions as 'the [perception] that the brand is reliable and responsible for the interests and welfare of the consumer'. Especially the element of intentionality was framed by Munuera-Aleman et al. (2003) as the cognitive level of abstraction connected to trust.

Focussing on further dimensions of trust, Ebrahim (2019) proposed his framework built on a brand's honesty, intentionality, ability and integrity, imposing indirect influences on a brand's equity and brand loyalty. This contribution not only acknowledges the previously described dimensions, but adds additional elements. In line with previous quotes on the intentional actions of a brand, this paper further adds the notion of 'brand trust [being] defined as the willingness of a consumer to rely on the ability of a brand to perform as entitled' (Ebrahim, 2019). According to the publication, trust in a brand's ability is directly connected to the importance of honest and upright operations. This relevance of honesty and integrity was also proposed by Palmatier et al. (2006) and Mal et al. (2018). Concluding this dimension-specific analysis of (media) brand trust, in line with the publication presented by Dimoka (2010) and Cho et al. (2011), trust can be connected to cognitive operations in the audiences' brain, resulting in the conscious evaluation of brands and the ability and intentions behind their operations.

Perceptual, Emotional, and Cognitive Stages of the Digital Ad Exposure Process

Diving deeper into consumers' responses towards media brand environment and digital advertisements, the analysis draws on theories of human perception to explore the process of digital ad exposure in a given media environment with a particular focus on the role of media brand trust. In line with the theories presented by Daniel Kahneman (1973, 2011) and Karla Evans & Anne Treisman (2004), this examination shall be based on the concepts of System 0, 1 and 2.

When humans are exposed to any visual and audio stimuli like ads and/or media content, these stimuli immediately and implicitly compete for attention. This initial phase of subconscious processing of any given informational input happens within System 0, which is characterized as the initially unconscious and fast

response of human senses like seeing and hearing to external stimuli (perception) (Evans & Treisman, 2004). According to the attenuation theory of attention (Treisman & Gelade, 1980), there is no all-or-nothing-filter of perception, but a more-or-less principle of information processing, i.e. all information is principally processed. Information that is less important is "marked" as such very early at the perceptual level. However, this information is still passed on, but at a lower intensity. And more important stimuli with lower activity thresholds, such as your own name, are only slightly or not at all attenuated while passing them on. In the context of digital advertising, the good news is that principally every ad seen is also processed by the recipient, which means that there is no "banner blindness" in Treisman's theory. However, most ads on Facebook, Instagram or Twitter are recognized very early and quickly as such by the human brain, where the more-or-less-filters of attenuation are trained to weaken advertising as irrelevant. Thus, personalization, literally the explicit use of the proper name in advertising, is therefore an empirically tested way to avoid exactly this attenuation.

Following the activation of the perceptual System 0, the mostly unconscious and spontaneous System 1 level responses are initiated by the human brain, intuitively reacting to the impressions and providing first emotional responses (Daniel Kahneman, 1973, 2011). This interaction with information provided to the emotional System 1 determines which ads a consumer pays attention to, and indirectly which brand to buy. Intuition, biases, and beliefs determine the emotional response of System 1 to an ad, operating as a gatekeeper for information to be forwarded to the cognitive System 2. As advertising usually addresses low-involved consumers, the approach is typically emotional. For highly involved consumers (e.g. in the purchase decision process), more reliable information is essential and advertisements focus on informing the recipient (Kroeber-Riel & Gröppel-Klein, 2019). This results in a lower demand for information-based advertising with research on psychology highlighting the importance of the emotional brand response connected to brand communications increasingly focusing on entertainment and affective storytelling.

Finally, System 2 is activated when the consumer actively and deliberately processes the ad to which he is exposed (Daniel Kahneman, 1973, 2011). Since this final process is the first one where the consumer consciously interacts with the stimulus and connects cognitive information and active thoughts with the input, it represents the largest part of interaction in terms of time spent with the content. The central assumption is that the impact of the media environment is greatest for System 2 level responses because humans have developed a basic distrust of advertising over decades - and thus, the trust necessary for a later conversion must stem from somewhere else, i.e. from the trust in the media brand.

In line with that, trust can be described as a cognitive process based on past experiences (Cho et al., 2011) as well as on conscious examinations of media brand content.

According to Liu-Thompkins (2019) and Stipp (2018), ad perception and effectiveness are significantly influenced by the environment the ad is placed in, as well as on the amount of ad-environment congruence. The effects relevant for the interrelated response of consumers to ad and context can be categorized as 1) attention transfer and 2) priming/halo effects (Stipp, 2018). Attention transfer describes the correlation between attention on content and advertisement recall. It can be connected to the second category in certain aspects and has been proven repeatedly (Stipp & Snyder, 2017). The priming/halo effect refers to the cognitive and emotional responses to the context that affect consumer perception of advertisements (Stipp, 2018). Especially research on the priming/halo effects is abundant, with the most common topic being ad-context congruence.

Ad-context congruence representing the majority of research on context effects can be analyzed in depth based on the factor determining congruity that is measured. In that regard, content ratings provide the strongest evidence for an impact of ad-context congruence on the perception of advertisements. Following the publication presented by van Reijmersdal et al. (2010), positive programme evaluations, as well as the positive perception of contextual fit between ad and context, can positively influence audience response to ad exposures. In line with this finding, Kwon et al. (2018) showed that 'high media involvement, greater media–advertising-content congruency, and program liking positively affected advertising memory'. Expanding this general impact of content evaluation, also the perception of a programme being positive or negative/neutral can influence the performance of ads placed in the medium, based on matching or non-matching emotional properties (Bellman et al., 2015). This impact of emotional perception or energy levels was also analyzed by

Belanche et al. (2017), who presented evidence for the impact of ad and context arousal on brand attitude. Providing further research on the congruence between content and ad involvement, Puccinelli et al. (2015) analyzed the impact of content presenting high and low energy stimuli on the response to active (i.e. requiring action) and passive (i.e. facilitating relaxation) ads. The results introduced in their publication show that the energy level of the content and the degree to which energy levels of content and ad match each other have an impact on response to ads, which is expressed by consumers' skipping behavior. Additionally, free and cued recall are significantly influenced by ad-context congruity based on involvement types described as 'cognitively involving' or 'affectively involving'. This research showed that the recall of cognitively involving ads placed in cognitively involving programmes (and vice versa) was significantly higher (Sharma, 2000). In line with the impact of 'cognitively involving' programmes, also the complexity of (banner) ads was found to have a moderating effect between a contextual advertisement and its effectiveness, generated through two priming effects called 'assimilation effect' and 'contrast effect'. Contextual alignment between ad and content were shown to influence not only brand recall and ad favorability, but also the general attitude towards the brand (Yeun Chun et al., 2014). Moreover, the impact of priming on consumer response to advertisements was further analyzed by Shen & Chen (2007), who showed that the priming effect (i.e. the exposure to certain cues such as product attributes) induced by the environment can set certain energy thresholds required before advertisements become 'accessible or easily retrievable'.

Finally, connecting audience trust and ad perception, Malthouse et al. (2007) included the element 'I trust the magazine' in their analysis on the effects of media context experiences on advertising effectiveness, which confirmed the significant impact of trust in the environment on the response to embedded advertisements. This finding is especially relevant to this contribution, as it highlights the possibility of ads 'borrowing' trust from their environment, as consumers in general do not tend to trust ads. This finding also highlights the significant importance of trust besides the traditionally quoted element of credibility (e.g. Goldsmith et al., 2000) as being relevant to ad effectiveness. As illustrated above, credibility should rather be perceived as an element of trust, with media brand trust eventually being responsible for context effects on ad perception. A leading advertising technology provider, who conducted multiple studies on the effect of the media environment on advertising perception, is Integral Ad Science (IAS). In its studies (IAS, 2019, 2020), IAS was able to show that a 'quality' digital media environment in which online advertisements are placed is defined as 1) trustworthy, i.e. using established, reputable sources and publishers, 2) appropriate, i.e. brand safe and free of violence, hate speech and fake news, and 3) objective, i.e. neutral and unbiased. In the exploration of the multi-dimensional concept of trust, it became evident that 2) and 3) could well serve as sub-dimensions of 1) trust. By applying theories on human sensual, emotional, and cognitive information processing on advertising in a digital media environment, a first and integrated model of explaining ad effectiveness was developed. A visualization of the model can be found in the appendix.

As stated before, the assumption is that the impact of the media environment is greatest for System 2 level responses to digital advertisements as most humans have developed a basic distrust in advertising - and thus, the trust necessary for a later conversion and the ad to be effective must stem from another source, namely from the trust attached to the media brand environment.

Conclusion and Discussion

Recapping the publications introduced in this article, a first conceptual process model of digital ad experience was established. Additionally to the development of the framework, the special role of the media environment for establishing trust in the advertisement was highlighted. In line with the three research questions on a timely media brand definition, the dimensionality of trust in media brands, and the context effects on media brand trust on digital ads, the key results are summarized and discussed below.

First, taking the aggregated contribution on media brands into account, further research on the area is permitted by presenting a substantive definition of the construct 'media brand', which was insufficiently presented before. This definition of the term 'media brand' was built on the contributions revolving around consumption categories, external and internal functions of the brand, cultural relevance as platforms, and communicative approaches. Originating from this observation, a timely definition of the construct was presented, underlying the further process of framework development.

Second, a comprehensive outline of dimensions relevant for the emergence of trust, connected to implications for managerial decisions, resulted from the specific analysis of literature presented on the topic of (media) brand trust. Taking the importance of the dimensions of transparency, ability, credibility, intentionality, integrity and honesty into account and working on improving the perception of consumers regarding these elements according to the literature leads to an increase in customer loyalty (Palmatier et al., 2006), brand equity (Munuera-Aleman et al., 2003), purchase intention and overall market performance (Kang & Hustvedt, 2013).

Third, associating psychological research on the perception of humans with the holistic influence of media on consumer interactions resulted in the allocation of the construct of media brand trust at the intercept of both theories. Human perception as described in psychological contributions can be separated into several areas, responsible for distinct tasks when exposed to external stimuli. In line with publications presented by Karla Evans & Anne Treisman (2004), and Daniel Kahneman (1973, 2011), the notion referred to in this article was based on System 0, 1, and 2, differentiating between unconscious and conscious mental activities. As research on the perception of media repeatedly showed that everything is perceived in context, the theory of human cognition was connected to the holistic influences of media defined by content, ad and context effects. Following the aggregation of publications in this area demonstrated the relevance of trust in media brands for advertisement effectiveness, due to ads 'borrowing' trust from their environment. Connecting those theories led to the attribution of the conceptual MBT model at the intersection of System 2 and contextual impacts of advertisement effectiveness based on the environment and context effects.

Concluding from the introduction of the conceptual media brand trust model, research needs to be clear about how to proceed with this contribution. First, the definition of media brands to be included in the media brand trust scale to be developed based on the conceptual model developed in this contribution needs to be precise about the brands to be included. While the general definition in this article is sufficient for the theoretical analysis of the topic, quantitative methods underlying the development of a scale need to be able to rely on an accurate and statistically robust background. Since media brands will continue evolving due to technical progress, as well as vary significantly

between different markets due to cultural factors and diverse media landscapes, this theoretical contribution further needs to be backed up by quantitative approaches.

Additionally, since the dimensions of brand trust presented in this article are based on brands in general and news media brands in specific, additional research on the relevance of those dimensions for media brand trust is required. This further analysis also needs to consider adding further dimensions only relevant in terms of media brands. Approaching this research should encompass qualitative and quantitative measures on an international scale to be able to come up with a comprehensive set of dimensions reliably determining media brand trust among global consumers.

Originating based on the conceptual model defined and presented in this article, the media brand trust scale will thus encompass elements from the fields of psychology and marketing, providing information of major importance to media brands and advertisers. This contribution will provide the foundation for optimized marketing campaigns and effective advertising spent based on the knowledge about the importance of trust in media for advertisement effectiveness.

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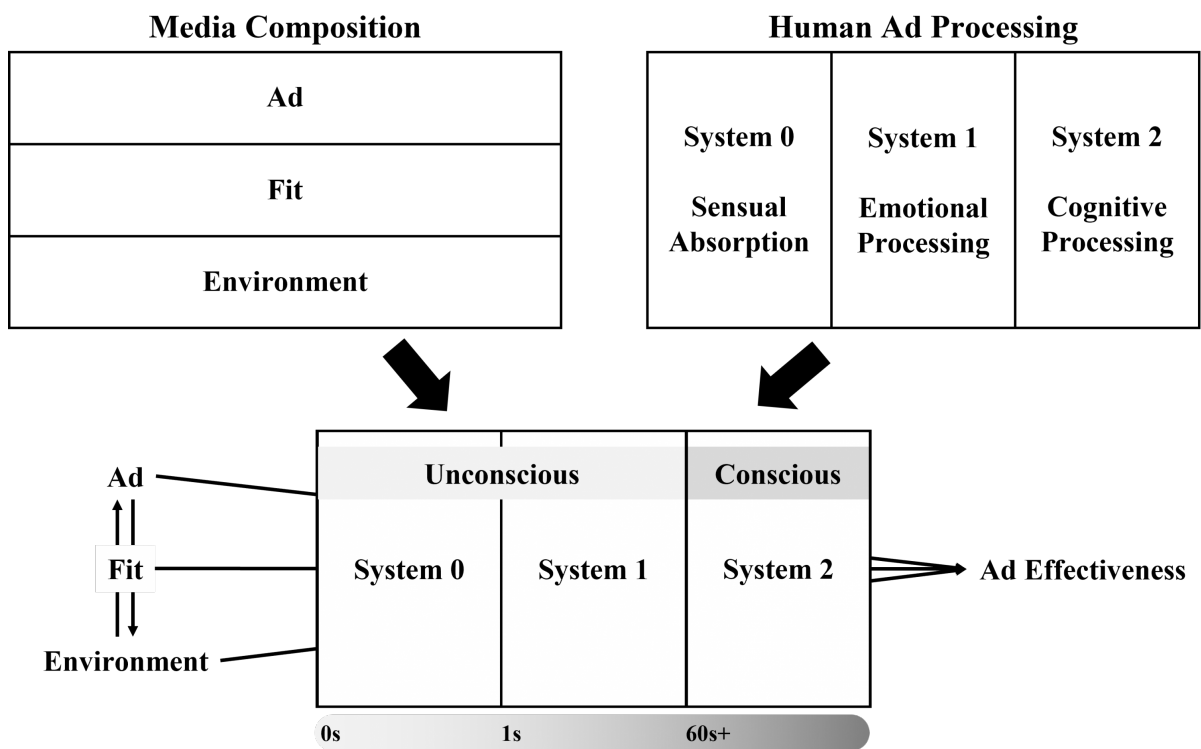
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Media Composition   **Human Ad Processing**

Conceptual Process Model of Digital Ad Experience