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INTRODUCTION

This special issue of Budapest Management Review is guest-edited in collaboration with the Working Group on “Audience interactivity and participation” of the COST Action IS0906 “Transforming Audiences, Transforming Societies”.

COST is an intergovernmental framework for European Cooperation in Science and Technology, allowing the coordination of nationally-funded research at the European level.

The Action “Transforming Audiences, Transforming Societies” (2010–2014) is coordinating research efforts into the key transformations of European audiences within a changing media and communication environment, identifying their complex interrelationships with the social, cultural and political areas of European societies. A range of interconnected but distinct topics concerning audiences are being developed by four Working Groups: (1) New media genres, media literacy and trust in the media; (2) Audience interactivity and participation; (3) The role of media and ICT use for evolving social relationships; and (4) Audience transformations and social integration.



<http://www.cost.eu>



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The issue covers wide area of cross media production and audience involvement related topics with special emphasis on managerial issues and aspects. Participating audiences are changing media market value chain; co-creators, producers and prosumers as audiences appear, so the special focus on participation in managerial context is emphasized as well.

In the first paper the authors, Zsolt Varga and Nóra Nyirő, provide a screen shot of the younger age group audience and the identification of potential media consumption clusters in participatory cross media era. The study as kaleidoskop gives perspective on how media consumption is overlapping between mediatypes and provides a potential clustering of the mass audience based on old and new media consumption. As a field of clear audience involvement and participation gaming platforms are also included in the study. From managerial approach of changing audience behavior a main conclusion is that it is clearly the internet itself which become the real mass media beside television, however it has much more fragmented structure. At the same time television keeps its audience however there are emerging segments self-reporting non or light television viewers and evolves the question of viewer-television relation among different tv viewer clusters. However gaming was examined no special differentiation was identified based on this new media platform, it remains the field of a next study if it is still a too innovator platform at the moment, or only special interest audience is open to use it.

Daiva Siudikiene in the second paper highlights the challenges of traditional media when consumer generated content gains wider and wider place. Companies – both media and other companies – are moving on the internet as looking for new business models and income sources. While consumers are also present in the digital sphere and are producing and distributing their own content as well.

Consumers, audiences act as partners in the content creation process and so being part of all processes related to content creation. Therefore, in is stated in this article that all parties should participate in shaping media policy.

Tamás Csordás and Mirko Gáti examine how the content generation by the media company and by users becomes even more visible and unavoidable in the new, social media context. A new role of content management and new field of content marketing appears in the life of companies. The perspective of small and medium sized enterprises provoke the study of this field even more as ensuring a new and cost efficient marketing communication tool. Social media sites impel companies to eventually rethink the traditional one-way communication flow of their marketing messages and to incorporate a new, two-way communication into their marketing strategy, where participatory behavior of consumers is obvious. The preliminary results of this study show that diffusing content generally acts for SMEs as a facilitator to involve consumers within a thematized company context. It means that for SME companies it becomes crucial to follow their brands and in an interactive communication process where they may influence their costumers' behavior as well.

The non-profit sphere of theaters, one traditional field of performing arts, is also under effect of new audience behavior as Angela Chang's study shows. Even if the context is out of the realm of the strictly defined mass media consumption the study gives an interesting insight on the process how social relations are formed and affected through different media channels (e.g., word-of-mouth, newspaper, television, and the internet) and throws a light at marketing management aspects of this process. In addition, the study in question extends our understanding of audiences seeking pleasurable experiences when attending performing arts events and contributes to the genre of audience studies in general.

The fifth study, authored by Tamás Bokor, deals with one of the Janus-faced phenomena of audience participation in marketing communication, namely with the common practice of online brand destruction. There exists widespread belief among marketing experts that internet is a rather efficient tool and an adequate scene for building up company and/or product brands. Nevertheless, this belief seems to be one-sided, as the author underlines. Everyday business experience clearly indicates that the process of building up brands requires both consistent planning and continuous attention during the implementation period. At the same time, to reconcile this strictly managed process with the inherent properties of the internet, characterized by a great deal of contingency, eventuality and virtuality, a really hard managerial exercise is required. All these properties of the internet imply that brand-builders have to face some serious, unpredictable and inevitable problems as one can witness during the use of different social media platforms, and they have to handle them effectively.

Dóra Horváth, Ariel Mitev and András Bauer in the last paper emphasize the inevitable importance of building winning media strategies at the time of economic crisis. The rather typical corporate response, cutting the advertising and media spending seems to be inadequate and has to be replaced far more delicate problem handling, authors argue. They apply multiple research method, including in-depths expert interviews, consumer narratives, blog/forum analysis and focus group interviews in order to map the process of harmonising consumer problems and advertising content in crisis time. The authors come to the conclusion that marketing communication can provide help in reshaping the value set of consumers in distress and doing so it may strengthen emotional relations toward the company: this outcome can be achieved by well-targeted messages, increased interaction with the members of target-group and new innovative solutions in the media mix.

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