Convergence and media brand loyalty in cross-media communication

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Dynamic development of new and social media has significantly changed the way media companies are functioning. The view that in some way we've just faced the biggest change in media landscape since Gutenberg's invention is quite popular (Charles, 2012). Broadcasters stand up to their biggest challenge linked with convergence process, i.e. to switch foregoing one for prevailing many content platforms. The latest research shows that institutional media face many problems with transition of their communication from a traditional level (the press) into the Internet and mobile dimensions (Jackson & Paul, 1998; Neuberger et al., 1998; Becker & Schonbach, 1999; Quandt et al., 2006; O'Sullivan, 2005; Karlsson, 2012). The media are not able to proliferate the content in a way that the audience and users: (1) would adapt online and mobile media as a dominant news source, (2) pay for the access, (3) in a further perspective, read the press mostly on mobile devices.

The convergence process brings another challenge, which is rarely indicated. Namely, in the age of efforts to expand the brand we should also ask a question of the issue of loyalty to the media brand. The purpose of this paper is, therefore, to propose a theoretical concept of analysis media brand loyalty in the era of convergence.

It seems paradoxical that internet and the possibility of multi-platform content presentation, having significant potential economic advantages by extended opportunities for consumption of content or engagement of the audience in digital multi-platform context etc. (Doyle, 2010), being viewed at the beginning as a chance finally occur at least as a risk, if not a jeopardy. The reason of such situation in many cases was wrong way of media transformation. The need to segue from traditional to a new model based on information as a process instead of product (Karlsson, 2012; Nygren, 2014) which has taking place in uncertain environment with limited financial and human resources (Lee-Wright & Philips, 2012; Nygren, 2014) with lack of skills

or negative attitude to multimedia for many newsrooms remained a real challenge. The gateway to success seems to be a well-executed convergence (*transform or die* – Usher, 2010). Convergence of marketing and news production?

Institutional media during the convergence have to analyse behaviours and habits of the audience and users that are more and more adapted to functioning in ICT space. In this context we observe cross-media communication processes that can be described as changes in media space in the context of multiplatform broadcasters' interaction with audience and users. Such perspective allows explaining the consequences of convergence for media brand loyalty.

The analysis of the media sector in 2012 prepared by the media experts from the European Commission has shown that the media convergence is at the head of the challenges facing the media industry. Special attention is focused on the need to develop a new business model that would not only facilitate the process of media adaptation to changes related to new technologies, but would also allow the expansion of the capital for technological development and expansion of media coverage (*EU Media Futures Forum Fast-forward Europe 8 Solutions to Thrive in The Digital World, Final Report*, 2012, p. 3-17)

However, the fundamental change in the media sphere is related to some completely new cooperation rules among different actors, who have not cooperated with one another, yet, but now must. In other words, nowadays three main branches have to cooperate: on the one hand the media industry, who creates and produces the information, and the second one, the telecommunication industry, which provides content, and third, the industry that provides platforms for receiving the content by consumers (*EU Media Futures Forum* 2012, p. 4-7).

A lot of convergence matrices already have been created. Some of them like the classical *Convergence Continuum* (Dailey et al., 2005) define (only) following steps (levels) of the process. Others determine more specific indicators within different scopes on which convergence process is bringing off. It is important to mention here Garia et al.'s matrix conceptualizing 32 convergence indicators (Garcia et al., 2009).

The issue is complicated by the requirement of permanent analysis of changes in the behaviour and habits of consumers of ICT, which are used primarily to answer accurately the needs of consumers/users. In other words, convergence requires a very high flexibility and high efficiency.

According to current research, nearly 40% of people in the world use the Internet (Szczęsny, 2014). In the European Union countries the Internet is used in 79% of households (Pliszka, 2013, p. 14). Users feel increasingly better in the network, and they use new communication solutions more frequently. Although, unlike the users of mobile technology - as opposed to specialists - they understand the concept of mobile media quite narrowly - they associate it mainly with the smartphones (*Report Combining Mobile Device Tracking and Consumer Survey Data to Build a Powerful Mobile Strategy*, 2014, p. 6). GlobalWebIndex Research shows that in 2014, 80% of the Internet users had a smartphone, while nearly 50% a tablet (Papiński, 2015).

Currently, the new technologies are less and less said to threaten the brand, but as rightly pointed out by James Heskett "new information technologies will punish weak brands faster and more severely than in the past" (Heskett, 2014). What is his rationale for saying this? What's more, the author poses a legitimate question about the issue of locality to brands. The issue is particularly relevant in the case of media brands. In their case, we are not talking about an additional communication platform but of some profound transformations of the entire sector. It is therefore particularly important to notice the enormity of changes in the behaviour of the Internet users and mobile tools, to the media brands perception.

In general, the media cope with two kinds of problems: (1) related to the convergence course, that is the efforts that media brands undertake to adjust to ICT development, and how does the convergence change journalism practice and newsroom work; (2) how effectively does the convergence reinforce media brand loyalty and lever media brand extensions. It means that the research field concerns (1) broadcasters: (a) the structure of newsrooms, (b) media brand and brand extensions, (c) platforms of communication; (2) broadcasted content: (a) news types, (b) self-promotion; (3) the audience: (a) used platforms of communication, (b) received content, (c) behaviour and media habits.

According to the Report *The Social Diagnosis Reading Behavior within The Print Media and Digital technology. New Platforms to Access the Content. Transformation of Content* (Poleszczuk & Anuszewska, 2013) the range of reading e-press will increase in the coming years, which is consistent with global trends. The Word Association of Newspapers and News Publisher in the World Press Trends report shows that 2.5 million people in the world read printed newspapers and more

than 800 million read the newspaper in an electronic version (*World Press Trends Report 2014*). Deloitte estimates that in 2015 in the US and Canada, the Internet users will spend $ 62 billion for paid content (*Report Deloitte Technology, Media& Telecommunication Predictions* 2015, p. 35).

Following the Poleszczuk and Anuszewska research cited above: the paid newspapers (in print) have a very good image and are usually associated with professionalism, honesty and reliability. Generally, both the traditional and digital media evoke good feelings among users. Recipients appreciate the digital press for its modern form (46.8% respondents). According to the above studies, the authors estimate to increase the range of reading in the light of technological development of the weekly reviews (estimated growth between 30% to 46%), followed by thematic magazines (from 56% to 64%), newspapers (with 48% to 60%). The research shows that the greatest difficulties in this regard will have women's press (Poleszczuk & Anuszewska, 2013, p. 3-4).

It should be noted, however, that the users of the Internet news services do not perceive them as media, which provide the content that could be seen as valuable, professional and reliable (Poleszczuk & Anuszewska, 2013, p. 33). Therefore, the key question occurs here: why is this happening? The question is also linked directly to the issue of brand extension into the realm of new media sphere

Theoretical Approach

Cross-media communication is a concept that settles the contemporary media theory and practice. It offers new approach to describe and understand changes in communication practices and patterns in media usage. Since the media audiences and users combine different media platforms, massively modify their communication habits, and crisscross effortlessly between various media services, the concept of cross-media communication no longer belongs only to sphere of media production. Adaptation of cross-media approach in media brand research, we argue, requires few methodological and theoretical explanations.

In context of methodology, it's irrelevant to use only one research method and technique. Moreover, the triangulation within one methodological perspective falls short when it comes to such holistic modus as multiple interactions of media and users among diverse brand extensions, information spaces, and contents. Hence, we

propose transdisciplinary combination of media and communication, sociological, anthropological, and brand management methods.

From theoretical point of view, we assume that the key to understand media brand loyalty in cross-media communication is tracking not only users' communications in different media platforms, but also their behavior, that is, how they experience and interact with each brand extension. Connections between users, users and media brands contain immense data that challenge traditional understanding of concepts such as media brands, users, audiences, and brand communication. Hence, our scope is to capture complex picture of what media brand loyalty complexity is.

To analyse the audience behaviour in cross-media communication we engage uses and gratification theory. To grasp the media communication platform proliferation we use a soft technological determinism framework (with assumption that it may evolve into medium theory). Every aspect of the media brand communication will be introduced with brand loyalty and extensions concept.

Since the 1950s, uses and gratification is one of most common theoretical approaches hired in the audience behaviour analysis (Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch, 1973; Levy & Windhal, 1984; Ruggeiro, 2000). U&G assumes that the media receivers have communication needs that can be fulfilled with usage of specific mediums and contents. That is, every usage is related to expected gratification. In the process of ICTs' shifting we will make use of the medium as long as it fulfils a function and gives us expected reward. In that case each media substitution has to be linked to better functional fulfilment by newer medium. After Katz and Gourevitch (1973) we diverse users' needs into: (a) cognitive (information, knowledge, understanding), (b) affective (emotions), (c) personal integrative (status, credibility), (d) social integrative (social role), (e) tension release (entertainment).

The latest studies focus on U&G application to observe the users' behaviour in the Internet, mobile media, and social media (Bouwman & de Wijngaert, 2002; Eastin & LaRose, 2005; Raacke & Bonds-Raacke, 2008; De Waal & Schoenbach, 2010; Whon & Na, 2011; Giulietto & Selva, 2014; Thorson, Shoenberger, Karaliova, Kim & Fidler, 2015). U&G theory in that context enables to grasp differences in media usage depending on communication platform, technological clusters, transmitted content, and lifestyle.

Taking single U&C into the consideration might be not enough to achieve definite aims. Using only mentioned theory we are not able to explore and explain in an unambiguous manner all of indicators, which might influence the selection of a specific content facility or consequences of such behaviour. For example, based only on U&C generally it's not possible to consider impact of unaware and impalpable indicators, which are beyond audience awareness. According to research, people are more able to remember content and thus call it up faster and more effectively if they gather information from 'print' rather than from Internet (Santana, Livingstone & Cho, 2013). Thus, it is really important to take it into consideration, because media brand, which is in some way a content, might be better to call up depending on which medium has been used.

Therefore, to underline some important characteristics of each technology we'll pay more attention to information environment's structural features, i.e., in what way, ontologically, used technology is different than others. Thereby we would like to refer to technological determinism perspective but rather soft than hard one (Chandler, 1995; Levinson, 1997).

The third theory concerns the media brand communication of broadcasters that pursue new ways to transit the brands into the Internet, mobile, and social media. The main reasons for such practices are reduction of marketing costs, new brand positioning, income and market share increase. Regarding the social trend where the Internet and mobile media become the main source of information for young people, media broadcasters face the crucial problem for further functioning: how to build or transfer media brand loyalty in new ICT extensions?

The simplest approach toward brand loyalty is based on customer purchase decision (e.g. Oliver, 1999). Brand loyalty, however, can't be understood as purchase decision, especially when we take into account the context of the media space where relation between the media brand and customer is also based on nonfinancial factors correlated directly with U&G hypothesis. Thus, brand loyalty is defined as a customer attitude and behaviour in response to the brand (Aaker, 1991; 1996; Baldinger & Rubinson, 1996; Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001; Gounaris & Stathakopoulos, 2004). Brand extension, in turn, is usage of existing brand for launching the new product or service (Aaker, 1996; Völckner &Sattler, 2006).

To observe the media brand loyalty shift from a traditional level into the Internet and mobile media, we adapt Tarkiainen's *et al.* (2008) relational model

describing the influence of online press on building brand loyalty. This approach is based on meta-analysis of data sets from media brands and describes how users of websites and mobile brand extensions build their brand loyalty in two-stage process. They have to feel satisfaction of using extension, which may evolve into users' website or mobile trust. Although this model seems to be oversimplified, we argue that it describes cognitive aspects of users' perception of brand loyalty.

Media brand loyalty indicates whether brand strategy is successful or not, and is basic element of brand equity. Knowing media brand loyalty we can understand how does the media brand extensions are functioning. Thus we can evaluate if the broadcasters are able *to transfer* users between brand extensions, increasing the same time total content audience.

Mobile Contingency Model and Media Brand Loyalty Model

As stated by Thorson *et al* (2015) the succession of the media (from the user perspective) can take place in three fundamental ways. First, each new medium entirely substitutes its predecessor (Waldfogel, 2002). This occurs when users have better access to new technology, which in general, fulfills their communication needs more quickly. Second, both media may be used complementarily (Dutta-Bergman, 2004; Ruppel & Burke, 2014). Gratifications resulted from incumbent medium usage are complemented by the new medium and that increases total time spend with the new one. The third possible scenario describes a situation when the *new* medium amplifies total time spend with *old* medium. That is, time spend with new medium reinforces frequency of the press amplification (Phillips, 2010).

If the media succession concerns only the new media, we can observe creation of technology clusters described as media clusters by Vishwanath and Chen (2006). This concept establishes the amplification effect in ICT usage. Users to fulfill their communication needs are more prone to use new technologies, which accomplish similar functions as incumbent one in the cluster. Authors demonstrated such succession in personal computers and iPads (Vishwanath & Chen, 2006). Following studies also demonstrated the media clusters concept in context of news websites and mobile users (Nguyen & Western, 2006; Weslund, 2008; Chyi, Yang, Lewis & Zheng, 2010), and laptops, tablets, and smartphones as an information source (Chyi & Chada, 2012).

ICT conjunction in clusters does not explain, however, how specific

technologies (media platforms) are perceived in the context of published and received content. As we mentioned before, choice of the medium depends, to a certain extent, on fulfillment of users communication needs. Previous studies demonstrated that online news is perceived as less credible, less like, and less useful than those from traditional media (Chyi & Lasorsa, 2002; Amsbary & Powell, 2003; De Waal, Schoenbach, & Lauf, 2005). These results allow explaining why news audience on media brand extensions is still relatively small and not influential to media brand loyalty, even despite fast ICT's adaptation and merging into media clusters.

To fully understand the adaptation of media brand extensions in convergence process we use threefold model combined of: (1) user perspective, (2) ICT and content perspective, and (3) media brand perspective. First one is based on Mobile Contingency Model (Thorson, Shoenberger, Karaliova, Kim & Fidler, 2015). MCM explains determinants affecting media succession and adaptation in U&G framework. On the basis of previous findings (Goodhue & Thompson, 1995; Bouwman & Wijngaert, 2002) MCM embraces three types of variables influencing the process of media choosing: the nature of communication need; fit between needs and ICTs; decision-maker factors. According to MCM each user's decision starts in demographics and is related strictly to: incumbent media habit, mobile device adoption, access to the device, attitudes and opinions about the news, time spend consuming news in incumbent media, internet media, and mobile media.

Considering the European, Polish in particular, perspective we have to assume that demographics will not be as efficient in predicting users decisions as in the American case. Polish (and European) social structure has a higher degree of cross-generational movement, lower entrance barriers, and higher openness indicators. It results in dynamic changes in social structure that dodge demographic designates (Domański, 1994; 2002; 2004; Domański, Rychard & Śpiewak, 2005). Hence, the more comprehensive way to capture users' decisions would be combining demographic, psychographic, spatial, and habitual factors as *lifestyle* in general (Bourdieu 1986, Chaney 1996).

Media brand loyalty analysis in the era of convergence

Referring also to Expectancy-Value Theory (Rayburn & Palmgreen, 1984), Adaptive Structuration Theory (Fulk & Boyd, 1991; De Sanctis & Poole, 1994) and

Media Richness Theory (Daft & Lengel, 1986) the presented model synthesizes technological determinism and social constructivism, and gives a coherent view about the role of ICTs (see: Dylko, 2013). Taking the environment's structural features into the consideration, we point out four important variables: 1) perceptions of each channel (medium); 2) uses of different channels according to exposure to a particular content; 3) social space where users access the medium; 4) uses of the chosen information environment (features of technology impact on how the information environment is used) (Dylko, 2013). All of it might finally affects brand loyalty.
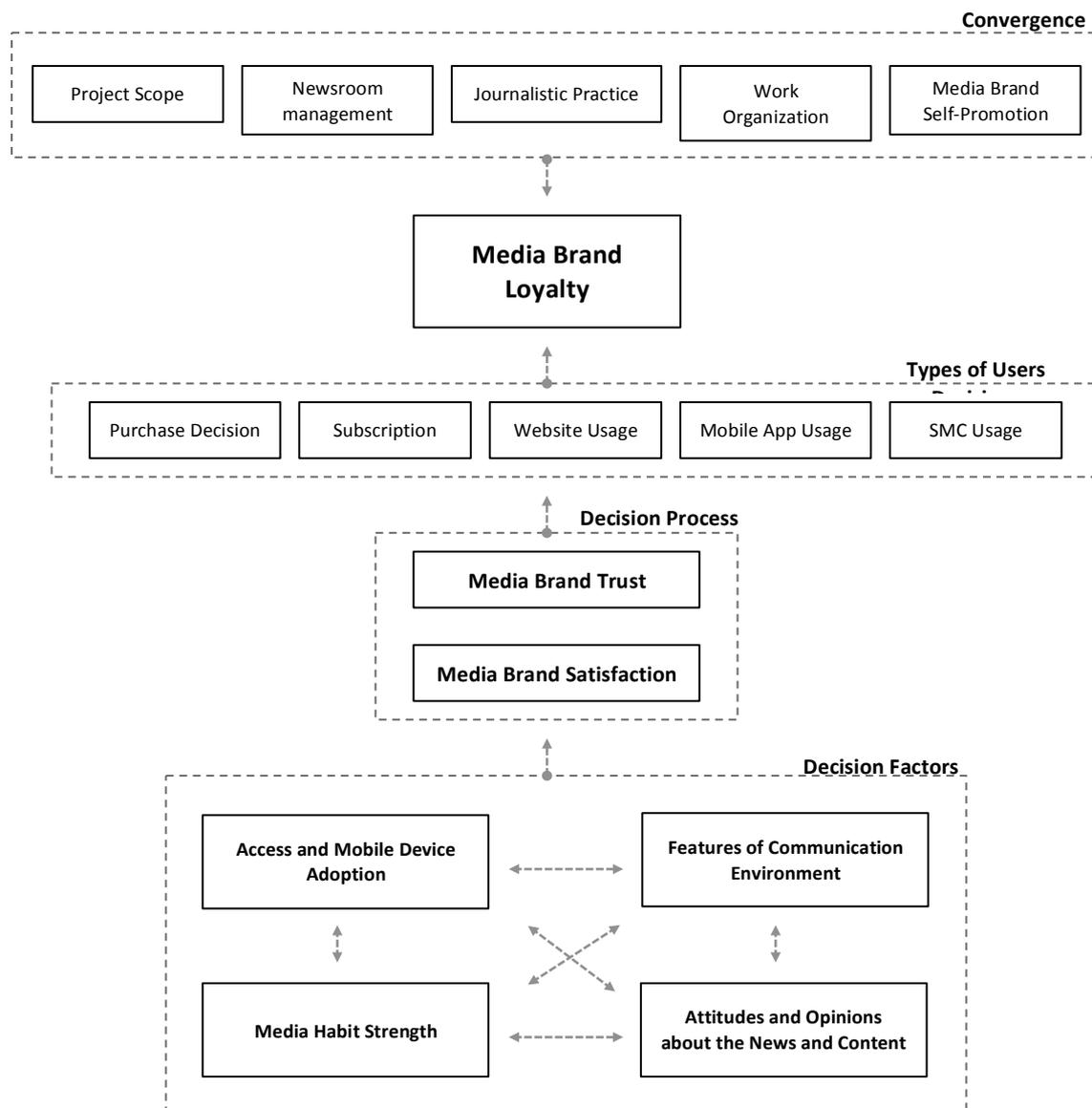
Convergence

| Project Scope | Newsroom management | Journalistic Practice | Work Organization | Media Brand Self-Promotion |

Media Brand Loyalty

Types of Users

| Purchase Decision | Subscription | Website Usage | Mobile App Usage | SMC Usage |

Decision Process

Media Brand Trust

Media Brand Satisfaction

Decision Factors

Access and Mobile Device Adoption

Features of Communication Environment

Media Habit Strength

Attitudes and Opinions about the News and Content

Chart 1. Media brand loyalty model

The first point of our analysis will be to determine what is the level of advancement of the process of convergence. In this analysis we will partly use Jose Garcia Aviles and others (Garcia et al. 2009) the convergence matrix especially concerning the work of the same editorial, and above all the structure of creating and distributing information. The starting point will be to identify which elements of convergence must occur to recognize that the process is at an advanced level.

The next step will be an analysis of promotional activities it undertakes a media entity to increase the effectiveness of brand extension for carriers of the media. Brand extension is defined as different brand's products or services that are offered for different media devices as website, mobile website, online e-newspaper, application, iPad replica. Brand loyalty means that people avail oneself of different media devices the same brand, for example newspaper's reader use of tablet's or smartphone's application. Henry Jenkins rightly points out that:

> Convergence (…) is both a top-down corporate-driven process and a bottom-up consumer-driven process. Corporate convergence coexists with grassroots convergence. Media companies are learning how to accelerate the flow of media content across delivery channels to expand revenue opportunities, broaden markets and reinforce viewer commitments. Consumer ale learning how to these different media technologies to bring the flow of media more fully under their control and o interact with other consumers (Jenkins, 2006, p. 18).

Therefore, we included in these studies the evaluation of the consumers habits associated with the use of the content offered by the media brand. This element is essential due to the fact that the consumer's role has moved because "(…) new consumers are migratory, showing a declining loyalty to networks or media" (Jenkins 2006, p. 18-19). The main point of this project will be the evaluation of what action is taken by media brands to respond to market challenges associated with technological development. Secondly what kind of activities media brand does, which can strengthen media brand loyalty? Last but not least we also need to take into account the elementary mechanisms witch refer to the decisions that are taken by users/consumers of the media brand.

The media brand loyalty manifests itself among other things in whether (1) users use the subscription (paid and / or unpaid) or if media brand give opportunity to use (2) mobile applications, whether they are paid or not, and (3) whether the content on the website is paid or not. Of course, the issue of payment for the content is a

particular matter in the discussion about convergence process, so it can't be ignored in the analysis of media brand loyalty in the era of convergence. The fact that consumers decide to pay for the content depends on many factors, including the quality of the proposed materials and whether a media brand enjoys the trust of users / readers. In this case, the confidence in the media brand understood as confidence that user's expectations will be fulfilled with specific media function.

Not without significance is the fact that the consumers have confidence e.g. for new technologies in general. The decision-making process consists as well of what are the users' experience associated with the media brand, in short, whether using of media brand has been satisfactory so far. It is also important whether the user was satisfied with the use of media content using the app or website. The points indicated above are significant in the process of building media brand loyalty, and thus the occurrence of emotions, which then translate into decisions concerning the use or discontinuation of use of a particular brand of media.

Users' decision process is shaped by four groups of variables, which simultaneously influence it. Tracking all four allows distinguishing each substantial element of media brand loyalty. First is **access and mobile device adoption**, which shows if users build media clusters and include different media brand extensions to them. Second is **media habit strength** that is related to three patterns of new media adoption in context of incumbent medium usage. It can be influenced by media brand self-promotion, availability and access to media brand extensions, and lifestyle factors. Third is **attitudes and opinions about the news and content**, which depicts the way that users understand news quality and content quality, that is, news values, media brand extensions price, design, social media services, and technological functionality. Fourth is **structural features of communication environment** that is understood as combination of habitual and spatial conditions in which media brand is used, perception of each extension, particular extension – particular news/content ratio, and finally usage of chosen information environment.

Combination of these factors helps to track two substantial elements of media brand loyalty: complexity of usage decision in different brand extensions, on the one hand, and meaning, values and emotions, which users have to media brand, on the other hand. Moreover, these two features are key to track users' decision process, which is composed of building satisfaction and trust to media brand. In general, media brand satisfaction could be understood as users conditions towards media brand that

results from evaluation whether the brand fulfils users' expectations or not. Hence, media brand trust is state of confidence that this specific brand fulfils these expectations. As mentioned before, satisfaction to one media brand extension may lead to trust. Since users combine multiple brand extensions the same time (e.g. second screening practices), they simultaneously may create dissimilar media brand loyalties in different extensions, which are not simply transmittable to *mother* brand loyalty. Thus, understanding how this process is shaped, by what factors, and why users perceive loyalties differently are central research scopes in proposed model.

Conclusion

Close theoretical examination of convergence and media brand loyalty in cross-media communication indicates that this process is very complex. Nowadays recipients can use various media – traditional and new – in different places where they are. Broadcasters are trying to meet these expectations – and also not to fall out media market – and implementing new technologies. This is changing work at newsroom, as well entailing costs, what can bring a lot of new problems.

That is why there is important to research into different level of convergence process. For the purpose of this work is researching the way of media adapt to ICT's market development and the way of recipients use traditional and new media. Therefore, it is necessary to focus on (1) broadcasters: (a) the structure of newsrooms, (b) media brand and brand extensions, (c) platforms of communication; (2) broadcasted content: (a) news types, (b) self-promotion; (3) the audience: (a) used platforms of communication, (b) received content, (c) behavior and media habits. It let us to research this issues comprehensively.

Consequently, we would like to check few questions. What kind of activities do the media brands take in order to improve the quality of content? Where the media brands perceive the greatest difficulties associated with the brand extensions under the necessity of cross-media communication? Does a more advanced level of convergence increase media brand loyalty? What factors determine the users' choice of mobile media as a source of information? Whether, and if so, to what extent the purpose of acquiring access to content, as well as its influence on the choice of the type of media?

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