Is Love the Answer?
Emotions and their role for television stations

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Purpose

The notion of managing media products as brands has meanwhile received a broad acceptance and increasing attention (e.g., Chan-Olmsted, Cha, 2008; Förster, 2011; McDowell 2006; Ots, 2008). The main issue of research on media brands can be condensed in the question which strategies and tactics turn a media product into a successful media brand. But – to start with – what is a successful media brand?

If we follow McKenna's (1991) assumption that a brand can be mainly conceived as a special relationship, we need to ask how this special relationship between the audience on the one hand and media on the other can be attained. Different research perspectives and traditions have produced a wide range of answers to this question. One of the main foci in brand management since the 1970s (Kapferer, 2008) has been brand *personality*. Based on our knowledge of relationship building between people, it has been hypothesized that (brand) personality plays a central role in social interactions. Aaker thus defines brand personality as «...the set of human characteristics associated with a brand » (1997, p. 347).

The premise that consumers think about a brand not as a passive object of marketing transactions, but as an active 'partner' in a relationship has been documented in past studies. In an innovative study Fournier (1998) investigated the quality of different types of relationships consumers form with brands, i.e., love/ passion, self-connection, commitment, interdependence, intimacy, and brand partner quality. Evidently consumers show no difficulty in assigning personality qualities to inanimate brands or in thinking about brands as human characters.

According to Franzen and Moriarty (2009), brand personality is important on a strategic level because of its function as a mental brand asset (driver of brand equity), as a possibility to improve positioning and differentiation from functionally identical brands in the market, as a means to provide expressive consumer needs (symbolic brand function) and – not least – as an instrument to develop relationships between consumer and a brand. Hence, if brand personality is a key dimension within a television's branding strategy, the question occurs whether this is mirrored in the audience's perception of televisions stations:

> **RQ1:** Are television stations associated with distinct brand personalities?

While brand personality is a concept of perception and can be understood as the result or the consequences of media branding activities, from a managerial perspective the question arises, how these brand personality aspects can be affected. In this regard, the role of emotions has been highlighted in recent research and emotional branding has emerged as a highly influential brand management paradigm recently. As an example, an empirical study by Knackfuß (2010) for German automotive brands showed that positive emotions have a significant positive effect on various brand aspects, such as brand loyalty, perceived uniqueness, price premium and word-of-mouth, while negative emotions do not have significant effects on these aspects.

But what relevance do emotions have for television brands and their personalities, or in other words: is 'love' the answer for television stations in times of a changing media consumption towards a more social and participatory usage on one hand and a risen and still rising competitive pressure through new players in the market on the other? Thus, our second research question emphasizes the role of emotions for shaping a brand's personality:

> **RQ2:** Do emotions affect brand personality aspects?

By examining these research questions, the present study aims to analyze the emotions recipients associate with television brands and to identify their effects on brand personality aspects of audiovisual brands.

About the nature of emotions

Bagozzi, Gopinath and Nyer (1999) define an emotion as « a mental state of readiness that arises from cognitive appraisals of events or thoughts; [that] has a phenomenological tone; is accompanied by physiological processes; is often expressed physically (e.g., in gestures, posture, facial features); and may result in specific actions to affirm or cope with the emotion, depending on its nature or meaning for the person having it » (p. 184). Meyer, Reisenzein and Schützwohl (2001, p. 22) highlight typical characteristics of emotions:

- Emotions have a *quality* (e.g., fear, joy, surprise), *intensity* (e.g., weak or strong anger) and *duration* (emotional episodes vs. emotional dispositions).
- Emotions are *object-related*. That does not imply that objective occasions are necessary for the emergence of emotions; it is the perception and interpretation of the object by the individual which is crucial.
- Emotions affect individuals. These changes are described by means of three components: *Emotional experience* (personal feeling), *physiological changes* (physical reactions, e.g., blushing, perspiration), and *behavioral reactions* (e.g. facial expressions, gestures, posture).

But, how do emotions act in the recipient's mind? According to Heath and Nairn (2005, p. 270), « feelings and emotions have primacy over thoughts, and emotional responses can be created even when we have no awareness of the stimulus that causes them.» Moreover, empirical results support the presumption of the significant influence of emotions on behavior, cognitions or other psychological processes (Russell, 1989). More specifically, the results indicate that even a mild and positive affective state can influence thought processes. Also according to Isen (2000), affects organize thoughts; i.e., common positive feelings are fundamentally involved in cognitive organization and processing.

Hence, if we know that emotions affect cognitive processes, volitions, goal-directed behavior, and decisions (Bagozzi et al., 1999), how can they be incorporated in an appropriate media branding approach? What role do emotions play in the branding process? In our understanding emotions can be taken as intended reactions, as emotional image aspects which the audience associates with certain television stations and which, in turn, influence cognitive evaluations, media usage decisions and relationship-building.

Thereby we can understand emotions as an *effect* of branding stimuli (e.g., communication, programming strategies). Furthermore, we assume that – the rather unconscious – emotional image aspects determine the more reflected perception of a television brand's personality. But, what do we already know about the character of an audiovisual brand's personality?

Brand personality research on audiovisual brands

Brand personality research aims at providing an instrument to measure brand associations with human characteristics, preferably standardized (Aaker, 2002, p. 137). Aaker (1997) conceptualized the Brand Personality Scale that has been established as an internationally

accepted dimensioning and operationalization of brand personalities. The author suggested five brand personality dimensions: (1) Sincerity, (2) Excitement, (3) Competence, (4) Sophistication, and (5) Ruggedness. The scale has been validated for different products, but did not stay undisputed (e.g., Azoulay/ Kapferer, 2003). This is especially because numerous replication studies as well as original ones in different language areas yielded a varying number of basic dimensions and different interpretations of these factors. The most vital criticism in this regard is that these dimensions and indicators depend on the cultural context, since every language has its own vocabulary with untranslatable meanings.

The applicability of the brand personality construct to media has been tested as well *(Table1)*. Chan-Olmsted and Cha (2008) investigated the brand personalities of different US television newscasts. Based on McDowell's (2004) free-association perception study and Aaker's (1997) 42 original personality traits the authors identified three factors: Competence represents the perceived capability to create a news product, timeliness represents the delivery of a news product, and dynamism represents the lively energy of a news product.

Kim, Baek and Martin (2010) explored the structure of 16 news media brand personalities across multiple media outlets, including television network news, newspapers, and news magazines. The authors found five brand personality dimensions represented by forty-eight items: Trustworthiness, dynamism, sincerity, sophistication, and toughness. These dimensions have been found to apply across media outlets. They mirror some of the factors suggested by Aaker, but also support the findings of Chan-Olmsted and Cha (2008) by confirming the dynamism and the competence (trustworthiness) components of news brands.

Recently Sung and Park (2011) investigated brand personality dimensions of 36 cable television networks in the U.S. They found a five-component solution with the factors of excitement, warmness, intelligence, controversy and ruggedness. The results show that four of five dimensions have overlapping meanings with those identified by Aaker. Controversy appears to be unique to cable network brands, while Aaker's sophistication dimension was not observed.

Table 1: Research on audiovisual brand personalities

Study	*Subject*	*Factors*				
Aaker (1997)	Media and non-media brands	Sincerity	Excitement	Competence	Sophistication	Ruggedness
Chan-Olmsted and Cha (2008)	Television news media (U.S.)	Competence	**Timeliness**	**Dynamism**		
Kim, Baek and Martin (2010)	TV network news, newspapers, news magazines	Trustworthi-ness	**Dynamism**	Sincerity	Sophistication	Toughness
Sung and Park (2011)	36 cable television networks in the U.S.	Excitement	Warmness	Intelligence	**Controversy**	Ruggedness

Factors in bold indicate specific media brand personality dimensions compared to Aaker's (1997) brand personality scale

Evidently, these media brand related studies are limited to the American audience and their perceptions. The results reveal contrasting implications regarding the general transferability of brand personality approaches of non-media brands to audiovisual brands which illustrates the need for further research, especially within the European cultural domains.

Methodology

An exemplary study for audiovisual brands has been conducted at a national level, namely television stations in Austria. Brand architecture of television brands typically consists of the station brand (e.g., BBC1) as well as sub-brands with genre (e.g., news on NBC), format (e.g., Desperate Housewives on ABC), and personality brands (e.g., David Letterman on CBS) (Wolff, 2006). We focused on television stations as brands in our study and define those – in accordance with Franzen and Moriarty (2009, p. 6) – as « a complex, interrelated system of management decisions and consumer reactions that identifies a [television station] …, builds awareness of it, and creates meaning for it. » Five television stations in Austria have been selected for this purpose: The public service broadcasting station ORF provides two channels ORFeins and ORF2 with a market share of 13.8% and 22.6% respectively in 2010 (AGTT/ GfK Teletest). The biggest Austrian commercial broadcaster is ATV with a market share of 3.6%. Since the Austrian media market is strongly influenced by its neighbors, the German commercial broadcasters ProSieben (5.2%) and RTL (6.5%) were also included.

The survey was conducted online utilizing an external panel-provider (OGM). Data collection took place in September 2011. The final sample consists of 495 people who completed the online survey. The participants are between 14 and 62 years old with 49,2% women and 50,8% men. The sample mirrors the structure of the Austrian population in this age range in terms of gender and geographical distribution.

The respondents were provided with a set of questions, starting with aided and unaided recall measures of television stations in Austria, followed by general aspects of media and television usage, and the likability and frequency of use of the five different TV stations of interest. Then the respondents were randomly assigned to one of the television stations and asked which emotions and aspects of brand personality they associate with it:

Emotions attached to the television stations were measured using the imagery scale by Bosch, Schiel and Winder (2007).[1] Up to now, the imagery scale developed by Bosch, Schiel and Winder (2007) provides the most promising emotion measurement scale with the most comprehensive theoretical and empirical foundation. The authors developed a marketing specific imagery scale involving eleven emotions, namely: acceptance/trust, fear, joy, sadness, surprise, anger, desire, disappointment, boredom, love, pride. For each emotion three pictures were displayed to the respondents for one second successively. Afterwards they were asked to rate on a

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[1] The methods to measure subjective *emotions* can be divided basically into verbal and non-verbal procedures. Here a wide variety of scales with different theoretical foundations has been suggested. In general, verbal scales show considerable disadvantages: First, they contain a lot of items that makes a practical usage in marketing research difficult. Second, the lack of awareness of emotions requires a non-verbal measurement, i.e., an approach that does not demand for a reflection of the answers.

6-point-scale: « How strongly do you associate the depicted emotion with … [television station]? »

As it has been stated, the measurement of *brand personality* requires a consideration of the specific language domain. For this study the inventory developed by Bosnjak, Bochmann and Hufschmidt (2007) was utilized as it provides an appropriate scale for measuring brand personality in the German language domain. As research on media brands revealed the dimensions found for media brand personalities differ from those reflecting non-media brand personalities, the items suggested by Bosnjak et al. (2007) have been extended by five media-specific attributes similar to those identified in previous research on media brand personalities; i.e., intelligent, credible, analytical, diverse and creative. The 24 attributes were divided into two sets of 12 items each that have been randomly assigned to the respondents. Introduced by the statement « Now we will show you some attributes. How well do they fit to ... [television station]? » The items were measured using a 6-point scale.

And finally, there were personal questions, i.e., questions addressing self-concepts and demographic characteristics of the respondents.

Results

As we expected television brand personality to have a multidimensional character we calculated an exploratory factor analysis[2] based on the attributes associated with any of the five television stations. It revealed that across all stations these attributes can be best summarized in four factor dimensions (*Figure 1*)[3]: spirit, competence, warmth, and small mindedness.[4]
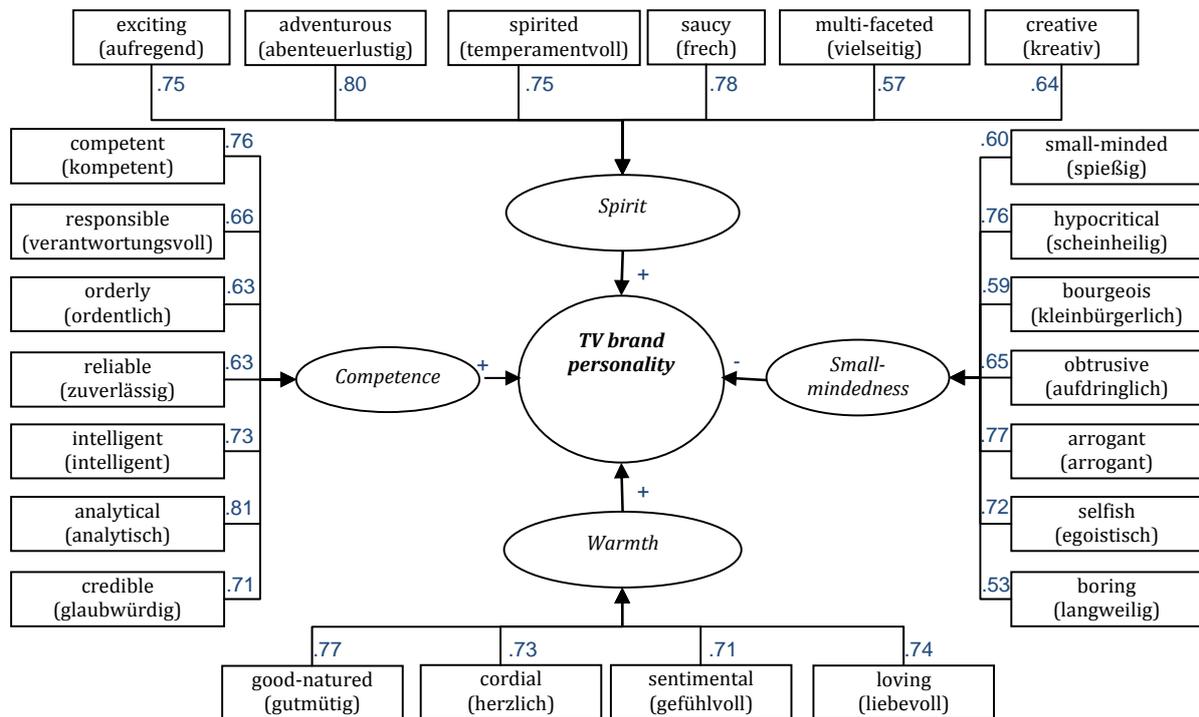
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[2] Exploratory factor analysis is used to identify underlying dimensions (factors) that explain the correlations among a set of variables. By that it replaces the original set of (correlated) variables by a set of uncorrelated factors.
[3] Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO): 0.95; 64.8% variance explained. KMO is an index used to examine the appropriateness of factor analysis; high values (between 0.5 and 1.0) indicate factor analysis is appropriate. Factor loadings are listed next to each attribute indicating how well the attribute can be explained by the respective factor dimension (loadings can range between 0.00 and 1.00, with 1.00 indicating a perfect correlation).
[4] As we are analyzing a different television market and have adapted the instruments (to include negative attributes etc.) we did not expect a perfect replication of previous results on media brand personality dimensions. The validity of our results, however, is greatly supported by the fact that our positive dimensions were part of previous solutions, in particular competence and spirit (=dynamism or excitement).

Figure 1: Structure TV brand personality (VARIMAX-Rotation)[5]

| exciting (aufregend) | adventurous (abenteuerlustig) | spirited (temperamentvoll) | saucy (frech) | multi-faceted (vielseitig) | creative (kreativ) |

.75   .80   .75   .78   .57   .64

competent (kompetent) .76

responsible (verantwortungsvoll) .66

orderly (ordentlich) .63

reliable (zuverlässig) .63

intelligent (intelligent) .73

analytical (analytisch) .81

credible (glaubwürdig) .71

Spirit

TV brand personality

Competence +

Small-mindedness -

Warmth +

small-minded (spießig) .60

hypocritical (scheinheilig) .76

bourgeois (kleinbürgerlich) .59

obtrusive (aufdringlich) .65

arrogant (arrogant) .77

selfish (egoistisch) .72

boring (langweilig) .53

good-natured (gutmütig) .77

cordial (herzlich) .73

sentimental (gefühlvoll) .71

loving (liebevoll) .74

N=495

Now that we have identified the four dimensions of television brand personality in the Austrian market we shall look at whether respondents differ in how strongly they associate each dimension with the different stations, i.e., whether – in the mind of the respondents - each television station has a distinctive brand personality (**RQ1**, see *figure 2*). The results show that the respondents perceive the public service broadcasting stations ORFeins and ORF2 as more *competent* in comparison to their private competitors. Contrastingly, the commercial broadcasters Pro7, RTL and ATV are characterized by the audience as more *spirited*. Furthermore, respondents evaluated ORFeins as very small-minded, while they associate the negative attributes summarized in the factor *small-mindedness* a lot less with ProSieben. Each television station thus appears to have a unique brand personality.

Figure 2: Rescaled factor means for television stations

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[5] VARIMAX procedure is the most commonly used method for rotation. It is an orthogonal method resulting in uncorrelated factors. Varimax minimizes the number of variables with high loadings on a factor, thereby enhancing the interpretability of the factors.
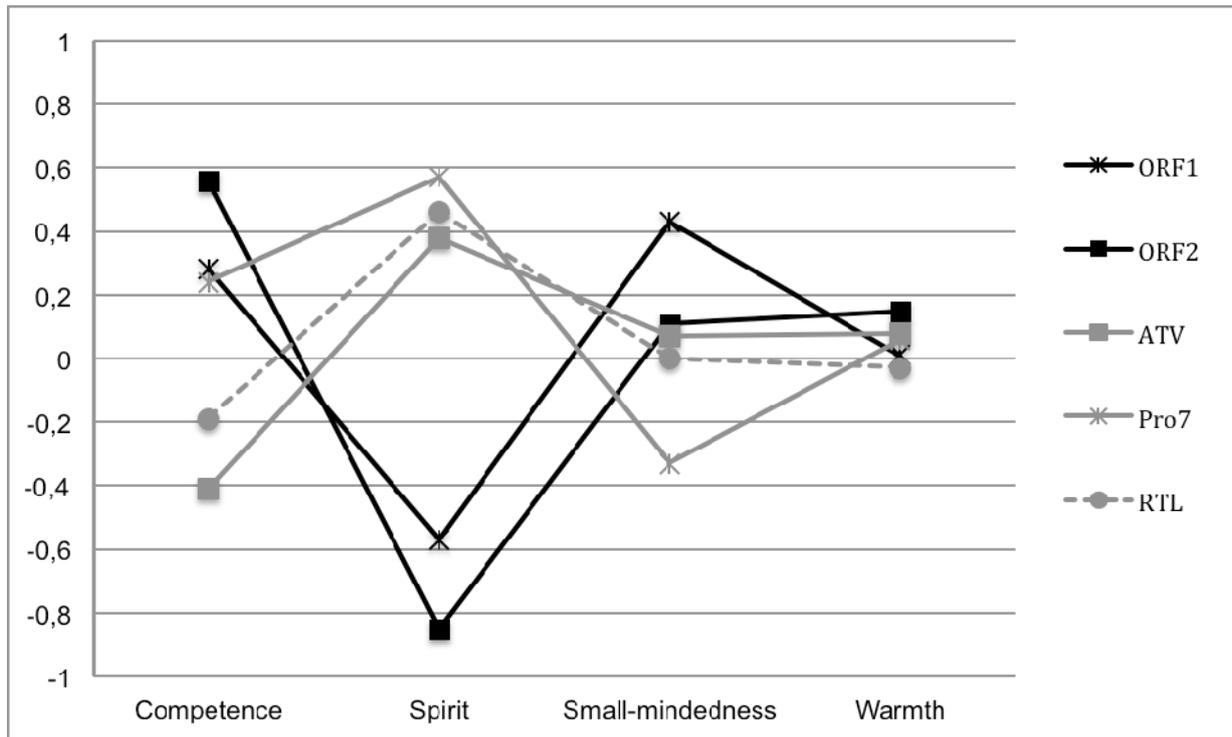
But how are these brand personality dimensions, i.e., competence, spirit, small-mindedness and warmth affected by emotions the audience associates with the television stations? To investigate this question a structural equation model (SEM) has been calculated which allows an estimation of causal relations between multiple and multidimensional constructs. As the independent variables (emotions) should preferably be uncorrelated among themselves for this analysis, in a first step emotions have been aggregated into four groups using a multidimensional scaling analysis (MDS). The closer the examined emotions are in the configuration (*Figure 3*) the more similar they are in the perception of the respondents, and the more distant, the more different they are.

Figure 3: Structure of emotions
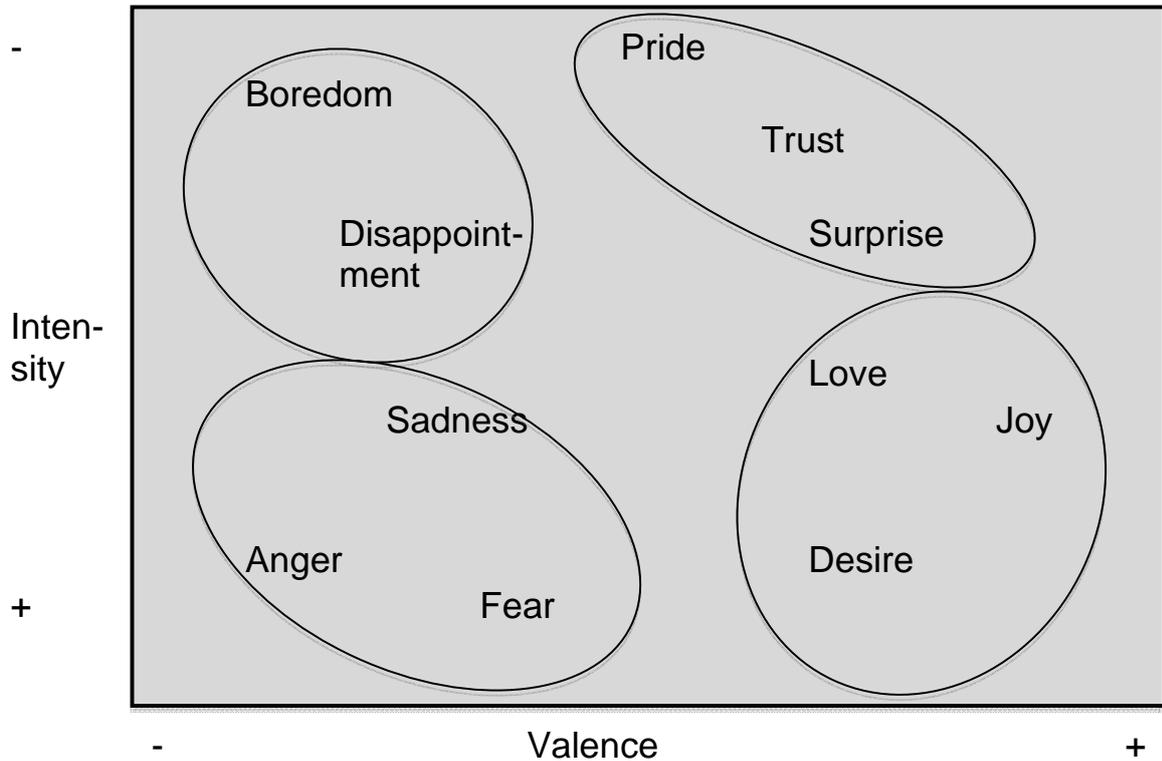
The investigated emotions can be divided into four groups: (1) intense positive emotions (desire, joy, love), (2) weak positive emotions (trust, pride, surprise), (3) weak negative emotions (disappointment, boredom), and (4) intense negative emotions (sadness, anger, fear). Based on these groups of emotions we calculated the structural equation model (SEM) to identify emotional drivers for the single brand personality dimensions (*Table 2*).

Table 2: Emotional drivers for brand personality (path coefficients, p<0.01)

	Brand personality dimensions			
	Competence	Spirit	Small-mindedness	Warmth
Intense positive emotions		0.46		0.26
Weak positive emotions	0.80	0.43	-0.52	0.74
Weak negative emotions		-0.40	0.36	
Intense negative emotions	-0.40		0.30	-0.39
Variance explained (in %)	*0.80*	*0.56*	*0.49*	*0.78*

CMIN/DF=3.909; RMSEA=0.76

As the results show emotions act as important determinants for brand personality aspects. The rather weak, but positive emotions (trust, pride, surprise) display the strongest effects on brand personality aspects. In other words, the more television viewers associate weak, but positive emotions with a specific television stations, the more they also perceive the station to be competent and warm, but *not* small-minded. Not very surprisingly, if a television station evokes rather strong positive emotions (such as desire, joy and love), it is also perceived to have a lot of spirit. Contrastingly, the effect of rather weak, negative emotions (i.e., disappointment and boredom) is smaller, but still significant: Television stations perceived as disappointing or boring, are evaluated by respondents also as small-minded and lacking spirit. In turn the stronger negative emotions fear and anger lower the perceived competence and warmth, and strengthen the negative associations of small-mindedness. Thus, when a television station aims to position itself as competent and warm, it should concentrate on trying to evoke weak positive emotions, such as trust, pride and surprise in its communication and programming strategies. The spirit dimension of a television brand personality can be best affected by focusing on stronger positive emotions, such as desire, joy and love.

Summary and Implications

According to our analysis Austrian television stations distinguish themselves in their brand personalities: While public service broadcasters display higher values for competence, commercial broadcasters are associated with a higher level of spirit. Furthermore, these distinct brand personalities are shaped by the emotions the audience associates with the brands. In particular the rather weak positive emotions, i.e., trust, pride and surprise, emerge the strongest emotional drivers.

Evidently, these results have direct implications for television stations which need to consider emotions more in their branding activities. Brand strategists should incorporate 'emotional stimuli' in their activities and monitor the emotional associations of their audience with the station brand closely in order to evaluate their success. But what are possible 'emotional stimuli', and what content and programming strategies might lead to the development of certain emotional associations on part of the recipient? If we consider that competence and spirit are the most distinguishing brand personality aspects for television stations, and that these are in turn mostly influenced by trust, pride and surprise, we need to explore what genres might influence these emotions: For example newscasts can be assumed to play a vital role in affecting trust, while entertainment formats might have a greater impact on surprise. But future research is needed to evaluate the impact of specific genres on emotional associations with the station brand.

Moreover, recent research (Förster, 2011) suggests that communication activities play an important role in television brand management. As television station brands are mostly perceived as substitutable by television viewers in terms of benefit and core competence (i.e., entertainment), a strong and clear brand positioning with a stringent communication strategy is essential for the success of a TV brand. Here, a television station whose distinguishing brand personality trait is *spirit* (such as ProSieben) should focus on promoting strong positive emotions (joy, desire and love) in its communication activities, for example ?? The exact contribution of communication activities to the shaping of emotions opens the necessity for further research.

The present study has brought attention to the general relevance of emotions in shaping the personalities of audiovisual brands. Undoubtedly, further research is needed to illuminate the multifaceted field of emotions and audiovisual media. We want to conclude with a famous Viennese, who already highlighted the role of emotions almost 100 years ago:

« We remain on the surface so long as we treat only memories and ideas. The only valuable things in psychic life are, rather, the emotions. All psychic powers are significant only through their fitness to awaken emotions. » (Freud in « Delusions and Dreams », 1921, p. 159).

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