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RESULTS REPORT: Towards a Theory of Media  
Consumption Value

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## **RESULTS REPORT:**

### Towards a Theory of Media Consumption Value

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#### **ABSTRACT:**

*This hypothesis paper advances the conceptual groundwork for exploring the consumer perspective on media use and the perceived value of media. It addresses three central questions: (1) which theoretical foundations are available to build upon, (2) what relevant literature exists in this field, and (3) which conceptual adaptations are required to capture the specificities of media consumption. The findings provide the framework for developing the discussion guide for the first stage of empirical research, consisting of group discussions with consumers. They serve as the conceptual foundation for structuring the inquiry into how individuals evaluate media and their own media-use behaviors.*

*The **Theory of Consumption Values (TCV)** (Sheth et al., 1991) forms the starting point for analyzing user motives and value perceptions across media genres. Building on this framework, the project has exploratively expanded the set of value dimensions to reflect contemporary expectations of media. These include **trust** (credibility, reliability, and confidence in media offerings), **social gratification** (belonging, connection, and community-building), **resilience** (stability, coping and well-being in times of uncertainty), **familiarity** (emotional comfort through continuity and predictability), and **accessibility** (the precondition of being able to access content at all).*

*These dimensions demonstrate that media use is not only shaped by short-term aspects, but also by long-term cognitive, emotional, social, and societal values. Within the **Value Media framework**, this broader conceptualization allows for a more holistic assessment of media engagement and supports the development of sustainable strategies for media providers and consumers alike. Importantly, the project takes a **multiplatform approach**, encompassing the full spectrum of media genres. In this way, the TCV not only serves as a foundation but also demonstrates potential for theoretical advancement: by applying it to media contexts and integrating additional value dimensions, it contributes to the development of a new conceptual model – the **Theory of Media Consumption Value**.*

#### **KEYWORDS:**

*Value Media, Theory of Consumption Value, Theory of Media Consumption Value, Sustainable Media, Responsible Media, Media Responsibility*

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**Lisa-Charlotte Wolter** is a professor and program director for Online Marketing and Customer Centricity at IU (International University of Applied Sciences). She heads the Research Center Sustainable Media & Marketing (RCSMM) in collaboration with a global network of researchers and industry partners. The aim of the project is to develop guidelines and standards for a more sustainable media and advertising industry with a focus on the responsible use of media. Prof. Dr. Wolter’s other research interests include media and consumer engagement processes and the associated connections between values, emotions, and trust.



**Peter Kenning** is Professor of Business Administration, specializing in marketing, at Heinrich Heine University Düsseldorf. He earned his doctorate and habilitation in business administration at the University of Münster. From 2007 to 2014, he held the Chair of Marketing at Zeppelin University (ZU). Prof. Kenning’s research focuses in particular on quantitative marketing research and consumer neuroscience. He is also committed to science-based consumer policy and Member of the Advisory Council on Consumer Affairs at the Federal Ministry of Justice and for Consumer Protection.



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## 1 Introduction

Media are deeply embedded in everyday life, shaping how people communicate, access information, form opinions, and engage with culture and society. Because of their reach and influence, the ways in which media are produced, financed, and consumed have far-reaching consequences for individuals, organizations, communities and democracy (e.g., Dwyer, 2010). This makes it essential to investigate the dynamics of today's media and advertising markets, where key stakeholders – media providers, agencies, advertising companies and consumers – face diverse challenges (Wolter et al., 2025): a flood of content in a highly networked world (Vivion et al., 2024), innovations such as artificial intelligence (André et al., 2018), technology-related ethical and social issues (Saura et al., 2021), the rapid development of new platforms (Sundqvist et al., 2021), and increasing consumer autonomy combined with growing skepticism towards media offerings (Vraga & Tully, 2021). Recent research by von Rimscha et al. (2025) further underscores the complex interplay between the audiences and advertising markets, highlighting financial importance of advertisements for media organizations, the pressures of market-driven brand expectations, and the rising prominence of behavioral targeting in mediating this relationship.

With this in mind, the project's overarching goal is to establish a sustainable standard – termed Value Media – that measures the value of media beyond one-dimensional, short-term KPIs. Earlier work has already indicated that consumers expect social and individual values to be reflected in the media landscape (Meynhardt, 2009). More broadly, current research shows, that value alignment is increasingly decisive in usage and purchase decisions: according to the Edelman Trust Barometer (2024), 84% of respondents globally state that they need to share values with a brand in order to buy it. Notably, for the media-related category of social media, 32% highlight shared values as a decisive purchase factor, with the share being significantly higher among younger cohorts (42% for ages 18–27). This suggests that value alignment is not only central for brands in general but may also play an important role for media brands in shaping engagement and sustained use.

Evidence from diverse contexts suggests that ethical practices can strengthen consumer-brand relationships across cultures (Sameen, 2025), and that perceived social value may enhance satisfaction and continued engagement (Hameed & Swar, 2016). Social influence models further indicate that individuals balance personal preferences with peer opinions in ways that can promote more responsible and sustainable consumption (Shah & Asghar, 2023), offering insights relevant to value perceptions in media environments. Globally, consumers are also willing to pay a premium for products and services aligned with sustainability and social responsibility (PwC, 2024). Given the growing complexity of the media market and the associated social concerns, there is a need to develop progressive evaluation approaches that go beyond the economic perspective (i.e., revenue and profit) and move towards long-term sustainable decisions (Chan-Olmsted et al., 2024). That said, integrating a Value Media approach into the media planning process enables companies to make socially responsible and transparent decisions (Wolter et al., 2024; Wolter et al., 2025).

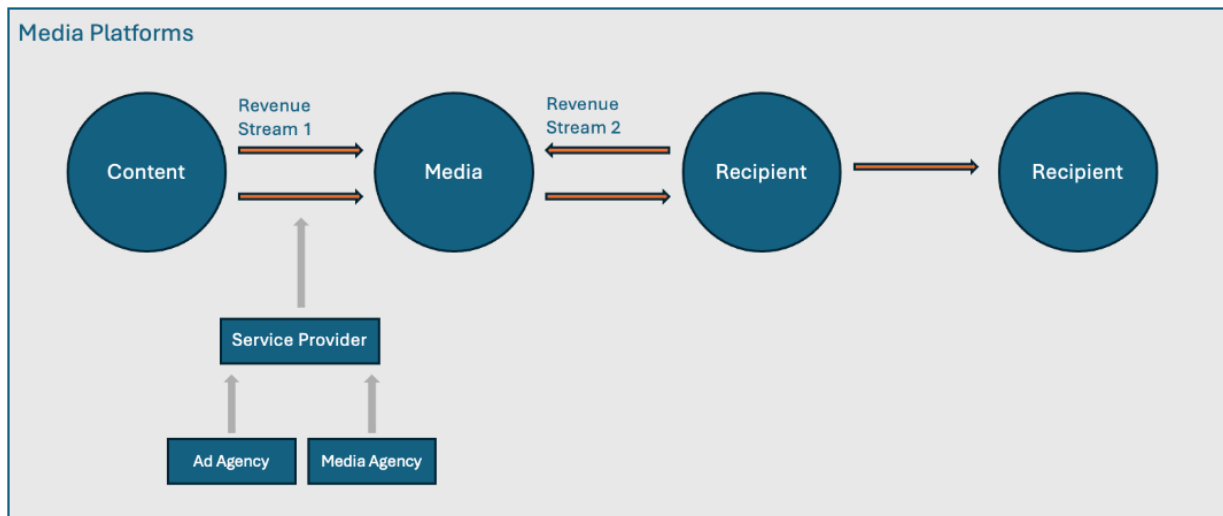
Chan-Olmsted et al. (2024) defined “Value Media” as an analytical approach for media platforms and channels that examines value creation in the interaction between individuals, media organizations, and society. Media value arises from the recording and classification of individual perceptions and values (cognitive, affective, experience-based), media-economic objectives (market and non-market-related),

and societal interests (Chan-Olmsted et al., 2024). The goal is to systematically record and relate consumer, corporate, and societal values to derive a sustainable overall socio-economic value – especially with regard to information-based content. In the further course of the project, this triad will be concretized, particularly through a consumer-centric perspective – based on the Theory of Consumption Values (TCV).

To identify which values are most salient to users and which motives shape their media consumption, it is essential to consider the structural characteristics of the media industry as a two-sided market (see Figure 1 for visualization). In such markets, media organizations simultaneously address audiences through content and provide advertising environments for brands (Bachmann, 2023; Chan-Olmsted et al., 2024; von Rimscha et al., 2025). This dual role positions not only users but also advertisers, agencies, and intermediaries as integral actors within the media ecosystem, each with specific expectations, e.g. regarding brand safety, audience reach, and contextual relevance (Dwivedi et al., 2021; IAB Europe, 2024).

Considering growing societal concerns about sustainability, trust, and responsibility, operationalizing these values becomes increasingly critical, not only for fostering audience engagement but also for sustaining the commercial viability of media platforms within competitive, advertiser-driven markets. This perspective aligns closely with the Value Media framework, which emphasizes integrating both audience and advertiser needs into a socially responsible and economically sustainable media ecosystem. Therefore, it will be evaluated whether the TCV could serve as a framework model in this context.

Despite the relevance of consumer values, a systematic and operationalized integration into media management research literature is still lacking, particularly with regard to the sustainable use and social value generation of media offerings (Dwivedi et al., 2021; Bachmann, 2023). As Dwivedi et al. (2021) note, integrating consumer values, trust, and long-term engagement factors is critical for fostering sustainable relationships with audiences. Similarly, Bachmann (2023) emphasizes that in two-sided media markets, sustainable value creation depends not only on short-term reach but on the capacity to cultivate lasting user relationships and provide socially relevant content. These values are therefore likely to be crucial not only for short-term usage intention but also for long-term loyalty, sustainable consumption, and ultimately for value creation within the entire media ecosystem (Bachmann, 2023; Chan-Olmsted et al., 2024).



**Figure 1** Exemplary Visualization of a Media Value Chain

Due to the two-sided nature of the market, the consumer perspective is relevant not only in the context of media management research but also in marketing research (Bachmann, 2023; von Rimscha et al., 2025). A deep understanding of individual values and preferences enables more targeted segmentation, personalization, and customization through marketing measures, particularly in the context of sustainable consumption, ethical marketing, and corporate social responsibility (Dwivedi et al., 2021; Sheth et al., 2011; Kotler & Lee, 2005). Moreover, recent evidence indicates a persistent “trust gap”: audiences systematically trust news on social media, search engines, and messaging apps significantly less than they trust news in general (Mont'Alverne et al., 2022). This underlines the critical importance of operationalizing consumer trust and values within media strategies, not only for audience engagement but also for sustaining perceived credibility, especially in media that mediate the relationship between brands and consumers. Furthermore, it is becoming increasingly evident that media users value not only functional or hedonic values but also expect media and advertising environments to demonstrate social responsibility – for example, through credible reporting, diversity in representation, and ethical data practices (Freeman et al., 2007; Sheth et al., 2011; Mont'Alverne et al., 2022). Integrating such consumer values into media strategies does not merely drive short-term transactions but fosters trust, credibility, and long-term relationships between brands, platforms, and audiences (Chan-Olmsted et al., 2024; Wolter et al., 2024). In Table 1, the identified main gaps in literature are summarized.

Aspect	Current Research Gap	Research Need
Operationalization of consumer values in the context of media use	Lack of systematic integration of values into media management research.	Develop measurable indicators for cognitive, affective, and social values in media contexts.
Social responsibility in media planning	Limited approaches for integrating social responsibility into planning processes.	Investigate how Value Media can guide socially responsible and long-term sustainable decisions.
Expansion of TCV	Trust and societal benefits are not part of the original TCV (Sheth et al., 1991) but deserve a closer examination in the Value Media context. Trust may function as a precondition or moderator for other values, as a distinct value dimension in its own right, or as an outcome of sustainable media practices. Additionally, resilience may contribute explanatory variance as a further, distinct dimension.	Extend TCV to include trust as precondition, moderator, distinct value, or outcome, and systematically account for collective/social benefits.

**Table 1** Overview of Research Gaps

This report covers the work carried out during the first project phase of the research collaboration between IU International University of Applied Sciences and Heinrich Heine University Düsseldorf, focusing on the consumer perspective within the Value Media framework. These address the following questions: Is the TCV suitable as a framework model for the Value Media context? (2), Can a measurement system be developed from the theory? (3a), What might the measurement model look like? (3b), and Which items could be used in which structure? (4).

Although the TCV was originally developed to explain purchase decisions, its underlying dimensions – functional, emotional, epistemic, social, and conditional – are equally relevant for understanding how individuals evaluate and engage with media offerings, from pre-use decision processes to actual use experiences. A systematic literature search via Scopus has been conducted by combining relevant keywords (e.g., consumer values, value, media) into search strings. Table 2 summarizes the literature search process. The identified literature was then analyzed by assigning the various value terminologies to the TCV framework and examining their conceptual fit. In addition, new value concepts not originally grounded in the TCV were incorporated into the framework. Subsequently, similarities between existing measurement scales in the literature were reviewed, and new measurement items were proposed to address identified gaps. Research has demonstrated applicability of the TCV beyond the purchase decision stage, including the evaluation of ongoing user experiences (Sweeney & Soutar, 2001; Sánchez-Fernández & Iniesta-Bonillo, 2007). This extension is particularly relevant in media contexts, where value is often realized during the act of consumption itself and contributes to satisfaction and loyalty (Holbrook, 1999). The present study therefore focuses on the “use” phase, as it is central to understanding value creation in media environments where engagement, trust, and recurring interactions drive both user and advertiser outcomes. This focus does not limit the framework

to single temporal “moments of use,” but also includes recurring and first-time use situations, acknowledging that different usage types may be associated with distinct motivating values.

Search Phase	Relevant Steps
Phase 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Literature search via search strings in Scopus</li> <li>47 papers were identified and then categorized by media genre</li> <li>The identified value dimensions within the papers were then assigned to TCV dimensions</li> </ul>
Phase 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To reflect further theoretical considerations in the Value Media framework, further literature was searched and added that reflect values beyond the TCV</li> <li>In contrast to Phase 1, this literature search was exploratory in nature and deliberately built on both searching and the inclusion of key sources already known to the project team. New value dimensions were identified and integrated</li> </ul>
Qualitative Phase	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In September 2025, focus groups will be held in which the conceptual findings will be analyzed further by qualitative content analysis</li> </ul>

**Table 2** Literature Search Process

To maintain conceptual consistency and ensure a comprehensive representation of value creation, the human is conceptualized as a user in various roles across four sequential phases of the media value chain. This phased perspective reflects established insights from media economics and audience research, which connect user actions at different stages with distinct mechanisms of economic value creation (Bachmann, 2023; Chan-Olmsted et al., 2024; Webster & Ksiazek, 2012). These phases link media choice, content use, advertising exposure, and subsequent user reactions to both the editorial and commercial performance of media offerings. Table 3 summarizes these phases, the corresponding user roles, and their respective economic relevance.

Phase	Role of the Human <sup>1</sup>	Economic Relevance
1. Media Choice / Access	Media consumer / Media customer	Purchase decision, subscription, registration
2. Use of Content	Media user	Prerequisite for reach, engagement, advertising contact
3. Advertising Contact	Advertising-exposed media user / Audience	Monetization through visibility, attention, data
4. Reaction / Impact	Consumer in the usage context	Conversion, purchase, brand loyalty, disclosure of personal data

**Table 3** Phases of Value Creation

<sup>1</sup> The underlying role concept assumes that media roles are increasingly blurred: users are no longer merely passive recipients but also active producers of content (Sparviero, 2019). Instead of fixed “roles,” the focus is therefore placed on practices.

The first phase, Media Choice / Access, marks the initial decision point where users determine whether to subscribe, register, or otherwise gain access to content. As Bachmann (2023) emphasizes, such access decisions are pivotal in two-sided markets because they define the potential audience base and, consequently, the scope for advertising and subscription revenues. The second phase, Use of Content, reflects the actual engagement with media content. In the audience fragmentation framework, Webster and Ksiazek (2012) highlight that sustained and repeated use is a prerequisite for generating reach, fostering engagement, and enabling subsequent advertising contact. This phase captures the experiential value of media consumption, which directly influences loyalty and continued usage. The third phase, Advertising Contact, occurs when the media user is exposed to commercial messages within the chosen content environment. As Chan-Olmsted et al. (2024) point out, in two-sided markets media act not only as content providers but also as advertising platforms, where visibility, attention, and data constitute key monetizable assets.

The fourth phase, Reaction / Impact, encompasses the user's behavioral or attitudinal response – ranging from brand consideration and purchase to ongoing loyalty and the disclosure of personal data. Webster and Ksiazek (2012) underscore how audience behaviors and cross-platform overlaps at this stage feed back into the structural value creation of the media system, influencing both editorial strategies and advertiser returns.

## 2 Theory of Consumption Values as a framework model

### 2A THEORETICAL CLASSIFICATION OF THE TCV

The Theory of Consumption Values was developed by Sheth et al. (1991) to explain consumption decisions based on various value dimensions. Essentially, the theory states that the consumption of a good or service is motivated by five distinct, partially interacting value categories:

1. **Functional Value:** Refers to the perceived objective added value of a product or offering. This includes, among other things, performance or usefulness in the narrow sense, functionality, usability, price-performance ratio, efficiency, and reliability.
2. **Social Value:** This encompasses the value derived from social group membership, status, recognition, or group conformity. Consumers also choose products because they want to signal social affiliation or maintain a certain image.
3. **Emotional Value:** Refers to the affective response triggered by consumption – such as joy, nostalgia, relaxation, or excitement. These values are particularly relevant for experience-oriented consumer goods.
4. **Epistemic Value (knowledge or curiosity value):** Refers to the need for novelty, variety, exploration, or intellectual stimulation. New or surprising content and features can serve this value.
5. **Conditional Value:** Refers to values that only manifest under certain situational conditions – such as seasonal events, special contexts, or specific occasions.

According to the TCV, these five values together explain why individuals make certain consumption decisions. The theory has been applied in a variety of contexts – from retail to tourism to digital

products. The TCV has become a firmly established theory in marketing research, one that, due to its dynamic nature, does not become outdated (for a review, see Tanrikulu, 2021).

However, the literature emphasizes the context-dependence of the TCV. This means that consumption values depend significantly on outcome variables, which are situation-specific (Mason et al., 2023). Sheth et al. (1991) claimed that the TCV can be applied in various contexts and has already been employed to study consumer choice behavior in the service area. Pura (2005) has demonstrated that the TCV can be expanded or adapted depending on the context. Pura (2005) divided the functional value into two separate values in the context of mobile services: the *Convenience Value* and the *Monetary Value*. Convenience Value describes the extent to which a service allows users to accomplish tasks quickly, efficiently, and with minimal effort (Brown, 1990; Pura, 2005; Schrage & Kenning, 2020). This value can arise from time savings, ease of use, or superior features when compared to alternatives (Liu et al., 2015; Pura, 2005). Monetary Value captures the extent to which consumers evaluate a service as being worth its cost. It reflects perceptions of fair pricing, affordability, and whether the benefits received justify the financial expenditure (Pura, 2005; Schrage & Kenning, 2020). This expansion has only been made in the service sector, whether this expansion is also fitting in other contexts still needs to be investigated. **The TCV thus offers the potential to be extended to new contexts, combining the application of an established theory with the exploration of a new topic area, forming a new theoretical approach: The Theory of Media Consumption Value.**

### **From TCV (Theory of consumption) to TMCV (Theory of Media Consumption Value)**

We propose, that the TCV provides a robust and theoretically sound framework for analyzing value-based media use and harnessing it for shaping a more sustainable media world. The classification of existing empirical findings shows that different media values can be systematically translated into the five categories of the TCV. Thus, the TCV can not only contribute to theory development in the interdisciplinary field of media research but also serve as a practical analytical tool – for example, for the development of sustainable media offerings that address actual user needs.

## **2B CURRENT STATE OF RESEARCH**

The aim of this project is to identify and measure consumer values comprehensively for all areas of media use and media genres. However, current research does not offer this broad perspective, but rather only examines sub-areas of media, such as social media (e.g., Aljukhadar et al., 2020). In addition to the specific focus on individual media genres, there is a lack of uniformity in the use of value terminology. Therefore, the following provides an overview of the current state of research and then places it in a theoretical framework to create a clear structure based on which previous research can be reviewed. The aim is to examine whether the TCV can serve as the theoretical basis for user value analysis in the Value Media context. Within the overall Value Media framework individual benefit perception that represents a partial perspective. To explore this dimension, it is useful to first consider existing studies on how users perceive and evaluate media offerings.

Much of the currently published research in this area focuses on usage intentions in **social media**. Aljukhadar et al. (2020) showed that users particularly value the **aesthetics**, the opportunity to learn, and social interaction of social media content designed for image consumption (e.g., Instagram). Furthermore, users are more likely to continue using social media when it serves **social purposes** (Ji et

al., 2024). Aikat et al. (2024) highlighted the importance of **information** and **entertainment** as characteristics of social media platforms. In addition to credibility, irritation, and value, these factors also appear to be highly relevant for users' evaluation of social media advertising (van Deventer & Saraiva, 2015), with their model explaining almost half of the variance in advertising evaluations. Arora and Agarwal (2019) confirmed these three factors regarding social media advertising and further added **personalization**, **irritation**, and **specific incentives** (e.g., collecting status points) as evaluation factors, although their model accounted for a smaller proportion of the variance. Furthermore, people are more likely to use social media to interact with financial institutions when the perceived **usefulness**, **economic benefits**, and **social benefits** are high (Dootson et al., 2016), with the authors reporting a strong explanatory power for their model. The authors defined social benefits as the extent to which the person expects that using the service innovation will improve their social status, enable them to serve as a role model for future generations, or enable membership in a higher social class. Regarding instant messaging apps, perceived **usefulness**, **interactivity**, and **playfulness** play an important role for users in their continued use and the likelihood of recommending the app (Huang & Lin, 2023), with these factors explaining a considerable share of user intentions. Rauniar et al. (2019) examined attitudes towards social media using Facebook as an example and found that **perceived value**, **social presence**, **interactivity**, and **trustworthiness** were positively related to attitudes towards social media. Furthermore, people were more likely to use social media while doing something else (e.g., watching sports) if these fulfilled certain factors. Wang (2013) showed that utilitarian functions, social identity, self-esteem stabilization, and self-efficacy have a positive effect on attitudes towards social media use, explaining more than half of the variance in attitudes. This means that people are more likely to use social media if they feel competent in using it, want to maintain their social identity, or have a specific purpose. In addition, social media is used for **educational purposes**, for **escapist motives** and to establish **social contacts** (Hughes-Nind et al., 2024), although this effect was relatively small.

Wu et al. (2024) also confirmed in a literature review that certain values predict the intention to use media platforms – here in the context of video streaming services. Perceived **quality**, perceived **relevance** of content, perceived **variety**, perceived **enjoyment**, perceived **cost-benefit ratio**, and perceived **personalization** influenced whether a subscription is made, and content is consumed.

A central motive for social media use is **entertainment**, consuming content that offers joy, pleasure, or relaxation (Meservy et al., 2019). Furthermore, social media serves as a means of **social interaction** (i.e., communication and exchange with other users). Another frequently cited motive is **information seeking**, whereby users specifically search for information or further their education. The **pastime and relaxation motive** also plays a role, as social media helps to dispel boredom and unwind (Meservy et al., 2019).

Many users also use social media to **share information** by posting content to inform others. Furthermore, the fear of missing out is a motive for social media use (Ji et al., 2024). The aspect of **practical usefulness** describes the general benefits and everyday convenience that social media can offer (Meservy et al., 2019). By **expressing opinions**, users can share personal views and beliefs with others. **Staying up to date** makes it possible to learn about what others are doing and experiencing at any time (Aikat et al., 2024). Finally, building **social capital also plays** a role by maintaining relationships and building social resources (Meservy et al., 2019).

Regarding the discontinuation perspective, people reported stopping using social media when they perceived themselves to be using it problematically or excessively, or when they feared for their privacy, as described in a review by Franks et al. (2023). This demonstrates that users themselves value the sustainable use of media platforms, and that this is directly linked to their well-being.

The consumption of **mass media**, especially news media, is also significantly influenced by consumers' different value perceptions. It has been shown that **functional, hedonic, and social aspects** play a role (e.g., Katz et al., 1973; Krishen et al., 2016; Olsen, 2021). In the area of incidental news consumption, Goyanes (2020) identified media **preferences**, individual **usage behavior**, and **trust** in the media source as key predictors of usage intention, with these factors together explaining a little over one-third of the variance.

For print media, Krishen et al. (2016) showed that characteristics such as **familiarity, personality**, and the **visualization** of content are particularly relevant for consumers. In addition to functional usage aspects, **hedonic value is also explicitly** emphasized, as print media is often appreciated for its sensory experience, aesthetic presentation, and emotional significance (Krishen et al., 2016).

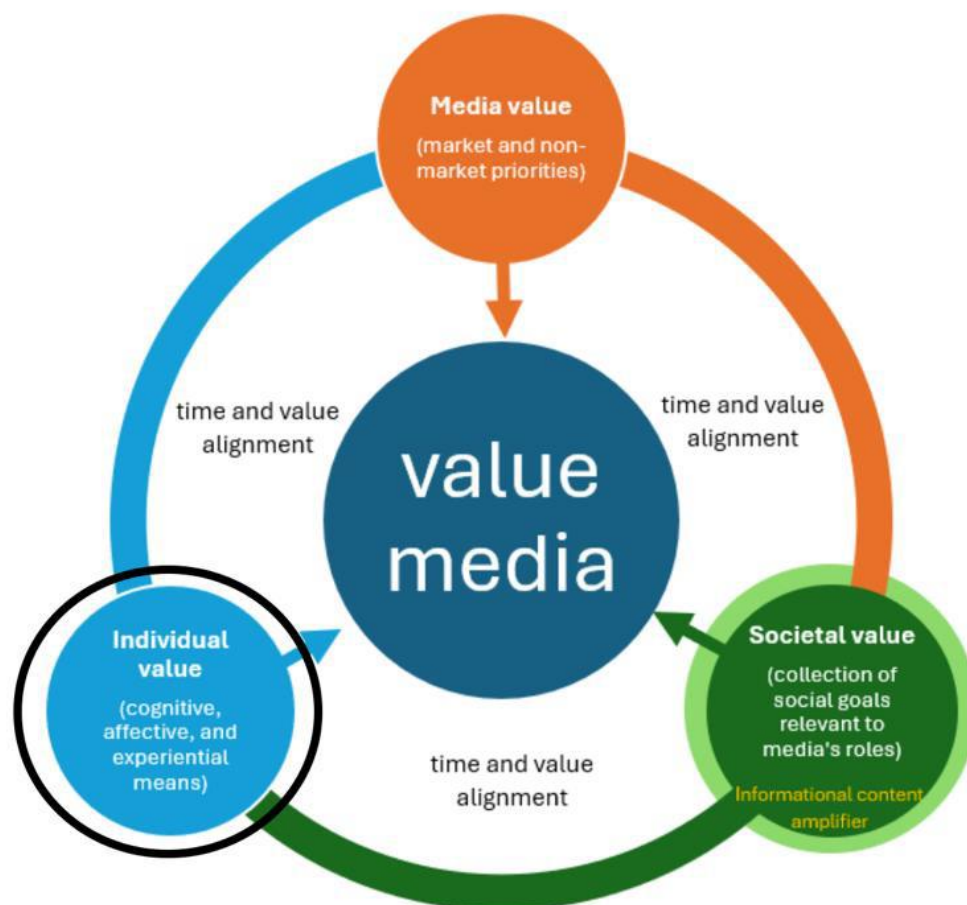
Olsen (2021) expanded this finding to include additional value dimensions: For consumers, news media not only fulfilled a need for **trustworthy information**, but also for **social anchoring** and **social status** through the reception of local content that signals community belonging. Furthermore, **soft news** and **light content contributed** to the experience of entertainment and relaxation. The evaluation of media offerings is often based on a subjective value-benefit ratio, in which the expected information gain and social benefit are weighed against the invested effort (Olsen, 2021).

Beside these findings, it becomes clear that there is a lack of consistency in the use of these terms in literature. Due to the suggestion that the TCV (Sheth et al., 1991) can be fitted to new contexts and is a well-established operationalization framework, this theory was chosen as a possible operationalization framework. There is also an overlap with the Uses and Gratifications (U & G) Theory (Katz et al., 1973). While the U&G approach provides valuable insights into users' motivations for media selection and use, it primarily focuses on media-related needs and gratifications, such as information-seeking, entertainment, or social interaction (Katz et al., 1973). However, we propose that it does not sufficiently capture the underlying value structures that guide consumer judgments, preferences, long-term engagement with media, and value creation for advertisers. Therefore, a gratification value will be integrated into the TCV framework within the Value Media context to reflect the relevance of the U & G approach. Nevertheless, the primary emphasis remains on fostering sustainable, long-term value creation.

## **2C APPLICATION TO THE VALUE MEDIA CONTEXT**

The identified literature was then integrated into the TCV framework to further examine its applicability to the Value Media context. Particularly concerning media environments – that is, the embedding of content in platforms, formats, and contexts – a theory-based application of these dimensions is currently lacking. One goal of this project is to develop a Value Media scale in order to operationalize the consumer perspective of the Value Media model shown in Figure 2. This will be achieved throughout the project. To date, consumer values in the media context have been used to explain purchase intention in the social commerce sector (e.g., Zhou, 2019). Ghennie et al. (2024) showed, for example,

that hedonic and utility-based values predict whether purchases are made via social media platforms. The relationship between consumer values and utility intentions was not considered. Zhang and Mao (2012) directly related the TCV to the relationship between certain values and the intention to use location-based services on a smartphone. They found that all five values are associated with this intention. Thus, they showed that the TCV could also be related to usage intentions of digital applications, beyond predicting purchase intentions. The allocation of the values described in the literature to those operationalized in the TCV is described in detail below. Moreover, the TCV framework will be expanded to address not only what is important to consumers in this context, but also what motivates them and why. To this end, elements from the Uses and Gratifications approach (Katz et al., 1973) will be incorporated, alongside the Internet Motives Scale (e.g., Papacharissi & Rubin, 2000) and the Television Viewing Motives Scale (e.g., Rubin, 1983). This integration ensures balanced representation of both traditional media (TV, radio, print) and digital media (internet, social media). The qualitative phase, which follows after project phase one and entails conducting focus groups, will also explore distinctions between private and public service media, with a particular focus on their respective contributions to perceived value.



**Figure 2**

Source: Chan-Olmsted et al. (2024)

## Functional Value

In the media context, we propose that this value refers to the perceived instrumental benefit of a medium, for example, the information quality, the technical reliability, or the ease of use. These are conceptual proposals, and similar contextualizations will be made for the other TCV values in order to adapt the framework systematically to the media domain. Specifically, in the literature described, in addition to the term *functional value*, the following terms were used: *learning value*, *perceived usefulness*, *perceived credibility*, *informational value*, *utilitarian value*, and *educational purpose* (e.g., Aljukhadar et al., 2020; Le & Han, 2017; Wang, 2013). These can be summarized under the umbrella of *functional values*. The terms *learning value*, *educational purpose*, and *perceived usefulness* refer to the cognitive benefits of media content by emphasizing the ability of the media platform to convey knowledge and support learning processes (Aljukhadar et al., 2020; Dootson et al., 2016). The concept of *utilitarian values* emphasizes the instrumental benefits that arise from the purposeful use of media (Wang, 2013).

At the same time, concepts such as *informational value* and *convenience* reflect the efficient provision of relevant information as well as the user-friendliness of media use (Lee & Han, 2017; van Deventer & Saraiva, 2025). The aspect of *perceived credibility*, in turn, addresses the trustworthiness and reliability of content and sources, which is central for consumers to evaluate the functional quality of a medium (Dootson et al., 2016).

Overall, it can be argued that these heterogeneous concepts represent complementary facets of the *functional value* which, in the context of media use, integrates both the cognitive benefit (e.g. information gain, knowledge transfer), the instrumental benefit (e.g., usefulness, expediency, efficiency) and the trust aspect (e.g., credibility, reliability, trustworthiness).

## Social Value

In the literature on media use, numerous concepts have been identified that can be subsumed under the umbrella of *social value*, including *collaboration*, *dialogue*, *feedback*, *perceived interactivity*, *sense of community*, *social identity*, *social presence* and the explicit term *social value* (e.g., Dootson et al., 2016; Zhang & Mao, 2012).

Aljukhadar et al. (2020) define *social value* in the context of media use as community and exchange on social media. Ji et al. (2024) define it more as the need for social recognition and to strengthen one's social self-concept. In comparison, Zhang and Mao (2012) relied on Sheth et al. 's (1991) definition of *social value*. Dootson et al. (2016) adopted this definition and focused on the desire for status as the core of *social value*.

Terms such as *collaboration*, *dialogue*, and *feedback* emphasize the media-mediated opportunity for participation, expression of opinion, and social exchange (Johnson & Van Der Heide, 2015; Zavattaro & Brainard, 2019). *Interactivity* describes the perceived degree of reciprocity in communication with other users as well as the interactivity of media platforms (Huang & Lin, 2023), which is essential for the perceived social embeddedness, social status, and self-perception. The *sense of community* refers to the sense of belonging to a community that can arise through shared media practices (Zhou, 2019). Similarly, the concept of *social identity* emphasizes that media use also serves to identify with social groups (Wang, 2013). *Presence* describes the experience of social proximity and presence of others

across media channels (Rauniar et al., 2019). In the Value Media context, the classical social value dimension described in the TCV is not sufficient and needs to be expanded by adding social benefit and social concerns as important aspects. As Chan-Olmsted et al. (2024) have described, social concerns form a relevant factor in this context and should, therefore, be integrated in the measurement scale.

### **Social Gratification Value**

To address broader societal dimensions, the Social Gratification Value is proposed as an additional category within the TCV framework. Whereas traditional TCV categories emphasize individual-level benefits, the Social Gratification Value encompasses peripheral, yet meaningful societal gratifications derived from media use. These include users' appreciation of media that foster public knowledge, civic discourse, cultural diversity, ethical data practices, and collective well-being. Such functions are central to the role of media in shaping shared realities and enabling societal cohesion, as highlighted by Couldry and Hepp (2017). Social Gratification Value captures value perceptions grounded in the social and ethical implications of media consumption, rather than in direct personal utility alone. Integrating these factors extends the classical TCV framework and aligns it with contemporary expectations for socially responsible and community-oriented media (Wolter et al., 2024).

### **Emotional Value**

Terms like emotional connection, escapist relief, familiarity, self-related affective states, and self-esteem have been identified in the literature as relevant emotional dimensions of media use (e.g., Krishen et al., 2016; Wang, 2013; Zajonc, 2001). Authenticity is not itself an emotional dimension but a perceived characteristic of content that can evoke positive affective states such as trust, warmth, and emotional closeness, particularly in the context of social media or influencer content, and also in other formats such as trusted television hosts or print columnists (Kothari et al., 2025; Morhart et al. 2015). Escapist relief describes the use of media to disengage from everyday life and experience emotional recovery and relaxation, which has been empirically shown to occur across different media types, including entertainment TV, radio, online platforms, and print media (Reinecke & Hofmann, 2016). When using social media, this relief particularly describes scrolling through entertaining content, while in television or streaming it can be achieved through light entertainment genres, and in print through lifestyle or leisure sections. Familiarity refers to recognizable content or formats that create security and well-being, often explained by the mere-exposure effect, which applies equally to recurring news formats, radio shows, or TV series (Zajonc, 2001). Familiarity can provide a sense of emotional comfort and security by reducing uncertainty and easing mental effort (Walker-Andrews et al., 2011). It may further take on an affective dimension by evoking nostalgia or fostering parasocial bonds with recurring content or characters, which can enhance the user's emotional attachment (Wulf & Rieger, 2018).

According to Krishen et al. (2016), this value predicts the use of print media, as it is perceived as more personal and familiar than digital media.

Social media use can also be predicted by self-efficacy and self-confidence (Wang, 2013). In this context, self-efficacy refers to users' belief in their own competence to use social media. This fosters emotional empowerment, which describes a feeling of being capable, competent, and thus emotionally strengthened in one's media engagement (Hocevar et al., 2014). Self-confidence refers to feeling assertive in using social media, which contributes to emotional assurance, as social validation and positive feedback in media contexts provide comfort, security, and positive affect (Valkenburg et al.,

2006). While primarily studied in digital contexts, similar cognitive-affective factors influence user confidence and comfort in other media environments – for instance, in navigating complex news coverage, participating in radio call-ins, or engaging with interactive TV formats (Bandura, 1997). These affective and self-related effects play a central role in the motivation to use media. Sheth et al. (1991) described the emotional response triggered by the purchase as crucial to purchase intention. This definition also seems appropriate in the area of media use, as media content can also elicit an emotional response, including positive affect such as joy from inclusive and engaging narratives, or negative affect such as anger and fear when exposed to hostile or harmful content across any medium (Bilewicz & Soral, 2020).

Other affective outcomes associated with media use include nostalgia, which can evoke feelings of social connectedness and comfort (Wildschut et al., 2006), and excitement or thrill, often linked to suspenseful or high-stakes content such as sports or action genres. Emotional value in media use is also closely related to mood management processes (Zillmann, 1988), in which individuals actively select media to maintain or alter their affective states.

### **Epistemic Value**

While emotional value in the TCV framework refers to the utility derived from affective responses such as enjoyment or mood enhancement, epistemic value is rooted in cognitive processes (Berlyne, 1960). It emphasizes *curiosity*, *novelty*, and the *pursuit of knowledge* rather than the regulation of emotional states (e.g. Litman, 2005).

In literature, epistemic value refers to benefits derived from curiosity fulfilment, knowledge acquisition, and cognitive stimulation (Berlyne, 1960; Litman, 2005). Within the TCV framework, this value does not primarily concern entertainment, but rather the search for novelty, unfamiliarity, or intellectually challenging content that expands one's knowledge horizon. Epistemic motivation can involve both exploratory behavior and targeted information seeking, for instance when using media for learning or research purposes (Ko et al., 2005; Zhang & Mao, 2012).

Aesthetic value can be relevant here if the design is perceived as stimulating due to its novelty or cognitive challenge. Novelty – understood as exposure to new formats, perspectives, or topics – is a core driver of epistemic use (Litman, 2005) and differs clearly from hedonic entertainment, as it is motivated primarily by cognitive curiosity rather than mood management.

Concepts such as lightweight content (Olsen, 2021) may also have epistemic relevance if they provide new information, unfamiliar perspectives, or innovative presentation styles despite their brevity. This, however, is not automatically entertaining or playful consumption, but rather about experiencing novelty and gaining insights.

Overall, epistemic motives play a significant role in media use, particularly in exploring new content, testing innovative formats, or expanding one's own knowledge and experience horizons. These motives are driven by psychological factors such as curiosity, perspective seeking, willingness to experiment, and cognitive stimulation, which are clearly distinct from emotional benefits such as mood management or enjoyment (Berlyne, 1960; Litman, 2005; Ko et al., 2005).

### **Conditional Value**

Situational conditions are not only relevant in the context of purchase intentions; media can also appear particularly useful or attractive depending on location, time, mood, or social circumstances.

The term *conditional value* has been directly addressed in the literature on media use (Zhang & Mao, 2012); it appears to be less relevant in the context of media use than, for example, *functional value*. Conditional value refers to the context-specific fit between user needs and media offerings (Zhang & Mao, 2012). However, it is entirely plausible that this value is more important here than previously described in the literature. For example, listening to a podcast while commuting might be experienced as particularly valuable, or certain content (e.g., news) might become more relevant in times of crisis. Situational factors such as available time, energy, or attention could also determine whether and how media is used. This aspect needs to be examined further in the next project steps.

Considering conditional value could therefore be particularly relevant for adaptive or flexible media offerings – a central issue for socially sustainable media practices that are oriented towards the realities of users' lives.

### **Resilience Value**

Misinformation and disinformation (see glossary for differentiating definitions) are consistently ranked among the top global risks, particularly in the short term. The *World Economic Forum's Global Risks Report 2024* emphasizes how actors with political, financial, or ideological motives exploit vulnerabilities in media and technology systems to amplify distrust (World Economic Forum, 2024). Against this backdrop and complementary to the TCV, resilience emerges as a crucial dimension of value media also from a user perspective.

Prior work has shown that skepticism and the demand for social responsibility shape user evaluations of media (Meynhardt, 2009; Siegert et al., 2015). In organizational research, resilience is defined as the ability to adapt to and recover from disruptions, while maintaining core functions and identity (Mallak, 1998; Sutcliffe & Vogus, 2003). For media users, this translates into valuing brands that remain *independent under pressure* and uphold ethical standards when confronted with disinformation or external shocks (Branicki et al., 2016).

Importantly, resilience extends beyond functional robustness to include *authenticity* and *credibility*. Users appreciate media (organizations) that ensure transparency and verifiability of information, reducing the cognitive burden of constant fact-checking. Perceived authenticity, defined as the congruence between content, process, and values, enhances trust and reduces the need for individual verification (Pulido et al., 2018).

Furthermore, resilience has a direct connection to *trust* and *loyalty*. The ability of a medium to adapt during crises fosters long-term credibility and strengthens audience commitment. Loyalty, in turn, can reinforce resilience by providing stable support and legitimization, creating a virtuous cycle (Lengnick-Hall et al., 2011; Vogus & Sutcliffe, 2007).

Crucially, resilience is not only an internal organizational capacity but also a societal value: media organizations act as resilience enablers by providing reliable information during crises and promoting social sustainability. This includes innovation capacity, where resilient organizations are better

positioned to navigate the sustainability transformation and digital disruption, ensuring both continuity and adaptation (Hollnagel, 2011; Waisbord, 2019).

In sum, the resilience value reflects the perceived ability of media to withstand and recover from crises, while safeguarding independence, ethical orientation, and journalistic quality. For users, resilient media create assurance in uncertain environments, lower the burden of verification, and cultivate deeper trust and loyalty. In this sense, resilience becomes a distinct value dimension that connects organizational capacities with user expectations, while simultaneously positioning media as enablers of individual and societal resilience.

**Conceptual aspects of resilience value for media users include:**

- Crisis robustness & adaptability: perceived ability to maintain reliable information and services under pressure or disruption (Branicki et al., 2016).
- Ethical integrity & independence: safeguarding against political, economic, or commercial influence (Branicki et al., 2016).
- Authenticity & transparency: providing traceable, verifiable content that reduces user effort for fact-checking (Pulido et al., 2018).
- Trust & credibility: fostering user confidence in both ordinary and crisis situations.
- User loyalty as resilience reinforcement: stable audience relationships that both reflect and strengthen resilience (Lengnick-Hall et al., 2011; Vogus & Sutcliffe, 2007).
- Resilience as enabler: the role of media in strengthening societal and individual resilience, particularly in contexts of misinformation, sustainability transformation, and political discourse (Hollnagel, 2011; Waisbord, 2019).
- Innovation capacity: the ability to learn from crises, adapt practices, and develop new solutions that align with evolving social, technological, and sustainability demands.

These conceptual aspects not only highlight how resilience in media organizations creates value for users but also offer a foundation for operationalization. To capture resilience as a measurable construct, the identified dimensions have been translated into survey items (R1–R9) in Table 5. These items reflect user perceptions of crisis robustness, ethical integrity, authenticity, trust, loyalty, as well as the broader role of media as resilience enablers and innovation drivers in the context of societal and sustainability challenges.

### 3 Development of a measurement scale

#### **3A CAN A MEASUREMENT SCALE BE DEVELOPED FROM THE THEORY AND LITERATURE?**

Based on the previous theoretical analysis, it has already been shown that a variety of terms and benefit aspects from the existing literature can be assigned to the five dimensions of TCV (Sheth et al., 1991). This provides a conceptual basis for capturing media use from a value-related perspective. **However, there is currently no established measurement scale** that operationalizes this structure of consumer values comprehensively and across media. Existing scales were mostly developed for specific contexts – for example, for the advertising effectiveness research (e.g., informativeness according to Ducoffe,

1995), the technology acceptance (perceived usefulness according to Davis, 1989) or the individual platforms and services such as social media, instant messaging or location-based services (Aikat et al., 2024; Huang & Lin, 2023; Zhang & Mao, 2012). These scales capture partial aspects of what can be understood as functional, emotional, social, or epistemic value within the framework of TCV – but a theoretically consistent overall structure is still lacking.

Against this background, a **literature-based comparison of existing scales and items** was conducted. The goal was to examine **the extent to which thematically related scales and definitions from different studies can be traced back to common value dimensions**. To this end, relevant empirical studies were reviewed, and all reported scales and measurement items relating to user value were extracted. These were then comparatively analyzed through a structured content analysis in which items were grouped according to semantic and thematic similarity. This systematic evaluation provides the foundation for developing a proprietary, theory-based measurement instrument.

The analysis shows that, despite terminological diversity and different contexts of origin, many of the scales used exhibit **content overlaps**, particularly with regard to recurring central themes – such as usefulness, learning potential, social integration, or emotional resonance. These recurring semantic patterns support the assumption that an integrated measurement concept for capturing **consumer values in the media context can be developed** based on the TCV, which is theoretically sound and empirically compatible. Such an approach offers the opportunity to consolidate existing research, bridge terminological inconsistencies, and systematically capture media consumption and use from the perspective of values.

### **3B WHAT COULD THE MEASUREMENT SCALE LOOK LIKE?**

Based on the TCV (Sheth et al., 1991), a multidimensional measurement scale, assuming conceptually and empirically distinct value dimensions, can be developed that captures the value-related reasons for media use in a differentiated manner. The scale could be based on the five central value categories of the TCV, as well as the added dimension, and represent them as independent constructs in the sense of latent variables. Each of these constructs would be operationalized by several indicators (items) and made empirically measurable within the framework of a structurally valid questionnaire.

The scale's structure would thus be reflective: The observable items are considered expressions or manifestations of the underlying values. For example, statements about social recognition reflect social value, while statements about playful experiences are assigned to epistemic value. Such a reflective scale structure enables a factor-analytical verification of the theoretically assumed value dimensions (for a review, see Jarvis et al., 2003).

The scale's development is also supported by the demonstrated delimitation and conceptual independence of the TCV dimensions (Sheth et al., 1991), as shown in the literature in the previous sections through the compilation and analysis of existing studies. At the same time, the model allows for a content-open and media-independent application, as it is not limited to specific platforms or media formats. Rather, it is intended to capture the fundamental value attributions of users in their interactions with media – for example, in information searches, entertainment, social connection, or emotional processing.

It would also be worth examining whether the five main dimensions can be understood as higher-level latent constructs, possibly containing sub-dimensional facets. For example, functional value could be subdivided into sub-aspects such as usefulness, informativeness, or efficiency gain. Emotional value could also potentially be subdivided into sub-facets such as authentic resonance, emotional self-efficacy, and familiarity. Such a hierarchical measurement model would enable a differentiated analysis and allow for connection to existing research traditions.

**Ultimately, the proposed scale could provide a basis for a differentiated analysis of value-based media consumption and use, including analyzing social sustainability and identifying leverage points for increasing value creation for advertisers. The next step will therefore involve the development of a separate theory-based scale that will make the presented aspects empirically feasible.**

## 4 Compilation of a measuring scale

### Functional Value

The development of the functional value items is based on a systematic evaluation of the empirical studies cited in previous sections, which have captured functional consumption and utility aspects in different media contexts. Several recurring dimensions of meaning were identified in the literature review:

1. **Goal-oriented use:** Media are used to efficiently achieve personal or objective goals (e.g., Ashraf et al., 2019; Dootson et al., 2016; Davis, 1989; Zhang & Mao, 2012).
2. **Usefulness & problem solving:** Content or platforms help in completing specific tasks or in dealing with information (e.g., Huang & Lin, 2023; Zhang & Mao, 2012).
3. **Information gain:** Media use provides current, relevant, or situation-related information (e.g., Aikat et al., 2024, Ducoffe, 1995).

In particular, the scales for perceived usefulness according to Davis (1989) and informativeness according to Ducoffe (1995) have been increasingly used and adapted to different contexts (e.g., Dootson et al., 2016; Zhang & Mao, 2012). These aspects occur independently of the medium or usage context under investigation and indicate robust semantic consistency in the understanding of functional benefits. Regardless of whether apps, advertising, or social media are involved, similar value propositions are coming to the fore: media should be informative, efficient, useful, and cognitively helpful.

### Social Value and Social Gratification Value

In the literature analysis, three central dimensions of meaning were identified:

1. **Social recognition and status:** Some items relate to the need for social validation and positive external perception. Media use is linked to the desire to be accepted, admired, or perceived as modern (e.g., Zhang & Mao, 2012; Ji et al., 2024; Dootson et al., 2016).
2. **Group belonging and connectedness:** Additional items emphasize the role of media in social integration, building contacts, and maintaining relationships. Here, the feeling of being part of a social network or community is paramount (e.g., Huang & Lin, 2023; Aikat et al., 2024).

3. **Social interaction and exchange:** A third cluster refers to interaction options, such as group chats, shared content, or dialogic functions. Media is understood as a means of regularly and easily engaging with others (e.g., Huang & Lin, 2023; Kim & Han, 2009).

These dimensions form the conceptual foundation for developing items that assess social value in the context of general media use and media consumption. Social value here refers to interpersonal benefits such as fostering connection. To fully reflect the Value Media framework, however, it is important to distinguish this interpersonal focus from more peripheral, collective value aspects (Chan-Olmsted et al., 2024). These collective aspects are captured by the separate construct of Social Gratification Value, introduced earlier, which reflects the perceived value users attribute to media that serve broader societal purposes, such as advancing public knowledge, civic discourse, cultural inclusivity, and collective well-being. Whereas social value addresses an individual's direct social experience through media, Social Gratification Value emphasizes the indirect, socially sustainable impact of media consumption on the collective or public good.

### **Emotional Value**

The following thematic focuses could be identified for the emotional value:

#### **1. Positive emotional experience through use**

Numerous items emphasize the pleasant feeling that the use or consumption of media offers triggers such as joy, enjoyment, or relaxation. Media are a source of positive affects (e.g., “would make me feel good”, “would give me pleasure”, Sweeney & Soutar, 2001; Zhang & Mao, 2012).

#### **2. Emotional self-image and empowerment**

Some of the items refer to media as an amplifier of positive self-perception. Users feel more intelligent, confident, or competent through their use. This was demonstrated, for example, by Zhang & Mao (2012) through statements such as “I feel confident when I use my location-based services,” was operationalized.

#### **3. Escapism and emotional detachment**

Other items describe media as a means of temporary escape from everyday life or as a distraction. The scales by Turel et al. (2010) particularly demonstrate that the immersive quality of media is used to “detach oneself from everything” or “immerse oneself in another world.”

#### **4. Emotional connection, enjoyment of use, and entertainment**

Some formulations (e.g., “is one that I would enjoy“, Sweeney & Soutar, 2001) refer to an emotional proximity or connection to the user experience itself. It is less about concrete feelings, but about the affective attraction of the medium as such. Additionally, the entertaining nature of media content is reflected, among others, in the scales of Ashraf et al. (2019), Aikat et al. (2024), and van Deventer & Saraiva (2025), which define media as a source of pleasure and entertainment.

These meaning facets form the basis for the development of a theory-based scale to assess emotional value in the context of media use. Existing scales provide consistent anchor points for this purpose.

## Epistemic Value

The following content-consistent dimensions could be identified:

1. **Curiosity, knowledge acquisition, and cognitive stimulation:** Items address the cognitive stimulation and knowledge acquisition through media use. Media serve as a source of new information or creative approaches to knowledge (e.g., Zhang & Mao, 2012).
2. **Novelty and positive surprise:** In addition, there are items that link media use with ease, playfulness, or unexpected positive moments. This is particularly evident in the *Perceived Playfulness scale* by Huang & Lin (2023), for example through formulations such as “ always gives me unexpected surprises“.

These two dimensions form the basis for the conceptual assessment of epistemic value in the context of socially sustainable media use. The scale of Motives for Using Social Networking Sites (SMU-SNS) for adolescents and youths (Pertegal et al., 2019) served as a basis for developing new items, among others (i.e., Aikat et al., 2024; Chou et al., 2022; Huang & Lin, 2023).

## Conditional Value

For the area of media use, only one relevant scale (Zhang & Mao, 2012) is available in the analyzed literature, which refers to location-based services (LBS). Despite the limited data, the available items provide important substantive clues for a theoretically sound measurement concept:

1. **Situation-specific use:** All items on the scale emphasize that certain usage motives or needs only arise under specific circumstances - e.g. when traveling, in unfamiliar environments, or unplanned situations (" when I am on a trip," " when I do not plan ahead "). Media use is therefore not continuous, but rather reactive to specific contexts. Availability also plays a role, for example, magazines need to be physically bought, while online magazines can be accessed at home. Therefore, accessibility could be an important aspect, which becomes relevant even before a medium can be used.
2. **Context-sensitive utility:** Conditional value manifests itself in the fact that media offerings are experienced as particularly useful or relevant under certain conditions. This suggests that users consciously utilize situational media functions - an aspect that is particularly relevant for mobile, location- or time-dependent media use.

The items presented here thus provide an initial substantive basis for operationalizing conditional value in the media context. However, scale development requires contextual expansion (i.e., location and platform).

Particularly relevant for the development of own measurement items were the scales of **Davis (1989)**, **Pertegal et al. (2019)**, **Sweeney and Soutar (2001)**, **Chou et al. (2022)**, **Schultz and Kaiser (2025)**, **Papacharissi and Rubin (2000)** as well as **Rubin (1983)**. The following table provides an exemplary overview of key items from these key studies, organized by value dimensions:

Value	Source	Example items
Functional Value	Davis (1989)	“... would make it easier to do my job.” “... would enable me to accomplish tasks more quickly.”
	Chou et al. (2022)	“... Compared to other media, listening to podcasts can help me understand a certain topic.” “...I think there is abundant information I can get when I listen to podcasts.”
	Pertegal et al. (2019)	“I use ... to be informed about the news.”
Social and Social Gratification Values	Sweeney and Soutar (2001)	“... would help me to feel acceptable.” “... would improve the way I am perceived.” “... would make a good impression on other people.” “Using ... gives me (social) recognition.”
	Papacharissi and Rubin (2000)	“I use the internet to belong to a group.” “I use the internet to belong to help others.”
	Rubin (1983)	“I watch TV because it makes me feel less lonely.” “I watch TV because it’s something to do when friends come over.”
Emotional Value	Schütz and Kaiser (2025)	“Shopping <sup>1</sup> via mobile/digital devices is a pleasure.” “Shopping via mobile/digital devices gives me a good feeling.” “Shopping via mobile/digital devices entertains me.”
	Chou et al. (2022)	“Listening to podcasts makes me happy.” “Listening to podcasts is my entertainment.”
	Papacharissi and Rubin (2000)	“I use the internet because it is enjoyable.”
Epistemic Value	Huang and Lin (2023)	“An instant messaging app adds fun to my life.” “An instant messaging app always gives me unexpected surprises.”
Conditional Value	Schütz and Kaiser (2025)	“I appreciate the independence of time and place that mobile/digital devices offer.” “I appreciate the real-time information and interactions that mobile/digital devices make possible.”

**Table 4**

<sup>1</sup> In the Value Media context, this aspect would have to be adapted to use in general, not online shopping.

These items formed the basis for the theory-based scale development presented in the following table to capture consumer values in the media context (see Table 5). These items are supposed to be adaptable to specific media genres or brands (e.g., 1Live, FAZ, Instagram) and represent a first draft.

Value	Conceptual design of potential items Seven-point Likert scale, 1 = strongly disagree; 7 = strongly agree.
Functional Value	F1: "This medium helps me to stay informed about important issues." F2: "I use this medium purposefully to acquire new skills or knowledge." F3: "This medium provides me with useful information for my everyday life." F4: "I turn to this medium when I have specific questions." F5: "This medium supports me in completing practical tasks."
Social Value	S1: "Content published via this medium helps me feel connected to other people." S2: "I use this medium to stay in touch with friends, family, or communities." S3: "This medium is valuable to me when it raises awareness about important social topics." S4: "I also use this medium to "belong" socially." S5: "I value this medium because it contributes to public understanding." S6: "I value this medium because it promotes informed democratic discourse." S7: "I value this medium because it raises awareness of environmental issues." S8: "I value this medium because it promotes sustainable practices."
Emotional Value	Em1: "This medium helps me improve my mood." Em2: "I use this medium to relax or distract myself." Em3: "Some content published via this medium touches me particularly emotionally." Em4: "This medium makes me feel understood or empowered." Em5: "I find aspects in this media content with which I can personally identify."
Epistemic Value	Ep1: "I use this medium because it challenges my thinking or assumptions." Ep2: "I'm drawn to this medium because it sparks my curiosity about unfamiliar topics." Ep3: "I seek out this medium because exposes me to ideas or experiences I wouldn't encounter otherwise." Ep4: "I value this medium because it feels original, unexpected, or thought-provoking." Ep5: "I enjoy this medium because it introduces me to unfamiliar ways of thinking or storytelling."
Conditional Value	C1: "I use different media options depending on the situation."

	<p>C2: "Certain locations make this medium especially valuable to me (e.g., when commuting, when at home)"</p> <p>C3: "In specific life situations, this medium provides me with particular value - such as comfort, distraction, or focus."</p> <p>C4: "I adapt my media use to my daily routine or location."</p> <p>C5: "Sometimes I use this medium just because it's accessible."</p>
Social Gratification Value	<p>G1: "I use this medium because it helps me stay informed about issues that matter to society."</p> <p>G2: "I use this medium because it raises awareness to social or political issues."</p> <p>G3: "I use this medium because it gives a voice to different cultural or social groups."</p> <p>G4: "I use this medium because it contributes to the common good."</p> <p>G5: "I use this medium because it respects user privacy and data protection."</p>
Resilience Value	<p>R1: "I trust this media to inform me reliably in times of crisis."</p> <p>R2: "I value media that are guided by ethical standards."</p> <p>R3: "It's important to me that media remain independent under pressure."</p> <p>R4: "When I use this medium, I rarely feel the need to verify if the content is real or truthful."</p> <p>R5: "This medium makes it easy for me to check whether the information is accurate or well-sourced."</p> <p>R6 (Resilience as Enabler): "This medium helps me personally or socially to cope with challenges such as misinformation, crises, or societal change."</p> <p>R7 (Innovation Capacity): "I value media that adapt and innovate in response to crises or sustainability challenges."</p> <p>R8 (Leadership Resilience): "I value media that demonstrate strong leadership in overcoming crises and emerging stronger."</p> <p>R9 (Loyalty &amp; Timelessness): "I remain loyal to media that sustain their quality and trustworthiness over time."</p>

**Table 5**

### Next steps to the phase of research

The next phase of the research will focus on the development of interview guidelines for qualitative studies. In conclusion, these guides will be designed to capture the five core TCV dimensions as well as the additional constructs of resilience, authenticity, social benefit, and formative media experiences.

Imprint theory (for a review, see Marquis & Tilcsik, 2013) will be considered to explore whether early media experiences have a lasting influence on current media expectations and value perceptions.

Imprint theory is particularly relevant because it explains how formative experiences during sensitive periods create enduring patterns of perception and evaluation, which aligns well with the study of long-term media use. Unlike more general learning or socialization theories, Imprint theory explicitly emphasizes the persistence of early influences rather than ongoing adaptation (for a review, see Marquis & Tilcsik, 2013). It therefore provides a stronger conceptual basis for investigating how early encounters with specific media genres or brands continue to shape user value perceptions over time.

Then, findings from focus groups and interviews will be integrated into the current theoretical considerations. These methods will serve to validate initial item formulations, uncover potentially missing value dimensions, and ensure that the evolving scale aligns with practical media usage contexts.

### **Summary of Value Dimensions in the Value Media Context**

This is the first study to link TCV and media usage, developing an approach that considers media usage in all media genres. The TCV (Sheth et al., 1991) provides the conceptual foundation for analyzing user motives and value perceptions in media usage cross-genres. It distinguishes between five core value dimensions:

- Functional value (usefulness, efficiency, quality of information and services),
- Social value (social approval, peer influence, reputation effects),
- Emotional value (affective experiences such as enjoyment, excitement, comfort),
- Epistemic value (novelty, curiosity, and learning effects),
- Conditional value (situational benefits depending on context and occasion).

Building on this framework, the project has exploratively expanded the set of value dimensions to better capture the specificities of media usage and contemporary societal expectations. These include:

- **Trust**, shaping credibility, reliability, and confidence in media offerings,
- **Social gratification**, encompassing the relational benefits of media use, such as belonging, connection, and community-building through shared experiences,
- **Resilience**, understood as the capacity of media use to foster stability, coping, and well-being in times of uncertainty or crisis,
- **Familiarity**, which provides emotional comfort through continuity, predictability, and parasocial bonds.

Additionally, accessibility to content could play a role before content can even be consumed. Taken together, these established and newly developed dimensions highlight that media usage decisions are driven not only by short-term utility or entertainment, but also by long-term values that combine cognitive, emotional, social, and societal considerations. Within the Value Media framework, this broader perspective enables a more holistic assessment of media engagement and supports the development of sustainable strategies for both providers and consumers. It is especially important to note that this project has a multiplatform approach, considering all media genres.

## 5 GLOSSARY

Expression	Discipline	Description
Users	Communication Research	Active user of media offerings; increasingly interactive and co-creative.
Recipient	Communication Research	Perceiving recipient of media content; focus on reception and interpretation.
Consumer	Marketing	Individual who purchases products or services; focus on need satisfaction.
Buyer	Marketing	Person who actively makes a purchase; at the center of the consumer decision.
Customer	Marketing	Returning buyer with potential relationship to the provider (e.g. through loyalty).
Consuming recipient	Hybrid term	Connection between receptive reception and conscious media consumption.
Disinformation	-	Disinformation is false information which is deliberately intended to mislead (American Psychological Association, n.d.)
Misinformation	-	Misinformation is false or inaccurate information—getting the facts wrong (American Psychological Association, n.d.)

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