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What is Nordic Media Business Research?

An analysis of major research outlets

Media business research has been growing rapidly in the Nordic region. In a highly internationalised field of research, is there a line of enquiry that is distinctively Nordic? Based on an analysis of papers and articles presented at NordMedia or published in the two major journals, we find that, compared with other nationalities, Nordic researchers are on average more open to apply qualitative methods, more likely to study specific media platforms (e.g. newspapers and TV) and less likely to study general media phenomena. Nordic researchers are also more likely to have a policy perspective and less likely to use innovation as the theoretical prism.

The authors chaired Division 6, Media Management, Economics and Policy at the NordMedia conference in Copenhagen, August 2015. It came as a slight surprise to us when we discovered that this division had grown to be the 2nd largest division of the 22nd Nordic media research conference, only surpassed by journalism studies. In this article we reflect on media business studies in general and we investigate the approach of Nordic researchers.

What are media business studies?

Over the past two decades, the interest in media business has been growing rapidly among

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practitioners and academics. The leadership of news and media companies has been gradually professionalised, introducing management and marketing philosophies where journalistic ideals were previously the guiding choices. Some say this has led to a more market-oriented and commercial view on content creation and journalistic work. However, as a result of the impact of the economic crisis on traditional news media, business questions are absolutely central to the survival of organisations. Questions of digital business models, entrepreneurship, innovation, finance, branding and marketing call for answers in a situation where audiences are more and more reluctant to pay for journalistic content.

Development in the industry is accompanied by an equally growing interest in media business by academic scholars. Conferences such as the European Media Management Association, and the division for Media Management, Economics and Policy at NordMedia have experienced a rise in the number of submission records year by year. Three dedicated academic journals, all of them European and two of them Nordic, have been established

blished and presented in 2015, i.e. articles published in the Journal of Media Business Studies (JOMBS), the International Journal of Media Management (JMM), and papers presented at the NordMedia Conference in Copenhagen, Division 6. Media Management, Economics and Policy (Table 1). Articles or papers were coded as Nordic if one of the authors was affiliated with a Nordic university. This approach makes it possible to describe the current research front of this field. We are not investigating the history of media business research, nor are we speculating about its future in the Nordic region.

Table 1. Articles and papers examined, 2015 (number)

2015 Venue	Nordic	Other	Total
Journal of Media Business Studies (JOMBS)	3	11	14
International Journal of Media Management (JMM)	2	12	14
NordMedia Conference, Division 6	16	0	16
Total	21	23	44

Note: 2015 articles published in the Journal of Media Business Studies (JOMBS), the International Journal of Media Management (JMM), and papers presented at the NordMedia Conference in Copenhagen, Division 6. Media Management, Economics and Policy. Article or paper coded as Nordic if one of the authors was affiliated with a Nordic university.

Nordic media business researchers are more likely to study specific media platforms (e.g. industry or case studies of newspapers or TV) and less likely to study general media phenomena than researchers affiliated with universities in other regions (Table 2). About six out of ten articles and papers (57%) studied the impact of new media. The same was true of Nordic and other authors.

Nordic researchers are more likely to have a policy perspective and less likely to use innovation as the theoretical prism (Table 3). The characteristics of the Northern European media system might in part explain the research focus.

Table 2. Medium studied 2015 (per cent)

Medium	Nordic	Other	Total
TV	29	22	25
Newspaper	29	13	21
Film	0	17	9
Other	10	4	7
General	33	44	39
Total	100	100	100
Number of articles	21	23	44

Note: 2015 articles published in the Journal of Media Business Studies (JOMBS), the International Journal of Media Management (JMM), and papers presented at the NordMedia Conference in Copenhagen, Division 6. Media Management, Economics and Policy.

In this region, media policy is negotiated between the authorities and the players in the media industry, in what Hallin and Mancini (2004) characterise as a Democratic Corporatist media system, and it is typical that (1) newspapers have high circulation and readers from a broad section of the population, (2) a strong party political press has evolved to become more commercial, and to a greater extent politically neutral, and public broadcasting with a great degree of autonomy, (3) a great degree of professionalisation and institutionalised self-regulation, and (4) a strong degree of state intervention through regulation and subsidies, while freedom of speech is also protected (Krumsvik 2013). Hence, the research focus on policy and regulation (Table 3), as well as the strength of newspaper studies (Table 2), might not come as a surprise given the locality of Nordic researchers.

Table 3. Theoretical perspective 2015 (per cent)

Theory	Nordic	Other	Total
Policy	33	22	27
Strategy	24	26	25
Innovation	10	22	16
Other	33	30	32
Total	100	100	100
Number of articles	21	23	44

Note: 2015 articles published in the Journal of Media Business Studies (JOMBS), the International Journal of Media Management (JMM), and papers presented at the NordMedia Conference in Copenhagen, Division 6. Media Management, Economics and Policy.

The methodical approach is also different in the Nordic region, as researchers used qualitative methods more often than media business researchers from other regions (Table 4). This finding is in line with previous calls for more diverse methods and theoretical lenses (e.g. Küng, 2007).

Table 4. Methodological approach, 2015 (per cent)

Method	Nordic	Other	Total
Quantitative	24	50	37
Qualitative	71	50	61
Combination	5	0	2
Total	100	100	100
Number of articles	21	23	43

Note: 2015 articles published in the *Journal of Media Business Studies (JOMBS)*, the *International Journal of Media Management (JMM)*, and papers presented at the NordMedia Conference in Copenhagen, Division 6. Media Management, Economics and Policy.

We also coded the department affiliation of first authors, and found the Nordic contributions to be authored by a higher variety of scholars than contributions from other regions. About half the first authors (52%) from the

Nordic region were affiliated with schools of media study, while every fifth was affiliated with a business school (19%) or a school of technology (19%). In contrast, eight out of ten researchers from other regions (83%) were affiliated with a media department.

Conclusion

Nordic media business research is slightly different from media business studies in general. Based on an analysis of 2015 papers and articles, we find that Nordic media business researchers stretch across Media and Communication studies to Business schools, Sociology and other departments. They are more likely to study specific media platforms (e.g. newspapers and TV) and less likely to study general media phenomena, than researchers affiliated with universities in other regions. Nordic researchers are also more likely to have a policy perspective and less likely to use innovation as the theoretical prism. And, finally, Nordic researchers used qualitative methods more often than media business researchers from other regions. These differences might in part be explained by the characteristics of different media systems.

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