

The practices of media sales in a Finnish multi-channel media organization

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to contribute to a better understanding of the day-to-day activities of CRM and media sales as social practices in the context of media convergence. This study has two main objectives. First, it aims to characterize the key customer relationships of media sales. Second, it aims to identify the social practices of media sales and examine how these practices enable or constrain customer orientation. The empirical study is conducted in a Finnish media organization which is transforming its sales operation model towards more customer-oriented as a response to the challenges introduced by media convergence. The changes in the media environment and within the organization have profound implications on how media sales work is carried out and how customer relationships are managed, providing a current and interesting case context.

Research objectives are approached through a qualitative case study. The empirical data consists of nine thematic interviews in total, four of which were conducted in one of the media sales units of the case organization. Five interviews were conducted among customers of the media sales unit. The theoretical framework builds primarily on practice theory in social sciences and literature on media management, drawing also on customer relationship management literature. The practice perspective provides an interpretive lens through which attention is directed to the collectively shared norms, traditions, understandings, procedures and routines that seem to guide the everyday activities of marketing practitioners.

Overall, the case study provided a detailed view of the practical complexities of media sales in the context of media convergence. Based on the empirical analysis four social practices of media sales are identified. The practices of relationship management, steering, collaborating, and developing describe the underlying background understandings and the bodily activities that make up media sales. The study suggests that these interrelated practices consist of both enabling and constraining features towards customer orientation. Although the case organization has taken measures to enhance customer orientation, it was found that the old product-oriented logic is mediated through established, culturally and historically transmitted social practices.

Keywords Media management, media sales, media convergence, practice theory, CRM

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Tutkimuksen pyrkimyksenä on lisätä ymmärrystä asiakassuhteiden hallinnan ja mediamyynnin päivittäisestä toiminnasta sosiaalisina käytäntöinä mediakonvergenssin kontekstissa. Tällä tutkimuksella on kaksi päätavoitetta. Ensiksi, tutkimus pyrkii luonnehtimaan mediamyynnin keskeisiä asiakassuhteita. Toiseksi, se pyrkii tunnistamaan mediamyynnin sosiaaliset käytännöt sekä tarkastelemaan miten nämä käytännöt estävät tai edistävät asiakaslähtöisyyttä. Empiirinen tutkimus toteutettiin suomalaisessa mediaorganisaatiossa, joka on parhaillaan muuttamassa myyntimalliaan asiakaslähtöisemmäksi vastatakseen mediakonvergenssin asettamiin haasteisiin. Mediaympäristössä sekä organisaation sisällä tapahtuvilla muutoksilla on syvälinen vaikutus siihen, miten mediamyyntiä ja mediamyynnin asiakassuhteita johdetaan, tarjoten ajankohtaisen ja mielenkiintoisen tutkimuskontekstin.

Tutkielma on toteutettu laadullisena tapaustutkimuksena. Empiirinen aineisto koostuu yhdeksästä teemahaastattelusta, joista neljä on toteutettu tapausorganisaation yhdessä mediamyyntiyksikössä ja viisi tämän mediamyyntiyksikön asiakkaiden parissa. Teoreettinen viitekehys rakentuu pääasiassa yhteiskuntatieteisiin perustuvasta käytäntöteoriasta, mediajohtamisen kirjallisuudesta sekä asiakassuhteiden hallintaan liittyvästä kirjallisuudesta. Käytäntöteoria toimii tulkintakehyksenä, joka kohdistaa huomion yhteisiin normeihin, perinteisiin, käsityksiin, toimiin ja rutiineihin jotka ohjaavat markkinoinnin harjoittajien päivittäistä toimintaa.

Tapaustutkimus antoi yksityiskohtaisen näkemyksen mediamyynnin käytännön haasteista mediakonvergenssin kontekstissa. Empiirisen analyysin tuloksena voitiin tunnistaa neljä sosiaalista käytäntöä. Suhdejohtamisen, ohjaamisen, yhteistyön ja kehittämisen käytännöt kuvaavat taustalla vallitsevia käsityksiä sekä toimintoja, joista mediamyynti rakentuu. Tutkimuksen perusteella nämä toisiinsa yhteydessä olevat käytännöt koostuvat toisaalta sekä asiakaslähtöisyyttä edistävästä että sitä estävästä piirteistä. Vaikka tapausorganisaatio on tehnyt toimenpiteitä jotka edistävät asiakaslähtöisyyttä, tutkimuksen perusteella voidaan todeta, että tuotelähtöisyys nousee esiin vakiintuneista, kulttuurisesti ja historiallisesti välittyvistä sosiaalisista käytännöistä.

Avainsanat Mediajohtaminen, mediamyynti, mediakonvergenssi, käytäntöteoria, asiakassuhteiden hallinta (CRM)

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1 INTRODUCTION

*"There is a tremendous abundance of professional competence at [company]. Solid content production expertise, in particular, is a good foundation for building the future. The important thing right now is to navigate amidst the ongoing radical change in the media environment. We are seeking new business models and new ways of working for [company]. Such changes are best made through team efforts, together with people."
CEO of [company]*

This research is about how media sales is managed and carried out in Finnish media organizations that operate in the field of cross-media business. Media sales is typically defined as the selling of advertising space within a magazine, newspaper, website or other media. However, this definition ignores the complex nature of media sales as an everyday social practice. The aim of this study is to examine and identify these social practices and thus broaden our understanding of what media sales is about.

Media sales and the operation of media organizations in general are of special interest, since the whole industry is affected by a phenomenon labeled as media convergence, causing changes to which media companies must respond. In its most simple form, media convergence can be defined as the blending of 'old' or traditional media (e.g. magazines, newspapers, television, or radio) with new media (Internet-based forms of interactive communication) to deliver content (Lawson-Borders 2003). Taking a broader perspective, Jenkins (2004) defines media convergence as a technological, economic and cultural change that impacts the consumption of media and the mediation of information. Media convergence alters the relationship between existing technologies, industries, markets, genres and audiences, thus signifying a very holistic change. Consequently, the media industry is undergoing a major transformation, forcing media organizations to re-think their business models. Media companies around the world are struggling to adjust to changing modes of production, increasing competition, the erosion of traditional audience and advertiser basis, and changes in the market structure (Picard 2004: 1).

The phenomenal growth of the Internet (Lawson-Borders 2003) and the deep transformation emerging from the digitalization of media contents challenges the principles of the old one-way model of mass communication, shifting from one-way message sending and receiving to interactive communication with hybrid roles of senders and receivers (Couldry 2009). Already a decade ago Picard (2003) argued that the proliferation of analogue media and the development of digital media have caused significant changes in audience and advertiser behavior, challenging the long-term survival of the newspaper, magazine, and book industries. The volume and speed of technological change has created a challenging environment for media companies, for existing business models are expiring (Küng 2007) and the future outcomes are unpredictable (Bartosova 2011).

Media convergence is both a top-down corporate-driven process and a bottom-up consumer-driven process (Jenkins 2004), accounting for the complex nature of the phenomenon. On one hand, media organizations are learning how to deploy its channels in delivering media content by merging, adopting, converging and synergizing their brands and intellectual properties across channels to expand revenue opportunities, broaden markets and reinforce consumer loyalties (Jenkins 2004; Jenkins & Deuze 2008). On the other hand, consumers are learning to use the different media technologies so as to control the media flow and to interact with others (Jenkins 2004). Furthermore, it has been argued that the roles of advertisers, media producers and content consumers are converging in the current digital and networked global media ecosystem (Falkheimer & Jansson 2006).

Although media convergence creates new business opportunities for creative industries, Jenkins (2004) notes that it is also a risk because it requires media companies to rethink old understandings about what media consumption is, affecting both programming and marketing decisions. Consumers have become active and migratory and thus unpredictable (Jenkins 2004), setting a major challenge also to managing relationships with advertisers who follow the consumers, therefore affecting the work of media salespeople. The fundamental changes in the media sector will be reflected in the present practices among media workers and managers, with an emphasis on the need for managers to adopt 'convergent skills' that stand for content production, multiplatform and technology skills, people skills working with the creatives, and business acumen (Bartosova 2011: 196).

Media organizations have major challenges they need to respond to. First of all, consumption of media has been shifting from newspapers and other traditional media towards new, often digital-based media. As subscribers and newsstand copy buyers have decreased in their number, advertisers have followed this tendency in their advertising investments. In addition, the economic downturn has also affected negatively on the advertising income in media companies¹. In fact, media organizations have been struggling in creating solutions to compensate for the lost advertising and subscriber income. Among the interviews of media salespeople it was emphasized that one of media companies' current strategic business challenges is in fact developing new earnings models. One of such developments has been the set-up of paywalls in online newspapers, such that consumers are no longer able to consume media products free of charge. This is a major cultural change, and media companies around the world are gradually moving towards this direction. However, media companies still rely on advertising income, which sets the relationship between the media sales of media organizations and advertisers to a significant position. The case media organization is altering its sales operation model to be more comprehensive, customer-oriented and effective. It has profound implications on how media sales work is managed and carried out, as salespeople are increasingly required to offer customized, integrated media solutions instead of individual media products.

¹ The Association of Finnish Advertisers, Advertising barometer (published 16.1.2013)

This thesis will focus on the less addressed topic of managing and carrying out media sales by examining the social practices that construct the everyday work of media sales professionals. In this study, media sales is not considered a company function that operates in isolation and involves merely selling advertising space. Instead, it is considered as a social practice that is constructed through the everyday activities and shared background understandings carried by members within but also outside the department of media sales.

The theoretical framework builds primarily on practice theory in social sciences and literature on media management, drawing also on customer relationship management literature. The research setting and the rather multifaceted phenomenon under focus generate a need for a multi-disciplinary approach. Media organizations can be considered to be quite special cases in terms of managing and organizing work (Jenkins & Deuze 2008), which sets a challenge in applying the concepts and theories of the general discipline of management (Küng 2007). Therefore, the field of media management has emerged to build a bridge between the general theoretical disciplines of management and the special characteristics of the media industry (Küng 2008: 2). However, media management studies have for the most part remained on the macro level, and focused primarily on the external environment, structural characteristics, industry output and consumers rather than on the internal firm dynamics and its effect on firm performance (Küng 2007). Moreover, there seems to lack theoretical and empirical understanding in how business-to-business sales and customer relationships are managed and carried out in the context of media convergence. Scholars in the marketing discipline have been mainly focusing on conceptualizing customer relationship management as a set of processes. The practice perspective directs attention to the everyday doings of media sales, providing also an interpretive lens to understand how the socially instituted, historically and culturally transmitted practices guide practitioners in their daily work.

The study aims to answer the following research questions:

1. *How can the key customer relationships of media sales be characterized in Finnish multi-channel media organizations?*
2. *What are the relevant social practices of media sales that enable or constrain customer orientation?*

Research objectives are approached through a qualitative case study. The empirical case study is conducted in a Finnish company operating in the media industry among other fields across Europe. The empirical data consists of nine thematic interviews that include members of the case organization and its business customers. A qualitative approach with semi-structured, but rather open thematic interviews was chosen as a research approach in order to gain in-depth knowledge of a rather unknown

phenomenon. The research frame was strongly guided by empirical data, but did not follow a purely inductive approach since some theoretical understandings were used as an interpretive lens in the empirical analysis. This kind of approach in which empirical analysis is not directly based to theory but there are observable links between these two can be called *abductive* (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2002: 99). In practice, the research process turned out as an iterative process between empirical data and theory, during which the research questions and the choice of relevant theoretical base took shape and were revised.

Overall, the case study provided a detailed view of the practical complexities of media sales in the context of media convergence. Based on the empirical analysis four social practices of media sales are identified. The practices of relationship management, steering, collaborating, and developing mediate the underlying background understandings and the bodily activities that make up media sales. The empirical analysis shows that these interrelated practices consist of features that both enable and constrain customer orientation. Although the case organization has taken measures to enhance customer orientation, it was found that the old product-oriented logic is mediated through established, culturally and historically transmitted social practices.

The contribution of this thesis is two-fold. First, this study advances knowledge in the field of marketing management by contributing to a better understanding of the day-to-day activities of CRM and media sales as social practices. In particular, by articulating a practice-based approach to CRM, the study broadens the perspective on media sales from a mere marketing function of selling advertising space to a socially constructed organizational practice that is historically and culturally transmitted. Second, this thesis continues the practice-turn in the broader field of management and marketing research, by empirically exploring the social and communicative activity through which media sales is carried out in media organizations.

The study continues as follows: In *chapter 2* I will discuss the theoretical background of the study. A literature review of the relevant theories, including media management (Picard 2004; Küng 2007, 2008; Jenkins & Deuze 2008; Achtenhagen & Raviola 2009), customer relationship management (Srivastava et al. 1999; Day 2000; Payne & Frow 2005; Zablah et al. 2004), the practice theory in social sciences (Schatzki 2001; 2005; Reckwitz 2002) and the practice turn in organizational studies (Whittington 2006; Johnson et al. 2007; Skälén & Hackley 2011) will be presented.

Chapter 3 discusses the methodological choices. In this chapter I will also give an introduction of the case and describe the research process.

Chapter 4 is divided into two parts. Chapter 4.1 characterizes the key customer relationships of media sales, focusing on advertisers and media agencies. It examines what kind of actors they are and what kind of relationships they have with media organizations and with media salespeople in particular. In chapter 4.2 I present the four social practices of media sales which I have identified, focusing on how these practices

enable or inhibit customer orientation aimed by the case organization as a response to media convergence.

In *chapter 5* the findings will be summarized and will be further discussed. In this chapter I will also discuss the contributions and the limitations of this study and present suggestions for future research.

2 MEDIA SALES AS PRACTICE

This thesis will focus on the practice of media sales in a Finnish, multi-channel media organization in the context of media convergence. Media organizations are special cases in terms of managing and organizing work (Jenkins & Deuze 2008), for they operate in a dual-product marketplace. Studying the practice of media sales is thus a multifaceted topic and requires a multi-disciplinary approach.

The theoretical framework builds on three streams of literature. Media management literature acknowledges the special characteristics of media organizations and also the phenomenon of media convergence, which constitutes a significant part of the research context. Media sales is about managing customer relationships with advertisers but also managing dualities and other tensions within the organization, which ultimately affect to how media sales and customer relationship management (CRM) are carried out. For an organization that aims to become customer-oriented, it is relevant to study how the organization manages its customer relationships. The second part of the theoretical framework thus builds on customer relationship management literature to provide an overview of how this concept is defined and to examine what customer orientation implies to CRM. Finally, there is a review on the practice theory which is used as a lens through which the focus of empirical analysis is set upon the everyday activities and the shared background understandings that guide practitioners in their daily work.

2.1 Media management

The key purpose of media management is to build a bridge between the general theoretical disciplines of management and the special characteristics of the media industry (Küng 2008: 2). The media industry can be described as a collection of different industries that each have their unique features, but all share the common activity of creating mediated content (Küng 2008: 17). A media organization is engaged in transforming different types of intellectual and cultural inputs into products and services that are consumed by audiences or markets (Küng 2007). Media organizations can be considered to be quite special cases in terms of managing and organizing work (Jenkins & Deuze 2008). Media companies “are not thoroughbred commercial entities, but must also comply with public interest and artistic and creative imperatives” (Küng 2007: 24), or in other terms, have to balance between the creative autonomy of culture creators and the management of commercial enterprises (Jenkins & Deuze 2008). Many media organizations operate in a dual-product marketplace: they produce content for audiences, and ‘deliver’ audiences for the advertisers (Küng 2008: 9-10). The dual product nature of commercial media implies that revenues for media products are determined by both audiences and advertising, forcing media companies to appeal to both (Picard 2005).

Media convergence sets a challenging context to managing work in media organizations. According to Picard (2004), market changes are destabilizing the mature media industry and thus undermining long-term relationships with audiences and advertisers. What makes the business environment extremely challenging for media managers is the pace of changes, requiring unusual speed and agility from media companies that typically lack organizational flexibility and are inexperienced of operating in rapidly changing markets (Picard 2004). Furthermore, the multitude of forces behind the changes makes it difficult to determine where to focus attention. Sánchez-Tabernero (2004) argues that problems within struggling media companies can be usually traced to lack of leadership, appearing as an inability to innovate or to revise the company strategy. It is also suggested that the key reasons why media organizations fail in attempts to achieve synergies through mergers, for example, are infighting, slow centralized decision-making, mismanagement, lack of knowledge-sharing work culture, and a general lack of co-operation among different mediums within the same organization (Deuze 2009).

Deuze (2009) distinguishes four ways how convergence relates to media work (p. 474):

The *inclusion* of various stakeholders – professional producers, audiences, sources, sponsors – in the (co-)creation of media content and experiences

The *integration* of various media industries in a global production network

The *immaterialization* of media production practices – as skills, values and ideas rather than people or machines move across such networks

The *coordination* between distinctly different goals – creativity, commerce, content and connectivity – in the media production process.

Although these impacts are distinguished from the perspective of media production, they represent important themes also in managing and carrying media work on the commercial side. The fundamental and fast changes regarding technology and audiences, in particular, represent real challenges to managers in media organizations (Küng 2008: 1). As market conditions continue to change, media organizations must learn how to effectively engage in cross-media activities that involve co-operation between units within the organization, but also with other firms (Picard 2003). Picard (2003) argues that although audience behavior is at the core of changes in publishing industries, the advertiser responses to audience changes are the key factors in the funding and business models. This applies to the media industry throughout, although some variation can be found between different mediums. Küng (2008: 17) notes that although sectors within the media industry share commonalities and are subject to common environmental changes, these sectors also face challenges particular to that sector.

The specificities of media organizations and the media industry set a challenge in applying the concepts and theories of the general discipline of management and have generated a need for the field of media management (Küng 2007). With media management scholarship's youth relative to other fields (Sylvie & Weiss 2012) and its rapid growth over the past decade, the field of media management remains confused concerning its scope, purpose and methods (Küng 2007). The subject of media management has been earlier addressed by disciplines that are not grounded in the study of management and organizations, such as media economics, media studies, political economy, and mass communications and journalism (Küng 2008: 3). Understanding the type of impact new technologies has on the media industry and its products is important to various stakeholders, including media managers, practitioners, investors and consumers among others (Mierzewska & Hollifield 2006). Changes in the content delivery and media consumption patterns have motivated academics to study how such factors have affected organizations internally, and how these organizations participate in creating value for consumers (Bartosova 2011). According to Küng (2007), media management studies have remained for the most part on the macro level and focused primarily on the external environment, structural characteristics, industry output and consumers rather than studying the internal firm dynamics and how they affect firm performance. Although there has been a large stream of work on media companies' strategy, this work has applied rationalist strategy models that are content-oriented, and thus they have not been able to capture the complexity of organizations (Küng 2007).

There are, however, some studies that make an exception from the mainstream and take a more dynamic approach in studying media organizations. For example, Achtenhagen and Raviola (2009) discuss the concept of duality management in media companies, exploring how tensions change and are managed in a media company undergoing an extensive reorganization to embrace technological convergence. According to these authors, media companies are inherently facing conflicting dual demands of artistic and commercial orientations, finding three forms of organizational tensions that arise. First, *structural tensions* can derive from the way a company's tasks are organized. Second, *processual tensions* derive from the way the workflow in the company is organized and thus reflect issues of coordination and communication needs. Third, *cultural tensions* can derive from differences between professions in the media organization, as professions represent different norms, values, and mindsets. According to these authors, active and comprehensive management of these interlinked, interdependent, and dynamic tensions might enhance success in the reorganization process. Table 1 summarizes the dualities typical of media companies and the strategies to manage them.

<i>Dualities</i>	<i>Sources</i>	<i>Examples From the Case</i>	<i>Strategies</i>
Structural	Formal structuring of the organizational tasks	Internet newsroom versus paper newsroom	Reorganizing the structure of the organization
Processual	Organizing and coordinating the workflow	Editorial versus business staff; Reporters and editors for the paper versus for the Internet in the same newsroom	Training courses; Increasing collaboration; Facilitating knowledge sharing and communication through physical proximity
Cultural	Differences between professions	Desk journalists versus reporters; Print versus online journalists	Working at the perceptual level; Developing a new mindset

Table 1: Strategies for managing different dualities in news publishers (Achtenhagen and Raviola 2009, p. 39)

According to Achtenhagen and Raviola (2009), most tensions cannot be entirely solved, but their potential disfunctionality can be reduced and managed. The study by Achtenhagen and Raviola (2009) sheds light to the tensions that arise between media managers and editors, as well as the tensions between different subgroups among creative workers, focusing on managing intra-organizational dualities under reorganization. Although this study builds on a similar context as the study of Achtenhagen and Raviola (2009), instead of focusing on intra-organizational dualities this study focuses on the social practices of media sales, aiming to identify and describe how these practices enable or constrain customer orientation. In the following chapter I will review literature on customer relationship management, which constitutes an inherent part of media sales work.

2.2 Managing customer relationships in the media industry

The practice of media sales is constituted by a nexus of activities and the inherent logics or understandings that practitioners carry and draw on in their everyday activities. Managing the relationships with advertisers is one of the core activities of media sales. By exploring the practices of media sales the aim of this study is to find out how media organizations manage their customer relationships. In sales organizations customer relationship management is often reduced to *selling*, hence for a media organization that attempts to become customer-oriented it is interesting to see how customer relationships are managed.

A broad view on customer relationship management (CRM) is adopted in this study. Instead of considering CRM as something that organizations *have* (e.g. an IT system), it is viewed in this thesis as a social practice that involves the background understandings and activities aiming at building and sustaining customer relationships. CRM is more an ‘all-encompassing’ view over the activities between a company and both its consumer and business customers.

CRM definition and perspectives

Customer relationship management is a topic of growing interest, and academic research on this topic has begun to flourish after failed initiatives (Zablah et al. 2004). Interest in customer relationship management has expanded among both scholars and practitioners over the past decade (e.g. Parvatiyar & Sheth 2001; Reinartz et al. 2004; Payne & Frow 2005). According to Payne and Frow (2005) the term “customer relationship management” emerged in the information technology (IT) vendor community and practitioner community in the mid-1990s, and is often used to describe technology-based customer solutions. Although some companies view CRM primarily as investments in technology and software, others have taken a more expansive view and are developing sound and productive relationships with customers (Reinartz et al. 2004). According to Parvatiyar and Sheth (2001), companies are recognizing the need for in-depth understanding of their customers in order to build close, collaborative relationships. These authors suggest that the emergence of new channels and technologies is considerably altering the way organizations interface with their customers, shifting organizations towards a greater degree of integration between marketing, sales, and customer service functions. This development is particularly topical in the media and advertising industry, which sets the context for this study.

Customer relationship management has been studied from a number of perspectives and has been conceptualized as a process, strategy, philosophy, capability, and/or technological tool (Zablah et al. 2004). CRM literature seems to be inconsistent and highly fragmented, lacking a common conceptualization (Zablah et al. 2004). Also, there has been criticism about the severe lack of CRM research that takes a broader, more strategic focus (see Reinartz et al. 2004). Much work focuses on describing CRM as a set of processes, differing in their view on what constitutes CRM. For example, Reinartz et al. (2004) define CRM as the processes of relationship initiation, maintenance and termination, and study what is the impact of these processes on economic performance. Zablah et al. (2004), on the other hand, view CRM as an ongoing process involving the processes of knowledge and interaction management. According to Srivastava et al. (1999), the CRM process addresses all aspects of identifying customers, creating customer knowledge, building customer relationships, and shaping their perceptions of the organization and its products.

Increasingly, scholars have been taking a more strategic and holistic approach to CRM in the academic community (e.g. Lambert 2009), and thus it has become more than IT-enabled software for collecting customer data and managing the relationships on its basis. CRM can be viewed as one of the key business processes that explicitly contribute to generating and sustaining customer value and leading to marketplace success (Srivastava et al. 1999). Marketing scholars are engaging in studying the nature and scope of customer relationship management, developing conceptualizations regarding the value and process of collaboration between buyer-seller relationships (Parvatiyar & Sheth 2001). For example, Payne and Frow (2005) conceptualize CRM as a set of five key cross-functional processes that enhance customer and shareholder value: a strategy development process, a value creation process, a multichannel integration process, an information management process, and a performance assessment process. These authors argue that the definition of CRM significantly affects the way an entire organization accepts and practices CRM, and propose that CRM should be viewed broadly in any organization. They suggest the following definition of CRM Payne & Frow 2005: 168, emphasis added):

*“CRM is a strategic approach that is concerned with creating improved shareholder value through **the development of appropriate relationships with key customer and customer segments**. CRM unites the potential of relationship marketing strategies and IT to create profitable, long-term relationships with customers and other key stakeholders. **CRM provides enhanced opportunities to use data and information to both understand customers and cocreate value with them**. This requires a **cross-functional integration** of processes, people, operations, and marketing capabilities that is enabled through information, technology and applications.”*

In a similar vein, Parvatiyar and Sheth (2001: 5, emphasis added) define CRM as follows:

*“Customer Relationship Management is a comprehensive strategy and process of **acquiring, retaining, and partnering** with selective customers to create superior value for the company and the customer. **It involves the integration of marketing, sales, customer service, and the supply-chain functions of the organization** to achieve greater efficiencies and effectiveness in delivering customer value.”*

Both of these definitions take a broad view on customer relationship management, emphasizing its cross-functional nature and its role in creating value for customers and shareholders.

According to Parvatiyar and Sheth (2001) several factors have contributed to the rapid development of CRM. One of such factors includes the de-intermediation process in many industries facilitated by the computer and telecommunication technologies, which allowed producers to directly interact with end-customers. Also the growth of the service economy influenced the de-intermediation process and consequently the emergence of CRM, as the role of middlemen was minimized (ibid.). As observed by these authors, due to the de-intermediation process the nature of marketing is changing fast towards a more relationship-focused in several industries such as the airline, banking, or consumables industries. This is evident on the consumer side, but also in the business-to-business markets where firms aim at building collaborative and customer-oriented relationships.

Day (2000) argues that central to every market relationship is an exchange process of value, ranging from single anonymous or automated transactions to a complete collaboration and integration of the value exchanging partners. Transactional exchanges involve the series of continuous transactions in which the focus is on the exchange of standard products, whereas collaborative exchanges include ‘very close information, social, and process linkages, and mutual commitments made in expectation of long-run benefits’ (ibid.: 24). According to this view, how close a business relationship is formed relates to the type of communication exchanged, the tightness of the linkages, and the coordination mechanisms between the buyer and seller. Also Zablah et al. (2004) view customer relationships to consist of exchange processes, involving the exchange of products and services (the core benefit), exchange of information, and social exchange. According to Zablah et al. (2004), customer relationship management is concerned with the creation of market intelligence and using this intelligence to enhance the quality of interaction or ‘exchange episodes’ between buyers and sellers (p. 483). All interactions require active management to foster the development and growth of exchange relationships (ibid.).

According to Day (2000), a firm must master three elements in creating and maintaining collaborative market relationships. First, a relationship orientation must be infused in the mindset, values, and norms of the organization, thus influencing all interactions with

the customer. According to Srivastava et al. (1999), execution of the CRM subprocesses sometimes degenerates into mere work or task routines, leading to people becoming accustomed to doing their jobs in only one way. Therefore, these processes must be reinvigorated with a genuine customer or market orientation. Second, according to Day (2000), in creating and maintaining collaborative market relationships customer knowledge needs to be deepened and shared throughout the organization, utilizing the databases and transaction files. Third, the key processes must be integrated internally and aligned externally with the corresponding customer processes to strengthen the linkage with the customer.

A strategy of building close relationships is neither appropriate nor necessary for every company (Day 2000). In this study, the case organization is aiming at becoming more customer-oriented, implying that customers are created comprehensive media solutions instead of offered single media products. To succeed in this, building close relationships with their customers is regarded as an imperative. According to Srivastava et al. (1999), a change to a market-driven CRM process requires a shift from viewing customer relationships as means to sell, deliver, and service a product, to regarding these relationships as opportunities to learn how to create, satisfy and sustain customers' needs and wants. This implies intimate and sustained customer relationships, which are prerequisites to tailor solutions and other customer functionality enhancing activities (ibid.).

To conclude, companies are recognizing the importance of understanding their customers, and thus increasingly engage in building close, collaborative relationships with their customers. Furthermore, marketing scholars are more often adopting a broad and strategic view on customer relationship management. However, for a large part existing studies of customer relationship management are macro-level descriptions of the key processes of CRM, remaining unclear about what actually happens on the micro level and also what is the relationship between these micro activities and the wider social context. In addition, there is a lack of research in how customer relationships are managed in the context of media organizations. As discussed earlier, media organizations have a dual nature, having to balance between the artistic and commercial worlds, thus setting a special context also for managing customer relationships. The practice theory provides an interpretive lens through which the day-to-day media sales and customer relationship management activities can be analyzed.

2.3 Practice-theoretical approach to media sales

This section develops a practice-theoretical approach to studying media sales. The approach builds on the practice turn in social theory (Schatzki 2001; 2005; Reckwitz 2002), as well as practice-based management and marketing studies, with strategy-as-practice (Whittington 2006; Johnson et al. 2007; Jarzabkowski et al. 2007; Golsorkhi et al. 2010) and marketing-as-practice (Skålén & Hackley 2011; Svensson 2007) studies in particular. This approach directs attention to the everyday doings of marketing practitioners, highlighting the historically and culturally transmitted social practices that make up the practice of media sales.

2.3.1 Practice turn in social theory

The ‘practice turn’ has gathered momentum since the 1980s (Schatzki 2001; Reckwitz 2002), stemming from a wider intellectual movement in the social theory (Johnson et al. 2007: 30). The theory of social practices, or the ‘practice theory’, is a form of social and cultural theory with important contributions from authors such as Pierre Bourdieu, Anthony Giddens, Michel de Certeau, and Michel Foucault (Reckwitz 2002, Johnson et al. 2007: 34). This study will draw particularly on Theodore Schatzki (2001, 2005) and Andreas Reckwitz (2002) who are recent, strong influencers in the development of the practice approach in social theory and in the field of strategy. According to Reckwitz (2002), the turn to practices in social theory seems to be connected to an interest in the ‘everyday’ and ‘life-world’ (p. 246).

Practice theory aims to overcome the ancient dualism in social theory. The many strands within social theory all share a common concern with what people actually do (Schatzki 2001; Reckwitz 2002). However, according to Schatzki (2005) social theory has been divided since its emergence into two social ontological camps – individualism and societism. Social ontology is what explores the nature and basic structure of social life and social phenomena (ibid.). Ontological individualists explain social phenomena as constructions of individual people and their relations, whereas the societist view holds that there are social phenomena through which social affairs are analyzed and explained (ibid.). Whittington (2006) argues that individualists are criticized of focusing too much on human actors and forgetting the macro phenomena, whereas societists attribute only to large social forces. Practice theorists aim to overcome this dualism by respecting both individual actors and the larger social forces (Whittington 2006). A third ontology called ‘the site ontology’ has also emerged, in which social life is seen to be inherently tied to the context or site in which it happens (Schatzki 2005). In the terms of Schatzki (2005: 465) the type of context is ‘composed of a nexus of human practices and material arrangements’, and is thus central to analyzing and explaining social phenomena.

Cultural theories aim to explain action and social order through symbolic and cognitive structures and their social construction of reality (Reckwitz 2002), embracing the implicit, the tacit, and the unconscious aspects of collective knowledge (Skålén & Hackley 2011). Four cultural theories can be distinguished: mentalism, textualism, intersubjectivism, and practice theory. According to Reckwitz (2002) the most important difference between practice theory and the other forms of cultural theories is in where it situates the social. Cultural mentalism locates the social in the human mind; textualism locates the social in speech, texts or signs; intersubjectivism locates the social in interaction. Practice theory places the social in 'practices' and treats them as the smallest unit of social analysis (ibid.). According to Reckwitz (2002), practice theory considers institutional complexes as 'routinized body/ knowledge/ things-patterns of which discursive practices are components' (p. 259). In other words, practice theory does not focus only on discursive practices but also to the bodily and mental activities and material arrangements that form a nexus of practices.

The core themes of practice theory

Given that there are diverse disciplines referring to practices and thus numerous paths of thinking, there is no unified practice approach (Schatzki 2001). Although practice theory is heterogeneous, three core themes can be distinguished (Whittington 2006): society, individuality, and actors. First, according to Whittington (2006) there is the concern of how social systems define the practices that guide and enable human activity and behavior. Second, there is the interest in people's actual activity, requiring the attention of what happens 'in practice' (p. 615). Third, there are actors who make a distinction between practices and what actually happens. Hence, the notion of practice embodies different levels of the social.

There are several definitions for the concept of practice. Reckwitz (2002) defines practices as routinized types of behavior which consist of several interconnected elements such as bodily and mental activities, understanding and emotion. Jarzabkowski et al. (2007) argue that despite their routinized nature, they do not form rigid patterns but are rather diverse and variable in the way they are interconnected. Schatzki (2001) describes practices as embodied, materially mediated arrays of human activity that are centrally organized around shared practical understanding, which make up a nexus of interconnected human practices. Practices inherently entail shared understandings, cultural rules, languages and procedures (Whittington 2006). Hence, practices include regularly carried out performances of the body but also shared background understandings of the world (Järvensivu 2010).

To clarify the meaning of practices, Reckwitz (2002) makes a distinction between practice and practices (p. 249):

Practice (Praxis) in the singular represents merely an emphatic term to describe the whole of human action (in contrast to 'theory' and mere

thinking). 'Practices' in the sense of the theory of social practices, however, is something else. A 'practice' (Praktik) is a routinised type of behaviour which consists of several elements, interconnected to one another: forms of bodily activities, forms of mental activities, 'things' and their use, a background knowledge in the form of understanding, know-how, states of emotion and motivational knowledge.

Praxis is what practitioners actually do, entailing all the various activities involved in formulating and implementing strategy, for example. Practices are multilevel, ranging from organization-specific practices to up to practices of whole societies (Whittington 2006). According to Miettinen et al. (2009), the practice approach in organizational studies challenges researchers to bridge the three analytical levels of organizational phenomena: micro (what people say and do); meso (routines); and macro (institutions).

The third core theme in the practice turn is the actors who make a distinction between practices and what actually happens (Whittington 2006). According to Reckwitz (2002), a practice is a pattern which can be reproduced by a multitude of single and often unique actions. Individuals, then, act as the 'carrier' of a practice, who not only carry patterns of bodily behavior but also routinized ways of understanding, knowing how and desiring (Reckwitz 2002). These actors differ in their skills and in the way they interpret and draw on the stock of practices (Whittington 2006). What is important to this third theme is the assumption that people are not mindless reproducers of practices but instead they have influence on them and how they act in practice. Practitioners can be seen as the linkage between intra-organizational praxis and the organizational and extra-organizational practices that they rely on and actively draw on in performing the praxis (Whittington 2006).

2.3.2 Practice perspective in management and marketing studies

In recent years a number of fields within organizational studies and elsewhere have adopted and developed the practice theme (Miettinen et al. 2009). According to Feldman and Orlikowski (2011), practice theory offers a powerful analytical tool to study contemporary organizing, which is increasingly understood complex, dynamic and mobile. Across a range of disciplines that have turned towards practice, people's ordinary practical activities are taking a central place in the discussion (Johnson et al. 2007: 30). In the organizational context the focus of studies is in what humans actually 'do' when managing, making decisions, strategizing, and organizing (Miettinen et al. 2009).

Practice-based management studies

Different fields of management research are engaging increasingly with the practice turn, sharing a commitment to understanding human activity and the interrelationships

between the three focal themes in the practice research: people, activity and the wider society (Whittington 2006). The practice turn has influenced fields such as technology (e.g. Orlikowski 2000), organizational learning (e.g. Nicolini et al. 2003; Gherardi 2000, 2006), institutional change (e.g. Seo and Creed 2002), accounting (e.g. Ahrens & Chapman 2007; Fauré & Rouleau 2011), leadership (e.g. Carroll et al. 2008), strategy (e.g. Jarzabkowski et al. 2007; Whittington 2006; Chia & Holt 2006, Hendry & Seidl 2003), and marketing (e.g. Holt 1995; Hirschman et al. 1998; Allen 2002; Araujo et al. 2008).

The practice theory can be viewed as a lens through which the world is understood (Feldman and Orlikowski 2011). Three modes of studying practice can be distinguished within organization studies: first, an *empirical* focus on how people act in organizational contexts, focusing on the everyday routine and improvised activities of organizing; second, a *theoretical* focus on understanding relations between actions of individuals and the structures of organizational life, explaining how everyday activities are generated, and third; a *philosophical* focus on the fundamental role of practices in producing organizational reality (ibid.).

The practice perspective has increasingly gained ground in strategy research, and quite recently there has been established a clearly defined sub-discipline called *strategy-as-practice* (Golsorkhi et al. 2010: 3). Contributions in the strategy-as-practice (s-as-p) discipline have laid a foundation for practice-based studies in the field of marketing. The approach focuses on the micro-level social activities, processes and practices that make up strategy and strategizing (ibid.: 1). In applying the practice perspective strategy is understood as something that organizations *do* as opposed to the traditional view of strategy as something that organizations *have*, such as diversification strategies or strategic planning processes (Whittington 2006; Jarzabkowski 2004; Johnson et al. 2007). The practice perspective is essentially concerned with strategy as an activity carried out by organizational members, going deeper from the level of abstraction into studying what actually happens in organizations (Johnson et al. 2007: 3-4). Strategy-as-practice is distinct from the conventional strategy research in its focus on human actors and their actions instead of the focus on industry-level effects upon firm performance (Jarzabkowski & Spee 2009). According to Johnson et al. (2007: 3) the focus of s-as-p researchers is essentially in two questions neglected in the traditional strategy research agenda: the actual activity among people engaged in strategizing and their influence in strategic outcomes. In particular, studies focus on how strategy is constituted through the everyday actions of organizational participants, and aim understand how these strategies constrain or enable actions (Feldman & Orlikowski 2011). However, there is no unified view over the definition of practice and especially what exactly strategic activity or 'strategizing' entails.

The advantages in using a practice approach are summed up by Golsorkhi et al. (2010: 2-3). First, it provides an opportunity to examine micro-level social activity and also its construction in a real social context. The flexibility in the notion of practice enables activities to be studied from various perspectives – for instance as intentional or non-

intentional action, cognition, embodied material practice, discourse or text. Second, the practice approach emphasizes the need to understand activities as enabled or constrained by the prevailing practices of how actors are supposed think, feel or communicate in the given social context. Third, the concept of practice can be used to explain the link between social action and the reproduction of routines, rules and norms.

Practice-based organization studies have also received some criticism and have raised some concerns among researchers. For example, Geiger (2009) finds that the concept of practice is used very differently in practice-based organizational studies. Also Corradi, Gherardi, and Verzella (2010) criticize the ambiguity of the concept of practice. Geiger (2009) argues that organization studies that understand practice as ‘what actors do’ are not displaying much critical power, and views these studies as extensions of the process perspective (p. 129). Practice-based organization studies should not simply examine what people do in organizations but rather try to explore why and how practices become established in organizations, which normative and institutionalizing power they unfold and how practices are changed (ibid.).

To clarify the notion of strategic activity and strategizing, scholars using the practice approach in strategy research have created a conceptual framework for analyzing strategy-as-practice and (Whittington 2006; Jarzabkowski et al. 2007). This framework is presented in figure 1.

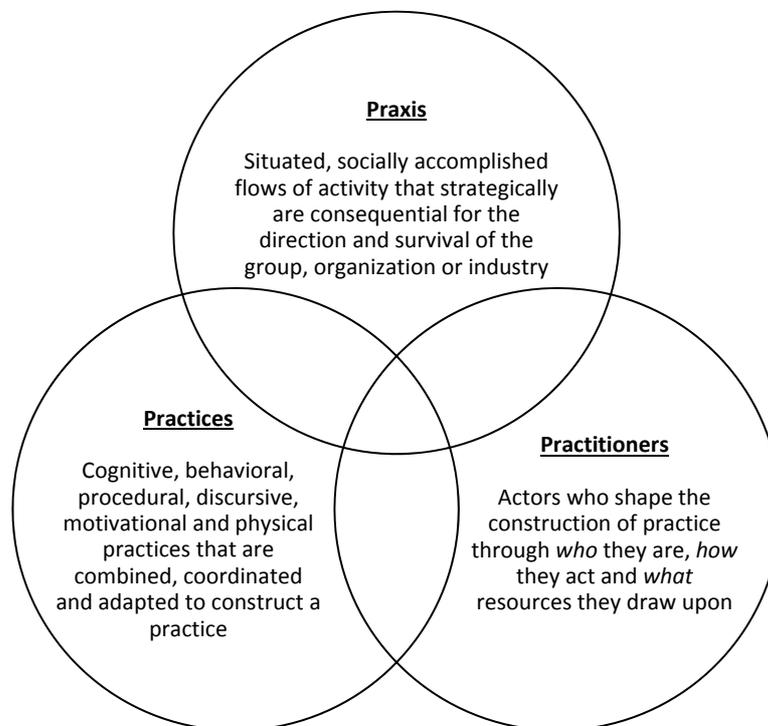


Figure 1: A conceptual framework for analyzing strategy-as-practice (Jarzabkowski et al. 2007)

The framework underpins the key concepts within practice-based studies: the practices produced both by organizations and their wider social field/the society, the actual activity by the individual, and the actors or practitioners (Whittington 2006). According to Jarzabkowski et al. (2007) these concepts are distinct but interconnected, forming a nexus in which the social practice of strategizing occurs. In studying activities within organizations, Whittington (2006) emphasizes the need to understand the wider social context in which strategizing activities were made. Instead of working in isolation, actors draw upon the regular, socially defined *modus operandi* that arise from the many social institutions to which actors belong (Whittington 2006; Golsorkhi et al. 2010: 4). A *modus operandi* can be defined as an internalized disposition to act in a manner consistent with past actions and experiences (Chia and Holt 2006). In turn, society is produced by activities of individuals (Whittington 2006). The interrelationship between activity and society are a central part of the framework (ibid.). Although this framework was created as an analytical tool for analyzing the field of strategy-as-practice, the same concepts apply also to other fields of practice-based research.

Practice-based marketing studies

The practice turn in the strategy literature has been followed by recent attempts to develop a practice-orientation also within the marketing research discipline. Although there is a growing engagement with practice theory in the marketing research discipline (Skålén & Hackley 2011), it seems that the practice approach has not yet gained strong ground in marketing research. The practice-based marketing studies draw on practice work in contemporary social theory, management and strategic management studies, building especially on strategy-as-practice research (e.g. Jarzabkowski 2004; Jarzabkowski et al. 2007; Whittington 2006, 2007) but is ‘not confined to it’ (Skålén & Hackley 2011: 190). Although some exceptions exist (e.g. Ardley 2005; Brownlie et al. 2007; Skålén 2009, 2010; Svensson 2007), Skålén and Hackley (2011) find that marketing has attracted criticism for being ideologically-driven, lacking empirical research into how marketing is really carried out in organizations. For example, Svensson (2007) calls for studies that perceive marketing work as a human and, thus, social practice. He argues that especially the marketing management approach (see e.g. Kotler 2000) tends to neglect the interconnectedness of society and marketing. According to Svensson (2007), marketing work is assumed as a predefined set of activities, tools and goals, rather than a social practice produced in the daily activities of marketing practitioners. The worldview of the marketing management approach is ‘conformist and static’, excluding the possibility of social change (ibid.: 273).

The practice approach thus seeks to invigorate empirical studies in marketing and consumption (Skålén & Hackley 2011) by directing focus to the emergent and unfolding practices that actors engage in (Araujo et al. 2008). Increasingly, scholars view marketing as a social construction and a discourse (Hackley 2001; Skålén et al. 2008), operating in various levels within and outside organizations (Skålén & Hackley

2011). Similarly to the practice-based view on strategy, marketing work is approached as a social phenomenon or social activity emerging in the everyday life of marketing practitioners rather than a pre-given object (Svensson 2007). A key focus in the emerging practice-oriented marketing literature has been in identifying different types of marketing practices in different social contexts (Skålén & Hackley 2011). Practice-based marketing research has been done within the topics of consumption practices (e.g. Holt 1995; Warde 2005), the practices of how markets are constructed (Kjellberg & Helgesson 2007a, 2007b), value creation practices in brand communities (Schau et al. 2009), interactive value formation (Echeverri & Skålén, 2011) and corporate brand building (Järventie-Thesleff et al. 2011). Some papers focus on the discursive practices in different contexts, such as service productization (Jaakkola 2011) and customer orientation (Koskull & Fougère 2011).

Thus, there is a growing engagement with practice theory in the field of management and marketing, focusing on identifying the social or discursive practices within different organizational contexts. However, currently there is little theoretical understanding of customer relationship management as a day-to-day activity within business processes, especially in the context of media sales. The intention of this study is to find out how media sales is managed and carried out in Finnish media organizations, shedding light into the routinized behavior and collectively shared background understandings that constitute the social practice of media sales. Rather than considering media sales as an isolated function, it is considered as a social phenomenon comprised of the activities and practices carried out by individuals within and between organizations.

3 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Choice of research methodology

The research was conducted as a qualitative case study, focusing on exploring how media sales is managed and carried out in a Finnish media organization that operates in the field of cross-media business. The aim of this study is to gain in-depth knowledge of the bodily and mental activities as well as the shared background understandings that constitute the social practice of media sales. The research topic lacks previous empirical studies and is concerned with a relatively complex social phenomenon, for which a qualitative approach is the most suitable for this study.

Qualitative methods allow exploring phenomena that we don't have knowledge of in advance, and are regarded to provide a more in-depth understanding of social phenomena than quantitative methods. Qualitative methods enable the exploration of the social actions, processes and culture that make up the organization (Koskinen et al. 2005). Qualitative studies attempt to find answers for questions like *how* and *why*, aiming at providing detailed, in-depth knowledge of a certain phenomenon (Saarela-Kinnunen & Eskola 2001, 159-160). Also *what* questions are typical to qualitative business research, focusing on exploring and describing states, situations and processes (Eriksson & Kovalainen 2008: 39). Typically, qualitative case studies aim to understand and learn something new about an unknown, culturally situated phenomenon and to find new theoretical perspectives instead of finding universal truths (Alasuutari 1996, 371-374; Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2004: 59). According to Eriksson and Kovalainen (2008: 4-5), many qualitative research approaches understand reality as socially constructed, and are therefore concerned with interpretation and understanding how the social reality is produced. In qualitative studies the context becomes important in the data collection and analysis. On the contrary, quantitative approaches are often concerned with explanation, testing of hypothesis, and statistical analysis, having more standardized and abstracted modes of data collection and analysis.

The empirical part of this thesis is based on a single case study. Eriksson and Kovalainen (2008: 116) suggest that case studies should be understood as a research approach or strategy rather than a method since case studies be used both in qualitative and quantitative studies (see also Yin 2003: 14-15). A case study offers a means to study and understand a contemporary and complex phenomenon within its real-life context (Yin 2003: 1-2). The phenomenon in this research consists of managing and carrying out media sales in a real-life context in a Finnish media organization.

Eriksson and Kovalainen (2008: 118) have identified two types of case studies. Case studies can be carried out as intensive or extensive studies, the former indicating often to single and the latter to multiple case studies. According to this distinction, intensive

case studies aim at understanding holistically a unique case from inside, whereas extensive studies aim at elaboration or generation of generalizable theoretical constructs by comparing several cases (ibid.: 118). This study cannot be explicitly described as either one but rather falls in between, having features of both types. Carried as a single case study it aims at gaining a comprehensive insight from a single case, but it also aims at generating theoretical constructs that apply also outside the case organization.

The research frame was strongly guided by empirical data, but did not purely follow an inductive approach, since some theoretical understandings were used as an interpretive lens in the empirical analysis. This kind of approach in which empirical analysis is not directly based to theory but there are observable links between these two can be called *abductive* (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2002: 99). In practice, the research process turned out as an iterative process between empirical data and theory, during which the research questions and the choice of relevant theoretical base took shape and were revised.

3.2 Introduction of the case and case context

The description of the context is relevant to understand the broader social and historical background of the phenomenon (Hirsjärvi and Hurme 2004: 146). The media industry in Finland and worldwide is currently under a strong change, making it an interesting case context. Media convergence alters the relationship between existing technologies, industries, markets, genres and audiences, thus signifying a very holistic change (Jenkins 2004). Consequently, the media industry is undergoing a major transformation, forcing media organizations to re-think their business models. Media companies have carried out mergers and acquisitions in seek for synergies, which has led to the consolidation of the media industry. According to Croteau and Hoynes (2007: 35) the media industry is dominated by large companies that are highly integrated. This holds true also in Finland, where newspaper publishers and other traditional media companies have developed into multi-channel organizations, increasingly operating across the different sectors of the media industry. In Finland the media industry is basically dominated by four large media conglomerates or cross-media organizations, one of which is non-commercial (Nikunen 2011).

The case organization is a Finnish company operating in the media industry among other fields across Europe. It operates in a broad range of media, such as magazines, newspapers, online, TV and entertainment media. The organization has been undergoing a strategic change for a few years, aiming at seeking new business models to respond to the radical change in the media environment. More specifically, the organization is restructuring its business operations to respond to changed customer needs and to exploit synergies across the group. This has required active seeking and trial of different solutions inside the organization.

The media sales model is being restructured, aiming at developing the sales operations model more customer-oriented and effective. In practice but also culture-wise, the organizational boundaries between the different media brands of the company are being removed to be able to provide customers an all-encompassing *solution* and thus improve customer orientation. To facilitate this goal the case organization has established a media sales unit that offers advertisers integrated, cross-media solutions across its own media, offering a combination of TV, radio, newspapers and magazines, for instance. Along with this establishment, the logic of media sales is facing a complete turn. From managing a multitude of customers with a narrow offering and working relatively independently, the logic is turning towards narrowing down the customer account basis for each person, enabling a profound understanding of a customer's needs to provide comprehensive, cross-media solutions. The following quotes illustrate the direction to which the case company is going:

"So I have understood that he has initiated this [transformation] project, which aims at adding collaboration, taking down these invisible separating walls little by little. All the time we must look for different ways and solutions." MS4

"Perhaps that's basically the solution, we don't sell products anymore, but rather we sell solutions. And then what we have been doing in these units, in a cross-media way, we have learned to work with the web media sales. From this type of direction comes such cross-media doing, and I think more cross-media co-operation could be done with [a newspaper brand]. We are scaling over the same customers, dealing with the same problems." MS3

To date, each brand within a medium (e.g. newspaper or TV) has typically had its own media sales department. Advertisers have been approached by a great number of media salespeople who each try to sell advertising space from their own medium or brand. Advertisers have been left with the task of planning and optimizing their media mix, i.e. the combination of advertising channels. Having organized activities the way described ahead can be named as product-oriented operation logic. Media planning and the practical work involved in reserving media space require a lot of human resources and often specialized skills, for which many advertisers have outsourced the process to media agencies. Now, media organizations are transforming their service logic towards more customer-oriented, implying that media companies themselves aim at finding the optimal media mix for their customers by building cross-media solutions.

Despite the establishment of the integrated media sales unit, several salespeople continue to sell only a single medium or brand. Yet each brand typically has several products located in different channels, indicating that in practice these salespeople of single medium manage a portfolio of multiple, often dozens of products. Four interviews were conducted in such type of a media sales department before the initiation of this study. Interviews were conducted with the sales director, two sales managers and one media salesperson.

Media convergence is a current topic of interest in the academic world. However, there is a lack of research of its implications on managing advertiser relationships and thus on

carrying out media sales. Furthermore, there is limited knowledge on the organizational complexities regarding the social practice of media sales. This study aims at filling this gap by exploring these issues through a qualitative case study. The empirical data is formed by nine thematic interviews. I will next describe in more detail the collection of the data and how it was analyzed.

3.3 Empirical data and research process

Empirical data

The empirical data consists of two parts. As preliminary material I had transcripts of four interviews which had been conducted in a media sales unit of a newspaper which belongs to the case organization. These interviews had been conducted as part of another research project. However, as the objective of the study was to discover what kind of practices exist between media sales and their customers and thus identify the possible challenges that media salespeople have in managing customer relationships, I wanted to interview also the advertiser customers of the case organization. The preliminary material allowed me to become familiarized with the research topic, and proved helpful in identifying some of the themes that needed to be discussed with the advertisers. After first exploring literature on the practice theory and customer relationship management, five interviews were conducted among advertisers in September-October 2012.

In addition to gaining more general knowledge about the practice of media sales in Finnish media organizations, my intention was also to get detailed, case specific knowledge of how relationships are managed between the media sales unit of the case company and its customers. Therefore, I wanted to interview companies that advertise in the newspaper brand that these interviewed media salespeople work for. During a period of two weeks I skimmed through the newspaper which is sold by the interviewed media sales unit, and listed all advertisers. In addition, to have a broader perspective I went through the advertisers from the online version of the tabloid in two separate days. The advertisers that I contacted were selected on the following basis: I excluded private entrepreneurs and the smallest advertisers, preferring large enough companies because the size and complexity of advertisers were likely to entail the greatest challenges regarding customer relationship management (Payne & Frow 2005).

According to Miles and Huberman (1994: 27-28), interviews should be conducted among people who are able to offer the best insight to the studied phenomenon. I approached marketing managers or equivalent, since I wanted to interview people who are involved in planning and executing their company's advertising or marketing activities and are thus involved with media salespeople. The target group for the interviews was mentioned in the email request, and in some cases the contacted persons re-directed me to more suitable interviewees within their company.

The total sample is formed of nine interviews, which are listed and provided with more detail in the following tables:

Interviewee	Position in the media sales unit
MS1	Sales director
MS2	Sales manager
MS3	Sales manager
MS4	Salesperson

Table 2: Interviews among media sales (preliminary data)

The interviewees come from different positions within the media sales unit. Each of them has experience also from other units within the organization, and has several years of work experience in the case organization. The interviews followed a rather open structure, in which the following themes were discussed: managing, organizing and carrying out media sales; the reorganization of media sales; changes in the operating environment.

The following interviews were carried out during this study in September-October 2012:

Advertiser	Interviewee position	Company description	Use of a media agency
A1	Sales director of marketing department	Small Finnish operator in the banking sector	No
A2	Marketing director	Large international company operating in the consumables industry	Yes
A3	Marketing and communications manager	Medium to large Finnish retailer operating in the field of telecommunications	Yes
A4	Marketing and communications manager	Large Finnish mobile phone operator and internet service provider	Yes
A5	Marketing and communications manager	Large international company that operates in the field of home furnishing	Yes

Table 3: Interviews among advertisers

The objective was to obtain interviews from different cases in order to gain as rich description as possible of the social practice of media sales. However, possibilities for any pre-selection were very limited for two main reasons. First, as the whole phenomenon was relatively unknown it was difficult to set any selection criteria. Second, information regarding media usage and possible usage of a media agency is unattainable from public sources. There was no previous knowledge about how the company domain would effect on the practices of media sales, including customer relationship management. In the course of data collection and during the data analysis,

some relevant domain-related issues came up. These issues will be discussed in chapter four.

An interesting issue occurred when I contacted the advertisers. One of the contacted advertisers that had an online advertisement responded that they do not advertise in the newspaper. Two discoveries could be made from this: first, companies that buy online display from certain service providers do not necessarily acknowledge on which online sites their advertisement is displayed; second, although many newspaper brands have created a vast amount of digital products, advertisers might first and foremost relate this brand to the original product (i.e. the traditional print newspaper), forgetting the other channels of the brand.

Data collection

The empirical data is formed by nine interviews. Interviews are one of the most common data collection methods in qualitative studies (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2002: 73, Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2004: 34). Other common methods include surveys, observation and the use of different documents or material. There are three fundamental types of research interviews: structured, semi-structured and unstructured. The choice of the interview structure depends on the kind of information the researcher wants and what kind of control he or she wants to take over the situation. Structured interviews are questionnaires with pre-defined questions and response options, and are typically used in quantitative research. They are used in situations where relatively much is known about the research phenomenon, and when little interviewee responses are required. Conversely, unstructured interviews are carried out by open questions, aiming at gaining in-depth knowledge about an unknown phenomenon (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2002: 73-78.) Semi-structured interviews fall in the middle ground.

For this study, thematic interviews were chosen as the most appropriate data collection method. Thematic interviews can be categorized as semi-structured interviews, consisting of key questions around predetermined areas to be explored. However, the interview typically follows a fairly open structure, allowing the researcher to diverge in the order of proceeding, in the choice of wording, and in elaborating on the information during the interview (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2002, p. 78; Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2004: 48). Thematic interviews are one of the most used collection method of qualitative data in social science and business economics. According to Koskinen et al. (2005: 105-107), thematic interviews can be a very efficient method if used well, based on the possibility that the researcher is able to direct the course of the interview without taking full control. Furthermore, it is more convenient for busy people to agree to a thematic interview for one hour as opposed to agreeing to an observation study.

The interview outline for the advertisers was formed around three main themes: the interviewee's as well as the advertisers' role and main activities in media planning, in particular; collaboration practices and the nature of the relationship between advertisers,

media companies and media agencies; and characteristics and changes of the media and/or advertising industry. The function of an interview outline is to guide the researcher through the interview, ensuring that all central themes are covered (Strauss & Corbin 1998: 76-77). I also thought of several questions around the themes in advance to ensure that the interview goes smoothly. The interviews of the media salespeople worked as an initial source of ideas and as a basis for the construction of the interview outline for advertisers. The interview questions were thus formed on the basis of existent interviews and intuition rather than drawing purely on theory. Nevertheless, questions were formed through the theoretical lens of practice theory, guiding the focus on the everyday activities of these marketing practitioners.

The ‘elasticity’ and openness of the interview process is brought up by qualitative guidebooks (e.g. Rubin & Rubin 1995). According to Hirsjärvi and Hurme (2004: 59), the researcher can begin with a rough plan and to discuss with the interviewees exploratively, testing his or her original ideas, after which the study is (re-)focused the specific themes are decided. Fairly little was known in advance about the practice of media sales. Therefore, I conducted the first interviews among the advertisers very open-minded, as my aim was to explore what topics and key concepts would emerge around the phenomenon. Hence, the interview outline was shaped a little bit as I proceeded with the interviews and gained more knowledge about the phenomenon.

The appropriate number of interviews is always case-specific, depending on the objectives of the study (Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2004: 58). One instruction is to continue interviewing until the data is *saturated*: a saturation point is achieved when the interviews do not open up any more new insights (ibid.: 60). Defining the saturation point is left for the researcher to subjectively assess whether he or she has enough data to be able to draw conclusions. The objective of the interviews was to discover what kind of practices there and what activities are taken, and thus my interest was in the content of the interviews rather than analyzing language usage, for instance. The four interviews of the media salespeople which I had as preliminary material were sufficient, since the same issues recurred among the interviews and thus achieved a saturation point. Similarly, the five interviews which I conducted among advertisers were an appropriate number, as saturation was observable during the last interviews.

Recording and transcription

The interviews among advertisers lasted on average 44 minutes ranging from 35 to 50 minutes. In the case of the media sales, the length of interviews ranged from 56 to 70 minutes, lasting 63 minutes on average. With the respondents’ permission the interviews were recorded using a digital voice recorder, and were soon after transcribed ‘verbatim’. Although this study is in English it was natural to conduct the interviews in Finnish, which is the native tongue of both the researcher and the respondents. Quotations have been carefully translated into English, focusing on maintaining the

original sense. During the interviews, some interviewees also presented some physical materials such as an advertisement on a newspaper or an annual media plan.

There are a few notations in the citations in the empirical analysis that need to be clarified:

(--) part of the quote has been left out

[Square brackets] are used to indicate a key word or topic that is discussed, but does not appear in the quote or is left out for anonymity

Underline stands for a particularly stressed word in the quote

Some unclear words or irrelevant parts of the quote have been left out to keep the quotes concise and ease the reader. Square brackets have two meanings: first, for the sake of anonymity the names of brands and companies are replaced with a common noun; second, they are used to indicate a key word or topic which does not otherwise occur from the citation.

Data analysis and interpretation

It is rather widely accepted that there is no single way to carry out data analysis and interpretation in qualitative studies. According to Yin (2003: 109), the strategies and techniques for analyzing case studies have not been well defined, making the analysis a difficult task. Moisander and Valtonen (2006: 125) view data analysis and interpretation in qualitative research as a fairly complex task that requires creativity and imagination. However, according to these authors normative guidelines enable the making of interpretations from the data as well as allow the reader to understand and evaluate these interpretations. When analyzing the data, the researcher makes sense of the data and tries to learn about the phenomena that the study focuses on (ibid.: 101-102). This happens by iterative reading and re-reading of the data, using also analytical techniques and methods to support the process. Gaining new insights usually requires also stepping outside the data set, and thus an essential phase in cultural analysis is to understand the historical and socio-cultural context in which the data are produced (ibid.: 103).

Although the analysis was strongly data-oriented, practice theory was used as an interpretive framework that guided the process of analysis. Thus, in studying the social practices of media sales, interest is focused on identifying the bodily and mental activities, background understandings, traditions, procedures and routines that seem to guide the everyday activities of marketing practitioners.

As mentioned earlier, the whole study began by getting familiar with the interviews of the media salespeople and forming the interview outline for advertisers based on that. However, I kept reading and re-reading these interviews several times during the entire research process, thus forming an equally important part of the material as the interviews of the advertisers.

I began the analysis by carefully reading the transcripts, looking for interesting themes that emerge and themes which were repeated in the interviews, but also things that were not said. When reading the transcripts I was interested in the content rather than *how* things were said. The themes that I identified helped to arrange the data according to the topics. Regarding the interviews of the advertisers, I had already the key themes of the interviews so instead of searching for topics I focused on searching for similarities and differences between the advertisers and sketched different advertiser profiles to understand the relationship between media sales and its customers. I found it helpful to first summarize the key points that describe how advertising and media planning is carried out within the organization and between its service providers. I constantly wrote down thoughts and questions that occurred to my mind while arranging the data, which worked as the basis for the final interpretation. Furthermore, from early stage I chose quotes that illustrated the different activities and practices that construct the social practice of media sales. Gradually the number of quotes was decreased to have a good balance between the text and the descriptive citations.

While re-reading all of the transcripts I focused on the apparent activities but at this point I also formed vague ideas about the underlying understandings behind these activities. After having identified different activities and practices as well as having excluded irrelevant parts of the data, I formed upper-level categories for these activities and practices, (e.g. media planning, development and renewal, and collaboration practices) and arranged the data according to these categories. These categories formed the basis of the social practices identified in chapter four, but were revised several times before their final form. In formulating the social practices I kept in mind the following questions: (1) what are the underlying rules and understandings? (2) what are the practical activities? and (3) what kinds of tensions arise, i.e. how does the social practice enable or constrain customer orientation? Interpretation was a continuous process during which I tried to think beyond the apparent, looking for explanations for the activities and practices carried by individuals. Overall, the process of analysis and interpretation proceeded from vague ideas to grounded interpretations, involving continuous reformulation and revision of the empirical analysis.

4 MEDIA SALES IN A FINNISH MULTI-CHANNEL MEDIA ORGANIZATION

In the empirical part I will examine the social phenomenon of media sales by studying the key customer relationships of media sales and how media sales is managed and carried out in a Finnish multi-channel media organization. This study will explore what kind of established social practices of media sales exist and how these practices enable or constrain customer orientation within media sales. What is also in the focus of interest is what kind of implications media convergence has for media organizations, in particular what kind of challenges it brings to managing and carrying out media sales. Although dynamic studies about the complexities of managing media companies exist (e.g. Achtenhagen & Raviola 2009), there seems to be a lack of studies that explain how sales work and customer relationship management are carried out in media companies, and what kind of implications media convergence has on these practices.

The chapter is divided into two parts. Chapter 4.1 characterizes the key customer relationships of media sales, focusing on advertisers and media agencies. It examines what kind of actors media salespeople encounter in their everyday work, and what kind of relationships advertisers and media agencies have with media organizations and media salespeople in particular. In chapter 4.2 I present the four social practices of media sales which I have identified, focusing on how these practices enable or inhibit customer orientation aimed by the case organization as a response to media convergence. For each practice, I will describe the activities that make up the practice and discuss the collectively shared understandings and norms that underpin the inherent logic of the practice. I will also analyze the effects of these practices on customer orientation. These practices are interrelated; therefore activities and understandings overlap at different points and could be placed also under other practices.

4.1 The key customer relationships of media sales

It was discussed in the review over media management literature that media companies are composed of two, almost separate entities. The other side consists of the creatives, such as editors, who create content for consumers to different mediums such as newspapers, TV or the Internet. The function of media sales, on the other hand, is to manage the relationships between business customers to whom they primarily sell advertising space. The dual product nature implies that media companies receive income from both consumers and advertising companies, although most media, especially newspapers and digital media, rely heavily on advertising income.

The following figure illustrates the market relationships in the commercial media markets from the perspective of media sales. Within media organizations the function of media sales provides advertising space for advertisers. Media agencies often act as an intermediary between media salespeople and the advertising companies and are thus a

key stakeholder for media sales. Advertising agencies are also included in the figure, for they have an important role in planning and executing advertising campaigns. Advertisers, media agencies and advertising agencies often work closely together creating a close tripartite liaison. However, examination of the practices related to advertising agencies is not at center stage in identifying the social practices of media sales and the challenges brought by media convergence, for which advertising agencies are merely touched upon in this study.

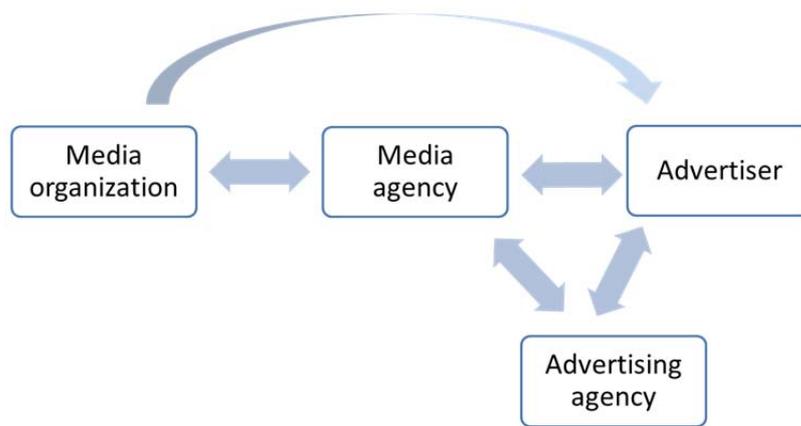


Figure 2: Market relationships in the commercial media markets

In the next sub-chapters I will characterize the relationships that media organizations have with advertisers and media agencies based on the interviews conducted among the advertisers but also among the media sales unit. Focus will be put on the roles of advertisers and media agencies as well as the main activities and practices that effect the everyday work of media salespeople.

4.1.1 Advertisers

Several topics were discussed during the interviews with advertisers, relating broadly to three main themes: the interviewee's as well as the advertisers' role and main activities in media planning, in particular; collaboration practices and nature of the relationship between advertisers, media companies and media agencies; and characteristics and changes of the media and/or advertising industry.

Interviews exposed that there are differences among advertisers in many respects, both on the market actor level and on the practitioner level, reflecting on the type of relationship media salespeople can potentially establish with their customers. Advertisers differ in relation to their media usage (e.g. the range and quantity) and the complexity of their media solutions, affecting to their need for a media agency as an intermediary. Media usage often depends on the size and internationality of a company, for instance. On the practitioner-level the advertiser's degree of involvement in the set of activities and willingness to micromanage to the smallest detail characterize the type of relationship advertisers have with their service providers. Marketing practitioners also vary in their expectations for and attitudes towards media salespersons and media agencies.

Types of advertisers

On the basis of the interviews of both advertisers and media sales, advertisers can be classified broadly into three groups according to how they have organized their advertising campaign planning and execution, in the perspective of media planning in particular. This is not an exhaustive typification of all the different advertisers, but characterizes what types of advertisers exist in the industry and thus illustrates what type of customers the media salespeople encounter.

Type 1 advertisers are large, often international companies with multiple brands that rely on a media agency in media planning and media purchasing activities. For large advertising companies with multiple brands the media planning and purchasing activities require a vast amount of work and can be demanding to manage, for which a media agency is taken as an intermediary.

Type 2 include "old and traditional" companies that have an own in-house advertising agency, and might also have in-house media planning. Hence, advertising altogether is often executed without intermediaries.

Type 3 companies are typically either small sized or represent a certain kind of company, such as retailers of domestic appliances or sport equipment. Advertising in such companies is often quite straightforward, and thus they might purchase advertising space directly from media salespeople.

Five interviews were conducted among advertisers, two of which are subsidiaries of the same group. Four out of five companies currently uses a media agency and could be categorized as *type 1* advertisers. One of the companies has quite recently quit using a media agency and could be categorized as a *type 2* advertiser. This company has in-house functions that produce necessary data for them, both regarding advertising and media planning, although according to the interviewee they do not utilize the media planning services except for determining target groups. The company has limited its media presence to the mediums of the case organization, reducing the need for a media agency. In addition to the tightly limited media presence, they advertise also in their own channels (e.g. a customer magazine and several points of contact to consumers through offices and shops), as well as in Google.

"(--) They are one of our partners in co-operation with whom every week we sit with this bunch and go through our issues. [Name of company] brings its own understanding to this. We have this kind of media, they are used by these kind of people, and based on that we make plans." A1

The interviewee from this company finds purchasing advertising space easy, and feels that by giving up on a media agency they have overcome some problems related to practicalities and also problems related to the usage of their own media, which seemed to cause issues with the media agency.

"(--) the reason why we have decided on this settlement is that we have so much media of our own that we don't want a media agency which usually thinks about its own sales margin and revenue. (--) We have decided that we purchase only [the media portfolio of the case company] so that no one has a problem if we once in a while use our own media too. But your questions about it is [purchasing advertising space]difficult, well let's say that it used to be difficult, we always wondered why our own media doesn't do because we think it should. And another thing what has always been a, let's say a common challenge is that.. depends on the media agency, but some of them are more kind of traditional in the way that they can't do montly invoicing which then causes certain challenges. To meet their own goals they then sell extremely much that purchased media. Then another thing that from my experience concerns pretty many is managing the purchase process.. where they collect the information from and what do they do after that and.. these kind of things." A1

Although advertisers differ with respect to how they have organized their media planning, some similarities among advertisers also stood out from the interviews. In general, advertisers seemed to agree that the media field has changed a lot and continues to change, and has affected to their media planning practices.

Changes in media planning practices

Historically companies have had relatively straightforward media plans and similar media purchase patterns from year to year, focusing on dividing the advertising budget between print, TV, radio and outdoor advertising. Based on the interviews, it seems that media planning practices are altering due to changes in the media landscape and in

media consumption practices. The fragmentation of the media landscape requires a more active role from advertisers in keeping oneself updated and ensuring that the company has presence in the right media.

“Well let’s say that it [advertising] demands increasingly more from the buyer. Earlier, very similar stuff was bought year after year. In the beginning of the 2000s TV was bought, and radio and outdoor advertising was bought, and everything was going in its own silos. Now the whole media field is fragmented so that now the entire time I have to think myself whether I have considered each different medium in the right way. (--) Because now it depends on keeping myself very updated all the time, going once in a while to some seminars to hear where the newest thing is where we might have to be, what we haven’t acknowledged. Things are going forward in such a speed that... well certain things remain, but then again if you just stay there and stick to the old you won’t develop and you inevitably over-invest in the wrong places.” A2

For advertisers, coping in the fragmented media field requires support from service providers as there are almost infinite ways to carry out a campaign on the Internet, for example. Advertisers appreciate comprehensive, solution-based offerings as there is a shortage of time and also personal competence among marketing managers to construct a media presence plan.

“That is a jungle of its own in a way, and this is when it comes out that I, as an advertiser or a buyer, don’t have time to think and find out myself that how could I get this and that piece, but rather usually the ones who can offer a broader unity... Now if I decided to make a deal with some x-pedia about a bigger online presence, then they will come with a suggestion that ‘this and this should be done because it will bring you this much more and will reach this much contacts’ – they have already figured out a solution. I can’t start thinking about those things. Increasingly media salespeople are required to sell packages which then contain different parts.” A2

Media planning has thus become a more complex process. Apart from that, it seems that the importance of media planning is increasingly being acknowledged, thus becoming a more integrated part in the advertising planning process. This is evident from the following statements about media planning:

“I guess in this case and probably in the future in each case we will think about the role of media and these very transmedia things and this type of stuff already at early stage. Maybe that’s something that is on the rise. Before, it was such that we briefed a campaign and then we chose in a traditional way the mediums for it, for the pie, so that ‘this much for this, this much for that’, but I guess that it’ll change now a little. After this good experience it will probably change, if changes.” A4

“It’s not so that the advertising agency would plan the campaign on its own but instead the media agency is integrated already into the planning work. So that the media agency can tell right the way, before the client is presented something, that ‘it’s not worth doing, that now we have forgotten the other aspect and that we should definitely integrate mobile in here’. (--) So the advertising agency and the media agency work closely together.” A2

If simplified, earlier advertising campaigns have been planned first and only then the mediums have been selected. To a greater extent, media planning has become a more

integrated part of the creative planning process. It could be argued that the earlier integration of media planning provides an opportunity for the media planner, being either the media agency or media representative, to enhance a co-creational role. Their earlier participation in the process increases their opportunity to create innovative, novel solutions regarding the combination of advertising channels. However, there are differences between advertisers at which point media planning is included in the planning process. The process of planning advertising campaigns is described in the following:

“It works in such a way that now we are in the next year’s planning phase, planning what we want to do, at this stage, and then at some point we begin to discuss also with the media agency about with which mediums are we going to do this, and because all the time it gets specified how our budget is going to change and what kind of a budget we have the following year. That affects a lot to what kind of mediums we should use. Well then in a way when this progresses and we begin to discuss it with the media agency, then it’s a kind of collective sparring about with which mediums we are going to do it. And then they negotiate the annual contracts with our purchasing department.” A3

“Well of course it goes in such a way that first we, here inside the house, typically me and my boss think about in what way we will brief the advertising agency, that what we want them to do for us. Then at that point when the advertising agency presents us their plan, which is based on the brief, then pretty often at that point we take the media agency along and it becomes a tripartite. Because at this point the role of the mediums begins to take shape, so from this point on it really is tripartite, so that the three of us together work on it to reach the best possible outcome.” A4

Like the previous quote illustrates, at some point the advertiser, the advertising agency and the media agency form a ‘tripartite’, i.e. a joint effort in which members work very closely. Although they have certain roles in this trio, in everyday work the boundaries between their roles become obscured. This seems to be true for advertisers that actively engage in the process, and create tight, partner-like relationships with their service providers with which they frequently interact.

“In media planning it [the media agency] is certainly the key actor but also the roles blur in a way, so that sometimes the creative ideas can come from the media agency, and quite often they come from us too, but that it doesn’t always go so that the creative idea is invented by the advertising agency, then the mediums will be chosen by the media agency, and then we are there only as orderers. Everyone does sort of everything but of course the focus areas of doing are in these things that I mentioned.” A4

Although technological development and the diversified media field enable the creation of innovative media solutions, according to the interviews with media salespeople the majority of advertisers tend to select conventional alternatives. The interviewed media salespeople expressed that advertisers always want to hear great new ideas, but in the end although some experiments are carried out advertisers generally settle with the old and familiar solutions. The media salespeople expressed that they are required to generate new ideas to become valued by the customer, but in practice their work is about building solutions from existent products. This is illustrated by the following quote:

"Well perhaps this work is more about finding the suitable combination of existent pieces for the customer, and then of course if some new idea occurs it's ok. But then there's also the thing that everything new and fancy is always wanted, then maybe it is tried once, and it doesn't necessarily work out. Or then they want to hear about everything, but in the end what they want to buy is 'well I'd like to have the whole page'. To a great extent the traditional is relied on, although they want to hear, but then of course the ideal would be that you could get to a certain level with the client where they can really tell about their challenges and who they are targeting, so that we would be able to juggle with ideas."
MS4

"[mobile, iPad and others] are something that customers are extremely interested in, but fairly few then has the courage to try. Naturally with little money to invest it's risky."
MS4

The reliance on the traditional means stems from risk management but also from the lack of skill or know-how among advertisers in new technologies. Based on the interviews it seems that advertisers need consultancy especially in planning web-based solutions. Advertisers are fairly unskilled in regards to web-based campaigns:

"Although we have done web for a long time it's not necessarily, or then they know how to buy a certain campaign but they are not able to... The web is a different operational environment and requires creative execution, so either the customer has some agency that does it or then they do it somehow themselves; it has many factors to it." MS4

Negative or resistant attitude towards media salespeople

Salespeople of single mediums or brands often encounter some resistance, implying that advertisers are not particularly interested in meeting sales people with a narrow offering. Resistance occurs for mainly two reasons. First, the marketing managers or equivalent in the advertising companies are too busy to meet media salespeople. The following quote provides an illustration of a rather typical attitude towards media salespeople, reflecting a general reluctance to meet them:

"They [media salespeople] would gladly meet as very much, but we on the other hand are not so pleased to meet them... at least too much. But once in a while we get good infos from them, of course they want to tell about their own media but we too have to keep ourselves updated, so it's sort of balancing. For sure they think we don't meet enough, whereas we think that... we meet them enough (laughs). Of course, they only want to sell more and more. That's crystal clear." A3

Second, and perhaps more importantly, the interviewed advertisers were not particularly interested in the details of media plans. In other words, advertisers did not care about which particular newspaper, magazine or TV channel their advertisement is placed at, which would explain their unwillingness to discuss with salespeople of single medium. Altogether I was left with an impression that advertisers are interested in the media plan only at a general level. However, this standpoint is affected at least by the domain the company operates in and the company size. Companies with generic

products (e.g. mobile phones, teleoperators, and furniture) without narrowly targeted consumer groups aim for masses rather than specific customer segments. Large companies that use a media agency seemed to be concerned with seeking for volume and high target rating points (TRPs), and it was primarily the responsibility of the media agency to decide upon the particular channels within different media.

The fact that marketing managers of advertising companies are concerned of the big picture, whereas media salespeople approach them often with only a single product, advertisers might feel that they have different interests in their doing. This turned out in one interview in particular, which was conducted with an advertiser that collaborates only with a contact person from the cross-media sales unit of the case organization. The interviewee had a very negative attitude towards media salespeople in general, as well as towards media agencies, and refuses to meet media salespeople. According to the interview, he felt that both media agencies and salespeople of single medium or brand are doing a completely different thing than himself as an advertiser. When this advertisers was asked about media salespeople, the interviewee expressed his unwillingness to meet them. The following excerpt from the interview is a rather extreme example of what kind of an attitude media salespeople might encounter:

“Well, I have one contact from [case organization], it has been our prerequisite, that we... It’s awfully heavy to meet media salespeople because they are... I understand it. They have some bonus, they have to sell it’s their job, but it’s tough to listen to them trying to sell their own thing, it’s not like I would buy that thing. I’m doing a completely different thing; we are doing completely different things. They sell us their medium, and we on the other hand are trying to create an authentic relationship through content (--). It’s from a completely different world.” A1

Interestingly, when referring to their contact person from the cross-media sales unit, the interviewed sales director did not relate these people at all to media salespeople but rather referred to their expertise and ability to meet the needs of the advertiser. The interviewed advertiser had a totally different attitude towards the salespeople of the cross-media sales unit.

“These people are type of cross-media experts. (--). They understand the whole palette that they possess. And that is helpful to our needs since we don’t want to discuss about a particular newspaper or one TV channel.” A1

Not all advertisers are resistant, however. For instance, one of the interviewed advertisers has a somewhat positive attitude towards media salespeople although she is selective in meeting them. Even though this advertiser uses a media agency, the interviewed marketing director has allowed some of the media representatives to contact her directly.

“In principle I tell that I don’t want to meet them, because all my time would go in meeting with the media representatives. For that I have a partnership, a media agency that unravels it. But then if I get too many messages for instance that our contact person does not meet anyone, and myself as I came as a new one into the business I think it’s interesting to meet certain media, so I told that I want to meet them. So now I have

permitted certain main media, there are only three of them perhaps, to be directly in contact with me. All others are dealt with through the media agency.” A2

Despite some level of responsiveness from advertisers, it seems that at least in the type of companies which were interviewed the possibilities for co-creative, customer-oriented activities between media salespeople and advertisers seem minor due to the general lack of willingness to interact with media salespeople. Hence, there seems to be a fundamental barrier for media sales to become genuinely customer oriented, in which exchanges of close information and social linkages, as well as mutual commitments are often prerequisites (Day 2000). However, although there would be an established relationship between an advertiser and a media representative, ‘doing’ might fall far from co-creative, which can be noticed from the interviews. For example, in the case of the advertiser without a media agency, media planning does not seem to happen in a co-creational manner but rather the advertiser ‘hears and accepts’ the propositions he receives in their weekly meetings, relying on the expertise of the media contact person.

”It’s not our skill but the skill of our partners of co-operation in knowing for instance how to increase awareness of a loan category and then its preference. We can have some kind of an understanding about it but we count on their knowledge, that an expert tells how to do it. Yeah well, of course we challenge and question, once in a while, but it’s more that we jointly hear.” A1

To conclude, marketing practitioners vary in their expectations for and attitudes towards media salespeople, often being somewhat reluctant to meet them. The negative attitude can be regarded as a significant challenge for media salespeople to succeed in establishing a collaborative relationship with the advertisers and thus become genuinely customer oriented. Also, media salespeople encounter different advertiser types, which affect to the kind of relationship the media salespeople can try to establish. Some advertisers plan and carry out advertising campaigns individually, while others use service providers such as advertising and media agencies. Media planning has become a more complex process due to changes in the media landscape and in media consumption practices, and is increasingly being incorporated earlier into the advertising planning process. Advertisers themselves lack the skills especially regarding digital media solutions, increasing the need for a media agency where this expertise can be found. Especially large, international advertisers use a media agency, and media salespeople often have to deal with them rather than the marketing managers of the advertising companies.

I will next examine the role of media agencies in more detail to understand what kinds of needs advertisers have with regards to media planning. Understanding these needs is important in considering what kind of opportunities media salespeople have in establishing collaborative relationships with advertisers and thus becoming customer oriented.

4.1.2 Media agencies

Media sales involves interacting with media agencies, who are important service providers for many advertisers. Advertisers, media agencies and advertising agencies work together in planning and carrying out advertising activities, often forming a close tripartite. For media salespeople, managing their customer relationships often involves managing relationships with each of these three actors. Media agencies fill the need of advertisers to manage and coordinate advertising activities. Traditionally, advertisers have had to build a media presence plan from individual mediums, and, due to lack of skills and resources this task has been often outsourced to media agencies. The case organization is aiming at a more customer oriented logic, in which instead of offering an array of products it offers media solutions. This change in logic might result in some overlapping in the role of media sales unit and that of media agencies. It is thus interesting to examine what kinds of roles media agencies have in the view of advertisers, to be able to identify the possible challenges for media organizations in adopting a more customer-oriented logic.

It turned out from the interviews that media agencies have a multitude of roles regarding their relationship with the advertisers, such as *time savers, strategic partners, sparring partners, price negotiators and informants*. The interviews also exposed that the role of the media agency becomes stronger the more complex the media purchase process is. Large companies in particular tend to have a broad and frequent media usage, generating a need for an intermediary to manage the process, including the practical work of contacting media and reserving media space, for instance. Advertisers that have straightforward solutions, for instance those who advertise only now and then on the front page of a certain newspaper, are in no need for an intermediary. It occurred from the interviews that media agencies have an important role especially in managing and providing expertise in digital media, since advertisers seldom have a profound understanding of it. The following quote states how media fragmentation has really become timely, which has increased the need for advertisers to use an agency in media planning.

“(--) the more complex the purchase process the stronger the role of the media agency is. If you simply buy so that ‘I want a full-page ad in newspaper X’, then there’s hardly a role for a media agency. But then if when we go to the digital world or we go to television where you can buy the same thing in thousand different ways, then it’s about running Excel and about mathematics in figuring out what is sensible. Such that ‘I want these target groups, what could be a sensible combination, which ones should I buy.’ (--) The world has changed a bit because this thing that has been discussed, that the media is becoming fragmented, well all that long time that I’ve been in this business, now we really are in the situation that it’s fragmented. There’s Google, there’s Facebook, there are newspapers, television, then there’s the whole digital world so there begins to be quite a lot of options.” MSI

Media agencies add value to the advertiser in the media planning process in ways that vary across agencies, depending also very much on the skills of the individual. The

main value of a media agency, according to the interviews, comes from understanding the media landscape and finding the optimal, cost-efficient media presence plan to reach consumers.

"Their [media agency's'] duty is to understand the mediums and the customers or the reachability so that they can offer the best for us. Otherwise they're not needed at all there in between." A2

"Perhaps that's something I as a purchaser would want more, that we would optimize the best mix, so that we wouldn't do it in the traditional way that we have always bought TV like this, and always certain print like this, but really, if we decide to do this huge radio thing, then how could we create a good online presence through these mediums, and negotiate on that and not just the volume and the discount percentage. (--) But it requires a lot from the media agency, it requires that the contact person is very proactive. And that contact person must suggest, think of new ideas, to be constantly alert to what's going on... in the company's sales, what's working and what's not." A2

"Together with the media agency we seek for the best, workable, most cost-efficient media solutions. How we get our messages through to the big audience. How we perhaps sometimes achieve some dialogue too." A5

Some regarded media agencies as *informants*, emphasizing their role in providing valuable information about the changing media field.

"Of course the media agency has such a role that we should receive information from them about what significant new things have happened in the media field. But we have to be alert ourselves too. We can't in a way be lulled into that the media agency takes care of things, and then we would only act as the receiving side." A3

Media agencies also simply save the time of marketing managers by meeting the media and dealing with the practicalities, including booking media, coordinating the technical information and delivering advertising material:

"My time could be used in meeting every day all sorts of media salespeople, because altogether there are very many of them." (gives a laugh) A5

"Let's say that we meet much less than they would like to, the majority of media, since we can't be seeing the media all the time because in that case we wouldn't have the time to do our jobs. (--) The media agency meets them [the media] much more than we do. I think so." A3

"There can be very different forms of co-operation with media agencies. In the coarsest form it can be something that we do not have, such as 'we have a media agency so that we get a 15 per cent agency discount'. And then you put some emails to your contact person in the media agency that 'I'd like to book from these and these mediums', and they then book and coordinate these so called technical specs with the people and deliver the material." A2

For some advertisers, media agencies are more than a service provider that deals with the practicalities or a means to benefit from a media discount. The following quotes illustrate how media agencies are sometimes regarded as *strategic partners*, referring to

the close collaboration and their role in developing business as well as executing the strategy together with the advertiser.

“The media agency has a very important role in executing our mutual, or our strategy so that how do we reach the people who we want to reach. Plus that they have pretty good ideas, sometimes even going on the creative side, new ways to do things.” A5

”Strategic partnership here and also in [name of former employee] means that the team which is chosen collaborates very closely. We open up our business situation for them, naturally they are obliged by professional secrecy, they have all (MDAs) written because they develop together with us this business of ours. In a way they have the responsibility to suggest things for us, the mediums and the media mix that further our sales’ growth. And in there we have a country director who has a team that consists of a representative or a sparring expert of the print side, then of course the digital side has its own and the TV its own. And this team works on our 12 months plan. Optimize the best media solutions...” A2

Some advertisers regard media agencies merely as *sparring partners*, emphasizing their role in “helping” and giving their opinion to the annual plans. Media agencies also carry the role of *price negotiators*, for media agencies negotiate prices with the media.

“They [media agency] have this sparring role when we plan our year, that in what ways in their opinion we reach our goals with a given budget. And naturally on the practical level I expect good plans always for each need. All the time they make sure of course that we are kept to our annual frame.” A3

“Their role in a relationship that we have, which is based on an annual contract and not ad hoc –based, is to get our money the best worth. In other words to negotiate, of course we are also involved, but their job is to negotiate the best prices and the best media mix for us. That’s their main duty. And then how they get to it and are able to carry it out, well that depends on how they are involved in this thing themselves. So, then it’s more about their internal issues of how they run things there. This is the most important thing from the client’s perspective. And I could say that it is alarming if there have been no signs of the media agency representative in about one week. If he/she is not interested in how things are going with us or how our sales are going...” A2

There are, however, some mixed feelings about the benefits of having a media agency. One interviewed advertiser had concerns for conflicting goals, referring to the objective of media agencies to maximize spending in paid advertising rather than supporting the advertiser’s overall aims in building a relationship between their customers, which sometimes meant using other than paid media. Other problems with media agencies related to their ability to monthly invoicing, for example. Furthermore, media agencies were criticized by media salespeople for being so busy that they are not given an opportunity to offer their solution, an issue which was acknowledged also by one of the advertisers:

“(--) sometimes you hear from media representatives (--) that, well naturally they would like to work with us directly, and certainly for example in negotiations for annual contracts we are at the same table, but that they, these media representatives, feel that media agencies do not necessarily come to us with the best suggestion and that they feel

that often they are contacted only to ask how much they get discount for buying a certain column.” A2

To conclude, media agencies are important intermediaries and service providers for advertisers, having the main role of optimizing the advertiser’s media presence. This role stems partially from the product orientation of media organizations, for which traditionally advertisers have had to build and optimize a media presence plan from individual mediums. Many advertisers have outsourced these tasks to a media agency due to lack of skills and resources in the advertising company. The fragmentation and complexity of the media environment has made media planning even more challenging, and has thus increased the need for a media agency.

Media agencies have different roles, ranging from the practical role of booking media and coordinating advertising activities to a strategic partner that works closely with the advertiser, being involved in developing their business. One of the major assets of media agencies is their expertise in digital media, since advertisers seldom have a profound understanding of it. In the previous chapter it was discussed that the media strategy has become more significant, for which media planning is incorporated earlier in the advertising planning process. This change can be expected to emphasize the role of a media agency as an expert and a creative, strategic actor rather than a sparring partner, creating an opportunity for media agencies to add more value for the advertiser.

For media organizations to become genuinely customer-oriented, media salespeople should be let in on an early stage of the media planning process in the same way as media agencies are let in. This would require, however, sharing business-sensitive knowledge for media salespeople and can be therefore regarded as one of the key challenges for media organizations to achieve customer orientation. I will next turn to examining how media sales is managed and carried out within the case organization, having special emphasis on what impact the practices of media sales have on customer orientation of the case company. Media sales is not considered to be an isolated sales function carried out by members of the media sales unit, but is affected by what happens within the organization and between customers. The examination thus includes practices related to how relationships are managed as well as intra-organizational practices that make up the social practice of media sales.

4.2 The social practices of media sales

The aim of this thesis is to identify the underlying social practices that characterize media sales work. In applying the practice approach to studying the practice of media sales, interest is focused on identifying the collectively shared norms, traditions, understandings, procedures and routines that seem to guide the everyday activities of media sales practitioners (cf. Jarzabkowski & Spee, 2009; Reckwitz, 2002; Whittington, 2006).

In the following section I will elaborate on the social practices of media sales, focusing on how these practices enable or inhibit the transformation towards customer-oriented service logic as a response to media convergence. The practices which I identified were labeled as the practice of *relationship management*, the practice of *steering*, the practice of *collaborating* and the practice of *developing*. For each practice, I will first summarize the key points of the practice at the beginning of each sub-chapter. These points are then further discussed in the actual text. For each practice, I will describe the activities that make up the practice and discuss the collectively shared understandings that underpin the inherent logic of the practice. I will also analyze the effects of these practices on customer orientation. These practices are interrelated, and thus activities and understandings could fall also under other practices, i.e. they overlap at different points.

4.2.1 The practice of relationship management

The practice of relationship management is about the art of managing business-to-business relationships within the media industry, namely with advertisers and media agencies. Carried by media salespeople, the practice of relationship management is performed through contacting and meeting current and potential customers. Having an overall goal of selling advertising space, customer relationships are maintained by offering good deals and solutions. Face-to-face encounters seem to be important ways of managing relationships. However, getting customer calls is perceived challenging as advertisers have less time and willingness to meet media salespeople.

The practice of relationship management is based on a general background understanding that customers' needs come first, although in practice activities are driven by a sales orientation. There is a constant struggle between finding the best solutions for the customer and achieving own sales goals. The inherent logic of the practice is changing from product to customer orientation along with the establishment of the cross-media sales unit, in which the customer relationship is based on a profound understanding of the customer and its needs.

The practice of relationship management is dynamic by nature, performed through activities such as managing small details and customizing advertising solutions. The practice is not carried out in isolation, but is affected by what happens on the consumer side. Members of the media sales team act in an environment that requires responsiveness and flexibility towards both customers and the editorial staff, which is why the practice of relationship management involves also balancing between the needs and wants of advertisers and the editors.

In media sales, customer relationship management is often carried out between multiple actors. Media salespeople manage relationships not only with advertisers but also with media agencies and even advertising agencies. Sometimes an advertiser relationship is managed solely through a media agency. Advertisers that use a media agency seem to be in direct interaction with media representatives on special occasions, for example when new, innovative solutions are searched for, when new media relationships are established or when last-minute deals referred to as 'berry picking' are offered.

The practice of relationship management is in a constant state of flux. Changes in the media field and in advertisers' needs set new requirements for media salespeople. In the customer-oriented cross-media sales model a broader marketing know-how is needed, as salespeople must be able to understand all-encompassing solutions and are expected to generate new ideas, requiring adaptability and an ability to think beyond the established *modus operandi*.

Organization of sales and marketing

On the basis of the interviews, it can be interpreted that customer relationship management within the case organization is viewed mainly as sales and marketing – related activities. The interviewees do not refer to customer relationship management as such, but rather refer to selling and marketing as they describe their tasks and role, exposing the kind of understanding they have towards the purpose of their work. The interviews were, however, conducted among people working in the *sales* unit, not in the business-to-business marketing department that, according to an interview, employs 'one and a half people'. Nevertheless, media salespeople are the key persons who act at the customer interface, so it is important to study these actors when trying to explore the social phenomenon of media sales and to examine how customer relationships are managed in media companies.

It occurred from the interviews that sales and marketing have been separate functions, but the sales director has been actively bringing them together. As a result, sales and marketing have now become more integrated. A similar kind of integration has happened between the consumer and business-to-business marketing. The marketing function has traditionally focused on consumer marketing, although business-to-

business (B2B) marketing exists as well. There has been development towards a single department that covers both B2B and consumer side sales and marketing, which is stated in the following quote:

"When I started back in the day they [sales and marketing] were very separate functions, but as a matter of fact, what I have been doing all that time I've been here is that I have brought them closer and closer, because everybody understands that they are not separate functions. In my point of view they are one and same thing, marketing is someway part of selling. Of course there has been the difference between B2B sales and consumer sales, and on the side of consumer sales was this marketing. Now we have driven them to a single department, we have common meeting practices and all, every two weeks there is a regular meeting for everyone. (--)" MS1

The integration of the consumer and business sales and marketing suggests that the practice of customer relationship management is not isolated from what happens on the consumer side. Instead, especially as advertisers seek for ways to establish meaningful, interactive relationships with the consumers, it may not suffice that media workers offer solely audiences for advertisements but rather they have a role in creating opportunities to establish these meaningful relationships through their mediums.

The everyday activities of media salespeople

The main activities of media salespeople consist of contacting and meeting their clients, trying to sell them advertising space from their mediums. It occurred from the interviews that the unit of web-based media sales is as an important partner within the organization. Customers are visited together with the web media sales team in order to support one another. These are illustrated in the following quote:

"Well I work in sales. In practice I have my own customer portfolio in which I have the clients under my responsibility. I am of course responsible for keeping contact to them, meeting them, trying of course to sell them print, web, mobile and tabloid solutions in general from [brand]. Also what's part of my job description is that we cooperate a lot with other units, especially the web media sales is a pretty important partner of co-operation within this house. (--) We do a lot that we go together to the client. Even though [the website of the brand] is under my responsibility, the web solutions, they have all of them – more than 50 sites or so that they have – we are able to build some sort of target groups, so in practice we support one another." MS4

The practice of relationship management is dynamic by nature, and is performed through activities such as managing small details, reacting to different things on a short notice, and customizing solutions. Members of the media sales team act in an environment that requires responsiveness and flexibility towards both customers and the editorial staff. Customers are provided with highly customized solutions, and often their needs require immediate reaction.

"Workdays are very multifold and particular, and quite some time goes to handling with practical issues so that we make it to the next day. (--) Handling means that, for example customer administration sends us a list that we are short of ten materials, and 'take care

of it, we're unable to reach the customers and we should have the materials for tomorrow's paper'. Or then the back page of [a newspaper brand] is unsold so we have to sell it to someone with some price, and figure out with which price we could sell it. These kinds of small things that come up extremely often during the day." MS2

Customer relationship management is often a multilateral activity. Altogether a media salesperson can have three different contact persons for one advertiser-customer. These contact persons represent the advertiser, advertising agency and media agency, but the salesperson views them all as one customer. However, advertisers are very different in how they prefer things to go. Especially large, international advertisers tend to arrange everything through their media agency, in which case the media representatives have a rather low opportunity to approach the advertiser personally and try to establish a relationship. On the contrary, other advertisers prefer to handle themselves all issues concerning media despite having a media agency.

Advertisers' way of planning advertising campaigns determines to what extent media salespeople are let in to the process. The salesperson might meet with the client with a few proposals, or the advertiser gives a brief about their needs, to which the salesperson responds with an offer. What is also typical is that the media agency makes a media plan and then demands for an offer from the media salespeople, who then might propose something more for the original offer.

Although advertisers are the primary target group for media sales, the practice of relationship management involves also taking care of relationships between media agencies. Media salespeople approach media agencies in trying to win customers, for sometimes it is the only way to approach their primary target. However, according to the interviews media agencies are very busy themselves, having a vast amount of media representatives trying to reach them. The following quote illustrates how the practice of customer relationship management involves media agencies:

"You have to do a lot of work to that way, throw ideas, try through them since part of the customers directs straight to them. The problem is that there is a million media bombing these media agencies so it is rather challenging. Then, it is very much about relationship management, so that once you get to meet or chat with someone and it goes smoothly, then you get to meet them again and throw ideas. They do have a big influence." MS4

Advertisers that use a media agency seem to be in direct interaction with media representatives on special occasions, for example when new, innovative solutions are sought for or when new media relationships are established. The role, importance, and activity of media agencies in these special occasions vary to some extent, but it seems that value-creating activities happen primarily in the interaction between advertisers and media representatives while the role of media agencies in these situations can be quite minor, functioning merely as the executor of practicalities. The following quotes describe some situations in which advertisers are directly in touch with the media companies:

"A good example is the prelaunch of our [advertising campaign]. In this case we looked for new ways of doing with the media, for example we went to [a TV show] which

demanded quite big negotiations with that media. (--). In special cases we do quite much directly with them. Surely the media agency is also involved, but we ourselves are quite tightly involved in the development work.” A4

”We meet different producers of TV programmes; they offer us deals to be the main partner of co-operation and to integrate into the TV programme. Here the media agency doesn’t actually have any role; we do the thinking work here and planning together with the media representative.” A2

”Very often they [media representatives] send suggestions of these special theme issues straight to us. And that’s a good question, why? One answer has been that they are unable to reach these media agency representatives. So apparently media agency representatives are themselves so jammed or occupied that they don’t have time to answer calls or have time to meet.” A2

Special occasions include also last-minute deal offers, which media salespeople refer to as ‘berry picking’.

”It’s fast, compared to let’s say magazines this is a completely different world. Here there’s a possibility to make money with this thing called berry picking, in which you call a customer and tell there’s an opportunity like this and that – will you take it, a special price for you.” MS2

”They offer us ad hoc some quick, cheap or less expensive advertising spots and so on.” A4

”They have some special offers, but a lot of them goes through the media agency. Let’s say as an example that a cancellation occurs to the front page of [a newspaper brand]. Then we get informed about it very quickly either directly or via our media agency, depending on how urgent it is.” A3

”It’s the same thing as with the main media, for example afternoon tabloids, I have given them a permission that if they have a great offer they can put it to me so I can decide in five minutes if I want to take it.” A2

Advertisers, however, are different with respect to their advertising planning practices. There are firms that practice ‘ad hoc’-advertising, implying that they make decisions on a short notice. This is an important point for the salespeople in different media who attempt to offer last minute deals for customers. On the other hand, some companies are tightly committed to an annual plan, even to the smallest detail of when and in which channels they advertise. According to one of the interviews, their type of company cannot advertise ad hoc because they would end up in an out of stock situation as their logistical system doesn’t allow for major changes at a short notice. Also, this advertiser has instructed media salespeople to handle all things through their media agency.

”These things are handled with the media agency, plus like I told earlier we have the commercial calendar, we have a clear annual plan, so even if we were offered the front page of [a newspaper brand] I wouldn’t have anything for them. We don’t produce separate material for it. (--). In my view any media doesn’t exceed others, because we use media at such a wide range and diversely, that any of them doesn’t work alone but rather it’s the combination of the media that counts. (--). Furthermore, it has to be taken into consideration that we are a large company with five department stores, so we have to

have ensured always that we have products in the house. (--). Let's say that when you are big you have long processes, so it [ad hoc advertising] doesn't ever happen." A5

Media salespeople's activity towards advertisers focuses on selling deals that are additional to the annual contract, offering sponsoring deals with TV programmes or other quite conventional forms of collaboration. Otherwise, media salespeople are not considered particularly active in approaching with novel transmedia solutions. Instead, media representatives approach with rather superficial sketches or they introduce what new media solutions exist in general in public events.

"For example, we get a lot of proposals related to sponsoring programmes (--). They might have developed something small, sketched out what the collaboration could be. (--). In such things they are active because in a way it's the part that exceeds our annual contract. It's additional sales for them. If they manage to sell us some programme sponsoring deal it's always a feather in your cap for this media salesperson. But otherwise they're not particularly active. Well okay, every large media has a couple of times a year some events where they introduce new media solutions and possible new ways to advertise in their media, on a general level, but they don't come to us and introduce them to us specifically. Well okay, some do, such as digital media every time when new formats are developed, but that is something not that interesting." A4

According to the interviews, all media companies have set targets for customer calls. These face-to-face encounters seem to be important ways of managing customer relationships. It could be argued that in many cases the contact to the advertiser is the most valuable, since media salespeople can hardly reach a similar level of co-operation with media agencies that generally have limited decision power. However, achieving the targets for customer calls is perceived challenging as advertisers have less and less time and willingness to meet media salespeople, especially those who represent only a single media brand. Taking care of and maintaining established relationships can thus be viewed an important activity of the practice of relationship management. The sales manager, for instance, has customers of his own that are based on a long-lasting relationship, for which he wants to keep taking care of them although he need not to.

Adapting to changed requirements

The practice of relationship management is in a constant state of flux. Along with the changed media field and the changes in advertisers' needs, media salespeople are required broader marketing know-how. It is not sufficient to sell only one thing, but media salespeople must be able to understand all-encompassing solutions and to generate new ideas. The interviewed media sales unit aims at a customer- and solution-oriented activity, although at times people act according the old logic.

"We try all the time to be more customer-oriented, solution-oriented, but here too we sometimes fall for product orientation and product selling.(--) having product managers without necessarily any sales background, who think about products, versus having people with sales experience on the product side who would be able to think things from another perspective." MS4

“I’ve had a kind of feeling that, in regards to the web for example, one is really unable to absorb and understand in the level that I could meet a customer and present something, if the opposing side is a media agency that is a web guru, in which case I’m walking on thin ice at this point and would have to brush up on my sales skills and focus on selling ideas. But these kinds of details have to be put aside; there is no room upstairs to be able to manage them.” MS2

One of the advertiser that collaborates with the cross-media sales unit commented on the same thing. Although the interviewee feels that along with their co-operation discussion evolves now around more significant issues, the old logic of doing still ‘shines through’.

“Discussion is now a bit different. Now we talk with [the case company] and these others about where the customer gets information from rather than having a presentation with all the good numbers of this and that. That has actually been the most important change, but there’s still much to do. It still shines through that they have been doing it for a long time, that... that they live from advertising money, so that’s a pretty difficult thing for them.” A1

Adaptability, flexibility, and the ability to think beyond the established modus operandi are important characteristics for the media salesperson who act as carriers of the practice of relationship management. They also need a good sense of the competitive environment and skills to manage the extending media landscape, especially within the digital media.

“(--) the relevant thing is how you get along with customers, that you have something inside your head to that you have the ability to adapt. (--) You constantly have to [adapt] to the fact that our offering changes, customers’ needs change, their interests, this situation inside the organization might change, so in a way in my opinion you cannot stick to do things in the way you are used to do them.” MS4

“For your name to stick to one’s mind, your ability to throw ideas and your personality has extremely much significance in media sales work. If you are odorless and tasteless then seldom you get a second meeting, if the customer doesn’t perceive to have benefited from that meeting. I think that’s a big challenge in sales, because each media company has ambitious targets for customer calls. It seems that customers have increasingly less time; they don’t want to meet you quarterly. If you meet them once or twice a year that’s a feat, and yet you should scrape together enough calls.” MS2

Individuals also draw on the shared background understandings of what their work is about. One of the interviewed sales managers stated that sales work is directed by the basic principles of quantity, focus and quality:

“If you look at the basic principles of sales they are quantity, focus and quality. We have to succeed in these such that we have enough activities towards customers, then that we meet the right customers and people, and that we do our job well. We have benchmarked this with [a partner] and we have done pretty well in this” MS2

Changing the logic from product to customer orientation

The inherent logic of the practice of relationship management is changing from product to customer orientation. To date, each brand within a medium (e.g. newspaper or TV) has typically had its own media sales department. Advertisers have been approached by a great number of media salespeople who each try to sell advertising space from their own medium or brand. The starting point for how activities are organized is the medium, and can therefore be named as a product-oriented sales model. Some of the interviewed advertisers questioned what utility such salespeople of single mediums or brands can provide them with, suggesting that salespeople of single brands will not exist in the future. It was common to think among the interviewed advertisers that such salespeople are not able to respond to their needs and thus unable to offer much additional value.

“I’m not sure whether there exists such [salespeople of single medium] anymore?” A4

“It’s all the same, for example [a newspaper brand] has a very active salesperson, who despite that I have told I won’t buy anything pushes like a bull. I don’t even bother to answer the phone anymore. It is tormenting, already from his account but then, generally it’s only one newspaper or one site or whatever solutions they have, so... It’s like riding with only one wheel so all the other opportunities are left unused. So, within the next few years to come there won’t be any media salespeople who represent only one medium. (--) What they can do well over there is to make sure they have interesting ways to do things, for example on their website. That is the point, and we will certainly hear it from elsewhere.” A1

The establishment of the cross-media sales unit changes the practice of relationship management more customer-oriented. According to the interviewed media salespeople, in the cross-media sales model the customer relationship is based on a profound understanding of the customer and its needs. The service logic within the integrated media sales unit is based on the idea that one person manages only a few customers, but instead of representing only one brand the person manages the whole range of media that the organization has to offer. On the basis of the following description, the cross-media sales unit seems like a strategic partner:

“Well this cross-media sales unit is sort of where it [the cross-media sales model] is best carried out and there it is natural that the sales manager and the key account manager have only a few customerships that they take care of... and in that case are kind of better able to offer our huge palette of products, but it’s also more about being able to know and learn about the customers, they are reasonably large customers almost all. You really learn to understand their business, how it works, and how the customer operates, when they are on the move and what target groups they have, these basics and through that one can begin together with the customer think about the best solutions and marketing, that how we can get the cash register to sing or get the products move.” MS3

It is evident from the description above that the change in the media sales model alters the nature of customer relationships, requiring on one hand a greater sense of business and knowledge from media salespeople, but on the other openness from advertisers in sharing their business insights.

4.2.2 The practice of steering

The practice of steering is about directing and guiding media sales, which involves intra-organizational practices that influence also customer orientation of media sales. The practice of steering is performed often through meetings within the media sales unit but also through the mundane encounters between the members of the organization. Integral to the practice of steering is the wage model that directs the doing of media salespeople.

The practice of steering is based on an understanding that managing is based on leading people. The management philosophy highlights the importance of good working atmosphere and open relationships between people. However, it turned out that in practice salespeople are managed by numbers, resulting in that team meetings have a focus in reporting and the follow-up of sales. Furthermore, the wage model, which encourages achieving personal sales goals, has a strong influence on how media sales is carried out.

An inherent part of the practice of steering is that work is very independent, being based for a large part on self-direction rather than team work. In addition, work is carried out without clearly defined rules for pricing, for instance, for which sometimes media sales becomes 'random bidding' when salespeople make offers based on guessing and intuition. Here, the social skills of media salespeople and their knowledge about the customer become important in succeeding in closing customer deals. Furthermore, sparring between the members of the media sales unit is continuous, compensating the independent nature of work. Continuous interaction is enabled by an open-plan office as well as the working culture that encourages this type of behavior.

The practice of steering has some constraining effects on customer orientation. As the media field has changed, the work of media salespeople is becoming increasingly more challenging. Furthermore, salespeople are expected to provide cross-media solutions. Adapting to the changed conditions would require the development of the skills of media salespeople as well as genuine team work, because it is impossible for one person to master all what's going on in the media field. Therefore the practice of steering which results in very independent work and a focus in achieving personal sales goals seems to inhibit media sales from becoming entirely customer-oriented.

Management philosophy

The interviewed sales director described his management philosophy to be based on leading people instead of managing numbers, emphasizing the importance of relationships within the work community. According to the sales director, employees are encouraged to be open and not to hesitate in discussing concerns with colleagues or managers.

“My leadership philosophy is pretty simple; of course we’ve got to have profit targets and we have reader targets but I’ve said at least a hundred times during the time I’ve been a manager and director, that there won’t be a day in which I would manage numbers – so people are led as people, and when people are led it means that you have to be able to guide, spar and motivate them, and as a by-product comes generally the numbers. It’s quite humane my way of leading so, it’s kind of like the company’s targets come as spin-offs but that, at least the time I’ve been here, they have come pretty well so we haven’t had many problems regarding that.” MS1

Although the principles of management are viewed human-based, in practice the work of salespeople is based on achieving numeric goals which is rather typical for a sales function. Furthermore, work is carried out relatively independently and is based on self-direction, so employees basically find their own way in meeting their sales goals. However, managers are open to provide sparring when help is requested. Meetings on the other hand were regarded more as reporting occasions with ‘light sparring’ rather than fruitful teamwork:

“It’s more about people who are in the same situation; we go through how it’s going and hear perhaps that... (--) And then there might be asked that ‘hey, what ideas have you offered for a case like this’, so there’s this light sparring. But I don’t feel like, although we are supposed to do in teams, but then we really don’t. MS4

“As far as we are concerned, a media salesperson is a bit like a private entrepreneur. For sure we have to give him/her the lists of customers that are possible to get, but everything is based on last year’s success – that’s next year’s target. From there we have the base for these sales, and then from upstairs we get what kind of growth we have to achieve.” MS2

The regular meetings which are held among the media sales deal with future and current issues of media sales. Based on the interviews, meetings focus primarily on reporting and the follow-up of sales numbers:

“Every other Monday we have a sales meeting in the morning for an hour or so, where we go through current sales offerings and how sales have gone etcetera. It’s sort of looking into the rear mirror and partly steering sales, looking at how much customer Z has purchased last year and how much this year, and should we sell more there (--)” MS3

“(--) guidance and follow-up of sales, we have a lot of different so-called products in [a newspaper brand], in print and online, so developing them from sales’ point of view, so that we get enough stuff sold there that’s my and my colleague’s job.” MS3

The interviewed sales team manager described guidance as focusing on figuring out target groups, i.e. potential customers for products for upcoming special issues, for example. Activities of the practice of steering thus revolve around guiding sales team members, the follow-up of sales, as well as in developing sales strategies for their various products.

Despite the independent way of working, the sales teams work in an open-plan office which enables continuous interaction between the team members. Good relationships between colleagues also enable this type working practice. Furthermore, the nature of work sets certain conditions for how work is carried out each day. The interviewed media salespeople work with a daily changing product that requires often quick reaction, and therefore most things are dealt with on the run rather than during meetings. These issues are illustrated by the following lines:

“Well, we have these regular meetings where we go through forthcoming and current issues, but managing things doesn’t happen only around these meeting. It’s not possible in our culture since we begin each day from zero. (--) In our case meeting practices are based on continuity, plus we all sit very tightly in an open-plan office so it means that when you walk by, these issues are dealt with one by one.” MSI

“It’s like continuous interaction and discussion, which is why I have experienced that the only way, is to lead people so that the relationship between me and my employees and between them is as good as possible. (--) Each time I emphasize that our organization is neither hierarchic nor byocratic, but anyone should feel comfortable talking to anyone and things are dealt with as they occur, because if they don’t come [talk] rarely they become any better.” MSI

Coping without a manual

The everyday activities of media sales are characterized by a fast rhythm, in which marketing work is carried out around a product that changes daily. Each day begins ‘from scratch’ and although there are certain cornerstones, generally there is no guide or manual for the work of media sales.

“Well there has been made some kind of a brand definition for [medium] which naturally has been changing in the course of time and has been updated and so on, but our doing is still characterized pretty much the fact that it’s this so called ad hoc –doing since there is no product which is produced in great amounts in a factory and then sold in stores. Or there is, but it changes every day. We can’t produce some chocolate that is sold for two or three weeks but we begin each morning basically from zero.” MSI

Due to the lack of a rule book that would include guidelines for pricing, for instance, media sales work can be characterized as a continuous consideration of what product combinations could be offered for customers in order to close a deal. Here, social skills and customer-based knowledge become emphasized in winning customer deals. To ease media sales work, as well as to develop customer offerings, the marketing department has commercialized special product bundles. The productization of service offerings

into incisively labeled solutions (e.g. ‘Morning to evening’) also guides media purchases among advertisers that have difficulties in selecting the proper media combinations, indicating a more customer-friendly approach.

“(--) What has been making our work challenging for many years already, is that there isn’t a guidebook for pricing. If we want to win customer cases, it depends on the salesperson’s knowledge who then finds out the boundaries that at which point deals are made. (--) The price is really difficult, and it takes a lot of time to think how to win the biggest cases.” MS2

“Then since there is no rule book it causes this kind of continuous reflection of what to offer and what to come up with. Such as if we offer this TV-magazine and give something from the web, would they then accept this hundred thousand worth package, for example. It’s like this all the time. And where we have received a lot of help, nowadays from our marketing, we have been able to make product bags and take them as partners to somewhere. These have been good things in my opinion; here the competitor hasn’t quite been able to respond yet.” MS2

Based on the previous quote it seems that sometimes offers could almost be characterized as random biddings, trying out and testing what kind of offers get accepted by the advertiser.

The lack of a manual relates also to carrying out media sales without a clearly defined brand definition. Although there is some kind of a brand definition or understanding of it, according to the interviewees the brand is defined by the editorial content and is shaped through the everyday doing. The brand *per se* is not the first thing in mind when carrying out everyday activities. Instead, they focus on reliability and producing high quality content, as well as good usability on the digital side.

“Of course there is some sort of brand definition that forms the basic picture that we have, then naturally that the content is of a good quality and is trustworthy, these are in a way the two most important things, and third is then that it’s good in terms of usability, at least when we talk about digital appliances. So certain corner stones exist, but then since the rhythm is so fast, always to reach absolutely to the point where we could see that all advertising and all doing is exactly according to what the brand definition says, well in practice it’s not possible to do in a laboratory space like that. We have some background values and then, in that regard, we have an 80 year-old well-known brand that doesn’t require much anymore, we don’t have to do any image campaigns or some brand campaigns because each day we have that plus 20 000 headlines out there and people know what it is.” MS1

Advertisers were asked about the importance of the media brand. The case organization was commonly considered as a safe advertising environment. Overall, the brand of the media seemed to be the least of their concerns. Rather, advertisers were interested in reaching their target groups and didn’t put much thought on the brand of individual mediums.

Wage model

Integral to the practice of steering is the wage model that directs the doing of media salespeople. It occurred from the interviews, that the wage model has a significant role in guiding the work of media sales. In the following quote, a media sales manager describes his role in managing subordinates:

“Well, perhaps I’m the one who gives them a framework within which we operate, so through me goes the follow-up of customer calls. And fortunately the wage model directs a lot in here. We have, on the level of [the case organization] the most aggressive wage model. Basic wages are slightly lower and then the sales provision system is aggressive. In this I think we have been in front at [the case organization], and I believe it has been one of the basis for good results in media sales. But then again there are those certain concerns and challenges in supervising and HR. Such as someone cheats at work hours or other things, it’s about these practical issues then. And once in a while there are bigger worries such as what’s the meaning of work, when you have to motivate a bit.”
MS2

Although the current wage model has been one of the key factors of good results in media sales, it doesn’t provide incentives for developing the best possible solutions for customers. Thus, the old wage model does not enhance integrated, cross-media thinking as the following quote illustrates:

“There are these basics that, since the salespersons don’t gain from total sales, then in that case they won’t do it.” MS3

“(--) because I get paid for what I sell in [brand 1], so of course if the customer wants I will think of how to connect [brand 1] and [brand 2], but it’s just so that my interests are in getting the money to my products, since I get provision from there. (--) This is sort of the old model, that’s why we have the integrated media sales unit. But that’s the thing, because I am measured on the basis of how much I sell my product, even if I’d create an incredible solution, such that ‘let’s use this amount, a little for [brand 1], a little for [brand 2] and a little for [brand 3]’, well great thing but then again my index will be looked at.” MS4

The interviewees emphasized that a customer-centric and a solution-based view is important and required to succeed. According to their view, sales activities are directed in any case by a customer orientation, which is seen to override the traditional challenges of provision-based goals in a sales organization.

“I think it has been organized smartly that different product categories have their own sales goals. But if I know I won’t reach the goal for web sales, and that I could get provision from print, then I would focus on selling print from which I will get provision. These are the challenges for all sales organizations. But above all, you have to try to deliver the customer a good, working solution. That is the starting point for success.”
MS2

The customer-oriented, service-dominant logic towards which the case organization is pursuing seems to be in contradiction with the current incentive model within the sales units of single medium. The wage model compensates salespeople on the basis of selling only certain media products, thus not encouraging to cross-selling through which

comprehensive, integrated media solutions could be provided. A proper rewarding practice has been taken into use in the cross-media sales unit where salespeople are rewarded on the total amount of sales, regardless of which mediums or brands the amount is composed of. This type of rewarding is seen to support a genuine customer orientation. It seems that the case organization needs to align the new organizational mindset and the wage model throughout the organization to succeed in implementing the customer-oriented logic, because currently ordinary media salespeople have no proper financial incentives.

4.2.3 The practice of developing

The practice of developing is about re-building and adjusting the business model and the everyday activities to respond to changes in the media markets. Within the organization it has a key role in achieving the goal to become customer-oriented. The practice of developing is carried out by members of the development teams in particular, but involves the shared background understandings of the organization throughout.

To understand the rapidly evolving needs of advertisers and thus develop the service model into more customer-oriented, development practices should be preferably based on close collaboration with the customers. It occurred from the interviews that development work is carried out by development teams rather the media salespeople who work at the customer interface.

The practice of developing can be characterized as strongly consumer-oriented, focusing on developing the digital media products in particular. It is based on a shared background understanding that consumers are the starting point for all activities. Development teams produce an extensive amount of products to meet the needs of consumers, which hinders the focus of media salespeople and shifts doing into product orientation. It was suggested that a stronger link between the development teams and media salespeople would be needed to improve customer orientation.

The practice of developing is based on an encouraging culture that prevails in the organization, supporting a trial and error –type of doing. Members of the organization are encouraged to explore and experiment new solutions, but it is also acknowledged and accepted that there is a possibility of failure. Furthermore, media salespeople share an understanding that ideas and development emerge as a bottom-up activity, feeling also that they have a possibility to influence. However, salespeople do not engage as much in developing work as they could as there is a lack of systematic development work within the media sales units.

The practice of developing cannot be characterized very customer-oriented. A customer relationship focus requires collaborative activities between the customer and the seller. Here, development work is carried out without any advertiser participation, and more importantly, is strongly consumer-oriented. Thus, despite the encouraging culture within the organization the practice of developing constrains a customer orientation or at least does not enhance it.

Development through trial and error

The practice of development is based on a positive and supportive stance to development work. The organizational culture in the case company has quite recently changed into more favorable towards a trial and error –type of doing, encouraging the members of the organization to experiment with new solutions without the fear of failure. Applications have been experimented on their own initiative but also from customers' suggestion.

“It’s not empty words but it’s for real, for the last year or more there has been [an atmosphere] that you can try, and you can fail too. It’s especially in the digital business, talking more broadly not just the internet but also mobile and new interfaces, whatever there is, well over there we are doing all sorts of applications from our initiative but also if a customer wishes something, which I think is part of putting the strategy into practice... Doing bravely new things although it wouldn’t give us millions of euros of money immediately, but can be seen that it’s the future anyway.” MS3

It became clear from the interviews that the nature of business in which they operate requires presence in new technologies, media interfaces, devices or channels due to low consumer loyalty. According to the interviews media consumers are not very brand loyal, so if you are not present as a media in the right channels consumers can thus switch to another brand. This is the case in tabloids in particular whose consumption is mostly based on newsstand copy sales. The situation is different for subscribers, for subscriptions do not come to a sudden end even if the media would not fulfill all needs. Therefore, in the fear of losing consumers certain media cannot afford to wait and see whether or not new digital devices or platforms will establish themselves among the masses. However, the bulk of advertisers do not feel a similar need to be present in each new platform since they often appreciate volume and prefer cost-efficiency. On the contrary, advertisers seem to prefer wait and see how these new interfaces develop. Naturally this is different with advertisers considered as forerunners, which actively develop new, often non-mainstream advertising solutions.

Development as a bottom-up activity

Focal to the practice of developing is the perception that ideas and development emerge from 'the bottom floor', among which development teams are reckoned. One of the sales managers states that he does not expect the top management to be innovative and continuously generate ideas, but rather 'to navigate the ship forward'. The following quote illustrates the kind of understanding there is about development work, emphasizing that innovation and development work is essentially a bottom-up activity.

“New ideas and innovations have to come from below, and then their [the top management’s] duty is to consider which ones are good and which are not, and then if firms need to be acquired then that’s their job. I don’t see it the way that our management should be generating ideas non-stop; it has to come from down here, this house is full of creative people so it has to come from here.” MS3

“(--) I genuinely believe that in this house, it doesn’t always go downward but if there are good things they definitely go upward too.” MS3

The ‘top floor’ is considered to listen to employees and to be interested in what happens ‘beneath the surface’, also making decisions based on what they hear from there. There is an understanding that people who work at the customer interface produce information for the management but also create new products or solutions. The interviewed salesperson who was quoted above genuinely believes that there are possibilities for bottom-up influencing and innovating.

To embrace customer orientation, it’s important to engage the people who actually work with customers in the development work. A good starting point is that such people feel that they have an opportunity to influence. However, the interviews revealed that salespeople do not engage in developing as much as they could. One significant explanation seems to be that rather than developing systematically new solutions, team meetings focus on the follow-up of sales and other selling-related activities. Furthermore, during the course of day it seems to be challenging for the managers of media sales to develop operations as the days pass while coping of daily routines. Development activity might remain on the level of brainstorming in the sales team. In addition, both the editors and the development teams constantly develop new products to sell, so the members of the media sales team do not feel such a strong need to be developing something new. The following quote states how the development of media sales is difficult to incorporate to the daily rhythm:

“It’s challenging, it feels like you’re pretty tied to it. To make it through the daily rhythm, that it’s difficult to sit down and think about yet better things. I have three internal meetings on a weekly basis. I have sales team meeting every other week where we go through sales and brainstorm a bit and go through successes and failures and how we could help one another, and of course acute products that we should try to sell. Then every other week we have a sales meeting, headed by [the sales director], where we go through the big picture and where we are. And then there’s the so-called management group’s meeting with the editors-in-chief and the marketing chiefs and other people, in which we go through potential problems and what’s there to come that has to be told downward. (--)” MS2

Strong consumer focus

According to the interviews, the organization has emphasized on digital advancement and thus currently focuses largely on the development of digital media. In practice, development work is carried out by development teams and editors. Based on the interviews, challenges of the media sales teams are out of their scope. Rather than thinking about the relevant challenges of media sales, development work focuses essentially on the media product, where the consumer perspective is central. The practice of developing is based on an understanding that consumers come first, a thought which is shared also among the interviewed media salespeople. These issues are illustrated in the following quotes:

"In each unit there's a development team that thinks about it, but at this moment developments are mainly committed or are focused on different digital media. Development of basic print must be mainly the responsibility of the chief editors and the managing editor (--)." MS3

"(--) it begins from the product side and pretty much from the consumer point of view, which is of course the most important thing. What interests the consumer, it's the point that the consumer must become interested, in which case it comes among the media, and only then media sales has a market there. First we have to get the consumer among some media or app. After that begins media sales work. And then it either becomes commercialized or it doesn't." MS3

Consumer orientation in the practice of developing creates some challenges for media sales. The product base has exploded within media, resulting in that one media brand has multiplied into a family of tens of products. The explosion in the number of products results from the growth of reader interfaces such as mobiles and tablets which require own products, the growth in the use of web-based media, as well as the excessive commercialization of products. According to an interview there are so many different things that are offered to customers, having led to a situation where almost everything is offered for everyone.

The excessive commercialization might benefit the consumers, but for the media sales unit it seems to have counter effects in two ways. First, it hinders the focus of media salespeople as there are numerous options to suggest to the customer. The following quotes illustrate how media sales has become more challenging than before due to the larger product base:

"In that sense it has, because the product offering has grown enormously, so focus gets easily lost. There are extremely many options, so that if I would go offer a target group of women in what ways could I put up the package." MS2

"We have all these different devices with which we reach people 24/7, there are quite a few of them and they multiply all the time. (--) I think it's a good thing from a consumer's perspective, but then again from media sales' perspective it's a difficult thing pricing-wise and also thought from the viewpoint of the product family." MS3

Second, the excessive commercialization implies that media sales becomes more product-oriented, moving away from the goal of becoming customer-centric:

"We have a lot to sell and a lot is being commercialized, something you could think a bit is it necessary to even commercialize everything. (--) All the time there's some competition or something on the web for instance, to which we should get a customer to sponsor or something. But then since things are offered insanely much, then in a way it becomes idiotic if we begin to offer everything for everyone. It becomes perhaps a little product-oriented when we have this and that." MS4

Media salespeople are not involved in the development process although changes in the media product ultimately affect what they have to offer to their customers. It was felt that in some cases a stronger link between the development team and the salespeople

who work with customers could be needed to take the customer perspective better into account.

“There are many practical issues, in here we are maybe quite product-oriented, since the customer perspective isn’t always understood in the development side. Of course certain people are and should be more analytical and do certain things, but in my opinion it lacks a certain link which would connect it to reflecting upon customer needs. (--) Now some people develop, others sell, then not much information is left over. It’s sort of like, for example our marketing develops events but then our sales find out about them too late, so they aren’t necessarily commercialized. There’s a place for development I think.”
MS4

Although the consumer and product orientation of development were largely brought out in the interviews, some examples of how media sales has been developed could be found. The development of media sales, too, revolves around the topic of digital media and particularly in how sales of digital media is organized. According to the interviews, web media sales is being decentralized implying that rather than dedicating the sales to a unit of web media sales, all salespeople take responsibility of web sales.

“(--) it has been done clever here that the digital development has been invested in a lot. That gang has been reinforced, there are more and more salespeople and it is tried that everybody knows how to sell the web. It’s not so that only the web unit sells, but that it’s also under my responsibility to know both web and print. Or let’s say part only knows the print, but that’s not a good road.” MS4

The key challenge of creating a new earnings logic

When asked about the key challenges of the moment and the near future, the interviewees of the media sales unit mentioned primarily the earnings logic and offering consumers quality content with great usability. Hence, discussion evolves primarily around the readers – not the advertisers. It is interesting that media salespeople bring up the consumers rather than advertisers. They do recognize, however, that there is no business without the readers, which is an understanding that guides their activities and the practice of developing.

The interviewed sales director considers his greatest current challenge to be gaining consumer understanding and finding a consumer funding -based earnings logic. One of the greatest challenges for the different mediums or brands within the organization is to make products for which consumers are ready to pay for. The following quotes imply that the media sales unit thinks beyond selling advertise space for business customers. They are concerned with making a good product and thus satisfying consumer needs.

“(--) content will always be in the core, but it has to be made so interesting and offered with such good usability that the consumer is ready to pay for it. That is the simple challenge that we have.” MS1

“Perhaps how the earnings logic will develop in the long run. I don’t think print is on the way out, but it’s steadily decreasing little by little. Plus how we reach younger people. Of

course from the web yes, but if we think how much money we get from the web versus from print, how are able to get it from the web and what all sorts of things you have to create – you should be continuously creating something.” MS4

On the organizational level, the greatest challenges involve the organization of work. The organization operates now in the middle ground of the whole transformation process, for which many issues related to the organization and distribution of work between different media sales units are uncertain. Although the formation of the cross-media sales unit supports the overall goal of the organization to become customer-oriented, the organizational change which is still underway has created uncertainty among the media sales units of single brands. Some interviewees felt that their own work has become more challenging since their best clients have been transferred to the new unit.

”How to get everything work together and how to organize this all, because now I think we are kind of in the middle ground, earlier everyone worked in their own units, everyone doing their own product family. Well suddenly we were encouraged to collaborate, so we collaborated, and now a part of the customers are in the cross-media model. I think that’s the direction, that there’s one face per client from [the case organization] and then a team is built. But then how it will be put up, now there are small customers, large customers, but then middle-sized customers are still in this old model. How that is going to be changed and in what schedule, I think there’s something...” MS4

”[The cross-media model] is one fairly major reason for this confusion on a manager level. The cross-media sales model was established one and a half years ago, so in Q4 2010. At the beginning about twenty largest or strategically important customers were moved to them, and their object is that one person takes care of only a few customers and sells all products of [the case organization]. So there are all web sites, all print and all sub-products. Little by little more customers have been moved there. And if we look at it in euros, we have lost for the past two years about 40 per cent of our sales to the cross-media sales unit. And attitude-wise, if you look at your own sales it’s quite challenging, because it feels like all the berries from our cake are taken there.” MS2

The interviews also revealed that some employees have been intimidated about their future work prospects. However, although organizational changes have caused some concerns, based on the interviews it seems that bigger motivational or other problems have not occurred. Some interviewees discussed about the disorder and confusion related to their work. It occurred that the establishment of the cross-media sales unit and the fact that the range of tasks has expanded in general have increased ambiguity in ‘doing’ especially on the managerial level. Sales managers are involved broadly in all kinds of doings within the organization as well as taking care of own customer relationships.

”Especially recently this has been really confusing. I’m at meetings dealing with [a brand’s] subscriber service, its advertising, customer register, then within the group we are seeking for co-operation models and then at the same time I should be checking out the subscriber service and numbers for circulation. Then, at the same time in media sales, we should be helping out the salespeople and I also have around twenty customers of my own which I try to manage on the side the best I can. But they are based on pretty long relationships, and that’s why I take care of them.” MS2

The interviewed sales director felt that he has such an extensive job description that time does not suffice to keep himself updated about the developments.

"I can tell you that I'm pretty far from sales that I don't even know all the latest things, it's good if once in a while in all the rush try to keep yourself updated that what's now hot and what are we capable of doing, that's a full job in itself." MSI

The organizational transformation together with the fundamental and rapid changes brought by media convergence set a challenge to sales practitioners on the managerial level as well as regular media salespeople in coping with their work. How media sales is developed regarding how work is organized and how people are managed become one of the key issues in keeping up with the changes within the media field and thus ensuring that advertiser customers are offered interesting media solutions.

4.2.4 The practice of collaborating

The practice of collaborating is about how different media sales units co-operate with each other and with advertisers, but also how media salespeople and the editors collaborate. The practice of collaborating can be characterized by strong compartmentalization of the organization which also reflects to peoples' way of thinking. Carried by members throughout the organization, the practice of collaborating essentially affects the organization's ability to provide cross-media solutions and thus become more customer-oriented.

The practice of collaborating is inherently about the general background understanding that prevails within the organization. Here, the media salespeople but also the editors play an important role as carriers of the practice. It is commonly considered that the commercial side (i.e. media sales) and the creative side (i.e. the editors) need to be kept independent from each other to assure the credibility of the media. Therefore, direct collaboration between the media sales and the journalists is out of the question. However, collaboration practices diverge between different media. In some mediums it is much more ordinary to incorporate a commercial perspective, having different forms of co-operation with the advertisers.

Apart from the dichotomy between media sales and the editors, strong identities among media units create implicit barriers that inhibit cross-media work. In addition, some organizational structures still cause internal competition. However, the culture of collaboration has improved a lot within the last years. The establishment of the cross-media sales unit and the role of the digital sales unit as a key partner are practical implications of how the organizational culture has evolved towards more collaborative. Improvement of the culture has been furthered by the cross-media trainee program and new employees that arrive with fresh thinking.

The mindset of where people relate themselves to work in seems to have a strong influence on how people adapt both to the changes in the media environment and the structural re-organization in the case company. In the customer-oriented sales model advertisers are offered solutions from a broad range of media rather than selling single products, which requires that people change their mindsets into thinking 'I work for the media' instead of 'I work for newspaper X'.

The practice of collaborating has a conflicting inner logic. On one hand, trainee programs and the establishment of the cross-media sales unit enhance the integration of different units within the organization, enabling a more customer-oriented approach in media sales. On the other hand, the old mentality of working for you own unit without cross-departmental co-operation has counter affects for customer orientation.

Dichotomy between media sales and the journalists

The interviews implied that especially in the newspaper business there is a clear dichotomy between the editorial side and the media sales, which was often referred to as 'the commercial side' by the interviewed media salespeople. It was viewed that it is important to keep these instances separate in order to guarantee the independency and credibility of the media among its readers or consumers.

"In this house there has traditionally been, between the editors and the commercial side, a... gap of one kilometer, well in [name of medium] not so much but... I genuinely think that this is the way it has to be. The editors cannot take the commercial side into account, and if it is taken to account in the main doing, it is then noticed by consumers, it is noticed by advertisers, it's a bad thing." MS3

However, there are signs of increasing collaboration between these sides. Collaboration practices diverge between mediums but also between brands:

"Well let's say that it develops little by little as it has been traditionally (--) so that the editors have their pride and so they should, you can't in a way commercialize yourself too much. Surely I know that in many media companies it's common that the editorial staff reacts to customers' wants, they do it a lot in TV for example. But in our case... they do it from their premises and from what readers are interested in, and we live according to that. But let's say that I feel that eyes have opened, at least in [media brand 1], myself of course I come from [media brand 2] which is yet more matter-of-fact and more independent, of course [media brand 1] is too, but there is the more entertaining side in [media brand 1] so perhaps we aim more at common interests. So I'm sure it's going to the right direction. But there has to be a borderline without question." MS4

What was described in the interviews above makes a substantial difference into the magazine business, where collaboration between editors and companies is more common. The interview implies that it is a question of self-respect that journalists remain separate from the commercial world. Although newspapers are dependent on advertiser income, their dependence cannot effect on the product itself and must thus remain as an independent, reliable media. However, as found in the interviews, the editorial staff in one of the mediums in the case organization has gradually become more approving to the interests of advertisers as well.

Interestingly, media salespeople prefer to limit collaboration between the commercial and the editorial side. One of the salespersons stated that ideas coming from the creatives cannot be shared directly between the two instances but have to be 'circulated through the organizational matrix' instead:

"In my opinion it has to go from the top, first up and from there down to us, it can't go directly. This is my opinion. I really want them to be two different worlds." MS3

Possibilities for the media salespeople to create customized solutions are limited by an internalized disposition of keeping the business and the consumer side independent from each other. Similar collaboration as within magazines does not exist in the newspaper business, but there is a mutual understanding that things are the way they

should be. Possibilities to customize solutions remain, firstly, on a technical level (e.g. the shape of advertisement or the section in which the advertisement is published), and second, on a trans-media level which requires either cross-departmental activities or participation of the cross-media sales unit.

Although the practice of developing is based on a dichotomy between media sales and the creatives, according to the interviews there have been signs of better understanding towards commercialism and the significance of advertisers among the editorial staff. This change in understanding could enhance the opportunities of the media sales unit to customize solutions in collaboration with the editorial staff. Better understanding stems from the new employees who arrive with a new mindset. In other words, they have a wider perspective to business-making within the media industry. Furthermore, people have acknowledged that the earnings models have changed and that the way of thinking needs to be changed too. This is evident from the following statement:

“(--) new people are coming there [editorial staff] who are used to think differently, and then again some customers, just like that Aalto University, since isn't it possible to study arts for example, but also commercialism, so perhaps business logic is better understood there. Plus, earnings models have also changed here, thinking that [newspaper 1] had a massive circulation and [newspaper 2] had a massive circulation, but now of course we have those challenges so we've got to understand that money comes pretty much from other places too, that we seriously need those advertisements where the money comes from. So that understanding has grown.” MS4

Divergent advertiser-media collaboration practices in different media

Some of the interviewed media salespeople felt that newspaper business has incorporated features from the magazine business, as they have begun to publish magazine-like issues as supplementary products. However, the collaboration practices separate different mediums from each other. In some type of media, including magazines, the advertiser perspective is taken much more into consideration.

Magazines are active towards advertisers and collaborate in many ways. The relationship between advertisers and the representatives of mediums like magazines or TV could be characterized as co-creational; this type of co-creational aspect seems to be rather weak in the relationship between newspaper media sales and advertisers. However, what is important to notice is that interaction happens between advertisers and the creators of media content, such as the editors of a magazine, rather than between the media sales unit. The following quotes illustrate how magazines and TV channels in particular take the initiative in creating forms of collaboration with advertisers:

”Purchasing eyeglasses is not just about needing glasses for reading, but about having an accessory which is part of you and part of different situations in your life. That's why we have come along in these [creating content together with a magazine], and as a matter of fact women's magazines contact us a lot. (--) Our marketing but also communications is very active in these cases. Keeping the reader in mind, they plan together with the editors of the magazine how to make a good entity of it.” A2

“It’s the same in TV. We meet different TV-show producers who suggest that we would think about becoming the main partner in co-operation and to integrate inside the show. Here, the media agency doesn’t actually have any role. We do the thinking work here and the planning work together with the media representative.” A2

An interesting point relates to sponsoring or integrating advertisers to TV programs. As it occurs from the statements above, media agencies have no role in these arrangements. Headwork and planning happens directly with the representative of the media.

Some level of customization can be found within newspapers, too. One of the interviewed advertisers showed their advertisement which was purposefully placed in a newspaper section that covers the same theme as the advertisement. The advertiser felt that his preferences about the layout and other details were taken quite nicely into account by his contact person from the media company. This example of customization is not a very extreme one, but it illustrates how solutions can be arranged to the smallest detail when advertisers are involved directly with media companies. This advertiser does not use a media agency but co-operates directly with the people from the case organization. It can be assumed that this type or level of customization would not be possible if there was a media agency acting as an intermediary.

Cross-media co-operation

Collaboration between the different media units is a key activity for an organization aiming at a customer-oriented logic, in which trans-media solutions are offered instead of individual media products. The media offering of the case company is so broad that a single person to handle it in-depth is very challenging. Different brands let alone different mediums have their unique characteristics. Therefore, a solution-based approach seems to require small teams that consist of specialists of their area. This places a challenge to how media companies will organize customer relationship management for small companies so that the customer can be satisfied but that human resources are not wasted.

Customer orientation thus demands integration of the business units within the media company. The interviews among the media sales unit revealed that salespeople sometimes identify themselves strongly to the media they work for, hindering their ability to adopt the new organizational mindset of cross-media solutions. For the case organization to succeed in their new strategy, apart from the explicit, visible boundaries also the implicit boundaries between the different media need to be removed. For this to happen, salespeople must alter their way of thinking and adopt a much wider perspective in how they identify themselves.

It occurred from the interviews that people who complete a trainee program held in the case organization as well as people working in the cross-media sales unit have adopted a broad mindset. These people identify themselves as working for *the media*, whereas people who have worked for long in a certain media brand identify themselves strongly

into this one particular unit, making it harder for them to conceive a more integrated mindset. The following quote illustrates how a media salesperson working for a newspaper perceives to work for the media:

“When I went to the cross-media unit my eyes were opened pretty well. Until then I was basically a salesperson for [newspaper brand], so it opened up to me at that point. And also when I realized that customers think that way. This I heard from a customer that they currently use 90 per cent to new digital media in planning, and only 10 per cent to old traditional media. Whereas the money goes ninety-percent to traditional media and ten-percent to new media. When I heard this sentence I realized that I also have to adopt a mindset, otherwise we are behind if we don’t begin to do things proactively, also here at the customer interface. After that I realized you cannot be only a [newspaper 1] salesperson or [newspaper 2] salesperson, you have to think about the whole product family.” MS3

According to the interviewed media salespeople, the majority is beginning to think in a broader way, but it has been harder for the long-term employees to renew their thought. Furthermore, salespeople from one of the newspapers in particular relate themselves so strongly to their own media, finding it difficult to engage in cross-media sales activities. Again, the mentality changes to more open and broad among younger and fresher employees.

Adoption of the new organizational mindset is hindered also by a different implicit hierarchical status between different media units which has historically affected, and to some extent still affects, on the willingness to collaborate between units. It occurs from one of the interviews that self-appreciation in certain media units was earlier so strong that it prevented collaboration between units and which also reflected to the development and modernization endeavors of its own.

“When I came to work at [newspaper 1], at that point [newspaper 1] was the king, just like it still is big and mighty. But back then we didn’t even consider taking anyone under our wing, in a sense that if a salesperson from [newspaper 2] would’ve wanted to join us it wouldn’t had worked out. Let alone [newspaper 3], if it would’ve wanted to join it would’ve been out of the question.” MS3

“(--) for sure the salespeople are out of countenance, thinking ‘now we are here in this big and great..’, talking about the seventh estate and what all has been talked about [the newspaper brand] back in the day.” MS3

The practice of collaborating has evolved through time. Within the last years the organizational culture has become more collaborative across media units:

“We have gone already light years ahead. I have been working seven and a half years for [the case company], and back then there was not much co-operation and on the contrary, sometimes it even felt like the worst competitor comes from inside the house rather than from the outside (--), so sometimes it was a bit like is there any point in fighting with each other, and customers were a bit confused about what’s going on.” MS3

The web media sales unit seems to be an inherent partner of co-operation within the media organization. It turned out from the interviews that salespeople collaborate

especially with the web unit, meeting customers together and building target groups from different online sites. In such cases customers are offered suitable online packages consisting the entire offering of the company, not only the brand which the media salesperson represents. However, internal competition seems to be inevitable at least in the current business model in which most media salespeople represent single brands. One of the interviewed media salespeople stated how basically all products within the media company are competitors for their brand:

“Yes, all online sites, all newspapers and magazines, from [the case organization] that is. Here it goes often in such a way that although there is much talk about co-operation, but then if a customer has planned to put a certain amount of euros into print and a certain amount to the web, well then unfortunately the case is that we might compete about putting it to us or putting it to [brand 1] or [brand 2]. Instead of finding a common solution where each gets a share, or something like that. But in my opinion everyone is basically our competitors, especially in the online world. That’s pretty harsh.” MS4

The practice of collaborating has thus conflicting effects on customer orientation, resulting essentially from the compartmentalization of the organization that stems from afar. Although the visible walls are being currently removed within the organization, compartmentalization is reflected in the way of thinking especially among the people who have worked for a long time according to the old sales model. Consequently, on one hand trainee programs and the establishment of the cross-media sales unit enhance the integration of different units within the organization, enabling a more customer-oriented approach in media sales. On the other hand, the old mentality of working for you own unit without cross-departmental co-operation has counter affects for customer orientation.

5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The research gap and objectives of the study

This research takes a practice perspective to studying how media sales is managed and carried out in Finnish media organizations that operate in the field of cross-media business. Based on the literature review, there seems to be a lack of both theoretical and empirical understanding of how business-to-business sales and customer relationships are managed and carried out in the context of media convergence. Media organizations can be considered to be quite special cases in terms of managing and organizing work (Jenkins & Deuze 2008), setting a challenge to applying the concepts and theories of the general discipline of management (Küng 2007). The theoretical framework builds primarily on media management literature and practice theory in social sciences, drawing also on customer relationship management literature. The field of media management builds a bridge between the general theoretical disciplines of management and the special characteristics of the media industry (Küng 2008: 2). However, studies have generally remained on the macro level and have focused primarily on the external environment, structural characteristics, and consumers rather than the internal dynamics of media organizations (Küng 2007). The practice perspective directs attention to the everyday doings of media sales, providing an interpretive lens to understand how the socially instituted practices guide practitioners in their daily work.

Media sales is typically defined as an activity that focuses on selling advertising space within a magazine, newspaper, website or other medium. However, this definition ignores the complex nature of media sales as an everyday social practice. In this study, media sales is considered as a social practice that is constituted through the everyday activities and shared background understandings carried by members within but also outside the department of media sales. The objective of this study was to broaden our understanding of what media sales is about in the context of media convergence by conducting an empirical case study in a Finnish multi-channel media organization.

The research problem was addressed through the following questions:

1. *How can the key customer relationships of media sales be characterized in Finnish multi-channel media organizations?*
2. *What are the relevant social practices of media sales that enable or constrain customer orientation?*

Characterizing the key customer relationships

Commercial media organizations operate in a dual-product marketplace, complying with the interests of both consumers and advertisers. Within the business-to-business markets, advertisers and media agencies can be regarded as the key stakeholders for media organizations. Although revenues for the department of media sales come from advertisers, it was found that large advertisers in particular use a media agency as an intermediary and might direct all media-related issues through them instead of interacting with the media salespeople. Therefore, managing the relationship with media agencies seems to have become an integral part of customer relationship management within the media sales unit. However, the importance of the relationship with media agencies did not come up in the interviews with the media salespeople at any degree. It seemed that media salespeople regarded media agencies more as actors that hinder their work rather than important stakeholders and linkages in the customer relationship with the advertiser.

The empirical analysis showed that media agencies have different roles, ranging from the practical role of coordinating and booking media activities to a strategic partner that is involved in developing the business of the advertiser. The findings suggest that the role of media agencies has become stronger as the media field has become more complicated and fragmented. Advertisers themselves lack the skills especially regarding digital media solutions, which were regarded as one of the major assets of media agencies by the interviewed advertisers and, on the contrary, as one of the major challenges by the media salespeople.

There are changes in the media planning practices that have important implications for media sales but also for media agencies. Increasingly, media planning is integrated earlier into the advertising planning process. According to Day (2000), collaborative relationships are built on the exchange of close information and tight social and process linkages between the value exchanging partners. In the context of media planning, it can be viewed that earlier participation in the process provides an opportunity to suggest innovative, novel solutions regarding the media plan and thus engage in a relationship that creates added value to the customer. This would require, however, sharing business-sensitive knowledge for media salespeople and can be therefore regarded as one of the obstacles for media organizations to achieve customer orientation. The advertiser might not be willing to share intimate knowledge of their future marketing activities for media organizations that provides services often also to the advertiser's direct competitors. This problem has been overcome in media agencies so that contracts prohibit having the advertisers' direct competitors as customers.

It can be argued that the possibilities for media salespeople to become involved early in the advertising planning process are minor also due to advertisers' general lack of willingness to interact with media salespeople. One of the main reasons why resistance occurs is that marketing managers feel that they have different goals in doing. Media salespeople are considered to be interested only in selling their own media brand,

whereas large advertisers in particular are interested in the big picture, leaving the details of the media plan for media agencies. It occurred that the profession 'media salesperson' has a negative vibe in it in general. Interestingly, advertisers had a much more positive attitude towards salespeople of the new cross-media sales unit. The negative attitude can be regarded as a significant challenge for media salespeople to succeed in establishing a collaborative relationship with the advertisers and thus become customer-oriented. The establishment of the cross-media sales unit is an important and a recommended step in enhancing media organizations' role as a media planning partner. It could be also suggested that media salespeople called themselves something else than salespeople, which refers to the old product-oriented business model of the media organization. Titles such as 'media specialists' or 'media planners' would better describe their new customer-oriented role as architects of cross-media solutions rather than mere sellers of advertising space.

The social practices of media sales and their enabling and constraining features

Media organizations in general are searching for new business models and new ways of working to adapt to the ongoing radical change in the media environment. It is suggested that the integration of marketing, sales, and customer service functions aids companies to gain in-depth understanding of their customers in order to build close, collaborative relationships (Parvatiyar & Sheth 2001). It was found that such measures have been taken by the case organization to support the transformation from product- to customer-oriented. By renewing the sales model, the organization aims to learn comprehensively about its advertiser customers and thus provide cross-media solutions instead of single media products. Furthermore, it was found that integration of the sales and marketing departments has been actively promoted within the organization. However, despite the structural changes that lay good foundations to operate from the customer perspective, the analysis of the empirical data suggests that there are established social practices of media sales, some of which enable but others which constrain customer orientation.

The social practices of relationship management, steering, collaborating, and developing which were identified in chapter 4.2 mediate the underlying background understandings and the bodily activities that make up media sales. These interrelated practices consist of features that both enable and constrain customer orientation, embodying structural, processual and cultural tensions identified by Achtenhagen and Raviola (2009) in their study about organizational dualities. According to these authors, active and comprehensive management of these interlinked, independent, and dynamic tensions might enhance success in a reorganization process. In this thesis, it occurred that although the case organization has taken measures to enhance customer orientation by establishing a cross-media sales unit and a trainee program which produces broad-minded media salespeople, as well as integrating sales and marketing, the old product-

oriented logic is mediated through the established, culturally and historically transmitted social practices.

The practice of relationship management is about the art of managing business-to-business relationships within the media industry. Although this practice is based on a shared understanding that customers' needs come first, it was found that activities are driven by a sales orientation. The practice of relationship management depicts a constant struggle between finding the best solutions for the customer and meeting own sales goals. This struggle is present within the media sales units of single brands in which the issue of guiding and rewarding arises. The wage model does not encourage salespeople of individual mediums to offer cross-media solutions but rather encourages to sell only one's one products, and thus is not in line with the new service logic. The sales orientation thus stems also from *the practice of steering*, which is about the direction and guidance of media sales. In addition to the wage model, the sales orientation is sustained by team meetings that focus on reporting and the follow-up of sales rather than enhancing salespeople's cross-media skills or teamwork, for instance.

The practice of developing is about re-building the business model and the everyday activities to respond to changes in the media environment. Although it encourages the exploration of new solutions and bottom-up development, it was found that the strong consumer orientation of the practice is in the way of customer orientation. Development work focuses on the media product itself and is carried from a consumer perspective. It was also found that the practice of development actually hinders the focus of media salespeople and shifts doing into product orientation as development teams produce an extensive amount of products that are imposed on advertiser customers. *The practice of collaborating* refers to the co-operation between different media sales units, editors and advertisers. It is characterized by strong compartmentalization of the organization, referring to the physical lack of collaboration but also reflects to peoples' way of thinking. It is commonly understood that the commercial and the creative sides need to be kept apart to assure the credibility of the media. The change towards the cross-media logic is difficult, for the old mentality is embedded quite deep into the employees with a long working history in the company.

It can be reflected how changes in media consumption and in the media field will affect the role of media organizations and the role of media salespeople in the future. Especially as advertisers seek for ways to establish meaningful, interactive relationships with the consumers, it may not suffice that media workers offer solely audiences for advertisements but rather they have an active role in creating opportunities to establish these meaningful relationships through their mediums. To keep up with the changes, or even preferably to keep ahead, requires reinvigoration of the practices and processes within the media sales unit but also throughout the whole organization.

Contribution, limitations and suggestions for further research

The contribution of this thesis is two-fold. First, this study advances knowledge in the field of marketing management by contributing to a better understanding of the day-to-day activities of CRM and media sales as social practices. In particular, by articulating a practice-based approach to CRM, the study broadens the perspective on media sales from a mere marketing function of selling advertising space to a socially constructed organizational practice that is historically and culturally transmitted. Second, this thesis continues the practice-turn in the broader field of management and marketing research, by empirically exploring the social and communicative activity through which media sales are carried out in media organizations.

The present research has some limitations. During the process of analysis I realized that the media industry itself, albeit limited to the business-to-business side is a broad context. Although different mediums (e.g. newspapers, TV or magazines) share some common practices, there are many prevailing media-specific practices of media sales that fall out of the scope of this study. I have, however, discussed some of these media-specific practices when they have been relevant in describing the activities discussed with the interviewees. Another limitation concerns the interview data. Due to the limited scope of this study, interviews were conducted only among advertisers that are medium to large in size in order to gain as rich data as possible of the social practice of media sales. However, it would be interesting to expand the study and explore what is the relationship like between media salespeople and small advertisers with more simple media usage.

Based on the findings, some approaches for further research can be suggested. First, it would be interesting to examine how the divergent collaboration cultures of different mediums and different brands are shaped or work together within the cross-media sales model. The divergent collaboration practices might inhibit or at least complicate the adoption of a cross-media sales model, having implications on managing customer relationships. This would be an interesting future research topic, since the media industry is moving towards a more integrated operating model in which media departments collaborate more. Second, a more profound study of media agencies would give more insight to the relationship between advertisers and media organizations and their constraining or enabling impact on customer orientation.

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