

‘Intermediaries’ versus ‘media’: A multi-perspective investigation into the questionable viability of a regulatory distinction

[English translation; original German publication: Andree, Martin: „Intermediäre’ versus ‚Medien’. Eine multiperspektivische Untersuchung über die fragwürdige Tragfähigkeit einer regulatorischen Unterscheidung.“ In: Medienwirtschaft 21, 3 (2024), S 32-40; this original article is available as PDF file and can be downloaded on the German website (www.kriegdermedien.de)]

ABSTRACT

Of the seven most valuable companies in the world, five are the so-called ‘GAFAM’, namely Google (or Alphabet), Apple, Facebook (or Meta), Amazon and Microsoft (see Statista 2024). A large part of GAFAM's revenue is generated by digital platforms. These have, for the most part, replaced traditional media providers. However, the digital platforms are not regulated as media but as ‘intermediaries’. Behind this term lie massive regulatory privileges. The digital platforms are regulated like infrastructure (e.g. telephone networks) even though they offer specific content, such as editorial media, and monetise it in the same way. In addition, they are exempt from liability for content (unlike ‘media’). The following article analyses the distinction (media versus intermediaries) from a variety of perspectives (definitional, media theory, media history, media economics, supplemented by an empirical review of user understanding) and demonstrates that it is barely tenable. Accordingly, it seems reasonable to conclude that the excessive growth of digital platforms and the disappearance of editorial media are also the result of a flawed regulatory distinction and preferential legal treatment or privileges.

1. Background

The invisible ‘elephant in the room’ at the heart of the debate about the proper regulation of big tech companies is the concept of the ‘intermediary’ and similar, mostly synonymous terms (‘service provider’, ‘platform’, etc.). For many years, platform owners have consistently claimed that they are anything but media (see generally Jarren/Neuberger 2020; Jarren 2019; Seufert 2015; Lowe/Noam 2023).

Early on, Eddie Guy pointed out the questionable nature of this basic assumption in relation to Facebook: "A company that dominates the media does not want to be a media company." When asked whether Facebook was a publisher or a platform, the company responded with the same defiance for years: "Platform, platform, platform" – for obvious reasons. This is because it is "difficult to imagine how Facebook could exist if it were liable for the many billions of pieces of content posted by users on the site" (Guy 2018).

From a legal perspective, this question has long been settled (German Bundestag 2018) – the complex structure of intermediary regulation was built on the assumption that platforms are not media, but ‘only’ intermediaries. Typically, in legislative processes involving such fundamental decisions and definitions, commissions of experts are appointed – as is the case with the current re-evaluation of abortion laws in Germany, where biologists, physicians, health scientists, ethicists and so on are being consulted.

However, it is doubtful whether the simplistic distinction between media and intermediaries was backed up by similarly careful scientific advice. This becomes obvious when we ask ourselves why people unanimously refer to platforms such as Facebook and Instagram as ‘social media’ – are they all mistaken?

Certainly, the legal provisions mentioned above were made at a time when the digital channels in question did not have any relevant social significance. Perhaps the issue was not considered important at the time. But times have changed. Since then, digital corporations have grown to become the most valuable companies in the world, and their platforms increasingly dominate our lives. This development has important implications for our democracy in particular. After all, media forms the basis of public opinion and this applies equally to analogue and digital media.

However, the analogue media world of newspapers, television and radio is steadily shrinking and being replaced by digital media. There are many indications that digital media are already dominating the media sphere. This can be perceived indirectly in the distribution of advertising investments as digital media have been attracting more attention than any and all analogue media combined since 2020 in Germany (see Janke 2021 and 2022; Statista 2022; Navarro 2023). Typically, advertising companies invest where they expect to attract the attention of their audience, which is why advertising investment is an excellent indirect indicator of the relative importance and relevance of the respective media types and channels.

This digital transformation would not be a bad thing in itself, but measurements show a significant concentration of traffic on platforms (YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, Google, etc.), while the many millions of independent content domains hardly receive any traffic. This means that the future digital media world is likely to be controlled mainly by a few platforms ('intermediaries'), with the remaining domains and apps being largely irrelevant and insignificant. In particular, this applies to the digital extensions of formerly analogue editorial 'media', i. e. press offers such as www.guardian.com or, in Germany, www.spiegel.de, i.e., the editorial 'content providers' (cf. Andree / Thomsen 2020).

This demonstrates the precarious status of the issue of intermediaries. The following example makes this clear: Due to the massive concentration of traffic, there is already a significant lack of provider diversity in the use of digital media, which also stands in open contradiction to the constitutional regulatory objectives of German media law. Intermediaries are not only exempt from liability for the content but are also not regulated in terms of provider diversity.

The barely plausible rationale behind the regulatory distinction between 'media' and 'intermediaries' becomes immediately apparent when we extrapolate the takeover of the digital media reality by platforms about five to ten years into the future. After the decline of analogue media, a media system consisting largely of platforms ('intermediaries') would follow. In this media system, the traditional rules for media would no longer apply because intermediaries do not count as media in the regulation.

Thus, as they take over, intermediaries can currently undermine the constitutional framework of our media system completely legally and without interference because, according to current case law, they are not considered to be media. Thus, the common distinction between media and intermediaries creates dangerous preconceptions that determine the foundation of our current digital regulation.

2. Question

With this context in mind, it is time to critically review the distinction between media and intermediaries. This is particularly important given that even a superficial examination reveals that the term 'intermediary' itself is merely a euphemism for 'media'. If you ask media scholars what a medium is, they will typically point to core aspects such as their 'middle' position or their 'mediating' nature (see generally Munker/Rösler 2008; Krüger 2021).

The 'medium' is conceived of as a third (middle or medium) entity, a kind of tool that stands between ('inter'!) two poles of mediation and transmits media content. In this respect, it is quite risky in legal terminology to say that social media are not media, but something completely different and separate, namely 'intermediaries', which is again a

rephrasing of the term ‘media’. Lurking within this seemingly clear distinction is the tautological concept of the ‘medium as intermediary’.

The terminology of current internet regulation is particularly fascinating from a media theory perspective because the idea of the ‘medium as intermediary’ has shaped the entire history of the Western concept of media. It is therefore worthwhile reconstructing the emergence of the concept of media in order to find out exactly which semantic roots were brought to light in the processes of legal terminology formation. We will then examine current media usage through an empirical survey of 1,000 participants in Germany and come to the conclusion that the distinction is completely irrelevant to users. We conclude the analysis by assessing media economics and find that here too, media and intermediaries are not fundamentally distinguishable in the structure of their revenue models.

3. Media versus intermediaries: media theory analysis

a. Historical origins of the media concept

Aristotle's work *Peri psyches* (On the Soul) is considered the founding document of the Western concept of media and, even here, the figure of the ‘medium as intermediary’ can be found. Aristotle did not yet have a concept of media. Nevertheless, this classic text is also the birthplace of the term itself, because Thomas Aquinas, in his later Latin translation, fills the conceptual ‘gap’ with the Latin expression ‘medium’, which is then used more than a hundred times in his Latin text (Hagen 2008, p. 16).

In the classical Aristotelian texts (especially Aristotle 418a-419a), the question of how sensory perception comes about (seeing, hearing, tasting, smelling, etc.) is explored. In contrast to other contemporary models, the necessary existence of a mysterious, imperceptible substrate is postulated, which must be located between (Greek original: *to metaxy*, ‘between’) the object and the sensory organ – an intermediary, in other words. In the case of hearing, smelling and tasting, Aristotle considers these to be perception-neutral elements (air or water and moisture) while, in the case of seeing, he considers it to be an ‘unnameable’ (*anonymon*) substrate, which is also characterised by the fact that it is itself transparent (*diaphanous*).

We immediately recognise central aspects of the concept of media, which is considered to be a mediator (Latin: medium) between (Latin: inter) a sending and a receiving entity. We could make the provocative suggestion that the Aristotelian medium is already understood as an inter-mediary in the transmission of content. And we can add that even Aristotle conceived of the medium as a form of self-denial: the medium makes things visible but at the same time remains invisible. Or, in the case of hearing: the air transmits the vibrations of sound and makes them audible while staying completely silent itself. Even here, the medium is only, merely (!) an intermediary, i.e. ‘transparent’, ‘neutral’, it is

‘innocent’, in a sense irrelevant, transparent and does not manipulate, because what is crucial for sensory perception is the transmitted content and not the medium itself. This, too, sounds similar to current fantasies about the supposed ‘neutrality’ of platforms, to which we will return in detail at a later stage.

b. Conceptual origin of the media concept

To this context we can briefly add the emergence of the German concept of media. The Latin word *medium* has its precursors in the Indo-European **medhios* and is related to the Greek *meta* and *meson*. In Latin, *medium* refers to a spatial middle between (inter) two points (Hoffmann 2002, p. 24f.). The term therefore also has the potential to describe processes of mediation (cf. the two German terms ‘Mitte’ and ‘Mittel’, which are related to each other in a similar way and both mean ‘middle’ or ‘centre’), which was already fully recognised by Thomas Aquinas in his Latin translation of Aristotle.

The Latin term was then adopted into the German language in the 17th century as a loanword, where it was initially used primarily in meanings such as *Mitte* (middle), *Mittleres* (middle) or *Hilfsmittel* (auxiliary means) before being extended at the beginning of the 19th century to concepts such as mediator, intermediate means and mediating element (Hoffmann 2002, p. 25ff.). Here, too, the medium already appears as an intermediary.

c. Media theory distinction

Efforts within media studies to arrive at a precise definition of the term ‘media’ are widespread and have led to the coexistence of various concepts, which cannot be explored in detail here. Instead, I will refer to recurring basic elements that most current theoretical designs share.

The starting point for various media theorists is the application of the conceptual historical dispositions outlined above to the field of various media and mass media (e.g. radio, television, the internet, etc.). Stefan Münker defines it as follows: "A medium is a means of transmitting information," adding that "the idea that the medium as a means of transmission is also situated in the middle of the transfer process" is always virulent in its various uses (Münker/Roesler 2008, p. 322). Once again, according to such definitions, the medium proves to be an intermediary.

Current theories also take up the idea of the "neutrality, self-abandonment, invisibility" of the medium, as Sibylle Krämer puts it. Media have an inherent tendency to "hide their own structure and sensuality" (Krämer 2008, p. 83); they have always been characterised by a specific "withdrawal and weakening of their self" (ibid.).

From this perspective, the current insistence of platforms that they are ‘merely’ intermediaries because they ‘only’ enable the transparent, permeable and neutral

transmission of content is not only tautological — it is also merely the historical end point of a millennia-long evolution of supposedly ‘transparent’ and ‘neutral’ media. Since ancient times, media, but especially ‘new’ media, have distinguished themselves through their alleged transparency, immediacy and authenticity (see Andree 2005 for a general overview). To demonstrate this with modern media: Photography promised to create images that were neutral in terms of content, drawn for the first time by light and not by humans themselves ("The pencil of nature," Talbot); the phonograph promised a neutral reproduction of sound experiences; the telephone promised a neutral transmission of the voice over long distances (tele-phone), and so on. Of course, every medium forms a specific ‘dispositif’ of its respective supposed neutrality – just as platforms today claim to be merely neutral transmitters, and we users, conversely, perceive user-generated content as particularly ‘authentic’. The current digital intermediaries are simply doing what media have been doing for millennia.

From a media theory perspective, the legal distinction between media and intermediaries is doubly and triply interesting. For it was precisely the discovery of the autonomy of the media, above all by Marshall McLuhan, that catalysed the emergence of modern media studies in the first place. Let’s remember his observation: "The medium is the message." We can unpack this in detail:

The idea that media are ‘merely’ neutral, transparent intermediaries has always been part of a historically constant media ideology that has developed over thousands of years. It is an illusion, practically the promise with which the media have enticed their users since time immemorial: "the idea that identifies media with neutral intermediaries that are supposed to convey something as faithfully as possible – and thus not to produce or change anything themselves" (Krämer 2008, p. 68).

It is precisely this illusion conveyed by the media in general that McLuhan exposed as fundamentally false, giving contemporary media studies its research mission in the first place. Since then, the scientific *media turn* has proven in countless studies that, contrary to their own operational promises, media never operate in a content-neutral manner. That is why the rejection of responsibility for content on the part of platforms is fundamentally wrong on a very basic media-theoretical level. Media are never ‘merely’ neutral transit stations or ‘content-neutral’. From a media theory perspective, such statements posit a clear contradiction. Or, to phrase it with Kant, media are always the condition of possibility for content; through their "generativism" (Krämer 2008, p. 67), "they simultaneously produce what they convey".

We can illustrate this from yet another angle: even the transport metaphor of ‘transmission’, i.e. of information (cf. Winkler 2008, p. 216), leads to false conclusions because it suggests that it is irrelevant which ‘carrier’ (newspaper, radio, television, social media) transmits the content. However, the chosen media ‘carriers’ of individual pieces of content are never ‘innocent’ – they always filter, shape, colour, influence and modulate

the transmitted content according to the specific possibilities of the specific medium. As with all media, this also applies to current platforms, whose algorithms and structures not only determine the selection and filtering of content, but even influence the creative process — because creators are forced to adapt to them in order to gain visibility for their content.

When platforms deny and conceal this fact, they are merely conforming to an age-old fascination with supposedly content-neutral intermediaries (cf. Andree 2005). In this respect, they are again no different from other media.

4. Media versus intermediaries: empirical study on media practice

Over time, advanced media science would not only answer the question of the distinction between media and intermediaries at the level of artificial, *ex post* classifications (cf. Lowe / Noam 2023), but would also develop it additionally from the practice of current media use.

If we approach the research question from this perspective in an exploratory manner, we may once again express considerable doubts that we can identify substantial differences between ‘media’ and ‘intermediaries’. It is not without reason that people refer to platforms as ‘social media’. For centuries, users have been accustomed to consuming a colourful mix of media content via various aggregators — in newspapers, radio, television and now also in social media.

Even if we focus on the relevant aspect of content authorship and responsibility, the various media genres are surprisingly similar. It is certainly true that intermediaries “produce little or no content themselves” (Gundlach/Hofmann 2019, p.10). But this difference hardly seems sufficient to justify a categorical distinction, especially since analogue mass media content providers have not developed any emphatic concepts of authorship either. In newspapers, for instance, editorial contributions are usually presented in colourful mixtures combined with third-party contributions, guest comments or agency reports. Even if the individual contributions are marked accordingly, their exact origin and authorship are largely irrelevant to users in their daily media use (unlike, for example, as in the use of artefacts from art or poetry).

In order to gain clarity about users' attributions in their everyday media use, we conducted an empirical online survey with a representative sample of 1,000 people in Germany. We deliberately chose a typical and everyday situation of media use and asked users which media they use for a specific purpose. We deliberately asked the question in an open-ended manner without any guidance and did not allow multiple selections or multiple choice answers in order to rule out any influence by the test design. Users thus had no option but to spontaneously express their own opinions in free text fields. The question asked was: “There are currently many political crises around the world. We would be

Figure 2: ‘Media’ from the perspective of their users (wordcloud, font size weighted by relative frequency of mentionings)

The accompanying illustrative WordCloud gives an impression of the heterogeneity of what users refer to as ‘media’ from the perspective of media practice:



If we take a closer look at the categorical mix in the responses, we see that the media mentioned by users are roughly divided equally between the channel level (e.g. ‘television’ or ‘internet’, 1,495 mentions) and about half at the level of the offering (such as the TV channel ‘ZDF’ or ‘Google’, 1,423 mentions); in rare cases, specific programme offerings are also mentioned (e.g. the news programme ‘Tagesthemen’, which was assigned to offerings above) and, in an equally small number of cases, end devices (e.g. ‘cell phone’, 51 mentions). It is fascinating that users also mix and combine these different levels within their responses (e.g., ‘Google,

newspaper, television’), as illustrated by the diagramme of sample verbatim responses shown below.

Figure 3: Media from the user’s perspective: Verbatim

Finally, we would like to briefly touch on the question of the significance of the results with regard to the relative importance of analogue versus digital media. The design of our study is barely suitable for providing a nuanced answer to this question, as we can assume a bias toward socially desirable answers (‘satisficing’) — meaning that established traditional news media such as newspapers, radio, and television are likely to benefit, while new digital media genres perform less well than they do in real-life usage. The following evaluation must be interpreted with these reservations in mind.

We initially based our analysis on 2,928 responses out of a total of 2,969 (the remaining 43 responses could not be clearly assigned to one side or the other). Analogue media and offerings accounted for 59% of the responses (1,716), including ‘radio’, ‘TV’, ‘FAZ’, etc.), whereas 41% (1,212) referred to digital media and offerings (entries such as ‘internet’, ‘YouTube’, ‘Facebook’, etc.). Thus, even taking into account the assumed bias, this study confirms the rapidly growing importance of digital media for the process of public opinion formation.

The results also clearly show that the distinction between media and intermediaries is completely irrelevant from the user's perspective. At this point, we can certainly ask how high the share of media is compared to intermediaries (however, we must express similar reservations as above and assume a bias in favour of analogue media). For this analysis, we also sorted out all mentions that could not be clearly assigned to one side or the other (the pool of evaluated mentions then comprises 2,496 out of a total of 2,969). From this remaining pool of mentions, intermediaries account for 26% (647) and media for 74% (1,849). However, we should also take into account that, despite this assumed bias toward analogue media, only 29% of all users list *only* media in their three or more responses, which conversely means that the 'media diet' of the vast majority of respondents (71%) includes at least one intermediary.

It is much more interesting to look at all mentions that can be clearly assigned to digital channels, especially since we can assume that the above-mentioned bias will no longer play a significant role in this subset (766 out of a total of 1,212 – the different size of the sample results from the elimination of generic terms such as 'internet', which cannot be clearly assigned to either side (intermediaries versus media)). As expected, the weighting is then exactly the opposite. In the pool of digital channels, 84% of all identifiable mentions relate to intermediaries (642) and only 16% to media or content providers (124). We therefore find a very similar imbalance in favour of platforms, which we would also expect from real usage measurements (cf. Andree/Thomsen 2020).

5. Media versus intermediaries: the demarcation in terms of media economics

In a final step, we will examine the distinction between media and intermediaries from the perspective of media economics. If we take the most frequently mentioned providers from the perspective of users in our survey as our starting point, we find, as expected, that these are typically large mass media (television, newspapers, etc.) and the leading intermediaries (Instagram, YouTube, Facebook, TikTok, Google, etc.).

First of all, it is immediately apparent that both media and intermediaries are active in two-sided markets (see Dewenter/Rösch 2015, p. 115 ff. for details). Or to put it another way: they have two different types of customers, with users on the one hand and advertising companies on the other. Both media and intermediaries bundle large collections of media content (e.g. a collection of texts and images in newspapers, programming on television or the content of feeds on social media) which they offer to end users on one side of the market in order to attract as much attention as possible. On this first side of the market, the content is either offered free of charge (as in the case of television or intermediaries) or users are required to pay a fee (e.g. newspapers, but also Amazon Prime or premium products offered by intermediaries).

Media outlets, as well as intermediaries, try to maximise the attention of their audience by offering attractive content. They then sell the bundled attention of their audience to advertising companies on the other side of the market through advertising inventories. Typically, they subsidise the first side of the market in order to maximise the desired network effects. For this reason, private television and intermediaries, for example, are usually free of charge for users. Users therefore ‘earn’ the access to content through their consumption of advertising.

Thus, it is obvious that media and intermediaries do not differ fundamentally in terms of their revenue model. They both offer content that they then monetise through advertising or fees. From a media economics perspective, both media and intermediaries are undoubtedly content providers.

6. Conclusion

We have critically examined the distinction between media and intermediaries in a multi perspective review and have arrived at the following conclusions:

- The distinction between ‘media’ and ‘intermediaries’ is largely tautological in terms of content and definition.
- Since the earliest reflections in ancient Greece, mediality has been explained by the concept of a neutral ‘intermediary’ — from this perspective, all media have always been intermediaries.
- From the perspective of current media theory, the idea of supposed ‘content neutrality’ or ‘permeability’ can be exposed as an illusion that has shaped the concept of media since ancient times. But since the scientific *media turn*, we know that media always shape and form the content they produce. Also at this level, intermediaries cannot be distinguished from media.
- From a media history perspective, the distinction is also questionable — people typically consume aggregations of content in mass media such as newspapers, radio, television, and today, social media.
- Our review of current media usage practices also provides no evidence that users distinguish between media and intermediaries. They refer to all media types in question as media.
- From a media economics perspective, there is also no substantial difference between the revenue models of media and intermediaries – both media and intermediaries generate their monetary income as content providers.

The question is, of course: How is it possible that the highly questionable distinction between media and intermediaries could have become established in the first place? The

answer is simple: early digital content providers wanted to monetise their content without being liable for it. They wanted to enjoy the benefits of the business without bearing the efforts and costs typically associated with their revenue model. So they pretended not to be media and asked to be regulated like infrastructure providers, such as telephone network operators (see Lowe / Noam 2023, p. 52). The intention is clear – it is "distancing as a business model" (Peifer 2014).

It is particularly amusing that this denial of fabrication is a constant feature of media history. Even Moses (or the authors of the Old Testament) wanted us to believe that he had nothing to do with the creation of the tablets of the law, that the dear Lord had entrusted them to him – as if he was just a 'neutral' messenger. And, as early as the 17th century, newspaper publishers claimed much the same as today's intermediaries: "The widely renowned Celadon [pseudonym of the then well-known editor Georg Greflinger] once wrote: I do not write the newspapers myself, but communicate them unchanged, as they are communicated to me by one person or another, and publish them as mere trifles," wrote one publisher about his work in 1673, asking his readers "not to attribute such things [i.e. errors and untruths] to me". (Blühm / Engelsing 1967, p. 45).

Whether it is legitimate to introduce a rather artificial distinction that serves the transparent purpose of unilaterally privileging a specific type of content providers, thereby allowing them to shirk responsibility for the content that they monetise, is a matter for experts in the field of law to decide. It should be noted, however, that, even back in the days when the distinction was introduced, intelligent and media-savvy regulation would have linked economic responsibility to responsibility for the very same content. Or to put it another way: the intermediary privilege (no liability) should have been linked quite simply to the condition that intermediaries in such a scenario must never be allowed to monetise specific content. That would actually be a rather bizarre idea anyway, and on top of that a complete contradiction because, according to their own statements, intermediaries are not content providers at all. But if you claim explicitly not to be a content provider, you should not be able to monetise said content. It is astonishing that we allow them to do exactly that through a regulation.

We therefore currently have two comparable groups of content providers, one of which we arbitrarily classify as 'media' and the other just as arbitrarily as 'intermediaries'. Although both are in fact content providers or media and even have the same revenue model, the 'intermediaries' are massively privileged. We should therefore not be surprised if the providers we call 'media' are gradually disappearing from the market as a result of this massive regulatory disadvantage and misregulation. This has very little to do with their economic behaviour and is largely the result of a mistaken regulatory distinction between 'media' and 'intermediaries', which leaves editorial media with little chance of competing against platforms in the digital arena due to massive regulatory disadvantages. It is therefore our own misguided regulation, which massively privileges intermediaries, that is systematically destroying editorial media. However, there is every reason to abolish

this absurd *status quo*, especially since the survival of editorial media should definitely be in our democratic and constitutional interests.

Literature

Andree, M., und T. Thomsen (2020): Atlas der digitalen Welt. Frankfurt/M.: Campus 2020.

Andree, M. (2005): Archäologie der Medienwirkung. Faszinationstypen von der Antike bis heute. München: Fink.

Blühm, E., und R. Engelsing, Hrsg. (1967): Die Zeitung. Deutsche Urteile und Dokumente von den Anfängen bis zur Gegenwart. Bremen: Schünemann.

DENIC, Hrsg. (2022): Statistiken, <https://www.denic.de/wissen/statistiken/>

Dewenter, R., und J. Rösch (2015): Einführung in die neue Ökonomie der Medienmärkte. Eine wettbewerbsökonomische Betrachtung aus Sicht der Theorie der zweiseitigen Märkte. Wiesbaden: Springer Gabler.

Deutscher Bundestag, Wissenschaftliche Dienste (2018): Regulierung von Intermediären. Möglichkeiten und Auswirkungen der Regulierung im Hinblick auf Medienvielfalt. Ausarbeitung WD 10 - 3000 - 062/18. O. A. Download available via <https://www.bundestag.de/resource/blob/591830/c58874d515f02deecdc34ff18727ce12/WD-10-062-18-pdf-data.pdf>

Gundlach, H., und U. Hofmann (2019): Verdrängen Google, Facebook & Co. die Medien? Innovationspotenziale der Medienindustrie im digitalen Transformationsprozess: Eine Conjoint-Analyse. In: MedienWirtschaft 16,4, S. 8–21.

Guy, E. (2018): Inside the Two Years That Shook Facebook – and the World. In: Wired, 12. 2. 2018; <https://www.wired.com/story/inside-facebook-markzuckerberg-2-years-of-hell/>

Hagen, W. (2008): Metaxy. Eine historiosemantische Fußnote zum Medienbegriff. In: Was ist ein Medium? Hrsg. von S. Münker und A. Roesler. Frankfurt/M.: Suhrkamp 2008, S. 13–29.

Hoffmann, S. (2002): Geschichte des Medienbegriffs. Hamburg: Meiner (Archiv für Begriffsgeschichte).

Janke, K. (2021): Digitale Spendings liegen erstmals über nicht-digitalen Investments. Horizont online, 7. 10. 2021. <https://www.horizont.net/medien/nachrichten/werbemarkt-2021-digitale-spendings-liegen-erstmal-uebernicht-digitalen-investments-194918>

Janke, K. (2022): Warum die Mediaagenturen so viel Wachstum bei den digitalen Plattformen erwarten. Horizont online, 14. 2. 2022; <https://www.horizont.net>

net/medien/nachrichten/werbemarkt-warum-die-mediaagenturen-so-vielwachstum-bei-den-digitalen-plattformen-erwarten-197781

Jarren, O., und C. Neuberger, Hrsg. (2020): Gesellschaftliche Vermittlung in der Krise. Medien und Plattformen als Intermediäre. Baden-Baden: Nomos.

Jarren, O. (2019): Social Media: Institutionalisierungsprozesse als interdisziplinäre Forschungsaufgabe. In: MedienWirtschaft 16,1, p. 14–24.

Krämer, S. (2008): Medien, Boten, Spuren. Wenig mehr als ein Literaturbericht. In: Was ist ein Medium? Hrsg. von S. Münker und A. Roesler. Frankfurt/M.: Suhrkamp 2008, p. 65–90.

Krüger, K. (2021): Die Ära der Datafizierung. Wiesbaden: Springer Gabler 2021.

Lowe, G. F., und E. M. Noam (2023): Ist alles Medien? Die Definition des Mediensektors und seiner Branchen im digitalen Umfeld. In: Medienwirtschaft 20,1, p. 50–63.

Münker, S., und A. Rösler, Hrsg. (2008): Was ist ein Medium? Hrsg. von. Frankfurt/M.: Suhrkamp 2008.

Münker, S., und A. Roesler (2008): Was ist ein Medium? Ein philosophischer Beitrag zu einer medientheoretischen Debatte. In: Was ist ein Medium? Hrsg. von S. und A. R. Frankfurt/M.: Suhrkamp 2008, p. 322–337.

Navarro, J. G. (2003): Advertising Expenditure in Western Europe from 2017 to 2024, by Medium. In: Statista, 6.1.2023; <https://www.statista.com/statistics/799801/ad-spend-in-western-europemedia/>

Peifer, K.-N. (2014): Konvergenz in der Störer- und Verbreiterhaftung. Vom Störer zum Verbreiter? In: AfP – Zeitschrift für Medien- und Kommunikationsrecht 1/2014, p. 18–23.

Schaupp, S. (2021): Technopolitik von unten. Algorithmische Arbeitssteuerung und kybernetische Proletarisierung. Berlin: Matthes & Seitz 2021.

Seufert, W. (2015): Alles Medien? Öffentliche und private Kommunikation im Zeitalter automatisierter Informationsverarbeitung. In: MedienWirtschaft 12, 1, p. 30–34.

Statista (2022): Advertising – Germany, in: Statista, 10.2022; <https://www.statista.com/outlook/amo/advertising/germany>.

Statista 2024: Größte Unternehmen der Welt nach Marktkapitalisierung im Jahr 2024 (in Milliarden US-Dollar; Stand: 05. September); <https://de.statista.com/statistik/daten/studie/12108/umfrage/top-unternehmen-der-weltnach-marktwert/>

Winkler, H. (2008): Zeichenmaschinen. Oder warum die semiotische Dimension für eine Definition der Medien unerlässlich ist. In: Was ist ein Medium? Hrsg. von S. Münker und A. Roesler. Frankfurt/M.: Suhrkamp, p. 211–220.

I would like to thank Adriana Rieger for her support in conducting and evaluating the empirical study.