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CHAPTER 4

Public Service Media and Sustainability? A Critical Debate of the Value of Public Service Media in Supporting the SDG18 (Communication for All)

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Abstract

Purpose and Argumentation
The purpose of this study is to explore the role of Public Service Media (PSM) in supporting the Sustainable Development Goals 18 (Communication for All), from facilitating dialogue within the

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community to acting as a critical watchdog over business and government. We look to issues of public value theory and performance measurement with a view to strengthening PSM's role toward remaining strong arbiters of SDG18. We view the lineages of the curent debate on public value for PSM as a useful exercise for answering questions surrounding the fundamental change in the news media industry and independent journalism, the challenges that PSM are currently facing under the impact of sustainability, and the grounding public value theory and performance management thinking offers for PSM research and practice in understanding the breadth and complexity of these challenges. We argue that PSM benefit from improving the efficacy of their public value remit by exploring the Public Value Scorecard (PVSC) model which measures public value from an audience perspective. If PSM output and services are to improve the public value for audiences, it needs to consider criteria such as improving the well-being of individuals and communities across a wide range of dimensions.

Findings
We find that critical debates into public value theory and performance management practice can help improve our understanding of the challenges of PSM trying to add value to programming output and service quality as perceived by audiences. In our view, the PVSC is an effective framework to generate valuable insights into the needs of increased audience engagement of public value creation for PSM. Measuring public value outcome on multiple dimensions comes as a defining moment of PSM wishing to improve outcomes for media audiences and stakeholders toward meeting SDG18 objectives, given the need that PSM becomes measurably more efficient and accountable.

Originality/Value
This study critically examines the public value concept and empirically proves both economic value and societal welfare of PSM offerings. It adds value to discussions about the fitness of PSM and their role as guarantors of public value for society in meeting the SDG18 goals.

Keywords Public service media • Public value • Sustainability • Public value scorecard • SDG18 (Communication for All)

Introduction

Public Service Media (PSM), which is mainly "legacy" public broadcasting, of which the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) is the best-known example, have a legal remit and commitment to inform, entertain, and educate the public who pay for them. But in doing so they must also protect their independence and ensure accountability.

In countries where the theme of information as a public good is taken seriously, governments are supporting media in the public interest—ideally without wielding editorial influence. However, challenged by the pressures of diminishing public funds, the growth of commercial media, new technologies, and globalization, PSM no longer enjoys the dominant—even, in some countries, monopolistic—position that it once held.

Problem Background

Digitization and emergent technologies are changing media use rapidly, with private streaming services and online platforms are gaining in importance and making it harder for legacy PSM to hold their ground. PSM are today bound to deliver more and better services despite diminishing public resources and financial support (Gransow, 2020; Lowe et al., 2018; Donders, 2021; Serong, 2017).

Worse yet, news media around the world have continued to face enormous challenges such as restrictions on press freedom ushered in and expanded under the cover of COVID-19, concerns around fake news and misinformation, a sense of mistrust and alienation from younger audiences and their migration to social media or the loss of revenue through the decline of long-established business models (CMPF, 2021; Horowitz et al., 2021; Murdock, 2021; Newman, 2021).

However, right now, supporting the role of trustworthy, anti-partisan quality news journalism and news media in a democratic society—primarily taking the form of license-fee funding or tax contributions for PSM but also as direct grants and indirect support to private media incumbents—seems ever more important (Murschetz, 2020).

And yet, despite public support for PSM being common across Europe and beyond, it remains a contested matter, stricken with many challenges and threats to all stakeholders involved. Some examples may illustrate this. While Austria, for example, provides grants for institutions training journalists, France has shelved income tax allowances for journalists, a

surprising move that could exacerbate the existing lack of diversity of opinion in the country's media. In Poland, a reform of public service media took place in 2016, putting public television and radio under the direct control of the government and restricting the constitutional role of the existing media regulator.

Now, if we assume that critical journalism is synonymous with *independent* public interest journalism, according to which publishing facts and opinions about what matters to society, and covers topics that are vital for democracy and its citizens to make informed decisions and choices, we may then suggest that governments are well-advised to care for both political protection and financial support for these media and journalists in ways that work to monitor and hold accountable the institutions of government, commerce, and civic life.

National peculiarities apart, questions concerning public service broadcasting can be reduced to the following question: What social and cultural goals that are attributed to broadcasting require a specially mandated, noncommercially driven organization that is publicly owned, publicly funded, and publicly accountable? Broadcasters, politicians, media professionals, creative people, community activists, and scholars worldwide are wrestling with this question.

However, when society increasingly requests that the common good becomes a priority but no longer trusts news media to do so, what flexibility do PSM have? How can public media value be safeguarded and strengthened and how can PSM performance in supporting the SDGs best be measured?

Rationale

The purpose of this study is to explore the role of Public Service Media (PSM) in supporting the Sustainable Development Goals 18 (Communication for All), from facilitating dialogue within the community to acting as a critical watchdog over business and government. We look to issues of public value theory and performance measurement with a view to strengthening PSM's role toward remaining strong arbiters of SDG18.

We view the lineages of the current public value debate for PSM as a useful exercise for answering questions surrounding the fundamental change in the news media industry and independent journalism, the challenges that PSM and are currently facing under the impact of

sustainability, and the grounding public value theory and performance management thinking offers for PSM research and practice in understanding the breadth and complexity of these challenges. We argue that PSM benefit from improving the efficacy of their public value remit by exploring the Public Value Scorecard (PVSC) model. If PSM output and services are to improve the public value for audiences, it needs to consider criteria such as improving the well-being of individuals and communities across a wide range of dimensions.

Propositions

To answer the questions raised above, we discuss the following three propositions:

Proposition 1: "PSM must rethink their public value" Firstly, we re-enter the debate of "public value" and present some current dominant scholarly debates around the concept's use, practicality, and validity surrounding questions related to the role of PSM in times of transformational change.

Based on the above introduction, we posit that it is necessary to rethink the role of media organizations in general and PSM in a more fragmented society more particularly. On the one hand, this involves refining the societal contribution of public service. Starting from the notion that PSM should, as McQuail (2010, p. 178) put it, "serve the public interest by meeting the important communication needs of society and its citizens," these needs (e.g., contribution to democratic governance and culture, production of information and knowledge, cohesion and integration, or progress) and the ways PSM can address these needs in unique ways must not be ignored. We argue that PSM need to rethink their public value engagement and explore new performance measurement tools and public value reporting strategies. To be truly effective, PSM values need to be based on the Public Value Scorecard model which defines public value both more broadly and narrowly at the same time. More broadly in mission and vision, and more narrowly in measurable impact.

Proposition 2: "PSM must endorse new performance measurement approaches" Secondly, we support the notion that PSM need to endorse new performance measurement approaches that help them deal with the "new realities" in the management and wider social impacts of media today, that is, sustainability. In this context, we discuss the Public Value

Scorecard (PVSC) model as an alternative performance measurement and reporting tool. To be truly effective, we argue that public value for PSM needs to be based on performance measurement and reporting models such as the PVSC which defines public value both more broadly and narrowly at the same time. More broadly in mission and vision, and more narrowly in measured impact.

Proposition 3: "PSM are dedicated arbiters of SDG18" Thirdly, the issue of "sustainability" in media and communications comes as a further emergent challenge for public value theory and PSM practice. Sustainability is called into question by institutional and intellectual transformations that push inexorably toward changing current governance and regulation policies to support news media and safeguard independent journalism. Clearly, however, media and communication can play an important role in raising awareness about the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), from facilitating dialogue within the community to acting as a critical watchdog over business and government, media can excel its capacity in advancing Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Methods Used

Methodologically, we shall draw literature from various academic fields such as media policy, journalism, and media management studies, and thereby systematize, link, and extend familiar definitions, characteristics, types, and dimensions of these perspectives on sustainable communication from extant literature in these fields. By delineating the central properties of public value for news media and independent journalism, we attempt to make strides toward building a conceptual bridge between public value for news media and the notion of SDG18 (Communication for All).

PSM and the Public Value Debate Revisited

The European Broadcasting Union (EBU) is the world's leading alliance of public service media. Well-known as the producer of the annual Eurovision Song Contest, the EBU has 115 member organizations in 56 countries, and there are an additional 31 Associate Members in Asia, Africa, Australasia, and the Americas. EBU members operate nearly 2000 television, radio, and online channels and services, and together they reach

an audience of more than 1 billion people around the world, broadcasting in more than 160 languages.

At the Union's 2012 General Assembly, EBU members from Europe and abroad unanimously adopted six core values that define why PSM are indispensable in truly democratic societies.

These are (EBU, 2012, 2020):

- Universality ("to reach everyone, everywhere with our content");
- Independence ("to be trusted program makers, independent of political, commercial and other influences");
- Excellence ("to act with the highest standards of integrity and professionalism and set benchmarks within the creative industries");
- Diversity ("to be diverse and pluralistic in our programming, the views we express and the people who work with us");
- Accountability ("to be open and listen to audiences and engage in meaningful debate");
- Innovation ("to be a driving force for innovation and creativity and enrich the media environment of the countries we work in., i.e., intensive promotion of new formats, new technologies and new ways to connect with the audience");

To achieve these core values, however, they must be properly operationalized and effectively measured. To do this, key figures of PSM as value-driven media organizations must first be identified, which are then combined in a meaningful way in the scorecard model.

The public value of PSM is thus multi-dimensional. As such, it can thus become subject to testing various hypotheses based on relations between the variables involved.

For example, a recent study by the Austrian Academy of Sciences has raised the question as to whether government financing of public service media would directly influence audience success. Hence, "broadcasters with higher public funding achieve higher market shares, greater relevance as a trustful source of information and higher levels of trust in independence from external influences" (Eberwein et al., 2019, p. 143).

Based on the above core values, the EBU has launched peer-to-peer reviews to provide its members with dedicated, professional-standard analysis at an international level of how they are complying with their public service remits. These peer-to-peer reviews highlight best practices while offering comparisons and suggestions for improvements based on the experiences of other public service media organizations.

The academic debate about the public value of media is complex and rather confusing. This is mainly due to its hybrid intellectual architecture of the public value concept.

Three schools are fighting for academic hegemony: firstly, the beginning of public value research dates to 1995, with Mark H. Moore's seminal book *Creating Public Value: Strategic Management in Government* (1995). Then, Moore presented the public value concept as a normative theory of strategic management in the public sector and saw it as the equivalent of shareholder value in the management of private companies. Social value creation has since become a corporate duty.

Secondly, in contrast to Moore's management perspective, Barry Bozeman's work is concerned with the societal level (Bryson et al., 2015). This is reflected in Bozeman's definition of public values as "those that provide a normative consensus about the rights, benefits, and privileges to which citizens should (and should not) be entitled; the duties of citizens to society, the state and each other; and the principles on which governments and policies should be based" (Bozeman, 2007, p. 17). A central theme in Bozeman's approach is the idea of public value failure, describing situations in which neither the market nor the state provides the necessary outputs and conditions to achieve public values (Bozeman, 2002).

And thirdly, unlike Moore's (1995) and Bozeman's (2007) approaches to public value, Timo Meynhardt (2015; ibid., 2019) uses the term to critically analyze an organizations' contribution to the common good. He believes that current management concepts, such as shareholder value, stakeholder value, customer value, sustainability, or corporate social responsibility, should legitimize themselves with regard to their impact on the common good. In his view, public value emerges for individuals from the experiences made in social structures and relationships.

Meynhardt posits that an organization is valuable to society when it contributes to the common good as perceived by the public (Meynhardt, 2009a, b; 2019). "Public value is situated in relationships between the individual and 'society', founded in individuals, constituted by subjective evaluations against basic needs, activated by and realized in emotional-motivational states, and produced and reproduced in experience-intense practices" (Meynhardt, 2009a, b, p. 212). To put it succinctly: "Public value is what the public values" (Talbot, 2011, p. 28).

Broadly speaking, the public value debate is about the question of which media content conveys values for society, how PSM—usually broadcasting—produce institutionally socially relevant content, how PSM

distribute it on diverse platforms and channels, and how it is also accepted and consumed by heterogeneous audiences (Dobusch, 2018).

In principle, it can be determined and measured via four public value dimensions across industries (Faulkner & Kaufman, 2018):

1. Outcome: An outcome would be, for example, a social-economic, ecological, or cultural outcome that is perceived as an improvement of the public sector, such as increased security and good medical care. Quality media achieve a socially valuable outcome through so-called positive externalities in the consumption of, for example, regional news, cultural programs, or the broadcasting of parliamentary debates.
2. Legitimacy and trust, that is, the extent to which an organization and its activities are trusted and seen as legitimate by the public and key stakeholders, which can be achieved, for example, through a transparent and fair process of service provision and distribution.
3. Quality of the service as perceived by customers, managers, etc. as well as the availability and the effort required to consume a service.
4. Efficiency, such as a low level of bureaucracy, a balance of costs and benefits, or even the value that can be generated for resources used.

However, it is crucial that this value contribution to society is also experienced as important by individuals. In economic theory, such acceptance is signaled by the consumer's willingness to pay. Here, we assume that only through individual appreciation in the sense of maximizing the benefits of consumption does social acceptance for the collective good of public service media arise.

The UK's Work Foundation describes this process as follows: "Public value is what the public values, and it is the role of public managers to help determine through the democratic processes of deliberation and public engagement what social outcomes are desirable. It is through such processes that public managers can help to articulate collective citizens' preferences and thereby redress the 'democratic deficit' between public services and citizens" (The Work Foundation, 2006, p. 7).

More recent studies emphasize the need for widening our understanding of public value in media. Mazzucato et al. (2020) developed new metrics that can assess how the BBC delivers against its mission, creates public value, and co-shapes markets. In their report *Creating and Measuring Dynamic Public Value at the BBC*, the authors tackled questions of how to

measure the BBC's public value more dynamically and holistically. By widening the picture beyond mere audience reach numbers, it identified three layers of public value in that the BBC creates broader value for both individuals, industry, and society at large. In doing so it has created value for individuals in their experiences as consumers; for society in contributing to a more inclusive, tolerant, and diverse culture; and in industry in taking the kinds of risks necessary for new markets to emerge.

Truly, audience share and some more qualitative metrics such as reach remain important. "Consumption figures help to show the BBC's reach, efficiency, and commercial success—these are key indicators of public value as without successful and widely viewed programming, the BBC would not have the legitimacy and scale to engage the wider public. But by widening the picture beyond numbers, we can see that the BBC creates broader value for individuals, industry and society" (Mazzucato et al., 2020, p. 23; Mazzucato & Semieniuk, 2017; Mazzucato, 2016). According to Mazzucato et al. (2020), there is a need to return to the understanding of the state as a collective value creator, and not limit its role to stabilizing markets. By acting as investor, inventor, innovator, and consumer platform at the same time, the BBC would play an essential role in developing the UK's infrastructure for digital and media innovation.

For public value not to become an empty formula, a central problem must be solved: What counts as public value is not only a problem of definition and agreement upon particular interest groups in society in the sense that PSM automatically create public value as a matter of their remit but, more essentially, predominantly as a problem of measurement and proven evidence in public value media performance.

Evidently, the total benefit that an individual derives from the consumption of TV programs and other services becomes a *verifiable* value in and for society. If this individual media benefit is not generated, no willingness to pay and hence no social value is generated, and thus ultimately no public sphere is created. In the fragmented media society, individual consumer preferences determine the value of a market offering, and ultimately the benefit to the individual consumer. In other words: "The 'value' that an individual attaches to an experience is based on how well the experience satisfies his or her basic needs as assessed against these dimensions. Note that the assessment is a subjective, emotional-motivational, and valanced reaction to an experience of some sort involving the 'public'" (Bryson et al., 2014, p. 450).

However, public value reaches beyond the individual self-interests of media audiences. Public value services are primarily designed to contribute to the common good. Therefore, it predominantly resides in the collectivist interest of society.

This means quite practically that PSM must deliver value not only for individual audiences but also for those who do not individually draw value from consuming their programs and services. Only when PSM are capable to create value that is perceived as valuable and beneficial for *all* members of society (i.e., consumers and non-consumers), will they gain legitimacy and true democratic meaning.

PSM and the Public Value Scorecard (PVSC)

The public value concept theoretically contributes to the debate on organizational legitimacy by providing new insight into how individual and societal well-being are affected by organizational action. As mentioned above, public value cannot merely be delivered, but instead must be perceived and experienced among the publics. Thus, to make valid predictions on their societal value contribution as perceived by their different public(s), as well as on areas of improvement, organizations need valid measurement tools (Meynhardt et al., 2017).

Meynhardt developed a "Public Value Scorecard" (PVSC) framework to help organizations understand and increase their value to society (2009a, b; 2015). The questions raised by this model are: What value are large organizations bringing to society? And, when they are getting it right, how can and should corporations build trust and gain legitimacy within society?

The PVSC framework (see, Fig. 4.1 below) aims at recording an outside-in perspective next to the strategic decision tools of organizations (Meynhardt & Frantz, 2021a, 2021b). It can be used to organize societal feedback from audiences and to reflect one's own strategical approaches with the evaluations and needs within the social environment. Of course, PSM have a strong awareness of their social and democratic responsibility, and, clearly, they strive to understand their customer needs and evaluate their impact among them. However, they do not explicitly engage in dialogue about their social function, unaware of their public value, and thus often do not realize the core of their purpose.

The PVSC is inspired by Kaplan and Norton's Balanced Scorecard (BSC) approaches in public management which shook up the world of

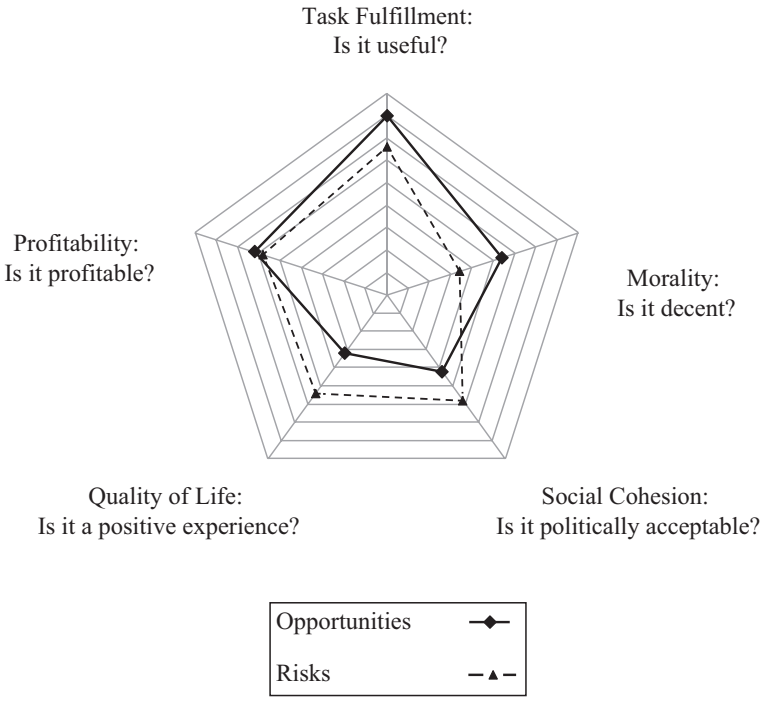


Fig. 4.1 The Public Value Scorecard (PVSC). (Source: Adapted from Meynhardt, 2015 (example))

performance measurement in the 1990s—in both the private and public sectors (Kaplan & Norton, 1992; Moore, 2003). While the BSC provides a synoptic view of the financial, marketing, operations, and human resources perspective and hence look to the supply side forces of a firm's performance, Meynhardt's PVSC draws attention to the demand side and retrieves results of the public value of an organization, service, or project from an individual's subjective judgment of five broad categories: task fulfillment, profitability, morality, social cohesion, and quality of life.

Accordingly, Meynhardt (2015) defines public value as follows:

- Public value is subjective—it, therefore, enquires about people's perceptions instead of gathering "facts."

- Public value, in keeping with needs theory, can be decomposed into several dimensions—different value perspectives are therefore included.
- Public value is non-normative—the scorecard has no value hierarchy (i.e., all five dimensions of the PVSC introduced below contribute equally to the public value score. But since public value ultimately is evaluated by every single recipient, organizations might allocate more weight to certain single public value dimensions).

As introduced by Meynhardt et al. (2014, 2016), the Public Value Scorecard model focuses directly on public value creation along five theory-based basic public value dimensions.

Survey participants answer several questions alongside five public value dimensions (seeking answers to five key questions):

1. Task fulfillment: "Is it useful?"
2. Profitability: "Is it profitable?"
3. Morality: "Is it decent?"—moral-ethical values
4. Social cohesion: "Is it politically acceptable?"
5. Quality of life: "Does it allow for positive experiences?"

As such, the PVSC is explicitly designed to collect evidence from individuals and their perceptions, beliefs, attitudes, values, sentiments, and feelings when judging a specific product or service of value. Hence, by putting emphasis on the micro/individual rather than the meso/organizational and macro/societal level, individuals can be addressed as key actors and central drivers for engagement in visioning a good and just society.

Meynhardt's approach is based on the Cognitive-experiential Self-theory of Epstein (1990), who identified four basic human needs: (1) the need for maximizing pleasure and minimizing pain, (2) the need for self-enhancement, (3) the need for maintaining control and coherence, and (4) the need for relatedness. Accordingly, human beings aim to satisfy their basic needs to ensure personal well-being. Consequently, "an evaluation of any object against basic needs is called a value" (Meynhardt, 2015, p. 321).

Data on the PVSC is typically collected through surveys, specific interview techniques, workshop methods as well as by applying social media analysis (Meynhardt, 2015). Results are schematically represented in a

pentagonal profile, directing management attention to perceived opportunities and risks regarding the five dimensions given above.

According to Meynhardt's PVSC, public value is to be solely evaluated subjectively on the level of the individual beneficiary of a public value service. There are different inquiry techniques, all based on the five dimensions, but using various methods to collect data and to provide specific findings for various demands (Meynhardt, 2015, pp. 157–168).

Applying the *prioritizing* version of the PVSC, focus groups of PSM audiences can be asked to assess and prioritize an initiative or program regarding its current or potential Public Value. Participants evaluate a series of statements (see Table 4.1 below), reflecting on their Public Value relevance.

In total, there are 18 statement sets, 9 of which represent opportunities, and the other 9 point to risks, that are connected to a certain program or initiative. Each statement set contains five items, reflecting each Public Value dimension. Further, the nine statement sets of each perspective (opportunities and risks) are categorized into three subcategories, each concerning (a) the present status (general), (b) the short-term development, and (c) the medium and long-term development.

Respondents are asked to rank each value item within the several sets of statement from 5 (being the most important) to 5 (being the least important) values.

By applying a forced-choice mechanism, this method allows for analyzing each public value dimension independently within different situations and strategic perspectives. The categorization helps to identify possible sustainability gaps and provides a dynamic perspective of change over time.

Taken together, a specific public value profile is plotted into the PVSC (Fig. 4.1): the higher the opportunities compared to the risks, the higher the public value.[1]

Based on this, PSM can be evaluated alongside these five dimensions. Integrating the outside-in perspective gives more voice to the people

[1] Fig. 4.1 shows a real example of a leadership team's application of a specific scorecard version to self-assess the public value of its divestment decision (Meynhardt, 2015). From a business perspective (usefulness and profitability), the opportunities (the solid line) clearly outweighed the risks (the dotted line). However, a conflict emerged between the moral-ethical dimension and the political-social one. Whereas the project was seen as bearing a moral risk, the political dimension appeared to be less risky.

Table 4.1 PVSC value statements (generic)

Opportunities	General	The aims of the initiative convince me because they …	*Not* carrying out the initiative would above all prevent …	The chances of the initiative being successful in the end are great because …
		are factually and technically coherent	a solution with innovative content being tried out	the content is well thought out
		do not regard human aspects as merely a means to an end	an important contribution to more fairness being made	the matter is not just legal but also perfectly legitimized
		incorporate different interests appropriately	the politically favorable situation being utilized	a wide range of interest is being appropriately considered
		are oriented to the satisfaction and well-being of those involved	the public image of those initiating the initiative being improved	those involved predominantly recognize the opportunities it gives them
		are financially and economically attractive	a lucrative investment being made	there is the prospect of making a profit
	Short-Term	**I believe that the initiative will be successful within a short time because …**	**It is immediately obvious that …**	**It will quickly become apparent that …**
		the fitness for purpose of the content will be recognized	the initiative makes sense	the objectives are achievable
		nobody suffers on a personal level	the self-worth of those involved will be increased	those in charge handle gray areas fairly
		it does not trigger any insuperable political controversies	any power conflicts that occur will not impede the initiative	conflicts that arise are dealt with constructively
		it provides fun and pleasure	those involved associate good and enjoyable experiences with it	the welfare of all is taken into consideration appropriately
		it is being handled appropriately economically	the initiative pays off financially	funding is being used sensibly
	Long-Term	**I am convinced that the initiative will also gain recognition in the medium- to long-term, because …**	**Over time it will be recognized that …**	**In retrospect, the initiative will be acknowledged in that …**
		the cost-benefit ratio is right	the content is worth the expenditure	the quality of the approach is right
		the matter is fair and just	the dignity of the individual is strengthened	the leap of faith is justified
		there is a balance of interests	there is a positive effect on relationships between groups	the cohesion of different groups is being influenced positively
		it helps meet important needs	the satisfaction of those involved increases	it provides fun and pleasure
		those involved will benefit materially from it	the financial resources are being used sensibly	it is worthwhile from an economic point of view

(*continued*)

Table 4.1 (continued)

Risks	General	**In my view, the greatest risks to the Initiative are that …**	**When difficulties loom, the initiative will be reproached most for …**	**I believe that in the end, the initiative is most likely to fail because …**
		there is too much emphasis on the current level of knowledge	not solving any really relevant problems	it is not possible to make the ideas comprehensible
		reservations on moral grounds are not dealt honestly	having excessive moral expectations	people will have suspicions about the good intentions
		not enough attention is paid to the political effects	provoking tension between people in an irresponsible way	it does not achieve social balance
		there is no agreement among those involved	tacitly approving disproportionate individual hardship	too few people really have fun with it
		the costs are being underestimated	not working efficiently economically	financial or cost objectives are not being achieved
	Short-Term	**With this initiative, there is a risk in the short term that …**	**The initiative is particularly vulnerable in the current situation because …**	**A failure would above all immediately …**
		initiatives in this field that are at least as important will be dropped	the technically superior quality of the approach is not being adequately acknowledged	exacerbate material problems
		our own credibility will suffer	there are doubts whether it would also be equitable under pressure	do irreparable moral damage
		relationships among those involved will be adversely affected	existing relationship structures are being queried	put a strain on existing cooperative relationships
		too few people will be positively motivated	in the beginning it will involve losses for different parties in the first place	adversely affect the well-being of those involved
		there will be a shortage of funding elsewhere	the actual financial effects are still unclear	cause financial losses
	Long-Term	**As things stand today it seems to me that it is very uncertain in die medium to long term whether…**	**In the longer term, it appears particularly uncertain whether …**	**In the medium- to long-term, one might pay the price in that …**
		the expected long-term benefits will occur	the solution is sound and viable enough	the path for other solutions is being obstructed once and for all
		the moral and ethical claim will be realized	all will keep to their word	new injustices arise
		it will ever be accepted in the public power and relationship structure	those involved will deal with each other in a professional and cooperative way	prejudice between groups increase
		it will gain positive feedback from third parties	the results will be perceived as rewarding	too many people are dissatisfied
		the potential financial yield will be exploited	the necessary funding can be found	the economic results are not being properly appreciated

Table is taken from Meynhardt (2015, pp. 161–163)

within the decision-making and programming and leads to a more integrated and sustainable discourse with and within the society.

PSM and the Emergent Issue of Sustainability

In the last 30 years, sustainability has moved beyond its buzzword status. In 2015, all United Nations Member States adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, setting a "shared blueprint for peace and prosperity for people and the planet, now and into the future." The agenda recognizes "that ending poverty and other deprivations must go hand-in-hand with strategies that improve health and education, reduce inequality, and spur economic growth—all while tackling climate change and working to preserve our oceans and forests" (THE 17 GOALS | Sustainable Development (un.org)).

In management theory, notions like corporate social responsibility (Garriga & Mele, 2004) or the Triple Bottom Line (Norman & MacDonald, 2004) have gained currency, helping to illuminate sustainability issues and drive social and environmental reporting and performance in organizations and their interactions with financial outcomes.

However, research has still to provide a greater understanding of how media organizations respond to the imperative of sustainability (Lubin & Esty, 2010) and how economic, social, and environmental performances interact.

Importantly, media management scholars also have a significant—but yet unfulfilled—role in asking questions and helping to make collective decisions related to what media systems, subsystems, and characteristics of them we should be interested in sustaining (Costanza & Patten, 1995).

Finally, the notion of sustainability, in the context of digitally transformed consumer behavior and financially struggling organizations, has also entered scholarly discussions on media. Societal, cultural, environmental, legal, technological, market, and other macro-level interdependencies influence the economic, social, and environmental sustainability of the dominant means of mass communication (broadcasting, publishing, and the Internet).

At the organizational level, the economic sustainability of media players—that is, their capacity to remain in the market for a long time—may depend on efforts and activities as diverse as innovation and technology, collaboration, knowledge management, processes, purchase, and sustainability reporting and communication (Baumgartner & Ebner, 2010).

Similarly, media organizations' social sustainability—anchored on their positive influence on the present and future relationships and stakeholders, such as their value chains or their local communities (Figge et al., 2002)—will hang on critical organizational strategies in human capital development, corporate governance, internal motivation and incentives, ethical behavior, or corporate citizenship. And finally, media organizations' use of resources, emissions, or waste also carries a significant impact on ecological sustainability not always addressed.

Several large-scale and collaborative initiatives are underway to try to address some of these issues. In September 2018, the United Nations launched the SDG Media Compact, an initiative marking a new drive to advance awareness of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The SDG Media Compact began with 31 founding media and entertainment companies and has grown into a powerful alliance of over 200 members around the world, spanning 160 countries on 5 continents, with a combined audience of about 2 billion people worldwide. The SDG Media Compact seeks to inspire news and entertainment organizations to leverage their resources and talent to amplify and accelerate progress toward achieving the Goals (SDG Media Compact (un.org)).

Scholars have started to provide insights and overviews on how sustainability has been applied and explored in the world of media firms (Berglez et al., 2017). Unfortunately, however, sustainability is still a nascent communication phenomenon. It started as an economic description of the use of resources with avoiding their depletion to maintain an ecological balance (World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987, p. 51); however, the concept of sustainability changed at the end of the 1990s into a future vision of growth, a vision of the future *within* the existing system of capitalism. With a massive wave of corporate communication, sustainability gained fame and, above all, increased its public "glamour"; it even developed into a master frame (Weder et al., 2021), used (and abused) in many contexts of meaning.

The Role of PSM as Advocates of Sustainability

Certainly, media in general and PSM, in particular, are a crucial tool for raising awareness of the SDGs, as intended by the United Nations with the SDG Media Compact Initiative. They, therefore, have an important role to play in achieving the SDGs. However, limiting the media's function to that of an awareness driver would be too narrow a scope. The social

significance of media and of PSM, in particular, goes far beyond a promoter function for certain agendas. Their social significance lies deeper.

PSM, which are independent in character and committed to the general interest, have a constitutional function for society. They have the purpose of facilitating constructive social discourse and thereby enabling the social opinion-forming process. In this context, they not only have the task of drawing attention to and informing about socially relevant phenomena and developments such as the SDGs but also of constructively promoting an in-depth discussion of them, reflecting on normative settings, and also pointing out conflicts of goals and values, dilemmas, and challenges (Fetzer, 2018), as well as critically observing their implementation and the activities around them.

First and foremost, PSM have an obligation to society and the common good. They thus take on a function for all socially relevant issues. As a response to global and societal challenges, the SDGs are highly relevant to the common good and accordingly also relevant for PSM. However, in terms of public interest, the role and function of PSM in this regard should not be normatively guided. The PVSC framework presented here can support PSM in determining and shaping their role regarding the achievement of the SDGs from the perspective of society. This procedural approach can identify functions that support the SDGs and their achievement and are socially sustainable: for example, through independent and informed journalism, strong regional relevance, holistic and diverse considerations, or factual enlightenment and education. Furthermore, the sustainability function of PSM can thus also be complemented by other facets that have not yet been captured in the SDGs, such as cultural aspects of sustainability.

PSM can only be a strong advocate for the SDGs if they are well accepted by society and they act in line with their societal function. In this way, PSM are indispensable for the sustainable development and implementation of the SDGs and for society itself.

Conclusion

This study has sought to interrogate the value of PSM in contributing to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

We reviewed the debate of public value as it relates to PSM and independent journalism and explored the PVSC model as a possible approach

to enhance existing performance measurement practices of PSM in the light of the sustainability imperative.

Sustainability comes as the next big challenge of transformational change for the media industry. It refers to quality news media's capacity to operate effectively under sound political, legal, and economic conditions. In a sustainable market environment, it is alleged, journalists operate without interference or fear of violence, and media organizations enjoy stable legal and business conditions that pay decent salaries, discourage media corruption, and promote sector-wide integrity. Ownership structures in the media sector reflect a diversity of views, and citizens trust that the media represent the full range of society's interests, including the information needs of minorities or repressed groups (Forum on Information & Democracy, 2021).

Given the findings of this discussion, we can reasonably conclude the following:

Firstly, we reaffirm the importance of the public value doctrine to support news media in the public interest. Evidently, PSM play a particularly crucial role in supporting public dialogue, enhancing knowledge of ways to support sustainable development, and holding governments accountable. Certainly, healthy news media and independent journalism are more important than ever.

The public value concept theoretically contributes to the debate on organizational legitimacy by providing new insight into how individual and societal well-being are affected by organizational action. However, we stress the notion that public value creation is to be understood as audience-centric and engagement-driven.

Public value services must first be consumed by the publics before being considered to be legitimate. Thus, to make valid predictions on their societal value contribution as perceived by their different public(s), as well as on areas of improvement, news media organizations such as PSM need qualified measurement tools (Meynhardt et al., 2017).

However, we posit that legacy PSM need to become both stronger and more acclaimed, yet more accountable to wider issues of societal impacts. In our view, the public value doctrine for PSM needs to open toward new topical challenges (notably, the sustainable media and communications future alias "sustainability imperative"). This means that PSM must adapt its principles and practicalities to meet SDGs in a mediatized world (Karmasin, 2020; Westlund & Murschetz, 2019).

Mediatization shapes public discourses and thus influences the way in which the Agenda 2030 is reflected, criticized, and implemented. Communication plays an important and sometimes decisive role in the awareness and individual acceptance and the political and economic legitimation of the SDGs.

As it seems, the future of PSM and independent journalism is as much an economic issue as it is a societal one. In fact, the individualization of civic cultures has emerged in tandem with the growth of mediatized communication processes whereby individuals use new technologies, with a tendency toward personalization in the public domain (Alvarez & Dahlgren, 2016; Bennett & Segerberg, 2013; Murschetz, 2018).

Secondly, as a corollary, PSM value can no longer be measured solely based on traditional output performance metrics such as audience share and reach.

Instead, new frameworks to measure audience engagement in a sustainable media future are to be explored. We suggest that PSM benefit from improving the efficacy of their public value remit by exploring the Public Value Scorecard (PVSC) model which measures public value from an audience and societal perspective.

Unsurprisingly, the PVSC's central theme is one of accountability. It aligns with the performance measurement movement within public services which has been in part justified as an increase in customer accountability and participation (Talbot, 2007).

From this perspective, public media value can no longer be measured solely based on traditional modes of measurement such as ratings, charter reviews, evaluations, and metrics.

Instead, when addressing the issue of PSM, performance is more effectively measured by quality-based measures that activate audiences to judge news and information individually (Sehl, 2020). Audience satisfaction and approval ratings, "value for money" measures (as this is, for example, done in the UK by the BBC Trust), or any other new forms of audience engagement measures become equally important (e.g., deep listening, sentiment tracking, collective storytelling models).

In all, the PVSC approach is both integrative and transformative by design. Integrative, as it stresses the centrality of audience engagement to measuring the impact of PSM contributing to the common good. Transformative, as it enables managers to determine whether public value is being created for audience demands, and whether demands for accountability from audiences as citizens are properly met.

Thirdly, there is no doubt about a new quest for a broader notion of PSM performance in an ever more complex world; however, how best to measure value and performance of PSM is less obvious.

Unfortunately, however, scholarly research on performance measurement of PSM regarding underlying theories, core ideas, process, insight or value created, and risks and limitations remain scarce (Anding & Hess, 2001; Kunz et al., 2016; Napoli, 2014; Picard, 2003; Reising, 2013).

Arguably, however, sustainability may challenge PSM principles and core values in rather unpredicted ways. This is because their impact on the environment as well as their "social footprint," including their relationship to employees and external stakeholders and audiences needs to be taken into account more substantially. The social impact (SI) on the society and the key audiences or publics as well as the need to get their license to operate (SLO) (Hurst & Ihlen, 2018) is discussed in various fields of CSR communication research (e.g., Rasche et al., 2017). However, PSM have not (yet) been challenged to consistently introduce responsible business models and respond to sustainability principles.

This paper also only states conceptual considerations to approach the role of PSM in achieving and promoting SDGs. Further research needs to include improving the validity of analysis by generating more insightful and testable propositions to be examined against empirical evidence of the effects of sustainability on PSM performance. This would imply establishing a structural model which postulates effects between the technological, communicative, economic, socio-cultural, and perceptual determinants of sustainable communication on PSM decision-making, audience integration strategies, and the perceived impacts on performance measured against Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) (Barbuio, 2018).

Due to the "public value" that the product or "good" (potentially) carries, there is a second dimension of responsibility that needs to be considered. A so-called communicative responsibility, as Karmasin and Weder describe it, means the responsibility for *what* and *how* a medium communicates. To further understand communicative responsibility next to economic, social, and environmental responsibility of media, the concept of *public service* needs to be bridged with the existing CSR and media management literature. Furthermore, sustainability as an overarching normative framework and guiding principle for responsible behavior and action helps to bring these concepts together and to develop a framework for *what makes media valuable to society.*

As a guideline for a sustainable future, the idea of sustainable resource use and regeneration has developed into a normative framework for individual behavior, but by the same time has been institutionalized as the 17 Sustainable Development Goals by the United Nations (UN, 2021). This "sunshine perspective" on the future, this story of progress, technological innovation, and a renewable energy economy have been communicated by political institutions and business, and organizations of all kinds, shape, and size (Weder et al., 2021). Next to this, the "rainy side" of sustainability, the principle of abundance, individual sacrifices, and environmental degradation have developed as an answer to the "old story" of climate change, as an alternative *to* capitalism, instead of an alternative *within* capitalism. This new story of revolution, cultural change, and innovation needs different ways and channels of communication.

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