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Title : BRANDING OF FREE-TO-AIR TELEVISION STATIONS: FROM CUSTOMER-BASED TO AUDIENCE-BASED BRAND EQUITY

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The concept of Customer Based Brand Equity (CBBE) was introduced in 1990's and since then there have been a few studies that apply the concept on television (TV) as media. Different characteristics of the business usually lead to different market structures at the industry level and in turn affect strategic choices at the firm's level. Therefore, some scholars in the mass communication field pointed out of the need to study the applicability of brand equity constructs on broadcast television as a medium due to the unique nature of television as opposed to other products and services. This study seeks to examine comprehensively what drives brand equity in a TV media environment particularly for free-to-air TV channels and how it is operationalised among two key stakeholders, namely the channel management and the audience. The thesis has two parts. The qualitative part is essentially to find out how brand management is applied or implemented in relation to the uniqueness of television brands as opposed to normal products and services in building brand equity in Malaysia. The

quantitative part is a survey among viewers to examine the interaction among antecedents and the formation of brand equity. A new term – Audience Based Brand Equity (ABBE) is coined to apply the concept of CBBE on media. The result of the qualitative study suggests that brand management of a TV station is more complicated than normal products and similarly the quantitative study also suggests that ABBE formation is different from CBBE formation. Conventional integrated marketing communications like advertising and public relations that are the thrust of brand management are found to be partial mediators for high brand equity station (TV3) but full mediators for lower brand equity station (ntv7).