

English Abstracts

Michael Meyer: The “dual audience”. On the influence of media content on user desires (Das „duale Publikum“. Zum Einfluss des Medienangebots auf die Wünsche der Nutzer), pp. 5 – 23

The communication needs of Germans remained relatively stable in the 20th century and primarily depend on working conditions and everyday life as well as on the status of the individual in the societal hierarchy. The majority of people expect media to provide entertainment and a knowledge overview, and only a minority belong to the category of the “information-orientated” user. This “dual audience” existed long before the dualisation of the broadcasting system. There are several reasons for the fact that the long-term mass communication study exaggerated the information function of television so markedly for so long and, furthermore, that it was able to claim that the depoliticisation of this medium’s content had strengthened the entertainment orientation of viewers: the societal causes of varying communication needs were neglected, the terms “entertainment” and “information” were used to denote two completely different things (to describe the content as well as the expectations of the users) and, in addition, the result corresponded to the interests of the people commissioning the study. The commercialisation of the media system has merely made audience preferences evident.

Joachim R. Höflich / Julian Gebhardt: The computer as a contact and relational medium. Theoretical positioning and explorative investigation with reference to the example of online chat (Der Computer als Kontakt- und Beziehungsmittel. Theoretische Verortung und explorative Erkundungen am Beispiel des Online-Chats), pp. 24 – 43

Working on the basis of a characterisation of the computer as a contact and relational medium, this study turns its attention to the specific “frame” within which these contacts take place and/or the corresponding relations are sustained. It explains that it is inadequate to view such a frame of computer-mediated communication solely in the light of the aspect of associated deficits. Rather, the focus is how people deal with such a frame. Consequently, the frame-related coping mechanisms are the subject of an exploratory study about online chat. Against the study’s background, the functionalities or the innovative codings that accompany a “communication in obscurity” are illuminated. In particular, the constitutive characteristics of a frame of establishing contact with persons who were previously strangers are outlined. The frame of computer-mediated communication ranks as one of “non-commitment”, which, however, does not necessarily imply unreliability, but rather the inclusion of a partial self. Finally, it is shown that, particularly when relations seek to demonstrate a certain permanence, certain “commitments in the frame of non-commitment” must be established.

Johanna Dorer: Internet and gender order: women experts in discussion (Internet und Geschlechterordnung: Expertinnen im Gespräch), pp. 44 – 61

Although the percentage share of women using the Internet is rapidly rising this in no way means that the dualism of gender and its hierarchical structures are becoming less significant. The conditions of the media-related as well as societal frameworks create a

setting for Internet discourse which, in its binary gender coding, exerts an influence on the application practice and the self-positioning as male or female that this reflects. Interviews conducted with 23 female Internet experts in Austria reveal that women are only able to participate in the reformulation of gender boundaries to a very limited extent in the still male-dominated occupational domain of the Internet. Contrary to the ideas and utopian notions of cyberfeminists, to the effect that women could eliminate gender boundaries through an active interaction with the Internet, this qualitative study points to the subtly effective mechanisms and practices of gender positioning and everyday “doing gender”.

Friedrich Krotz: Marshall McLuhan Revisited. The theoretician of television and the media society (Marshall McLuhan Revisited. Der Theoretiker des Fernsehens und die Mediengesellschaft), pp. 62 – 81

In the following article the main statements in the works of Marshall McLuhan are presented in a communications research perspective and with respect to questions discussed today. It begins with an overview of his central ideas. This leads on to his concept of what media are and which significance they have for individuals and society. This is followed by an explanation of which media-related theory of history was designed by McLuhan. The ideas about the direction in which the society will develop in future are also outlined. This moves on to McLuhan’s metaphors and style of writing. Furthermore, there is an overview of major ideas that McLuhan adopted from other theoreticians. Finally, a number of critical remarks are made on McLuhan’s theory design and an answer is sought to the question of how his works can contribute to the questions raised in today’s media-related research.