

A Case Study of (Inter)medial Participation

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**"A Case Study of (Inter)medial Participation"**

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**Ed. Steven Tötösy de Zepetnek, Asunción López-Varela Azcárate,**

**Haun Saussy, and Jan Mieszkowski**

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**Abstract:** In his article "A Case Study of (Inter)medial Participation" Steven Tötösy de Zepetnek presents survey data followed by quantitative and qualitative analysis about the daily intake of media in cultural participation. The survey data of the study are the result of questionnaires conducted 2001-2002 with advanced undergraduate students enrolled in media and communication studies at Northeastern University and with advanced undergraduate and graduate students at the University of Halle-Wittenberg. As the survey was conducted in 2001-2002, the data and the analysis have "historical" relevance with regard to (inter)medial cultural participation in the digital age. The data are from a mid-size urban setting (Boston, USA) and from a provincial urban setting of the then just over ten-year old former East Germany (Halle, Germany). The data and the analysis suggest that (inter)medial participation and practices in the two different settings do not differ significantly.

## STEVEN TÖTÖSY de ZEPETNEK

### A Case Study of (Inter)medial Participation

In the article at hand I present quantitative survey data followed by qualitative analysis about the daily intake of media in cultural participation in the U.S. and in Germany. The survey data of the study are the result of questionnaires conducted with the participation of advanced undergraduate mature students enrolled in media and communication studies at Northeastern University (Boston, USA) and with advanced undergraduate and graduate students at the University of Halle-Wittenberg (Halle, Germany) in 2001-2002. Thus, the data and the analysis are "historical" in the sense that the survey is prior to the arrival of communication tools such as twitter or facebook but including the world wide web. With regard to theoretical and methodological parameters, the present study is located in comparative cultural studies and within that field in audience studies which, in turn, is a subfield of (inter)mediality studies with the following key definitions:

1) In comparative cultural studies it is the processes of communicative action(s) in culture and the "how" of these processes in certain groups which constitute the main objectives of research and study. Within comparative cultural studies, the study of cultural participation involves the activities of individuals and groups in their interaction(s) with cultural products and processes such as the reading of written texts, the use of media offerings such as radio, television, the listening to music, the use of the world wide web, etc., that is, interaction in some way with the sources, processes, and results of media culture in its widest definition.

2) In audience studies as located in media studies — itself a subfield of comparative cultural studies — audience is defined as an individual's or a group of persons' cerebral and/or sensory and/or tactile intake/reception and/or perception of a culture product and/or products of communicative action(s) in all media. Further, audience studies is understood as the inquiry into the what, when, where, who, why, and how of a media culture product or products consumed by certain groups of media users. The field of scholarship including market-oriented research where audience is studied is commonly designated as audience studies, aimed at the observation and analysis of individuals in groups and their behavior with regard to his/her or their intake of a particular culture product(s) presented in a medium or media. In this definition, areas of communicative action such as the readership of literature, radio audience, television viewership, music concert audience, theater audience/spectatorship, museum viewing, multimedia, the world wide web, etc., are all understood as constituting audience of communicative action(s) with/in/of media

4) Audience research is understood containing the following categories of research: *Readers as Audience*: Printed media (book, newspaper, magazine, etc.); *Auditory Audience*: Radio, record, tape, CD, incl. music and other forms of material, etc.; *Auditory and Visual Audience of Performance*: Theater, musical, opera, concert, dance, etc. *Audience Development Studies* (opera: a combination of comprehensive strategies towards and including studies of relationships between audience, the art form, and the opera company); *Visual Audience*: Museum, gallery, exhibition, photography, display, etc.; *Mixed Auditory and Visual Audience of Media* (e.g., television, film, video, music video, etc.); *New Media and Technology Audience*: World wide web, multimedia, etc.; *Mass Media Audience*: Audiences of mass media where audience is understood primarily in a quantitative context and tied to newer media such as television, film, music on CD and television, etc. At the same time, also newspaper and magazine audience, book readership, etc., can be understood as audience of mass media.

5) In audience studies, media is defined as the tools and venues of communication via which a culture product or products is/are assembled, processed, disseminated, and consumed (e.g., printed matter, television, film, radio, theater, etc.) and media culture is defined as a system of communicative action(s) with several sub-systems of such communicative actions including all types of communication in all media. (for the above definitions see Tötösy de Zepetnek, "The New Humanities," "Toward a Framework")

Further, with regard to the theoretical and methodological parameters of the survey and data analysis, I present a brief discussion about audience research. What and who audience are may seem fairly straightforward, at least as far as the current situation of audience research is concerned. Certainly, the large amounts of money spent on commercial research into audiences' media usage and behavior seem to suggest that media producers believe they know what audiences are and how to measure their responses to their products. We hear, every year, about this or that pilot project of a new television series that is then discontinued based on the results of audience measurements. However, when we look back over the history of the conceptualizations of audiences and research into them, it soon becomes evident that "audience" has always been a rather fluid and poorly defined concept. In the popular imagination, media corporations and advertising agencies conduct intensive research into audiences. They identify the audience members' socio-economic class, lifestyles, motivation, disposable income, perceived fantasies, etc., and that knowledge enables them to "target" their audience precisely.

In sum, most of current research raises new questions to what extent and how a special set of various patterns actually may determine the process of participating with media, of understanding media discourse, and what items may strengthen the social process of building a consensus in the group or a decision by an individual about a media product. Here, the object is locate causalities between personal attitudes, social behavior, demographics (age, gender, profession, income, etc.), and the ways of media use, respectively. The paradigm here is backed by a worldview in which variables stemming from a social, economical, and psychological discourses go first and variables — such as the ways of media use in the context of cultural participation — come second. Usually, in most audience research the question does not arise as to what extent the use of media itself constitutes shared views of relevant features or to a certain amount overlapping perspectives into the world we live in, thus performing a kind of communicative coherence in certain groups. Recently, therefore, a discussion has begun in media theory to question the problem the other way around. Some theorists find it more interesting to focus research by describing groups on behalf of a common media use. Audience research, then, means first to collect data about media users and their everyday use of media and, second, to constitute by empirical and statistical methods groups of those who use the media in a comparable way for comparable reasons and with a comparable effect. Theorists legitimize this approach, for example Siegfried J. Schmidt, by arguing that the world we live in, that the way we want to see the world and the way we see it, is at first — and in a fundamental way — a matter and result of communication. In this type of audience research it is argued that since modern societies and the people in those societies communicate by use of media they do so the more that society grows in complexity and diversity, and — vice versa — the more the modern society develops and diversifies, the more it becomes important to use media for communication for any individual or group agent(s).

Relying on those assumptions it seems a serious undertaking to investigate the use of media in a certain group of users. In conducting such a research project the collected data should then be questioned and interpreted by using appropriate statistical methods, to describe groups of users with comparable aims and objectives, and comparable media behavior — so as to not reducing them to groups categorized only by income or professional position or by gender or similar traditional ways common in most audience research. Instead, we propose to look into whether or not the often-claimed divergence and differences between media users in the US-American cultural system as compared with media users in the German cultural system shows different (or shared) practices and processes in the use of media as cultural participation.

The data of the first questionnaire consists of the media intake by about 120 students in communication studies at Northeastern University (Boston, USA) in 2001 and the data of the second questionnaire consists of data by about 140 media studies students at the University of Halle-Wittenberg (Halle, Germany) in 2002. From the total data, 20 participants from the US and 20 from Germany are selected randomly. Among other data, the surveys include questions about the intake of TV, music (radio, CD, MTV, concert, etc.), newspaper, magazine, and book reading, and e-mail and web use including web surfing, and similar categories of cultural participation with mass media. The age of the participants in the surveys range in both instances 20-26. In both cases the questionnaires were placed online in English and German, respectively, and the data from the participants were sent to the instructor (Steven Tötösy de Zepetnek) via e-mail. Both at Northeastern and at Halle-Wittenberg the data of the questionnaires were a required part of the students' work for the successful completion of the seminars. The concept of the survey and the questionnaires were designed following the "media journal" and "diary study" format (see Harris, Rosen, and Calpas; Papper, Holmes, and Popovich; see also Machin). While the method to collect data via e-mail proved cost effective, at the same time it created the problem of data transfer because the data were to be input manually from the e-mails into a software program for quantitative analysis.

The socio-cultural location of the survey data's origin is different and this difference has bearings on the analysis. Boston is a cultural center in the US, highly industrialized, and socio-culturally diverse; Halle is a city of 240,000 in the former East Germany with an unemployment ratio of 20-24% (in 2002-2001), with limited socio-cultural diversification while with a highly developed culture scene of established traditions and higher than average cultural activity; the University of Halle-Wittenberg is 500 years old, a full university with all faculties, the city maintains an opera and several art galleries, museums, theaters, and orchestras.

In the survey for the statistical analysis of media intake as per time lengths, the data have been consolidated into the following Survey Categories of type of media use and subcategories of use of media genres: TV total consumption: entertainment (incl. soaps, reality soaps, documentary, soaps, cartoons, sitcoms etc.), sports, music channels (e.g., MTV, music shows); Movie total consumption with subcategories DVD, television, cinema, and video; Radio total time intake: total of all radio-subcategories listed by subjects, general programming of various stations; Music: CD, television, radio, video, etc.) total time intake (incl. gospel, jazz, and classical music, rock and popular music (incl. punk, heavy metal, etc.); Print Media total time intake: newspaper, book, magazine, study material; World Wide Web total time intake: e-mail (incl. instant messenger), web surfing (incl. Napster and similar); Other Media total time intake: outside advertising, theater, opera, concert,

clubbing; and Demographics: gender, education; household income, education of parent(s), type of residence city or town.

For the content analysis of the data of the survey categories the following Profile Groups have been constructed. A Profile Group is a group of survey subjects whose media cultural participation is characterized by specific and selected features. The selected features of the profile group are then analyzed with regard to the total data of the survey. The following Profile Groups have been developed for both the Boston and Halle subjects: 1) Sports media intake; 2) TV intake; 3) Movie intake; 4) Music intake; 5) Radio intake; 6) Internet intake; 7) Print media intake; and 8) Visual media intake. Within each of the eight designated Profile Groups, a particular activity is subdivided by types of media use. In the following I present selected quantitative data from the results of the survey of 140 participants in Halle (2002) and 120 participants in Boston (2001) as per 20 randomly selected participants' data whereby the time span of the survey was three months in Halle and Boston each as follows. Total use of media categories (Figure 1); Total use of media per day (Figure 2); Total use of sports media (Figure 3); Total use of film by genre (Figure 4); Total use of the internet by weekday (Figure 5); Total use of music in various media (Figure 6); Total use of print media (Figure 7); Total time spent on viewing film by gender (Figure 8), Titles of print fiction books read in Halle (Figure 9), Titles of print magazines read in Halle (Figure 10); Titles of print newspapers read in Halle (Figure 11); Titles of print fiction books read in Boston (Figure 12); Titles of print magazines read in Boston (Figure 13); and Titles of print newspapers read in Boston (Figure 14):

Figure 1: total use of main media categories in %

medium	Halle	Boston	p-Value
1. tv	21,15	39,33	0.01940105
2. film	3,37	3,52	0.9563199
3. radio	14,55	12,52	0.69663137
4. music	12,46	11,00	0.76290969
5. print	25,92	25,92	0.02355641
6. wwwweb	10,18	16,42	0.22629475
7. other media	12,36	5,23	0.08913093

chi<sup>2</sup>15.483, degrees of freedom 6, p-Value 0.01681504

Figure 2: total use of media per day in %

week	Halle	Boston	p-Value
Monday	14,98	16	0.85370682
Tuesday	14,85	14,86	0.99999999
Wednesday	14,01	16,43	0.66125722
Thursday	11,95	15,26	0.52554398
Friday	13,10	12,68	0.93332199
Saturday	14,06	11,92	0.67483356
Sunday	15,20	12,82	0.65311132

chi<sup>2</sup>0.997, degrees of freedom 6, p-Value 0.98572579

Figure 3: total use of sports media

medium	Halle	Boston	p-Value
1. tv	24,83	52,91	0.0014485
2. film	4,77	2,05	0.29758171
3. radio	13,68	11,92	0.72795243
4. music	12,58	7,18	0.22440141
5. print	22,88	9,24	0.01609926
6. wwwweb	8,27	12,14	0.3915897
7. other media	12,98	4,56	0.0443812

chi<sup>2</sup>23.392, degrees of freedom 6, p-Value 0.00067528

Figure 4: total use of film by genre

genre	Halle	Boston	p-value
action	13,19	17,15	0.47212421
art film	3,85	4,18	0.90581285
comedy	24,73	12,97	0.0554667
drama	28,02	17,99	0.13918017
family film	0	1,26	0.26165109
musical	3,3	2,09	0.6019933
romance	5,49	16,74	0.01703271
thriller	13,19	7,53	0.21372692
western	1,65	9,62	0.01759531
unknown	0	0,42	0.51693704

chi<sup>2</sup>22.92, degrees of freedom 6, p-Value 0.00065419

Figure 5: total use of the internet on weekdays

week	Halle	Boston	p-Value
Monday	23,63	18,43	0.42262654
Tuesday	16,12	14,4	0.75545989
Wednesday	16,22	17,95	0.76673531
Thursday	14,85	16,03	0.83200403
Friday	11,68	13,65	0.69568478
Saturday	7,61	9,18	0.70141891
Sunday	9,89	10,35	0.92034433

chi<sup>2</sup>21.355, degrees of freedom 6, p-Value 0.00058214

Figure 6: total use of music in various media

medium	Halle	Boston	p-Value
1. on tv	13,9	30,39	0.01321573
2. in film	15,78	3,92	0.00753832
3. on radio	14,44	6,41	0.07862972
4. on wwweb	15,28	22,11	0.26393481
7. on other media	14,04	4,35	0.02384323

chi<sup>2</sup>24,49, degrees of freedom 6, p-Value 0.00042424

Figure 7: total use of print media

medium	Halle	Boston	p-Value
1. book	15,01	46,91	0.00005037
2. magazine	9,84	18,75	0.09562714
3. newspaper	14,99	23,34	0.17743236
4. study material	60,16	10,98	0.00000001

chi<sup>2</sup>55,029, degrees of freedom 3, p-Value 0.00018312

Figure 8: total time spent on viewing film by gender in %

subject	gender	average 120 minutes	average 90 minutes	film title named	%
1	male	4920	3690	41	22,51
2	female	1680	1260	14	7,69
3	female	2040	1530	17	9,33
4	male	1680	1260	14	7,69

5	male	600	450	5	2,74
6	male	0	0	0	0,00
7	female	1560	1170	13	7,14
8	male	1560	1170	13	7,14
9	female	1080	810	9	4,94
10	male	600	450	5	2,74
11	female	1200	900	10	5,49
12	male	840	630	7	3,84
13	female	120	90	1	0,55
14	female	480	360	4	2,20
15	male	720	540	6	3,29
16	male	960	720	8	4,39
17	male	240	180	2	1,10
18	female	840	630	7	3,84
19	male	380	270	3	1,74
20	male	360	270	3	1,65
total		21860	16380		
average		1093	819		

chi<sup>2</sup>19.195, degrees of freedom 6, p-Value 0.00045216

A further category of data of interest is the list of printed material read by the Halle (Figures 9-11) and Boston (Figures 12-14) participants in the three months of the survey by the twenty randomly selected participants:

Figure 9: titles of print fiction books read in Halle times named minutes read

	times named	minutes read
Hermann Hesse, <i>Narziss und Goldmund</i>	16	1080
Umberto Eco, <i>Baudolino</i>	12	1015
W. Moers, <i>Ensel und Krete</i>	9	715
Hermann Hesse, <i>Steppenwolf</i>	8	690
Boccaccio, <i>Das Dekameron</i>	9	585
Dünnebieier Paczensky, <i>Kulturgeschichte des Essens und Trinkens</i>	5	395
C. McCullough, <i>Rubikon</i>	4	205
Herrmann Hesse, <i>Wer lieben kann, ist glücklich</i>	1	120
Stefan Zweig, <i>Maria Stuart</i>	1	90
Hermann Hesse, <i>Das Leben bestehen</i>	1	60

Figure 10: Titles of print magazines read in Halle times named minutes read

	times named	minutes read
<i>Der Spiegel</i>	61	2870
<i>ct magazin</i>	6	370
<i>National Geographic, Deutschland</i>	6	295
<i>Elle</i>	4	195
<i>Glamour</i>	4	170
<i>Focus</i>	3	120
<i>UNI Spiegel</i>	1	100
<i>Computermagazin</i>	1	90
<i>Studentenzeitschrift UNICUM</i>	1	70
<i>TV Today</i>	1	60
<i>Stiftung Warentest</i>	1	50
<i>Comic Mosaik</i>	1	50
<i>Cinemaxx</i>	1	30
<i>PC Welt</i>	1	30
<i>Stern</i>	1	30
<i>Unimagazins Audimax</i>	1	30
<i>Bahn-Mobil</i>	1	30
<i>kultur-spiegel</i>	1	20
<i>Readiculum</i>	1	20

Figure 11: Titles of print newspapers read in Halle times named minutes read

	times named	minutes read
<i>Mitteldeutsche Zeitung</i>	79	2425
<i>Berliner Zeitung</i>	41	1495
<i>Volksstimme</i>	43	1275
<i>Leipziger Volkszeitung</i>	14	420



<i>Torgauer Wochenblatt</i>	13	400
<i>Die Zeit</i>	13	400
<i>Frankfurter Allgemeine Sonntagszeitung</i>	1	120
<i>Süddeutsche Zeitung</i>	2	90
<i>netzzeitung</i>	2	30
<i>Welt am Sonntag</i>	1	30

Figure 12: Titles of print fiction books read in Boston times named minutes read

<i>Beatles Anthology</i>	5	80
Albert Valdman and Cathy Pons, <i>Chez nous</i>	3	75
Graham Greene, <i>The Human Factor</i>	2	65
George S. Clason, <i>The Richest Man in Babylon</i>	1	50
Stephen King, <i>It</i>	5	50
Stephen King, <i>Desperation</i>	2	45
Stephen King, <i>The Dark Tower II, The Drawing of the Three</i>	2	40
Stephen King, <i>The Dark Tower IV, Wizard and Glass</i>	2	40
Stephen King, <i>The Dark Tower III, The Waste Lands</i>	2	35
Dean Koontz, <i>False Memory</i>	1	35
Richard Bachman, <i>The Regulators</i>	1	30

Figure 13: Titles of print magazines read in Boston times named minutes read

<i>Cosmopolitan</i>	5	80
<i>Maxim</i>	3	75
<i>Stuff</i>	2	65
<i>US Weekly</i>	1	50
<i>Yahoo Magazine</i>	5	50

Figure 14: Titles of print newspapers read in Boston times named minutes read

<i>Boston Globe</i>	1	50
<i>USA Today</i>	1	50
<i>Northeastern News</i>	7	75

The above selected quantitative data indicate the following: data of the total use of main media categories suggest that television and the internet are used to higher extent in Boston than in Halle and this indicates a difference with regard to the economic situation of Halle versus Boston, the former a location in the former East Germany and the latter in an economically and industrially advanced place. However, the total daily media intake between Halle and Boston does not show a significant difference and I am unable to explain this except by the large difference between the use of "other media" — i.e., theater, book and poetry readings, concerts, opera, etc., — in Halle which refer to the cultural activities of the city participants partake in and that appears to be less so in Boston. There are large differences in the intake of sports media whereby most data in Halle suggest less interest in sport than in Boston. This, too, is likely a result of different cultural participation. An interesting situation is suggested with regard to the intake of film between the two locations: while in Boston action, comedy, drama, and thriller films dominate, in Halle romance and western films dominate and I have no explanation for this difference; interesting is that the viewing of art films are low in both locations and this counteracts the above suggestion that in Halle theater, book and poetry readings, concerts, opera, etc., are a dominant category of cultural participation. The use of the internet is similar in both locations and this, too, counter acts the suggestion that Halle — because of its lesser economic status — would use less new media in 2002 than Boston in 2001. At the same time, it should be noted that internet use in the former East Germany versus West Germany — in the post-1989 combined Germanies — is significantly different with "West" Germany with a significantly higher level of internet access (see ht) and this is borne out by the fact that while in Boston participants have internet access at home, Halle participants have access almost exclusively and only at university. The media category of music is with the largest difference between the two locations whereby music on television and the world wide web dominate in Boston and music on film and the radio dominate in Halle. An unexpected situation is the use of print media where Boston dominates by far while the use of print study material dominates in Halle. The last category in the selected data — total time spent on viewing film by gender — suggests that women view films to a higher extent than men in both locations. The data with regard to printed material read indicates that Halle participants read more canonical texts, as well as print magazines while Boston participants read mostly popular texts and that Halle participants read newspapers more frequently than Boston participants. Of interest is that *The New York Times* is not read by Boston participants and that the most read newspaper is the university's internal publication. Of relevance is also that in Halle the newspapers read are mostly left-leaning newspapers, thus confirming the political climate in the region in 2002. The overall data — that is, the data of all media categories and their use by the twenty participants in each location in



2001 and 2002 and suggested in the selected data presented in this article — suggest that media cultural participation and practices in the two different settings do not differ significantly and this is, at least with regard to my expectation prior to the data collection, an unexpected result.

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