

English Abstracts and Keywords

Helmut Scherer / Werner Wirth: I chat – who am I? Identity and self-presentation in virtual communication situations (Ich chatte – wer bin ich? Identität und Selbstdarstellung in virtuellen Kommunikationssituationen), pp. 337 – 358

As a result of the triumphal march of the Internet, many people feel that the concept of identity is crumbling. Studies on the construction of identity in virtual reality emphasise, above all, the free play with virtual identities and the detachment from one's own identity, which is anchored in "real life". This article critically investigates the myth of free play with identities. It initially clarifies the concept of identity and distinguishes it from self-presentation. On this basis, it explains which functions could be associated with authentic and non-authentic self-presentations in the chat context. The theoretical reflections are subsequently underlaid empirically with the help of a qualitative and a quantitative study. Both study sections examine users of a specific chat forum. They show that the approach of examining chatting from the perspective of normality is definitely fruitful. The distinction between identity and self-presentation makes it clear that many chatters also foster an authentic self-presentation if they are untruthful with respect to their individual attributes of identity. Rather than serving to depart from one's own identity and to slip into other identities, the reasons for this are rooted in relationship and communication tactics. The majority of study participants are interested in building relationships by chatting and some have a major interest in even integrating these relations into normal everyday life. For the majority, the pretence of false attributes of identity apparently has the function in this context of enhancing relational prospects that are often experienced as deficient in everyday life.

Keywords: Authenticity, relationship, chat forum, identity, real life orientation, self-presentation, virtual life orientation

Silvia Knobloch / Grit Patzig / Matthias Hastall: "Informational Utility" – Influence of usefulness on the selective exposure to negative and positive online news („Informational Utility“ – Einfluss von Nützlichkeit auf selektive Zuwendung zu negativen und positiven Online-Nachrichten), pp. 359 – 375

In line with the "Informational Utility" model, the "usefulness" of news can be conceptualised through three subdimensions: the perceived extent of consequences (magnitude), the probability of involvement (likelihood), and the temporal proximity of events (immediacy). These aspects of usefulness influence the recipients of news, which is utilised all the more extensively, the stronger these dimensions are developed. Furthermore, as they are reputed to influence the recipients of both positive and negative news (into opportunities or risks), these three dimensions are formulated into two hypotheses respectively. In two field experiments on positive and negative online news, grammar-school pupils (n = 137) read fictitious online school magazines, whose articles varied in terms of dimensions of informational utility. The exposure to these individual articles was logged via software. Finally, the persons taking part in the experiment answered a questionnaire. Four of the six hypotheses were confirmed. Likelihood and immediacy had a significant influence on the use made of positive news and the

recipience of negative reports were demonstrably influenced by magnitude and immediacy.

Keywords: Informational Utility, usefulness, selective exposure, news

Nicola Döring: Ringtones and logos on the mobile phone: how new media of uni-communication are used (Klingeltöne und Logos auf dem Handy: Wie neue Medien der Uni-Kommunikation genutzt werden), pp. 376 – 401

By concealing or displaying their phone in a systematic way vis-à-vis other persons and by making it perceptible to outsiders through the selection of certain ringtones and logos as additional symbolic features, mobile phone users can tell the respective audience something about their status, their attitudes, their interests and their group affiliations (uni-communication). This article reconstructs the use of ringtones and logos on the mobile phone as uni-communicative activity and provides data from three explorative studies: 1. from a quantitative content analysis of ringtones and logo offerings on the Internet, 2. from a guideline-backed oral survey, and 3. from a fully-structured online survey of mobile phone users. It was revealed that the frequency with which the new ringtones and logos are loaded onto the mobile phone varies very strongly. The selection of the category (e.g. ringtone with pop, rock or classical melody; logo with animal, love, sex, TV or automotive motif) correlates closely with individual interests, gender and age. In the social context, ringtones and logos indeed become the subject of drawing attention and making an impression and sometimes stimulate interpersonal as well as intra- and intergroup follow-up communication.

Keywords: Uni-communication, mobile phones, logos, ringtones, media use

Series: “Classics of Communication and Media Research Today”

Thomas Gebur: Theodor W. Adorno – Criticism of the media as criticism of society (Theodor W. Adorno – Medienkritik als Gesellschaftskritik), pp. 402 – 422

Theodor W. Adorno did not develop a media theory in the more narrow sense. In his extensive works, various critical media analyses are embedded in a theory of culture industry, which plays a central role in his theory of society. This article begins by outlining the context of origin of Adorno's thoughts in order to shed light upon his specific, capitalism-critical perspective of the media network. After presenting the societal function of the culture industry in late capitalism the relevant individual moments are elucidated: the specific nature of the products of the culture industry on the one hand and the role of the audiences on the other. The analysis of the interaction between the recipients and the offerings of mass communication goods seeks to confirm culture industry as a uniform societal system of integration, the significance of which, in Adorno's interpretation, extends beyond a complex of media socialisation. In the analysis of the criticism levelled against him, comments on Adorno's characteristic methodology, on his lines of arguments and on his style illuminate the current relevance of the intention, range and limitations of his approach. Finally, mention is made of Adorno's ideas of media pedagogy and his conceptual reflections on critical recipience research.

Keywords: Theodor W. Adorno, culture industry, criticism of capitalism, theory of society, critical theory, media capitalism