

English Abstracts

Elisabeth Klaus / Stephanie Lücke: Reality TV – Definition and criteria of a successful genre family with exemplary reference to reality soap and docu soap (Reality TV – Definition und Merkmale einer erfolgreichen Genrefamilie am Beispiel von Reality Soap und Docu Soap), pp. 195 – 212

Dream ratings for “Deutschland sucht den Superstar” (screened on channel RTL, rough equivalent of “Idols”), the Grimme Prize for “Schwarzwaldhaus 1902” (SWR), the launch of the fourth series of “Big Brother” (RTL II): everyday persons and everyday themes are extremely popular on television. With reference to earlier studies, the article defines reality TV as a highly active genre family, which combines numerous genres, including “court TV”, “daily talks”, “personal help shows” and the current “casting shows”. Taking the hybrid genre reality soap and docu soap as examples, which had a particularly strong influence on German reality TV at the transition to the 21st century, the most important criteria of the genre family are outlined. These can be characterised in terms of content by their deliberate overstepping of limits, such as the mixture of fictional and non-fictional elements, of authenticity and staging, of everyday and exotic life, and of information and entertainment. Formally, they are shaped by the same staging strategies, these being personalisation, emotionalisation, intimisation, stereotyping and dramatisation. The article views itself as an interim assessment of a genre family that has become a taken-for-granted part of the German television landscape and has unbroken development potential.

Keywords: genres, reality TV, docu soap, casting show, reality soap, court TV, daily talks, personal help show, staging strategies

Volker Gehrau: (Film) Genres and the reduction of uncertainty ((Film-) Genres und die Reduktion von Unsicherheit), pp. 213 – 231

The study examines the connection between the use of genre designations and the reduction of uncertainty. In the first section of the article, four theoretical modellings are presented in this context: in cultural modelling, the reduction of uncertainty results from the follow-through capability between a specific offering and the offerings as a whole. Economic modelling concentrates on the capability to follow through from an individual offering to the offerings already marketed and audience desires. In psychological modelling, genre classifications provide the capability to follow through the cognitive and emotional experiences that have already been made. In social modelling, genre designations serve to reduce the uncertainty of common media actions, in particular of communication about media offerings, by means of ensuring follow-through capability. The reflections in the second section of the study focus on the audience: accordingly, the audience would have to make increasing use of genre designations in communication about media offerings if the situation is uncertain. Within the same situation, the individual sense of certainty would have to increase if it is possible to fall back upon genre designations. The available data from an oral survey and from a number of recipience experiments confirm the suppositions.

Keywords: film and television research, recipience research, genre, uncertainty, control function, survey, recipience experiment

Barbara Pfetsch: Symbolic noises via the others – The public sphere via media policy in press commentaries (Symbolische Geräusche über die Anderen – Die Öffentlichkeit über Medienpolitik in Pressekommentaren), pp. 232 – 249

The article discusses the structures and processes of the policy field of media policy and, against this background, attempts to analyse the media public through media policy. After taking stock of the internal structures and negotiation processes and of the norms and governing principles of media policy decisions, the role of the public sphere in systems of media policy decision-making is discussed. Insofar as the opinion is shared that a broadly based public discussion about media and media criticism is a prerequisite for the redirection of the German media policy from control by state jurisdiction towards “regulated self-regulation”, the empirical question arises regarding the specific nature of this public discourse about media policy. On the basis of a content analysis of 240 commentaries about media policy in national quality newspapers between 1994 and 1998, the study describes the media discourse on media policy and interprets this against the background of the assumption that the persistence of the structural and functional deficits of the current media policy is possibly attributable to the fact that the media policy public is a peripheral factor, which at most reproduces the symbolic noises of the media policy dispute.

Keywords: media policy, media criticism, public sphere, commentaries, content analysis

Christiane Eilders / Katrin Voltmer: Between Germany and Europe. An empirical investigation of the degree of Europeanisation and support for Europe of the leading opinion-making Germany daily newspapers (Zwischen Deutschland und Europa. Eine empirische Untersuchung zum Grad von Europäisierung und Europa-Unterstützung der meinungsführenden deutschen Tageszeitungen), pp. 250 – 270

This paper investigates the role of the media in the construction of a European public sphere. The discussion of different models of a European public sphere shows that the Europeanisation of the national public sphere complies with normative claims of extensive inclusion and deliberation better than the models of a pan-European public sphere and publics with segmented transnational issues. A content analysis of the discourse on European politics in German quality newspaper commentaries from 1994 to 1998 shows a degree of Europeanisation of the public sphere that markedly lags behind the increasing Europeanisation of politics. EU actors and EU issues are hardly addressed. Even if the media do address European issues, they predominantly address them in terms of national politics. At the same time, the media unanimously support the idea of European integration.

Keywords: public, Europe, Europeanisation, commentaries, content analysis, press reporting, quality newspapers

Wolfgang Schweiger / Hans-Bernd Brosius: Eurovision Song Contest – do news factors influence the voting of the viewers? (Eurovision Song Contest – beeinflussen Nachrichtenfaktoren die Punktvergabe durch das Publikum?) pp. 271 – 294

Since 1998, the points at the Eurovision Song Contest (Grand Prix Eurovision, ESC) have been cast over the phone by TV viewers. The assumption is that the quality of a song is the central explanatory factor for its success. The remaining variance is interest-

ing, however, from a communication sciences angle. It can be explained with reference to at least three factor groups: (1) Characteristics of the voting country, (2) Relations between the voting country and the country for which the vote is cast and (3) Formal characteristics of the song and its singer. The first three factor groups point to variables, which are known as news factors from news value theory. Whereas the concept has been solely applied up to now to explain the journalistic selection of news and the selection of news by recipients, the authors of this article refer to news factors to explain the voting at the ESC – and thus the behaviour of the audience. Three hypotheses result, which the article examines with respect to the contests of the years 1998 to 2002. H1: The higher the political, economic and cultural status of a contestant country, the more points its entry receives. H2: The closer the contestant countries are in political, economic, cultural and geographical terms, the more points the viewers give one another. H3: Entries by so-called next-door giants receive fewer points from their (smaller) neighbours than they should have received on merit of their status. As shown by the data collected, all three hypotheses can be clearly confirmed to varying degrees.

Keywords: news values research, Eurovision Song Contest, televoting, decision-making theory, schema theory, heuristics, international communication, Europe, European Broadcasting Union, music