

Is the Video Star Dead?

The Role of MTV in Young People's Lives in the Context of a Changing Media Environment: A Typology of Viewers

Abstract

The article presents findings from a study that was carried out in Austria and the U.S. in 2013. It looks at MTV's development over time and its relevance in young people's lives and media repertoires against the background of their individual lifeworld and a diverse digitized media environment. Drawing on Bourdieu's praxeological approach and Havighurst's concept of developmental tasks on the theoretical level, the article presents a typology that was developed from the qualitative section of the study. Based on group discussions and in-depth interviews with 43 young people between 14–29 years in total, this typology consists of four different types of MTV viewers: the Enthusiasts, the Opportunists, the Distinction Seeking and the Nostalgists. Each type presents a different way of making sense of MTV within a person's lifeworld conditions and incorporating it into individual media repertoires depending on relevant developmental tasks they seek to resolve.

Zusammenfassung

Der Artikel präsentiert Ergebnisse einer Studie, die 2013 in Österreich und den USA durchgeführt wurde, und untersucht die Entwicklung von MTV im Laufe der Zeit und seine Relevanz für das Leben und das Medienrepertoire junger Menschen vor dem Hintergrund ihrer individuellen Lebenswelt und eines vielfältigen digitalisierten Medienumfelds. Der Artikel stützt sich auf Bourdieus praxeologischen Ansatz und Havighursts Konzept von Entwicklungsaufgaben auf theoretischer Ebene und präsentiert eine Typologie, die aus dem qualitativen Teil der Studie entwickelt wurde. Basierend auf Gruppendiskussionen und Tiefeninterviews mit 43 jungen Menschen zwischen 14 und 29 Jahren setzt sich diese Typologie aus vier verschiedenen Typen von MTV-Nutzer*innen zusammen: den Enthusiast*innen, den Opportunist*innen, den um Distinktion Bemühten und den Nostalgiker*innen. Jeder dieser Typen steht für eine unterschiedliche Art und Weise, im Rahmen individueller Lebensumstände Sinn aus MTV zu generieren und abhängig von relevanten Entwicklungsaufgaben in die jeweiligen persönlichen Medienrepertoires zu integrieren.

Keywords: MTV, praxeology, youth culture, qualitative study, popular culture, media repertoires.

1 Introduction: MTV in a YouTube era?

In the 1990s, (popular) youth culture and MTV were terms that were almost inextricably linked to each other. This was a time when MTV had a huge impact on what became popular and successful music, what was deemed cutting-edge and trendy. MTV also provided a platform for artists away from commercial radio (Banks 1996, pp. 36–37) and helped elevate the music video to significant popularity as an advertising tool for various markets, thus undoubtedly having an impact on consumer culture (Banks 1996, pp. 1–2). Since it held a monopoly in the market of distributing music videos on television for quite some time due to cunning business strategies and exclusive contracts, it also fulfilled a gatekeeper function for the music industry (Banks 1996, pp. 36–46). Yet with the emergence of the internet and advancing digitalization, its content and its status in and for popular culture, for the popular music (video) industry and most of all for the consumers has changed drastically. As a channel that features music videos on television, MTV was affected by these changes in more than one way, as digital technologies and processes of convergence increased the availability as well as the potential accessibility and flexibility of choice for consumers through on demand options (Hand 2008, p. 1; Lotz 2018, p. 91), especially with regard to music and music video distribution (i.e. since 2005 on YouTube, later also on Spotify and other streaming providers).

Almost parallel to the rise of the internet in the years after the turn of the new millennium, MTV relocated its core content on television from music videos to various (popular) Reality Shows, putting its mark on the genre as one of its forerunners with shows like *The Real World*, *Jackass*, *Pimp My Ride* and later *Jersey Shore*, *Teen Mom*, *My Supersweet Sixteen*, *Made* and in consequence also started to incorporate Scripted Reality Shows, Cartoons and especially in Germany and Austria also Animes (Japanese Cartoons) into its portfolio (Kulterer 2019, pp. 81–109).

Visibility of the television channel itself has dwindled especially in Germany and Austria since MTV took its content from Free TV to Pay TV in 2011¹). Yet this does not mean that MTV or its influence on popular culture has vanished altogether. As much as the television and music business have changed through digitalization especially on the level of distribution, established offers continue to exist (Lotz 2018, p. 491). In the context of new challenges and new possibilities in the business, MTV has grown way beyond the former music television channel itself and ventured into new territory online as well as on the existing TV channel. It developed into a vertically and horizontally integrated network as part of the VIACOM media conglomerate and now more than ever pursues a multi-platform strategy where music and popular artists feature as a main content in various online offers (websites, apps, Social Media). Entertainment is provided in form of shows but also follow-up material on artists and current trends (Viacom Form 10-K 2018, Part 1, Item 1). Cornerstones of MTV's identi-

1) This project ended in 2018, when MTV returned to Free TV.

ty are still the various Award Shows (such as the Video Music Awards, European Music Awards and others) that are engineered as megaevents. With these strategies, MTV secures itself a relevant position in digital (youth) culture, in a highly competitive media brand environment where brand associations are harder to maintain across platforms (Chan-Olmstead 2015, pp. 14–15).

However, there is no denying that the character of the channel and the whole MTV network for that matter has changed and was adapted to better suit the interests and needs of young media users today, who adopted new ways of accessing and viewing content as a consequence of technological advancement (Lotz 2018, p. 492), by focusing on a wider subject area and incorporating strategies that cover relevant distribution channels i.e. on Social Media. There were even attempts to rid MTV of its association with the original meaning ‘music television’ in 2011 when these words were officially deleted from the MTV logo (Kreps 2010, n.p.). When MTV was about to turn 35 four years later, this anniversary was mostly ignored, which Nathaniel Brown, deputy director of communications for MTV at that time commented as follows: „MTV as a brand doesn’t age with our viewers. We are really focused on our current viewers, and our feeling was that our anniversary wasn’t something that would be meaningful to them, many of whom weren’t even alive in 1981.“ (Stewart 2016, n.p.)

The following article presents findings from a study (Kulterer, 2019) that was carried out in Austria and the U.S. This study sought an answer to the questions that arise from the developments described above, one of which is: What relevance do young people between 14 and 29 years ascribe to MTV in the context of their everyday lives and in the light of a changing media environment? This question entails sub questions that the study dealt with, two of which are also important for the article at hand: Which functions does different content (i.e. Reality Shows, Charts) aired on the channel MTV or distributed through other platforms fulfil from the users’ perspective? What role does their lifeworld play in the process of ascribing meaning to MTV’s offers?

2 Theoretical framework: A praxeological approach to analyzing the sense-making process of MTV in the context of the everyday life of young people

The theoretical framework of the study draws on Bourdieu’s praxeological approach that calls for a perspective that combines and unites an objectivist view with a subjectivist view – the approach is helpful in that it focuses on the subjective practice of sense-making of individuals, as well as the context and the structures in which the subject and these individual sense-making processes are embedded (Bourdieu 1990; Bourdieu 1977).

The concept of habitus as a system of dispositions helps to understand the complex identity construction processes that a person experiences in their entanglement with social structures. The habitus can thus be understood as a tangible expression of the

socialization process that people undergo in different ways against the background of the individual lifeworld (Bourdieu 1977, p. 72–95). With a view to the topic at hand, the respective habitus of individuals and groups is also expressed in form of music taste, taste in television shows and the specific use and evaluation of MTV, which will be shown in the following parts of the article.

In order to make the individual's context – its lifeworld conditions, in which it grows up, acquires a certain habitus, uses and makes sense of media – empirically feasible, the concept of “developmental tasks” was added to the theoretical framework of the study. This concept goes back to Havighurst (1972) who formulated his ideas about how individuals are confronted with different tasks at different points in their lives that they seek to resolve. He also takes the role that individual lifeworld conditions play into consideration (Lohaus & Vierhaus, 2013, 20). However, there is an underlying normative potential inherent in this concept (Oerter & Dreher, 2008, p. 279, p. 284), since society has certain expectations about what is deemed a ‚successful‘ development by way of pre-defined developmental and socialization goals²⁾ (Montada, 2008, p. 28), yet one must never forget to keep an individual's ‚Eigensinn‘ in mind as well.

Central developmental tasks that become relevant in the lives of adolescents and young adults are in Western industrialized societies for example (Göppel 2005, pp. 84–85; pp. 107–108; Oerter & Dreher 2008, 279):

- creating boundaries to the parents
- building an individual network of relationships
- developing ideas about intimate relationships
- forming a/thinking about one's sexual identity
- to engage with beauty ideals and one's looks
- ponder future career goals
- strive for self-sufficiency
- (thinking about) starting a family

These topics become roughly prevalent between the ages of 14–19 (adolescents) and 20–29 (young adults), although definitions vary. These two age groups were thus selected as the relevant target groups for the sampling process of the study. This is not to say that once a person dealt with one task, it is over and will never be a topic again. When looking at the life span approach in developmental psychology (Baltes, Lindenberger & Staudinger, 1998) we learn that a person's development is not linear and restricted to certain points in time, what can be said, however, is that there are times in life when specific tasks become relevant for the first time or when they particularly pre-occupy a person (such as negotiating sexual identity in puberty).

In the study at hand, this concept helps to make the link between the individual and the structures empirically feasible: People were asked about subjectively perceived challenges that they were currently facing in their lives and how they were trying to come

2) An example is the hetero-normative paradigm that still deems seeking and forming a heterosexual relationship core goals in a person's life.

to terms with these challenges and tasks as subjects with individual personal traits and their own 'Eigensinn'. In their answers, they expressed their perceptions of what can be theorized as „developmental tasks“ and of what they think is expected of them, what they themselves want and which role media play in this context. As a consequence of the mediatization of everyday life, media have come to play a crucial role in socialization processes (Drotner & Livingstone 2008; Paus-Hasebrink, Kulterer & Sinner, 2019, pp. 45–46) – socialization and dealing with and resolving the above-mentioned developmental tasks thus happen also with and through media. As a consequence, media have become important contexts of socialization next to others such as parents, schools and peer groups (Paus-Hasebrink, Kulterer & Sinner, 2019). Therefore, looking at a person's media repertoire (Hasebrink & Popp, 2006) becomes relevant. The assumption is that individuals form a media repertoire that suits their needs best and promises to help them come to terms with the tasks described above. People derive meaning from the media content they use, thus drawing on a form of cultural capital that helps them to accommodate society's expectations as well as their own expectations and goals.

3 Researching the relevance of MTV in young people's lives: an empirical approach

The theoretical framework of the study outlined above calls for a methodological set up that allows to answer the research question adequately and to that purpose focuses on the subjects and their subjectively meaningful practice of using media as well as the structures that these subjects are embedded in. To achieve this, the underlying study incorporated a mix of methods with a clear emphasis on qualitative ones.

Group discussions (Lamnek, 2005, p. 27) were chosen because they allow to access a broader level of meaning that is created discursively among the participants. This discursive and very dynamic process allows to gather a large variety of perspectives and opinions on a subject matter in a short amount of time.

In order to access the level of the subjective and unravel concrete practices of media use and processes of sense-making in the context of the participants' lifeworlds, in-depth interviews in the form of problem-centered interviews (Mayring, 2002, 67; Witzel, 2000, n.p.) were chosen. With regard to the concept of developmental tasks, questions included inquiries into the personal background of interviewees, their current living situation, relationships with parents, peers, (potential) romantic partners, and general topics that preoccupied them in their current situation as well as their plans for the future. The second part of the interviews was dedicated to inquiries into the participants' habits of media use, the set-up of their media repertoire (with a special focus on the role of music and music videos) and the role and relevance of MTV in that context.

Despite the primarily qualitative set-up, a quantitative element in form of an on-line questionnaire was used in Austria between February and April 2013 (n = 443)³⁾ to facilitate sampling and to gather first data that helped to further develop the instruments for carrying out the qualitative portion of the study.

Participants were recruited from among the participants of the online survey as well as through snowballing and on site in youth centers, the logic of theoretical sampling (Rapley, 2014, pp. 60–61) was applied to the process. The part of the study that was carried out in the U.S. took place between July and September 2013 in Knoxville, Tennessee, applying the same logic to the sampling process as in Austria.

At the end of the sampling process in Austria and the U.S., six group discussions with 21 participants and 22 interviews had been carried out in sum.

The qualitative data⁴⁾ was analyzed in consecutive steps, following a combination of theoretical coding (Thornberg & Charmaz, 2014) and thematic coding (Flick, 2012, pp. 402–408) for the group discussion material that resulted in the discovery of relevant themes and hinted towards a potential for developing a typology based on the discovered attributes and dimensions (Kluge, 2000, n.p.).

The interview material was added to the next analytical step, applying the previously developed and refined coding-scheme. This analytical step served to further map out a typology of four different types of people who use and make sense of MTV in different ways.

In the next step that followed, the interview material was analyzed contextually (Paus-Haase et al, 1999; Paus-Hasebrink & Kulterer, 2014) in order to produce case studies for each of the identified types that depicted the complex interplay of factors when it comes to young people's preferences in media use, the set-up of their media repertoire and the specific meaning that they give MTV with its associated media content in the context of their everyday lives and the structures they are embedded in.

This mix of methods and the integration of different steps of analysis produced rich results and enabled a deep look into specific perspectives of the participants on the relevance of MTV in youth culture at that time.

4 Making sense of MTV between individual development and social demands: A typology of using MTV in a digital media environment

Before introducing the typology, it is important to demonstrate how the participants characterize MTV, since this reflects their initial relationship with MTV and its content.

3) Due to circumstances of the research stay in the U.S. and the previous experiences of data collection and the further selection process in Austria, the original plan to use a similar questionnaire was abandoned in favor of only a very shortened version (see Kulterer, 2019, pp. 173–177).

4) Results of the survey can be found in Kulterer, 2019, pp. 191–231.

The group discussions and later also the interviews made one thing very clear, the term ‘music television’ and the television channel MTV are still inextricably linked to each other in the participants’ perspectives, despite the changes on the content level, the additional outlets online and the new cross-media image MTV tried to create. Even if the participants are well aware of this, or if they are too young to know MTV in its classic form, the connection between both terms is almost formed immediately. In this context, Barbara (student, 21 years) says when asked what she associates with ‘music television’: “What I spontaneously think of is MTV and VIVA⁵⁾, those are the classic music television channels for me and by that I mean both the music videos and the shows that they show there.”

For others, the link between the term and the channel is so self-evident that they do not even refer to MTV explicitly but instead verge right into a discussion about how MTV changed when asked about their associations with the term, like Nick (unemployed, 18 years): “The first thing that comes to mind is change.” The topic of change is a dominant one in almost all of the group discussions, an exception are the discussions with adolescents who only know MTV as it was at the time of the interviews – not knowing what it used to look like, they cannot reflect on the aspect of change.

Adam (student, 21 years) summarizes the development of MTV as he sees it: “From music to music television, to people in music television or something.” He reasons that since people can now watch music videos online, MTV relocated its focus from music to the people and stories behind the music along with popular entertainment in form of Reality and Scripted-Reality Shows. Yet throughout the discussion with his friends, Adam keeps shifting back and forth between referring to MTV as music television and not. His indecisiveness reflects that of many other participants and expresses insecurity about ‘where to put’ MTV nowadays.

In the context of these contemplations, different types of how the participants use, make sense of, appropriate and evaluate MTV began to emerge and the following core dimensions for developing a typology were identified: intensity of use (of MTV on television and associated platforms), formal education, age⁶⁾ and function (of MTV and its different content offers). For the four types of viewers that could thus be deduced from the material at hand, four particular modes of reception of MTV characteristic for the respective type could be further identified (see Fig. 1). They will be described and discussed below.

5) VIVA is the German sister channel of MTV, it was originally founded as a competitor by German record labels in 1995, it was acquired by Viacom in 2004 (Kulterer, 2019, p. 102).

6) More correctly it is developmental tasks that are truly relevant here, age and developmental tasks are linked to each other, but are not always congruent since a certain topic might occupy a person for a longer time span than others or a person might go back to re-negotiate how he or she previously dealt with a task at a later point in life, the process is not always a linear one. Age is however easier to grasp, which is why it is used as a dimension in the process of developing the typology.

Figure 1: MTV viewer typology. (Source: own diagram)

Type Dimension	Type 1	Type 2	Type 3 The Distinction Seeking		Type 4
	The Enthusiasts	The Opportunists	Manifestation I	Manifestation II	The Nostalgists
Intensity of Use	High	Low to middle	Low	Low	Very low
Formal Education	Low to high	High	High	Low	Middle to high
Age	14-20 years	18-24 years	16-25 years	19-25 years	21-26 years
Function	Orientation	Distraction	Distinction	Distinction	Nostalgia
Mode of Reception	Involved	Selectively-interested	Critically-distanced		Indifferent

Type 1: The Enthusiasts

Participants who can be allocated to the first type can be characterized through their search for community and belonging. They tend to be younger with various educational backgrounds ranging from high to low.

Although one might expect the contrary at first, the linear program that the TV channel MTV offers is of central relevance for the younger participants. Their smartphones are vitally important in the context of their media repertoire⁷⁾, they do use YouTube and various Social Media channels intensively also for the purpose of listening to music and watching music videos, but linear media offers fulfil an important function for them, that non-linear options do not provide: MTV acts as the metaphorical lighthouse in a sea of choices and input in today’s complex media worlds and serves as a point of reference for them regarding trends (not just in music, but also in fashion). They know that their peers will have watched the same chart show or TV show and the same episode as they did and can thus participate in discussions about them and partake in the common negotiation of meaning. As Besim (pupil, 15 years) puts it: “I like when I see the charts, then I’m up-to-date about what is ‘in!’”

Knowing what is ‘in’ and ‘trendy’ and knowing about the content of shows, facilitates *anschlusskommunikation* – communication about the content with peers – which is important in their peer group dynamics and can often decide about who belongs and who does not. As Hoffmann (2008, pp. 161–162) points out, shared media preferences and media experiences facilitate group inclusion, but they also help to express individuality through the consumption of rather special offers or the demonstrative non-use of media (content).⁸⁾ This holds also true for inclusion in the sense of the respective gender that especially the younger participants are looking to identify themselves with.

7) This reflects in the results of the quantitative survey that also asked for general aspects of media use (see Kulterer, 2019)

8) Similar observations with regard to distinction via music consumption can also be found in von Gross (2008).

Although the frequency⁹⁾ of watching MTV does not differ between boys and girls, the content that is watched from MTV's range of shows does. While boys show a tendency to watch Animes, Cartoons and Action Shows, girls lean more towards (Scripted) Reality Shows and fictive series, with central topics being dating, looks and friendship.

The Type 1 viewers have a big interest in what MTV has to offer and a high frequency of use. MTV – and in Austria its sister channel VIVA¹⁰⁾ – are watched regularly and intensively, usually at fixed times of the day. Especially in the mornings, before they go to school, many of the participants of this type tune in to bring themselves up to date before meeting their friends. After school, they enjoy various shows to relax, often together with their friends, facilitating immediate exchange of opinions.

Orientation through trends that are presented in media offers like MTV is crucial for these participants, since they are at the beginning of refining their identity and negotiating their position in society. They are beginning to look for individuality but as a starting point they turn to mainstream offers. They reason that what many people like, must be good and it is 'safe' to consume it, without the risk of wandering too far away from the groups that they seek to belong to. At the same time, they are beginning to distance themselves from 'childly' offers and look for orientation towards grown-ups, which they believe to find on MTV. Chart music is for them a tool to position themselves 'correctly' and demonstrate that they are not kids anymore who listen to 'childish music'. Likewise, the various shows on MTV provide orientation in terms of fashion, looks and behavior. As a consequence, this type of viewers shows a very involved mode of reception. They do not only watch what MTV has to offer, they use the content as popular cultural capital (Fiske, 1992, p. 32) that helps them to tackle and resolve their developmental tasks by presenting them with symbolic material.

Type 2: The Opportunists

Participants who belong to this type can be characterized by their wish for self-determination and their confident display of individuality. They are older (over 20 years) with a higher degree of education (all of them are college students), who have less interest in MTV than they used to have when they were younger. They do not watch MTV as intensively anymore, yet they may show a regular use from time to time when a certain program feature appeals to them. What becomes apparent is that they mostly use these features detached from the TV channel via different streaming options. Their media repertoire is in general characterized by non-linear content, so that they also use MTV's content in the same fashion when and if a particular topic strikes them as relevant in the context of their individual interests (e.g. when the participant is preoccupied with questions of 'alternative' sexual identities and MTV airs a show featuring bisexual or homo-sexual characters.) – that's when they show a selectively-interested mode of reception. What is interesting about this type is that we also see how these par-

9) This was a core result of the quantitative survey (see Kulterer, 2019).

10) Since it was at that time available on Free TV, but MTV and VIVA showed mostly the same content, only time-delayed.

ticipants are already much more independent and confident as far as their own taste in music and media is concerned as compared to Type 1 viewers.

Listening to what they like and watching what they want to watch, regardless of what others might think is a central feature of this group. Expressing their individually shaped interests (in music, in television, in fashion) is of high importance to them. They do not need someone else's (imagined) approval and do not feel a comparably high need to belong to a particular social group so as to focus their energy and media interests on pursuing mainstream trends, at the same time they also do not actively try to avoid them like the Type 3 participants.

Type 3: The Distinction Seeking

This type has two manifestations. The first one mostly consists of older and formally higher educated participants who have a high standard when it comes to their own style that they express through the use of alternative music and television content. Through this, they seek to express individuality and their intellectual superiority over the uniform masses they see represented by mainstream music and mainstream television. These participants have a strong need to emphasize their oppositional readings and ability to critically question media content and that of MTV in particular. Especially the Reality Shows that are so popular among the younger and/or lesser formally educated participants (especially Type 1) become a focus of their critique: „Don't get pretentious, it's like the Matrix. It's like the matrix, it's like people that are like, it's people that are broken out of it, it is just, there are so many mind-numbing like pop culture things that people will just openly, blindly take.” (Brian, student, 21 years).

For that reason, they enjoy all the possibilities that digital media offer them to autonomously integrate whatever appeals to them to their media repertoire, discarding linear offers as something for 'lazy' consumers who are willing to accept whatever the media industry 'throws at them'.

Participants like Brian thus reproduce what they perceive as expected of them per their degree of education and their perceived social position – they mirror what can be interpreted as principles of the educated middle-class. In their understanding, they need to live up to these expectations of the ‚right‘ taste and the ‚right‘ choice of media from which Reality Shows and mainstream music need to be excluded. If this type of content is used nonetheless – which is in fact the case with MTV shows that some of the participants ‚admit‘ watching – it needs to be done with an emphasis on the critical consumption, thus legitimizing it through descriptions like “guilty pleasure”.

The other manifestation consists of older but formally less educated participants who belong to different sub-cultural groups and occupy particular subcultural positions at the margins of society (either because of their hobbies and music taste and/or because of their living and job situation). While participants of manifestation one see themselves in some sort of self-imposed exile from 'the system' based on their intellectual ideals, participants of manifestation two see themselves as social castaways and

express their anger at a system that rejects them through their negative evaluation of MTV. They prefer the use of non-linear media offers simply because their sub-cultural or niche interests are so special that they are mostly not represented in conventional media. Some of the Death Metal groups that the participants of this manifestation prefer are so special that it is even hard to find videos of them on YouTube, let alone on MTV. One exception are, however, Animes that are shown on VIVA and that the participants are all interested in, but again it is mostly the more mainstream ones that are aired, the special subgenres such as splatter Animes must be watched online on designated platforms.

For both manifestations MTV presents an important symbolic material to negotiate one's position in society in relation to other social groups by way of distancing themselves from its content.

Type 4: The Nostalgists

The nostalgists are older with higher degrees of formal education. To a certain degree they can be described as the aged version of the Type 1 participants, since they used to be frequent and intensive viewers of MTV. Participants of this type do no longer watch MTV and show no current interest (or only very little) in its program and other content offers. This is mainly due to their shifting priorities in their overall media use, but also due to a lack of overlaps between the topics that preoccupy them personally and the topics that are prominent in MTV's content offers.

Type 4 viewers appear rather indifferent in their mode of reception, meaning that it does not really matter to them if they watch MTV or not. They get rather nostalgic when talking about shows that they used to watch or music they used to listen to on MTV, but their involvement stops at this level. A commonality they share with Type 2 und Type 3 is that their daily routines have changed drastically since they finished high school and do not use media to structure their everyday lives, on the contrary, their leisure time is very valuable to them and media must fit in whenever there is time, without wasting too much of it on advertising or going through channels in search of something interesting – that is why most of them prefer online streaming over linear television.

5 Discussion

Young people today are growing up in a fairly different media environment than young people did twenty or thirty years ago when MTV first became successful and was an integral part of popular youth culture. Since then, technological advancement in the area of digitalization and convergence has made media almost omnipresent in many aspects of everyday life (Hand 2008, p. 1). New technologies facilitate new possibilities and choices for users and present challenges for media producers and distributors, MTV and its mother company VIACOM being among them.

The article at hand discussed how a former icon of youth culture developed in this context of change and how MTV attempts to remain relevant in a complex, fragmented digital media environment with offers such as YouTube, that challenge its previous monopoly in the music (video) business. Audiences today have adopted new viewing practices and expectations, also when it comes to accessing music and music videos. In the competition for the attention of these audiences in a fragmented media environment, MTV seeks to stay close to the interests and needs of its target audience, which means to also venture into new multi-platform strategies and a new program focus in order to leave its imprint on digital (youth) culture.

Against this background, the core question that the article is sought to answer which place the offers of MTV have in the diversified media repertoire of young people and which relevance these young people attribute to MTV and its offers against the background of their lifeworld. This also entailed the question how they assign meaning to these offers in the context of coming to terms with individual developmental tasks that they are facing in the process of growing up.

Based on the different patterns of watching and making sense of MTV, four user types – *The Enthusiasts*, *The Opportunists*, *The Distinction Seeking* and *The Nostalgists* – could be identified. From highly invested and involved modes of reception, to selective approaches and a vehement dismissal of MTV's offers, the participants displayed a variety of interpretations and attributions of meaning. The presented typology showed that although technological advancement is of key relevance when looking at changing media repertoires, the personal development of participants and how they can draw on media content – such as content provided by MTV – to come to terms with tasks they are facing in their development (i.e. looking for orientation) is just as relevant. Among a myriad of digital media offers, the participants of the study use the symbolic material that MTV presents to negotiate their position in relevant peer groups, their ideas of friendship and romantic love and their position in society. In doing so, they display their habitus through establishing and expressing a particular taste in music, television shows and fashion.

Beyond the case study of MTV, this typology can be useful in future research to capture and categorize practices of media use in changing media environments as well as the changing relevance of media content in the context of dynamic lifeworld conditions and technological developments.

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