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Media Convergence from an Adolescent's Perspective

Today's media landscape is marked by two forms of convergence: Firstly, a technical convergence can be observed, which describes the merging of transmission paths due to digitisation and the associated erosion of boundaries between formerly segregated media services and the development of multiservice terminals. Secondly, a convergence of media form and content becomes apparent: Increasingly, identical or similar content is presented within various media and through multiple transmission routes respectively. Such cross-media strategies aim at the development of media brands which offer synergetic effects through cross-media references and marketing for media suppliers.

So far, there is little research concerned with the way in which adolescents appropriate this convergent media landscape and, consequently, what influence convergence developments have on socialisation processes and the identity construction of young people. Based on empirical data gathered in the project "Media Convergence Monitoring II", this paper discusses the appropriation of convergent media and their contents by young people. The main focus hereby lies on the results of a quantitative online survey concerning the patterns of media usage and the acceptance of current convergence developments amongst young people aged 12 to 19. In addition, data gathered in qualitative interviews with selected media-enthusiastic adolescents focuses on their appropriation processes and permits conclusions about the impact of growing convergence on socialisation processes and identity construction. This analysis is founded on content-related access motivation – in particular media-related interests and preferences – based on which young people turn towards the convergent media ensemble of today with its content-related and technical conjunctions.

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