

Theoretical Foundations

In this chapter reality TV is classified within research on mass media. To thoroughly investigate reality TV viewing motivations, existing research on mass media motivations is examined in Chapter 2.1.1 while television viewing motivations are introduced in Chapter 2.1.2. In order to explain motivations in the context of reality TV, I will draw on theories explaining the psychological constructs that form the core of this work, which are presented in Chapter 2.1.3. Since there is no universally accepted definition for reality TV yet, I propose a definition for this particular television genre in Chapter 2.2.1. To illustrate the potential of social and psychological motives in this context, the diverse subgenres are presented in Chapter 2.2.3. Building on prior research, Chapter 2.2.4 discusses social motives of reality TV that serve as a foundation for the construction of the subsequent studies of this work. Conclusions are drawn in Chapter 2.3.

2.1 Theoretical Foundations of Mass Media Motivations

2.1.1 Motivations to Use Media

The dissemination of electronic mass media started in the early 20th century when radio and television became more and more popular among ordinary people. Research on mass media started only in the 1930s (Downing et al., 2004) but soon became more important in the subsequent decades when various researchers started to describe different characteristics of mass media.

According to McQuail (1983), mass media involve means of communication that **reach almost every person in a society** to differing degrees. He emphasizes four important elements:

- a **technology** (e.g., the Internet as a channel of media) for distribution,

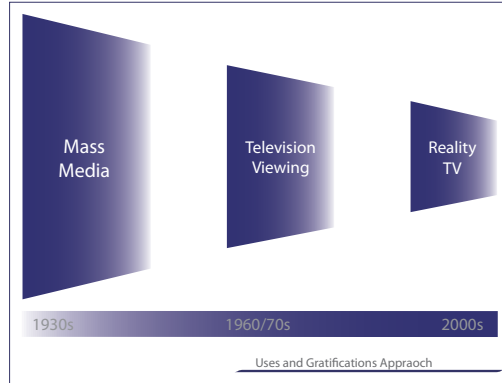


Fig. 2.1: Development of Research on Mass Media

- the political, social, or cultural **situation of a society**,
- different **activities, functions, or needs**, and of course
- **people**, formed into groups, classes, or interests (McQuail, 1983).

Hence, a mass medium uses a technology to transport a message to a specific group of people. Why those people use a certain medium depends on their situation with regard to external (political, social, cultural) and internal (activities, functions, needs) factors.

With the elements presented by McQuail (1983) in mind, it becomes apparent that reality TV **exceeds the traditional understanding** of mass media. Many reality TV does not only use one technology but combines television viewing with Internet usage and the use of smartphone apps. For example, the reality TV show 'Berlin Tag & Nacht' provides a smartphone app where viewers can interact with each other and watch scenes from the show (see also Social TV in Chapter 3.2).

Table 2.1 presents further characteristics of mass media according to Luhmann (2000) and Peters (2008). Both scholars stress three aspects: the **message**, the **means**, and the **agents**. While Luhmann (2000) describes those components as communication, technologies, and institutions, Peters (2008) mentions content, delivery devices, and audiences. Thus, as opposed to McQuail (1983), they concentrate on the core elements that represent a mass medium.

They further emphasize additional characteristics of mass media. Luhmann (2000) mentions the large quantities that are produced and states that the target group is

Luhmann (2000)	Peters (2008)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'institutions of society • which make use of copying technologies • to disseminate communication' (p.2) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'openly addressed content, • expanded delivery in terms of durability in time and/or transportability over space, • and the suspension of interaction among authors and audiences ...' (p. 2)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • forms of mass media: 'books, magazines, newspapers manufactured by the printing press [...] • photographic, electronic copying procedures provided that they generate large quantities of products • whose target groups are as yet undetermined [...] • broadcasting, provided that it is generally accessible' (p.2) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • forms of mass media: printing press, newspapers and magazines, radio and television, cinema, the Internet

Table 2.1: Descriptions of Mass Media

undetermined, indicating the anonymity of the audience as opposed to traditional, bidirectional senders and receivers in communication. These characteristics are supported by Peters (2008) who stresses that through mass media, messages as well as the opportunities for reception are multiplied and that the relationship between the participants is distanced.

Many researchers concentrating on mass media emphasize that they are **one-sided** and address a **disperse** audience (Maletzke, 1963), which means that traditionally people cannot interact with a medium. For example, when listening to the radio or watching television the media user cannot talk to the media character and react to what is presented. However, reality TV, once again, exceeds this traditional view on mass media by enabling social interactions. Some of its programs are not necessarily one-sided. Particularly, in programs with a competitive character, viewers are able to influence the course of the show. For instance, the viewers of 'Deutschland sucht den Superstar' can vote which candidate makes the next round and the viewers of 'Ich bin ein Star - Holt mich hier raus!' can decide which contestant will have to take the next jungle test and who is eventually the winner of the show.

Moreover, the connection between the media users is different today. As ratings show, the reality TV audience is rather large (e.g., the program 'Ich bin ein Star - Holt mich hier raus!' exhibited an average of 30% market share in the last three years in Germany (AGF; GfK, 2013)). Still, compared to older media, reality TV enables its audience members to get in contact with one another. For example, the program 'Berlin Tag & Nacht' actively links its content to the program's facebook page and

smartphone app. Hence, the original assumption of the mass media audience being distanced is faced by this new genre of television, which enables social interaction as no other medium before.

Considering the different descriptions of mass media, **reality TV** functions as a **modern form**. Traditionally a genre of television, reality TV transmits a **new kind of message** by providing a 'real' and more mundane content. Its device is television, though depending on the reality TV program also the Internet is applied (e.g., 'Berlin Tag & Nacht'). Its audience stands out by the large number of rather young people. However, as opposed to classic mass media, reality TV's **audience members are not distanced** or anonymous but also get in contact with each other, for example via facebook or smartphone apps. These characteristics emphasize that reality TV enables social interactions and thus serves a social function.

In this work, the **audience** of mass media takes the centre of attention. The term 'mass audience' was elaborated by Blumer (1939) who stressed the **large number** of recipients, its **heterogeneity** and dispersion, the **anonymous relation** to one another and the fact that its members are not organized. Although the reality TV audience is not always anonymous, as programs such as 'Berlin Tag & Nacht' or 'Köln 50667' show, it is still large and considering its different programs also heterogeneous.

McQuail (1983) distinguishes three different traditions in audience research: the structural, the behavioral, and the cultural form. The **behavioral tradition** aims at explaining and predicting the audience's choices, reactions, or effects. The main data analyzed in this tradition are motives, reactions, or acts of choices. Since this work aims at understanding **why people watch reality TV**, and thus their motivations, it is associated with the behavioral tradition.

The analysis of motivations¹ in the context of mass media evolved from research on the **uses and gratifications approach** (see Chapter 2.1.1.1) which links social and psychological needs and attributes of the audience to media selection and consumption. Based on the overall aim of this work, it **stands in the tradition of this approach** and related fields of research. Therefore, the following sections present important studies, concentrating on mass media motivations and the uses and gratifications approach. Thereby, the development of motivations research is presented, serving as a foundation for the research emerging from this work (Bryant

¹ Similar to the terms 'needs', 'goals' and 'problems' in uses and gratifications research (Rosengren, 1974), the presented studies use the terms 'motivations' and 'gratifications' interchangeably. In order to ensure a uniform notation, the underlying thesis will consistently use the term 'motivation'.

& Oliver, 2008; Nabi & Oliver, 2009; Bryant et al., 2012). The studies presented in the following represent seminal research in this area, as conveyed by state of the art articles (e.g., Ruggiero, 2000).

2.1.1.1 Early Function Studies

The history of research concentrating on audiences' media motivations goes back to the beginning of the twenty-first century. After earlier studies in the 1940s, the question '**What do people do with the media**' (Katz & Foulkes, 1962, p. 378) arose in the 1960s. A research school developed, which focused on audiences' uses and gratifications. Before that time, research on media had concentrated on campaigns that were designed to change the audience's opinions or attitudes, the so-called effects studies (Katz et al., 1973). The transition from those effects studies to the examination of **media functions** represents a change in the way the audience was perceived. While in effects studies the audience was perceived as passive, functions studies assumed the **audience to be active**, moving research away from **strong media effects** towards the audience and what it derives from the media (Rosengren, 1974; Kippax & Murray, 1980).

In the 1940s, researchers concentrating on the audience's uses and gratifications (e.g., Herzog, 1944; Warner & Henry, 1948; Berelson, 1949) tried to find explanations for the appeal of media content (McQuail, 2000). They developed lists of functions that were served by a specific type of content (Katz & Foulkes, 1962). The following studies are among the best known examples of this early research (Katz et al., 1973). Herzog (1944) and Warner & Henry (1948) concentrated on daytime serials that resemble modern reality TV programs airing in the afternoon (e.g., 'Familien im Brennpunkt') by presenting the lives of ordinary people of society at this specific time. Berelson (1949), in turn, was able to examine unsatisfied needs and thus, what people missed, due to a lack of newspapers during a strike of the newspaper delivery men in 1945. The following section presents these three studies and their results with regard to media motivations.

Herzog (1944) examined audience gratifications derived from radio daytime serials. Since radio serials were mainly consumed by housewives in the 1940s, the listeners to be examined were female.

The results of the study suggest a difference between listeners and non-listeners. There is a difference in formal education and the number of women living on farms is considerably higher in the group of listeners than in the group of non-listeners,

providing those women with a **vicarious contact** of human affairs. Thus, Herzog (1944) illustrated a relationship between a recipient's **personal and social background** and her **media use**. In addition, listeners and non-listeners seem to slightly differ in personality characteristics. While there were no differences in talkativeness, emotionality, and worrying, the results suggest that listeners are less energetic and self-assured than non-listeners.

Furthermore, Herzog (1944) identified three major types of gratification:

1. **emotional release**, such as crying or getting aggressive while identifying with the media character,
2. **wishful thinking**, when media content fills gaps in the listeners' own lives, and
3. **advice** that is obtained by listening, such as how to react in certain situations or how to do certain things.

The presented gratification types imply an **identification** with media characters which enable recipients to **vicariously feel** with them (emotional release). It seems that these radio daytime serials seem to have something in common with reality TV programs. Reality TV, too, enables some of its viewers to vicariously participate in the media character's life (e.g., Barton, 2009). This response can lead to parasocial interactions and a stronger form of identification, called **wishful identification** (e.g., Hoffner & Buchanan, 2005). Wishful thinking, at which media content fills a gap, implies a form of **companionship** that the recipient finds in the media character.

Just as Herzog (1944), Warner & Henry (1948) concentrated on a radio daytime serial. The authors conducted a study in which they examined the influence of the symbol system of a radio daytime serial on American women. They concentrated on the program 'Big Sister', the daytime serial with the largest audience at that time. Its story centers on the life of a happily married couple in a small city. The husband is a successful doctor while the wife tries to run the household. However, she gets involved in the problems of their relatives and friends. Warner & Henry (1948) studied the personality of each participant to find out more about the participants' private meanings of the program. Their social backgrounds and listening habits were surveyed as well.

The results of the study suggest that the 'Big Sister' program expressed the beliefs and feelings of the women listening to the program. It reflected the women's hopes and fears and the psychological realities of their lives as a member of the

traditional American family. The program gave the women a **feeling of importance** and security while they **identified** with the heroine. The American family and the role of the wife were emphasized and strengthened, helping the women, who were often insecure in their existence, to solve their emotional and interpersonal problems, and to give them the feeling that they are learning while listening.

The basic themes of the program expressed the restrictive virtues of the middle class in America at that time, suggesting that good and noble women, the wives and mothers, are those who are unbeatable in their kind of profession and that even the men depend on their wife's wisdom. Such a presentation of society resembles the presentation in some reality TV programs. In particular, programs airing in the afternoon present the **lives of a certain part of the contemporary society**, however, emphasizing its weaknesses (e.g., 'Frauentausch', 'Familien im Brennpunkt').

While the two studies concentrating on radio daytime serials stand out because those serials resemble reality TV programs by presenting people the audience can relate to, the following study is special due to by showing what happens when a medium that recipients use every day lacks.

Berelson (1949) presented a survey that was based on the strike of newspaper deliverymen in June 1945. Due to this strike the people in Manhattan did not receive their newspapers for 17 days. This unusual situation enabled researchers to investigate more precisely the motivations to use a specific medium. Berelson (1949) conducted his own study to get psychological insights because previous studies on this particular situation had not been able to answer the question why exactly people missed the newspaper.

The findings indicate that what people said they missed the most and what they actually missed was diverging. Although most of the participants stated that the overall information and the newspaper's 'serious' purpose was very important to them, a great part of them was not able to mention on which particular topic they would like to get informed and hence which kind of information they missed the most. Accordingly, there must be other uses of the newspapers than its serious purpose. This is an important finding because it shows that recipients are **not always aware why they use a medium**. While one of the reasons for the answer might also be social desirability (e.g., one has to read newspapers in order to be properly informed), the **inability to express motivations** is important for research in this area. This finding suggests the experimental examination of motivations, measur-

ing what people derive from media consumption instead of applying a selection of motivations viewers have to rate.

The results further suggest different uses of the newspaper, divided into **rational uses** and **non-rational uses**. The rational uses are those that were mentioned right away by the participants. They comprise the use for information as well as the interpretation of public affairs and serve as a tool for daily living, meaning that newspapers provide direct aid in everyday life, for example information on weather or on entertainment, such as the movies or the radio.

The non-rational uses comprise **psychological aspects**. Newspapers provide a form of **escapism**² by offering psychological relaxation or distraction from one's problems, for example through comics. They sustain **social prestige** since they have a conversational value and can, if being read, increase a person's prestige among his/her fellows. Finally, they offer a form of **social contact** by providing advice and gossip and thus giving insights into private lives. Those can lead to **vicarious participation** and indirect personal contact. In one aspect the needs identified resemble the needs gratified by reality TV. Reality TV, too, gives viewers insights into the **private lives of people**. This kind of insight enables viewers to vicariously participate in the media characters' lives in a way that no other medium has done before.

Study	Medium	Identified needs	
		Informational	Psychological/ social
Herzog (1944)	Radio	Advice	Emotional release, wishful thinking, companionship
Warner and Henry (1948)	Radio	Vicarious Learning	Identification, feel important, secure, companionship
Berelson (1949)	Newspaper	Information needs	Escapism, social prestige, social utility, social contact, psychological relaxation, distraction

Table 2.2: Overview of Identified Needs in the 1940s Studies

The presented studies were among the first to analyze media motivations (Ruggerio, 2000; Bryant & Oliver, 2008; Nabi & Oliver, 2009; Bryant et al., 2012), applying explorative research methods. As Table 2.2 shows, the studies of the 1940s concentrated on a single medium illustrating that radio and newspapers were important media in the audience members' lives. Furthermore, different kinds of needs that were satisfied by those two media were identified. Among those were **informational**

² Escapism is described as turning to 'the dreamlike world of mass media for substitute gratifications' (Katz & Foulkes, 1962, p. 379)

needs, such as advice, but also **psychological and social needs**, such as escapism or identification.

2.1.1.2 Audience Research in the 1960s and beyond

In the 1950s/60s and beyond, researchers like Horton & Wohl (1956), Katz & Foulkes (1962), Katz et al. (1973) or Blumler (1979) concentrated on the audience's uses and gratifications. They assumed that the audience member is conscious of his/her needs, which stem from **personal and social circumstances** and are related to media selection. In the following, some of the most seminal studies in audience research of that specific time period are presented. Horton & Wohl (1956) presented a new form of relationship between the media character and the recipient, revealing opportunities for social motivations. Katz & Foulkes (1962) concentrated on escapism and emphasized the importance of social and psychological needs and that there is not only a single motive that leads to media consumption.

Horton & Wohl (1956) were the first to present **parasocial relationships** and discussed their characteristics in detail. Media characters offer continuing relationships by addressing the audience talking personally and directly facing the camera. For the audience member this leads to the impression that he/she 'knows' the performer more intimately. Horton & Wohl (1956) named these relationships between media users and performers parasocial relationships.

Parasocial relationships are one-sided and controlled by the performer, so there is a considerable **lack of reciprocity**. The audience member has no responsibility or obligation and can withdraw at any time. There are different possible relationships offered by the media from which the audience can choose. Still, it cannot create those relationships. Although they differ from real-life relationships, parasocial relationships are similar to social interactions in the audience members' actual lives.

Since radio, television, and film were among the new media at that time, face-to-face relationships with the performers were not possible before. Those new media provided opportunities that some audience members in real life were lacking and thus compensated what was missing in some peoples' lives by giving them the chance to enjoy sociability.

Another aspect important for the creation of parasocial relationships is the kind of show the media characters performs in. Popular shows in this context are those that stress sociability, friendship or close contact and in which ordinary people are praised for what they do or what they are. This resembles typical afternoon reality TV program, presenting the life of an average family.

To the majority of audience members, parasocial relationships are only **complementary** to their actual social life. However, to the lonesome, socially isolated audience members, parasocial relationships are **compensatory**. Some of the shows are designed for this target group and do not only provide escape from their unpleasant real lives but also boost their self-esteem. Again, a resemblance to reality TV is identified. Many reality TV programs elicit a downward social comparison which boosts the viewers self-esteem by seeing that there are people who are worse off (see also Chapter 3.4.3).

Katz & Foulkes (1962) concentrated on another phenomenon associated with media. They analyzed existing literature that assumed **escapism** to be a motive to use mass media. Escapism develops through a psychological process, such as **identification** or **vicarious participation** in the lives of fictional characters leading to compensatory gratifications. In their study, the authors address different elements of this socio-psychological process ('drive', 'high exposure', 'social context of exposure', 'content', and 'psychological process') and examine their connection to escapism.

Although Katz & Foulkes (1962) agree with earlier researchers (e.g., Klapper, 1960) that escapism is driven by deprivation and alienation, the remainder of the elements might also be associated with other social or psychological aspects. Each step of the socio-psychological process of attending to mass media in connection with escapism differs from person to person and in different contexts. As a result, the authors suggest that there might be more uses of media content than mere escapism, e.g., advice derived from soap operas as already found by Herzog (1944) or parasocial interactions as presented by Horton & Wohl (1956). Future research should therefore not only concentrate on escapist uses but also consider other factors such as **social and psychological aspects** when examining the uses and gratifications of media.

2.1.1.3 The Uses and Gratifications Approach

The demand of integrating social and psychological aspects into the examination of media motivations was met by the development of the uses and gratifications approach. The following section presents this approach as well as studies that describe its different aspects more detailed. Rosengren (1974) introduced a paradigm that includes the main assumptions of the approach and an elaborate description of its elements. Katz et al. (1974) emphasized the importance of needs in the context of media motivations, while Blumler (1979) developed solutions for the criticism that the uses and gratifications approach faced.

The **uses and gratifications approach** links an audience member's uses, which means **needs and motives**, with his/her mass media use by supposing that an individual's **social and psychological attributes** influence the use of mass media (Katz & Foulkes, 1962). It is assumed that an audience member is **active** and **goal-oriented** (McQuail et al., 1972; Katz et al., 1974) and that the audience 'puts the media to some use' (Kippax & Murray, 1980, p. 335). Needs, motives, values, and beliefs affect a person's behavior and thus also his/her **media choices** (Fisher, 1978). The uses and gratifications approach assumes that audience members are **aware of their needs** and select certain media based on the **expected need gratification** (Palmgreen & Rayburn, 1985; Rubin & Perse, 1987). Hence, they actively choose a specific medium and media content to gratify certain needs. Furthermore, the approach assumes that mass media **compete** not only among themselves but also with other sources of need gratification. Summed up, the uses and gratifications approach assumes that

- audience members are **aware** of their **needs and motives** and
- **actively** choose media and media content
- based on the **expectation** that the selected medium, respectively the selected content,
- **gratifies** a certain need.

Although many studies applied the uses and gratifications approach, some **criticism** has been formulated. According to some researchers (e.g., Palmgreen & Rayburn, 1979; Rubin, 1981) the approach lacks theoretical integration and precision and ignores the audience's perception of media content. Furthermore, the influence of the audience members' social and environmental background is not considered (Rubin, 1981). Apart from that, the approach does not examine the relationship between media gratifications and their social and psychological origins or possible consequences (Palmgreen, 1984).

Elaboration of the Uses and Gratifications Approach

Despite this criticism, the uses and gratifications approach has been applied in media studies ever since its beginnings. Even today, it is applied in **research concentrating on new media**. Chen (2011), for example, applied the uses and gratifications approach to Twitter, finding that active Twitter use intensifies the need gratification of this social-network platform. Likewise, Quan-Haase & Young (2010) found that

the uses and gratifications approach can also be applied to Facebook and instant messaging. Finally, Ruggiero (2000) demands to expand the traditional use of the approach by including further concepts such as interactivity.

Rosengren (1974) developed a uses and gratifications paradigm, including findings from existing literature. The author demands an 'elaborate paradigm, with brief comments on each of its several components, providing examples of research relevant to them, criticism of such research and also [...] suggestions for new research (Rosengren, 1974, p. 269). For this reason, he divided the uses and gratifications approach up into eleven different elements and presented each of them by reviewing what existing research had already found.

In essence, the outline of his paradigm states that (1) **basic human needs** along with (2) **intra- and extra-individual characteristics** and with (3) the **surrounding society** result in (4) **individual problems** as well as (5) **solutions** for these problems. The combination of problems and solutions leads to (6) **motives** to seek gratifications and solve problems, which results in (7) **patterns** of media consumption and (8) other behavior. Both forms of behavior lead to (9) **gratifications** or non-gratifications and (10) can **affect** the individual's combination of intra- and extra-individual characteristics as well as (11) the media structure and other **social or cultural structures** of society. Table 2.3 gives an overview of the eleven elements of the uses and gratifications paradigm and their respective meanings.

The first element, **basic human needs**, comprises biological and psychological needs of an individual. **Intra-individual characteristics** (element 2) comprise personality variables of an individual, although Rosengren (1974) emphasizes that these variables have been more or less neglected by research so far. **Extra-individual characteristics** (element 3) are societal variables such as social position, status, or leisure time. While the third element comprises characteristics of the surrounding society, the fourth element includes the problems of the individual. However, the author states that those are not necessarily problems. Some researchers (e.g., Lundberg & Hulten, 1968) refer to them as goals and some describe them as needs. Those terms are used rather interchangeably in uses and gratifications research (e.g., Katz et al. (1973): 'needs', Lundberg & Hulten (1968): 'goals', Rosengren (1974): 'problems'). Element five comprises **solutions** with regard to the aforementioned problems. Existing literature (e.g., Katz et al., 1973) described this kind of element as the helpfulness in achieving goals or satisfying certain needs. Element six includes **motives of gratification-seeking and problem-solving**. Again, Rosengren (1974)

No.	Element in paradigm	Description of element
1	Basic human needs	Biological and psychological needs
2	Intra- and extra-individual characteristics	Personality variables and societal variables of the individual
3	Surrounding society	Societal characteristics
4	Individual problems	Goals or needs of the individual
5	Connected solutions	Helpfulness of the media in achieving goals or satisfying needs
6	Motives to seek gratifications and solve problems	The individual's motivation to seek certain gratifications or to solve problems
7	Media consumption patterns	'Uses' side
8	Other behaviors	Other activities apart from media consumption
9	Gratifications and non-gratifications	Obtained gratifications or the absence of a gratification, respectively
10	Individual's combination of intra- and extra-individual characteristics	Intra- and extra-individual characteristics that are influenced by the gratifications obtained/not obtained
11	Media structure and other social or cultural structure of society	Societal characteristics that are influenced by the gratifications obtained/not obtained

Table 2.3: Presentation of Elements in the Uses and Gratifications Paradigm

highlights the difficulty in distinguishing the different terms in this context³. The following element (7) describes actual **patterns of media consumption**, i.e., the 'uses side' and is measured by evaluating viewing habits (e.g., time spent watching, media content).

The author also distinguishes between 'consumption relations' and 'outside relations'. '**Consumption relations**' describe the relation between the medium or media content and the individual during the consumption (e.g., a little boy watches a Western and identifies with the cowboy), whereas '**outside relations**' describe this relation after the consumption (e.g., the boy still thinks of or wants to be like the cowboy, maybe even weeks after the consumption). This differentiation of reactions towards media content is also explored by Mayer & Gaschke (1988) who differentiate between **initial responses** to media content and **meta-responses**, responses to these initial reactions (see Chapter 3).

The eighth element comprises **behavior other than media consumption**. Rosengren (1974) stresses that those activities can either be considered in a direct comparison with media consumption (e.g., time spent, perceived utility), or the type of content or the time spent on a medium influences other activities, such as sleep, family, or feelings (e.g., aggression, see also Mood Management Theory in Chapter

³ Academic terminology varies in this context, e.g., Rosengren (1974): 'need', Atkinson (1958): 'motivation'.

2.1.3). The ninth element includes the resulting **gratifications** or non-gratifications. The next two elements (10 and 11) are the combination of intra- and extra-individual characteristics on the one hand as well as media structure and other social or cultural structures of society on the other hand. They present the effect of media uses and gratifications on the audience member and on society.

Advancement of the Uses and Gratifications Approach

Katz et al. (1974) conducted a study reviewing the state of the art of uses and gratifications research including a discussion on the future of this approach. The authors reviewed earlier studies from the 1940s summarizing their results. Examining the social origins of audience needs and gratifications, Katz et al. (1974) suggest that **social factors** might be involved. Altogether, they name five social factors that play a role in the generation of media-related needs:

1. the social situation producing **tensions and conflicts**,
2. awareness of the resulting problems, **demanding information** that might be found in the media,
3. the **lack of real-life opportunities** to solve those problems,
4. the **affirmation of certain values** through media content, and
5. help to sustain **membership** of valued social groupings through collective media use.

As a result of the analysis of existing gratifications research the authors suggest that media research should study human needs to discover how much mass media contribute to the generation and satisfaction of those needs. Moreover, it should be examined which kind of content satisfies which kind of need, which is especially useful for media management.

Blumler (1979) discussed criticism towards the uses and gratifications approach by considering important existing literature and proposing implications for future research. The author presented a study with 1000 British adults. They had to rate 32 gratification statements and answer questions about their social situation. A factor analysis of these statements and ratings suggested four different types of media satisfaction: surveillance, curiosity, diversion, and personal identity.

The results of the survey suggest that the relationship between media satisfaction and the audience members' real-life situations is not always compensatory but can

also be complementary, so that even people with a strong social background may indulge in media to feel even better. This is an important finding for research on media motivations. Although many studies stress the compensatory effect of media, only a few state that media content can also be only complementary and still have an effect, even for people with a strong social background. This explains in parts the high ratings of reality TV which already suggest that not only social misfits watch the genre (as social desirability purports) but also people who are socially better off.

The author found three different forms of influence social background has on media satisfaction. There are normative influences on why the individual consumes a certain medium, meaning that age or the position in the lifecycle as well as the social background form expectations influencing a person's choice of satisfaction. Then, an individual's social life can have two effects. On the one hand, the frequency of social contacts or education can lead to a higher involvement with media content. On the other hand, media can serve as a compensation, for example for the lack of a satisfying job or social interaction. Finally, the subjective reactions or adjustment of the audience member might influence his/her motives to consume certain media.

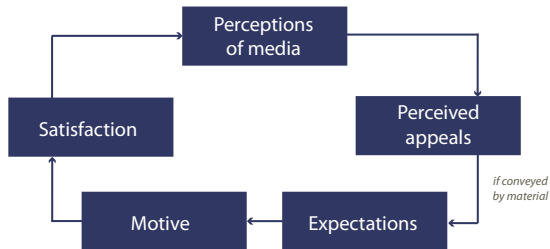


Fig. 2.2: Circuit of Audience Perceptions

Finally, Blumler (1979) presented his assumption on how audience perceptions turn into motives. This circuit of media perceptions is shown in Figure 2.2. The author assumes that an audience member who knows certain media contents forms perceptions that turn into perceived appeals. Those perceived appeals, if conveyed by the material, are turned into expectations. In this way the appeals become motives to consume the same materials again. If the expectation is met by the material,

this will lead to satisfactions that in turn feed back into the motives to consume the material again.

The elaboration of uses and gratification studies shows that the approach is an advancement of the **S-O-R** (Stimulus, Organism, Response) model. This model suggests that media messages serve as *stimuli* (for example, in a book or when watching television) that are processed by recipients via **intra-psychological processes** (*organism*). These lead to a *response*, for example to a certain media effect, such as a confirmation or strengthening of the recipient's opinion or attitudes (Bonfadelli & Friemel, 2011). Howard & Sheth (1969) extended this model by suggesting that those intra-psychological processes are split into processes concerning the perception of the stimuli, which differs among people, and learning constructs, meaning the way certain information is processed. The uses and gratifications approach advances the S-O-R model by assuming that the **active recipient** selects media content **based on uses**, which results in more or less **gratifying effects** (Bonfadelli & Friemel, 2011, see Figure 2.3).

The differentiation between stimuli, organism, and response is particularly important for the subsequent empirical studies of this work. As will be shown in the following chapters, stimuli derived from reality TV programs will be presented to subjects. The intra-psychological processes occurring in the organism will be measured with multi-item measures and related to the subjects' responses towards the respective stimuli. Thereby, the intra-psychological processes that influence media motivations (see Mood Management Theory Chapter 2.1.3) are examined to find out more about how stimuli affect a reality TV viewer. Consequently, the criticism of the uses and gratifications approach is tackled by not only asking predetermined questions that try to picture the intra-psychological processes, but by applying qualitative and experimental research to examine the interrelated elements of the S-O-R model in conjunction.



Fig. 2.3: The Active User

2.1.2 Television Viewing Motivations

Theory and research concentrating on television started in the late 1960s (Gerbner et al., 1986). As already mentioned, opposed to the effects studies conducted before the 1940s, this line of research concentrated on the **functions** served by media (Kippax & Murray, 1980).

The following section presents important studies of that time. The first two studies (McQuail et al., 1972; Greenberg, 1974) examine **gratifications of television viewing** by applying an open, explorative method. Respondents were asked why they watch certain programs which allowed them to state what is on their mind. In contrast, the subsequent studies provide motives the participants had to rate. Palmgreen & Rayburn (1979) differentiated between gratifications sought and gratifications obtained, while Rubin (1981) presented television viewing motivations in combination with viewing behavior. Conway & Rubin (1991) discussed psychological predictors in combination with television viewing motivations. Just as the studies in Chapter 2.2, these studies, too, are among the most cited in the context of television viewing motivations and serve as a foundation for this work (e.g., Ruggiero, 2000).

2.1.2.1 Classic Studies on Viewer Gratifications

In their study, McQuail et al. (1972) analyzed several data sets to show that besides the escapist theory that prevailed in mass media motivations research (e.g., Kracauer, 1960; Schramm, 1961), there are also other kinds of gratifications that viewers gain from watching television.

According to McQuail et al. (1972), the escapist assumption is substantiated by the fact that during television consumption or a visit to the cinema viewers are free from obligations. As opposed to newer studies, earlier research depicted escapism as a negative activity, emphasizing that the escapist theory contributes to a negative perception of television. Television's popularity was therefore attributed to the poor quality of its contents with regard to educational attainment. Television programs were perceived as homogeneous, implying that they serve the same motives and provide the same satisfactions. Furthermore, television was perceived as a shallow and trivial leisure activity. Those perceptions of the medium indicate a lack of meaning and depict the viewer as stupid. Interestingly, this criticism with regard to television resembles the prevalent criticism that reality TV has to face nowadays (Keller, 1993; Klaus & Röser, 2008). McQuail et al. (1972), however, suppose that there are more kinds of feedback to television content than escapism and that **one and the same**

content elicits **different motives** and satisfactions at different times **in different kinds of people**.

They conducted four different studies to develop a **typology of viewer gratifications**. The resulting data were analyzed using cluster analysis ⁴. The cluster analysis of the four studies concentrating on four different broadcast materials (*The Dales* radio serial, *The Saint*, television news, quiz programs) led to 19 clusters that were further analyzed. The overall framework of gratification types is presented in Figure 2.4. The typology of viewer gratifications includes four categories: **diversion**, **personal relationship**, **personal identity**, and **surveillance**. In addition, three of the four categories comprise several sub-categories that describe the respective category in more detail. **Diversion** comprises escape from the constraints of routine and from the burdens of problems as well as emotional release. Programs that enable those gratifications offer fantasy worlds the viewer can dive into, which helps him to forget his own worries.

Categories			
Diversion	Personal relationship	Personal identity	Surveillance
Subcategories			
<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Escape from constraints of routine- Escape from the burdens of problems- Emotional release	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Companionship- Social utility	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Personal reference- Reality exploration- Value reinforcement	-
Description			
<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Offer fantasy world (<i>The Saint</i>)- Help forget worries (quiz programs)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Vicarious relationship with media personalities- 'Parasocial relationship' (<i>The Dales</i>)- Source of conversation (quiz programs, news-viewing)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Reflect upon important topics in viewers' lives or situation (<i>The Dales</i>, <i>The Saint</i>)- Comparing with media personalities (quiz programs)- Presents values the viewer believes in (<i>The Dales</i>) as well as educational values (quiz programs)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Information and opinions about events in the wider world of public affairs (news-viewing)

Fig. 2.4: Typology of Viewer Gratifications

⁴ McQuail et al. (1972) conducted a cluster analysis referring to McQuitty (1957)'s elementary linkage analysis. Although this analysis is used to cluster people it also can be used to cluster items or objects, and thus, corresponds to factor analysis, which would nowadays be applied in this context.

The category **personal relationship** comprises companionship and social utility. Companionship means that viewers can build vicarious relationships with media personalities, the so-called parasocial relationships (see Chapter 2.1.1). Social utility means that the content of programs can serve as conversational topics and thus enables the viewers to socially interact with real people.

The category **personal identity** comprises the sub-categories personal reference, reality exploration and value reinforcement. Hence, some programs enable the viewer to reflect upon important topics of his own life. Furthermore, the viewers can compare their abilities and their lives with the media personalities, which implies a social comparison (see Chapter 3.4.3). Some programs also reinforce values the viewer believes in.

Finally, the category **surveillance** comprises gratifications that viewers derive from information and opinions with regard to the wider world and public affairs.

Considering the reality TV context, the categories personal relationship and personal identity are important. Reality TV programs provide a possibility for vicarious relationships due to the openness of the shows. Some of the more unconventional programs (e.g., Big Brother) also trigger discussions, thereby serving as social utility. The presentation of ordinary people viewers can relate to, allows for a comparison on many dimensions that viewers find important.

Greenberg (1974) conducted a study to find out more about young people's motives and gratifications in terms of television viewing. Although only children were part of the study, the items established by Greenberg (1974) were replicated in many other studies (e.g., Rubin, 1979; Selnow, 1984), making his study a standard for further research.

Before the main study a pre-study was carried out. Children of three age groups (9-year-olds, 12-year-olds, 15-year-olds) had to write an essay on why they like to watch television. Those texts were content analyzed resulting in eight categories of reasons. The eight categories include 'to pass time', 'to forget, as a means of diversion', 'to learn about things', 'to learn about myself', 'for arousal', 'for relaxation', or 'companionship', and 'as a habit'. The results of this pre-study were used to **develop motivation items**. For each category four statements were used as items and turned into a questionnaire the children were asked to answer. A factor analysis was carried out, resulting in the seven factors '**for learning**', '**as a habit**', '**for arousal**', '**for companionship**', '**to relax**', '**to forget**', and '**to pass time**'.

After this analysis, **function indices** were established, dealing with media behaviors, media attitudes, attitudes towards aggression, and socio-demographic characteristics. The authors used the indices to find out how they are associated with the seven factors. Escape was associated with no media behavior but with being among other youngsters and a more aggressive attitude. Television violence preference and an aggressive attitude, however, were more likely among children who seek excitement.

Furthermore, it was examined whether there were any differences between the age groups' motivational structures as shown in Table 2.4. The 9-year-olds associate learning and relaxation with television watching. Furthermore, aggressive attitudes are associated with the factors 'for arousal' and 'to forget'. However, the factors 'as a habit', 'for companionship' and 'to pass time' are not associated with any of the functions. For 12-year-olds, this age displays the peak of television viewing. The factor 'as a habit' is associated with each of the functions, while aggressive attitudes are associated with 'as a habit', 'for arousal', 'to forget', and 'to pass time'. Finally, the 15-year-olds show associations with the factors 'for learning', 'as a habit', 'for arousal', 'to relax', 'to forget', whereas 'for companionship' and 'to pass time' yield no association.

Age group	Motives
9-year-olds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • for learning • for arousal • as a habit • to relax • to forget
12-year-olds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • as a habit • for arousal • for companionship • to relax • to forget
15-year-olds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • for learning • for arousal • for companionship • to pass time

Table 2.4: Differences Among the Age Groups

2.1.2.2 Gratifications Sought and Obtained

As opposed to the researchers that merely identified gratifications, Palmgreen & Rayburn (1979) went a step further and differentiated between **gratifications sought**

and **gratifications obtained**. The authors introduced a model supposing that the exposure to television results from the average difference between 1) the gratifications viewers⁵ and non-viewers seek and 2) the extent to which they perceive these gratifications to be obtained. Thus, the study compares the gratifications sought and gratifications perceived to be obtained in the context of public television⁶.

Palmgreen & Rayburn (1979) conducted telephone interviews with viewers and non-viewers and measured how often people watch public television, the gratifications sought and obtained from this kind of television, and which person in their home decides what to watch during two different time slots of the evening (decision-maker). The gratifications sought and obtained were sampled by giving the respondents different gratification categories. The items only differed in the wording depending on whether gratifications were sought or obtained⁷.

The results of the study suggest differences between viewers and non-viewers. Accordingly, the discrepancy between gratifications sought and gratifications obtained is smaller for viewers than for non-viewers. While viewers watch public television to learn about people, places and things and to be informed about the arts, non-viewers would watch public television to learn about people, places and things and for communicatory utility. With regard to relaxation, pass time and companionship the analysis of viewers and non-viewers suggest no significant difference between the two groups. This is an interesting finding for the present thesis, indicating that the results derived from analyses on viewers might also apply to non-viewers and thus are universal to a certain extent.

With regard to the question who decides which program to watch, the results suggest that from 7 to 9 pm children are the decision-makers. Though it seems that the impact of television uses and gratifications is much weaker among the non-decision-makers. Finally, the authors found that apart from viewing frequency and decision-making also external factors (e.g., work schedule, family circumstances) might play a role in the gratifications derived from television viewing.

⁵ A public viewer is defined as a person who watched KET 'from time to time', had watched at least one program in the last month and is able to name it (p. 162).

⁶ The study concentrated on programs that aired on 'KET' (Kentucky Educational Television), a local educational and public television network.

⁷ For example, an item for gratifications sought was 'I watch TV because it helps me to relax' while the corresponding item for gratifications obtained was 'Programs on KET (would) help me to relax'. The wording for non-viewers is shown in parentheses.

2.1.2.3 Television Viewer Types

Rubin (1981) conducted a study to find out why people watch television, in particular how age influences television viewing motivations and how television viewing motivations influence viewing behavior. Questionnaires and personal interviews were used to measure viewing motivations, television viewing behavior, television attitudes, and demographic data, which resulted in nine clusters⁸ of viewing motivations: viewing to pass time/as a habit, viewing for companionship, viewing for arousal/excitement, viewing for specific program content, viewing for relaxation, viewing for information/learning, viewing for escape/to forget, viewing for entertainment/enjoyment and viewing for social interaction.

Viewer type	Age	Affinity to the medium	Television usage
Social viewers	young people	affinity towards the medium	do not view a lot of television and avoid news and talk shows
Entertainment viewers	people from all age levels	attached to the medium	watch a lot of television and avoid no specific programs
Escapist viewers	young people	great affinity	watch a lot of television, but have no specific program preferences
Program content viewers	people from all age levels	not very attached	watch a lot of television, but have no specific program preferences
Informations viewers	people from all age levels	only moderately attached	watch substantial amount of television and prefer talk and game shows
Relaxation viewers	people from all age levels	affinity towards the medium	watch moderate amount of television and prefer comedies
Companionship viewers	people from all age levels	attached	watch a lot of television and prefer adventure-dramas but avoid talk shows
Arousal viewers	young people	attached	watch a lot of television and prefer sports and adventure-dramas but avoid public affairs programming
Pass time viewers	young people	great affinity	watch a lot of television and prefer comedies but avoid news and talk programming

Table 2.5: Television Viewer Types

⁸ As in the study by McQuail et al. (1972), also Rubin (1981) conducted a cluster analysis on the basis of McQuitty (1957)'s elementary linkage analysis. Again, this analysis is used to cluster items, and thus, corresponds to factor analysis.

The results of a correlation analysis of viewing motivations and the variables age, viewing behavior and television attitude suggest that **program content, entertainment, relaxation, and pass time/habit** are the motivations with the highest means. Furthermore, there is a negative correlation between age and the motives escape, pass time, arousal, and social viewing. However, the remaining motives are positively correlated with viewing levels, attachment, and reality.

In addition to the identification of different viewing motivations, different types of viewers emerged as presented in Table 2.5. ***Social viewers*** are young and show affinity towards the medium but do not view a lot of television. Furthermore, they avoid news and talk shows. ***Entertainment viewers*** are from all age levels and watch a good deal of television. They are attached⁹ to the medium and avoid no specific programs. ***Escapist viewers*** are young, do not view a lot of television but show a great affinity towards the medium. However, they show no program preferences. ***Program content viewers*** are from all ages and watch a lot of television but are not very attached to the medium. They, too, do not show any program preferences.

Informational viewers watch substantial amounts of television and prefer talk and game shows. ***Relaxation viewers*** show affinity towards the medium but do not view a lot of television. They prefer comedies. ***Companionship viewers*** watch considerable amounts of television and show affinity towards the medium. They like adventure-dramas but avoid talk shows. ***Arousal viewers*** are young and watch a lot of television. They are more attached to the medium than the other viewer types and like sports and adventure-dramas. However, they avoid public affairs programs. Finally, ***pass time viewers*** are young and watch considerable amounts of television. They are attached to the medium, prefer comedies and avoid news and talk shows.

Two years later, Rubin (1983) presented a similar analysis that resulted in two general types of television viewers. The **first type** watches out of **habit, to pass time or to get entertained**. For this type, television leads to amusement and enjoyment. Although he watches a considerable amount of television, the content is not important. The **second type** watches television **to seek information and to learn**, but not to escape. He shows higher viewing levels and prefers talk shows, news, and game shows. Furthermore, he uses the information gained from television viewing for social interactions, stressing social utility.

This differentiation of television viewing as identified by Rubin (1983) was supported by Conway & Rubin (1991). They conducted a study to find out more about

⁹ Attachment describes the affinity a viewer shows towards television, for example whether he could do without it or is already used to watching television.

psychological predictors of television viewing motivations. The authors distinguish between two types of television viewing. While **instrumental use** of television is goal-directed, **ritualized use** describes habitual viewing. The psychological predictors considered in this study were measured through self-report questionnaires and included authoritarianism¹⁰, attributional complexity¹¹, sensation-seeking¹², locus of control¹³, anxiety¹⁴, creativity¹⁵, parasocial interactions¹⁶, and assertiveness¹⁷. In addition to these psychological predictors viewing motivations, television affinity, television exposure, and demographic variables were measured. To analyze the data, the authors applied a principal component analysis and a hierarchical regression analysis.

The results of the study are shown in Table 2.6 and suggest that sensation-seeking was associated with pass-time, and escape motives. Anxiety was associated with status-enhancement, escape, and pass-time motives, while creativity was associated with relaxation and information motives.

Parasocial interactions explained information, entertainment, relaxation and pass-time needs, while status-enhancement motives were explained by assertiveness. Furthermore, it was found that parasocial interactions are important for viewing intention and selection. The results of the study, therefore, show that **psychological factors in fact influence media uses** and effects.

2.1.3 Theories of Mass Media Motivations

As the preceding chapters illustrate, this work investigates the motivations to watch reality TV programs and thus stands in the tradition of the **uses and gratifications approach**. Still, the uses and gratifications approach and related research have some **weaknesses** that the present research tries to approach. Prior research only identified and collected media motivations. However, no study further investi-

¹⁰ Authoritarianism describes a person's tolerance of ambiguous situations or dissonance (Kirscht & Dillehay, 1967).

¹¹ Attributional complexity characterizes a person's level of attributing causes to others' actions (Fletcher et al., 1986).

¹² Sensation-seeking is defined as the need for novel and complex situations or experiences (Zuckerman, 1979).

¹³ Locus of control describes the need to be in control (Rotter, 1966).

¹⁴ Anxiety is defined as stress and tensions that people seek to avoid (Levitt, 1980).

¹⁵ Creativity in this context means that people can use their imagination to enjoy media (Stephenson, 1967).

¹⁶ Parasocial interactions are one-way relationships between media personalities and television ? develop over time and are similar to interpersonal relationships (Horton & Wohl, 1956).

¹⁷ Assertiveness describes the need to have power over other people (McGuire, 1974)

Psychological predictors	Motives (dependent variable)	β	R^2
Sensation-seeking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> pass time escape 	.18** .14*	.38 .36
Anxiety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> status-enhancement escape pass time 	.28*** .23*** .20***	.22 .36 .38
Creativity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> relaxation information 	.19** .17**	.25 .17
Parasocial interactions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> information entertainment relaxation pass time 	.25*** .22*** .19*** .12*	.17 .29 .25 .38
Assertiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> status-enhancement 	.13*	.22

* $p < .05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < .001$

Table 2.6: Psychological Predictors and Corresponding Motives

gated the psychological constructs that stand behind those motives. In this context it would be interesting to investigate how psychological responses arise, for example what their determinants are and how they are implemented in a reality TV program. These insights would be important not only for media psychology but also for media management. Hence, for this work not only the identification of viewing motivations applied in the context of reality TV is central but also the further **examination of social and psychological constructs** that are connected to those motives, which has been neglected in traditional communication studies so far. Therefore, this work serves as an interdisciplinary approach, unifying communication studies, media psychology and ? referring to practical implications ? also media management.

However, in doing so, it is necessary to **draw on theories** to be able to further examine and explain the social and psychological constructs that are connected to reality TV consumption. The following sections, therefore, present theoretical approaches that stem from media psychology and that will be applied to achieve the objective.

Existing research (e.g., Wirth & Schramm, 2005) stresses that **emotions** can be **transmitted via media**. Those emotional reactions (e.g., what is read in a book or shown on television) do not differ fundamentally from emotions that are elicited in everyday life.

Reality TV, in particular, elicits emotional reactions. This characteristic of the genre is already embodied in the label '**affect TV**', a name that prevailed for this genre in the 1990s (Bente & Fromm, 1997). According to Bente & Feist (2000, p. 114), affect TV includes 'offerings that present the most private stories of non-prominent

people to a mass audience, crossing traditional borders of privacy and intimacy.’ Likewise, Wirth & Fröh (1996) found that reality TV elicits different emotions such as excitation or embarrassment. Those earlier studies already assumed that the genre’s success comes from the gratification of human needs, for example to compare the self to other people or to assess one’s own way of life and behavior (Bente & Fromm, 1998).

Research on mass media comprises theories that try to explain the cognitive and affective reactions of individuals towards mass media. Due to the fact that the main objective of this work is the examination of motivations to watch reality TV, it is based on a variety of theories. Thus, in the following an outline of relevant theories will be given.

McGuire (1974) stresses that although external circumstances are important for mass media consumption, the recipient’s needs are also substantial determinants in this context. Gratifications obtained from mass media may seem illusory. Still, they might exceed those available in an audience member’s real life. In his article, McGuire (1974) presents **different categories of theories** that are summarized and examined in the context of gratifications the audience might obtain from mass media consumption. These categories describe the general assumption of theories prevailing in media psychology that will be applied in this work.

Consistency theories stress the attainment of internal balance. They assume that there are different forces, such as needs, one’s past and present, or the views of other people that affect an individual so that he/she is pushed in many directions. Consistency theories suppose that each individual aims at minimizing the extent to which a single force dominates to find a resolution of the conflicts and to gain coherence. In this context, there are two interpretations of how mass media might affect this assumption. On the one hand, the media provide much information that might lead to even more tension for the individual. On the other hand, the individual might find helpful material or even **comparative** consolation in mass media materials.

Objectification theories assume that individuals are rather passive and learn about their own feelings by observing their own behavior or that of other people. Mass media provide interpretations for one’s own feelings and their content serve as **social comparison** targets, allowing the audience member to evaluate his/her own performance.

Especially, for these first two theories the **comparative aspect** can be applied to reality TV where ordinary people are shown, serving as excellent comparison targets for viewers.

Tension-reduction theories assume that an individual strongly reacts to tensions. A reduction of arousal leads to gratifications, whereas an increase is aversive. In this context, Aristotle's cathartic theory is applied suggesting a release of tensions through the vicarious expression of one's feelings with the help of fantasy. Likewise, mass media provide release from tension through **identification** with factual or fictional media personae or situations.

Identification theories assume that people seek ego-enhancement by adopting additional role identities to their self-concepts. Mass media provide a variety of these role identities that often are stylized to directly get recognized by the audience. The adoption of role identities in fantasy, and thus, the **identification** with these roles allow for an **ego-enhancement**. Due to the proximity of reality TV characters to the recipient, these programs are particularly suitable for identification.

Expressive theories assume that a person gains gratification by expressing his/her feelings or beliefs and attesting one's existence through any form of achievement. Mass media provide the possibility to identify with media characters and **vicariously express** one's feelings which can be gratifying and **self-enhancing** and which can lead to further self-expressions. By watching ordinary people living their lives or being in extraordinary situations recipients get the chance to vicariously feel what the reality TV character is feeling.

Affiliation theories assume that the individual is rather altruistic and seeks acceptance in interpersonal relationships. Moreover, they stress the human motivation to get connected with other people. Mass media offer **conversations topics** that the individuals can use in social interactions as well as the possibility to regularly watch and learn about the media characters in a way that is not possible with real people (apart from the nuclear family). This is particularly true for reality TV programs, which enable viewers to get insights into other people's lives as no other medium has done before.

Modeling theories assume that people take others as models and emphasize with them or imitate their behavior. Mass media provide many opportunities to imitate factual or fictional characters. This is expressed in similar dressing or the furnishing of one's house similar to the media character's. The strong admiration of media characters in this manner is called **wishful identification** (Hoffner & Buchanan, 2005).

All in all, the adaption of different motivation theories on media consumption shows that there are different groups of needs that can be gratified by mass media. Apart from the need to get informed (Consistency theories) there are also psycho-

logical and social needs that can be satisfied by media consumption. There is the possibility to compare the self to media figures and thus evaluate one's own performance (Consistency theories, Objectification theories). Furthermore, media provide diversion and relaxation (Tension-reduction theories) as well as reaffirmation of one's own choices. The vicarious expression of one's feelings through media consumption (Expressive theories, Tension-reduction theories) can derive from identification with media figures (Tension-reduction theories, Expressive theories, Identification theories) and may be self-enhancing.

Mood Management Theory

Moods play an important role in the selection of media and media content (Knobloch-Westerwick, 2007). Originally labelled as affect-dependent stimulus arrangement (Zillmann & Bryant, 1985), mood management theory assumes that an **individual's affective state** impacts which media and media content this person selects or avoids. Individuals are assumed to arrange internal and external stimulus conditions. The theory is based on the assumption that individuals

- (a) try to **avoid** or at least diminish **bad moods**, and
- (b) try to **establish** and maintain **positive moods**.

Thereby, they know which stimuli to choose based on their former experiences. At first, the stimuli are arranged in a random fashion, meaning that media choices are made incidentally. For example, if a person is in a bad mood he/she makes a random media choice to reduce the bad mood. The result leaves a **memory trace** so that in similar situations in the future he/she will make similar choices. This is equally true for choices that enhance a positive mood.

Mood management can also happen without the individuals' awareness. Often, media choices are intuitive and some kind of 'gut reaction', even though it is possible for an individual to recognize the causal circumstances of the media choice. Still, it is also not necessary. Moreover, the effect of a certain type of medium or content is not consistent. Hence, different media 'affect different moods in different ways' (Zillmann, 1988, p. 330).

2.2 Reality TV

2.2.1 Definition and Characteristics of Reality TV

Although the number of research studies examining the phenomenon of reality TV increased in the last years, there is **no established** or universally acknowledged **definition** of the genre yet (Hall, 2006; Nabi, 2007). Rather, many scholars (e.g. Klaus & Luecke, 2003; Aslama & Pannti, 2006; Lundy et al., 2008; Aubrey et al., 2012) emphasize that it is difficult to find an overall definition due to the **diversity of the programs** that all come under the genre reality TV. Still, a few researchers dealt with the characteristics of reality TV leading to a variety of descriptions and definitions that will be presented in the following.

One of the most cited definitions of reality TV is the one by Nabi et al. (2003). It is the most detailed definition of reality TV describing the genre as 'programs in which real people are filmed while they experience incidents that occur in their lives, contrived or otherwise' (p. 304). Nabi et al. (2003) further mention different key elements that characterize reality TV programs. Those elements include:

1. **People**, who are filmed playing themselves
2. **without a script**
3. at least partly in their **living or working environment** instead of a set
4. during incidents that are embedded in a **narrative context**
5. with the aim to **entertain** the viewer.

Another definition of the genre is the one established by Biltereyst (2004). It is somewhat shorter than Nabi et al.'s (2003) definition but it comprises similar elements. Accordingly, reality TV includes programs 'that

1. have a high **reality claim**,
2. stress the actions and emotions of **non-actors**, and
3. often use a combination of **authentic and staged images**' (p. 7).

This definition supports some of the elements mentioned by Nabi et al. (2003). The people acting are described as real people instead of professional actors who experience activities and emotions. Furthermore, Biltereyst (2004) emphasizes the claim of creating a certain amount of **reality**.

A study that examined the characteristics of reality TV in more detail is the one by Hall (2006). She conducted four interviews with focus groups including 33 participants in order to find out how television viewers perceive reality TV. Subjects highlighted that many reality TV programs include elements of a competition and

that they concentrate mainly on negative behavior and circumstances by pointing out the actors' problems and accentuating the bad in people. Another feature that seems to increase the interest in those programs is the fact that they are unpredictable. Thus, you can never tell what will happen next. On the one hand, this might be due to the not scripted or only semi-scripted formats. On the other hand, this feature probably comes from the fact that although the people shown are real people, they seem to have extraordinary backgrounds (e.g., a woman with seven babies) and do not seem to be that 'real' any more.

Being aware of the lack of a definition, several studies tried to describe the genre. The descriptions presented in Table 2.7 support the aforementioned definitions by naming similar features of the genre. In particular, they emphasize the fact that the actors are **ordinary people** who are filmed in **everyday situations, without a script** being used. Most notably, Papacharissi & Mendelson (2007) emphasize that these happenings are no extraordinary incidents but only **daily routine**, glorified by the increased attention via those programs. Another important aspect is the aim of these kinds of shows. Just as Nabi et al. (2003) stated, Hall (2009) also notes that the programs serve to **entertain** viewers.

Although the definitions and descriptions of the reality TV genre are rather similar, there is one aspect that differs among the descriptions. Most of the researchers point out that the stories presented on reality TV programs are not scripted. Yet some researchers (e.g., Ebersole & Woods, 2007) assume that the programs are at least semi-scripted. Although Nabi et al. (2003) emphasize that reality TV programs do not include a script, they do not suspend that the events happening in those shows might be contrived. Biltereyst (2004) is even more precise, indicating that the images presented are not always authentic but sometimes staged. Likewise, Klaus & Luecke (2003) write that reality TV programs include both fictional and non-fictional components. Even Godlewski & Perse's (2010) statement of reality TV programs claiming to present reality refers to the assumption that some of the shows are scripted.

Scripted reality TV can be described as programs that follow a script based on fictional patterns (bpb, 2013). Thus, reality is narrated in the way fictional programs are built. The plot is presented by non-actors who re-narrate and re-enact the script. Since those programs feature many characteristics of documentations or coverage, it is rather difficult for a viewer to decide whether the program is scripted or not. Moreover, due to the fact that the different reality TV subgenres are more and more staged, even for professional media persons, it is difficult to differentiate between

the different shapes and to draw a line between actually scripted and non-scripted shows (Weiss & Ahrens, 2012). This argument is not only a prevailing discussion with regard to German reality TV programs. Even for American and British programs the assumption emerged that some programs described as reality TV are in fact scripted, for example 'The Hills' or 'The Only Way is Essex' (Allen & Mendick, 2013).

From all these descriptions emphasizing different aspects of the genre, it is possible to derive a definition that serves as a generic description of the diverse programs that belong to the genre reality TV. Thus, considering existing research and their descriptions of this rather new genre, I propose that

*Reality TV comprises programs that show ordinary people or **non-actors**, in a **variety of situations** that **claim to present reality** and that can be **semi-scripted or scripted**. Those situations can include **private and intimate aspects** of the non-actors' lives and/or tasks embedded in a kind of **competition**. A common feature of many reality TV programs is the emphasis on **people's problems** and **negative aspects** in general.*

Study	Description reality TV
Bagley (2001, p. 1)	As a presentation of non-actors in legitimately natural settings and situations working without a script , reality TV stakes its claim with viewers to regard its depictions as unadorned and spontaneous truthful documentation of natural reality
Klaus & Luecke (2003, p. 196)	The collage of non-fictional and fictional components, the steering towards more common themes taken from the viewer's environment and thus the emotionalized presentation of private and intimate aspects in public are the main characteristics of reality TV
Reiss & Wiltz (2004, p. 370)	Ordinary people (not professional actors) serve as the main characters of the television program
Rose & Wood (2005, p. 284)	The majority of reality fare depicts common people engaging in uncommon (wilderness survival, international travel) and common (dating, home redecorating) tasks
Hall (2006, p. 208)	Shows that portray people whose behavior is not predetermined by a script and has the potential to reveal their true natures
Nabi (2007, p. 373)	In essence, reality programs are marked by ordinary people engaging in unscripted action and interaction
Papacharissi & Mendelson (2007, p. 358)	The reality genre glorified the experiences of ordinary people
Ebersole & Woods (2007, p. 3)	A conceptual definition of reality television would include this concept of semi-scripted programming that simulates real-world or real-life situations and features ordinary people from the audience as participants
Barton (2009, p. 462)	For this study, reality TV shows are defined as any show featuring non-actors under constant surveillance , reacting in spontaneous and unscripted ways to their environment, and ultimately seeking to outperform or outlast their opponents in some sort of competition
Hall (2009, p. 520)	Shows intended primarily for entertainment that feature real people whose words and behavior are not predetermined by a script
Godlewski & Perse (2010, p. 148)	Characteristically, these reality shows are unscripted programs , with nonprofessional actors as participants in a variety of situations that claim to present reality

Table 2.7: Descriptions of Reality TV

2.2.2 Subgenres of Reality TV

Numerous studies dealt with a classification of the genre resulting in a large number of categories. As mentioned before, the genre is rather diverse and consists of various different subgenres (e.g., Klaus & Luecke, 2003; Aslama & Pantti, 2006; Lundy et al., 2008). An overview of the different categories is shown in Table 2.8.

Klaus & Luecke (2003) emphasize that the reality TV genre consists of many different subgenres, but divide the different kinds of shows into two main groups: **narrative reality TV** and **performative reality TV**. While narrative reality TV includes programs that show events that are real or close to reality and present unknown people to entertain the viewer, performative reality TV comprises programs that show the staging of not common events that interfere with the lives of unknown people. Narrative reality TV includes for example *court programs* or *personal help shows*. Performative reality TV, in turn, includes *daily talks* or *dating shows*.

Nabi et al. (2006) differentiated between six categories, while Hill et al. (2007) differentiated between eleven different subgenres. In consideration of the definition of reality TV given by Nabi et al. (2003) particularly the last five categories of this classification are of importance.

Nabi (2007) provides an overview of the prevailing categories by presenting different authors who already dealt with the categorization of reality TV. Nabi (2007) mentions Couldry (2004) who wrote about 'Gamedocs' in his study. This category is about programs that combine aspects of game shows with aspects of documentaries. Everett (2004) writes about 'Transformation TV' including programs in which houses are furnished, as well as about 'Voyeur programs' which he exemplifies with programs such as 'Big Brother'. However, dating-related programs were the only group of programs that were clearly perceived as a unique subgenre. The other groups of programs were rather interwoven with fluid boundaries.

Barton (2009) concentrated exclusively on 'competition-based reality shows', which include programs that create a competitive context between the participants of the shows.

Bagdasarov et al. (2010) refer to the examination by Nabi (2007) and name the two subcategories 'romance' and 'competition', which according to the participants of their study stand out the most. The overview of already identified categories shows that for the most part authors agree upon the division of the prevailing formats, although they sometimes use different terms for one and the same subgenre. Summed up, the genre reality TV seems to feature six different sub categories:

- **Game shows:** Shows in which people get the chance to win a competition and thus to win money with the help of their knowledge or skills (e.g., 'Big Brother')
- **Casting shows:** Shows in which people get the possibility to show off their ability and maybe get a record deal or similar rewards (e.g., 'Deutschland sucht den Superstar', 'Germany's Next Topmodel')

Study	Classification
Fitzgerald (2003)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talent and survival competition • Personal makeover • Home makeover • Get-rich-quick schemes • Docudramas • 'Mr. Right' programs
Klaus & Luecke (2003)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Narrative reality TV • Performative reality TV
Couldry (2004)	Gamedocs
Ouelette & Murray (2004)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gamedocs • Docusoaps • Court programs • Reality sitcoms • Programs featuring celebrities
Nabi et al. (2006)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reality-dramatic programming • Romance • Game show/ competition • Talent • Crime/ police informational
Nabi (2007)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dating-related programs • Talent/ gamedoc programs • Makeover programs • Crime programs • Docusitcom programs
Hill et al. (2007)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Infotainment • Docusoaps • Lifestyle • Reality gameshows • Life experiment programs
Barton (2009)	Competition-based reality shows
Bagdasarov et al. (2010)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Romance • Competition

Table 2.8: Categorization of Reality TV

- **Crime/ Emergency/ Court programs:** Shows that deal with crimes or emergencies or with discussions with regard to these situations in a courtroom (e.g., 'K11', 'Richterin Barbara Salesch')
- **Reality Sitcoms:** Shows whose main characters are real people that experience occurrences in front of the camera, and these happenings are supposed to be funny. Another form of this category are docudramas and docusoaps that are designed in a similar way but that show more dramatic situations (e.g., 'Spiegel TV Reportage')

- **Makeover shows (home and personal):** Shows in which either houses and apartments or people's appearances, respectively the lives of people are transformed (e.g., 'MTV Made', 'Einsatz in vier Wänden')
- **Romantic shows:** Shows in which people get the chance to find the love of their life (e.g., 'Bauer sucht Frau', 'Schwiegertochter gesucht')

2.2.3 Reality TV Viewing Motivations

Although there exist a number of studies concentrating on reality TV, most of them do not cover motivational aspects but rather deal with other issues (e.g., differences between ethnic minorities in reality TV: Bell-Jordan (2008); Orbe (2008); Ouellette (2010); Squires (2008); reality TV programs that deal with cosmetic surgeries or eating disorders: Mazzeo et al. (2007); Sperry et al. (2009)). This work concentrates on the motivation to select and consume reality TV programs. Studies covering other aspects, therefore, can be neglected.

Building upon past findings, the entertainment motive is rather pervasive in reality TV viewing. As shown by Papacharissi & Mendelson (2007), reality TV satisfies the three entertainment motives (reality) entertainment, relaxation, and pass time, whereas entertainment and pass time are the motives that were mentioned most frequently. The study's findings suggest that participants find reality TV shows more entertaining and the characters more interesting than in fictional programs. People who watch reality TV mainly for entertainment and relaxation perceive the content of these programs ? which is accurately coordinated and oftentimes planned in advance ? as realistic. Similarly, Barton (2009) suggests that there are correlations between the content of reality programs and the viewers' gratifications obtained. In the context of entertainment motives, the results of her study found that one gratification obtained was to pass time.

However, assuming that there is only one reason why people engage in the consumption of the many diverse reality TV programs is unreasonable (Hall, 2006). Following from research on the uses and gratifications approach, social motives and psychological aspects of viewers also have an influence on television consumption, which is why this work concentrates on social motives and viewers' personal determinants in the context of reality TV.

2.2.3.1 Social Motives

The results of a study by Nabi et al. (2003) suggest that **personal relations** and **personal identity** serve as motives to watch reality TV. To evaluate personal rela-

tions resulting from the consumption of reality TV (e.g., you can talk to other people about reality TV shows), the authors measured **parasocial relations** as well as **social utilities** resulting from the consumption of these kinds of shows. To evaluate gratifications resulting from the participants' personal identity, Nabi et al. (2003) examined **self-consciousness**, and **downward social comparison**¹⁸.

Nabi et al. (2006) examined uses and gratifications resulting from the consumption of reality TV and linked them to social motives. The gratifications include information on **personal relations**, on the participants' **personal identity**, as well as on the quality of what can be drawn from the surveillance of the characters. Personal relations were identified through questions on **parasocial relations** and **voyeurism**. Information on personal identity were gained by investigating information on **self-consciousness**, **judging other people's behavior**, and **social comparison**. At this point it becomes apparent that a person's social motives are influenced by his/her psychographic determinants and predispositions. A clear division into social motives and psychographic determinants, therefore, is hard to accomplish. The results of the study further suggest that for reality TV voyeurism, happiness, surprise, and relief were positively associated with enjoyment.

It seems that the enjoyment people derive from **watching others** is an important component to the appeal and enjoyment of reality TV and distinguishes it from fictional programming. Gratifications do not appear to be necessarily positive. Rather, it seems that when they are sought they lead to positive outcomes. However, when they are **unintentionally aroused** in pursuit of other desires they may interfere with enjoyment. This is an interesting finding for motivations research. First, this connection between intended arousal and enjoyment supports Mood Management Theory (see also Chapter 2.1.3). Second, it shows that television does not only have to elicit positive reactions to keep the viewer.

Papacharissi & Mendelson (2007) identified reality TV motives related to self-perception and their involvement with reality TV and analyzed the influence of social and psychological factors on reality TV motives. They concentrated on **parasocial interactions** that can be found in certain program categories suggesting that those viewers who do not go out very often (**low mobility**) and have only a few social

¹⁸ According to Festinger (1954) people need solid and definite valuations of their own selves. Thereby, they evaluate themselves with the help of objective standards. If such information is not available they take other people for comparison. In doing so, mainly those people are favored who are similar to the own self. However, Wheeler (1966) states that there is a motivating effect of comparing the own self to people whose skills are better or less good than one's own skills (Taylor & Lobel 1989, p. 560/570). See also Chapter 3.4.3

relations watch reality TV out of **voyeurism** and **companionship**. Reality TV, therefore, serves as a functional alternative to interpersonal communication channels and experiences. The authors applied this particular form of relationship as presented by Horton & Wohl (1956) to the context of reality TV, illustrating that reality TV serves social motives (see Chapter 2.1.1). This is also exemplified in the following finding. Depending on how **status-oriented** a participant was, the reason why he/she watched reality TV was their need to **feel self-important**.

Barton (2009) examined whether the content of three different competition-based reality shows influence the gratifications obtained by viewers. The author found several gratifications obtained by reality TV programs. Apart from **vicarious participation** (e.g., to imagine how one would act and adapt in a situation similar to the one presented), reality TV programs satisfy the need for **personal utility** and **social utility**. Personal utility means that by watching reality TV programs viewers feel less lonely and forget about their problems. These findings imply a combination of the motives companionship and escapism. Social utility entails watching those shows because everyone else does as well and to be able to talk about the shows with others. These results show that the social motives identified by earlier research as presented in Chapter 2.1.2 also hold for reality TV.

Baruh (2009) examined reality TV contents in order to find features that may contribute to its voyeuristic appeal. The results of the study suggest that scenes in which viewers get insights into the actors' lives like a fly on the wall that is insights that take place in a private surrounding and comprise elements such as nudity or gossip, contribute to the programs' voyeuristic effect. Furthermore, **voyeurism** and **social comparison** relate to the consumption of reality TV programs.

Hall (2009) examined the association between viewers' perceptions of reality programs' authenticity and involvement, enjoyment, and perceived learning, and thus how perceived authenticity influences audiences' responses to those shows. The results of the study suggest that reality TV programs help people to **feel self-important**. The fact that those formats show ordinary people enables the viewers to fantasize about being famous themselves by appearing on television. Thus, the feeling of self-importance seems to be a direct consequence of **social comparison**.

2.2.3.2 Personal Determinants

Prior research (e.g., Bagdasarov et al., 2010) supports the view that a viewer's personal determinants are closely connected to his/her television viewing habits and to the motivation to select and consume reality TV. Personal determinants in this con-

text include **demographic determinants** such as age and gender, **behavioral determinants** such as the frequency of reality TV consumption, and **psychographic determinants** which can be connected to social motives.

Demographic Determinants

The first group of determinants to be examined are a viewer’s demographics. As Table 2.9 shows, none of the studies analyzed age or gender in detail. This may be caused by the fact that numerous studies (e.g., Reiss & Wiltz, 2004; Nabi, 2007; Papacharissi & Mendelson, 2007; Barton, 2009; Hall, 2009; Bagdasarov et al., 2010) used student samples, making the analysis of different age groups impossible. However, since the target group of reality TV consists of viewers being 18 to 49 (Fitzgerald, 2003), these samples are not too problematic.

The only result concerning the determinant **age** is provided by Nabi et al. (2003) who found that age does not have any effect at all on pleasure resulting from voyeuristic behavior. However, **older viewers** more often engage in social comparison, while **younger viewers** become more self-aware and are more entertained by reality TV.

Two studies examined the determinant **gender**. Bagdasarov et al. (2010) found that gender is a strong indicator for the consumption of television. While men prefer programs that include action, women prefer reality TV formats, soaps, or sitcoms. As found by Nabi et al. (2003), there seems to be no difference between genders with regard to voyeuristic aspects. The probability of women peeping into other peoples’ lives is as high as it is for men. Still, the authors found that women engage more in downward social comparisons than men. Men, in turn, are more prone to establish parasocial relationships and are more entertained by reality TV.

Study	Determinants
Nabi et al. (2003)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Age does not have any effect on pleasure resulting from voyeuristic behavior• Older viewers engage more often in social comparison• Younger viewers are more entertained by reality TV• There is no difference between genders with regard to these voyeuristic aspects
Bagdasarov et al. (2010)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Gender is a strong indicator for the consumption of media• Men: shows that include action• Women: rather Reality TV formats or daily soaps or sitcoms

Table 2.9: Overview of Demographic Determinants

Table 2.9 gives an overview of the results based on demographic determinants. The analysis shows that the viewers' age has not been examined before in the context of reality TV. Hence, future studies should concentrate on this determinant in order to identify differences in reality TV consumption that are evoked by age. In addition, there seem to be differences between men and women with regard to the selection of TV programs as well as their perception making gender a determinant worth to be further examined.

Behavior-Related Determinants

In contrast to earlier studies on television viewing motivations, behavior-related determinants have not yet been examined in the context of reality TV. Those determinants can also be described as reality TV viewing habits. So far, only Nabi et al. (2003) considered television viewing behavior in this context. They divided participants into casual and regular viewers. The group of casual viewers comprises people who watch television only casually. Regular viewers, however, watch television on a regular basis. Nabi et al. (2003) found that the two groups of viewer types differ not only in terms of their motivation but also in terms of their perception of reality TV. **Casual viewers** like the specific features of reality TV, especially the fact that these programs show real people's stories without a script. They like to watch the shows in order to get entertained. **Regular viewers** watch reality TV mostly to avoid boredom and do not care about the specific characteristics of the genre. This differentiation between viewer types is based on the television viewer types by Rubin (1981; 1983) (see Chapter 2.1.2). Future research should take his work as an example and consider to establish more detailed reality TV viewer types.

Psychographic Determinants

As mentioned before, viewers' psychographic determinants are connected to social motives that lead to the selection and consumption of reality TV programs. As Ho (2006) states, reality TV involves complex psychological processes. Therefore, it is not surprising that research has identified a number of psychological aspects in the context of reality TV viewing.

The results of Nabi et al.'s (2003) study suggest that **impulsivity** influences motivations to watch reality TV programs. Impulsivity relates to diversion, escapism, personal identity, surveillance, voyeurism, and personal relationships.

Reiss & Wiltz (2004) conducted a survey including 16 basic desires that were rated by reality TV viewers. The results show that **status** is one of the main motivations that lead to reality TV consumption. Hence, the more status-oriented a person is, the more probable it is that he/she watches reality TV programs. Furthermore, these kinds of people show an above average motivation to **feel self-important** which may stem from a feeling of superiority over the people shown on television. The fact that the people on television are real and ordinary can add to the viewers' feeling of superiority. As already mentioned before, by seeing ordinary people on television, viewers might dream of becoming famous themselves (Hall, 2009). Thus, the fluent connection between psychographic determinants and social motives is becoming apparent. Both aspects ? status-orientation and feeling self-important ? are inevitably connected and thus should not be considered separately.

Papacharissi & Mendelson (2007) found that viewers with only few interpersonal relations who do not go out very often (**low mobility**) select reality TV shows in order to satisfy their needs for companionship. Apart from this social motive they also select reality TV in order to satisfy their **voyeuristic needs**.

Bagdasarov et al. (2010) examined the impact of the personality traits **sensation-seeking**¹⁹ and **voyeurism**²⁰ on the selection of different TV genres and found that they predict media selection. In the context of reality TV, voyeurism leads to the consumption of revealing pictures of real people, while sensation-seeking concentrates on any kind of experience that entails suspense and avoids boredom.

In 2010, Baruh investigated the relationship between **trait voyeurism** and the consumption of reality programming while controlling for viewer demographics and the amount of television viewing. The results of the study suggest that voyeurism seems to have an effect on the consumption of reality TV programs.

However, the results of Nabi et al.'s (2003) study challenge the role of voyeurism in the context of reality TV for several reasons. First, viewers know that the people acting are aware of the fact that they are being filmed and thus are partially at fault that their life is being observed. Furthermore, sexual content is already excluded through restrictions by the broadcaster, which constrains voyeuristic pleasure. Nabi

¹⁹ Sensation-seeking is a personality trait that 'is formed by the seeking of multifunctional, novel, and complex experiences' (Zuckermann, 1994, p. 27). Thereby, Zuckermann (1994) emphasizes five characteristics of this trait: suspense, adventure, seeking for new experiences, social disinhibition, and the avoidance of boredom.

²⁰ With regard to reality TV, voyeurism is defined as the 'consumption of revealing pictures or information on the obviously real and exposed life of others through mass media and the Internet; oftentimes, but not always, this happens with the aim to entertain, most often at cost of peoples' privacy' (Bagdasarov et al. 2010, p. 301).

et al. (2003) found that viewers do not watch reality TV due to sexual actions per se but because they like **observing interpersonal relations** and what is going on in other peoples' lives. Besides, viewers' motives arise 'from their personal identity which does not coincide with the motives of a voyeur' (Nabi et al. 2003, p.524/525).

2.3 Summarized Implications for Thesis

This chapter serves as a foundation for the subsequent work by providing insights into prior research on media motivations and reality TV.

The part on **mass media motivations** illustrates that this work stands in the tradition of research on mass media motivations and the **uses and gratifications approach**, on which the analysis of reality TV viewing motivations is based.

As shown by the characteristics of mass media presented by McQuail (1983), Luhmann (2000), and Peters (2008), reality TV is identified as a mass medium. However, as exemplified in Chapter 2.1.1, this new form of television expands the traditional understanding of mass media. First, the message it transmits is quite different to traditional messages. Since some of the programs show ordinary people living their simple lives, the content shown is rather 'real' and mundane. Second, though the audience is large and heterogeneous, it is not distanced. This aspect also concerns the technological factor. Some reality TV programs enable the viewers to get in contact via facebook pages or smartphone apps provided by the broadcasting stations. Deploying not only television but also the Internet merges two technologies.

Research on mass media motivations implies that the recipient, hence the audience member, takes the center of this work. This is also supported by the uses and gratifications approach. By investigating the motivations to watch reality TV, this work belongs to the behavioral tradition of audience research, as proposed by McQuail (1983). The **recipients' needs and motives**, but also their **social and psychological backgrounds** are important, which is why earlier studies on media motivations have been taken as a foundation to answer the question why people watch reality TV.

Although the present thesis stands in the tradition of the uses and gratifications approach, there are also some **weaknesses** of this approach that have to be addressed. Many studies only replicated the items created by Greenberg (1974) and most of the studies on the uses and gratifications approach merely collected motives that respondents had to rate. Although these studies might have been able to identify viewing motivations, they did not try to further examine and explain those

motivations, nor did they analyze the psychological constructs behind them, such as determinants that elicit psychological reactions or different kinds of consequences for the viewer. This work aims to approach these weaknesses by

1. **further examining motivations** to watch reality TV,
2. analyzing the **psychological constructs** behind those motivations, more precisely how they arise and where they may lead, and thereby
3. identifying **insights for media psychology** and **media management**.

Hence, this work serves as a conjunction of **communication research**, **media psychology**, and **media management**, pursuing an **interdisciplinary approach**. For this reason, this work involves different aspects with regard to the audience member and further applies theories to explain social motives in the context of reality TV consumption.

The analysis of research on media motivations yielded interesting findings. On the one hand there are, of course, **entertainment** and **informational motives** that lead audience members to use mass media. Informational motives comprise needs that are concerned with information, such as advice on certain regards of life. Entertainment motives comprise needs that are concerned with diversion and relaxation or to pass time. On the other hand, however, there are many **social motives** that have been identified by earlier research. Those kinds of motives derive out of the situation of a viewer. If, for example, a viewer is often alone, he/she might use a medium to feel less lonely by vicariously taking part in the media character's life or by establishing a parasocial relationship. Table 2.10 gives an overview of the different social motives and displays in which of the presented studies they were identified.

The most frequently mentioned social motive is **companionship**. Companionship through a media character can be complementary or even compensatory to the audience member's real social life. Companionship also includes parasocial relationships, as presented by Horton & Wohl (1956). Herzog (1944), for example, found that daytime serial listeners enjoy the vicarious contact that those shows provide.

The second motive is **identification** with the media character. For instance, Warner and Henry (1948) found that the radio program that was analyzed reflects the hopes and fears of the listeners and provides identification with the heroine.

Social utility means that the media content is used in conversations and social interactions as a topic to talk about. Berelson (1949), for example, concentrated on

the use of newspapers and found that the associated motives include social prestige and utility, as well as social contact.

Personal identity comprises the audience member's beliefs and feelings, which are confirmed by media content (value reinforcement). Warner and Henry (1948), for instance, found that the content of the radio program reassured its female listeners in their way of life and in addition satisfied their need for companionship.

Finally, **vicarious feelings** describe the affective reactions an audience member shows towards what happens to the media character (vicarious participation). For example, Herzog (1944) found that radio daytime serials provide its listeners emotional release.

Study	Identified social motives				
	Compan- ionship	Identi- fication	Social utility	Personal identity	Vicarious feelings
Herzog (1944)	x	x			x
Warner & Henry (1948)		x		x	
Berelson (1949)			x		x
McQuail et al. (1972)	x		x	x	x
Greenberg (1974)	x				
Blumler (1979)	x			x	
Palmgreen & Rayburn (1979)			x		
Rubin (1981)	x		x		
Conway & Rubin (1991)	x			x	

Table 2.10: Identified Social Motives Derived from Motivations Research

In accordance with the criticism of the uses and gratifications approach, this chapter shows that most authors did not further explore what kind of motive prevails during television viewing but only provided items their participants had to rate. The only studies examining motivations are the ones by McQuail et al. (1972) and Greenberg (1972), although the latter concentrated only on children. The fact that the only explorative study that concentrated on the whole society found the most social and personal motives, as opposed to the studies using pre-assembled items, implies that **existing research** more or less **ignored social and personal motives** of television viewing. This is rather surprising since the studies derived from the uses and gratifications approach which emphasizes that an audience member's social and psychological attributes influence media usage (Katz & Foulkes, 1962). An exception is the study by Conway & Rubin (1991). Although they determined which kind of motive was presented to the participants, they also considered psy-

chological predictors. Those psychological variables are of social and personal origin, which emphasizes the importance of a viewer's social and psychological attributes for television viewing motivations.

Apart from the disregard of social and personal attributes in the context of television viewing motivations, there are two other critical aspects worth to be noted. First, television viewing motivations were not always considered with regard to general television. Some of the studies concentrated on specific programs, which hinders a comparison. Furthermore, the examined studies only used questionnaires or interviews to find out more about television viewing motivations. However, no study included an experimental approach to further examine motives in this context.

In addition to the identification of different motives to use media, the analysis of seminal studies on media motivations reveals important findings for this work. The studies by Herzog (1944) and Warner & Henry (1948) showed that the radio daytime serials of the 1940s resemble the afternoon reality TV shows broadcasted nowadays. In both kinds of program a part of the **prevailing society** is represented, triggering diverse reactions. One part of the audience might identify with the content of the program due to a shared similarity with the media characters. However, those who do not identify with this way of living might disapprove of the content, as is the case with afternoon reality TV programs (Keller, 1993; Klaus & Röser, 2008).

Furthermore, Berelson (1949) showed that sometimes people are not able to express their reasons for using a particular medium. On the one hand, this might be attributed to social desirability because one ought to read the newspaper. On the other hand, some audience members might, in fact, be unable to express their motivations. If the latter is the case, motivations research should consider this **inability** in future research. An experimental design eliciting psychological reactions in viewers would enable research to measure those responses, which would be more accurate than relying on viewers' memories.

The presentation of earlier research shows that some of the media content is **compensatory**. People with few social contacts use media characters as a substitution of real life social contacts. However, media content can also be **complementary**. Hence, media content can satisfy social needs and motivations even for people who already have a strong social background. This explains the high ratings of reality TV programs. Although many people state that reality TV programs are only for social misfits, the ratings show huge market shares, indicating that not only those social misfits watch them.

Finally, McQuail et al. (1972) found that the different motives that prevail within television consumption are not firm but rather variable with regard to **different programs** at **different times** and in **different people**. Due to the diversity of reality TV programs, this assumption suggests that different programs within the genre also yield different reactions in different people. Reality TV, therefore, provides many different reactions towards its **diverse contents**. This is also illustrated by the analysis of viewer typologies. It shows that different aspects of a recipient, such as demographic variables and psychological factors but also viewing behavior, which depends on a person's daily routine, influence what the individual watches on television. Hence, the examination of viewer motivations requires more than just the itemizing of different motivations.

Although, the chapter on reality TV presented its characteristics and the different subgenres illustrating the diversity of the genre, there are also common features, such as their claim for reality, 'concerned to extract the maximum entertainment potential from the material' (Kilborn, 1994, p. 425). Despite the attempts of various researchers to define the genre, there is no universally accepted definition yet. This work, therefore, generated a definition from existing research.

Considering this definition, it strikes that even the different aspects hint at the genre's potential to fulfill social motives as illustrated in the following. Still, no study ever examined them in more detail.

First, the fact that in those programs not professional actors but ordinary people are shown allows for the assumption that viewers may **identify** with those people. Building on prior research, some viewers might at least dream of becoming stars themselves after seeing people who are similar to them on television (Hall, 2009). Second, the situations which are shown in reality TV programs claim to present reality and sometimes even depict **private or intimate aspects** of the characters' lives. This characteristic of the genre enables viewers to get a peek into other people's lives and thus satisfies a **voyeuristic** need. Further, by seeing how other people live, viewers may inevitably **compare** their own lives with what they see on television. Third, reality TV programs that include competitions are presumably designed to make viewers **judge** the people on the shows, whereas the negativity of some of the programs can elicit **schadenfreude**. All in all, it is striking that considering the definition of reality TV the different characteristics of the genre indicate that it **fulfills social motives**. Even, prior research on reality TV viewing motivations lends support to this hypothesis.

As shown in this chapter, empirical evidence supports the view that social motives which are inseparable from viewers' psychographic determinants are important in the context of reality TV consumption.

The analysis of prior literature concentrating on viewers' age and gender yielded only few and sometimes even diverging results (e.g., on gender and reality TV). In order to yield suitable results, future research has yet to concentrate on viewer demographics in the context of reality TV. This also applies to behavioral determinants. Although Rubin (1981) serves as a good example and therefore should be adopted to the reality TV context or even to individual subgenres.

Social motives and viewers' **psychographic determinants** represent the main part of the analysis of empirical studies in the context of reality TV in this chapter. Table 2.11 gives an overview of the examined studies and the most important social motives and psychographic determinants they identified. As will be shown in the following, those motives and determinants are sometimes inseparable.

The most important social motives identified in this chapter are social utility, companionship, parasocial relations, feeling of self-importance, social comparison, and voyeurism.

Social utility describes that viewers use reality TV programs and their content as a conversational topic and watch some shows because other people do so, too. This motive was identified in two studies.

Companionship, also called personal utility, describes a viewers need to feel less lonely by seeing the media character as a friend. This motive was mentioned in two studies.

Parasocial relations or interactions are relationships between the viewer and the media character (see also Chapter 2.1.1). Those relations that were first discovered by Horton & Wohl (1956) were identified in three studies in the context of reality TV.

Feeling self-important means that viewers feel important by seeing ordinary people, like themselves, on television. This motive was identified in three studies.

Social comparison describes that viewers compare aspects of their own lives with those of the media characters'. Often, reality TV programs elicit a downward social comparison with media characters who are worse off. This motive was among the most frequently mentioned with four studies identifying it.

Finally, **voyeurism** was identified in five studies. However, it is important to note that some authors defined it as a trait, whereas other defined it as a motive.

Moreover, it was found that the voyeurism mentioned in the context of reality TV is not in accordance with the traditional understanding of voyeurism.

Another interesting finding in the context of social motives was provided by Nabi et al. (2003). They found that reality TV gratifications do not necessarily need to be positive. Enjoyment of reality TV programs or media content in general mainly depends on the viewer's **intention**. Accordingly, an unintentional arousal can interfere with enjoyment. This explains why some contents elicit negative emotions but still attract viewers and is evocative of the sad film paradoxon (e.g., vicarious embarrassment; see also Chapter 4.1).

Table 2.11 also shows the most important psychographic determinants identified in this chapter. Those comprise **status-orientation**, **self-consciousness**, as well as **impulsivity** and **sensation-seeking**, respectively. In addition, vicarious participation, low mobility, and judging other people were mentioned as psychographic determinants, though only by one study each.

Besides the identification of different social motives and psychographic determinants in the context of reality TV there is one finding of utmost importance. The overview of viewers' psychographic determinants suggests that they are inseparable from the social motives to watch reality TV programs.

Study	Social Motives				Psychographic Determinants				
	Social utility	Companion ship	Parasocial relations	Feeling self-important	Social comparison	Voyeurism	Status-orientation	Self-consciousness	Impulsivity/sensation-seeking
Nabi et al. (2003)	x		x		x			x	x
Reiss & Wiltz (2004)				x			x		
Nabi et al. (2006)			x		x	x		x	
Papacharissi & Mendelson (2007)		x	x	x		x	x		
Barton (2009)	x	x							
Baruh (2009)					x	x			
Hall (2009)				x	x				
Bagdasarov et al. (2010)						x			x
Baruh (2010)						x			

Table 2.11: Overview of Social Motives and Psychographic Determinants in the Context of Reality TV

For example, **parasocial relations** ? that is relationships a viewer forms with media characters ? probably result from the viewers' **need for companionship**. Someone who does not go out very often (**low mobility**) and thus does not have many social contacts seems to find a substitute in reality TV programs and **vicariously takes part** in the lives of the people shown on TV in order to satisfy the need for companionship.

Self-consciousness and the **feeling of self-importance** advert to **downward social comparison** with reality TV characters who are worse off. Observing ordinary people and their problems seems to be soothing for a part of the viewers. Hereby, the viewer feels better because he sees that there are people who live a less comfortable life, which confirms that he/she has a higher status than the people shown on television. According to the results from the analysis, status-orientation is connected to feeling self-important which could also come along with fantasizing of becoming famous as mentioned by Reiss & Wiltz (2004) or Hall (2009).

Further, the results show that a number of studies already dealt with the examination of **voyeuristic** viewing of reality TV programs. However, it strikes that the definitions of voyeurism diverge. Nabi et al. (2003) state that there is a difference between curiosity and actual voyeurism, since voyeurism stands out due to the fact that the people observed are not aware that they are being watched. Still, there seems to be a passion for **getting a peek** into other peoples' lives, which obviously is a motive for reality TV consumption. Whether this passion should be labelled voyeurism is questionable.

An issue that should be considered in future research is the question if voyeurism should be named a motive. The compulsion to observe people has existed for a long time. People like to observe interpersonal relationships (Nabi et al., 2003). However, only recent technologies like television or the Internet enable this activity in such an intense way. Thereby, it becomes apparent that the need for presenting the own self is increasing (Yesil, 2001). An examination with regard to the question if 'the desire to observe and the desire to be observed' (Yesil, 2001, p. 5) really can be named as motives would be insightful.

Although social motives in combination with psychographic determinants were identified as important in the context of reality TV consumption, there are some weaknesses worth to be mentioned. Empirical evidence shows that there are indeed social motives in the context of reality TV consumption and that some of them have been identified by numerous scholars. However, those social motives and the psychographic determinants have not yet been further examined by prior research. As

criticized in the context of the uses and gratifications approach (see Chapter 2), also these newer studies only identified social motives. Still, they were merely descriptive, neglecting how social motives can be explained and what consequences might arise. This work, therefore, tries to approach this weakness by examining social motives in the context of reality TV. Drawing on established theories, social motives of reality TV consumption will be explained and their origins will be further investigated.

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