

R&D R 27/2001

Rich Ling, Kristin Thrane

Konsernprosjekt HB@

“I don’t watch TV to like *learn* anything”:

The leisure use of TV and the Internet

Title	R&D Report	27/2001
“I don’t watch TV to like learn anything”: The leisure use of TV and the Internet	ISBN	82-423-0403-3
	ISSN	1500-2616
	Project no	BXHBOO
	Program	Flexcom
	Security gr.	Open
	No. of pages	13
	Date	01.08.30

Author(s)

Rich Ling, Kristin Thrane

Subject headings

Entertainment, TV, Internet

Abstract

This paper is an analysis of how Norwegians use television and the Internet in their leisure time. It sets up a taxonomy using the degree of engagement in the mediated information on one axis and the degree of sociability on the other. Within this matrix one can examine the similarities and differences between the two media and also differences between the generations. The analysis is based on 15 in-home interviews with Oslo based families.

Title (Norwegian)

© Telenor AS 30.08.01

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced or utilized in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or by any information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publisher.

Contents

1 Introduction.....	1
2 Method and background	2
2.1 Method	2
2.2 Background	2
3 The leisure use of the TV and the Internet in everyday life	4
3.1 TV	4
3.1.1 Modes of entertainment via the TV	4
3.1.2 The social functions of the TV	5
3.2 The Internet.....	6
3.2.1 Functional use of the Internet	6
3.2.2 Modes of entertainment via the PC/Internet.....	7
3.2.3 The PC/Internet as a social device.....	9
4 The differences between generations	11
5 Summary and speculation.....	12
Bibliography	13

1 Introduction¹

This article is the second in a series of articles examining the use of ICT in the home. The article is based on 15 in-home interviews with families in the Oslo area. Building on this material we find that ICTs, and in particular the TV and the PC/Internet, have a changing role vis-à-vis leisure activities.

Looking across the various types of leisure activities respondents indicate that these range from passive use of technologies, to extremely intense use, as seen for example in the use of video game devices. Another dimension that arises out of the material is the degree to which the ICT is a social device. In some cases, one uses it in a solitary way. In-house sociability is the next level and this is followed by sociability in the broader society. Obviously, the TV and the PC/Internet have very different profiles here.

Finally, the material examined here indicates that there are intergeneration differences in the approach to technology. While older respondents generally have a more crystallized understanding of the placement and use of, in particular, the TV and the PC/Internet, younger interviewees seem more willing to blur the boundary between the two. In particular, we note that the PC can be used to provide audio (MP3) and visual (DVD films) entertainment.

After a discussion of the methods and the background for the analysis, we will turn to the examination of the TV and the PC/Internet in the leisure activities of the home.

¹ A revised version of this paper was presented at the HFT2001 conference in Bergen, Norway in November 2001.

2 Method and background

2.1 Method

The material presented in this paper was collected during 15 in-home interviews with families living in the Oslo area in 2000. Since we were interested in active ICT users, we included only homes with teen-aged children present. The analysis employs qualitative research methods and the focus is on the 15 families' own descriptions of their daily life concerning electronic media.

The teenagers are between 12 and 16 years old and they have a central role in the project. Young people are quick to adopt and they are active in lobbying for domestic adoption of new technology. As we will also see, the teenagers make frequent use of information and communication technology (ICT) for entertainment purposes. Thus, it was useful to observe their role in context of ICT in the domestic sphere.

We purposefully chose a variety of housing styles, ranging from smaller apartments in apartment complexes to larger detached single-family homes. The point was to examine differences in income, housing and educational level among the 15 families. As far as we can see this did not influence the families' attitude towards electronic media in the domestic sphere, but it does influence their ownership of multiple devices.

2.2 Background

This paper is an attempt to locate the TV and the PC, and by extension the Internet, within the social structure of the home and in particular to locate their meaning vis-à-vis leisure. Taking a couple of steps back, the TV and the PC are both objects that have a particular profile, that is they are embedded in a context and their specific meaning is the result of ongoing negotiations among household members.

The meaning of the TV and the PC/Internet is dynamic and ambiguous depending on the age and perspective of the person who is commenting or viewing the mode of use and even the time of day. Their display and use can, and indeed are, seen as evidence of the home's ability to successfully understand and participate in the culture. That is, the ability to manipulate and arrange significant symbols in the presentation of self (Goffman 1959; Gullestad 1984; 1992). These ICTs, and in particular the TV, can be defined as artifacts of beauty and importance around which other furniture and indeed whole rooms are organized (Silverstone 1993). At the other extreme, the TV and the PC can be seen as vulgar reminders of the mundane life and banished to the functional parts of the home (Ling, Nilsen and Granhaug 1999). The simple placement of the TV becomes an issue of importance, particularly given the fact that many homes were constructed before the widespread ownership of the TV (Guttu, Jørgensen and Nørve 1985, 49; Lindloff et al. 1988; see also Morley 1986). In effect, the device has colonized portions of the home and periods of the day. More recently, the placement of the PC has also given rise to similar discussions (Ling and Thrane 2001).

Beyond their visual value, and beyond their value as simply artifacts, they are also communication media. That which differentiates the TV and the PC/Internet from other objects in the home is their ability to create real connections with others beyond the home (Meyrowitz 1985). Their use can be seen as cultivating and culturally enhancing, or as inducing slovenliness and vulgarity. Perhaps because of this dynamic and somewhat controversial identity, these ICTs have often engendered a set of well-proscribed rules regarding their use. Selberg has suggested that these are

a type of modern ritual (Selberg 1993; 1995; see also Lull 1980, 202; Boullier 1993).

The physical as well as the “moral” placement within the context of the family is what Silverstone has called domestication (1992; 1994). That is, the process by which one takes an artifact from the commercial world into their home, by which one locates it physically, temporally and morally in their world, and finally by which one integrates it into a portion of the way they are seen by others. In a sense, it is a way that these artifacts become a part of their extended costume. Thus the TV, but also tellingly for the PC/Internet are doubly articulated. That is they function “both as an object (the machine in itself) and as a medium” (1994, 83).

The focus of this paper is the use of the TV and the PC/Internet in the leisure activities of the household. The analysis suggests two dimensions with which to place the ownership and use of these ICTs. These are 1) the degree of engagement in the TV or PC/Internet and 2) the degree of sociability.

Looking first at the degree of one’s engagement in the use of an ICT, our data suggests that it stretches from passive background use to the level of absorption that one might say borders on addiction. The major stations on this continuum include: 1) the use of ICTs as a form of background or ambiance; 2) the passive use, where one is basically filling in the activity between other more demanding actions; 3) relaxing, i.e. the use of the technology to withdraw from more stressful activities such as work in order to “get a breather” in the words of an informant; 4) engaging use of ICTs such as their employment in hobbies or their use in gaming (that parents sometimes see as addictive) or their use in the support of social networking. Beyond these leisure-based activities, there is the functional maintenance of the home. This includes things such as paying bills via the Internet, ordering of vacation travel and finally home based work activities. As noted above, these are merely stations on a continuum. It is clear that the transition from one to the other includes a gray zone where the characteristics of one station slowly give way to those of the next.

Looking at the social dimension, we were able to distinguish three points. The first is the use of the TV or the PC/Internet by the individual. At the next level we looked at use that included interaction with others who were physically collocated in the home, i.e. internal sociability, and finally we distinguished what we called external sociability. This latter category is generally Internet related in that its interactivity permits various types of social interaction, i.e. e-mail and chat. However, there is also a sense in which the TV provides a sector of society with the simultaneous albeit vicarious sense of participation in a common event. Thus, in an indirect sense one participates in an extended sociability.

3 The leisure use of the TV and the Internet in everyday life

In this section, we will examine the TV and the Internet/PC vis-à-vis their role in the mediation of leisure time for the family. First, we will consider the TV, the more traditional of the two, followed by the Internet/PC.

3.1 TV

3.1.1 Modes of entertainment via the TV

The material from the interviews underscores that while the TV is more ingrained into the culture and the routines of the home (Ling and Thrane 2001) that it is more limited in its scope, i.e. in terms of interactivity. Where the Internet has a clearly functional dimension via its connection to work, school, information gathering and various household maintenance tasks (banking, travel planning, etc), the television has only vague potentials in this direction, i.e. providing a common sense of nationalism, informing the populace, etc. In addition, as we shall see, where the PC/Internet is a dynamic technology where new possibilities such as DVD and “streaming” present new potentials; the television was not seen in this light.²

Putting the TV into the dimension of leisure activities discussed above, it was, in its most basic form, seen as a type of background noise. Its function in this mode seems to be the generation of an ambiance.

Interviewer: What about TV? It is a TV. . . . You have a TV in your room. How much do you use it?

Marte I have it on almost all the time, but I have on music channels to listen to.

Mother: It is on in here a lot also. I could imagine that the off button be used more often [. . .] It is probably me because I have a job where there is a lot of noise and a lot of people, you know. There is a lot going on around me all the time and so you get a little tired, so when you come home it would be all right with a little peace and quiet you know.

In this case, the TV was as a type of radio and thus it was easily available for a few minutes attention and a way to cover over the noise generated by other activities. Its use in this capacity, however, was not completely accepted by the mother since she felt that it was a disturbance.

Beyond being a backdrop, the TV was perhaps most often seen as an entertainment medium. It had a complex identity when used in this mode. Its use moves along an axis ranging from passivity, to escape and entertainment, and finally to – in the best of cases – a type of engagement.

Description of the TV as a pacifying element is old news (Lull 1980; Meyrowitz 1985; Silverstone 1994). None-the-less, this gloss was obvious in the data. A mother for example noted: “You need a conscious relationship to the use of the TV.” If one is not careful, the TV determines one’s level of activity. The respondents seemed unsure about the boundary between entertainment and relaxation on the one hand and passivity on the other. For example, the teen-aged daughter describes the use of the TV as a form of entertainment in the following sequence.

Interviewer: When you watch TV, is it most for entertainment do you think or for useful things?

² This is the case, in spite of the potential for interactive TV, which was not brought up by the informants in our study.

Bente (14): I don't watch TV to like learn anything. I don't sit there and watch nature programs. It is to have fun.

Interviewer: Do you think that you usually just sit down and watch TV or do you plan that you will

Bente: I [watch] *Hotel Caesar* every day. I know what is on TV. Planning, no, I don't think so, I just know what is on.

Bente describes a style of use that is the polar opposite of the “enlightened engagement” approach to TV. The point is to enjoy TV. At the first level, there is a strong egotistical dimension associated with the desire to “have fun” (*ha det goy*). On the other hand, her determination to watch a specific soap opera indicates that there is a certain social currency, perhaps among her peers, in being able to follow the ebb and flow of the series. We will return to this point below. The other thing here is the detailed knowledge of what is on at any particular time. This speaks to a routinized knowledge of what is offered on TV. Many people have ritualized ideas regarding their use of TV (Selberg 1991, Selberg 1993, Selberg 1995). In a broader sense, however, Bente seems to indicate membership in a broader social grouping through her comments.

In another mode, the TV was seen as a legitimate form of relaxation if one needs to withdraw into a sphere away from daily stresses. A mother of three notes:

Mother: If we relax during a normal evening when you were at work and have done a lot, then it is good to have the TV.

Others spoke of “watch[ing] TV and maybe drink[ing] a glass of soda or something. [. . .] Lay down in the sofa.” In these comments, the informants focus on relaxing via use of the TV. There is a different nuance here when compared to the entertainment comments provided by Bente in the previous citation. None-the-less the relaxation and the entertainment functions do not seem too dissimilar in that both provide a sense of escape from other thoughts and a distraction from other, more mundane parts of life.

In the previous section there was a discussion regarding the ability of an ICT to engage one, and further to carry out functional activities. We will examine the former mode of use vis-à-vis the television in the next section. With regard to the latter we were tellingly not able to find comments regarding the functional modes of use in our data material. This is however a theme that we will revisit in the discussion of the Internet.

3.1.2 The social functions of the TV

The discussion up to this point has focused largely on the individual and their relationship to the TV. In this section, we will consider the TV as a social device vis-à-vis the household and within one's broader social context. Looking at its social meaning within the home, the main TV was often placed in the living room and provided a place where the family could collect and share each other's company.

Father: TV is clearly an entertainment medium, it is what we use during the weekends and we have a tendency to collect around the TV on Friday and Saturday evening. Then we watch a program together and then we eat food and such. We do that. . . .

When compared with the PC, which has a shorter history in the home, one sees a much more embedded situation. In the case of the PC, as we will see, furniture needs to be readjusted to accommodate multiple users. This is usually not a problem with the TV since chairs and sofas are already positioned around the device. As noted in the citation, food can be consumed at the same time that one uses the TV since it is not as interactive and since the furnishing of the room means that there are “coffee

tables” that can be used for this activity and one sits further away from the TV itself. Indeed, in some cases viewing certain programs becomes a ritualized portion of the day (Selberg 1991). One of the mothers in the interviews called the TV the house-altar. Indeed when the TV entered Norwegian homes in the 1960’s and 1970’s the habits for home decoration changed the way the living room where organized in Norway.

Thus, it is easier to achieve local sociability with the traditional TV since routines for physically gathering around the device and sharing the time have been worked out beforehand. At the same time, it can be a divisive factor. It can be a source of friction, a way to underscore one’s power in the home and mark one’s territory (Ling and Thrane 2001).

Looking now at one’s integration into broader social groupings, the comments of Bente in the previous section pointed to the idea that watching certain programs was not simply escape or entertainment, but was similar to other types of consumption in that it provided one with a link to a broader social group. Informants in other households also indicated that, in some situations, the TV seemed to provide an inordinate focus in one’s daily life. A family with a 16-year-old daughter provided the following:

Interviewer: Which series do you usually watch?

Father: Just admit it.

Trine: *Friends* and *Beverly Hills* are the ones I watch the most.

Mother: The one you have with your father, *Hotel Caesar*.

Trine: Yeah, *Hotel Caesar*.

A similar imperative focus on certain programs also came out in the following sequence

Interviewer: Is it such that one just sits down and watches TV?

Father: It is more like you have planned something.

Joakim: Tuesdays!

Father: Yeah, there is, there is *Friends*. That is fixed and a couple of others *South Park* and *Friends* we have to see those. Otherwise, it is like you watch when you have the time, and of course, there are Soccer games and things like that.

While not overt, these comments place the use of the TV onto a type of social dimension that extends beyond the home and family. One gets the sense that the fate of Manchester United or the fate of the various characters in the Soap Operas have a currency that the individual carries with them in their peer group interactions. It can become important to have seen, and to be able to talk about, the latest goal by one particular player, or to have insight as to why a soap opera character left his wife, etc. The TV provides them with the content to be used in other contexts and in other discussions. This knowledge becomes a part of the glue holding the group together. Thus, at a secondary level, the TV provides a type of common cultural identity that is shared and which becomes part of the lore of the group and the society.

3.2 The Internet

Now we turn to the analysis of the PC/Internet. Where the TV has a generally fixed identity within the home, the PC and the Internet have not yet achieved this status. In addition, the PC and the Internet have a broader repertoire of potentials. We will examine these in this section.

3.2.1 Functional use of the Internet

The PC in the home was often seen as a school or a work related device. This sense comes through in the comments in the following passage.

Father: My use of the PC is generally connected to my job. I don't use it for any particular enjoyment. I am a little against PC games. . .

The sense that the PC and Internet were a part of one's working life was a common theme expressed by many of the parents in the interviews. The boundary was more or less absolute in the eyes of parents. Some parents tactfully described themselves as being "satisfied" after a long day in front of the PC while others, such as the man cited above were more direct in their comments. Others were not so absolute.

Father: [The internet is] for things that you need to do, assignments in connection with either school or work, or if you want to read a newspaper or look something up.

Here there was the evocation of a "functional" imperative but it is broadened to include information retrieval. On the functional and quasi-functional uses of the PC and the Internet, one finds informants who described a set of various functional domestic uses. These include carrying out school assignments, participating in auctions, making travel arrangements, checking stock prices, etc. Indeed the polymorphous character of the Internet means that there are a broad range of functions and services available there which allow one to carry out a broad range of informational tasks (Mante-Meier et al 2001). A mother of two teen-aged boys – who were active PC users – described how her use of the Internet had expanded over time.

Mother: . . . I might find out a little more [about the Internet] as time goes by, and I might be interested. In the beginning, I thought that I would not use it. But after awhile it is such that, I see that it opens new possibilities. I was in Bulgaria on vacation and after I came back then I looked up Bulgaria and tried to find out a little more about different things. Otherwise, I use the PC mostly as a typewriter.

The woman sees Internet as a type of general source of information. Other people used the Internet to gather information in a type of vicarious "window shopping."

Father: There are auctions and there are a lot of inexpensive things. Just yesterday we saw an e-book for less than 10 000 kr. and it costs over 16 000 full price. That could have been possible if we needed one, I would have bought one there.

One is playing with the boundary between the functional and the leisure based use of the Internet here. Indeed the sense that the PC and the Internet are exclusively work or functionally related devices is in the process of being replaced. In the words of a father of three who had installed ISDN in order to encourage his children's use of the Internet:

Father: I work a little and play a little and fiddle a little, yeah a little of everything.

This is a complex and perhaps unsettled view of the PC. The PC and Internet clearly bridge a gap between work, functional activities and recreation.

3.2.2 Modes of entertainment via the PC/Internet

Turning now more directly over to the use of the PC and the Internet as entertainment devices, the material provided examples literally, of how new territory was being opened up. The television has classically been the center of visual entertainment, and this has more or less found its place in the living room of the standard Norwegian home. The PC has also been assigned a place in the home, usually in a hobby room or a home office (Ling and Thrane 2001). However, this location is not as crystallized as that of the TV and indeed may be changing. The impetus to redefine the PC can be seen in the following sequence.

Mother: I think that we used [the video] more before, when we didn't have Internet. Now you use more time . . .

Mads: . . . to download films that have not come to Norway yet, and that are not in the theatre yet, so we have it on the PC [. . .] We have a DVD player.

Interviewer: But do you sit up there and watch the films because that is where the screen is.

Mads: Yeah.

Interviewer: Together or just one and one?

Mads: Me and my brother. Me and friends.

Mother: It is not good to sit up there since there are only office chairs.

Mads: That is what you think. Mom likes to sit in the sofa.

One quite literally sees the blending of the so-called “sitting forward” and “sitting back” forms of entertainment. Where the mother favors the use of more comfortable seating when watching video material, this point is lost on her son. The capacity to gain access to various types of video material via the PC/Internet means that, in some cases, it is favored over the more traditional, and less interactive TV. Indeed, in some ways the capacity of the PC is seen as being superior to that of the TV. One father notes, for example, that the sound on a PC is superior to that of many TV sets.

This leads one to think of the PC as a new version of the TV in the sense that it can be used for passive entertainment, in fact as a way to kill time, by watching something in the spaces between other more demanding engagements. While not being seen as pacifying, some informants thought of the PC as a way to relax.

Mother: We use the PC to get a breather, if you just want to get a breather.
 Father: Yeah, relaxation
 Mother: Yeah, we surf a little and just get a breather

The parents in this home – one of the most affluent families in the sample – indicated that the Internet and the PC were used to relax and to get their minds off other more stressful activities. This is quite different from the more strictly functional discussion of the father cited at the opening of this chapter who did not use his PC for enjoyment. The mother in the previous citation, however, describes her use of the Internet as a type of “irrational” activity that none-the-less has its function. Thus, “getting a breather” was not engaging recreation nor was it entertainment; rather it was creating a space away from the stress and chaos of everyday life in which one could chase after various muses.

There were other interviewees who used the Internet as a supplement to their other free time engagements.

Father: [Surfing] is mostly for fun, I . . . among other things like model trains that I enjoy a bit. So I try to find, you know, what I can there. I have also done a little genealogy. I am just a beginner but I have tried to find out some of the pages, tried to see what I can find about my ancestors, if there is anything there. . .

Here the father used the Internet as an enhancement of his preexisting hobbies of model train building and genealogy. In one case, an informant had made the PC itself into a type of a hobby. Here that actual object of the hobby is the PC itself, not the communication possibilities that it represents.

Father: You know we have plans we have that PC. How old is it? It is four years old now. It is actually pretty old fashioned. So we are, I have a buddy and he has built his own PC himself. I have thought about doing that, build it myself because that way I get what I want myself. . . .

Beyond hobbies, the informants brought up the issue of games and gaming via the PC and the Internet. This is an even more engaging – albeit often short-term – form of mediated entertainment. Where hobbies are a background sphere that allows one a mental distance from more mundane activities, gaming seems to be more intense

while one is engaged in exploring a particular game. However, the data seems to indicate that there is a process of engagement and boredom with gaming that is not as intense with other types of hobbies. They are interesting when fresh but boring when one knows the tricks, or at any rate has come as far as possible.

Interviewer: Do you play Nintendo?

Gro: It is mostly Nintendo but when we have a new game on the PC I use that a lot [. . .] But then I get tired of the game and then it is boring and then there is something else and then you get bored by that and so it goes.

When the game is new, there is a high degree of engagement; however, when one discovers how to score the most points or perhaps sneak through the various barriers the game loses its interest. Another issue here is that interactive gaming is a “life stage” rather than a cohort activity. That is, gaming is characterized as being a part of the teen years and it is only rarely carried on to other portions of the life cycle with the same intensity. Almost nobody over 25 plays with game stations etc. (Ling 1996).

Mother: I don't think that it is necessary to sit there and to play [PC] games so much so sometimes I just say that they can't. They are completely immersed, him and his friend.

Gaming is seen as being too passive and too intense. Thus, the parent's stand on one side of the boundary and children are on the other. This generational difference is not simply a difference in types of activity, but also it describes a different morality vis-à-vis gaming.

3.2.3 The PC/Internet as a social device

Beyond the various forms of largely individual entertainment described up to this point, there is also the potential to use the Internet in various forms of social interaction.

In the previous quote, the mother expresses concern regarding her son's immersion in games. One can deconstruct this by suggestion that the mother was interested in that her son engaged on more active free time activities and perhaps also activities that were more social. One can argue that there is sociability between the two children in that they are having a shared interaction. One must agree with the mother, however, that the form of interaction is not the same as that one experiences by having a coffee break together. The focus is on a common activity, not on the other individual.

Another family took a different approach to their son's use of the PC and Internet with friends. Rather than expressing concern, they approached the staging of the interaction much in the way that one would approach other social encounters.

Mother: We bring chairs and sit on pillows and [they] enjoy themselves[. . .] they play games and everything that friends do and all of that. [. . .]

Interviewer: Do you think that it is difficult to have several people sitting in front of the PC?

Eskild: No, it is like we share if we are playing something. It is like if you die two times then it is somebody else's turn. That is no problem.

The mother and the son describe the session both in terms of the physical staging, i.e. the placement of chairs etc, and also in terms of the rules for interaction. In relation to the former, it is interesting in that one needs to rearrange furniture in order to accommodate this use of the PC. This is generally not the case with the TV. Further, this is a form of local socializing. That is, all the individuals are co-located.

The Internet, however, also allows one to engage in remote socializing. The two forms of remote socializing that were most commonly described in the material were chatting and e-mail. The wife of a long distance trucker reported the use of chatting in the following quote:

Interviewer: What do you use the Internet for?

Mother: [. . .] Sometimes I chat a little. . . . sometimes especially. . . . We are alone so much so when the children are in bed I do it sometimes. There is so much silliness there. Usually I just sit and watch those who talk with each other.

The woman's comments are interesting in that she reports mostly sitting and watching (*sitter og kikker*) the other people who are chatting. She gives the impression that the medium is not interactive, but rather a type of reality text-TV where one can see various relationships working themselves out. A 16-year-old girl told of her more active relationship to chatting:

Marte (16): I get to know people, I actually meet people that I know that I didn't know who they were to start with because they have nicknames that . . . but then after awhile you find out who they are, or you know somebody who knows somebody, you know. I do it for fun. There are a lot of people who do it to meet others and to have friends on the Internet. I do it for fun, just to talk to others.

Rather than simply "watching" the others, she reports a far higher level of engagement. There is the active exchange of information and the tracing of friendship networks. In addition, she is cognizant of the potential for romantic involvement.

E-mail presents another, perhaps more serious, form of social interaction.

Mother: We don't chat.

Interviewer: No?

Mother: No, we have never done that.

Interviewer: What about e-mail

Mother: I do a lot of that because of my family in Canada and the US. That is how we keep in contact, it is e-mail. So we use that, especially last year we had hundreds. There is a lot of e-mail, it is a wonderful way to communicate. Fast.

The negative attitude towards chatting is generally more characteristic of the older informants while the teen informants were generally more open to chatting. In addition, the parents were more often concerned with maintaining contact with friends and family who were geographically removed.

4 The differences between generations

A sub-theme that has been running through the two previous sections, and in particular the latter section on the PC/Internet, is the generational difference in the approach to ICT in the home. Where the parents generally have difficulty seeing the PC as a source of entertainment, teen-aged children are more open to this possibility.

Morten: I think that the PC has taken over as a medium of entertainment, at any rate it has for me. It used to be TV.

Mother: No that is not the way it is for us of course. We never use the PC as a source of entertainment. They do [. . .] To be completely honest, I don't think it will. I don't think I will use Internet a whole lot. I don't think it is very. . . I am not interested in things like that. . . playing with technology, I don't think. I like to listen to radio a lot more for example.

The mother, in effect, rejects the Internet as a source of leisure time enjoyment and focuses instead on the radio, a technology that is often equated with middle aged and elderly persons. The PC is not the same genre as the TV in that middle aged parents are not willing to use the DVD player on the PC to watch films. There is still a boundary between the two technologies.

Another area where the data points to a generational difference is in the case of music. As noted above, parents prefer the radio. This, however, is not always an acceptable form of entertainment for teens. In the words of one teen-aged informant "I don't use the radio, children don't use the radio." Indeed, one informant, Trine, knew of a friend who used the Internet and streaming as a replacement for the traditional radio:

Trine (15): I have a friend that has a PC nearby where we sit because she listens to music from the PC and Internet.

Another alternative in some cases was the use of MP3 files.

Interviewer: Do you download music you want or do you think that it takes too long?

Joakim: I buy CDs and I also download some MP3.

There is a parallel here to the replacement of the TV with the PC, DVD players and the Internet. Where the older informants were content with the relatively inflexible broadcasting system behind the TV and the Radio, the younger users were exploring various forms of interactivity. This included downloading music from the Internet, using the PC as a type of radio through which they could stream various audio and video sources etc. One sees a type of dynamism here that will result in the renegotiation of leisure activities as well as the placement of equipment and objects in the home

5 Summary and speculation

In the discussion above we outlined an approach to the data examined here. In effect, we have placed the various comments on two dimensions, i.e. the degree of engagement required by either the TV or the PC/Internet and the degree of sociability associated with this use.

By way of summary, we will draw back from the close-grained analysis presented above and look at the broader picture. This more abstract analysis indicates that the TV is more integrated into the lives of the informants. This is seen in terms of daily routines and also in the physical furnishings of the homes. None-the less, the TV, in its current form, has a more limited potential than the PC/Internet vis-à-vis leisure activities. The TV has a limited potential to engage the individual, i.e. the interactivity of the PC/Internet is far greater than is commonly available with the TV.³ In addition, the PC/Internet offers a different type of sociability than is available via the TV. Where there can be an element within home sociability, i.e. the organization of film evenings accompanied by food etc., the PC/Internet offer the ability for interaction with one's broader social world.

It is also clear that while the profile of the TV is actually quite crystallized, that of the PC/Internet is in flux. The latter technology seems to be slowly moving from being simply a work/school based device to where it is seen as a source of various types of entertainment. This potential, however is being realized by teens. They and their younger siblings will likely have a far different mental image of the PC/Internet than their parents, not to mention their grandparents.

This sea change however, is not complete. Our folk image of the PC/Internet is changing as we use it in other portions of our lives. In addition, the development of technology and various interactive services, such as broadband access, VOD, "always-on" "web pads," Digital TV, MP3 etc. add new dimensions to the technology. Thus, the contours of technology and our understanding of the technology shift and change. The technical changes also prompt us to reconsider, discuss and rethink our understanding of how the technology fits into our lives.

³ Gaming machines such as the Nintendo are on a boundary here in that they are basically a PC that is attached to a traditional TV. Thus, they have a foot in both worlds.

Bibliography

- Boullier, D. 1993. Accounting for viewing styles. *Reseaux*, 1(2), 209-229.
- Goffman, E. 1959. *The presentation of self in everyday life*. New York, Free Press.
- Gullestad, M. 1984. *Kitchen-table society*. Oslo, Universitetsforlaget.
- Gullestad, M. 1992. *The art of social relations: Essays on culture, social action and everyday life in modern Norway*. Oslo, Universitetsforlaget.
- Guttu, J., Jørgensen, I., Nørve, S. 1985. *Bovaner: En undersøkelse av 30 blokkleiligheter i Oslo*. Oslo, Byggforsk.
- Lindloff, T.R. et al. 1990. Accommodation of video and television in the American family. **In:** *World families watch television*. Lull, J. (ed.) Newbury Park, Sage, 158-192.
- Ling, R., Thrane, K. 2001. *It actually separates us a little bit, but I think that is an advantage: The management of electronic media in Norwegian households*, presented at ICUST 2001, Paris, 12-14 April 2001.
- Ling, R., Nilsen, S. Granhaug, S. 1999 The domestication of video-on-demand: Folk understanding of a new technology. *New media and society*, 1(1), 83-100.
- Ling, R. 1996. *An overview of SSB's media use survey: 1994-1995*. Kjeller, Telenor Research and Development. (Telenor R&D, N 30/96)
- Lull, J. 1980. The social uses of television. *Human communication research*, 6(3), 197-209.
- Mante-Meier, E. et al. 2001. Checking it out with the people: ICT markets and users in Europe. (2001, Aug 29) [online] - URL: <http://148.121.27.136/secure/projectresults/P900-series/P903d1-d3.asp>.
- Meyrowitz, J. 1985. *No sense of place: The impact of electronic media on social behavior*. New York, Oxford.
- Screen Digest. 1996. Video software review. *Screen digest*, July 1996, 159.
- Selberg, T. 1991. Folks vaner er vonde å vende. Dagsrevyens rolle i ritualiseringen av vårt dagligliv. *Samtiden*, 5, 53-59.
- Selberg, T. 1993. Television and the Ritualization of Everyday Life. *Journal of popular culture*, 26(4), 3-11.
- Selberg, T. 1995. Fjernsynsvirkelighet og hverdagsvirkelighet. Om bruk av fjernsyn i den norske hverdagen. **In:** *Nostalgj og sensasjoner*. NIF Publications, 29, 32.
- Silverstone, R. 1994 *Television and everyday life*. London, Routledge.
- Silverstone, R. 1995. Media, communication, information and the 'revolution' of everyday life. **In:** *Information superhighways: Multimedia users and futures*. Emmott, S.J. (ed.) London, Academic press, 61-77.
- Silverstone, R. Hirsch, E., Morley, D. 1992. Information and communication technologies and the moral economy of the household. **In:** *Consuming technologies: media and information in domestic spaces*. Silverstone, R. and Hirsch, E. (eds.), London, Routledge, 15-31.