

Summary of KIM study 2008

The tenth year of the KIM study shows that mass media use of children has not lost its relevance. It is evident that the change in media affects children and their everyday life through various new developments. Mobile phones, computers, and access to the Internet have entered the children's rooms and have a lasting impact on them. Today, a big variety of media devices are available for children from ages six to thirteen. Almost all household which children grow up in, have a computer and access to the Internet. Video-game consoles are found most often in the children's rooms and one in two children have his or her own mobile phone, hardly less children has their own TV-set. Only own computer is still rather seldom in the children's room.

However, despite the large changes that the media offers, many elements of childhood have been retained. Themes such as friendship, sports, animals, and music continue to have a great significance for children. Three quarters of the children regularly spend time with the family, but also actively engage in sports.

The television remains the most important media activity for children from ages six to thirteen years. It is most commonly used, and in addition to the meeting with friends and engaging in physical activity, the television is the most popular pastime. On average, according to the information given by parents, children spend most of their media time in front of a television. The television is the media that children can renounce the least. The mainly watched and highly rated are the children's programmes and channels with an explicit child programme, such as ARD, ZDF or Super RTL. Television plays a major role in a child's mood: whether it being boredom, loneliness, or as a simple distraction of everyday life, in children's opinion, the television is the best way to meet these desires.

The book as a traditional medium could meet competition against the electronic medium so far rather good. Every second child takes pleasure in reading, and more than four fifths rarely read a book. However, the number of non-readers is in the upward trend.

Although the television has kept its prominent position among the children until now, computers and Internet have already attained a great deal of importance. More than three quarters of the children sit at least rarely at the computer; most of them do this at least once a week. The most

common activities on the computer are games, surfing the Internet, school work, and using educational software. Computer and console games for children play an important role. Boys in particular, strongly integrate this activity in their everyday life. More than one quarter of the boys spend more than one hour a day on the computer. The content of computer games is critically discussed in public. To guarantee the protection of children and young people, computer games must have a differentiated age marking. However, this hurdle does not seem to present a problem for many children, since approximately every third player has already gathered experience with games that were not released for his age.

One particular subject in the study that was mainly focused on was "Computer and School". Only two fifths of the children with computer experience use a computer regularly at school. However, widespread use takes place mostly first after the completion of primary school. Chiefly, the computer is used for the subjects German and mathematics, and at the secondary schools foreign languages also play an increasing role.

Not only in the school context, but also in the context of spare time, the Internet is becoming a great importance. Three quarters of the children have already collected experiences by using the internet, and nearly half of the Internet users spend on average each day more than thirty minutes surfing the net. In addition to school work, search engines and special pages dedicated to children are commonly used. As mentioned before, online games are of most importance for boys. The Internet as a communication platform via chat and Instant Messenger as well as Communities plays a major role for the older children. Overall, the use of videos, movies in the net, Instant Messenger and chat, all have won in importance.

As with the Internet, one can find that with entry into the secondary school the use of a mobile phone changes too. The communication outside the family environment becomes more important. However, this normal development displays certain risks. By using Instant Messenger one has to follow the rules for personal security. Increasing development of the Internet should be accompanied with an appropriate competence of its use. It appears that already in the childhood, for example, through the imitation, the children get the patterns for the future media use. Basic skills and abilities for using the Internet and mobile phones must be provided at the latest in secondary schools. This concerns not only the school, but also the parents and other educational facilities.