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Public Media Libraries: Unnoticed Among Netflix and Others?

The Young Generation's Expectations of Public Service Broadcasting Media Libraries in Germany

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ABSTRACT

When it comes to the target group for public service broadcasting (PSB), young people who are now in their mid to late twenties are particularly attractive. Being in their midst of life, they shape society and its institutions and actively use various streaming media. This contribution focuses on this age group by using an innovative methodological approach, examining in detail this generation's interactions with the media library of the German public broadcaster ARD, their priorities when selecting these services, and how they assess quality in relation to the user experience and content. Strikingly, this age group is still strongly influenced by classic linear television programs and has a clear idea of what public broadcasting can and should provide.

KEYWORDS: Public service broadcasting, media libraries, young target group, thinking aloud, focus group discussion

YOUNG INDIVIDUALS AND PUBLIC BROADCASTERS – A RARE COMBINATION?

Without further differentiating this here: The young target group tends to watch private streaming services and comparatively rarely accesses public media libraries (Beisch et al. 2021; Breunig et al. 2020; ARD/ZDF-Forschungskommission 2021; Büchel & Rusche 2020). This trend was further intensified by the Covid 19 pandemic in the years from 2020 to 2022 (Sonnenberg 2021). Meanwhile, calls for a fundamental reform of the German public broadcasting system, especially regarding its online offerings, have also become more frequent: In this context, Haller (2022, p. 18) describes 'backward-looking' attempts to reform the broadcasting landscape to be destined to fail as they disregard the online media market and fail to understand interactive forms of communication – especially of the younger generation. However, the contribution presented here is not intended to make any sweeping statements, but instead investigates the functioning of public service digital offerings, asking: "To what extent does the TV streaming offering of public service broadcasters – discussed here using the example of the ARD media library (the German public service broadcaster ARD's streaming media library) – meet the expectations of 25- to 29-year-olds, who are experienced with streaming services but make little to no use of public service media libraries?" This overarching approach results in several sub-questions, out of which the following will be focused on:

- To what extent do the layout and user experience reflect habits practiced in other media libraries?
- Which potentials for further development do representatives of the selected target group perceive?
- How could the attractiveness of public service media libraries be increased for the target group?

In relation to the program mandate, a further question that arises, is as to what extent a platform fundamentally following the dynamics of the digital can be an offer in the sense of representing common interests (Gonser 2012).

To summarize the most important findings of this study: According to the sample, the ARD media library appears to be on the right track; the richness of its content and its design surprise the participants. In addition to opportunities for conceptional improvement and design, the participants suggest that it should be promoted better among the young target group.

Concerning this study's framework, it is worth pointing out that already in 2017, Germany was the third largest streaming market in Europe behind

Great Britain and France (von Rauchhaupt 2017; on the situation of privately organized streaming services: cf. Birkel et al. 2021, p. 98–99, Beisch et al. 2021, p. 532; Hake 2022; Koch & Beisch 2020, p. 491). Between 2017 and 2020, the market volume grew from EUR 715 to 1547 million (Seidel et al. 2021, p. 45).

Regarding these developments, public service broadcasting has considerably expanded its online media libraries (Telkmann 2022, p. 69). However, a major criticism here is that the young generation is not being sufficiently addressed by the programming offer (ARD Zukunftsdialog, n.d.). This contribution aims to examine to what extent the viewing habits and demands of 25- to 29-year-olds are reflected in these online offerings and whether they contradict or contribute to the expectations and habitualizations shaped by private streaming providers (Tefertiller & Sheehan 2019). Internet TV use has been increasing considerably since 2015, i.e., since the teenage years of this study's target group, and with the new habits of usage, new gratifications emerge in place of well-researched habitualizations; the motives for media use change and become more individualized. The 'Uses and Gratification Approach' (UGA) can however still be applied as a theoretical basis and thus be transferred to digital offerings (Sommer 2019, p. 93). This contribution examines a sample of non-users and low-users interacting with the ARD media library. The age range (25 to 29 years) was deliberately narrowed down in order to be able to make statements for a group as homogeneous as possible – a group of post-adolescent, young individuals at the end of their studies or training and soon to be starting their careers, that public service broadcasters will consequently want to draw.

Netflix, Amazon Prime Video and Disney+ are currently among the three largest and most popular providers of paid streaming services in Germany and considered particularly relevant here (Birkel et al. 2021, BVDW 2019, Deloitte 2021). However, even if private-sector offerings are used more regularly, the media libraries of the ARD and ZDF have a larger audience potential, at least in theory, than the paid streaming services mentioned (Beisch et al. 2021, p. 534; cf. also Egger et al. 2021, p. 277). This makes them particularly interesting as a research subject, also from an economic point of view – especially since the TV audience of the public broadcasters differs greatly from the typical streaming user: According to first study results, the latter is younger (between 20 and 29 years), tends to be unmarried, is more educated, has a household net income of EUR 3,000 and more, and lives in larger cities (acxiom, 2020). Of the 182 minutes of moving image usage time invested daily by 14- to 29-year-olds in 2021, streaming services accounted for 44 percent (ARD/ZDF-Forschungskommission 2021, p. 17), with relaxation and entertainment cited as the main motives for using private streaming services, followed by exclusive content and independent use (Breunig et al. 2020, p. 604, cf. also Dehm & Storll 2020).

In 2018, the minister presidents of the German federal states had agreed that while public service telemedia offerings should focus primarily on radio and TV and their online offerings should also focus on audiovisual content (Schneiders 2019, p. 341), online offerings were given the status of "an audio-visual medium in its own right and no longer used as a program-accompanying medium [...]" (ibid., p. 346); this decision created freedom for the development of media libraries. Parts of the program and other content can and should be available on demand according to the agreement (Die Medienanstalten 2022, p. 33). As a result, the ZDF, for example, announced that it would increasingly broadcast specially developed online content without reference to a linear program (Bellut 2020, p. 23). ARD and ZDF reach just under half of the total population with their media libraries at least infrequently (Beisch et al. 2021, p. 529), and 25 percent use the offerings of the two media libraries regularly (at least once a week, cf. ibid.).

FRAMING – NON-MARKET ECONOMICS, NEEDS, GRATIFICATION, AND USE EXPECTATIONS

This contribution's theoretical framework results from the nature of the matter - media economics and media usage research must be thought of together here, with traditional and current categories of need in particular and based on active audiences serving as the basis for argumentation. From a media economics perspective, the challenges and opportunities media organizations are facing as a result of technological change have been widely studied. As Doyle (2015) describes the path from singular media channels to multimedia content generators, a theory of program choice (e.g., Steiner 1952; Litman et al. 2000) becomes one of cross-media program management (e.g., Telkmann 2021). Broadcast economics in particular are firmly locatable in this transformation process, with stripping and audience flow (Koch-Gombert 2010) are established approaches to pre-digital, mono-channel programming. When broadcasting cross-channel and cross-functional, the strategic orientation of media companies follows the platform idea, primarily focusing on the factors of 'connectivity' and 'interactivity' (e.g., Doyle 2015; Kim 2016) as core features of a new 'audience flow' – to be called digital or hypertextualized. One implication of this may be to let TV broadcasters develop media libraries as stand-alone channels with individualized and algorithmized interleaved scheduling strategies (e.g., Eastman & Ferguson 2013; Kim 2016). Lobato (2019) adds that this makes them not classical platforms, but much more library-like portals. Unaffected by the discussion about a suitable definition of the term is the goal of a coherent service planning: TV media libraries want to offer added value and (despite extensive competition and

their own parallel linear program) aim to be used regularly and habitually (Eastman & Ferguson 2013). The focus in this case is on the recipients and potential recipients, their needs and routines. This approach can be justified by the very nature and legitimacy of the constitutionally established mandate of a basic supply provided by public service broadcasting (PSB) (Rau 2020), whereas program-strategic approaches could be extended to this end (Lotz et al. 2018; Telkmann 2021).

Media usage research assumes active audiences that select media content according to their needs in a goal-oriented manner (UGA; Katz, Blumler & Gurevitch 1973, p. 509). In this context, mass media competed with other sources of need satisfaction, for example, personal conversation as an alternative form of communication (ibid., p. 510–511; Sommer 2019, p. 14–15; Rubin 2002; Burkart 2019, p. 174; Gleich 2021, p. 462). Cognitive, affective, social-interactive, and integrative-habitual needs can be distinguished (Burkart 2019, pp. 178–182; Bonfadelli & Friemel 2015, p. 83) – Katz et al. (1973) as well as Palmgreen et al. (1980) had also already attempted to categorize needs associated with media. Briefly, the consensus can be summarized as follows (cf. Burkart 2019; Bonfadelli & Friemel 2015; Sommer 2019):

- cognitive: seeking information, learning, knowledge expansion, self-awareness.
- affective: distraction and pastime, escapism, relaxation, seeking tension, relief, repression of surrounding demands.
- social-interactive: desire for sociability and social contact, recognition, topics, and occasions for conversation, parasocial interaction.
- integrative-habitual: need for trust, security, and safety as well as stability in relation to different reference groups; media offer traditional usage patterns and recurring content structures for this.

Despite the widely documented transformation of the media landscape, there is evidence confirming the basic findings of the research on UGA summarized here. In addition to Ruggiero (2000, p. 26), Sundar and Limperos (2013, p. 507–508) illustrate this with a systematic literature review covering UGA studies from 1940 to 2011. They identify main motives that apply equally to new and old media: "arousal, escape, learning, habit, social interaction, companionship, information-seeking, passing time, relaxation, and entertainment" (ibid., p. 507). Important in context of this contribution is another idea: while expectations of media offerings are equally variable and specific, their evaluation is based on more general and stable criteria, which allows for fixed attributions of characteristics for regularly used media (Sommer 2019, p. 33–34). A process

referred to by Naab (2012) as routinization. Due to the stability in assessment, the age cohort chosen for this study appears to be particularly relevant: young people from Germany who are now in their mid- to late-20s were socialized in their childhood through linear television use (Süss 2004) and experienced the emergence of Netflix (available in Germany since September 2014) and Amazon Prime Video (available in Germany since February 2014) in their teenage years. Thus, for almost ten years, media use has been possible that, on the one hand, stands in distinction to that of one's own parents, and on the other hand, promotes exchange among peers (Friedrichs & Sander 2010, p. 213). However, the question arises what it means for the PSB, its basic service and programming mandate, if adults are increasingly digitally socialized and young people's previous media use has a direct impact on their future viewing habits, as has been adequately demonstrated in theory. This contribution uses an explorative approach to outline the picture of a very narrowly defined target group that has received rather little attention in research to date, but which is central to the PSB's reorganization debates (e.g., Haller 2022): Today's young adults who have been digitally socialized since their teenage years, as they represent the first of a new generation of media users.
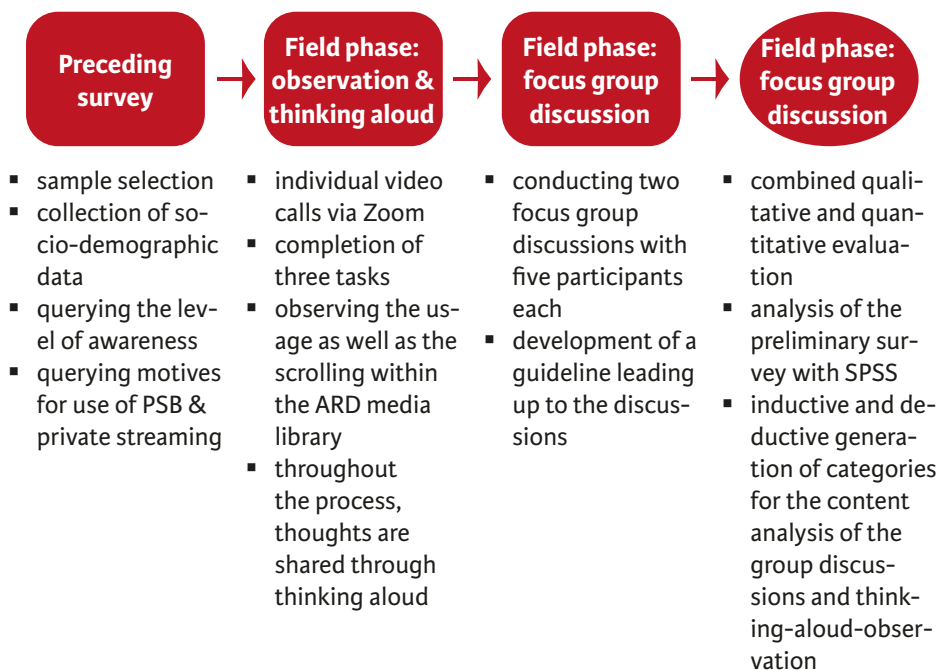
Thus, the approach chosen here also addresses limitations described for the UGA, including missing socio-demographic variables such as age and education level (Sommer 2019, p. 104), an overemphasis on audience activity (Bonfadelli & Friemel 2015, p. 84), and the disregard of unconscious selection processes and needs (ibid., p. 85). Nevertheless, the UGA can still be considered a suitable theoretical construct for this research question, especially since continuous media change has driven researchers to further develop the UGA since the 1970s (Ruggiero 2000, p. 3), with the Internet as a platform bringing three new attributes when compared to traditional media: "interactivity" (ibid., p. 15), "demassification" (ibid., p. 16), and "asynchroneity" (ibid., p. 17). Based on this, Sundar and Limperos (2013) developed their 'MAIN model'. The 'new gratifications' ('modality', 'agency', 'interactivity', and 'navigability') brought together in this acronym can be transferred to streaming services and media libraries (Sommer 2019, p. 93). This goes hand in hand with a shift in priorities regarding certain motives for use: for example, the structuring of everyday life by the television program is becoming increasingly obsolete while individual viewing preferences are taking its place (ibid.). All these assumptions imply that engaging with new media is more mentally demanding and that the active recipient's basic presumption of the appears more relevant than ever (cf. ibid., p. 125; Ruggiero 2000, p. 19; Scherer & Schlütz 2004, p. 9; Sundar & Limperos 2013, p. 504).

EMPIRICAL APPROACH — THREE PERSPECTIVES
ON MEDIA LIBRARY USE

Empirical research has so far scarcely covered the expectations and motives of gratification among the first new generation of media users in relation to audiovisual online offerings of public service broadcasting. The research design chosen to answer the previously outlined question(s) is therefore based on (qualitative) appropriation studies with small samples (Röser 2016, p. 490), in which media usage is recorded as closely as possible to everyday life (ibid., p. 492, cf. with regard to quality criteria Flick 2020a). This research follows a three-stage approach (see figure 1): First, study participants complete a short preliminary survey online; in a second step, researchers link individual observation (Vicari 2016) with the method of thinking aloud; finally, participants discuss in two focus groups. Despite a small sample, this triangulation of methods opens up different perspectives and emphases with regard to answering the research question (Flick 2020b, p. 189). This enables an increase in knowledge that may reach further than a single methodological approach (ibid., cf. also Lamnek & Krell 2016, Scholl 2016). The underlying population consists of 25- to 29-year-olds in Germany who use at least one private streaming account and tend to have a higher level of education.

Figure 1
Empirical approach (own presentation)

Preceding survey	Field phase: observation & thinking aloud	Field phase: focus group discussion	Field phase: focus group discussion
■ sample selection ■ collection of socio-demographic data ■ querying the level of awareness ■ querying motives for use of PSB & private streaming	■ individual video calls via Zoom ■ completion of three tasks ■ observing the usage as well as the scrolling within the ARD media library ■ throughout the process, thoughts are shared through thinking aloud	■ conducting two focus group discussions with five participants each ■ development of a guideline leading up to the discussions	■ combined qualitative and quantitative evaluation ■ analysis of the preliminary survey with SPSS ■ inductive and deductive generation of categories for the content analysis of the group discussions and thinking-aloud-observation

According to Brosius et al. (2016, p. 72), this kind of approach entails the selection of typical cases, whereas the criteria regarding 'typical' characteristics is based solely on the prior knowledge and hypotheses of the researchers. Evidently, the level of education is relevant for needs and attributions of performance in relation to (public-service) media (acxiom 2020). Therefore, the here presented study aims to select a sample that represents the educational level of the defined population in a structurally similar way (see figure 2). The participants were recruited via e-mail at universities, schools, organizations, and political parties.

Figure 2
Education level and usage habits – the sample (own presentation)

name	gender	age	level of education	current employment status	use of the ARD media library at least once a week	use of the ZDF media library at least once a week	use of funk at least once a week (plat- form-independent)	no use of public ser- vice broadcasting streaming offers
Antonia	female	26	Bachelor	Master student: High school teach- ing	no	no	yes	no
Carolin	female	25	Bachelor	Master student: media and commu- nication research	no	yes	no	no
Christian	male	26	Bachelor	Master student: technol- ogy-ori- ented manage- ment	yes	no	yes	no
Chriso- pher	male	29	Sec- ondary school diploma	master electri- cian	no	yes	no	no
Dennis	male	26	Bachelor	army officer	no	no	no	no

name	gender	age	level of education	current employment status	use of the ARD media library at least once a week	use of the ZDF media library at least once a week	use of funk at least once a week (platform-independent)	no use of public service broadcasting streaming offers
Jan-Ole	male	25	Abitur	Bachelor student: media communication	no	no	yes	no
Julia	female	25	Master	engineer	no	no	yes	no
Julian	male	25	Bachelor	event and sports manager	no	no	no	yes
Lennard	male	26	Bachelor	Master student: industrial / mechanical engineering	no	no	no	no
Lisa	female	27	Secondary school diploma	High school graduate	no	yes	no	no

In line with the studies by Dehm & Storll (2003) focusing on TV experience factors and the research by Tefertiller & Sheehan (2019) on TV usage motives in the streaming age, the preceding survey queries various categories. Making use of the thinking aloud method, the researchers get first self-observing insights into the expectations towards private and public streaming providers. In contrast to such surveys based on participants' self-reporting, the following observation within the research triangulation measures (more valid) actual and current behavior of research subjects (Brosius et al. 2016, p. 183). The data collection is similar to that of a content analysis, as an observation also often involves the use of a codebook with instructions, as well as a coding sheet to keep a protocol of the results (ibid., p. 186). Alongside the observation, this research makes use of the thinking aloud method, also known as a thought protocol (Reegen 2020, p. 75). This offers the possibility of gaining direct insights into thought processes and behavioral patterns (Konrad 2020, p. 380). The thinking aloud method involves participants working on a specific task while expressing their thoughts and feelings aloud (ibid., p. 82). For

this research, the ARD media library was chosen, as it potentially higher need to keep up, as as it is used less frequently by the younger target group than the ZDF media library (acxiom 2020). An individual video call was conducted, recorded, and transcribed with all ten subjects via the video conference platform 'Zoom' between the beginning of January and the beginning of February 2022 using a shared screen. The observation focused in particular on the participants' scrolling and selection behavior in the ARD media library.

Moreover, focus group discussions subsequently served to significantly expand on the findings from the observations and the preceding survey. In order to establish the focus groups, eight of the ten subjects were divided into two groups of four persons each (for the procedure: cf. Kühn & Koschel 2018, p. 76). The sample is homogeneous in terms of the characteristics age, current employment status, and level of education, as are the focus groups (Lüthje 2016, p. 160). Both discussion rounds were conducted online in February 2022 using the video conference application 'Jitsi Meet', recorded and transcribed.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION 1 — ONLINE SURVEY

The data set of the online survey was cleaned, formatted, and analyzed using the statistical software SPSS, with frequency tables, mean values and medians being calculated. Since the preliminary survey was only intended to ensure that the target group for the observation is correctly defined and the sampling is validated in the best possible way, its results are only briefly discussed here: Within the sample, Netflix is the 'market leader', closely followed by Amazon Prime, while Disney+ is not established in the sample at the time of this study. The question's filter function ensured that only those participants using at least one private streaming service once a week and 'users not experienced with public service media libraries' (i.e., using them less than once a week) went through the research process. In terms of public service broadcasting offers, all participants turned out to be familiar with the youth portal 'funk' (cf. funk 2022; on the role of funk, cf. also Stark & Steiner 2018) and almost all are familiar with the two media libraries of the public TV stations, even though the services are barely used (less than once a week). This leads to the question of what expectations, motives and needs young infrequent or non-users have that could be addressed in online media libraries of PSBs. Additionally, this raises the question of how the public service is to be evaluated.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION 2 – OBSERVATION, THINKING ALOUD AND FOCUS GROUPS

ANALYSIS OF THE QUALITATIVE RESEARCH DATA

The observation data and the group discussions were analyzed by means of a qualitative content analysis following Mayring (2015). The aim of these content analyses is to reduce the complexity of the data and to condense the participants' responses; in general, the content analysis in the social sciences mostly aims to reduce texts to measurable characteristics (Brosius et al. 2016, p. 157). In this case, similarities, and differences in the participants' views, attitudes, and usage patterns were to be identified and elaborated (cf. Tables 4 and 5). Accordingly, all available data had to be structured and systematized in a way that allows the research question outlined in the introduction to be answered.

Two separate codebooks – one for the observations and one for the group discussions – were developed to evaluate the data. The combination of inductive and deductive category extraction represents a specific characteristic of qualitative content analysis (Fürst et al. 2016, p. 217) – therefore, several categories were deductively derived in advance, based on the current state of research on UGA (Burkart 2019; Bonfadelli & Friemel 2015; Sommer 2019) as well as from the media economics approach to programming (Eastman & Ferguson 2013; Doyle 2015; Kim 2016) and from the developed guidelines. The predefined categories of the group discussions differ from those of the observations, as these also incorporate the initial findings from the observations.

The participants' statements were paraphrased in order to condense them into core statements and transferred into tables for classification in the category system. During this evaluation step, additional categories were added in several iteration loops, so that the category systems could evolve with each analyzed transcript. This way, it was possible to look specifically for similarities, differences, attitudes, and patterns of use among the participants. After applying the categories to the entire material, the category system was checked again in a second material run. This made it possible to identify overlaps between the individual categories and, if necessary, to combine them for a better overview and to increase their separability. Categories are only separable if the individual characteristics are mutually exclusive and all characteristics refer to the same feature (Brosius et al. 2016, p. 160). Separability must be ensured both between the categories and within a category (cf. ibid.). In case one participant made multiple responses concerning the same issue, all of these were considered for categorization, if they addressed relevant issues within the discussion. The final selection of the categories is subsequently also reflected in the subheadings of this chapter.

Table 1

Examples for the reductionist approach (coding for observation with thinking aloud method)[1] (own presentation)

Quote	Paraphrase	Category
"[...] I'll say now in comparison to the ZDF media library, which I'm also familiar with: I consider the ARD media library to be more attractive. It has a better layout, is clearly structured, and is more appealing. So, I think, especially this carousel, presenting these nice cover photos, is more appealing and makes the whole thing somewhat attractive, yes." (Jan-Ole)	ARD media library's layout more attractive than ZDF media library; good structure	praise for the ARD media library's structure
"What I think is very good is that potential problems seem to already be addressed, since the ARD has to fulfill their mandate of providing the society with important information." (Lennard)	ARD's mandate fulfilled with broad spectrum	competence attribution of the ARD media library / usage attributes
"When I feel like watching a documentary, a short film with content, with information, something that is also a bit exciting to learn about – I think that's the main reason for now, to visit the media library again." (Christian)	use of the ARD media library to form opinions and for knowledge transfer	future media library usage
"I've seen him before in other movies, which is why I would just watch it. Because I've already seen him in good things and think this might not be too bad." (Christopher)	well-known actor (Bjarne Mädel), association with previous productions of the actor	selection criteria for category / content: popularity

Table 2

Examples for the reductionist approach (coding for focus group discussions) (own presentation)

Quote	Paraphrase	Category
"In some cases, there are also quite interesting series or so in the ZDF and ARD media library. The problem is that they're not advertised to the extent that you can find them without searching". (Antonia)	3 out of 8 suggest advertising in general	Increasing awareness and visibility in the target group: more advertising
"You only really discover it if you watch the ARD program on television. I don't think many people in our age group do that. [...] That's where the media library is advertised, but elsewhere you rarely discover it." (Christian)		
"maybe just with more advertising. I mean, like Prime or something, they already do a lot of advertising. I know the ARD also always points out that certain content is already available on the media library. Yeah, but with ZDF I don't think so." (Lisa)		

STRUCTURE OF THE ARD MEDIA LIBRARY

The ARD media library's general structure is largely considered success-

ful by the participants, who praise the "clear structure" with the individual categories on the start page (four mentions). In comparison to the ZDF media library, the ARD media library is also perceived to be more structured. "It has a better layout, is clearly structured, and is more appealing. So, I think, especially this carousel, presenting these nice cover photos, is more appealing" (Jan-Ole). The similarity to the structure of private streaming services is emphasized as particularly positive. The 'carousel' highlighting suggestions of suggested content receives positive feedback (three individual mentions). Lennard considers this to be better designed in the ARD media library than in private streaming services: "Because even on Netflix you just see so many images and ultimately you don't know exactly what you want to watch. So, this way, you probably have the big series visible right away, or at least you get the right suggestions, which might help you if you can't decide.

In the following, table 3 depicts categories generated from the thinking aloud observation.

Table 3
Deductively predefined and inductively generated categories (observation with thinking aloud)
(own presentation)

Deductively predefined categories	Inductively generated categories
Popularity of the ARD media library	Competence attribution to the ARD media library / usage attributes
	Popular forms of presentation / categories
	Popular series
Preferred genres	Preferred content / series more popular than movies
Structure of the ARD media library	Praise of the structure
	Criticism of the structure
	Suggestions for improvement of the structure
	Quality of the produced content / quality of the production
	Length of the contributions
	Diversity of content is considered positive
	Diversity of content is considered negative
	Thumbnail design
Categories clicked on	Lack of knowledge about the sections' contents
	Criticism: lack of separation of the sections
Current usage	Media library is overloaded

Deductively predefined categories	Inductively generated categories
Future usage	Lack of knowledge related to the offer of / lack of awareness regarding the ARD media library
	Competition: other platforms
Selection criteria for headings / contribution	Awareness
	Availability of content
	Opinion shaping
	Appealing "thumbnail"
	Personal interests
Suggestions for improvement	
Motives for use (entertainment, relaxation / distraction, information & knowledge)	Trustworthy source / credible information
	Opinion shaping

A more frequently mentioned problem is that too much scrolling is required to access the content. Particularly the free scrolling through the media library revealed difficulties for the participants. Lisa was initially overwhelmed with navigating her way around, as she accidentally clicked into the winter sports category without noticing; Christian, on the other hand, considers the clear layout of the main page to be limited by too many duplicate categories. Julia points out that videos always start immediately when selecting them. Furthermore, the participants mentioned the lack of an option to watch content in its original language, and that it was too difficult to find the language setting for multilingual content (two mentions). Julian further mentions the lack of a personalized selection for suggestions of "currently popular" content. An algorithmic selection of suggested content would also be interesting for Christopher. Dennis is critical of this based on his experience with YouTube, as such an algorithm could significantly limit his own perspective regarding suggested content.

In both focus groups, preview elements such as trailers and teasers were discussed intensively in relation to the 'structure' category. Antonia and Christopher would appreciate trailers in the public media libraries since they consider them to be an important "decision-making aid" when selecting content. Julia also describes the inclusion of trailers as a nice feature. Carolin and Jan-Ole, on the other hand, are rather critical of trailers. Carolin thinks that such previews already reveal too much of the plot. She therefore suggests that trailers should only be included as an optional element in the media libraries. For Carolin and Jan-Ole, 'thumbnails' and 'teaser texts' are more important than trailers when it comes to selecting content. These already exist in the public media libraries but could be made more appealing according to the two participants.

Below, table 4 depicts the categories generated from the focus group discussions.

Table 4

Deductively predefined and inductively generated categories (focus group discussions) (own presentation)

Deductively predefined categories	Inductively generated categories
Increasing awareness and visibility in the target group	More advertising
	Modern content
	Social media presence
	Further channels
Competition with other platforms	Media libraries without advertising
	Presence via apps; links, search engines
Suggestions for improvement: structure of the ARD media library	Preview elements: include trailer or provide the option / teasers
	Reduce overload
	Follow the example of Netflix and others
	Recommendation system
	Alignment to social media logics
Length of contributions	
Missing content (international productions & mainstream)	PSB has to promote national productions
	International productions as an added value; possibly in original language
	PSB vs. mainstream
Expectations / needs / motives for use: further education & information	
Increasing the acceptance of the broadcasting fee	Media library may increase acceptance
	Too many issues
Personalization	desired
	critical
	Temporary solution
	Increase the visibility of existing user account functions
Shift in usage behavior	Increasing usage
	No changes

One aspect repeatedly addressed in the focus groups is the perceived 'overload' of the ARD media library. Lisa's perception is exemplary of this: "For me, there are simply a lot of things shown in a very small space, and I think

one could [...] use the space better, be a bit more generous with the space, [...] so that you have to [search] a bit less and decide less". For Jan-Ole, "real highlights" that could be particularly interesting for the younger generation get lost this way. "It's just overwhelming me a bit with a lot of images", says Carolin. Christopher also points out that there are too many similar subcategories, and that the ARD media library's layout should be more in line with the clear structure of Netflix, for example. This includes a (presumably individualized) range of titles, the line-by-line arrangement of headings – considered important under marketing aspects (e.g., *International series dubbed in German*, *Currently popular*, *Because you watched 'xyz'*, and classic headings such as *comedy*) – and a very simple menu structure with a search function, the menu items *Series*, *Movies*, and *Categories*, whereas movies and series may be sorted by a large number of categories. The intention of the ARD media library to follow the standards of Netflix and Amazon Prime in terms of sorting content and optimizing search functions (Virnich 2021) could therefore be well received by the target group.

USAGE AND POPULARITY OF THE ARD MEDIA LIBRARY

FINDINGS FROM PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION

As already evident in the preliminary survey results, the ARD media library has so far been rarely used actively in the sample. Antonia and Lisa use it to rewatch the 'Tagesschau'. Christopher, Christian, Lisa and Jan-Ole (rarely) watch content aimed at conveying knowledge and shaping opinions, which they consider to be documentaries. This then became apparent in the participants' behavior. In the first task of scrolling freely through the media library, almost all participants began by looking at the highlight carousel at the top of the home page – before scrolling down the home page to get an overview of the ARD media library's content. Only Christian, Carolin, Dennis and Lennard also looked at the other tabs at the top and the menu bar. Almost all of them were surprised by the broad and diverse range of content: Christopher, for example, was surprised that the media library has children's series among its offerings. Carolin assumed that the funk format maiLab is only available through ZDF; Jan-Ole and Julian were surprised that the series Babylon Berlin can be found in the ARD media library. The fact that the content deals with current but also controversial topics is regarded as positive. Julia is also surprised that the ARD media library contains films that were just shown in theaters. Dennis was positively surprised by the option of watching the current TV program in a livestream or rewatching past 'Tagesschau' broadcasts.

The final task of freely browsing through the categories further revealed a lack of knowledge about what the ARD media library actually offers. However, many of the participants were interested in first checking out further categories available. Another surprising aspect was the number of other categories in which documentaries or content of a documentary nature can also be found. This lack of distinction was formulated as a major point of criticism: In many cases, it is not clear how the content of some sections differs. For example, Carolin does not immediately recognize the differences between the *knowledge* and *learning* sections. According to Dennis, there is no clear distinction between *knowledge*, *learning*, and *documentaries*; according to Christian and Lennard between *knowledge* and *documentaries*; and according to Christopher and Antonia between *documentaries* and *history*.

In general, the majority of participants claim to want to use the ARD media library more for watching documentaries in the future: "When I feel like watching a documentary, a short film with content, with information, some-thing that is also a bit exciting to learn about – I think that's the main reason for now, to visit the media library again" (Christian). Moreover, the ARD media library was mentioned to also be used in the future for cognitive needs of opinion shaping, for (re-)watching news such as the 'Tagesschau' or for watching interesting, appealing series.

In this regard, the ARD media library competes with other platforms. For example, some of the participants stated that they do not use the ARD media library primarily for certain content or individual programs – such as the talk show 'Chez Krömer', highlights of the German Soccer League or individual funk formats such as maiLab – but rather other video platforms such as YouTube. For the participants, using YouTube appears to be more convenient than directly accessing the ARD media library. "Well, that's more tangible for me, I'm on the road more often, the algorithm shows me the things I already like very much, that's somehow easier for me to access" (Dennis). The participants tend not to want to watch movies and entertainment content in the ARD media library or would only rarely do so – thus affective and social-interactive needs (Burkart 2019, pp. 178–182; Bonfadelli & Friemel 2015, p. 83) such as watching mainstream movies and entertainment formats are primarily met via private streaming providers.

FINDINGS FROM THE FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS

In the group discussions, the question arose as to how the content's popularity and visibility could be increased among the young target group. Some participants are generally in favor of intensifying advertising measures (three

mentions). Antonia complains that the media libraries are hardly on her radar if it were not for her own search activities. Christopher specifies that recipients only come across streaming content if they also follow linear programming, such as the ARD on television. The most obvious common denominator among the participants is the demand to increase the media libraries' presence on the corresponding social media channels (eight mentions by six people). The frequent mentions of increased social media activity demonstrate a lack of awareness about the offerings, as there are separate accounts for both media libraries – for example, both the ARD (@ard) and the ARD media library (@ardmediathek) are present on Instagram, and both provide information about current offerings. The lack of knowledge about this may also be explained by the fact that the ARD media library's social media presence is not yet sufficiently established in the young target group and therefore needs to be improved. The discussion's participants made some suggestions in this regard: Carolin recalls the format Sophie Scholl (WDR), which was successful for her and attracted attention through storytelling elements on Instagram. This approach could be transferred to other productions and series. Jan-Ole points to the example of Netflix: "[...] it would make a lot of sense to make user-oriented postings, especially on social media channels like [...] Instagram and TikTok [...]. Saying: Look, this is new in the media library this month, you can watch it now, these are the movies we have, or we've added new series. Kind of like what Netflix is already doing". Lennard would like to see engaging, high-quality content on social media. Another suggestion brought up involves using podcasts, movie reviews, and YouTube videos as promotional or support tools for public media libraries (two mentions).

PERCEPTION AND EXPECTATIONS OF THE ARD MEDIA LIBRARY

The ARD media library is primarily associated with a broad range of information and compact, credible news, but also with knowledge and "smart stuff" (Lisa). The need and expectation for knowledge and information is also reflected in the popular genres or forms of presentation among the participants. These include in particular historical series (Charité, Babylon Berlin, Eldorado KaDeWe) as flagship series. The ARD media library is primarily associated with 'well made' documentaries: "The documentary character in particular is a core competence of the ARD media library. I wouldn't turn on Amazon Prime to watch a documentary there" (Christian). Jan-Ole is convinced that the ARD media library has a strong advantage over other streaming platforms in the area of documentaries: "I know that I can find a good selection of documentaries and reports bundled here, which I can't find as [easily] on formats or platforms like YouTube, for example, because they really have to

be searched for specifically there. As for Netflix, it seems that they tend to offer documentaries geared towards the mainstream. And also, very much Americanized, with a focus on foreign countries" (Jan-Ole). Furthermore, Lennard emphasizes the content-related character of ARD documentaries as a strength compared to private streaming services such as Netflix or Amazon Prime Video. Christian also appreciates the tonality of the ARD's documentaries: "Also that such documentaries are relatively scientific. And they are not presented in an extremely lurid way, but also look at many problems from two perspectives". Interestingly, it is exactly in this regard that it becomes apparent that the participants are indeed able to define the particular specifics of content produced in a public service media offering very precisely – despite them being non-users or infrequent users of the examined media library. This is presumably on the one hand based on to the aforementioned media socialization of the age group, and on the other hand due to conclusions drawn from viewing experiences in the ARD's linear TV offering (Süss 2004). In this context, this also underlines the chosen theoretical framework this contribution is based on, which, among other things, emphasizes routinization in terms of a constant rating of the content by the viewers (Sommer 2019, p. 33–34; Naab 2012).

This aspect is also discussed intensively in the focus group discussions: Antonia assumes the following strength of public service streaming based on past experiences of using public service TV offerings, which tend to rely more on a linear offering and less on a media library: "In some cases, information is [...] certainly much better investigated than on some private or economically oriented streaming services". In this context, Antonia refers to Terra X as "*the quintessential documentary series*". "[...] I used to watch it very often on TV with my parents. That's why [...] the first thing I usually look for is: Is there maybe something on Terra X?" (Antonia). This statement reflects the integrative-habitual needs approach introduced with the theoretical background of this study and can be described here as a sustainable perception based on media socialization in childhood. This aspect should also be considered for follow-up research: How can an integrative-habitual need, that is reflected by a constant rating of content and routinization by the viewers – expressed by means of linear public TV offerings – be systematically used in order to increase the appeal of media libraries in the target group? More generally speaking: More generally, how can the ARD media library offer a home, or better yet, maintain a home?

On another note, Jan-Ole, Carolin and Lennard also positively emphasize the aspect of high-quality investigation underlying the documentaries and reports of the PSBs. Christian and Christopher generally associate

public service media with professionalism, objectivity, independence, credibility and high-quality documentaries. Jan-Ole and Carolin also praise the successful way of combining entertainment and knowledge transfer, e.g., in historical feature films. Christopher, Jan-Ole and Lennard equally point to an existing "basic trust" in PSB. All of this indicates that an integrative-habitual needs approach remains relevant in terms of interpretation, although it also becomes apparent that the offerings are outside of the global mainstream – another aspect brought up by the participants. For Jan-Ole and Christian, the ARD media library lacks exactly this kind of mainstream offering: according to them, it is limited primarily to German productions, which they consider to be less appealing. Christian misses exciting films that he would also watch in the cinema. When asked to choose a series, Julia also feels that the range of series offered is rather limited. Jan-Ole notes the lack of availability of familiar PSB series such as 'Tatortreiniger' or the BBC series 'Sherlock', which were temporarily available in the ARD media library. Lennard also notes that the first seasons of the ARD series Charité are no longer available in the media library and that he has to switch to the competitor Netflix to watch them. This indicates that the sample is unaware of the depublication requirements for public broadcasting, which could be considered as an aspect for the providers' future communication strategy. Lennard generally the ARD's content to be of high production quality, adding that, from his perspective, e.g., the 'Tatort' is often based on scripts that feel 'out-of-date': "It doesn't fit with new formats, [but] you simply have to provide this high standard, even as a media library of the ARD, if you want to generate viewers. At least, if you want to attract a young audience." In the group discussions, the participants added that they would also like to see a broader range of international PSB productions or co-productions by "English, German and French public service broadcasters" (Carolin), as well as international documentaries and reports.

Some further expectations were not met, however in a positive sense: For example, Julia was surprised to find content in the ARD media library that appealed to her and not just "[...]stuff that's on the ARD's early evening program – intended for elderly people". Lennard was particularly impressed by the ARD's own productions among the online offerings, as he was convinced that German series and movies were not of high quality, "[...] which is why I didn't like watching [them], because German television [usually] is simply not as 'sexy' as 'Babylon Berlin' managed to be".

The appealing and informative preview images – especially for in-house productions – were also highlighted positively. In contrast to titles on private streaming services, the content of ARD media library can often already be vaguely estimated based on the thumbnails (Julian). For Carolin, however, clear

differences between the individual productions can be observed, especially when it comes to the thumbnails and titles: "This is typically German. 'Karla, Rosalie and the hole in the wall' – I think it really doesn't get more German than that [laughs]. I think it's cover artwork like this where they always fail a bit. And that's what I find so striking, that there are such big differences in some cases." Lennard feels similarly about the cover artwork of the series WaPo Bodensee, from which he already concludes that "this series is exactly what [I] consider to be not good German television". This may also reflect the criticism mentioned in the beginning that the ARD does not sufficiently attract the young generation with its programming (ARD Zukunftsdialog, n.d.). It also became apparent from the observations that the media library was expected to provide content tailored primarily to Germany's so-called 'baby boomer' generation (the parent generation of the target group studied here). Some of the participants in this study therefore do not see themselves as the ARD media library's main audience in the first place.

In the observation, five participants indicated that they prefer to use YouTube for content that can be found in the ARD media library. These statements are in line with the findings of Koch & Beisch (2020, p. 485), according to which the younger target group in particular has grown accustomed to using YouTube over the years which in turn also lead to an increase in consumption of television content on YouTube in recent years (ibid., p. 487). This was further emphasized by various statements made in the group discussions. There, the discrepancy was explained primarily by a lack of visibility of the PSB media libraries on smart TVs, apps, search engines or via links, e.g., in social media posts: "On the smart TV, while sitting on the couch in the evening and wanting to access Netflix or Prime, you just take a quick look to see what's on ZDF, because their tab is right there. And with that, you may have already started to think about not going to Netflix, but to the PSB media library, instead" (Christian). A lack of relevance is addressed in a total of 6 contributions. Talking about her experiences with the Fire TV stick, Julia identifies considerable potential for technological improvement in the ARD app. In particular, the selection of individual episodes does not work as effectively as on YouTube because they start immediately, are difficult to rewind and there is no video description. Furthermore, Antonia and Jan-Ole once again mention the problem that social media links tend to lead to YouTube rather than to the media libraries. The same is noted for search results in search engines such as Google. Christian also points out that the YouTube app is installed directly on the smartphone of many younger people, unlike applications of the public media libraries. These comments are in line with findings from Lindstädt-Dreusicke & Budzinski (2020), who found that the use of YouTube depends on individual pref-

erences (ibid., p. 115) and should not be perceived as a competitor, but as a powerful VoD streaming alternative. The results of the present observation and group discussion suggest that YouTube is an important place to go for media reception among the young target group, and in some cases is already in direct competition with PSB streaming. YouTube appears to be the more obvious place to go for PSB media offerings such as radio reports, talk shows and highlights of the German soccer league. This suggests that the primary platform factors of "connectivity" and "interactivity" (e.g., Kim 2016; Sundar & Limperos 2013) play a key role and that YouTube offers a place where the greatest possible individuality and an almost unlimited wealth of inspiration on the one hand and the connection with people with similar interests on the other are bundled on a single platform.

PERSONALIZATION IN PSB MEDIA LIBRARIES

With the planned merging of their media libraries, the ARD and ZDF want to introduce a joint personalization and recommendation system (Gaddum 2021). This system will suggest content from both media libraries on the start page based on personal interests (ibid.). What do the participants think about this topic? Already during the thinking aloud process, several negative comments were made about the lack of personalization options in the ARD media library. However, the subsequent group discussions reveal a rather divided opinion on personalization in public service streaming. Christian, Lisa and Jan-Ole welcome a stronger personalization within the media libraries. Lisa proposes a chronologically ordered, personalized watch list alerting users about content that is about to expire. Jan-Ole recommends "age-based recommendations", while Antonia, Christian, and Lisa point out the personalization options that already exist after setting up a personal account. With an account, it is already possible to receive personalized recommendations (ARD 2022). This way, it is also possible to create personalized watch lists and to use the continue watching function (Das Erste 2022; cf. ZDF 2022). In the group discussions, however, the participants explicitly demanded that these features be communicated about in order to create a more personal experience and increase the frequency of use. After all, most of the participants were not aware of the features mentioned. For this study, it can be concluded that the assumption of Beisch et al. (cf. 2021, p. 538), according to which users are not sufficiently aware of the advantages of registration, appears to be accurate[2]. According to Antonia, these features have a posi-

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[2]   A look at the user profiles reveals that only about one of ten users makes use of the registration option in the PSB

tive influence on the frequency of use: "[...] it's just very impersonal and somehow [the users'] loyalty is higher with Netflix [...]. At least that's the case for me. And with the ZDF or ARD media library, it's like: Yes, I watch it, but it's not the first thing I think of". Julia and Lisa also suggest a kind of personalization in line with what Borgers (2021) describes as 'personalization light', in which the categories are pre-selected according to personal interests. Lisa suggests a preselection, in which a few top categories, such as sports, could be sorted out according to personal interests, while other categories are displayed normally. Julia proposes a combination of personalized content and top ranked content in Germany. Currently, for example, the ARD media library already features the category 'our top 10' among the series or 'our best documentary series' among the documentaries (ARD 2022).

On the other hand, personalization is also viewed critically (three contributions). Lennard states that the personalization aspect should be viewed differently than in the case of profit-oriented private providers. As he states, in contrast to these, binding customers to the own channels with personalized content by any means should not be the currency of PSBs. Instead, according to his perception, public media libraries should also suggest contributions that are not already the focus of consumers. Carolin can even imagine it as a unique selling point of media libraries to dissolve personal filter bubbles. Christopher is also skeptical about personalization in the PSB. As he argues, "I would always be a bit cautious about these algorithm-driven things. Because I think it's kind of dumb if I only ever get suggestions for things that I'm already interested in – that I already watch a lot [...] anyway. And many other things that would be good to know about are just ignored. You would then usually get stuck at the top row of the media library and watch the videos that are suggested to you". Personalization tendencies are also discussed critically in the literature, as they reach their limits with regards to the public service mandate (Borgers, 2021), while the personal adjustment of content also rather tends to be one of the strengths and a relevant usage motive of private streaming services (Breunig et al. 2020, pp. 612–614; 2021). In summary, the present study suggests that a 'light personalization' of the PSB streaming offering might be desired as a compromise solution between for these two opposing aspects.

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media libraries (Beisch et al. 2021, p. 537). The main reason for registering is the rewatch function, which allows a stopped video to be continued later at the same point (ibid.). From the low number of registrations, Beisch et al. (2021) conclude that the respondents are not sufficiently aware of the advantages of registering in the ARD and ZDF media libraries or that these advantages are not persuasive enough (ibid., p. 538).

FUTURE USAGE BEHAVIOR

The focus group discussions also proved to be valuable regarding another aspect. For instance, some of the participants stated that they had used the media library more frequently after completing the first two phases of the study and that they intended to continue doing so in the future (seven mentions out of five contributions). Based on the statements, this can be attributed in particular to a "convincing", "broad" offer and formats that are interesting for the target group, such as 'Babylon Berlin' (four mentions). As further potential for improvement, Lennard identifies a continuous exchange with the community within the media libraries: "[...] for example, now with the Wannsee Conference, there are several topics that somehow involve viewers: What else would you like to have filmed, or what topic should we address? That would probably be another exciting aspect for public broadcasters to consider".

Lisa, Christian and Carolin, on the other hand, do not see any change in their usage behavior caused by their involvement as participants in this study and explain this with the fact that they already used PSB offerings both linearly and, to a lesser extent, via the media libraries before the research was conducted. Jan-Ole and Carolin conclude by sharing positive predictions: they estimate that media libraries will not the significance of Netflix and others, but with the necessary adjustments, such as an increased social media presence, they expect media libraries to establish themselves as a streaming platform in the young target group, nonetheless.

LIMITATIONS

The findings illustrate potentials for improvement from the point of view of a very narrow, young sample, represented by a small selection of participants. Statements are therefore only valid for this sample. All the results presented in the previous section refer to people in an age group between 25 and 29 years with a higher level of education and thus do not allow any generalized statements to be made. Methodological limitations in the three-stage research design also become apparent. In retrospect, the online survey appears to be a bit too detailed in some aspects – especially considering that some findings were not entirely necessary to answer the research question, thus rather providing a framework to justify the sample.

With a view to the observation and the thinking aloud process, the authors notice a certain influence of the tasks on the behavior and the expressions of the participants. Although the three scrolling tasks were deliberately designed to be variable in their degree of freedom in order to ensure a combination of familiar usage situations and

features of the ARD media library that were relevant for this study, the predefined number of minutes of use and the associated (short) clicks on content for the most part also understandably do not reflect real behavior. Moreover, the observation's online setting was mostly a new situation for the participants, which initially led to uncertainty in some cases. The fact that most of the participants had not used the ARD media library intensively before also had an influence on their behavior and statements.

In the observation and group discussions, the phenomenon of social desirability must be taken into account. Especially in the focus groups, a certain desire for harmony and a fear of confrontation became apparent at some points, which was expressed in agreement tendencies. Furthermore, the shares of speech varied, and opinion leaders emerged. For example, it became apparent that the first answers to the authors' questions strongly influenced the further course. However, these limitations do not appear to be a fundamental weakness of this work, but rather related to the method of group discussions in general.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION —
PSB MEDIA LIBRARIES IN PRACTICE

Given the limitations and a critical assessment of the sample, several recommendations for action can be derived despite the previously mentioned limitations. Table 5 summarizes thematic areas that were given particular attention in both the observation and the group discussions and for which the participants' expectations reveal a certain consistency.

Table 5

Possible recommendations for action for the ARD media library's strategic management and development (own presentation)

Topic	Expectation, need	Recommendation for action
Presence, popularity of the media library	Cognitive: Simplified search for information Integrative-habitual: Transfer of familiar usage patterns from other platforms	The young target group is rather unaware of the offerings. The social media presence, search engine presence, and the availability of applications for smartphones and smart TVs could be increased. The advertising and social media strategy could potentially be realigned in a trial-and-error process. Additionally, specific content in other media (podcasts, YouTube videos, scrollytelling, multimedia stories) could increase awareness.

Topic	Expectation, need	Recommendation for action
Personalization	Integrative-habitual: Transfer of familiar usage patterns from other platforms New gratification: personal fit of content	The young target group is hardly aware of the advantages and possibilities of having their own ARD media library user account. Users who are more experienced online also look for watch lists, a 'continue watching' function and personal recommendations. These functions are already available in the examined media library. This may therefore need to be communicated more sustainably. Expanding personal recommendations as 'light personalization' could also help strengthen the relationship to the young target group.
Target group specific adjustments	Cognitive: Search for Information, knowledge enhancement Affective: relaxation Integrative-habitual: Transfer of familiar usage patterns from other platforms New Gratification: personal fit of content	Within the sample, the young target group considers the media libraries to be lacking in some areas. Due to the perceived overload, in this case less could be more. The expansion of the ARD's documentary area appears to be the right decision, as the sample expects and demands this format as part of media libraries. The sample notices a need for optimization in terms of the range of films and series; international productions are underrepresented; offering more international co-productions would appeal to the sample; this content could also be provided in its original language.

Ultimately, the authors can describe the outlook for the young target group's usage and satisfaction of needs as being ambivalent. On the one hand, according to this study's findings, it can be assumed that private streaming, which contributes to the new gratifications of the digital (cf. Table 5; Sundar & Limperos 2013), will remain the dominant form of usage among younger people. The target group grew up with linear television consumption. Their parents and grandparents regularly consume content available in the media libraries – but in many cases still linearly. The study was able to demonstrate: Low- and non-users associate cognitive and social-interactive fulfillment of needs with the ARD media library based on their experience and prior knowledge. These experiences often date back years and relate to the linear public service broadcasting program. This reveals a steadiness in the evaluation, which is destined to progressively decrease in the following generation, whose viewing habits are predominantly and almost exclusively characterized by streaming. This aspect illustrates this study's relevance for the PSB, which is forced to increasingly prove itself on the market among all age groups, in order to be able to continue fulfilling its service mandate the same way in the future. On the other hand, this contribution has also been able to reveal that media libraries are already convincing in many respects and thus need not fear the competition. This can be seen as a main outcome over the course of this study's three research steps.

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