

Beyond the Multiplex: audiences for specialised film in English regions

The dynamics of audience practices: mobilities of film consumption

Film audience migrations and migrations | Panel 7: Interrogating Social Mobilities and Practices Oxford Brookes | 09-Sep-2020

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Background context

- By looking at the triple articulation of screens it is possible to understand the mobilities of film consumption
 - Draws on 200 interviews from the Beyond the Multiplex project
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Outline of the talk

- Introduce Hartmann's notion of the 'Triple articulation of media'
- Examine the mobilities of film consumption by looking at the dynamics of film audience practices using a triple articulation approach; treating screens as objects, films as texts, and the material, social context of viewing as environments
- Argue there are various mobilities defined by how people negotiate the triple articulations of film consumption
- Consider the wider value of a triple articulate approach for exploring film consumption mobilities

Triple articulation and film consumption

The practices of film consumption can be articulated simultaneously as **objects**, **texts**, and **environments**.

- What are the characteristics of different screens as objects?
- How are films understood and interacted with through each screen as texts?
- How is film consumption on different screens made meaningful in particular temporal, spatial, and social contexts (as environments)?

What practices of mobility are there within contemporary film consumption?

- Watching films at....
...the cinema | TV in the living-room | Laptop/tablet in bed | smartphone on a train | in-seat screen on an aeroplane.

- Hartmann, M (2006). 'The triple articulation of ICTs. Media as technological objects, symbolic environments and individual texts'. In Berker, T., Hartmann, M., Punie, Y., and Ward, K. (eds.) *Domestication of media and technology*. Berkshire: Open University Press. pp. 80–102.

Watching at the cinema

Everyone is alone in [the] cinema really, no one knows who anyone is, a small tiny temporary community is formed... You wouldn't normally sit at home in a dark room with people you don't know... It feels like the rules are temporarily suspended... - *Lizzie*

[If] there's a really good film that you want to watch...you want to give your entire attention...engaged from start to finish... - *Pete*

[I go to] Big [multiplex] cinemas in the town [because] the local cinemas will get [it] probably later - years, months later... - *Isaiah*

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- > **Object** - Cinema screen, auditorium seating, and material layout of the venue
 - > **Text** - New releases, 'good' films
 - > **Environment** - Darkness, anonymity, public space, surrounded by strangers and/or known people

Watching on television in the living-room

...I will quietly sit by myself and chill out in front of a **movie**....Myself and my boyfriend...[are] both really busy... [we] take a day out on Sundays to chill... I have 'friends film nights' ...me and my friends will get together... the stereotypical “let’s pull up a bunch of [fast-food] and close the curtains and make a cinema night of this” ... - *Penelope*

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- > **Object** - Television screen fixed in place in living-room
 - > **Text** - Relaxing films and ones that can be shared as part of a ‘cinema night’
 - > **Environment** - Domestic and shared setting, alone or surrounded by friends/family - changes

Watching on a laptop or tablet in bed

...the predominant way that I would watch **film** would be, sort of **by myself**, **on my laptop at home**, **in bed with some red wine**... - *Sophie*

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- > **Object** - Portable screen, web-based, personal media, and personal place
 - > **Text** - Personal
 - > **Environment** - Private place, comfort

Watching on a smartphone whilst travelling by train

If I'm prepared enough to **download a film** so that I can **watch it on my phone**, then I would **watch a film on the train**, only **if it's a long-distance journey** obviously... like Liverpool to London, it's **two hours** approximately, so it's kind of [a] perfect time to watch [a] film - *Mathew*

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- > **Object** - Portable screen, web-based, personal media, and personal place
 - > **Text** - Personal
 - > **Environment** - Public place, anonymity, set period of time

Watching on an aeroplane

I might not watch a lot of films but when I, I fly a lot - like I travel a lot, and that's when I will catch up with the films, I suppose...I watch like three films on the plane, back-to-back... - *Nicola*

...it's like you can watch lots more guilty pleasures on planes, or stuff that like, I'd probably have been intrigued about that [I] never would have actually gone to watch - *Jennie*

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- > **Object** - In-built screen, fixed in place, semi-private space
 - > **Text** - Limited range including new releases, guilty pleasures and films not watched elsewhere
 - > **Environment** - Private/public juxtaposition, there for fixed period of time

Mobilities of film-viewing: audiences and the triple articulation of screens

- **Objects** - Film audiences moving to and orienting themselves in relation to immobile cinema and television screens. By contrast smartphones, laptops, and tablets are portable and can move with people. This also enables integrative mobilities, where people carry out various other activities whilst watching films on each screen. For example, watching on a smartphone while commuting on a train, watching a film on television with friends whilst socialising, or sharing films as material objects (e.g. by gifting or exchanging DVDs, or sharing a SVoD login).
- **Texts** - Connecting with others through film in virtual mobilities, learning about other people, places, and cultures through the stories and narratives of films in imaginative mobilities. Immersing within film content at a personal level.
- **Environments** - There are different physical mobilities when audiences travel to specific venues, stay to watch in particular places within the home, or watch whilst on the move for the embodied experience of watching in particular material environments. There are also social mobilities where people come together to watch collectively, while people may also choose to watch alone, in absence of others.

Through the triple articulation of screens we can see and make sense of people's film consumption mobilities

- Urry, J. and Sheller, M. (2006) 'The new mobilities paradigm', *Environment and Planning A*, 38(1). pp. 207-226.
- Urry, J. (2007) *Mobilities*, Cambridge: Polity.

Thank you

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