

A peek at a week in my life

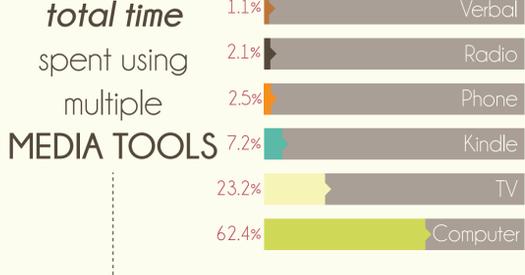
An infographic and written analysis of my media usage

By Melissa Pilkey



Total media consumption

82 HOURS & 1 MINUTE



That's nearly **3.5 DAYS**

OR ABOUT **50%**

of my week spent consuming media

Television was background noise for **12 hours and 50 min**



Provided pure **Entertainment**

for **6 hours and 12 min**

TV provides comfort and some **stress relief**

Spoke about media only for **54 MINUTES**

Percentage of the time I spoke about media **at work**

89 =

100%

of my verbal conversations pertained to stories from the **newspaper**



2 HOURS 3 MINUTES

Talking, texting & using alarms on my cell & work **PHONES**

SPENT **45 minutes**

reading the **PRINT**

edition of the **newspaper** as part of my job



Time spent **listening** to radio on my way to work:



1 HOUR & 42 MINUTES



Took **30 minutes** worth of photos at the local **Air Show**



KINDLE used for a variety of **different tasks**

for a total of..

5 hours &

52 minutes

Percentage of time **MULTI-TASKING** with various *media tools*

19.4%



Total **time** spent on the **COMPUTER**:

51 HOURS & 13 MINUTES

8% = Personal

39% = Work

53% = School



Percentage of **time** on **COMPUTER** performing a variety of different tasks

My Media Analysis

Media Usage

Introduction

When I began my media diary, it was a Friday, which is my busiest day at work. I had a notepad with me during the day so that I could jot down what media tool I used, when, why, and for how long I used it. At first this was a little overwhelming to do because I am just so used to jumping from one form of media to the next whenever I need it, especially when I'm at work. With the diary, I had to remember to stop, write down what I just did, and then move on. At the end of the day I would input the data I had written down into an InDesign table I created. While this was time consuming, and as I stated, a bit much to take in at first, it allowed me to really see just how much media I used every day.

The week I chose was fairly typical, at least for a week during the summer that is. Had this week been sometime in the fall,

“Creating this media diary allowed me to discover that I engage with media a lot more than I realize.”

my consumption of media on the TV would most likely have been higher. This is due to the fact that many of my favorite TV shows do not begin until late September or early October. I believe my media usage also tends to be even higher during the winter months. Living in Michigan, it is often best to stay in and watch TV, play a video game, or be on the computer than to go outside in the extreme cold and snow. While I feel this media diary is overall a fairly accurate representation of my media usage, I did find myself overly thinking about what media tool I was going to use and in what order so that it would be easier to write down in the diary later on. Though I did not do this a lot, I found myself thinking this way on occasion,

but I still engaged with all the media I would have anyway, just perhaps in a slightly different order.

Role of Media in My Life

Creating this media diary allowed me to discover that I engage with media a lot more than I realize. During my week, I utilized eight different connection points to access some form of media, which consisted of a computer (both my home laptop and work desktop), TV, Kindle, phone (my personal cell phone and a regular work phone), radio, verbal conversation, print (in the form of a newspaper), and a digital camera.

Computer

The computer was the tool I used the most to engage with media. The majority of the time I was using it for school, whether I was in class, doing research for homework, or working on the homework assignment itself. I'm also on the computer all day while I'm at work, as everything I do there involves using

the computer in some way. When on the computer for personal use, I check my email, explore interesting websites, play games, and use some social media as well. Without a computer, I think I would be lost. All of my school work I have ever done is stored on it, along with pictures, stories, music, and design work I have done for jobs or for myself, family or friends. I use it to connect with my family, discover wonderful new things on Pinterest, and learn more about almost anything I can think of. As far back as I can remember I have had some type of computer in my life, which is why I think I am so comfortable with it today and use it so much. It has become second-nature to me to go to the computer to help me do anything I can think of.

TV

The TV was my second most-used tool to engage with media. For the seven days I kept the media diary, the TV primarily served as background noise to relax me while I worked on the computer, or even while I played around on my Kindle. Without the TV running in the background, I would find myself feeling slightly stressed and anxious about performing a task I had to get done, mainly school work. Once I turned on the TV, just having that sound helped to relax me a bit, and it became easier to get

my work done. I also used the TV for pure entertainment, and enjoyed watching a few shows.

Kindle

My Kindle mainly serves as a tool for entertainment and to help me relax. I play games, check various apps, and check out different websites as well. I also have several books stored on it, which is great for me because I love to read a lot of books, though I did not use any during this particular week.

Radio

In the past, I listened to the radio quite a lot, however, in recent years I have grown tired of it. I became annoyed with having to constantly change stations to find a decent song or one that wasn't playing commercials. To get my music fix, I now just use Pandora, which I did once during this week on the computer. The radio has now become something I only listen to on my way into work, as I enjoy listening to a talk radio show that airs during this time.

Phone

A study performed by Pew Internet & American Life Project found that "a quarter of Americans with smartphones use the

devices as their main way to go onto the Internet" (Kang, 2011). Since this study was done in 2011, I'm sure that even more than a quarter of Americans now use their smartphones to access the Internet and perform other tasks as well. I, however, simply use my phone for talking, texting, and setting reminder alarms. I have not yet crossed over to the smartphone world, as my cell phone is just a basic one. It does what I need it to do and provides me with comfort in knowing that if something should come up, or I'm in an emergency situation, I have my cell phone to call or text for help. The same thing goes if someone needs to get ahold of me and let me know if something is wrong, or they need help. So even though my phone is not "smart" it is still able to put my mind at ease just by having it with me.

Other

The remaining media tools I used to engage with media are verbal conversation, print, and a digital camera. Verbal conversation and print are two media tools that, like the computer, are necessities for my job. I frequently have to discuss stories for the newspaper with the editor and other co-workers, and have to read through our print newspaper to check which stories ran each week, and if any errors occurred. I also enjoy reading a lot of print books as well, though,

“But in the end, the media diary really wasn’t that difficult to do, and was an eye-opening experience as to how much I actually engage with media on a regular basis.”

as I mentioned previously, I did not read any during this seven-day period. Although I buy digital books for my Kindle, there is something comforting in curling up with a print book and reading for hours. Verbal conversation is something I enjoy engaging in outside of work as well. It’s nice to talk about different topics in the news with others and get their viewpoints on the subject.

As for my digital camera, this is something I don’t use often, but wish I did. When I take pictures, I enjoy being able to look back months, or even years from the time they were taken and relive the moments in the photos. Unfortunately I don’t do this enough, but it is always fun when I do.

Due to technological convergence, where different media have come together through digital technologies (Laughey, 2010), it has become possible to accomplish most of the tasks I performed during the seven-days of keeping my media diary with one device: the smartphone. Though I would never get

rid of my computer, TV, or Kindle, because their larger screens are more favorable for the content they provide access to, I can see how perhaps one day owning a smartphone could have its advantages as part of my media tool collection. I could easily check email, listen to music, take pictures, and of course talk, text and set my reminders.

Media & Relationships

Before I began keeping my media diary, I explained to my family, friends and co-workers what the project entailed. Because of that, no one really reacted when I wrote things down in my media diary throughout the day, as they already understood what I had to do. When I mentioned the diary initially, however, I did get some responses such as, “have fun with that,” or “that sounds rather difficult.” I had similar thoughts before I began, and even on the first day of

keeping the diary. But in the end, the media diary really wasn’t that difficult to do, and was an eye-opening experience as to how much I actually engage with media on a regular basis.

When thinking about how media effects my relationships with others, I would say it has both positive and negative effects. For example, when I’m at work, I engage with media in a way that is positive because it is helping the newspaper go to press on time and with the best possible information that can be placed into it, which is great for everyone working at the paper. Also, when I engage in social media I am communicating with family and friends, which helps foster positive relationships with them. Even watching TV often effects my relationships in a positive way because I usually watch a show with someone else, or watch the same shows that my family and friends do. This allows me to have good conversations with them about shows, or even movies, that we enjoy together.

The negative effects on my relationships with others typically occur because of the large amount of time I spend on the computer for school. While everyone in my life understands, and supports, my reasons for going back to school, it is often difficult for

some of them to accept the amount of time I have to devote to it. It does cut into the quality time I can spend with people in my life, and I often have to turn down invitations to do things because I have school work to do. However, I always reiterate the fact that my schooling won't last forever, and it is something that will help advance my career and allow me to achieve something I have always wanted: getting my master's degree.

Theoretical Analysis

Hermeneutic Theory

In thinking about what I felt my primary theoretical orientation was when trying to understand my usage of media, I first leaned toward social hermeneutics: a form of the hermeneutic theory. This theory, according to Stanley Baran and Dennis Davis, seeks "to understand how those in an observed social situation interpret their own lot in that situation" (2012). What I gather from that is, when examining my media diary, I am seeking to understand, and make sense of, the reasons why I use media the way I do, and what meanings and values those media have for me. When using that logic, I can definitely see how I used social hermeneutics in analyzing my media diary. In terms of this project, applying this theory in some

way seems almost unavoidable. However, during the days I kept the diary, and upon examining my media usage after completion, I couldn't help but constantly think about, and wonder how, I was using media in comparison to others. That is when I looked further at normative theory, and feel that is my primary theoretical orientation toward media use.

Normative Theory

The goal of normative theory "is to set an ideal standard against which the operation of a given media system can be judged" (Baran & Davis, 2012). So to put it in context for my situation, when analyzing my media diary, I was judging my media usage against the average person's media usage in today's society. This "average person" I judge myself against has, ideally, found the best way to incorporate different media into their life that helps them live a productive, happy life. Therefore, their media usage became the ideal to which I was comparing my small, seven-day media system. One example given by Baran and Davis where this theory would be employed is if a theorist was interested in learning more about "the press's role in a democracy" (2012). If I change this example to be more suited to what I wish to use normative theory for, it would be that I am seeking to learn more

about the role media plays, and what effect it has, in my life. Also, I am trying to discover how that role compares to the "ideal mode of operation based in the values of the social system" (Baran & Davis, 2012). In other words, how does the role of media in my life compare to that of the average person that I mentioned?

In examining my media usage with the normative theory, I discovered that I use media a lot more than I thought I did, as I previously mentioned. While I feel I utilize multiple media tools better than some people, when I think about the ideal balance between media tools that the average person has achieved, I feel I fall slightly below that. For example, I see people engaging with multiple forms of media in my life every day, most often at work, doing, or attempting to do I should say, several different things at once. I have noticed a few people at work attempt to write a story, talk or text on their phone, and look up information regarding that story at the same time. This is quite a regular occurrence. However, when they do this, it is often to the detriment of the quality of the story. Obviously not everyone can multi-task to that degree, but I think I have discovered how to utilize those tools, while multi-tasking, better than most.

Another example of poor multi-tasking ability was shown in the Digital Nation video. College students were interviewed and asked questions about their multi-tasking skills and what tasks they performed while multi-tasking (PBS, 2010). They often had their email open, while texting on their phones, instant messaging on their computer, all while working on a research paper for school (PBS, 2010). Though they felt they were great multi-taskers, when tested on their ability to do so, it was found that they weren't great at multi-tasking at all (PBS, 2010). I think there are too many people in society today who try to do too much at once all the time, especially the younger generations. It is becoming all too commonplace for younger people to try and "multi-task" but in the end, something is going to suffer because of it. Whether it be relationships, or their work for school or a job, as they aren't giving their full attention to a conversation or an important project.

But, there are others that know how to use a multitude of media tools properly, at the right times, and get things done at work,

“In the days since completing the ... media diary, I have continued to engage with media in the same way with the same media tools.”

and in their personal lives as well. They have found that ideal balance between the usage of different media tools to help them in their daily lives. One woman I used to work with was a great example of this type of person. She would use her smartphone to talk, text, send emails and correspond with local officials, and use the computer for a variety of things including social media, checking various informational websites, and writing stories. She was able to use these various forms of media at the proper times to where she got tasks done on time, was organized for school, as she was also working toward her master's degree, and was able to make plans with friends and

family as well. She had found the ideal balance between knowing when and where to use, and not to use, a specific media tool for whatever purpose she needed.

Conclusion

In the days since completing the seven-day media diary, I have continued to engage with media in the same way with the same media tools. I have always been a creature of habit, so to speak, and am used to doing things a certain way. I get things done properly and on time, and use a variety of media tools to help me relax as well. Though my media usage habits may not work for others, as they are so used to doing everything with their smartphones, it works for me at this time in my life. There may come a day where I will decide to give in to technological convergence and purchase a smartphone, but it won't be because everyone else has one. It will be because I have reached a point in my life where I feel it would be more beneficial for me to use a smartphone than using a few separate devices that perform the same type of tasks.

Works Cited

Baran, S., and Davis, D. (2012). *Mass Communication Theory: Foundations, ferment, and future*. 6th Edition. UK: Thomson

Kang, C. (2011, July 11). *As smartphones proliferate, some users are cutting the computer cord*. Retrieved from http://www.washingtonpost.com/business/economy/a-smartphones-proliferate-some-users-are-cutting-the-computer-cord/2011/07/11/gIQA6ASi9H_story.html

Laughey, D. (2010). *Media Studies: Theories and approaches*. UK: Kamera Books.

PBS Frontline. (2010, February 2). *Digital Nation* [Video]. Retrieved from <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/digitalnation/view/>