

INTRODUCING AUDIO BOOKS

Usage of Audio Books in Germany, the Netherlands and the USA- an explorative study



Development

Development audio books → after WWI for visually impaired returning soldiers → other visually impaired → children → modern multimedia public

Technological development audio book carriers → several audio tapes → several compact discs → one MP3-file

No uses and gratifications research results available → explorative research needed → different reading cultures → market data books and audio books → survey potential audio book users

Our research

Study 1

Reading habits and audio books usage for the three countries were explored in a secondary data research. There are some differences between the three countries in terms of reading culture and usage of audio books. Germany has one of the largest audio book markets in Europe while the United States has the biggest sales number in absolute terms. The most common reason found for listening to an audio book in all countries is to be entertained during long trips.

Study 2

An online survey among students (N = 82) in the three countries. Results show that almost all of the respondents are familiar with the phenomenon of audio books. Both for printed books and audio books the home is indicated as the primary reading/ listening location (in bed or other locations at home). Differences between countries are found in the reasons for listening. Germans use audio books most for entertainment purposes. The Dutch are the only ones who listen to all the languages mentioned, being English, German, Dutch and other. All nationalities indicate to listen to audio books in English.

Discussion

Although the concept of audio books is already widespread knowledge, the amount of users varies per country and is still growing. The different reading cultures of the investigated countries have shown a different response to the introduction of audio books.

This explorative research has focused on the usage of audio books in general and has made a comparison between the biggest audio book market on the planet (United States of America), one of the biggest in Europe (Germany) and a very small audio book market (The Netherlands).

Audio books gained great popularity with the development of software that allowed an entire audio book to be carried by just one or two Cd's, a PC or MP3-player. In all the researched countries audio books are still growing in numbers and all the participants are aware of them, although evaluations may differ.

The Dutch are the biggest audio book users, mostly non-Dutch ones, but are less positive. Germans purchase more audio books, and listen mostly for entertainment purposes. Americans do not listen to anything from the literature genre and are the least informed on the publication of new titles.

