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Summary

Uses of Museum and Art Multi-Media in relation to "Cultural Legitimacy"

Museum and art multi-media¹ is a cultural industry which, as such, implies the question of the link between industrial logic and logic of legitimacy – traditional problems that we will approach from a point of view of the "received theory", according to a study on the domestic uses² of museum and art multi-media.

Because of its double characteristic, at the same time technical and cultural device, museum and art multi-media is hybrid: it belongs as much to the technical sphere, because it's information and technology of communication (ITC), as it does to the elite cultural sphere due to its contents.

The specificity of the device supports a plural reception: for example, certain users take advantage of the more technical aspect of the device whereas some users are more interesting in the cultural product. Practices are thus differential but they are also normative, which is to say, they are impregnated by registers of standards and values. Indeed, in the hierarchy of legitimacies, this hybrid device seems to occupy a median position: at the top of the hierarchy from its noble contents but on the bottom in regards to the technical mediation, which contributes to decreasing the *degree of legitimacy* of this cultural practice.

Taking into consideration our fieldwork, we discuss the theory of cultural legitimacy by showing its contributions and its limits. It comes from our investigation looking at whether Bourdieu's theory always clarifies certain cultural behaviors – in particular in regards elite culture –, the model resists, with difficulty, the analysis concerning other elite cultural activities. This investigation – which takes into account the various cultural practices of these users –, stresses that those who have elite activities also exert non-elite activities but that the difference between the users does not occur as much in the contents of consumption but more in the act of reception.

It would seem that certain social phenomena and several studies confirm our results which do not challenge the theory of "cultural legitimacy" but invite to modify it.

Multi-media technologies would contribute to developing new models of analysis of cultural practices implying a decompartmentalization of the boundaries between elite and non-elite cultural practices – favouring consequently the users of the crossings of socially and hierarchically unequal practices.

¹ In our fieldwork, multi-media concerns CD-Rom, DVD-Rom and Internet sites.

² The fieldwork includes a sample of 43 users.