

High performance career women in Germany's Next Top Model - A new view on women and work in German Reality TV

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Introduction

'Germany's Next Top model' belongs to the new reality TV show genre. Its goal is to find a new German "Supermodel" from a selected pool of young girls. The show is presented by the internationally acclaimed and successful fashion model Heidi Klum from Germany. It is based on its American counterpart "America's Next Top Model" which was first shown in 2003. This type of fashion show has been copied in several different countries and has become a huge commercial success. The German version has been broadcast since 2006. Every series follows the same basic structure: twenty young girls are chosen from a crop of young hopefuls by a jury consisting of media-acclaimed fashion and modelling experts and Heidi Klum. The 'chosen ones' compete against each other in different 'challenges' during the course of the series. These challenges are set up by the 'coaches' and the jury. The candidates must demonstrate skill and motivation to proceed to the next challenges. During the course of the show, they are taught about body language, style and personality. In this context they are required to take part in different 'walks', photo shoots and other jobs which result from castings from real businesses. Here, they have to prove themselves as 'real' models. The orchestrated 'walks' and shoots aim to build up a career portfolio. The winner of a challenge usually earns a prize: it ranges from a dinner with popular celebrities to prize money.

Every show has its own 'finale' where a decision is made by the jury as to who will stay and who will leave. This decision-making is based on the girls' performances throughout the show. The losers are usually shown in a dramatic farewell scene with sad music and lots of tears. During the show the candidates are referred to as 'girls'¹, who are competing against each other even though a friendly atmosphere exists. This aspect helps to emotionalise the show: only one candidate can be the winner. Every series ends with a grand finale: one of the three finalists will become Germany's next top model. The ultimate prize is a real modelling contract with high prestige companies to market the winner even further.

The participants are bound by several contracts, even before the show begins. For example, they must pass 40% of their profits to the TV channel 'Pro Sieben' and to the modelling agency "Face your brand" in the first year. Also, they have to take part in promotions free of charge for Pro Sieben. According to one source, it is up to Pro Sieben to extend contracts without

¹ In German: 'Die Mädchen'

asking the participants and all the rights to their names are signed over to "Heidi Klum GmbH and Co.KG".²

The success of the show cannot be disputed: the ratings of the third series show that 3.5 million viewers watch 'Germany's Next Topmodel' every Thursday at 8.15pm. The market share for the 14-29 year-old category stands at around 38%, which is perceived as large for a German TV show.³ Despite this level of success, there is a lot of criticism: the young women are being treated too harshly even though they are just beginners. At the same time, they should act 'sexy' but are being treated like little children.⁴ Another critique is the level of harsh criticism meted out by the jury: the participants are easy to break mentally because they are beginners.⁵

Reality TV shows such as 'Germany's Next Topmodel' deliver new kinds of lifestyle blueprints. The ratings prove that these kind of staged lifestyles are interesting for a younger generation of TV viewers. My analysis in this paper investigates what kind of view on women is being produced, how it is staged and what kind of emotions are awakened. I use conversation analysis to analyze these new lifestyle blueprints.⁶ My results show that on a manifest level, the increased efficiency of the participants is the main focus of the show but on a latent level, the staging of Heidi Klum as 'Miss Perfect' is another important aspect to contrast that shown on a manifest level. Throughout the show, an asymmetrical relationship is constructed between Heidi Klum and the candidates. The young women are imperfect and clumsy: Heidi Klum is always shown as flawless. The young women's flaws reflect the greatness of Heidi Klum. Continuously, the praise of the candidates and Klum's modelling agency strengthen this picture of greatness and an asymmetrical relationship. In this paper, I will show how this works and which kind of emotions this staging unfolds.

Gender relations in Germany have changed through modernisation. Individualization, fragmentation of traditions and the pluralisation of living conditions help to dissolve current gender borders. That is why the analysis of female lifestyle blueprints, norms and ethics is important. In Heidi Klum's show, women are being staged as working subjects who are working hard for a career. Germany's Next top model is a field where these kinds of lifestyle are being shown to a wider audience. The characteristics for these kinds of new formats are the over-the-top emotionalisation (suspense, tears and discipline), personalisation (fate of each candidate), intimisation (no privacy, life laid open) and the creation of an authentic real-life based show (real jobs and education). The following analysis shows how the emotions interact with the content of the show.

² Borgir, „Knebelverträge, : <http://www.shortnews.de/start.cfm?id=704644> (2008) [Last accessed: 07.11.2011]

³ Birgit Klawonn, Ratings, [http://www.birgit-klawonn.de/topmodel-2008-mit-top-quote/\(2008\)](http://www.birgit-klawonn.de/topmodel-2008-mit-top-quote/(2008)) [Last accessed: 07.11.2011]

⁴ Author anonymous, Kritik an Topmodel, <http://www.oe24.at/zeitung/lifestyle/article262214.ece> [Last accessed: 07.11.2011]

⁵ Christian Kortmann, Kampfhubschrauber Klum, <http://www.sueddeutsche.de/kultur/tv-kritik-germanys-next-topmodel-kampfhubschrauber-klum-1.257676> (2008) [Last accessed: 07.11.2011]

Social change leads to the waning importance of traditional paradigms like churches and the traditional family model. In light of this, fewer of the more previously traditional role models and values are being found for the younger generations. New TV formats like the casting show 'Germany's Next Topmodel' deliver instead new overall concepts and even new lifestyle blueprints. Heidi Klum represents in this show the new, the interesting and the role model.⁷

Currently, according to Koppetsch and Senett, employers not only seek for general knowledge, but also place emphasis on personal performance and the perfect execution of social roles. Authority and success are not based solely on duty and expertise.⁸ Koppetsch and also Senett emphasises in his book 'Der flexible Mensch'⁹ the flexibility of human beings compared to the routine work in the past. Employees are asked to be more flexible, to adapt to last-minute changes, to take risks and to be less dependent on formal procedures. Short term contracts for employees are supposed to give more flexibility to employees to design their lives but instead this creates different and harder to see through rules for human beings. The future of economics is based on the short-term and elasticity: people are expected to be ready for everything and change their working place, working forms and living places. Lifelong learning and the permanent need for experience are needed. Old experiences count less and less and a new depth emerges: it is more important to have connections and long term friendships to find a job.

German reality TV shows exactly represent these new ideals, as laid out by Koppetsch and Sennet. The boom of reality TV in Germany is undeniable. According to Zeit Online, one casting company has around 100,000 applicants each year.¹⁰ Viewers compare themselves to candidates on these shows and imagine even "I" can do that. Every imaginable variation on these shows is being produced in Germany. Around 21 of these are similar shows to Germany's Next Top model, including shows such as 'Das Supertalent', 'Star Search' and 'Fame Academy'.

My work is divided in the following sections: Section two introduces the method of conversion analysis.¹¹ In Sections three and four I will introduce my results with the help of a conversion analysis of a show. In the conclusion I will summarise the results.

Conversion Analysis

⁷ Stach, Anna „Die Inszenierung sozialer Konflikte in der populären Massenkultur am Beispiel erfolgreicher Talkshows: Ein Beitrag zum Thema Sozialisation durch Massenmedien unter Berücksichtigung geschlechtsspezifischer Sozialisation“. Tectum Verlag. Marburg. (2006): 108

⁸Koppetsch, Cornelia. 'Körper und Status: Zur Soziologie der Attraktivität (Analyse und Forschung)'. Konstanz: Uvk- Verlag, 2000.

⁹Sennett, Richard. 'Der flexible Mensch : die Kultur des neuen Kapitalismus'. Munchen: Goldmann Verlag, 2000.

¹⁰A. Kaiser ,: „Die Billigen und Willigen“ <http://www.zeit.de/2003/35/Reality-TV> (2003). [Last accessed: 07.11.2011]

¹¹In German : „Methode der tiefenhermeneutischen Medienanalyse - Konversionsanalyse“

New television formats show alternative lifestyles and values by using orchestrated, reality-based situations. These situations are mostly fictitious but also contain elements of society's realities. Conversion analysis is a method related to in-depth-hermeneutical culture analysis, developed by Ulrike Prokop¹² to interpret audiovisual media. Prokop combines content and effect analysis and aims to work out emotions on both manifest and latent levels. The level of show production is not relevant to the interpretation or plays, at most, a minor role. The focus of the analysis is the central message of the show, as well as the more obscurely hidden ones. For this, it is also important to involve elements of fantasy development and emotional responses. These hidden messages (latent level) are mostly not visible and not outspoken. They can stand in contrast to the material shown (manifest level). This deep hermeneutic analysis tries to identify the tensions between manifest and latent messages and cultural patterns which are hidden or open. This dramatic staging of fantasy in reality television conveys attractive dreams or wishes for the viewer.

To test the case an experiment was developed using an audience; in this case, it was a mixed-sex class of around twenty-five students¹³ at Kassel University, aged 20-25 years. The first step of the research involved a 'perception protocol', whereby the researchers note their emotions and associations.¹⁴ This technique is referred to as 'naive viewing' and is a crucial element of the research method. The audience and researchers must write down everything that comes into their minds whilst viewing without using formal language or scientific terms. Even profanities and strong emotions such as anger are acceptable, as it is important to see which topics or visuals affect the audience emotionally.

Thereafter, a 'show overview' is written: it describes step by step the content of the show from beginning to end on a manifest level. After this step, the perception protocols are used to find central topics in the show. These systematically recurring topics are developed by understanding certain scenes of the research material. Anna Stach uses Lorenzer's definition and highlights this as 'scenic understanding' instrumentalising daily assumptions of the viewers to work out confusions and experiences in certain scenes. According to Stach, this happens at first with daily experiences but also on the level of psychoanalysis with personal associations and thoughts contained in the 'perception protocol'. Through analysing the perception protocols, researchers can uncover taboo and intended topics, as well as recurring themes throughout the show. What did the viewer think of the scene? Which aspect of the scene was this related to? Which significance does this have? Following on from this, the reception of the show can be analysed using group discussion or single interviews. This can include topics that are usually taboo but are meaningful to the viewers. Taboo in this case indicated a level of meaning which cannot be described but is still relevant.

¹² Ulrike Prokop. „Doku-Soap, Reality-Tv, Affekt-Talkshow, Fantasy-Rollenspiele. Neue Sozialisationsagenturen im Jugendalter.“ Tectum Verlag. Marburg. 2006

¹³ „Tiefenhermeneutik und Gender Kassel“ at Kassel University.

¹⁴ Anna Stach, „Die Inszenierung sozialer Konflikte in der populären Massenkultur am Beispiel erfolgreicher Talkshows“: „Ein Beitrag zum Thema Sozialisation durch Massenmedien unter Berücksichtigung geschlechtsspezifischer Sozialisation“. Tectum Verlag. Marburg. (2006): 110

Germany's Next Top Model: Introduction to the Fourth Episode (Series Three)

After watching the whole third series of "Germany's Next top model", I decided to analyse three randomly chosen episodes, which were not directly related and focus my main analysis on the fourth episode. The three chosen episodes had been shown to the student group mentioned earlier and their perception protocols had been collected into three show overviews. However, the main focus of the audience was on the fourth episode.

This episode was first broadcast on March 20th 2008. It begins with a flashback to the last episode. The candidate Gina-Lisa Lohfink (21 years old) is being criticized strongly by the jury member Heidi Klum (35 years old) and starts to cry.¹⁵ The final decision-making as to who will stay and who will leave consistently plays out in the same way: emotional with many tears. Like in all other episodes, the interaction between Heidi Klum and the young women is the main focus.

During the course of the episode, the young women are required to undergo a somewhat drastic change in appearance in order to be styled to fit the aesthetic requirements demanded from professional models. Heidi Klum is shown rather conspicuously in almost every scene. She is portrayed as the perfect woman with the ability to jump into every social role, e.g. the role of a comforter or the role of the perfect craftsman.

Conversion analysis: Show overview

In this section I would like to give a brief example of one of the show overviews that I have worked on¹⁶. The show overview collates central scenes and staging of the show alongside the effects on the research group. The effects on the research group arose from having a group discussion and from the perception protocols. The first column separates each scene in the show and names each scene with a title. Every individual scene from each episode needs to be read separately and is given a title. The title should assist readers and the researchers to quickly understand which scene in the episode is meant during a discussion. The second column describes as exactly as possible what happens in the scene. All details need to be included so that a reader can visualise in his or her mind what happened in that scene. It can be written in the present tense to make the readers feel like they were watching the scene at that moment in time. The effects and associations are located in the last column. This does not require a formal writing style since it is the collation of the perception protocols from the audience. It can contain profanities, unrelated topics and is informal in nature.

¹⁵ Gina-Lisa Lohfink, myspace account, [www.myspace.com/GinaLisa2008\(2008\)](http://www.myspace.com/GinaLisa2008(2008)); www.HeidiKlum.com [Last accessed: 07.11.2011]

¹⁶ The complete overviews are at least 20 pages long for each episode.

<p>Show : Germany's Next Topmodel (20.03.08) Performance, Main content of the scene</p>	<p>Dramatic composition and intended central emotions</p>	<p>Emotions, Associations, Thoughts of the research group</p>
<p>Flashback of previous show (Short version)</p>	<p>Scene of Gina-Lisa from the previous show is being shown. She is standing in front of the jury and is being judged. Heidi Klum criticizes her: „You are special, too special”. Suspenseful music starts. Gina-Lisa starts to cry.</p>	<p>Builds suspense, motivates to watch how the show will turn out. Play with nerves; the research group feels pity for Gina-Lisa.</p>
<p>Opening</p>	<p>Happy music is playing during the colorful opening sequence. Candidates are being shown, both happy and sad moments. Heidi Klum smiles kindly to the viewers. The background has flying colorful lipsticks. The last shot shows all the candidates in a group photo and the title of the show appears. The theme song used here is by “Seal”, who is also Heidi Klum's husband.</p>	<p>Heidi Klum looks flawless while the candidates are crying. What an emotional show !</p>

Results of the content analysis

Following the viewing of the aforementioned episode and preparation of the perception protocols, a group discussion was carried out to collect thoughts. Heidi Klum and her interaction with the candidates surfaced as the main topic. To be more precise, there was some confusion relating to the staged contrasts: already in the opening scene, crying women are juxtaposed with Heidi Klum smiling happily into the screen. After further discussion, the group agreed that the interaction itself is asymmetrical. The candidates are portrayed in extreme contrast to Heidi Klum. The young women are set up as incapable beginners whilst Klum emerges as a prototype ‘perfect woman’. This complex relation is further strengthened by the praise of Heidi Klum by the candidates throughout the whole show. This irritation created a central topic for the analysis: Heidi Klum's greatness is being strengthened by the detrimental subjugation of the young hopefuls. It was confusing for the viewers to grasp the various roles Heidi Klum portrays in the series and how she manages to handle each one perfectly. For example, she is one of the

'workmen' who help to set up the mirrors of the hair stylist.¹⁷ Other examples can be seen in other episodes, where she masters being a perfect photographer or the 'ultimate judge' in the decision-making round.

These results from the research group led to various discussions on social roles and another central topic was found: Heidi Klum as the high-performing career woman. I will explain these topics by the use of manifest and latent levels of perception. For this, I will reference my own show overviews. To explain the scenes, I have chosen to describe them as if the reader was watching the show right now and kept the exact wordings from their reported speech.

Manifest vs. Latent: Performance boost of the candidates vs. Heidi Klum's Greatness

The greatness of Heidi Klum is strengthened by the instrumentalisation of the candidates. Already in the opening scene, Heidi Klum is smiling while the candidates appear desperate and cry. Klum is perfectly styled and the accompanying theme tune to the series 'Amazing', performed by her pop star husband Seal, strengthens this. At the flashback to the previous episode Heidi Klum comes across as a competent and strict person, whose powerful criticisms can break the candidates mentally: Gina-Lisa starts crying.¹⁸

Klum's power over the young women is even more visible at the return to the youth hostel.¹⁹ The asymmetrical relationship is shown with Klum criticising the young women and partaking in humiliating one particular candidate named Sandra. On the bus ride back to the youth hostel, three jury members stand in front of the candidates. One - Peyman Amin - comments on the performance on the catwalk. He says the girls are nicely made-up but their performances were awful. Heidi suddenly speaks up: *'You have to give everything! Only the moment counts'*. While saying this, she shows them how to do it correctly and poses. Heidi points her finger to Sandra: *'Hey, I told you to do a 'hollow back' – three times – but nothing came. Do you even know what it is?'* Sandra looks at Klum and claims: *'Yes, I do know!'* Klum stops her and talks again while standing in front of her like a dominatrix: She starts to pose and shows her how to be pretty: *'Hollow back! Sexy! Hair into the air! Laughing! Wild!'* One of the other candidates looks at Heidi Klum and says *'We all want to learn what she can do!'* The young women see Heidi Klum as their idol. They want to be flawless like her. Nobody doubts the omniscience of Heidi Klum and the candidates are ready to take harsh criticism to achieve their dream to be a top model in her image. The young women are constructed as incompetent beginners, who do not even know to do basic moves like a 'hollow back'. Even though Klum is much older than the candidates, her staging as the perfect model makes her seem the youngest. Her omnipotence is clearly visible because she knows how to move and behave like a true fashion model.

¹⁷ See fourth episode 20.03.08, third Scene: a) Hair Salon

¹⁸ Fourth episode 20.03.08, Flashback (short)

¹⁹ See second episode 06.03.08, 2nd Scene: Back to the youth hostel

In the following decision scene it is the thankfulness of the candidates which this time supports the greatness of Heidi Klum.²⁰ At decision time, Heidi Klum is sitting at a table with the panel jury. The young women come one by one and stand in front of them. Meanwhile, music is being used to build tension and to release it. The suspense is created through the music and Heidi Klum's speech: *'You are ok, but being 'OK' is not enough!'*. She stops and continues *'I do not have a photo for you.'*²¹ The candidate has been removed from the competition but is still thankful and gives Heidi Klum a few goodbye kisses. The next candidates appear and Klum says: *'I do not have a photo for you.'* Sudden pause. *'But do you know what I do have? A super, nice Germany's Next Top Model picture folder!'*. No matter if the candidates lose or win, get insulted or not, they are still being portrayed as thankful. Most of the time, the candidates are pictured going to Heidi Klum, hugging and kissing her and saying 'thank you'. Some of the young women are submissive enough to ask *'May I?'* before they hug her. Even though their dreams to become Germany's Next Top Model are finished, it is clearly visible that the women, even though they are being removed, still see Heidi Klum as their idol and do not even question her decision. The candidates are never shown as resistant or seriously critical. Gratefulness and cheering are dominant in Heidi Klum's scenes, which create a view of a flawless idol. The asymmetrical relationship has another aspect: Heidi Klum is portrayed as an expert, while the candidates are being shown as naive amateurs.

Looking at the interaction in episode one, series three, this asymmetrical relationship is clearer.²² Here Heidi Klum demonstrates how to walk like a perfect model. The candidate Maria is wearing a black mini skirt and blue top and introduces herself to the jury. She walks in a cramped and stiff manner. She even trips on the stairs. The next shot shows an open-mouthed Heidi Klum in close-up. She is shocked: *'Move your hips!'* She further comments *'Oh, when I was younger, I think I could not do it either.'* Heidi Klum walks towards her and explains to her: *'You move from here to here. You don't really move. Be cooler!'* She imitates Maria's walk. It looks stiff and comedy music plays. She goes back and says: *'Now...look at how I walk. To the left, to the right, to the left, to the right...'* Maria, emotionless, tries it again and fails. *'You are too stiff, goodbye'* says Heidi while Maria leaves the show.

During a photo shoot with another candidate – Wanda - Klum is shown as a teacher.²³ In this scene, she dominates with her charismatic appearance and her omniscience, while Wanda is silent. Klum's professional experience and ability to dress properly as a model are to the fore. She is amused by Wanda's outfit. This further emphasises the asymmetrical relationship. The scene is paradoxical as Heidi promises not to interfere but she still does. Once again, it is another scene with the portrayal of beginners against greatness of Heidi Klum. Wanda wears a dress and has curly hair. She comments on how she loves her outfit and that she feels comfortable with it. However, Heidi neither likes the dress nor her haircut. She speaks to Wanda: *'This is totally 'Jane Doe' with curly hair.'* Heidi comments further in a separate scene: *'She had this grandma haircut with curly hair and a grandma dress – this puffy dress –*

²⁰ See second episode 06.03.08 , seventh Scene: Decision

²¹ Not receiving a photo equals losing.

²² See first episode 28.02.08, seventh Scene : d) Casting of *Maria*

²³ See second episode 06.03.08 , third Scene: Photo shoot for the Sedcard: a) Wanda

she looked like she came from milking cows, from a barn or something.' For Heidi, this outfit is too virtuous. She asks her assistant to give Wanda his pants and shoes. The photographer gives Wanda her jacket and her outfit is suddenly perfect. The assistant hesitates to strip down and refuses. Klum shouts dominantly: *'Down with your pants!*' Music suitable for a striptease is being played. Klum fires up the assistant: *'Don't make such a fuss...You are still wearing shorts, what's your problem?!*' Another comment by Wanda: *'This is shit, I go to this casting and get totally dismantled.'* After this, Klum is shown again, saying that the girls should do everything themselves today.

In the following scene, Klum is portrayed as the flawless idol again.²⁴ Even the mail in the model house is called *'Heidi-Mail'*. In this scene, the switch from a serious Heidi Klum to Klum as 'one of the girls' is visible. First, she is friendly, then serious and then again youthful. At the end, the candidates start to smile and think Heidi Klum is cute. Wanda is in the model mansion in Los Angeles and comes down the stairs with a red envelope. She is happy that they received *'Heidi Mail'*. The young women circle around a big TV on a big couch. Klum is seen on the screen. Her hair makes her look strict. In the background, a large jewellery collection and accessories are visible. She talks in a strict, dominant voice: *'Hello dear girls, now it's really crunch time. This is the last week before the finale.'* Klum looks strict and points her finger determinedly. The background is dark, like her eye make-up. The five young women are shown again. Klum motivates further with her raised voice: *'Give everything! Show everything! I want to see everything from you!*' The young women start to smile. Then Klum reiterates in strict tone once again with every word being stressed: *'I want to see Top Models, got it?'* Suddenly, her voice changes and she sounds like a little child and throws kisses with her hands. The girls start to smile and say: *'Oh, so cute! Heidi.'* Afterwards, impressions of the candidates are being shown with suspenseful music playing in the background.

Heidi Klum's authority and idol function is also visible in Gina-Lisa's casting from the first episode.²⁵ Gina-Lisa does not question Heidi Klum and quickly fulfils her wishes. Heidi Klum is shown as always being right. She suggests another outfit and another haircut. Gina-Lisa is smiling. She is enthusiastic about the comment. To her, Heidi Klum is the expert and the experienced one. In this scene, Heidi Klum's greatness is being strengthened by Gina-Lisa who appears and hip music plays. She wears a black dress and has long platinum-blond hair. Heidi Klum looks astonished and smiles. Heidi Klum asks her about her hair extensions. *'I want to see you with a different style. More natural.'* Gina-Lisa smiles and is content. Gina-Lisa comes back wearing a bikini and Heidi Klum speaks up: *'Wow! So much better!'* Heidi Klum asks her about her painted on eyebrows and her extremely tanned skin. Gina-Lisa unquestioningly accepts Klum's criticism and is delighted. Now the question arises: what is so flawless and great about Heidi Klum? What makes her interesting and perfect?

²⁴ See fourteenth episode 29.05.08, 2nd Scene „Heidi-Mail“

²⁵ See first episode 28.02.08, seventh scene Casting: f) Casting of *Gina Lisa*, i) Casting of *Gina-Lisa* Part 2

Heidi Klum as the High-Performer

The analysis of the show showed many social roles that Heidi Klum embodied. During the course of the show, she is portrayed as the omnipotent actress who can perform any role. The continuous role change and the perfect execution are part of the orchestration of her greatness. She knows how to act in different social classes. She can be sexy, sporty, a mechanic or a teenager. Whatever she portrays, she is flawless: She is the high performance career woman. The following scenes show this kind of perfection and I will analyse them one by one.

At the hair stylist²⁶, Klum plays a highly noticeable role. The scene is obviously staged which further proves my point: Klum is not a craftsman but as the scene runs the viewer is left with the impression she helped assemble up to thirty mirrors. This reality seems authentic and perfectly embodied by Klum who can turn her hand to anything if required. The scene begins in the beauty salon. Klum is wearing high heels and is standing on a stepladder. She uses a drill to hide the mirror with a piece of roller blind. Her tongue is sticking out, the sleeves of her jeans jacket are rolled up and she says: *'It's solid, eh?'* A light moaning and another question to an unseen man: *'Ha, that's it. So many mirrors! Thirty right?'* The man replies: *'Thirty, yes!'* while Klum responds: „Wow, 30 mirrors!“ Now the man is shown. He is slightly overweight, bearded and wears a hat with typical clothing for a handyman. She explains why she put roller blinds up. She does not want the 'girls' to see their transformation until the process has ended. Heidi Klum demonstrates: *'Look, you pull up here, the roller blind goes up and then you will hear 'AHHHH' from the girls.'* Finally, she laughs into the screen, seemingly amused. This scene is supported by rock music. It shows how Klum can be an all-round genius, specifically a handyman in this scene.

The programme also shows Klum multitasking as a photographer.²⁷ In one distinct scene based on a fashion shoot for *Cosmopolitan* magazine, Klum uses a camera and tells the young women how to present themselves. Her omniscience is visible here again because she knows what *Cosmopolitan* wants to see. She gives instructions, whilst the photographer takes the pictures. Her greatness is emphasised again since the photographer does not have any objections. This scene stages her as being always right. The candidates take part in the photo shoot in a big studio. On the set, the photographer, a few picture assistants and the candidate posing in front of a bright background are visible. The photographer is kneeling down and to his left are Klum and the magazine editor sitting on small chairs. The photo shoot starts with the candidate Carolin. The English speaking photographer gives instructions: *'Keep it running, keep it running!'* Then we see Klum in close-up, surveying the situation critically. It is Jennifer's turn now. She is wearing a blue mini dress. The photographer complains about the stiffness of Jennifer to the editor. She agrees with him and Heidi Klum nods. He points at Jennifer's dress and says: *'It's too massive!'* Meanwhile, Heidi Klum gets up and walks directly to the candidate and the photographer is still speaking to the editor. Klum takes the reins and adjusts Jennifer with instructions about her body

²⁶ See fourth episode 20.03.08, 3rd Scene: a) Preparation in the hair salon

²⁷ See fourteenth episode 29.05.08, 8. scene: „Cosmopolitan“-Shoot

language and even turns her into the right position. Klum demonstrates: *'Do like a curve and don't go too far to the back [...] otherwise your head looks like a little ant.'* Jennifer still fails and the photographer shows his disappointment. The editor speaks up: *'Yeah, we have to change the dress.'* Klum sits between the editor and photographer, looking concentrated and grinding her teeth, her elbows are on her knees and her hands folded under her chin. She nods to the photographer. It is Christina's turn now. Klum shouts: *'She looks great!'* Next scene: Jennifer comes back with a new dress. Klum: *'The new dress is here and now it looks a thousand times better.'* Wanda is next. Heidi Klum is sitting with a coffee cup at the set. She is direct and speaks to Wanda: *'Do you have a sweating problem?'* Wanda: *'Yes. Is it visible?'* Klum, professionally: *'Yes, but it doesn't matter, we will retouch it later!'* as she drinks from her cup. During the photo shoot she is shown as the judge while the editor is not visible anymore. There are comments on what the fashion magazine wants to see since she knows best. She finally appears again and says: *'I am looking forward to seeing the photos!'*

Another recurring role is Klum as the herald. The role of the herald is characterised by the decisions made over the young women's destinies. As a herald, she is emotionless, cool and has a dominant appearance. She is often pictured standing on a step which makes her look taller than the young women both visually and symbolically. While announcing the candidates' destinies, the young women are silent and passive, then grateful and crying. Her authority is visible in the fourth episode. Heidi Klum is dressed in black, looking somewhat like a grim reaper on a little stage and holding the pictures of the girls. She looks strict and the candidate Aline appears in front of Klum and her colleagues. Klum announces in a strict, slow tone: *'Aline, we had hoped that you would give us more in your photo shootings.'* She pauses while sad music is being played. A close up of Aline's teary eyes appears on the screen. Heidi Klum moves her head slightly to the side: *'But in your last photo shooting, you had trouble showing us good expressions.'* Aline is gasping and nods lightly. Heidi Klum is shown again with her cold stare and quick camera angles switch between Heidi Klum and Aline's sad face. While the two stare at each other, Heidi Klum speaks up: *'We don't think you can surpass your rivals.'* The scene ends with a teary-eyed Aline and Klum still has the same expression as in the beginning.

In the next scene, in stark contrast to her herald role, Klum is pictured as a 'girlfriend' and speaks in a friendly, almost childlike manner.²⁸ In the backstage area, Klum visits the candidates, creates a circle with the young women and is happy to be visiting New York. The young women shout out their happiness. Klum motivates the candidates to give their best: *'I don't wanna hear any whining and no more whining if you have your periods! Now it is beginning for real!'*

My analysis shows that in all scenes Heidi Klum is being staged as omnipotent and flawless. She is capable of being permanently happy and always looking perfectly styled. This is further strengthened by the incapability and good cheer of the young women. The candidates are shown to have deficits and are being portrayed in the role as the failing beginners. Klum is further shown to know how to act in every social class and to be perfect at it, no matter what she does. Her body language is also flawless. Klum also

²⁸ See fourth episode 20.03.08, eleventh Scene: The decision, c)after the decision

stands at a distance to the candidates, emotionally and spatially, meaning she is mostly sitting in higher positions and far away from the candidates. The emotional distance is visible in scenes where the candidates are being mocked and humiliated without giving any counter reaction. On the contrary, the young women see Klum as an idol and are thankful for every comment. Even during scenes, where the candidates hug and kiss Heidi Klum, no emotional affinity is visible. Significant for this behaviour are the decision scenes, which are clearly communicated emotionlessly. What is strikingly odd about this distance is that it is part of the whole staging of the show, even in scenes where friendship and closeness are being shown.

Central impacts of the show

If we analyse the perception protocols of the research group regarding the omnipotence of Heidi Klum, certain aspects are noticeable. Even though we had a critical standpoint to the show, it was not possible to keep that position while watching the show. On the contrary, in some cases, we thought that Heidi Klum was a likeable 'Power-Woman'. Even if you dislike Klum, somehow she is still fascinating. The perception protocols show the music and her charismatic appearance put viewers in a trance, even in cases where she gives unfriendly comments. In episode four she says '*You are like a little snack, tasty but a bit bland. You need more spice!*'²⁹ This comment was felt to be embarrassing by most of the viewers in the research group. Suddenly, this feeling of embarrassment disappears and another interesting aspect arose; the harsh and humiliating comments towards the candidates made the audience angry and critical. Again, these feelings disappear quickly. How is that possible?

The analysis shows that the use of ecstatic music coupled with the use of scenes of happy winners with raised arms and tears of joy erases critical feelings. Somehow, viewers are sucked in to the feeling of accomplishment. It is clear that the music and staging of emotional scenes blurs perception and turns off the thought process. The perception protocols show that at first, viewers feel empathy for the candidates. If a candidate is being criticized or removed from the show, this empathy loses its power and viewers think that the candidate is bad, ugly etc. This mechanism is tied to the use of music and the staging of greatness of Heidi Klum, who is being put into great contrast with the young women. As an example, let us analyse again the scene from the first episode with the candidate Maria, jibed for walking like a robot. We pity her. Suddenly, funny music is played. We start to laugh and mock the young women together with Heidi Klum. The candidate is ridiculous and probably over-estimated her abilities. She is now the embarrassing character in the scene, while Heidi Klum shines as the perfect woman.

²⁹ Fourth episode 20.03.08, first Scene b) Decision from last episode

Conclusion

The idea of researching popular media formats such as Germany's Next Topmodel came to fruition after looking at what TV shows are popular with people in modern German society and the wish to see how it is relevant to real-life work and gender relations. Since the show is mostly female-dominated and with a popular and famous host such as Heidi Klum, it is interesting to see what kinds of gender relations are depicted.

Conversion analysis is a good method to analyse media such as TV-shows or video games. The topics appearing in the researched group show reoccurring themes and intentions that can be analysed. The advantages here are that topics, which would have never crossed the researchers mind without an analysis group, can emerge and be talked about. In this research, topics like Heidi Klum and her portrayal of the candidates were the main interest. It is possible that another researched group would have reached similar results since it is a recurring theme throughout all episodes. The randomly chosen episodes from the current series also show these recurring themes. It is at first difficult to find the common issues and impressions of the show. After long discussions with the participants and taking notes of the episode with the help of the protocols the researcher can discover the core topics.

Heidi Klum is the prime example for a high performing career woman. She can jump into any role. During the staging of the scenes, it is not about being sexy but portraying sexiness. The analysis shows, that on a manifest level, Heidi Klum tries to help the young women to become a top model. On a latent level however, the greatness of Klum is the main focus. The greatness lives on through the dismantling of the candidates. Part of this is the portrayal of the incapable beginners, while Klum appears perfect, omniscient and uses criticism (even insults) to degrade the candidates. Furthermore, the greatness is emphasised through the praise and compliments of the candidates. This is a major part of the show styling Klum as their idol. The scenes prove one thing: Klum's judgment is never questioned and the young women are submitting themselves to her.

Despite the obvious crossing of borders in the show, viewers feel no remorse with the candidates because of the music and the production techniques. Viewers rather side with Klum. Her charismatic appearance and perfectly used background music are ecstatic and cut off critical thoughts. Klum is also portrayed as the high performance career woman. Beauty does not play a central role but what is important is her perfect appearance in various roles. Referring back to Koppetsch and Senett, employers not only need expertise, but put an emphasis on flexibility, performance and the flawless execution of social roles. Career and success are not based solely on duty and expertise.³⁰

The reality TV show "Germany's Next Top Model" shows how this kind of performance can be learned and is also being taught. Heidi Klum is the manifestation of this ideal performance: A woman who is the embodiment of success.

³⁰ Cornelia Koppetsch, „Körper und Status“: „Zur Soziologie der Attraktivität (Analyse und Forschung)“: Uvk- Verlag. Konstanz. 2000; Richard Sennett, „Der flexible Mensch : die Kultur des neuen Kapitalismus“. Goldmann Verlag. München. (2000).

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