Social Media and Its Role in Friendship-driven Interactions among Young People: A Mixed Methods Study

# Details

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## Sample

2008, 2011, 2014, 2016 – Plan Communal Jeunesse survey (longitudinal) for young people in different municipalities in Luxembourg.

“The samples of all four waves of the trend survey were convenience samples consisting of young persons between 15 and 25 years of age. The sample size for wave 2008 was n = 277, for 2011 n = 453, for 2014 n = 164 and for 2016 n = 209. With regard to gender, all samples were balanced.”
(Jean Philippe Décieux, Andreas Heinen, Helmut Willems, 2018, page 6)
“A total of four focus group discussions were conducted: Three focus groups consisted of young people (N = 16) between 15 and 25 years old and of various nationalities, education, and gender. One expert focus group consisted of 12 youth experts”
(Jean Philippe Décieux, Andreas Heinen, Helmut Willems, 2018, page 7)

# Abstract

This article examines trends and developments in social interactions of young people and the role of social media in Luxembourg using a mixed method approach, drawing on both quantitative and qualitative data. Our findings corroborate that social interactions via social media play a growing role in leisure time of young people and have changed the traditional patterns of friendship-driven social interactions among peers. We argue that although offline interactions remain very important for young people, they have been complemented and partially replaced by interactions via social media. Modes of young people’s social media interactions can be characterized as mixed modalities.

# Outcome

Quantitative:
Trend survey of leisure activities among young people changed over the years. Meeting up with friends and reading newspapers or books declined. Playing a game, relaxing alone and surfing, chatting, maligning in the internet increased.
The most frequent internet activities of Luxembourgish young people in 2016 was to interact with friends (76.1% use the internet to interact with others).
83.4% of young people in Luxembourg are registered on social networks and 81.5% use it on a daily basis.

Qualitative:
Why do young people use social media:

Low time investment, ease of use and low motivation to meet in person.
Being able to do different things (e.g., extracurricular activities) while using social media for social interactions.
Time alone and for relaxation is needed, provided by social media, by taking away the need to meet in person.

The ubiquity of social media, as people can see the everyday lives of their friends online, there is less reason to meet in person and exchange this information. Therefore, whole communication patters can change, as no unnecessary information exchange would occur.

Not only words can be used on social media, but also photos or videos which gives the communication diverse features to make interactions more visual and alive. Tools like video conferencing brings the dimension of seeing as well as hearing your friends. Yet most young people in these focus groups stated that they know most of their online friends through offline interactions (like school, neighborhood, associations, etc.). So offline interactions are a perquisite to develop friendships.
"In summary, online and offline interactions are mutually interrelated so that the mode of interaction via social media can be characterized as mixed modalities."
(Jean Philippe Décieux, Andreas Heinen, Helmut Willems, 2018, page 15)