

## **Social Media Repertoires: Investigating Multifaceted Social Media Use Among Late Adolescents**

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Social media play a crucial role in adolescents' everyday lives and impact their well-being, mental health, and risk behavior. Consequently, it is vital to understand the multifaceted social media use of this age group. However, despite the increasing number of platforms affording the curation of communication and audiences, studies to date have predominantly examined single platforms while neglecting sharing behavior and the variety of communication partners. In this article, we thus apply a holistic repertoire perspective that offers essential descriptive insights. We consider active social media users that 1) use multiple communication platforms, 2) apply various communication practices, and 3) curate distinct communication partners. We analyze data from a representative survey among late adolescents (ages 15–19) in Switzerland and explore the use of six social media platforms (i.e., Instagram, Snapchat, TikTok, Pinterest, Twitter, and Facebook). We identify social media repertoires, analyze consumption, sharing, and curation practices, and compare perceived and addressed actors across platforms. The implications for future media use and effects research are discussed.

*Keywords: social media, repertoire, consumption, sharing, curation, audiences, adolescents*

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Social media use is ubiquitous among adolescents (Anderson & Jiang, 2018; Bernath et al., 2020; Feierabend et al., 2020) and plays a crucial role regarding their information and entertainment (Peters et al., 2021), as well as their peer observation, self-presentation, and identity formation (Alhabash & Ma, 2017; boyd, 2014; Sheldon & Bryant, 2016; Valkenburg & Piotrowski, 2017). It is thus not surprising that studies associated adolescents' social media use with their well-being (Valkenburg et al., 2022), mental health (Keles et al., 2020), and risk behavior (Vannucci et al., 2020). Given social media's impact on adolescents' everyday life, it is vital to have detailed and up-to-date descriptive insights into the social media use of that age group.

Social media platforms differ in terms of affordances (van Dijck, 2013) and are often used simultaneously and in diverse but stable constellations (Brandtzæg, 2012; Horvát & Hargittai, 2021; Waterloo et al., 2018). Such social media repertoires allow users to perceive and address a variety of actors (Bayer et al., 2020; Miller et al., 2016; Quan-Haase & Young, 2010). Adolescents, in particular, extensively use social media (Bernath et al., 2020; Feierabend et al., 2020), frequently share content (Bernath et al., 2020; Griffioen et al., 2021) and manage multiple social contexts online (boyd, 2014; Duffy & Chan, 2019). However, despite this increasingly multifaceted social media use, the majority of studies to date have examined the role of single platforms (Hellemans et al., 2020; Horvát & Hargittai, 2021) while neglecting sharing behavior (Valkenburg, 2017) and, for the most part, not differentiating communication partners (for an overview, see Keles et al., 2020; Valkenburg, 2022; Vannucci et al., 2020).

In this article, we apply a repertoire perspective (Hasebrink & Hepp, 2017) and argue that a descriptive understanding of social media use offers an essential basis for further research approaching social media use, its subjective meaning for users, and social media effects. Following Hasebrink and Hepp (2017), we distinguish three key aspects to assess: 1) communication platforms in terms of frequency of use and social media repertoires, 2) communication practices in terms of consumption, sharing, and curation practices, and 3) communication partners in terms of perceived and addressed actors across

platforms. This holistic approach to social media use is particularly promising for informing future research interested in specific user groups. In this article, we adopt this insightful approach as we focus on 15 to 19 year olds, i.e. late adolescents (WHO, 2023).

In the first half of this article, we provide a brief overview of the literature and outline the perspective of active social media users who use multiple communication platforms, apply various communication practices, and deliberately curate communication partners. In the second half of the article, we draw on a national online survey of 15- to 19-year-olds in Switzerland (N = 1,837) and investigate adolescents' use of six popular social media platforms at the time of data collection in 2021. We identify different social media repertoires, examine adolescents' consumption, sharing, and curation practices, and compare perceived and addressed actors across platforms. The findings led us to reconsider conceptual work on active social media use among adolescents, as well as to address implications for future media use and effects research.

### **Approaching Multifaceted Social Media Use**

Social media are “internet-based channels that allow users to opportunistically interact and selectively self-present, either in real-time or asynchronously, with both broad and narrow audiences who derive value from user-generated content and the perception of interaction with others” (Carr & Hayes, 2015, p. 50). This commonly referenced definition emphasizes that 1) there exist multiple channels users select from, 2) such platforms facilitate both the consumption and sharing of (user-generated) content, and 3) these practices entail a variety of communication partners. Based on the assumptions that active media users selectively use media (Knobloch-Westerwick, 2015), manage the visibility of shared material through consumption and sharing practices (Treem et al., 2020), and curate both perceived and addressed actors (Thorson & Wells, 2016), scholars have called for a more holistic description of media users' multifaceted engagement with social media (Boczkowski et al., 2018; Hasebrink & Hepp, 2017).

One approach that specifically addresses the importance of the simultaneous use of multiple media is the repertoire approach. Repertoires can be defined as “the entirety of different media that a person regularly uses [and] as relatively stable cross-media patterns of media practices” (Hasebrink & Hepp, 2017, p. 4). Hasebrink and Hepp (2006) argue that a focus on the level of repertoires is increasingly important in light of new tools for information and communication online. This focus has the potential to yield insights for industries interested in cross-media strategies, as well as for media effect scholars, who can no longer rely on the influences of any single media. Such a repertoire-oriented approach is characterized by a user-centered perspective (in contrast to a media-centered perspective, e.g., in investigating the overlap of users), the need to consider the entirety of media regularly assembled by users, and a focus on relationality, meaning the interrelation of media’s functions in repertoires (Hasebrink & Domeyer, 2012; Hasebrink & Hepp, 2017). Furthermore, Hasebrink and Hepp (2017) argue that repertoire research offers a unique insight into media use that considers both users’ perspectives regarding selective media use, as well as their relation to certain social domains through media use, what they call “figurations.” Repertoires of individuals are thus “(at least partly) structured according to the figurations in which they involve themselves. The figurations of social domains are based on the actor constellations as well as the communicative practices of the individuals that constitute them” (Hasebrink & Hepp, 2017, p. 367).

Given the characteristics of online communication, this perspective seems particularly suitable to social media users that engage with multiple platforms to communicate with a variety of actors. Insights into these arrangements of platforms, practices, and actors promise to be informative for future research on social media use and social media effects among adolescents and other segments of the population. In this article, we therefore draw on Hasebrink and Hepp’s (2017) repertoire approach and differentiate among three key aspects of social media repertoires: the simultaneous use of communication platforms, the relevant communication practices, and the perceived and addressed communication partners. In what follows, we address these three aspects and briefly review previous conceptual and empirical work in each field of research.

### *Communication Platforms*

Social media platforms are often used in parallel (Brandtzæg, 2012; Horvát & Hargittai, 2021; Orchard et al., 2014; Waterloo et al., 2018) and fulfill various functions that can differ across platforms (van Dijck, 2013) and user groups (Costa, 2018; Miller et al., 2016). Furthermore, studies comparing motivations (Pelletier et al., 2020; Rathnayake & Winter, 2018; Sundar & Limperos, 2013) and sociodemographic characteristics among users (Blank & Lutz, 2017; Hargittai, 2007, 2015, 2020; Hargittai & Hsieh, 2010; Mellon & Prosser, 2017) have repeatedly advised against the generalization of findings related to a single platform. However, social media research has only rarely considered the simultaneous use of social media platforms and has predominantly examined single platforms (Hellemans et al., 2020; Horvát & Hargittai, 2021), with a particular focus on Facebook use among U.S. citizens (Rains & Brunner, 2015).

Repertoire research applying a more holistic approach to media use has been mostly investigating repertoires of TV channels and media types (Kim, 2016; Neuendorf et al., 2001), and literature on social media repertoires remains scarce (Horvát & Hargittai, 2021). Studies have mainly considered social media platforms as additional sources in news repertoires (Peters et al., 2021; Peters & Schrøder, 2018) or looked at social media repertoires with a focus on news (Edgerly et al., 2018; Geers, 2020) or multi-media themes (Kleinen-Von Königslöw & Förster, 2016).

In light of social media's importance for adolescents' peer observation, self-presentation, and identity formation (Alhabash & Ma, 2017; boyd, 2014; Sheldon & Bryant, 2016; Valkenburg & Piotrowski, 2017), it seems relevant to investigate social media repertoires independent of other media types and detached from a focus on news. In the present study, we accordingly acknowledge the diverse social media use among adolescents and aim to identify social media repertoires. Furthermore, we follow Hasebrink and Hepp (2017) in understanding media repertoires as "composed of media-related communicative practices that individuals use to relate themselves to the figurations that

they are involved in” (Hasebrink & Hepp, 2017, p. 362). Hence, we further consider communication practices and communication partners, which are addressed in the following sections.

### *Communication Practices*

While mass media users actively select channels and content (Knobloch-Westerwick, 2015), social media users are even more involved and not only consume but also interact with and share information (Carr & Hayes, 2015; Shao, 2009). Numerous studies have explored the social affordances of social media (Postigo, 2016) and demonstrated that people utilize social media to communicate and self-present (Boczkowski et al., 2018; Neubaum & Krämer, 2017; Phua et al., 2017; Quan-Haase & Young, 2010).

While early research on social network sites emphasized users’ lack of control over the reach of personal information and communication privacy (boyd, 2008, 2014), subsequent studies demonstrated that social media users arrange communication partners such as friends, peers, family, and other contacts with multiple platforms (Miller et al., 2016; Tandoc et al., 2019) and separate social contexts using multiple private and public accounts per platform (e.g., on Facebook (Costa, 2018) and Instagram (Duffy & Chan, 2019; LaBrie et al., 2021)).

In addition to the availability of platforms and accounts, technological developments on the level of features have further improved social media users’ options to curate communication. First, increasingly sophisticated curation tools (Bayer & Hofstra, 2020) allow communication on a spectrum from private to public (Miller et al., 2016) and the management of communication visibility (Treem et al., 2020). For example, users can receive and share private Snaps on Snapchat, make Instagram Stories visible to a curated group, or publish public videos on TikTok. Second, the increasing opportunities to share ephemeral material improve users’ control over its potential visibility (Choi et al., 2020;

Ma et al., 2021). What was first considered a unique feature of Snapchat is now possible on numerous platforms (e.g., Instagram and Facebook). Third, the growing overlap of features and functionalities between social media platforms (Phua et al., 2017; Quan-Haase & Young, 2010) further facilitates targeted communication across platforms. Most of today's social media allow users to share material or send messages to specific contacts in one-on-one chats (e.g., Instagram, Snapchat, TikTok, Facebook), target selected groups of contacts (e.g., Stories on Instagram, Snapchat, and Facebook), and share public content in private and algorithmically curated public feeds (e.g., public accounts, Instagram Reels, TikTok For You Page).

Given that adolescents particularly engage in peer observation and self-presentation online and that both exposure to as well as sharing of such information can affect offline behavior (Geber et al., 2021; Geusens & Beullens, 2020; Valkenburg, 2017), it seems crucial to differentiate between the consumption and sharing across platforms to understand platform differences better. Because practices involving the sharing of content are inherently connected to the management of social contexts and privacy concerns (boyd, 2014; Valkenburg & Piotrowski, 2017), it also seems important to assess how audiences are curated on the level of platforms, accounts, and features. In this article, we thus examine platform differences regarding consumption, sharing, and curation practices.

### *Communication Partners*

Consumption, sharing, and curation practices ultimately result in the presence of a variety of contacts and social contexts across platforms (Bayer et al., 2020; Miller et al., 2016; Quan-Haase & Young, 2010). On the one hand, social media users perceive their communication partners through the consumption of messages and shared material in feeds. For example, family members may be visible in individual chats or group conversations, while friends and public figures may be present in personal and public feeds. On the other hand, social media users address communication partners (or the public) through messages and shared material accessible to more or less deliberately selected

recipients. Early research on social network sites found that communication structures emerging from user-generated content entail context collapse, invisible audiences, and a blurring of private and public (boyd, 2008, 2014). Consequently, reached recipients often remained ambiguous and social media users resorted to “imagined audiences” (Litt, 2012; Litt & Hargittai, 2016) to conceptualize addressed communication partners. In light of the technological development of communication platforms and more elaborate communication practices mentioned above, this perspective has shifted to one of active social media users who deliberately separate or overlap contexts and curate their audiences (Loh & Walsh, 2021; Miller et al., 2016; Valkenburg & Piotrowski, 2017) using multiple platforms, multiple accounts per platform, (Duffy & Chan, 2019; LaBrie et al., 2021; Tandoc et al., 2019), and features (Duffy & Chan, 2019). On a conceptual level, scholars acknowledged these curation efforts by the distinction of deliberate context collusion and undesired context collision (Davis & Jurgenson, 2014).

Studies examining adolescents’ curation of communication partners online found that Instagram is used to address both personal contacts and the public, while Snapchat is reserved for intimate conversations with close friends (Boczkowski et al., 2018; Miller, 2018; Piwek & Joinson, 2016; Vaterlaus et al., 2016). While Pinterest is mainly used to consume public content (Mull & Lee, 2014), Facebook is used to communicate with a wide range of contacts (Hollenbaugh, 2019). Regarding Twitter, findings are mixed. Miller (2016), for instance, found that the platform is used for school banter, while Boczkowski (2018) found that most of adolescents’ contacts on Twitter are not part of their private realm. Although the increasing popularity of TikTok since its introduction in 2016 sparked a variety of studies (Zeng et al., 2021), little is known about adolescents’ communication partners on that platform. However, a recent study indicates that TikTok is used to publicly share content in the form of videos and less to perceive or address personal contacts (Bhandari & Bimo, 2022).

Due to the diverse tools and practices, as well as the overlap of features and functionalities between social media platforms, the curation of communication partners



might differ on the level of the user group and the cultural context. Because adolescents' orientation and self-presentation (along with the related impact on attitudes, normative beliefs, and offline behavior) differ depending on reference groups such as friends, peers, family, and public figures (Erikson, 1974; Knoll et al., 2015; Shepherd, 2017), it is critical to understand the presence of these social contexts across platforms. Therefore, this study additionally considers users' perceived communication partners in terms of visible contacts and contexts and addressed communication partners in terms of more or less deliberately selected recipients.

### **Investigating Multifaceted Social Media Use Among Adolescents in Switzerland**

Applying a repertoire perspective (Hasebrink & Hepp, 2017) and drawing on the literature introduced above, we argue that a descriptive overview of social media use in a specific user group, such as adolescents, has much to gain from considering three key aspects of social media use. First, studies should consider the variety of communication platforms in terms of social media repertoires and neither examine social media use with a narrow focus on an individual platform nor as an aggregate of multiple platforms. Since people use social media in diverse repertoires (Brandtzæg, 2012; Horvát & Hargittai, 2021; Waterloo et al., 2018) and make use of functions that may differ (van Dijck, 2013) and overlap (Phua et al., 2017; Quan-Haase & Young, 2010) between platforms, a more holistic approach is warranted. Second, studies should differentiate communication practices unique to social media and avoid the reduction to consumption, as it is often the case in traditional mass media research. Because of users' dual role as recipients and communicators (Carr & Hayes, 2015; Thorson & Wells, 2016) and ever-evolving curation tools (Bayer & Hofstra, 2020) that allow private and public communication (Miller et al., 2016), a distinction between the communication practices of consumption, sharing, and curation of communication partners is necessary. Third, studies should take that presence of different communication partners into account. Precisely because of the dual role of users, the variety of actors, and the associated management of social contexts online (Boczkowski et al., 2018; Miller, 2018), it is crucial to distinguish perceived actors, that

are present in chats and feeds and addressed actors, that are more or less deliberately selected as recipients of shared material.

In Switzerland, a representative study examined social media use among adolescents 12–19 years of age (Bernath et al., 2020). Among Swiss adolescents, 99% use a smartphone and 98% are active on social media. Nevertheless, there are differences regarding the popularity of platforms: 94% use Instagram, 88% use Snapchat, and 75% use TikTok. Adolescents in other European countries (e.g., Germany, Feierabend et al., 2020) the United States (Anderson & Auxier, 2021) and South America (e.g., Chile, Correa & Valenzuela, 2021) show similar social media use patterns. However, the mentioned studies seldomly investigated social media repertoires. Therefore, the assumption that most adolescents use the three most popular platforms, Instagram, Snapchat, and TikTok, is reasonable but not supported by empirical findings. Studies that did identify social media repertoires either worked with small sample sizes (Griffioen et al., 2021) or only referred to the number of platforms without indicating the prevalence of specific repertoires (Boczkowski et al., 2018). In the case of Switzerland, Bernath et al. (2020) examined platform use in detail but did not examine repertoires. Therefore, we aim to answer the following first research question related to communication platforms (RQ1): How often and in what repertoires do adolescents use social media platforms?

The study mentioned above (Bernath et al., 2020) accounted for certain practices and found that among Swiss adolescents, 85% consume, 85% like, and 46% comment things they see on social media at least weekly. Further findings showed that 51% share ephemeral material, 34% share things aimed at specific audiences, and 24% share constantly visible content on a weekly basis. Although these results provide valuable insights into certain practices, they do not allow a comparison of platforms. To examine such differences, we aim to answer a second research question (RQ2): How often do adolescents apply communication practices in terms of consumption, sharing, and curation on social media platforms?

There is great interest in adolescents' management of social contexts online (boyd, 2014; Loh & Walsh, 2021; Valkenburg & Piotrowski, 2017), and numerous studies have found differences between platforms related to communication partners (Boczkowski et al., 2018; Miller, 2018). However, studies have also indicated great variability of communication practices related to user group or cultural context (Costa, 2018; Miller et al., 2016). To contribute to the existing literature, we therefore ask a third research question (RQ3): How often do adolescents perceive and address different communication partners on social media platforms?

## **Data and Methods**

### ***Data Collection and Sample***

To answer the formulated research questions, we explored data from a national online survey among 15- to 19-year-olds in Switzerland ( $N = 1,837$ ), collected between May 28 and July 28, 2021. The disproportionate random sample was drawn from the population registry provided by the Swiss Federal Statistical Office and stratified by language region (i.e., German, French, Italian), age, and gender. The study was eligible to access the registry of all residents due to a collaboration agreement with a federal office. Compared to other sampling techniques, this approach helps to minimize sampling biases that often limit the validity of school-based surveys or panels provided by survey companies. Due to the low number of individuals in Italian speaking Switzerland, we combined age groups and only considered gender in the stratification for that region. We conducted the fieldwork in collaboration with the market research institute LINK and invited and reminded a total of 5,683 potential participants via postal mail, phone, and e-mail to take part in the online survey. We did not offer incentives. A total of 1,837 adolescents participated in the self-administered online survey, which corresponds to a response rate of 32% of the original sample. Table 1 reports targets and actual quotas for language region, age, and gender. The study was approved by the Ethics Committee of the University of Zurich (No. 21.4.7). All participants gave informed consent.

**Table 1. Target and Actual Quotas by Language Region, Age and Gender.**

Language	Age	Gender		Total
		M	F	
German	15	87/100	107/100	194/200
	16	95/100	133/100	228/200
	17	86/100	123/100	209/200
	18	82/100	104/100	186/200
	19	59/100	86/100	145/200
French	15	45/50	58/50	103/100
	16	47/50	55/50	102/100
	17	41/50	63/50	104/100
	18	37/50	53/50	90/100
	19	34/50	39/50	73/100
Italian	15–19	191/150	212/150	403/300
Total		804	1,033	1,837/1,800

*Note.* Actual  $n$ /target  $n$ .

Approximately 56.2% of the participants are girls, and the mean age is 16.9 (SD = 1.35; Min = 15, Max = 19). Furthermore, 52.4% of the participants live in the German-speaking, 25.7% in the French-speaking, and 21.9% in the Italian-speaking part of Switzerland. Regarding education, the sample consists of 16.5% participants in compulsory education, 39.7% in general education (e.g., upper secondary school), 39.7% in vocational education (e.g., apprenticeship), and 4.1% in tertiary education (e.g., university). To ensure that the sample reflects the distribution of 15- to 19-year-olds in Switzerland, we based all reported analyses on weighted data, adjusting for the planned oversampling of participants from the Italian-speaking part of Switzerland, as well as the overrepresentation of girls and participants attending general education schools (in contrast to vocational schools). Drawing on current federal statistics (Federal Statistical Office,

2020, 2021c, 2021a), we computed weights to consider language region, age, and the combined quotas of gender and education. Table 2 reports the distribution of sociodemographic variables in the population, the unweighted sample, and the weighted sample. Since we combined quotas for gender and education, there are small but acceptable deviations in the weighted sample with regard to gender. Weight values range between 0.17 and 2.44 (SD = .53).

**Table 2. Sociodemographic distribution in the population and the sample.**

		Census	Unweighted sample	Weighted sample
Language	German	66.2%	52.4%	66.2%
	French	27.1%	25.7%	27.1%
	Italian	6.8%	21.9%	6.8%
Age	15	20.1%	19.7%	20.1%
	16	20.0%	22.9%	20.0%
	17	20.0%	22.4%	20.0%
	18	19.7%	19.4%	19.7%
	19	20.1%	15.5%	20.1%
Gender	M	51.4%	43.8%	52.3%
	F	48.6%	56.2%	47.7%
Education	Compulsory	18.7%	16.5%	18.7%
	Vocational	50.2%	39.7%	50.2%
	General	26.7%	39.7%	26.7%
	Tertiary	4.4%	4.1%	4.4%

*Note.* Census data is based on official statistics for language region (Federal Statistical Office, 2021a), age (Federal Statistical Office, 2020), gender (Federal Statistical Office, 2020), and education (Federal Statistical Office, 2021b).

### *Measures*

**Communication Platforms.** We assessed general social media use with two questions. First, we asked participants to indicate which platforms they use at least occasionally among six popular platforms in Switzerland (Bernath et al., 2020): Instagram, Snapchat, TikTok, Pinterest, Twitter, and Facebook. For each platform, participants further indicated how many days they use it in a normal week on a scale indicating numbers of days from *7 days* down to *1 day*, as well as the options *less often* and *never*.

**Communication Practices.** To measure consumption behavior, we asked participants how often they use each platform for consumption on a seven-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = *never* to 7 = *very often*. To measure sharing behavior, we asked how often they post, share, or send material on each platform on a scale from 1 = *never* to 7 = *very often*. Regarding curation practices, participants indicated separately how often they directly select contacts, use multiple platforms, and use multiple accounts per platform to reach specific people. They also indicated how often they share content publicly. For the four items we again used a scale from 1 = *never* to 7 = *very often*.

**Communication Partners.** To assess perceived communication partners, we asked participants for each platform they used at least weekly how often they see things of the following actors on a seven-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = *never* to 7 = *very often*: *close friends, people from school, people known from leisure time, family, people from work, public figures, and organizations and sites*. To assess addressed communication partners, we asked participants for each platform how often they post, share, or send things that can be seen by the following actors from 1 = *never* to 7 = *very often*: *close friends, people from school, people known from leisure time, family, people from work, and everyone (public)*. Given the opportunities to curate recipients of communication on most social media platforms with private accounts and features, we assume that adolescents are at least aware of potential recipients in the case of most of the content they share, hence the formulation “can be seen”.

## Results

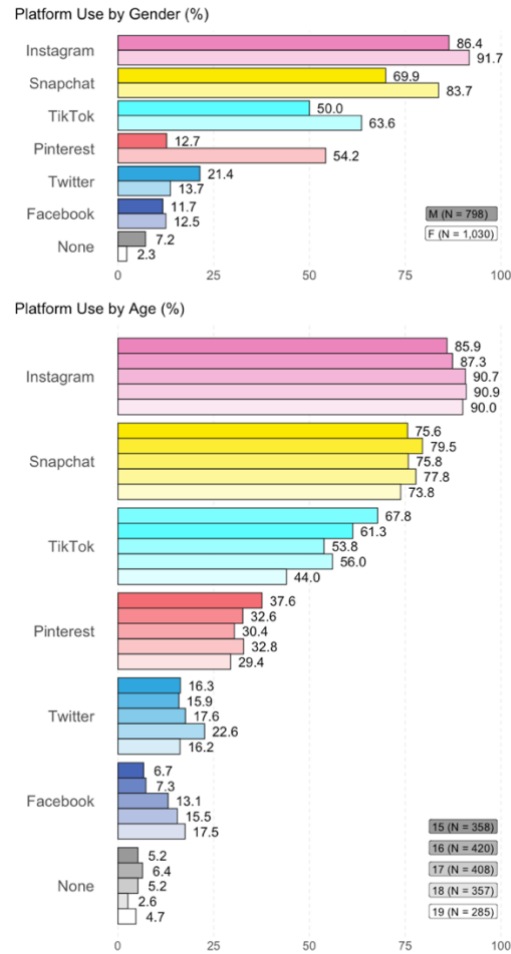
### *Communication Platforms: Frequency of Use and Social Media Repertoires*

The findings show that Instagram, Snapchat, and TikTok are the most popular platforms among Swiss adolescents (Figure 1). Among girls, 91.7% use Instagram (boys 86.4%), 83.7% use Snapchat (boys 69.9%), and 63.6% use TikTok (boys 50.0%). Pinterest is much more widespread among girls (54.2%) than among boys (12.7%). Twitter, on the other hand, is more popular among boys at 21.4% (girls 13.7%). In terms of age, the differences are less pronounced on most platforms. However, clear differences can be identified regarding TikTok and Facebook. Younger adolescents more often use TikTok. Around 67.8% of 15-year-olds but only 44.0% of 19-year-olds use the video platform. Conversely, only 6.7% of 15-year-olds but 17.5% of 19-year-olds use Facebook at least occasionally. In terms of weekly usage, the dominance of the three most popular platforms becomes even clearer (Figure 2). 63.6% of adolescents use Instagram daily, 57.4% use Snapchat daily, and 31.0% use TikTok daily, while they use the remaining platforms much less frequently.

In terms of the number of platforms (Figure 3), the findings indicate that the regular use of three platforms is most common among adolescents (31.9%), followed by the use of four platforms (23.3%) and the use of two platforms (22.7%). The identified social media repertoires reflect these numbers (Figure 3). Around 19.4% of adolescents use Instagram, Snapchat, and TikTok, 14.4% use Instagram and Snapchat, and 14.2% use Instagram, Snapchat, TikTok, and Pinterest. While 6.2% of adolescents use only Instagram, 5.1% use Instagram, Snapchat, and Pinterest. Seven additional social media repertoires exist that are at least used by 1% of adolescents, all including Instagram. Rarer repertoires exist among 14.3% of adolescents. Around 4.8% of adolescents do not use any of the mentioned social media platforms.

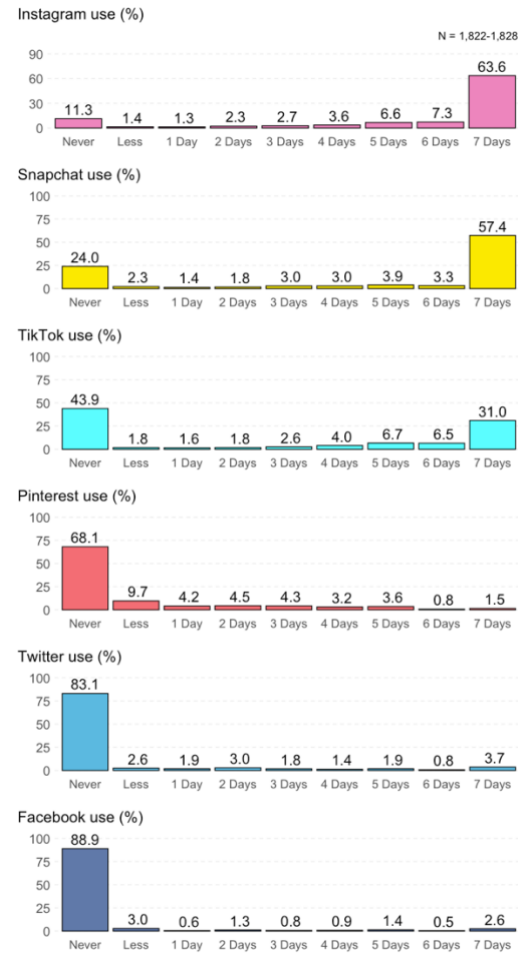
## COMMUNICATION PLATFORMS

**Figure 1. General Platform Use.**



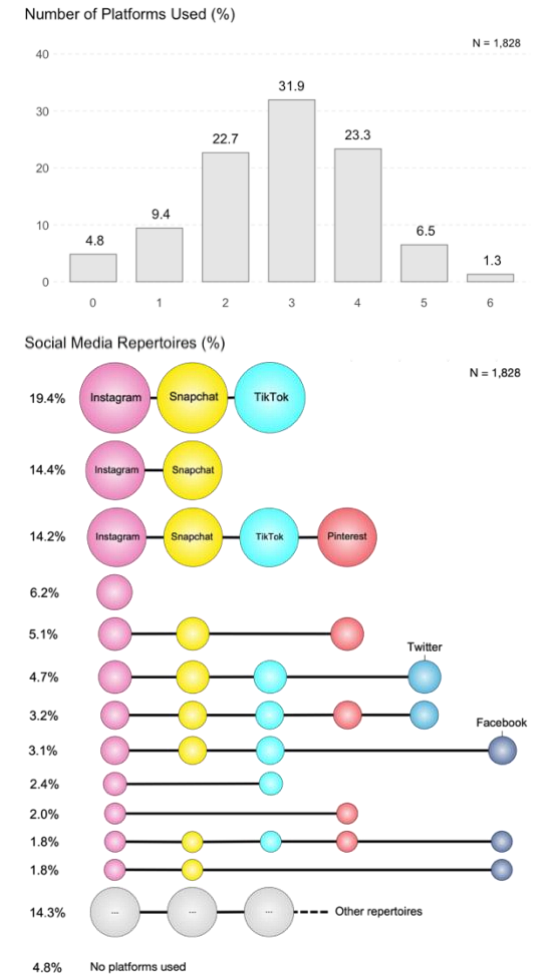
Note. Question: Which of the following platforms do you use at least seldomly?

**Figure 2. Weekly Platform Use.**



Note. Question: In a normal week, how often do you use [platform]?

**Figure 3. Social Media Repertoires.**



Note. Number and repertoires of platforms used among Instagram, Snapchat, TikTok, Pinterest, Twitter, and Facebook.



### *Communication Practices: Consumption and Sharing*

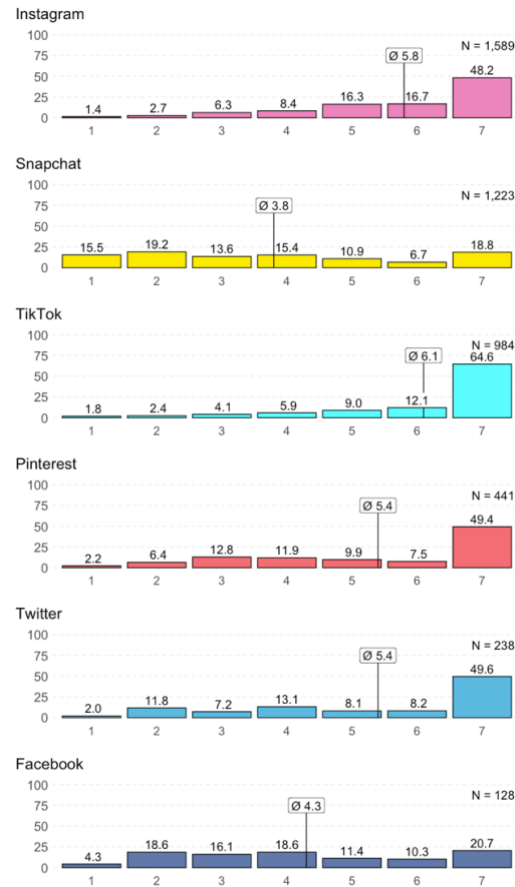
Comparing the platforms in terms of communication practices reveals that adolescents not only use them with differing frequency but also for different purposes. Figure 4 shows how often adolescents use platforms for consumption, while Figure 5 shows how often they use them for sharing. Here, we only considered data from participants who use the respective platforms at least weekly (hence the lower case numbers). The displayed bar plots indicate the frequency of the answers on a scale from *never* (1) to *very often* (7), as well as the mean.

The findings demonstrate differences between the three most popular platforms. Adolescents frequently use Instagram for consumption ( $M = 5.8$ ,  $SE = .04$ ) and occasionally for sharing ( $M = 3.5$ ,  $SE = .05$ ). They less frequently use Snapchat for consumption ( $M = 3.8$ ,  $SE = .06$ ) but more frequently for sharing ( $M = 4.8$ ,  $SE = .07$ ). On TikTok, adolescents consume the most ( $M = 6.1$ ,  $SE = .05$ ) but share the least often ( $M = 2.4$ ,  $SE = .07$ ). While 64.6% of TikTok users consume material very often (7 on the scale), 52.1% of users never share anything on the platform. The percentage of users who never share material is 83.3% for Pinterest, 56.8% for Twitter, and 44.5% for Facebook.

Regarding sharing itself, adolescents apply different curation practices with varying frequency (Figure 6). Most often, adolescents curate their audience by choosing contacts directly that should be reached ( $M = 3.8$ ,  $SE = .06$ ). However, the variance of this frequency is relatively large. While 19.7% of adolescents very often select specific contacts (7 on the scale), 27.0% never do so. Less often, adolescents use multiple platforms to reach different contacts ( $M = 3.1$ ,  $SE = .06$ ). Furthermore, adolescents rarely use multiple accounts per platform ( $M = 1.7$ ,  $SE = .04$ ): 71.8% of adolescents never use that form of curation. Public sharing is rare as well ( $M = 2.1$ ,  $SE = .05$ ): 57.9% of adolescents never share things publicly.

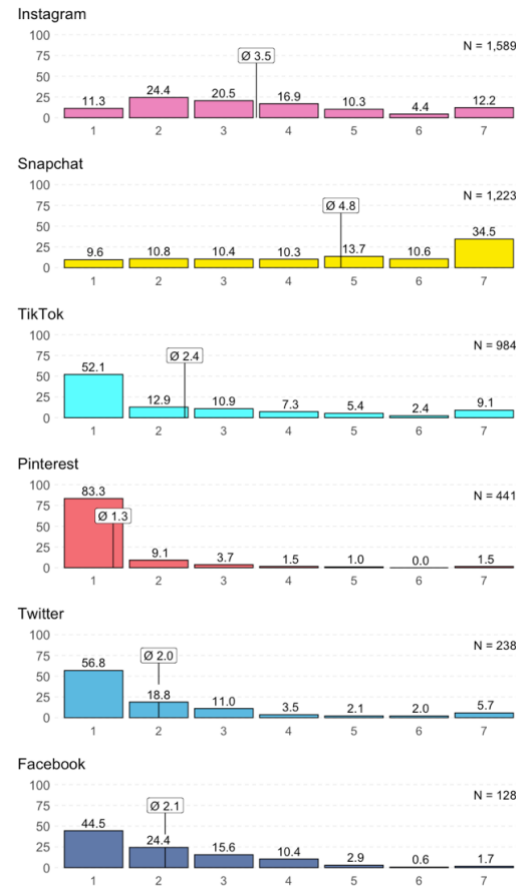
**COMMUNICATION PRACTICES**

**Figure 4. Consumption.**



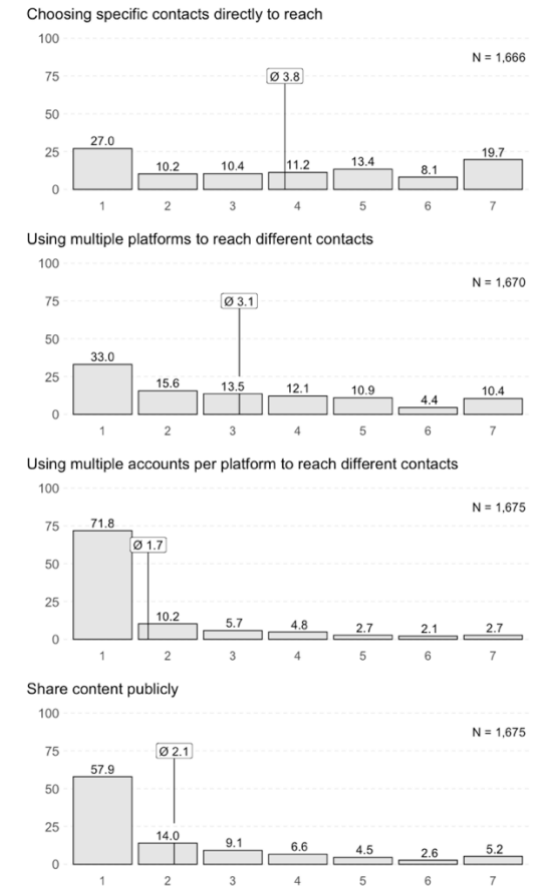
*Note.* Question: How often do you use the following platforms/apps to consume content (not posting or chatting)? Scale: Never (1) – Very often (7).

**Figure 5. Sharing.**



*Note.* Question: How often do you use the following platforms/apps to post, share, or send content? Scale: Never (1) – Very often (7).

**Figure 6. Curation.**



*Note.* Question: When you post, share, or send something, how often do you do the following to reach specific people? Scale: Never (1) – Very often (7).

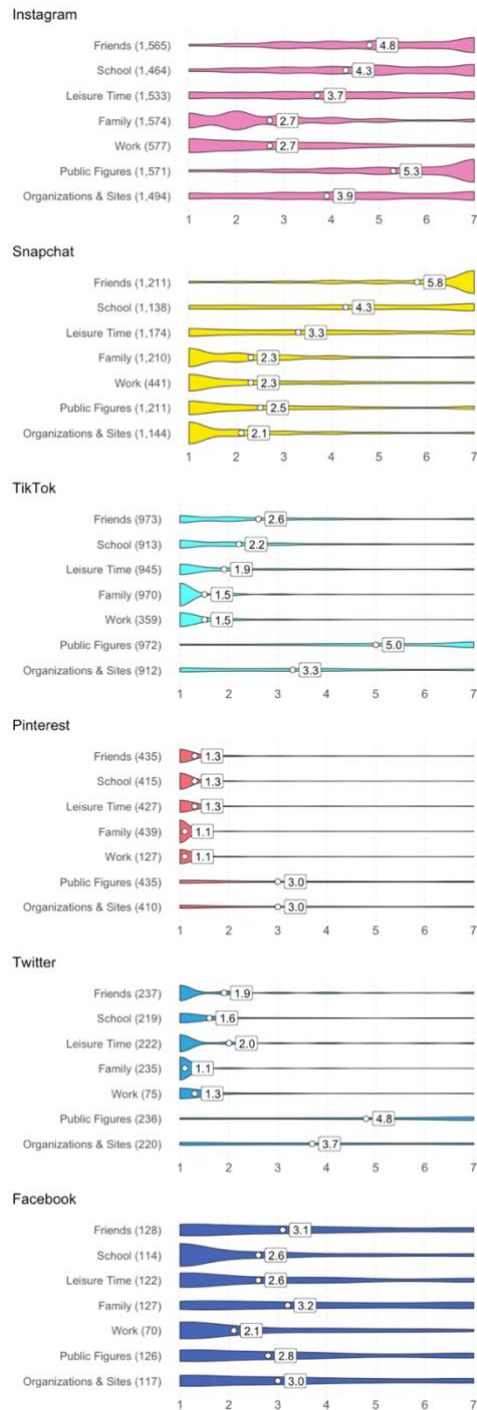
### ***Communication Partners: Perceived and Addressed Actors***

Although the frequency of use and detailed analysis of consumption and sharing already provide in-depth insights into social media use among late adolescents, we also examined the perceived (Figure 7) and addressed (Figure 8) communication partners across platforms. The density plots display the distribution of the answers on a scale from *never* (1) to *very often* (7) and indicate the mean. While we considered all users of the platforms in the case of perceived actors, we only considered users who stated that they share content on the respective platform with regard to addressed actors.

On Instagram, adolescents most frequently perceive public figures ( $M = 5.3$ ,  $SE = .10$ ), followed by friends ( $M = 4.8$ ;  $SE = .09$ ) and peers from school ( $M = 4.3$ ;  $SE = .10$ ). Addressed actors most often include friends ( $M = 4.1$ ;  $SE = .10$ ) and peers from school ( $M = 3.2$ ;  $SE = .10$ ). On Snapchat, adolescents most frequently perceive friends ( $M = 5.8$ ;  $SE = .10$ ) and peers from school ( $M = 4.3$ ;  $SE = .11$ ), and most often address friends ( $M = 4.8$ ;  $SE = .12$ ). Public figures and sites play a subordinate role on Snapchat. The opposite is the case on TikTok. Here, adolescents rarely perceive actors from the personal environment, and most often perceive public figures ( $M = 5.0$ ;  $SE = .12$ ). When someone is addressed on TikTok, it is most often a friend ( $M = 3.0$ ;  $SE = .20$ ). On Pinterest, adolescents most frequently perceive public figures ( $M = 3.0$ ;  $SE = .23$ ), as well as organizations and sites ( $M = 3.0$ ;  $SE = .23$ ), but they seldomly use the platform to address others. On Twitter, adolescents frequently perceive public figures ( $M = 4.8$ ;  $SE = .31$ ), organizations, and sites ( $M = 3.7$ ;  $SE = .32$ ) and seldomly address friends ( $M = 2.5$ ;  $SE = .42$ ), acquaintances from leisure activities ( $M = 2.4$ ;  $SE = .50$ ), or the public ( $M = 2.7$ ;  $SE = .50$ ). Finally, on Facebook adolescents perceive and address a large number of actors to the same extent, albeit rarely in comparison to Instagram and Snapchat.

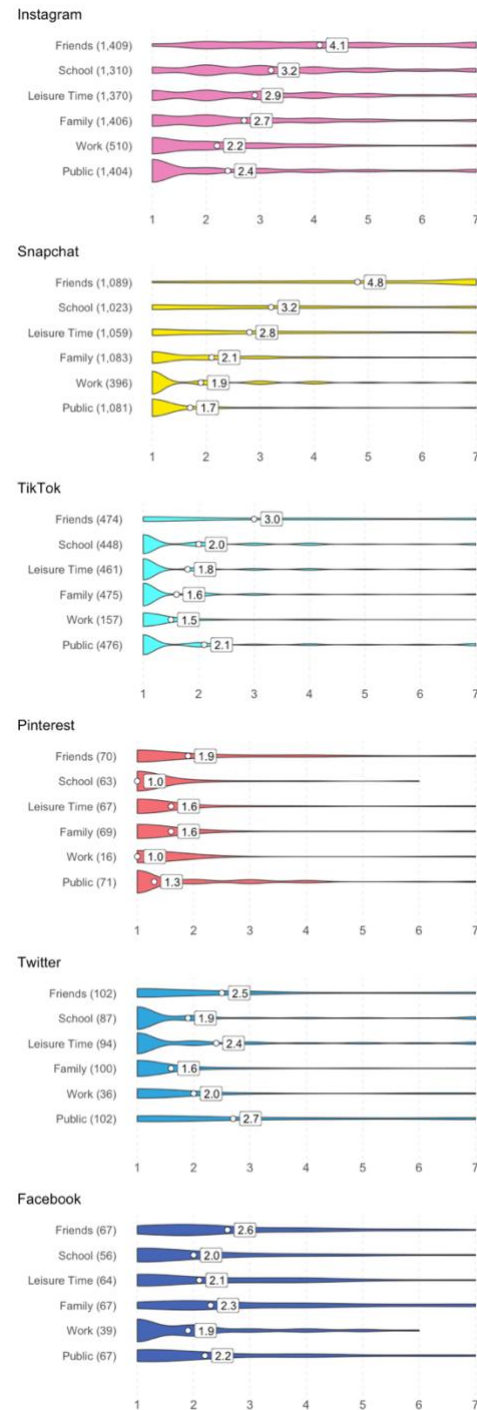
## COMMUNICATION PARTNERS

**Figure 7. Perceived actors.**



*Note.* Question: How often do you see things on the following platforms/apps from [...] ? Scale: Never (1) – Very often (7). Plot: Density plot, representing the distribution of answers.

**Figure 8. Addressed actors.**



*Note.* Question: How often do you post, share, or send things on the following platforms/apps that [...] can see? Scale: Never (1) – Very often (7). Plot: Density plot, representing the distribution of answers.

## Discussion

The analysis of communication platforms adolescents use, communication practices they apply, and the communication partners they perceive and address yields detailed insights on the social media use among late adolescents in Switzerland. With regard to the use of platforms and the occurrence of repertoires (RQ1), the findings demonstrate that Instagram, Snapchat, and TikTok are the most widespread and most frequently used platforms. Furthermore, they confirm previously found gender and age differences (Bernath et al., 2020). However, by following the call to investigate simultaneous platform use (Boczkowski et al., 2018), we identified a variety of social media repertoires. Although the repertoire of Instagram, Snapchat, and TikTok is the most common, it is only a minority of adolescents who particularly use these three platforms. Just as many adolescents use either the two platforms Instagram and Snapchat or only Instagram. The third most widespread platform, TikTok, does not appear in three of the five most widespread repertoires and is often part of repertoires including Pinterest, Twitter, or Facebook. Due to the increasing opportunities to adapt the visibility of perceived and addressed actors (Treem et al., 2020) and the overlap of features and functionalities between platforms (Phua et al., 2017; Quan-Haase & Young, 2010), the assumption is reasonable that the constellation of platforms impacts the role of single platforms. For adolescents that consume algorithmically curated Instagram Reels, for instance, the similarly curated TikTok For You Page might be less relevant. Analogously, one-on-one communication might take place more frequently on Instagram among adolescents that do not use Snapchat. Such assumptions, however, can only be clarified with in-depth repertoire research. Hasebrink and Hepp (2017) suggest drawing on gathered knowledge about frequencies and repertoires to conduct qualitative research with the aim of learning more about the purpose of social media platforms. The findings of this study provide a valuable basis for such efforts.

Regarding communication practices (RQ2), the findings indicate that adolescents use platforms differently in terms of consumption and sharing. Instagram and Snapchat

stand out as platforms that adolescents use for both practices, while they predominantly use other platforms for consumption. Instagram allows to both observe and self-present (Alhabash & Ma, 2017; Sheldon & Bryant, 2016), and Snapchat lives up to its hybrid character as a social media platform (Hollenbaugh, 2019) and instant messaging service (Piwek & Joinson, 2016). In contrast, adolescents use TikTok for the consumption of public material and rarely to share. In terms of curation practices, adolescents most frequently choose specific contacts that are addressed directly. Furthermore, they curate audiences more often by using multiple platforms rather than multiple accounts per platform. The use of secondary accounts identified in previous research (Costa, 2018; Duffy & Chan, 2019; LaBrie et al., 2021) might have become less important due to the popularity of Snapchat in this age group and the adoption of certain key features (e.g., the ability to send ephemeral content targeting specific audiences) by other platforms (Choi et al., 2020). Future research might specifically focus on curation practices on the level of platforms to further investigate this potential development. Given that today's social media increasingly afford the deliberate separation or collusion of contexts (Davis & Jurgenson, 2014) on the level of features with single targeted instances of communication (e.g., Snaps, posts and Stories), more research on practices and curation efforts in shorter time frames might be required.

The results regarding perceived and addressed communication partners (RQ3) confirm how adolescents use platforms to communicate with contacts belonging to distinct social contexts. Adolescents use Instagram to perceive public figures as well as friends and peers from school and to address personal contacts. Snapchat is almost exclusively limited to exchanges with friends, peers from school, and individuals known from leisure time. In contrast, TikTok, Pinterest, and Twitter primarily afford to perceive public figures, organizations, and sites, while audiences are rarely addressed on these platforms. The minority of adolescents that use Facebook perceive and address a wide range of actors, from personal contacts to public figures. These findings indicate that adolescents' struggle with context collapse found in previous research might no longer be as omnipresent among today's adolescents. While Facebook users continue to be confronted with a wide range of

audiences to be addressed and might still experience the need to manage context collapse (boyd, 2008), this seems less so on other platforms. In line with the results regarding adolescents' curation practices, the overlap of audiences therefore might less reflect an undesired context collision but rather active engagement in context collusion (Davis & Jurgenson, 2014). It seems therefore important to investigate, in more detail, where context collusion is taking place and to what extent context collision is still an issue—an area of research that is empirically neglected in communication literature (Loh & Walsh, 2021).

In summary, the results confirm that late adolescents use social media platforms in a range of repertoires and for varying purposes. Adolescents consume and share with different frequency and perceive and address different actors depending on the platform. Furthermore, they more likely address specific audiences via platform selection and the features offered on each platform than via multiple accounts per platform. These insights can guide research on social media use and social media effects among adolescents. Knowledge about repertoires, practices, and communication partners can facilitate qualitative research that further explores the subjective meaning of particular media repertoires (Hasebrink & Hepp, 2017). In guided interviews, adolescents could share why they do or do not use certain platforms, how their consumption and sharing practices changed with the adoption of a new platform, and how they manage social contexts across platforms. The findings presented in this article offer valuable reference points. Furthermore, such insights can be of use for research examining social media effects. The identified communication practices and communication partners across platforms indicate where particular media effects might take place. While peer influence processes might be more prevalent on platforms such as Instagram and Snapchat, the impact of influencers might be investigated on Instagram and TikTok. The increasingly studied sharing effects (Geber et al., 2021; Valkenburg, 2017) might be more prevalent on Snapchat, where most sharing takes place. Regardless of whether the focus lies on media use or media effects, these findings underline the need to take the multifaceted nature of social media use into account.

### **Limitations**

There are several limitations we would like to address. In terms of communication platforms, the study was limited to the six most frequently used social media in Switzerland. However, it would be appropriate to consider additional platforms. On the one hand, popular instant messenger applications (e.g., Messenger, WhatsApp) might prove relevant to accounting for sharing practices in one-on-one communication with personal contacts or specific social contexts in group chats. On the other hand, platforms affording consumption of public content, such as video-streaming services (e.g., YouTube) or live streaming services (e.g., Twitch), might play an important role in social media use. This is particularly the case due to their overlapping features and functionalities with the platforms we examined in this study. Algorithmically curated YouTube Reels might serve equivalent purposes as Instagram Reels or the TikTok For You Page. Live streaming, on the other hand, is afforded not only on streaming services, such as Twitch, but also on YouTube, TikTok, Instagram, and Facebook. Accordingly, such platforms should be studied as part of repertoires with regard to consumption in particular.

The second limitation concerns the communication practices we considered. Although the distinction between consumption and sharing provides valuable insights, it does not cover the spectrum of the practices today's social media offer. To include more detailed forms of sharing (e.g., self-produced vs. third party material) and further interaction practices (e.g., likes, comments) might yield novel insights. Furthermore, the use of different features for both consumption and sharing would facilitate identifying more precisely which channels users turn to to perceive or address different actors (e.g., personal messages, posts for a curated audience, public posts).

The third limitation pertains to the communication partners we considered. In the present study, we made a relatively rough distinction between public figures, organizations, and sites. However, this leaves room for interpretation regarding which actors adolescents actually perceive.



A final limitation is related to the fact that this study differentiated between communication platforms, practices, and partners but did not distinguish between the type of material. Consequently, the findings provide no insight into the type of information that is perceived and shared on social media (e.g., personal content, information, entertainment).

### **Conclusion**

This study provides insights into social media use among late adolescents in Switzerland. Drawing on a unique sample of 15- to 19-year-olds, we explored repertoires of communication platforms, frequency of communication practices, and the presence of perceived and addressed communication partners. Based on these three key aspects of social media use, significant differences between the platforms became apparent.

Instagram is the most popular platform and is included in most social media repertoires among late adolescents. The platform enables the consumption of material of friends and public figures and the sharing of content with personal contacts. The public is addressed to a lesser extent. Snapchat is almost as widespread as Instagram and is part of the top three repertoires, as well as most other repertoires. Although Snapchat affords the consumption and sharing, communication partners are mostly limited to friends and schoolmates. TikTok is particularly common among younger adolescents and present in two of the three most common social media repertoires. However, in contrast to Instagram and Snapchat users, TikTok users mainly consume content from public figures. Pinterest is especially widespread among girls and almost exclusively used for the consumption of content from public figures, organizations, and sites. Twitter is more popular among older adolescents and boys for consumption and, occasionally, to share material with friends and the public. Facebook is used rarely and is more common among older adolescents. In contrast to the other platforms, Facebook users consume and share material from and to a variety of actors, ranging from friends to the public. The overall differences between the platforms in terms of present actors are reflected in the frequencies of curation practices.

Adolescents often address contacts via the selection of particular platforms or the features they offer, while they rarely use multiple accounts per platform to curate communication partners.

The findings of this holistic approach to social media use inform future qualitative research assessing the role of social media in adolescents' everyday lives, suggest to examine curation practices on the level of feature use and shorter time frames, and demonstrate the need to reconsider the frequently studied context collapse (boyd, 2008), as well as curation efforts, such as the use of multiple accounts per platform (Duffy & Chan, 2019; LaBrie et al., 2021). Furthermore, the introduced approach facilitates to investigate social media use among other segments of the population and to consider additional predicting variables. Drawing on numerous studies indicating the role of sociodemographic characteristics in social media use (e.g. Hargittai, 2015, 2020; Mellon & Prosser, 2017) future studies might therefore follow the introduced perspective to explore what communication platforms certain segments of the population use, what communication practices they apply and what communication partners they perceive and address with more rigor.

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