

# MEDIATIZATION OF THE YOUTH: THE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA AMONG THE HUNGARIAN TEEANAGERS<sup>1</sup>

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## ABSTRACT

### **Mediatization of the youth: The use of social media among Hungarian teenagers**

In this study I wrote about the findings of the BKF *Viadukt* research among Hungarian teenagers. Thanks to the focus group research and the survey, we found that Hungarian teenagers openly and willingly talk about their social media use habits, give access to their data, profile and cover pictures, the structure of their social network and the applications they use. They usually gave access to save their personal data for the research. We were able to determine what social media channels were popular among them in 2013, which were used more actively, and for what purposes.

**Key words:** the use of Internet, social media, public opinion

Because of the impact of the new media or the new new media, the use of media among teenagers has changed a lot in the last few years in Hungary. The emphasis related to media using habits changed from mainstream media consumerization to participation in social networks.

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<sup>1</sup> This article based on my conference presentation at: Művészet és technikai civilizáció, 2013-12-02, Eger, Hungary and my publication: Gyorgyi Retfalvi, „Először gépezek, aztán telefonozok, majd gépezek” Közösségi média használat magyar középiskolások körében – Alapadatok, in: “Kommunikáció, Média, Gazdaság”, 2014/1, BKF, Budapest, pp. 87-118. Supported by: TÁMOP-4.2.2/A-11/1/KONV-2012-0050 (VIADUKT).

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As is well known, a large part of the late-modern media environment is in change because of fast developing technology, the consequences of digitalization, and media convergence, which created a hybrid media environment. According to Jan van Dijk there were two so-called media revolutions in the past few years: a technological and a structural one. The technological revolution is the continuous shift from analogue to digital information processing: “The most recent technical communications revolution is characterized by the introduction of digital artificial memories, and digital transmission and reproduction” (van Dijk 2005: p. 15). This structural revolution is media convergence, as he calls it *integration*, where the differences between various kinds of media have disappeared: “The most important structural characteristic of the new media is the integration of telecommunications, data communications and mass communications into a single medium. It is the process of convergence. For this reason, the new media are often called multimedia” (van Dijk 2005: p. 7). The idea of media convergence applies wider interpretations and different levels. As Jenkins notes in his book: “Convergence does not occur through media appliances, however sophisticated they may become. Convergence occurs within the brains of individual consumers and through their social interactions with others. Each of us constructs our own personal mythology from bits and fragments of information extracted from the media flow and transformed into resources through which we make sense of our everyday lives” (Jenkins 2006: pp. 3-4). According to Paul Levinson with the appearance of online social networks, a new communication and social revolution has started. He calls the new media environment the new new media, where information can be distributed more quickly and widely, which might lead to new forms of society, new ways of living and new power structures within societies (Levinson 2013).

In communication and media theory, the paradigm of the information society was displaced by the paradigm of the network society. Networks are “sets of interconnected nodes through which communication flows occur, that are open flexible and adaptable forms able to expand without limits as long as communication codes are shared within the network” (Castells 2005). As van Dijk notes “With little exaggeration we may call the 21st century the age of networks” (van Dijk 2005) and where new networks are based on common interests.

In the online social networks, like Facebook, Instagram, Google+, Twitter, Tumblr etc, the information traffic patterns are integrated. In Jan van Dijk’s theory there were four types of basic information traffic before the appearance of online social networks. He calls them: *allocution*, *registration*, *consultation* and *conversation*, adapted from Jan L. Bordewijk and Ben van Kaam’s theory about the four definable traffic patterns (Bordewijk, van Kaam 1986): „The birth of integrated networks implies a combination of allocution, consultation, registration and conversation in a single medium” (van Dijk 2005: p. 21) and this new convergent communication pattern is called an *integrated information* pattern according to van Dijk. In the late-modern media environment there are a lot of

shifts among the basic patterns also. The allocation, which was the significant use of the media at the old, broadcast media-systems, like passively consuming radio and television programs, is shrinking. The opportunities for registration and consultation patterns are growing in the new media, and these two communication patterns have become an involved part of the new, integrated pattern, and also as conversation. “The most fundamental change takes place in the pattern of conversation. Conversation is an exchange of information by two or more local units, addressing a shared medium instead of a centre, and determining the subject matter, time and speed of information and communication themselves. In the new media, the existing channels for conversation are not only enlarged, but they can also contain more kinds of data. The old media (telegraph and telephone) only offered room for speech and a limited amount of data. Local computer networks and data communication over telephone lines caused an explosive growth in the capabilities for transporting data and text. The new media added a substantial new quality: the possibility to combine speech, data and text in one message. Then pictures could be added, and since a number of decades we can even add moving images to these messages. This qualitative enlargement of the range of options for conversation is enabled by broadband facilities” (van Dijk 2005: p. 14). As we have found in our research, the biggest part of teen media use is relevant to this conversation as an information traffic pattern. The theoretical background of this article is from the theories of the new media, the late-modern media environment, the network society and the term *silent generation* from recent youth research in Hungary. The use of media is a socially and culturally embedded practice and as such, it is a natural part of the mediatization.

At the BKF University of Applied Sciences there was a research project called, *Viadukt* in 2013, where three media researchers studied the use of social media among Hungarian teenagers. Nora Schleicher, Zoltán Gayer and the author of this article, tried to map the levels of social media use among Hungarian secondary school students. In the preparation phase of this research, there were two focus-group researches to develop the basics and the focuses of the bigger, nationwide representative, quantitative research which was the backbone of the research. We asked 600 teenagers in Hungary with a questionnaire, about their online media using habits. The research is based on two focus group researches and on a nationwide representative survey among Hungarian high school<sup>2</sup> students. In this study I will focus on which kind of new media/social media sites are used by Hungarian teens, with what periodicity and for what purposes.

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<sup>2</sup> In Hungary secondary education can be of three types: vocational school (normally 3 years), professional secondary education (4 years), academic secondary education (gymnasium) (4 years).

*“First I’m using my phone, then I’m using my computer, then I’m using my phone”*

At the *Viaduct* research we explored the meaning and identity constructor media users of the late-modern media environment about their social media using habits. We questioned teenagers aged 15-19 years old in Hungarian high-schools.

Participation and interactivity are key characteristics of the new media and even more with regards to the social media which is called the new new media by Levinson and which is totally based on the participation and social interaction of its users. The actors’ activity and the complex network of their cooperation is also typical in social media. The numbers of teens participating in social media seems to be very high, as reflected by the numbers.

The Hungarian Youth<sup>3</sup> 2012 research basically focused on a wider population than we (from 15-29 years old, the study by Gergely Kitta) but the population which we were concentrating on was a part of this research as well. They called this generation the *silent generation*. According to their research the youth in Hungary is spending their free time at home, becoming more and more distant and careless in their social life, and live with not too much of a perspective regarding the future.

We can partly rely on research about media consumption, that is a study by Gergely Kitta but we disagree with his finding that this generation is a *silent generation*, because we found that high school students are really active in social media and they find their voice using chat applications even though they look shouted-in at social life and programs.

The “Results of the Hungarian Youth 2012” survey show that young people’s access to a computer, the Internet or a mobile phone has ceased to increase at the pace observable during the previous, almost ten years. The number of households in possession of a computer has increased by a mere 1% (from 79% to 80%), while the proportion of young people who use a computer has remained stagnant at 84% during the examined period, as Gergely Kitta’s analysis reveals. The proportion of young people’s homes with an Internet connection has increased, albeit to a lesser extent (from 70% to 74%). Mobile telephone use also reflects a tendency of stagnation, with 93% of the age group claiming to be in possession of a cell phone in both 2008 and 2012. According to the research, the proportions of several electronic appliances used by young people, such as music players, cameras or games consoles, have fallen dramatically. The marginalisation of these is due to the fact that integrated media tools such as smart phones, provide simultaneous access to functions earlier available only through separate appliances. The focal points of Internet and mobile telephone usage also underwent a transforma-

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<sup>3</sup> The Hungarian Youth 2012 is the 4th Hungarian comprehensive research about young people made by The Kutatopont Research Group in 2012. See more: [http://kutatopont.hu/files/2013/09/Magyar\\_Ifjusag\\_2012\\_tanulmanykotet.pdf](http://kutatopont.hu/files/2013/09/Magyar_Ifjusag_2012_tanulmanykotet.pdf).

tion between 2008 and 2012. The significance of e-mails and messaging by SMS or real-time chat programmes has suffered a setback, partly due to the popularity of social networking sites and their integrated messaging services. 69% of those between the age of 15 and 29 use social networking sites, which represents an increase of 6% since 2008” (Kitta 2013: p. 355).

Kitta says that Hungarian teenagers’ attitude fits into the normal, global media consumption attitude at their age, which is measured as being open to technical and content updates using more than one media tool at the same time, and very well at digital literacy in a higher proportion.

### *Which Social Media Services are Used by Hungarian teens?*

In the research we asked where the subjects have a user account among the different social media sites and how? First, we asked them about access to the Internet via computers, tablets and mobile phones. And we found that 82% of the youth has a mobile phone, while 18% doesn’t. At the same time 58% of the teens has a Smartphone with an Android operation system and 10% has an iPhone. Regarding computers, we have found that 55% of the youngsters own their own computer, 17% has an account on a computer in a family, 16% has only a tablet, 7% owns a tablet and has access to another computer and only 5% of the population has no access to a computer.

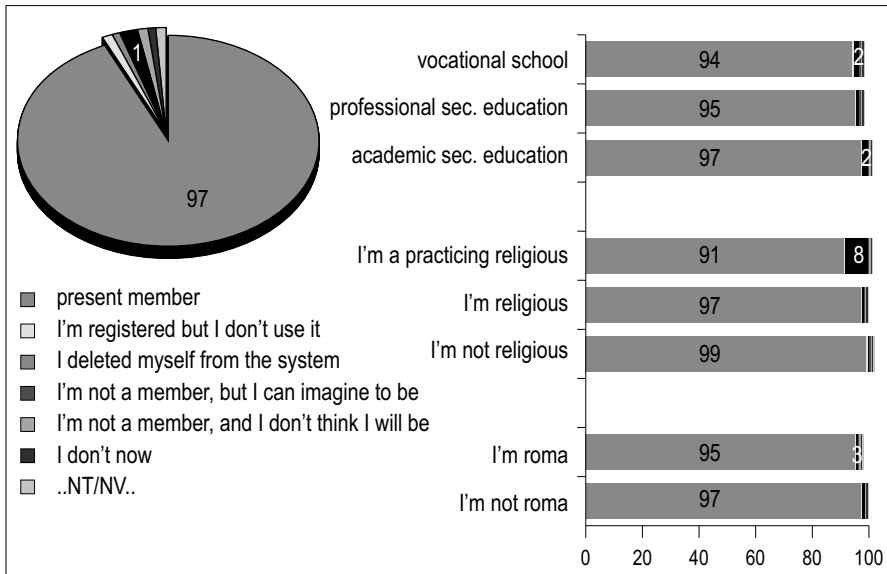
This generation is the first to have gone through their entire teen years with Internet and social networking sites on a daily basis. They are totally adept and very familiar with the late-modern media environment.

According to our results, 97% of the interviewed subjects are on Facebook at least with one user profile. 77% of the teenagers are registered on YouTube, 69% use Skype, 51% use the Viber service, 42% are registered on Google+, and 25% use Instagram. Basically, their social media presence is very high and they are present in several virtual communities at the same time using more than one application in a parallel manner. But they prefer Facebook from amongst the social media services offered. That is why I’m concentrating in this study, on the use of Facebook among them.

The first interesting question is related to the results of the numbers of the registered Facebook users from the young population, who are the 3%, who are not present on Facebook.

We have found that there are significant differences only in two segments: the religiosity and the school form, not even minority roots, age, or place of residence have an impact on it as you can see in the chart above. The number of non-Facebook users is higher among those teens who are attending vocational schools or are practicing members of a religious group. But we have to emphasize that in these two groups, Facebook presence is still very high: 92% or 91%, but they are less connected to their parents and teachers on the social media site.

**Figure 1. Facebook – Total Sample**



Source: Rétfalvi 2014 (N = 612).

Along with Facebook, most of the high school students has a YouTube registration – 77%. This number is also very high and I have to note that for watching movies and listening to music, it is not obligatory to sign up so the students who are registered are also content providers, not only consumers. The high number of registered teens indicates a higher activity level as well.

According to our research, those who are not registered in YouTube, are younger, live in the countryside, or in smaller villages; more of these teens' parents have no high school education, or have more than two children in the household, or have Roma roots.

The next popular social media site is Skype. Skype is for non-public social interaction among people. The hardware required for using all of Skype's functions include a camera for your computer or for your mobile phone or tablet; 69% of the high school students are registered members and active, 7% are registered but non-using, 2% deleted themselves from the system, 6% are not registered but suppose they will be in the future, and 14% are of the opinion that they will never be a member. And yet, there are 2% of high school students who have never heard of Skype. Everybody has heard of YouTube and Facebook, but 2% of Hungarian teenagers has never heard of Skype.

Amongst those who are not members, we found significant differences related to place of residence: Skype is less used in villages, and that's where those teens who have never heard about the existence of Skype live. The parents' education level also has an impact, the lower the parents education the higher the possibility

that the teen doesn't use Skype. Vocational school students registered less than the more prestigious school students. And fewer students from the Roma minority use Skype than from the non-Roma.

The Viber mobil application is like Skype for call, videocall, and chat, more than half of the teenagers use Viber on their mobile phone. Viber is possible to use with all mobile operation systems. There are significantly more Viber users in the capital, than in the countryside. And all the other factors which I have mentioned related to Skype is relevant to the Viber users and non-users as well. Overall, the users of the Viber applications are from socially higher status groups. The non-users are from socially lower status groups or teenagers with disadvantages or living in villages.

Google+ is the Google social media surface, which started a bit later than the others. Less than half of Hungarian teens are members of it according to our data. It is actually not true because everybody who has YouTube (77% of the students do have it) registration has to be accompanied by Google+ also. But we got this number from the questionnaire asking the high school students themselves. And some of them may not know that he or she has an account automatically with a Gmail or YouTube account.

25% of Hungarian teenagers are Instagram users, 2% has an account but don't use it, 11% are planning to register but 41% are sure they will not be registered on it. Instagram use in Hungary is increasing. For Instagram activity a user needs content providing skills, it is about sharing pictures, music and movies. Among users, there are more students from Budapest, or bigger cities, with better possibilities, better educated parents, and less children in the household, with better grades at school. As we have found, Instagram, even though it is totally free to register, somehow is mainly the virtual playground for those who are better advantaged, and older, non-religious, non-Roma teenagers with better grades, and not for those students living with disadvantages, or being religious. 68% of the Roma high school students have not even heard of Instagram.

About the microblogs: there are 18% registered on Twitter and use it actively, 8% has an account but don't use it. There is a significant difference related to gender: that is girls are tweeting more than boys. The popularity of Twitter is increasing, younger students use it more than the older ones from this age group. Tumblr shows almost the same characteristics: younger girls use it more. Picasa is used by 15% of the teens, 4% are registered non-users, 29% have not heard of it. WhatsApp is used by 15%, 4% are registered non-users, 36% don't know anything about it. Only 4% are registered on FourSquare, and only 2% has a Flickr, Pinterest and MySpace account. So these 3 online applications are not popular among Hungarian teenagers.

From our survey it seems that Hungarian high school students are actively and colorfully using social media possibilities; they are members at least on one surface, but usually on 2 or more surfaces, at the same time. They prefer Facebook and YouTube. Facebook is the dominant social media platform among them. Ins-

tagram, Tumblr and Twitter count as an elite media and use of these platforms is increasing among teens.

The next question is to examine the periodicity and frequency of social media use.

### *Frequency of Social Media Use*

From the focus group conversation I have found specific parts to introduce data about the frequency of Facebook use among high school students in Hungary.

Marcell: *I'm online all day.*

Babett: *At school sometimes. If I'm bored during breaks, but I go everyday online at home.*

Miklós: *There was a funny story, when my teacher sent me an FB message which said: Do not use Facebook! And we were both sitting at the Geography class (all the participants were laughing).*

In this chapter I will show the frequency of media use related to a specific social media platform, where the registered, active teen users' number is more than 50%. So I will focus on Facebook, YouTube, Skype and Viber. From the total sample of 83% of the students who are on Facebook once or more every day, 13% use Facebook several times a week, some use it once a week or a month, and 2% never use it.

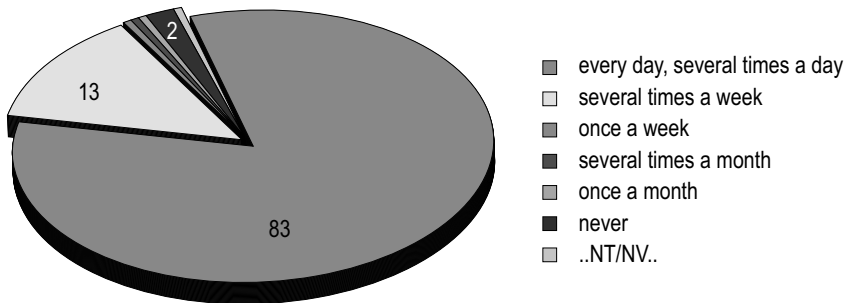
We have found significant differences among students related to their location. 85% from students living in Central Hungary use Facebook every day. 5% living in East-Hungary never use Facebook. Those students attending vocational schools, or having low grades, or who have Roma roots, use Facebook less than the others and 5% of the Roma high school students never use Facebook.

We can almost discern similar differences in the case of YouTube use. Among those who know YouTube, 68% use it every day, 21% use it several times a week, 4% once a week, 2% once a month and 3% never use it. Students living in Budapest or bigger cities use it more. And those whose parents education is worse, or who are attending vocational schools, or are members of the Roma minority, use it less.

The frequency of Skype use seems to be a bit different. Amongst who know this online telephoning system, 26% use it every day, 28% several times a week, 16% once a week, 15% several times a month, 13% once a month, or rarely, and 2% never. We have found that although Viber is less popular than Skype among those who know it, the frequency of use is higher than in the case of Skype, as 58% use it as a part of their daily routine, 23 several times a week, 8% weekly, 5% several times a month and 2% never.

In addition to the very high number of teenagers registered on several social media sites, the frequency of use is also very high among them. But if they are all day online, what are they doing in virtual places? I will try to answer this question in the last chapter of this article.



**Figure 2. Frequency of Use: Facebook – Among Those Who Know Facebook**

Source: Rétfalvi 2014 (N = 612).

### *For What Purposes Are They Using Social Media?*

In the late-modern media environment, the focus of media use is changing from consuming media content to interaction, and the channels of mass media and the channels of interpersonal communication are integrating. As I have mentioned in the first chapter from the information traffic patterns, conversation has become more and more important. What students told me about their media consumption at the various focus groups was:

Laura: *I check, if I got a link to the fashion section on Facebook.*

Dávid: *Funny pictures and other things.*

Anett: *I only check personal messages.*

Media consumption of teenagers is Facebook centred in Hungary. They usually only visit other pages if they got a link to it via Facebook, or nothing happened on Facebook. With what frequency do they publically share content on Facebook? 1% post on Facebook more than 50 times a day, 3% never. The average posts something several times a week. We have found significant differences among students whose parents have a higher level of education – they post less, and they also seem to be attentive about the content. Those teens attending vocational schools care less and post more, 11% of them post more than 50 posts a day. This is a high difference within the Hungarian population, because only 1% of the population posts 50 times a day.

We also asked them about uploading their own media content like photos. 1% signed to post their own photos more than 50 times a day, 1% 10-50 times a day, 3% 1-10 times a day, 13% several times a week, 14% once a week, 25% several times a month, 38% once a month and 5% never. We have an interesting extreme finding: students living in the countryside, in small villages, or those who have more than two siblings, or are attending vocational schools, are the ones who post

the most and the less photos. If they upload photos they upload the most (50 times a day) but if they decide not to upload, they never upload.

From our research it is clear that the most popular social media sites among Hungarian students are those, which allowed a conversation traffic pattern. And we have found that they usually also use Facebook more for conversation than public content providing or consuming.

Dávid: *I usually talk via Facebook with my acquaintances. I talk one or two hours every day. During school recesses more.*

Nóra (the moderator): *Can we say that you use Facebook for chatting?*

Everybody: *Yes!*

Dávid: *I only care about chatting.*

They prefer Facebook, because they can chat with a lot of other people at the same time on it. So we have found that the *silent generation* continuously talks on social media surfaces. This shows that in the new new media, the focus is on conversation traffic patterns.

Anett: *I have 900 Facebook friends, and I talk to 30-40 of them every day, but I talk with the others also, only there can be 20-30 with whom I don't talk usually.*

Nóra (the moderator): *You are chatting with 30-40 people every day?*

Anett: *Well, yes. There are people to whom I talk in the morning, with some of them during the day, or in the evening, it depends when they have time for that.*

Nóra: *How many people do you chat with every day?*

Miklós: *15.*

János: *With everybody who just sends a message...*

There is a channel switching in the channels use for chat caused by the increasing penetration of smart phones. The emphasis, in the case of the hardware, is on switching from computers to mobile communication equipment like tablets and mobile phones. But with the possibilities of mobility, not only are the channels changed, but the amount of chatting also. Teenagers can link with the rest of the world via mobile equipment, they can participate in conversations with their peer group easily online, so they are continuously talking with each other via the non-visible channels of social media. We also asked them about their chatting habits. We asked which applications they use more for chatting. Among those who own smart phones (N = 595) 82% use Facebook chat, 10% use Viber chat, 3% use Skype, 2% use SMS, and some of them use other application like WhatsApp.

We also asked them about the frequency of their chatting. Among those who own a smart phone (N = 595) 26% use Facebook for sending messages more than 50 times a day. 34% send messages 10-50 times a day, 30% 1-10 times a day, 8% several times a week.

We found that 97% of high school students are member on Facebook. 90% of Facebook user high school students use Facebook to chat more than once a day. So we have the justification that they basically use Facebook for chatting with each other online. We also have significant differences related to the school type.

More students at an academic secondary education school use Facebook to chat more than 50 times a day, and less, only 19% from the vocational schools. There are differences among the Roma and the non-Roma students as well. Only 14% of the Roma students use Facebook to chat more than 50 times a day, but 27 from the non-Romas. In other segments, we couldn't find relevant differences.

### Summary

In this study I wrote about the findings of the BKF *Viadukt* research among Hungarian teenagers. Thanks to the focus group research and the survey, we found that Hungarian teenagers openly and willingly talk about their social media use habits, give access to their data, profile and cover pictures, the structure of their social network and the applications they use. They usually gave access to save their personal data for the research. We were able to determine what social media channels were popular among them in 2013, which were used more actively, and for what purposes.

The most popular social media is Facebook. Although Facebook offers a lot of application and function, they mainly use Facebook to chat. And they usually prefer social media which offer a chatting application. They spend their time in this virtual playground or chat room. They think that although some of them already were victims of cyber bullying or harassment (35% said they were), they think Facebook is a good thing in their life, 7% of the students questioned said Facebook is good, 75% said Facebook is mostly good, 13% think, that Facebook is mostly wrong, and only 1% answered, that Facebook is totally wrong. So we can conclude that besides its mistakes, most of the teenagers not only use, but also like Facebook. And we suggest the moniker of *silent generation* be replaced by the use of the term *chatting generation*.

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## STRESZCZENIE

### **Mediatyzacja młodości: użytkowanie mediów społecznościowych wśród węgierskich nastolatków**

W artykule zostały omówione rezultaty badania BKF *Viadukt* przeprowadzonego wśród węgierskich nastolatków. Zgodnie z wynikami badań fokusowych (zogniskowanego wywiadu grupowego) oraz ankiety węgierskie nastolatki otwarcie i chętnie rozmawiają o swoich przyzwyczajeniach (nawykach) związanych z korzystaniem z mediów społecznościowych, udostępniają swoje dane, profil oraz zdjęcia, strukturę sieci społecznych, a także aplikacje, których używają. Badania umożliwiły wskazanie, jakie kanały mediów społecznościowych były popularne wśród węgierskich nastolatków w 2013 roku, które z nich były aktywnie wykorzystane i w jakich celach.

**Słowa kluczowe:** użytkowanie Internetu, media społecznościowe, opinia publiczna