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ZHAW Department of Applied Psychology in cooperation with Swisscom

JAMES study: Flat rate streaming is increasingly popular with adolescents

Netflix, Spotify and similar services are setting the tone for young people in Switzerland. Thanks to flat rate streaming, more than half of young people have virtually unlimited access to films, music or games. These are the findings of the 2018 JAMES study conducted by the Zurich University of Applied Sciences (ZHAW) and Swisscom. Young people mainly communicate via Instagram, WhatsApp or Snapchat on their mobile phone. Only one in five adolescents now use Facebook regularly.

A third of the young people in Switzerland have their own video or music streaming subscription to Netflix, Spotify or other similar providers (video: 33%; music: 35%). These two subscription types have thus more than doubled their subscribers over the last two years. More than half of all households have such streaming subscriptions (video: 56%; music: 51%). Flat rate gaming subscriptions which give users unlimited playing time are also available in about a quarter of the households in Switzerland. These are the findings of the most recent JAMES study, which asks about 1000 young people between the ages of 12 and 19 about their media usage. The 2018 survey is the fifth such study to be conducted since 2010. "In previous years, it was primarily the growing use of smartphones that changed the usage habits of young people. Now music and video streaming services are playing a big role," says ZHAW researcher and study director Daniel Süss, who conducted the JAMES study together with fellow project director Gregor Waller and his team.

Streaming affects content

Flat rate streaming not only gives young people in Switzerland access to a huge range of films, music and games. It also influences their preferences. For example, the most popular series is "House of Money," which is distributed through Netflix. Of the ten most popular series, no fewer than seven come from this series portal. "In addition to the seemingly endless volume of content on offer, the system uses algorithms to suggest further content based on prior use of the service. However, it remains to be seen how this entertainment paradise will affect use," Waller says. "The individualisation of our society is thus also reflected in the media, where we can put together our own 'media menu' according to our personal preferences. In the future, media literacy will increasingly refer to the ability to put together the ideal media menu from the millions of possibilities," he adds.

With video games too, there are more and more flat rate gaming subscriptions available, such as PlayStation Now and the Xbox Game Pass. As a consequence, 23% of young people and one-third of all households already have access to a wide range of games. Such games can also increasingly be played on many different platforms, a trend that is promoting the dissemination of games like the current favourite, "Fortnite." At the same time, wearable game consoles are losing relevance because more and more people are playing on mobile phones or tablets. Only 37% of young people now possess their own portable game console (2016: 45%). Flat rate streaming is having an impact on the equipment young people own. Radios, DVD and MP3 players are losing importance. Whereas four out of five teenagers (81%) owned an MP3 player six years ago, just two in five do so now (2016: 53%; 2018: 38%).



Messenger apps replacing SMS

Nearly all (99%) 12- to 19-year-olds have their own mobile phone. They use it for about two-and-a-half hours a day – primarily to communicate: 95% of them daily or several times a week using a messenger app. It's therefore hardly surprising that Instagram is the most popular smartphone app, followed by WhatsApp and Snapchat. What's more, young people primarily use mobile phones for entertainment purposes, be it listening to music (89%), surfing the Web (89%), social networking (88%) or watching videos (82%). By way of comparison, regular phone calls have settled at about 70%, SMS text messaging has dropped to 49% (2012: 93%).

Snaps and stories dominate

Fully 94% of the young people in Switzerland are signed up with at least one social network. However, up to a fifth of all accounts are not actively used. Almost all the study's respondents have an Instagram (87%) or Snapchat (86%) account. The majority uses them several times a day. By contrast, Facebook has moved several steps down the popularity ranking, with only 52% of young people having an account. This trend is also reflected by usage figures: whereas almost four-fifths of adolescents visited Facebook several times a week or more in 2014, only about a fifth currently do. But the older they are, the more likely they are to use Facebook regularly.

On social networks, young people are reserved and reveal little publicly. Most frequently, they view other people's photos, videos or texts (82% several times a week or more) or "like" them (80%). Chatting within social networks is also popular (75%). By contrast, fewer than half of the respondents regularly post photos, videos or text. If they do, they are mostly time-limited posts (45%) or those intended for a selected audience (29%). Snapchat and Instagram support temporary posts ("snaps" or "stories" respectively) which disappear after a specific time. In addition, three-quarters of Switzerland's young people have set their accounts to restrict who can see their photos and videos. "It appears that sensitizing adolescents about the dangers of publishing content on social networks is bearing fruit," Gregor Waller says. "Our young people are reserved, protect themselves using privacy settings or post material only for a limited time."

Online time remains constant

Overall, the amount of time young people spend on the Web has remained constant at two-and-a-half hours per week since 2016. When they are online, teenagers mainly use social networks and video portals like YouTube for entertainment. They are increasingly viewing videos on the Internet (85% do so at least several times a week) and watching less television (69%). Search engines such as Google are the primary source of information over the Internet. On the other hand, fewer and fewer young people regularly read newspapers, whether online (2010: 26%; 2018: 18%) or on paper, both free (2010: 49%; 2018: 21%) or by subscription (2010: 32%; 2018: 11%).



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More time spent with family, less with friends

For the first time since the survey began, there have been changes in non-media-based leisure activities. Compared to 2010, 12- to 19-year-olds are doing more with their families (2010: 16%; 2018: 27% at least several times a week), but meet friends less often (2010: 81%; 2018: 70%). "This corresponds to the social trend of 'social cocooning,' whereby people are increasingly withdrawing into their private lives at home," Daniel Süss explains. "The family is becoming more important, the circle of friends less so. This can be seen as a counter-trend to suspected global insecurity," Süss adds. Aside from meeting friends, 67% of young people regularly engage in sports, while 65% like doing nothing at all now and again.

Cyber-grooming has increased

One-third of the adolescents in Switzerland have already been contacted online by a stranger with unwanted sexual intentions. Almost half (43%) of 18- and 19-year-olds have received such unwanted attention. However, even 12- or 13-year-olds are being targeted. This so-called "cyber-grooming" has increased significantly in the last four years (2014: 19%; 2016: 25%; 2018: 30%). "It is therefore important to educate young people at an early age and support them in dealing with such contact," says Michael In Albon, Swisscom's youth media protection officer. Nearly a quarter of respondents (23%) said they have been attacked online at least once. Cyberbullying has remained more or less stable since 2010. "Teenagers of all backgrounds and children as young as 12 are being subjected to cyberbullying. That's why it's important that prevention work starts in primary school," In Albon says. Almost half of Switzerland's adolescents (42%) have struck up a relationship with someone they met online.

The JAMES study

The JAMES study maps the way young people in Switzerland use the various media. The abbreviation JAMES stands for "Jugend, Aktivitäten, Medien – Erhebung Schweiz" or Swiss Youth Activities Media Survey. It is conducted every two years. Since 2010, the Zurich University of Applied Sciences (ZHAW) has been surveying a representative sample of more than a thousand young people aged between 12 and 19, in Switzerland's three major linguistic areas, about their media use and leisure activities.

The ZHAW School of Applied Psychology

The ZHAW's School of Applied Psychology is the leading centre of excellence for the teaching and practice of scientifically based psychology in Switzerland. It comprises the Psychological Institute and the Institute of Applied Psychology (IAP). Through bachelor's and master's degree courses, research and development as well as consultancy and continuing training, the school makes practical use of sound scientific findings for the benefit of companies and individuals in their private lives and at work.

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Swisscom as cooperation partner of ZHAW

Using different electronic devices to access media is part of the everyday lives of young people today. Media literacy and the protection of minors are among the core cultural skills that include reading and arithmetic. Swisscom has been involved in education since 2001. More than 6000 Swiss schools use its Internet for Schools programme, in which media experts visit more than 30,000 pupils, parents and teachers a year to promote media literacy. Within the framework of its entry into the e-sports industry, Swisscom is attaching great importance to media support for children and adolescents and providing a variety of information. The JAMES Study is commissioned by Swisscom and conducted by the ZHAW every two years.

Further information:

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