The Dilemmal Socialization on Social Media Platforms

A Quantitative Study on the Experience of Online Socialization and the Infrastructure of Social Media Platforms

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Abstract
Social media effects may affect self-perception and the way media users live their offline lives. The purpose of this essay was to examine the phenomenon of social media saturation in order to understand the possible risks to the development of human identity during the adolescent period. Hence, these risks may be generated by being exposed to social comparison, cyberbullying, self-validation, and self-perception in a sensitive age when self-image is still fragile and being formed. The purpose of this essay is to examine the psychological tendencies of human beings while interacting with their peers on social media platforms. Hence, this will give us a clearer view of what would be achieved by conducting interviews. Moreover, a selection of theories will be applied to those interviews in order to associate those theories with what has been said by respondents. Hence, Meyrowitz’s theory will be used in relation to understanding the identity adaptation to online connection and linked to Goffman’s discussions of “onstage” and “backstage” (Meyrowitz, 1985: 5). After this, the essay will investigate how users’ self-perception and social comparison are enacted while socializing on social media platforms. Furthermore, this essay sheds the light on how identity is constructed online in the sense of belonging to a community on a social media platform as well as of gratification coming from peer validation in a virtual community. To be able to explain this, the “Social Identity Theory” will, therefore, be discussed (Teo, Matti, et al, 2017: 23). This will be discussed by mentioning theories like “Mediatization” (Couldry & Hepp, 2013). And lastly, the sociological concept of Habitus, minted by Pierre Bourdieu will demonstrate the process of adaptation towards unspoken social codes existing in virtual communities (Markham, 2017: 55).
As found in the four qualitative semi-structured interviews with social media users, respondents are surrounding themselves with like-minded social groups which provide them with confidence about their own system of beliefs. Nevertheless, their perspectives are often marked by notable social pessimism and a lack of incentive to engage in conflictual interactions with others on social media. The results pointed out the perception among the interviewees that the impact of social media on identity formation is largely confined to adolescent users. Many users self-report significant daily screen time and are aware of the risks of social bubbles. Most of the respondents denied being subjected to cyberbullying, while they were surfing on social media, so the respondents’ physical lives were not affected by cyberbullying even for those who mentioned their exposure to cyberbullying. All the respondents expressed a sense of jealousy to some extent, even though some of them showed awareness of the thought that people post their lives from a perfect angle while hiding the flaws and not showing the imperfections of their lives on social media. Lastly, social comparison was an incentive feeling affected most of the respondents, and in their own experience, social media affected their character development and self-perception since they were exposed to social media at an adolescent age.

Key words: Front stage\backstage, algorithm, mediatization, social identity, cyberbullying, social Habitus, phatic communication, adolescence

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Preface
I would like to extend a warm thank you to the people who have enabled the realization of this research paper. Firstly, I would like to thank my tutor, Roman Horbyk for his guidance and support. Moreover, I would like to express my gratitude to the respondents who enriched this essay with a valid vision of their own experience. I have ensured the privacy of the interviewees, according to the GDPR policies of Södertörn University (2021).
# Table of Contents

Abstract ........................................................................................................................................... 1  
Preface ............................................................................................................................................... 2  
1. Introduction .................................................................................................................................. 5  
2. Previous Research ....................................................................................................................... 6  
2.1 Preliminary Purpose of Social Networking .............................................................................. 6  
2.2 Social Media User’s Self Image ................................................................................................. 6  
2.3 Cyberbullying and Self-image .................................................................................................... 7  
2.4 The Daily Consumption of social media ................................................................................... 8  
2.5 Algorithms and Social Media Platforms ................................................................................... 10  
2.6 Filter Bubble and Echo Chambers ........................................................................................... 11  
2.7 Summary .................................................................................................................................... 12  
3. Essay purpose ............................................................................................................................. 13  
4. Theory .......................................................................................................................................... 14  
4.1 Simulation and Simulacra .......................................................................................................... 14  
4.2 Frontstage/Backstage .................................................................................................................. 14  
4.3 Social Identity Theory ................................................................................................................ 15  
4.4 Mediatization ............................................................................................................................. 15  
4.5 Social Habitus ............................................................................................................................ 16  
5. Qualitative Method ....................................................................................................................... 17  
5.1 Research Design ....................................................................................................................... 17  
5.2 Research Approach ................................................................................................................... 17  
5.3 Selection ..................................................................................................................................... 18  
5.4 Method Discussion .................................................................................................................... 19  
5.5 Ethical concerns ......................................................................................................................... 20  
6. Analysis ........................................................................................................................................ 20  
6.1 Social Media Expert .................................................................................................................. 20  
Algorithm and The Technical Part of Social Media Platforms ......................................................... 20  
User’s benefits from algorithm and Technology ............................................................................. 22  
Software Engineers and Online User’s Data .................................................................................... 22  
6.2 Social Media Users Interviews ................................................................................................. 23  
Social Media Daily Use .................................................................................................................... 24
1. Introduction

Since the dawn of history, the role of socialization and communication have always been vital in the progress of humanity by serving the prosperity of civilization around the globe. Historically, communication began with hand signs and wall drawings, while it also depended on establishing a primitive dialogue. As a result, the ability of communication and the possibility of establishing dialogues helped with crystallizing a sense of collective understanding towards the necessity of building evolved communities. In contrast, today, people can reach each other in a heartbeat thanks to the revolutionary leap of technology and telecommunication. Therefore, human beings can now imitate Athens’s ancient symposium by communicating and leading discussion virtually via chat rooms and groups on social media platforms. Consequently, the evolution of communication came as a result of the continuous evolution of human beings and their social habits. Understanding what virtual communities can bring to their user’s life is a way to understand virtual communities. Thus, virtual communities can be a place where the tribal feelings of belonging to a group of people are demonstrated as an interactional ritual guarded by unstated social codes and norms.

The social media revolution is probably one of the greatest events in the lives of human beings in the 21st century. It is an update in the way people are connecting and interacting with each other. And this update has developed with time until it has reached a place of importance for people that level with physical interaction. Then, social media platforms, for some of them, work as social tools, contributing to connecting people for free around the globe. However, many questions are circulating around the intentions behind free services and the alleged utopia of social interactions. Moreover, people are divided on the role of social media in the life of mankind. Additionally, some people see that social media can replace physical contact with virtual, and others see that the ease of escaping from reality on social media is harder in real life. While others perceive virtual communities as a futile place for humans to learn the experience of doing difficult things and how to get along with people we do not like in physical life. We can easily unfriend someone we do not like, but we cannot easily unneighbor someone who we are bother by in our physical life.
2. Previous Research

2.1 Preliminary Purpose of Social Networking
In a research paper, Licoppe and Smoreda (2005) point out an observation about the purpose of social networking, which is to establish communication. Nevertheless, it is not necessary to establish humane communication. This means that communication is much shorter, compressed and briefer nowadays than how it used to be in the past (Licope & Smordea, 2005: 331). In addition, Licoppe and Smoreda describe this type of communication as "phatic communication," which means social communication for the sake of connection only and with no purpose of gaining any useful information. Furthermore, this social function does not aim to exchange information but to express sociability in a brief, short, nonverbal way, like sharing memes, if we want to project it onto modern social networking (Licope & Smordea, 2005: 331). Nonetheless, Vincent Miller points out that these phatic communications are not necessarily irrelevant or meaningless. Social media users who understand the scheme of an inside joke or its implications and connotations that only they can understand embrace recognition and intimacy toward such types of communication. “In many ways, they are very meaningful and imply the recognition, intimacy, and sociability in which a strong sense of community is founded” (Vincent, 2008:395).

2.2 Social Media User’s Self Image
According to NORC Center for Public Affairs Research (2017), referenced in “The Impact of Social Media Use on Appearance Self-esteem from Childhood to Adolescence” by Silje Steinbeck et al. (2012) in the journal “Computers in Human Behavior”, the self-perceived image of a social media user is associated with a global concept about what a physical appearance should look like. Hence, social media creates a global concept of self-esteem for most adolescents and especially among female adolescents. With time, the role of physical appearance on social media becomes more primal, as it becomes a part of self-presentation and idealization for selective portrayal, in order to increase self-presentation. (Steinsbekk, et al., 2021: 1).
Consequently, this may lead adolescents to drown in a type of normative pattern that orbits around self-appearance and presentation that are difficult to maintain on social media platforms (Steinsbekk, et al., 2021: 1). As a result, this method of self-portrait may eventually result in
self-distress and negative emotions like sadness and low self-esteem (Higgins, 1987:34). However, several researches conducted about the effects of social media on self-presentation have not yet given total consensus, in which some of researches show a positive relationship between self-appearance on social media and self-esteem. While other researchers demonstrate a negative association on self-image, while others found no association whatsoever (Steinsbekk, et al., 2021: 2). Similarly, Wichstrom and Von Soest (2016) claim that Self-presentation on social media can be noticed to be more important to female adolescents than to male adolescents (Wichstrom & Von Soest, 2016: 24). As a result, the process of social media consumption will affect the self-esteem of female adolescents to a greater extent than male adolescents’ (Knauss, Paxton, & Alsaker, 2007: 110). In contrast, Gonzalez and Hancock (2008) claim that the state of self-presentation on social media platforms can contribute with increasing self-esteem since adolescents present their best image there, “interpersonal interactions that take place online may lead actors to generate self-fulfilling prophecies through interpersonal feedback” (Gonzalez & Hancock, 2008: 180). In addition, adolescents often receive positive feedback about their self-presented image while interacting on social media platforms, which helps boost their self-perception and self-esteem (Valkenburg, Peter, & Schouten, 2006: 587). Nevertheless, this does not mean that the state of interaction on social media is not risky. And it is as mentioned in “Online Hate and Harmful Content”, by Teo Keipi, Matti Näsi, et al. (2017), that a mental collision happens when online users try to reflect on the lives of others on their own realities (Keipi & Näsi et al., 2017:24). Consequently, this reaction leads the users’ identity to have unclear evolvement amid the process of comparison with others in the midst of learning social codes of the user’s surrounding groups’ language accommodations on social media. “As individuals carry out this process while approving or disapproving of all manner of content and behaviour, a sense of self in relation to others takes shape in new ways and can lead the individual to norms that reinforce past values and group affiliations” (Teo, Matti, et al., 2017: 23). Nevertheless, adolescents are less likely to be affected by negative online experiences causing identity or mental distress if they have a good relationship with their physical social surroundings like parents and friends (Teo, Matti, et al., 2017: 85).

2.3 Cyberbullying and Self-image

Tijana Milosevic defines in her book “Protecting Children Online? Cyberbullying Policies of Social Media Companie” (2017) that cyberbullying is an aggressive behaviour existing majorly in the age of adolescents when kids tend to “involve a form of real or perceived power
imbalance” to form a type of domination over other kids by using electronic technologies (Milosevic, 2017: 13). Milosevic also published a study by “The Research Center of Cyberbullying” in the US indicating that, on average, around 27 percent of students who participated in most recent bullying studies between 2007 and 2016 were reported as victims of cyberbullying during their activity on social media at some point in their lives (Milosevic, 2017: 13). In another study mentioned by Milosevic, which was built on collecting samples from 25 European countries, it shows that children from the ages of 11 to 16 were 7 to 12% more likely to be prone to cyberbullying in the year 2014 than in the year 2010. Furthermore, the risk of being harmed is reported by half of the kids who were exposed to cyberbullying, in which half of them felt of distress. The distress was due to the painful messages and hate speech they received online (Milosevic, 2017: 13). However, Milosevic clarifies that cyberbullying is one of the factors that play a role in encouraging people to commit suicide. Nevertheless, children who committed suicide after getting exposed to cyberbullying had psychological vulnerabilities combined sometimes with “unique social circumstances” or “self-harm tendencies” (Milosevic, 2017: 22). However, not every child who has been exposed to cyberbullying has a high risk of developing anxiety or depression, but frequent cyberbullying can increase the risk of such mental problems (Milosevic, 2017: 22). Similarly, Milosevic also refers to the results of research regarding kids who reported their experience of being bullied in the UK. Kids between the ages of 9 and 16 have been exposed to cyberbullying by 21%, whether online or offline. However, only 18% of them reported feeling distressed as a result of bullying (Milosevic, 2017: 26).

2.4 The Daily Consumption of social media
Qualitative and quantitative studies have been conducted by the Korean Government under the supervision of the National Youth Policy Institute, referenced in (Kim, 2016: 367), focusing on the matter of “excessive Internet use” among Korean youths. First, the surveys used in the study targeted both students and their parents. Second, the gathered data of 2099 surveyed students, distributed among 125 schools and their parents, consisted of five waves starting from 2004 until 2008 and analysed statistically (Kim, 2016: 367). Furthermore, this study aimed to study self-rated health with a close association to psychiatric symptoms like depression, suicidal thoughts, interpersonal, and behavioural problems. The research also targeted students between the ages of 12-15, and it reveals an undeniable relationship between online activities like chatting, emailing, and participating in communities and self-reported mental health among Korean students (Kim, 2016: 372). In addition, the same study takes into account
gender, age, time spent on social media applications, night time sleep, family income, the degree of closeness between the Korean students and their parents. Furthermore, it considers the type of relationships that these students have within their neighborhoods as well as the type of interaction that these students have with their surrounding community (Kim, 2016: 367). As a result, the findings of this study suggest a notably negative relationship between online activities and mental health problems resulting in suicidal thoughts. “The central finding of this study is that, net of control variables at two different levels of analysis, there is a strong and negative relationship between online activities (chatting, e-mailing, participating in communities or clubs and using bulletin boards) and self-reported mental health and suicidal ideation among a nationally representative sample of Korean students” (Kim, 2016: 373).

The same study revealed a grave danger of cyberbullying and its severe effects on students’ mental health by causing some negative mental outcomes like depression and suicidal thoughts. As a result, cyberbullying has been linked to a variety of negative outcomes, including depression, emotional distress, substance abuse, externalized hostility, and even suicidal ideation, in both victims and perpetrators (Kim, 2016: 373). Consequently, social media is contributing to social distress for people at transitional moments in their lives by complicating their transitional moments due to the state of frequent social comparison with their peers’ life on social media. Therefore, the state of continuous comparison is happening between humans all the time. “In the absence of objective verifications of individual attributes, people seek information about themselves through social comparison, particularly by evaluating their abilities and opinions against comparable others’ “(Yang, Chia-Chen, et al., 2018: 93). In the same sense, Chloe Berryman and Christopher Ferguson et al., conducted a study about social media consumption. The study found a potential negative impact on the mental health of 471 undergraduate students caused by social media use. To clarify, this study was applied to Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube users, in order to measure the inflicted effects of social media on the psychology of young adults. “These latter variables will include suicidal ideation, social anxiety, loneliness, and decreased empathy” (Berryman, Ferguson, et al., 2017: 309). However, the research admits that the way social media platforms are used is what affects the characteristics and mental state of those young adults, not the time spent on social media platforms.
2.5 Algorithms and Social Media Platforms

Taina Bucher elaborates in her book “If Then: Algorithmic Power and Politics” (2018) on the existence of algorithms in all life, from politics, economy, services, and media. In addition, algorithms possess a type of ambiguous power with an unknown manifestation. Henceforth, algorithms cannot be understood without understanding those who programmed them, and those who are using them. After all, understanding the context of use and the way in which algorithms are put into use are the keys to understanding their power. Not to mention that the bias or neutrality of an algorithm is the result of the programmer’s work and the data that the algorithm is based on. In addition, algorithms work according to the data collected by government institutions and corporations, so algorithms reflect only what has already been collected by governmental institutions. “If the machine that is supposed to compute the likelihood of future crimes is fed statistical data tainted by centuries of racial bias materialized in police reports, arrests, urban planning, and the juridico-political systems, it would be misleading only to talk about the power of algorithms in producing such risk assessments” (Bucher, 2018: 36). Taina Bucher’s understanding of algorithmic power is mainly based on Michel Foucault’s understanding of power as based on knowledge. Nevertheless, Bucher does not clarify what type of power these algorithms have. And it is not so much about how much power algorithms have as it is about when they use it. “What exactly is it that algorithms ’do’ and what are the constitutive conditions necessary for them to do what they do? How are algorithms enlisted as part of situated practices, and how do they operate in different settings? How can we develop a productive and critical inquiry of algorithms without reducing it to a question of humans versus the machine?” (Bucher, 2018: 4).

Bucher uses the term “black box” to describe the ambiguity of algorithm mechanisms, in which in the game of power, algorithms can be used in a neutral or evil way depending on the situation and the purpose of use. Moreover, Van Dijck talked about how friendships and interactional relationships between users on social media have an embedded relationship with the software beneath social media platforms that secures and maintains our connectivity with our friends on those platforms. “What is important to understand about social network sites is how they activate relational impulses” (van Dijck 2012: 161). Moreover, the state of making social media platforms look more engaging is how algorithms cultivate an incentive for users to like, comment, and participate more frequently. In return, this creates an impression of a normative engagement with the people on social media that turns to be as a driving force to stay connected, which is like the idea of Foucault’s “driving force in the governing of the self”. Foucault is also describing the norm of engagement for individuals playing the social game and willing to be
accepted as members of a society. And they need to display a “whole range of degrees of normality indicating membership of a homogeneous social body but also playing a part in classification, hierarchization and the distribution of rank” (Foucault, 1977: 184). Furthermore, scholars are now afraid that algorithms may endanger our expression of freedom by functioning as gatekeepers to monitor, mould, reform, and influence the way public opinion is formed. In the light of creating a concept like filter bubble to control and customize the type of information exhibited for each user according to their interests, this may manipulate with users’ ideology, beliefs and way of thinking (Bucher, 2018: 34). Frank Pasquale describes in his book “The Black Box Society” (2015), the absolute power of search engines and social networks to influence user opinions since technology was never meant to be neutral but rather embedded with certain biases and values. “The power to ensure that certain public impressions become permanent, while others remain fleeting” (Pasquale, 2015: 14).

2.6 Filter Bubble and Echo Chambers

Filter bubbles are a part of the social engineering and identity-making on social media platforms like Facebook, steered by algorithms and based on the mechanism of excluding information and posts contradicting the views of the user. Seargeant & Tagg claim that “Algorithm selectively predicts the information that users will find of most interest based on data about each individual – including signals such as their history of Likes, search history, and other past online behaviour” (Seargeant & Tagg, 2019: 42). Hence, the personalization by algorithm leaves users in a state of isolation from any other social spheres but the ones that they share the same user’s interests as an ‘echo chamber’. However, it is hard to say that Facebook’s filter bubble is jeopardizing democracy, since the argument is not supported with sufficient studies and systematic studies and empirical, theoretical support for this phenomenon (Min & Wohn, 2020: 23). Eli Parser, the man who coined the term filter bubble shows his concern about the filter bubble being “undermine civic discourse” by making people prone to falling for propaganda and manipulation by politicians and advertisers (Min & Wohn, 2020: 24). Moreover, the influence of echo chambers may be devastating by saturating users with information that confirms their convictions with fake news and falsifiable beliefs, according to the echo chamber thesis. “Users in today’s Internet are trapped in a chamber in which they listen to only similar voices, and this is driving political fragmentation, polarization, and extremism” (Min & Wohn, 2020: 24). Nevertheless, it is hard to say that the filter bubble of Facebook is jeopardizing democracy, spreading fake news, or establishing a confirmation bias phenomenon. Since the argument is not supported by sufficient studies to back this claim with
evidence, it can be proven without a systematic study and empirical, theoretical support for this phenomenon (Min & Wohn, 2020: 23). In a study surveying 271 Facebook users on the exposure of echo chambers, the results explain how the filter bubble tends to feed Facebook users with disagreeable viewpoints more frequently than similar viewpoints. (Min & Wohn, 2020: 30). Moreover, the filter bubble depends on cross-cutting information for those with weak and strong ties to Facebook users. “Those who have many weak ties in their network – strangers and acquaintances – are less likely to be trapped in the silo of like-minded viewpoints” phenomenon (Min & Wohn, 2020: 23). On the contrary, the existence of strong ties represented by family and friends lowers the cross-cutting information due to the decrease in diversity on account of an increase in the similar religious or ethnic social surrounding (Min & Wohn, 2020: 27). Therefore, the steering wheel of the filter bubble represented by the algorithm is countered by how social media users are choosing their networks and contacts (Min & Wohn, 2020: 23). Similarly, Min and Wohn's study "Underneath the Filter Bubble: The Role of Weak Ties and Network Cultural Diversity in Cross-Cutting Exposure to Disagreements on Social Media" in the journal of “Social Media in Society”, shows that for every four Facebook friends who share the same political ideological perspective, there is at least one friend who disagrees. This study explains how disagreement is not a rare phenomenon on Facebook. (Min & Wohn, 2020: 25). In like manner, the same essay demonstrates that Facebook’s use leads to “depolarization of partisan attitudes among users” in the long run (Min & Wohn, 2020: 25). Nevertheless, looking for similar opinions that confirm one’s pre-existing perspective does not necessarily mean neutralizing the different points of view and opinions that the user comes across. And the users, thus, come across information that agrees with their beliefs “without sacrificing contact with other opinions “(Min & Wohn, 2020: 25).

2.7 Summary
Social media effects on self-image are mixed and relative. Some of the effects are positive relating self-appearance on social media to self-esteem, while sometimes the effects are negative on self-image, while others have no association whatsoever. Self-presentation on social media can be observed to be more important for female adolescents than for male adolescents. Self-presentation on social media platforms can contribute to increasing self-esteem since adolescents present their best images there. South Korea’s National Youth Policy Institute and the study of social identity theory agreed on an existing relationship between identity distress, the user’s excessive use of the internet,
and the instability in family and friendship relationships. In addition, identity distress is a common problem in the lives of young people today. This is caused by the expansion of choices, self-comparison, and life ambiguity while a young person is transiting to a new chapter in life. While the study of Chloe Berryman and Christopher Ferguson focused more on analysing whether the type of engaging or the time spent on social media is what matters. And it came up that the type of engagement is what causes the decrease in mental health. However, according to the same source, it is not yet clear whether the study is totally accurate, but it remains an interesting question to look for (Berryman, Chloe, et al., 2017: 313).

Cyberbullying is a phenomenon endangering the stability of adolescents’ mental health, but it is only one of the factors that would encourage adolescents to commit suicide. Psychological vulnerabilities and tendencies toward committing suicide are also factors. Nevertheless, frequent cyberbullying can increase the risk of such mental problems. Algorithms possess a type of unknown power and they called” black boxes”. Algorithms try to keep people connected on social media platforms by entrapping them with interactions by liking and commenting. Algorithms possess a type of ambiguous power with an unknown manifestation, and they cannot be understood without understanding those who programmed them. Algorithms create an impression of a normative engagement for users to like and comment and participate more frequently.

Technology was never intended to be neutral, but rather to be imbued with specific biases and values. Filter bubbles are also a part of the making of virtual identity when people are convinced of their falsifiable beliefs by sieving them with information and communities that support and confirm their belief system. On the other hand, how media users choose their networks decides whether they will be surrounded by like-minded viewpoints or more diverse viewpoints.

3. Essay purpose

The study aims to discuss the perceived effects of social media on the human identity and self-perception in the age of adolescence experienced by users and reflected in their daily use. In addition, this essay will observe the effects of cyberbullying. Furthermore, in order to understand the technological factors represented by algorithms and filter bubbles which are the main distributors of media content on social media platforms. Hence, this essay will examine
the technical side of social media platforms and then try to make a connection with a theoretical mainframe to understand the state of users’ interactions online. The aim will be reached through answering these questions.

How do social media users perceive the impact of social media use from an early age on their own identity and self-perception? How would virtual bullying affect their realities and physical lives?

4. Theory

4.1 Simulation and Simulacra

The concept of “simulation and simulacra” was founded by Jean Baudrillard, describing how we live in a world of simulation. A Simulacrum according to Baudrillard, is a representation that precedes reality. It appears when media representation becomes so deeply integrated with our perception, that reality becomes irrelevant, and media representation replaces reality. Baudrillard suggested that simulation threatens our conceptual system by blurring our perspective on concepts like true, false, imaginary, and real. The simulacra are physical representations of phenomena such as cinema, media, and shopping. According to Baudrillard, simulacra work provides us with an image of reality that transforms our reality not only into hyperreality as a copy of reality, but the simulacra also generate the definition of reality in our world (Baudrillard, 1983: 5). In addition, Baudrillard saw that reality does not exist anymore in any of the imaginations we have in our minds, but rather is an imitation of what we used to have. “It is no longer a question of imitation, nor of reduplication, nor even of parody. It is rather a question of substitution signs of the real for the real itself” (Baudrillard, 1983: 7).

4.2 Frontstage/Backstage

“This section is taken from the theoretical section of my co-authored B-uppsats (2020). I was the author of that section”.

“No Sense of Place” (1985) is a book written by Joshua Meyrowitz that discusses the proposals of his mentors, Marshall Mcluhan and Erving Goffman. These proposals concern human interactions in a social sphere and the effects caused by the newly emerging electronic media on the psychology of a human being. Goffman’s idea of frontstage/backstage explained how the consciousness of the human being is nothing but a performance in the arena of a society (Meyrowitz, 1985: 2). This arena is like any theatre, it has a front stage where others are watching us and where we practice our social norms and socialize with our peers. At the same
time, it is the place where we act professionally in front of our work colleagues and managers. In contrast, the backstage is where we are more comfortable and freer from social norms and would rather be ourselves. It is the place where we take off our norms’ outfit and act more casually away from pretending (Meyrowitz, 1985: 5). To sustain stability between the two stages, according to Goffman, we need to rehearse, train, and repeat our roles, because with practice we become better performers in our social arena. Hence, practicing is something that would help us to coordinate our body language with different situations we face or arenas we stand on in our daily life. Joshua Meyrowitz, on the other hand, does not think that face to face interactions and the media are parallel lines that will never meet. Meyrowitz sees that electronic media is nothing but a simulation and rearrangement of the social arenas we have in reality (Meyrowitz, 1985: 4).

4.3 Social Identity Theory
Originally, the theory was developed by the British social psychologists Henri Tajfel and John Turner in 1978. The theory suggests that people categorise themselves and others to make their world understandable and they use these categories to make social comparisons between different groups. In addition, Social Identity Theory is concerned with group phenomena within the individual and assumes that a notable source of self-concept is determined by one’s belonging to various social groups while also discriminating against other unfavoured groups. Consequently, the simple act of categorising the self and others into groups causes discrimination against outsiders and favouritism towards one’s own in terms of how resources and sentiment are distributed (Teo, Matti, et al, 2017: 23).

4.4 Mediatization
Mediatization is a theoretical framework describing the interaction between media, culture and society. It also describes the process of technological adaptation by media to adapt to cultural and social changes (Hepp et al., 2015: 318). Moreover, mediatization is a meta process constructed out of a long process of interrelation between the changeable and continuous evolution of communication. On one hand, this process reflects on media, and on the other hand, examines, as well, the cultural changes happening in a society on the other hand (Hepp...
et al., 2015: 320). In addition, the role of communication has accompanied humankind’s evolution since the dawn of history. Thus, this meta process is an outcome generated by capturing the cultural changes of everyday life, and how they is reflected politically, economically, and culturally by media content on media platforms to reach communities (Couldry & Hepp, 2013: 191). Couldry & Hepp mention two dimensional aspects of Mediatization, the qualitative and quantitative aspects. The qualitative dimension specifies certain media that overlap with sociocultural change: “It matters what kind of media is used for what kind of communication” (Couldry & Hepp, 2013: 197). While the quantitative dimension demonstrates the state of media saturation in societies, which leads people to get used to this media and to fit their way of communication according to media and its technology. (Couldry & Hepp, 2013: 197).

4.5 Social Habitus

Pierre Bourdieu, a French sociologist, is the one who created this sociological concept to explain the contradiction between social requirements to be accepted in society and the social position a person holds among their peers. “Via habitus, the individual develops a particular lifestyle and set of practices and value orientations that justify the hierarchical position of the individual and make it meaningful” (Hjarvard, 2013: 140) These demands come from the external objectivity of the social world and are projected onto the internal worlds of the people who live in that social world. Those people are, therefore, reflecting on their internal subjectivity and interpretations to know how to act in their social spheres (Hjarvard, 2013: 138). Significantly, speaking about the concept of “Habitus” provides this essay with a better understanding of the influence of social media on social and cultural identity.

As to reflect on this essay’s topic, Habitus is the sense of adaptation to the unspoken rules of the virtual communities in this case. It is also a set of dispositions for learning social rules and codes that help individuals adapt and survive among their communities. “It feels like a second skin” (Markham, 2017: 73). Hence, the user’s sense of belonging to a community depends on the mastery of the unspoken rules and social codes (Markham, 2017: 55). Furthermore, Julia Knight and Alexis Weedon describe how users are practicing Habitus on social media platforms since social media has “become a native Habitus” for users, where they perform their different roles in a multimodal dimension “as a professional, a parent, an acquaintance, and a colleague” (Knight & Weedon, 2014: 257).
5. Qualitative Method

5.1 Research Design
In order to investigate the perceptions of social media users and their self-presentation on social media platforms, a qualitative interview with semi-structured interviews was chosen. This method helps illuminate the perception of how social media is built and designed from a technical perspective (Ahrne & Svensson, 2015: 27).

5.2 Research Approach
The authors of “Handbok i kvalitativa metoder” stress the importance of doing interviews whenever we feel stuck with our research material, which may, in a way, help us attain a new dimension in the progress of our essay (Ahrne & Svensson, 2015: 34). The interviewed respondents were people who I know personally recruited through ‘snowball sampling’. Therefore, the choice of interviewees is not random. And due to the questioning about the personal experience of using and interacting on social media platforms, the respondents must feel comfortable and familiar with the interviewer (Ahrne & Svensson 2015, s.41). The study does not aim to create a representative and generalizable picture of perceptions current in society, but rather to map the diversity of opinions. Therefore, a qualitative research design was seen as preferable to the quantitative one. The interviews must be conducted in a friendly way and the interviewer must be patient with the respondents. As well, the interviewer must not pressure the respondent, or give the feeling that the interview is taking a form of an authorial shape. The interviews must, in addition, remain neutral and it is not acceptable to throw any judgments towards the respondents’ answers (Ahrne & Svensson 2015, s.45).

The interviews will be qualitative semi-structured interviews and will be divided to two parts. The first part will discuss the infrastructure of social media platform, from a technical standpoint concerning filter bubbles, algorithms and other schemes used by social media platforms to keep social media users for the longest time on their platforms. The first part will therefore be an interview with a software engineer who is working for one of the most formidable social media companies. However, this interview is only considered as a contextual interview to provide insight into the environment of social media infrastructure and will not be taken as a part of the analytic material.

The second part will focus on social media platforms from the perspective of social media users. The interviews will, thus, be with five social media users who will provide this research
with their experience of social media use in their daily life. Equally important is to allow a space for creativity and addition in a way that fits the discourse of the interview by letting the interview open for new questions in case an interesting new aspect is discussed while the interview is in progress (Ahrne & Svensson, 2015:45).

The thematic question guide of this essay is designed for both an expert and social media user, which can be checked below. And the reason behind two separate type of guides is to have two dimensional aspects to cover the matter of social media from both consumptive and a technical perspective. The respondents are aware of the aim behind the conducted interview in order to guarantee the credibility of this essay and its final results (Saunders, 2016: 406). The five qualitative semi-structured interviews have been conducted, recorded and transcribed to be used later by other authors. And at the beginning of the interview, the respondents were asked if it was okay to record the interview and were assured of their anonymity. Not to mention that the respondents were reminded of the purpose of the study, (Ahrne & Svensson, 2015: 50).

5.3 Selection

Since the research questions are vital elements of the investigation into social media in this essay (Ahrne & Svensson, 2015: 39), and since this essay investigates the perceived effects of social media on adolescents in particular, and our identities and physical life in general, the respondents are, therefore, selected based on their daily social media consumption (Ahrne & Svensson, 2015: 40). The answers of all respondents will be set in comparison with the selected theories to look for similar patterns circulating around the answers by respondents and the theories presented in this essay.

The expert being interviewed expert is a software engineer working for one of social media’s leading companies, and he is, therefore, a reliable source to be interviewed about his own field of expertise. However, this interview is only considered as a contextual interview to expand our understanding of the technical terms that, in a way or another, affect social media users and their way of spending their time and interacting on social media platforms. And it will not be taken as a part of the analytic material. On the other hand, social media users are chosen not only for their daily consumption but also for their ability and awareness of describing their social media experience. And since all the respondents have an academic background, and some of them are working in the media sector, they are aware of the insights and concepts discussed in this essay. Information about the respondents’ employment, the length of interview, the date of interview will be presented in the figure 1 below.
**5.4 Method Discussion**

The choice behind semi-structured interviews goes back to the fact that this method allows the interviewer to go deeply into the prepared questions. Thus, this method allows the interviewee to be more detailed with description without being interrupted by the interviewer, while the yes and no questions produce short answers that lack detail. Therefore, interrogating words like ‘who’, ‘when’, ‘what’ and ‘why’ will be used to give the freedom to the interviewees to expand their answer and to avoid steering them in any direction to guarantee more objective results (Ahrne & Svensson, 2015:45). Moreover, the method of semi-structured questions will give the interviewer the advantage of expanding the answers of respondents and giving them the liberty to speak their minds freely, thus allowing them to answer the discussed research questions above.

With the limited number of respondents and with the chosen qualitative approach of this essay, it should be mentioned that the study should not be generalized, nor be taken as an absolute source, whether for analyzing the infrastructure and technicality of social media platforms or as an observatory for the influence of social media effects on human identity, self-esteem, or self-image. Moreover, it is not preferred to generalize the results with such limited research, otherwise the process of this research will be halted by a negative impact on the reliability of this essay and research (Ahrne & Svensson, 2015, p.27). After all, the aim of this essay is to

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**Figure 1**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondent</th>
<th>Career</th>
<th>Length of Interview</th>
<th>Date of Interview</th>
<th>Gender</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Software Engineer (only contextual)</td>
<td>39 minutes</td>
<td>19 April</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>24 minutes</td>
<td>21 April</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Sales Manager</td>
<td>21 minutes</td>
<td>22 April</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>Gallerist</td>
<td>16 minutes</td>
<td>23 April</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>Salesman</td>
<td>15 minutes</td>
<td>26 April</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
expand our understanding of social media platforms and the experiences of interactivity of the interviewed users on those platforms. However, the reliance on the independence of the results generated by interviewing the respondent is partial, since there is a possibility that emotions, experiences and subjectivity would interfere with the objectivity of their answers (Ahrne & Svensson, 2015, p.42). At the same time, the author could also contribute to shaping the result of the study according to possible subjective and former experience on social media platforms. However, the use of semi-structured interviews has a positive impact on the reliability of this study since it allows the respondents to express freely their ideas about the discussed topics and develop their own answers.

5.5 Ethical concerns
This study did not focus on sensitive issues, and no sensitive personal information was collected (such as pertaining to the participants’ health conditions, sexual life, political views, or crime). Therefore, no special ethical measures were taken other than preserving the participants’ anonymity (Saunders, 2016: 406).

6. Analysis

6.1 Social Media Expert
Disclaimer…. This interview is only considered as a contextual interview to provide insight into the environment of social media infrastructure in comparison with the respondent’s answers. Therefore, this interview will not be taken in consideration, nor will affect the results of this study. Nevertheless, it is useful to be able to navigate through the infrastructure of social media.

Algorithm and The Technical Part of Social Media Platforms
The first section is to analyse the expert interview with a social media expert that is given the name of respondent A. The aim behind this interview is to perceive the mechanisms of algorithms and filter bubble explained by an expert who works with such critical elements to the infrastructure of social media platforms on a daily basis. Respondent A sees that social media has been an important tool for establishing a global knot of communication and interaction between people. Respondent A asserts on the evolution of
social media and what changes it has brought on the shape of human communication by changing the old methods of communication with new, virtual and interactional types of communication. This answer coordinates with the theory of “Mediatization” that explains the interchangeable relation between media, culture and society. The theory also explains the process of technological adaptation by the media to adapt to the cultural changes. “I think social media platforms plays a big role, and shaping and facilitating the means and the tools that enables people around the globe to communicate and react with each other” – Respondent A. Similarly, respondent A asserted on the played role by social media infrastructure with influencing the way of how people think and react on social media by the help of tools and mechanisms like algorithms, filter bubble and echo chamber. Therefore, those technological tools are keeping users entrapped in echo chambers and causing confirmation bias to keep them as long as possible on social media platforms. “Algorithm enables users to communicate and connect to each other and is mainly responsible for gathering people around the same beliefs. This will gather the people who have the same interest or the same views, which in the end creates this sort of say what they call them like echo chambers, where you can see that group of people have a certain view or belief or preferences in life” – Respondent A.

Respondent A notices that the effects of algorithm and filter bubble are mainly projected on the long run by entrapping users of their own universes and state of beliefs. “Recently, it has been a lot of debate about the effect of algorithm in the long run on how to group people, because the thing is that people have been stuck within social bubbles and they have created their own universes of their own preference” – Respondent A.

Respondent A analyses the functionality of an algorithm as a chain of actions in which each action depends on the previous action and results with the following action as an interchangeable relation of calculated inputs. “The algorithm in general works as a procedure of actions, depending and each new action depends on the previous one” – Respondent A. In addition, respondent A describes the functionality of algorithms as a process generated from the study of user’s behaviour and user experience on social media platforms. This study covers the clicks, the type of posts, and the qualities that users like. “Many modules and many programs that have been run on these platforms study the behavior of each user. And these programs are also being run later on artificial intelligence and machine learning. So, the prediction of user’s behaviour gets better and better with time based on spotting the patterns of the users” – Respondent A.
Respondent A describes how algorithms shape knowledge and evolve with time. “If these predictions become more or less accurate, the machine learns that, and we can know these types of inputs are most likely given the pattern of a certain output. So, algorithm learns this pattern as the child to repeat it and enhance it” – Respondent A.

Nevertheless, respondent A describes the nature of algorithm as the embodiment of its creator and the users who contribute with their input in the first place. Developers are human beings and have their own biases like anyone, they have their own preferences and their own unconscious biases. “That is how it emerged with the algorithm that they construct or the code they write. So, I can't say the algorithm is neutral. It is more of subjective to the developers, mainly directly, and then to the vision of a corporation that owns this platform as well” – Respondent A.

**User’s benefits from algorithm and Technology**

Respondent A points out to the possibility of users to benefiting from the functionality of algorithm from the state of their behaviour being studied on these platforms. This may generate with variety of services or offer new job opportunities existing in their country regions. “For sure, there are a lot of positive things that these platforms provide to the users. I would like for some sort of some certain film streaming services or applications to suggest me the movies that are based on my own preference, I’d like my phone to warn me about some sale that is being going on Sunday near me” – Respondent A.

Respondent A clarifies his trust about the usefulness of technology and artificial intelligence as a tool to facilitate the course of humanity’s life. Respondent A resumes by mentioning that if algorithm has a malicious side, it is because of the codes set by its programmer. Respondent A is, as well, comfortable and assured of the safety of artificial intelligence. “Knowing the mathematical equation that allows you to create an atomic bomb does not state that you have to throw it on some people. The technology itself does not tell you what to do. Artificial Intelligence is going to help humans by making their life better. But it can also be used for bad purposes” – Respondent A.

**Software Engineers and Online User’s Data**

Respondent A states that software engineers, especially those who work in social media companies know more than any other about how these things work. And they know how people
have been targeted, and to which extent they can indulge themselves on those platforms. “I think that, especially people who are involved, like to construct these things that are the most people who are aware, or they have a better understanding about how these things work. Probably, the effect on developers or programmers will be same more or less, but I am pretty sure that it is still different than the effect on a usual user” – Respondent A.

Comparatively, respondent A is pointing out to the matter that user’s data is being collected by social media companies as a way to improve their platforms. Nevertheless, collecting data also depends on the place and the country where a social media company operating from. “It is an exchangeable relationship between the view of the platform itself and the place they are operating under which regulation they are subjected to. They’re not just collecting these data, for exploitation, mainly, but for many companies that are trying to make use of this data to develop their own platforms, like they want to make the output of this experience of the user as an input for the next cycle, where this program, or this algorithm will go bigger and bigger” – Respondent A.

Moreover, respondent A sees that it is okay for data to be used in promotions for marketing purposes to analyse the market needs, what the customers like and dislike or to study how products can be distributed more easily to customers. However, at the same time, respondent A asserts on the existing risk coming from selling user’s data to data collecting companies that may be used for some manipulating purposes. “I think the type of data that social platforms and online services are collecting from the users can tell many things that the users themselves probably are not aware of about themselves, which makes it risky for exploitation, and social manipulation. On the other hand, selling the data is not a problem. I mean, you can sell data for marketing purposes. There’s nothing personal here. It’s not about who you are, but it’s like, what do you like, and what do you dislike, so the products can be reached to like, easily” – Respondent A.

6.2 Social Media Users Interviews

Social media users were interviewed due to their daily consumption on social media platforms. They were asked about their amount of time spent on social media platforms, their self-experience on those platforms, self-presentation, their awareness about the differences of virtual communication vs physical communication, social media impact on their wellbeing, social comparison and jealousy by perceiving other users live on social media, and their perception for the state of reality presented on social media. These topics were investigated to
help this essay to deliver a better understanding towards online user’s character and self-perception while this user is under the exposure of interactions with other online users and information provided on social media platforms.

**Social Media Daily Use**
The average time spent on social media platforms answered by the respondents as a self-estimate was on the average of three to five hours per day:

“I would say maybe around four hours” – Respondent B;

“I’ll say like, three hours” – Respondent C;

“Five hours. I think some days, it’s more, and I also work with social media with my gallery. So, it’s both work and leisure” – Respondent D;

“I think I listen a lot to music and podcasts. And when I like to use Facebook and Instagram, maybe it consumes two to three hours” – Respondent E.

**Users Experiences on Social Media Platforms**
Some of the respondents expressed their addiction to social media consumption, not necessarily with participation but with scrolling around the platforms, reacting and liking posts with less self-participation: "I think I’m basically addicted to it, but I don’t feel the need to post things. So, I mainly just like, consume other people’s likes, and I don’t know, post some feeds, but I don’t really tend to participate myself," said respondent B.

Respondent D expressed dissatisfaction about the time being consumed on social media platforms sometimes. On the other hand, respondent D uses the platforms for marketing purposes and to promote its business as well. Sometimes social media is a time-consuming thing to do, but it's also a very good business platform, so it’s very good for keeping contacts. It is also a good place for keeping updates, especially for me in the gallery business, ”– Respondent D.

Respondent C showed its contentment with the experience, since it is saturated with information of like-minded viewpoints that confirm one’s political views and topics that respondent C is comfortable with. Most of the things that pop up on my feeds are usually like politics, which I already agree on. So, it’s nothing that I am becoming provoked about. It is usually things that I already, more or less, agree with. ”– Respondent C.

Here, we can associate the opinions of the respondents D and C with the theory of social identity, in which respondent C feels that it is more comfortable to surround himself with a
group of people who share the same beliefs. In other words, respondent C’s social environment is constructed of like-minded viewpoints that provide relief to the respondent. Respondent D, on the other hand, relies on the virtual social environment to promote its business.

On the other hand, respondent E prefers to surround itself with a limited audience presented by friends and colleagues and to stay away from promoters and influencers to dodge contracting with negative feelings. "It’s mostly my friends. I don’t follow a lot of influencers and stuff. So, I don’t think I’m getting negative things from that. I just want to have positive vibes," – Respondent E.

Self-Expression on Social Media Platforms

All the respondents show their freedom to express their ideas freely on social media. However, some of them showed their caution about expressing themselves due to a feeling of pressure from their peers, while the rest showed their lack of desire to engage with arguments and to dodge political arguments on social media platforms.

"I feel free to do so generally, but also cautious in the sense of social pressure like peer pressure, like I would not post anything, because I’m scared. But I wouldn't post anything, because I don’t want my friends to see it." – Respondent B.

"I have all the freedom, because I can write whatever I want to, but I rarely engage. People are always arguing, and there is no end to the arguments. You never really learn anything because people on the screen do have their ideas or thoughts. It is not that you can change people’s opinions. So, I never ever really engage in anything" – Respondent C.

"I never like to post campaigns or to be political like that. I think I did when I was in art school, but not anymore. I don’t want to say pro or against anything if it is too sensitive." – Respondent D.

However, respondent E shows its comfortability with expressing itself since respondent E surfs anonymously on social media. "I’m anonymous. I don’t like posting stuff about political things. And my, like, own opinions. But I feel like I could do that. Because I don’t have a lot of followers" – Respondent E.

Cyberbullying

Most of the respondents denied being subjected to cyberbullying while they were surfing on social media platforms, except for respondents B and C who were subjected to cyberbullying.
“Someone said some nasty things about my appearance a few times, but only like anonymous comments” – Respondent B.

“Once actually, but it wasn’t really a bully. It was like something stupid. One girl commented on a photo that I posted. But it was like one person.” – Respondent C.

Social Communication Digitally vs Physically

Some respondents stated that they saw no difference between communicating virtually and physically.

However, respondent B sees that the difference depends on who you talk to. And it adds that with virtual communication, people can reckon the tone by the use of emojis, while with physical communication, people need to check the temperature of whom they are communicating with and know their audience. "It depends on who you speak to. I’m not sure because sometimes you cannot read more into a conversation when someone does not use emoji. While in physical life, you need to check the temperature with each person. Then you realize that this is how they communicate here." – Respondent B.

Respondent D expressed its discontent about the difference between virtual and physical communication in which it is easier to dodge talking to unwanted people by blocking them virtually. While this is an impossible thing to happen in physical communication, "I don’t block people in real life. But yeah, I block people on social media." – Respondent D.

The quantitative dimension of the "Mediatization" theory demonstrates the state of media saturation in societies, which leads people to get used to this type of media and to fit their ways of communication accordingly to the media and its technology (Couldry & Hepp, 2013:197). However, not all the respondents find their way of communication has changed virtually vs physically.

Personal Identity and Social Media Communities

Most of the respondents think that social media has influenced their identities in one way or another in some part of their lives. Respondents B and E reckon that social media communities influenced their adolescent periods and contributed to shaping their identities and preferences. In addition, social media influenced the way they presented themselves and their lifestyle at that time of age:
"When I was 17, I remember being able to get inspiration on how to dress and how to act. I wanted to come across as a bit more like a hipster there for a while as well. I think that was influenced by the social media communities that I was part of. Definitely "–Respondent B.

"Social media influenced my identity a lot when I was younger, like, how you're going to look and what you want to be like" – Respondent E.

On the other hand, respondents C and D showed no sense of the influence of social media on their identities. Hence, they found no problem with shaping their identities separately away from the effects of social media.

Respondents C and D’s conception of their identities being affected by social media communities agrees with the "Social Identity" theory, suggesting that the self-concept of some online users is determined by their belonging to various social groups. Consequently, the simple act of categorising the self is reflected in the lives of social media users (Teo, Matti, et al., 2017: 23).

Self-presentation on Social Media vs Real Life

Some of the respondents show a state of separation between how they represent themselves in real life and on social media. Respondents B and D declare that their character in real life differs from how they present themselves on social media platforms. Respondent B explains how its character differs on social media from the one in reality when respondent B had to blend into a new country, "I feel like my aesthetic of who I present on Instagram might be a bit hotter. Since I used to live in the UK, I used to write my captions in Swedish. And then after a bit, and after living in London for a while, I decided to go with just writing everything in English on like, my Instagram posts, because I wanted to come across this a bit more like, international" – Respondent B.

Respondent D explains that social media platforms are places where users show the happy part of their lives. In addition, it is a place for people to benefit professionally for the sake of their careers. "My character is more professional in real life, while I only show the good sides on social media. I would never post something that isn’t great. Or something like, very happy. Of course, it’s a fake. I mean, advertising "–Respondent D.

On the other hand, respondents C and E showed no difference in their self-presentation between real and virtual life since they do not engage a lot on social media platforms.

Similarly, we can associate the state of separation of virtuality and reality of the respondents B and C with Goffman’s theory of "Onstage/Backstage" that describes how the consciousness of
the human being is nothing but a performance in the arena of a society (Meyrowitz, 1985: 2). The respondents may represent a professional character by wearing the costume of seriousness in front of their colleagues in reality "Onstage", while being a more playful, spontaneous and comfortable character by wearing the costume of coolness on social media "Backstage" (Markham, 2017 p.93).

**Social Media and Personal’s Wellbeing**

All the respondents admit that social media affects their wellbeing to some extent by affecting the perception of the course of their lives.

Respondent B expresses how social media has affected her life for the worse. Respondent B also feels that his private life is not his anymore due to the pressure of being online on social media applications all day, or when someone shares an unpleasant photo of him without asking for permission. "It definitely has an impact, and probably for the worst. For example, people can assume that I’m constantly available, and to participate in conversations when obviously like, sometimes you feel like you do not want to talk to someone, but then you are on social media. Just the other week, a friend of mine posted a picture of me that I did not like that much. And I got really upset with the whole thing. I felt as if this is not what I wanted other people to see in me." – Respondent B.

On the other hand, respondents C and E see that social media affected their lives more viciously when they were adolescents, but they do not find themselves getting affected by social media anymore.

"I got Facebook when I was 17. Before that, there were other communities. But I did not have Instagram until I was 23. And at that time, I think I had already molded my own identity, my own personality, my likings, and what not. So, it is not that it affected me in a way that it might have been if I had Instagram when I was 12" – Respondent C.

"I think it affected me more when I was younger, but now it does not affect me that much. Because now when I feel something on my social media account is taking over, I just stop falling for them or do not look at their account." – Respondent E.

Respondent D declares that social media affects their habits, especially with the ritualistic consumption of social media before sleeping. "If you look at social media as when you’re going to sleep, of course, I’m going to sleep more or less. However, the brightness of my mobile screen distracts me, and I lose track of time." – Respondent D.

Comparatively, the process of building an identity was affected by social media for some of the respondents in their adolescent period. In addition, some of the respondents were affected
by the social pressure on social media in order to adapt to a certain lifestyle, and to attain social acceptance by committing to some unspoken rules among their virtual communities on social media platforms. This is what Pierre Bordieu called the act of "Habitus", or in other words, is to attain a second skin, which for some of the respondents affected them in a bad way during their adolescents’ period. In order to understand their virtual societies and be accepted among them, some of the respondents began to reflect on their internal subjectivity and interpretations of their virtual communities (Hjarvard, 2013: 138).

**Self-Perception, jealousy and Social Comparison**

All the respondents expressed a sense of jealousy to some extent, even though some of them showed awareness of the fact that people post their lives from a perfect angle. In return, a massive portion of media users tend to hide the flaws and not show the imperfections of their lives on social media.

"I’m not very jealous of people, like on social media because I feel the content is not their actual lives. So, I tend to not feel as jealous, but I would say maybe when it comes to appearances and looks, maybe sometimes I can get a bit jealous. I can feel jealous if someone I know has accomplished something that I would like to accomplish. And they post what they’ve accomplished on social media." – Respondent B.

"I sometimes fall into the trap of comparison, even though you know that they only show what they want to show but still, you get fooled, even though we know. And it is only to like influencers or celebrities’ lives" – Respondent D.

"Sometimes I feel like, oh, I want to be there and go on this trip, and be like, eating at all these restaurants all the time and, if I feel kind of jealous when I come across a picture for a good-looking girl, especially if she is in a place that looks so fun. But then I feel like, yeah, if in the end, that doesn’t make you happy," – Respondent E.

Nevertheless, respondent C expressed her resolution towards jealousy as a feeling that she does not experience very often due to a feeling of contentment towards her life. Thus, it is easier for her to appreciate what she has in her life than the other respondents. However, respondent C admits that falling in comparison is a hard thing to dodge since our brains fall for some social stereotypes embedded in us. "Not that often. Honestly. I’m very happy with my own life. I think that in the core, Whatever people think about it, it's a success. At the end of the day, you
don’t really know the real life of that person because everybody wants to present the perfect side of themselves. It is, again, about comparison that I am trying to avoid, because it’s just toxic and doesn’t really help me in the long term. I know it for myself. But of course, I mean, the brain is stupid. " – C., Respondent

The sense of comparison, jealousy and how the respondents realize their self-perception on social media groups and social gathering match the discussed theory of "Social Identity" that suggests that people categorize themselves and others to make their world more understandable. In a similar manner, social media users sometimes fall into comparing their lives with how they perceive others’ lives presented on social media. In addition, they use these categories to make social comparisons between different groups, as an act of categorising themselves and others (Teo, Matti, et al., 2017: 23).

**Self-Judgment about concepts Like True, False, Imaginary and Real**

All the respondents expressed a type of fuzziness and unclarity while experiencing abstract concepts like true, false, imaginary and real on social media platforms. Moreover, the respondents think that social media affects their current lives or at least has affected their judgments at some point in their lives. In addition, the respondents feel that social media puts them under great exposure to inaccurate information by only exposing one side of the truth. Hence, they mentioned that, in a way, social media platforms affected their resolution about the whole picture of reality presented on those platforms.

"I feel like I’m very much as most people think that I’m the one who sits on the truth here. And everyone else is sort of oblivious to that truth. Let’s say on Instagram, a politician that I really dislike posts something. Then I’m highly likely to dislike what that person posts, even if some politician that I do like posts the same thing. " – B. Respondent

"I think most of it is just exaggerated, because that’s what people want to present whenever people are writing or posting pictures. Usually, you post pictures when you have happy moments or when your life is great, so, I know that only good things are what we are feeding on social media platforms. " – C., Respondent
"I get one side of the truth, but my boyfriend on the other side gets his own, so it is kind of interesting to see the comparison. Yeah. I noticed that all my news is very one-sided. And I think that is like news on TV, it’s very one-sided actually. I think my opinion sometimes is a little bit naive on social media." – Respondent D.

"I feel like it did. Young girls must get to know that social media life is fake. And of course, they like influencers on Instagram. But at the same time, influencers’ job is not the job to raise young girls, but to gain their own profit" – Respondent E.

Hence, the respondents’ resolution about the reality presented on social media platforms agrees to some extent with the theory of Jean Baudrillard’s "Simulation and Simulacra" that suggests a fragmented reality consumed by the media audience. Therefore, simulation threatens our conceptual system by blurring our perspective on concepts like true, false, imaginary, and real. While simulacra work provides us with a hyper image of reality as a copy of reality, simulacra also generate the definition of reality in our world that we adopt (Baudrillard, 1983: 5). It is just like how influencers provide their audience with one side of reality that would serve their promotional means, as respondent E described.

6.3 Summary
Social media is seen as affecting the way people communicate with each other on a daily basis. Social media consumption may affect some users, depending on how they perceive their lives. Social media platforms may distort users reality and beliefs if the user totally relies on social media without double-checking from external sources, according to what interviewees agreed on. In a similar manner, the user’s identity and self-perception are seen as subjects of influence by social media in a good or bad way. In addition, the extent of influence depends on whether users started using social media at an early age while their identity and self-image are still at the stage of taking shape, according to the respondents.

7. Conclusion
The effects of social media are still controversial when it comes to the user’s self-perception. Algorithms are ambiguous and hard to measure since we do not really know when or how it
affects us. Do algorithms make us wonder how much we are aware of their larger effects, given that they are embedded everywhere on social media and that the algorithm designs in our newsfeed will consume our time for hours. Should we just accept the ambiguity of algorithms, or should we dig harder to know to what degree social media and its tools are affecting our character and self-perception? If human beings are used to shaping their identities while socializing among their peers in real life, then if the state of socialization shifted to happening on social media platforms, under the supervision of algorithms, then could algorithms not be responsible with the process of shaping the identities of social media users?

On the other hand, our collective knowledge as human beings is also what formulated the algorithm and allowed it to possess the current state of power in influencing users’ personalities online, so why cannot we accept algorithms as new tools to evolve and adapt with evolution of technology?

The ideas of Joshua Meyrowitz, Jean Baudrillard, Pierre Bourdieu, Henri Tajfel & John Turner, Couldry and Hepp were projected by the social media users I interviewed. On one hand, the ideas of “Simulation and Simulacra” permeate the experiences of social media users who tend to profess such ideas about social media as threatening our conceptual system by blurring users’ perspectives towards concepts like true, false, imaginary, and real, while the work of simulacra provides users with a hyper image of reality.

The idea of Social Identity helps people categorise themselves and others to make their world more understandable. In a similar manner, social media users fall sometimes for comparing their lives to how they perceive others’ lives presented on social media.

The ideas of Joshua Meyrowitz and Erving Goffman provide us with an understanding of how social media users may act differently while they are on social media platforms as a state of performance in the arena of a virtual society by shifting between Onstage and Backstage.

On the other hand, the theory of mediatization facilitates our understanding of the interaction between the media, culture, and society and the adaptation of the media to societal changes and vice versa.

The concept of habitus, minted by Pierre Bourdieu, illuminates our understanding of the social requirements to be accepted in society. In addition, it is a theory that helps us to grasp the social positioning that people tend to attain in communities. Hence, individuals develop a particular lifestyle, set of practices and value orientations that justify the hierarchical position of individuals and make it meaningful.

The theory of social identity elaborated on how respondents surround themselves with like-minded social groups, which provide them with confidence about their own system of beliefs.
This research was primarily aimed towards examining the perception of algorithm and filter bubble functioning on social media platforms. In addition, the research aimed to examine how social media platforms affect users’ identities and self-perceptions. And this examination was presented by discussing theories to circulate the research with an academic framework to apply it to the conducted interviews with an expert and with social media users. Therefore, the conducted interviews covered the research questions and answered the discussed speculations regarding the exposure to social media by questioning a man of experience about social media technical infrastructure and media users who consume social media on a daily basis.

The results point out that a perception among the interviewees which says that the impact of social media on identity formation is largely confined to adolescent users. Many users self-report significant daily screen time and are aware of the risks of bubbles and algorithmic black boxes (even though often they find evidence of the diversity of their own feeds), expressing a perspective characterized by a certain social negativity regarding social media interaction. This leads many of the users to keep silent on social media and primarily "lurk", simply following others and avoiding clashes and conflicts on social media. In the end, the results can be improved in further research by expanding the interviewed samples and by including more experts to explain a huge phenomenon that, in a way, has managed to occupy a large part of our daily lives.

Appendix 1. Thematic Interview Guide

Questions for an expert:

General
- Where do you work and what is your field of profession?
- Can you describe your role as a software engineer?
- How will social media impact the future of social interaction?

Algorithm and The Technical Part of Social Media Platforms
- What is a social media algorithm?
- How can we analyze the functionality of Facebook’s filter bubble and echo chamber?
- How does the algorithm function and how does it deal with the user’s online data?
How can social media algorithms be able to contribute to dividing or putting users in social bubbles during their daily use on social media platforms?

User’s benefits from algorithm and Technology
How can users use the logic of algorithms to serve their own gains on social media?

Questions for Social Media Users:

Social Media Daily Use
What is the average time spent on your mobile screen per day?

Users Experiences on Social Media Platforms
What social media platforms do you mostly use?
How would you describe your experience on social media platforms in general?

Self-Expression and Cyberbullying on Social Media Platforms
To what extent do you feel free to express yourself and thoughts on social media? Have you ever been subjected to cyberbullying while on social media?

Social Communication Digitally vs Physically
How can you describe the difference of social communications physically vs digitally? (How does social media) Do you think that social media influenced your personal identity?

Personal Identity and Social Media Communities
What types of communities do you find yourself belonging to on social media?

Self-presentation on Social Media vs Real Life
What are the differences of your character in the physical life and your character on social media platforms?

Social Media and Personal’s Wellbeing
How does social media impact your wellbeing?
How does virtual connectivity affect your relations with your physical social sphere?

Self-Perception, jealousy and Social Comparison
How often do you find yourself jealous about people’s lives presented on social media?
How often do you feel yourself falling in comparison with your peers on social media?
Self-Judgment about concepts Like True, False, Imaginary and Real

What is your thought about the social media affecting your conceptual system’s judgement about concepts like true, false, imaginary and real?

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