Adolescents, YouTube and Media Literacy

A mixed-method time series study of Norwegian youth's social media usage and its implications for media literacy

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What a journey it has been to write this master thesis, with one foot inside the pandemic and the other outside. It has been an emotional roller coaster where stress, and at times hopelessness, ultimately transformed into feelings of achievement and relief.

Luckily, stubbornness, self-motivation, and my genuine interest in the impact of social media on society, now and in the future, led to the completion of my biggest academic contribution yet. I am happy to say I have grown and evolved thanks to this experience and hope to inspire others to do the same.

It could, however, not have happened without the help of a few key people.

First of all, I would like to thank my supervisor Robert W. Vaagan at OsloMet, for guiding me through unfamiliar waters, providing much-needed feedback, and bearing with me in times of confusion and challenging moments. It is greatly appreciated.

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Daniela Dahle
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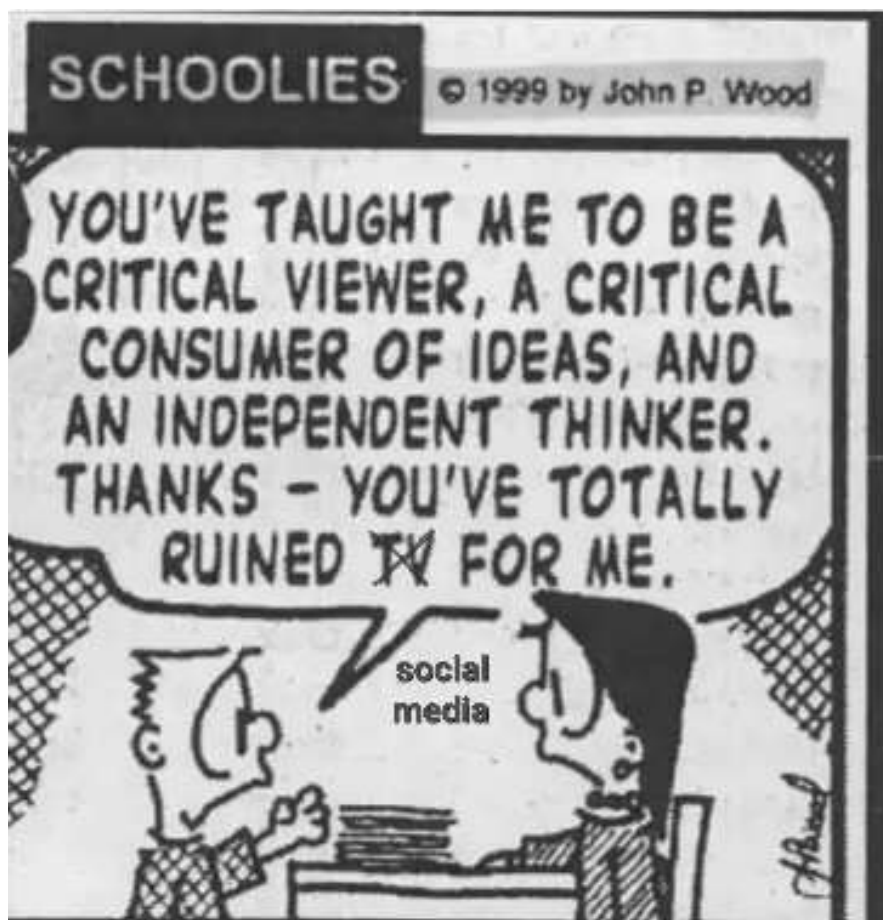
Some things never change… [Source: Schoolies, John P. Wood, 1999[1]]

[1] https://wellsmedia.weebly.com/

Abstract

One of the side effects of the Corona pandemic amongst Norwegian youth was increased screen time and social media usage. As a result, the need to sharpen critical senses became increasingly significant. This master thesis explores whether the social media usage of adolescents has impacted their media literacy in any way during and in the immediate aftermath of the pandemic.

Established theories within the field of media and communication are applied to answer the research questions, mainly *uses and gratifications theory* and *cultivation theory*. Moreover, theories on media literacy, social media, YouTube, and marketing are also integrated. A mixed-method approach was most appropriate for answering the research questions. Method triangulation thus consisted of *content analysis*, *focus group interviews* and *surveys*. In combination with all primary methods, cultivation analysis was central as well.

Amongst significant findings from the analysis are the following. Youth are not familiar with what media literacy or similar terms mean and seem to associate them solely with technical aspects. Nearly all news consumption continues to take place on social media. There was a lack of mention of media ownership and implications for users. Fact-checking techniques on YouTube now seem to not only involve looking at sources but also 'view counts' and 'likes', which are distressing means of establishing credibility. Similar to earlier findings, young people's media literacy skills regarding advertising seem to be stronger than other aspects.

Based on the analysis of all findings from 2018 to 2022, the overall impression is that increased social media usage during the pandemic has had some, albeit minimal, impact on adolescents' media literacy. However, scepticism has evolved and is more activated, although not always accompanied by concrete actions. The momentum of the aftermath of the pandemic should be utilised to increase digital literacy knowledge and skills amongst Norwegian adolescents.

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1. Introduction

Most Norwegian adolescents today began their digital journey at a young age and are often quick to adopt and understand new services, apps, and functions. Social media are no exception, and young people start using numerous platforms early on. It was Marc Prensky who first coined the term 'digital natives' at the beginning of this century (2001). According to Prensky, what characterizes a digital native is someone who expects quick access to information, can do multiple things at once, enjoys visual content more than textual, relies on an instant sense of achievement and prefers to be online (2001, p. 2). We consider the generations from Millennials and onward as digital natives because they grew up with a digital language alongside their native tongue.

Despite this 'natural' understanding of the digital world, there are certain skills and strategies that young people need to acquire to process information online and communicate critically, effectively, and efficiently (Erstad, 2015, p. 89). This particularly applies to the abundance of content they are faced with on social media, and it is not enough to simply be familiar with technical functions. As a society, it seems as if we now find ourselves in limbo between the information age and the disinformation age. Digitization enables the facilitation of new arenas and platforms where information is sought out, presented, and received through multiple sources – private and professional. Even as adults, we can sometimes struggle navigating through the abundance of information and determining the credibility of a specific source or piece of content. The social media ecosystem made the task harder than before, and young people are perhaps more vulnerable to untrustworthy content. Moreover, it has become easier to accept certain messages simply because they might conform to our wants and needs and match our own thoughts and biases.

The research field dealing with youth, media usage, as well as media effects and influences, is plentiful, and studies are conducted at a regular pace. Much of the research has been concerned with topics of high relevance, such as violence, political messages, sex, and advertising. With the constant forward movement of technology and new services, it is necessary to keep up with how youth interact with digital media and how their critical evaluation of information and media messages is evolving. Although not all researchers agree,

many suggest that adolescents still lack sufficient cognitive tools for critical assessment online or that children's security online needs increased attention from adults. These complications are apparent in data from recent national survey reports, for instance, from the Norwegian Media Authority (2019), which hereafter is referred to using the acronym **NMA**. Likewise, the effect of young people's media usage has repeatedly entered the public debate as a relevant point of discussion (Forskning.no, 2020; Støyva, 2021). Basic media literacy skills amongst youth are present but still considered inadequate. We will return to a more thorough discussion on this matter as part of the literature review in chapter 1.4.

Rewinding to 17 March 2020, Norway went into lockdown due to the Coronavirus pandemic. For a year and a half, adolescents' screen time increased significantly due to using digital platforms for school and entertainment purposes. The possibility of hanging out with friends was drastically reduced. During their leisure time alone, screen use increased by 11 percentage points in 2021 (Bakken, 2021, p. 4). Although young people have handled the pandemic well overall (Bakken, 2021, p. 2), towards the re-opening of the Norwegian society in the second half of 2021, several findings indicated that many adolescents are lonely (Ettung, 2021; Askeland, 2021). The combination of these measures and the change of events prompted an increase in social media use amongst Norwegian youth in an attempt to stay connected.

Loneliness, as well as blurring the lines between school and home life considerably, may also have initiated a larger need for an outlet. Both gaming and the use of social media have been essential sources of connectivity and entertainment for youth in tackling the changes brought on by the pandemic (Lassen, 2020). Incidentally, these are two highly interconnected arenas, commercially and financially. However, the flow of commercial media messages is slightly less controlled on social media platforms such as YouTube than on gaming platforms. This, in turn, means that media literacy is even more essential for processing the complexity of all sorts of media messages on social networks.

1.1 Background and presentation of the project

The motivation and inspiration for this master thesis stem from multiple sources, including personal frustration and concern with what youth are being presented on social media today.

Over time, I would think about how my own mind at times subconsciously gets used to the 'reality' of social platforms. We sometimes fail to recognize hidden marketing and advertising tricks from influencers or trust tips from a 'lifechanging guru' in a YouTube video. Occasionally, I have found myself exposed to content that made me question under which policy it was even allowed to be displayed, for instance, posts promoting the alleged benefits of non-medical cosmetic surgery. More concerning was that I was receiving these media messages in my feed with no prior interest in the form of likes, saves, or comments. I began asking myself if adolescents are exposed to similar or worse content and how they read into these media texts in a crucially developmental stage of their lives?

During my first year as a master's student at OsloMet, I had the opportunity to conduct a literature review as a scientific assistant for the U-YouPa project (Understanding Youth Participation and Media literacy in Digital Dialogue Spaces; Project Number: 301896 – SAMKUL). Here, I was able to scratch the surface of the world of adolescents and media literacy before embarking on this more comprehensive project. Based on my research, I understood that I was far from alone with my thoughts and concerns. I did, however, notice that the majority of studies focused on specific behaviour on social media. Contrarily, I was more interested in cognitive reflections when exposed to doubtful content. This, therefore, became the main factor for deciding to explore this topic further.

I moved on to investigate two reports from the NMA that were available and timely (2018; 2020). An attempt was also made to gain additional information about the data, by reaching out to the responsible contact persons via e-mail. Unfortunately, I did not receive a response from anyone. Nonetheless, the information in the latter report revealed that YouTube was the most used platform amongst adolescents and both reports gave clues about the direction of media literacy amongst youth in Norway.

Youth's relation to marketing and advertised content, which they are heavily exposed to on social media, was also a highlighted topic in both reports. The advertising revenue in Norway in 2020 accounted for 19.8 billion NOK in total, of which 12.2 billion NOK came from the Internet (medienorge, n.d.). Undoubtedly, a large proportion of this stems from social media. YouTube alone stood for more than 300 million NOK in 2019 (Hauger, 2019), which has only

continued to rise because video marketing nearly reached similar levels at the beginning of 2021 (Jerijervi, 2021). What drives high revenues is mainly due to YouTube's owner Google, who live off of advertising and user data. Therefore, it was inevitable not to include this perspective as a relatively central part of the research. Moreover, (hidden) advertising was initially part of my primary interest to write this master thesis. One of the main goals of the project became to explore the NMA's survey-based data from a close-up perspective. Using this data as a basis, I further wanted to look specifically at whether usage in 2021/2022 affected media literacy levels in an extraordinary situation. The reports will be investigated and discussed more thoroughly in the findings and analysis chapters.

1.2 Research questions

Combined, the above-mentioned factors sparked the aspiration to understand how teenagers read, receive, and react to potentially harmful media messages disseminated on YouTube. Therefore, this thesis aims to explore what drives the high percentages of social media usage amongst Norwegian youth, focusing on YouTube. As the Norwegian society was preparing to return to a normalized mundane life, it also became essential to investigate whether media literacy was affected by usage during the pandemic. Choosing YouTube also stems from the vast amount of advertising from content creators, such as influencers or 'YouTubers', making the platform an exciting place to study media literacy skills amongst youth. The main research question is as follows:

> **RQ 1: *To what extent have Norwegian adolescents' social media usage affected their media literacy in 2021/2022?***

RQ 1 is an explorative and correlational open-ended question. To answer it, I need to look more closely into the specific updated information on media usage habits and media literacy amongst young people in Norway. Moreover, I need to see whether there has been a change in usage and reasons for usage, which may have impacted media literacy. Three sub-questions were therefore developed:

> **RQ 1a:** *What is the typical social media usage of 15-18-year-olds in Norway?*

> **RQ 1b:** *To what extent are 15-18-year-olds in Norway media literate?*

RQ 1c: *What is the relation between social media usage and media literacy amongst Norwegian 15-18-year-olds in 2021/2022?*

I will try my best to answer the research questions through a bottom-up approach, considering adolescents' own perspectives.

1.3 Clarification of terms and concepts

A brief and concise explanation of the how terms and concepts should be interpreted is needed to narrow down the focus of this thesis. This includes elaborating on what young people's *social media usage* entails, which correlates to RQ 1a. Regarding RQ 1b, it is necessary to state what the metaconcept of *media literacy* means in the context of the specific research. An interpretation of how the two connect is then provided, including what is meant by the term *affected.* This last section is therefore related to RQ 1c and the main research question.

1.3.1 Social media usage

First of all, when speaking of social media usage in this thesis, this mainly refers to the use of YouTube. Today, YouTube includes virtually all functions found on other large social media platforms such as Instagram or TikTok, although the private messaging function is not available. Searches for information on Google can also lead to results that suggest navigating to YouTube to find answers. The user can thus end up on the platform both directly and indirectly. Secondly, social media usage is intended as a collective term for the behaviour and activities adolescents perform on YouTube, but also to the exposure to media messages. In other words, it is about both the *production* and *consumption* of content in multiple forms. This is relevant because we don't just use media anymore as private citizens – we *do* media. Lastly, it is important to point out that the focus is not on using different devices to access social media, such as smartphones and tablets. Through the lens of YouTube, usage thus implies the intentional practices, habits, and activities, as well as unintentional influences from social media exposure.

1.3.2 Media literacy in the 21st century

As mentioned in the introduction, teenagers and adolescents are at a developmentally vulnerable stage in their lives. Exposure to certain media effects through their media usage

and habits may have a more significant impact than in other stages of their lives. Along with the constantly evolving media landscape, many researchers agree that the need for progressive media literacy amongst youth is essential. At its foundation, media literacy is often associated with the educational system, mental health, children's rights, as well as the involvement of parents in mediating young people's activity in the digital sphere. Research which is based on or mentions these aspects is abundant, as opposed to studies that argue that adolescents are already sufficiently media literate.

Lately, the term has been dubbed the "21st century literacy" (Center for Media Literacy [CML], n.d.). It functions as an overarching metaconcept extending to a broader scope of study disciplines and theoretical frameworks, all concerned with critical assessments of sociocultural media messages. In this sense, it seems as though the meaning of media literacy is scattered. Separately these sub-concepts each play a part in what it means to be media literate, and hence, they tend to overlap. For instance, some are generally concerned with new media literacies, while others focus solely on visual literacies or literacy skills. Today most literacies have in common that they are more often than not brought up in relation to our use of digital media, amongst them social media.

For the purpose of this thesis, where YouTube is used as a basis for research, the term *digital literacy* seems the most appropriate. Whereas media literacy extends to all media types and is the main framework, digital literacy matches the contemporary media landscape. Because of the incorporation of the digital in our daily lives, the latter term can be considered synonymous with media literacy alongside other terms such as media or digital competence and information literacy (Erstad, 2015, p. 86). Consequently, media and digital literacy can be understood as one and will be used interchangeably throughout the thesis. The main elements of digital literacy are illustrated in Figure 1.1.

The reason for including digital literacy is because new findings may be beneficial outside of a pedagogical perspective alone, which is currently the dominating field of study. Hopefully, they may be of value to researchers, mass media, and, not least, the media and communications industry. The latter may include companies, corporations, and organizations that in some way need to successfully reach out to young people on social media with a message. Advertisers may be particularly interested in qualitative perspectives, not only on usage trends or patterns but also on levels of digital literacy, because they need to match their content to the media literacy level of specific consumers (Burton, 2020).

From the user's point of view, not all advertising or media messages are trustworthy or ethical. Therefore, it is crucial to understand how the application of source criticism amongst adolescents adapts to different platforms in a dynamic media environment. Here, it is helpful to keep in mind that audiences decode media messages differently. Interpretations may not only be socially or context-bound (Livingstone & Das, 2013, p. 114) but could also vary according to the age of the adolescents. The matter might become more complicated when

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[2] https://www.nfer.ac.uk/publications/FUTL06/FUTL06casestudies.pdf

the mediator of the marketing or promotion is a person they follow, admire, and potentially trust because a subconscious parasocial friendship may have developed. Because source criticism in relation to advertising is a central component of digital literacy in terms of critical assessment, the focus in this thesis will lean more heavily towards this aspect, although not neglecting other perspectives.

1.3.3 Correlation and dependency of terminology

In more than one way, social media usage does not exist without digital literacy and vice versa. Using a smartphone, tablet, or PC requires some form of technical competence to be understood and used effectively. This includes the critical assessment of information sought out, presented to us, or shared with others. From an opposite viewpoint, acquiring a decent level of digital literacy presupposes using digital media, preferably driven by interest and curiosity. If we do not explore how social networks work in terms of their functions and internal cultures, we cannot know all the necessary skills needed. Using the lens of YouTube to narrow down the social media perspective, we can attempt to see if usage has contributed to or impacted young people's digital literacy knowledge and skills.

Pedagogically speaking, it has long been important to use didactic methods at home and in school to help young people work up the necessary skills and competencies to make informed decisions about online risks and opportunities. We can think of this as a way in which learning to improve and maintain a high level of media literacy influences the ways different media are used. The aim of this thesis focuses on the opposite perspective and centres on whether increased media usage *affects* how young people interpret and act on information received through social media. More specifically, the concern is with whether the level of media literacy has become *strengthened*, *weakened*, or if it has remained virtually the same as previous data indicate, now in an abnormal situation. Just as important is whether the relationship between usage and literacy online contributes to shaping the cognitive offline in terms of attitudes, beliefs, perceived realism, and self-awareness.

1.4 Literature review

It is beneficial to explore previous research related to the main topic to see how the research questions can be of relevance. Recent research is of particular interest because it reflects the

fast pace changes that technology inflicts on society and how young people use and assess information on social media. Before presenting the literature review, it is necessary to give an insight into two NMA reports, "Barn og Medier" (Children and Media) from 2018 and 2020. As the reports are part of the background of the study and include empirical data that will aid in answering the research questions, I will only provide a brief summary of media usage here.

1.4.1 Norwegian Media Authority reports 2018 & 2020

Relevant findings concerning media usage and habits from the NMA's 2018 report include easy access or ownership of a smartphone, high usage of YouTube (especially boys), somewhat critical to the amount of time spent on the phone or online (especially girls), Snapchat is the most used social media platform, and most youths are good at finding and critically assessing information online (p. 2-7). The 2020 report's main findings are quite similar to the results from 2018 in some cases, with a considerable amount of new data sets as well. Amongst these, the most relevant show that access to certain technology is still high and has increased, 'liking' things on social media is an everyday occurrence, social media accounts are primarily private, and exposure to advertisements for gambling and weight loss are most prominent (NMA, 2020, p. 5-7). Snapchat is still one of the most common social mediums, but YouTube is now shown to be used by nine out of ten adolescents in Norway (p. 23).

Interestingly, YouTube is neither considered a social media platform *nor* included as a separate category in the 2018 report, where it is only briefly mentioned amongst streaming services and TV. Media usage information on this platform is therefore highly absent. The NMA's 2020 report, however, acknowledges YouTube as a social media platform and includes notably more data. Additionally, exposure to certain types of advertising and critical evaluation of such content is not included in the 2018 report. Unfortunately, for this reason, the two reports cannot be compared on these points in the analysis. Nonetheless, they do provide an overview of the most general usage patterns in the recent past and where young people in Norway stand in terms of their media literacy levels.

1.4.2 Overview of prior international academic research

This literature review follows a chronological order from 2015-2021, where foreign studies are presented first, followed by Norwegian publications in the same order. The international

database Academic Search Ultimate (ASU) and the Norwegian database Idunn were used to conduct the literature searches, which contained search words related to key terms from the research questions (see Appendix A). Mapping out the literature will hopefully reveal whether the discourse has revolved around or mentioned a clear development of a relationship between media usage and media literacy amongst youth up till now. For more information on how the searches were conducted, see chapter 3.6.

In 2015, a health-related study by Geraee et al. tried to uncover whether learning about media literacy impacted young people's understanding and behaviour in responding to mass media messages (p. 9). The answer to dealing with harmful media effects and messages has, until recently, been to censor and/or limit this content. In response, the study highlights a shift in the research field - a change in perception from media restriction to media literacy education for young people. Results showed that raising awareness of how to react critically and actively to harmful media messages, and learning to control daily media use, positively affected adolescents' responses (p. 12-13).

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, searches revealed that the media literacy approach could be split into several sub-concepts. For instance, Kim & Yang's South Korean study examined whether young people's civic participation, such as political and social engagement, was more strongly associated with their 'Internet information literacy' or 'Internet skills literacy' (2016, p. 438). They argue that adolescents today are more politically engaged than they are portrayed to be, and that this engagement takes several forms that often include functions and resources available on social media. This could involve commenting on an issue in a thread or posting a political meme in a story. Their research showed that when it comes to youth civic participation online, internet information literacy is the driving force rather than internet literacy skills (p. 450-451). In other words, just knowing how to navigate online environments is not enough, and adolescents need to critically assess and comprehend the information they come across to become more active civic participants.

On a more serious note, some of the content adolescents are exposed to on social media can advertise unhealthy habits offline. Cranwell et al. (2017) explored the content of several YouTube music videos in the UK in which alcohol was consumed and promoted through

product placement. Along with other similar studies, their findings showed that the promotion of alcohol often goes hand in hand with "sexualized imagery or lyrics, […] objectification of women, […] wealth and luxury and sociability, and drinking to excess" (p. 72). Access to an adult account through alteration of birth dates is relatively effortless on YouTube, meaning that adolescents can easily consume this type of content.

Another aspect of media literacy, which is abundant within the research field, is parental mediation. Daneels & Vanwynsberghe (2017) were interested in the ways Belgian parents mediate adolescents' social media usage and how parents' own media literacy can affect this mediation (p. 4). As young people today are 'digitally native', there is a difference in how they understand the digital landscape as opposed to their parents, who did not grow up within the same technological environment. The study results were in accordance with previous studies on the subject. Parents' involvement in adolescents' social media use and habits happens through "active or interpretative" mediation of risks and safety measures, but also involves restrictions for younger adolescents (p. 9-10).

An article from de Dios et al. also takes on parental mediation concerning the digital skills of Spanish youth, along with online risks and opportunities. The study is twofold. First, it focuses on adolescents' digital skills and how they can affect risks and opportunities online, and second on whether active or restrictive parental mediation has the most impact (2018, p. 193). Here, the first part of the results also matched many similar studies in the field, namely that increased digital skills amongst youth equals taking more risks and opportunities online. However, the second part of the results yielded new knowledge that slightly contradicts Daneels & Vanwynsberghe's (2017) outcomes. de Dios et al. demonstrated that young people's media literacy levels indicated a more restrictive rather than active parental mediation of risks and opportunities online (2018, p. 193). In tandem, the two studies suggest that parental mediation styles may highly influence young people's media literacy and habits in the home.

When it comes to adolescents' media habits, use, and encounters, a report from Pew Research Center shows the two-sided media effects of social networks on US teens. The findings of the report read that young people's social media usage and habits do lead to more positive than

negative experiences, but the so-called 'norms' of social media can put a strain on their sharing experiences online (Anderson & Jiang, 2018, p. 2-3). Many may not feel free to express themselves the way they genuinely want to because there are unwritten rules about how to behave or what can be shared, and that popularity is key to being accepted on social media.

Turning towards marketing, 'advertising literacy' is another sub-concept of media literacy dealing directly with promotional media messages. Highlighted in van Dam & van Reijmersdal's Dutch study (2019) is how content creators advertise product brands on audio-visual networking sites, termed "video influencer marketing" (p. 1). YouTube is one of the main platforms for this type of content. The study aimed to discover young people's critical assessments and reactions to influencer promotional announcements, with the findings indicating an insufficient level of advertising literacy on social media (p. 10-11). Adolescents can be exposed to products from recognizable brands, but in some cases, there are more or less dubious commodities in question, such as miracle weight-loss teas.

Hu & Liu argue that the way Chinese adolescents use social networking sites impacts their materialistic views through upward social comparison. Upward social comparison involves self-evaluation in contrast to others seemingly better off than yourself, often involving peers. In relation to social media, this specifically refers to what others share about themselves online. Hu & Liu's hypotheses state that passive SNS use (information consumption) leads to materialism and that upward social comparison and jealousy towards other adolescents, function as intermediates between the two (Hu & Liu, 2020, p. 2). Cultivation was part of their theoretical foundation, and the variables in their hypotheses were shown to correlate in the final results. Contrarily, being more active on SNSs (information production) should equal a decrease in upward social comparison and materialism.

Parental influence and mediation are ongoing topics at the beginning of the 2020s as well. Lauricella & Cingel argue that parents' media use media has a direct effect on how children or teens use media in the US (2020, p. 1927), and therefore examine how their attitudes, behaviours and social media use may reflect youth's media habits (p. 1929). According to their findings, having access to or ownership of technological devices such as computers and smartphones in a domestic context contributes highly to adolescents' formation of media

habits, and they often copy their parents' media behaviours and usage. Additionally, parents' beliefs and attitudes about certain media, including the rules of media, play a crucial role, and the compromise between restrictions and allowances is still relevant (p. 1934).

Wojdan et al.'s (2020) research aims at mapping social media use and habits of young people in Poland to examine these habits in relation to different outcomes. The outcomes include internet addiction, how their personal life and connections could be affected, as well as how they decide which school to attend or what to study (p. 8-9). Amongst the most common habits are using YouTube and spending too much time on social media daily, usually for entertainment or communication purposes. These habits were found to impact education and sleep negatively, and also indicated that many youths do not know enough about the dangers online. However, an interesting finding is that a majority of teenagers involved in the study were confident they could decrease time spent on social media (p. 13). Wojdan et al. did not examine or specify whether these habits could impact adolescents' media literacy, but like nearly all other studies in this literature review, they too urge the implementation of more educational programs.

Maheux et al. (2021) move away from the risks and harms of adolescents' social media use and toward a more positive aspect. The aim of their study was to explore whether and how gratitude and motivation to use social media amongst US high-schoolers might have changed prior to and during the Covid-19 pandemic (p. 736). Adolescents emphasizing the importance of staying in touch and having meaningful discussions on social media are also prone to feel greater levels of gratitude in the long run (p. 741). Maintaining friendships through social media during the pandemic also led to feeling less lonely. Loneliness amongst youth has been a key issue throughout the worst parts of the pandemic in Norway (Askeland, 2021), making these findings relevant. Additionally, similar results from a Norwegian master thesis showed that digital communication has been an essential tool for staying in touch during the pandemic (Lyshaug, 2021, p. 86). Altogether the study shows that there can be significant benefits to social media usage in terms of social interactions, especially for adolescents' mental health.

As part of a more extensive study amongst eight different countries spread across three continents, Pires et al. (2021) look closely into how teenagers spend their time on YouTube.

They specifically investigated how adolescents learn to use it, as well as their habits, thoughts and understanding of the platform through metaphors (p. 1176-1177). Five core uses were identified: "*radiophonic, televisual, social, productive and educative*", which can vary and sometimes overlap according to teens' media habits and the platform itself (p. 1179). These uses refer to what adolescents use YouTube for the most and also signify positive social media use, such as listening to music or searching for knowledge.

The influence of social media marketing and advertising content consumed by youth is an increasingly researchable topic. Studies from Spain, Argentina and Mexico, respectively, cover several subjects. These include the effects of gambling commercials (Labrador et al., 2021), the promotion of unhealthy food and drinks regarding obesity issues (Castronuovo, 2021), as well as marketing strategies from brands promoting unhealthy products (Théodore et al., 2021). Aside from this, recurring marketing themes in the literature search included tobacco use, e-cigarettes and alcohol consumption. It is illegal to advertise these products on any media platform in Norway, meaning that these studies do not apply to Norwegian youth directly. Influence does, however, occur in other ways, through user-generated influencer videos or music videos, as explored in the articles of van Dam & van Reijmersdal (2019) and Cranwell et al. (2017).

1.4.3 Overview of prior Norwegian academic research

Findings from the literature review thus far can be transferred to a Norwegian setting for several reasons, the main one being the importance and acknowledgement of media literacy education globally. Similar to many other parts of the world, young people in Norway own or have access to digital devices. This puts parental mediation of youth's digital skills, risks, and opportunities on the public agenda here as well (Gnanasekaran, 2021). Moreover, the studies seem to be relevant for most countries with a high Internet penetration rate, which is also true for Norway.

International findings more or less apply, not just because Norway is a multicultural society, but also because young people are highly influenced by foreign media cultures on a daily basis, particularly from the US. Furthermore, YouTube is one of the most popular social media platforms amongst Norwegian youth and abroad. Although the cultures overall are different,

the results from the studies in this review can be consistent with both usage and media literacy levels. Studies showing similar levels of usage patterns across borders can therefore be relevant. Moreover, the platform's user interface indicates that usage may be similar across nationalities and cultures, although content consumption and time spent online may vary. Some research has been conducted domestically as well and can shed light on where the focus is within the field.

Recent Norwegian research from Kleppang et al. (2021) focuses on youth, media use and mental health, especially depression. The study's main aim was to discover if there is a relationship between depression and social media use amongst young people, and if gender and having many friendships mediate this correlation (p. 2). Results revealed that higher use of electronic media, such as social media and gaming, increases the probability of developing symptoms of depression, but gender or friendships did not influence this association (p. 8-9).

Steinnes & Teigen (2021) bring to the surface and explore the subject of the enormous influencer marketing exposure on young people in Norway. This article strongly connects the advertising aspect of media literacy with youth response to promotional content. They investigate how and through which strategies consumption is marketed by influencers and how youth are persuaded (p. 6). Influencers seem to provide a specific methodology for how their followers can achieve their lifestyle by consuming specific products and services, often luxurious brands that signal status and wealth. A connection can be made between this study and Hu & Liu's (2020) research on materialism and upward social comparison, where they argue that social media has the power to portray people a certain way. Many young people are sceptical of the content, but they can also be unintentionally influenced through the leverage of specific marketing strategies (p. 19). Ultimately, youth often see influencers as friends and not brands, which can create a strong connection and thereby be able to influence an individual.

Influencer marketing on YouTube is not always country-bound either, meaning that, for instance, the same influencer marketing videos can reach audiences in different geographical locations. In terms of the 'classic' advertisement videos on YouTube, there are differences in perceptions and reactions, as well as regulations, in different countries. However, genres such

as gambling and fast food are also relevant to Norway. Although some of the findings from the studies presented in the previous sub-chapter are more applicable to a Norwegian context than others, it is possible to make connections. Globalization and the spread of social media means that national usage characteristics are less relevant.

1.4.4 My contribution

The systematic searches and the relevant findings from the NMA reports that led to the literature review suggest that previous research tackles many angles of media usage and literacy amongst youth. These include time spent online, internet addiction, psychological factors of media literacy, parental mediation, marketing influence, youth perceptions of advertisement, civic participation, and social media usage related to the Corona pandemic. Based on the information presented, the majority of studies seemed to aim at exploring media literacy or social media usage separately. In some, media habits or usage were sometimes mentioned as a 'side-effect' of media literacy, formed as a result of knowledge and skills online, as well as influenced by parents. None of the international or Norwegian studies I came across explored the opposite, namely whether adolescents' *social media usage* strengthens or weakens their media literacy levels. Additionally, no studies connected this aspect to Norwegian youth, nor YouTube as the most used platform amongst young people in Norway.

The literature review did illuminate some surprising aspects. To gain an overview that can aid in choosing which methodological and theoretical approaches to include, I created a summary sheet. An overview of methods is included in chapter 3, while the range of different theories used is depicted in Table 1.1.

Table 1.1: Theories employed in literature review publications

Authors	Theories
Anderson & Jiang (2018)	N/A
Castronuovo et al. (2021)	N/A
Cranwell et al. (2017)	N/A
Daneels & Vanwynsberghe (2017)	Digital and Social media, Parental mediation, Social media literacy
de Dios, van Oosten & Igartua (2018)	Digital literacy (skills, risks, opportunities, parental mediation) Digital Literacy Scale (DLC)
Geraee et al. (2015)	Theory of planned behaviour (TPB), Transtheoretical model (TTM)
Hu & Liu (2020)	Passive social network use, Adolescent materialism, Upward social comparison, Cultivation theory
Kim & Yang (2016)	Civic Engagement, Internet skill literacy, Internet information literacy
Kleppang et al. (2021)	Based on previous studies through systematic reviews
Labrador et al. (2021)	Gambling advertisement
Lauricella & Cingel (2021)	Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory (contexts and environments in which children are affected by something)
Maheux et al. (2021)	Adolescent peer interaction (during Covid-19), Adolescent social media use, The role of gratitude
Pires et al. (2021)	Practices, uses and YouTube metaphors.
Steinnes & Teigen (2021)	Youth and influencer marketing, Social media, Parasocial relationships, Consumption
Théodore et al. (2021)	Marketing, Digital media
van Dam et al. (2019)	Advertising Literacy, Disclosures of influencer content, Brands and influencers
Wojdan et al. (2020)	N/A

Based on the research questions, some theories had already been considered appropriate choices. One was Uses & Gratifications theory (UGT), which I was already familiar with. I anticipated that UGT would be included in some of the studies from the literature searches, certainly in terms of media and social media usage research. A literature review from Masrom et al. demonstrates that several recent studies exploring behaviour in social networks have applied UGT to their research (2021, p. 11). As mentioned In chapter 1.1. behaviour-centred studies are abundant. Table 1.1 thus exposed an unexpected finding in that UGT was not

applied to studies that specifically dealt with social media usage. Moreover, UGT was not applied to social media usage, youth, and media literacy altogether. This combination is a theoretical gap I can fill in this thesis.

Furthermore, cultivation theory, used to study media effects over time, appeared in only one research paper. It was not an approach I was acquainted with prior to the literature searches. Now that social media has had time to mature and is ever-present in young people's lives, cultivation theory could be re-applied to newer media to study the impacts of usage and was, therefore, highly considered. The overview helped me confirm the theoretical choices and provided a chance to apply them to this project. It also demonstrated that theory on social media, digital literacy, and marketing is essential to include.

1.5 Structure of the thesis

So far, I have provided a brief introduction to the background and aim of the master thesis. The research questions were presented, and the terms and concepts used were elaborated on and operationalised. Furthermore, a literature review was provided, giving an insight into the most recent reports on youth and media usage, as well as academic literature published during the last six years. In chapter 2, the main theoretical foundations and scientific concepts that will aid in answering the research questions are elaborated on. I then explain which methods are applied and how in Chapter 3. Here, I also provide information that concerns the project's scope, such as the selection of and criteria of the study group. Limitations and ethical considerations of both the methods and the overall project are presented here as well.

Furthermore, the main part of the thesis is split into two sections. Chapter 4 covers all the relevant empirical data generated using the chosen methodologies. In Chapter 5, the empirical data is analysed and discussed, and the answer to each sub-question is summarized. This means that I follow the order of the research questions presented in chapter 1.2. I will begin by addressing young people's social media usage first, then look closer into their media literacy levels, and lastly discuss the connection between the two in 2021/2022. At the end of the thesis, I provide a concluding remark that answers the main research question, with a proposal for future research.

2. Theory

Alongside the growth of mass media, the study of media effects began to emerge. Part of the discourse early on, which still prevails today, revolved around youth and the impact of media consumption on their perception of reality (Turow, 2020, p. 35-36). Sequentially, efforts to identify motivational reasons or patterns for using media became an important stepstone towards understanding the impact of these effects from different angles (Rubin, 2009, p. 166). In other words, some researchers began to question whether media effects could truly occur if the message did not psychologically comply with a recipient's personal needs, beliefs or interests. In turn, this has led to researchers attempting to grasp how people actually *understand* media messages and *reflect on* their usage of different media through media literacy studies.

Nowadays, social media play a substantial role in how modern societies function. The manifestation of media texts implies that a different reality exists inside and outside this cyberworld, often blurring the lines between fact and fiction. It requires us to sharpen our senses and become increasingly attentive to the content we seek or are exposed to. It could therefore be possible to gain an understanding of audiences' meaning-making on social media through a metaperspective, studying text and discourse (Boréus & Bergström, 2017). However, media effects are a challenging research field, and it is difficult to confirm a causal relation between one specific variable and a particular media effect. Therefore, I instead choose to lean on established media effects and media usage theories to explore motivations for social media usage and possible impacts that may correlate with the type of usage. The chosen main theories originally aimed at exploring two of the most prominent mass media technologies, television and radio.

The first framework of the thesis is Uses & Gratifications theory (UGT). It is concerned with audiences' motivational factors for specific media usage based on satisfaction resulting from usage. This theory was deliberately chosen based on the results from the literature review. Similarly, only one article implemented cultivation theory (Hu & Liu, 2020), which is the second part of the theoretical foundation. The second framework is cultivation theory, which examines the long-lasting impacts of media effects, particularly on television viewers. In this

thesis, long-term *or* long-lasting can be understood as the time during the pandemic lockdown and the immediate aftermath. Merged, the two theories may help answer some more profound questions about young people's media usage in Norway and whether this affects their skills and knowledge online. Before diving in on the theories, it is necessary to provide some background information on social media, including YouTube, marketing, and theory on media literacy.

2.1 Social media

If there is one phenomenon in the 21st century that holds power to influence young people globally, its social media. Although the term social media goes by numerous definitions due to its complexity, we can stick to a general rule in this thesis. Social media platforms and applications enable virtually anyone to be a sender and receiver of user-generated content, in which a many-to-many communication form takes place (Bastiansen & Dahl, 2019, p. 380). It strongly contrasts traditional mass media communication from one-to-many, towards a seemingly passive audience, which prevailed with television, radio, and newspapers. Furthermore, we can say that in most cases, social media conveys a sender's status, identity, and/or position (ibid., p. 380). These aspects can add context to the content in a message but can also inform a receiver about the sender's trustworthiness.

The immense growth of social networks and platforms has allowed individuals to speak their minds, communicate with each other, and engage instantaneously through likes and comments. In 2011, when growth had just started to escalate rapidly, over 1.2 billion users aged 15 and over were active on a social media network in the course of just one month (van Dijck, 2013, p. 4). Now, a decade later, over 4.5 billion people use social media, and the numbers show that it will only increase in the future (We Are Social, 2021). Survey data from Statistics Norway, hereafter referred to as SSB, show that 98% of Norwegian 16-19-year-olds use social media (2020, p. 64). We need to keep in mind that parts of this percentage apply more to some social platforms than others. With such high percentages, it is interesting to understand how young adults use social media and what habits or patterns form from the usage.

Despite positive aspects of social media usage, researchers, societies, and parents worldwide have expressed concerns about harmful effects over the years. Casares Jr. & Binkley argue that "the effect of digital media consumption on young people is a dynamic and multifaceted reality" (2021, p. 1). In other words, social media usage can be an enriching experience, but it can also create problems. Some consequences can affect social media users of all ages, although youth are particularly vulnerable. And not just due to immaturity but also being the most frequent users may increase their chances of unwanted outcomes. Van Dijck describes one such consequence through a reminder that certain comments or images that used to reach a limited number of people can now become widespread in no time and sometimes lead to permanent aftereffects (2013, p. 7). Finding out whether media literacy amongst youth strengthens or weakens along with their own user experiences, such as learning from past mistakes online, could reduce the risk of negative consequences.

Social media have also been heavily criticized for presenting a false reality. One example is how some users portray their own lives as utterly perfect through carefully chosen content, usually stemming from the accounts of what is now known as influencers. On the receiving end, some adolescents may perceive the content as realistic and compare one's own life to that of the influencer. In many cases, this narrative applies to girls who, unlike boys, are more or less flooded with persuasive content on what to wear, how to look or how to act. These influences often lead to girls comparing themselves to specific figures on social media, as well as peers, and seeking validation through likes and comments on social media platforms, such as YouTube and Instagram (Casares Jr. & Binkley, 2021, p. 1).

Social media algorithms play a fundamental role in establishing what is presented to us, depending on our usage patterns. Bastiansen & Dahl explain how this process can lead to an 'echo chamber' where exposure to content is one-sided, supporting one's interests (2019, p. 382). Contradicting opinions or non-relatable content are either scarce or will have to be actively sought out by a user. A snowball effect can thus occur in which looking at certain content only produces more of the same type of content in the main feed. Furthermore, as our usage patterns leave traces, they also open up opportunities for advertisers (p. 382). Ultimately the advertising we are exposed to is often tailor-made based on our data.

2.1.1 Youtube

'Broadcast Yourself' is the slogan of Google's video sharing platform YouTube. It is one of the most successful video-streaming sites on the Internet. Co-founded by former PayPal employees Steve Chen, Chad Hurley and Jawed Karim in 2005 (Hartmans, 2020), the platform now has over 2.3 billion users of which approximately 122 million log in daily (GMI, 2021). It is also one of the most popular social media sites amongst adolescents, in Norway and internationally. One aspect that sets this age group apart from older users is that they use the platform more as a search engine, which it is in fact, being ranked second after Google (Finch, n.d.). Understanding school-related issues, solving a practical problem, or the hassle of finding a specific song are all legitimate reasons for turning towards YouTube to easily explain or provide answers.

There have been discussions of whether YouTube truly can be considered a social media platform, mainly due to the lack of a private messaging function. The term *platform* can be defined as a "*mediator* rather than an intermediary: it shapes the performance of social acts instead of merely facilitating them" (van Dijck, 2013, p. 29). Combining this interpretation with the definition of social media described in the previous chapter, we can see that YouTube has established itself as a social media platform in several ways. More specifically it is defined as an SNS, but also as a content sharing service (Olsen & Peretz, 2017, p. 338). This means that anyone can be a creator of original content with the potential of communicating to a massive audience. Users can communicate with each other or provide feedback to creators in comment sections using their own profiles, including interactive chats during live broadcasts. Communication can also be more discrete, through using the *like* and *dislike* buttons Unfortunately, YouTube has recently disabled the possibility to see how many dislikes a video has. Moreover, although the platform lacks connectivity through private messages, it enables it in many other ways. Furthermore, algorithms push forward more of what individuals, or the general audience, view or engage with on the front feed. It is therefore possible to envision the *medium* YouTube as a hybrid of mass media and social media.

2.1.2 Marketing strategies on YouTube

Using social media to connect with other people is only a 'side-effect' of why it was created in the first place. It was mainly meant for businesses to promote their products and services and

connect to their audiences. There are several ways this process can occur, many of which apply to YouTube. In any type of market communication, the consequence of changing people's attitudes is seen as a fundamental goal because it can ultimately lead to a change in behaviour (Olsen & Peretz, 2017, p. 173). In other words, it can prompt a certain action, such as purchasing a product or sharing a message with friends and family. However, this process involves active cognitive reflection in deciding whether to support or adopt a certain attitude towards something, which may also backfire on the advertiser (ibid., p. 174-175). In this sense, this is where the degree of media literacy comes into play and can, along with other sociocultural factors, help us make informed decisions.

However, the most essential characteristic of advertising on social media platforms is *monetization*. On Youtube, monetization can occur through branded video channels owned by companies, promoting videos in the 'relevant videos' section, and InVideo ads such as advertising snippets and pop-ups (van Dijck, 2013, p. 125; Jones & Hafner, 2021, p. 42). Alternatively, there are ways that brands, companies, and organizations can promote products and services without necessarily creating and distributing expensive adverts on YouTube. A trend in recent years involves partnering up with YouTubers for marketing purposes (van Dijck, 2013, p. 126), provided they have a persistent and sufficient number of subscribers and viewers.

Word-of-mouth (WOM) or electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM) becomes central here in changing people's attitudes (Olsen & Peretz, 2017, p. 339). The former acronym will be used hereafter. Advertisers often target opinion leaders, such as famous YouTubers, because of the potential to make messages about products or services go viral, often through storytelling. In return, young people often discuss things they see or read about on social media with each other. If the form and content of the marketing efforts are good enough, the chances of WOM become higher.

As mentioned in chapter 1.4, some studies discuss adolescents in relation to this topic, such as van Dam & van Reijmersdal's (2019) and Steinnes & Tangen's (2021). On YouTube, the types of marketing strategies mentioned above can come in the form of "unboxing" videos or "tutorials" (Collins & Conley, 2022). Often this means that the main advertiser is separated

from the message, and the nature of the advertisements can thus become camouflaged and hard to distinguish (Olsen & Peretz, 2017, p. 23). Teachers often recommend pupils to watch tutorials in an attempt to put their media literacy to the test. A reason is that adolescents watching and relating to this type of YouTube content may be more easily influenced by what they see or hear, as opposed to the 'classic' monetization ads.

2.2 Digital and Social Media Literacies

Keeping up with the right ways to navigate and evaluate online encounters is an everchanging process in the contemporary media landscape. Media literacy is highly relevant for youth because being a 'digital native' does not automatically equal a high level of media competency at all times, in all ways, and all situations. The risks and opportunities adolescents face in being the most frequent social media users and usually being first in dealing with new communication trends prompts the need to implement new knowledge regularly. Some risks include cyberbullying, sexual harassment, privacy issues, and harmful advertising. For this reason, *media literacy* is more important than ever and can hopefully tackle current and future challenges along with the evolvement of digital media.

As a key concept, media literacy is concerned with developing an awareness of and acquiring the correct tools to critically assess different communication in mass media (Turow, 2020, p. 20). For instance, to be considered media literate, criteria such as "critical evaluation of media content" (UNESCO, 2013, p. 49) and being able to perceive "media content as a means of learning about culture" (Turow, 2020, p. 20) have to be met. In other words, the concept was never designed to protect adolescents from harmful media messages through prohibitions or restrictions but rather to guide them in an inescapable media culture (CML, n.d.). Applying this to social media, and YouTube in particular, youth encounter all sorts of advertisements, fake news, and influencer marketing. This may require double-checking the nature of the informational source. It also calls for an even more critical content assessment, as some information is trusted based on relatedness and popularity instead of actual research.

Media literacy covers many perspectives and areas that could be explored in relation to adolescents, from news journalism to the movie industry. As mentioned in chapter 1.3, being media literate today can be perceived as equal to being digitally literate. What this mainly

involves is making use of various digital media to "take actions and make meaning in particular social, cultural, and economic contexts" (Jones & Hafner, 2021, p. 18). The contexts, in turn, are interconnected with "values, ideologies, power relationships, and cultural understandings" (ibid.). Moreover, in narrowing the scope of digital literacy, we find *social media literacy*, which is the main part of the digital sphere explored here. Another term, audio-visual literacy, could be applied directly to YouTube as a platform. However, this sub-concept will not be taken into consideration because digital literacy today, as well as social media literacy, is already concerned with audio-visual media messages.

Navigating social media sites requires skills associated with being media literate altogether. However, social media literacy adds to this basic knowledge by emphasizing its importance in relation to social encounters in an online environment. Being socially competent means understanding how others are communicating and, at the same time considering "social consequences of one's own media-related behavior" (Dewe & Sander, 1996, cited in Festl, 2021, p. 251). For young people who usually master the necessary technical skills online, the cognitive skills are the ones they need to practice consistently. Both sets of skills are, however, necessary to critically evaluate media messages. Social media literacy thus requires users not just to know how to post or when to share something on social media, but to have a deeper critical understanding of the content they consume and produce. Although some basic elements will remain, the definition of media literacies changes along with fast developments in technology and today's understanding may not be entirely valid in the near future.

2.3 Uses & Gratifications theory (UGT)

The roots of UGT stem from the prime of radio in the 1940s and Lazarsfeld's studies (Rubin, 2009, p. 168). Nevertheless, television soon placed itself at the top of the mass media totem pole and became the primary medium of UGT research, although research on other mass media was conducted too. In the 1950s and 1960s, perspectives on mass media effects research began moving away from traditional models, and through collaboration with psychologists (Ruggiero, 2000, p. 6), towards a functionalist discourse focusing on interaction and "audience motivation for using the media" (Rubin, 2009, p. 166). This change in tradition established itself firmly in the 1970s and has endured. UGT is still being applied regularly as a

framework for investigating several mass media technologies (Ruggiero, 2000, p. 3), including the Internet and social media.

According to UGT, motivations for and ways of using media mainly depend on viewers and not the communication of media institutions. Audience motivation can be understood through the theory's hypothesis. It states that choosing to use a medium repeatedly is a result of the level of satisfaction it can provide (University of Twente, 2019, p. 20). Therefore, underlying motivational factors determine audience activity, which is the foundational layer of the theory, but does not entail that audiences must be constantly active (Rubin, 2009, p. 172). Whether a medium is crucial for performing a particular action or solving a problem is also a motivational factor for using it (Galloway & Meek, 1981, as cited in Ruggiero, 2000, p. 10). How users intend to engage with a medium, as well as the media functions and affordances that they consider to be of value to them, can all be a part of audience activity.

Audience activity can further be split into two more complex processes concerned with specific ways of media usage and usefulness, which are typically context-bound. The first entails a ritualised and relatively passive use of a medium. In these cases, the medium serves as a means of distraction and a way to pass the time (Rubin, 2009, p. 172). Most of us have probably been in a situation where we automatically pick up our smartphones to distract ourselves from work or school tasks simply because it is a habit to do so. The second process involves the deliberate use of a particular medium "to gratify information needs or motives" (Ruggiero, 2000, p. 10). This is referred to as instrumental media use, which involves higher audience activity (Rubin, 2009, 172-173). An example could be to find directions using a GPS application on our smartphone, requiring us to focus on what we are doing. Rubin (1993) argues that passive audiences have higher chances of "being more directly influenced by media or messages", while active audiences can reflect more on their "decisions in accepting or rejecting messages" (as cited in Rubin, 2009, p. 172). In reality, audiences are not on either side of the spectrum but usually fall somewhere in between.

Current media technologies allow for the exploration of new dimensions of UGT. Internet, and now social media, in particular, have become gateways for attributes that were not traditionally accessible through television or radio. These include "interactivity,

demassification, and asynchroneity" (Ruggiero, 2000, p. 15). *Demassification* has led to a shift towards decentralization, in which the audience can choose amongst a large variety of media and have greater control of how they can interact with it (ibid., p. 16). Consequently, electronic media messages have become easier to alter or manipulate in many different ways, making them *asynchronous* (ibid, p. 16). Increased power and control over social media use offers possibilities but can also equal greater risk. Anything put out can stay there forever, and spreading false information is easier than ever. It only intensifies the need for media literacy amongst individuals, especially young people.

Of the three features mentioned above, one aspect worth elaborating on in this thesis is interactivity. *Interactivity* is a core aspect of how the Internet is used and applies even better to social media with its abundance of user-generated content. According to Ha & James (1998), it entails whether the willingness of communication between a sender and receiver is sufficiently reciprocal (p. 461). In order to explore how this plays out on social media, Ha and James' dimensions of interactivity can be useful, from which four are relevant to this thesis (p. 461-463):

- *Playfulness*: Using online services for entertainment purposes

- *Choice*: Having access to a large number of options to choose between while navigating the medium

- *Connectedness*: Having access to the 'real world' and being able to communicate with others, due to asynchronism

- *Reciprocal communication*: Possibility to not just consume messages from a communicator online, but also respond and engage with content

A fifth dimension, *information collection*, is not included. Its definition does not align with the definition of audience activity described earlier in this chapter nor with the research questions and context of the thesis. An alternative is provided in the paragraph below.

Other researchers have also described interactivity as a multidimensional concept, adding to the above-mentioned elements. Amongst other things, Heeter mentions the importance of "how actively responsive a medium is" and the "amount of effort a user must exert to access information" (1989, as cited in Ruggiero, 2000, p. 15). This could refer to what happens when

one presses a specific button or not having to scroll down a webpage with excess information. Erstad lists four main points *or* motives for using digital media (2015, p. 90-91), which can link to interactivity:

- *A participatory culture*: Primarily social media; important to feel like a part of something, stay in touch, join a discussion, share thoughts

- *Information access*: Easy access to knowledge; refers to both the production and consumption of information online

- *Communication possibilities*: Facilitating arenas for conversation

- *Content production*: Free to be both a consumer and producer

Although Erstad refers to digital media in general, all four points can be transferred to a social media setting, including YouTube. He also includes the possibility for audiences to find information easily, which was missing in Ha and James' dimensions. Hence, users anticipate that a medium fulfils several interactive needs, which in exchange can make them more prone to continue to use that medium if it checks certain boxes.

Audience activity can be summarized based on core beliefs of what UGT research means for newer technologies and contemporary media (Rubin, 2009, p. 167). Audiences actively choose what content they want to consume through which kind of media. However, activeness varies depending on the specific wants or needs they wish to fulfil. Behaviour and level of fulfilment when receiving and processing media messages are highly affected by social, cognitive, contextual, and interactive influences. Media have to compete with other communication forms that can alter choices, perhaps through persuasive processes such as WOM. However, audiences still depend on media for specific communication needs, meaning they are not entirely in control as an active audience either. Although UGT is now used to study social and traditional media, the goal remains to discover why audiences choose to use certain media and what they get in return (Ruggiero, 2000, p. 29).

The theory has, however, not been passed down without criticism. Most of the critique derives from researchers from the decades prior to the 1980s. They voiced that there was a lack of understanding of UGT's building blocks, different interpretations of what motives and gratifications mean amongst different researchers, being dependent on "self-report data"

from diaries or narrative methods, and regarding the audience as "too active or rational in its behaviour" (Rubin, 2009, p. 169). In an attempt to confront the critique, Windahl (1981) proposed to combine theories on media effects and uses because they interrelate and can provide a more valid conclusion of communication outcomes (as cited in Ruggiero, 2000, p. 10; as cited in Rubin, 2009, p. 172). The theories in this thesis cover both effects and uses, respectively, and a combination will provide a valuable framework for examining the research questions. Aside from this, most of the criticism belongs to a pre-social media era and may not be sufficiently valid today. The relation between uses and gratifications has changed tremendously, as data on audience activity through algorithms is abundant and accessible. It allows for an easier research process and verification of self-report data through comparison.

2.4 Cultivation theory

Since its infancy, traditional mass media have served as the primary connection between a specific message and the masses. In doing so, they have had an enormous impact on audiences over time, socially and culturally. In the 1960s, a project led by George Gerbner named 'Cultural Indicators' was developed to study these effects (1969). He later renamed the project *cultivation theory*, explaining that the framework was created to highlight "the consequences of growing up and living in a cultural environment dominated by television" (Morgan et al., 2009, p. 34).

To cultivate means to repeat a process *or* nurture something. In a media context, the theory has been used to see how certain media usage or habits could ultimately impact "public beliefs, attitudes, opinion and behaviour" (Hansen & Machin, 2019, p. 90), as well as values and perceptions of 'the real world'. Cultivation is considered both a theoretical perspective *and* a methodological approach, namely cultivation analysis. I choose to explain the theoretical foundation in detail in this section because it requires thorough elaboration, while a brief description of the methodological aspects is provided in chapter 3.4.

There are several interpretations of what cultivation theory entails, particularly regarding differences in Gerbner's original definitions and ideas that followed (Potter, 2014). However, at its basis, cultivation is thought to be a gradual process in which habits create long-lasting impacts on viewers (University of Twente, 2019, p. 108) and where there is an "interaction

among messages, audiences, and contexts" (Morgan et al., 2009, p. 38). There is also a difference in *type* of viewer, ranging from light to heavy. Heavy viewers are more dependent on television to fill their informational needs than light viewers, although the types also differ according to several demographics and characteristics (Shanahan & Morgan, 1999, p. 26). It is possible to imagine how these theoretical descriptions may also fit well with today's media landscape and audiences. On a side note, cultivation is also concerned with the effect of mainstreaming and the 'mean world syndrome', where the latter relates explicitly to the adverse effects of violence in relation to heavy consumption. Although these two variations of the theory could also be discussed through the scope of social media, I will not go into them because they are beyond the frames of the thesis.

Cultivation theory is more prone to fit into contemporary media if we move away from Gerbner, at least on some points. Potter states that cultivation is still relevant for all forms of media, seeing that one is explicitly exploring "exposure to media content [and] the relationship of that exposure to some kind of effects outcome" (2014, p. 1031-1032). The theory itself has also moved towards the examination of short-term effects of media messages (ibid.), possibly in an attempt to match the social media environment. Along the same lines, the effect that demassification had on UGT research mentioned in the previous chapter can be applied to modern processes of cultivation as well. Morgan et al. argue that it is not necessarily the content that has changed in the new media environment but rather how we receive it (2015, p. 685). Seemingly endless on-demand entertainment options have resulted in shorter attention spans amongst audiences, leading to an 'attention-war' where different media fight for views. This perspective is particularly relevant for YouTube, where anyone can share their 'story' amongst a sea of content.

One of the main reasons audience attention is crucial for cultivation and a central part of media, is economic. If the audience does not invest enough time or attention in what they are viewing, advertisements become useless (Shanahan & Morgan, 1999, p. 17-18). In return, media corporations would miss a sizeable financial source. Statements like '*Stay with us after the short break, you don't want to miss this!*' on a TV show, cliffhangers in TV series, and eye-catching titles and thumbnails of YouTube videos that persuade us to wait for the advertisements to finish, are all attempts of buying our attention and time. Through this

perspective, we can see how advertisement and cultivation are interconnected, along with rhetoric, although this element is not the focus of this thesis.

There are undoubtedly cultural and individual differences regarding the choice of media, time spent using different media, and how we decipher media messages. Moreover, it can matter whether we consume content alone or in the company of others. In its earlier stages, media effects research pointed out the connection between media and social relations, which is still highly relevant today. Through WOM, discussions amongst people about media messages they have watched or heard about may contribute to different interpretations (Turow, 2020, p. 36). If we include young people in this train of thought, many may get together and listen to the same music, stream the same series, and get exposed to similar content on social media. Later on, they may discuss what they experienced with each other. WOM could therefore be perceived as a strong contributor of cultivation.

Cultivation theory is suitable for answering the research questions in this thesis for multiple reasons. First, looking at the media culture today in many parts of the world, we consume content from our smartphones, computers, tablets and televisions daily. Although cultivation theory was initially concerned with television, it is possible to make connections and find similarities across different contemporary media. In addition, one can draw lines between television media effects on audiences and effects created by the content on YouTube (or other audio-visual platforms). Second, if we view media usage and habits as a consequence of media effects, we can use cultivation theory to explore whether these habits improve or worsen youth's understanding of navigating the media landscape critically.

Third, the immaturity of adolescents makes them more vulnerable to influences caused by media effects. However, belonging to a digital generation could mean they have built up competency from a young age and, are more skilled than some research suggests. We can examine the validity of these perceptions based on cultivation. Lastly, of all the largest social media platforms or networks, YouTube is quite similar to television because its primary feature is audio-visual content. The influence of television is also reflected in YouTube's rectangular-shaped logo and font inspired by vintage TV sets (Logos-World, 2021). Cultivation

theory can be used as a tool to analyse the media effects or impacts YouTube may emit based on young people's usage and viewing patterns on the platform.

There are naturally some deficiencies in the theory and ways it does not reach its full potential in answering the research questions. Some of the heavier criticism is summarised by and stems from Potter. He claims that the theory as a system is no longer relevant or distinctive because the current trend is, as mentioned, to examine short-term media effects instead of long-term (Potter, 2014, p. 1032). In addition, one of the theory's primary objectives historically has been to explore the effects of violent media, while other cultivation indicators have received significantly less attention (Potter, 2014, p. 1028). Although the criticism may spark some scepticism towards the theory, it also opens up for applying it in different ways and testing its relevance in newer forms of media. Equally important is to discover how young people understand the media messages they view or hear because it could say something about their media literacy, alongside the evolvement of digital media. Synthesising cultivation theory with Uses and Gratifications theory can thus aid in explaining what drives adolescents to select specific content and, subsequently, find out how this information is processed.

2.5 Theoretical summary and reflections

In an everchanging digital media landscape, the need for media literacy is more relevant than ever, particularly amongst young people. Acquiring the necessary critical skills and competence to process, create, and share information on social media, or anywhere online, is considered crucial for becoming an active participant in today's society. On platforms such as the social media giant YouTube, the lines of entertainment and marketing are easily blurred and used to persuade various audiences easily. Information in audio-visual form moves quickly today, requiring both fast and critical cognitive responses. Moreover, media literacy is a dynamic process which needs to change along with new trends and technological progress. A precondition for exploring the relationship between media usage and media literacy is thus keeping up with this movement. Focusing on YouTube, which is one of the most frequently used social platforms amongst youth in Norway, I apply UGT and cultivation theory to examine this interrelation in-depth.

Although UGT does overlap with cultivation theory in some respects, there are some main differences between them. UGT differs from cultivation theory in that it considers the audience an active participant rather than just a passive receiver of media messages. In other words, the two theories study similar objectives from two different perspectives, although UGT puts less emphasis on the power of media effects alone. Additionally, analysing communication outcomes is also different in that cultivation theory begins by looking at the message from the sender first, while UGT sees the receiver *or* audience as the main point of departure.

Theories covering the media and communication field are abundant, and there were certainly alternatives considered. *Agenda-setting theory* could replace cultivation theory. Both focus on the effect of distributing media messages to a substantial percentage of the public (Potter, 2014, p. 1027). However, agenda-setting is more concerned with how the news establishes what is considered important at any given time (McCombs & Reynolds, 2009). An option for UGT is *dependency theory*. Although similarities with UGT include context, usage, and motives for media usage, the theory states that dependency derives from a *restricted* choice of media and that this factor can lead to changes in behaviour or attitude (Rubin, 2009, p. 174). Dependency and agenda-setting theory could have added valuable insights to the analysis. As news consumption amongst adolescents is not on its own the aim of the study, and YouTube itself offers a large variety of media that adolescents are known to consume, cultivation theory and UGT were preferable.

3. Methodology and Research Design

In this chapter, I will depict the procedures involved in the gathering of empirical data. This involves presenting the choice of method, selection and description of participants, and considering methodological strengths and potential weaknesses. Additionally, I will strive to make the connection between the research questions and methodology clear. Some methodological reflections are then offered further on where I elaborate on delimitations related to the project overall. Thoughts on the reliability and validity of the research, including ethical issues and considerations especially relevant to both the research and choice of

method for this project, are also provided. Lastly, a brief overview of the methodological steps taken in conducting the systematic searches for the literature review is included.

Several methods were considered during the early stages of the project. Bearing in mind the formulation of the research questions, I found it most appropriate to combine different methodological approaches. Method triangulation *or* mixed-methods research is becoming increasingly common because it enables approaching a phenomenon through multiple angles (Johannessen et al., 2021, p. 262). Combining methods also increases the chance of using methodological strengths to outweigh weaknesses, which can positively affect the reliability and validity of the research (ibid.; Bowen, 2009, p. 28). For this reason, most scientific researchers agree that, if possible and suitable, the two approaches should be used to complement each other (Tjora, 2017, p. 24). As this thesis explores, the impacts of social media usage on media literacy amongst youth, it is not enough to rely solely on one type of empirical data. Therefore, the research design consists of both qualitative and quantitative methods for examining the phenomenon.

The most common characteristic of qualitative research is that data is examined in the form of text *or* words, rather than numbers (Tjora, p. 24). We can also say that the procedure of gathering data is usually *inductive*, meaning that the research is explorative and guided by the research question(s) and data (ibid.). It is the preferred method used when the objective is to understand why people think or act a certain way (Johannessen et al., 2021, p. 23). This approach often requires direct communication and close proximity between the researcher and the study participants. Quantitative methods, on the other hand, aim at generalizing results from empirical data, and the research process is *deductive*, meaning that it is guided by theory (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 41). Most research methods, however, are not polar opposites and usually fall somewhere along the continuum of inductive and deductive approaches.

The choice of methods is based on information from the studies in the literature review. As the theoretical approaches applied to the different studies were mapped out and elaborated on in chapter 1.4.4, Table 3.1 only shows the methods.

Table 3.1: Methods employed in literature review publications

Authors	Methods
Anderson & Jiang (2018)	Survey
Castronuovo et al. (2021)	Scoping review
Cranwell et al. (2017)	Content Analysis (Quantitative), Thematic Analysis
Daneels & Vanwynsberghe (2017)	In-depth interview
de Dios, van Oosten & Igartua (2018)	Survey
Geraee et al. (2015)	Survey
Hu & Liu (2020)	Survey
Kim & Yang (2016)	Survey
Kleppang et al. (2021)	Survey
Labrador et al. (2021)	Systematic literature review, CRF Scale (McMaster)
Lauricella & Cingel (2021)	Survey
Maheux et al. (2021)	Survey (longitudinal)
Pires et al. (2021)	Short-term ethnography, Mixed-method (survey, workshop, in-depth interview, online observation)
Steinnes & Teigen (2021)	Content Analysis (Quantitative), Focus group interview
Théodore et al. (2021)	Quantitative sample selection
van Dam et al. (2019)	Focus group interview
Wojdan et al. (2020)	Survey

The overview shows that the most prominent methods applied are quantitative surveys, followed by interviews, content analysis and literature reviews. Although some studies used a single qualitative method or triangulation, this sample indicates that quantitative data is abundant in the research field of youth, media usage, and media literacy. The literature searches alone showed that surveys are prevalent, and often used as the only or primary method. This opens up the possibility of conducting more qualitative research and combining methods. Aside from this, no studies directly applied cultivation analysis; only the theory was mentioned as portrayed in chapter 1.4.4.

First, content analysis is used to examine results from pre-existing survey data to give some background to the state of youth, media usage, and media literacy in Norway. Second, to give

insight into these elements in 2021/2022, further data collection consists of qualitative focus group interviews. In terms of UGT, conducting interviews is one of the main ways to try and understand why people use certain media and what gratifications they receive (Turow, 2020, p. 38). Additional data collection will be carried out using a small quantitative survey in the form of a questionnaire as a supplement to test the main theories. This method is particularly well suited for cultivation analysis, but it could also be applied to test UGT because it can say something about "what certain kinds of people do with particular media" (ibid.). A detailed presentation of methods will follow below, in correlation with the order of the RQs and beginning with content analysis.

3.1 Content Analysis

I have chosen to conduct a content analysis that provides a relevant overview of young people's media usage prior to 2021, which applies to the scope and aim of this thesis. It is necessary to convey these aspects before even attempting to understand possible changes resulting from national lockdown. It does not make sense to investigate patterns or differences in contemporary usage, nor how this usage may have affected media literacy, without having some knowledge of how audience behaviour and competency online have evolved amongst youth. The primary content analysed are documents, namely survey reports from the NMA (2018; 2020), meaning that times series data are investigated. Here, the content analysis serves as a tool to draw out the most significant and relevant data (Bowen, 2009, p. 32). Moreover, it is used to extract, compare, and explore aspects connected to youth and social media in Norway.

When I began working on this thesis, the NMA reports were the two most recently published documents that allowed tracking of any developments related to the main topic. They were chosen based on their timeliness and because they both focused exclusively on youth's media usage, habits, and overall understanding of the role of the media. As part of the comparison, I briefly include another report from the NMA dealing specifically with critical media literacy and understanding amongst the Norwegian population, where I will elaborate on data concerning Norwegian youth (2019). Additionally, I draw on other relevant data from reports conducted by SSB (2020), Norwegian Social Research referred to as NOVA (Bakken, 2021), and lastly, HubSpot & Talkwalker (2021). However, the three latter documents are not part of the

leading comparison and are only meant to illustrate additional findings that may be of value in the analysis and discussion, in all stages of the pandemic and prior to. The content analysis was conducted in Excel (see Appendix C).

Categories and single words are used to interpret the numerical data, meaning that the analysis leans more towards a qualitative nature (Bengtsson, 2016, p. 10). Comparisons of each report's most prominent percentage values related to the thesis topic are included where possible, both negative and positive. I use these to highlight any prominent deviations *or* areas where a change may have been expected but where the percentages have not necessarily moved significantly from one report to the other. This is something that the original NMA reports did not elaborate on too extensively, as they aimed at not comparing the data over time in the 2020 report. Due to this, the NMA has not provided a complete set of comparable percentage values between the two reports, meaning that this information is unfortunately lacking, and some values are presented separately. The main aim, however, is to explore the state of young people's media usage before the Corona pandemic, which will be discussed later in unison with the newly generated data from the focus groups and survey.

As a method, content analysis is adaptable to either methodological paradigm. It is often described as a quantitative method with qualitative traits and is thus ideal for mixing methods or utilising method triangulation in research. In media and communications research, the aim of content analysis involves, amongst other things, how "[…] advertising and entertainment output reflects social and cultural issues, values and phenomena" (Hansen & Machin, 2019, p. 89). Exploring these matters through YouTube, where advertising and entertainment make up large portions of the ecosystem, makes content analysis a highly suitable research method. However, performing a content analysis based on survey reports can lead to a rather *manifest* analysis, meaning that it "describes the visible and obvious in the text" (Bengtsson, 2016, p. 10). In the case of this thesis, certain aspects of adolescents' media usage and comprehension of media messages need a more thorough examination. This is often where in-depth interviews, particularly focus groups, come into play (Hansen & Machin, 2019, p. 225). I elaborate more on focus group interviews in the following section.

3.2 Focus group interviews

To gain sufficient detailed knowledge about my topic, I have chosen to conduct focus group interviews with adolescents. Focus groups allow for a type of in-depth interview where the aim is to study opinions, attitudes, behaviour, and experiences from a phenomenological perspective (Tjora, 2017, p. 114). YouTube itself can be perceived as a phenomenon, and focus groups are thus a preferred method for investigating how usage may affect media literacy amongst adolescents that are frequently on the platform.

Furthermore, in media and communication research, focus groups enable exploration of "[…] how audiences make sense of mediated communication through conversation and interaction", as well as why the relation between audiences and media is shaped a certain way (Hansen & Machin, 2019, p. 223). A central part of focus groups is thus the discussion that occurs between the participants. Moreover, interpreting the connotations of media messages is something that generally occurs in mundane conversations. Focus groups intend to replicate these discussions by recreating a 'natural' social environment (ibid., p. 226). My understanding is that these aspects of focus groups correlate well with the aim of the research questions. Specific knowledge about passive and active usage might say something about the interpretations of media messages amongst young people.

During a focus group interview, the researcher has the essential role of moderating the conversation. It requires "active input and structuring" of the conversation, as well as redirecting attention back to the topic in case participants digress (Hansen & Machin, 2019, p. 227). In-depth interviews can, however, afford some digression because participants may share aspects or thoughts that the moderator did not previously consider (Tjora, 2017, p. 114). Furthermore, the role extends beyond the interview situation itself, particularly when younger human subjects are involved. For instance, attending a focus group interview may seem like a less invasive or intimidating method than an individual interview (Krueger & Case, cited in Tjora, 2017, p. 123). Because adolescents are involved, this may play a more significant role in lowering their guards more easily. Additionally, limiting the topic of this thesis to a single social medium and not discussing sensitive subjects allows for shorter focus group interviews than usual.

Although conducting focus group interviews is a great way to obtain different perspectives from several people at once, the process of acquiring participants is not always smooth-sailing. Unforeseen problems or changes can occur prior to or during the recruitment, requiring the researcher to make adjustments. Moreover, a common counterargument for group interviews is the risk of someone dominating the conversation, which in turn could increase the chance of 'yea-saying' as well, where participants move towards a shared agreement on certain issues (Hansen & Machin, 2019, p. 227). As mentioned earlier in this chapter, the role of the moderator becomes crucial here in steering the discussion.

Also important to mention, and perhaps most relevant to this thesis, is that research with focus groups tends to be media-centric rather than user-centric (Hansen & Machin, 2019, p. 227). Researchers have in other words traditionally been more interested in the impact media effects have on users, than how personal media usage can affect the understanding of media effects. Exploring how young people as a specific group in society use and interpret certain media critically may challenge this norm. Focus group discussion can help provide different insights than what is normally achieved just through methods such as large-scale surveys, which may only scratch the surface.

3.2.1 Participant selection: Criteria, Scope and Approach

Participants in this project are teenagers between the ages of 15 and 18. In Norway, this means that they are attending first to third (and final) year of high school. The chosen high school for the research is based in Oslo, and the data collection took place in Q1 of 2022. There was a total of eight participants split into two focus groups attending the sessions. Both groups had four respondents each, where the first consisted of the gender ratio M=2/F=2 and the second of M=3/F=1. Although gender is not considered an integral part of the project, I still find it necessary to mention it here because openness on this matter influences the reliability of the research.

The recruitment process was challenging, as I had no prior experience nor connections with anyone attending or working at a high school. Although a typical focus group within media and communication research would ideally include five to ten participants per group (Hansen & Machin, 2019, p. 233), I had to work with what was possible to achieve. This refers to the

number of focus groups as well. The uncertainty of the corona pandemic also did not make things easier and indeed delayed the process well into 2022. After a large handful of rejections and a lack of response from several schools, both on the phone and through e-mail, I finally recognized a familiar contact from my old high school and reached out. As a result, I connected with some pupils who volunteered to join and carried on the recruitment with their and my contact's help. My contact received an information sheet and forwarded it to the pupils so that they could read, understand, and make up their minds about participating beforehand. I had no prior association with any pupils at the school, nor any of the participants I came into contact with.

3.2.2 Interview guide design

Based on the type of qualitative interview one is conducting, the structure of the interview itself and the questions differ. We usually distinguish between structured, semi-structured, and unstructured interviews. In-depth interviews, such as focus groups, typically follow a semi-structured approach with open questions, which allows for a great deal of flexibility (Hansen & Machin, 2019, p. 236). The interview guide for this project (see Appendix D) is meant to help establish the direction of the discussions but allows for diversions, if necessary, especially if the respondents give an answer that could be explored further.

The questions are split into three sub-topics, following the theoretical background. In practice, I first ask about reasons for usage in accordance with UGT and move on to asking about the effects of content consumption on YouTube across time, related to cultivation theory. I lastly bring up the subject of media literacy through questions about source criticism and advertising. Separate sections are not used only to guide me as a moderator but also to give the participants information about the framework for the upcoming sub-topic (Tjora, 2017, p. 157).

Because the interviews are short and focused, the guide begins with a quick round of warm-up questions, such as *'What do you like best about YouTube or use YouTube for the most?'*. The aim is to get the pupils talking about their general usage before diving deeper into questions about the impacts of usage, media literacy, and advertising. These are meant to encourage reflection and include possible follow-up questions or keywords that may be necessary for

guiding the discussion (Tjora, 2017, p. 146; ibid., p. 153). Examples are *'Do you feel that you depend on YouTube to find information? Elaborate'* and *'Do you think that being critical of social media content has been even more important during the lockdown? Discuss and explain why/why not'*. The guide ends with thanking the participants and asking them if they would like to add something or have questions about the process. Lastly, the round-up for the interviews is the questionnaire handed out at the end of the discussions.

Aside from this, the interview guide itself did not contain any visuals. There was no stimulus material involved where the participants had to discuss something or solve a problem using pictures, videos or text as a starting point. However, during and at the end of the opening PowerPoint presentation, images were shown to illustrate the central theme of the interview. It is also worth mentioning that the interview guide was developed in Norwegian to make the process easier for the respondents. Relevant data to be included in the thesis was later translated to English.

3.2.3 Conducting the interviews

Although the past year was filled with ever-changing Covid-19 restrictions, fortunately, the interviews were carried out at a physical location. I met up with my contact at the school, who helped me book a room with which the participants were familiar. I arranged the seating and tables and laid out fruits, snacks, beverages, consent forms, name tags and pens on each desk. When the participants entered, I welcomed them and made sure they were comfortable. Everyone seemed relaxed and chatty, and I tried to bring myself to their level language-wise to keep this going. I then gave them a short introduction of myself, my studies, the theme of the interview and a short agenda for the session. I informed the participants one more time that the discussion would be recorded and made the recording device visible throughout the session.

The duration of the first interview recording was about 27 minutes, with the entire session, including the introduction and survey, lasting about 45 minutes. Participants were rarely quiet, and some seemed to know each other relatively well. The conversation sometimes strayed away from the purpose of some of the questions but not from the theme of the interview itself, which was a highly favourable aspect and made it easier to jump back in. Most of the

questions I posed seemed understandable to everyone, with the occasional need for short elaborations. Follow-up questions were also used at some points to drive the conversation further. Some participants sometimes spoke simultaneously, and I tried to urge them to repeat themselves. At the end of the session, I thanked them again for participating and told them they did a great job. They seemed pleased and wished to stay to help put tables and chairs back in their place.

The second interview recording lasted approximately 25 minutes, and the duration of the entire session lasted about 45 minutes, the same as the first interview. In this group, participants too knew each other and were talkative, but some required more guidance and rephrasing of questions. Again, follow-up questions were often used to generate more thoughts from the participants. The conversation tended to move towards speaking of TikTok frequently, and participants were guided back towards YouTube several times. The fact that TikTok was frequently mentioned is an interesting finding discussed later on in the thesis. Other than this, the theme of the interview was persistent throughout the session. Respondents sometimes spoke simultaneously, and body language (nodding and shaking heads) occurred more frequently in this group than in the first. It made the transcription phase more challenging as I had to rely on notes, and in future interviews, it is beneficial to make it more clear to participants to express everything verbally. The participants were thanked for their time at the end of the interview. They expressed that they enjoyed the setup and the discussions.

3.2.4 Transcriptions and coding

The interview guide was used as a codebook by which the answers from the interview were measured. Both interviews were first transcribed in the order they were recorded, and all names were switched to 'Respondent 1, Respondent 2' and so on. Afterwards, documents with quotations from each respondent were created. These were then extracted to the program *Delve Tool* in order to be categorized and coded. I first went through data from each respondent separately and systematically created specific codes based on quotes. It allowed me to get a faster and clearer overview of ratios amongst the participants. All the coded data was selected based on its relevance to the project, namely whether it could be compared to previous findings from the content analysis and whether it contained any new or surprising

findings. Code groups were then established based on the single codes to highlight the main themes of the discussions in relation to the interview guide.

3.3 Survey

Whereas the focus group interviews aim to provide a more profound knowledge of the phenomenon, a short survey is used as a supplement. According to Creswell & Creswell, a survey may contribute to "a quantitative or numeric description of trends, attitudes, or opinions of a population by studying a sample of that population" (2018, p. 49-50). Questionnaires, in particular, are often used in combination with focus group interviews as part of media research (Hansen & Machin, 2019, p. 225). My understanding is that including a questionnaire can hopefully provide another dimension to the data collection and contribute to a more holistic discussion of the results. Furthermore, as mentioned in chapter 3.2.2, the form was deliberately handed out at the end of the discussion as a kind of cool-down and way to end the session. Same as the interview guide, the questionnaire was written in Norwegian and later translated to English in chapter 4.4.

Surveys are usually associated with a large number of respondents. However, because it is not the only method used but rather an additional component of the focus groups, only the interview participants filled out the form. Based on Hansen and Machin's definition, the questionnaire used in this project can be defined as a *descriptive* survey, aiming to "describe patterns and trends relevant to a particular population" (2019, p. 202). The questionnaire consists of 10 questions (see Appendix E). Similarly to the interview guide, they are split up into sub-topics, where the first five questions are linked to UGT and the remaining five to cultivation theory. However, as opposed to the questions in the interview guide, the topics of media literacy and advertising were interwoven here as opposed to being separate sub-topics. Moreover, some questions were not suitable for the interview itself as they are associated with a more personal use of YouTube and could therefore be hard to discuss in groups. These were added to the questionnaire instead.

The questions are standardized and closed, having fixed alternatives that the participant has to choose between to respond, typical of surveys (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 51). Examples are: *'Do you subscribe to one or several YouTube channels?'* and *'Approximately how many*

days a week do you use YouTube?'. Respondents choose an answer that, for instance, includes a 'yes/no' option, a drop-down menu (if online) or answers based on a Likert scale. Although surveys allow for easier data collection and processing, the standardized format in particular and the risk of incorrectly formulating questions gives answers with less nuance and possibly less accuracy (Hansen & Machin, 2019, p. 203-204). For this reason, it is beneficial to combine it with an easily adjustable method such as focus group interviews, which also take social context into account.

3.4 Cultivation Analysis

What cultivation theory investigates has already been elaborated on in chapter 2.4, and only a brief section on the process of cultivation analysis is included here. Simply put, cultivation analysis involves examining the theoretical assumptions of cultivation. The main hypothesis states that a more considerable amount of time spent watching television is consistent with seeing and understanding reality according to the media messages consumed (Morgan et al., 2009, p. 34). Applying this to the research in this thesis, the hypothesis can be translated to time spent watching and engaging with YouTube content and how this may relate to perceived reality, influenced by the degree of media literacy. As some researchers argue, the theory's strong connection to traditional mass media has turned it into a "side-note in the exploration of SNSs", i.e. social networking services (Stein et al., 2021, p. 88). Arguably, this opens up an opportunity to apply it to contemporary forms of media.

Quantitative surveys are the usual go-to method for cultivation analysis. Part because survey research is usually deductive and partly due to cultivation analysis being hypothetical, which is also a deductive approach. Questions tend to revolve around the time spent watching content, which indicates differences in light, medium, and heavy viewers (Morgan et al., 2009, p. 38). However, as behaviour, attitudes, perceptions, and beliefs are a central part of the theory itself and necessary for answering the research questions, cultivation analysis is also conducted as part of all the remaining methods and analyses.

3.5 Methodological summary and reflections

In order to gather the necessary empirical data for testing the main theories and answering the research questions, I have chosen a mixed-method approach consisting of three methods.

First, a content analysis of survey reports aims to shed light on the current situation regarding the topic of this thesis. Second, focus group interviews are conducted to gather in-depth knowledge of what young people have been doing on social media platforms such as YouTube during the lockdown and media literacy's role during this process. Lastly, a short questionnaire survey is included to add to the latter method. Although I see these three methodologies as most fitting, others were considered. A short discussion of and reflections on methodological choices are provided in the following sections, along with ethical considerations, thoughts on the validity and reliability of the project, and lastly, the approach to the literature review searches.

3.5.1 Delimitations

Individual in-depth interviews were the original option for this project. However, they are less cost-efficient and more time consuming than focus groups (Hansen & Machin, 2019, p. 223). It was important to keep the interviews short and effective, not to waste too much time during school hours. Moreover, observation was a possible choice because behaviour on YouTube is a large part of the project (Hansen & Machin, 2019, p. 61). Considering the age of the participants, this method may have been hard to execute and experienced as invasive. In the worst case, this method may have generated unrealistic results because the potential feeling of invasiveness can alter behaviour.

Additionally, the time limit of this project required me to work efficiently, and focus groups stood out as a better fit than individual interviews or observation. On another note, a large survey may have been an option instead of interviews. A more extensive questionnaire could have been sent out to schools and pupils. Searches on Google quickly exposed that a fair amount of survey data in Norway already exists and could partially contribute to answering the research questions. Therefore, this method was debunked, and I chose to add to the existing research instead.

Aside from the choice of methods specifically, there were certain factors that I chose to exclude from the research itself. First, I do not consider differences in gender nor make a comparison to, for instance, adolescents aged 13-14. Again, information on gender differences in media use and exposure was readily available through existing survey data on a national

scale. Selecting high schoolers between the ages of 15 and 18 for this project was a deliberate choice, as they may perhaps be able to resonate with the topic and provide more comprehensive responses than younger adolescents. Second, I did not include several schools. This would perhaps have been more appropriate for a large-scale survey, and I thus considered one school sufficient to gather data from focus groups. Lastly, I would have preferred to include several reports on youth and media usage to compare in the content analysis, other than the ones from the NMA. More extensive reports that could have been highly relevant, such as from Kantar/TNS or Ipsos, are unfortunately behind paywalls, and some only consider ages above 18.

3.5.2 Ethical considerations

Before any data collection from interviews or questionnaires began, written approval from the Norwegian Centre for Research Data, known as NSD, was applied for and obtained (see Appendix F). All participants received and signed a consent form (see Appendix G) that included concise information about the project, data anonymization, and their rights concerning the choice of participation or withdrawal at any given time. The collection of signatures on the consent forms and the voice recordings during the interviews classify as personal data. This means that I am responsible for storing and handling the data safely and securely, according to set guidelines. Therefore, ethical considerations elaborated here primarily refer to the focus group interviews and consent forms, while data gathered for the content analysis is not affected by regulations.

In all research, particularly involving human subjects, the researcher must follow specific ethical and legal guidelines. Providing clear and comprehensive information about all the aspects of a research project and ensuring participants understand what it means to give consent applies to several qualitative and quantitative research methods. It can also mean participants should not be subjected to unnecessary strain, for instance, during interviews (Johannesen et al., 2021, p. 46). The latter is especially important to keep in mind as this project involves respondents who are minors.

When underaged individuals participate in research, it becomes increasingly necessary to protect all types of personal data. In Norway, The National Committee for Research Ethics in

the Social Sciences and the Humanities, also known as NESH, provides guidance on ethical and legal matters (2016). Under point 14 in their ethical guidelines, NESH states that minors above the age of 15 can agree to participate in research as long as no sensitive information is being collected (2016, p. 20). There are no questions during the interviewing process or as part of the questionnaire that require sensitive information to be answered. This means that the participants in my project could consent to participate themselves. To limit the amount of personal data gathered, I chose not to consider gender differences connected to each respondent, and for the same reason, I excluded the name of the participating high school. Although these factors could have contributed to the research, they do not alter the integral parts of the project and could therefore be ruled out.

3.5.3 Validity and Reliability

Establishing a high level of validity and reliability can be more challenging for qualitative methods. As attitudes and beliefs change over time, so do perceptions and descriptions of reality, which may be plentiful (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, cited in Johannessen et al. 2021, p. 255). Large parts of this project focus on a focal point in time, making the terms validity and reliability, in their plainest form, more fitting for measuring quantitative data. However, there are specific criteria of validity and reliability that can be transferred to qualitative research as well.

Although there are several perceptions, there is no clear answer to the meaning of validity. On a general basis, it mainly involves the degree of credibility and legitimacy in scientific research (Skovsgaard & Svith, 2014, p. 61). In other words, the data has to be high in relevancy. Mainly, there is a distinction made between *internal* and *external* validity. To increase internal validity, there needs to be a correlation between the method used for an experiment or analysis and the data gathered, where qualitative data is measured in its representation of reality (2021, p. 256). External validity, on the other hand, is concerned with a generalisation of quantitative data, while rich descriptions of a phenomenon are the external validity that applies to qualitative research (ibid., p. 258). The higher the external validity, the easier it becomes to generalise or transfer the results to other research areas. In this thesis, internal validity is primarily concerned with the quality of the findings. External validity mainly involves

the operationalisation of central concepts, as well as correctly transcribing and translating what is verbally and non-verbally expressed in the interviews.

At its core, reliability refers to whether replicating a form of research using the same criteria will generate similar results (Carmines & Zeller, 1979, p. 11). In the same way as validity, it is concerned with trustworthiness, with the difference being trusting the data over time. No research produces fully reliable data, although one should always strive to increase reliability. While it is relatively uncomplicated to replicate quantitative research, replicating qualitative research can be impossible because it is context-bound. Sociocultural changes, which sometimes take place swiftly, can largely influence replicability in the future. To increase reliability, it is crucial to state the research context clearly and provide detailed information about the entire process (Johannessen et al., 2021, p. 256). Additionally, as mentioned earlier in this chapter, it is beneficial to mix methodologies. In this case, applying some quantitative methods can help increase the reliability of the project overall.

As a final point here, it is necessary to mention that objectivity was simply unattainable as part of the research. All research involves some level of subjectivity from the researcher, which in this case, applies not only to the focus group interviews but also to the content analysis (Hansen & Machin, 2019, p. 91). For instance, using codebooks and categorising the data may affect the analysis and discussion. These factors can decrease the validity of the results because the recorded experiences bear a mark of how they came to be (Johannesen et al., 2018, p. 22). My thoughts on the subject matter, time limitation, as well as choice of data material, school, and age group, shape the outcomes of the project. However, I have no children myself, and I do not have any association with teenagers of the same age as the participants, neither through professional nor private life. Although I had a prior association with the high school that was willing to attend, this was merely a way to recruit participants more easily. I, therefore, consider the level of objectivity to be high, although not impeccable by any means.

3.6 Literature review method

The literature searches were conducted keeping two separate goals in mind. The first was concerned with finding relevant research that had been carried out, focusing on Norwegian

adolescents' media usage and literacy. Aside from the NMA reports, Idunn was the primary source of Norwegian research because it is the largest academic publishing site in the Nordic region. The second goal dealt with youths' media usage and the metaconcept of media literacy in general. Research in these areas was mainly conducted outside of Norway and found using the multi-disciplinary database Academic Search Ultimate (ASU). Google Scholar could have been an alternative or addition at the very beginning of the searches to get a broad overview. However, it was not chosen because it does not provide the same advanced tools and parameters as other large databases, which enable narrowing down searches and results as you go.

Therefore, choosing ASU as the only interdisciplinary and international database for the searches was deliberate. Personally, previous experience with systematic searches has shown that large databases such as Web of Science generate the same results using the same search terms and string setup as in ASU. The same applies to the closed database SAGE, which only issues content from its own publishers. SAGE covers the field of media and communication well, but relevant results from the database do appear in ASU as well.

Because of the amount of literature extracted from ASU, only search history from this database is included (see Appendix B). Studies within the field of media and communications are published frequently. For this reason, the set time frame for the literature searches was limited to 2015-2021. The review thus solely consists of journal articles and reports, hopefully providing an up-to-date overview of the research field in relation to the research question. However, several of the chosen publications include studies conducted before 2015, allowing the chosen time period to cover parts of the first half of the previous decade as well.

A table of search terms and search strings was created based on keywords from the research question (see Appendix A). These show that an additional set of terms and synonyms for 'advertisement' were added due to its strong affiliation with media literacy. Therefore, the first search was conducted in September 2021, and the second one in October 2021. The strings were first searched separately, and different combinations were later used to narrow down the results. This included proximity operators such as 'N1' and 'N3', which set strict criteria for the closeness of the terms in the results. Further on, the first and second searches

in both databases combined led to the extraction of 29 articles, based on information in their abstracts. After examining them more thoroughly, a total of 17 articles were included in the literature review to portray some of the main discussions on youth, media usage and media literacy in the recent research.

4. Findings and Results

This chapter addresses findings from the content analysis first, which includes pre-existing data from survey reports. Each sub-chapter deals with specific categories from the reports, all of which in some way involve young people's social media usage and media literacy. A closer look into data from other reports will briefly be presented afterwards. Following these findings are the results from the focus group interviews, which include different codes and code groups, as well as ratios amongst the respondents. Furthermore, an overview of the answers from the questionnaires is also presented, using landscape bar charts with short summaries. Lastly, a synopsis of all new findings is provided before I move on to the analysis and discussion.

4.1 Pre-existing data 2018-2020

RQ 1a asks about the typical social media usage amongst 15-18-year-olds in Norway, and RQ 1b asks to what extent this age group is media literate. A content analysis of data from the 2018 and 2020 'Children and media' reports could shed light on the state of both elements in the most recent years ahead of the pandemic. Furthermore, data from the NMA's 2019 report 'Critical media understanding in the Norwegian population' is included in this main part because it was too significant to look at separately. In this chapter, I have only mapped out the available data relevant to my specific research and compared the numbers on usage and media literacy where possible. After the results from the main reports, additional relevant data is presented from reports published by SSB, NOVA and HubSpot & Talkwalker.

The chosen categories from the documents all revolve around an overarching set of keywords and terms. These were used to create a framework for choosing and coding relevant variables from the reports to match them to the thesis topic. A total of three main categories were included. Here, I begin with *Social media and YouTube usage*. I then move on to *Media*

literacy: Source criticism, which deals with information assessment and whether adolescents take measures when faced with fake news or information. The third category is *Media literacy: Advertising*, which also looks at influencer promotion. Data from the supplementary documents are categorized separately as *Other findings*. This last set primarily fills gaps that may be missing from the main reports and adds to the above-mentioned categories*.*

The only available data that can be fully compared on all points between the two main reports has to do with fake news and information. This is followed by data on media and social media usage, as well as critical understanding of the media, where most of the variables are comparable. Otherwise, there are only single-standing percentages among the remaining categories, which will be briefly mentioned. The main findings with comparisons are presented in the form of image excerpts from Excel (full overview in Appendix C), followed by a description of percentages and percentage points. Single percentages from only one of the reports and the last category that looks at other findings are not presented in grids. It is also worth mentioning that some of the results only include adolescents aged 13-18 and 9-18 because separate percentages according to each age, or the target age for this thesis, were not always available. This means that some numbers may deviate slightly from the aim of the research. However, the percentages available for comparison have been recalculated to only show averages of ages 15-18 to match the research questions, highlighted in blue.

4.1.1 Social media and YouTube usage

The first part of the content analysis consisted of mapping out adolescents' social media usage in general and activity on YouTube. In relation to the increased screen time amongst youth during the pandemic, data about phone usage was also relevant to include. Although screen time using digital media also refers to tablets and computers, these data were not included in the NMA's 2018 report and is the reason for not presenting them here either. As most young people mostly use their phones for social media, not including other devices does not affect the analysis in any significant way.

As Table 4.1 portrays, some comparisons were not available between the two reports regarding media and social media usage. Most of the time, this applied to age, and in these cases, it did not make sense to recalculate the age percentage for only one report.

Furthermore, when asked about spending time on the phone or social media for two hours or more, the 2018 report only considered the day prior (NMA, p. 14; p. 17). This also means that wherever it was possible to compare these variables, there are still inconsistencies because the 2020 report looked at usage in general and not only one day prior. The latter was also concerned with whether youth used considerable time on social media. We can assume that 'considerable time' includes usage for more than two hours and can therefore be compared with the former report in the percentages below.

Table 4.1: Media and social media usage amongst youth

MEDIA USAGE AND HABITS (9-18y)	2018	2020	Difference in p.p.
Access to/Own a phone (15-18y)	99 %	99 %	0
Using cellphone / smartphone the day prior (9-18y)	89 %	N/A	N/A
Time spent using cellphone / smartphone for 2 hours or more (9-18y)	49 %	N/A	N/A
Think they spend too much time on their phone (9-18y)	45 %	N/A	N/A
Use Social Media (9-18y)	89 %	90 %	1
Does not use social media (9-18y)	11 %	1 %	-10
Uses social media for 2 hours or more (15-16y)	45 %	72 %	27
Uses social media for 2 hours or more (17-18y)	45 %	73 %	28
TOTAL AVERAGE: Uses social media for 2 hours or more (15-18y)	45 %	73 %	28

Unfortunately, it was not possible to recalculate the numbers for using and not using social media, in order for them to match in terms of both report year and age. According to the NMA, there was practically no difference in social media usage across the entire age range, increasing only one percentage point in 2020. Therefore, it is fair to assume that this applies to ages 15-18 as well. At the same time, the number of adolescents that did *not* use social media dropped down to one percent between 2018 and 2020, meaning that virtually all teenagers are present on at least one social media platform. There was also a significant increase in the time spent using social media amongst 15-18-year-olds, moving up 28 percentage points in 2020.

When it comes to *Youtube*, entire data sets from the two reports were not possible to compare. This is due to the 2018 report viewing YouTube as a category of TV and streaming services, while the 2020 report included it as a separate social media category. Of relevance to this thesis from the former report was time spent on YouTube, albeit a day prior here as well. It showed that 77% of adolescents aged 9-18 watched YouTube the day before, and 23% of teens aged 15-18 watched 2 hours or more worth of YouTube content the day before.

On the other hand, the latest report showed interesting results for ages 15-18 in 2020. First, 96% use YouTube, meaning almost everyone in this age group. Second, a larger percentage of teenagers have a private user instead of an open one, with 42% over 39%. However, 16% of 9-18-year-olds do not know if they have an open or private user. Although the NMA does not have percentages for the target age of this thesis, it is worrying that the latter percentage is not lower overall, because it involves privacy issues and, therefore, media literacy as well. Third, 65% use YouTube primarily for music, while other popular video genres are gaming and funny videos/pranks. Reading and watching the news is also quite common, with 38% of Norwegian teenagers using the platform for this purpose. Lastly, there is a vast difference in language choice on YouTube, with 74% using English as opposed to 10% using Norwegian.

4.1.2 Media literacy: Source criticism

One way adolescents' media literacy level can be measured is by understanding how they seek and interpret information online. In their 2018 report, the NMA asked teenagers about their self-perception of source criticism. All percentages apply to adolescents aged 15-18 being slightly or very good at different assertions. 92% believe they can find correct information online, while 90% understand the information they are exposed to or find. Moreover, 80% think that it is easy to understand whether someone is fooling them online, and 90% believe they can distinguish between true or false information. According to themselves, these results show that, on average, the age group was at 90% or above on most statements in 2018. However, it also illustrates that there was a need for strengthening media literacy in terms of scam attempts and the like.

Table 4.2 portrays relevant findings from the NMA's 2019 report, comparing young people with the general population. This perspective can paint a different picture of adolescents' media literacy skills and add to the data from the two more extensive reports. Although the 2019 report considers ages 16-20, the target age group for this thesis is still largely included. Perhaps not surprisingly, adolescents' critical media understanding is much higher when it comes to digital than analogue orientation. However, 55% of youth still seem to be at a mediocre level. Overall, only 21% of youth aged 16-20 have a high media literacy level, compared to 43% across the general population. Furthermore, 21% are also considered to

have a low media literacy level overall. These data stand in immense contrast to the self-reported percentages presented in the previous paragraph regarding information assessment. It only increases the importance and need to discuss these issues directly with young people in order to understand thought processes.

Table 4.2: Young people's critical media literacy and experiences

Critical media literacy amongst youth (16-20y) - 2019	Youth	Gen. pop.	Difference in p.p.
Uses Youtube	62 %	22 %	40
High critical media literacy and understanding	21 %	43 %	-22
Average, digitally oriented critical media understanding	55 %	28 %	27
Average, analog oriented critical media understanding	2 %	20 %	-18
Low critical media literacy and understanding	21 %	9 %	12
Difficult to follow news	60 %	43 %	17
Uses fewer sources to understand a news story	65 %	79 %	-14
Online newspaper as the most important news source	65 %	64 %	1
Social media as the most important news source	51 %	26 %	25
Reveal fake news	62 %	56 %	6
Check if a news story is true using other reliable sources	70 %	62 %	8
Have not experienced any adverse events online	53 %	66 %	-13
Unwanted sexual messages	16 %	6 %	10

One of the most prominent areas in which young people differed noticeably from the general population is that they used YouTube three times as much on a daily basis (NMA, 2019, p. 71). At the same time, a much higher percentage of young people considered various social media as reliable news sources, although online newspapers were still at the top. The report also shows that adolescents found it more challenging to follow the news to the same extent as the general population and use fewer sources to comprehend news stories.

Moving on, both of the main reports explicitly focused on which actions adolescents take when they suspect they are faced with *fake news or information* online. As illustrated in Table 4.3, the comparison between 2018 and 2020 yielded some noticeable results for teens aged 15-18. All variables in this sub-category showed a decrease in percentage points. The only exception is the variable that states adolescents do nothing, which increased by 26 percentage points. In terms of the negative percentage point values, the ones that stood out the most are associated with using fact-checking services (-15 p.p.), checking well-known sources (-13 p.p.) and performing web searches (-13 p.p.). Although there was a decrease in percentage points on average for these variables, there seemed to be an increase concerning age for both years,

when looking at changes from ages 15-16 to 17-18. It is interesting to explore whether the importance and will to assess potential false information through different measures may have changed in 2021/2022.

Table 4.3: Actions teenagers take when faced with potential fake news/information

Fake news/information - Measures taken (15-18y)	2018	2020	Difference in p.p.
Web search (15-16y)	39 %	30 %	-9
Web search (17-18y)	49 %	32 %	-17
TOTAL AVERAGE: Web search (15-18y)	44 %	31 %	-13
Well-known news sources (15-16y)	30 %	19 %	-11
Well-known news sources (17-18y)	42 %	27 %	-15
TOTAL AVERAGE: Well-known sources (15-18y)	36 %	23 %	-13
Ask adults (15-16y)	28 %	18 %	-10
Ask adults (17-18y)	21 %	11 %	-10
TOTAL AVERAGE: Ask adults (15-18y)	25 %	15 %	-10
Ask friends (15-16y)	21 %	18 %	-3
Ask friends (17-18y)	22 %	11 %	-11
TOTAL AVERAGE: Ask friends (15-18y)	22 %	15 %	-7
Fact checking services (15-16y)	18 %	4 %	-14
Fact checking services (17-18y)	26 %	10 %	-16
TOTAL AVERAGE: Fact checking services (15-18y)	22 %	7 %	-15
Writing an opinion in the news comments or on SoMe (15-16y)	6 %	3 %	-3
Writing an opinion in the news comments or on SoMe (17-18y)	5 %	4 %	-1
TOTAL AVERAGE: Writing an opinion in the news comments or on SoMe (15-18y)	6 %	4 %	-2
Nothing (15-16y)	36 %	59 %	23
Nothing (17-18y)	32 %	60 %	28
TOTAL AVERAGE: Nothing (15-18y)	34 %	60 %	26

4.1.3 Media literacy: Advertising

A surprising finding was that advertising was not a separate category in the 2018 report. It was therefore not possible to make connections or comparisons. The expectation was that advertising would be central to both documents because it is something young people have been exposed to long before social media. It has only increased along with digital developments. For this reason, only data from the 2020 report is elaborated here, about the type of advertisements adolescents receive on social media and their perceptions of it. Additionally, the NMA tested whether or not young people recognize advertisements. Although the 2018 report did not investigate advertising exclusively, it did mention adolescents' thoughts on bloggers and YouTubers that promote products. I will cover the above-mentioned findings briefly below because they are still relevant to the thesis, although they cannot be directly compared.

On average, 78% of Norwegian adolescents aged 15-18 participating in the NMA survey reported exposure to social media advertising in 2020. Most of the adverts promoted weight loss products at 64%, followed by muscle enhancing products at 52%, and cosmetic treatments at 41%. Although this thesis does not explicitly consider gender, it is not so difficult to understand what kinds of advertisements are meant to target boys and which are aimed mostly at girls. Most adolescents between the ages of 9-18 and 13-18 either say they do not care or do not like these types of adverts (NMA, 2020, p. 115-116).

When asked about identifying social media posts, 76-86% of 9-18-year-olds could see the difference between an advert and a regular post. Although 20-29% could not tell the difference, the numbers of those who could differentiate suggests a high level of media literacy overall in this area. According to the NMA, the percentages increased with age for both cases (2020, p. 109). This may indicate that there are still blurred lines between commercial and non-commercial social media content, which in return requires a higher level of media literacy.

Lastly, the 2018 report highlights some interesting aspects of adolescents' thoughts about influencer product promotion. 56% of youth aged 15-18 stated that they do not care about this type of advertising, while 53% believed influencers only promote products to earn money. Moreover, 20% believed influencers actually like the products they are advertising, while 26% were unsure whether influencer promotion is to be trusted at all. Although the 2020 report also touched on this topic (p. 63-68), it was mostly about *which* YouTubers the teenagers followed and the genres mentioned in chapter 4.1.1, without considering the aspect of advertising.

4.1.4 Other findings

Amongst other documents are reports which contain a smaller amount of relevant data on the topic at hand. First is the Norwegian Media barometer 2020, published by SSB. This report highlights that 98% of Norwegian teenagers aged 16-19 used social media in 2020 (SSB, 2021, p. 64), and 69% used social media to catch up on the news (p. 12). The second is a report from NOVA that compares specific media usage patterns amongst youth over time. This particular report states that during the pandemic and aside from school hours, an average of 77% of

adolescents attending high school have used more than three hours in front of a screen daily (Bakken, 2021, p. 30), compared to 66% prior to the pandemic amongst the same age group (Bakken, 2020, p. 24).

Lastly, HubSpot & Talkwalker's report shed light on the evolvement and increased power of influencer marketing during the pandemic. The report highlights that influencer marketing has matured to a point where it is a natural part of the marketing mix, and the pandemic has only helped acquire "bigger and more engaged audiences than ever before" (HubSpot & Talkwalker, 2021, p. 3). As most influencer marketing takes place on social media, and certainly YouTube, it is natural to assume that a considerable proportion of audiences are adolescents.

4.2 Summary of pre-existing data and other findings

Nearly all Norwegian adolescents have had access to a smartphone from 2018 onwards, and a vast majority have been using social media. The most prominent development from 2018 to 2020 was that young people who use social media for more than two hours a day increased by nearly 30 percentage points. YouTube usage amongst youth aged 15-18 was at 96% in 2020 – nearly all adolescents were using the platform. Reasons for usage mainly involved music, watching gaming videos (e.g. streaming) and funny videos, as well as consuming news. A vast majority of the content youth are exposed to is in English.

In 2018, young people's self-perception of media literacy skills involving source criticism was very high. An average of 90% amongst 15-18-year-olds said they could seek out and understand information correctly, although recognizing scam attempts was somewhat lower. Youth's critical media literacy skills were compared to the general population in 2019, where in contrast to 2018, young people were considered to be at a mediocre level. The 2019 report also showed that YouTube was used three times as much amongst youth than the general population. Although online newspapers prevailed, social media was considered a reliable news source, and youth struggled to follow the news overall. When faced with potential fake news or information, there was a decline in percentage points for all variables, namely fact-checking methods, from 2018 to 2020. The most noticeable change applied to adolescents that do nothing to fact-check, which increased by 26 percentage points in 2020.

Exposure to advertisements was common amongst most Norwegian 15-18-year-olds in 2020. It mainly included marketing of weight loss products, muscle enhancing products, and cosmetic treatments. The general opinion amongst youth seemed to be dislike towards these types of ads. Most adolescents could distinguish an ad from a regular social media post, and this skill increased with age, but so did the percentage of those that could not. The 2018 report only included influencer marketing briefly, where a bit more than half seemed to generally dislike ads by influencers and know the true intentions behind the ads.

Lastly, some of the remaining findings outside the NMA reports confirmed that nearly all Norwegian youth used social media in 2020. Screen usage at the beginning of the pandemic was also soaring. The majority of youth spent a minimum of three hours in front of a screen outside of school. Moreover, influencer marketing, which is often aimed at young people, has become a central piece of the marketing mix.

4.3 New empirical data: Focus group interviews

Empirical data based on transcribed answers from the focus groups were extracted and coded in order to be compared to previous findings from the content analysis. Any new or surprising findings are also included, regardless of whether they could be compared. Because the interview guide followed the project's central themes, the answers essentially did so as well. However, it was important that the individual codes were based on the answers alone, meaning that they are not entirely in line with the questions from the guide. From the codes, four main themes *or* code groups were established to provide a more comprehensive overview, presented in Figure 4.1.

YouTube usage and behaviour	Media literacy knowledge and skills
Impacts of usage on attitudes and beliefs	Advertising on YouTube

Figure 4.1: Code groups and corresponding colours

Codes included in each code group that match the corresponding colour are explained in Appendix H. Here, I only present a summary of the code groups first, followed by all the

findings within each code along with ratios. The codes are elaborated on in the analysis and discussion chapter, where specific quotes from respondents are also highlighted.

4.3.1 Code groups

YouTube usage and behaviour refers to responses that involve the degree to which the adolescents use YouTube, as well as what drives them to use the platform and the gratifications they receive from usage. This code group also refers to behaviour, namely whether they perform any actions on the platform and to what extent they engage with the content. Additionally, behaviour involves their perceptions of the platform versus other social media, particularly TikTok, to which some frequently made comparisons. This code group involves what the respondents would do daily or any time they use YouTube in general.

The second code group focuses on the *Impacts of usage on attitudes and beliefs* amongst adolescents. More specifically, it refers to the respondents' perceptions of the content they watch on YouTube and the platform's ethos, which can show whether cultivation effects reflect themselves in real life. Answers involved whether adolescents believe YouTube and its content is trustworthy, and to what extent it is the leading source for content and information. The discussions also centred around WOM, which may affect how the adolescents perceive reality.

Moving on to the third code group, *Media literacy knowledge and skills* involves responses that highlight the extent to which the adolescents were able to define the term or exemplify what it entails. Regarding the latter, the participants tried to describe a person with adequate social media knowledge and skills. Moreover, as source criticism is a large part of media literacy, the respondents also discussed where they receive news and how. Here, they gave examples of fake news and explained how they would fact-check information.

Advertising on YouTube as a code group refers to all responses that, in some way or another, involved statements about YouTube marketing. This includes how the participants feel about marketing efforts, influencers and YouTubers, what type of content they identify as an ad, and the type of potential marketing or promoting efforts they intentionally watch.

Use YouTube

- 4/8 use YouTube regularly
- 4/8 use YouTube sometimes

Youtube is still used by the majority of the adolescents, although there is a difference in frequency. Also, the answers revealed that the platform's popularity and areas of use have decreased. For this reason, there was a tendency amongst some of the respondents to say that YouTube is only *occasionally* used when needed.

Motivations

- 7/8 had clear motivations for using the medium
- 7/8 watch specific genres
- 4/8 expressed a certain gratification that they received from watching YouTube videos
- 4/8 expressed that they use YouTube for music

Motivations for usage were diversified – meaning that respondents usually use YouTube for multiple purposes. Naturally, those that first expressed that they use YouTube more frequently were also among those that use it for several different reasons. Almost all respondents used YouTube to watch specific genres that could conform to or gratify individual needs, usually related to entertainment. However, although some adolescents initially said they use YouTube less now than in the years prior, they still had a clear perception of what drove them to use the platform, such as watching certain genres. Additionally, what seemed to be a common denominator for many was that their motivation was often to find music that, for instance, is not available on Spotify. Aside from this, one respondent who actively uses the platform today had previously had a YouTube channel and was sponsored, which could be a motivational factor still.

Behaviour

- 3/8 like videos
- 0/8 comment
- 5/8 read comments
- 2/8 do nothing except watch/listen to content
- Subscriptions (see survey results)

- Own channels/content (see survey results)

The interviews showed that reading comments is the most common behaviour on YouTube, and posting comments virtually never happens. Some also found it natural to press 'like' on content they enjoy watching, while others do not engage in any form of expression and only watch or listen to content. For answers about subscriptions and publishing their own content, see results from the short survey in chapter 4.4.

From YouTube to TikTok (and other social media)
- 4/8 frequently brought up TikTok as a 'replacement' for YouTube.
- 3/8 switch quickly from YouTube to TikTok when losing interest in content

Several respondents expressed that YouTube is considered 'older' and not as 'cool' anymore compared to other social media, especially TikTok. Usability seems to be a main reason adolescents are starting to turn away from YouTube because it is socially more challenging to navigate and may affect motivations for usage. However, some also indicated that YouTube is used as a 'gateway' to TikTok, where they start using the former, and when they run out of interesting content, they switch to the latter.

Dependency on YouTube
- 4/8 return to the platform exclusively for specific purposes or video genres

Half of the respondents return to the platform frequently to watch the same or similar video genres, such as videos about football, cooking or updates about influencers. However, the overall impression is that YouTube is a choice rather than a necessity. The degree of 'dependency' is also linked to the purpose of usage, for instance, whether the platform is used for school versus entertainment.

WOM
- 4/8 are both senders and recipients of WOM
- 2/8 are never involved in WOM as a sender or a recipient

Half the respondents talked about sharing YouTube videos as a casual, mundane thing. This includes either discussing content, or sending or receiving recommendations amongst friends and family. Others either had no opinion or explicitly expressed that they did not do this at all. Amongst those that had an opinion, either way, there was a tendency to say that WOM resulted primarily from using other social platforms such as TikTok.

Media literacy knowledge

- 3/8 have heard or think they have heard of the term media literacy (either as a whole or separately)
- 8/8 did *not* know what the term media literacy means
- 5/8 indicated a certain level of knowledge *after* the moderator helped steer the conversation

All the respondents could not explain or give examples of what media literacy involved on their own. Trying to repeat some points about media literacy from the presentation first led to some of the respondents explaining technical aspects of the term. This seemed to steer them in the right direction slowly, and they expressed some thoughts and ideas about the cognitive aspect of media literacy as well. At this stage, with a bit of 'warm-up', more than half of the respondents managed to provide examples of what media literacy could involve or how they tend to solve problems related to it. However, half of the respondents described scenarios that indicated that media literacy is not adequate.

Media literate person

- 3/8 focused on technical aspects only
- 3/8 did not know what it entails and provided no answer
- 2/8 considered activity and popularity as the main measurements of media literacy

Respondents in both groups were mostly confused about what it means to be a media literate person on social media – not surprising as they were not familiar with the term itself. Here, the focus for some continued to be on technical aspects alone. Others mainly referred to high activity levels, and the social status someone has on social media (e.g. influencers, famous YouTubers, etc.) as a description of a person who handles social media well/is media literate. In other words, the depictions did not reflect any correct knowledge of how a person could be media literate on social media.

Credibility on YouTube

- 4/8 expressed that they believe content on YouTube is trustworthy
- 1/8 did not consider YouTube to be more credible than other social media

Altogether, the respondents were relatively optimistic towards the trustworthiness of content on YouTube versus other social platforms. Credibility was explicitly compared to TikTok, but also Snapchat and Instagram. The respondents were in unison that it is easier to post fake content and information on these platforms versus YouTube. Also mentioned was the importance of considering the source behind the content.

Fact-checking source

- 2/8 use credible online newspapers to fact-check information
- 1/8 asks family or friends
- 8/8 respondents include YouTube in the fact-checking process
- 3/8 compare videos on YouTube to establish trustworthiness
- 2/8 use 'likes', views, and/or comments on YouTube as measurement tools for fact-checking

A surprising find was that all respondents said they would turn to YouTube to either check or double-check information they are not sure of. However, some turn to YouTube for this purpose more often than others, meaning that it can also be a 'last resort' in the process. The type of information they tried to find on the platform when fact-checking also varied, from looking at a news source's YouTube channel to finding facts for a school assignment. Another interesting find was that some solely relied on family and friends to reassure them about the truthfulness of certain information.

News consumption source

- 8/8 receive either a majority or all their news through social media.
- 3/8 consume news from credible news sources outside of social media, such as online newspapers.
- 1/8 prefer foreign news sources over Norwegian ones

All respondents more or less receive all their news from social media. However, some expressed that they consider online newspapers as much more credible than social media.

Fake news

- 4/8 respondents mentioned fake news unsolicited.
- 1/8 explicitly said they would check other sources to investigate potential fake news

Half of the respondents mentioned the term fake news or brought up an example of fake news unsolicited. The remaining respondents did not elaborate on fake news in relation to media competency and skills, even when the moderator brought it up. Only one respondent expressed that they would investigate further when suspecting fake news. We have to remember that this does not necessarily mean that they are not critical of the information.

Reflections on YT ads

- 3/8 use YouTube less now than before because of the increase in ads.
- 5/8 find YouTube ads annoying and exhausting

Respondents were particularly interested in talking about the advertising aspect of media literacy and had many thoughts on this. All participants expressed their dislike towards YouTube ads, and some have limited their usage patterns as a result.

What they perceive as ads

- 8/8 are familiar with InVideo ads
- 8/8 recognize and consider influencer content to be marketing/ads
- 1/8 particularly mentioned what they consider to be hidden advertising
- 3/8 consider travel vlogs on YouTube to be ads

All respondents were familiar with the 'usual' ads before and after videos. However, everyone also brought up how influencers market or promote specific products or experiences as part of the content. They provided specific and different examples of what type of marketing efforts they had recognized, such as merch, promoting food, clickbait videos, link in bio, pop-up ads, unboxing, hidden advertising etc. Additionally, when asked whether travel vlogs on YouTube could be considered ads, reactions differed amongst both groups. Some were sure that it is marketing, others were unsure, and some had not previously thought of the possibility of those types of videos being ads.

Types of ads watched

- 3/8 specifically watch promotional videos that they know are ads

Nearly half of the respondents purposely watch marketing content on YouTube for informative and/or entertainment purposes, and are aware of the nature of the content. For those that do, it became apparent that it is quite usual rather than an occasional thing.

4.4 New empirical data: Survey questionnaires

Here, I briefly present the results from each answer in the short survey taken at the end of the focus group interviews. Short summaries of all the results are included in between clusters of answers. Here too, the ten questions followed a pattern that asks adolescents about their YouTube usage, time spent using the platform, as well as behaviour and attitudes towards YouTube content. As mentioned in chapter 3.3., part of this involves asking adolescents questions related to self-perceptions of media literacy skills and knowledge, including advertising. These answers will aid in discussing the findings from the interviews in the analysis chapter.

As some of the first results show in Figures 4.2 - 4.8, only one adolescent shares a user profile on YouTube with another person, meaning that most participants have access to their private user profiles. None of the respondents said they have a personal or a shared YouTube channel. However, the adolescents all subscribe to several YouTube channels, whereas a smaller percentage said they follow many channels. All respondents joined the YouTube platform four years ago or more, meaning that they were in their early teenage or tweenage years. Furthermore, there were some differences in how many days a week the respondents use YouTube. A minority either use the platform only one day a week or all days of the week. However, most of the respondents fall somewhere between three to five days a week, with the majority being three.
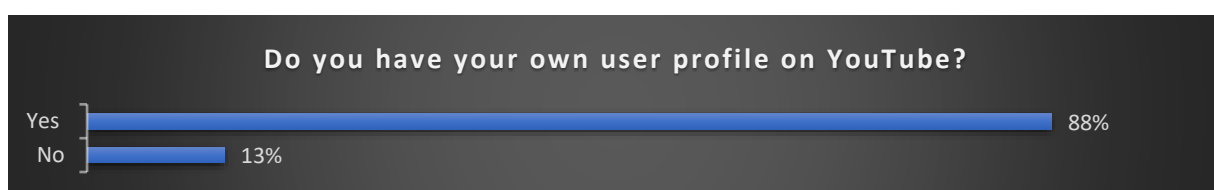
Figure 4.2: Question 1
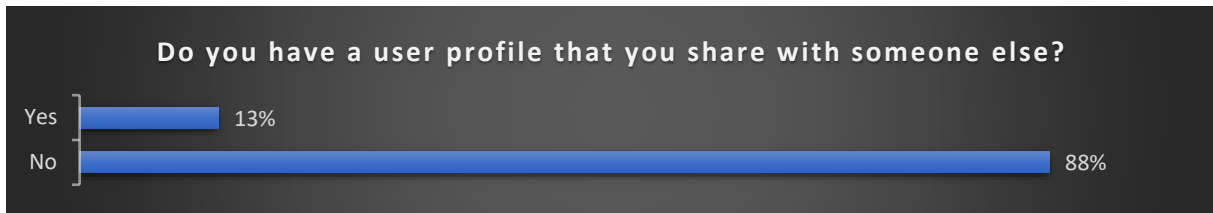
Figure 4 3: Question 2
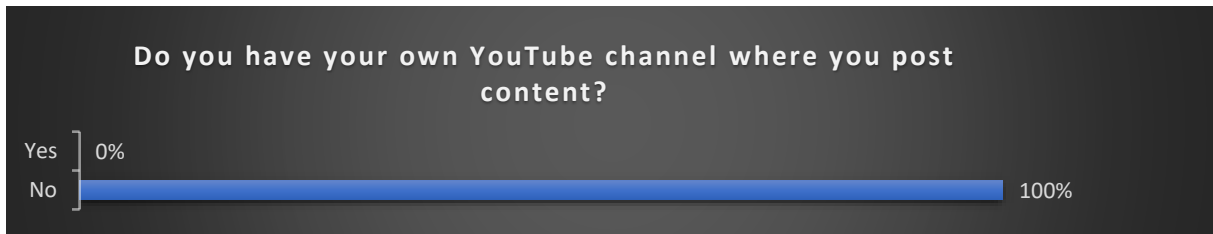
Figure 4.4: Question 3
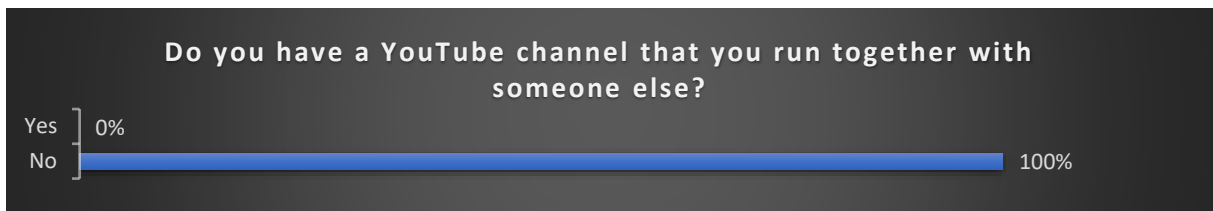
Figure 4.5: Question 4
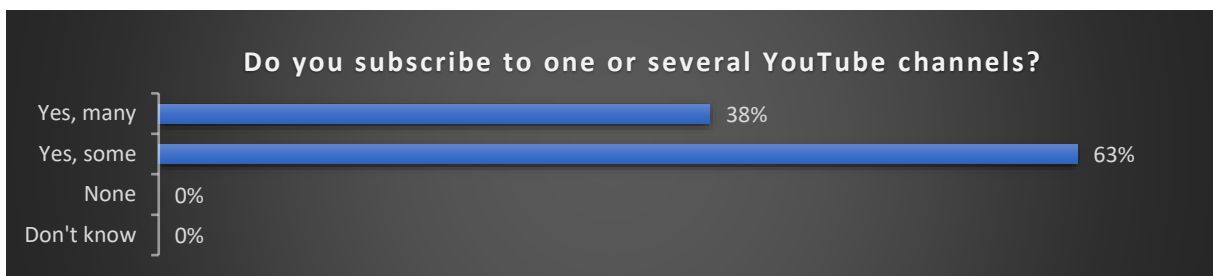
Figure 4.6: Question 5
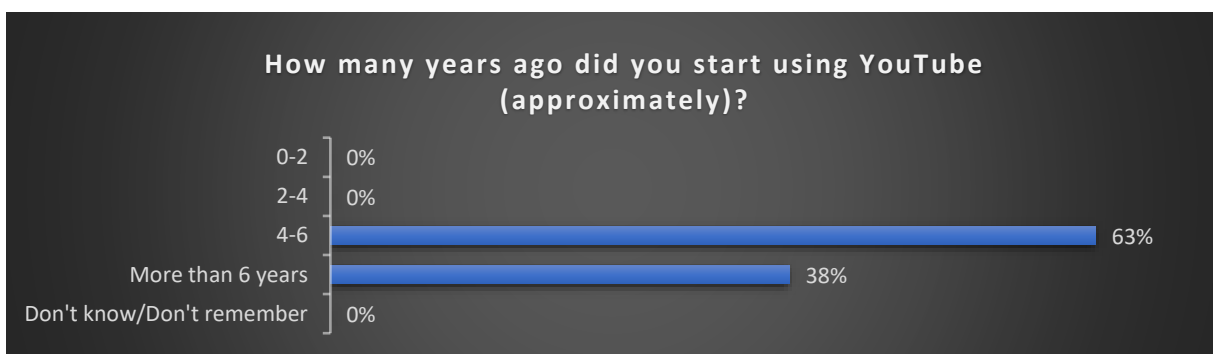
Figure 4.7: Question 6
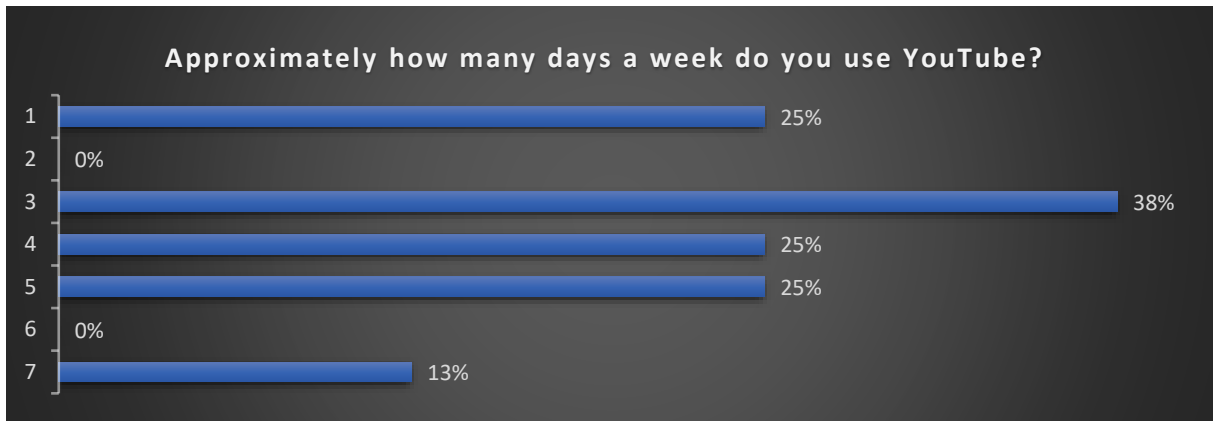
Figure 4.8: Question 7

When asked whether they find YouTubers trustworthy as a result of following them, the answers varied, as shown in Figure 4.9. While only one respondent has full trust in the content YouTubers present, another does not agree to some level. The majority of respondents here either somewhat agreed or remained neutral on the matter. Moreover, the respondents were asked about how they perceived their own level of media literacy. Figure 4.10 shows that all of them are highly positive that their level is adequate. The majority said their knowledge and skills are at a reasonably good or somewhat good level, while one respondent perceives it as very good. Combined with answers from the interviews, it will be interesting to see if these statements apply.

Figure 4.9: Question 8

What level of media literacy do you think you are at today?

Category	Value
Don't know/Neither or:	0%
Very bad:	0%
Bad:	0%
Somewhat good:	38%
Good:	50%
Very good:	13%
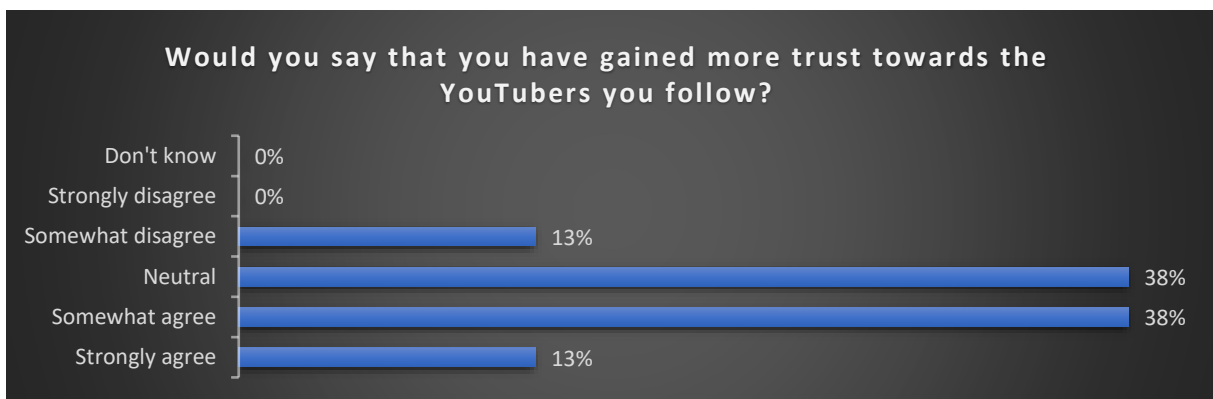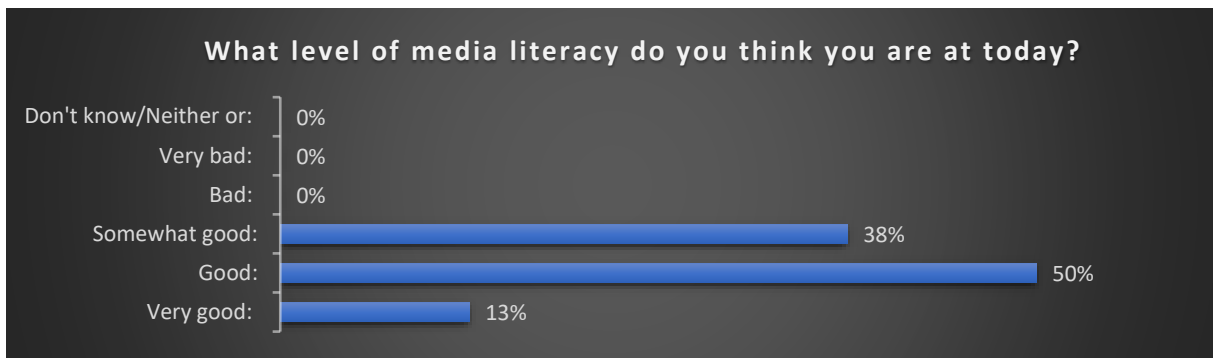
Figure 4.10: Question 9

Furthermore, Figure 4.11 shows that the adolescents were asked whether their YouTube usage specifically has strengthened their media literacy in terms of both technical and cognitive skills and knowledge, as well as whether they can recognize advertising efforts on the platform. Regarding technical aspects, the answers were split in half between agreeing somewhat and strongly, meaning they feel highly confident in this. The majority of adolescents also took a firm stance regarding the cognitive part, whereas all but one, who took a neutral stance, said that they either somewhat or strongly agree with the assertion. Lastly, a clear majority of respondents answered that they could easily recognize ads or promoted content on YouTube. Here too, only one respondent took a neutral stance. Overall, on this particular question, all eight respondents believe their degree of media literacy is above average on each statement.

Has your YouTube usage strengthened your media literacy competence in relation to:

Media literacy skills (Purposeful use of a medium to solve tasks, find information etc.)

Category	Value
Don't know:	0%
Strongly disagree:	0%
Somewhat disagree:	0%
Neutral:	0%
Somewhat agree	50%
Strongly agree:	50%
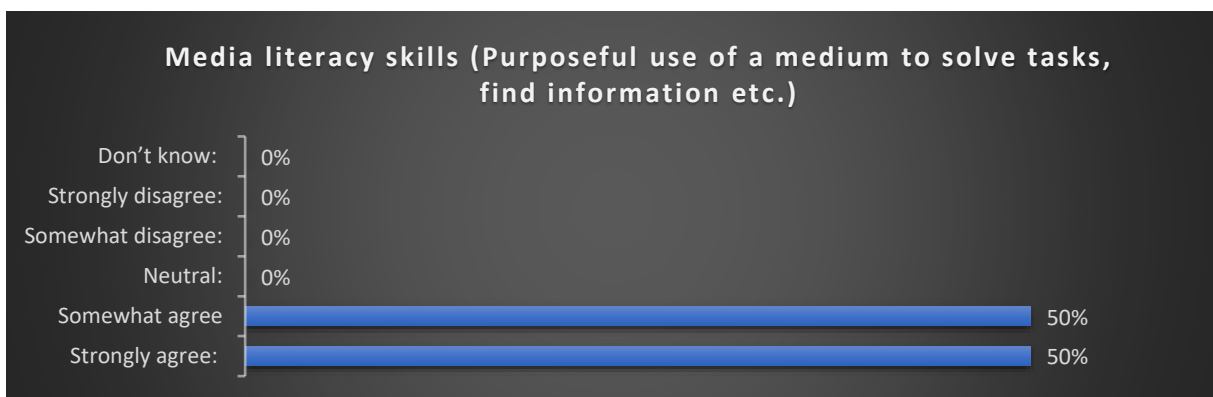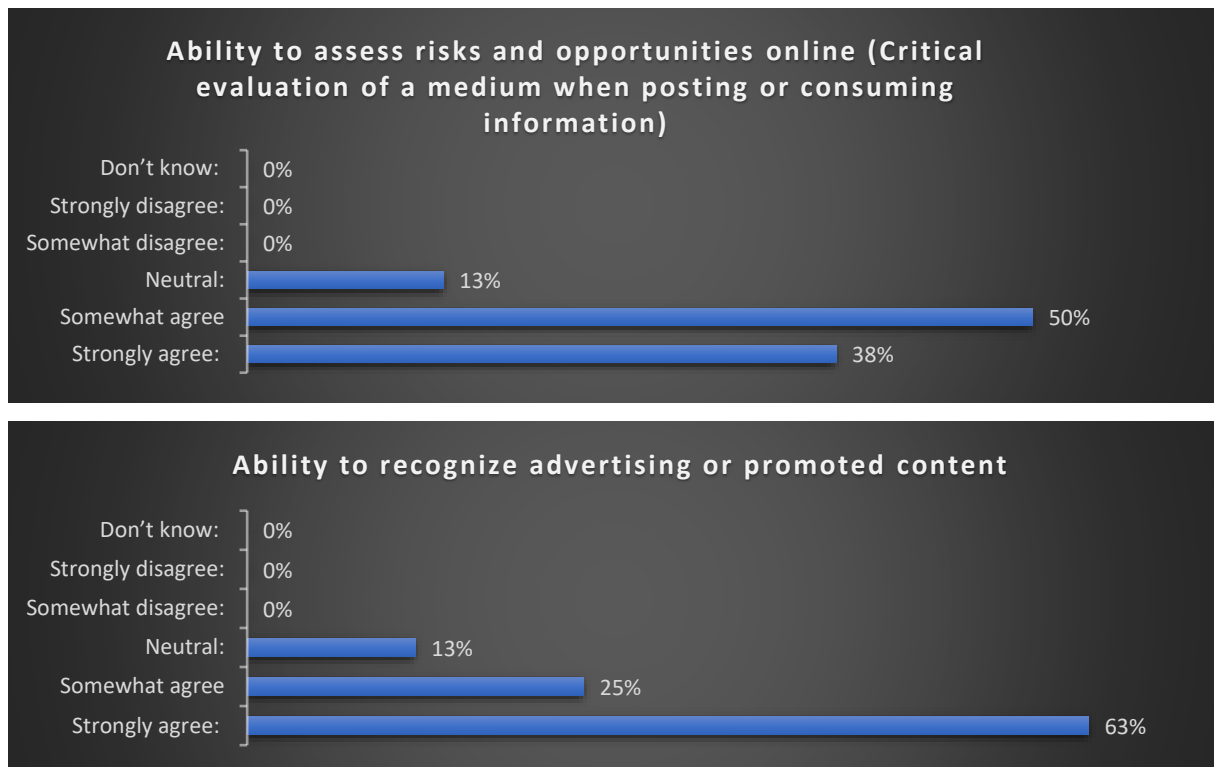
Figure 4.11: Question 10

4.5 Summary of new empirical data

Coding responses from focus group interview transcripts led to four main code groups: *YouTube usage and behaviour*, *Impacts of usage on attitude and beliefs*, *Media literacy knowledge and skills*, and *Advertising on YouTube.*

Starting with the first code group, only half the respondents use YouTube regularly. However, nearly all respondents have clear motivations for using the medium, no matter the purpose or frequency. Half the respondents said they receive specific gratifications from using the medium – a number that also corresponds with how many use the platform regularly. It is also quite usual to turn to the platform only to listen to music or other audio content, instead of watching videos. In terms of behaviour, there are similar patterns. Youth either watch, listen or read comments on the platform. Liking and commenting are either scarce or non-existent. The most considerable change from 2018 and 2020 to 2021/2022 is that there seems to have been a shift in YouTube's popularity amongst this specific age group. More than half of the respondents either did not care for YouTube at all or brought up other social media such as Snapchat, Instagram, but mostly TikTok. The latter is the one that usually replaces YouTube when there is 'nothing else to watch'.

As part of the second code group, the participants talked about the importance of YouTube in their daily lives. The main finding from this discussion is that most consider YouTube a helpful platform, a place to solve specific problems if needed, or nurture interests – but only occasionally. It is a place they can turn to, but they do not seem to be dependent on using it for multiple purposes, although there were exceptions amongst the respondents. Moreover, there were splitting opinions on whether sharing YouTube content is a 'thing', either digitally or offline. Half of the respondents either share or receive recommendations from peers regularly. Most participants, including those that share and receive YouTube content, are involved in WOM mainly on other platforms. TikTok stood out again here.

The respondents discussed several issues related to media literacy knowledge and skills, which subsequently formed the third code group. Overall, the groups were unfamiliar with this particular term or similar terms in English or Norwegian, and did not know what being a media literate person involves. As expected, some focused on technical skills alone and cognitive aspects were either not mentioned, or were referred to as other digital skills not directly associated with digital literacy on social media. Moreover, half of the respondents have a positive attitude towards what they see, hear, or read on YouTube compared to other social media, particularly TikTok. At the same time, some respondents were clear about the importance of checking sources no matter where you consume information.

Talking about credibility on YouTube served as a 'warm-up' for participants in both groups to enter discussions about fact-checking and news consumption practices, with some guidance from the moderator. There are contrasts in how youth approach the fact-checking process from solely relying on family members, to including YouTube amongst other more established sources *or* other social media. When faced with potentially false information within the platform, some also compare the content, views, comments, and video likes. No one spoke of fact-checking services, such as *Faktisk.no*.

Furthermore, all respondents receive a large portion of news on social media, while for some it also stems from online newspapers or outlets. However, most respondents agreed that well-known online newspapers, either Norwegian or foreign, are the most trusted platforms for

news consumption and fact-checking information. This includes respondents that did not verbally mention which ones they use. Regarding fake news, half the respondents brought up several examples, but only one explicitly stated that they tend to double-check. Therefore, we can assume that although youth may be critical, they tend not to do anything about it.

Various aspects of YouTube advertising, which is the fourth and last code group, became a popular discussion topic amongst the participants as it was brought up at different stages of the interview. All respondents were acquainted with InVideo ads. These were particularly mentioned as a main reason for youth turning their back on the platform, due to their large quantity, repetitiveness, and intrusive nature. Moreover, respondents said they could easily recognize influencer marketing on the platform or promotion videos by YouTubers. This included, amongst other things, sponsored products or influencers' and YouTuber's merchandise. Amongst the responses, only one participant mentioned hidden advertising, which was initially expected to be mentioned by several. Lastly, nearly half the respondents regularly and deliberately watch promotional ads, which are part of the content on YouTube, despite the resentment toward InVideo ads. This includes product reviews, how-to tutorials and unboxing videos.

5. Analysis and Discussion

This chapter aims to analyse and discuss the findings and results from the previous chapter. It follows the order of the research questions. I begin with analysing social media and YouTube usage, moving on to youth's media literacy levels, and lastly looking at the relation between the two in 2021/2022. The theoretical foundation is interwoven in the analysis in order to answer the RQs. Additional sources, including online and news articles, are sometimes used in tandem with the findings and theory to illustrate examples. Interpreting the results from the content analysis, in combination with newly generated empirical data from the interviews and survey, can hopefully illuminate whether social media usage has had any sort of impact on the level of media literacy due to the pandemic.

5.1 Dynamic users in a dynamic social media environment

As mentioned in chapter 1.3.1, answering RQ 1a involves looking at social media primarily through the lens of YouTube. However, some of the results from the content analysis do consider social media usage in general. Therefore, it is natural to involve this broader perspective as part of the analysis to some extent. The findings showed that according to the NMA, social media is still highly popular amongst adolescents and was only rising in 2020. SSB, however, provided the data that matched the target age group best. It showed that nearly all Norwegian teens aged 15-18 were present on social media in 2020. It is, therefore, beneficial to explore the typical social media usage that drives these high percentages.

Arguably, the most evident feature which sets social media apart from other media in today's digital environment is many-to-many communication through user-generated content. Along with one-to-one communication through messaging services, it plays an essential part in maintaining a high activity level. On YouTube, we could say that the "mass self-communication" prevails (Castells, 2013, p. 55), together with many-to-many communication. Although YouTube lacks private one-to-one functions, it allows for faster and easier communication, similar to most other social platforms where we can share experiences, opinions, and information (Bastiansen & Dahl, 2019, p. 380-381). This refers to what Jenkins calls a participatory culture (2006, as cited in Erstad, 2015, p. 90). For adolescents, using certain social media actively may act as a safe haven and a free space, whether through entertainment or contact with peers. Moreover, when others share, it can help confirm that you are not alone with a certain feeling or situation.

Furthermore, the connectivity aspect may be a contributing motivational factor to why a majority of adolescents increasingly spend a substantial amount of time on social media. Connectivity can be seen in relation to Ha & James' interactivity dimensions of connectedness (1998, p. 462) and reciprocal communication (p. 464), as well as the communicative and production properties of digital media, listed by Erstad (2015, p. 90-91). YouTube enables open dialogue with both creators and users, and provides an arena where virtually anyone can develop and share their content. Often, YouTubers 'decide' what future content will be, based on suggestions from users. Feedback through comments, likes, and views is part of the platform's interactive features and contributes to YouTube's content economy.

Moreover, the non-stop availability of audio-visual content heightens the experience of connectivity and makes it more personal (Ha & James, 1998, p. 462). Seeing faces or hearing voices makes us relate more to others than just through written text. In other words, gratification from social media connectivity can be obtained in different ways. With the constant access to different services that can fulfil different needs at any given time, the perceived closeness of audio-visuality is a powerful aspect of social media. In return, this can contribute to repeated, long-term usage.

Other kinds of gratifications play a large part in keeping the percentage of adolescents' YouTube usage high too. According to Erstad, one of the ways that digital media affects the way all media are used is the need for and access to information (2015, p. 90). This aspect matches what YouTube can provide its users. The platform is often associated with problem-solving or as a more convenient informational resource, presuming that news and information stem from a reliable source. It also offers freedom of choice of information, which sits high when deciding whether to use a medium, according to Ha & James (1998, p. 462). YouTube allows users to search through an enormous library of content before making up their minds about being exposed to certain information. This is at least the case whenever we do not choose a video presented by algorithms, although recommended videos also are a factor for engagement (Jones & Hafner, 2021, p. 42).

YouTube thus stands as a perfect example of the demassification that began during the last part of the 20th century (Ruggiero, 2000, p. 16). Most eminently, however, from a young viewer's perspective, YouTube is a source of entertainment which can take many forms, from music to livestreaming. Ha & James' dimension of playfulness is thus covered here (1998, p. 461). The more motivations *or* gratifications that a user can 'tick off', the higher the chances of using a particular service or medium.

Although certain gratifications may encourage youth to use YouTube, other factors can impact their activity level. As Rubin explains, media activity can range from instrumental to ritual (2009, p. 172-173). Being actively present can mean searching for specific content with an end goal in mind, creating content, and paying more attention to media messages (Ruggiero, 2000,

p. 10). Ritual usage, on the other hand, was initially linked to television programs that aired at specific times and therefore created a habit of content consumption. From an ideological viewpoint, this type of activity level can lead to "greater exposure to and affinity with the *medium*" (Rubin, 2009, p. 172). It can in turn lead to greater affinity with media messages as well because the viewer can become less critical of what they consume over time.

Changes that have occurred due to on-demand functions on platforms like YouTube may have altered how these habits form and how long they last. According to Rubin, a ritual activity level implies that a medium is used to pass the time, usually for entertainment purposes (ibid.). As the findings show, this is the case for most Norwegian adolescents, who often use YouTube to listen to music or watch gaming and funny videos. However, it can be considered a habit to be present on YouTube daily, but not necessarily watch the same things. Alternatively, one might turn on the same or similar videos and simply let them play in the background while paying attention to something completely different. Because digital media has and constantly is altering media exposure, and not least differently across media platforms, youth can customize certain 'ritualised' practices much more often today.

Furthermore, Rubin states that audience activity is largely determined by "social context, potential for interaction, and attitude" (2009, p. 173). Taking his last point into account, this means that youth's perception of the world highly influences the choice of medium and content. This perspective makes it possible to see how a user's motivations are connected to cultivation. If predisposed attitudes and beliefs impact choice, then they must, at least partially, impact the effect of the consumption. This, in turn, can create a loop of affirmation, similar to an echo chamber created by algorithms. Theoretically, what you choose to consume based on values and needs, is what is presented to you again in a similar form. In a way, this can be perceived as an opposite cultivation effect, where the influence begins from outside the medium.

To explore if cultivation occurs amongst the target age group, we can look at whether attitudes and behaviours on YouTube tend to resemble those of heavy or light viewers. What has typically been considered a heavy viewer of television is related to fulfilling certain needs through exposure to repeated media messages (Morgan et al., 2015, p. 688). This definition

does not necessarily apply to YouTube in the same manner. Today's abundance of content options means that youth *can* view a lot more, although the content is not necessarily always the same (ibid., p. 693). Following the cultivation hypothesis, we can say that cultivation through YouTube could be possible if a person actively watches the same or similar content *or* follows specific content creators habitually for a longer time. Alternatively, it can be more widespread. For instance, the majority of YouTube content available to Norwegian youth is in English, and cultivation has occurred in that they have adopted the language into their everyday vocabulary, both online and offline (Eide, 2021).

Adolescents are still in the developing stage, meaning that the possibility of influence heightens. Issues concerning youth and negative outcomes of time spent using various digital media have circled the public discourse time and time again. In 2018 the WHO defined excessive gaming as a mental disorder (Wakefield, 2018). Moreover, concerns have revolved around how much screen time is considered too much (Nordahl, 2017) and psychological concerns, where a connection has been found between time used on social media and loneliness (Revheim & Michelsen, 2017). The comparison in chapter 4.1.1 showed a high and steady usage pattern, with a slight increase amongst the target age group. A high percentage of youth using social media for hours at a time, in combination with repeated use, may indicate cultivation. Just as viewing similar things on television for a long time has been thought to slowly but steadily contribute to changes in beliefs and attitudes about the world (University of Twente, 2019, p. 129), the same may be happening when 'overusing' social media. Although social media offers a world of opportunities when used correctly, excessive and mindless use could spark unwanted outcomes in the long run.

However, excessive usage alone may not be enough to drive cultivation or lead to adverse media effects. As Casares Jr. & Binkley point out, it is necessary to remember that the consequences of youth's media usage are not static (2021, p. 1). This is because the way we use media today is not static in itself, as all social media offer dynamic environments and different forms of engagement, which may lead to both positive and negative experiences. To a large extent, YouTube gives youth the freedom to choose what media messages to consume, how, and when. Therefore, they can be perceived as being interchangeably active or passive at any given time. It could more easily lead to short-term changes in perceptions and beliefs

about reality. If so, it may matter more *how* and *why* YouTube and other social media are used, as opposed to the *time* used on the platforms.

Interestingly, only a decade ago, we could see that the vast majority of YouTube's viewers were passive audience members who rarely engaged with content in any way, shape, or form (van Dijck, 2013, p. 115). In effect, this can blur the lines between what it means to be a light and heavy viewer, and adolescents fall somewhere in between, as is typical for other age groups as well. For this reason, one might perhaps have to consider whether someone is a light or heavy *user* of YouTube. This, in turn, can make it hard to establish whether a cultivating effect takes place, even with tracking and measuring activity data. In general, this means that using YouTube daily for a couple of hours does not necessarily, on its own, mean that the outcome will be harmful media effects. However, we can assume that the many gratifications youth get from YouTube and other social media contribute to the high usage percentages and may determine their typical choice of content.

5.1.1 Summary of RQ 1a

Social media is used by nearly all 15-18-year-olds in Norway and usage only rose from 2018 to 2020. Communicative aspects and the various forms of entertainment youth have access to set social media apart from other digital media and most likely contribute to increased use. Particularly the element of connectivity covers several interactive dimensions, which are thought to be central gratifications for being present online. YouTube allows for most types of communication and interactive features in multiple forms, from text to audio-visual content, but lacks the direct one-to-one communication prevailing on most other large social platforms. This could therefore affect motivations to use the platform, but also the number and the intensity of gratifications youth receive from YouTube. Other platforms which can fulfil more, or all gratifications, may thus become more attractive.

Aside from connectivity and entertainment being reasons for using YouTube, the platform is also a search engine. Access to information, either privately or for school, is therefore also a significant gratification for many young people, along with the freedom to choose amongst an extensive library of content. YouTube usage is also concerned with the activity level on the platform, which can vary between instrumental and purposeful to ritual and habitual use of a

medium. For most Norwegian adolescents, the results showed that activity levels on YouTube are primarily due to the need for entertainment, from music to funny videos. This shows a tendency to use the platform slightly more habitually than instrumentally.

Activity levels can also be a source for interpreting whether cultivation occurs by looking at differences in light and heavy viewers *or* users of a medium. Whether certain attitudes, values, and beliefs young people have about the world change due to using YouTube is difficult to determine. On the one hand, a majority use social media excessively and can be considered heavy users of social media platforms, including YouTube. Cultivation effects can thus take place due to repeated and exaggerated usage, although the content may vary. On the other hand, the content variation makes the usage much more diverse and dynamic than with earlier media such as television. Switching between active or passive activity levels is also relatively straightforward. Moreover, young people do not necessarily watch the same things repeatedly at certain times. How and why YouTube is used could matter more for cultivation than time spent on the platform. In this case, youth tend to interchange between being light and heavy viewers *or* users.

5.2 Disconnections between self-perceptions and reality

Regarding digital literacy in general, the findings showed that the NMA reports from 2018 and 2019 could be relied on for looking into this matter. Beginning with the former, it portrayed an image of Norwegian 15-18-year-olds as highly competent in most aspects of digital literacy, meaning that they mostly have the necessary skills to seek and critically comprehend information online. Turow explains that considering the creator of a message, the persuasive techniques that are applied, as well as investigating why and how particular media messages are constructed, can help the receiver uncover whether information is reliable and authentic (2020, p. 23-25). Through self-reporting, most adolescents seem to have the necessary skills and tools to find, evaluate, and understand information online correctly. On YouTube, this can mean that they can recognize attempted scams, for instance, questionable URL links in the description area of a video.

Equally relevant to digital literacy is social media literacy. Because of its audio-visual features, YouTube also "requires literacies different from those we use to produce and consume written

texts" (Jones & Hafner, 2021, p. 65). This means, for instance, recognizing certain cues in videos that reveal misleading information. The added dimension of connectivity in social media literacy means that assessing risks and opportunities also means considering social context (Festl, 2021, p. 251). Regarding YouTube, this could involve looking into whether an account or a user in the comment section is spreading true or false information, by evaluating how a text is built up and communicated to others, and who the user is. Just as important is understanding the impact of one's own communication and exposure. Therefore, social media literacy extends to privacy issues in a social context as well. Not knowing whether a profile is open or closed, for instance, can cause unwanted consequences if the user does, in fact, want restricted access. Although this refers to a relatively low percentage of Norwegian youth and a platform that allows for non-invasive profile settings, it may cause an issue if the behaviour and lack of knowledge are transferred to more vulnerable platforms such as Instagram or Facebook.

Perhaps what stood out the most from the results was the large gap between adolescents' own perceptions of their media literacy levels, set up against a more objective measurement in the 2019 report, compared to the Norwegian population. When measuring differences, the NMA considered, amongst other things, knowledge of algorithms, privacy, media ownership and financing, and news consumption (2019, p. 69). We are subjected to all of these elements daily, either directly or indirectly, and it is crucial to have at least basic knowledge about how they function.

Jones & Hafner argue that being critical of creators of media messages and the spread of certain ideologies is more about being conscious *or* aware of them rather than pointing out wrongs (2021, p. 135). As mentioned in the theory chapter, leaning more towards an instrumental activity level makes a difference here, according to UGT. Activeness encourages reflectiveness, which may, in turn, alter potentially harmful media effects (Rubin, 2009, p. 173). The current pandemic is an excellent example of a time when both youth and adults have needed to be even more attentive and critical of digital information that we read or hear and the sources of the messages.

Speaking of evaluating information in digital media, where and how adolescents consume news are relevant points of discussion regarding media literacy. The 2019 and 2020 reports from the NMA, as well as SSB's report, showed that a large majority of adolescents turn to social media to read or watch the news and indicated that much of the news consumption does take place on YouTube. However, only a fraction of news stories appear on social media and usually those that can generate the most clicks and are most "shareable and likable" (Martin, 2018). In addition, all the genuine news stories may get mixed up into a web of content produced by robots, which automatically fill up a platform's news feed (Jones & Hafner, 2021, p. 59). The 2019 report from NMA showed that high percentages of adolescents have trouble following the news. At the same time, social media is an important source of news consumption, connectivity, and entertainment. This means that there is a mix of elements that each demand a lot of attention. Combined with potentially unreliable news sources, consuming news on social media can cause an overload of information and contribute to why youth struggle to follow the news on these platforms.

Aside from content produced by robots, other 'news' sources may not always be well-established and deliberately aim to spread misinformation *or* disinformation. This phenomenon is more famously known as fake news. Jones & Hafner explain that the sources behind fake news are only getting better at mimicking well-known sources and therefore try to use the same means of persuasion (2021, p. 152). Often, they wish to change beliefs and perceptions, usually concerning current and controversial topics (Munthe, 2018). Through the lens of cultivation theory, it may impact the "cultivation differential", which considers the difference in perception of reality between light and heavy viewers (Morgan et al., 2009, p. 35). In other words, being repeatedly targeted by fake news stories and content on a frequently used platform could unintentionally cultivate heavy viewers of this type of content. This is particularly relevant for social media because it only becomes harder to distinguish truth from twisted truths. As social media seem to have become one of the primary news sources for half of Norwegian youth, understanding how they evaluate exposure to news and fake news becomes increasingly important (Campo, 2018).

The 2019 report focused heavily on critical media understanding regarding news consumption. On most accounts, adolescents scored high in terms of media literacy skills and

news assessment, and although social media is used often, online newspapers are still the primary source of news. This may indicate that the social functions of platform giants like Facebook and YouTube as "gatekeepers for the dissemination of knowledge" (Jones & Hafner, 2021, p. 155) still do not reach the level of trustworthiness that stems from online newspapers. The data referring to youth using fewer sources than the general population to comprehend news stories can thus be interpreted differently. On the one hand, it may suggest that their media usage contributes to a lower level of digital literacy and understanding than the rest of the population, due to lack of research. On the other hand, it can indicate a high digital literacy level, meaning that youth know where to look for answers and quickly establish the trustworthiness of a source or media message, for instance, by checking with online newspapers.

Comparing the 2018 and 2020 reports, it was possible to map out some ways in which adolescents aged 15-18 try to uncover fake news or information they are suspicious of and whether there have been any changes in measures taken. A reason for why these results were unexpected refers to the possibility of interactivity as a result of demassification. The Internet provides "selectivity characteristics", which allow for greater user control (Ruggiero, 2000, p. 16). A user can thus look for and be presented with information for relatively quickly (Heeter, as cited in Ruggiero, 2000, p. 15).

Additionally, the interactive aspect of information access is highly connected to the discourse of digital literacy (Erstad, 2015, p. 90). Therefore, we can say that the decrease in using well-known sources and fact-checking services amongst youth is alarming. It may suggest that adolescents struggle in deciding who and what to trust. Additionally, the increase in percentage points for not taking any action explains why all the other percentage points have decreased. However, this data also indicates that youth increasingly choose to dismiss suspicious news and content by not paying it more attention when recognizing it. This behaviour may contribute to less harmful media effects and influences, but at the same time, it does not aim at strengthening media literacy skills. In other words, digital media opportunities are not utilized adequately, although the risks may be somewhat avoided.

In theory, YouTube as a video-streaming giant does not exist without advertising and marketing efforts. Advertisements are an integral part of the content, and in using the platform, youth are being exposed to numerous marketing media messages, perhaps more than what people used to receive through television on its own. Still, the main goal remains the same for digital as it did for traditional media – using media messages to catch and keep the audience's attention. Bring in marketing, and repeat the process until a change in belief and, ultimately, attitude hopefully occurs (Olsen & Peretz, 2017, p. 173; Shanahan & Morgan, 1999, p. 12). In this manner, cultivation highly persists in today's digital sphere, and it is most likely more effective in some respects (Morgan et al., 2015, p. 219). However, a difference is that the messages are no longer based on just the interests of social elites – a trend that user-generated content helped change. Although this has led to a democratization of content distribution, it has also paved the way for misinformation. In the marketing sector, this can involve dubious commercial practices, such as hidden advertising on social media.

YouTube creates a perfect environment for advertising efforts mainly due to its large number of users. Shanahan and Morgan point out that viewer attention is essential as it "is a precondition for the overall economic health and purposiveness of the system" (1999, p. 18). Particularly views, but also likes and comments, are part of an arsenal of tools for measuring the success of monetization on the platform. Google uses the information we provide or leave behind and "sell big data for advertising purposes" (Fuchs, 2021, p. 53). Through this perspective, we can see how the audience *is* the commodity. YouTube's dependency on marketing shows that cultivation and advertising are intertwined. Youth spend hours scrolling through content daily and are often excessive consumers compared to other age groups. It could make them more vulnerable to cultivation influences of absorbing marketing messages.

YouTube marketing takes several forms. The most conspicuous types of ads, such as InVideo ads, can appear prior to, during, or at the end of a video. They are recognizable in that they intentionally disrupt the viewing experience and the interactive features of the video change, such as buttons. However, other types of adverts are implemented in the video content itself, such as 'unboxing' videos. Marketers often hire influencers to convey a message about a company's product or service (van Dijck, 2013, p. 40). It can lead to the viewer not always

understanding who the sender actually is (Olsen & Peretz, 2017, p. 23), namely the brand or company behind the influencer. The target age group in Norway are widely known for following YouTubers and influencers on social media, and marketing efforts may simply hide behind a parasocial relationship between the two.

Perhaps, influencer marketing videos can be perceived as a type of native advertising on Youtube. Native advertising is meant to "mimic the look, feel, and function of a medium's content" to appear more trustworthy (Lessard, 2018). This type of digital marketing is primarily found in online newspapers. On Youtube, however, promotional ads are often within the YouTube video content itself. They virtually become a part of the environment, more so than the InVideo ads, which are clearly separated and distinguishable. In turn, this may allow for easy influence and, for some, may require a high level of media literacy skills to determine whether the video is an ad or not.

The NMA's findings showed that the majority of adolescents could distinguish ads from regular posts, but this mainly applied to Instagram. In addition, the ethical issues of native ads have often led to heated discussions between advertisers and newspaper editors (Revheim, 2016). We could ask ourselves why this discourse has not yet been transferred to YouTube and video adverts? Possibly, YouTube's resemblance to TV makes the adverts more 'acceptable' because they appear as a natural part of the viewing experience.

Whether a cultivation effect occurs from regular exposure to InVideo ads and promotional influencer content can be seen in view of youth's attitudes towards marketing efforts. Olsen & Peretz write about *attitude strength* and explain that it refers to the degree to which a consumer is confident in and has reflected on the attitude they express towards something (2017, p. 174). A strong attitude must thus also equal a persistent attitude. The findings from the NMA showed that adolescents primarily receive ads for weight loss, muscle enhancing products, and cosmetic treatments and that they tend not to care or like these types of ads. The same applies to ads promoted by influencers, where more than half of teens ages 15-18 think that influencers only do this for money, according to the NMA's 2018 report. Based on this, we can assume that most adolescents have a medium to strong attitude towards both regular and potentially harmful advertising messages they are met with, and can critically

reflect on them. It also indicates that the stronger the attitude over time, the lower the chances for a cultivation effect to transpire the way an advertiser may have originally intended.

On the other side of the scale, we also need to consider the virality of social media, which speaks to cultivation and media literacy simultaneously. We often hear of viral videos where some people seem to become 'influencers' overnight or have their '15 minutes of fame'. As mentioned in the theory chapter, Potter argued in 2014 that cultivation studies have begun to look more at short-term influences from specific media messages (p. 1032). Viral videos tend to have a brief impact on viewers and could spark a temporary change in attitudes and beliefs if the impact is strong enough. As mentioned at the beginning of chapter 5.2, whether someone is a relatively active or passive user of the medium could influence the effects of media consumption too.

Furthermore, the content of viral videos, especially ones that might contain hidden advertising, should urge us to take a critical stance. This means exploring whether certain ideological standpoints are emphasized in the interests of certain people (Jones & Hafner, 2021, p. 135). The time available to take a critical stance may shorten with the phenomenon of virality, calling for more advanced media literacy skills. For this reason, it may be fruitful to consider both short and long-term exposure to media messages on social media, to better understand youth's media literacy levels.

5.2.3 Summary of RQ 1b

Young people's self-perception of digital and social media literacy in 2018 showed high levels of knowledge and skills. However, when objectively compared to the general population in 2019, it became clear that Norwegian youth have a long road ahead in some areas. Due to social media and YouTube usage being slightly more habitual than instrumental, critical senses may not always be activated. Furthermore, data from 2019 and 2020 showed that large amounts of news consumption happened through social media, with YouTube being an obvious choice. However, online newspapers and outlets prevailed as the most-used news sources in terms of trustworthiness.

Because of the many distractions on social media, many young people found it hard to keep up with the news. This particularly applies to real news and information, as these may get mixed up with misinformation and untrustworthy sources. Excessive social media usage possibly increased the chances of being targeted by fake news, which may, in turn, have increased potential adverse cultivation effects. Moreover, between 2018 and 2020, young people used less well-known sources and fact-checking services to establish the credibility of information online. There also seemed to be a tendency not to do anything and simply ignore potential false information, although this eliminates critical reflection and thus signifies a weakened digital literacy level.

Digital literacy is also concerned with advertising, with social media being one of the main arenas. Because young people spend a significant amount of time on social media platforms like YouTube, they can be considered an ideal target group. They are also often easier to persuade. In 2020, nearly 80% of Norwegian adolescents stated they were exposed to ads on social media. Cultivation is thus very likely to occur through YouTube, particularly because young people are known for following certain YouTubers and influencers religiously. According to the NMA, most adolescents are good at recognizing ads, although this has only been explored on Instagram.

Moreover, the general reaction to various ads seemed to be that youth disliked them. In both 2018 and 2020, advertising and influencer marketing seemed to be an aspect of social media that Norwegian adolescents reflected on and took a critical stance towards. However, viral content that may include hidden advertising could have a short-term cultivating impact. Youth's digital literacy in 2020 related to advertising could thus be considered adequate in many areas, with potential for improvement.

5.3 Shifted usage patterns during Covid-19 and new implications for media literacy

We now turn towards social media usage and media literacy amongst youth in 2021/2022. In answering the third research question, the aim is to see whether there are any similarities or changes in usage and media literacy, and thus if the former has affected the latter. The chapter is structured based on the order of the main code groups presented in the findings in chapter 4.3. New perspectives that emerged from the focus groups and surveys and that distinguish

themselves from pre-existing findings are elaborated on here. Comparisons to earlier findings are made where possible. Relevant data from other findings in chapter 4.1.4 of the content analysis will be included to support the discussion.

The results from the focus group interviews and the short surveys provided some deeper insights into the mediated lives of Norwegian 15-18-year-olds. Amongst other things, the respondents discussed their presence on YouTube, how they spend their time on the platform and why. Furthermore, they shared their thoughts on the main topics of this subject and gave clues to where their skill levels fall on the media literacy scale. Respondent quotes are included in the following sections, where those from respondents 1-4 are from the first interview on February 16, 2022, and those from respondents 5-8 are from the second interview on March 4, 2022.

5.3.1 YouTube usage and behaviour

Before the pandemic, YouTube usage was abundant amongst Norwegian youth, and it was hard to imagine it had decreased during 2021/2022. As NOVA reported in 2021, adolescents' screen time mid-pandemic has been soaring (Bakken, 2021, p. 30). Moreover, all the participants knew the interview topic beforehand and joined voluntarily, which strengthened the assumption that all of them had used YouTube actively during the pandemic. This was, however, not entirely the case for everyone.

Although respondents in the first interview all used the platform in one way or another, one respondent was clearly confused about this and stated early on:

> **Respondent 2**: *I generally do not use YouTube. I only use YouTube to listen to music, not to watch videos or anything. I don't understand why anyone uses YouTube.*

Other answers from the respondents in the second group also revealed that there has been a slight shift in YouTube's popularity. At least from what was portrayed in the NMA's reports. Here, there was a tendency to compare YouTube to other social platforms, and the majority of screen time now seems to be devoted to apps like TikTok, but also Snapchat.

> *Respondent 5: When I was younger, it was like, 'Oh, have you seen this on YouTube?', but now it's like, TikTok and the other social media are winning. And like, if you see something cool, you see it on TikTok, and then you press the share button and go to Snapchat and send it to your friends.*

Another respondent added:

> *Respondent 6: The thing is that everything from YouTube is on TikTok now too so… it's easier to just sit and scroll.*

Although YouTube is still frequently used by some, participants in both groups indicated that it is perceived as not as up to date anymore in some areas.

Based on the high percentages presented in the NMA's 2020 report, it was presumed in chapter 5.1 that YouTube usage stems from youth receiving multiple gratifications from the platform. It was mainly the interactive dimensions of UGT described by Ha & James (1998) and Erstad (2015) that seemed to fit well with YouTube. However, dimensions such as reciprocal communication, content production, and being part of a participatory culture have not been utilized on the platform during the pandemic. At least, this seems to be the case compared to other social media. This is reflected in the ratios where respondents expressed that they usually do not share, produce, comment or discuss anything with anyone on the platform. Sharing YouTube content, in particular, is not done outside the platform either. Commenting and liking videos was something several respondents mentioned they did when they were a lot younger.

Participants went back and forth on why their activity levels have decreased on YouTube. Particularly in the second interview, it was pointed out that a reason for a decline in popularity and change in choice of medium is due to YouTube making social activities, such as sharing and chatting, less available. During a challenging time, gratifications that involve a sense of higher connectivity and easier access to reciprocal communication, therefore, seem to have been highly valued factors amongst adolescents. As Ruggiero explains, these two dimensions usually resemble the needs of expressive users (2000, p. 15). As digital natives, youth are often expressive online, for instance, through likes or comments, meaning that they need to feel

that they can share things with others with common interests. Moreover, it seems important to adolescents that sharing is easy, preferably within the platform.

What seems to be typical behaviour on YouTube amongst young people who use it is simply watching videos, reading comments, or listening to audio. Genres mostly revolve around entertainment, followed by educational videos that nurture their interests, such as tutorials and DIYs.

> *Respondent 3: I watch things I like to repair, like machines and stuff. And then I use YouTube Music. I watch too much of like, football clips and fishing videos.*
>
> *Respondent 8: I use it for useful information. And, if I have a bad day, I use it to watch funny clips.*
>
> *Respondent 6: I think to find information, ehm… and entertainment mostly. Maybe when I want to find out things in general, on a daily basis. For instance, I started cooking lately and I search for how to cook pasta or rice etc. And I use it for music, that like, isn't on Spotify.*

The responses indicate that the respondents' typical usage and activity level is dynamic, however, leaning slightly towards instrumental usage. One respondent, in particular, was eager to describe what their behaviour on YouTube would normally look like.

> *Respondent 1: I like watching interviews or, like, vlogs. I also look at a lot of feedback on different products that I find interesting. I keep up to date on things that happen with influencers. Or when someone is fiddling with something, let's say it's a puzzle you have to solve, I love to look at things like that where you have to solve a problem.*

From this viewpoint, we can see that usage can also be abundant and a repeated practice, which acts as a diversion (Rubin, 2009, p. 172) and gratifies the need for entertainment. At the same time, the usage is sometimes deliberately and purposeful (ibid., p. 173), such as trying to gratify the need for information. In addition, it became apparent that listening to music on YouTube is still highly relevant. This means that youth do not necessarily always watch videos or read comments on the platform and that cultivation may have an auditory effect here.

As a side note, just as interesting as the findings that did occur are those aspects of social media and YouTube usage that were not mentioned. UGT postulates that youth use things and media perceived as 'cool' by themselves or their peers. As mentioned in the previous paragraph, YouTube seems to be a place where young people nurture interests, entertain themselves and learn new things through multiple types of content. A mix of these motivations *or* gratifications applies to most of the respondents. However, YouTube's own data, based on algorithms, shows that videos with "extreme views and incendiary information" keep people more engaged than other types of content (Jones & Hafner, 2021, p. 42). It was quite noticeable that no one mentioned content that could be considered inappropriate, scary, or violent. Of course, the presence of other respondents and the moderator may have contributed to the lack of such remarks. Examples of channels that can post this type of content are YouTubers and musical artists, for instance, in the rap genre. As adolescents make up a large share of the viewership on YouTube, it would be surprising if they were not exposed to or did not consume this type of content.

5.3.2 Impacts of usage on attitude and beliefs

There seem to be several differences in what youth usually watch on YouTube, but also in how often they visit the platform and the time spent using it. Particularly the two latter factors make it difficult to say whether cultivation happens in a certain way for most adolescents. What we can assume now is what Shanahan & Morgan pointed out over 20 years ago; throughout history, the premises for cultivation have always been strengthened in combination with conditions brought forward by new media (1999, p. 219). Moreover, we have to remember that despite its size, YouTube can be perceived as merely a speck in the social media universe. Youth receive hundreds if not thousands of impulses daily from multiple media sources. Any media effects they may be targeted by on YouTube are only increased by the total sum of influences they see and hear elsewhere. In this sense, cultivation is, in fact, strengthened and can influence how certain impressions they receive online play out in the real world.

What Shanahan & Morgan may not have anticipated is the evolution of and speed at which we now receive and consume a vast amount of information daily. More specifically, they argued that "deeply held cultural perspectives and assumptions will not be efficiently nurtured

[...] as a result of a one-shot message blast" (Shanahan & Morgan, 1999, p. 12). In other words, cultivation simply cannot happen unless a message is repeated steadily over time. Moreover, in 2015 Morgan et al. stated that because of the way we consume content now through social media, cultivation in its most traditional sense "with its emphasis on fictional narratives" is not truly applicable (p. 686). Aside from advertising such as InVideo ads, YouTube's content is practically meant to avoid creating a repetitive environment. New and original content is what drives traffic, although the creator of that content may remain the same. And the content itself can be both non-fictional and fictional. So, where does that leave cultivation?

An option is to resort to the notion of light and heavy *users*. More precisely, we can look at where adolescents fall within the range of user (or viewer) type. This is closely connected to the degree of dependency on a medium. When asked about this matter, the findings indicate that when the basis for usage is informational *or* instrumental, choosing whether to use YouTube is a deliberate thought process.

> ***Respondent 2***: *It's a pretty good source. But it still comes last on my list as a source when I am looking for information, for instance, for a school assignment.*

> ***Respondent 8***: *If I really need to see a clip to understand something, that's when I search something up on YouTube.*

Therefore, these usage patterns lean more toward the behaviour of light viewers, which tend to consider various informational sources (Shanahan & Morgan, 1999, p. 26). Participants generally agreed that YouTube is an excellent informational source but do not rely on it, nor is it the first place they search.

On the other hand, several statements about motivations for usage from respondents in chapter 5.3.1 mention specific entertainment purposes. Examples are respondents that frequently return to the platform for product reviews, tutorials, reading comment sections and the like. The statements seem to be in tune with a higher degree of dependency and demonstrate a more habitual *or* ritualistic form of usage, which in turn resembles a heavier user or viewer. As Morgan et al. argue, heavy exposure today does not mean just watching a large number of different types of content but also seeing more of everything (2015, p. 689). The answers from participants who predominantly use the platform for entertainment match

this thought process. From their perspective, youth seem to return to the platform to consume various types of content, which is abundant and available to them.

The range between light and heavy can also be examined using the perspective of WOM. Amongst participants, there were contradicting views on the importance of sharing or receiving things they have seen or heard on YouTube with others.

> **Respondent 1**: *I often talk to others. 'Have you seen what happens in that video?' 'Oh, they said that in this video'. Or we might watch the same clips and then talk about it later. So, for me that kind of stuff is interesting.*
>
> **Respondent 6**: *Hmm… I get <u>a lot</u> of recommendations, like football clips and stuff.*
>
> **Respondent 7**: *Rarely… We don't really do it always. But often with TikTok though!*

On the one hand, these responses show that those that could initially be considered heavy viewers, based on usage patterns, are also those that seem to be influential sources. Moreover, they too tend to receive WOM more often and act on it. This type of behaviour may not just affect how these viewers understand the original intention of media messages, but depending on how they share it with others, it also has the power to alter interpretations (Turow, 2020, p. 36). Additionally, there was a tendency to watch the same things as peers amongst these respondents due to shared interests, mostly involving entertainment. Seeing that the content takes on sociocultural, political or economic perspectives that could impact attitudes and beliefs about reality, heavy viewers that engage in WOM often could contribute heavily to cultivation.

On the other hand, both focus groups gave the overall impression that youth do not engage in WOM about YouTube content, usually due to low activity levels. They tend to rather search up content themselves instead when they feel the need to and therefore lean more towards being light viewers. However, although light viewers are considered less receptive, particularly of adverse media effects, they still interact with heavy viewers both online and offline. Heavy viewers can thus become a source of influence and contribute to the cultivating process in the real world (Morgan et al., 2015, p. 681; Turow, 2020, p. 36). Pre-existing beliefs amongst light viewers can be challenged *or* even altered based on the WOM source, which could be a trusted friend or family member. Moreover, as Respondent 7 illustrates, a light viewer on

YouTube could be a heavy viewer on TikTok or other social media. In all cases where WOM is involved, the level of media literacy plays an even more significant role in assessing information correctly.

5.3.3 Media literacy knowledge and skills

Although the respondents scored themselves high when assessing their own media literacy levels using the questionnaire, the discussions in the focus groups painted a different picture. In many ways, the results here resemble the findings from the NMA's 2019 report described in chapter 5.2, showing a disparity between self-perceptions and reality. Throughout the discussions, it became clear that adolescents are not familiar with either the terminology of media literacy, digital literacy, or social media literacy. Consequently, they all initially struggled to explain what the main term means and what a media literate person is, particularly on social media.

Knowledge and examples of skills were, as expected, more on the technical side than the cognitive. However, some did touch upon elements of digital and social media literacy.

> ***Respondent 1****: I would say that person is good at influencing others.*
>
> ***Respondent 2****: Isn't it like how much you know about social media, how active you are.*
>
> ***Respondent 5****: Stalking. I feel like if you know how to do that, then you have mastered social media. And like, knowing shortcuts to how you can edit videos with the best quality. That kinda stuff.*

As Turow explains, "part of being media literate means taking an informed stand on why the media are important" (2020, p. 54). In other words, digital literacy today means understanding how mainstream and social media are important assets, but also having a critical sense and reflecting on boundaries that can minimise risks. These snippets from the interviews illustrate that youth need a clearer understanding of the basics of media literacy, as there was no mention of online hazards or how to utilise opportunities provided by these media. However, this thesis also tries to uncover whether adolescents' have been particularly attentive or alert when assessing information online and on YouTube in 2021/2022, whether it be news or advertising. Regardless of their knowledge of terms and definitions, youths' reflections on the importance of being digitally literate are considered part of the equation.

As the discussions evolved, the respondents' answers did show more familiarity with media literacy, but they could not pinpoint that it was precisely that they were discussing or engaging in.

> *Respondent 5: Especially with TikTok, I feel like I have become much better at not taking everything lightly. We have focused on this a lot in school. Being critical towards everything that is said online and all that. And learned about techniques to double-check whether a source is credible etc.*

The pandemic has been a driving force for putting media literacy high on the public agenda and in schools, which is long overdue (Schmidt, 2021). It may, therefore, not be as surprising that adolescents are familiar with elements of media literacy now, but are still in the learning phase when it comes to more complex issues.

No matter the type of information one is exposed to online, source criticism is crucial and lies at the heart of digital literacy. It urges us to take a "*conscious* stance" toward the massive flow of information (Jones & Hafner, 2021, p. 135). When asked about the importance of critical assessment of sources on YouTube, particularly during the corona pandemic, some were quick to respond while others took time to think about their answers. Nonetheless, the participants answered honestly.

> *Respondent 3: I always double-check, or at least partially.*
> *Respondent 1: I often press a link, and <u>then</u> I realise that it's a virus.*

Videos that appear and automatically play on the front page of YouTube were brought up during this discussion. One respondent expressed their technical knowledge of why certain content from certain sources *or* publishers is often presented to viewers here.

> *Respondent 5: That happens because of the algorithms – from the traces of data we leave behind.*

Fuchs states that "how content is organised and presented" is crucial for catching audiences' attention, and not least having more control over it over time (2021, p. 312). The statement from the respondent thus indicates comprehension of the mechanisms through which

information is presented to us on social media (Bulger & Davison, 2018, p. 10). However, because this was the only participant across both focus groups that explicitly mentioned this aspect, it is difficult to say how often youth consciously consider the power of algorithms behind the content they are exposed to repeatedly.

Furthermore, being long-time users of YouTube, adolescents expressed that they use specific and rather creative 'criteria' to establish whether the main source or the content is credible. Evaluating and determining credibility, for instance, of news content can involve looking at who the media outlet is or whether the information stems from established academics (Jones & Hafner, 2021, p. 152). Instead, two participants pointed out, and several others agreed, that there is strength in numbers.

> *Respondent 7*: *It's kinda hard to say, but I feel that we kind of judge from the view counts. For instance, if I search up a type of video and watch one with a low view count and one with a high view count, I sort of choose to trust the most popular one. And I feel it just happens automatically without even thinking about it. I sometimes compare videos, but yeah, it's hard to know what to believe anyways.*
>
> *Respondent 8*: *And then, people who have pressed like or not - from that, you can tell the difference. If it has few likes, then I think the video is fake.*

According to these statements, young people's source criticism skills somehow reflect the situation in 2020, where researchers found that Norwegian adolescents were struggling (Forskning.no, 2020). Moreover, this is another example of how cultivation does not necessarily need to stem from viewership but rather from the way we use social media platforms and read into all types of content. It takes on a much more complicated form today, as YouTube's functions and features could contribute to establishing how adolescents perceive social reality.

Speaking of the power of followers or view counts, massive viral spreads of content may lead to a temporary shift in attitudes and beliefs for some. The *attention economy* is more relevant than ever (Jones & Hafner, 2021, p. 225), and those who 'make it' within this ecosystem can potentially impact others. For instance, strong emotional persuasion *or* appeal can be a powerful influence that affects who or what we perceive as credible (Aristotle, 2006, p. 28). For some, short-term repeated exposure to particular messages may only reaffirm or maintain

predisposed beliefs, whether these are rooted in socio-political realities or not. Although reaffirming media effects conform more strongly with the traditional cultivation paradigm focusing on long-term repeated exposure (Shanahan & Morgan, 1999, p. 35), cultivation today does not necessarily rely on long time periods.

In Potter's critique of cultivation theory related to new media, he brings to the surface that the paradigm denies "that meanings are rapidly changing rather than stable" (2014, p. 1030). Information is abundant, widespread, and constantly available; it is entirely the opposite of the early days of television. Receiving frequently repeated messages short-term could alternate values and beliefs, even if it is not permanent. That is why critically considering the sharing of information is so central to digital literacy; it is easy to forget how each individual's shares, likes, views, or comments contribute to virality through algorithmic processes (Jones & Hafner, 2021, p. 247). Again, adolescents' threshold for influence is known for being low, and changes may occur faster in their case, seen in the light of the contemporary technological and media environment. There may even be frictions between the information received at home and what is found online. Additionally, some may not have developed certain attitudes or beliefs towards specific political or social issues, and views could, therefore, be altered more easily based on emotional impact.

One of the most interesting findings was, with some exceptions, that most respondents were in unison that information posted on YouTube, such as news, was more trustworthy than on other social media.

> **Respondent 1**: Then TikTok? Yes! I don't think TikTok is a credible source <u>at all!</u>
>
> **Respondent 8**: I think YouTube is more credible. Especially compared to Snapchat and Instagram.

Some respondents were quick to call out YouTube itself as the more trusted platform. None of the respondents mentioned media ownership, namely who owns YouTube and TikTok, and if there may be any implications based on that. Some people would argue that Google being the owner of YouTube would make the platform more trustworthy than Chinese-owned TikTok. Interestingly, YouTube has, in fact, been criticised for not handling false information

well enough, and has now published a concrete set of efforts for how they are tackling this problem going forward (Mohan, 2022).

At some point in both group discussions, however, all respondents did specify that not everything can be trusted. Some also pointed out the importance of cross-checking facts on trusted platforms, no matter which platform you find the information on. This shows attentiveness and implementation of media literacy skills *or* tools (Turow, 2020, p. 21). Results from the questionnaire also revealed that half of the respondents do have a certain amount of trust in YouTubers. This is possibly because some are under the impression that they operate on a more 'trusted' platform. However, answers on this matter were split, and some remained neutral or disagreed, which indicates that youth do not consume everything uncritically, even media messages from influencers they may follow.

Critical thinking and assessment were also centred around news consumption during the interviews, particularly fake news and fact-checking. Respondents shared their observations online at the peak of the pandemic and lockdown. Amongst other things, they mentioned how gullible people can be on social media regarding new information about the coronavirus. Anyone could post information during the heat of the moment, and people would easily panic before double-checking first, which to some level confirms Potter's critique of cultivation theory mentioned above (2014, p. 1030). Moreover, they brought up single issues they perceived as fictional and laughable, such as fake news about Covid-19 and 5G, and the infamous advice from former president Trump to drink sanitiser to kill the virus. Discussions, thus, did not centre on the mechanisms of the system behind fake news (Jones & Hafner, 2021, p. 154), as this was perhaps too complex and advanced. Instead, the respondents did elaborate on what actions they would take, and strategies used to evaluate the trustworthiness of potential misinformation or disinformation.

What is essential to bear in mind when analysing what youth do when fact-checking is that all eight respondents specified that they receive a large amount of news and information through social media alone. For instance, TikTok and Snapchat have now become so integrated into young people's lives that learning about world events, such as the war between Russia and Ukraine, happens here first (Vik, 2022).

Respondent 5: I definitely use Snapchat. After 'VG TV' came to Snap, where you can just scroll through, it's sort of cooler to stay updated on things there.

Moreover, although some more than others, all respondents stated that they turn to YouTube at some point during the fact-checking process. It was pretty unexpected to find out that one social media platform is used to verify information found on another. Therefore, evaluating credibility has as much to do with being critical of the content and source as considering *where* information is consumed (Jones & Hafner, 2021, p. 152-153). Again, the question and implications of ownership arise here as well. Luckily, many credible news sources have adapted to young people's news patterns and made it easier to consume credible information. However, news on social media usually only shows a fraction of the whole picture and should not be used as the only channel for news consumption.

It became clear that youth have become more sceptical towards news and information on social media due to the pandemic. In the first interview, however, there were rather heavy discussions of *where* and *with whom* they had or tended to fact-check information. One respondent felt the need to ask family for guidance and fully trusted them. Most respondents expressed that online news outlets or newspapers were at the top of their list for consuming news and fact-checking, next to or second to social media. Others also used alternative methods.

Respondent 2: I usually go to VG, NRK or Aftenposten. I feel they are the most credible sources.

Respondent 3: For me, it's maybe… 70/30. 70% from social media and 30% from online newspapers. I like to read there too, because not all news shows up on social media. And also, I find BBC to be more credible than VG, Aftenposten, and the like.

Respondent 5: I usually look at multiple sources or multiple websites and see if they say the same thing. And then I might also see what professionals are saying.

As mentioned in chapter 5.2, both main reports from the NMA showed that youth tend not to resort to using well-known sources or fact-checking services, and most do nothing to evaluate information. During the interviews, only one person stated that they do not take any action but would instead recognise that something is not right and just move on. On the other hand,

the findings from the NMA's 2019 report, analysed in chapter 5.2, showed that newspapers dominate amongst most youth despite the consumption happening on social media.

Looking at data from the reports and the findings from the focus groups, there seem to be changes in the importance of using established news sources from one year to another. However, there was no mention of fact-checking services other than news outlets or newspapers. Altogether, approximately half of the respondents here gave the impression that there may have been a positive shift in the importance of checking information using well-established sources during the pandemic. It also shows an increase in the understanding of media's place in a democratic society, as well as how to find and evaluate information using multiple credible sources while also being critical of the differences between them (UNESCO, 2013, p. 13). A cultivation effect may have taken place here, as youth may have changed attitudes and behaviours regarding researching information. Nevertheless, combining news sources with other fact-checking services should help bring youth's digital literacy to a more adequate level.

5.3.4 Advertising on YouTube

Of all the subjects brought up during the interviews, respondents were most eager to express their thoughts and feelings toward advertisements on YouTube. On the one hand, there seems to be consistency between the NMA reports and the findings here, as youth are still heavily exposed to ads on social media. On the other hand, the results here also show that ads seem to affect the interactive gratifications youth expect to receive from platforms like YouTube.

> **Respondent 2**: That is why I don't use YouTube, there is sooo much advertising!
>
> **Respondent 5**: I used to watch a lot of YouTube, but it was more like bloggers and stuff when there weren't any ads. But now that there are ads… I don't bother anymore. It's really tiresome.

More precisely, they affect the core foundation of UGT (University of Twente, 2019, p. 20), as the wish to satisfy a need using the platform is disrupted.

Aside from access to entertainment, access to information was brought up as well. Primarily, the steps needed to find a piece of information are becoming numerous due to ads. This

means that a greater effort is put on the user and the need for quick access to information is not adequately met (Heeter, 1989, as cited in Ruggiero, 2000, p. 15; Erstad, 2015, p. 90). Here, we need to keep in mind that young people are often much less patient and expect instant gratifications. According to Fuchs, too much information or a lack of it is also problematic for users and can drive them away from a platform (2021, p. 312). The responses mentioned above sum up the overall mood in both groups, and the answers were loud and clear – YouTube ads are time-draining and annoying, affecting the attention span.

Because there seems to be a change in trends and adolescents aged 15-18 spend less time on YouTube, this would naturally mean that they are less exposed to and absorb fewer ads. Particularly InVideo ads, which seemed to be the top reason for not using YouTube amongst respondents. However, as mentioned in chapter 5.2, marketing efforts today are often baked into the content. Using story-telling techniques and anecdotes is quite usual and can sometimes be less visible forms of advertising products and services (Shanahan & Morgan, 1999, p. 219). Although the initial thought may be that a cultivating effect is minimal or absent now, we need to remember that much of the content and videos youth consume can contain hidden advertising.

For this reason, adolescents were asked if they could elaborate on what an ad on YouTube is from their perspective. The answers mostly revolved around content posted by influencers, YouTubers, and potential scammers. All respondents brought up different examples, and it is worth showcasing most of them here.

> ***Respondent 1***: *Anything that someone tries to sell us. Anything that is showed by them, what they use, what they do, where they go, restaurants, anywhere – it's promoted by the influencers.*
>
> ***Respondent 4***: *It may be that they [YouTubers] wear something that they want to show in a video.*
>
> ***Moderator***: *Like product placements?*
>
> ***Respondent 4***: *Yes.*
>
> ***Respondent 7***: *Something called clickbait. It's like when they say something that is fake, it doesn't need to be anything serious, but it's just to make you click the video.*
>
> ***Respondent 8***: *[About clickbait] Many people click on that, and it's just to get views. And when you're in, there are ads, and they earn money on that.*

One respondent surprisingly brought up hidden advertising as well.

> *Respondent 5: And it can be like hidden advertising. Let's say you watch a blogger or vlogger or something. They often put out things, or like during the video, and be like 'Oh, I bought this', 'By the way, I bought this at this place', and then promote it like that.*

The statements above show that youth generally know when YouTube content is aimed at either trying to scam, sell, or persuade them to buy a product or service. They showed a high level of media literacy in terms understanding how some users or channels "consciously design their content in order to attract 'likes' and comments from us" (Jones & Hafner, 2021, p. 41). Compared to previous findings from the NMA reports, youth still seem to be heavily exposed to various types of ads, but also meet risks that are meant to lure them right then and there to profit others.

During this conversation, they also expressed what they would look for in order to recognize ads on YouTube. Results from the questionnaires showed that they perceive their own media literacy skills as adequate when decoding ads. In some ways, this was confirmed during the discussions. One participant had noticed changes in videos that contain promotions.

> *Respondent 5: They have become really strict now, at least in Norway, that you need to mark a video and like write 'ad' or 'in collaboration with'. So now your eyes go to the corner of a video where they mark it.*

Another respondent added that it is easy to expose the true intentions of influencers and YouTubers when they attempt to use story-telling techniques to sell something.

> *Respondent 7: I feel like you can't trust it. They sort of just advertise to advertise. Eh...and I don't feel like they even use the products they advertise every day, right?*

The two above-mentioned statements reflect observational and critical digital literacy skills because both the superficial features and the reality behind the messages are aspects being considered. The latter, in this case, is especially concerned with power relationships woven into the context of the video (Jones & Hafner, 2021, p. 18). Reflections here seem to be consistent with earlier findings by the NMA, particularly from 2018, which showed that youth

believe influencers only promote to earn money and not because a product or service is necessarily used by themselves.

Being aware of and being able to separate organic content from paid ads in videos with influencers and YouTubers is a necessary media literacy skill. However, when promotional ads are purposefully sought out, it also exemplifies an "'exchange' relationship [where viewers] accept the terms of an economic system" (Jhally & Livant, 1986, as cited in Shanahan & Morgan, 1999, p. 17). This is often a compromise made by the user or viewer to satisfy a particular need, such as seeking opinions about the quality of a product before deciding to buy it.

> *Respondent 1*: I also watch a lot of reviews of different products that I find interesting. When I want to buy something, I look at whether it's good or not.
>
> *Respondent 3*: I actually do that sometimes, too, I did it not long ago with a gaming device. So, I had to see what different YouTubers said about the device, hehe, and yeah, it got good reviews.

Depending on what type of products adolescents are searching for, these statements somewhat contradict findings from the NMA, which stated that youth generally do not care about most ads on social media. However, this shows that if the information you wish to consume is important enough, the threshold to knowingly sit through advertisements is substantially lowered, albeit frustrating at times. For videos, such as product reviews, the threshold may be non-existent, as the viewer purposefully seeks out the promoted content. This was, however, the case for only some of the participants, meaning that most would seem to match earlier findings from 2020.

Lastly, it became apparent that it is pretty usual amongst respondents to watch promotional content on YouTube for informational and entertainment purposes. This primarily included the already mentioned paid product reviews, but also unboxing videos and tutorials, such as How To-videos. These types of ads are often associated with affiliate marketing (Tay, 2021). Purposefully watching promoted videos on YouTube shows that the relation between storytelling and advertising is still very much alive. It also conveys just how impactful these personas have become, particularly during the pandemic. Much of it has to do with the rules

and regulations implemented to strengthen brand credibility (HubSpot & Talkwalker, 2021, p. 3) and thus make them more credible in the eyes of consumers and especially youth. Therefore, influencer marketing should not be taken lightly when considering the significant media effects it can have on youth's attitudes and beliefs, often subconsciously. In these cases, media literacy skills may not always be sufficient and need to be adjusted in tandem with the industry's evolvement.

5.3.5 Summary of RQ 1c

In this chapter, new empirical data was interpreted and compared to previous findings from 2018 to 2020 where possible. To begin with, there has been a slight change in how young people use YouTube in 2021/2022. Overall, they seem to be divided on whether YouTube is 'cool' enough to use; some consider it an everyday thing or use it sometimes, while for others, it is a mere blip on their radar. Other apps like Instagram and Snapchat, but especially TikTok, seem to range higher in popularity.

Both behaviour and activity levels differed amongst the respondents as well, indicating that some main components of UGT were utilized on YouTube during the pandemic, particularly those related to connectivity. Activity involves watching videos, listening to audio, or reading comments, and some adolescents consume content more frequently than others. Like earlier findings, the content revolves mainly around entertainment or informational videos, such as tutorials. Engaging by pressing 'like', commenting, discussing, or sharing is either rare or never happens. Respondents expressed that they perceive sharing and chatting as less available and that these are two of the main reasons for a decrease in usage during the pandemic. For most, the purpose for using YouTube is now more instrumental and active, meaning that there might be a shift from earlier usage which leaned slightly towards being ritualistic and passive. However, because social media offers a dynamic environment, these activity levels are not absolutes.

Changes in YouTube usage during the pandemic have had implications for cultivation. There may be a need to consider youth as both light and heavy users, as well as viewers, of YouTube and other social media. A minority of respondents still use YouTube habitually and can be considered heavy users *or* viewers, particularly concerning WOM, where they both try to

influence others and are influenced by others. Heavy viewers can also contribute to cultivation amongst light viewers, depending on the content they share through WOM. Engaging in WOM about YouTube content is not very common, which indicates that most adolescents are light users, and their activity levels are higher when they need to use the platform. However, these same light users may be heavy users *or* viewers of other social media, such as TikTok.

There are inconsistencies between adolescents' self-perceived media literacy knowledge and cognitive skills and their depictions of a media literate person. Different media literacy terms were completely unfamiliar, and there was no mention of the roles of corporations behind different media, for instance, Google's ownership of YouTube. This is considered a major finding from the research. Moreover, the lack of cognitive skills also clashes with how adolescents say they spend their time on YouTube. Instrumental usage is often associated with light users and more reflectiveness, which should lead to a higher critical sense. As discussions in the focus groups evolved and respondents were somewhat guided, there were signs of some degree of reflectiveness. Participants overall were honest about any lack of knowledge and skills they could think of and knew they had to get better. Others showed awareness about how and why certain content is displayed or recommended.

Regarding verifying information, sources, and news on YouTube, respondents struggled as well. Higher view counts and 'likes' are typical measurements of authenticity and trustworthiness, indicating no particular advancements in this area from 2020. Cultivation and public opinions, primarily targeted at youth, could thus be taking place through the interface of social media platforms as well and later be transferred to social reality. Another contributor to cultivation could be the spread of viral content due to the attention economy, which can lead to short-term impacts amongst a group that is in many ways easier to persuade. As a result, youth may have trouble being critical due to the abundance and spread of online content.

Furthermore, to some degree, adolescents view other social media as less credible than YouTube and its content. Again, there was no mention of ownership or any other arguable reason here for the platform's credibility, at least other than that they believe it is harder to produce and post fake content on YouTube. Answers were split on whether YouTubers could

be trusted. However, all respondents demonstrated some media literacy knowledge in mentioning the importance of cross-checking and fact-checking sources.

News consumption and fake news during the pandemic were two areas the adolescents had reflected somewhat on. However, mainly single incidents were depicted and not the more profound implications of false information. Moreover, similar to earlier findings, youth receive nearly all their news on social media, but online newspapers are still at the top. Although the amount of news received solely through various social media, including YouTube, has increased, youth's scepticism towards news on social media seems also to have increased due to the pandemic.

To fact-check whether news and information they find suspicious are actually credible, most adolescents tend to seek out Norwegian and foreign news outlets, online newspapers, other social media, or ask family members. Surprisingly, all respondents would somehow turn to YouTube during the fact-checking process, but did not mention any specific fact-checking services. Overall, there may have been a slight change in the importance of double-checking with credible news sources. Source criticism and fact-checking seem to be subjects of digital literacy that are a work in progress for adolescents, and need to be paid more attention to going forward. Especially regarding the considerable amount of time youth spend on social media and the ways they use it.

Advertising on YouTube was an exciting subject to discuss and an area of media literacy that seemed most familiar to adolescents. The amount of advertising aimed at youth on social media is still high, and respondents could identify several types of marketing efforts. Digital literacy skills aimed at picking up on scam attempts or recognizing persuasion techniques seem to be adequate amongst youth. Moreover, particularly InVideo ads seem to affect how devoted young people are towards using the platform. Subsequently, fewer gratifications can be 'ticked off' due to widespread and frequent marketing.

Generally speaking, young people still seem to say they do not really care about social media ads, which matches previous findings by the NMA. However, the more integrated and sometimes hidden advertising seems to be a lesser problem for some. YouTubers that show

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off places to eat, often accompanied by story-telling techniques, or influencers reviewing a product, can be perceived as more 'acceptable' ads watched by choice. Influencer marketing has increased immaculately during the pandemic. The important thing is that youth seem to be more aware of and able to decode particular media messages that are ads, instead of always assuming that influencers and YouTubers do this 'for fun' or because they like all the products themselves. This shows critical media literacy skills but also implies a willingness to accept ads to satisfy a specific need.

6. Conclusion

Conducting the research necessary to answer the main research question had multiple purposes. The most important one was to try and gain a better understanding of adolescents' cognitive abilities when dealing with the world of social media, looking particularly at YouTube. Another essential element was to critically evaluate existing data on media literacy knowledge and skills amongst youth, using teenagers' own thoughts and stories to do so. Moreover, studying whether specific impacts have occurred during an extraordinary situation such as the pandemic, where the digitally mediated world in many ways became all-consuming, was an opportunity that simply could not be overlooked.

A mixed-method approach was used to answer three sub-questions connected to RQ 1. In short, the two first aimed at exploring the period from 2018 to 2020, to highlight typical social media usage amongst adolescents and elaborate on their media literacy levels. Mapping out existing findings on these matters was performed using content analysis. Lastly, the third sub-question looked at how these two have related during the pandemic and shortly after. Collecting new empirical data involved conducting focus group interviews with adolescents aged 15-18 and using short surveys as part of the sessions.

These research methods were combined with a theoretical foundation, including approaches to uses and gratifications (UGT), cultivation, media and digital literacy, social media literacy, social media and YouTube, and marketing. A thorough analysis and discussion were then carried out based on findings and results from all the above-mentioned methods and theories. The answers to all three underlying questions were included in the summaries of the analysis

and discussion sub-chapters. Therefore, I will only answer the main research question (RQ 1) here: *To what extent have Norwegian adolescents' social media usage affected their media literacy in 2021/2022?*

In tandem, the total sum of findings indicates that from 2018 to the beginning of 2022, social media usage patterns and reasons for being on YouTube have gone through some changes. At the same time, both screen time and social media usage, in general, have soared during the pandemic. Despite this, digital literacy seems to have been brought to a standstill with only minor improvements, meaning it is neither significantly weakened nor strengthened. Same as prior to the pandemic, the main exception seems to be advertising. **Therefore, the conclusion for RQ 1 is that social media usage has had minimal impact on adolescents' media literacy during the pandemic and re-opening of Norway. Scepticism and critical senses are more activated due to increased screen time and (mis)information consumption. However, they have not necessarily been applied as much as they need to in all areas where media literacy matters most.** Norwegian adolescents need a better understanding of and clearer perspectives on risks and opportunities on social media. In order to become fully functioning co-citizens, they need to close the digital literacy divide both amongst themselves and the general population.

6.1 Future research

Some implications arose from both major and minor findings, which could be significant for subsequent research. First, it could be beneficial to explore native advertising on YouTube and other social media. It is a concept that should be considered a more significant part of digital literacy, mainly because people of all age groups have trouble distinguishing between organic and paid content at times. On social media, it may be more inconspicuous than in online newspapers. Second, cultivation analysis can be applied to various digital devices, such as laptops and tablets, to see whether one device impacts the processing of media messages over time differently than others. Third, this master thesis only looked at the correlation between two specific variables. Conducting a causal analysis, where several factors and variables are involved, could broaden the perspectives on this particular topic with more insights. Lastly, and perhaps most importantly, the focus groups in this thesis demonstrated a

lack of knowledge and reflections on media literacy overall, but particularly in terms of ownership. Therefore, this perspective should be a highly considered topic for a future thesis.

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Appendices

Appendix A - Literature Review: Search terms and strings

Search terms based on original problem statement:

*To what extent have **young people's** **media habits** in Norway affected their **media literacy** in 2021?*

An additional search that included synonyms for 'advertisement' was run due to its strong interrelatedness with media literacy and relevance for the thesis.

Search terms

Young people	Media	Habits	Literacy	Advertisement (additional)
Young people	Media	Habit*	Literac*	Advert*
Youth*	Social media	Behav*	Competen*	Ad*
Young	Social network*	Practice*	Skill*	commerc*
Young adult*	Online media	Custom*	Knowledge	promot*
Young girl*	Internet	Pattern*		sponsor*
Young boy*	Smartphone*	Use		
Adolescen*	YouTube	Usage		
Teen*	Digital	Tendenc*		
		Activit*		

Search strings

S1
("young people" OR youth* OR "young person*" OR "young adult*" OR "young girl*" OR "young boy*" OR adolescen* OR teen*)

S2
(media OR "social media" OR "social network*" OR "online media" OR internet OR smartphone* OR YouTube OR digital)

S3
(habit* OR behav* OR practice* OR custom* OR pattern* OR use OR usage OR tendenc* OR activit*)

S4
(literac* OR competen* OR skill* OR knowledge*)

S5 *(Additional)*
(advert* OR ad* OR commerc* OR promot* OR sponsor*)

1st search

Search for all:

(("young people" OR youth* OR "young person*" OR "young adult*" OR "young girl*" OR "young boy*" OR adolescen* OR teen*) N3 (media OR "social media" OR "social network*" OR "online media" OR internet OR smartphone* OR YouTube OR digital) N3 (habit* OR behav* OR practice* OR custom* OR pattern* OR use OR usage OR tendenc* OR activit*) N3 (literac* OR competen* OR skill* OR knowledge*))

Search for 'habits'

(young people OR youth* OR young person* OR young adult* OR young girl* OR young boy* OR adolescen* OR teen*) N3 (media OR social media OR social network* OR online media OR internet OR smartphone* OR YouTube) N1 (habit* OR behav* OR practice* OR custom* OR pattern* OR use OR usage OR tendenc* OR activit*)

Search for 'literacy'

(young people OR youth* OR young person* OR young adult* OR young girl* OR young boy* OR adolescen* OR teen*) N3 (media OR social media OR social network* OR online media OR internet OR smartphone* OR YouTube OR digital) N1 (literac* OR competenc* OR skill* OR knowledge*)

2nd search (additional w/ advertisement)

Search for all:

(("young people" OR youth* OR "young person*" OR "young adult*" OR "young girl*" OR "young boy*" OR adolescen* OR teen*) N3 (media OR "social media" OR "social network*" OR "online media" OR internet OR smartphone* OR YouTube OR digital) N3 (habit* OR behav* OR practice* OR custom* OR pattern* OR use OR usage OR tendenc* OR activit*) N3 (literac* OR competen* OR skill* OR knowledge*) N3 (advert* OR ad* OR commerc* OR promot* OR sponsor*))

Search for 'young people' + 'media' + 'advertisement'

((young people OR youth* OR young person* OR young adult* OR young girl* OR young boy* OR adolescen* OR teen*) N3 (media OR social media OR social network* OR online media OR internet OR smartphone* OR YouTube) N3 (advert* OR ad* OR commerc* OR promot* OR sponsor*))

Appendix B - Academic Search Ultimate Search History

1st search

SEARCH #	SEARCH TERMS	SEARCH OPTIONS	RESULTS
S1	("young people" OR youth* OR "young person*" OR "young adult*" OR "young girl*" OR "young boy*" OR adolescen* OR teen*)	Limiters - Scholarly (Peer Reviewed) Journals; Published Date: 20150101-20211231; Language: English Search modes - Boolean/Phrase	208,662
S2	(media OR "social media" OR "social network*" OR "online media" OR internet OR smartphone* OR YouTube OR digital) N1 (habit* OR behav* OR practice* OR custom* OR pattern* OR use OR usage OR tendenc* OR activit*)	Limiters - Scholarly (Peer Reviewed) Journals; Published Date: 20150101-20211231; Language: English Search modes - Boolean/Phrase	18,091
S3	(media OR "social media" OR "social network*" OR "online media" OR internet OR smartphone* OR YouTube OR digital) N1 (literac* OR competen* OR skill* OR knowledge*)	Limiters - Scholarly (Peer Reviewed) Journals; Published Date: 20150101-20211231; Language: English Search modes - Boolean/Phrase	4,377
S4	S1 AND S2	Limiters - Scholarly (Peer Reviewed) Journals; Published Date: 20150101-20211231; Language: English Search modes - Boolean/Phrase	3,048
S5	S1 AND S3	Limiters - Scholarly (Peer Reviewed) Journals; Published 150Date: 20150101-20211231; Language: English Search modes - Boolean/Phrase	749
S6	S1 AND S2 AND S3	Limiters - Scholarly (Peer Reviewed)	150

SEARCH #	SEARCH TERMS	SEARCH OPTIONS	RESULTS
S7	("young people" OR youth* OR "young person*" OR "young adult*" OR "young girl*" OR "young boy*" OR adolescen* OR teen*) N3 (media OR "social media" OR "social network*" OR "online media" OR internet OR smartphone* OR YouTube OR digital) N3 (habit* OR behav* OR practice* OR custom* OR pattern* OR use OR usage OR tendenc* OR activit*) N3 (literac* OR competen* OR skill* OR knowledge*)	Limiters - Scholarly (Peer Reviewed) Journals; Published Date: 20150101-20211231; Language: English Search modes - Boolean/Phrase	21

2ⁿᵈ search

SEARCH #	SEARCH TERMS	SEARCH OPTIONS	RESULTS
S1	("young people" OR youth* OR "young person*" OR "young adult*" OR "young girl*" OR "young boy*" OR adolescen* OR teen*)	Limiters - Scholarly (Peer Reviewed) Journals; Published Date: 20150101-20211231; Language: English Search modes - Boolean/Phrase	211,806
S2	(media OR "social media" OR "social network*" OR "online media" OR internet OR smartphone* OR YouTube OR digital)	Limiters - Scholarly (Peer Reviewed) Journals; Published Date: 20150101-20211231; Language: English Search modes - Boolean/Phrase	450,017
S3	(habit* OR behav* OR practice* OR custom* OR pattern* OR use OR usage OR tendenc* OR activit*)	Limiters - Scholarly (Peer Reviewed) Journals; Published Date: 20150101-20211231; Language: English Search modes - Boolean/Phrase	3,712,613

S4	(literac* OR competen* OR skill* OR knowledge*)	Limiters - Scholarly (Peer Reviewed) Journals; Published Date: 20150101-20211231; Language: English Search modes - Boolean/Phrase	584,624
S5	(advert* OR ad* OR commerc* OR promot* OR sponsor*)	Limiters - Scholarly (Peer Reviewed) Journals; Published Date: 20150101-20211231; Language: English Search modes - Boolean/Phrase	4,710,311
S6	S1 AND S2 AND S3 AND S4 AND S5	Limiters - Scholarly (Peer Reviewed) Journals; Published Date: 20150101-20211231; Language: English Search modes - Boolean/Phrase	2,721
S7	S1 AND S2 AND S5	Limiters - Scholarly (Peer Reviewed) Journals; Published Date: 20150101-20211231; Language: English Search modes - Boolean/Phrase	14,997
S8	(("young people" OR youth* OR "young person*" OR "young adult*" OR "young girl*" OR "young boy*" OR adolescen* OR teen*) N3 (media OR "social media" OR "social network*" OR "online media" OR internet OR smartphone* OR YouTube OR digital) N3 (habit* OR behav* OR practice* OR custom* OR pattern* OR use OR usage OR tendenc* OR activit*) N3 (literac* OR competen* OR skill* OR knowledge*) N3 (advert* OR ad* OR commerc* OR promot* OR sponsor*))	Limiters - Scholarly (Peer Reviewed) Journals; Published Date: 20150101-20211231; Language: English Search modes - Boolean/Phrase	14
S9	((young people OR youth* OR young person* OR young adult* OR young girl* OR young boy* OR adolescen* OR teen*) N3 (media OR social media OR social network* OR online media OR internet OR smartphone* OR YouTube) N3 (advert* OR ad* OR commerc* OR promot* OR sponsor*))	Limiters - Scholarly (Peer Reviewed) Journals; Published Date: 20150101-20211231; Language: English Search modes - Boolean/Phrase	1,516

S10	S1 AND S5	Limiters - Scholarly (Peer Reviewed) Journals; Published Date: 20150101-20211231; Language: English Search modes - Boolean/Phrase	192,391
S11	(("young people" OR youth* OR "young person*" OR "young adult*" OR "young girl*" OR "young boy*" OR adolescen* OR teen*) N3 (advert* OR ad* OR commerc* OR promot* OR sponsor*))	Limiters - Scholarly (Peer Reviewed) Journals; Published Date: 20150101-20211231; Language: English Search modes - Boolean/Phrase	72,922
S12	((young people OR youth* OR young person* OR young adult* OR young girl* OR young boy* OR adolescen* OR teen*) N3 (media OR social media OR social network* OR online media OR internet OR smartphone* OR YouTube) N1 (advert* OR ad* OR commerc* OR promot* OR sponsor*))	Limiters - Scholarly (Peer Reviewed) Journals; Published Date: 20150101-20211231; Language: English Search modes - Boolean/Phrase	1,486

USAGE/HABITS			
MEDIA USAGE AND HABITS (9-18y)	2018	2020	Difference in p.p.
Access to/Own a phone (15-18y)	99 %	99 %	0
Using cellphone / smartphone the day prior (9-18y)	89 %	N/A	N/A
Time spent using cellphone / smartphone for 2 hours or more (9-18y)	49 %	N/A	N/A
Think they spend too much time on their phone (9-18y)	45 %	N/A	N/A
Use Social Media (9-18y)	89 %	90 %	1
Does not use social media (9-18y)	11 %	1 %	-10
Uses social media for 2 hours or more (15-16y)	45 %	72 %	27
Uses social media for 2 hours or more (17-18y)	45 %	73 %	28
TOTAL AVERAGE: Uses social media for 2 hours or more (15-18y)	45 %	73 %	28
Time spent on YouTube	2018	2020	Difference In p.p.
Watched Youtube 1 day prior (9-18y)	77 %	N/A	N/A
Watched for 2 hours or more (15-16y)	23 %	N/A	N/A
Watched for 2 hours or more (17-18y)	22 %	N/A	N/A
TOTAL AVERAGE: Youtube for 2 hours or more (15-18y)	23 %	N/A	N/A
Teenagers and YouTube (9-18y)	2018	2020	Difference in p.p.
Uses YouTube (15-16y)	N/A	97 %	N/A
Uses YouTube (17-18y)	N/A	95 %	N/A
TOTAL AVERAGE: Uses YouTube (15-18y)	N/A	96 %	N/A
Own user (9-18y)	N/A	71 %	N/A

Only allowed to watch (by parents) (9-18y)	N/A	11 %	N/A
Does not have a user (9-18y)	N/A	10 %	N/A
Shares user with someone in the family (9-18y)	N/A	5 %	N/A
Open user (15-16y)	N/A	34 %	N/A
Open user (17-18y)	N/A	44 %	N/A
TOTAL AVERAGE: Open user (15-18y)	N/A	39 %	N/A
Private user (15-16y)	N/A	42 %	N/A
Private user (17-18y)	N/A	42 %	N/A
TOTAL AVERAGE: Private user (15-18y)	N/A	42 %	N/A
Both open and private user (9-18y)	N/A	4 %	N/A
Do not know (9-18y)	N/A	16 %	N/A
Video genre: Music (15-16y)	N/A	61 %	N/A
Video genre: Music (17-18y)	N/A	69 %	N/A
TOTAL AVERAGE: Music (15-18y)	N/A	65 %	N/A
Video Genre: Gaming (15-16y)	N/A	51 %	N/A
Video Genre: Gaming (17-18y)	N/A	57 %	N/A
TOTAL AVERAGE: Gaming (15-18y)	N/A	54 %	N/A
Video genre: Funny / Pranks (15-16y)	N/A	57 %	N/A
Video genre: Funny / Pranks (17-18y)	N/A	43 %	N/A
TOTAL AVERAGE: Video genre: Funny videos / pranks (15-18y)	N/A	50 %	N/A
Read or watch news on YouTube (15-16y)	N/A	38 %	N/A
Read or watch news on YouTube (17-18y)	N/A	37 %	N/A
TOTAL AVERAGE: Read or watch news on YouTube (15-18y)	N/A	38 %	N/A
Norwegian language on Youtube (15-16y)	N/A	12 %	N/A
Norwegian language on Youtube (17-18y)	N/A	7 %	N/A
TOTAL AVERAGE: Norwegian language (15-18y)	N/A	10 %	N/A
English language on YouTube (15-16y)	N/A	69 %	N/A
English language on YouTube (17-18y)	N/A	78 %	N/A

TOTAL AVERAGE: English language (15-18y)	N/A	74 %	N/A

SOURCE CRITICISM			
SOURCE CRITICISM - FIND AND UNDERSTAND INFORMATION (15-18y)	2018	2020	Difference In p.p.
Slightly or very good at finding info online (15-16y)	90 %	N/A	N/A
Slightly or very good at finding info online (17-18y)	94 %	N/A	N/A
TOTAL AVERAGE: Slightly or very good at finding info online (15-18y)	92 %	N/A	N/A
Slightly or very good at understanding info they find online (15-16y)	87 %	N/A	N/A
Slightly or very good at understanding info they find online (17-18y)	92 %	N/A	N/A
TOTAL AVERAGE: Slightly or very good at understanding info they find online (15-18y)	90 %	N/A	N/A
Slightly or very good at understanding if someone is fooling them online (15-16y)	75 %	N/A	N/A
Slightly or very good at understanding if someone is fooling them online (17-18y)	84 %	N/A	N/A
TOTAL AVERAGE: Slightly or very good at understanding if someone is fooling them online (15-18y)	80 %	N/A	N/A
Slightly or very good at understanding whether info is false / true (15-16y)	87 %	N/A	N/A
Slightly or very good at understanding whether info is false / true (17-18y)	92 %	N/A	N/A
TOTAL AVERAGE: Slightly or very good at understanding whether info is false / true (15-18y)	90 %	N/A	N/A
Fake news/information - Measures taken (15-18y)	2018	2020	Difference in p.p.
Web search (15-16y)	39 %	30 %	-9
Web search (17-18y)	49 %	32 %	-17
TOTAL AVERAGE: Web search (15-18y)	44 %	31 %	-13
Well-known news sources (15-16y)	30 %	19 %	-11

Well-known news sources (17-18y)	42 %	27 %	-15
TOTAL AVERAGE: Well-known sources (15-18y)	36 %	23 %	-13
Ask adults (15-16y)	28 %	18 %	-10
Ask adults (17-18y)	21 %	11 %	-10
TOTAL AVERAGE: Ask adults (15-18y)	25 %	15 %	-10
Ask friends (15-16y)	21 %	18 %	-3
Ask friends (17-18y)	22 %	11 %	-11
TOTAL AVERAGE: Ask friends (15-18y)	22 %	15 %	-7
Fact checking services (15-16y)	18 %	4 %	-14
Fact checking services (17-18y)	26 %	10 %	-16
TOTAL AVERAGE: Fact checking services (15-18y)	22 %	7 %	-15
Writing an opinion in the news comments or on SoMe (15-16y)	6 %	3 %	-3
Writing an opinion in the news comments or on SoMe (17-18y)	5 %	4 %	-1
TOTAL AVERAGE: Writing an opinion in the news comments or on SoMe (15-18y)	6 %	4 %	-2
Nothing (15-16y)	36 %	59 %	23
Nothing (17-18y)	32 %	60 %	28
TOTAL AVERAGE: Nothing (15-18y)	34 %	60 %	26
Critical media literacy amongst youth (16-20y) - **2019**	Youth	Gen. pop.	Difference in p.p.
Uses Youtube	62 %	22 %	40
High critical media literacy and understanding	21 %	43 %	-22
Average, digitally oriented critical media understanding	55 %	28 %	27
Average, analog oriented critical media understanding	2 %	20 %	-18
Low critical media literacy and understanding	21 %	9 %	12
Difficult to follow news	60 %	43 %	17
Uses fewer sources to understand a news story	65 %	79 %	-14
Online newspaper as the most important news source	65 %	64 %	1

Social media as the most important news source	51 %	26 %	25
Reveal fake news	62 %	56 %	6
Check if a news story is true using other reliable sources	70 %	62 %	8
Have not experienced any adverse events online	53 %	66 %	-13
Unwanted sexual messages	16 %	6 %	10

MARKETING & ADVERTISING			
ADVERTISING (9-18y)	2018	2020	Difference in p.p.
Receives a lot of ads on social media (15-16y)	N/A	72 %	N/A
Receives a lot of ads on social media (17-18y)	N/A	83 %	N/A
TOTAL AVERAGE: Receives a lot of ads on social media (15-18y)	N/A	78 %	N/A
Cosmetic treatments (15-16y)	N/A	35 %	N/A
Cosmetic treatment (17-18y)	N/A	47 %	N/A
TOTAL AVERAGE: Cosmetic treatment (15-18y)	N/A	41 %	N/A
Weight loss products (15-16y)	N/A	60 %	N/A
Weight loss products (17-18y)	N/A	68 %	N/A
TOTAL AVERAGE: Weight loss products (15-18y)	N/A	64 %	N/A
Muscle enhancing products (15-16y)	N/A	49 %	N/A
Muscle enhancing products (17-18y)	N/A	57 %	N/A
TOTAL AVERAGE: Muscle enhancing products (15-18y)	N/A	53 %	N/A
Sees the difference in advertising on social media (9-18y)	N/A	76-86 %	N/A
Does not see the difference in advertising on social media (9-18y)	N/A	20-29 %	N/A
Body-related advertising (13-18 y)	2018	2020	Difference in p.p.
Do not care	N/A	55 %	N/A
Do not like	N/A	31 %	N/A

Like	N/A	7 %	N/A
Think it is ok	N/A	6 %	N/A
Muscle enhancing advertising (9-18 y)	2018	2020	Difference in p.p.
Do not care	N/A	62 %	N/A
Do not like	N/A	25 %	N/A
Like	N/A	7 %	N/A
Think it is ok	N/A	5 %	N/A
Weight loss advertising (9-18 y)	2018	2020	Difference in p.p.
Do not care	N/A	58 %	N/A
Do not like	N/A	30 %	N/A
Like	N/A	8 %	N/A
Think it is ok	N/A	5 %	N/A
BLOGGERS/YOUTUBERS THAT PROMOTE PRODUCTS (15-18 y)	2018	2020	Difference in p.p.
Children and young people who do not care (15-16y)	57 %	N/A	N/A
Children and young people who do not care (17-18y)	54 %	N/A	N/A
TOTAL AVERAGE: Children and young people who do not care (15-18y)	56 %	N/A	N/A
Believe that influencers like the products themselves (15-16y)	21 %	N/A	N/A
Believe that influencers like the products themselves (17-18y)	19 %	N/A	N/A
TOTAL AVERAGE: Believe that influencers like the products themselves (15-18y)	20 %	N/A	N/A
Not sure if influencers can be trusted (15-16y)	24 %	N/A	N/A
Not sure if influencers can be trusted (17-18y)	28 %	N/A	N/A

TOTAL AVERAGE: Not sure if influencers can be trusted (15-18y)	26 %	N/A	N/A
Believe that influencers do it for money (15-16y)	50 %	N/A	N/A
Believe that influencers do it for money (17-18y)	55 %	N/A	N/A
TOTAL AVERAGE: Believe that influencers do it for money (15-18y)	53 %	N/A	N/A

Appendix D - Focus Group Interview Guide

INTERVJUGUIDE

Introduksjon
Snacks, frukt og drikke er allerede delt ut og fungerer som motivasjon eller belønning for å delta. Først presenterer jeg meg selv kort, forteller hvor jeg studerer og hvilket studie jeg går, samt litt om inspirasjonen for oppgaven. Jeg forteller deretter informantene om prosjektet og mål for dagen ved bruk av en Power-Point presentasjon, før jeg går over til å stille spørsmål og starte fokusgruppeintervjuet ved bruk av denne intervjuguiden. Respondentene får deretter et kort spørreskjema de skal fylle ut før gruppeintervjuet avsluttes.

- Praktisk informasjon:
  - Først og fremst, tusen takk for at dere ville være med i dag – det setter jeg stor pris på!

  - I dag skal vi bare late som at vi sitter i kantina eller et annet sted og tar en prat. Jeg stiller spørsmål, oppfølgingsspørsmål og tar notater underveis. Det er lavterskel for å si det man ønsker høyt. Husk at deter absolutt ingen fasitsvar, dette handler kun om deres ærlige tankerog fortellinger rundt dagens tema – det er det jeg er interessert i. Det skal altså være en *fri* samtale.

  - Også er det supert om en og en person snakker når dere skal svare, slik at opptakeren klarer å fange opp alt.

  - Ingenting som sies i dag har noen tilknytning til verken læreren deres, et spesifikt fag eller karakterer.

  - Det vil bli tatt opptak av gruppeintervjuet og det er kun jeg som kommer til å høre på det i etterkant. Det vil også slettes senere

  - Anonymitet: Verken navn, skole eller klasse vil bli gjenkjent i selve oppgaven. Dere blir omtalt som respondenter. Også er det lov å trekke seg når som helst selvfølgelig!

  - Før jeg går videre så kan dere få skrive under på samtykkeskjema her.

- Plan for timen - todelt:
  - DEL 1: Vi skal først bruke ca. 20-30 minutter der dere svarer på noenspørsmål. Fordi dette er et gruppeintervju vil jeg selvfølgelig at så mange som mulig av dere blir med i samtalen. Bare tenk at vi skal diskutere et tema sammen.
  - DEL 2: Deretter skal vi bruke ca. 5 minutter til å gjennomføre et spørreskjema på nett. (Har alle PC forresten, hvis ikke har jeg med på papir her).

- Tema for dagen:
  - *Mediebruk* – nærmere bestemt bruk av YouTube i løpet av 2021. Årethar vært preget av både nedstenging over lang tid som følge av koronapandemien, men også gjenåpning. Det har altså vært økt brukav digitale medier over en noe lengre periode. Har dette hatt en påvirkning på tidsbruk, bruksmønstre og kritisk medieforståelse av innhold på YouTube?

- *Mediekompetanse* – dette er snakk om blant annet kunnskap og ferdigheter, i møte med risiko og muligheter på nett. Med andre order det snakk om kritiske ferdigheter – om man klarer å fange opp fake news eller å vite at det man ser i sosiale medier ofte ikke er ekteosv. I dag skal vi altså diskutere hvordan dette kan utspille seg på YouTube.

- I tillegg vil kildekritikk knyttet til reklame være en del av temaet i dag, nettopp fordi det er mye reklame på YouTube – ikke alltid like lett å se hva som er ekte/fake.

<u>Har dere noen spørsmål før vi setter i gang?</u>

1. Spørsmålsrunde (U&G) – Skal snakke om bruk av YouTube

- Bruker dere YouTube?

- Hva er det dere liker best ved YouTube eller bruker det mest til?

  - Hvis de sitter fast:
    - Er det valgfriheten rundt innhold?
    - Nyheter
    - Kunnskap (skolerelatert)
    - Underholdning (musikk, gaming, morsomme klipp, tidsfordriv, youtubere eller influensere)
    - YouTube Shorts (de som ligner på TikTok videoer og InstagramReels)
    - Trening
    - Matlaging

- Leser dere eller skriver kommentarer, trykker på likes og dislikes osv.?

- Er det noen YouTube-kanaler dere liker å følge mer enn andre? Og hva ergrunnen til det?

- Pleier dere å like, lese kommentarer og kommentere osv. på kanalene dere følger *mer* enn annet innhold på YouTube. Og eventuelt hvorfor?

  - Hvis de sitter fast:
    - Er det noe f.eks. ved en musikkvideo til en artist eller en youtuber-video som kan skille seg ut og som gjør at dere ønsker å uttrykke noe?

2. Spørsmålsrunde (Cultivation) – Snakke om konsekvenser av bruk

- Føler dere at dere er avhengige av YouTube for å finne informasjon?

  - Hvis de sitter fast:
    - Altså, bruker dere YouTube som en søkemotor for å finne uthvordan dere f.eks. løser et problem med mobilen?

- Skjer det ofte at dere ser på youtube-videoer som en venn eller kompis sender dere, eller finner dere frem til Youtube-videoer selv vanligvis?

➢ Hvor vanlig er det å snakke sammen om ting dere ser eller hører fraYoutubere eller Youtubevideoer med venner?

3. Spørsmålsrunde (Mediekompetanse, YouTube, kildekritikk og reklame)

➢ Hvor godt kjent er dere med begrepet *mediekompetanse*, f.eks. fra skolen eller etter å ha lest om det på nett?

➢ Hvis dere skulle beskrevet en person som behersker sosiale medier, hva ville dere sagt at personen er god til? Gjerne kom med konkrete eksempler
   o (Hvis de blir usikre eller snakker om tekniske aspekter: Tenk på stikkordene som ble nevnt tidligere - kunnskap, ferdigheter, risiko, muligheter, reklame)

➢ Tror dere at det å være kritisk til innhold i sosiale medier har vært enda viktigere i løpet av nedstengingen? Diskuter og begrunn hvorfor.

➢ Helt generelt, har dere kommet over innhold eller informasjon på YouTubedere har vært skeptiske til? Med det mener jeg om dere har vært kritiske til det som blir sagt eller vist. Kom gjerne med eksempler.

➢ Oppfatter dere innholdet på YouTube som mer troverdig enn det som legges ut på andre sosiale medieplattformer eller ikke? (f.eks. TikTok,Instagram, Facebook, Snapchat osv.) Begrunn hvorfor/hvorfor ikke.

➢ Hva mener dere er reklame på YouTube?

➢ (Hvis det ikke nevnes som svar på forrige spørsmål) Tror dere at videoersom 'tutorials', 'guides', reisevideoer, 'unboxing' av produkter eller YouTubere som f.eks. snakker om klær osv, er reklame eller ikke?

Avslutning

Tusen takk for at dere bidro!

Helt til slutt, er det noen av dere som ønsker å tilføye noe før vi starter med spørreskjemaet?

Har du egen brukerprofil på YouTube? *

(Profil som brukes til å se videoer, kommentere, like osv.)

☐ Ja | ☐ Nei

Har du en brukerprofil som du deler med noen andre? *

☐ Ja | ☐ Nei

Har du egen YouTube-kanal der du legger ut videoer? *

(Kanal som brukes til å laste opp og dele videoer.)

☐ Ja | ☐ Nei

Har du en YouTube-kanal som du driver sammen med noen? *

☐ Ja | ☐ Nei

Abonnerer du på en eller flere kanaler på YouTube? *

(F.eks. YouTubere, influensere, artister, gamere eller andre)

☐ Ja, mange | ☐ Ja, noen | ☐ Nei, ingen | ☐ Vet ikke

Når begynte du å bruke Youtube (omtrentlig)? *

(Velg ett alternativ)

☐ 0-2 år siden   ☐ 2-4 år siden

☐ 4-6 år siden   ☐ Mer enn 6 år siden

☐ Vet ikke/Husker ikke

Omtrent hvor mange dager i uken bruker du YouTube? *

(Velg ett alternativ)

☐ 0 | ☐ 1 | ☐ 2 | ☐ 3 | ☐ 4 | ☐ 5 | ☐ 6 | ☐ 7

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Vil du si at du over tid får eller har fått mer tillit til YouTubere du følger? *

(Tillit til det som blir sagt eller vist, f.eks. meninger, produkter osv.)

☐ Vet ikke | ☐ Helt uenig | ☐ Litt uenig | ☐ Nøytral | ☐ Litt enig | ☐ Helt enig

Har din bruk av YouTube over tid styrket din mediekompetanse i forhold til:

a) Medieferdigheter (Hensiktsmessig bruk av et medium til å løse oppgaver, finne informasjon osv.) *

☐ Vet ikke | ☐ Helt uenig | ☐ Litt uenig | ☐ Nøytral | ☐ Litt enig | ☐ Helt enig

b) Evne til å vurdere risiko og muligheter på nett (Kritisk vurdering ved bruk av mediet når man legger ut eller samler inn informasjon) *

☐ Vet ikke | ☐ Helt uenig | ☐ Litt uenig | ☐ Nøytral | ☐ Litt enig | ☐ Helt enig

c) Evne til å gjenkjenne reklame eller promotert innhold *

☐ Vet ikke | ☐ Helt uenig | ☐ Litt uenig | ☐ Nøytral | ☐ Litt enig | ☐ Helt enig

Hvilket nivå mener du selv at din mediekompetanse ligger på i dag? *

(Kritisk medieforståelse av innhold i sosiale medier)

☐ Vet ikke/Verken eller

☐ Veldig dårlig

☐ Dårlig

☐ Litt god

☐ God

☐ Veldig god

Appendix F - NSD Project Approval

NSD NORSK SENTER FOR FORSKNINGSDATA

Vurdering

Referansenummer

593721

Prosjekttittel

Ungdom og YouTube

Behandlingsansvarlig institusjon

OsloMet – storbyuniversitetet / Fakultet for samfunnsvitenskap / Institutt for journalistikk og mediefag

Prosjektansvarlig (vitenskapelig ansatt/veileder eller stipendiat)

Robert Wallace Vaagan, ▬▬▬▬▬▬▬▬▬▬

Type prosjekt

Studentprosjekt, masterstudium

Kontaktinformasjon, student

Daniela Dahle, ▬▬▬▬▬▬▬▬▬▬

Prosjektperiode

03.01.2022 - 30.06.2022

Vurdering (1)

12.12.2021 - Vurdert

Det er vår vurdering at behandlingen av personopplysninger i prosjektet vil være i samsvar med personvernlovgivningen så fremt den gjennomføres i tråd med det som er dokumentert i meldeskjemaet med vedlegg den 12.12.2021, samt i meldingsdialogen mellom innmelder og NSD. Behandlingen kan starte.

TYPE OPPLYSNINGER OG VARIGHET
Prosjektet vil behandle alminnelige kategorier av personopplysninger frem til 30.06.2022

LOVLIG GRUNNLAG
Prosjektet vil innhente samtykke fra de registrerte til behandlingen av personopplysninger. Vår vurdering er at prosjektet legger opp til et samtykke i samsvar med kravene i art. 4 og 7, ved at det er en frivillig, spesifikk, informert og utvetydig bekreftelse som kan dokumenteres, og som den registrerte kan trekke tilbake.

Lovlig grunnlag for behandlingen vil dermed være den registrertes samtykke, jf. personvernforordningen art. 6 nr. 1 bokstav a.

PERSONVERNPRINSIPPER

NSD vurderer at den planlagte behandlingen av personopplysninger vil følge prinsippene i personvernforordningen om:

· lovlighet, rettferdighet og åpenhet (art. 5.1 a), ved at de registrerte får tilfredsstillende informasjon om og samtykker til behandlingen
· formålsbegrensning (art. 5.1 b), ved at personopplysninger samles inn for spesifikke, uttrykkelig angitte og berettigede formål, og ikke behandles til nye, uforenlige formål
· dataminimering (art. 5.1 c), ved at det kun behandles opplysninger som er adekvate, relevante og nødvendige for formålet med prosjektet
· lagringsbegrensning (art. 5.1 e), ved at personopplysningene ikke lagres lengre enn nødvendig for å oppfylle formålet

DE REGISTRERTES RETTIGHETER

Så lenge de registrerte kan identifiseres i datamaterialet vil de ha følgende rettigheter: innsyn (art. 15), retting (art. 16), sletting (art. 17), begrensning (art. 18), og dataportabilitet (art. 20).

NSD vurderer at informasjonen om behandlingen som de registrerte vil motta oppfyller lovens krav til form og innhold, jf. art. 12.1 og art. 13.
Vi minner om at hvis en registrert tar kontakt om sine rettigheter, har behandlingsansvarlig institusjon plikt til å svare innen en måned.

FØLG DIN INSTITUSJONS RETNINGSLINJER

NSD legger til grunn at behandlingen oppfyller kravene i personvernforordningen om riktighet (art. 5.1 d), integritet og konfidensialitet (art. 5.1. f) og sikkerhet (art. 32).
Ved bruk av databehandler (spørreskjemaleverandør, skylagring eller videosamtale) må behandlingen oppfylle kravene til bruk av databehandler, jf. art 28 og 29. Bruk leverandører som din institusjon har avtale med.
For å forsikre dere om at kravene oppfylles, må dere følge interne retningslinjer og/eller rådføre dere med behandlingsansvarlig institusjon.

MELD VESENTLIGE ENDRINGER

Dersom det skjer vesentlige endringer i behandlingen av personopplysninger, kan det være nødvendig å melde dette til NSD ved å oppdatere meldeskjemaet. Før du melder inn en endring, oppfordrer vi deg til å lese om hvilke type endringer det er nødvendig å melde: https://www.nsd.no/personverntjenester/fylle-ut-meldeskjema-for-personopplysninger/melde-endringer-i-meldeskjema
Du må vente på svar fra NSD før endringen gjennomføres.

OPPFØLGING AV PROSJEKTET

NSD vil følge opp ved planlagt avslutning for å avklare om behandlingen av personopplysningene er avsluttet.

Lykke til med prosjektet!

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Vil du delta i forskningsprosjektet:

"Ungdom og YouTube"

Hei! 😊 Har du lyst til å være med i et forskningsprosjekt? Mitt navn er Daniela Dahle og jeg er masterstudent ved OsloMet. Jeg ønsker å finne ut om unges bruk av YouTube i 2021 har bidratt til å styrke eller svekke deres mediekompetanse. Dette skrivet er en invitasjon til å delta, der jeg gir deg informasjon om målene for prosjektet og hva deltakelse vil innebære for deg. Jeg håper at akkurat du vil være med!

Bakgrunn og Formål
Undersøkelsen handler om bruken av YouTube og hvorvidt det har en påvirkning på mediekunnskapen til ungdom. Har nedstengingen som følge av korona, med økt bruk av sosiale medier bidratt til at unges mediekompetanse og -ferdigheter nå har forbedret seg, blitt verre eller er det ingen forskjell fra tidligere? Forskningsprosjektet utføres som en masteroppgave skrevet på engelsk, men forskningen vil foregå på norsk. Problemstillingen og forskningsspørsmålene for prosjektet tar for seg unges typiske medievaner og nivået av mediekompetanse, og ser til slutt på forholdet mellom disse. Fordi reklame er en stor del av mediekompetansefeltet og et omdiskutert tema, vil dette også bli trukket frem i prosjektet.

Prosjektets foreløpige problemstilling er:
- *To what extent have Norwegian adolescents' social media usage affected their media literacy in 2021?*

Prosjektets foreløpige forskningsspørsmål er:
- *What is the typical social media usage of 15-18-year olds in Norway?*
- *To what extent are 15-18-year-olds in Norway media literate?*
- *What is the relation between social media usage and media literacy amongst Norwegian 15-18-year-olds in 2021?*

Hvem er ansvarlig for forskningsprosjektet?
Ansvarlig for prosjektet er OsloMet.

Hvorfor får du spørsmål om å delta?
Du får spørsmål om å delta i forskningsprosjektet fordi du faller innenfor en aktuell aldersgruppe for undersøkelsen (15-18 år) i forhold til bruk av sosiale medier. Det kan eventuelt bli aktuelt å inkludere andre skoler og elever i undersøkelsen.

Hvis du har lyst til å være med i forskningsprosjektet, må det krysses av for dette på siste ark og skrives under til slutt i dette brevet. Hvis du ikke vil være med gjør du ingenting.

Hva innebærer det for deg å delta?
Forskningen vil være todelt og bestå av
- *Presentasjon av prosjektet + Fokusgruppeintervju* (ca. 30 min)
- *Spørreskjema* (ca. 5 min).

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Noen av spørsmålene som stilles i fokusgruppeintervjuet er:
- Tror dere at det å være kritisk til innhold på sosiale medier har vært enda viktigere i løpet av nedstengingen med økt bruk av digitale medier? Diskuter og begrunn hvorfor.
- Oppfatter dere innholdet på YouTube som mer troverdig enn det som legges ut på andre sosiale medieplattformer eller ikke? (f.eks. TikTok, Snapchat, Instagram, Facebook). Begrunn hvorfor/hvorfor ikke?

Noen av spørsmålene som stilles i spørreskjemaet er:
- Har du egen brukerprofil på YouTube?
- Når begynte du å bruke YouTube?

Det er frivillig å delta

Det er frivillig å delta i prosjektet. Det er kun du som kan velge å samtykke eller ikke. Hvis du velger å delta, kan du når som helst trekke samtykket tilbake uten å oppgi noen grunn – det er lov å ombestemme seg. Alle dine personopplysninger vil da bli slettet. Det vil ikke ha noen negative konsekvenser for deg hvis du ikke vil delta eller senere velger å trekke deg.

Ditt personvern – hvordan vi oppbevarer og bruker dine opplysninger

Vi vil bare bruke opplysningene om deg til formålene vi har fortalt om i dette skrivet.
Vi behandler opplysningene konfidensielt og i samsvar med personvernregelverket.
- Utover masterstudenten, vil veileder tilknyttet behandlingsansvarlig institusjon ha tilgang til dine opplysninger. Det er allikevel kun masterstudent som skal oppbevare og behandle disse.
- Du blir *ikke* bedt om å oppgi navn i noen deler av prosjektet og du blir kun referert til som "respondent" i masteroppgaven. Opplysninger fra fokusgruppeintervjuet vil bli samlet inn via lydopptak og eventuelt notater, og deretter lagret elektronisk via en kryptert app. Svarene fra spørreskjemaet vil være anonyme og blir lagret elektronisk.

Hva skjer med opplysningene dine når vi avslutter forskningsprosjektet?

Opplysningene anonymiseres når prosjektet avsluttes/oppgaven er godkjent, noe som etter planen er juni 2022. Etter prosjektslutt vil opptak av gruppeintervjuet og svar fra spørreskjemaet bli slettet.

Hva gir oss rett til å behandle personopplysninger om deg?

Vi behandler opplysninger om deg basert på ditt samtykke i dette brevet.

På oppdrag fra OsloMet har NSD – Norsk senter for forskningsdata AS vurdert at behandlingen av personopplysninger i dette prosjektet er i samsvar med personvernregelverket.

Dine rettigheter

Så lenge du kan identifiseres i datamaterialet, har du rett til:
- innsyn i hvilke opplysninger vi behandler om deg, og å få utlevert en kopi av opplysningene
- å få rettet opplysninger om deg som er feil eller misvisende
- å få slettet personopplysninger om deg
- å sende klage til Datatilsynet om behandlingen av dine personopplysninger

Hvor kan jeg finne ut mer?

Hvis du har spørsmål til studien, eller ønsker å vite mer om eller benytte deg av dine rettigheter, ta kontakt med:
- OsloMet, ved masterstudent Daniela Dahle ████████████
- Veileder og prosjektansvarlig Robert W. Vaagan ████████████
- Vårt personvernombud: Ingrid Jacobsen (personvernombud@oslomet.no).

Hvis du har spørsmål knyttet til NSD sin vurdering av prosjektet, kan du ta kontakt med:

- NSD – Norsk senter for forskningsdata AS på epost (personverntjenester@nsd.no) eller på telefon: 53 21 15 00.

Med vennlig hilsen

Veileder   Masterstudent

Samtykkeerklæring

Jeg har mottatt og forstått informasjon om prosjektet *"Ungdom og YouTube"* og har fått anledning til å stille spørsmål. Jeg samtykker til:

☐   å delta i *fokusgruppeintervju med spørreskjema*

Jeg samtykker til at mine opplysninger behandles frem til prosjektet er avsluttet

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(Signert av prosjektdeltaker, dato)

Appendix H - Overview and translation of transcription codes

Code group: YouTube usage and behaviour	
Code	**Translation/Explanation:**
Use YouTube	Whether or not they use YT – yes/no question
Motivations	What motivates them to use YT as well as gratifications received from usage (can overlap with video genre)
Behaviour	Refers specifically to their level of engagement on YT – likes, dislikes, writing comments, reading comments, posting via their own channel etc.
From YouTube to TikTok (and other Social Media)	Adolescents' reflections on TikTok becoming more popular than YouTube during the time period 2021/2022. Additionally, arguments for how YouTube content is more difficult to share across several SoMe, in comparison to TikTok.
Code group: Impacts of usage on attitudes and beliefs	
Code	**Translation/Explanation:**
Dependency on YouTube	The degree to which adolescents tend to return to this specific medium for a particular reason(s) (e.g. social interaction, information, entertainment). (can overlap with motivations and video genre)
Word-of-mouth (WOM)	Refers to word-of-mouth that they share with others and that they receive about YT videos
Code group: Media literacy knowledge and skills	
Code	**Translation/Explanation:**
Media literacy knowledge	Whether the participants know or do not know what the term means or involves, in general. Also refers to whether they mention certain skills or actions they take when faced with suspicious information (fact-check, asking family/friends etc.) before being asked directly about this
Media literate person	Whether the participants can or cannot give examples of what it entails to be media literate on social media specifically
Credibility on YouTube	The degree to which adolescents consider YouTube content as more or less trustworthy than content on any other social platform
Fact-checking source	Reflections on the primary source(s) they use to fact-check media messages when in doubt (can overlap with news consumption)
News source	Reflections on the primary source(s) they access for news (can overlap with fact-checking)
Fake news	Mentioning fake news during the interview, as well as providing examples of fake news
Code group: Advertising on YouTube	
Code	**Translation/Explanation:**

Reflections on ads on YouTube	Participants' own thoughts on the existence of and amount of ads on Youtube
What they perceive as ads	Refers to what the participants themselves recognize as advertisement and marketing efforts on YouTube
Type of ads watched	Refers to advertisement that the participants deliberately watch on YT (e.g. product reviews or promotions such as unboxing or tutorials)