
An Analysis of Food Media Practices in Switzerland

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Abstract

According to Samin Nosrat’s (2017) best-selling cookbook, salt, fat, acid and heat are key to cooking good food. At the same time, the process of making food has never been more connected with media. Given how intertwined food and media are today, I also add media to the list of ingredients. Food has become a popular topic in traditional media, as well as on new digital platforms. Since there is already a large body of research on food media texts, this thesis concentrates on food media related practices in the everyday life and the convergence between traditional and digital food media. For this study, a mixed-method approach was chosen, which included a questionnaire and a subsequent in-depth interview for the participants. The qualitative analysis of the data builds on a theoretical framework which draws first and foremost on Couldry’s (2004) Practice Theory which is complemented by Foth & Hearn’s (2007) Communication Ecology Theory to organize the practices. The food media practices of the study participants illustrated how embedded media have become in everyday practices and explained the convergence between traditional and digital food media. At the same time, the results brought media power dynamics to light and demonstrated that even media, that seems innocent at first, has to be consumed with a critical eye.

Keywords: food media, practice theory, communication ecology theory, everyday life, media power
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1. Introduction

Food media is thriving. In the past three years, traditional media titles such as New York Times, The Times and Bon Appétit managed to make profits in the digital foodscape. Despite a paywall, the New York Times as well as The Times accrued hundreds of thousands of subscribers to their online food content. Bon Appétit’s YouTube channel enjoys a followership of nearly 6 million subscribers as of May 2020 (Ting, 2019). While digitalization was seen more as a threat to the print market, the demand for cookbooks has not taken a hit yet. On the contrary, Forbes Magazine reported that cookbook sales increased by over 20% in 2018 (Maynard, 2019). These developments imply a convergence in people’s use of traditional and new food media, as it has already been observed in news media (Chao-Chen, 2013). However, contrary to news media, both traditional and digital food media seem to be on an all-time high according to Ting (2019) and Maynard (2019).

Thus, studying this convergence with the focus on changes in behavior could lead to interesting insights (Warde, 2016). Given the abundance of food content, these insights are not only interesting, but also highly relevant. First, according to Povlsen (2016), “food practices are currently represented and performed in the media as never before” (p.133). The digital advancements gave rise to new food media formats, such as cooking channels on YouTube or food blogs, which again carry an abundance of media texts (Lewis & Phillipov, 2018). This rich diversity in food media has yet to be explored from a media scholar’s perspective. Second, this “colonization of food by digital technologies”, as Lewis (2018) described it, also hints at how these technologies have become a significant part of our everyday life. Thus, in addition to the elements salt, fat, acid and heat, that Nosrat (2017) views as essential for good cooking, I argue that media has become the fifth element in cooking.

While the research on food media has rather been centered around media texts and representation, there is only little research on the increasing digitalization of food (Lewis, 2018). For this reason, this thesis seeks to build on the latter and look into how people engage with traditional as well as new food media. Furthermore, the motivation behind this thesis also lies in capturing the variety of emerging food media and raising awareness for it which may inspire further studies. These goals are manifested in the following research question and two sub-questions, which were developed to guide the research process:
- What practices contribute to the consumption of digital food media instead of traditional types of food media and vice versa?
  - What types of food media are consumed in Switzerland?
  - What practices related to food media can be identified in Switzerland?

The research questions already hint at the theoretical perspectives that are applied in this study: *practice theory* and *communication ecology theory*. The latter aims at organizing food media in relation to ideas, concepts and people, as each communication ecology consists of a technological, discursive and social layer. While this theory provides a structure for the variety and richness of food media consumed, practice theory forms the main theoretical framework for this thesis. Practice theory has only recently been applied to media studies. The goal of a practice theoretical approach is to enable media research without a specific focus on media text, production or audience (Couldry, 2004, 2013). Instead, the focus should rather be on practices, as due the increasing convergence and digitalization in our life, it becomes difficult to look at only a slice of media engagement and draw conclusions from it (Couldry, 2004). Thus, this concept provides an interesting foundation to explore how people engage with different types of food media.

The data for this study is gathered through in-depth interviews as well as a preceding questionnaire. The sample is chosen based on their appreciation for food and their high-level of cooking in their everyday life, as they are the main cook in the household. That led to a focus on the age group from 23 to 30 years old. Furthermore, all respondents are living in Switzerland or have lived there until recently, since this study forms a contribution to the research of food media in Switzerland, which has been neglected so far.

The thesis begins with defining what food media is and contextualizing it within the increasing digitalization in our everyday lives and within the media landscape in Switzerland. In the next chapter, the theoretical framework consisting of practice theory and communication ecology theory is introduced in more detail. Before the methodology for this research is elaborated in chapter 5, I will revisit the current stand of food media research in a literature review. The methodology chapter presents how interviews and a questionnaire were used to gather data and how this primary data was analyzed with the help of the text analysis software Nvivo. After the presentation of the results, I am going to discuss the findings in
connection with the theoretical framework, which ultimately allows me to contextualize the results in the light of media power dynamics and the concept of the everyday life.
2. Background

This background chapter first and foremost serves to contextualize the present research. In this case, this begins with a conceptualization of food media. Even though – or because, the term food media is excessively used in academic as well as non-academic texts, it is difficult to find a definition. As one of the few written statements found regarding the definition of food media, Phillipov (2017) notes that “Media and Food Industries takes an unusually broad definition of food media as essentially any food-related media text” (p.14). Rousseau (2012) conceptualizes it as “information about food and nourishment”, but does not provide further definition, even though she wrote a book with the title food media, (p.13). For the coherence of this research, I am going to suggest the following definition based on Phillipov (2017) and Rousseau (2012):

**Food media includes all media that produce and share media texts with information about food and nourishment.**

This definition covers a breadth of media and includes cookbooks, TV cooking shows, food and travel documentaries, food influencers and so on, to mention a few. While in other research a loose definition may lead to undesired bias, I argue that in this case it will work in our favor: According to Phillipov (2017), only a broad definition is able to grasp the vast diversity of the current food media landscape and analyze its complexity. Furthermore, given the practice theoretical approach, it is even more important to keep the definition of food media broad, so that the study of the variety of practices within this complex food media landscape is not limited because of a definition. Otherwise, valuable insights may get overlooked.

However, it is important to differentiate between what is considered traditional food media and digital food media. In order to capture all food-related media that exist in the digital space, Lewis (2018) introduced the concept of ‘digital food’. With this concept, she also provided a foundation to research all practices that emerged from digital food media, such as reading food blogs, sharing food photos on Instagram or selling food on digital channels. Thus, I argue, that traditional food media are the opposite and constitute of food-related media that emerged and exist outside the digital realm. This covers food media types, such as cookbooks, food magazines as well as food-related TV and radio segments.
2.1. History of Food Media

“Tell me what kind of food you eat, and I will tell you what kind of man you are” (Savarin & Robinson, 2008, p. 12). This aphorism by Savarin (Savarin & Robinson, 2008) captures perfectly, why cookbooks are of immense interest to historians. Recipes do not just represent instructions of how to cook a particular meal, they also reveal a part of the everyday life and reflect the state of society at that time (Rousseau, 2012). Based on the ingredient list, the techniques and the style of the cookbook, researchers may draw conclusions about the state of agriculture, society and economy (Rousseau, 2012). Given the abundance and diversity of cookbooks (not to mention other food media) published today, drawing conclusions has become increasingly difficult. However, the same motives that inspire historians, trigger sociology, anthropology and media scholars to investigate representations in food media texts. While these representations form a part of the next chapter, I am now taking a closer look at the history of food media in order to contextualize it accordingly.

Rousseau (2012) starts her book with a reference to an article in The Guardian: “Do you remember when chefs just cooked?” (p.13). This question captures the essence of the development of food media, which went from functional to recreational. The first cookbooks to reach a broader mass were addressed to the growing middle class, which emerged from the industrial revolution in the 19th century (Rousseau, 2012). Popular cookbooks from that time, such as “A Shilling Cooking for the People” by Alexis Benoît Soyer or “Book of Household Management” by Isabella Beeton indicate that these cookbooks served a functional purpose (Rousseau, 2012). The same can be said for the food programs on TV and radio, where the aim was to teach women how to cook (Phillipov, 2017). Over the years, food media expanded and no longer served (just) a functional purpose as in how to cook a specific dish. The focus changed from function to fantasy (Phillipov, 2017; Rousseau, 2012). According to Phillipov (2017), this transformation along with the rapid growth of food media is due to two external factors: various food crises that led to consumer anxieties as well as the change in the media industry.

Food crises and scandals have raised concerns about the food system. This led to an increase in food activism in the media. This ranges from publishing documentaries about food production to celebrity chefs like Jamie Oliver who successfully fought for healthier school meals in the UK (Phillipov, 2017). However, food crises also increased the popularity of other food programs. Phillipov (2016) attributes for example the growing interest in the TV program “River Cottage” and their “traditional’ food production methods” to the BSE crisis in
the 1990s, because the British TV series “presents rural self-sufficiency as the ‘solution’ to
the problems and anxieties of contemporary food production”. Rousseau (2012) notes that not
only food crises have driven the interest in food programs. This “escape from reality” has
already been observed in the 1960s, where cooking shows provided a welcoming change from
other TV programming that was pre-eminently dominated by war, riots and assassinations at
that time (Rousseau, 2012). This can also be seen as an act of individual agency to take
control. Rousseau (2012) cites food critic Mimi Sheraton who claimed that “there are more
people interested in knowing where to buy the best bagel than about the latest act of political
or corporate corruption, primarily because they personally can do something about the bagel
but feel powerless against the Enrons of the world” (p.19).

However, the crises were not the only reason for the exponential rise of food media. The
technological advances in media also supported this growth. For example, MasterChef as one
of the most successful food programs worldwide, has not only been licensed to other
countries, but it also diversified its portfolio and launched other products, such as social
media channels, cookbooks or magazines (Bell & Hollows, 2011; Ouellette & Hay, 2008;
Phillipov, 2016). Food media has caught the eye of food and media industry, once they
realized the potential of (integrated) advertising and marketing. Nowadays, chefs no longer
“just” cook. They have become a brand as well as a culture intermediary who does not only
teach “the art of cooking, but also the art of lifestyle” (Phillipov, 2017, p. 19). Thus, the
growth of food media is also driven by the marketing strategies of the food industry.

These cross-media productions have also been observed in news media (Chao-Chen, 2013;
Deuze, 2011; Erdal, 2011). The resulting changes in media production and media
consumption have far reaching consequences. In the field of news media, the convergence has
implications on the whole news industry in terms of news formats and content, as well as
working conditions of journalists (Erdal, 2011). And as in news media, digital technologies
also enabled new actors and new platforms to enter the food media landscape. YouTube and
Instagram, for example, have provided a fertile ground for professional home cooks and
influencers to compete with celebrity chefs (Lewis & Phillipov, 2018). Furthermore, the
digital advancements are not only used by food activists but also by local food producers who
found new innovative ways to sell their products through digital platforms (Lewis &
Phillipov, 2018). However, what makes food media stand out and highly interesting to
investigate in comparison to news media is that both traditional and digital food media are rapidly increasing in demand, as mentioned in the introduction of this thesis.

2.2. Media in Everyday life

What enables, facilitates and ultimately, makes this convergence between traditional and digital media interesting to the various industries are how deep our media practices became embedded in our everyday life. Many scholars have devoted their studies to the question, how media and media practice in particular has become such a substantial part of our life (Leer & Povlsen, 2016). Ayaß (2012) attributes the change in how media is received to two processes: *everydayification* and *boundary dissolution* (Ayaß, 2012, p. 3). *Everydayification* describes the domestication process of media, that has also been observed by other researchers, such as Hollows (2008). The more a media is used, the more ordinary the use of this media becomes and is turned into a deeply embedded practice that is taken for granted (Ayaß, 2012, p. 3). Deuze (2011, p. 137) goes further and states that it is not only taken for granted, but it even disappears “from consciousness when used intensely”, leading to an “increasing invisibility” of the media. This also means that media practices can form a part of everyday practices and become rituals. According to Hollows (2008), media also supported this domestication. She points out that media is not just like any other household object. It has to be considered as a “‘medium’ through which a range of texts enter domestic space” (p.95). Thus, a media’s popularity rises with what it has to offer.

*Boundary dissolution* on the other hand refers to how media (practices) break down temporal, spatial and social boundaries and penetrate all aspects of life (Ayaß, 2012, p. 3).

Furthermore, Ayaß (2012) also observed that users have become carriers of media. This mobility allows for new forms of (old) practices (Ayaß, 2012; Ishii, 2006; Spigel, 2001). In the realm of food media, a new practice would be taking and sharing food photos on Instagram, for example (Lewis, 2018). Ayaß (2012) concludes that these processes affect how media texts are received. While she does not want to speculate about how much it affects our life, Halkier (2010) claims that this development led to the fact that our practices are now mostly informed by media, because it became impossible to learn everything only from people that we know personally. However, the question surrounding how much media affects society, culture and individuals has sparked volumes of research across different fields of expertise.
Most media scholars start their research either from an institution’s or an audience’s perspective or examine representations in media. This debate about which starting point is the way forward, has inspired Couldry (2004) to propose a new paradigm, which is also used for this paper and therefore elaborated in more detail in chapter 3.

2.3. Food Media in Switzerland

In a study of the Swiss media for the Swiss government, Studer, Schweizer & Puppis (2014) found out that the media landscape in Switzerland is characterized by two factors. One factor refers to the political system, where the Swiss media system can be described as a democratic corporatist model (Studer et al., 2014, p. 10). However, in connection with food media, the second factor is more relevant: The fact that Switzerland is a small state leads to three major consequences in the media industry: small market size, spillover effects and dependency of foreign media.

Due to the small number of residents, Swiss media have a smaller audience, which is why every production needs to be carefully considered in terms of production costs. The already small market is segmented even further due to the multilingualism in Switzerland (Studer et al., 2014). There are 4 national languages: German/Swiss German, French, Italian and Romansh (Federal Statistical Office, 2017). Swiss German media cannot be published one-to-one in the French part of Switzerland. This results in higher fix costs for local Swiss productions compared to German productions, as German productions are able to serve a bigger population, which is also known as economy of scale.

Furthermore, Swiss media institutions compete with media from abroad. The population of the German part of Switzerland also consumes media from Germany, the Romands (French population of Switzerland) consume media from France and the people living in the Italian part are also able to consume Italian media. This influence from abroad is also called spillover-effect (Studer et al., 2014). Because of this spillover, von Rimscha & Siegert (2015, p. 12) argue that it is more important to consider language and cultural borders rather than national borders, when media markets are investigated.

This spillover-effect also shows in advertising. Swiss companies are more inclined to pay for an advertisement in a foreign media rather than in a Swiss media. Because of economies of scale, foreign media producers are able to offer cheaper advertising spaces for Swiss
companies compared to Swiss media producers. In this way, Swiss media also becomes dependent of media politics and policies of the neighboring countries (Studer et al., 2014).

This means that Swiss people can also consume food media from abroad. However, food is more locally rooted than language, which is why there are Swiss food media that enjoy a great popularity.

In terms of cookbooks, the Swiss cookbook “TipTopf” is one of the best-selling cookbooks in Switzerland with over two million copies (Schmid, 2006). It was first published in German and as a teaching material in 1986 for the subject of “Hauswirtschaft” (Schmid, 2006), which translates to home economics, but is rather focused on cooking. However, it was soon translated to the other official Swiss languages and was also enjoyed by amateur chefs (Schmid, 2006). Even though the subject “Hauswirtschaft” is no longer taught as much as in 1986, the cookbook still remains in the best-selling list and published its 28th edition in 2014 (Orell Füssli, 2020).

However, the first food media in Switzerland goes back to Betty Bossi. Inspired by American marketing strategies, Sais/Astra, a cooking fat producer, started to publish a leaflet in 1956, which was distributed in retailers for free. Back then, the leaflet was called “Betty Bossi Post” after the American example “Betty Crocker” and featured all kinds of information regarding cooking and household (Betty Bossi, 2018). The publication was met with great success, which is why it became available as a subscription (Betty Bossi, 2018). However, it was their cooking and baking books, that made Betty Bossi iconic. Four years after the publication of the first cookbook, Betty Bossi became an independent publisher and started to diversify its product portfolio (Betty Bossi, 2018). They started to rethink and develop kitchen utensils, such as a “Ravioli maker” or a “croissant cutter”, which also became very popular. Nowadays, they launch around 40-50 new tools a year (Betty Bossi, 2018). However, the diversification also took place in the media industry. They were the first to launch a digital recipe hub in Switzerland and started to broadcast a cooking / quiz show on national television (Betty Bossi, 2018). Today, Betty Bossi is owned by Coop, one of the largest retailers in Switzerland (Betty Bossi, 2018). Coop first bought 50% of the shares in 2001 and took over completely in 2012 (Betty Bossi, 2018). Already after the first investment, Coop started to collaborate with Betty Bossi and launched new convenience food with the Betty Bossi brand (Betty Bossi, 2018).
Coop’s biggest competitor in Swiss retail industry, Migros, forms the other major food media player. Migros started to publish a magazine called Saisonküche, which was rebranded in May 2017 to Migusto. The magazine is not only available as a print magazine (free in stores and as a subscription), but also has a website, which serves as a recipe hub and where also tips and tricks are shared (Persoenlich, 2017a). It is also present on social media with an own Instagram account and YouTube channel. According to Widmer (2020), Migusto was one of the only magazines that managed to increase its reach by over 10% within the last year. This can be seen as a sign of a successful rebranding.

Even though Coop already had a food media brand with Betty Bossi, they decided to launch an additional and own brand Fooby in 2017 (Persoenlich, 2017b). Like Migusto, Fooby shares food content in forms of recipes and tips and tricks on a website and social media. However, Fooby is also available as an app and collaborates with influencers and celebrity chefs on their platforms (Fooby, 2020). Thus, both retailers have developed an additional food-specific media brands, under which they share food content using different communication channels.

On top of that, both Migros and Coop publish a weekly customer magazine, which have the highest number of readers across all magazines in Switzerland. According to a latest study, Migros-Magazin reaches 2.3 Mio. readers, while Coopzeitung reaches 2.4 Mio. readers (Widmer, 2020). Each issue of these magazines features a recipe of the week and shares backstories of the (food) products they sell in their stores. Thus, the food media market in Switzerland is dominated by the two largest retail companies in Switzerland.
3. Theoretical Framework

This chapter introduces and discusses Practice Theory as the main theoretical framework for this thesis as well as Communicative Ecology Theory that serves as an additional structure for food media related practices. I see the common denominator of the two concepts in their holistic approach, where they no longer view production and consumption of media as separate (research) entities. For this reason, I argue that these concepts can complement each other and constitute a solid theoretical foundation for finding answers to the research questions of this thesis.

3.1. Communicative Ecology Theory

In order to address the research question regarding what types of food media are consumed, I am drawing on “Communicative Ecology Theory” by Foth and Hearn (2007), which is based on Altheide’s Ecology of Communication (1994). In a more recent paper Hearn, Collie, Lyle, Choi, & Foth (2014, p. 203) stated that “Communicative Ecology Theory is an approach to understanding communication among and between people and groups, from a holistic perspective”.

Drawing from environmental science, this ecology metaphor provides media researchers with a new vantage point. Seeing a network as an ecology leads to pursuing new questions, such as how people engage within an ecology, how ecologies differ from each other and how sustainable an ecology is (Hearn et al., 2014). Furthermore, the concept of ecology accounts for investigating the ecology as a whole. Therefore, this holistic approach does not limit the focus on a specific actor or a specific channel. As pointed out by other researchers, this shift to a more holistic perspective is welcome, since media has become increasingly deeper rooted in the everyday life and its effects become harder to trace back to one specific event (Couldry, 2004; Halkier, 2010; Hill, 2018; Hodkinson, 2017; Shove, 2016).

The aim of this concept is to provide a deeper understanding of “communication that occurs within the group and between groups, without focusing solely on an individual or on a single communication channel” (Hearn et al., 2014, pp. 203–205). In order to do so, Foth and Hearn
(2007) conceptualized communicative ecology with three layers: A technological, social and discursive layer:

**Technological Layer**
Foth and Hearn (2007) place all devices and infrastructures in the technological layer, that set “the foundation for mediated communication to occur in addition to conventional face-to-face interaction” (p.757). This would include information and communication technologies as well as the infrastructure behind it, such as electricity or data centers. However, for this thesis, I concentrate on devices that transmit (food) media content. These devices can be material as a newspaper or a cookbook. They can also be immaterial, such as social media platforms, cooking shows, as well as messaging apps, if they are used to share food related content.

**Discursive Layer**
“The content, that is, the ideas or themes that constitute the conversations and narratives of the ecology” are placed in the discursive layer (Foth & Hearn, 2007, p. 756). Thus, this is the content, that is provided by media and interacted with by people. In the light of the topic of this thesis, I expect to find recipes, different types of food, food trends, as well as stereotypes, lifestyle and normativity within this layer.

**Social Layer**
Foth and Hearn (2007, p. 756) state that “[the social layer] consists of people and social modes of organizing those people”. Thus, this layer focuses on all actors within this ecology as well as their relationship between each other. It is important to note that people not only give feedback to the media by their consumption, but also by action, such as commenting, producing content, etc.

After the framework was created by Foth and Hearn (2007), it has been applied by various studies to investigate the usage of social media platforms (see Ardianto, Aarons, & Burstein, 2014; Davison, Ou, Martinsons, Zhao, & Du, 2014; Seol, Lee, Yu, & Zo, 2016) or the effect of information and communication technologies (ICT) on individuals or communities (see Khan & Dongping, 2017; Okon, 2015; Won Jung, 2020). This thesis is positioned closer to the first group of researchers with the difference that the focus does not lie on a specific social media platform, but on a specific genre within media.
Even though this theoretical framework first and foremost assists with structuring the different types of food media, I argue that it also enables researchers to map how communication flows at the same time. For this present thesis, this aspect will be particularly of interest when practices are investigated, because a practice may involve a technological layer (what media platform is used), a discursive layer (food related content) as well as a social layer (how do people engage with other actors in relation to food media).

3.2. Practice Theory

Halkier & Jensen (2011) point out that there are several readings of practice theory, which finds its roots in the field of sociology. What they have in common is their assumption that “activities of social life continuously have to be carried out and carried through, and that this mundane performativity is organized through a multiplicity of collectively shared practices” (Halkier & Jensen, 2011, pp. 103–104). Reckwitz and Schatzki belong to the most significant contributors of this theory. Reckwitz’ contributions positioned the theory in the fields of sociology, while Schatzki was more concerned with developing the theory further (Halkier, 2010). However, instead of explaining Reckwitz’ and Schatzki’s concept of Practice Theory in more detail, I rather proceed to how Couldry (2004) applies their concept to media studies.

3.2.1. Practice Theory in Media Studies

By applying practice theory to media, Couldry (2004) established a new paradigm in media research. The new approach sees media as a set of media-related practices and is particularly devoted to find out the answer to the question “what are people doing that is related to media” (Couldry, 2013, sec. "Varieties of media-related practice", para. 1). It aims at shifting the perspective on media from current foci, such as media production and/or media text, to media practice (Couldry, 2004, 2013). According to Couldry (2004, p. 129), this shift is required in order to investigate how deeply media is interwoven with our life. This perspective also implies that the “notion of “culture” as internal “ideas” or “meanings”” is lost and replaced with the notion of “practice” and “discourse” (Couldry, 2004, p. 121). Practices are seen as “routine activities” and discourse as a “system of meanings” which is not articulated, but known by everyone (Couldry, 2004, p. 121).

Couldry (2004, 2013) also follows the core assumption of practice theory that practices are organized in a hierarchy, which means that some practices “anchor” or evoke other practices.
Thus, based on this point of view, “media represent other practices and so have direct consequences for how those practices are defined and ordered” (Couldry, 2004, p. 123), whereas “images, representations, patterns of discourse” are products of media practices (Couldry, 2004, p. 128). In this connection, Couldry also points out the importance of rituals. Based on former findings in sociology, he states that “ritual practices may “anchor” all sorts of other practices that deal in the same categories and values” (p.127). This makes mundane practices even more interesting to look at.

It also leads Couldry (2004) to question whether or not “media practices have a privileged role in anchoring other types of practice because of the privileged circulation of media representations and images of the social world” (Couldry, 2004, p. 127). In the quest of answering this question, he turns to Durkheim and his theory of social categories and found out that “certain types of ordered (often ‘ritualized’) practice reproduce power by enacting and embodying categories” (Couldry, 2013, Chapter 3, para. 10). Thus, media power also lies in what is viewed as reality, or normality for that matter, and can be abused to foster stereotypes and disseminate racism in the worst case.

3.2.2. Practice Theory in Consumption Research

Couldry (2004) claims that the primary value in applying practice theory to media is that it frees researchers from limited research focus such as media consumption (Couldry, 2004, p. 125). Even though I acknowledge Couldry’s (2004) perspective of seeing media consumption as practices or only a part of practice, I would still like to draw on previous consumption research - more specifically, on the practice theoretical area of consumption research. I am going to elaborate my decision in the following paragraphs.

In consumption research, practice theoretical approaches have already been widely adapted since the 1990s (Halkier, 2010). Because they also see consumption as an everyday practice, I argue that these practice theoretical areas of consumption research may hold valuable insights, in terms of theory as well as in practical application.

By turning to consumption research, I can draw on Warde’s (2005) conceptualization of practice. He agrees with Schatzki that practices “consist of both doings and sayings”. This is why he points out, that not only practical activity, but also its representation must be addressed in the analysis. According to Warde (2005), there are three ways to connect an
activity with a representation: *understandings, procedures* and *engagements* (Warde, 2005, p. 134). *Understandings* refer to Schatzki’s *general and practical understanding*, while *procedures* refer to *rules*, and *engagements* correspond to Schatzki’s *teleoaffective structures* (Warde, 2005, p. 134). *Understandings* means that the doing and saying is connected by practical knowledge and know-how. *Procedures* means that the activity and representation is connected through rules and instructions and *Engagements* point to “emotional and normative orientations related to what and how to do” (Halkier, 2010, p. 29). Warde also states that “the reproduction of the nexus requires regular enactment” (Warde, 2005, p. 134). Couldry (2004) also sees the power of media in this act of repetition. For this reason, I also argue that it is legitimate to turn to consumption research. Reproducing representations in the media leads to a reproduction of certain nexuses. Halkier (2010) concludes that “significant parts of our understandings are based upon representations in media of knowledges, experiences and discourses” and also recognizes an urge in media discourses to change consumer’s behavior and rituals: consumers should change “in order to act as morally good consumers, who help to solve collective problems in society” (Halkier, 2010, p. 2).

3.3. Application of the theories

The following sections describe, how the discussed theories are specifically applied to this study.

3.3.1. Application of Communicative Ecology Theory

As mentioned earlier, according to Communication Ecology Theory (CET), an ecology consists of three layers: technological, discursive and social layer. While Foth and Hearn (2007) have not provided a graphical representation of these layers yet, previous studies who used CET have made several attempts. Khan and Dongping (2017) see it as a triangle, each side representing a layer, whereas Seol et al. (2016) depict Communication Ecology as a big circle with three smaller circles in it, which stand for the three layers. I propose a new visualization that also visualizes the movement of individuals within the food media ecology. At the same time, these movements also illustrate the flow of information. The creation of this visualization brought the complexity of a communication ecology to light. Since the content for each media in the technology layer is produced by individuals, who again interact with their own social, discursive and technology layer, an accurate visualization could only be presented as a never-ending three-dimensional network. This complex representation would
however interfere with the clarity of the representation, which is why I choose to keep the visualization below (see Fig. 1).

![Communication Ecology (original figure)](image)

**Figure 1 - Communication Ecology (original figure)**

3.3.2. Application of Practice Theory

As with any other concept, practice theory serves as a lens or frame to investigate a part of reality. Thus, in a study, where practice theory is applied, it is vital to define what the researcher identifies as “practice” beforehand (Couldry, 2004; Hobart, 2010, p. 62).

For this paper, I am going to follow Hobart’s suggestion and use the term “media-related practice”. Hobart (2010) argues that this term is better than Couldry’s (2004) original “media-oriented practice”, as his terminology would account for more practices – from activities directly linked to the consumption of media, but also substitute activities, such as watching soccer instead of reading a newspaper (Hobart, 2010, p. 63). Since this paper is concerned with how and why food media is consumed, which leaves room for many possible answers, it is important not to limit research by a definition. Hence, all activities that are related directly or indirectly to media are considered as practices in the following study.
In his original article, Couldry (2004, p. 125) already stated that precisely this openness is one of the key values of practice theory: “The value of practice theory, as we have seen, is to ask open questions about what people are doing and how they categorize what they are doing, avoiding the disciplinary or other preconceptions”. Thus, he also agrees with Hobart’s more inclusive suggestion and welcomes the new term “media-related practices” in a later comment, which encourages the use of Hobart’s (2010) definition in this thesis (Couldry & Hobart, 2010).

On top of that, there are two kinds of practices to be distinguished in this food media ecology. On one hand, there are media-related practices performed by people. On the other hand, there are practices performed by media that represent practices in real life. The primary focus of this thesis lies on the practices performed by consumers.

3.3.3. Combining Couldry and Warde

Couldry’s (2004) practice theoretical approach to media translate into three premises for this thesis:

1) Media consist of practices
2) Practices are organized and interdependent
3) Media power lies in reproduction of practices

As these premises still leave room for more structure, I also draw on Warde’s (2005) framework from consumption research, which has already been used in previous studies (see Halkier, 2010; Halkier & Jensen, 2011). For every practice found, I will not only need to describe the practical activity, but also identify the representational element of it, which can be either understandings, procedures or engagements. These differentiations are going to be particularly interesting in analyzing media related practices, because they may shed light on why certain types of food media are preferred to others.

Warde (2005) also states that practices are performed and coordinated. This ties in with Couldry’s (2004) propositions regarding the reproduction of practices as well as the organization and interdependency of practices. What has not been articulated by Couldry (2004), but can be seen as a continuation of the interdependency, is Warde’s (2005) concept of trajectories. This accounts for the changing relationships of practices with time and
changes in other external factors, such as the technological progress (Halkier, 2010; Warde, 2005).
4. Literature Review

This chapter focuses on previous studies on food media practices in order to position the current research within this field of research.

Food has been a popular research topic in anthropology as well as in sociology and medicine (Povlsen, 2016). Warde (2016) finds that food studies have two major research foci. One centers around obesity, healthy diet and body image, while another focuses on migration, ethnicity and identity. While earlier studies from the 1990s treated media texts as “a mirror of reality”, more recent studies focus on representation in food media (Povlsen, 2016). Celebrity chefs (Curnutt, 2016; Luthar, 2010; Phillipov, 2017), cooking shows (Buck, 2008) and cooking competitions, such as MasterChef (Packham, 2016) and The Great British Bake-Off (Bradley, 2016; Casey, 2019; Lagerwey, 2018; Phillipov, 2017), have inspired an array of studies in connection with representation in terms of gender, culture and identity. While these studies concerned representation in food media, there has also been another research branch that concentrated on how food is represented in media. When food is involved in horror films, for example, they often create another food spectacle – one that plays with fear and disgust regarding food (Kimber, 2016). Phillipov (2017) concludes that media and food industries are deeply involved in shaping representation, as food media provides another space for constructing and negotiating meaning.

But there has not been a lot of research from a production’s or audience’s perspective (Povlsen, 2016). One of the few studies stems from Hill’s (2018) research project “Media Experiences”, which focused on audience’s media experiences of three television formats, including MasterChef. Hill (2018, p.6) presents an interesting concept of media engagement, which “encapsulates research on audiences, fans or producer-users, and the ways these different groups co-exist with those making content and driving policy and politics”. In this concept, media consumers are autonomously moving around in a media landscape, that is constantly shaped by them and shapes them in return: “if we watch and share content, or remix stories into new narratives, then we help to shape a shared collective experience that is determined and sustained by use” (Hill, 2018, p. 3). For this reason, media consumers are considered as roaming audiences. In this landscape, media producers are the creators of pathways that lead audiences to their experience with media (Hill, 2018, p. 1). They are, however, not the only ones creating pathways, as roaming audiences are also able to make
new paths (Hill, 2018). This implies that media production and audiences are closely intertwined, which is why they have to be investigated in a holistic manner, rather than separately. In order to comply with this holistic approach, Hill’s (2018) research project team not only included researchers, but also practitioners.

Even though Hill’s (2018) case study of MasterChef accounts for both the production and audience perspective, her study could also be criticized for only looking at “an artificially chosen “slice” through daily life that cuts across how they actually understand the practices in which they are engaged” (Couldry, 2004, p. 121). In her case, the artificial slice is the TV-program MasterChef. In order to avoid “artificial slices”, Couldry (2004) introduced practice theory to the field of media studies and takes the holistic approach to a new level.

4.1. Practice Theoretical approaches to Food Media

Having realized that there is a lack of user studies in relation with food media, Povlsen (2016) pursued the same research goal as this thesis. She sought out to investigate how individuals engage with different kinds of food media and was also inspired by Couldry (2004; 2010), who advocated for a practice theoretical approach in media research, as well as by Warde (2005), who has looked at consumption through the lens of practice theory. However, while this research uses Communication Ecology as an additional theoretical foundation, Povlsen (2016) draws on Foucault’s heterotopias in order to find patterns across different demographic profiles. According to her assumptions, heterotopias are created, once media is used. Her findings revealed that, food media use was highly complex and very individual (Povlsen, 2016). Thus, it was hard to find specific heterotopias, as “most interviewees use media food to create diverse heterotopias” (Povlsen, 2016, p. 145). These differences in heterotopias and media use can be explained by taste distinctions, which is also supported by Johnston and Baumann (2010).

Kirkwood (2018) shares the same intentions in her research, which focuses on the increasing digitalization in everyday culinary practices. However, instead of drawing on practice theory, she looks at “theories of the domestication of technology, polymedia, and serious leisure” (Kirkwood, 2018, p. 278). Thus, by focusing solely on digital media and an individual, her research does not account for any social interaction of the individual that may also be connected to food and food media. Her research has shed more light on how digital media
have been incorporated in everyday culinary practices. It has also shown that digital and traditional media do not perfect substitutes in an economical sense, where customers would be indifferent to either media. In Kirkwood’s (2018) research, traditional media were perceived as “useful, enjoyable, or therapeutic”, while new media seemed to be more pragmatic and “made cooking easier or led them to new food information and experiences” (Kirkwood, 2018, p. 288).

While not necessarily focused on media, Warde (2016) has looked into the practice of eating. Warde (2016) considers ‘eating’ as consumption. This implies that ‘eating’ no longer serves just a functional purpose. Warde (2016) also connects it with self-expression and identity formation. By viewing ‘eating’ as an activity, he is able to analyze it from a practice theoretical approach (Warde, 2016). His research pointed him to the concept of habituation.

With that said, this present thesis positions itself within the body of research devoted to food media use. While Povlsen (2016) also applies a practice theoretical approach to investigate food media practices, her focus is particularly on media users. Thus, media use merely constitutes a way of categorizing media users, whereas this thesis puts the practice of media use first as well as the differences in the use of traditional and digital food media. Kirkwood (2018) also focuses more on media use, especially on the increasing digitalization in food media. What distinguishes her study and my study is the social component in media use as well as the theoretical approach. This thesis contributes not only to food media studies, but also Couldry’s (Couldry, 2004; Couldry & Hobart, 2010) new branch in media studies, where practice theory is applied. By also drawing on communication ecology theory, this thesis is also accounting for social aspects in media.

There has not been a study from a media scholar’s perspective on food media in Switzerland. Therefore, this thesis can also be seen as a contribution to food media studies in Switzerland, which has not received much attention yet, even though it is a very interesting area, since the main food media producer are not media companies, but food retailers.
5. Methodology

Before the research design for this thesis is introduced, I would like to recall the research questions.

- What practices contribute to the consumption of digital food media instead of traditional types of food media and vice versa?
  - What types of food media are consumed in Switzerland?
  - What practices related to food media can be identified in Switzerland?

5.1. Research Design

As this thesis looks at everyday practices that involve food media, it builds on ethnomethodology as a paradigm. Ethnomethodology draws on a subjective ontology and assumes that social order and norms are established and adopted in everyday practices by social actors, which is why the focus lies on studying the ordinary (Blaikie & Priest, 2019).

This undertaking calls for an abductive research strategy. According to Blaikie (2009), this research strategy implies that an understanding of social actors is achieved by investigating their constructions of reality. In contrary to inductive and deductive research strategies, an abductive research strategy puts motives and meanings behind people’s practices in their everyday life at the core of research (Blaikie, 2009). Thus, this is aligned with the theoretical framework, especially with Couldry’s (2004) practice theory, where practices are placed in the foreground, as well as with the chosen research paradigm, which emphasizes the focus on studying the everyday.

5.2. Methods of Data Collection

The choice of an abductive research strategy also leads to a qualitative research approach. Insights into the constructions of reality can only be gathered through an interaction with social actors. Previous studies who have pursued similar research goals relied on qualitative research methods, such as interviews, focus groups or ethnography (see Broad et al., 2013; Foth & Hearn, 2007; Halkier, 2010; Hill, 2018; Tacchi, 2005). For this thesis, I chose in-depth interviews as well as a precedent questionnaire as methods to source primary data. This
decision is encouraged by a previous food media study, which successfully used a mixed-
method approach to gather primary data (Povlsen, 2016).

5.2.1. Questionnaire
According to Collins (2010, p.128), implementing questionnaires is a popular method to
gather data that either serves as a basis for a study or for a following interview. In this thesis,
all respondents were asked to fill out a questionnaire before the interview took place.
Therefore, the questionnaire only served the purpose of interview preparation. The
information gathered from these questionnaires formed a foundation for the interview, which
means that the results provided an overview over the respondent’s use of media. This allowed
me to focus on their specific media use and ask follow-up questions where necessary.
Furthermore, filling out this questionnaire already primed the respondent’s understanding of
the broad field of food media. This was necessary, as most people are not familiar with the
variety of food media and most of the time only consider cookbooks as food media. This
became apparent, when the topic of this thesis was presented to outsiders.

The questionnaire sought to cover as many types of food media as possible, in order to get an
overview of the respondents’ engagement with food media. For each media, the respondents
revealed 1) how many kinds of this type of media they read, watch or listen to, 2) how
frequent they do so, and 3) list their favorites of this type media. At the end, respondents were
also given the opportunity to name other types of media that had not been included yet. All
questions are found in more detail in Appendix 1.

Questionnaires need to be simple and answered without assistance (Collins, 2010). In order to
ensure this clarity, the questionnaire was tested beforehand with a third person. Furthermore,
all respondents were able to clarify their answers in the following interview. Thus, the bias
due to any misunderstandings was kept at a minimum. Collins (2010, p.128) lists further
disadvantages, such response time, incomplete and not fully spontaneous responses, as well as
not knowing who actually completed the questionnaire. Among the participants of this study,
there were only two instances, where respondents needed to be reminded of the questionnaire.
Furthermore, the questionnaire was conducted on GoogleForms, which allowed for “required
answers” and ensured that all important questions were answered. Since the questionnaire
only serves as a basis for a subsequent interview, I argue that the chances that the
questionnaires were filled out by another person is very slim. In addition, results that raised
questions could be further addressed in the interview. This shows that the addition of interviews to questionnaires can compensate for the downfalls of questionnaires.

5.2.2. Interview

Collins (2010, p. 134) states that “Interviewing is a technique that is primarily used to gain an understanding of the underlying reasons and motivations for people’s attitudes, preferences or behavior”. This corresponds with my research strategy, which is why, I argue that this tool fits the purpose of studying people’s motives behind their food media consumption the best.

The interviews were conducted in a semi-structured manner, meaning that a set of questions was prepared beforehand. At the same time, there was room for longer answers as well as other questions, which emerged on the spot based on the respondent’s answer (Collins, 2010, p. 134). The questions which guided me through each interview were based on the elaborated theoretical framework (see Appendix 2).

Due to the COVID-19 situation, the interview was conducted over Zoom in order to come as close as possible to a personal interview. During the interview, I additionally made use of Google Jamboards. Prior to the interview, a Jamboard was created for each respondent based on results from their questionnaire (see Figure 2). This served as a visualization tool, which the respondent was also able to contribute to simultaneously. However, since the respondents did not make use of the Jamboards during the interviews, it will not be elaborated further.

Figure 2 - Jamboard for respondent XY (original figure)
5.2.3. Sample

According to sampling theory, it is possible to draw a conclusion out of a sample, if the selection of the sample is based on randomness (Collins, 2010, p. 178). In this thesis, however, this randomness would lead to two groups of people. One group that is actually interested in performing a certain practice and another group that is performing a practice, because of other circumstances. Couldry (2004) gives the example of a football match. While there is one person interested in watching a football match, another person may only watch a football match because of the other person or other social reasons. Furthermore, if a random person is interviewed with no interest or relation to food media, the interview would most probably be over very quickly and not yield interesting results. Thus, I argue that in this case, a convenience and strategic sample makes more sense.

The respondents form a convenience sample, as they belong to my circle of friends and acquaintances, whom I also follow on social media. However, the sample is strategic, as the selection of respondents was made based on their social media activity and how much food related pictures they post. Another selection criterion was my personal judgement of their enthusiasm for not only enjoying, but also making food. This enthusiasm ensured that they will have engaged with food media – either for educational or recreational reasons. Furthermore, the respondents are all between 23 and 39 years old and are living in Switzerland or have spent most of their lives in Switzerland, as the study focuses on food media practices in Switzerland. By focusing on this age group, I hope to receive a good mix between engagements with offline as well as online food media. In addition, all respondents were the main cook in their household at the time of the interview. Except for respondent 10, all respondents have also moved out from their family’s home and have been on their own in the kitchen. These characteristics also ensured that they not only cook on occasion, but also on a daily basis. Even though respondent 10 still lives with his parents, I included him in the data sample, as he is the main meal provider of the family and demonstrated a high level of independence in the kitchen.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Household</th>
<th>Date of Interview</th>
<th>Type of Interview</th>
<th>Length of Interview</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Respondent 1</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>Couple</td>
<td>30 April 2020</td>
<td>Video</td>
<td>ca. 57 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondent 2</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>Couple</td>
<td>1 May 2020</td>
<td>Audio</td>
<td>ca. 35 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondent 3</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>Couple</td>
<td>4 May 2020</td>
<td>Video</td>
<td>ca. 65 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondent 4</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>2 May 2020</td>
<td>Video</td>
<td>ca. 32 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondent 5</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>Couple</td>
<td>11 May 2020</td>
<td>Video</td>
<td>ca. 55 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondent 6</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Shared Flat</td>
<td>3 May 2020</td>
<td>Video</td>
<td>ca. 43 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondent 7</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>3 May 2020</td>
<td>Audio</td>
<td>ca. 65 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondent 8</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>8 May 2020</td>
<td>Video</td>
<td>ca. 48 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondent 9</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>Couple</td>
<td>8 May 2020</td>
<td>Video</td>
<td>ca. 60 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondent 10</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>Family</td>
<td>11 May 2020</td>
<td>Video (no recording)</td>
<td>ca. 30min</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1 – Sample of the Study

5.3. Methods of Data Analysis

5.3.1. Analysis of the Questionnaire

The purpose of questionnaire served first and foremost the preparation of the following interview. Before the interview, I evaluated the questionnaire that was filled out by the respondent. In doing so, I received a general picture of what food media the respondent interacted with. This allowed me to address media uses that stood out and it also spared me from asking questions about a type of media that were not used by the respondent.

Since respondents were given an opportunity to add types of food media that have not been mentioned in the questionnaire yet, their input led to the discovery of further types of food media. They are discussed in Chapter 6.1. and added to the communication ecology of the respondents.

5.3.2. Analysis of the Interview

For the qualitative analysis of the data from the interviews, a textual analysis was conducted. According to Collins (2010, p. 152), the analysis of the data begins with a coding process. She distinguishes between three ways of coding: open, axial and selective coding. Open coding refers to organizing data in main categories, which can be further divided into sub-categories.
The process of coding data into sub-categories is called axial coding. Last, but not least, selective coding means to organize data in categories that have been created based on the theoretical framework (Collins, 2010).

However, before the coding process could began, all interviews were transcribed using a text analysis software Nvivo. This had the advantage that I was able to continue the text analysis with the same program. Nine of the interviews were conducted in Swiss German and one interview in German. Since Swiss German is not considered as an official language, the interviews were transcribed in German.

The first step in the coding process consisted of an open and selective coding. This means, main categories were created based on the theoretical framework:

- Practices
- Time of Media Use
- Location of Media Use
- Technological Layer
- Social Layer
- Discursive Layer

As a practice theoretical approach is applied, all practices mentioned during the interview are highlighted. Simultaneously, time and location of practices that involved media, were coded. Furthermore, given the inclusion of communication ecology theory, the codebook also took the three layers of the practices into account: technological, social and discursive layer. All instances with a type of media were coded in the technological layer, all social interactions or mentions of a third person were coded in the social layer. The discursive layer included ideas and concepts that emerged out of the interview. The codebook for the first open and selective coding can be found in Appendix 3a.

The second step consisted of an axial coding, where data from the main categories were broken down further into sub-categories. Not surprisingly, this process led to a variety of different codes, especially within the code “practices”. Please see Appendix 3b for the codebook of the axial coding in more detail.
Within this extensive coding structure, there were certain codes that present similarities. *Veganism, Sustainability* and *Food Production* were grouped together, as they all can be subordinated to the theme *Sustainability*. For the same reason, *Unwinding, Commute, Entertainment* and *Watching TV* were categorized under *Entertainment Practices*. All groupings are listed in Appendix 3c.

The coding was done with the text analysis software Nvivo, which is the same software, with which the interviews have been transcribed. In order to ensure a consistent coding throughout all 10 interviews, the coding is conducted through an iterative process (Collins, 2010). When a new coding category is created, the interviews that have already been coded are revisited and checked for data that could also fit into the new code. At the end of the coding process, a spot check was made, by going through the coded data in selected categories.

5.3.3. Analysis of Practices

The coding process resulted in 1505 coded references. Out of these references, 625 references are practices. As practice theory assumes that practices are ordered, the next step consisted of finding key practices that trigger other practices. Since the coding process required a critical reading of each interview, I already noticed practices that recurred more often than others and led to triggering other practices. Nvivo’s data visualization in form of a hierarchy chart confirmed my subjective assumptions (see Fig. 3). Assuming that the most coded practices constitute key practices, I decided to proceed the analysis with a quantitative analysis of these practices to confirm my observation. According to Sun (2018, p. 149), a quantitative analysis of codes is usually used in the analyses of media texts to “identify key characteristics with which the issue or topic is portrayed or depicted”. Since key practices constitute key characteristics of this data set, a quantitative analysis presented a suitable way to find them.
The practice “use of media” was excluded from a more detailed analysis, as this code consists of practices in relation to media in general and no longer focused on food media. These results emerge from questions that sought to get a feeling for how tech-savvy the respondents are. Therefore, the remaining practices to investigate further include:

- finding a recipe
- learning to cook
- preparing food
- entertainment practices
- finding inspiration
- social engagement

Since this study is particularly interested in the use of food media, all practices were cross referenced with the codes from the technological layer, in order to find out which practices involve media the most. As expected, the practices that have been mentioned the most also included the most interaction with media (see Fig. 4).
A closer look at the cross-references within the practice of “Preparing Food” revealed that media only played a role in four instances that are directly linked with cooking. In other cross-references the media-use was interestingly related to one of the other disclosed key practices. Therefore, I conclude that “Preparing Food” is rather a sub-practice than a key practice.

In order to get a better picture of the remaining key practices, I created a communication ecology for each practice and mapped the movements of each respondents within this ecology. Through this process, all references from each code were critically evaluated. This direct comparison of references within each key practice as well as the visualization of these practices led to the discovery of further patterns. This is demonstrated by the analysis of learning to cook, where a distinction was made between learning a new/advanced dish/technique and learning a traditional/basic dish/technique (see Fig. 5). The insights from the analysis will be presented and discussed in the next chapter.
5.4. Limitations

Collins (2010) attributes many advantages to personal interviews. However, due to the global pandemic in spring 2020, this type of interviews was no longer possible. Video-interviews on Zoom, where the respondents’ facial expressions and gestures were visible, provided a good alternative. However, temporary connection problems disturbed the flow of the interview, which is why I argue that personal interviews cannot be substituted for video interviews. Yet, given the extraordinary times, video interviews were the best alternative to personal interviews.

Furthermore, the COVID-19 outbreak had a big impact on the everyday life of the respondents. All interviews took place between April, 30th, and May, 11th, 2020, where Switzerland was still undergoing a national shutdown. This meant that all respondents have either been working from home or were forced to into short-time work for several weeks. For most of the respondents, this led to more home cooking as well as trying out new recipes and therefore a higher engagement with more food media. While this was beneficial for this research, the peculiar situation also stands in contrast to the aim of researching everyday practices. However, the majority of respondents distinguished their everyday media use and
their “Corona” media use on their own, when they answered the interview questions. On top of that, in order to attend to this circumstance, one interview question also aimed at disclosing the changes in their daily routines due to this situation.

5.5. Ethics
Using interviews in order to collect primary data always implies an ethical challenge, as it involves studying a part of someone’s private life. Mertens (2011) presents three basic principles, which were established in the U.S. after the discovery of an extreme case of unethical research. These principles should ensure an ethical conduct of research (Mertens, 2011, p. 22):

1) Beneficence
2) Respect
3) Justice

The first principle demands maximizing the benefits for science and humanity, while minimizing harm to the research subjects (Mertens, 2011, p. 22). While this study does not lead to any physical harm, it does constitute an intrusion of the respondents’ privacy. By asking them about their everyday practices, they share personal details about their private life, their upbringing, their preferences and more. Even though this research are does not constitute a delicate subject, their data still needs to be protected by guaranteeing anonymity. For this reason, all names have been changed in this study.

The second principle calls for respect of the research subjects (Mertens, 2011, p. 22). This began with reaching out to the respondents. Before they gave their consent, they were informed about the purpose of the research topic, the scope of their involvement, as well as the recording of the interview. In addition, they were granted the right to withdraw from this study at any time. This agreement was written down in a consent form, which was sent to the respondent before the interview took place. When I noticed that the respondent does not feel fully comfortable with a video conference, the interview was conducted and recorded without visual. Furthermore, the transcription of the interviews also demanded a respectful treatment. Since all but one interviews were in Swiss German, the interviews were translated and transcribed in German. In order to include certain quotes in the thesis, I also translated them.
to English. In both translation processes, I aimed at staying as close to the voice of the respondent as possible.

The third principle addresses justice in a sense that the data is sourced in a reasonable manner. The interviews may seem too long in comparison to the scope of the thesis. Thus, the interviews provided more data than necessary. However, as this study was conducted with a convenience sample, the study subjects were more open to share their stories and opinions, which contributed to the length of the interview. On top of that, the respondents were informed about the approx. length of the interview, which was exceeded by only around 15 minutes. There was, however, one instance, where I forgot to record the interview. Luckily, I already took notes during the interview and realized this mishap the moment, the interview was over. Thus, I was able to complement the notes and reconstruct the answers. This concerns the interview with respondent 10.

Apart from these three basic principles, I would like to point out my own interest in food media. As an even more avid consumer of food media as many of the respondents, it was crucial for me not to project my own consumption patterns or motivations on my respondents. At the same time, this personal interest and consumption enabled me to relate to the respondents. For this reason, I assume that this bias is beneficial to this research. Furthermore, since I am aware of this bias, I am able to actively consider it during the entire study.
6. Results

In this chapter, I present my findings from the evaluation of the questionnaire and especially the in-depth interview. First, I am going to address the first sub-question and discuss the variety of food media that have been found in the study. In a second step, I am going to review the key practices that have been identified and placed in a communication ecology. In doing so, I am attending to the second sub-question regarding food media-related practices in Switzerland.

6.1. Types of Food Media

The list of types of food media was first informed by my own knowledge and research. This led to a list of 15 different types of food media, which forms the technological layer of a communication ecology.

- Blogs
- Cookbooks
- Food Apps
- Instagram
- Magazines
- Meal Kit Services
- Newsletter
- Newspapers
- Pinterest
- Podcast
- Recipe Hubs
- TV / Netflix
- YouTube (ASMR)
- YouTube (Food Entertainment)
- YouTube (Food Travel)
- YouTube (Food Tutorials)

In the questionnaire and during the subsequent in-depth interview, further types of food media were discovered, which are discussed below:

In the questionnaire, respondent 1 pointed out that he also uses the social media platform Reddit as well as memes in relation with food. While his food-related use of Reddit is rather
by chance, memes can be seen as a way of communication about food with family members (Respondent 1).

Another type of food media are **handwritten recipes**. Multiple respondents said that they started to write down recipes that are either handed down from older generations, passed on from friends, or created by themselves. One respondent stated that her mother as well as her grandmother and probably also her great-grandmother have done the same (Respondent 7). Another respondent said that she only began to write her own recipe book, so that she would not lose her grandmother’s Christmas cookie recipes (Respondent 9).

Across all interviews, respondents confirmed that they often talk about food with their family members. Recipes are passed on, Christmas dinners are organized, but also images of what was cooked or eaten are shared. The majority of respondents disclosed that food is a main topic that runs through their family chats. This is exemplified by a respondent’s family chat, where her mother asks their children about what they had for dinner on a daily basis (Respondent 6). This communication does not only happen in real life, but also through **instant messaging apps**, such as Whatsapp or Threema. Thus, I argue that instant messaging apps also need to be considered in the technological layer of the communication ecology.

The last type of media to include in the technological layer is **Google**. In her research, Povlsen (2016) observed that “everyone but one google, but nobody ‘just googles” (p.145). My research showed that for all respondents, google formed a major link between various types of food media and the searching individual. The use of google depends on their practices, which I will elaborate more in the following chapter, where I address how people use food media. But for this reason, I argue that google needs to be considered in this communication ecology as well.

In conclusion, the aggregate map of the Communication Ecology of the respondents consists of the following media:
The findings also revealed that the respondents rarely consume food media produced in Switzerland. It also shows that Swiss food media do not only face competition from neighboring countries, such as Germany, but also from England and the United States. This does not only concern YouTube videos and cookbooks. Respondent 7, for example, has a subscription of a food magazine from the United States that is also shipped from there. Apart from the content, that she favors a lot, she also mentions that it is actually cheaper to subscribe to this American food magazine than to a local Swiss food magazine. This observation of global consumption questions von Rimscha and Siegert’s (2015) suggestion of  

![Table 2 - Communication Ecology of Respondents](image)

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analyzing the media market according to language and cultural borders. It also points to an even bigger challenge to analyze media audiences in Switzerland in general.

6.2. Food Media Practices
The evaluation of the interviews has led to the discovery of an array of practices that are related to food media. The quantitative and qualitative analysis has also revealed that there are indeed a few practices, on which other practices seem to depend. This is in line with Couldry’s (2004) hierarchy of practices, where key practices order other practices. Without these key practices, other actions, such as media use, were not triggered either.

As expected, despite the digitalization in the kitchen, the results also show that there is still a convergence between the use of traditional and digital food media. The respondents do not strictly consume either digital media or traditional media. Thus, the next paragraphs do not only present key practices, but also shed light on which practices involve traditional and/or digital food media.

6.2.1. Learning a new technique or dish
One of such key practices is learning a new technique or dish. A closer look at this particular practice revealed two different arrays of subsequent activities, depending on what kind of technique or dish the respondent aspired to. These movements within the communication ecology are visualized in Fig. 8.

![Figure 6 - Movements while "learning a new technique or dish" (n=10, original figure)](image-url)
If a respondent was keen on learning a new traditional dish or had a question regarding a basic cooking technique, he or she most likely turned to a family member for information and help. This communication happened either through a phone call or instant messages. Asking a family member (mother) for help is not surprising, if the saying of this practice is further divided into Warde’s (2005) categories. A basic technique can be seen as an **understanding**, that is common knowledge. Since all except for one respondent stated that they learned how to cook from their family, it is relatable that they return to where they gathered their common knowledge in the first place.

Traditional cuisine, however, is connected with heritage and childhood memories. A mother’s cooking is often valued higher than any other (Buck, 2008). Thus, looking for a family recipe is rather a doing connected to **engagement**, as it involves many emotions. One respondent underlined this argument, when she was asked why she turned to her mother for this recipe and not another YouTube video.

> “Recently I texted my mother, because I like how she makes it. Those fried noodles, the wide Asian ones. And I always make it like she likes to make it, so I called her”
> (Respondent 2)

This reply showed that she remembered the specific taste of the dish and did not want to compromise (Respondent 2). Another example, that has also been mentioned above, is found in another respondent’s emotional attachment to handwritten recipe books from her mother (Respondent 7):

> “It’s funny... this is like a well-meant argument. We don’t really argue about it, but it is really always a thing. “Who get's the book?” And it goes so far, that we, siblings, say that we would rather take a pass on the house, if we would get these recipe books, because they somehow have such a value...”
> (Respondent 7)

While learning a basic skill or a traditional dish often ended with a phone call to their mothers, learning an advanced cooking technique or a dish from another cuisine required more steps. After the decision of wanting to learn something new, the journey either began with a google search or a search on YouTube. The majority of the respondents preferred
written instructions to a recorded tutorial. Written recipes were either found on blogs or on recipe hubs. Often multiple recipes/instructions were compared and studied, before one was chosen. However, when the written instructions were unclear or included a YouTube link, the respondents would also watch a video. Why do respondents rather turn to the internet for learning a new cooking skill or a new cuisine? I argue that these cooking skills that are not often used in a family household kitchen can be considered as procedures. They exceed the average know-how in the kitchen and are usually learnt in a professional (new skill) or authentic (new cuisine) environment. However, with the technological advances, this knowledge has been democratized (Buck, 2008; Kirkwood, 2018). According to Kirkwood (2018), this democratization has enabled people to learn more about tastes and cooking without having to invest in expensive cookbooks or fine-dining experiences (p.285). This is illustrated by a statement from respondent 3:

“My brother is also like this [into food]. He thought about writing a cookbook once. He’s almost even a bit more self-made [than I am], but maybe that’s also because of money or so... I don’t know. Maybe I can go to more restaurants than he can for financial reasons, but he makes Momos, Empanadas, and what not from scratch. Like really crazy stuff at home.” (Respondent 3)

Knowledge, that would have been only been accessible to a percentage of the public through a specialized education and training, is now available to the public. This shows that digital media does not only bring people together, but also people and knowledge.

The analysis of this key practice shows that the saying of each practice determined the following practice. If the key practice was connected to an understanding or engagement, the following practice would include traditional media, such as handwritten recipes, or an interaction with the social layer through instant messaging apps or telephone. If the key practice “learning a recipe” was linked to procedure, respondents would engage with digital food media. Thus, it is not only the key practice that play a role in ordering other practices, but also the saying attached to the key practice.
6.2.2. Finding recipes

Another key practice is formed by *finding recipes*. A closer look at how respondents searched for a recipe and where they found it revealed that there are three underlying characteristics behind this key practice. Recipes are searched for, when the respondents look for *inspiration* in general, when they expect *guests* for dinner or when they do not know what to do with the *ingredients* they have at home.

While the practice “*finding recipes for inspiration*” happens more out of lust, the practice “*finding recipes with certain ingredients*” emerges out of a need for utilizing certain food before its expiration date. In between these practices, I place the practice “*finding recipes for guests*”. This particular characteristic builds on the need of food for guests, while on the other hand, there’s a lot of freedom regarding the choice of recipe. Therefore, the main criterion is still the cook’s appetite. Depending on the characteristics, the respondents embarked on different paths in the communication ecology (see Fig. 9).

![Figure 7 - Movements while “finding recipes” (n=10, original figure)](image)

The visualization of the results show that inspiration is often found in cookbooks, magazines, YouTube, TV/Netflix, social media, as well as in restaurants or abroad. A few respondents also mentioned that they are inspired by what their friends cook and by their partner’s
suggestions / food wishes. When they look for a menu for their guests, the majority of respondents turned to cookbooks for inspiration. While some follow the recipes step by step, some also trust their own cooking instincts and see recipes more as a suggestive guideline.

Interestingly, when the respondents do not know what cook with the ingredients at home, the majority of them quite often ask Google what to do. This instant reflex to reach out to Google can be seen as how ordinary media has become in the kitchen and shows how embedded this practice already is in our everyday life. The search query is often formulated quite literally in terms of “chicken and broccoli” or “recipe with ingredient xy” (Respondent 3). This indicates that the practice of finding a recipe that has to include certain ingredients does not involve many emotions and can neither be classified as common knowledge. It rather poses a “how to”-question. Thus, I classify the saying of this practice as a procedure. One respondent illustrates that she chooses the recipes based on the ingredients, so that she does not have to go out and buy anything additionally and based on what excites her the most in that moment. She was also very reflective about this process:

“Google basically tells me, probably based on any algorithms of ratings and such, which recipe I am going to cook, because those recipes that appear on top are the ones I choose to cook” (Respondent 3)

The analysis of “finding inspiration”, on the other hand, revealed that the respondents did not use a Google search for this practice. They rather turned to traditional media, such as cookbooks or magazines, as well as to social media, such as Instagram and Pinterest. It is, however, important to note that “finding inspiration” can be accomplished by either actively looking for inspiration or in a passive way, where inspiration is found, while performing another practice. In this present research, the focus lies on the active search for inspiration, as the passive practice would not count as a key practice anymore. Finding inspiration during another practice would rather be described as a nice side product. I argue that the saying of an active search for inspiration can be classified as engagement, since emotions, like lust and memories of taste, guide the search. What strengthens this argument is the importance of food images in this process. Multiple respondents mentioned that their interest is mostly caught by beautiful images of food. Therefore, images have become the decisive factor in whether a recipe is read or not. Food images also have an impact on food media consumption.
However, that is not to say that cookbooks and recipes have lost their functional purpose. Even though my respondents show a high level of cooking skills, they still like to go through their cookbooks in order to find a recipe – especially, when they expect guests. For the majority of my respondents, guests are the main reason for consulting a cookbook. In my findings, this event presents with the opportunity to try a new recipe and cooking something out of the ordinary, which often requires more time. Some cook an entire menu from the cookbook, while others use recipes only as an inspiration and rely on their own creativity and skills in the kitchen. I argue that the doing of “finding a recipe for guests” is linked to 

engagement, as the social component connects this practice with many emotions such as self-expression or pleasing others. Thus, having guests over for dinner can also be regarded as a social event, where lifestyles are performed.

While the further exploration of this lifestyle performance would go beyond the scope of this thesis or even present a subject for a separate thesis, I move on to highlight the beneficial use of communication ecology theory instead. Framing the results from the analysis in communication ecology enabled me to discover patterns in user journeys and explain these similarities by analyzing the movements between the different layers. I assume that a sole focus on one media would not have yielded the same results.

As with the first identified key practice, there is also a difference in using traditional and digital food media depending on the saying of the practice “finding a recipe”. The saying engagement leads to a practice involving digital as well as traditional food media, whereas the saying procedure is followed by a practice with digital food media only. This strengthens the findings from above, that not only practices, but also their sayings order practices. This can also be an explanation for the rise of both traditional and digital food media. While the same practice may involve both forms of media, it is the difference in the saying that ultimately determines, what kind of media is used.

6.2.3. Entertainment practices
The interviews revealed that food media is often consumed for pleasure. The majority of respondents stated that consuming food media for entertainment could also be substituted with watching TV-series. This implies that respondents place these kind of food media in the same realm as watching TV. This result is not surprising for media types, such as TV, magazines and social media, as they aim at being consumed as entertainment.
The popularity of food media can be explained by what Spigel (2001) coined as mobile home phenomena, which she observed when TVs first found their into households. According to her, TVs “offered imaginary transport to urban spaces while allowing family members to remain in the safe space of the suburban home” (Spigel, 2001, p. 388). I argue that food media can also be seen as a window to the culinary world, where one can go on taste expeditions and enjoy the same mouthwatering experience that only take place in one’s own imagination and also feeds off one’s own memories with food. This is illustrated in the following statement:

“When you watch it [Chef’s Table on Netflix], then it becomes almost unbearable, when you only have a poor plate of Spaghetti at home and you actually want to eat what they’re having. It is genuinely hard. Most of the time, I watch it while I’m eating, so that I already have something and eat it. And I don’t have to cravingly watch it without having anything [to eat].” (Respondent 3)

This makes the consumption of food media for pleasure a highly emotional practice. Therefore, I argue that these practices can be categorized as engagements. For one respondent, travelling and food was strongly connected, as she actively relived her memories
by recreating food she had on her journeys. One of her statement also emphasizes the concept of food media as a culinary window to the world:

“[…] Mark Wiens is actually also cool, but somehow I prefer the Food Ranger, maybe it’s because of his nature or also the destinations he visits… and his setting is a bit different and his imagery is different and I think, this is really awesome. And when you see the authenticity and life in those street food stands… and then he goes to an amazing restaurant and eats. then I think to myself “ahhh, I want that too!””
(Respondent 6)

However, after revisiting the statements of the respondents in relation with entertainment, it became clear that “consuming food media for pleasure” does not constitute a key practice. Even though this practice may spark inspiration or new ideas for future cooking projects, it was more often triggered by other practices, such as commuting with public transport, waiting for someone or unwinding after work. Thus, the performance of “consuming food media for pleasure” depends on other circumstances and practices. For example, if the daily commute were to happen by car, the consumption of food media would no longer take place at the same time. Nevertheless, this practice was analyzed in more detail, as it does form a regular part of the respondent’s life, which is directly linked to food media.

A closer look at this practice revealed that it often took place out of habit. Especially digital food media is regularly enjoyed after a day at work, during (lunch) breaks or on a lazy Sunday morning after breakfast. In these instances, consuming digital food media has become a way of relaxation. I argue that this practice demonstrates how media technologies are able to become a part of our everyday life. Both processes of everydayification and boundary dissolution that lead to this development according to Ayaß (2012) are present. By using digital forms of food media and incorporating them in everyday practices and rituals, such as relaxing after coming home from work, media devices are increasingly domesticated. Food media are enjoyed at any time of the day and everywhere – on weekends in bed or in the train during the daily commute. Furthermore, food media can be consumed with others, as well as individually. For these reasons, “consuming food media for entertainment” does not have any boundaries, as they are not bound to time, space or third persons.
6.2.4. Social engagement

The high number of references with social engagement practices in connection with media can be explained by one of the standard questions in the interview, which asks about with whom and where one talks about food. The evaluation of movements of the respondents within the communication ecology show a concentration on Whatsapp, as well as on Family.

![Diagram showing social engagements visualized in movements (n=10, original figure)](image)

As already mentioned before in Chapter 6.1, food forms a central topic in families. However, the practice that links food media with family members are subordinated to key practices, such as learning to cook, as family members are often asked for advice, as well as finding a recipe, since respondents eagerly exchange recipes with family members. The practice finding inspiration may also lead to social engagement, as cookbooks are shared.

The key practice in social engagements unfolds in sharing food content. The majority of respondents state that they share their homemade food with their family and often with a picture of the dish. This sharing of homemade food is often a part of day-to-day communication within a family, which is facilitated by instant messaging apps, such as WhatsApp or Threema. Homemade food is also shared with family members, when respondents cooked or baked after a recipe, which they received from a family member.
7. Discussion

This chapter discusses the results in wider context and in connection with the theoretical framework.

7.1. Transition of Purpose

My findings indicate that cookbooks no longer serve the sole purpose of collecting and archiving recipes. Cookbooks offer visual pleasure, as demonstrated by respondent 8 who bought several cookbooks from the seventies for entertainment purposes:

*I really like flipping through them and sometimes, there are really funny pictures. In the past, you had a whole pig on the table and stuffed two cherries in the eyes. I just like to look at it [cookbook], but I never actually cook anything from it.* (Respondent 8)

This transformation in purpose of cookbooks has also been observed by Rousseau (2012): “Flipping through a cookbook to decide what to cook for dinner is essentially an exercise in fantasy” (p.35). The evaluation of one respondent’s interview also indicates that the same holds for magazines, as the visual appearance of the magazines was one of the main arguments for a subscription (Respondent 7). One respondent even compared cookbooks to art books because of their appearance, but also because of their high prices (Respondent 1). From a practice theoretical point of view, traditional media, such as a cookbook, that was originally used in a procedure practice has now become a practice that is more linked with the saying engagement. Therefore, this observation can be seen as an example of trajectories, with which Warde (2005) conceptualized the change of representations of a practice.

This transition also applies to digital media, such as cooking or baking tutorials on YouTube. From a practice theoretical point of view, practices performed in these videos can be seen as procedures, as they present instructions on how to prepare certain dishes. Thus, procedures have become entertainment and the consumption of procedure practices can be linked to the saying engagement. Buck (2008), who studied cooking shows in German television, goes one step further and arrives to the conclusion that food in media is trending, because it is no longer about food (p.127). This can also be illustrated in respondent 1’s statement:
“Most of the time, it is not even realistic to make these dishes. I watch many [videos] on these food channels, and even though it’s really good content and also very concentrated on cooking, I only watch them for entertainment”

(Respondent 1)

This observation begs the question, what happens, when procedures become entertaining and part of an engagement practice? A possible answer lies in the research on edutainment: Phillipov (2016) described TV programs, such as Masterchef, as an “edutainment” format, “that offers instruction on a range of everyday matters, such as domestic style and self-improvement, and is frequently structured by a narrative of “makeover” or transformation” (p.111). While making educational content more approachable and easier to understand may provide new opportunities in education, it also comes with drawbacks. In said edutainment formats, they de facto inform about what “good” or “normal” lifestyle looks like. In food media, culture is often mediated by a (celebrity) chef, who has now become a lifestyle expert (Phillipov, 2017). For this reason, Bell & Hollows (2011) argue that lifestyle television has also become an important space, where the everyday is mediated. According to Rousseau (2012), this is when food media turn political. Couldry’s (2004) practice theoretical approach to media also sees the power of media in the repetition of certain practices, which become the status quo. This is also exemplified by Ouellette & Hay (2008) who studied Makeover TV programs. They conclude that television has become a powerful tool to insert the image of a good citizen in a post-welfare state with a neo-liberal regime. Makeover programs do so by showing the audience, what a citizen must do, have and look like in order to be accepted in the present society. Furthermore, television is no longer a passive activity, as these images would also encourage viewers to engage with other (media) products, such as branded cookbooks, cooking utensils or even branded food, in order to become a better version of themselves (Ouellette & Hay, 2008). This extension and diversification of product portfolio is not only observed in traditional food media brands, such as MasterChef or Jamie Oliver. Ting (2019) reports that Food52, a food blog, generated 75% of its revenues in their online shop. These numbers encourage other digital food media to consider expanding their e-commerce business (Ting, 2019).

The mediation of certain images, however, does no longer lie in hands of media production companies alone. With social media, the audience have been given a platform, where they can
discuss media content. I argue that this way, social media becomes a new site for mediating a status quo. This observation is underlined by BBC’s recent rice recipe. In a video, their host cooked rice in a rather controversial way, which went viral and caused an outrage in Asia (Thompson, 2020).

Furthermore, the chances that procedures alone have suddenly become entertaining is very slim. I assume that it is rather the format in which procedures take place that have become more attractive. Thus, the attachment to these formats is created by the environment in which these practices of procedures take place. I argue that this particularly shows in the big success of Bon Appetit’s YouTube channel. Rapoport, head of Bon Appetit, intentionally hired independent and relatable personalities (Ting, 2019). At the same time, he insisted on filming in the test kitchen and focusing on the social interactions among each other, while creating a recipe. (Ting, 2019). This concept not only led to more followers for Bon Appétit, but it has also created a big fanbase for their chefs, which was also monetized by selling themed merchandise (Bon Appétit, 2020).

This example also indicates that once a media is linked to engagement rather than just procedure, it is able to attract a larger audience. My findings also suggest that due to practices with the saying engagement, cookbooks and other traditional food media are still in high demand. This insight could be applied to other media genres, such as news media that deals with challenges of convergence between print and digital media. Linking the practice of consuming (print) news media to the saying engagement could lead to an increase in sales. However, this is not to say that news has to become entertaining, but rather a suggestion for making the environment, in which news are presented, more interesting and attractive. Therefore, it is not the practice “consuming news” that has to be linked with engagement. It is the consumption of a specific media, where news is a part of, that has to form a bond with the audience.

7.2. Media Power in Food Media

While the joint force of communication ecology theory and practice theory managed to shed light on the convergence between traditional and digital food media, it was particularly the application of practice theory that has also brought media power dynamics to light. This can also be observed in practices, such as Learning advanced cooking skills / non-traditional
dishes as well as in Finding a new Recipe based on Ingredients. By turning to media for instructions, media is accepted as the carrier of knowledge (Buck, 2008). This allows media to constantly reproduce practices, which is seen as media power according to Couldry’s (2004) practice theory. Once celebrity chefs in cooking shows on TV are perceived as experts (Phillipov, 2017), they slip into a role of authority that enables media to establish certain frames. This framing was also observed in a respondent’s experience:

“I saw that on «Das grosse Backen” [German TV baking competition] and they always say that puff pastry was difficult and a “supreme discipline”. For this reason, I didn’t want to make it at first. If you are told everywhere that puff pastry would be difficult, I thought that the dough would not rise…” (Respondent 2)

After her partner convinced her to give it a try anyway, she realized that it was actually not difficult to make, it only took a lot of time, since the dough needs to rest between the folding (Respondent 2). This influence can be attributed to the power of media as stated by Couldry (2004). The media managed to convince her that puff pastry is a difficult task by repeating this statement. Even though this framing of puff pastry would not significantly affect anyone’s life, there are other aspects in food media that may lead to serious health problems. The framing of food that is considered as “healthy” or “good” is one example. Graeme Tomlinson (2020) gained a big followership on Instagram with his channel @thefitnesschef_ by trenchantly pointing out these preconceptions (see Fig. 10).

![Figure 10 - Instagram post by @thefitnesschef_ (Tomlinson, 2020)](image-url)
However, these images of “good” and “bad” food may also stem from the abundance of information on food and nutrition. Rousseau (2012) who is a pioneer in food media research, made the following observation:

“One of the strangest consequences of the enormous success of the food media industry is that the more access we have to information about food and nourishment – which is what food media are and which is epitomized in the figure of the celebrity chef – the less we apparently know what to do with it.” (p.13)

This helplessness or lack of knowledge directly leads to google. My findings showed that Google was one of the first go-to addresses, when the respondents did not know what to do with the ingredients they have in their pantry or their fridge. As quoted in Chapter 6.2.2., respondent 3 even concluded that Google basically tells her what to eat. This confirms Rousseau’s (2012) thoughts which were inspired by Adorno an Horkheimer: “the more food media we consume, the less incentive we have to think for ourselves about how we eat” (p.12). Based on Deuze’s (2011) statement about increasing invisibility of media with repeated use of it, I argue that the process of turning to Google for advice is also becoming invisible as it no longer requires a lot of thinking anymore. It has become a reflex. Thus, this invisibility adds to the power of media, as it is no longer questioned.

In this case of “finding a new recipe”, food media is also given power in a similar way as in the practice of learning a new skill or new dish. However, this time, food media does not seem to slip into a “teacher” role. It is merely seen as a personal advisor, as most respondents stated that they rarely follow recipes to the last detail. Furthermore, recipes are also compared and questioned. Because of the abundance of recipes, there seems to be an understanding that not all recipes can be trusted as respondent 1 pointed out: “just because someone bothered to write down this recipe, does not mean that it is good” (Respondent 1).

For this reason, Rousseau (2012) calls for more awareness in food media consumption. Critical thinking can be seen as a way to diminish the power of media. In his article about shifting power relations in a network society, Castells (2007) states that the rise of new technologies in mass communication enables the formation of counter-power. In the realm of food media, this is seen in Instagram channels like @thefitnesschef_ , who inform about the misconception of “good/bad” food or also in YouTube channels (Tomlinson, 2020), where the respondent 2 found a professional baker who encouraged her in her attempt of creating puff
pastry by demystifying the creation process of puff pastry (Respondent 2). The power of counter-power also became visible very recently in the course of the black lives matter movement which sparked again after the death of George Floyd in May 2020 (Clarke, 2020). The food media industry was heavily criticized for their lack of diversity and there were a number of initiatives trending on social media which focused on amplifying Black voices in food media. Furthermore, this movement has also led to the lay-off of the head of Bon Appétit, after it became known that non-white editors were paid less than their white colleagues (Bhabha, 2020).

Apart from critical thinking, it is also important to study new types of food media that emerge from the technological advances, as they constitute a space where practices are reproduced over and over again. There are several studies on TV shows in relation to food (see Bradley, 2016; Casey, 2019; Hill, 2018; Lagerwey, 2018), but rarely any on new types of food media such as YouTube. My findings have shown that even in a media niche like food media, that is often not given as much attention as compared to other media genres, power is exerted. More so, given the invisibility of food media due to its everydayification, media become even more powerful. Thus, media research on food media is equally important as on other media genres.

This holds especially true in Switzerland, where there has been little to no media research on this topic so far. However, the practices of the respondents have shown that their consumption does not stop at the border. Their media consumption consists of media from all over the world. While this study was not affected by this “global consumption” due to the main focus on practices, this may pose a challenge for further studies that focus on media representation and its effects on audiences in Switzerland.
8. Conclusion

Traditional and new food media have been in high demand in the last few years (Buck, 2008; Maynard, 2019; Ting, 2019). While most of the research on food media is oriented towards media texts, this thesis aimed at investigating practices with food media in Switzerland, where research on this topic is generally scarce. Moreover, the focus was set on finding out which practices contribute to the consumption of either traditional or digital food media or both.

The underlying theoretical framework was formed by practice theory after Couldry (2004) and Warde (2005) as well as by communication ecology theory after Foth & Hearn (2007). Both theories enabled a holistic view on how people interact with media. The practice theoretical approach led to a strong focus on practice instead of either a type of media or audience. This inclusive view was complemented by communication ecology theory, which allowed to organize and break down practices in practices into technological, discursive and social layers. While communication ecology theory was particularly helpful in illustrating the interactions of the respondents with different kinds of media and people in relation to different discourses and finding patterns, the main findings were predominantly discovered by applying practice theory to the research.

The results from the questionnaire and the subsequent interviews revealed that a variety of food media was consumed, as illustrated in Table 1. It also brought media, such as instant messaging apps or Google, to light, which were involved in food media practices. While instant messaging apps provided a platform for families and friends to exchange food content, Google facilitated the access to an array of digital food media. The evaluation of the interviews resulted in 1505 coded practices. The practice theoretical premise, that practices are organized in a hierarchy, enabled me to find two food-media-intensive practices which can trigger another set of practices that involve food media. These main practices include learning a recipe as well as finding a recipe. On top of that, consuming food media as entertainment was also considered, as it constitutes a regular part of the everyday life of the respondents. Furthermore, analyzing the sayings of practices according to Warde (2005) revealed that not only practices, but also the sayings of practices are ordering practices. In this study, it shows how different sayings lead to a practice with traditional food media or digital food media.
In conclusion, the analysis of these dominating food media practices brought two dynamics to light: the transition of purpose and the concept of power in food media. The transition of purpose refers to the consumption of food media for pleasure. In the very beginning, food media served a functional purpose of passing on and archiving recipes. Nowadays, food media is also enjoyed without the intention of recreating these dishes at first. Therefore, this transition may explain the growing demand in traditional food media, such as cookbooks. They are involved in practices, that are linked with the saying *engagement*. However, when *procedures* become a part of an *engagement* practice, media becomes more powerful, as they are accepted as a carrier of knowledge. In this position, they are able to frame and actively influence discourses by reproducing practices. Ultimately, this is where Couldry (2004) sees the exertion of media power. These frames do not only concern food-related issues, but also cover the lifestyle of a “good”, in terms of socially accepted, citizen. However, media starts to lose this power, once the performed practices in the media are questioned. While news media is increasingly questioned due to the rise of fake news, food media often falls under the radar. In this case, food media works like a wolf in sheep’s clothing, as its consumption seems innocent and often goes unnoticed because it has already been domesticated.

Going forward, this research could be conducted on a larger scale, in order to investigate media power further and on more grounds. Furthermore, following Lewis’ (2018) argument that food constitutes a space, where the culture is negotiated and mediated, these insights may also contribute to the study of power relations in general. Another interesting research is the concept of edutainment. While this concept is often used to study TV programs (Bell & Hollows, 2011; De Backer & Hudders, 2016; Ouellette & Hay, 2008; Phillipov, 2016), I argue that the application of this concept to non-traditional food media, such as YouTube, may also yield interesting insights.

All in all, by studying food media practices, this thesis was able to explain the convergence in food media with a closer look at practices and disclose the power of media in a field that seems as innocent as a cupcake. Due to the democratization of knowledge facilitated by digital technologies, the information is out there to reclaim the power. However, this is only achieved by critical thinking – something that digital technologies cannot take over for us (yet).
References


Thompson, D. (2020, July 31). A BBC cook’s “upsetting” rice recipe is stirring controversy online. *Intheknow.Com.* Retrieved from https://www.intheknow.com/2020/07/31/a-bbc-cooks-upsetting-rice-recipe-is-stirring-controversy-online/?guccounter=1&guce_referrer=aHR0cHM6Ly93d3cuZ29vZ2xlLmNvbS8&guce_referrer_sig=AQAAADi9cEdUJpWP23y84UiuuJRC3FJ-s1OeF45J8J4FiW5hc6WtDFeDbsI71Q362gInHf_atkJJju8_csoIijyf-FBMUubB5RI109yBU_1Zb4esGV7UxmfiEiSbUjjsohiB7Rq3HAF3ovMOJQNygr33Vu1p3U5TdrYihRoxF0IHWxlsY

Tomlinson, G. [@thefitnesschef_]. (13 May 2020). We like to idolize and demonize most things. We crave affirmation that what we believe in is universally correct. An example can easily be found in those idolizing their favourite sports team, whilst demonizing that team’s bitter rival. Yet, if... [Instagram photo]. Retrieved from https://www.instagram.com/p/CAIzOltA40x/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link


Appendix 1 – Questionnaire

This questionnaire was translated from German to English.

Cookbooks

- How many cookbooks do you possess?
  *Single Choice Answer:*
    - 0
    - 1 – 10 Cookbooks
    - 11 – 20 Cookbooks
    - > 20 Cookbooks

- How often do you use your cookbooks?
  *Single Choice Answer:*
    - Never
    - Less than once a month
    - A few times a month
    - A few times a week
    - Daily

- These are my favorite cookbooks:
  *open question*

Magazines

- How many food-related magazines do you read on a regular basis or have a subscription of?
  *Single Choice Answer:*
    - 0
    - 1 – 5 Magazines
    - 6 – 10 Magazines
    - > 10 Magazines

- How often do you read these magazines?
  *Single Choice Answer:*
    - Never
    - Less than once a month
    - A few times a month
    - A few times a week
    - Daily

- These are my favorite magazines:
  *open question*
Newspapers

- In how many newspapers do you read about food media on a regular basis?
  *Single Choice Answer:*
  - 0
  - 1 – 5 Newspapers
  - 6 – 10 Newspapers
  - > 10 Newspapers

- How often do you read about food media these newspapers?
  *Single Choice Answer:*
  - Never
  - Less than once a month
  - A few times a month
  - A few times a week
  - Daily

- These are my favorite newspapers:
  *open question*

Recipe Hubs

- How many recipe hubs do you visit regularly?
  *Single Choice Answer:*
  - 0
  - 1 – 5 Newspapers
  - 6 – 10 Newspapers
  - > 10 Newspapers

- How often do you consult these online recipe hubs?
  *Single Choice Answer:*
  - Never
  - Less than once a month
  - A few times a month
  - A few times a week
  - Daily
  - Multiple times a day

- What are your favorite recipe hubs?
  *open question*

Blogs

- How many food-related blogs do you read on a regular basis?
  *Single Choice Answer:*
  - 0
  - 1 – 5 Magazines
  - 6 – 10 Magazines
  - > 10 Magazines
- How often do you read these magazines?
  
  *Single Choice Answer:*
  
  o Never
  o Less than once a month
  o A few times a month
  o A few times a week
  o Daily

- These are my favorite magazines:
  
  *open question*

**Newsletters**

- How many newsletters have you subscribed?
  
  *Single Choice Answer:*
  
  o 0
  o 1 – 5 Magazines
  o 6 – 10 Magazines
  o > 10 Magazines

- What are your favorite newsletters:
  
  *open question*

**Food-related TV / Netflix programs**

- How many food-related TV/Netflix shows do you watch on a regular basis?
  
  *Single Choice Answer:*
  
  o 0
  o 1 – 5 Magazines
  o 6 – 10 Magazines
  o > 10 Magazines

- How often do you watch them?
  
  *Single Choice Answer:*
  
  o Never
  o Less than once a month
  o A few times a month
  o A few times a week
  o Daily

- These are my favorite food-related TV/Netflix shows:
  
  *open question*
Food tutorials on YouTube

- How many YouTube channels with Food Tutorials do you watch on a regular basis or have you subscribed to?
  *Single Choice Answer:*
  - 0
  - 1 – 5 Channels
  - 6 – 10 Channels
  - 11 - 20 Channels
  - > 20 Channels

- How often do you watch them?
  *Single Choice Answer:*
  - Never
  - Less than once a month
  - A few times a month
  - A few times a week
  - Daily

- These are my favorite YouTube channels with food tutorials shows:
  *open question*

Food-related entertainment on YouTube

- How many YouTube channels with food-related entertainment do you watch on a regular basis or have you subscribed to?
  *Single Choice Answer:*
  - 0
  - 1 – 5 Channels
  - 6 – 10 Channels
  - 11 - 20 Channels
  - > 20 Channels

- How often do you watch them?
  *Single Choice Answer:*
  - Never
  - Less than once a month
  - A few times a month
  - A few times a week
  - Daily

- These are my favorite YouTube channels with food-related entertainment:
  *open question*
Food-related travel vloggers on YouTube

- How many food-related travel vloggers on YouTube do you watch on a regular basis or have you subscribed to?
  Single Choice Answer:
  o 0
  o 1 – 5 Channels
  o 6 – 10 Channels
  o 11 - 20 Channels
  o > 20 Channels

- How often do you watch them?
  Single Choice Answer:
  o Never
  o Less than once a month
  o A few times a month
  o A few times a week
  o Daily

- These are my favorite food-related travel vloggers on YouTube:
  open question

Food-related ASMR / Mukbang on YouTube

- How many YouTube channels with food-related ASMR / Mukbang do you watch on a regular basis or have you subscribed to?
  Single Choice Answer:
  o 0
  o 1 – 5 Channels
  o 6 – 10 Channels
  o 11 - 20 Channels
  o > 20 Channels

- How often do you watch them?
  Single Choice Answer:
  o Never
  o Less than once a month
  o A few times a month
  o A few times a week
  o Daily

- These are my favorite YouTube channels with food-related ASMR / Mukbang:
  open question
Food-related ASMR / Mukbang on YouTube

- How many YouTube channels with food-related ASMR / Mukbang do you watch on a regular basis or have you subscribed to?
  *Single Choice Answer:*
  o 0
  o 1 – 5 Channels
  o 6 – 10 Channels
  o 11 - 20 Channels
  o > 20 Channels

- How often do you watch them?
  *Single Choice Answer:*
  o Never
  o Less than once a month
  o A few times a month
  o A few times a week
  o Daily

- These are my favorite YouTube channels with food-related ASMR / Mukbang:
  *open question*

Food on Instagram

- How many food-related Instagram accounts do you follow?
  *Single Choice Answer:*
  o 0
  o 1 – 5 Accounts
  o 6 – 10 Accounts
  o 11 - 20 Accounts
  o > 20 Accounts

- These are my favorite food-related Instagram accounts:
  *open question*

Food on Pinterest

- How many food-related Pins do you have on Pinterest?
  *Single Choice Answer:*
  o 0
  o 1 – 20 Pins
  o 21 – 50 Pins
  o 51 - 100 Pins
  o > 100 Pins
- How often do you use Pinterest in connection with food/cooking/baking?
  *Single Choice Answer:*
  
  o Never
  o Less than once a month
  o A few times a month
  o A few times a week
  o Daily

**Food-related Podcasts**

- How many food-related Podcasts do you listen to on a regular basis?
  *Single Choice Answer:*
  
  o 0
  o 1 – 5 Podcasts
  o 6 – 10 Podcasts
  o > 10 Podcasts

- How often do you listen to them?
  *Single Choice Answer:*
  
  o Never
  o Less than once a month
  o A few times a month
  o A few times a week
  o Daily

- These are my favorite food-related Podcasts:
  *

**Food-related Apps**

- How many food-related Apps do you have on your smartphone?
  *Single Choice Answer:*
  
  o 0
  o 1 – 5 Apps
  o 6 – 10 Apps
  o > 10 Apps

- How often do you use them?
  *Single Choice Answer:*
  
  o Never
  o Less than once a month
  o A few times a month
  o A few times a week
  o Daily

- These are my favorite food-related Apps:
  *

open question
Meal Kit Delivery Service

- How often do you use this service?
  *Single Choice Answer:*
  - Never
  - Once
  - A few times a month
  - A few times a week
  - Daily

- These are my favorite Meal-Kit Delivery Services:
  *open question*

Other Food Media

- I hope I was able to list all types of food media that you use in your everyday life. However, should I have forgotten one, I would be very thankful, if you could let me know:
  *open question*
Appendix 2 – Interview Guide

The interview was conducted in a semi-structured way. Therefore, the following questions mainly served as a base structure for the interview. Furthermore, each interview guide was slightly adjusted in the questions regarding the technological layer, as not all respondents engaged with the same types of food media. The following interview guide shows the questions for respondent 1.

Icebreaker / Entry question:

- Where and how did you learn to cook?

Questions regarding Movements in the Communication Ecology:

- What was the last dish you cooked / baked after a recipe?
  - Where did you find this recipe?
  - Why did you rely on this recipe and not another?
  - Why did you want to cook this in the first place?
  - Did you take a picture of the food?
    ▪ If yes, did you share the picture with someone?
  - How often do you cook after a recipe?
    ▪ How else do you cook?
    ▪ Do you use other media for assistance?
  - Can you think of a memory, where you cooked with the help of media?

Questions regarding Technological Layer (adjusted for respondent 1):

- How often are you on Reddit?
- Why do you read food content on Reddit?
- Where do you get food-related memes from?
- How is it, that you do not follow any food-related Instagram accounts?
- You’re mostly on YouTube for watching recipe tutorials and food-related entertainment as well as on recipe hubs…
  - Can you explain, why you are mostly on these platforms?
  - When do you go on these platforms?
  - How many recipes do you recreate?
  - Why do you prefer these platforms to an actual cookbook?
Where do you consume this food content?
- If you would not watch this content, what would you do instead?
- What do you before and after using these types of media?

**Questions regarding Social Layer:**

- With whom do you talk about food?
  - What do you talk about?
  - How often do you talk about food?
  - Why do you do that?
- How would you describe your activity on Social Media?
  - Do you like / comment on posts /stories of people you don’t know personally?
  - Do you share food content?
    - Why / why not?

**Questions regarding Discursive Layer:**

- Where do you get most of your inspiration for cooking / baking?

**Food Trends:**

- What food trends can you think of?
- Where would you first hear about them?
- How do you feel about them?

- Have you already heard of these trends? [if no food trends are thought of]
  - Dalgona coffee
  - Superfood / Pokebowls
  - Naked Cake
  - Banana Bread (in den letzten 6 Wochen)

**Cooking Skills:**

- If you wouldn’t know, how to cook rice – what would you do?
- If you wouldn’t know, how to poach an egg – how would you learn it?
- What dish / cooking skills would you learn from your parents?

**Questions regarding the COVID-19 outbreak:**

- How did COVID-19 outbreak affect your eating and cooking behavior?
Appendix 3 – Codebook

Appendix 3a – Codebook for first open and selective coding

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<th>DESCRIPTION</th>
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<td>References that indicate the location of food media consumption</td>
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Appendix 3b – Codebook for second axial coding

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**Social Layer**

| Cooking Class | References to cooking class (outside of school) |

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7
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20
92
24
51
6
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5
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**Time of Consumption**

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Appendix 3c – Codebook for second axial coding after grouping

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<td>30</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
## Social Layer

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>Cooking Class</th>
<th>References that describe an engagement with an educational institution</th>
<th>1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>