

Consumption of information and digital competencies of journalism students from Colombia, Peru and Venezuela

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Abstract: This paper proposes to examine the information consumption habits emerging in journalism students in Colombia, Peru and Venezuela, in particular the trend of infoxication and information overload in their communication ecosystem and also to analyze the media-literacy skills acquired over their training. The methodology focused on a digital self-administered quantitative questionnaire, applied to 1,603 third-year students of journalism at universities in Medellín, Lima and Caracas. Key findings are intensive use of Internet and social media that exceeds 5 hours a day, with especial attention to the fact that most of the content received through these networks is pseudo-information and stressing that media literacy training for informational consumption is preeminently self-taught.

Key words: infoxication, information overload, data smog, information consumption habits, media literacy.

Resumen: El objeto del presente artículo es profundizar en los hábitos de consumo informativo que se perfilan en estudiantes del grado de comunicación en Colombia, Perú y Venezuela, en particular sobre la tendencia a la infoxicación y sobrecarga informativa de su propio ecosistema comunicativo, así como indagar sobre las competencias comunicativas que han obtenido en su formación. La metodología se centró en un cuestionario autoadministrado digital de carácter cuantitativo, aplicado a 1.603 estudiantes de tercer año en universidades privadas de Medellín, Lima y Caracas. Entre las principales conclusiones se destaca un intensivo consumo de internet y redes sociales que supera las cinco horas diarias, con especial atención a que la mayor parte de los contenidos recibidos a través de sus redes son pseudoinformaciones y que la formación en competencias mediáticas para el consumo informativo se hace preminentemente de manera autodidacta.

Palabras clave: infoxicación, sobrecarga informativa, infobesidad, hábitos de consumo informativo, competencias mediáticas.

Introduction

The reduction on the costs of smartphones and tablets as well as the significant overload of internet use in Spain and Latin America have become crucial factors in the creation and modification of information consumption habits tending to infodiet (Shenk, 2003: 396-397; Cornella, 2010; Aguaded and Romero-Rodríguez, 2015: 47), understanding such as an excess on the consumption of necessary information for decision making, mostly entertainment content; therefore, an overload of an individual's cognitive capacity which produces distraction from important issues as well as their own rational alienation (Dias, 2014; Romero-Rodríguez, 2014: 33-48).

In the case of Spain, the universalization of internet access by youths from 16 to 24 years of age reaches 97.4% (INE, 2013), while the total penetration of internet use in Colombia (59.5%), Peru (36.5%) and Venezuela (41.0%) is mostly represented by 15-to-23-year youths (Internet World Stats, 2012). The permanent and omnipresent access that mobile web platforms allow –chat, social networks and apps– could be generating a cognitive overload and immanent distraction by the absence of infodiet and media, informational and digital literacy, including future journalists, serving as the breeding ground for a structural misinformation in the society.

Recent statistics on the use of information and communication technology (ICT), according to a study carried out in 21 countries, showed that population has integrated into the use of internet, particularly into social networks via smartphones. Being such technological tools the most used and popular among people under 30 with university education (Pew Research Center, 2014).

No surprising is it that young people pay especial attention to academic literature regarding ICT (Tapscott, 2009). Youths nowadays interact with social networks more than any other social group (Cabalin, 2014), which has generated a myriad of debates between enthusiasts and skeptics –in the words of Eco (1964), *Apocalypse Postponed*– on the benefits and drawbacks that these collaborative spaces generate.

As the main advantages of the interaction habits of the youth in social networks, one could list the “activism of an online generation”, more connected to political and social issues (Herrera, 2012), a production and consumption system (prosumption) independent and isolated from “symbolic manipulation mechanisms” (Castells, 2012: 5), one powerful instrument for the education and intellectual and professional formation (Rial *et al.*, 2014); while on the other hand, some problems arise, more frequently, in young population, like the addiction to be online and the effects of “hyperconnection”, which could generate stress, social isolation, familiar conflicts, decreasing school performance, language deterioration, individualistic behaviors and identity impersonation (Shapira *et al.*, 2003; Echeburúa and de Corral, 2010; Caldevilla, 2010; Lee and Stapinski, 2012), social networks and online videogames being the ones generating more addicts (Lam *et al.*, 2009).

The main objective of this article is to analyze the information consumption habits and behaviors toward the reception of network content by third grade Journalism students from private universities in Medellín, Lima and Caracas. More precisely, a comparison of the access typologies and received content was drawn, both between the geographical entities mentioned and among age groups, in order to identify which groups are more prone to infoxication.

In the second place, we will try to verify the quality of the contents that the prospective journalists have access to according to the utility of the information, in view of their academic, professional or decision making achievement; and finally, we will look into the media literacy of the analyzed sample and their perception of the importance of media literacy.

It is considered to be pertinent to make a study with Journalism students, since they are in a training phase for this profession, which is founded on the responsible management of informational contents, on the understanding that they will be the encoders of future events and the creators of the media discourse. Thus, they are considered to be a public that must have an academic training toward the selection and filtering of useful information, and must know and differentiate better than other groups who share their age ranges, the information dynamics and pseudoinformation on the internet and its multiple platforms.

The present study is carried out taking as the methodological foundation the researches made by Livingstone (2008), Livingstone and Helsper (2010), Livingstone and Brake (2010), Livingstone *et al.* (2011), Valcke *et al.* (2011) and the most recent study in the Spanish context, produced by García, López-de-Ayala and García (2013); works that have as the subject of study the interrelationship between children and the internet in respect to the contents they can be subject to. Therefore, this study will adapt to the aforementioned population.

Similarly, we take the works of Marín-Díaz, Sampedro-Requena and Muñoz-González (2015) as a reference, which analyzes the addiction of young college students to social networks, as well as the works presented by Gisbert and Esteve (2011) and Gallardo (2012), which examine the state of play of the affectation levels of ICT on college students and their digital literacy, in the light of the understanding that the new generations have changed radically the way in which they interact and inform because of the irruption of new technologies.

Infoxication and data smog: state of play

The concept of infoxication and data smog has been analyzed in the light of the omnipotent information access that modern society is beginning to acquire thanks to ICT, which allow relatively easily managing and increasing social relations and infinite

access to information on the net (Benito-Ruiz, 2009; Cornella, 2010; Dias, 2014), frequently resulting in the cognitive overload and the reduction of the capacity of comprehension, analysis and appreciation of such information in the decision making process (Gross, 1964; Shenk, 2003; Speier *et al.*, 1999).

Nonetheless, even when infoxication begins to be a subject of study with great scientific interest, due to the massification occurring with the access to the internet, Jacoby, Speller and Kohn (1974) and Jacoby (1977, 1984) already warned that immoderate information consumption can have dysfunctional consequences on cognitive processes and decision making. Even in 1970, futuristic writer Alvin Toffler (1970: 171-173) coined the term information overload to refer to the sensory overstimulation by which we perceive the construction of reality and that affects our ability to think, as it disrupts the continuous flow of the information we need.

The current model of information production, characterized by a society avid of presumption, the globalization of their interests and communications, the multiplicity of connection platforms and the growth of the necessity to be “online” are creating a breeding ground for an overloaded and distracted society in which informational overexposure constitutes the own blood flow of civilization (Shenk, 2003; Gitlin, 2005; Bray, 2008; Gleick, 2011; Andrejevic, 2013).

In fact, at the end of 2013, it was reported a total of: 204 million emails, 20 hours of YouTube videos, 2 million Google searches, 73 electronic sales on Amazon and 850 thousand social network interactions, a minute (Nielsen, 2014); this makes it virtually impossible to collect a significant percentage of all the information of events happening in a lifetime, understanding that our cerebral and cognitive evolution has remained inert for fifty thousand years, even when the supply of information keeps growing exponentially (Shenk, 2003; Cortés, 2006).

This scenario results in individuals adapting to the overload of stimuli dedicating less time to each input –informational entry-, blocking the reception of other inputs by effect of “voluntary scotomization” and installing filters to keep the quantity of data at levels which are possible to manage (Milgram, 2010), which creates a dissonance inherent to the very communicative process, in which a great part of the informational load is automatically rejected by the excess of the information that is already acquired, making the receptor fall into the vice of preferences for pseudoinformational content, rejecting those messages which are ideal for the representation of the reality of knowledge by their usefulness in decision making.

This means that subjects reject a large part of the information they receive because of their inability to process and maintain it, therefore the problem lies in the individual’s capacity to catalog, filter and maintain useful information and dispose of that with no value in terms of utility.

Cognitive assimilation barriers and pseudoinformation

In order to have an effective decision making process, certain quantity and quality of information is necessary, however, a surplus of it would gradually lead to a proportional decrease in cognitive capacity, depending on the process abilities and communicative competencies of its filtering. For this reason, it is not necessarily the person receiving more information the one who is better informed, but that who knows how to filter the information which is useful and dispose of that which is not.

Thereby, when the quantity of information received Q_i increases, the theoretical limit of the subject's filtering ability (R_0) increases proportionately to their real ability of process (SS). Nevertheless, the more information available, the larger the differential breach between the real ability (SS) and its theoretical limit of filtering (R_0), expressed with a curved line due to the decrease of the information quality by the effect of its quantity —overload— (Stewart *et al.*, 1992: 131).

The previous hypothesis assumes that as long as the quantity of information received (Q_i) is lower than the cognitive assimilation capacity (CA), it results in the real ability (SS) —because the subject can process that quantity of information—, provided that the real ability (SS) is that acquired by the amount of inputs cognitively assimilated for decision making or information recoding. Therefore, overload and infoxication (S_1) would be understood as the excess of quantity of information (Q_i) larger than the capacity of the individual's capacity of cognitive assimilation (CA) (Romero-Rodríguez, 2014): $S_1 = Q_i < CA$

The problem arises in the information selection process, thus, while infoxication creates a rupture in the cognitive process generating psychological dissonance and noise, both for excess as well as informational uselessness. An incorrect consumption habit and the insufficiency of communicative and digital literacy for the correct selection and filtering would also generate that the receptor receives pseudoinformation, and what is worse, that they become a multiplying factor and diffuser of such contents through the existing multidiverse platforms on the internet.

This way, information overload and permanent and irrational access to the internet could generate structural misinformation, since, on the one side, multitasking creates unwilling distraction by the subject to commonly undertaken activities; and, on the other, the bulk of data accessed is not necessarily useful for personal and professional development, while their own cognitive filters can reject useful information, confusing the subject and generating a breeding ground for disinformation (Romero-Rodríguez, 2012; 2014).

Hence, the surplus of information demands spending enough time and the needed discernment to select the most beneficial contents (Serrano-Puche, 2014), although it is worth confirming that in the information overload context the receptors mostly trust their social networks contacts as primary filters (Rainie and Wellman, 2012); thereby, the subjects could be turning into “isolated islands inside conviction bubbles” (Doval, 2012), which definitely causes the perceptive and interpretative parceling for the creation of realities depending on the otherness, preventing the receptor from a more holistic and integrative vision of the events (Pariser, 2011).

Digital literacy and infodiet

Digital literacy is defined as a collection of abilities, capacities, skills and knowledge for the use and consumption of internet information, which in exchange, makes the subject keep an imperative necessity to be online (Gisbert and Esteve, 2011). New generations, who have been called “Millennials” (Howe and Strauss, 1991; Lancaster and Stillman, 2002; Martin and Tulgan, 2002; Oblinger and Oblinger, 2005), “Digital Generation” (Tapscott, 2009), “Digital Natives” (Prensky, 2001) or “i-Generation” (Rosen *et al.*, 2010), are distinguished, according to these authors, by a strong digital literacy, their sense of immediacy, social character and multitasking tendency; even though other authors like White (2010) and Corrin *et al.* (2010) argue that digital literacy is not relative or proportional to an age group or generational characteristics, but by the youths’ approximation to technologies, therefore, one cannot ensure the existence of two different generations –digital natives and non-natives–, but different approaching habits to digital environments.

Regardless of the former, current generations have greater ease at their exposition to multiscreen and tendency to prosuming hyperconnection (Morduchowicz, 2008; Sabada and Bingué, 2009; Aguaded and Sandoval, 2011; Sandoval and Aguaded, 2012). They require training so their interactions with the net can be rational and responsible, both in the analysis and criticism of received messages, as in the roles of producers and distributors of contents through social-digital nodes.

Media literacy takes the vital role of the necessity that communicative competencies impose on the formulation of digital diets, not only by the excess of contents but also by the imperative culture of speed and a relative triumph of the trivial and superficial over the important, above all in the digital context.

For this reason, a correct informational diet must understand that input overload affects productivity (Hurst, 2007; Serrano-Puche, 2014) and memory (Klingberg, 2009; Niada, 2010), being multitasking a myth, as concentration is indivisible (Crenshaw, 2008), which causes objective distraction (Romero-Rodríguez, 2014).

Thereby, this must be understood in the “Principle of Relevance” (Lucchetti, 2010), as the subject’s ability to select useful information and reject useless information, focusing on directing their receptive capacity to the primary sources of information and not to the prosumption of distorted opinions, memes and viral contents (Johnson, 2012; Rodríguez, 2013), just as acquiring competencies through media literacy in order to ignite statistical thinking, critical mass, searching abilities and information filtering (Reig and Vilchez, 2013; Serrano-Puche, 2014).

Method

In the present study, we have opted for a quantitative survey on third grade IT, Journalism, Social Communication or related students in private universities in Medellín (Colombia), Lima (Peru) and Caracas (Venezuela), with the purpose of knowing their consumption habits on the internet, evaluating the quality of the information they access and assessing their education in communicative competencies in order to establish infodiets that prevent infoxication, data smog and the use of pseudoinformation.

The initial hypothesis (H1) is that students keep a habit of disproportionate informational consumption, which generates the ideal conditions for infoxication. The second hypothesis (H2) argues that the bulk of the data which prospective journalists access has a high content of false or trivial information; neither related to their personal nor professional development, not even useful for decision making. Lastly, the third hypothesis (H3) establishes that there are no plans or programs focused on media literacy at an early age which establish responsible infodiets and internet media consumption habits.

Methodological Strategies

A quantitative study was conducted with a non-representative statistical survey self-administered by third grade students (fourth and fifth semesters) from the careers of Communication Sciences, Journalism, Social Communication or related from universities in Medellín (Colombia), Lima (Peru) and Caracas (Venezuela), during the school year 2014/2015, in September and October 2014. This sample was non-randomly selected from 1,603 college students, aged between 16 and 30 years old (MAGE = 21.57), 989 (61.69%) women and 614 (38.30%) men (see Table 1¹).

The survey was conducted through the Typeform® tool, with the support of professors from universities in different cities to the ones mentioned in order to promote its compliance and included dichotomous questions, Likert scale and Multiple selection. The questionnaire, 18 questions, has followed a logical sequence

¹ All the tables and figures can be found in the Appendix, at the end of this article (Editor’s note).

beginning with short socio-demographical questions –country, university, age and gender–, continuing with issues related to the hypotheses proposed. We decided to conduct the questionnaire online, due to its fast nature at recollecting information, low cost and interviewer-interviewee distance (Díaz-de-Rada, 2012), characteristics that adapt to the objectives and line of this study. Additionally, the surveys were conducted in private universities due to the impossibility to obtain authorization in public universities.

Subsequently, IBM-SPSS® version 18 was used for the analysis of results, using the command “Personalized Tables” which allow generating contingency tables, including more than two variables, while, at the same time, controlling the effects of third variables which interrelate with the dependent variables (country, gender and age). The statistical validity level which will indicate the non-random detected differences is $X^2 < 0.05$. The total effective sample collected was 1,603 students, stratified as shown in Table 1.

Analysis and Results

In the first place, the informational consumption habits of the respondents are described according to the time they spend a day online, the activities they perform in parallel to their access and the amount of windows, tabs or apps they keep simultaneously –multitasking–. The following three subsections analyze: 1) completion of their review of webpages and social networks; 2) kinds of information or pseudoinformation more commonly received and their consumption habits; 3) respondents’ perception about the relevance and suitability of the acquisition of communicative competencies to establish infodiets and responsible informational consumption habits.

Informational consumption habits on the net

The first factor analyzed is how long each day and the respondents’ activity performed on the net. According to them, 67.2% of the sample spend between five and eight hours a day online, reaching 74.7% if we include those who spend more than eight hours a day. Upon this result, women spend more time on the internet, 81.3% access for more than five hours a day; while in the group between 20-23 years old, 77.2% claim to carry out this activity between five and eight hours a day.

In terms of internet consumption habits by country, Venezuela is the leader in hours a day with 84.5% of the subjects who connect for more than five hours, following Peru with 81.1% and Colombia with 77.8% in the same interval of time.

The second factor analyzed is the tendency to multitasking, daily activities and internet access. 68.2% of the respondents answered that they surf the net at the same time they perform any other daily activity such as going to school, chatting, having dinner or any other moment; 21.6% affirmed that they access during any other free time, namely, while not doing anything, while 10.2% said they were online only when there was an available WiFi network or that they rarely connect to the net.

In order to assess multitasking, we considered the evaluation of the tendency to multiple windows, tabs or apps operating in the background in the same connection. In this way, 58.2% of the sample informed that they commonly keep six tabs, windows or apps opened in parallel; while 34.6% work simultaneously with more than three but less than six tabs, windows or apps; meanwhile, only the remaining 7.2% access the internet using less than three. According to these data, the reasons for opening more than one tab, window or app are: to continue reading later, even when they admit never continuing (67.2%), speed in the access to the information (28.6%) and to continue reading a posteriori, which they admit doing it or never opening a window without closing the previous one (4.2%).

Completion of information inspection online

One very interesting fact are the information reading habits in webpages and social networks of potential journalists: 86.2% admits not reading the website they browse completely; 98.6% of the age group between 16-19 years old admits not concluding the inspection of the webpage completely.

Regarding information that is presented as a summary on social networks and having hyperlinks or external links to access the whole information, 72% of the respondents claims that they only read the summary or extract of the piece of news in their Timeline (Twitter) or their News Feed (Facebook), before sharing it, commenting on the note, “liking it” (Facebook) or “bookmarking it” (Twitter); meanwhile, only the remaining 28% confirms reading the information comprehensively before sharing it with their contacts.

With reference to Sharing or Retweeting information, the youngest age group (16-19) admits doing it more frequently without having read the information completely; 96.3% positive answers.

Regarding the different age groups, there are no significant differences in terms of informational completion habits, with the Venezuelan sample having the highest tendency to not reading the webpage information completely (87%), followed by Peruvian potential journalists with 86.2% and their Colombian peers with 85.5%.

Typology and information consumption habits

According to the cluster of information or pseudoinformation they receive in their social networks (Facebook and Twitter), the journalism students analyzed in this study testify that 58.6% of it are lists and viral information with little useful content for their decisions and professional education; 21.1% is music and/or viral videos; 13.4% is useful news and information, and the remaining 6.9% famous quotations and other kind of contents, which leaves in crystalline clarity that the information received in social networks is mostly pseudoinformation in terms of utility.

The largest differences between the data referred are presented more frequently in the age groupings: the age group 20-23 is the one who receives more pseudoinformational content, 96.3%; while the 28-year-olds and older receive less, 70% (look at Table 2). In the case of stratification of data by gender or geographic area, there are no great differences. In fact, Pearson's Chi-square test, taking the ages as independent variable, produces the value 98.948(a) with the expected frequency below 5; meanwhile, the minimum expected frequency is 1.03 (look at Table 3), which manifests the existence of statistically significant differences between age groups.

The potential journalists over 28 years are the ones who receive more useful information for their personal, professional and decision making development (30%), followed by the age group 24-27 (10.3%); meanwhile the group between 16 to 23 year-olds amounts to 13.2%, totaling this typology of useful contents only 13.4% of their informational reception in their social networks (see Figure 1).

The questionnaire also included four informational units with different levels of utility, giving the respondent the chance to decide which one they would delve into. Thus, the analyzed sample claims they would mostly delve into the link that shows photographs and videos with a fight between Orlando Bloom and Justin Bieber (41.2%) or the one showing the Canadian Prime Minister stopped following Homer Simpson on Twitter (31.1%); meanwhile, 15.3% of the students affirm they would mainly access some information related to their profession and 12.4% would access a research about a possible solution of the conflict in the Middle East.

When being questioned about the possibilities to obtain erroneous information or uninformatinal contents on the internet opposed to those disseminated by traditional media –press, radio and television–, 52.4% of the respondents declared that the internet presents exactly the same information as traditional media; 38.6% maintained that it is more probable to be uninformed through internet contents; on the other hand, only 9% argued that it is more probable to find wrong information and uninformatinal contents in traditional media.

Communicative competencies for the infodiet

Inquiring on the abilities and attitudes of the journalism students toward media and forms of acquiring knowledge about the responsible informational consumption of its contents; “Which should be the way to obtain competencies and abilities to learn to be informed?”, 81.3% answered that the consumption of media and internet are like a diet and that a professional should teach the correct habits to be informed, while the remaining 18.7% considers that the best way to acquire communicative competencies should be teaching oneself.

To this respect, only 12.4% of the respondents claimed to have had some subject or curriculum related to responsible media consumption during their education; the remaining 87.6% assured the opposite. There is a necessity to point that from the part of the sample who confirmed to have had some curricular activity related to media literacy (12.4%), 62.3% is Colombian, followed by Peruvian journalists with 21.1% and 16.6% is Venezuelan.

In relation to those who admitted not having had formal academic activities about media literacy and responsible consumption of media and internet (87.6%), 72.3% assured that they self-taught their consumption, 11.2% answered that their relatives helped in the process of information consumption, 8% admitted they were instructed by their friends and 8.5% pointed out that they acquired the competencies by other means.

When being asked about the stage in which responsible consumption of media and internet should be taught, 32.3% of the sample would preferred it to be in primary school, 23.4% in secondary or high school, 21.7% during college, and 3.9% stated that it should be an extracurricular activity and unrelated to formal education –workshops, courses, extra-class activities–; while, 18.7% think that communicative competencies should not be taught, they should be self-acquired.

Discussion and conclusions

The conclusions of the present study are diverse according to the hypotheses initially presented. Along with the hyperconnection state of the journalism students analyzed, it was confirmed that their internet interactions are carried together with other activities such as going to class or chatting. At the same time, 9 out of 10 respondents admitted to keep more than three windows or apps opened in parallel constantly, therefore the prevalence of multitasking as a breeding ground for information overload, infoxication and data smog, as it is extracted from the studies by Benito-Ruiz (2009), Cornella (2010), Dias (2014), Romero-Rodríguez (2014), Serrano-Puche (2014). As a consequence, this generates the ideal conditions for reducing the barrier of cognitive assimilation of the main activities executed in class or conversation and/

or the information accessed online (Gross, 1964; Shenk, 2003; Speier *et al.*, 1999).

In relation to the sample's frequency of average use, the consumption of internet for longer than five hours a day through their mobile devices exhibits an excess of online activity that could be tagged as "hyperconnection", which may presuppose an addiction to digital activity and social networks, just as referred in the studies by Shapira *et al.* (2003), Echeburúa and de Corral (2010), Caldevilla (2010), Lee and Stapinski (2012), Lam *et al.* (2009), and more recently and specifically in the case of the university students in Galicia, by Marín-Díaz *et al.* (2015).

Additionally, two thirds of the respondents admitted that they only read the extract or summary of the information they share and comment in their social networks, an attitude that is even more general in the age group 16-19; thus, a state of incompleteness in informational consumption habits and an incorrect filtering of consumed and shared information are evident, therefore, the overload of information reaching the real limit of cognitive ability is evident in crystalline clarity (Stewart *et al.*, 1992: 131; Pariser, 2011; Doval, 2012; Rainie and Wellman, 2012; Serrano-Puche, 2014), along with the subsequent effect of misinformation (Aguaded and Romero-Rodríguez, 2015).

In relation to the quality of information they access, it is evident the manifestation of a receptive pre-eminence of pseudoinformational contents, which are mostly viral lists or videos. With respect to preference of contents, the youths analyzed show a predilection for topics unassociated to their careers or professional future, being show business or trivial information the most interesting topics for them. In the present study, we additionally found the relevance of age variables in respect to information consumption habits, being the youngest group (16-19) the most susceptible to receive and share pseudoinformation; this situation is reduced in older groups.

Regarding media literacy for education in responsible consumption habits or infodiet, eight out of ten respondents consider that there should be educational activities about the correct use of contents on the internet, even if most of them admit having self-taught their competencies with the use of internet and social networks. However, opinions about the stage of education of correct consumption of media and internet are shared among primary (32.3%), secondary and high school (23.4%), and college (21.7%).

These results point out that there is an evident tendency to structural misinformation because of receptive overstimulation (Romero-Rodríguez, 2014), which is mostly due to failures in strengthening digital and media literacy at an early age (Aguaded and Romero-Rodríguez, 2015). At the same time, habits on information consumption and interaction are favorable for irrelevant contents to be consumed

and even shared without a correct filtering. Thereof the compelling necessity to attack information obesity with the practice of digital diets that focus on the quantity of consumed information, the analytical capacity and criticism toward received messages, the elimination of multitasking that tends to unwilling distraction and the re-training on social networks interaction.

As a result of all these data, it is worth considering if journalism education is really preventing prospect journalists from the negative effects of the excessive use of internet and its platforms or if, by contrast, early education is necessary for digital, information and media literacy as an essential requirement for the access to this professional career. In any case, media literacy must be where the training of responsible uses of digital media and social networks lie, especially in a digital scenery and a digital ecosystem as dynamic as the one characterized by this construction of postmodernity.

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Annex

Table 1

Stratification of the Study Sample

Country	City	Gender		Age Range			
		Masculino	Femenino	16 - 19	20 - 23	24 - 27	+ 28
Colombia	Medellín	203 (38,74%)	321 (61,26%)	77 (14,69%)	433 (82,63%)	11 (2,09%)	3 (0,57%)
Perú	Lima	219 (37,62%)	363 (62,37%)	73 (12,54%)	476 (81,78%)	21 (3,60%)	12 (2,06%)
Venezuela	Caracas	192 (38,63%)	305 (61,36%)	119 (23,94%)	354 (71,22%)	15 (3,01%)	9 (1,81%)
	Total	614 (38,30%)	989 (61,69%)	269 (16,78%)	1263 (78,78%)	47 (2,93%)	24 (1,49%)

Source: elaborated by the authors.

Table 2

Typology of the Contents received by Age Group

Age Group / Content	Viral Lists and Information	Music and Viral Videos	News and Useful Information	Famous Quotations and Other Contents
16-19	72,2%	11,2%	9,5%	7,1%
20-23	67,1%	26,1%	3,7%	3,1%
24-27	51,3%	29%	10,3%	9,4%
+28	44,1%	18,3%	30%	7,6%
Total	58,6%	21,1%	13,4%	6,9%

Source: elaborated by the authors.

Table 3

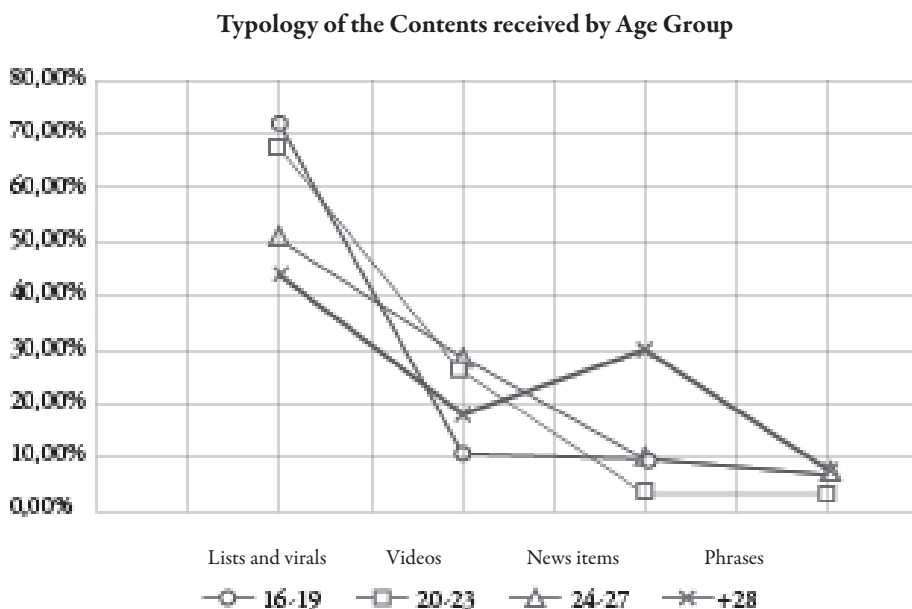
Chi-square Tests

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (bilateral)
Pearson`s Chi-square	83,948(a)	9	,000
Ratio of verisimilitude	68,901	9	,000
Linear-by-linear association	2,003	1	,157
Valid cases	1603		

NB: (a) 4 cells (25.0%) have an expected frequency lower than 5. The minimal expected frequency is 1.03%.

Source: elaborated by the authors.

Figure 1



Source: elaborated by the authors.

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