

The Credibility of Social Media and Ethical Implications for Young People

Credibilidad e implicaciones éticas de las redes sociales para los jóvenes

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: social networks are scenarios overload with information, tutorial, recommendations, jokes, advertising, fake news, and other contents which do not always reach the desired quality standards in mass media. Learning to handle this environment is essential to maintain critical and informed citizens, particularly among the youngest. This research focuses on the opinion about the content that circulates on social networks and the credibility and trust generated. **Methodology:** a correlational study is run with 935 participants between 18 and 25 years old selected by snowball process that filled an online questionnaire. Exploratory factor analysis identifies four dimensions that assess the implications of social media. **Results and Discussion:** those who are more identified with the controversial vision and lack of objectivity of social media show a higher level of trust in the sources of information on the Internet and lower trust levels in the news that appears in the profile feed. Sharing the vision of social media as an alternative channel to be informed is associated with giving greater confidence to the news content of social media, to the recommendations of unknown users and influencers. **Conclusions:** young people have a vision of the implication of social media that reflects some of the problems that have arisen in this space of interaction. The recommendation is to maintain a critical attitude towards social media content.

KEYWORDS: youth; social media; trust; credibility; information; media; ethic.

RESUMEN

Introducción: las redes sociales se presentan como un escenario sobrecargado de información, tutoriales, recomendaciones, bromas, publicidad, noticias falsas, que no siempre alcanzan los estándares de calidad deseables en un espacio mediático. Aprender a manejarse en este entorno es imprescindible para mantener una ciudadanía crítica e informada, particularmente entre los más jóvenes. El presente trabajo indaga sobre la opinión en torno a los contenidos que circulan en las redes sociales y la credibilidad y confianza generada. **Metodología:** se lleva a cabo un estudio correlacional con una muestra de 935 participantes que fueron seleccionados mediante bola de nieve entre 18 y 25 años utilizando un cuestionario auto-cumplimentado. Realizando un análisis factorial exploratorio se identifican cuatro factores que valoran las redes sociales. **Resultados y Discusión:** los jóvenes más identificados con la visión polémica y carente de objetividad de las redes sociales muestran mayor nivel de confianza en las fuentes de información en internet y menos en las noticias que aparecen en el perfil. Compartir la visión de las redes como canal alternativo para seguir la actualidad se asocia con dar mayor confianza a los contenidos noticiosos de las redes sociales, a las recomendaciones de usuarios e *influencers* de las redes. **Conclusiones:** Los jóvenes tienen una visión de las implicaciones de las redes sociales que refleja varias de las problemáticas que han surgido en este espacio de interacción. La recomendación que se desprende del trabajo incide en mantener el acceso de forma crítica a los contenidos.

PALABRAS CLAVE: jóvenes; redes sociales; confianza; credibilidad; información; medios; ética.

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Translation by **Paula González** (Universidad Católica Andrés Bello, Venezuela)

1. Introduction

Social networks in Spain have 26.6 million users who seek to entertain themselves (81%), interact (72%), and get informed (66%), according to the latest IAB report (2021). The average time spent on these devices has been increasing progressively and has been accentuated during the health emergency caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus (Newman et al., 2020; Masip, Aran-Ramspott, et al., (2020). According to the Reuters Institute annual study, social networks are the third source chosen in Spain for information (56%) after the Internet, chosen by 79%, and television with 63% (Newman et al., 2020).

During the pandemic, Spaniards have preferred television news (81.1%) and digital newspapers (74.7%) to know current affairs, with social networks and instant messaging occupying the third position (63%) in this ranking (Masip, Aran-Ramspott, et al., 2020; Masip, Suau, et al., 2020). One of the key issues in the information process is the trust placed in information sources (Masip et al., 2015; Masip, Suau, et al., 2020; Mauri-Rios et al., 2020; Pont-Sorribes et al., 2020; Babaei et al. 2019; Vraga and Tully, 2019; among others).

For citizens, the media are conditioned by the editorial line, their logic responds to economic and political interests (Mauri-Rios et al., 2020), and they have suffered a gradual loss of trust (Ardèvol-Abreu and Gil De Zúñiga, 2017; Bennett and Pfetsch, 2018; Edelman Trust Barometer, 2020; 2021). Although more trust is given to information from the internet media than if it comes from social networks (Pont-Sorribes et al., 2020; Pastor Ruiz et al., 2019, among others), there is a percentage of the population that trusts networks as a source of information and who go to these media to find out

about current events, particularly among young people (Gangadharbatla et al., 2014; Kong, 2021; Pastor Ruiz et al., 2019; Pont-Sorribes et al., 2020).

The presence of fake news is one of the issues that seriously threatens credibility in social networks (Blanco Alfonso et al., 2019). It has been shown that fake news spreads more easily, quickly, and wider than the rest of the information and its main means of spreading is social media (Bernal-Triviño and Clares-Gavilán, 2019; Papadopoulos et al., 2016; Vosoughi et al., 2018). A high incidence of users acknowledges having had contact with fake news through people they do not know (42%), politicians (43%), or news organizations (36%) as reported by Nielsen et al., (2020).

But information on current affairs is not the only focus of analysis of the quality of content on social networks. The discourse on social networks provides some clues about the type of content in which we are immersed as users. The analysis carried out on the successful profiles on YouTube shows the use of strategies to achieve data traffic, generating expectations in the audience through false claims (Gutiérrez-Martín et al., 2019). Renés-Arellano et al., (2020) find that the most frequent communication key of popular YouTubers is the funny one, accompanied by foul expressions and sexist language. On the other hand, Montes Vozmediano et al., (2018) also describe vulnerable issues in the topics of successful teens' videos.

Another defining aspect of profiles on social networks is the presence of brands and advertising (De-Frutos et al., 2021; IAB, 2020; Tur-Viñes et al., 2018; De Salas-Néstares, 2010; Freire, 2008; Feijoo-Fernández et al., 2020) and the discourse that accompanies many of the influencers frequently resorts to product recommendations in a misleading way (De-Frutos-Torres et al., 2021; Gómez Nieto, 2018).

The mechanisms around which the trust of the audience is configured is a key issue, especially in social media in which the reference of the source is not present and users have more responsibility when it comes to granting credibility of the information (Tandoc et al., 2018). Cheng et al., (2017) in a qualitative study with users of a chat platform, found that the quality of the information is one of the factors around which trust is built, as well as issues such as shared preferences, the ease of access to information, and the topics discussed. Westerman et al. (2014) find that the key to the most recent is the aspect with the most weight in the trust on Twitter content.

In any case, informative credibility does not seem to be a factor that worries or determines the choice of the media to get informed (Parratt-Fernández, 2010) and different purposes converge in the space of social networks. Interaction with others and entertainment are priority functions for most users, ahead of the informative function, which is evident in studies carried out with young people (Ayala-López and Santamaría, 2019; García-Jiménez et al., 2020; López-de-Ayala et al., 2020; López-de-Ayala et al., 2021; Pastor Ruiz et al., 2019). It seems logical that trust has different meanings depending on the purpose of the communication. Aspects such as the competence, knowledge, and honesty of the speaker become relevant in the construction of credibility (Chien et al., 2013; Westerman et al., 2014).

From the reception point of view, it is difficult to maintain skepticism towards the content to which we are exposed. People tend to trust information, due to a principle of cooperation between speakers (Lewandowsky et al., 2012); and to understand a piece of content we have to believe that it is true (Gilbert, 1991). It could be said that, by default, we tend to accept the information to which we are exposed unless there is a reason to be alert. Pennycook and Rand (2020) state that the source has little effect on the veracity of the information on social networks, most of the content appears outside the context in which it was created, and instead, the effect of familiarity takes center stage.

The illusory effect of truth, simply by repetition, has been repeatedly verified in the literature (Dechêne et al., 2010; Hasher et al., 1977). The repetition of fake news, and by extension, the rest of the content of social networks, facilitates its processing, which is interpreted as an indication of veracity. This effect has been demonstrated even with news that is created and very implausible, clearly partisan, and manufactured for a purpose; whose effects persist even if the participants forgot to have been exposed to the claim in question and are difficult to reverse (Chan et al., 2017; De keersmaecker and Roets, 2017; Pennycook and Rand, 2019).

Developing a critical attitude is the main tool to combat misinformation, exposure to fake news, and interested content (Golob et al., 2021; Johnson and Seifert, 1994); an attitude that must also accompany the discourse generated on social networks so that users can identify what content is relevant and reliable (Ahmed, 2021; Vraga and Tully, 2021). The media do not offer the reflection of reality but rather the media construction (Hall et al. 2013; Samuel-Arzan & Hayar, 2019) through reductionist, planned, and sometimes distorted, or simply wrong, representations of reality (Golob et al., 2021). Therefore, media education must be approached from a critical perspective on the economic, cultural, and ideological dimensions of the media (Buckingham, 2019).

A critical look at the media demands much-needed media literacy (Núñez-Gómez et al., 2012). It becomes evident that the results of the teaching and learning processes must generate dynamic participation processes -before the creation and consumption of messages- and skills as consumers of changing environments and multiple information codes, overcoming a linear and emergent use of messages (Rivera-Rogel et al., 2017). The ability to interpret the flow of information, to question the veracity and accuracy, the synchrony and timeliness of the information is closely linked to the development of reflective (Archer, 2012) and creative skills (Martens and Hobbs, 2015) and not only cognitive, emotional, and social ones.

Educommunication and digital literacy acquire the rank of strategy in the development of a critical and active citizenry for the European Commission (2018). Reflexivity not only refers to the skills of the consumer and prosumer agents (Ferrés and Piscitelli, 2012) of the media, it is also closely related to the excess of media information, engaging in what has been called “digital distraction” (Carrigan, 2017) and the redefinition of autonomous reflexivity in the face of the media. Age, educational level, and gender (Prendes-Espinosa et al., 2020; Welter et al., 2020), directly affect the verification of facts (Golob et al., 2021). Faced with this reality, we reiterate the need to implement and provide citizens with training programs in media competence (OECD, 2018) to use, analyze, evaluate, and reflect on social networks, the media, and their messages.

2. Objectives

The work is part of a broader research project focused on analyzing the perceptions and opinions that Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube users have about the media, truth, and ethics.

The specific objectives set out in this work are the following:

- a) Know the degree of credibility given by young people to the content to which they are exposed on social networks; distinguishing between current information, video tutorials, advertising, contributions from influencers, user recommendations, content shared in the close social circle, comments from other followers, and those shared by instant messaging.
- b) Explore the opinion on the ethical implications of social networks derived from their informative, relational, commercial, and expressive use.

- c) Determine if there is a relationship between the ethical implications of social networks and the credibility given to the content to which they are exposed.

The associated hypothesis establishes a relationship between the opinion on social networks and the trust generated by their contents; however, there may be differences in the degree and sign of the association depending on the type of content assessed and the identified ethical implications.

3. Methodology

A self-completed questionnaire is used that includes a battery of 22 statements around which the opinion on social networks is built (Table 1). Several items were taken from the scale used by López-de-Ayala et al. (2020) and were completed with statements collected in discussion groups carried out in a previous phase of the research (De-Frutos-Torres and Pastor-Rodríguez, 2021).

In the construction of the scale, six areas of interest were defined that define the view of social networks as:

- Instrument of economic interests collected in items 6, 21, and 22 from the scale used by López-de-Ayala et al. (2020), which is completed with items 19 and 20 that reflect partisan use.
- Current information sources: items 1 and 16 taken from López-de-Ayala et al. (2020), which were complemented with the view of networks as an alternative source and obtaining first-hand information (items 2 and 3).
- Instruments of citizen participation evaluated with items 7, 8, 9, and 10 that were taken from López-de-Ayala et al. (2020).
- Diffusers of not-verified and far-from-reality information that are specified in items 4, 5, 17, and 18.
- Confrontation space and lack of respect collected in items 11, 12, and 13.
- Connection space between equals verbalized in items 14 and 15.

The responses were collected on a Likert-type scale with four points, at the lower end of which is the absence of agreement (1) and at the upper end the presence of agreement (4) for the scale statements. The level of trust is evaluated on ten contents linked to: current information; video tutorials; advertising; influencer content; user recommendations; content shared in the close circle, comments from other followers, and shared by instant messaging. The responses are collected on a Likert-type scale with four points whose range goes from the absence of trust (1) to the maximum of trust (4).

Table 1. Description of the items of the scale on opinions of social networks and the assessment of trust (average, standard deviation, and valid cases)

Rate the degree of agreement with the following statements	Average	Standard Deviation	N valid
Q1. Social networks are the best source of information today	2.44	0.931	920
Q2. Social networks are an alternative to traditional media to stay informed	2.96	0.922	921
Q3. In social networks, you can see what is happening firsthand	3.01	0.922	918
Q4. The information that arrives through social networks is not always reliable	3.47	0.873	919
Q5. The information that arrives through social networks is not always objective	3.38	0.969	915
Q6. The information that circulates through social networks responds to many interests	3.25	0.933	917
Q7. In social networks, people freely give their opinion	3.13	0.976	917
Q8. On social networks, ordinary people assert their interests	2.82	1.085	920
Q9. On social networks, people say what they really think	2.62	1.01	917
Q10. Thanks to social networks, ordinary people express their complaints or their discomfort	3.07	0.959	920
Q11. Controversy is easily generated on social networks	3.48	0.936	919
Q12. In social networks, people do not usually respect opposing opinions	3.3	0.92	915
Q13. Insults and disqualifications are easy on social networks	3.34	0.997	920
Q14. One of the great things about social networks is finding people who think like me	3	1.004	920
Q15. In social networks, it is easy to find yourself immersed in unique currents of opinion, where there is no place for alternative views	2.85	1.114	917
Q16. In social networks you will find very interesting content and ideas	3.24	0.945	916
Q17. In social networks there is a lot of posturing	3.43	1.04	915
Q18. Many of the comments left on social media are not sincere	3.2	1.015	909
Q19. Behind the comments and news on social networks, people often try to argue, provoke, or viralize...	3.37	0.968	913
Q20. Social networks are becoming an instrument to spread propagandist information	3.25	1.06	916
Q21. A good part of the content that is disseminated on social networks responds to political interests	2.95	1.061	916
Q22. Behind the activity in social networks, there are economic interests that benefit the networks themselves	3.28	1.069	916
Assessment of the trust level of ...			
C.4 The current information that you read in information sources on the Internet (digital newspapers, television channels, or similar)	3.07	0.981	930
C.3 The news of profiles that you follow on Twitter, Facebook, etc.	2.71	0.929	931
C.7 The news that appear on social networks (Facebook, Instagram, etc.)	2.40	0.873	923
C.1 Commercial and brand information that appear on social networks	2.47	0.871	934
C.2 The recommendations of profiles with many followers	2.43	0.883	927
C.8 The content of video tutorials on YouTube (which you consult to resolve doubts about work, technical problems, or the like)	3.06	1.065	927
C.5 The comments, opinions, and complaints made by other followers on social networks	2.55	0.992	931
C.10 The recommendations of other users about services and products	2.73	0.96	927
C.9 The contents that your closest circle of friends share through social networks	2.84	1.063	930
C.6 The messages that are forwarded through the WhatsApp/Telegram groups to which you belong	1.88	0.96	927

To collect the data, a snowball was used. The starting point was university students enrolled in two subjects of the degree in Advertising and Public Relations, who received compensation in their final grade for their dissemination. The age range of the sample is between 18 and 25 years old, 935 valid responses were reached during January 2021. The average age of the participants is 21.44 (standard deviation 1.75); 31.6% are men and 68.4% women. The level of studies of the participants is distributed as follows: 47% are completing high school studies, 16% are in a medium or higher-level training cycle, 33% are studying a university degree, and 4% are doing postgraduate studies. Table 2 shows the areas of knowledge in which the respondents are integrated, except for secondary and high school students. As can be seen, all areas of knowledge are represented.

Table 2. *Distribution of the sample by level and area of study.*

Knowledge area	Level of postgraduate and undergraduate studies, and training cycles			Total % (n)
	Training cycles % column	Undergraduate studies % column	Postgraduate studies % column	
Arts and Humanities	10.3%	9.7%	21.6%	53
Science and IT	11.0%	10.7%	18.9%	56
Social Sciences and Law	23.3%	34.7%	24.3%	150
Communication	2.7%	3.9%	2.7%	17
Education	13.0%	18.8%	21.6%	85
Engineering, industry, and construction	10.3%	6.8%	8.1%	39
Health and social services	29.5%	15.3%	2.7%	91
Total (n)	146	308	37	

4. Results and discussion

Table 1 shows the descriptive results obtained by the scale questions on beliefs and opinions of social networks and the credibility of the content. As can be seen, all the questions raised arouse high agreement among those surveyed, with an average score above two points on a four-point scale, except for the credibility of the messages that are forwarded in instant messaging groups; although on several issues the degree of agreement is higher. For example, information sources from the Internet, from digital newspapers, television channels, etc. arouse a degree of trust clearly higher than that generated by news from profiles followed on social networks, and news that appears on social networks -without being associated with a profile-.

In order of credibility, the video tutorial content is the best-rated content, ahead of the information shared in the close social environment and the recommendations of other users about products and services. In the least valued section are the forwarded messages in instant messaging groups (WhatsApp or Telegram apps), along with the news that appears in the social networks profile, already mentioned, and the recommendations of profiles with many followers.

Given the exploratory nature of the study, it is proposed to identify the covariation patterns around the view of the ethical implications of social networks that allow simplifying the elements of the scale to their most informative part, responding to the second objective of the research. For this purpose, an exploratory factor analysis by main axes is carried out, which leads to the dimensions or factors around which beliefs and opinions about social networks are configured. The Kaiser-Meyer Olkin adequacy test (KMO=0.897) exceeds the reference value of 0.80, ratifying the predictability of the variables between them 0.80 (López-Aguado and Gutiérrez Provecho, 2019). The Bartlett

sphericity test is statistically significant (Chi-square=5939.327; g.l. 153, sig., 000); therefore, the data matrix is suitable for conducting factor analysis.

Table 3. Matrix of saturations of the main axis factor analysis, varimax rotation applied to the scale of opinions about social networks

	Factor or dimension			
	1	2	3	4
Q1.11 Controversy is very easily generated in social networks	0.717	0.33	0.139	0.123
Q1.13 Insults and disqualifications are easy on social networks	0.683	0.36		0.154
Q1.4 The information that arrives through social networks is not always reliable	0.638	0.154	0.135	
Q1.12 In social networks, people do not usually respect opposing opinions	0.634	0.321		0.197
Q1.5 The information that arrives through social networks is not always objective	0.629	0.231	0.135	0.153
Q1.20 Social networks are becoming an instrument to spread propagandist information	0.255	0.702		0.133
Q1.19 Behind the comments and news on social networks, many times people try to argue, provoke, or viralize...	0.32	0.666		0.128
Q1.22 Behind the activity on social networks there are economic interests that benefit the networks themselves	0.257	0.658		0.156
Q1.21 A good part of the content that is disseminated on social networks responds to political interests	0.152	0.616		0.147
Q1.18 Many of the comments left on social networks are not sincere	0.317	0.521	0.162	
Q1.2 Social networks are an alternative to traditional media to stay informed			0.799	0.107
Q1.1 Social networks are the best source of information today			0.615	0.168
Q1.3 On social networks you can see what is happening first hand	0.148		0.531	0.204
Q1.14 One of the good things about social networks is finding people who think like me	0.209	0.177	0.392	0.316
Q1.9 On social networks, people say what they really think			0.178	0.731
Q1.10 Thanks to social networks, ordinary people express their complaints or their discomfort	0.205	0.197	0.303	0.581
Q1.7 On social networks, people freely give their opinion	0.309	0.202	0.183	0.455
Q1.8 On social networks, ordinary people assert their interests		0.16	0.293	0.362

The resulting factorial solution, taking as the extraction criterion the number of eigenvalues greater than one, proposes four factors that explain 46.9% of the variance. The analysis of the weights in each factor of the rotated solution matrix (varimax rotation) allows us to identify the dimensions, after eliminating two items with low commonality with the factorial structure and whose weight did not reach 0.4 in any factor.

Table 3 shows the saturations in the dimensions of the exploratory factor analysis on the opinions of social networks. The first dimension brings together two aspects of social networks. On the one hand, it is characterized by controversial content, insults, and lack of respect for the opinion of other people (Items 11, 12, and 13), at the same time, social networks provide information that is not always reliable and objective (Items 4 and 5). The second dimension focuses on the interests that underlie social networks. In this factor, various uses motivated by the economic interests of the networks themselves saturate, such as creating controversy to obtain traffic of the contents, as well as making a propaganda use of the contents and serve political interests (Items 19, 20, 21, and 22). Curiously, the statement about the lack of honesty of the contents is located in this dimension (Item 18). The third group of statements is configured as an alternative way to know the news, collect first-hand information outside the conventional media together with the encounter with people who share

opinions (Items 1, 2, 3, and 14). The last factor includes expressions on social networks conceived as spaces to express opinions and share personal expressions (Items 7, 8, 9, and 10).

Lastly, regarding the third objective, it is tested whether the level of trust given to the content of social networks is associated with the opinions identified in the exploratory analysis. To do this, the scores in each of the dimensions were calculated from the saturation of each factor and the correlation coefficient was calculated with the questions about trust (Table 4).

Table 4. Spearman's Rho correlation analysis between the level of trust with information sources and opinions about social networks (factor scores)

Trust level in content about/from	Factor 1 <i>Controversial and non-objective</i>	Factor 2 <i>Economic and Political Interests</i>	Factor 3 <i>Alternative news</i>	Factor 4 <i>Channel of personal expression</i>
C4. Internet media information	.188 (.000)	.099 (.004)	.080 (.019)	.109 (.001)
C3. News from profiles I follow	.057 (.094)	.037 (.279)	.292 (.000)	.032 (.342)
C7. News from profile feed	-.138 (.000)	.018 (.598)	.289 (.000)	.084 (.014)
C1. Commercial content	.103 (.003)	.038 (.264)	.125 (.000)	.113 (.000)
C2. Influencer comments	.008 (.807)	.002 (.995)	.160 (.000)	.056 (.102)
C8. Video tutorials	.182 (.000)	.099 (.004)	.108 (.002)	.038 (.270)
C5. User reviews and complaints	.029 (.396)	-.009 (.786)	.145 (.000)	.164 (.000)
C10. User recommendations	.067 (.049)	.090 (.009)	.162 (.000)	.056 (.105)
C9. Content shared between friends	.159 (.000)	.098 (.004)	.153 (.000)	.075 (.029)
C6. Forwarded content in WhatsApp groups	-.186 (.000)	-.037 (.280)	.115 (.001)	.107 (.002)

The results show the discriminatory nature of the four opinion factors in their relationship with the trust on various facets of social networks as shown in table 4. The consideration of social networks as sources with controversial information lacking in objectivity (Factor 1) is positively associated with trust in information sources from the internet; although the amount of the ratio is low (Rho = 0.188; $p = .000$).

It is found that people who score higher in their view of social networks from this perspective, also tend to trust digital newspapers, television channels, and other sources of information to know the news. Along the same lines, the first factor is associated with trust in video tutorials (Rho = 0.182; $p = .000$), and in the content shared between friends (Rho = 0.159; $p = .000$). On the other hand, the scores in the first factor show an inverse relationship with the trust of the content sent in instant messaging groups through WhatsApp, Telegram, etc. (Rho = -0.186; $p = .000$) and with the news suggested in the social media profile (Rho = -0.138; $p = .000$). This implies that people who share this view of social networks tend to be less trusting of the information about news that is suggested or that is forwarded in closed messaging groups.

The second factor includes the conviction that social networks respond to economic interests that benefit the networks themselves, along with political and propaganda interests. This way of perceiving social networks is positively associated with trust in internet sources to know the news, with videos from social networks, with content shared between friends, and with the recommendations of other users, although the size of the correlation is very low. In contrast, scores on this factor are not related to trust in commercial content on social networks or with comments from influencers, actions that benefit more directly from social media activity.

The third factor considers the content of social networks as an alternative channel to traditional media, which provides first-hand information. Scores on this factor obtain positive correlations with all facets of trust, which shows a naive attitude towards the acceptance of content on social networks. The highest association with the news in the profiles that the person follows stands out ($Rho = 0.292$; $p = .000$) and with the news suggested in the profile ($Rho = 0.289$; $p = .000$).

Finally, factor four, focused on the possibilities of personal expression of social networks, is linked to the greater credit assigned to the opinions and complaints of other users ($Rho = 0.164$; $p = .000$). In this sense, it seems consistent that people with a participatory view of social networks trust more in the opinions expressed through these channels. This factor also shows a positive association with trust in current news from online media, with commercial and advertising content on social networks, and with content that is forwarded through instant messaging programs, although the magnitude of the ratio is very low.

5. Conclusions

Following the first objective, to identify trust in the various facets of social networks, it is confirmed that the credibility of social networks as a source of current information among young people is lower than in other internet media (Casero-Ripollés, 2012; Parratt Fernández, 2010; Pastor-Ruiz et al. 2019; among others).

The assessment of the contents does not only affect current information. The scope and intensity of the use of social networks lead us to consider how other content, that is not necessarily linked to the information line, is received. In this sense, the study provides a perspective view of the trust generated by other types of messages from social networks. In this sense, the trust offered by video tutorials stands out, considering them at the same level as traditional media. Pereira et al., (2019) pointed out the role of the media in the development of useful capacities and competencies from the school point of view, an aspect that is ratified by the high credibility generated by these audiovisual formats.

It seems logical that the participants in the study trust more in the content shared by the close social environment, than the comments of successful profiles with a high number of followers or in the advertising itself. However, the recommendations of other users are given a value similar to that of the nearby social environment. Possibly, other users are seen as a more disinterested source of information than advertising, or the influencers themselves, towards whom there is a certain disenchantment (De Frutos-Torres and Pastor-Rodríguez, 2021).

Regarding the second objective, the results show that the representations on social networks converge around four key aspects that reflect the duality of these interaction spaces. The first two bring together the negative side of the ethical implications in social networks embodied by their controversial and unreliable nature and the servitude towards economic and political interests. In a complementary way, social networks are seen as an alternative channel to access current affairs and a vehicle for expressing an opinion; factors that coincide with the informative and participatory use of social networks reported by López-de-Ayala et al. (2020).

The discriminating value that the four views of social networks have regarding the credibility of the content stands out, in this sense, it represents a contribution to the results of López-de-Ayala et al. (2020) that find no relationship between the informative use of social networks and opinions about the networks themselves. The critical view of networks due to their controversial nature and lack of veracity is associated with greater trust in internet information sources - alternatives to social

networks. Although being critical about the veracity of the information does not necessarily influence information preferences, as Parrat-Fernández (2010) pointed out in his study with adolescents. For this reason, it is interesting to see that this critical view of social networks is accompanied by certain discrimination, granting greater distrust towards the contents that are forwarded in instant messaging groups and with the news that appears in the feed of the social network over which they have no control.

Sharing the view of social networks as an alternative channel to follow current events is associated with greater trust in the news content of social networks and the recommendations of users and influencers of the networks. In a previous study (De Frutos-Torres and Pastor-Rodríguez, 2021) with discussion groups, it was evidenced that greater credit was given to the account of witnesses to an event than that from media professionals who, in the opinion of the participants, are at the service of other interests. Possibly, this more indiscriminate acceptance affects vulnerability towards the contents of social networks, where the effect of familiarity takes center stage as a reference for truthfulness (Pennycook and Rand, 2020) and that contributes to a way of representing the reductionist world (Golob et al., 2021).

Finally, the participatory dimension of social networks is more associated with the credibility of the opinions and complaints of other users. In previous works, greater trust in networks as a participatory tool had been collected when the user has had experiences in this regard (Vizcaíno-Laorga et al., 2019).

Although opinions on the implications of social networks are associated with the credibility of the content, other aspects can affect their critical analysis. Personal involvement in social networks is associated with greater credibility (Vizcaíno-Laorga et al. 2019) and with greater trust towards the advertising that appears in them (De-Frutos-Torres et al., 2021); Aspects such as physical attractiveness significantly influence the credibility of influencers and their influence on purchasing processes has been demonstrated (Sokolova and Kefi, 2020; Wilson et al., 2006). On the other hand, although the work identifies differences between the various conceptualizations about social networks, there may be personal traits that can influence a more critical view of the information (Ahmed, 2021), aspects that have not been considered in the study.

By way of conclusion, it can be affirmed that young people have a vision of the implications of social networks that reflects the internalization of several of the problems that have arisen in this interaction space. Although not everyone has the same idea about the implications that derive from social networks, the recommendation that emerges from the work falls upon maintaining critical access to content. In this sense, it would be interesting to delve into possible individual differences that make it possible to identify those most vulnerable and design action strategies.

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