Feeding the ego. The trivialization of influencers' content and its impact on young people's identity. Case studies in Spain and Chile

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: Social media are the most popular among young people: they identify with the content and feel they are part of a collective. We analyze the content of the main influencers in Spain and Chile to find out: 1) what they talk about and identify whether it is informational, educational or entertainment content; 2) determine its quality and whether it eventually leads to misinformation and tends to trivialization; and 3) reflect on the quality of the content and how it can affect the configuration of young people's media diet. **Methodology:** Twelve accounts of influencers on Instagram, TikTok and YouTube were analyzed through 439 contents. A comparative content analysis combining qualitative and quantitative methods was proposed. **Results:** Influencers talk about a wide variety of topics, but they prioritize their personal lives from an entertainment perspective. The poor quality of the content is noted, which tends to trivialization. **Discussion:** Although the study on the impact of social media on the mental health of young people is extensive, less research focuses on analyzing the content of influencers and how they influence their followers. **Conclusions:** Identifying this trivialization of content can contribute to the development of public policies and training programs in media literacy and encourage the regulation and self-regulation of content on social media, due to the impact on the mental health of young people, who are building their identity.

Keywords: identity; influencer; digital consumption; media diet; quality content; social media; youth.

1. INTRODUCTION

Media and digital platforms have the constitutive property of being central to public conversation (Postill, 2024), from everyday practices of identity creation (Goffman, 2021 [1956]; 1997; 2011), and to social transformation at global and local levels (Zuboff, 2020; Siles, 2023; Bonini y Treré, 2024). There has been a shift from the provision of content designed for a mass audience - mass media - to the creation and dissemination of much more targeted (Zuboff, 2020; Jenkins, 2008), personalized and specialized content - social media. Media consumption is no longer linear or unidirectional and has shifted to timeless and on-demand consumption, which represents a symbiosis between the content circulating in networks and the media agenda, and vice versa. It is this circulation that occupies the interest of this research, as it reveals a trivialization of content that makes it difficult to characterize according to quality criteria, due to the lack of categories that currently allow identifying what these patterns mean for network audiences, i.e. what they consider informative or relevant to their media diets.

Focusing on how the phenomenon of content creators has transformed the dynamics of communication, media consumption and audience behavior, it is observed that they have become professionalized and not only expose their lifestyle, but also monetize their activities (Gurrieri et al., 2023). Therefore, the research proposes to start with a study of the content published by influencers, in order to evaluate its quality according to the criteria currently available, an issue that becomes crucial due to the unlimited access to all kinds of information in the digital age. In particular, the young public is the most receptive and the one that uses social media the most, which can influence their behavior through the content published by their favorite influencers: young people are in the process of forming their identity and influencers are perceived as celebrities among this population because they connect with their interests (Brossi, et al. 2021).

Research on influencers mainly focuses on influencer marketing (Leung et al., 2022; Vrontis, 2021); on influencer marketing in tourism (Jang et al., 2020; Pop et al., 2021; Rodriguez-Hidalgo et al., 2023); in commercial relationships and actions between influencers and companies; in personal brand management (Luque, 2021); in consumer perception in relation to the influence exerted by content creators on product purchase (Croes and Bartels, 2021); or in activist communication (Valdivia et al., 2023; Dekoninck & Schmuck, 2021). Also of great relevance and more numerous is the research on the influence of social media on the mental health of young people (Braghieri et al., 2022; Naslund, 2020). However, studies that analyze the content and quality of influencers' publications are less common: Balaban et al. (2020) investigate the

perceived quality of influencers' content, while Fernández Gómez et al. (2018) make an approximation of the topics they talk about and the political ideological content of the publications of ten Spanish influencers on the X platform.

The novelty of this research is that it looks at the content published by influencers, evaluates its quality and reflects on how they can influence the media diet of their mostly young audience. Its relevance lies in the fact that the young audience is still in the process of forming its own identity. Therefore, we reflect on the risk of young audiences consuming content of poor or dubious quality. For this reason, it is recommended that media literacy training be strengthened so that young people can develop a healthy media diet to prevent addiction, promote responsible consumption of content and facilitate the development of critical thinking.

1.1. Social Media: Consumption Preference Among Young People

Social media is the most popular source of information and entertainment for young people between the ages of 16 and 24: in Spain (Mena, 2022), 92.6% participate in social media; and in Chile, "96.1% of people know about a social media and 94.3% usually use some" (CADEM, 2023, p. 59). This audience has its own consumption preferences (Gutiérrez-Lozano & Cuartero, 2020) and finds the content that interests them - that satisfies their tastes and needs - or creates its own in the online sphere, where different channels coexist and where a large number of people interact. In this context, young people connect with their content because they feel heard and that they are part of a collective, knowing that they can express themselves freely, learn and enhance their creativity (Jenkins, 2008, López de Ayala & Paniagua Santamaría, 2019) in a much more open way due to the possibility that anonymity offers them.

1.2. Infoxication. The Discrediting of the Media

The social function exercised by traditional and social media cannot be ignored in a context in which societies in the most democratized countries receive an infinite amount of content, from which it is necessary to learn to select and screen those that are of quality. The concept of infoxication is understood from the perspective proposed by the WHO during the COVID19 pandemic (López Veneroni, 2021), but also from the contributions of philosophy and communication and media studies (Wardle & Derakhshan, 2017), where different concepts have been established to describe information disorders, misinformation and false information that affect the information diet, use and practices of media content that are part of the social conversation. According to the description of Wardle and Derakhshan (2017), poorly processed information from a journalistic point of view can be considered as disinformation. Disinformation is also understood as information that cannot be proven or verified and that is of public interest and therefore subject to newsworthiness (Wardle & Derakhshan, 2017). Likewise, the possibility of differentiating these elements and when we are in the presence of one or the other case is still a matter of discussion among professionals and experts (Ireton & Posetti, 2018).

According to Newman et al. (2024), 64% of citizens in Spain are concerned about disinformation, while in Chile, according to data provided by Activa Research and the Worldwide Independent Network of Market Research (2023), the percentage rises to 71%. The growing interest in the study of disinformation phenomena occurs in the midst of a new crisis of discrediting and loss of credibility in the media, caused by a long process of transformation and adaptation typical of the adjustments of media ecosystems (Baym, 2010; Scolari, 2008). The emergence of much more personalized and specialized mechanisms to attract the attention of the audiences available for content consumption is pushing traditional media to try to survive and promote information consumption, struggling to stay afloat in the era of the attention economy and algorithmic personalization (Davenport & Beck, 2002; Pariser, 2017; Siles, 2020).Young audiences are the most exposed to this new transformation.

1.3. Content Creators: Towards Professionalization

Young people no longer consume so much professional content - of which they are dissatisfied - but amateur content. This has led to the emergence of new profiles, those of content creators who, although it seems paradoxical, are becoming increasingly professional (Baym & Burnett, 2009; Guerrero Pérez, 2018; Scolari & Fraticcelli, 2017). Katz and Lazarsfeld (1955) developed the theory of how personal influence acts as an intermediary between the media and people's choices. Toffler (1980) adopted the concept of "prosumer" to define this practice and the fact that content creators can influence public opinion and people's behavior. On the other hand, authors such as Abidin (2016) or Mendick et al. (2015) use the concept of microcelebrities to refer to this type of content creators, who become significant figures and with public impact, resembling the profile of the former media star. For his part, Muiños Morales (2017) understands as an influencer the person who has the ability to influence the public through his evaluation of a brand, company, product, service, etc.

This new communicator profile generates audiovisual content on a regular basis and specializes in a specific topic: gaming, culture, healthy living, fashion, cooking, sports, music, dissemination, economics, etc., which he/she ends up monetizing, since his/her activities on digital platforms are no longer just hobbies, but bring him/her economic benefits: paid collaborations, influencer marketing, online advertising, product sales, etc. (Luque Ortiz, 2021). In addition, there has been a shift from "mass media" to "social media" and from "media consumers" to "media prosumers" (García-Galera & Valdivia, 2014), because in social media, the audience assumes a dual role: it is no longer passive, but it consumes and, at the same time, creates content. Content creators, more than 9,000 in Spain (Alcalde, 2022) and 42,600 in Chile (Bravo, 2023) - much fewer, 4,679 to be exact, are the ones who declared benefits in 2023 (Internal Revenue Service, 2024) - are gaining greater popularity, relevance and visibility, and are perceived by young audiences as closer because they connect with their interests (Brossi, et al. 2021), ideology, values or needs. Goldman Sachs (2023) estimates that the content creator economy is worth $250 trillion globally.

1.4. Young People: Fragmented Identity

Identity formation is a critical developmental stage for young people as they navigate the complexities of the transition from childhood to maturity (Erikson, 1968), so they represent a population profile that tends to be more influential because it is in the process of consolidating its identity and recognizing itself as a subject. In the context of social media, young people's identity formation is influenced by their online interactions, the contents they consume, and the virtual communities they participate in. This gives them the opportunity to experiment with different identities, as they can present themselves in different ways through their online profiles and interactions (Boyd, 2014). They can choose what information to share and how to introduce themselves to their peers, while expressing themselves and connecting with others who share their interests and experiences. This can lead to a sense of identity fragmentation, as young people may adopt different personas for different online communities. Social media can also exacerbate feelings of inadequacy and social comparison, as young people are exposed to idealized representations of others' lives and experiences (Vogel et al., 2014). This can have a negative impact on self-esteem, particularly in relation to body image (Burnette et al., 2017). This can lead to pressure to present oneself in a certain way online, making it difficult to express an authentic identity.

Prensky (2001) speaks of digital natives -as opposed to digital immigrants- as people who use online and social media to inform themselves, educate themselves, and satisfy their needs for leisure, fun, and entertainment, because they grow up in a fully digital environment where they are used to receiving information quickly, prefer multitasking and random access, and want instant gratification and frequent rewards. The Internet is a democratizing tool for access to knowledge, but also a space where it is very easy to disseminate low-quality, harmful content and promote disinformation through unlimited and immediate access to all types of information (Anguita et al, 2023; Donovan, 2023), which leads to unhealthy lifestyles and makes people - in

this case young people - feel social inferiority, loneliness or dissatisfaction, an emotional state that authors such as Gupta and Sharma (2021) or Przybylski et al. (2013) describe as FOMO: fear of missing out. Similarly, authors such as Twenge and Martin (2020) suggest that constant exposure to ephemeral and shallow content can have a significant impact on identity development, arguing that increased social media use among adolescents correlates with decreased psychological well-being and greater difficulty in forming a stable identity. Throuvala et al. (2019) suggest that the addictive nature of social networks and their shallow content can lead to a "fragmented identity" in young people, making it difficult to consolidate a coherent sense of self. These findings highlight the need for greater media literacy and more conscious use of social media among young people, in order to promote sustainable identity development in the digital age.

2. OBJECTIVES

The research analyzes the contents of the main content creators in social media in Spain and Chile, two Spanish-speaking countries. The overall objective of this study is to determine the behavior of influencers in their profiles to find out:

- O1: What topics they talk about and identify whether it is informational, educational/training or entertainment content.

- O2: To distinguish between the quality of the content and whether it is conducive to disinformation, both in terms of technical production aspects and the quality of the message itself (i.e. whether it has any social relevance or public interest) and whether it has a tendency towards trivialization.

- O3: To reflect on the quality of contents and how they can affect the configuration of the media diet of young people - in the process of building their identity.

3. METHODOLOGY

A content analysis is applied, a valid method as long as the data obtained are independently confronted, which is achieved with a solid operational definition and with the same frame of reference and differentiation (Festinger & Katz, 1987). The profiles of the content creators with the most followers in Spain and Chile were selected, according to StarNgage (n.d.) and Bastero in Marketing4eCommerce (2024), on Instagram, YouTube and TikTok, the social media most used by young people in both countries (IAB Spain, 2023; Ascorp, 2024), ensuring that the results obtained are representative of the behavior of influencers on the platforms where they are present and to observe general trends, avoiding niche audiences. Two content creators from each country were selected for each social media platform. For Chile, the profiles of Fernanda Villalobos and Ignacia Hernández on Instagram, German Garmendia and Ignacio Orellana on YouTube and Alejandro Valenzuela and Claudia Mamani on TikTok are analyzed; for Spain, the profiles of Naim Alejandro Darrechi and Aida Domènech on Instagram, Miguel Bernal Montes and Rubén Dobles Gundersen on YouTube and Álvaro García and Lola Moreno on TikTok are analyzed. Cases of celebrities who have many followers on social media but are known for other professions, such as artists, football players, etc., have been excluded. Thus, only those whose profession is to be a content creator were taken into account. The period of analysis was defined between April 29 and May 13, 2024, a period of fifteen days that allows a broad and representative view of the dynamics and routines of publication of influencers and the observation of significant patterns of behavior in line with the objectives of the research. The data were collected manually, every day at the same time, at 12:00 noon. This form of analysis is meticulous and systematic, and at the same time allows to verify the data collected, so for each day screenshots were taken, and the data were also annotated in the analysis template. A total of 439 contents published by the 12 content creators under analysis were analyzed, among posts, stories or reels on Instagram or videos on YouTube and TikTok.

To find out what topics the influencers talk about and how, a content analysis of their publications was performed, taking into account 19 categories that include the topics identified during the analysis.

Table 1. *Analysis variables used by themes.*

V1. Travels
V2. Sports
V3. Music
V4. Gastronomy
V5. Gaming
V6. Fashion/Beauty
V7. Leisure
V8. Events
V.9 Challenges
V10. Personal life
V11. Body/Image Worship
V12. Pornography Industry
V13. Victim of a collective
V14. Attack on a collective
V15. Publicity
V16. Solidarity
V17. Propagating Disinformation
V18. Mental health/emotions/mood
V19. Others

Source: Own elaboration.

In order to delimit the method, it is of particular interest to define what is meant by quality content. Authors such as Blumler (1991), more than three decades ago, focused the discussion on the need to define conceptually what quality in television means, and since then they have been followed by several studies. Blanco Mallada (2005) considers the general standards that can contribute to defining quality in television: diversity and public interest, economic performance, ethics and professionalism. Camacho (2005) goes much deeper in the definition and considers that in the field of information, (public) television "must guarantee pluralism and the rights to freedom of expression, to broadcast, to inform and to be informed, which are fundamental rights of citizens" (p. 31); in its function of education, television must transmit civic values; while in its mission of entertainment, the same author considers that it is not necessary to seek an easy audience and that, beyond the quality of production and the more technical elements, it is necessary to apply civic values and an ethical and professional code. Thus, in order to know whether the content published by influencers can be qualified as quality or not, the focus is on the evaluation of the content in the context of information, education/training and entertainment.

However, it is difficult to find research that specifically discusses the quality of social media content in terms of information, training, or entertainment, beyond those that focus on engagement or purchase marketing, whose content is designed to attract followers and increase sales. Thus, the contributions of Chai et al. (2009) are relevant. They argue that the evaluation of the quality of content in social media must go beyond the parameters used to evaluate the quality of information, because the content is created by users from different backgrounds and areas and is consumed by people with different needs. Romero-Rodríguez et al. (2016) deal with the dimensions and indicators of information quality trivi digital media, while Agichtein et al. (2009) approach the debate from the perspective of evaluating information quality in social media. Other studies deal with the quality of much more specific content, such as those related to health communication (Afful-Dadzie et al., 2021), tourism (Wang & Yan, 2022), or other areas such as the mediating role of entertainment and its impact on consumer loyalty to a particular brand (Bazi et al., 2023).

For the analysis of the quality of content in social media, the following is considered: in the informative and educational field, content that is of public interest (McQuail, 1992), deals with topics of educational value, informative or scientific nature (Rajas et al., 2022), and also contributes to the generation and transfer of knowledge through entertainment content (Picard, 2004). The complexity of evaluating the quality of information is also taken into account, since the subjective perception and interpretation of the audience comes into play (Leggatt, 1996). In relation to the quality of content in the context of entertainment, the evolution of the business model (public vs. private) is considered, which has influenced the creation of a culture that aims at superficiality of content, even spectacularization, in order to gain audience's loyalty and capture the audience's attention. of the (Gutiérrez Gea, 2000) in the case of television, but which is transferred to social media, so that civic, ethical and professional values are taken into account, as well as specific elements of social media.

We start from previous studies on quality related to audiovisual media, because it is understood that there may be a correlation between the conceptualization of quality, which moves from traditional media to social media, and a process of adaptation and modernization of the definition, taking into account the specificities of digital platforms, such as the use of an adapted language or also immediacy, ubiquity or simultaneity. According to Israel-Garzón and Pomares-Pastor (2015), quality criteria must change according to the new communication tools.

Table 2. Analysis variables according to the quality of the contents.

V1. Quality of Information
V1.1. Public interest
V1.2. Information interest
V1.3. Social and ethical responsibility
V2. Quality of education/training
V2.1. Educational Interest
V2.2. Informational interest
V2.3. Scientific interest
V2.4. Generation and transmission of knowledge
V2.5. Does it use sources? (Informative, documentary, statistical, bibliographical)
V3. Entertaining quality
V3.1. Originality
V3.2. Creativity
V3.3. Professionalism
V3.4. Technical quality (light, sound, image)
V3.5. Public interest
V3.6. Social and ethical responsibility

Source: Own elaboration.

In order to know what influencers talk about and whether it is quality content, the data were operationalized based on an analysis template that applies a nominal measurement scale -useful for applying to non-numerical variables- (Coronado Padilla, 2007): if a sample is given, it is given a 1, and if not, it is given a 0. This system makes it possible to identify variables and to organize qualitative data -that is, data that cannot be measured quantitatively- in categories that do not have hierarchies and that can be mutually exclusive, if possible, so that the analysis produces results that are as empirical as possible. The analysis proceeded as follows: each author analyzed the accounts of 4 influencers, repeating the analysis at different times to check the consistency of the classification and category criteria. Then, each author was assigned to review 4 other influencers, different from those initially analyzed and previously analyzed by another author, in order to verify the consistency and uniformity of the proposed categories. Then, each author was assigned to verify 4 other influencers, different from those initially analyzed and previously analyzed by another author, which made it possible to verify the coherence and uniformity of the proposed categories. This practice resulted in a reliability level of 96.4%, avoiding possible biases and more or less subjective views. In fact, the classification into clear categories that

prevent any ambiguity, and the subsequent triangulation of the results, is a useful procedure for interpreting the results of the analysis, because it gives the study more depth, a much more reliable, objective, replicable vision and greater validity, in this case, both in terms of identifying the topics about which the content creators speak, and in terms of assessing the informative, formative and entertaining quality.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

During the data collection period, a total of 12 social media accounts of the main content creators in Spain and Chile were analyzed.

**Table 3**. *The Influencers as the Object of Study.*

Influencer	Profile	Social Media	Number of followers	Original Theme	Country
Fernanda Villalobos	@katteyes	Instagram	12.7 million	Life stile /Music	Chile
Ignacia Hernández	@ignaciaa_antonia	Instagram	10 million	Life stile	Chile
Naim Darrechi	@naimdarrechi	Instagram	6.2 million	Music	Spain
Aida Domènech	@dulceida	Instagram	3.4 million	Fashion	Spain
German Garmendia	@HolaSoyGerman @JuegaGerman	YouTube	49.9 million	Gaming	Chile
Ignacio Orellana	@NachitoJuegaJuegos	YouTube	12.1 million	Gaming	Chile
Miguel Bernal	@Mikecrack	YouTube	49.3 million	Gaming	Spain
Rubén Dobles	@elrubiusOMG	YouTube	40.4 million	Gaming	Spain
Alejandro Valenzuela	@strangehuman	TikTok	13.9 million	Music	Chile
Claudia Mamani	@claudipia.of	TikTok	5 million	Fashion/Beauty	Chile
Álvaro García	@animalize21	TikTok	13.7 million	Music/ Humor	Spain
Lola Moreno	@lolaloliitaaa	TikTok	12.2 million	Music/ Fashion/Beauty	Spain

Source: Own elaboration.

Influencers are no longer present on a single social media platform, but are diversifying their activities on other platforms to increase their impact, visibility and monetization through the content they publish, whose income depends on the number of views or subscriptions and the brands they work with. Rubén Dobles has migrated to Twitch, where he streams about games, and to TikTok; Miguel Bernal has increased his income by diversifying his activity and, for example, is present on TikTok, but has also published books and has a profile on Instagram. Aida Domènech has a presence on TikTok and an inactive YouTube channel, while Naim Darrechi, who canceled the analyzed account after the analysis period, also has a presence on YouTube and TikTok. Both Ignacia Hernández and Francisca Villalobos have active accounts on TikTok, but not on other platforms. Germán Garmendia and Ignacio Orellana have profiles on TikTok and Instagram, in addition to YouTube, where their content was analyzed. Lola Lolita started creating content on TikTok, but also uses other platforms such as Instagram and YouTube, where she publishes videos, vlogs and collaborations with other creators. She has also written books aimed at her teenage audience, showing that she has diversified her career beyond social media. Claudia Mamani has focused her activity on TikTok, without a significant presence on other platforms. Max Valenzuela, in addition to his initial success on TikTok, has expanded his presence on YouTube, where he shares music videos and has achieved millions of views on productions such as "All the time" and "Camino. His music, which fuses influences from SoundCloud rap and other genres, has been well received by his fan base in different parts of the world. Alvaro Garcia has gained millions of followers on both TikTok and YouTube thanks to his funny videos of everyday situations and comedy content. Alvaro has also written books, one of the most famous being "El Rulas y la Motillo Perdida" (2023).

A total of 439 pieces of content have been viewed, including publications, stories or reels on Instagram and videos on YouTube and TikTok. Ignacia Hernández is the most active influencer with a total of 138, followed by Fernanda Villalobos with 102 and Aida Domènech with 94. Ruben Dobles did not publish during the period analyzed, while Álvaro García, Alejandro Valenzuela, Claudia Mamani, Ignacio Orellana and German Garmendia were almost inactive. To attract the public, influencers use the language of social media - much more informal: little text, more videos than photos, music, of short duration - that both they and their followers understand and with which they connect. This allows the audience to actively participate by commenting, sharing or liking the content that interests them. In short, it makes them feel part of a community with similar interests and with which they feel identified based on a shared experience (Guerrero Pérez, 2018; Jenkins, 2008) and where they can express themselves freely (López de Ayala & Paniagua Santamaría, 2018; Jenkins, 2008).

Figure 1. *Total number of posts published by influencers.*
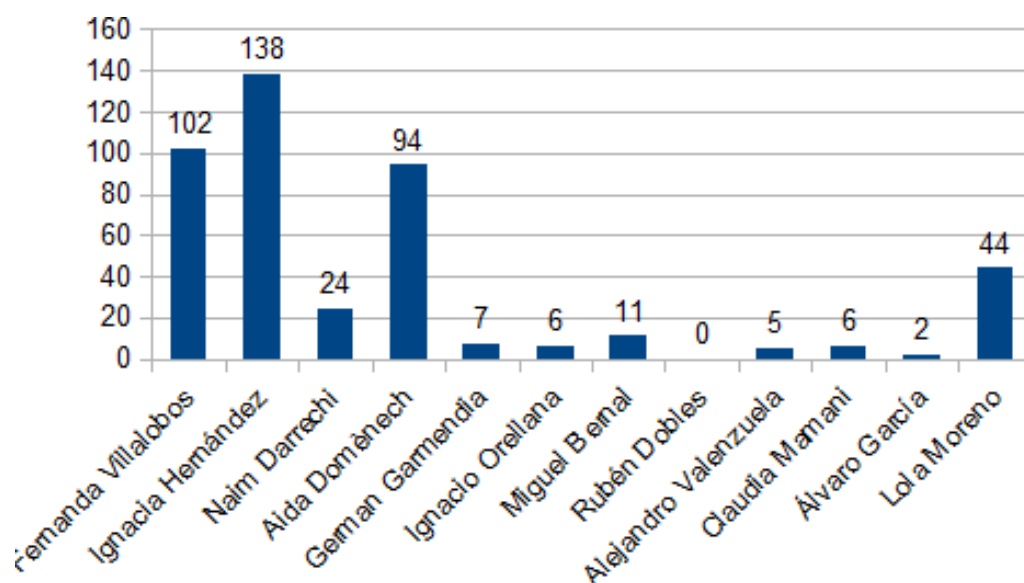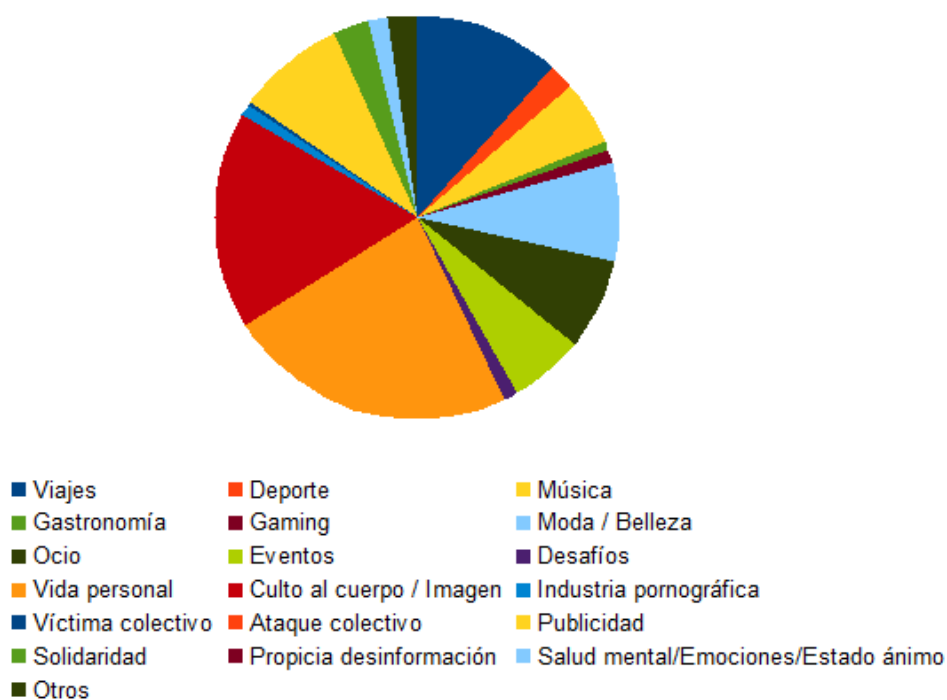

Source: Own elaboration.

4.1. What Influencers are Talking About

Influencers are talking about a wide variety of topics - up to 16 different topics were identified, plus those classified as "other" because they are not very specific - but the most common are: sharing their personal lives (23%) and body and image worship (17.6%). To a lesser extent, content creators talk about travel (11.6%), advertising spaces (8.6%), and fashion and beauty (7.8%). On the other hand, there is almost no talk about gastronomy (0.7%), sports (2.1%) or music (5.2%). In addition, content creators have no involvement in solidarity or charity activities (2.8%). It is worth noting that Aida Domènech denounced being a victim of hate speech because of her homosexuality when she and her wife, Alba Paul, announced their pregnancy. It is also relevant that some of the content creators, specifically Aida Domènech (10 times) and Claudia Mamani (1 time), openly talk about problems related to mental health, their emotions or their mood, especially interesting when they show their sadness. It is also worth noting that the content creators have diversified the topics they talk about in their profiles, and no longer only talk about the topic for which they started their activity. Aida Domènech no longer talks only about fashion, nor is it her main content; Miguel Bernal no longer talks about gaming, and although Lola Moreno usually publishes content related to music (32 posts of lip syncs, dances and choreographies) and body worship (17 times), during the analysis period she published 8 posts of advertising related to fashion and food. Influencer Claudia Mamani posts content related to fashion (4 times), but also posts about her personal life (3 times, but one of the posts was deleted). Influencer Ignacia Hernandez makes a mix between attending events, traveling and fashion, but also talks about her personal life. The same

goes for Fernanda Villalobos. Chilean influencer Alejandro Valenzuela publishes musical content, but during the analysis period he only published 6 times on TikTok (4 times). A similar situation was observed with Chilean YouTubers Germán Garmendia and Ignacio Orellana, who despite having many followers and interactions, made few publications during the study period. The Spanish influencer Álvaro García, who had 13.7 million followers in the analysis period, was the one who published the least: only 2 publications related to humor.

The narration of everyday life and repetition form an important part of social media content, providing a space for self-exploration and personal presentation that has been part of digital communication since its inception and has been extensively described by authors such as Boyd (2011), Baym (2010) or Turkle (2011). When explaining their daily lives, content creators put themselves at the center of interest, which also leads to individualism and narcissism, where the central figure is the "I", so it should be noted that excessive prominence can give them an image of isolation: many appear alone in front of the camera, in their room, at home, traveling, but rarely surrounded by other people. Today, the manifestation of these types of narratives is fragmented, in time and theme, expressing the same characteristics required of the content: speed, virality, spectacularity, added to the old ones: everydayness and repetition. This fragmentation is described as an expression of deep social problems that explain new forms of interaction, entertainment and identity construction (Rincón, 2018; Sadin, 2022; Turkle, 2011).

Figure 2. *What influencers are talking about*

Legend:
- Viajes
- Deporte
- Música
- Gastronomía
- Gaming
- Moda / Belleza
- Ocio
- Eventos
- Desafíos
- Vida personal
- Culto al cuerpo / Imagen
- Industria pornográfica
- Víctima colectivo
- Ataque colectivo
- Publicidad
- Solidaridad
- Propicia desinformación
- Salud mental/Emociones/Estado ánimo
- Otros

Source: Own elaboration.

The research results highlight that content creators prioritize the presentation of their personal lives on their social media profiles, followed by the publication of content related to body worship. This does not happen by chance, but is a common phenomenon among influencers: they accumulate followers on social media through textual and visual narratives of their personal and daily lives, creating a sense of intimacy with their audience (Abidin, 2016). This strategy of sharing intimate aspects of their daily lives contributes to the creation of a cult around their image and lifestyle, in addition to turning their personalities and bodies into commercial products that merge the personal with the promotional, which can easily extend to the promotion of certain body standards related to physical image (Abidin, 2016). Furthermore, these publications promote the perception that their lives are perfect (Chou & Edge, 2012) and reinforce unrealistic beauty standards (Tiggermann & Slater, 2013).

Ignacia Hernández (71) is the influencer who talks most about her daily life, showing her transfers, life in her house and paid collaborations that even include other members of her family, she also shows her friends and her boyfriend, generally in a positive key; followed by Fernanda Villalobos (49), who is dedicated to music but uses her Instagram account to show her daily life, the clothes she buys and her interpersonal relationships, always highlighting moments of joy and fullness; and Aida Domènech (40), who explains the progress of her pregnancy, how she misses her wife or declares her love for her, congratulates her mother on Mother's Day, shows photos of her childhood, recounts moments at home watching television, explains when she goes shopping, shows moments she spends with her friends, etc. On the other hand, Lola Moreno (9) shows her daily life, explaining her visit to the Jerez Motorcycle Grand Prix or telling her audience that she is going to rest. It is worth noting that Claudia Mamani is the female influencer who shares the least about her daily life (2). Male influencers are the ones who share the least about their daily lives and give few clues about their daily lives.

Fernanda Villalobos is the content creator with the most posts related to body worship (39), she constantly photographs herself in front of the mirror, showing off her flat stomach and using suggestive poses. Aida Domènech (34) mainly explains her workout routines, but she also talks about fashion, cosmetics, etc. (beauty-related content). Ignacia Hernández (24) also dances in front of the camera, but her content is related to fashion and events, that is, she appears showing her cleavage and dancing, but with the dress she is going to wear to a specific event. Lola Moreno also makes publications related to body worship, showing in her posts outfits with tight clothes and makeup. Claudia Mamani is the only influencer who does not publish anything related to the cult of the body. However, the case of Naim Alejandro Darrechi stands out, who in his origins published on Instagram videos in which he showed his dances. Later, he wanted to make a leap by promoting himself as a singer and expanded his content on TikTok. He is a controversial content creator due to problems with the authorities. His content is mainly related to the constant exposure of his body, either training or showing his semi-naked body. In particular, it is noted that his publications have drifted towards adult content and that he has already created an account on Only Fans, the platform owned by Fenix International Ltd, where users can access content from the pornography industry after subscribing via pay-per-view. In this case, there is a fine line between workout content, body worship and pornographic content. The rest of the male influencers do not post anything related to body-cult.

Ignacia Hernández (43) and Fernanda Villalobos (38) are the content creators who publish the most posts related to the travels they make, either on vacation and with their own means or through invitations to events. Both appearing in different parts of the world in a very short period of time: in the days analyzed there were international destinations such as New York, Tokyo and Puerto Rico, in addition to domestic destinations that require high purchasing power, such as the Nevados de Chillán, in Chile.

Influencers also offer advertising space to promote branded products, as in the case of Aida Domènech, the most prolific advertiser (38), who directly or indirectly promotes cosmetics or clothing. They also promote the visibility of other content creators, people or centers with which they collaborate: gyms, hairdressers, makeup, etc. In the case of YouTubers, paid collaborations and video game advertisements are more obvious because they are also warned in the video descriptions.

Aida Domènech is the content creator with the most publications on fashion and beauty (38), far behind Fernanda Villalobos and Claudia Mamani (4) and Ignacia Hernández (2). In fact, she started her activity on Instagram as a content creator in the field of fashion, and although her publications no longer focus exclusively on this topic, she often wears different outfits that she shows to her audience.

Other topics that influencers talk about relate to their professional activities, on or off the platforms: the legal disputes and conflicts they may be experiencing, the time they spend with their friends, their leisure activities, their workouts, the events and galas they attend, their collaboration with the media and their participation in solidarity activities.

To a lesser extent, some of the content creators are sensitive to issues of social relevance (21). Aida Domènech, for example, participated in the People in Red Solidarity Gala, a charity gala organized by the Fight Infections Foundation (*Fundació Lluita contra les Infeccions*). Ignacia Hernández (3) shared the post of a mother seeking help for her sick son, as well as the result of a campaign to allow children from disadvantaged sectors to visit an amusement park. This type of content in accounts that are not openly dedicated to social work can lead to influencers being perceived as committed people, but it can also be linked to an eagerness to increase their visibility.

Figure 3. *Influencers' posts by themes.*
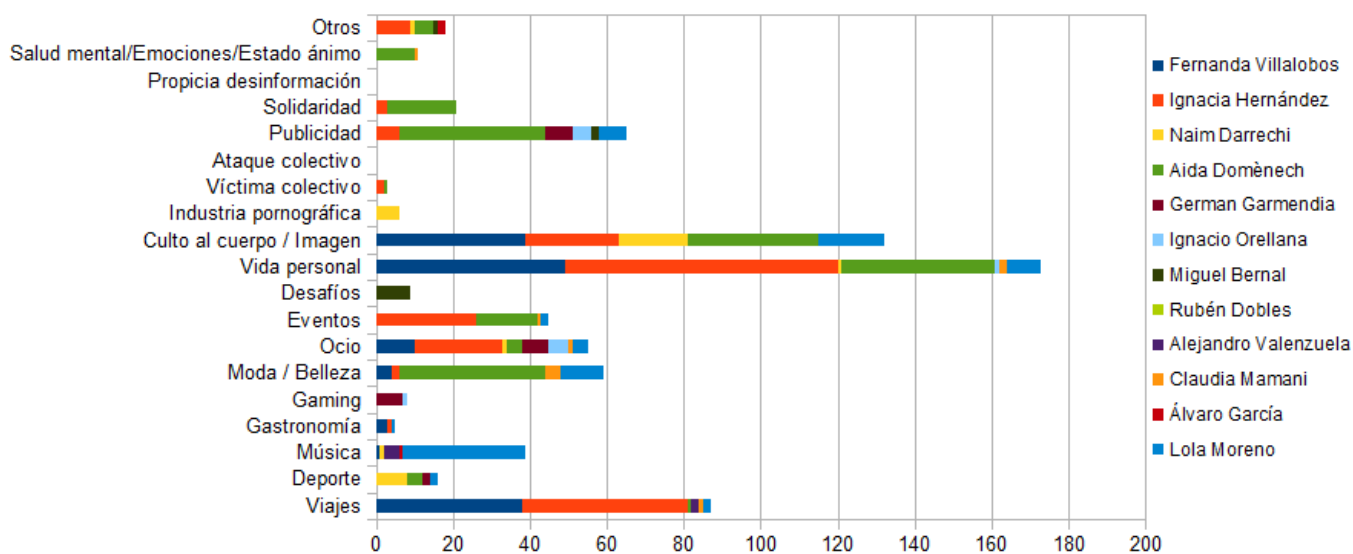
Source: Own elaboration.

The acceptance, social projection and success that exposing their daily lives to the public can bring to content creators correlates with an increase in followers, an increase in interaction and greater public engagement, which is essential to build their brand, a solid community and gain social recognition (Llovet & Establés, 2023). Influencers display their personal lives with the intention of demonstrating that they enjoy a perfect life; at the same time, they show their image and their body with an attractive and perfect physical appearance (Faelens et al., 2021), which leads them to self-objectify (Llobet & Establés, 2023). Aida Domènech is the one who shows her private life the most, but it is observed how Naim Darrechi takes her case of exposing her body to the point of publishing content exclusively for adults, which means taking self-sexualization and the desire to attract the attention of others to the extreme.

Influencers become a reference for their audiences, which are predominantly young, and can influence their behavior and mood. Festinger (1954) points out that the phenomenon of social comparison is understood as one in which people compare themselves with the information presented by others for self-evaluation (Festinger, 1954). In fact, the continuous exposure of young people to superficial contents can reinforce the social comparison effect from a negative perspective, generating feelings of inferiority, anxiety, or dissatisfaction (Faelens et al., 2021), because they think that other people's lives are more satisfying than their own. Social media can reinforce this effect by prioritizing content that can be idealized, especially in aspects such as the cult of the body or image, lifestyle, or topics such as fashion, beauty, or travel. Social media accentuate this comparative behavior among young people, turning it into an almost automatic habit (Vogel

et al., 2014) that seeks social validation (Nesi & Prinstein, 2015), which happens through quantifiable indicators such as likes, number of followers or comments. This can lead to mental health problems such as feelings of loneliness, anxiety, frustration or depression, which authors such as Gupta and Sharma (2021) or Przybylski et al. (2013) describe as FOMO: fear of missing out.

In fact, even in these cases, influencers can become references: Aida Domènech, for example, makes her moods public, explaining that she feels tired or sad. The fact that content creators, because of their influence, can openly express these types of problems can be positive for other young people who feel the same way. This is precisely where the importance of media literacy training focused on younger audiences lies, a process that contains the negative effects of negative social comparison by strengthening critical vision (Mihailidis & Thevenin, 2013) and responsible use of social media (Taibi et al., 2023).

4.2. Quality of the contents

The content published by influencers is identified as entertainment to the detriment of informational or educational content. Although the subjective perception that exists in studies evaluating the quality of content in social media has been taken into account, it is also questioned whether the parameters currently used to measure the quality of content related to entertainment are the most appropriate or whether a new model of analysis should be proposed to obtain much more accurate results. Cunningham and Craig (2019) consider the transformation of entertainment from television to social media, understanding social media as an emerging industry based on increasingly professionalized content creators who seek to monetize their publications. In this sense, also relevant are the contributions of Chai et al. (2009), who express the difficulty of defining the quality of content in social media, as it may be that content perceived as excellent by one type of audience may not be so for another. The present study urges the need to advance in the development of empirical studies that support the creation of a new measure of analysis to analyze the quality of content in social media. However, it appears that the 439 posts analyzed with the proposed analysis measure do not provide evidence of informative quality (educational interest, pluralism), educational quality (educational interest, informative, etc.) or entertainment quality (originality, creativity, professionalism, technical quality, etc.). This highlights how it is content that generally leads to superficiality, trying to satisfy hedonistic motivations with the aim of obtaining immediate gratifications, both of the content creators themselves and of their audience, who enter social media to relax, pass time, have fun or disconnect (Bazi et al., 2023; Mainolfi et al., 2021). And influencers themselves are aware of this: in an interview on the *Sin miedo al éxito* podcast, Miguel Bernal asserted that viewers are not interested in the content offered by streamers (Fernández Segura, 2023). Although he was referring to Twitch content, this can be extrapolated to content offered on social media in general.

Most content can be considered neutral or even harmless, but it is advisable to be wary of the dissemination of content that is offensive, humiliating, harmful, or that disseminates manipulated or falsified content, as it contributes to the spread of misinformation (Chen & Shu, 2024), which is on the rise in social media. An example of this is harmful, inappropriate content, or content that discriminates against or attacks groups - based on language, religion, class, ethnicity, or gender - and can lead to the rise of extremist ideas. In this case, it is worth noting how Naim Darrechi introduces content aimed at the pornographic industry with images of himself posing half-naked and adding links to his Only Fans account. Other content creators, such as Aida Domènech, have suffered hate speech because of their sexual condition.

This research not only shows the poor or questionable quality of the content but also warns of the need for young people to incorporate more diverse content in order to build a healthy identity, taking into account that social media are also generators of public opinion and useful for making informed decisions. It is alarming that the content creators themselves can publish harmful content - consciously or unconsciously - as they are people who enjoy authority within their community and can act as opinion leaders: if they do not take responsibility for producing quality content, it is very likely that their audience - young people - will not seek it out or create it themselves.

The lack of informative or educational content in influencers' publications and the poor quality of entertainment content can have a negative impact on the quality of their audience's media diet. The consumption of superficial content, exposure to immediate stimuli and little access to truthful information implies a reduction in the ability to develop critical thinking skills to deal with complex issues, leaving young people more uninformed and less prepared to make informed decisions. Authors such as Buckingham (2007), Bulger and Davison (2018), or Hobbs and Jensen (2013) have discussed the concept of media literacy, and this research contributes to the conversation, particularly about the importance of educating young people in this area as a potential remedy in relation to the effects of continuous exposure to social media (Cho et al., 2024) and the spread of misinformation in them (Pérez-Escoda et al., 2021).

5. CONCLUSIONS

Influencers talk about a wide variety of topics, prioritizing those related to their personal lives. They publish what they understand by authenticity and reality, although the narrative guidelines and interests are very much determined by fashions and trends (Arriagada & Bishop, 2021), which are becoming more global every day, while the formats of consumption and creation are also evolving towards a standard: fast, impactful, close. However, this proximity is not related to the daily experience of each individual, but to the expectation, that is, what is close is not what surrounds us, but what we want to be and look like: what appears in the lyrics of the songs, luxury, leisure, work that leads to a disproportionate economic reward, and so on. It could be said that small screens are like windows that open to the intimacy of influencers, creating an increased and disproportionate perception of human material needs, very often generating feelings of frustration and helplessness on the part of young users who feel unable to achieve these goals (Zhu & Chen, 2015).

The research highlights that the content creators studied resort to entertainment in their publications, leaving aside content related to information or education/training. There is no evidence of quality in the content, which invites us to rethink the construction of categories and the "from where" they are evaluated. Probably this distance between the contents and what is considered informative is given by the point of view of the studies. Many of them start from the assumption that something is informative because it has value for decision-making, or because it meets the criteria of timeliness, proximity and others mentioned above, without considering in reality what people understand by quality information in their daily lives.

Following the guidelines developed by UNESCO (2024), it is recommended to strengthen the training of young people in media and information literacy so that they have the tools to identify the most reliable and quality content, while distinguishing it from harmful content (García-Avilés et al., 2014). By understanding the complex relationship between social media use and identity formation, educators, researchers, parents, and policymakers can develop strategies to support the sustainable development of a healthy identity in the digital age. Thus, inappropriate consumption of entertainment content on social media could be seen as a threat to personality development. The consumption of fake news or aggressive content can be extremely harmful for young people, as it can distort the perception of reality and form habits that are not committed to journalistic or informational rigor and the exercise of citizenship (Marchi, 2012; Vosoughi et al., 2018).

The importance of content moderation, regulation and self-regulation is also highlighted (Martínez-Pastor et al., 2022), with the aim of being vigilant in protecting users from the most controversial content. Public institutions and social media companies are already acting to guarantee freedom of expression and information and to ensure the privacy and security of users, while at the same time preventing content that may attack certain groups and incite hatred. TikTok introduces the fight against illegal hate speech in its code of conduct (Keenan, 2020); Instagram indicates the prohibition of inappropriate, illegal, or hateful content in its community standards (Instagram, 2018); and YouTube also regulates violent content, hate speech, and cyberbullying. In terms of government regulation, in April 2024, the Spanish government approved the Influencers Law to ensure consumer protection and greater legal certainty: among other measures, content creators must indicate the age of the target audience and explicitly label advertising. In Chile, the Internal Revenue Service has identified more than 15 thousand taxpayers as influencers for the purposes of the 2024 income tax return. It is also important that influencers themselves become aware of the power of their publications and promote responsible practices, which would translate into an improvement in the quality of their publications and also in the user experience. If influencers adopt these ethical practices, an issue that has been addressed by authors such as Mackay (2021) or Wellman et al. (2020), they can have a positive impact on their extremely young community, reducing risks such as mental health effects or the spread of misinformation, while building their brand on the basis of responsibility and authenticity.

This research is interesting because an excess of individualism and self-image cult is observed among the influencers with the most followers in the countries analyzed. In general, they encourage individualistic, narcissistic and often unrealistic behavior. It is precisely young people who consume these contents the most, and it should be remembered that they are in the process of building their identity, so they can be influenced by these practices. The normalization of this type of content - of dubious quality - and, even more so, the interaction around it, can deteriorate public conversation, collective action and coexistence. In this sense, it warns of the possible problems of governance that can arise in societies where the individual takes precedence over the collective.

The research seeks to understand the evolution of the most watched contents and formats, without wanting to demonize these forms of communication. On the contrary, it proposes to find the positive parameters that encourage participation, foster the creation of communities and give success to these characters, since they are the clues that the media need to attract the attention of audiences. In this way, the foundations are laid for future studies on the creation of content in social media and how it is received by consumers. It is proposed to open new lines of research by widening the scope of the samples and analyzing the use that influencers make of other emerging digital platforms (Twitch or BlueSky). Likewise, there is a gap between the available literature on content quality and the results of empirical research on the subject, which makes it imperative to focus studies not only on the content published by influencers, but also to identify why the public is interested in such content. A much more global vision, taking into account all the actors, will at the same time make it possible to propose a specific methodological analysis to identify the quality of information, educational and entertainment content and to study the negative impact of long-term exposure to low-quality content, which can make it difficult for young people to face complex issues in a reflective way and to make informed choices.

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