



The identity of *eduTubers* projected on Instagram

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: Public figures on the Internet, such as *eduTubers*, use several digital tools to distinguish and position themselves among a certain audience. To capture their audience's attention and obtain more views, subscribers, and likes on their channels, *eduTubers* need to explore strategies for projecting a certain image. This research identifies the elements of *eduTubers'* identity projected on Instagram. **Methodology:** For this research, we propose a qualitative design with an interpretive scope; 2101 publications and stories from the Instagram profiles of seven *eduTubers* were analyzed. **Results:** The results identify two categories of identity in the publications of *eduTubers* on Instagram: the personal and the professional. The personal level includes three subcategories: personal life, interests, and sense of humor; the professional level consists of five subcategories: the role of *eduTubers*, the audience, alternative projects, collaborations, and the role of influencers. **Conclusions:** The results infer that the *eduTubers'* publications reflect their self-concept, which can be regulated both by the social requirements to fulfill their work as *eduTubers* and by the search for recognition and positioning among the *eduTuber* community.

Keywords: digital identity; *eduTubers*; Instagram; social media; educational innovation.

1. INTRODUCTION

There are several socio-digital networks through which images, videos, or texts can be shared. The various publishing and interaction options provided by these applications allow users to represent their identity in virtual environments. *eduTubers*, creators of educational content on YouTube whose name derives from the fusion of educator and YouTuber, become public figures when they are well known. Public figures use these digital tools to distinguish and position themselves among their audience. The interconnectivity of socio-digital networks facilitates publishing and interaction across multiple platforms, enabling public figures to promote their work and remain present in their audience's minds.

To promote their channels, *eduTubers* use different strategies to encourage content consumption on socio-digital networks. This could indicate that, consciously or unconsciously, they seek acceptance and recognition from their audience in these spaces. Thus, the presentation of their identity in these virtual environments perhaps responds to the social requirements they have to meet as digital "teachers".

In addition to YouTube, *eduTubers* use other socio-digital applications, such as Instagram, TikTok, or X, to gain visibility for their work. It is important that they explore social interaction mechanisms to capture the attention of the audience (Pasquel-López et al., 2022). In this way, *eduTubers* can get more views, subscribers, and likes on their channels. However, achieving this depends not only on their presence on socio-digital networks but also on the acceptance and recognition of the audience through the projection of their own identity within them.

Although the role of *eduTubers* in educational contexts has gained visibility, studies specifically examining their identity and its presentation on socio-digital platforms are still limited. However, in the literature, we found works related to academic identity (Salinas Ibáñez & Marín Juarros, 2019), professional identity (Kasperuniene & Zydziunaite, 2019), political biographies (Barassi & Zamponi, 2020), public figures (Moposita, 2021; Litchfield et al., 2018), and influencers (Arregui, 2020; Coronel, 2020; Galarza, 2020; Ruiz & Ruiz, 2021). *eduTubers* need to understand the key elements and/or strategies that strengthen their positioning among their audience. This research aims to identify the elements of *eduTubers'* identity projected on Instagram. This research is a starting point for providing answers about the strategies that capture the audience's attention and position the educational work of these content generators.

The concept of identity can be understood in different ways, depending on the study approach from which it is defined. For example, a philosophical approach views identity as a social construct, a psychological approach views it as a subjective individual experience of being oneself, and a sociological approach considers gender or ethnicity in understanding identity. According to Pérez Salazar (2021), the concept of identity can be presented as follows: Identity refers to the distinguishing characteristics that set one apart from others, shaped by self-reflection and constant evolution, as it originates from communicative interactions and finds expression and construction across various domains.

The following paragraphs deconstruct the concept of identity in two parts: the first explains the concept from the subject's essence, and the second explains how the subject's social context shapes identity.

The essence of the subject aids in highlighting the elements that set them apart from others. Goffman (1959) defines two important elements that people use to distinguish themselves from others: personal equipment and staging. Personal equipment refers to the tools and resources necessary to construct and maintain identity in social situations, such as clothing, body language, facial expressions, and gestures. Staging is the process by which individuals project their identity in everyday social interactions, using personal equipment to embody a defined role. Giménez (1997) found that one of the elements that make up identity is the set of relational attributes, i.e., those characteristics that function as personality traits (habits, tendencies, attitudes, abilities,

etc.). This set of attributes makes the subject unique.

In addition to this distinctive aspect, the subject's experiences and social relationships can shape identity. Goffman (1959) emphasizes that individuals construct and maintain their identities to manage how others perceive them, a process that typically occurs in social environments and involves interactions with others. This author views identity as flexible and changeable, adapting to the situation at hand and transforming one's behavior, appearance, and expressions to suit the context and the audience. Therefore, according to Goffman, identity is not static but a combination of various elements that emerge through interactive processes. The "authentic self" represents the private and personal aspect of identity, concealed by social performances, such as a facade, a social role, or an impression. In social contexts, the "facade or mask" refers to the performances or representations that project the self-image, which is a combination of behavior, physical appearance, and verbal and nonverbal communication. "Social roles" refer to the predefined roles that shape an individual's presentation in society. "Impression management" refers to a person's ability to control and manage how others perceive them, a process that aids in gaining respect, maintaining a reputation, or influencing others (Goffman, 1959).

Giménez (1997) proposes two additional elements that shape identity and help in its constant evolution: participation in collectives and one's historical narrative. For Giménez, identity depends on belonging to collectives and contemplating those cultural symbols of social relations and interactions. Moreover, a person's life history and social trajectory, which comprise a series of past acts and trajectories that hold significance for them, shape the person's identity. Therefore, life and experience themselves construct identity.

Harter et al. (1997) adopt a psychological approach to identity (self) and indicate that identity is the result of cognitive development during adolescence. During this stage of socialization, different identities (selves) may develop that are valid in different contexts. In addition, multiple identities may emerge when conflict arises over which is the true "self" (Harter et al., 1996; 1997). According to Campbell et al. (1996), the development of the "self" can be analyzed through the correlation of constructs such as self-esteem and self-concept clarity. Self-concept refers to thoughts, ruminations, evaluations, feelings, and perceptions that arise from one's self-definition and interactions with others. For Rosenberg & Egbert (2011), self-concept is the totality of a person's thoughts and feelings referring to oneself as a target. According to Markus and Nurius (1986), self-concept is a collection of beliefs that one holds about oneself that are incorporated into the past, the present, and the possible future of the "self." They view it as a broader phenomenon than typical descriptions, given its deeper temporal scope. Moreover, self-concept reflects the potential for growth and change and all those values that are attached to possible future states. Additionally, individuals have a collection of self-concepts and self-images, all of which can vary dramatically in their degree of affective, cognitive, and behavioral elaboration. This construction collection can also change in its valence, becoming a significant regulator of the individual's behavior (Markus & Nurius, 1986).

For some authors (Harter et al., 1996; Higgins, 1987; Markus & Nurius, 1986), the "self" is displayed in three domains: the "real self," the "ideal self," and the "false self." The "real self" encompasses authentic feelings, modifiable by inner qualities, as well as true thoughts and behaviors of the "self". Conversely, the "ideal self" embodies the qualities of a desired individual or audience. We understand this in terms of ideal attributes, which can manifest in both negative and positive forms. The "false self" is the false or acted self, in which one expresses things one does not believe or feels to be something someone else wants him or her to be. It includes untrue feelings and behaviors that may originate from deception, exploration, or impressing others.

Socialization since childhood and the detection of contradictory attributes in different roles are some of the reasons for the origins of inauthenticity (Harter et al., 1997). In addition, different psychological representations of the "self" may appear at different times and blend into the self-image (Harter et al., 1996;

Higgins, 1987; Markus & Nurius, 1986). Consequently, based on their context or convenience, some people may attempt to present a modified identity.

Often, people resolve “self” oppositions and discrepancies through their self-presentation. Self-presentation is the use of certain behaviors to present information about oneself to others (Yang & Brown, 2016). Baumeister and Tice (1986) describe self-presentation as a central aspect in the construction of the “self” and the efforts to establish a reputation in a social context. It is considered a dynamic process (Yang & Brown, 2016) that, when authentic, is valued by the moral obligation of individuals to be who they say they are (Goffman, 1959). Discretion selectively presents identity, highlighting certain characteristics or facets of the “self” in response to acceptance or belonging.

Barac and Maekawa (2017) opine that self-presentation is to some degree always selective since, generally, a person wishes to maintain a positive impression on others. According to Ellison et al. (2006), the term “selective” implies that while one may present certain characteristics, they may not always be true; additionally, some characteristics remain unrepresented and consistently negative. Lee et al. (1999) divide the investigation of 13 self-presentation tactics into two main groups: assertive self-presentation tactics and defensive self-presentation tactics. The first aims to develop and create identities (ingratiating oneself, projecting oneself as intimidating, projecting oneself as weak, giving oneself credit, enhancing oneself, associating oneself with something or someone positively, making negative evaluations of others, and being an example), while the second aims to defend or restructure an impaired identity (excuses, justifications, disclaiming responsibility, self-help, and apologies). As a result, an orchestrated and controlled presentation can lead to unrealistic, idealistic, and, to some extent, misleading self-presentation.

1.1. Digital identity

For interacting on socio-digital networks, active users must have a digital profile that reflects an image of the person in cyberspace. Sometimes a digital profile differs from an individual’s actual personality, resulting in artificial self-presentation (Çöteli, 2019). Interactions on socio-digital networks help people create and reconstruct their profiles (Michikyan & Suárez-Orozco, 2016). Furthermore, the memories stored on these networks influence the user’s self-definition (Brandtzæg & Chaparro-Domínguez, 2020). Thus, the daily interactions that make up the user’s history are important to establish who he/she is. Hence, digital identity is formed by a person’s profile, built from the information required by each digital platform, as well as publications and interactions in the digital world.

For several authors, such as Lévy (1999), virtual identity is a symbolic, immaterial representation constructed from any act of communication (publication, comment, or reaction), with updates across dimensions of time and space. This implies that the virtual and the face-to-face are two dimensions of the same being, with the difference lying in the planes of representation rather than in their essence.

Some authors point out that socio-digital networks increase the possibilities of presenting a controlled and selective identity, in which the person decides what, how, how much, and when to reveal his or her “self” in such a way that presents a “mask” adjusted to the context of the interactions and the desired impressions on the audience (Serrano-Puche, 2013). Del Prete and Redon Pantoja (2020) assert that identity construction and display rely on the value and appreciation of others through a narrative. According to this perspective, digital users often transform their weaknesses and the unpopular aspects of their daily lives into the strengths of their digital persona. People perceive these reconstructions as an illusion of reality, revising and altering their true identities.

Michikyan et al. (2015) research reveals that adolescents present multiple “selves” (true, ideal, and false) on socio-digital networks. In the context of socio-digital networks, clarity in self-concept explains differences in self-presentations (Fullwood et al., 2016).

Different aspects shape identity. For instance, the virtual environment can restrict a person’s gestures, opinions, and moral autonomy; the audience’s high-value mandates to join a community reflect the need for belonging and acceptance; and the digital society’s established popularity necessitates recognition (Del Prete & Redon Pantoja, 2020). According to researchers, individuals can construct and present their identities based on various factors, such as roles, relationships, gender, race, or the configuration of the virtual environment, which can also serve recreational or protective purposes (Pérez Salazar, 2021).

In this context, a variety of cultural structures project identity, allowing for the sharing of each application without revealing its fabrication. Therefore, the identity constructed from the need to belong becomes an interconnected identity that does not distinguish between the virtual and the real; both worlds are part of a continuum (Del Prete & Redon Pantoja, 2020). Socio-digital networks make it possible for physical presence to unfold in the technological context (Serrano-Puche, 2013).

In the context of socio-digital networks, the use of self-presentation tactics of the selective order is more frequent and favorable to the individual. Specific interactions in asynchronous socio-digital networks provide users with opportunities to calculate and organize their “self” for presentation (Chae, 2017). In addition, users choose which aspects to keep private and which to make public. According to Lévy (1999), people blend the notions of private and public, just as the boundaries of time and place are blurred. Some researchers have studied aspects of the redefinition of the boundaries between public and private (Brandtzæg et al., 2010; West et al., 2009).

Although these studies indicate that the user’s age could determine how to manage posts when defining strategies for sharing content to maintain privacy, it is not the only determining factor. The user’s audience reach could also play a role, as exemplified by the case of *eduTubers*.

2. OBJECTIVE

This research aims to identify the elements of *eduTubers’* identity projected on Instagram. This research is a starting point for identifying how the elements of identity are present in strategies that capture the audience's attention and position the educational work of these content generators.

3. METHODOLOGY

To investigate the identity of *eduTubers*, we proposed a mixed-methods qualitative-quantitative research design using a content analysis approach (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005; Neuendorf, 2016) on the Instagram platform. The coding categories were constructed inductively through interpretive analysis; subsequently, we quantified the frequencies to identify predominant patterns that guided the qualitative interpretation of meaning.

We employed convenience sampling (Creswell, 2013) to analyze 2,101 publications and featured stories from the Instagram profiles of seven *eduTubers*. This research was part of a doctoral thesis (Pasquel-López, 2023), and a preliminary selection of *eduTubers* was already available. We conducted an online search using the terms “top 10 *eduTubers*” and “top *eduTubers*” to identify the most suitable participants. This search yielded seven relevant web pages on the topic (<https://www.lanacion.com.ar/>; <https://www.elcorreo.com/>; <https://www.clubinfluencers.com/>; <https://brandme.la/>; <https://www.familyon.es/>; <https://www.bebesymas.com/>; <https://teneightymagazine.com/>). The participants were selected based on the following criteria: they were *eduTubers*, i.e., they had an active YouTube account presenting educational

content; they were recognized as *eduTubers* on the Internet; they were active on Instagram; and the account had at least five posts and/or stories in the last month. Table 1 lists the *eduTubers* selected for the research and provides information on the number of followers, total publications, analyzed publications, analyzed stories, and the total number of elements analyzed for each profile.

Table 1. *eduTubers* selected for research

<i>eduTubers</i>	Followers	Publications	Analyzed publications	Stories analyzed	Elements analyzed
jasantaolalla	1.5 million	3,161	140	320	460
expocaseros	724 thousand	1,657	7	146	153
julioprofenet	233 thousand	2,260	21	6	27
aldouscaldous	209 thousand	1,383	67	249	316
el_profe_jordi	131 thousand	671	36	218	254
soydamielcarreon	103 thousand	2,852	281	176	457
marisolmaol	12.7 thousand	1,661	26	408	434

Source: Author's own elaboration. Data recorded as of July 7, 2023.

For the research, we selected the following *eduTubers'* profiles: *el_profe_jordi*, a Colombian teacher, shares content of interest to other teachers; *marisolmaol* is a Mexican eduTuber who shares videos of engineering and *physicomathematics*; *julioprofenet*, a Colombian eduTuber, teaches mathematics and physics; *expocaseros* is a team of two brothers who share science experiment content targeted at children; *aldouscaldous*, a Peruvian eduTuber, does science popularization; *jasantaolalla* is also a Spanish science popularizer; and, finally, *soydamielcarreon* is a Mexican eduTuber who shares math content for children.

As the selection method, we used Creswell's (2013) sample collection criterion. Moreover, as a requirement for selecting publications and featured stories, we selected publications published between January 1 and March 31, 2023, and we classified the featured stories in the profile as of April 1, 2023. Also, after we collected the publications and stories, we conducted a content analysis. A systematic process of identifying patterns and themes was used to subjectively interpret the data (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Previous socio-digital networks research employed this methodology (Pasquel-López & Valerio-Ureña, 2021; Valerio-Ureña et al., 2015; Woolley et al., 2010).

To ensure the reliability of the raters' coding, two researchers independently coded. We measured consistency as the proportion of observations on which the coders agreed. Neuendorf (2016) considers a coefficient of 0.7 or higher appropriate for this type of comparison. This research met this criterion with a concordance percentage of 0.71. In cases of divergence, the two researchers analyzed the units of analysis together to reach agreement on their coding. This research employed inductive coding in its analysis (Miles et al., 2013). This approach constructs codes from the data rather than relying on a predefined list. Both researchers scrutinized the publications to categorize them and identify the elements of the projected identity. The researchers then counted the frequency of occurrence for each category. The data analysis procedure identified the following variables for each participant's publication: publication date, number of likes, and number of comments.

4. RESULTS

Following the data analysis, we inductively identified codes to answer the research question: What aspects of their identities do *eduTubers* showcase on Instagram? The generated codes were classified into two categories, identified based on similarities among *eduTubers* and the frequency of the data. These two categories were established based on the identities portrayed in the *eduTubers'* Instagram posts. The first category is the personal level, with three subcategories: personal life, interests, and sense of humor. The second category is the professional level, which encompasses five subcategories: the role of an eduTuber, the audience,

alternative projects, collaborations, and the influencer role. The following is a description of each code in both categories. Also, representative examples were selected to illustrate the interpretive relation behind each code.

- Personal level:

Personal life: This category refers to publications that showcase aspects of the eduTuber's personal life and identity beyond their professional role. It includes posts featuring an individual's profile picture or a video of them enjoying an activity. For example, in a series of photos, an eduTuber stands next to his mom; at the bottom of the publication, he indicates that it is his mom's birthday. These posts project the authenticity and emotional closeness of the eduTuber, reflecting a human sense that contrasts with the educator's more formal image.

Interests: Posts in this category reflect the *eduTubers'* interests, such as hobbies, likes, or favorite activities. It includes publications featuring trips, meals, and various forms of entertainment. For example, one publication shows an eduTuber at the "Aladdin" event, along with a second photograph with the actors on stage. The publication's caption describes the scenes he found most appealing in the play. By sharing hobbies and cultural preferences, *eduTubers* build an identity anchored in curiosity and openness, presenting themselves as multidimensional individuals beyond their teaching role.

Sense of humor: This category includes publications that aim to amuse the audience through humorous or sarcastic depictions of imaginative or real-life situations. Generally, this category contains parody publications in which authors make fun of their profession, their work as *eduTubers*, or situations related to their subject. As evidence, an eduTuber posts a video in which students ask him to take care of their backpacks; at the end, he ends up with more than five loaded backpacks. Humor becomes a strategy of self-presentation that dilutes professional authority and strengthens their affinity with the audience, reinforcing their image through shared, playful experiences.

- Professional level:

Role of eduTuber: This category pertains to the publications that *eduTubers* have created about their work. Among the publications are photos and videos that refer to a conference or interview about their work. In this type of publication, those who refer to their work and direct the public to their YouTube channel are also included. As an example, an eduTuber shares a short video explaining how long it would take to reach the edge of the galaxy, reflecting the work he does as an eduTuber. These posts emphasize expertise and pedagogical vocation, reaffirming the eduTuber's legitimacy as both educator and digital communicator within the online learning ecosystem.

Related to the audience: This category represents publications in which *eduTubers* share information, events, or meetings with the audience. The *eduTubers* most frequently share one-on-one encounters with their audience, giveaways from the audience or for the audience, or posts about scenarios where the audience is visible. For example, we found one publication: a double video showing an eduTuber on one side and, on the other, the eduTuber's drawing made by a child from his audience. In the publication's caption, he notes that he likes it when the audience sends him their drawings. Through direct interaction and recognition of followers, *eduTubers* build a close, community-oriented identity, positioning their audience as co-creators of meaning and validation.

Alternative projects: This category includes publications intended to promote or inform the audience about other projects that the *eduTubers* may have. It encompasses publications about press conferences and promotions, such as the release of a book, as well as brand or sponsor projects to which they have

been invited. As evidence for this code, one publication features a photo of an eduTuber holding a poster featuring his image from a conference held at a science, technology, and innovation congress. At the bottom of the post, the eduTuber expresses gratitude for the invitation to the event. These publications broaden the professional identity of the eduTuber, linking their educational work to other fields, cultural, academic, or commercial, that increase their credibility and visibility as creators of educational content.

Collaborations: This category refers to publications that show cooperative work with other content producers. The most frequent publications in this category showcase their collaborations with other *eduTubers* or influencers or featured videos they co-produced with another educational content producer. For example, we found a post of an eduTuber who shared a photo of several *eduTubers* appearing together at a public presentation. Collaborative posts highlight a collective identity rooted in peer recognition and knowledge sharing, placing *eduTubers* within a culture of collaboration and shared experience. Even for some *eduTubers*, it serves as a clarifier of their friendship and peer recognition, beyond the rivalry that the audience might imply.

Influencer role: This category refers to publications whose purpose is to trend or follow a trending topic in socio-digital networks. This category includes publications by *eduTubers* following a trending topic, artists or influencers, or the public of the socio-digital networks. For example, in one video, an *eduTuber* compares two types of cars, anchored by Shakira's new song about overcoming her struggles, which became a hit on the Internet. By participating in trending topics, *eduTubers* negotiate between their educational mission and the dynamics of influence, merging pedagogical authority with cultural relevance and digital popularity; moreover, this strategy helps them increase their positioning and visibility with the audience.

The codes emerged inductively from repeated reading of the posts and captions. Each code was defined by semantic and visual regularities that expressed meaning in relation to self-presentation. The findings reveal that *eduTubers'* publications frequently fall into the subcategories of "personal life" and "role of an eduTuber," with "related to the audience" and "alternative projects" following closely behind, as these two subcategories are directly connected to their work. However, the least common category was "influencer role." Table 2 shows the number of occurrences among *eduTubers* for each category.

Table 2. *Categories and the number of occurrences among eduTubers.*

Category	Number of occurrences among <i>eduTubers</i>
Personal life	7
Interests	5
Sense of humor	4
Role of eduTuber	7
Related to the audience	6
Alternative projects	6
Collaborations	4
Influencer role	3

Source: Own elaboration.

An analysis of the *eduTubers'* Instagram accounts shows that the posts they share most frequently focus on their work, their audience, and collaborations with colleagues. Interestingly, for one of the analyzed accounts, the subcategory "alternative projects" is the most important. Additionally, *eduTubers* often share information about their interests and a general description of their persona, which helps define who they are. While categories like "influencer role" and the subcategory "sense of humor" are less common, they are occasionally

utilized to capitalize on the viral nature of certain Internet content and engage their audience. Table 3 shows the detailed occurrences for each subcategory in the Instagram accounts of the *eduTubers* under analysis.

Table 3. Percentage of occurrence of each category and total average for each *eduTuber*.

Category / <i>eduTuber</i>	E1	E2	E3	E4	E5	E6	E7	Total average for each <i>eduTuber</i>
Personal level								
Personal life	20%	9%	34%	15%	31%	42%	44%	28%
Interests	64%	13%	13%	0%	0%	83%	63%	34%
Sense of humor	9%	0%	16%	0%	0%	18%	5%	7%
Professional level								
Role of <i>eduTuber</i>	12%	79%	53%	81%	28%	49%	60%	52%
Related to the audience	12%	52%	44%	0%	31%	9%	5%	22%
Alternative projects	10%	29%	0%	19%	99%	9%	35%	29%
Collaborations	0%	34%	0%	41%	46%	0%	22%	20%
Influencer role	13%	0%	8%	22%	0%	0%	0%	6%

Source: Own elaboration.

Beyond their frequency, the categories reveal how *eduTubers* negotiate their dual identity as educators and influencers. Personal references humanize the academic figure, while professional posts consolidate credibility as a symbolic authority. The interplay between the two constructs creates a coherent narrative of authenticity and expertise.

5. DISCUSSION

Some people use defensive tactics in their self-presentation, such as justifications, apologies, or disclaimers (Lee et al., 1999). However, our study shows that *eduTubers* do not employ such tactics. The resulting categories, such as personal life, interests, and sense of humor, provide evidence that their goal is to portray a genuine image to their audience. This authenticity could be justified as a strategic performance to maintain audience trust and engagement (Marwick, 2013). Nevertheless, one might question whether these posts and interactions on their network constitute selective self-presentation to convey a positive impression to others (Barac & Maekawa, 2017). *eduTubers* might feel a moral duty to present themselves as a positive influence. However, this selectiveness does not appear to result in displaying an unrealistic, idealistic, or deceptive self-presentation. Instead, *eduTubers* deliberately balance their profession with everyday life to maintain the public attention (Abidin, 2016) and a sense of authentic passion (Duffy, 2017). The results of our study also indicate that *eduTubers* select their self-presentation; for instance, “being an example” is one of the assertive self-presentation tactics they use to a great extent, which helps develop and create identity (Lee et al., 1999). Therefore, we can emphasize that *eduTubers* present themselves as role models, demonstrating moral worth and integrity through their postings and interactions, thereby inspiring others to respect, imitate, or admire them.

Our study results reveal two edges to *eduTubers*’ projected identity: the identity that projects elements of their career as an *eduTuber*, and the identity of the person behind the *eduTuber*. Regarding the first aspect, it is evident that *eduTubers* aim to reinforce their YouTube content and bolster their professional image. Conversely, the second is a combination of elements that make up their identity and that aim to reflect in their offline identity in their publications, as evidenced by other studies (Ruiz & Ruiz, 2021): publications about their interests, humor, and personal life. This could also be interpreted as the projection of the “complete self,” that is, the private and personal identity discussed by Goffman (1959). We can understand this identity as an analogous correspondence, which may not be a performance or a mask but a projected image of the person, inevitably filtered by the communication context (Pérez Salazar, 2021).

Similarly, the “personal life” and “influencer role” categories mirror the concepts discussed in this paper’s introduction: the “real self” and the “ideal self” (Harter et al., 1996; Higgins, 1987; Markus & Nurius, 1986). In their posts, *eduTubers* share parts of their true feelings, thoughts, and behaviors, as well as the ideal qualities they are expected to possess. The results of this study contrast with those of other studies (Arregui, 2020; Coronel, 2020), in which influencers are found to require adapting to specific needs to project their identity to their community and the business community in which they operate to be recognized and positioned as a key or differentiating profile. As established by some authors (Harter et al., 1996; Higgins, 1987; Markus & Nurius, 1986), the categories identified in this study could also project different representations and blend into a complete image, implying that both projected elements (the professional and the personal) interconnect and subsist in their identity. Given the nature of this research, it is not possible to identify whether the *eduTuber* projects a “false self.” This is because we need to compare the *eduTuber*’s identity projection with other means and realities to determine whether the *eduTuber* is false, acting out, or expressing beliefs or feelings that are not honestly held or felt (Harter et al., 1996; Higgins, 1987; Markus & Nurius, 1986).

Furthermore, the projected identities related to their careers as *eduTubers*, and their personal identities could be explained by the projection of identities based on the roles they play. The clarity reflected in their private lives and that of their work, perhaps, can be regulated by the influence of society and impression management (Goffman, 1959), that is, the strategies used to control and manage the way others perceive people to gain respect, maintain their reputation, or influence others (Goffman, 1959).

This implies that *eduTubers* manage their self-presentation, possibly aiming to establish a positive reputation with their audience, as found by Baumeister and Tice (1986). This was also demonstrated in other studies that indicate that influencers reinforce positive meanings to generate admiration or to create a relational bond with their audience (Arregui, 2020; Coronel, 2020; Galarza, 2020). This narrative is shaped by the value and appreciation that *eduTubers* expect from the same audience (Del Prete & Redon Pantoja, 2020). The results further suggest that the identity projected on digital media is an integration or interconnection of their roles as *eduTubers*, teachers, and their own person. Furthermore, the virtual, the real, the public, and the private are intertwined while also being limited by the members of their social network and the type of interaction defined by the same application (Pérez Salazar, 2021). This makes it difficult to clearly distinguish between the two, as all worlds form a continuum (Del Prete & Redon Pantoja, 2020; Lévy, 1999).

6. CONCLUSIONS

The results of this research suggest that *eduTubers*’ self-concept, or how they perceive and define themselves in the context of their interactions with their audience, influences the frequency with which they post certain types of content. This self-concept not only shapes their self-definition and interactions with their audience (Campbell et al., 1996) but also influences their goals as *eduTubers*, as Rosenberg and Egbert (2011) point out that self-concept refers to oneself as a goal. Furthermore, in the context of their role as digital educators, their postings appear to regulate their behavior. In this sense, their self-concept, in addition to appearing transparent, seems to be regulated by social requirements, as posited by Markus and Nurius (1986), and thus supports their work as *eduTubers* seeking acceptance and recognition from their audience, in addition to ensuring a way to differentiate themselves with respect to other *eduTubers* on the Internet. However, future research could validate this reflection and enrich the findings by complementing the methodology with interviews with the *eduTubers* under analysis.

The content these *eduTubers* publish on other socio-digital networks extends their YouTube channel. Besides disseminating their educational work, *eduTubers* take the opportunity to share personal aspects, revealing the other side of the person who creates educational resources. The results of this study suggest that their identity projection could be a selective presentation, designed to continue captivating their audience and building

rapport. The findings may be of interest to other *eduTubers*, as it appears that their projected identity as educators directly influences the content they share, thereby meeting the standards or expectations of their audience and, above all, seeking recognition and acceptance for their work to set themselves apart from others. This could also be one of the factors contributing to the growth of their socio-digital networks, as Ruiz and Ruiz (2021) conclude in their research with teachers and their YouTube channel.

The tactics employed by these *eduTubers* could serve as a model for other public figures on the Internet. The research findings reveal that showcasing their professional side and a portion of their personal identity could enhance the perception of the *eduTubers* as people with interests and a sense of humor, aligning with their audience. Furthermore, it conveys a cohesive, interwoven identity between their work and personal lives.

Finally, these strategies could benefit *eduTubers* who are still trying to find the best formula for managing their image on socio-digital networks. Our study shows that the few elements they communicate in these networks contribute to a clear projection of who they are and what they want to share with the “public.” Essentially, *eduTubers* seem to have a clear understanding of what they can publicly share about their personal lives.

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