

Perception of online news consumption and young people related practices in the Community of Madrid (Spain)

Percepción del consumo de noticias en línea y de las prácticas relacionadas a ellas por parte de los jóvenes de la Comunidad de Madrid (España)

Percepção do consumo de notícias online e práticas afins dos jovens da Comunidade de Madrid (Espanha)

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ABSTRACT | This article analyses the news consumption habits of young people in the Community of Madrid (Spain), their perception about them and the practices related to it. This is a relevant question, both for understanding the online behavior and for the effect it has on journalistic activity. Based on a statistically representative survey applied between June and July 2019, we obtained the point of view of 533 participants (17-24 years), and the influence of age and level of education is studied. The research confirms the low rate of news consumption of young people. In addition to the general presence of online consumption, incidental access is confirmed as a characteristic of this sector of the population, though it is influenced by age. It also explores the most preferred topics, the most prevalent ways of online news consumption, the procedures used to share them, and the practices related to verification. Finally, the importance of face-to-face communication in news consumption and the differences between consumption and trust in the means of accessing the news are observed.

KEYWORDS: news consumption; youth; social media; perception.

HOW TO CITE

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RESUMEN | Este artículo analiza los hábitos de consumo de noticias de los jóvenes de la Comunidad de Madrid, su percepción sobre estas y las prácticas relacionadas. Conocer su comportamiento en línea es relevante y tiene consecuencias en la actividad periodística. A partir de una encuesta estadísticamente representativa, aplicada entre junio y julio de 2019, se obtuvo el punto de vista de 533 participantes (17-24 años), estudiando la influencia de la edad y el nivel de estudios. La investigación confirma el bajo consumo de noticias por parte de los jóvenes. Además de la presencia general del consumo en línea, se corrobora el acceso incidental como característica en este sector de la población, modulado por la edad. También se profundiza en las temáticas con mayor preferencia, las vías de mayor prevalencia para consumir noticias en línea, los mecanismos empleados para compartirlas, y las prácticas relacionadas con la verificación. Finalmente, se observa la importancia de la comunicación presencial en el consumo de noticias y las diferencias existentes entre consumo y confianza en el medio de acceso a la noticia.

PALABRAS CLAVE: consumo de noticias; jóvenes; medios sociales; percepción.

RESUMO | Este artigo analisa os hábitos de consumo de notícias dos jovens da Comunidade de Madrid, sua percepção das notícias e práticas afins. Conhecer o seu comportamento online é relevante e tem consequências para a atividade jornalística. De um inquérito estatisticamente representativo aplicado entre junho e julho de 2019, foi obtido o ponto de vista de 533 participantes (17-24 anos) estudando a influência da idade e do nível educacional. A investigação confirma o baixo consumo de notícias por parte dos jovens. Além da presença geral do consumo online, o acesso acidental é corroborado como uma característica neste setor da população, embora modulado por idade. Também se aprofunda sobre os temas mais preferidos, as formas mais prevalentes de consumir notícias online, os mecanismos utilizados para as compartilhar e as práticas relacionadas com a verificação. Por fim, é observada a importância da comunicação presencial no consumo de notícias e as diferenças existentes entre consumo e confiança nos meios de acesso às notícias.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: consumo de notícias; jovens; mídias sociais; percepção.

INTRODUCTION

News consumption is one of the key factors in the development of young people as citizens, who face the exponential growth of new online access channels to journalistic products. They turn to blogs, instant messaging applications and, especially, social media, because of their ease of access and the interactivity they bring to users. Young people not only consume content, but also generate information and opinions, and share them in a short period among wide social circles (Catalina-García et al., 2019).

The natural adoption of new technologies that characterizes young people (Yuste, 2015) is linked to a trend of news consumption in the digital environment, to the detriment of conventional media (Fernández de Arroyabe Olaortua et al., 2018). In a context in which the values of good journalism –authenticity of the sources used, veracity, and objectivity– are called into question, the difference between being informed and being well informed is blurred.

This paper analyzes the consumption of news by young people in the community of Madrid, their perception about them, and the practices related to them. We are interested in knowing whether the selection of news comes from uncritical practices to discriminate content. If so, this phenomenon could possibly be a consequence of issues such as speed of access or disaffection for what is institutionalized.

STATE OF THE ART

Patterns and types of behavior

News consumption by young people is a relevant topic, among other issues, because of the impact on the configuration of future journalistic activity. It also influences the political sphere and even one's own perceptions and purchase intentions (Wackowski et al., 2019).

Therefore, it is relevant to consider their attitudes towards news, their level of consumption and their different uses. In general, they hold positive attitudes towards online news sites (Kang, 2009), with a long-standing preference for digital access. However, there is no agreement on their level of consumption of current affairs information. Although there are authors who point out that a relevant percentage like to be informed and this interest seems to increase with age (Costera, 2007; Casero-Ripollés, 2012), mainly through social media (Kim et al., 2014), others warn about the decrease in their media consumption (Drok et al., 2018).

The latter can be attributed to a reduced interest in political or social issues, or even to a decline in civic culture. It could also be considered that young people are socially engaged, but do not follow the traditional media because they are

increasingly irrelevant to them. Compared to the press, young people point to speed and price as the main reasons for digital consumption (Cherian & Jacob, 2012).

Not all young people consume news. According to Edgerly and colleagues (2018a), 52% of them would tend to ignore them. Thus, a greater supply of information would not result in greater news consumption (Arceneaux & Johnson, 2013). This behavior is consistent with research among adult users (Hasebrink & Popp, 2006; Lee & Yang, 2014).

Among young people who do consume news, two groups can be identified. On the one hand, those who seek the most important national and local news, regardless of devices. They tend to be relatively more interested in politics and, in the same way as their adult counterparts (Lee & Yang, 2014), they seek topical information from all possible sources. This fact is in line with the finding that the habit of contact with traditional newspapers is maintained, primarily in online format (Kaufhold, 2010; Hermida et al., 2012; Condeza-Dall'Orso et al., 2014; Catalina García et al., 2015).

However, the number of young people who uses social networking websites and information aggregators to keep abreast of events and happenings is growing. This profile could be broken down into two subtypes: those who actively engage in searching for content on the networks, and those who connect with information incidentally, due to comments from friends or peers and the result of algorithms that calculate what news is in their preferences. Both types of users have been considered as searchers and stumblers, respectively (Bode, 2016; Kim et al., 2013).

In the audiovisual domain, Papathanassopoulos and colleagues (2013) confirm that younger people tend to replace traditional news channels. Wonnenberger and Kim (2017) show that, in general, they watch less news on television when more alternative options are available.

Incidental consumption

Generally speaking, young people do not deliberately seek out news, but consume them incidentally, although there are differences in perception about the frequency of consumption (Patterson, 2007; Qayyum et al., 2010; Bergström & Jervelycke Belfrage, 2018).

Among the factors influencing their news consumption, Bergström and Jervelycke Belfrage (2018) point to news interest, the influence of opinion leaders –given that they provide a framework for news interpretation–, and age. The older the age, the lower the incidental consumption. Another relevant circumstance is family. The type of consumption of parents of adolescents between 12 and 17 years old is a determining factor: Edgerly and colleagues (2018b) even refer to a paired pattern of informational consumption between the two.

The mobile device is the most used to consume news (Boczkowski et al., 2017; Vara-Miguel, 2019). With incidental consumption, news becomes one more content within the entertainment content accessed by young people, to which they devote little time, a common phenomenon in college students (Catalina-García et al., 2019).

The intensity of digital activity can also influence news consumption. The longer the time of consumption, the greater the access to news and its verification (Catalina-García et al., 2015). On the other hand, young people consume news for normative motivations (among which being a good citizen stands out) and for personal, educational, professional, or hobby interests (Brites & Kõuts-Klemm, 2018).

Social media and news

To understand news consumption by young people, it is pertinent to dwell on the relationships between access to news and social networks (Bergström & Jervelycke Belfrage, 2018; Mitchelstein & Boczkowski, 2018; Mumtaz et al., 2019). Mitchelstein and Boczkowski (2018) consider the use of Facebook and Twitter as one of the factors linked to incidental consumption of journalistic information. Another factor is age, as younger people are more likely to connect with current affairs information in this way. The growing access to news via WhatsApp seems to confirm this (Martínez Costa et al., 2019).

Social media users use more sources of information incidentally, especially younger users with little interest in this type of content (Fletcher & Nielsen, 2018). According to Gangadharbatla and colleagues (2014), young people understand that social media favor control over the information received more than other options. They access news only in certain circumstances, through social media, and then consult digital media, in many cases traditional, to which they give greater credibility (Hilligoss & Rieh, 2007; Flanagin & Metzger, 2008; Johnson & Kaye, 2014).

On the other hand, several studies agree that the degree of credibility that young people and adolescents give to online news is high (Catalina-García et al., 2015; Flanagin & Metzger 2008; Kang, 2009).

The consumption of news via Facebook or WhatsApp has various connections with social relationships. Those with weak ties within the network pay more attention to topical information. When sharing news within a community, perceived control over privacy, the presence of clear norms and community boundaries, and the communicative goals of the group are key factors (Swart et al., 2019).

The Spanish case

Young Spaniards (15-29 years old) constitute a group characterized by living within families with structural changes. They have high unemployment rates and prolong their studies (Benedicto, 2017). Technological mediation influences their

social practices, they distrust institutions, and have a low associative practice. In a similar vein is the rest of Western Europeans: they approve less of the media than adults, although they still trust newspapers (Matza et al., 2018). In addition, they are much more likely to mention social media (31% according to Vara-Miguel et al., 2019) and search engine sites as main news sources, surpassing TV (27%) and print media.

Precisely, social media are emerging as the main source of news among young Spaniards aged 18 to 24, according to the Digital News Report Spain (Negredo et al., 2021), even though the general population considers them to be the most misinformative. In comparative terms, the data extracted are similar in Ibero-American countries (Argentina, Brazil, Chile, and Mexico) included in the report by Newman and colleagues (2020): social media are increasingly consolidated as a source of consultation, although trust in news in general is decreasing, including those coming from social media, but also from journalistic media. Chile and Spain show a serious drop in trust in these media.

News consumption is also linked to brief and intermittent episodes, such as bursts of information, or informative snacking, typical of mobile devices (Martínez et al., 2019). Some studies point out that many university students do not inform themselves rigorously (Soengas-Pérez et al., 2019). However, young people (18-34 years old) constitute the age group that compares news sources on the web the most and those who most use various news sources, through Twitter or different blogs (Hernández-Serrano et al., 2017).

OBJECTIVES

This study analyzes the consumption of news by young people in the Community of Madrid, based on age (17 to 24 years old) and level of education. The following objectives are proposed:

1. To verify news consumption habits in the media, areas of interest, and frequency of access.
2. Establish the actions they undertake with the information, both those they consult and those that come to them incidentally. If they contrast them or not, why they do so, and if they share them.
3. To know the degree of credibility that each media inspires in them and which are, if any, the elements of a piece of information that motivates them to trust the news content.
4. Also in terms of perception, we inquired about the motivations that drive them to get information.

METHODOLOGY

A questionnaire was administered to a statistically representative sample of 533 young people between 17 and 24 years of age in the Community of Madrid between June 17 and July 4, 2019, in person, at their homes. The sample collection and application were commissioned to an entity specialized in quantitative sociological techniques. The survey was approved by the research ethics committee of the Universidad Rey Juan Carlos¹ and the study follows Spanish regulations (European Union Regulation 2016/679) regarding data protection. The analysis error is set at $\pm 4.33\%$ for global data under the assumption of $p=q=0.5$, with a confidence level of 95%. For this purpose, we applied a two-stage, stratified cluster sampling, with selection of the primary sampling units (municipalities and census sections) by proportional randomization and of the final units (individuals) by random routes and gender and age quotas, according to the data corresponding to the population interpolated by simple age, for each gender with a reference date of January 1, 2019 (provisional) for the Community of Madrid and provided by the National Institute of Statistics (2019)². The information was accessed by the C.A.P.I. System (computer-assisted personal survey in the respondents' homes). The average duration of the surveys was 25 minutes.

After data collection, we detected a slight deviation in the gender and age variables of the sample with respect to those recorded in the universe of young people in the Community of Madrid. The sample was adjusted to maintain its representativeness (table 1).

The educational level was separated into two groups: higher and non-higher education, so that the cumulative percentage of the former is 35.4% and 64.6% among those with higher education.

Age	Sample			Madrid Community population and weight sample		
	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	Total
17-20	51.10%	48.90%	51.20%	51.14%	48.86%	49.54%
21-24	51.30%	48.70%	48.80%	48.91%	50.09%	50.46%
Total	262	271	533	262,655	257,229	519,884

* Population interpolated by simple age, for each gender. Reference date 1/1/2019 (provisional) for the Community of Madrid (INE, 2019).

Table 1. Distribution of the sample and the population by gender and age groups

Source: Own elaboration based on data from INE Spain.

1. Internal registration number: ENM 53/172103201906619. Date of signature: 10/04/2019
2. <https://www.ine.es/>

Questionnaire characteristics

The questionnaire, developed by us, is based on other related studies that used this technique (Aramburú-Moncada & López-Redondo, 2018; Catalina-García et al., 2015; Condeza- Dall’Orso et al., 2014), with three thematic axes. News consumption: examines the media used to get informed; it includes traditional and online versions of journalistic products (press, radio, and television) and other digital sources (social networks, search engines, blogs, subscription newsletters). We ask whether this consumption is incidental, by transmission in their family or friendship entourage through some means (telephone or messaging services, for example) or directly face-to-face. The use of media and forms of information are measured on an ascending time scale: never, once a month, once or twice a week, three or four times a week, every day or almost every day. Secondly, we examine the topics classified according to the traditional press sections: politics, economy, events, catastrophes, environment, culture, sports, science, technology, curiosities and entertainment, service agenda, and celebrities (mostly included in the tabloids).

1. Actions they undertake with the information: we observe the frequency and causes that incite them (or not) to contrast the information and whether they share or comment on them with their entourage. If so, how they do it, whether in their offline entourage or through digital media. Frequency is measured using a Likert scale (never, rarely, sometimes, very often and continuously).
2. Trust and perception of the different channels that generate information: for both aspects, the Likert scale is also applied. In the case of trust, the level of trust inspired by each of the aforementioned media is measured. The survey asks about the features needed to consider that a news item is credible, according to content, quality of the media, inclusion of audiovisual content, authorship or source, and publication in two or more media. As for perception, the respondents were asked to mark their degree of agreement/disagreement with a series of statements to find out why they consult the news. To explore how important they consider it is to be informed in relation to its implementation: if they believe it is essential to make decisions, if they are only interested in what affects them directly, or if, although they recognize that it is convenient, they do not usually consult.

The data collected were processed and analyzed with the SPSS Statistics v26 program and the level of statistical validity is set at $c^2 < 0.05$.

RESULTS

News consumption

Except for the conventional format of television (39.8% several times a week and 34.8% every day or almost every day), young people hardly access news in traditional media. 55.8% say they never or only once a month turn to analog radio for information and only 5.8% do so daily or almost always, while 40.5% never access the print media and only 5.9% do so regularly (every day or almost every day).

Although the online versions of these media have a greater acceptance, the online press is the most frequented by young people: 29.5% access at least three or four times a week, the same for digital radio (20.1%) and online television, by a quarter (table 2).

It is significant that a good part of those surveyed do not seek out the news: 69.6% usually learn about it from their family and 70.3% from their friends or colleagues via WhatsApp or face-to-face. This incidental way of being informed occurs at least three or four times a week. In addition to conventional television, this frequency only comes close to the query that 48.2% deliberately make in search engines on topics that interest them (table 3).

Age makes significant differences when consulting the digital and printed press, and when subscribing to newsletters or news lists. The older they are, the more they resort to these forms of information. 71.5% of respondents between 17 and 20 years of age hardly consult information in traditional newspapers or magazines (never or only once a month), compared to 54.9% of those in the 21-24 age range, who do not use this medium either or do so very sporadically.

Young people with a higher level of education consult the press and radio more frequently. The average values range from 3.1 for digital newspapers/magazines to 2.5 for digital radio. In contrast, young people with less education reach their maximum value at 2.6 for the online press and a minimum of 1.9 (between never and once a month); the same happens to this medium in its traditional version. Conventional television is a somewhat more recurrent source of news for people with lower education, whose average frequency is 3.9 (close to three/four times a week), five tenths higher than for those with higher education. For other consumption alternatives, statistical differences can only be seen in subscriptions to newsletters, whose recurrence is somewhat higher among those with higher educational levels (figure 1).

	Never	Once a month	Once or twice a week	Three or four times a week	Every day or almost every day	DK/DA
Printed media	40.5	23.6	15.9	11.7	5.9	2.4
Conventional radio	36.9	18.9	22	14.7	5.8	1.6
Conventional TV	10.3	13.5	19	20.8	34.8	1.6
Online press	25.1	21.4	20.7	18.5	11	3.3
Online radio	39.4	20	18.3	12.6	7.5	2.2
Online TV	30.6	20.3	20.9	15.8	9.2	3.2

Table 2. Frequency of media consumption*Source: Own elaboration.*

	Never	Once a month	Once or twice a week	Three or four times a week	Every day or almost every day	DK/DA
Through social networks	7	8.7	17.1	28.4	38.1	0.8
Through a newsletter or news list	33.2	12.8	19.6	18.1	12	4.4
You get news about specific topics in search engines	16.3	12.6	20.3	25.7	22.5	2.7
You get news by relatives, in person, by phone or WhatsApp	5.4	8.5	16.2	27	42.6	0.2
You get news by friends, colleagues or acquaintances in person, by phone or WhatsApp	4.2	7.7	17.3	24.9	45.5	0.5

Table 3. Incidental consumption frequency percentages*Source: Own elaboration.*

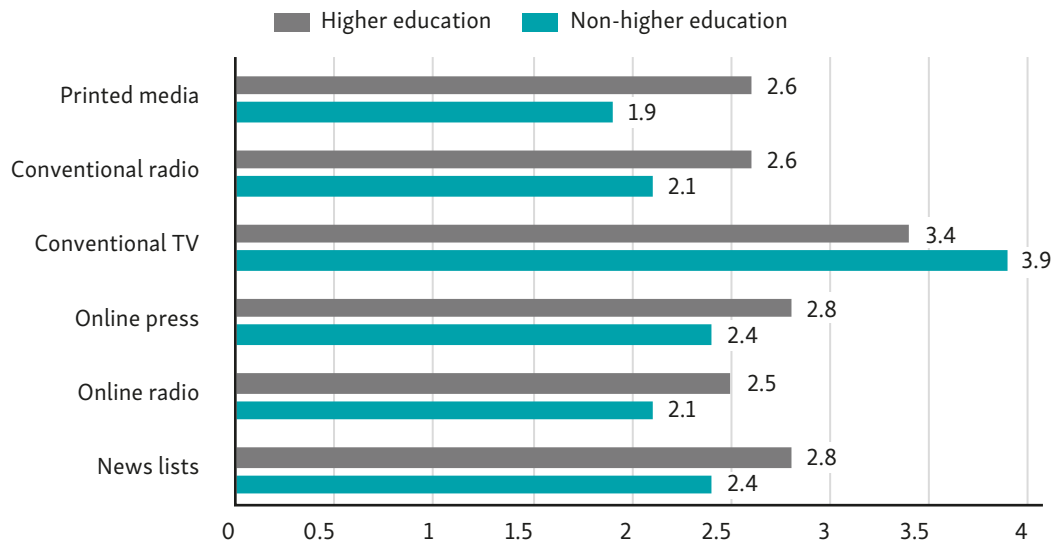


Figure 1. Means of media use according to educational level with significant differences as a function of chi-square ($c^2 < 0.05$)

Source: Own elaboration.

Curiosities and entertainment, technology, sports, and culture are, in that order, the most frequently consulted topics through social networks and other sources hosted on the Internet. In all cases, the average number of consultations is higher than 3, a value that corresponds to a high frequency.

The scarce and lower values reached by news related to politics and economics ($\delta = 2.35$ out of 5 in each of the items) reflect that, in general, they rarely consult them. This reinforces the traditional and already studied disaffection of young people for these topics.

In fact, age registers significant differences for politics ($\chi^2 = .000$) and economics ($\chi^2 = .002$): as they get older, their interest in both grows. 64.5% of the youngest never or rarely consult political news, while the figure drops to 50% when the age ranges between 21 and 24. Regarding the economy, the difference is greater: 78.1% of young people between 17 and 20 years of age are not interested, compared to 46% of older people (tables 4 and 5).

All topics reach a higher recurrence in the 21-24 age group due, according to the data, to a greater commitment and interest in what is happening in their environment. The only exception is news about celebrities. Mostly included in the tabloids, they are consulted quite frequently or continuously by 43.6% of the younger age group and 34.4% of 21- to 24-year-olds. There are no significant differences according to educational level.

		Politics					
		Never	Rarely	Occasionally	Frequently	Continuously	Total
Age							
17-20	Count	108	59	50	30	12	259
	Age %	41.7%	22.8%	19.3%	11.6%	4.6%	100.0%
	Politics %	61.4%	47.2%	41.3%	39.5%	41.4%	49.1%
	Total %	20.5%	11.2%	9.5%	5.7%	2.3%	49.1%
21-24	Count	68	66	71	46	17	268
	Age %	25.4%	24.6%	26.5%	17.2%	6.3%	100.0%
	Politics %	38.6%	52.8%	58.7%	60.5%	58.6%	50.9%
	Total %	12.9%	12.5%	13.5%	8.7%	3.2%	50.9%
Total	Count	176	125	121	76	29	527
	Age %	33.4%	23.7%	23.0%	14.4%	5.5%	100.0%
	Politics %	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
	Total %	33.4%	23.7%	23.0%	14.4%	5.5%	100.0%

Table 4. Contingency age-consultation of political information

Source: Own elaboration

		Economics					Total
		Never	Rarely	Occasionally	Frequently	Continuously	Total
Age							
17-20	Count	106	71	47	25	11	260
	Age %	40.8%	27.3%	18.1%	9.6%	4.2%	100.0%
	Politics %	61.3%	54.6%	37.9%	37.3%	31.4%	49.1%
	Total %	20.0%	13.4%	8.9%	4.7%	2.1%	49.1%
21-24	Count	67	59	77	42	24	269
	Age %	24.9%	21.9%	28.6%	15.6%	8.9%	100.0%
	Politics %	38.7%	45.4%	62.1%	62.7%	68.6%	50.9%
	Total %	12.7%	11.2%	14.6%	7.9%	4.5%	50.9%
Total	Count	173	130	124	67	35	529
	Age %	32.7%	24.6%	23.4%	12.7%	6.6%	100.0%
	Politics %	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
	Total %	32.7%	24.6%	23.4%	12.7%	6.6%	100.0%

Table 5. Contingency age-consultation of economic information

Source: Own elaboration.

Practices conducted with the news

Regardless of their age or educational level, more than a quarter (26.5%) of those surveyed acknowledge that they do not check the news because they trust the first media they access and 17.5% do not have time to access other sources.

Among those who do contrast sometimes, the percentages are fairly balanced between those who consult other media when the information is controversial (29.9%) and when it affects them or is of particular interest to them (23.4%). Similar values are found among those who always check them to confirm the first version (26.5%) and those who try to complete with more data (29%) (figure 2). Whether they do this action continuously or occasionally, there are no significant differences according to age or level of studies.

Young people prefer to communicate face-to-face to discuss current affair information with their entourage. Between one (never) and five (continuously), the mean is 3.75, a value that is close to quite frequent. This alternative is the only one that shows significant differences in educational level (with a higher frequency among those with higher education). Concerning online tools, WhatsApp comes close to offline communication for sharing information ($\delta=3.64$) and for commenting on it ($\delta=3.65$). It even outperforms social media, which achieve respective averages of 3.3 for sharing and 3.32 for commenting. They rarely use blogs to comment on news ($\delta=2.46$).

In terms of age, there are no statistical differences in face-to-face communication, but there are differences in the digital environment: older people comment more on news both on networks and WhatsApp and are more inclined to share them. This trend is broken when it comes to disseminating them through networks: among 17-20-year-olds they do so with a higher frequency ($\delta=3.4$). Among 21-24-year-olds the value is 2.8.

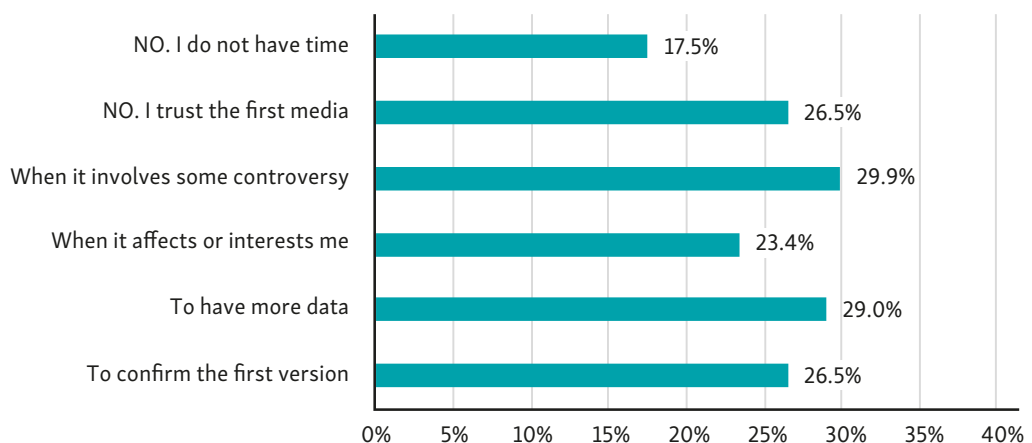


Figure 2. Contrast (or not) of the information and its causes

Source: Own elaboration.

Trust and perception of information sources

In general, young people show considerable confidence in almost all information channels, with an average score of over three out of five, except for blogs, whose value is $\delta=2.84$. These results are partly related to the already analyzed low interest in checking the news of the first media they consult. The highest values are registered in the analog format of the traditional media: 3.33 for the press, 3.30 for radio, and 3.28 for television. This order is altered in the respective digital versions, although with less confidence: an average of 3.14 for online television, 3.09 for the press, and 3.06 for radio. However, this last figure should be interpreted with caution, considering that about 10% answered DK/DA; this also happens with the low consumption of radio. In other less conventional digital channels, they prefer search engines such as Google or Yahoo ($\delta=3.2$) more than social networks, whose index is one of the lowest recorded ($\delta=3.09$) (figure 3).

Age does not make a difference, but the level of education in two of the offline versions of the media does: 86.9% with higher levels show a fair amount, a lot or total trust in the printed press and 81% with less education, in television. Although there is no clear benchmark among respondents to gauge the credibility of information, the publication of audiovisual content (still images or videos) and publication in two or more media are the most highly valued aspects. The respective averages achieved are 1.81 and 1.80 out of 5. These values are above the authorship of the news item ($\delta=1.78$) and the qualitative recognition of the media ($\delta=1.75$). This last aspect is the only one that registers differences according to the education variable, with a significant increase among young people who do not have higher education. The content of the information is the least valued by all young people (1.66), with no significant differences according to education. Age is also not linked to credibility.

Regardless of age and educational level, variables that do not reflect any singularity, entertainment is the main cause motivating young people to consult topical information ($\delta=2.6$ out of 5). In line with the low values recorded for contrasting news, the least recurrent cause is to obtain different perspectives on what is happening in their environment ($\delta=2.2$) (table 6).

Finally, the low deliberate versus incidental consumption is confirmed. Young people do not tend to inform themselves despite admitting that it is important ($\delta=2.6$). Those who do so justify it because it affects them directly (2.27) or it allows them to make a decision in the political or economic sphere (2.17). Precisely, these areas of journalistic interest offer low consumption. Nor in these cases are there differences in terms of level of education. In relation to age, there is somewhat more disagreement among those aged 21-24, given that they opt for the statement that "it is important, but I do not usually do it".

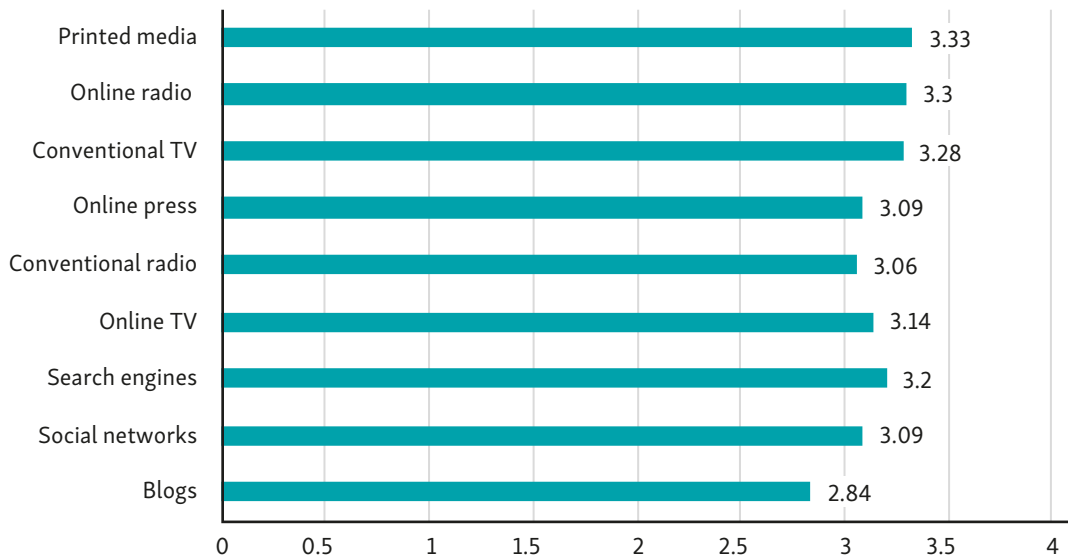


Figure 3. Average confidence in the ways of accessing the news

Source: Own elaboration.

	Valids	Losts	Average	Mean	Mode
Because it is necessary to get involved with my entourage and participate as a citizen	528	5	2.23	2	2
To get different perspectives of what is happening	530	3	2.2	2	2
For my work or studies	527	6	2.4	2	2
To be able to talk to other people	528	5	2.28	2	2
I only consult it because it entertains me	527	6	2.6	2	2
I acquired the habit in my family entourage	528	4	2.36	2	2

Table 6: Causes for becoming informed. Likert scale 1- 5

Source: Own elaboration.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The first finding of this paper confirms that news consumption by young people and adolescents is low in traditional media, both in print and in audiovisual or digital media. As the literature points out (Bergström & Jervelycke Belfrage, 2018; Mitchelstein & Boczkowski, 2018; Mumtaz et al., 2019), they consume news primarily on social media platforms or WhatsApp, except for news consumption on television two or three times a week. This phenomenon could be related to a habit in the family entourage, something not considered in this study and that may

open new research lines. The lack of attachment among the younger generations to the news media leads us to think about their decline. This is a cause for concern if we consider the amount of disinformation circulating in other channels that collect current news, linked to, among other negative phenomena, fake news and clickbaits, which do not have the desirable journalistic rigor. The digital adaptation of professional media is not a sufficient cause to attract these audiences, although it is also true that this work does not confirm the transfer to the consumption of informative videos in other channels and platforms (Vara-Miguel, 2019).

Likewise, the results are in line with Boczkowski and colleagues (2017), who point to incidental consumption as a key element: young people in Madrid mainly consume news received from their entourage, through digital tools or face-to-face, to a greater extent than they search for and consult in traditional media. This incidental consumption and the apparent conformism that young people have for getting information through the most accessible ways raises another reflection: restlessness, a characteristic linked to youth, is not reflected in the rigorous search for topical information. Although news consumption is associated with social engagement (Zhanh & Shoric, 2018), it is not among their priorities.

On the other hand, age is confirmed to be a distinctive factor in consumption. The older the age, the more deliberate news' search increases (Bergström & Jervelycke Belfrage, 2018). Higher educational attainment also influences more news consumption. The treatment of this variable represents one of the most important contributions of this study. Future research could analyze it in greater depth and associate it with greater emphasis to media and digital literacy. It would be interesting to verify the aspects that could influence the attitude of young people towards a greater interest in professional journalistic media. From a thematic point of view, the subjects that arouse most interest in the respondents are curiosities and entertainment, technology, sports, and culture. Among the least interesting were politics and economics. It is also relevant that the latter, two of the most important sections in the general media, are the ones that interest them the least. This could be linked to the assumption made in this research regarding their notorious disinterest in most of the eminently journalistic media.

As for the practices after getting information, it is worth noting that a good part of those surveyed do not verify the news. These results are worrying, due to the massive spread of disinformation in the digital environment, which makes it necessary to contrast and verify information. Surprisingly, in this age group, despite being digital natives, they tend to comment on the news in an offline social environment. Older young people are the ones who most share them digitally. WhatsApp is the most used tool, with a higher level than social media.

Among the reasons why they verify the information, the news that involves a certain degree of controversy stands out in the first place, followed by the interest in completing the news with more data. Those who do not verify the information argue above all that they trust the first medium through which they receive the news and, to a lesser extent, because they do not have time.

Regarding the degree of trust in information, it can be said it is high, except for the blog. The press, radio, and television, in analog format, occupy, in that order, the preferences of those surveyed, although radio has a low consumption. Among the digital media, search engines stand out above social networks, although this figure does not correspond directly with consumption, which is higher through the networks. Two main elements act in favor of the news' credibility: the presence of audiovisual documents (videos or photographs) and their publication in several media. The age variable again establishes a bias, since older people contrast the news more and have more opportunity to verify that the information is published by several media.

Concerning the level of education, there are no variations in the level of trust in the different types of media and all of them, regardless of their level of education, recognize that it is important to do so, although they do not inform themselves sufficiently.

Another key aspect to understand the phenomenon of news consumption by young people is the relationship with their civic and citizen engagement (Brites & Kõuts-Klemm, 2018). At this point, it is common to relate weak access to news with a certain degree of political and social disaffection. However, a different approach can be used. On the one hand, the willingness of youth to join the labor forces and adult life is evident, which could be understood as a manifestation of their civic and citizen involvement. On the other hand, the diversity and displacement in terms of channels for accessing news and its different formats probably leads to think of a confrontation with the traditional status quo, both political and media. Employing new experiences of consumption of current information could be seen, therefore, as a way of constructing social learning in a new social and political arena. The first limitation of the study is that the data were obtained at a specific moment, which does not make it possible to analyze consumption trends. The results are partially comparably to young Spaniards, as they focus on the Community of Madrid. Another limitation is establishing age and educational level as the only independent variables. Future research could address other comparisons related to gender or socioeconomic status and their relationship with the digital divide. Studying the impact of factors such as personal experiences that could mark news' consumption and its interrelation with one's own citizen awareness would also be a contribution.

The main contributions are the novelty regarding the news topics preferred by young people, based on a representative sample and relevant results to decipher the impact of age and level of studies on news consumption patterns. Finally, the importance of face-to-face communication among the actions related to news consumption and the differences between consumption and trust in the means of access to the news are observed.

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