

Social media and Generation Z

Redes Sociales y Generación Z



Fernando Marugán Solís. PhD in Audiovisual Communication and Advertising from the Complutense University of Madrid since 2014. Professor of Advertising Creativity at the San Pablo CEU University since the 2010-11 academic year, where I have directed La Agencia and Club de Creatividad, two extracurricular proposals for the development of creativity of students of the Degree in Advertising and Public Relations. Prior to teaching, I have worked for 25 years in advertising agencies such as McCann Erickson, Publicis, RK People or *Zamorano Asociados*, winning several national and international awards (*Clio New York Festivals*, *Fiap*, *El Sol*, *EFI*, *Ampe*, *Anuncios*, etc.). As a professor, he has won the Cardenal Herrera Award for Best Teaching Work in 2014.

CEU San Pablo University, Spain
fernando.marugansolis@ceu.es
ORCID: 0000-0002-6948-4096



Davinia Martín Critikián. PhD in Communication from the University Camilo José Cela. From 2017 to 2022 I have been working at San Pablo CEU University combining teaching with management and research. I am currently living in Indonesia for a research stay and lecturer in the LSPR Communication and Business Institute. My lines of research are communication trends, consumer behavior and social media. Before my teaching experience at San Pablo CEU University, I worked at the International University of La Rioja, developing unpublished syllabi and teaching online.

LSPR Communication and Business Institute, Indonesia
davinia.m@lspr.edu
ORCID: 0000-0002-6921-4707

Received: 31/05/2022 - Accepted: 20/07/2022 - Early access: 24/10/2022 - Published: 01/01/2023

Recibido: 31/05/2022 - Aceptado: 20/07/2022 - En edición: 24/10/2022 - Publicado: 01/01/2023

Abstract:

This article seeks to analyse the currently evolution of the uses of Social Media. The Generation Z are changing the relationship between users of social networks, evolving towards a more active role. We have two objectives in this article: analyse how young people interact with Social Media and what contents they prefer. Within a context in which COVID 19 has made change this relationships. In order to know these uses, a qualitative and also a quantitative study has been carried out, with surveys between young people (11-18 years old).

Keywords:

Communication; advertising; social networks; generation Z; Lifestyle.

Resumen:

Este artículo busca analizar la evolución de los usos de las Redes Sociales que se están produciendo actualmente. La llamada Generación Z está cambiando la relación de los usuarios de las redes, evolucionando hacia un papel más activo. Por esta razón, nos hemos marcado como objetivos ver cómo interactúan los jóvenes con las Redes Sociales y qué contenidos son sus preferidos. Todo ello, dentro de un contexto en el que la COVID 19 ha hecho evolucionar estas relaciones con las Redes Sociales. Para conocer estos usos se ha realizado un estudio cualitativo y también cuantitativo, con encuestas a jóvenes de entre 11 y 18 años.

Palabras clave:

Comunicación; publicidad; redes sociales; generación Z; estilo de vida.

How to cite this article:

Marugán Solís, F. and Martín Critikián, D. (2023). Social media and Generation Z. *Doxa Comunicación*, 36, pp. 381-399.

<https://doi.org/10.31921/doxacom.n36a1707>

1. Introduction

Social Networks do not stop transforming constantly since their creation (Orben, 2020), generating changes that are impacting both users and advertisers who rely on them as part of their marketing strategy (Ayala López & Santamaría, 2019). Therefore, it is essential to be aware of the rapidly emerging new developments, as many of them will be relevant and will transform the role of the Social Networks users (García & López de Ayala, 2020). The user of Social Networks becomes the focus of all companies that are investing into listening and dialoguing with them, through each customer's preferred channel, in order to get to know them better and personalize interactions (López de Ayala, Vizcaíno & Montes, 2021). The objective is the same as traditionally: to attract and retain customers through advertising and promotional messages (De Chollet, 1990). Now, however, it is the customer who has the power of decision and social networks the key for brands to interact with them.

Initially, according to Van Dijk, the key for success of social networks was massification (Núñez, 2019), whereas nowadays the trend is personalization and segmentation, allowing to target different market niches (De Frutos & Pastor, 2021). The trend in digitalisation is to humanise the content, the messages and adapt reality to virtuality as closely as possible (Vizcaíno, Catalina & López de Ayala, 2019). A digital ecosystem that is nourished by feelings and emotions, rather than rational content.

The aim of this research is to analyse how social networks have evolved from 2010 to the present day, as well as to determine the communicative behaviors and consumption of young people through social networks.

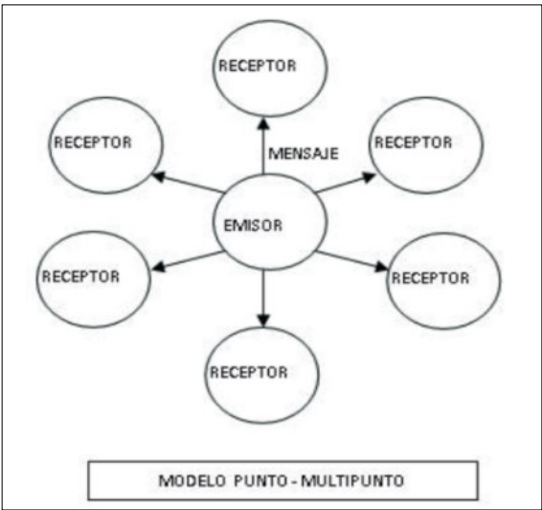
2. State of the question and hypotheses

2.1. *Evolution of social networks from 2010 to 2022*

One of the biggest changes that have taken place in the last 12 years through social networks is the interactions based on the construction of personal profiles and the connections with other users by sharing and exchanging different private and public messages using a variety of media. Thus, virtual connections have been created that are as real as those "face-to-face" (Calderón et al, 2019). According Fandos and Tello (2009) it has change the point-to-multipoint model to a multipoint-multipoint model (Figures 1, 2).

All this interactivity is further enhanced in chat rooms, newsgroups, noticeboards, network games, forms, surveys, file transfer programmes or e-mail. Blogs, forums and online social networks converge, the latter being the new ICT era. This means a rupture of space-time versus traditional media: instantaneousness, universality, almost infinite storage capacity and hypertextuality allows the user to enjoy a personalized, unlimited communication experience. Since 2010, authors are able to easily publish content online (graphic, audiovisual or text). This means, the author now has the power to decide what, when and where to publish, opposed to previously the publisher, reaching a situation with far less filters for publishing content (Peña, 2010).

Figure 1. Point-to-multipoint mode



Source: Adapted from *Modelo punto-multipunto* of Fandos and Tello, 2009

Figure 2. Multipoint-multipoint model



Source: Adapted from *Modelo multipunto-multipunto* de Fandos and Tello, 2009

Web 1.0 consisted of access to information generated by editors and webmasters; there was no user participation and users were limited to the role of passive receivers. Since the evolution to Web 2.0 - with social networks - users can read and also publish. This is a change in the communications pattern in which users are not passive receivers anymore but can also participate in the production of content on the web. Social networks have boosted the importance of graphics on the Net, giving increasing importance to images, relegating text. Currently, this trend is continued with video taking over as the predominant content (Bacallo Pino, 2010).

These trends are taken into account not only by users, but also by companies. Brands are beginning to consider the power of the customer as a user of the network and are looking not only for feedback, but also for optimal interaction with them. It is a milestone in the relationship with the customer, both current and potential, as it allows for a more personal, albeit virtual, approach, allowing for the creation of a network of mutual knowledge, personalising the brand as if the customer were talking to another friend. It is the user himself who segments, and social networks become spaces where brands, products and services can be consulted, acquiring the character of a prescriber (Noguera, 2010).

According to Caldevilla (2010), in 2010 there were four main functionalities in social networks: finding new friends, maintenance of friendships, entertainment and personal management of business structures. The most widely used tools were applications for publishing pictures, which allowed photo albums to be uploaded and commented on; private and public messaging; creating profiles in which to display personal information and interact with other users; and online games and competitions focused on branding, which were a key point for advertising.

The Cocktail Analysis Social Networking Observatory Results Report (Urueña et al., 2011) stated that 61% of users consulted social networks daily and 23% several times a week, meaning that 84% of them used the networks regularly. The most common activities were contacting friends by sending private messages, while only 10% used them to share texts.

According to the II Study on Social Networks on the Internet by IAB Spain (Marquina, 2010), there was a very noticeable growth compared to 2009, with the level of penetration of social networks rising from 51% to 70%, with Facebook, Tuenti and YouTube in the lead and being some of the most mentioned words in the Google search engine. The most used networks at that time were Facebook (89%), YouTube (60%) and Tuenti (44%), with the average user identified as a woman between 18 and 24 years old and a favorite place from where to connect: home. In terms of awareness of the three most searched Social Networks, Facebook increased its awareness by 9% reaching 96%, Tuenti remained at 62% and YouTube gained 1% to get to 85%. In contrast, Hi5 decreased by 8% and MySpace by 3%. As far as brand communication on social networks, no major user rejection was observed, 22% saying they do not like advertising, while 56% of those surveyed responding indifferently and 21% liking it a lot or quite a lot.

According to Lavilla and Mesonero, the main social networks in 2010 were MySpace, its successor Facebook, the photo-sharing social network Flickr, Tuenti, Twitter and Tagged, a social network aimed at meeting new people from all over the world. In the same year others emerged, such as the platform that allowed the user to create a personal page with links to other online profiles, called About.me, Ping, Apple's social network; the not very successful Buzz, launched by Google, which barely lasted three years on the web. But others emerged that shook up the social networking scene: Pinterest and Instagram. The latter, one of the three most used social networks in the world, had the merit of incorporating the tool for editing content published by

users within the same application, as well as adding the option of using hashtags, tags and location. After its launch in October 2010, it became immediately popular and acquired two million users in its first months (Rodríguez, 2021) and this year 2010 is a key date in which social networks take off in society, acquiring an important role in communication (Figure 3).

Figure 3. The most important milestones in Social Networking in 2010

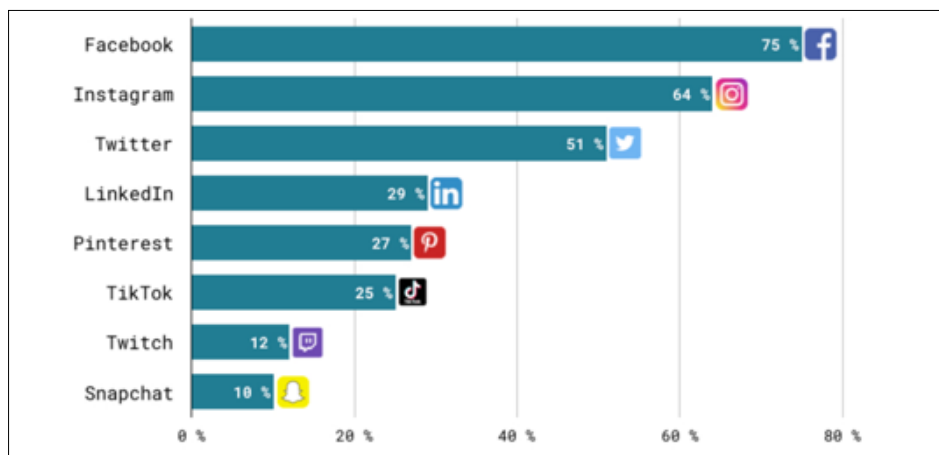
January	Millions of women share their bra color on Facebook during breast cancer awareness campaign.
February	Facebook mobile reaches 100 million users.
March	Co-working platform Hoist, now called Podio, wins MIT Best Global Startup award.
April	Facebook introduces changes: from "Become A Fan" to "Like" button.
May	YouTube reaches 2 billion video views per day.
June	Facebook achieves record web traffic in the United States with more than 141 million users per month, double that of 2009.
July	Facebook reaches 500 million users worldwide.
August	Facebook launches Places geo-location service in the United States.
September	Tipex brand triumphs worldwide with the viral "a Hunter Shoots a Bear", achieving more than 14 million views on YouTube.
October	Movie about Facebook is released
November	LinkedIn social network launches new pages for companies where users can make recommendations about products and services.
December	Mark Zuckerberg, founder of Facebook, is named Time magazine's person of the year.

Source: Prepared by the authors

While most accesses to Social Networks were via a personal computer, mobile devices came into play offering users a permanent connection, greater mobility and intimacy – thus, solving one of users’ major concerns about the use of social networks at home, offering more privacy and individualization. In this context, in view of the growth of Internet connection from mobile phones –48% of users– telephone companies are adapting to consumers’ Internet needs, reducing tariffs and proposing new offers (Gómez and Martínez, 2010).

The final development of social networks is based on Web 3.0 or semantics, which makes it possible to interpret the profiles and needs of each user, with the use of Artificial Intelligence, knowledge management and personalization algorithms. However, the Web of 2021 is that of an operating system with processing capacity emulating the human brain: Web 4.0 opens the door to voice control, user dialogue with the Net, neural implants or the well-known Google Glasses. Technological innovation and digital devices have changed the social pattern for good. Socio-economic and political issues, to a large extent, depend on what users do, and this change of role in which the Internet user became “king” is due to the exponential increase in digital data - Big Data - generated by users on a daily basis through infinite number of devices (Suárez and García, 2021).

According to the IAB Social Networks Study 2021 (IAB Spain, 2021), the Social Networks with the highest growth compared to 2019 are TikTok (up 9%), Telegram (up 8%) and Twitch (up 4%); Instagram increased its percentage of use by 5%, with Facebook being the only one of the main platforms to fall by 6% (Figure 4). This report includes for the first time networks that are booming, such as the podcast-based social network Stereo, Onlyfans, Patreon, the “exclusive” chat network Clubhouse, Discord and Ivoox; and others that have been left aside due to their loss of strength, such as Tumblr, 21 Buttons or the video-calling network House Party.

Figure 4. The most used/visited Social Networks in Spain in 2021

Source: Adapted from *Las Redes Sociales más utilizadas/visitadas en España en 2021* of IAB Spain, 2021, 2021

According to data from the 2021 Digital Report by the social media management platform Hootsuite and the creative agency We Are Social (Redacción Europa Press, 2021), 80% of the Spanish population uses social networks, which translates into more than 37 million users. Facebook has more than 2,700 million users worldwide (56.3% men), 2,291 million people use YouTube, with 54.2% of the audience being male, WhatsApp stands out as the country's favorite application and is used by 2,000 million people worldwide.

Women are more present on more visual platforms such as Instagram (51.5%), Snapchat (56%), and TikTok (50.1%). These networks are characterized by the possibility of being able to publish short videos in which tutorials, humor and music themes stand out, something that could be due to the mobility restrictions caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. Video is clearly the favorite content for Spanish users - 9 out of 10 consume them. However, 64% of users say they prioritize long-lasting content such as YouTube or Twitch, while 36% prefer ephemeral videos. In 2021, the following content stood out: humor, with memes and the recreation of comical situations, sentimentality and appeals to emotions, nostalgia, and environmental and sustainability themes. But the most successful content last year was gaming. Gamers have become the new influencers. Half of social network users claim to have watched an eSports competition, 73% of male users aged between 16 and 24. (De Frutos, 2021).

This content serves as entertainment for users, but it is also transferred to the educational sphere, as schools, colleges and universities have joined social networks in order to promote innovative mechanisms for the teaching and learning process (De Frutos et al., 2021). Due to the pandemic context, in Spain, great importance has been given to the role of social networks to promote social interaction between students, teachers and the academic institution itself. Communities and special

connections are formed, even closer than those generated in person, creating a climate of greater dynamism and participation (Calderón et al., 2019).

On the other hand, the IAB Spain study (2021) reveals that 92% of the profiles followed by users belong to friends and family, and, despite having dropped 4 points compared to 2020, brands continue to have a deep place in users' accounts, with 48% of those surveyed claiming to follow commercial brands and/or influencers. Caldevilla (2014) insists on the direct power of the Web on the behavior of users and potential consumers.

Thanks to the Internet and social networks, it is possible to modify behavior, create new opinion movements, political parties, protest platforms, promote demonstrations, create support groups for specific causes or create a fashion that generates the consumption of a certain product.

Brands today are aware that for something to exist, it must be shared on social networks. However, one of the problems that companies are facing is the excess of information on the Web, which leads to difficulty in delivering the message, so these messages need to stand out in terms of content and positioning -with tactics such as Search Engine Optimization or Search Engine Marketing in search engines such as Google, Microsoft Bing or Baidu- (Aladro, 2020).

2.2. Evolution of the Generations through digitalization and social networks

When we talk about the digital era, we have to consider six generations with very different characteristics. The authors, however, do not agree on the years that comprise each of them, so we will take as a reference the studies of the Institute of Digital Technology of the ESIC (ICMD); since other authors, such as Zemke, Raines and Filipczak (2014) place ranges of years for each generation that are not specific and too broad: Millennials between 1980 and 2004, Generation X from 1960 to 1980, Generation Y from 1943 to 1960, Baby Boomers from 1940 to 1943 and Silent Generation born before 1943. Other authors (Olivares & González, 2016), are much closer to the ranges of years taken into account by the ICMD, comprising the Silent Generation between 1925 and 1944, the Baby Boomers between 1945 and 1965, Generation X from 1965 to 1980, Generation Y or Millennials from 1980 to 2000 and Generation Z those born already in the 21st century, this last generation has also been called Screenagers -screen teenagers- (Álvarez & Heredia, 2019)). Although there are also other classifications, now outdated, that reduce the groups to digital natives or digital immigrants (Prensky, 2001) or consumers versus producers (Toffler, 1980).

The Silent Generation comprises those born between 1925 and 1944 and, according to the Institute for Digital Economy, seeks communication to avoid isolation and loneliness. Julio Malpartida, professor at the faculty of communication at the University of the Pacific, says that the Silent Generation use newspapers and journals for information, track their spending, subscribe to pay-TV, value recommendations before making a purchase but generally make little use of technology.

The study conducted by the digital economy institute says that the use of social networks by this generation is increasing considerably, as are digital devices such as Alexa or Google Home. The "Silent Ones" are not used to online shopping, so when it comes to making decisions, they rely more on personal recommendations (ICEMD, 2017).

This generation is followed by the "Baby Boomers", born between 1945 and 1964 and considered the owners of the market, due to their high purchasing power. This profile of people wants to feel young. In terms of the digital environment, according to ICEMD, their favorite social network is Facebook. Boomers mainly use one social network, although more and more are using

another, generally LinkedIn, for professional purposes (González Barranco, 2020). Internet use among boomers is increasing steadily, using it to break barriers between them and their loved ones who live far away or with friends from their teenage years with whom they once lost contact. A new social network to highlight among this generation is Stich, defined as “Tinder for adults”, where the aim is not only to look for a romantic relationship, but also to find company for trips or various group activities (ICEMD. 2017).

Next is the so-called Generation X, comprising those born between 1965 and 1979, who are generally looking for entertainment, travel and socializing. They want new experiences and active social lives. Physical exercise is also very important to them. Values such as ambition, individualism and workaholicism define them. Talking about the use of the Internet, it is stated that they do not need it to live their lives or to have fun, but they are open to try technological innovations that make their daily lives easier. Although they have had an analogue life in their childhood, they know perfectly well the use and management of social networks and use them frequently to share content (Nicolás, 2016). The main social networks where we find this generation are Facebook and Instagram, which they use to interact with their family and friends (ICEMD. 2017).

Those born between 1980 and 2000 are the so-called Generation Y, also called Millennials, they value experiences before any material objects and they like to feel unique, so they expect a lot from brands. They love humor, irony and anything that is surprising. They are curious and like to be the first to discover and share. It is a generation that wants to feel unique and different, so they have a deep-rooted collective feeling (Vilanova & Ortega, 2017), Instagram is the social network most used by this generation, followed by Facebook, which is losing more and more popularity. Millennials demand brands in an immediate and transparent way; they are empowered consumers who question everything that causes them concern and/or confusion. As ICEMD points out, they are a very diverse and fragmented generation. They consume all kinds of content, be it music, blogs or even podcasts. But the fact that they consume everything does not mean that they are not loyal to certain platforms such as Netflix and Spotify.

Subsequently, Generation Z comprises those born between 2001 and 2011. The Institute for Digital Economy defines these young people as the most diverse and multicultural, globally minded and highly respectful. It is possibly the most individualistic generation of them all, in which everyone continually seeks to assert themselves against the group and uses social networks to do so (Soriano & Ortega, 2021). Committed and responsible in the social sphere and lovers of images, emoticons and memes. The mobile device is a must for them. The social networks where we can find them are TikTok, Instagram and YouTube. Most of them are still teenagers very prone to the influence of relevant celebrities, so they are in the so-called “fan phenomenon”. They are independent in seeking and finding information and consume twice as much video content as images. They are said to have a maximum attention span of 8 seconds caused by the speed with which they get answers from the internet; so, they are said to be a rather impatient generation (ICEMD. 2017).

Finally, we have the Alpha generation, born from 2012 to the present, a generation that will mean the reaffirmation of the audiovisual message as a mode of communication (Soriano & Ortega, 2021). They are 100% digital and will grow up in an environment surrounded by virtual and augmented realities. This will influence their attitudes, habits and skills. They will experience many technological and digital advances. They are considered video consumers from before their first birthday and can find content that interests and appeals to them without the need to know how to read. As time goes by, they will interact

naturally with voice assistants such as Alexa or Google Home. They will not conceive technology as a tool; for them it has always been there, it is a singularity, they will not know any other way of living. It will be like another language to learn. They have been exposed to responses like Siri's since birth, which for them is something common and part of their lives. Although individuals of this generation do not have their own mobile phones as they are still very young, they do use Facetime from their relatives to connect with their loved ones (ICEMD. 2017).

2.3. Hypothesis

Relationships and uses in Social Networks are in continuous evolution; but, in the last few years, changes have been precipitated by the arrival of the so-called Generation Z. For this reason, the following hypotheses have been put forward:

- H1. Social Networks today have become the main mode of interaction between young people and their environment, establishing relationships online, within an environment where they want to reflect their tastes and their way of being.
- H2. Generation Z uses Social Networks more actively than the generations that have preceded them and prefer to upload their own content rather than share the content of others.
- H3. There is a change in the type of content that is uploaded to Social Networks, as Generation Z, with the rise of TikTok, prefers to upload audiovisual content to other types of content that until recently were in the majority (pictures).

In order to test the veracity of these hypotheses and with the aim of finding out about the Social Networking consumption habits of Generation Z, the study methodology was developed and is explained below.

3. Method

We chose a mixed methodology, applying qualitative and quantitative techniques. We will consider qualitative methodology as that which produces descriptive data: people's own words, spoken or written, and observable behaviors (Taylor & Bogdan, 1986). In this case, a content analysis has been carried out from an interpretative point of view based on primary and secondary sources such as scientific journals in the sector. The documentation search was carried out in the WoS, Scopus, IEEE Xplore databases and in the Google Scholar search engine for all scientific articles published between 2010 and 2022, in English and Spanish, in scientific journals (articles), reports, books (chapters) and thesis as research sources. This date has been taken as a reference as it marks the beginning of studies on this Generation Z, as prior to this date the members of this generation were young children and their differentiating characteristics compared to other generations were not highlighted. The document strategy includes the following search terms and their combinations with Boolean operators (and/or): "generation Z", "social networks", "communication", "young people", "Gen Z". Documents without scientific conclusions have been disregarded and, through hypertext "snowball" research methodology was applied to locate more documents with the selected search references in the same databases (Wohlin, 2014).

On the other hand, according to Hueso & Cascant (2012), quantitative methodology employs different statistical strategies in order to analyze aspects relevant to the target group of the study. At the quantitative level, a survey has been developed, defined by Groves et al. (2004, p. 4) as a systematic method for collecting information from a sample of the entities in order to

construct quantitative descriptors of attributes of the general population of which the entities are members. The objective is to obtain information on the consumption habits on social networks, for which closed questions were asked firstly to find out the consumption characteristics of each social network and finally questions in which the interviewees could evaluate each one of them (see Annex 1).

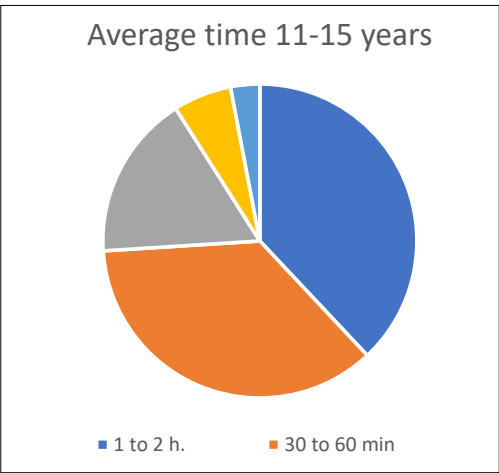
The total sample of the study corresponds to 500 teenagers aged between 11 and 18 years, with a slight majority in this sample of younger teenagers (59% aged 11 to 14 years compared to 41% aged 15 to 18 years) and more girls than boys (67% of girls compared to 33% of boys), since especially in the younger age groups there are many boys who say they do not use social networks and spend their time playing video games and sport, unlike girls. The survey was carried out between February and May 2022 in a geographical area covering the different administrative regions of Spain. A questionnaire was sent to the target audience via a link on the Forms platform (see Appendix I). As our sample is 500 and the universe is 8 million (according to a study by the INE, Instituto Nacional de Estadística, 2021), the margin of error is 4.38%. Therefore, this analysis is based on an approximation study of the phenomenon, since it is a specific sample and limited in the number of participants; even so, it is an initial study, allowing us to lay the foundations for future research.

4. Results

In this study, and according to the data obtained in the survey, we have been able to verify that 91% of young people between 11 and 18 years of age have at least one social network, the figure being 98% if we limit the study to the 15-18 age group.

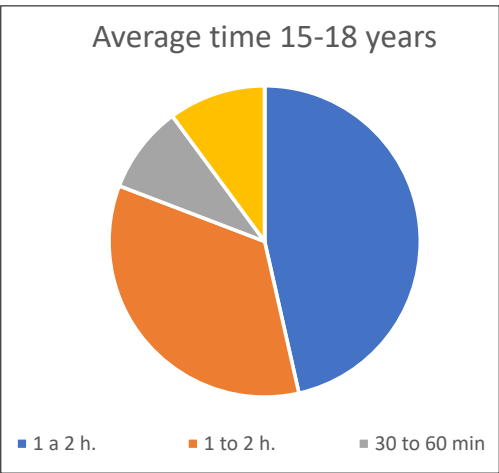
The approximate average time spent on social networks is mostly between 1 and 2 hours a day (for 38% of respondents) and between 30 and 60 minutes a day (for 36% of respondents), although some also answered that they spend less than 30 minutes (17% of the survey), more than 2 hours (6%) and 3% answered that they do not look at social networks at all. The data also changes if we analyze only the older age group, 15-18 years old, with a higher daily consumption of Social Networks: 46% connect between 1 and 2 hours a day, 34% between 30 and 60 minutes, 10% more than two hours a day and 9% less than 30 minutes (see figure 5). As for the average daily time spent by each sex, we can see that girls spend more time on social networks every day. As both boys and girls grow older, they spend more time on social networks, but the difference in time also increases, with girls spending more time (see figure 7). In the correlation graph (see figure 8) we can see how the majority of time spent on social networks varies between 30 and 120 minutes a day, but as they get older the segment of Generation Z people who spend more than 60 minutes on social networks increases; on the other hand, the percentage of people who spend less than 30 minutes on social networks is significant at the youngest ages, but then as they get older up to the age of 18, the percentage decreases and the percentage of people who spend more than 2 hours a day on social networks is higher. As for the median and mode data, we see that the mode in all cases is to spend 1-2 hours a day on Social Networks, while the median changes; in the 11-15 age group it is 30 minutes and in the 15-18 age group it is more than 2 hours, which proves the growth of the time spent on Social Networks as the members of Generation Z get older.

Figure 5. Average time using social networks, from 11 to 15 years of age



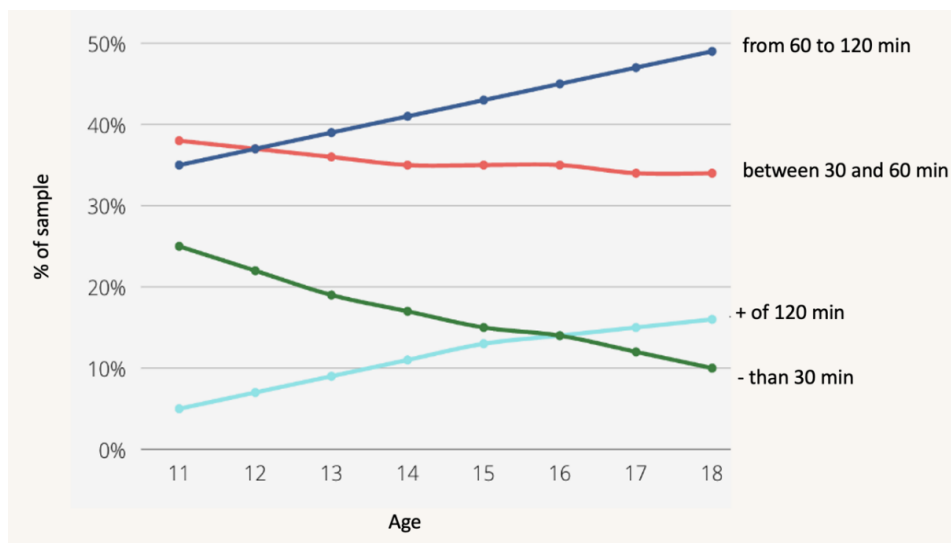
Source: prepared by the authors

Figure 6. Average time using social networks, from 15 to 18 years of age



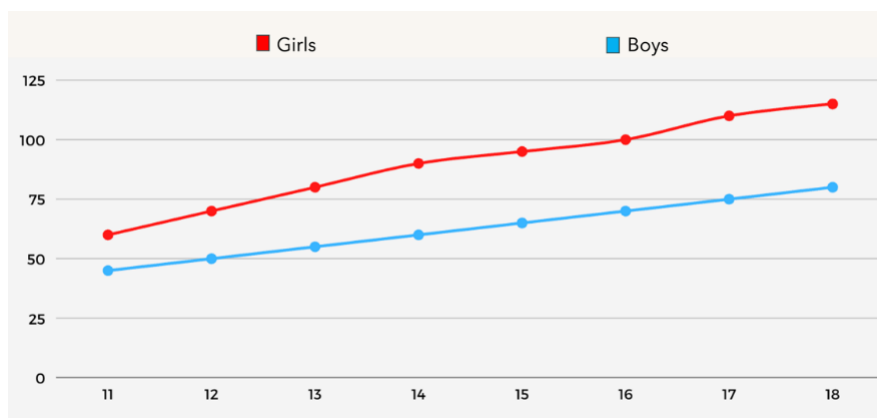
Source: prepared by the authors

Figure 7. Daily time spent on social networks by age



Source: prepared by the authors

Figure 8. Comparison of average time per minute on the Internet by sex and age

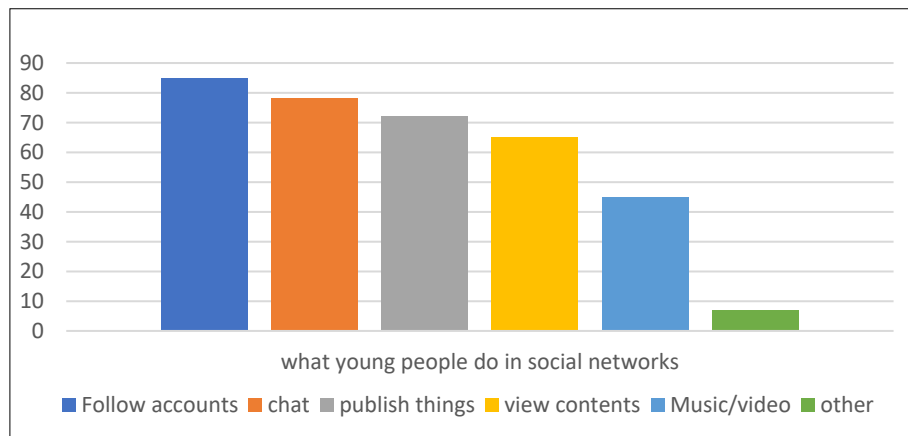


Source: prepared by the authors

The age at which they opened their first social network is mostly 13 years old (40% of the sample) and 14 years old (31% of the sample). In terms of the Social Network they prefer to connect to, Spotify, TikTok and Instagram are by far the most popular, with more than 85% of the sample connecting every day and sometimes several times a day, followed by YouTube, which they usually connect to every 2 or 3 days. The rest of the Social Networks do not appear to be significant for Generation Z, as the vast majority admitted to connecting about once a month to Facebook and Vimeo; and almost never to Twitter, Twitch, Pinterest and Snapchat. Similar results were obtained for these Social Networks when asked to rate them from 0 to 5, with TikTok and Instagram scoring around 4, YouTube 3.5, Facebook and Vimeo above 1.5 and the rest less than 1.

When asked what kind of activities they do on social networks: 85% said it was following accounts of other people or groups, 78% chatting and sending messages, 72% uploading posts and posting content, 65% seeing what their contacts are doing, 45% listening to music or watching videos. Then, with a percentage below 7% were: meeting people, playing online games, getting inspired, becoming a fan and following a brand, buying products or services and learning (see figure 7). We observe that the activity that people over 15 spend most time on is following other people. If we consider the gender variants, those under that age change their main activity, with girls uploading content and boys chatting (see figure 9). This is very significant, as the social network most used by them is TikTok, a video uploading platform. However, children prefer to chat rather than upload videos.

Figure 9. What Gen Z is doing on social networks



Source: prepared by the authors

Figure 10. Gender difference (girls:red; boys:blue)

	follow other people	chat	upload content
11 to 14 years			X
11 to 14 years		X	
15 to 18 years	X		
15 to 18 years	X		

Source: prepared by the authors

The last point of the survey was focused on what type of accounts they usually follow on social networks, with the majority of respondents (96%) being friends (96%). About 45% said they follow family, 41% influencers, 6% brands and only 1% the media.

5. Discussion

Social networks are constantly changing (Voorveld, 2016), and Brands use these changes as part of their marketing strategy, advertising evolves with the uses and platforms used, but they become intrusive elements that limit the relationship between the user and the social network (De Salas, 2010). However, other authors consider that advertising allows the development of these Social Networks, establishing a double influence in which the narrative of TikTok and Instagram conditions the narrative of advertising, but in turn advertising conditions the narrative that individuals establish on Social Networks (Hidalgo & Segarra, 2019).

Nowadays, the user has become the center of all the movements of Social Networks and companies, which are willing to invest in listening and dialogue mechanisms through each customer’s preferred channel, in order to get to know them better and personalize interactions as much as possible; this excessive use of data can go beyond legal limits, violating users’ right to privacy (Pastor, 2016). Other authors, in opposite, believe that the objective is the same as traditionally: to attract and retain customers. However, now it is the customer who has the power of decision and social networks are key in the interaction that brands have with users (Jiménez, 2019). Nowadays, the trend is more towards personalization and segmentation to cater to different market niches. The trend in digitalization is to humanize the content and message and adapt reality to virtuality as closely as possible. A digital ecosystem that feeds on feelings and emotions, rather than rational content (De Frutos & Pastor, 2021).

Regarding the use made of social networks, we have observed how Generation Z seeks more playful content and is also self-taught in the use of technology, they tend to share their own content and are always looking for immediate information about what they need. In contrast to these uses of social networks, the older generations are interested in receiving information that is more focused on the cultural and leisure sphere, they share other people’s content (Peral & Arenas, 2015). Age, therefore, is a

qualitative aspect in the social use of Social Networks (Carpintero & Lafuente, 2007) since young people build their community through the network (Sabater, 2014) and in this way the Social Networks themselves are the ones that build identity, both at an individual and group level (Núñez, García & Hermida, 2012) so that at the present time it is not possible to separate the study of society from technology (Álvarez, Heredia & Romero, 2019).

6. Conclusions

Considering the study carried out, we can say that Generation Z is possibly the generation that interacts the most on social networks, this is in some way explained by them being the first generation of digital natives, who have experienced interaction with all kinds of devices as something normal from a very young age. Most of them have had a smartphone since the age of 11 or 12, and by 13 or 14 they already have their own social network accounts. In addition, they spend a lot of time interacting on them, between 30 minutes and 2 hours for most of them, which makes them feel the need to communicate through them and establish virtual interactions and connections that in many cases come to replace real ones (Calderón et al, 2019). It is important to highlight that girls spend more time on Social Networks than boys, and boys tend to prefer video games and sports; and although both increase their daily time spent on Social Networks as they grow, this average time increases more for girls compared to boys. In terms of the content they prefer, this also varies and although those over 15 prefer to see content from people they know, the younger ones are more active and use Social Networks mainly for uploading content and chatting. Therefore, young people from Generation Z prefer to interact socially through social networks rather than any other form of socialization (Álvarez, Heredia & Romero, 2019).

As for the role that these young people play on social networks, we can see that it is much more active, as although they continue to use them to follow and keep in touch with their friends, they do not limit themselves to viewing content but try to generate it themselves. Interaction is continuously increasing to chat and to upload content. These contents are mostly audiovisual, this format now clearly surpassing the just visual or just audio. Social Networks that have been successful in connecting with this generation offer the possibility of uploading different audiovisual formats.

The preferred Social Networks of Generation Z are TikTok, Instagram and Spotify; and to a lesser extent YouTube. Meanwhile, those that were more successful for previous generations, such as Facebook, are rejected by most teenagers and young adults. On the other hand, some emerging Social Networks such as Twitch are growing quickly in this age group, although, as they pointed out in our survey, mainly for gaming and with a user profile heavily biased towards male.

Lastly, we should point out the lack of follow up by brands through Social Networks, something that should lead them to rethink the content they offer on their profiles, as we can see that it is not very attractive to the new generations.

For all these reasons, we consider this study to be the first step to continue to monitor the evolution of the use of Social Networks by this generation and how the use of the most recently created Social Networks evolves. Moreover, the next generation is likely to bring about a profound change in the use of Social Networks, as they have interacted with technology before they even knew how to read and write, which may lead to new habits when they reach adolescence and own their own devices and profiles on Social Networks.

In conclusion, considering the hypotheses that were put forward and once we have seen the results of the analysis, we can say that all of them are fulfilled, as young people from Generation Z interact with each other through social networks, where they choose who they want to share content with. The other hypotheses are corroborated, especially with the youngest, who prefer to upload their own content rather than share other people's content, and mostly tend to share audiovisual content.

Finally, it should be noted that this article can be used as the basis for future lines of research to see how Generation Z evolves in their use of social networks as they grow older and leave their current period of adolescence. It is also interesting to see how the later generation uses Social Networks, and whether they follow current Generation Z trends or not.

7. Acknowledgments

Article translated into English by Bruno Ott.

8. Specific contributions of each author

	Name and Surname
Conception and design of the work	Fernando Marugán Solís and, Davinia Martín Critikián
Methodology	Fernando Marugán Solís and, Davinia Martín Critikián
Data collection and analysis	Fernando Marugán Solís and, Davinia Martín Critikián
Discussion and conclusions	Fernando Marugán Solís and, Davinia Martín Critikián
Drafting, formatting, revision and approval of the version.	Fernando Marugán Solís and, Davinia Martín Critikián

9. Bibliographic references

Álvarez, E., Heredia, H., Romero, M. (2019). La Generación Z y las Redes Sociales. Una visión desde los adolescentes en España. *Revista Espacios* 40

Ayala-López, M.C., Santamaría, P. P. (2109). Motivations of youth audiences to content creation and dissemination on social networks sites. *Estudios sobre el mensaje periodístico* 25, pp. 915-933.

Becallo Pino, L. (2010). Representaciones mediáticas de las redes sociales: un estudio de casos. *Revista Latina de Comunicación Social*. <https://tinyurl.com/2p8m4c7j>

Calderón Garrido, D.; León Gómez, A. y Gil Fernández, R. (2019). El uso de las redes sociales entre los estudiantes de grado de maestro en un entorno exclusivamente online. *Vivat Academia. Revista de Comunicación*, 147, pp. 23-40. <http://doi.org/10.15178/va.2019.147.23-40>

- Caldevilla Domínguez, D. (2014). Impacto de las TIC y lo 2.0: consecuencias para el sector de la comunicación. *Revista de Comunicación de la SEECI*, 35, pp. 106-127. <http://dx.doi.org/10.15198/seeci.2014.35.106-127>
- Caldevilla Domínguez, D. (2010). Las Redes Sociales. Tipología, uso y consumo de las redes 2.0 en la sociedad digital actual. *Documentación de las Ciencias de la Información*, 33, pp- 45-68. <https://tinyurl.com/2p892jat>
- Caldevilla Domínguez, D.; Barrientos Báez, A.; Pérez García, A. y Gallego Jiménez, M. G. (2021). El uso de las redes sociales y su relación con la decisión de compra del turista. *Vivat Academia. Revista de Comunicación*, 154, pp. 443-458. <http://doi.org/10.15178/va.2021.154.e1360>
- Calderón Garrido, D.; León Gómez, A. y Gil Fernández, R. (2019). El uso de las redes sociales entre los estudiantes de Grado de Maestro en un entorno exclusivamente online *Vivat Academia. Revista de Comunicación*, 147, pp. 23-40. <http://doi.org/10.15178/va.2019.147.23-40>
- Carpintero H. y Lafuente, E. (2007). El método histórico de las generaciones: el caso de la psicología española. *Revista Historia de la Psicología*, vol.28-1, pp. 67-85.
- De Frutos, B. y Pastor, A. (2021). Consumo de las plataformas en internet y escepticismo a la publicidad. El profesional de la información 1-1. <https://doi.org/10.3145/epi.2021.mar.04>
- De Salas, M. I. (2010). La publicidad en las redes sociales de lo invasivo a lo consentido. *Icono* 14, 8-1 <https://tinyurl.com/4yrh7zxc>
- García, A. y López de Ayala, M. C. (2020). Características y percepciones sobre el uso de las plataformas de las redes sociales y dispositivos tecnológicos por parte de los adolescentes. *ZER Revista de Estudios de Comunicación*, 25 (48). pp 269-286 <https://doi.org/10.1387/zer.21556>
- Hueso, A., y Cascant, M. J. (2012). *Metodología y técnicas cuantitativas de investigación*. Universitat Politècnica de València.
- Marquina, J. (2010). *Informe sobre Redes Sociales en España 2010*. Julián Maquina Arenas. <https://tinyurl.com/yr7wcery>
- Fandos Igado, M. y Tello Díaz, J. (2009). El software social y las empresas de formación. El caso del grupo Master-D. *Vivat Academia. Revista de Comunicación*, 109, pp. 1-20. <http://dx.doi.org/10.15178/va.2009.109.1-20>
- Gómez Aguilar, A. y Martínez García, M. A. (2010). *Redes sociales y dispositivos móviles: oportunidades y amenazas de la conexión permanente*. Congreso Euro-Iberoamericano de Alfabetización Mediática y Culturas Digitales (2010). <https://idus.us.es/handle/11441/57455>
- Lavilla Muñoz, D. y Mesonero Izquierdo, R. (2010). Realidad y ficción. Desde la autopercepción a la sociabilización tecnológica: Devenir histórico. *Revista De Comunicación De La SEECI*, 22, pp. 16-29. <https://doi.org/10.15198/seeci.2010.22.16-29>
- López de Ayala, M.C., Vizcaíno, R., Montes, M. (2020) Hábitos y actitudes de los jóvenes ante las redes sociales: influencia del sexo, edad y clase social. El profesional de la información 29 (6). pp 1-13. <https://doi.org/10.3145/epi.2020.nov.04>
- De Chollet, M. (1990). *El Marketing-Mix: de la selección de los objetivos a la optimización de los medios dentro del plan de marketing*. Ed. Deusto.

- De Frutos Torres, B., Pastor Rodríguez, A. y Cruz Díaz, R. (2021). Credibilidad e implicaciones éticas de las redes sociales para los jóvenes. *Revista Latina de Comunicación Social*, 79, pp. 51-68. <https://www.doi.org/10.4185/RLCS-2021-1512>
- González Barranco, J. L. (2020). La generación “Baby Boomer” ante la alfabetización digital: un estudio del caso. <https://hdl.handle.net/11162/219690>
- Groves, R.; Fowler, F.; Couper, M.; Lepkowski, J.; Singer, E. y Tourangeau, R. (2004). *Survey Methodology*. 561.
- Hidalgo, T. y Segarra, J. (2019). Publicidad de la publicidad. Las redes sociales como soporte de comunicación de las agencias de publicidad. *Ad.Comunica* 18. <https://doi.org/10.6035/2174-0992.2019.18.7>
- IAB Spain (2021). *Estudio de Redes Sociales 2021*. IAB Spain[estudio]. <https://iabspain.es/estudio/estudio-de-redes-sociales-2021/>
- ICEMP (2017). *Estudio de las generaciones de la era digital. Las 6 generaciones de la era digital*. <https://tinyurl.com/22v9ba49>
- Marketing Directo (2011, 3 de enero). Los principales hitos de las redes sociales en 2010. *Marketing Directo*. <https://tinyurl.com/4ncyk3mu>
- Nicolás, O. E. (2016). Generación Z: móviles, redes y contenido generado por el usuario. *Revista de los estudios de Juventud* 114. pp. 111-126 Dialnet.unirioja.es
- Noguera Vivo, J. M. (2010). Redes sociales como paradigma periodístico. Medios españoles en Facebook, en *Revista Latina de Comunicación Social*, 65, pp. 176-186. DOI: 10.4185/RLCS-65-2010-891-176-186
- Núñez, J. (2019). Análisis crítico del discurso como metodología de comprensión de las ideologías. *Revista Innova de Educación Vol.1*, 4.
- Núñez, P.; García, M. L. y Hermida, L. A. (2012). Tendencias de las relaciones sociales e interpersonales de los nativos digitales y jóvenes en la web 2.0. *Revista Latina de la Comunicación Social*, 67, pp. 1-15. <https://eprints.ucm.es/id/eprint/23984/>
- Orben, A. (2020). Teenagers, screens, and social media: a narrative review of reviews and key study. *Social psychiatry and psychiatric epidemiology*, 55, pp. 407-414. <https://tinyurl.com/3ap79euh>
- Pastor, E. M. (2016). Límites jurídicos de la publicidad en redes sociales: Facebook, Instagram y Twitter. *La pantalla insomne* <https://dialnet.unirioja.es/servlet/articulo?codigo=6062536>
- Peña Acuña, B. (2010). Rasgos esenciales de la red. *Vivat Academia. Revista de Comunicación*, 112, pp. 99-109. <http://dx.doi.org/10.15178/va.2010.112.99-10>
- Peral, B. y Arenas, J. (2015). De la brecha digital a la brecha psico-digital: Mayores y redes sociales. *Revista Comunicar*. <https://tinyurl.com/3ap79euh>
- Prensky, M. (2001). Do they really think different. *On the Horizon NCB University Press* 9, N° 6 <https://tinyurl.com/yc38pwwd>
- Redacción Europa Press (2021, 29 de junio). WhatsApp encabeza las redes sociales en España, donde el 80% de la población ya usa estas plataformas. *El Mundo*. <https://tinyurl.com/mwvk3bsc>

- Rodríguez, H. (2021, 25 de septiembre). Historia de las redes sociales ¡Descubre el paso desde GENie hasta TikTok!. *Crehana*. <https://tinyurl.com/mvfasr52>
- Sabater, C. (2014). La vida privada de la sociedad digital. La exposición pública de los jóvenes en internet. *Aposta, Revista de ciencias sociales* 61, pp. 1-32
- Suárez Álvarez, R. y García Jiménez, A. (2021). Investigación del comportamiento de menores y jóvenes en las redes sociales mediante técnicas de Social Big Data. *Doxa Comunicación*, 32, pp. 95-113. <https://doi.org/10.31921/doxacom.n32a5>
- Taylor, S. y Bogdan, R. C. (1989). *Introducción a los métodos cualitativos de investigación*. Paidós
- Toffler, A. (1980). *La tercera ola*. Ed. Plaza & Janés Urueña, A., Ferrari, A., Blanco, D. y Valdecasa, E. (2011). Las Redes Sociales en Internet. *Observatorio Nacional de las Telecomunicaciones y de la SI*. <https://tinyurl.com/3vjy8u2j>
- Vilanova, N. y Ortega, I. (2017). *Generación Z. Todo lo que necesitas saber sobre los jóvenes que han dejado viejos a los millenials*. Plataforma
- Voorveld, HAM (2019). Brand communication in social media: A research agenda. *Journal of Advertising* 48, pp. 14-26 <https://doi.org/10.1080/00913367.2019.158808>
- Wohlin, C. (2014, May). *Guidelines for snowballing in systematic literature studies and a replication in software engineering*. In Proceedings of the 18th international conference on evaluation and assessment in software engineering (pp. 1-10).
- Zemke, R.; Raines, C. y Filipczak, B. (2014). *Generation at work: Managing the clash of Boomers, Gen Xers and Gen Yers in the workplace*. Ed. Library of Congress Cataloging in Public Data.

10. Annexes

Annex I:

Form (Google Forms) through which the survey for this article was conducted:

<https://forms.office.com/r/XdQHG78G7F>