

Young Adults' Interaction with News, Advertising, and Data Privacy Concerns: Insights from a Spanish Study

Lopez Drake

University of Gibraltar, Gibraltar

Abstract

This research aims to characterize how young adults interact with the news, to what extent their consumption is conditioned by the presence of advertising and if they worry about the transfer of personal data. For this, the "Digital News Report Spain 2018" is taken as a starting point, a report prepared from a questionnaire on the consumption of digital media to a national panel of 2,023 Internet users; Of these, 293 are young people between the ages of 25-34, who belong to the "millennial" generation. These data were completed with a qualitative study, carrying out two discussion groups with people of that age group residing in Navarre. Among the conclusions of the research, it is pointed out that young adults are interested in news, which they access primarily through mobile devices. This interest is greater when the content affects them directly or if they empathize with the topic of the news. On the other hand, the family environment and social routines condition their way of getting information. They continue to access traditional media, although they consider them to be ideologized. They perceive advertising as annoying, although there is no knowledge or widespread use of blockers. Finally, they negatively value the current personalization services, although they give up some personal data to the media if it makes it easier for them to access the information.

Keywords: online, news, advertising, data, privacy

Introduction

In the current media ecosystem in which traditional media and digital media coexist and complement each other, it is important to know the changes that are taking place in the public's information uses and preferences. Particularly from those groups that have grown up in a "saturated context of relational technologies and digital communications" (Buckingham & Martínez, 2013). The main objective of this work is to characterize how young people aged 25-34 interact with the news when using mobile media, and to what extent this consumption is conditioned by the presence of advertising, as well as concern for their privacy. This is a generation of great interest, which is part of the so-called «millennials», those who have reached adulthood at the beginning of the 21st century (Dimock, 2018), with commercial potential for the media and advertisers.

Nowadays, the relevance that mobile devices have acquired is unquestionable, to such an extent that their company in daily life is taken for granted (Ling, 2012). As in other digital technologies, a 'double articulation' may be noted (Silverstone & Hirsch, 1992). On the one hand,

the mobile is a material object that operates as a means of communication, connecting its owner with the world and with other people. At the same time, it is a cultural object closely linked to the identity, daily activity and social relationships of its users, thanks to its omnipresence and ubiquitous connectivity. Thus, it not only serves as a technological meta-device with multiple functions, but also offers a symbolic dimension, investing it with new meanings that emerge from social interaction.

The potentialities of mobile communication – which frees us from the limitations of physical proximity and spatial immobility (Geser, 2004) – lead to a reconfiguration of our relationship with space and time (Ling & Campbell, 2009). This disruptive factor in mobility manifests itself in the appearance of new scenarios for cultural and media consumption, since it no longer necessarily takes place in the domestic sphere, but rather, increasingly, takes place in public places and/or in displacement situations; making spatiality a key contextual factor in the consumption experience (Peters, 2015).

This social, cultural and technological phenomenon that is communication through mobile devices presents generational differences (Ghersetti & Westlund, 2018). Much of the research has focused on the analysis of the «millennials», a «generation tied» to the «smartphone» (Mihailidis, 2014), which plays a key role in their daily interactions and in their socialization among peers and who it provides them with an ephemeral, immediate, mobile and specialized consumption (Noguera Vivo, 2018; Van-Damme, Courtois, Verbrugge, & de-Marez, 2015).

Regarding information consumption patterns, mobile devices present some peculiarities compared to other platforms (Struckmann & Karnowski, 2016; Wolf & Schnauber, 2015). The usual tendencies in the use of news such as checking, sharing, clicking, monitoring or "pecking" at the information are noted (Costera Meijer & Groot-Kormelink, 2015), but in an accentuated way. The fact that the mobile is an object that always accompanies the user makes it more likely that the user will explore the news throughout the day, sometimes almost unconsciously or without a defined purpose. Furthermore, it is consumption that can take place in parallel to other activities and in a time slot that is normally forbidden to traditional media: the different interstices between daily routines (Dimmick, Feaster, & Hoplamazian, 2011).

The consumption of information through mobile phones and their applications can mean that access comes from alerts and notifications, thus turning media exposure into something that is not always planned by the user and to which give partial attention. From the point of view of temporality –and using the musical metaphor of Dholakia et al. (2014)– compared to the languid and continuous «legato» of other platforms, consumption on mobile devices is more of a «staccato» type, that is, based on short, intermittent episodes, like bursts of information. The information "pecking" typical of mobile devices is a habit that can have negative consequences (Molyneux, 2018). In opposition to deeper and more leisurely forms of consumption, it has been associated by the academic literature –although applied to television zapping– with less knowledge of public affairs and less civic involvement (Bennett, Rhine, & Flickinger 2008; Morris & Forgette, 2007).

Various studies indicate that young people have a positive attitude toward the news and like to be informed (Costera, 2007; Casero-Ripollés, 2012). However, their consumption pattern is changing, which is mobile and social (Yuste, 2015). In addition, it is characterized by casual or incidental access from social networks, rapid surveillance or monitoring on the Internet, and access to traditional media only to verify and expand information (GarcíaJiménez, Tur-Viñes, & Pastor-Ruiz, 2018). The data from the “Digital News Report Spain 2018” corroborate this. The interest in news expressed by young Spanish people aged 25-34 is very high: of 293 users surveyed, 32% and 48% are extremely or very interested in news. In this regard, there are no significant differences with other age groups, with the exception of those over 55 who stated that they were 58% very interested. Regarding the use of news sources, social media (69%), newspaper websites (54%), television programs (50%) and printed newspapers (44%) predominate as sources of access. Although the 25-34 year-old group does not abandon traditional media, social media, in addition to being a source, become key spaces for sharing, recommending news and personalizing the diffusion, as Hermida et al. (2012) point out. According to the Reuters Institute report (2018), 45% of young adults access news through networks. Other notable paths are search engines for specific news sites (45%), direct access to media websites (36%) and keyword searches for news (33%). With respect to devices, the mobile phone becomes the main access route to the digital ecosystem. The “Digital News Report Spain 2018” confirms the data from other studies (AIMC, 2018; Fundación Telefónica, 2017): 97% of users aged 25-34 recognize that the mobile is the main access device to the news. However, this group does not abandon news consumption through desktop or laptop computers (69%).

Internet is consolidated in the second position within conventional media (29%), taking into account advertising investment in Spain (Infoadex, 2018). According to Sádaba and Sánchez-Blanco (2018), its growth is due to the generalization of the Internet, automation, format innovation and the need to generate new income. In its relationship with news consumption, digital advertising is perceived by many users as a toll to access content. In addition, although it is a natural element within the new ecosystem, many times it is poorly valued because it grows indiscriminately and interrupts navigation (Gálvez, 2017). Hence, many users resort to ad blocking. The so-called "adblocking" is no longer an isolated behavior, especially in the group of users on which this work is focused. Gálvez (2017) points out that 59% of Internet users over the age of 14 know about ad blockers and that 28% use it regularly, while among users aged 25-34, this percentage is higher: 73% know and 45% use. Among the reasons, it is indicated that more than 90% block advertising in order not to lose browsing speed, avoid distasteful advertising and prevent the risk of viruses. These usage data are quite similar to those found in the benchmark quantitative study. 51% of users aged 25-34 –says the “Digital News Report Spain 2018”– have ever downloaded an ad blocker, being the age group that uses them the most. 42% currently use it, most of them on the computer (89%), and few on the tablet (27%) or mobile (25%).

Regarding the concern for privacy, although it exists, information is transferred to access services or simply to share it (Evens & VanDamme, 2016; Lee, 2016). The willingness to share

data depends on three factors: what is received in return, trust in the company and how personal the information is (Woodnutt, 2018). Those concerned about privacy resort to deleting their browsing history, using temporary usernames or email addresses, deleting apps, or adjusting privacy settings on their devices (Lee, 2016; Meeker, 2018). The “Digital News Report Spain 2016” studied this issue (Reuters Institute, 2016). In particular, he wondered if he was concerned that receiving personalized news might carry a greater risk to his privacy. Spain, with 54%, was the third country with the highest percentage of people who agreed with this phrase (Portilla, 2018). Worry grew with age. In the 25-34 year-old group, 53% expressed concern about privacy, a value similar to that of all Spaniards (54%).

From the review of the literature and the quantitative data presented, an overview of how young adults interact with news and advertising has been obtained, and also to what degree they are concerned about privacy. However, there are still questions to explore in depth:

1. Why are they interested in the news?
2. Do they trust the traditional media for information or do they diversify the sources and access itineraries?
3. How do you use the devices to follow the news?
4. How do they value advertising? Do they know and/or use blockers?
5. If you are asked for personal information to access news, what data are you willing to provide and why?

In order to answer these questions, a qualitative study is needed that allows knowing the reality through the discourse that is generated in this type of research. We worked with particular cases representative of young people aged 25-34 in Navarra, and who had consumed digital news, so that they were comparable to the universe of study of the «Digital News Report Spain 2018». The technique used was the discussion group because it offers a greater number of approaches and more information than would be achieved by interviewing its members in isolation. It is a habitual procedure of the qualitative methodology, which allows to know attitudes and motivations of a social group, reaching general principles from the particular (Báez & Pérez de Tudela, 2007). Given that in this study we focus on Navarra, data on media consumption in this region was shown first.

According to the "Study of the Media Audience", in 2017 there were 73,500 people residing in Navarra girls aged 25-34, of which 72,640 (99%) had accessed the Internet at some time. This group consumes all kinds of media, standing out from the rest of the age groups in reading the digital press, since 53% declared having read it before. The leading digital media in the Navarrese 25-34 year-old target and Internet users are *Diariodenavarra.es* (17%) and *Marca.com* (11%). In traditional media, 16% read *Diario de Navarra* on paper, 10% listen to Europa FM Navarra and 16% watch Antena 3. Another interesting fact for this study is to verify that 65% of them connected to Facebook the day before. Young adults from Navarre present a consumption of news media of interest to this research, which justifies using this universe in the qualitative study on the reason for their behavior in front of the news, how they reconcile media and devices, and their attitude towards advertising and Privacy.

Research Method

Two discussion groups were held for the study universe defined as people residing in Navarra between the ages of 25-34, consumers of any local and regional digital news format from said geographical area. For the methodological design, the recruitment of participants and development of the field work, we had the collaboration of the study and opinion company CIES. The groups were convened on Thursday, February 22, 2018, consecutively (5:00 p.m. and 7:30 p.m.) with a duration of two hours each. 16 people participated, eight in each group, being 50% women and 50% men. The mean age was 28.5 years. During the discussion groups, five major topics were discussed: news consumption, interest in local news and media, consumption of digital media, use of social networks and, finally, advertising and personal data. The use of mobile devices was a highlight of the conversation.

Result

Taking into account the universe studied, the participants showed interest in current information to a greater degree when they empathize with its content or when this content directly affects them. In the discussion groups, several people agreed on the importance of «knowing what is happening in the world» (man, 26) and «what is current, day by day» (woman, 34). Therefore, the quantitative data were corroborated. To delve into the motivations, they asked about the type of news that generates the most interest. Those interviewed distinguished between general news and particular interests. Regarding general news, several people indicated that they were interested in social issues, the cultural agenda, and local events "with which I empathize" (female, 25; male, 31). Local sport was also a recurring content. With regard to news related to private interests, one participant (male, 29) indicated that he was particularly interested in information that affects him "directly." On the other hand, they focused more on proximity news, which refers to people's close environment. News related to institutional politics had less interest among some participants: "politics is quite saturated, not much attention is paid to it" (man, 27). Meanwhile, others are regular followers: "although sometimes my blood boils, I love to see politics, because I like to know what is happening in the world and here" (man, 30). Related to the topics of the news we find another relevant phenomenon and it is the saturation that the repetition of the content produces when the media no longer have more information to contribute. According to one participant, this saturation corresponds to certain news items that become "in fashion" and in which interest is lost (male, 29).

The quantitative study had revealed that, among young people aged 25-34, social media, media websites and television programs were the most consulted sources, with print newspapers appearing only in fourth place. However, when contrasting this issue in the focus groups, a certain contradiction was perceived in this regard: traditional printed brands maintain their prestige, while television is considered as sensationalism and social media have both detractors and supporters. Thus, the majority of those consulted acknowledged using the «online» media more frequently than the traditional ones, because they offer immediate access, more news, more

plurality of approaches and «more freedom to choose» (woman, 33). If the traditional media fall into their hands, they read them; Yes No No. For this same reason, the traditional brands that are consumed depend on family habits, ease of access and ideological proximity. Sometimes, it is the family situation that leads to the encounter with the newspaper: "I usually read it on paper because it comes to my parents at home" (woman, 27). In others, it is a daily habit linked to other activities: "I read on paper when I drink my coffee, I do a first sweep at the bar every morning" (woman, 34). In general, local radio is consumed as a companion medium, but not as the first source of information, at least in this group. Approximately half of the participants watch television news and the trend seems to be decreasing: three people state that they never turn on the television. However, for issues of great scope and repercussion, this medium is used: "video is the most spectacular and often the most dramatic version" (man, 34). Defenders of social networks as a source of information appreciate the immediacy and variety of approaches in the face of a "local politicized and polarized" press (male, 31). «When you follow social networks – said another participant– you can follow a lot of different media and there you always have a more complete range» (man, 30). Some consult the local media through social networks, especially Facebook, receive recommendations from their WhatsApp contacts or follow live events on Twitter. Instagram is valued positively for following sports news. Among the detractors, some stated that they did not generally use social networks to find out about local news because they found it unreliable, it is difficult to discern credibility and the source must be verified: "I don't like how social networks work" (woman, 27) and "manipulate everything" (woman, 25). On the other hand, others acknowledge that "they are important to find out about breaking news" (man, 29).

Although it is not easy to identify common consumption patterns, the participants indicated that they accessed the news through the media's website, directly or using search engines, and via social networks, Facebook and Twitter, above all. With regard to these, much of the information comes from official media accounts that some users have chosen to follow, but it is also very common for the news to appear on their "timeline" because they are posted by their contacts: "by rebound you news is going to come out that someone has shared» (woman, 27). Some young people admit that they have difficulties in distinguishing the sources of information: "[On Facebook] I have a fair mess of things that I follow, sometimes I get a little lost where it comes from" (woman, 24). Thus, it is an accidental exposure to the news, as it does not start from a search originated by the interest of the users, but rather the users come across the information, in the context of an online activity guided by other motivations. As a 24-year-old woman points out, the news "usually comes from everywhere. They usually arrive to me and if one of them interests me more, I go to look for it». This dynamic extends to messaging applications such as WhatsApp, named at various times in discussion groups as a forum where the news is known. The access itinerary to the news is also conditioned by the more or less urgent nature and the geographical scope of the news event. Unexpected news from the local or regional level is usually known in the first place through WhatsApp, especially through family groups or friends. To expand the information, some go to local media or do searches on Google

or social networks. In any case, they agree on the need to verify the information and on the greater credibility that the traditional ones continue to have. When the news event is of a national or international nature, the media repertoire becomes broader and the consultation extends to media with more resources for coverage. Finally, the discussion groups highlighted that the digital consumption of the participants is fragmented but constant throughout the day, around micro-pauses: «I follow Diario de Navarra on all social networks, I look at it every day in case it has refreshed and there is new news. I go looking every three hours or so» (man, 25).

In line with the data from the "Digital News Report Spain 2018", the discussion groups found that the device most used by young adults to access the news is the mobile phone, followed by the computer. Information consumption «is usually always by mobile; newspaper, little" (woman, 24). This preponderance of mobile devices for accessing the news means that knowledge of current affairs is sometimes produced on platforms traditionally linked to other functions, such as instant messaging services, which become a door for the informative consumption, through the personal and group contacts of the user himself. As one participant explains, "we have a WhatsApp from the gang and when someone is interested in something, they usually send the link to that newspaper or that news item" (woman, 27). In general, respondents do not subscribe to news alerts and do not use media applications.

The opinion of young adults about advertising is not very positive: "I've hardly ever seen an entire ad, unless it's for something that interests me a lot" (male, 30). Another participant is more explicit when commenting that "sometimes they are very invasive" (male, 31) because they occupy the entire screen and make it impossible to read the news. Indeed, when asked about advertising based on the "cookies" of their browsing, the comment was unanimous that "it is horrible" since "for an ad that appears nothing happens, but when you get lost on the page, you don't know where you are playing, where you want to search, where you are» (woman, 27). However, this rejection is not directly related to the use of blockers, in fact, the knowledge of ad blockers is not very widespread. In relation to devices, advertising is more annoying on mobile. One participant underlines that the perception depends on "where you are looking at it, if I am with the laptop I don't care because you can close it easily, but if you are with the tablet or with the mobile I have to be sticking my finger in" (woman, 24), and another angrier one highlights: "aggressiveness enters you" (woman, 25).

When asking the participants if the media ask them to identify themselves to access their content, some indicated that they had registered through their accounts on social networks "for convenience" (woman, 34), so as not to have to remember so many passwords. Others indicated that they use an email address that they do not use regularly. In the event that a local media request registration, they were willing to provide some personal information, such as name, postal code and an email address. However, they expressed their refusal to provide other information such as postal address, telephone number, or bank account; data that would only give "to be a subscriber" (male, 30). When discussing whether they are willing to enable location tracking on mobile devices, they generally expressed some discomfort. They only accept geolocation to access content from a medium in the area and to use other services, such as maps.

In any case, it seems to them that some applications record information without the user's knowledge and transfer data to third parties, which generates a feeling of control and discomfort: "It gives me a bit of a bad feeling that they know where you are through my mobile" (woman, 3. 4). Some participants had tried the personalization of content and/or alerts. Their general evaluation was negative because the media did not match their interests or they received too much news and associated publicity. The generic topics did not work: "I am interested in a podcast on the economy in current news, but the filter is so wide that (...) what it does is send you advertising and news that you would not open in your life" (man, 29) . Some participants were reluctant to allow someone to pre-select the news they receive: "I look at a bit of everything and then I go to what interests me" (woman, 27). At the moment, they had no interest in personalizing news.

Discussion

Young adults are interested in news and are torn between information overload, news repetition, and the need not to get lost in the tangle of available sources. According to the qualitative study carried out, the social and family environment, as well as the type of activity and routines of these young people condition their way of accessing the news. The traditional media still occupy part of their informative diet because the personal environment facilitates the encounter with media such as the press. However, they are also very critical of them because they consider them ideological. Even though it is classified as sensationalist, television is a source for major news, a result also confirmed by the study by Antunovic et al. (2018). It is, therefore, a generation that embraces the digital without abandoning the traditional. The interest is greater when the content directly affects them or when they empathize socially with the subject: "Young people have a high appetite for news" (Casero-Ripollés, 2012) and want to be informed in order to interact with others. They appreciate the immediacy, plurality, and deepening of the stories that interest them (García-Jiménez, Tur-Viñes, & Pastor Ruiz, 2018).

Although it is not easy to identify homogeneous consumption patterns, it is verified that this public "nibble on the news, when and where they want", as Dholakia et al. (2014) pointed out. He prefers frequent snacks of news to full meals on a regular basis. Privileging the brevity of content over its informative value could discourage news outlets from producing quality content (Chyi, 2009; Chyi & Yang, 2009). In this sense, and as Westlund (2013), and Canavilhas and Rodrigues (2017) point out, adapting to the mobile era poses challenges for journalism both in the dimensions of journalistic language and genres, as well as in the business models themselves and in interaction. with the users. Despite the high use of social networks to find news with a variety of approaches and the tendency to share it in their communities, there is the paradox that they consider them unreliable or biased as the only source of information. However, this study highlights the use of WhatsApp for these purposes, even being their first access to relevant news. The mobile is the access device par excellence because it allows you to find the news immediately. Mobility favors consumption in a variety of settings, as Peters (2015) recalled and was corroborated in the discussion groups. However, emerging media such as «smart TV» are

beginning to gain followers among young people aged 25-34, but also in other groups. Hence, the media cannot neglect the development of content and good user experiences on smart devices (López-García, 2018).

In general, this group perceives advertising as annoying, but the qualitative study showed that there is no knowledge or widespread use of blockers. However, once informed of their benefits, they show interest. Despite the fact that the "Digital News Report Spain 2018" highlights that the use of the blocker is the majority on computers and has very little presence on mobile phones, qualitative research suggests that advertising may be more annoying on mobile phones than on mobile phones. computer. Therefore, when it is emphasized that journalism must adapt its languages and formats to the mobile era (Westlund, 2013; Canavilhas & Rodrigues, 2017), it must be understood that this adaptation also affects advertising. The young adult audience is willing to offer data or their geolocation only if they receive a good personalization service and they trust the company, as Woodnutt (2018) pointed out and confirmed by the qualitative study presented. In any case, improving personalization services and requesting non-identifying data seem to be two plausible alternatives for the media to obtain valuable information for their business.

Conclusion

In conclusion, journalism must take these new consumption patterns into account if it wants to keep the attention of these young adults and future generations. However, this cannot lead to a worse quality of content or misuse of advertising. Professional journalistic work is necessary to maintain trust in the media brand, as well as to achieve higher income with a service offer that adds value.

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