The youtuber phenomenon and its transmedia expansion. Analysis of youth empowerment in social media

El fenómeno youtuber y su expansión transmedia. Análisis del empoderamiento juvenil en redes sociales

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ABSTRACT

This work approaches the phenomenon of youth empowerment in social media, specifically *YouTube*. For this, it studies the reach of the channels of the ten most important Spanish *youtubers* according to Social *Blade*, as well as the expansion and transmedia reach of their personal branding. The descriptive analysis of their channels and the latest published videos confirms the use of links to other social networks such as *Facebook*, *Twitter* and *Instagram*, as well as the presence of entertainment content.

Key words: **empowerment, Facebook, transmedia, Twitter, young, YouTube.**

RESUMEN

Este trabajo se acerca al fenómeno del empoderamiento juvenil en las redes sociales, en concreto *YouTube*, como sinónimo del triunfo juvenil conseguido a través de las *social networks*, fuentes generadoras de marca personal e ingresos económicos. Para ello estudia el alcance de los canales de los diez *youtubers* españoles más relevantes según Social Blade, así como la expansión y alcance *transmedia* de su *personal branding*. El análisis descriptivo de sus canales y los últimos vídeos publicados permiten detectar el uso prioritario de los vínculos a otras redes sociales como Facebook, Twitter e Instagram, así como los contenidos lúdicos de entretenimiento.

Palabras clave: empoderamiento, *Facebook*, jóvenes, *transmedia*, *Twitter*, *YouTube*.

1. INTRODUCTION

The fact that social networks have revolutionized the paradigm of communication is a definitive and necessary statement to understand the current communicative scenario. Up until their omnipresent appearance, communication tended to be unidirectional: companies would broadcast their commercial messages to their audience —with more or less segmentation—, and the viewers, who did not interact with the sender, absorbed the messages and decided to buy the products —or not to do it. However, the current user, which is a "virtual" user, is hyper-connected to brands, institutions, influence groups and celebrities, and is no longer a passive subject at the mercy of persuasive messages, but an actor with a power that was unimaginable years ago.

Users of social networks have broken the barriers of bi-directionality and feedback, and these terms have become obsolete in view of the intensity of individualism that comes with virtual communication. The individual as the center of the communicative paradigm is not new: Rogers (2003) and Katz & Lazarsfeld (2006), among others, already introduced the role of the individual in the promotion and spreading of communication, as well as its importance in prescribing opinions and being an opinion leader. This is what years ago Toffler called a "*prosumer*"[1]. However, with the consolidation of social networks and technological education (Kim, 2012), these users of social media have become very significant as an influential agent in the process.

In a context in which social networks are focal points for society in general and for the young population in particular, the study of the uses and gratifications that social media offer individuals becomes very relevant. The *Uses and Gratification Theory* already considers how and why people look actively for contents in the different media to satisfy their needs (Katz, Blumler & Gurevitch, 1973). McQuail, Blumer & Brown (1972) also mention entertainment, interpersonal relationships, individual psychology and environmental surveillance as the true gratification that the user looks for in the media. Social networks, for their part, add other forms of gratification, such as company, happiness, enjoyment, surveillance and social relationships (Martínez, 2010).

If we focus on the younger audiences, which are the target of this study, we must say that communication between young people through social networks is defined by their perception of their own identity and their self-esteem, as well as of their social environment (Bianchi & Philiphs, 2005; Lin, 2006; Valkenburg & Peter, 2007). Also, this social communication has a direct influence on the construction of their identity and their behavior inside and outside social networks.

In any case, what is truly relevant is the use that young people can make of social networks as a tool to create social capital (Lin, 1999). The key is that the very nature of social networks (interacting, sharing and collaborating) is developing authentic networks of work and cooperation, a very valuable construct which is contributing to the social empowerment of young people. Social networks, after all, offer young people new ways to communicate, establish relationships, and create social groups and virtual communities (Varas Rojas, 2009). Also, young people, who are digital natives (Prensky, 2001), appreciate the instantaneous nature of the digital environment and are used to working in a technical scenario based on the economy of Information and Communications Technology (ICT), all of it within the framework of the internet, in which they have been raised (Castells 2001; Prensky, 2007).

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[1] The term, coined by Toffler in *The Third Wave* (1980), after the suggestions from McLuhan & Nevitt (1972), suggests that in a mass market characterized by standardization (Horkheimer & Adorno, 1969), the strategy of subsistence implies involving the consumer in the design and creation of the products through "mass customization" (Davis, 1987).

In this context of change and revolution in digital communication, the figure of the *youtuber* gains special significance, because it becomes the subject of an enunciation which, using a single communication channel (the social network *YouTube*) and resources based on creativity and innovation, is able to expand beyond his or her personal sphere (as a communication channel) to an entire universe of followers who discuss, rate and share what they do, and who are the real fans of their work. The phenomenon of celebrity culture (Jerslev, 2016), which involves bloggers or videobloggers, has already been analyzed from the perspective of the elements that define their success: constant activity, immediacy and authenticity based on the loss of their privacy even with regard to their sexual identity (Lovelock, 2017), as well as a professionalization (Sabich & Steinberg, 2017).

The objective of this study is to further analyze the empowerment of young people through social networks, and particularly *YouTube* as a social network which generates an economic capital. To do so, this work focuses on the study of young *youtubers* who have created an entire digital business within the platform and who obtain a substantial profit with a daily activity which they have transformed into a digital business. These young people, who are truly empowered as such, have known how to take the maximum advantage of their hobbies, and they have turned their leisure time into a job, their social networks into a company, and their own social profile into the figure of a celebrity admired by others.

To do so, this study assesses youth empowerment by analyzing the success of the ten more relevant Spanish *youtubers* and discussing their reach and transmedia expansion, as well as the contents and topics that contribute to the consolidation of this social empowerment of young people.

2. THE YOUTUBER PHENOMENON: TYPES AND TYPOLOGIES

Talking about *youtubers* is referring, in general terms, to any person who has created a channel in the social network *YouTube* and who uses it to publish videos and comments with the intention to obtain the highest possible number of views and, consequently, better audience figures. Based on this formal definition, any of us might become a *youtuber*. However, being successful in the social network *YouTube* is a dream that only comes true for a few individuals. Being a *youtuber* implies creating social momentum around the channel, capturing the interest of millions of users around the world and managing to have an ever-growing amount of fans and followers, both in general terms and with regard to the number of views of the videos themselves.

The social network *YouTube*, due to its style and its nature, promotes those creative spaces so that young people can find empowerment and develop as true business generators. In the words of Cayari:

"YouTube is an art medium; a technology which allows listeners to become singers, watchers to become actors and consumers to become producers creating new original works and supplementing existing ones. It allows everyone to have a voice that can be heard and face that can be seen" (2011: 24).

The success of the social network *YouTube* among the younger population is not casual. According to Chau, young people are the main demographic group in *YouTube*, both in terms of absolute audience and of the number of interactions and feedback actions (2010: 65). The social network itself, thanks to its characteristics and its combination of the social and the audiovisual spheres, cultivates this success among a generation eager to have access to interactivity and immediacy. According to Boyd, one of the most relevant characteristics of *YouTube* is its ability to generate a strong sense of

community among its users (2014:47). Also, we must point out that, among the younger population, new digital behavior models and codes are being developed that support the production of contents beyond their publication (Soep, 2012: 98). This factor confirms the power that young people have as subjects-consumers, but also as subjects-producers who add contents to this social network.

The journalist Antonio Rull was one of the first people to publicly identify in Spain the phenomenon generated by these young creators: "A *youtuber* is a person with hundreds of thousands of followers in their *YouTube* channel and who wants to make a living creating and uploading those videos to their channel" (Rull, 2014: 1)[2].

The phenomenon began in 2007 in the USA. After some previous attempts from others, Justine Ezarik was the first person to be labelled a *youtuber* in the history of the platform. This woman uploaded a video to *YouTube* where she reviewed a 300-page phone bill that had arrived on the same month that she bought one of the first iPhones in history. Within ten days, the video had been viewed more than 3 million times. From that moment on, the phenomenon spread worldwide. More people joined in, and finally *YouTube* created a program to recruit them as an important part of the platform: the *Partner Program* which regulates and administers the revenue produced by advertising on the *YouTube* channels.

The social network has found a double-edged sword with *youtubers*. On the one hand, they contribute to the network business consolidation and its international promotion; and on the other hand, they generate revenue through advertising and other formulas that benefit the platform's business plan. Thus, *YouTube* is in itself promoted and benefited by the exchange of contents. This empowers the members of the platform and increases the sense of community (Chau, 2010: 65).

3. METHODS

This study focuses on the analysis of the social profiles of the so-called *youtubers*, young people who have managed to find a successful job through the *YouTube* platform. The objective of this work is to know the reach of these social profiles as tools for self-promotion and marketing of these young creators who have found a space to shape their profession, their visibility and their success in the virtual sphere.

Our objective is to assess the reach of the social profile of the most influential *youtubers*, with special emphasis on their social expansion. We start from the premise that they are born in the social network *YouTube* but their scope is further enlarged through other social networks, particularly *Facebook*, *Twitter* and *Instagram*, which are considered the platforms to which young people are closest (IAB Spain, 2017).

In the making of this work, the analysis tool *SocialBlade* has been taken as a reference. It is a free software application that analyzes and measures social content (www.socialblade.com). More specifically, we have used the *Ranking Top 100 Youtubers Channels from Spain³*, which contains the 100 most relevant channels of this social network in Spain. The tool offers different filters (by relevance, number of subscribers and video views). In this case, we have sorted them by the number of subscribers, because the objective of this study is to have more data regarding the reach of *youtubers*. For the meth-

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[2] Last accessed on 20/12/2016. Available at: https://goo.gl/kWVyAd
[3] Available at: https://goo.gl/z2a7X3

odological application, the first 10 results provided by the ranking of *SocialBlade* have been selected, and the exploratory stage has taken place in the period from January 15th 2017 to January 25th 2017.

The methodology focuses on a descriptive study of the social data that the social networks themselves provide about their users. In this initial stage, an *ad hoc* questionnaire has been prepared with the objective to register all the figures related to the interactions of these young *YouTube* stars. Based on this initial classification, the total accumulated data offered by the remaining secondary networks are analyzed —*Facebook*, *Twitter* and *Instagram*—, and the accumulated data are included in the database. The study also takes into account the different types of profiles created in other social networks (either by the *youtubers* themselves or as *fanpages*), as well as whether there is a link from the main profile (their *YouTube* channel) to other social networks, in order to assess the existence of a transmedia strategy of expansion for those channels.

Also, the study took into account the contents of the five most recent videos in each *YouTube* channel in the sample. The channels have been classified according to the thematic tag added by the platform to each of the *youtubers* in our study. This exploratory analysis intends to offer an approach to content as a symbol of success. That is: What contents transform a young person into a referent on *YouTube*? What are the contents that generate the highest demand or success among the followers of *youtubers*?

A third stage analyzes the contents shared in the parallel networks to the *YouTube* platform, in order to determine whether the social expansion of the *youtuber* to other social networks follows the pattern of contents established by the main platform or, on the contrary, whether the parallel social networks adopt a different role from the main social network and offer a different promotional value to *youtubers*.

4. RESULTS

4.1. SOCIAL PROFILES OF THE YOUTUBERS AND ANALYSIS OF THEIR CHANNELS

The data obtained after applying a methodological process and after their analysis provides some information that lets us identify, at least preliminarily, the social profile of the *youtubers*:

Table 1. Social profiles of the *Top 10 youtubers*

Name of channel	Date of creation	Youtuber	Sex	Age	Age when channel was created	Province
elrubiusOMG	20/12/2011	Rubén Doblas Gundersen	M	27	21	Málaga
VEGETTA777	02/03/2008	Samuel de Luque	M	28	20	Madrid
TheWillyrex	26/01/2011	Guillermo Díaz	M	24	18	Teruel
Willyrex	09/08/2009	Guillermo Díaz	M	24	18	Teruel
iTownGamePlay	15/02/2012	Álvaro Herreros García	M	31	27	Valencia
aLexBY11	01/06/2011	Alejandro Bravo Yañez	M	24	18	Madrid
luzugames	01/05/2013	Borja Luzuriaga Vázquez	M	31	27	Bilbao
ZarcortGame	09/11/2012	Miguel A. Martos Bellos	M	26	21	Almería
sTaXxCraft	27/11/2011	Frank Garnes	M	23	17	Castellón
El Rincón De Giorgio	22/11/2013	Jordi Carrillo: "Jordi Wild"	M	32	28	Barcelona

SOURCE: COMPILED BY AUTHOR.

As we can see in Table 1, the ten most influential Spanish *youtubers* —the ones with the largest number of subscribers— are all men, with an average age of 27 years and a range from 24 years to 32 years. However, relevant information emerges when we focus on their age when they started their *YouTube* channels. This shows that the youngest of them all, Frank Garnes, started working on his channel when he was only 17 years old. The oldest was Jordi Wild, who started to be part of the *youtuber* phenomenon at age 28.

With regard to their place of origin, we do not find any relevant data, because there is only one correlation in the case of Teruel (20%). However, we must take into account that in this case it is the same *youtuber*, who manages two successful channels at the same time. Madrid, for its part, is the place of origin of another 20%, with two cases. The rest of the cities are not relevant for the purposes of this research.

Surprisingly, there are no women among the 10 Spanish *youtubers* with most subscribers. We may add that, if the sample is expanded to the 20 first results in the ranking of *SocialBlade*, we would only find a 5% of female representation, with a single case of a woman in charge of a channel, if we do not include the existence of another channel which is shared by a man and a woman.

Secondly, after collecting the data offered by this social network about each of the channels of the *youtubers* in our sample, we find significant information regarding the reach and number of followers. elrubiusOMG, who leads the list, has over 22 million subscribers who follow his channel and are notified every time that new content is uploaded, followed at a distance by VEGETTA777. The difference between the first *youtuber* in the sample and the tenth is over 16 million subscribers. In any case, in general terms and without focusing on the first positions of the list, the average number of subscribers is 9,670,606. This number does not go unnoticed and confirms the reach of these young *youtubers* within the social network.

Table 2. Absolute data on the *YouTube* channels

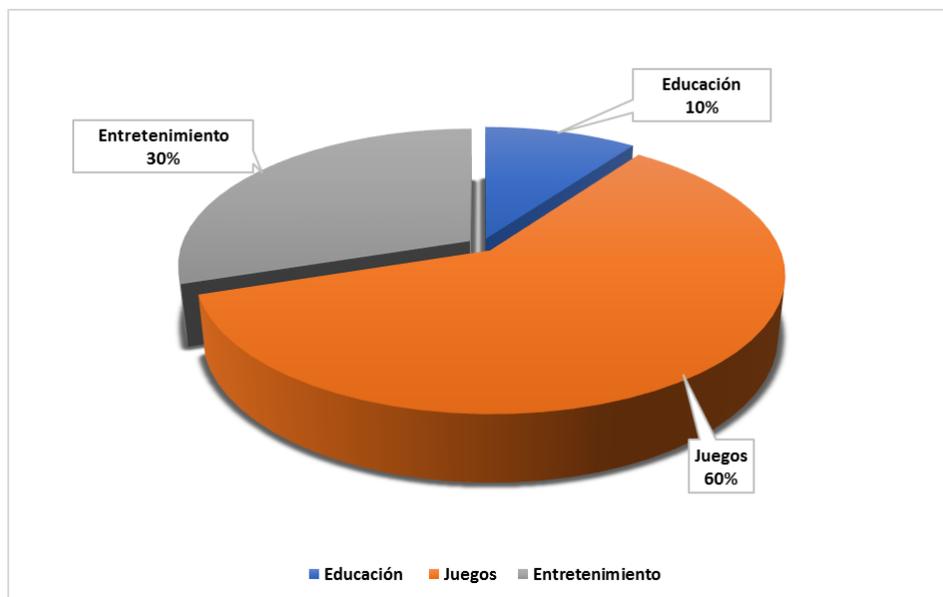| Name of channel	Date of creation	Sector	Total Videos	Subscribers	Views
elrubiusOMG	20/12/2011	Education	682	22,729,643	4,975,520,843
VEGETTA777	02/03/2008	Games	3,503	16,766,527	6,305,229,746
TheWillyrex	26/01/2011	Games	3,982	11,203,598	3,657,862,083
Willyrex	09/08/2009	Games	3,346	7,853,200	1,684,897,706
iTownGamePlay	15/02/2012	Entertainment	4,026	7,667,322	2,491,611,599
aLexBY11	01/06/2011	Games	2,942	6,477,299	1,013,500,724
luzugames	01/05/2013	Games	1,921	6,339,840	1,030,370,746
ZarcortGame	09/11/2012	Entertainment	225	5,919,619	1,235,325,366
sTaXxCraft	27/11/2011	Games	1,362	5,891,932	1,146,173,761
El Rincón De Giorgio	22/11/2013	Entertainment	588	5,857,083	920,275,829

SOURCE: COMPILED BY AUTHOR.

Another remarkable aspect is the fact that there is no association between the number of videos uploaded and the number of subscribers. While the *youtuber* on top of the list has only uploaded 682 videos to obtain over 22 million subscribers, there are others, like iTownGamePlay (5th place) who have uploaded no less than 4,026 videos and have a much lower number of subscribers. The same thing happens with alexBY11 (6th place), who has over 6 million followers after 2,942 videos.

We can also see that the date in which the account was created is not a factor that determines their position in the ranking, because the oldest profiles occupy the middle places in the list. The leader, for his part, represents an admirable paradigm if we take into account the fact that his profile was created in 2013 (a very good year for *youtubers*, since many of them created their profiles on that same year), that his channel has one of the lowest number of videos uploaded and that, nevertheless, he has achieved the highest number of followers.

Another remarkable aspect in this research is the content of the videos uploaded by the *youtubers*, as well as their style and the sector in which they are inscribed, and which can be interpreted as a trend or an attractive fashion by their own creators and by their subscribers.

In this research, the term that has been taken into account in the classification of the different channels was the classification tag added to the channel and validated by the *Partner Program*. According to this pattern, we can find three main themes: entertainment, games and education.

Figure 1. Classification of the channels of the *youtubers*

SOURCE: COMPILED BY AUTHOR.

Figure 1 shows the division of the different themes and reveals that 60% of the channels in our sample are classified into the field of "games". Their videos are tutorials in which they share their

experiences with virtual games or videogames, they show their own gameplay or they give advice on different techniques to other players.

Secondly, entertainment is found as a tag in 30% of the channels, and it refers to one of the most common gratification mechanisms for users of social networks. Entertainment videos may include contents from games or other forms of entertainment, ranging from leisure activities to humor or other topics. However, it is necessary to highlight that there is not a significant difference between both categories —games and entertainment—, although the absolute data provided by the social network itself makes it necessary to separate and differentiate between them.

Finally, only 10% of the channels are devoted to education. This category includes the experiences of the authors or video tutorials in which they show or teach something, ranging from an isolated daily anecdote to a master class on some topic. In this case, it is necessary to emphasize that the only channel in this ranking with such tag is the one in the first position, by elrubiusOMG, but that if we analyze the channel, we cannot find a direct link to education, but rather to a diverse selection of comic videos about daily occurrences.

4.2. THE TRANSMEDIA EXPANSION OF YOUTUBER CHANNELS

After the analysis of the social profiles of the channels of the *youtubers* in our sample and their contents, it is necessary to know how these channels feed from other social networks and interact with them. We have observed that there is a transmedia expansion of the channel to other social networks, in an attempt to enlarge their reach and obtain more subscribers for the channels.

In this section, we have collected data regarding the number of followers in each of the parallel social networks, the existence of a link to those networks in the main *YouTube* channel and the type of profile (personal or *fanpage*) which has been selected by these young *youtubers* to promote their channels.

In general terms we can mention that the main social networks shared and used by the *youtubers* to expand the scope of their channels are *Facebook* and *Twitter*, followed at a distance by the social network *Instagram*.

As we can see in Table 3, the transmedia expansion that young *youtubers* are implementing through the use of social networks other than *YouTube* is in virtually all cases achieved through a profile for their followers, or *fanpage*. This non-personal profile targeted at businesses, services or activities is the most adequate way to administer those social profiles, because it provides many advantages with regard to advertising, promotion and even analysis and segmentation of the audience. However, we must mention that there is one case in which a *youtuber* uses a personal page to promote himself: it is the channel "El Rincón de Giorgio", which has *fanpages* on *Facebook* and *Twitter*, but who maintains a personal channel on *Instagram* devoted to his own *youtuber* persona, rather than to the contents of the channel.

Table 3. Description of the transmedia strategy of the channels of the *youtubers*

Name of channel	Link to FB	*FanPage/* Personal	Link to TW	*FanPage/* Personal	Link to INS	*FanPage/* Personal
elrubiusOMG	Yes	*FanPage*	Yes	*FanPage*	No	*FanPage*
VEGETTA777	Yes	*FanPage*	Yes	*FanPage*	No	*FanPage*
TheWillyrex	No	*FanPage*	No	*FanPage*	No	*FanPage*
Willyrex	No	*FanPage*	No	*FanPage*	No	*FanPage*
iTownGamePlay	Yes	*FanPage*	Yes	*FanPage*	Yes	*FanPage*
aLexBY11	Yes	*FanPage*	Yes	*FanPage*	No	*FanPage*
luzugames	Yes	*FanPage*	Yes	*FanPage*	Yes	*FanPage*
ZarcortGame	No	*FanPage*	No	*FanPage*	No	*FanPage*
sTaXxCraft	Yes	*FanPage*	Yes	*FanPage*	Yes	*FanPage*
El Rincón De Giorgio	No	*FanPage*	No	*FanPage*	No	Personal

SOURCE: COMPILED BY AUTHOR.

We also observe that not all the channels have links on the main page (their *YouTube* channel) to the other social para-texts which are available. When referring to the links to *Facebook* and *Twitter*, for example, only 60% of *youtubers* have direct links to their *fanpages*, while there is virtually no transmedial strategy when we refer to *Instagram*, which is only linked in 30% of the channels in our analysis.

The way in which hyperlinks are used to promote the channel is rather imprecise if we take into account the fact that there is no correlation between the positions in the ranking and the use of external links or with the number of subscribers or followers in each social network, as we will see below.

Table 4. Results of transmedia expansion of the channels on other social networks

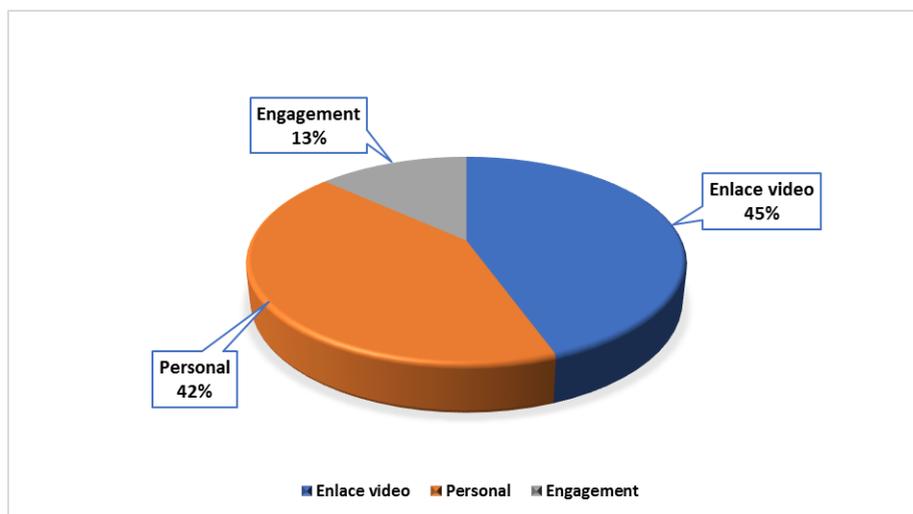| Name of channel	Date of creation	YT Fans	FB Fans	TW Fans	INS Fans
elrubiusOMG	20/12/2011	22,729,643	7,081,939	8,189,851	5,310,125
VEGETTA777	02/03/2008	16,766,527	3,223,339	4,367,350	2,098,044
TheWillyrex	26/01/2011	11,203,598	2,704,432	4,242,619	2,078,094
Willyrex	09/08/2009	7,853,200	2,704,432	4,242,619	2,078,094
iTownGamePlay	15/02/2012	7,667,322	3,129,274	2,057,690	N/A
aLexBY11	01/06/2011	6,477,299	75,397	3,543,679	1,567,769
luzugames	01/05/2013	6,339,840	241,759	2,423,643	1,652,898
ZarcortGame	09/11/2012	5,919,619	20,306	1,179,394	N/A
sTaXxCraft	27/11/2011	5,891,932	1,520,026	2,902,894	1,397,778
El Rincón De Giorgio	22/11/2013	5,857,083	373,166	1,148,330	860,956

SOURCE: COMPILED BY AUTHOR.

The most relevant stage in the analysis of the transmedia expansion that we have carried out shows some relevant data that confirm that *YouTube* is indeed the main social network that acts as a hub; that is, the one that provides the highest number of followers. This fact is evident if we consider that the channels are created to be distributed through *YouTube*. However, the social expansion of those channels is really relevant on *Facebook* and *Twitter*, and both of them expand the reach of the contents in the channels.

It is clear that the idiosyncrasy of *Facebook* and *Twitter* and the possibilities they provide to share audiovisual contents is the key for a high number of followers on social networks. *Youtubers*, apart from promoting their videos and their own profiles and communicating their news and their upcoming creations through *Facebook* and *Twitter*, can share their entire contents, and this creates an absolute transmedia phenomenon around the videos which, consequently, turns into a direct expansion of the reach of the channel and, of course, of the contents themselves.

However, while *Facebook* and *Twitter* can act as accelerators of the consumption of the videos by these *youtubers*, other social networks in our analysis, namely *Instagram*, show considerable differences regarding the number of followers and become a recurrent but residual presence within the context of social expansion of the channels of the *youtubers*. We must take into account that the nature of *Instagram* is not directly related to audiovisual contents (although it is true that it currently makes it possible to upload videos), but to static images and, consequently, its target is more closely associated with photography than with film creation. In this regard, the gratification that a *Facebook* or *Twitter* user can receive when they subscribe to the channel of a *youtuber* is different from the expectations that *Instagram* can meet.
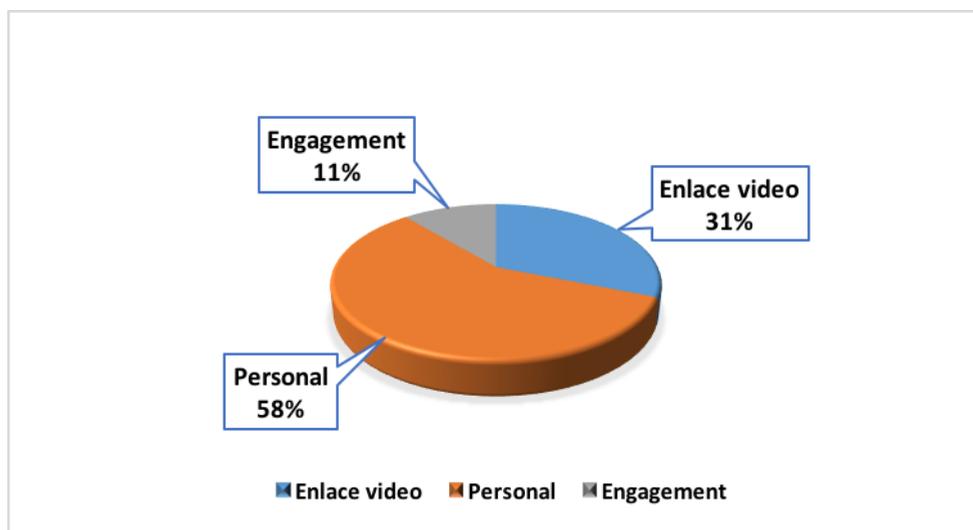
In order to conclude the exploratory stage around the transmedia expansion of these *YouTube* channels, we have performed an exploratory study of the contents published on the social networks that are an expansion of the official channel of the *youtuber*. To do so, we have analyzed the five last videos uploaded and we have collected the absolute data with regard to the number of positive votes and the number of comments generated by the videos in order to assess the engagement they generate on other social networks.

As we can see in Figure 2, we can observe that *Facebook* is mainly used to share the videos uploaded to their *YouTube* channel, with 45% of cases detected. The second objective of this social network is the personal promotion of the *youtuber*, found in 42% of the cases. Finally, only 13% of the publications are meant to promote an engagement with the audience.

Figure 2. Contents of the publications on *Facebook*

In the case of *Twitter*, there is a change in the trend of the use that *youtubers* make of this social network. As we can see in Figure 4, the social network *Twitter* is used with a much more personal tone and in order to promote the figure of the *youtuber* (in 58% of the cases), in line with the idiosyncrasy of the website itself. These are followed by contents to promote the videos (31% of the cases), and only in 11% of the cases the publications are used to generate engagement with the audience, a slightly lower proportion than what we could observe on *Facebook*.

Figure 3. Contents of the publications on *Twitter*

In the case of *Instagram*, the *youtubers* use this network to promote their own figure, and it becomes a network with their own pictures or humorous contents about their daily experiences, but always with a personal rather than commercial perspective. In any case, it is common to see *Instagram* images that refer to the contents of some videos or scenes, always with an approach that has nothing to do with the transmedia expansion of the contents of the main *YouTube* channel.

5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

As we have stated throughout this study, the presence of young *youtubers* who manage highly successful channels is clear. These young people have found a space in this social network in which they have their place both as emitters of messages and as generators of popular contents which are well received by the virtual community. This activity begins as a hobby and then becomes a successful business in which an increasingly large number of young people see the possibility to earn a living. In the words of Rubén Doblas, the owner of the channel with the highest number of subscribers in our study (elrubiusOMG) in an interview on the show conducted by Andreu Buenafuente: "more and more people are going to be able to make a living with this"[4].

It has been proven that the reach of the work carried out by *youtubers* is truly significant, if we take into account the data regarding the number of subscribers and their interactions. In any case, it is also necessary to consider the number of publications: *youtubers* are able to generate a surprising amount of videos in a short period of time, and this highlights the effort that is required for an activity which might, *a priori*, been interpreted as a hobby rather than as a job. Rubén Doblas, in another show conducted by Risto Mejide, declared: "I shut myself in my room in the dark for a year after I suddenly became famous"[5]. This confirms the enormous professional and personal burden that derives from this type of activity.

The contents of the most successful videos in these channels, as we can see in the analysis, are focused on games and entertainment. This fact perpetuates, on the one hand, the educational character of social networks, which allow gamers to learn new techniques and more information about their activities combined with a character of leisure and entertainment. However, although the sample in our analysis has shown very favorable data with regard to the world of gaming, it is true that other *youtubers* whose activities differ from these and focus on other types of tutorials or educational and/or entertainment contents are gaining relevance. In line with these statements, the journalist Antonio Rull claimed that:

"Only after getting to know the work of several Spanish *youtubers*, there are some myths that are busted: they are not all young, they are not all gamers, they do not all make a living out of this, their videos are not only a few minutes long —some of them are up to one hour long—, and almost none of them has reached the position they now have without working very hard for a very long time (a very long time in Internet terms, of course)" (Rull, 2014)[6].

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[4] Interview from January 15th, 2014 on the show "*En el aire*", broadcast in *prime time* from Monday to Wednesday in *La Sexta*. Available at: https://goo.gl/3johns
[5] Interview from June 2nd, 2015 on the show "*El rincón de pensar*" conducted by Risto Mejide and broadcast in *prime time* in Antena 3. Available: https://goo.gl/LVZxpd
[6] Last accessed 20/12/2016. Available at: https://goo.gl/xDozNX

We observe, then, that achieving a privileged position in the *youtuber* scene is not an easy task. These young people have found a place in which they are empowered and they can develop a professional activity which is, in turn, related to their hobbies and to the things they know, and which allows them to make a living doing what they love best and also achieving the gratification which is in the core of social networks, thus receiving recognition from an entire community of faithful followers.

This study proves that the capacity of the *youtuber* is a determining factor, but that there is also a significant influence of their capacity to interact in social networks with their own channel and their own persona. This finding confirms previous conclusions which, years ago, already announced the ability to interact of *youtubers*: "Users' ability to share *YouTube* videos with others in their social circles suggests that the extent of their offline social activities and interpersonal interaction with others may influence their social use of *YouTube*" (Haridakis & Hanson, 2009: 320)[7].

We cannot forget that social networks allow young people to create an online identity (Sweeney, 2009), and this identity is what *youtubers* use to promote and expand their channels. Social networks, therefore, are transformed into transmedia expansions of the activity of the *youtubers* and, consequently, into activities for the promotion and expansion of their own contents and their profile as virtual celebrities.

Therefore, this perpetuates the ability of new generations to empower their future through social networks, a space in which they feel comfortable and they can establish relationships with others, in a context of constant development and training. They are native users of social networks, they know how they work and how they are used, they can employ their tools perfectly, and because of all this, they do not need a communications or expansion plan to make their channels famous. Their investment in advertising is inexistent. They, through their own contacts, creativity and effort, manage to place their product —their own personal brand— on the top positions of the list.

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