ANALYSIS OF CHILDREN CONSUMPTION OF TV, VIDEOGAMES AND THE INTERNET: DIFFERENCES BASED ON GENDER IN THEIR SELECTION OF AUDIOVISUAL CONTENT

Análisis del consumo infantil de TV, videojuegos e internet: Diferencias en función del sexo en la selección de contenidos audiovisuales

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ABSTRACT

Under a strategy to attract a diverse audience, the audiovisual industry has been fragmenting its contents based on several criteria, including gender. In this sense, this research aims to verify whether these distinctions are reflected in the children's content selection in relation with different screens (TV, videogames and the internet). To approach this research, we selected a quantitative analysis using the technique of a questionnaire that was distributed among students of 6th year primary school, who are between 11 and 12 years old, to finally access a sample of 2200 individuals from 77 public and private Galician schools. Thanks to these data, we could corroborate that children choose completely different contents according to their gender, excepting internet, a medium in which their preferences tend to converge.

Key words: consumption, content, children, gender, screens.

RESUMEN

Bajo una estrategia de atraer públicos diversos, la industria audiovisual ha ido fragmentando su oferta de contenidos en función de varios criterios, entre ellos el de género. En esta investigación se quiso comprobar si estas distinciones se ven reflejadas en la selección de contenidos por parte de los niños ante distintas pantallas (Tv, videojuegos, internet). Para esta investigación se recurrió a la metodología cuantitativa de la encuesta autoadministrada entre individuos de 11 a 12 años que cursaba 6º de primaria repartida en 77 colegios públicos y privados de Galicia lo que permitió acceder a una muestra de 2200 escolares. De los datos recogidos y analizados se pudo corroborar que los niños optan por contenidos totalmente diferentes según su sexo, a excepción de internet, medio en el que sus preferencias tienden a confluir.

Palabras clave: consumo, contenidos, niños, sexo, pantallas.

1. INTRODUCTION

This research about the influence of gender on the consumption of audiovisual contents during childhood is based on the conclusions of a doctoral thesis (2015) which focused on the main use that Galician schoolchildren made of different screens (television, videogames and internet). The results showed significant differences with regard to the time spent and the contents consumed (particularly on television and videogames) depending on the sex of the child. This study aims to know specifically the differences in preferences regarding contents accessed through television, game consoles or internet between boys and girls.

2. THE REFLECTION OF GENDER IDENTITY ON THE MEDIA AND THE SCREENS

In this research, when we mention «gender» we refer to all the cultural aspects that surround the construction of the social functions of men and women; and when we talk about «sex» we refer to the biological features of each person. We have chosen an anthropological approach that takes into account both sameness and difference, and we are based on the idea that men and women are naturally diverse beings, with a difference which is not negative insofar as it does not become an arbitrary imposition (Burggraf, 2004). In this context, the concept of «gender equality approach» is used to defend the participation of men and women in all spheres of life, as long as this «fair goal» which is to be achieved «in terms of political, business, cultural, social and familiar governance […] includes the right to be different» (Burggraf, 2004, p. 30). One essential aspect of this gender perspective is the search to overcome «the androcentrism of social sciences which led to the invisibility of women in history» (Rodríguez Dorantes, 1997, p. 2).

When each person is born, he or she is assigned a gender according to their nature, which determines their future behavior. This is what García Guardia and Marcos Molano (2004) describe as masculine/feminine roles. They are socially approved patterns that are inherited and assimilated from childhood, and which are unconsciously repeated.

> «During this stage of childhood people progressively internalize the behavior norms assigned to their gender, so that they can act according to them. They become aware of the concept of "gender" and of the difference between the games played by boys and girls, and they use the people in their family, social and educational environment as a reference, and that even includestelevision characters» (Martínez Reina & Vélez Cea, 2009, p. 138).

This assumption of roles may entail the risk of an excessive simplification, with the creation of stereotypes that impose a forced image of the masculine and feminine aspects, «a reinforcement of the prejudices and convictions about objects, social classes and institutions» (García Guardia & Marcos Molano, 2004, p. 5).

This assimilation process would not be possible without the role of cultural aspects. In our field of research we highlight the role played by the media and the screens, whose influence is equal to or higher than that of the rest of social agents (family, school, peer groups…), particularly during childhood and adolescence (Espinar, 2007; Medrano, Aierbe & Orejudo, 2009).

In line with Espinar (2006), this analysis assumes that the media carry out a socializing function, «with particular relevance in the case of gender socialization» (2006, p. 3). Therefore, the consumption of media cannot be considered a mere market of leisure and entertainment, but one of the main «enlighteners of society» (Medrano et al., 2009).

Martínez-Reina and Velez conclude that toys do not have a gender:

> «It is culture and society who labels them for one sex or the other. Boys and girls need the same things for their development and their education. For example, a doll is not a toy for girls, but a useful tool to develop some humanitarian skills. From a teaching perspective, toys must be considered appropriate both for boys and for girls». (2009, p. 143).

Similarly, they claim that the contents broadcast through different screens are also genderless. It is the entertainment industry that classifies contents following a clear strategy of audience fragmentation. For example, audiovisual corporations design the profile of their channels with a segmentation based on the sex of their audiences by offering channels for a female audience (Nova, Divinity) and other channels for a male audience (Mega, Energy), or by classifying videogames into «blue» and «pink» games (Márquez, 2013). In the words of Medrano et al., «there are authors (Coyne & Archer, 2004; Hargreaves & Tiggemann, 2004) that defend exposure to differentiated contents to attract women and men based on the social concerns of each of those sexes» (2009, p. 296).

Therefore, we may consider that screens (or at least television and videogames) establish gender differences when they present their contents to the audience. Consequently, there is a relationship between the consumption of contents and gender identity, which does not necessarily mean that the audience cannot freely choose the contents they want to see, regardless of this gender classification.

An important percentage of the research which relates gender and media focuses on the specific study of television. In this field, Medrano et al. (2009) establish two essential lines of work: one which is associated to the analysis of sex-based differences with regard to the consumption profile, and another one focused on the transmission and/or perception of masculine/feminine stereotypes in television programs.

This study would be included into the first line of work, but it also deals with other screens, apart from television. Similarly, it agrees with the results from previous works (Martínez-Reina & Vélez, 2005; Medrano et al, 2009; Del Moral, Villalustre & Neira, 2010; Márquez, 2013) in which there is a clear difference between sexes regarding the consumption of television or videogame contents.

In the second line of work, Espinar (2006, 2007), thanks to an analysis of the stereotyped characteristics of men and women in television programming, provided some interesting data, such as a higher presence of men among main characters, with a higher ability for physical tasks, and with a limited expression of their feelings. The percentage of programs with exclusively male characters decreases over time. In the cases in which women appear as the only main character in a show, «there is a higher probability that they are represented at an early age —infantilization of female main characters—, and that they have magical or supernatural powers» (2007, p. 133).

More specifically, Belmonte and Guillamón (2008) focused on the analysis of gender representation in television series ('Los Hombres de Paco', 'El Comisario', 'Aída', 'Aquí no hay quien viva', 'The Simpsons', 'Los Serrano', 'Mis adorables vecinos') consumed by a young audience in order to verify whether they show a «dichotomized and stereotypical» representation of genders, both on a personal and a professional level.

> «In terms of gender, and in spite of their apparent look of modernity, harmlessness, nerve and self-assurance, or even of transgression in some cases, these cultural products still show a discourse that reproduces inequality in the representation of feminine and masculine characteristics» (2008, p. 120).

Even then, there are several authors that claim that the presence of gender stereotypes is more evident and more intense in advertising than in television programming (Medrano et al, 2009; Espinar, 2006, 2007):

> «There is a predominance on the screens of advertisements with a high degree of stereotyped contents, both masculine and feminine, which have an influence on the learning of values like enjoyment and competitiveness, risk and aggressiveness for boys, and values like beauty and appearance, looking after others or after the house for girls. Legislators then try to fight against these stereotypes through social policies of integration and equality». (Pérez-Ugena, Martínez & Salas, 2011, p. 229).

In this same line, a recent study by the Audiovisual Council of Catalonia about the 2015-2016 Christmas advertising campaign revealed that 34% of all the toy advertisements watched by the children and adolescents in Catalonia on television during the last Christmas campaign contain gender stereotypes, although the percentage was lower than in previous years.

In view of these results, some authors like Espinar (2007) underline the need to make television and media in general responsible of the way they spread stereotypes, and to make them assume their role in the learning process of children and adolescents:

> «We can ask ourselves whether the media, and particularly television, can be asked to become a force for social change, and to implement self-control mechanisms with regard to the transmission of stereotypical images of men and women […], so that they participate in the necessary process of change towards a more egalitarian society both for women and for men» (2007, p. 134).

With regard to other screens, and in the words of Márquez (2013), the world of computers and videogames was associated to the male identity from the beginning. Even now, men are still a majority in the industry, both in the production area and as consumers, «which does not mean that women do not enjoy videogames» (2013, p. 108). In fact, 45% of Spanish gamers are women (Aevi, 2014).

The recognition of women as gamers has led the industry to implement different strategies to promote the consumption of videogames by a female audience. In the decade of the 90s there was a division of videogames based on the sex of the user: «blue» games were targeted at a male audience and related with combats and sports; and «pink» games were aimed at women and associated with topics such as fashion, beauty and cosmetics. This segmentation was the result of marketing principles, but it received the support of parents, who were in many cases the final buyers of the product:

> «It has been proven that the attitudes of parents regarding those games also reinforce stereotypes. For example, the designers of KidCom, a game specifically designed for girls of ages 7-12 in the Netherlands found that girls did not like pink, but decided to create it in that color because it met the parents' expectations». (Márquez, 2013, p. 108).

However, and according to the data provided by the researcher, these videogames targeted at female audience were a commercial failure. On the other hand, women showed a higher preference for games with a neutral gender.

With regard to the transmission of gender characteristics through videogames, there are studies that reveal a significant predominance of male over female characters, «and when women appear they general play a subordinate role, as a stock character of a damsel-in-distress» (Márquez, 2013, p. 109). The appearance of the Tomb Raider saga, starring the female character of Lara Croft, represented a turning point in this area. The main character was a woman who challenged the secondary roles of previous games. However, «several authors interpret that the paradigm of the warrior woman symbolized by Lara Croft does not challenge traditional representation, but falls into the stereotype again» (2013, p. 109). In any case, the videogame sector also designs and develops proposals that show a more realistic image of a woman, such as the games *Project Zero* or *Beyond Good and Evil*, or the promotion of the *Wii* console, «with innovative interface, products and marketing campaigns that attract girls, women and other population groups that had been so far ignored by the industry» (Márquez, 2013, p. 112).

This study focuses specifically on children as users of screens. Therefore, the audience is right in the middle of their process of personal development. There are multiple theories about how people acquire gender stereotypes during their childhood; with one school of thought that refers to biological aspects, another one to social factors, and a third one to psychological elements.

However, the current trend is to interpret all these aspects as part of the same theoretical framework, «like the Social Cognitive Theory of Gender Development and Differentiation, which considers that human evolution creates a biological structure over which psychological and social factors can act» (Bussey & Bandura, 1999, cited in Martínez-Reina & Vélez, 2009, p. 138). The internalization of gender differences has important consequences for education, because they play a fundamental role on the children's ways of thinking, interpreting and acting, as well as on their relationships with their peers (Colás & Villaciervos, 2007).

With regard to the relationship between consumption and gender identity in children and adolescents, previous studies concluded that television productions have had an influence on the construction of their identity (Medrano et al., 2009). This research expands the field of study to other screens in order to verify whether the same differences regarding sex exist in the profile of consumption of internet, videogames and television among children in their last year of Primary Education.

3. METHODS

With this study, we want to observe specifically whether schoolchildren follow the gender patterns established by the screen industry with regard to content segmentation for television, videogames and internet. Children were asked directly what were their favorite television channels and

programs, videogames and websites. After processing these data with SPSS, they were classified according to sex in order to compare the differences between the preferences of boys and girls.

The statistical data shown in this analysis are part of a wider study included in the doctoral thesis *La infancia ante las pantallas: análisis del consumo de medios audiovisuales (TV, videojuegos e internet) entre los niños gallegos de último curso de primaria en 2010* [Children in front of the screens: analysis of consumption of audiovisual media (TV, videogames and internet) among children of Galicia in their last year of Primary Education in 2010] (Feijoo, 2015), which focused on the ways in which schoolchildren used those specific screens.

For this study, we used a quantitative method through a self-administered survey distributed among children of ages 11 and 12 who studied their last year of Primary Education. According to the Spanish National Institute of Statistics, when the fieldwork was carried out (2010), the population in Galicia of ages 11-12 was 41,889 people (21,513 male, 20,376 female), distributed into 898 private and public schools. If we take into account the defined universe, in order to have a 95.5% confidence index with an error margin of ±2.5% (variance P=Q=50), a representative sample needed to include 1,542 people.

A questionnaire was used, which is a basic element in observation studies (Sierra Bravo, 2001), and in this case a simple model was applied. According to the parameters stated above, it was distributed among 77 private and public schools, with a final sample of 2,202 schoolchildren. Although data are acquired indirectly in the survey (results were obtained through the answers provided by the children), their ability to cover a wide range of questions regarding a sufficiently representative sample make them the most appropriate method for this research.

The questionnaire included a set of 23 questions aimed at knowing the relationship of children in Galicia with audiovisual media. Consequently, those questions were structured into three sections, each one of them related to a screen (television, videogames and internet), in which children were asked about the time spent and the contents consumed, and the data were segmented according to sex, type of school and habitat.

4. RESULTS

The statistical information is divided into three sections, one for each screen in the analysis, and it shows the preferences of children distributed according to sex with regard to the consumption of television (channels, formats and programs), videogames (genres and titles) and internet (websites and social networks).

4.1. TELEVISION
4.1.1. TV CHANNELS

With regard to free-access television, the favorite channels for children were Disney Channel (75.1%), Antena Neox (36.0%) and Clan TV (20.0%). Other channels that did not reach 20% were Teledeporte (11.1%), FDF (8.7%), Gol TV (7.4%) and 40 Latino (6.6%). Channels such as Nova, La Siete, CNN or Intereconomía had a penetration of less than 5%.

With regard to general TV channels, more than half of the sample (58.7%) chose Antena 3, and the rest of the answers included Cuatro (32.4%), La Sexta (20.8%), Telecinco (13.8%), TVE (9.2%) and TVE2 (2.9%). The local station TVG was chosen as one of their favorite by almost 9% of children in Galicia, and TVG2 was selected by 1.9% of the sample.

Table 1. Favorite TV channels

Channels	Total (%)	Segmentation by sex (%)	
		Girls	Boys
Antena3	58.7	67.2	51.6
Antena Neox	36.0	41.0	34.4
Antena Nova	3.9	5.9	2.6
Canal Promo	0.0	0.0	0.1
Cinco Shop	0.4	0.2	0.4
CNN	0.5	0.4	0.4
Cuatro	32.4	27.4	37.7
Disney Channel	75.1	87.2	61.9
FDF Telecinco	8.7	4.3	12.1
Gol TV	7.4	1.0	12.5
Intereconomía	0.1	0.0	0.3
La Sexta	20.8	11.5	29.5
La Siete	1.8	2.2	1.8
Set en Veo	0.2	0.2	0.2
Telecinco	13.8	19.1	7.9
Teledeporte	11.1	4.5	17.7
TVE1	9.2	8.9	8.3
TVE2	2.9	2.9	3.6
TVE 24horas	0.5	0.4	0.9
TVG	8.9	9.2	8.8
TVG2	1.9	1.4	2.7
Tvs Locales	0.1	0.4	0.0
Tienda en Veo	0.1	0.1	0.0
Veo	0.6	0.6	0.6
40 Latino	6.6	9.7	3.6
Clan TV	19.5	17.6	21.3

Source: Compiled by author

When the data are analyzed based on the sex of the respondents, some channels are preferred by boys and some others by girls. The results showed that thematic channels about sports such as Teledeporte or Gol TV arouse more interest among boys, and so does the channel FDF. Girls showed a stronger preference for thematic channels such as Nova or 40 Latino. The analysis also showed that Neox and Disney Channel tend to have a female audience, contrary to Clan TV, which has more boys as an audience.

With regard to general channels, Cuatro and La Sexta were more popular among boys, while Antena 3 and Telecinco are preferred by girls. The public national television broadcaster, TVE, was equally interesting for boys and girls. With regard to the local TV stations of Galicia, boys and girls are equally interested in the first channel (TVG), while boys were slightly more interested in TVG2.

4.1.2. TV FORMATS AND PROGRAMS

Cartoons were the favorite television format for the children in our study: 36.1% of all the options mentioned were some kind of cartoon. Foreign series (22.4%) and national series (11.4%) complete the list of program genres preferred by schoolchildren.

Soap operas (8.0%) and talk shows (6.2%) also showed significant levels of acceptance; and in the lower positions of the list, we can find sport broadcasts (3.1%), quiz shows (3.0%), reality television (2.9%) and educational shows (2.3%).

Table 2. Most popular TV formats

TV formats	Total (%)	Segmentation by sex (%)	
		Girls	Boys
Cinema/movies	0.4	0.6	1.4
Quiz shows	3.0	7.9	6.8
Cartoons	36.1	49.4	75.4
Documentary	0.5	0.9	2.0
News programs	0.8	1.9	2.9
Magazine show	0.3	1.1	0.9
Sports programs	1.8	0.9	9.1
Sports broadcasts	3.1	2.5	14.1
Foreign series	22.4	57.8	28.7
Spanish series	11.4	27.5	20.5
Talk show	6.2	13.3	21.8
Soap opera	8.0	39.0	4.2
Reality television	2.9	11.8	2.9
Music programs	0.2	0.6	0.5
Documentary series	0.7	1.8	2.4
Educational programs	2.3	5.1	7.1

Source: Compiled by author

When the data are segmented by sex, the differences in tastes were significant. Girls clearly preferred national and foreign TV series, soap operas, reality television shows and quiz shows. For their part, boys chose cartoons, talk shows, sports programs, sport broadcasts, and educational programs. News programs, cinema and documentaries were more successful among boys.

After we verified the diversity of responses regarding their favorite TV shows, a shortlist was designed with the 10 most frequently cited options in the sample. In this list, almost half of the children (47.9%) chose a foreign children TV series as their favorite, including 'Hannah Montana', 'Sonny with a chance', 'The Suite Life of Zack & Cody, 'Wizards of Waverly Place, 'The saddle club' and 'Jonas' (oddly enough, all of them are broadcast by Disney Channel). The cartoon series 'The Simpsons' also occupies a significant position in the list, and it was mentioned by 40.8% of the children. Two out of every 10 children chose the soap opera 'Patito Feo', and 17.8% of the respondents mentioned the cartoon 'Phineas and Ferb'. 16.9% chose other cartoon series like 'Shin Chan', 'Naruto', 'Pokémon' or 'SpongeBob SquarePants'. The central position of the list features 'El Hormiguero', a talk show which

was mentioned by 15.7% of the sample. The Spanish series 'Física o Química' (15.2%) and 'El Internado' (12.3%), the cartoon shows 'Family Guy' and 'American Dad' (12.%) and the football programs or broadcasts (7.6%) complete this short list.

Table 3. Most popular television programs

Television programs	Total (%)	Segmentation by sex (%)	
		Girls	Boys
The Simpsons	40.8	34.4	49.2
Phineas and Ferb	17.8	11.6	19.6
Other cartoons: Shin Chan, Naruto, Pokémon, SpongeBob SquarePants	16.9	7.9	23.2
American Dad	12.3	4.7	15.8
El Internado	10.0	13.3	7.2
Física o Química	15.2	18.9	12.0
Patito Feo	20.6	37.3	3.8
Foreign children series: Hannah Montana, Sunny, Zack and Cody, Wizards of WP, The saddle Club, Jonas	47.9	50.1	17.4
El Hormiguero	15.7	11.0	22.1
Football	7.6	1.9	14.1

Source: Compiled by author

Girls and boys have quite different preferences. The former chose mainly foreign children series and 'Patito Feo'. Boys opted for cartoons, 'El Hormiguero' and contents related to football. The series 'El Internado' and 'Física o Química' were more popular among girls.

4.2. VIDEOGAMES
4.2.1. GENRES AND TITLES

The results showed that platform games (23.6%) and sports games (22.3%) were the most successful, followed by action games (12.2%) and social simulation games (10.2%). Respondents also mentioned, albeit with a lower proportion, the genres of adventure games (6.4%), fighting games and other life simulation games (7.7%).

Table 4. Most popular videogame genres

Videogame genres	Total (%)	Segmentation by sex (%)	
		Girls	Boys
Action	12.2	2.3	21.7
Arcade/entertainment	2.2	4.5	0.6
Graphic adventures	6.4	4.2	8.1
Driving/racing	4.6	0.9	7.3
Sports	22.3	8.1	33.0
Educational	0.3	0.0	0.4
Social simulation	10.2	14.6	7.4
Intelligence/mental ability	5.7%	9.5	3.0
Fighting games	4.9	2.0	6.1
Platform games	23.6	37.8	11.4
Role-playing	0.1	0.0	0.2
Life simulation (cooking, fashion, childcare...)	7.7	16.0	0.6

Source: Compiled by author

With regard to videogame genres, while girls preferred platform games, life and social simulation games and games of intelligence/mental ability, boys opted for sports games, action games and graphic adventures.

Table 5 shows the most popular videogames among the schoolchildren in our study. Games in the *Mario* franchise are particularly popular (27.4%), as well as the different versions of FIFA (20.4%). Videogames of social simulation like 'The Sims' and 'Animal Crossing', and the action game 'Gran Theft Auto' complete the list of the five most popular titles among the respondents to our survey.

Table 5. Title of the most popular videogames

Most popular videogames	Total (%)	Segmentation by sex (%)	
		Girls	Boys
Animal Crossing	10.4	18.9	1.6
Assassins Creed	1.3	0.3	2.6
Brain Training	1.3	2.0	0.2
Professor Layton and Pandora's Box	1.8	3.4	0.7
FIFA	20.2	3.4	33.5
GTA (Grand Theft Auto)	11.8	2.3	21.5
Gran Turismo	2.1	0.3	4.0
PES (Pro Evolution Soccer)	9.5	0.3	17.1
Mario series (Mario Kart, Mario Bros)	27.4	44.4	12.2
The Sims	12.6	24.0	3.5
Zelda	1.6	0.8	3.0

Source: Compiled by author

After a segmentation by sex in this list of the most popular videogames, we can see that tastes are significantly different. In the case of boys, their favorite games are two football games: 'FIFA' and

'Pro Evolution Soccer', and an action game: GTA; girls, for their part, prefer the videogames in the 'Mario' franchise, as well as 'The Sims' and 'Animal Crossing'.

4.3. INTERNET

4.3.1. WEBSITES

After cataloguing the results, we were able to create a list with the main websites that children visited online. The video platform YouTube was the most frequently cited website, and it was actively remembered by almost half of the children in the study, followed by the instant messaging program MSN Messenger (39.1%) and the videogames website Minijuegos.com (35.7%). The search engine Google, other virtual gaming websites such as Juegos.com, Juegosjuegos.com or Sésamo, the e-mail services of Gmail, Yahoo and Hotmail and the online encyclopedia Wikipedia complete the list of their favorite websites.

Table 6. Most visited websites

Most popular websites/web services	Total (%)	Segmentation by sex (%)	
		Girls	Boys
Gmail/Yahoo/Hotmail e-mail	7.5	9.7	4.8
Google	16.4	16.9	15.8
Juegos.com / Juegosjuegos.com	14.1	17.4	12.2
Messenger	39.1	47.4	31.5
Minijuegos	35.7	20.3	49.4
Sesamo	1.2	1.0	0.6
Wikipedia	3.5	3.2	3.5
YouTube	46.1	45.7	47.2

Source: Compiled by author

When the preferences were divided by sex, boys visited the website Minijuegos.com more often, whereas girls preferred the Messenger service, the Gmail/Yahoo/Hotmail e-mail services and the sites Juegos.com, Juegosjuegos.com or Sésamo (also a gaming site). Although we will discuss it in a section of its own, YouTube showed higher penetration among the male audience.

4.3.2. SOCIAL NETWORKS

An analysis of the level of penetration of social networks shows that children also have their preferences. In the responses proposed by the questionnaire, Tuenti was chosen by the largest number of children (24.9%), followed by Facebook (13.5%) and the photoblog networks Metroflog (10.2%) and Fotolog (5.2%).

Within the options proposed by the respondents themselves in the category 'Other', 36.4% of the sample cited the messaging service Messenger, which implies that schoolchildren consider it a social network. In fact, this service by Microsoft became the most popular 'social network' among children in Galicia. The social networking site for children and teenagers Habbo.es (4.2%) and the services of Yahoo (1.0%) complete the list of the most used social networks.

Table 7. Most used social networks

| Most used social networks	Total (%)	Segmentation by sex (%)	
		Girls	Boys
Tuenti	24.9	25.7	23.2
Facebook	13.5	13.7	14.4
Fotolog	5.2	5.7	5.3
Metroflog	10.2	12.8	9.2
*MSN Messenger	36.4	39.1	32.1
*Yahoo	1.0	0.8	0.9
*Habbo	4.2	3.4	5.0
Other social networks	3.3	2.8	2.9
*Suggested by the respondents			

Source: Compiled by author

Gender does not involve significant differences regarding the choice of one social network over another. There were a slightly higher percentage of girls who chose Messenger and Metroflog, while boys showed a higher preference than girls did for the Habbo site.

5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

In view of the results of the survey, our study seems to prove that sex was a major determining factor for the responses, particularly with regard to the choice of television channels and programs and of videogames. With regard to these two screens, respondents did not mention any content that was shared as a preference by both sexes. Figure 1 shows the differences in audiovisual tastes in the sample. This difference is not so clear on the Internet, and although some preferences were registered based on sex (mainly related to the use of Messenger and e-mail), both groups visited the websites of YouTube, Wikipedia or online gaming.

Figure 1. Favorite television programs, videogames and websites segmented by sex
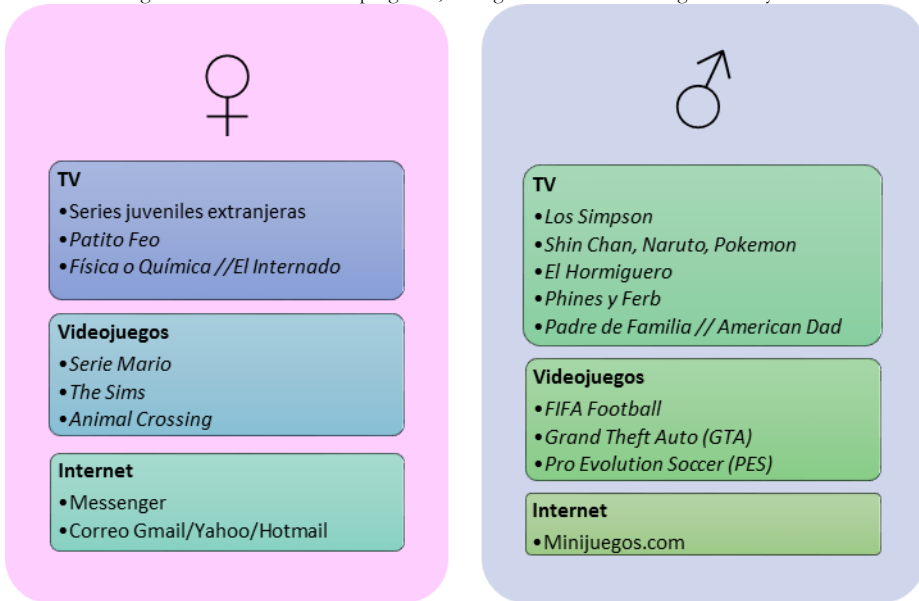
Source: Compiled by author

It is interesting to observe the differences regarding contents based on the screen that is being analyzed. Data seem to show that respondents tend to associate contents with the gender assumptions established by the audiovisual industry to a greater extent in the case of television and videogames than of the internet. Even so, there are authors such as Abuin Vences (2009) who claim that, in spite of this evidence, the distance between the male and the female universe is decreasing. However, although society moves forward, the discourse of marketing is still one step behind, and often uses images and messages that are associated with specific social roles in order to sell their products.

One of the possible causes that justify the results of this study may be related to the power of social agents, particularly parents, who generally influence the way in which their children use the two first screens, since it is easier for them to control the contents consumed by their sons and daughters. In this regard, advertising and media may represent a significant contribution to a change in attitude, and eradicate the stereotypes associated with sex, which may be an inequality factor (Conferencia de Pekín, 1995). However, in the words of Del Bravo (2002), if we analyze the mentality and lifestyles that prevail in the West, we can observe a "culture of death" based on three ideas: relativism, the conception of human rights and consumerism. Consequently, this scenario challenges us to create other ways of thinking and living which are in keeping with the dignity of individuals and with a culture of life.

Another result of this research shows that the use of internet at home creates a digital gap in which parents are digital immigrants that live together with their children, who are digital natives and whose control of technology exceeds that of their parents. Therefore, the power of parents to influence the contents chosen by their children is lower, and boys and girls are able to choose their favorite websites more spontaneously.

However, this approach is a possible hypothesis that would require a deeper study in which parental control could be analyzed with regard to the selection of contents through the screens. Our

study cannot conclude that the answers given by the children show a clear social influence. They may have been the result of a completely free choice by the respondents of the sample, and that is why we propose a future line of research in order to observe parental influence on the selection of audiovisual contents.

In any case, it seems clear that the consumption profile of children, at least with regard to television and videogames, contributes to define the gender roles transmitted through the mass media and other cultural agents.

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