

The use of the audiovisual format in Facebook: a means for identity representation

El uso del formato audiovisual en Facebook: un medio para representar la identidad

A utilização do formato audiovisual no Facebook: um meio para representar a identidade

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ABSTRACT | This article aims at studying the identity goals and the topics associated to the audiovisual format in social profiles of young users. To this end, a content analysis of 1514 posts was conducted in terms of their topic, their identity goal, the type of action, and the format used on each of them. This was done to evaluate whether the audiovisual format had different goals and uses than the other formats used in social networks. Identity goals are defined as the purposes of the posts regarding the self-presentation in the public space. Results show that audiovisual posts have an important role in the identity construction process. They are used with identity goals of self-description and content transmission, and cover a broad range of topics, some of them associated with series and movies.

KEYWORDS: social networks; identity; audiovisual format; youth.

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RESUMEN | Este artículo describe los objetivos identitarios y los temas que los estudiantes universitarios (N=231) tratan en formato audiovisual en sus muros de Facebook. Para tal fin, se realizó un análisis de contenido de una muestra de 1514 publicaciones de los usuarios. Estas publicaciones fueron codificadas en términos de sus objetivos identitarios, de los temas abordados, de la acción realizada y del formato utilizado, para evaluar si el formato audiovisual tenía objetivos y usos diferentes a los demás usados por los estudiantes en las redes. Los objetivos identitarios se definen como la finalidad de la publicación en relación con la presentación del self en un espacio público. Los resultados muestran que las publicaciones audiovisuales cumplen un rol importante en la construcción de la identidad virtual de los jóvenes. Se utilizan con objetivos identitarios de autodescripción y transmisión de contenidos, y cubren un amplio rango de temas, incluyendo algunos asociados a series y películas.

PALABRAS CLAVE: redes sociales; identidad; formato audiovisual; jóvenes.

RESUMO | Este artigo descreve os objetivos identitários e os temas que os estudantes universitários (N=231) discutem em formato audiovisual nos seus murais de Facebook. Para isso, foi realizada uma análise de conteúdo de uma amostra de 1514 posts, codificados em termos dos temas e dos objetivos identitários da publicação, assim como da ação realizada e do formato usado. Isto foi feito a fim de avaliar se o formato audiovisual tinha objetivos e usos diferentes dos outros formatos utilizados nas redes sociais. Os objetivos de identidade são definidos como a finalidade da publicação em relação à apresentação do self num espaço público. Os resultados mostram que as publicações audiovisuais têm um papel importante na construção da identidade virtual dos jovens. Estas são utilizadas com objetivos identitários de autodescrição e transmissão de conteúdo, e abrangem temas diversos, incluindo alguns associados a séries e filmes.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: redes sociais; identidade; formato audiovisual; jovens.

THE AUDIOVISUAL FORMAT: A MEANS TO REPRESENT IDENTITY ON FACEBOOK

In recent years, we have witnessed a radical transformation in the forms of cultural consumption and production, which has been largely motivated by changes in access to information resulting from the emergence of the Internet (Corredor, Pinzón, & Guerrero, 2011). This network has become a new space for action and identity construction (Alonso, 2015; Manago, Graham, Greenfield, & Salimkhan, 2008). Users have found in social networks a space to publicly narrate themselves and construct complex virtual descriptions of themselves during their identity construction processes. Consistently, previous research shows that there is a profound relationship between virtual behavior and various psychological variables (Hughes, Rowe, Batey, & Lee, 2012; Igartua & Rodriguez-de-Dios, 2020; Ross, Orr, Sisic, Arseneault, Simmering, & Orr, 2009; Seidman, 2013).

This study aims to determine the objectives of a sample of university students when using the audiovisual format in Facebook and what is the relationship between those objectives and the identity construction process. The objectives and their relationship with identity were identified from definitions previously established in the literature and codified through a content analysis (Corredor et al., 2011). This process focused on establishing whether the publications aimed to present elements of the self in the public space, to identify the contents associated with identity that are presented more frequently in this format, and to evaluate whether the objectives and actions of the audiovisual format are different from those of other formats used in the networks.

The importance of identity development

Identity is one of the cardinal concepts for understanding adult development and the individuals' life trajectories. In constructing their identity, people assume certain values, contents, roles, practices, and beliefs as fundamental elements of the definition of themselves (Schoen-Ferreira, Aznar-Farias, & Silveiras, 2003). In this process, the constitutive elements of the adult self are established, which is a determining factor for subjective well-being and for the capacity to resist social pressures of various kinds (Martinez & Dukes, 1997). Traditionally, the process of identity development took place in offline environments, such as the neighborhood or the bar. These informal interaction environments allowed for trying out different preferences and learning to negotiate them with the social world, which, in turn, facilitated key exploration processes for identity development (Dunkel, 2000).

According to identity theory, a person develops identity through two complementary processes: exploration and commitment (González, Cuéllar, Miguel, & Serra-Desfilis, 2009; Marcia, 1966). Both processes require people to present their choices in public space (Côté & Levine, 2014). Therefore, the availability of spaces

to present content is fundamental for identity development (Côté, 2006). In this regard, identity development depends on activities such as transmitting content, building interpersonal networks, general conversation, and self-description. This, because such activities allow people to publicly present elements linked to their identity and can discuss them in front of a community of reference.

Changes in the development of identity in the contemporary world

Until the end of the 20th century, it was said that the process of identity development took place during adolescence. At the end of adolescence, the subject was ready to take on the challenges of adulthood and face subsequent dilemmas in the life cycle, such as the choice of a partner, or work and professional activities (Arnett, 2000). Contemporary research points out that identity development currently has a non-linear and time-varying trajectory, which has derived from social changes such as labor flexibilization, the increase in available options, and the weakening of social restrictions on romantic ties (Côté & Levine, 2014). These same authors propose that adult identity, in the contemporary world, is not a final and static state, but a permanent process of negotiation vis-à-vis the environment. This lengthens the periods of identity exploration. The entry into adulthood nowadays happens after the age of 30 (Arnett, 2000). This change is explained, in part, by the expansion of the available options –the possible worlds– to which young people can have access (Côté, 2006). If in the last century people had to choose between the options available in physical space, today they go through the information available on the Internet; there is also the emergence of virtual spaces, in which it is possible to develop identity (Buckingham, 2008; Corredor et al., 2011). The classic example of this type of transition is the growth of youth subcultures in globalized networks, whose members do not have direct physical contact. In the past, interaction with peers, fundamental for evaluating and consolidating identity choices, took place primarily in physical space. In this context, identity choices were identified in the neighborhood street, the gated community, or the corner bar, and it was there that one interacted with others to test them (Josselson, 1980). Today, the emergence of megacities and the increase of parental control over adolescent development coincide with the transfer of these youthful processes to digital social environments. Thus, important aspects of the self have begun to be increasingly represented in virtual spaces (Nagy & Koles, 2014).

Internet and identity distributed in social networks

Identity development went from being a process exclusive to the offline world to being a process of representation constructed both in the latter and in online environments. An exemplary case of this process is the development of profiles in virtual social networks, where young people represent their identities in terms of their personal preferences at various levels (Bozkurt & Tu, 2016; Zappavigna, 2014).

These representations serve to articulate their social life and create external representations of identity elements, which is a protective factor of identity in times of crisis (Curwood & Gibbons, 2010; Halverson, 2005). In fact, virtual representations are processed as effective descriptions of the people behind the profiles (Farquhar, 2013), and those of social networks are elaborated thinking of an imagined audience receiving the messages (Litt, 2012). Thus, users of the latter engage in complex psychological processes to define the identity categories available in their virtual profiles (Bouvier, 2012). This is not exclusive to young audiences; it has increasingly extended to adults and the elderly, who use social networks to manage identity crises and reconstruct their preferences in various periods of personal transition (Castro & Corredor, 2016; Jung & Sundar, 2018; Sinclair & Grieve, 2017). In this task, people use the public presentation of content, in some cases audiovisual, as a tool to develop identity, which implies that, in addition to self-descriptions, people transmit content during this process (Corredor et al., 2011). Given their characteristics and expressive possibilities, digital technologies have become technologies of connection and identity representation (Serrano-Puche, 2013).

In digital social networks, users act not only as content consumers, but also as active producers and distributors, self-motivated by their own identity preferences (Martínez-Sala, Segarra-Saavedra, & Monserrat-Gauchi, 2018).

The audiovisual format in social networks

The use of social networks in the recent world has been marked by two very relevant trends in the development of content and technology. On the one hand, the audiovisual nature of the network's language is growing (Campos Freire, 2008; Livingstone, 2004). On the other, audiovisual content is predominant in viral messages in most networks. Additionally, and certainly in a complementary way, content distribution has been linked to algorithmic processing of user information, with navigation forms determined by machine-learning that allow offering users content and advertising according to their interests (Napoli, 2014).

The current configuration of technology and the ecosystem of audiovisual production and consumption imply the coexistence between content produced by industry professionals and content generated by prosumers (Martínez-Sala et al., 2018). In addition, the periods of audiovisual consumption are increasing and diversifying (which have grown in number of hours/day per capita), and access options are multiplying (Hemetsberger, 2003; Winter, 2012). In this context, young people use and prefer the audiovisual format, which has created a new space for the expression and social validation of personal choices, to develop identity. In accordance with the above, this study aims to answer two basic questions:

What are the objectives of the use of the audiovisual format in the presentation of identity in virtual social networks? What types of identity content are presented through this format? The hypothesis in relation to the first question is that audiovisual content is related to identity objectives identified in previous literature, such as self-description, and that these types of objectives are more common in posts in audiovisual format than in posts in other formats. The hypothesis in relation to the second question is that political, aesthetic, academic, sports, commercial, labor, and religious topics are associated with the presentation of identity in virtual networks through the audiovisual format (Corredor et al., 2011).

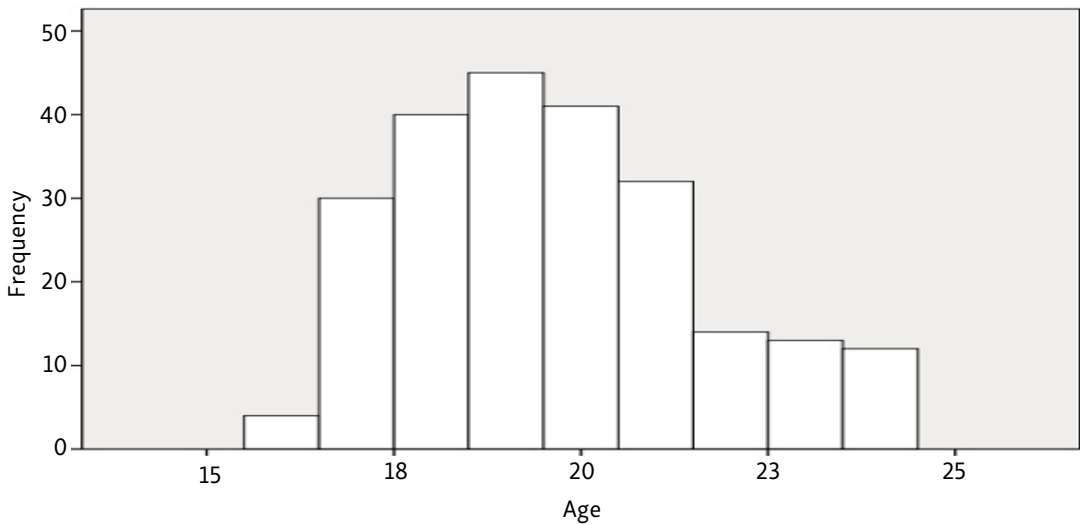
METHODOLOGY

In this study, we conducted a content analysis of publications in audiovisual format on Facebook walls of young people, based on the objective, action, and topic of these types of posts. From these codings, we carried out correlations and factor analyses to determine how the audiovisual format serves identity objectives and is used to transmit and distribute certain specific types of content, compared to the objectives and uses assigned to other formats. The characteristics of the participants, the coding and the instruments used are presented below.

Participants

A total of 231 university students participated, with a mean age of 19.6 (SD = 1.99). Of these, 119 were men and 112 were women. Figure 1 shows their age frequency, from 16 to 24 years old. The participants were contacted through open calls in different universities in Bogota, by email, inviting them to participate in a study on behavior in virtual social networks. These lists are publicly accessible and are frequently used by students and professors to ask for help or disseminate information. Participation was voluntary and was classified as a naturalistic observation in a virtual context, with no probability of harm, and with anonymous data storage as allowed by ethical standards for research in psychology (American Psychological Association, 2017). In accordance with those requirements, informed consent was obtained at the beginning of the application of the virtual form. In the case of minors, a consent form signed by their parents or caregivers was requested.

Those who responded indicating that they wanted to participate were asked to add their profile as a friend to the Facebook profile created for this study. Additionally, they were asked to answer a virtual form about sociodemographic characteristics (age, gender, university degree) and certain virtual behavior patterns (frequency of use, profile privacy). After copying the users' activity, they were unlinked as friends of the profile page used for this study, to maintain the confidentiality of subsequent actions.



Mean= 19.64; S.D.= 1.98; N= 231.

Figure 1. Sample distribution by age

Source: Own elaboration.

Participants were enrolled in 62 undergraduate programs at 13 Colombian universities and had been studying for between one and 10 semesters. All those who decided to participate were included in this study and reported having a frequent activity on social networks. They logged in at least once a day to their Facebook accounts, according to the following daily distribution: 33.5% more than 3 hours; 23% between 2 and 3 hours; 25.2% between 1 and 2 hours, and 18.2%, less than one hour. The students' degrees covered a wide range, including social sciences, engineering, health sciences, and basic areas.

Data

The walls were collected during the second half of 2017 and the data was coded in 2018. The sample covered a range of three days (Friday to Sunday). This range was chosen to have a sampling of virtual behavior during a weekend, when there is a higher number of interactions on this social network (Pempek, Yermolayeva, & Calvert, 2009). Most academic and work obligations happen Monday through Friday, and the weekend allows for a more flexible use of time. The observed weekend was not the same for all participants: posts made on their walls during the weekend prior to study enrollment were copied; by giving access to their profiles upon enrollment in the study, their previous posts could be seen. As students enrolled in different waves, the three days observed did not correspond to the same dates for all but were spread over four weekends. Open profiles were not used to have direct access to the content that people choose to present to their communities of reference. This was confirmed with the sociodemographic form.

When participants were asked if the privacy settings allowed full access by researchers to the contents of the profile, 92.1% responded affirmatively and 4.8% answered that they did not know what the privacy settings of their profile were.

Facebook was chosen because it is a network that allows different types of interaction (text, video, photos), because interaction and posting are public, and because there are no limits on the length of publications, which allows comparisons to be made between the use of audiovisual and other content presentation formats. In networks whose content is primarily audiovisual, such as Instagram, or focused on written content and with space restrictions, such as Twitter, the content format would be relatively homogeneous. These characteristics allow for complex interaction in relatively permanent communities of users, who act as peers to validate and test identity choices. The choice was also influenced by the fact that there are research precedents in Latin America that indicate a relationship between behavior on this network and identity development (Corredor et al., 2011). Additionally, Facebook penetration levels are the highest among all networks (Almansa-Martinez, Fonseca, & Castillo-Esparcia, 2013; Carmona, 2011; Krallman, Pelletier, & Adams, 2016).

Users' walls were copied into fixed files to be subsequently encrypted. Specifically, a screenshot was saved in an Excel file, which preserved the titles of the content of the posts and the description made by Facebook (e.g., "X posted a video"). This procedure allowed obtaining a sample of 1,514 posts, in which 96% of the participants presented some kind of activity. It was decided to copy and analyze only one weekend, because the aim was to obtain a sample of the typical virtual behavior of a university student during this period, during one weekend of the year. In the semester prior to the start of the research, a short survey was conducted to find out the conditions under which they would be more willing to give access to their profiles and share their walls. It was found that they preferred to limit wall copying to a restricted period and this was stated in the informed consent. In this process, fragments of walls were also collected to review the relevance of the categories established in previous literature on identity goals.

The corpus of this study covered four weekends, in one of which there was the observed weekend for each participant. Given the size of the sample, this design allowed for specific events in the behavior of different users to be balanced across the sample. If all the data corresponded to exactly the same date, shared events (such as a holiday) could affect the observations. The same would happen if a user had an important event during the observed period (e.g., a birthday). These problems were avoided by having a sample spread over four weekends. After students responded to the invitation and demographic questionnaires mentioned above, we made a copy

of the posts made between the Friday and Sunday prior to that date. The collection was conducted during 2017. Although there may have been an evolution in Facebook behavior after this date, it is possible to speculate that the primacy of audiovisual in user behavior does not seem to have diminished but, on the contrary, increased. The growth of networks such as Instagram and Tik-Tok are proof of this.

Content analysis

To characterize the users' virtual behavior, we conducted a content analysis, a structured coding that included categories established a priori based on the theoretical review and emerging categories identified in the data (Namey, Guest, Thairu, & Johnson, 2007). The publications were coded in terms of their objective, the action taken, the topic, and the content format. For this process, a series of questions (e.g., what objective, what action?) and a series of possible categories (such as content transmission as an objective) were established from previous literature (Corredor et al., 2013; Corredor et al., 2011). The categories were refined from the coding of a partial segment of the walls (10%), and new response categories were included when it was established that the existing coding did not cover important aspects of the data. This process was carried out by the same coders in charge of the final coding (see reliability section).

Regarding the post's purpose, those in which the textual content of the post was not created by the user were coded as content transmission. This category could include hyperlinks or photographs and was coded when the post did not initiate a conversation, did not use emotional expressions directed at other specific users, nor first or third person sentences. Posts were coded as interpersonally targeted when the user made expressions of affection towards other users in their network, there were no celebrities, musical groups or similar. Self-descriptive posts were coded as those in which the user expressed in the first person (with the inclusion of "I" or by means of the verb conjugation), his/her opinion about a content (belief, etc.) or made a description of him/herself. User's selfies, profile, or cover photos were also included in this category. General conversation posts were coded as those in which the person engaged in conversations of various types, with or without photos, without hyperlinks and with comments. If the post included items from other categories but was in the context of a conversation, it was coded as general conversation. These categories relate to identity development, because the presentation of personal choices and self-description in a public context of validation are central to identity construction (Bozkurt & Tu, 2016; Corredor et al., 2011; Zappavigna, 2014). Indeed, previous literature considers identity goals to be the maintenance of a social network through interpersonal actions, general conversation, and the presentation of personal choices through content transmission (Dunkel, 2000; Litt, 2012).

In terms of the action performed, we considered general categories that described the activities that users could perform within the network. In this case, the following categories were used: uploading a hyperlink with written, musical, or audiovisual content, with or without additional commentary; writing one's own post in which the participant expressed an opinion or idea in a written form on his or her wall; commenting on a post on another person's wall; using emotional expressions within the virtual environment (such as , "liking"); uploading a photo, and adding a friend or group. These definitions, given their operational nature, allowed us to capture the virtual behavior of participants in a straightforward manner.

As for the publication format, it was considered written when it had only text produced by the participant or by others; audiovisual, when it presented content that included audio and video simultaneously, and as other when it presented content that did not fall into the previous categories (such as paintings or memes). Additionally, the publications were coded in terms of the topics they presented: political, aesthetic, academic, sports, commercial or labor, religious, personal, humor, self-help, videogames, culinary, technological, health and beauty, and others.

Reliability

Following the criteria of Queluz, Campos, Santis, Isaac, and Barham (2019), reliability was assessed on 19% of the data (44 walls), categorized by five independent coders organized in pairs. Specifically, the pairs were organized by interleaving the walls that different team members were to code. Coders 1 and 2, 2 and 3, 3 and 4, and 4 and 5 were to simultaneously code 11 of the 44 walls mentioned above. Since the coders provided the total for each category within each wall, we assessed how similar these totals were using a Spearman correlation (table 1). In all but one case, the correlations were significant and greater than .69. In the case of adding a friend or group, the correlation was not significant. In this case, the degree of agreement was checked with contingency tables and the coincidence was 93%. The reliability of the subjects was performed in a similar way. In seven there were significant correlations and in three, perfect correlations. In the four cases in which there was no significant correlation, reliability was checked with contingency tables. The percentage of inter-coder agreement was 65% for academic topics, 93% for business and labor, 95% for health topics, and 60% for others.

Data analysis

We performed descriptive analyses to characterize the participants' behavior in their virtual social networks and to determine which objectives, actions, formats, and topics were most common. Differences in these descriptive data were evaluated with repeated measures ANOVAs. Secondly, correlations were performed to

determine what types of identity goals are related to the use of the audiovisual format. Finally, a principal components factor analysis was performed to determine how the identity objectives and formats of this type of procedure were organized, both at the factor level and at the level of the graphic solution.

RESULTS

Although the sample analyzed represents the behavior of users during a weekend and is not generalizable to a longer period, a general description allows us to account for the main objectives, actions, formats, and themes associated with the use of the audiovisual format in the presentation of the users' virtual identity during this time range (table 1).

The differences between the different identity objectives ($F(3,690)=22.75, p=.000$), type of action ($F(5,1150)=23.17, p=.000$), and type of format ($F(2,460)=11.90, p=.000$) were significant. These results indicate that the transmission of audiovisual content constitutes an important component of users' activity in virtual networks. In fact, over a range of three days, participants in this study shared an average of one and a half videos, for a total of 340 posts in audiovisual format. Given that the presentation of content in virtual network profiles is an identity act (Corredor et al., 2011; Manago et al., 2008), the frequency of use of the audiovisual format indicates that, at least in the time range of this study, users use this format to construct their virtual identity.

When the contents of the hyperlinks posted by the participants were exclusively analyzed, it was found that topics with personal content were the most frequent during the observed weekend (table 2). In that list, the next most frequent topics were humorous topics (such as memes) and aesthetic topics (e.g., music videos). The following topics included political, academic, self-help, and other topics. When these differences were compared using a repeated measures ANOVA, they were found to be significant ($F(13,2990)=47.295, p=.000$). These differences indicate that, thematically, users in the sample present their identity choices in their virtual profiles not only as personal descriptions, but with opinions and content, which is consistent with the idea discussed in the theoretical framework that virtual identity is fundamentally performative and not self-descriptive (Farquhar, 2013). In other words, table 2 shows that users present their identity not only as an explicit description of themselves, but through posts whose thematic focus reflects their interests.

	N	Mín.	Max.	Median	SD	Reliability
Objective						
Transmission	231	.0	64.0	3.05	5.81	.91**
Interpersonal	231	.0	18.0	1.10	2.11	.82**
Self-description	231	.0	9.0	.80	1.24	.80**
General	231	.0	27.0	1.59	3.39	.69**
Action						
Link	231	.0	22.0	1.51	2.46	.86**
Post	231	.0	8.0	.97	1.53	.94**
Comment	231	.0	17.0	1.12	2.06	.96**
Emotional	231	.0	11.0	.64	1.46	.74**
Picture	231	.0	57.0	2.15	5.02	.90**
Friend/group	231	.0	1.0	.03	.17	-.033
Format						
Written	231	.0	16.0	.44	1.55	.71**
Audiovisual	231	.0	71.0	1.47	4.92	.89**
Other	231	.0	3.0	.21	.53	.51**

a Spearman's correlation **p<.01.

Table 1. Descriptive. Objective, action, and format

Source: Own elaboration.

	N	Mín.	Máx.	Media	D. E.	Confiabilidada
Political	231	.0	10.0	.43	1.14	.77**
Aesthetic	231	.0	10.0	1.15	1.70	.71**
Academic	231	.0	12.0	.38	1.20	.27
Sports	231	.0	4.0	.10	.43	.64**
Commercial/labor	231	.0	4.0	.11	.48	-.034
Religious	231	.0	2.5	.04	.23	1.00**
Personal	231	.0	66.0	4.53	6.63	.57**
Humor	231	.0	101.0	1.51	6.84	.60**
Self-help	231	.0	6.5	.25	.76	.92**
Videogames	231	.0	1.5	.07	.27	.85**
Culinary	231	0	1	.00	.07	1.00**
Technological	231	.0	.5	.00	.03	1.00**
Health and beauty	231	.0	1.0	.01	.10	-.024
Others	231	.0	25.0	.93	2.60	.119

** a Spearman's correlation.

Table 2. Descriptive. Topic, publications

Source: Own elaboration.

Correlations between identity objectives and the use of the audiovisual format

Overall, the results indicate that the use of the audiovisual format correlates significantly with self-description and, to a lesser degree, with the transmission of content. When correlations were made between the actions' formats and objectives, patterns were found that shed light on the roles of audiovisuals in the process of virtual identity construction (table 3). The written format has its highest correlations with actions whose objective is content transmission, the development of interpersonal relationships, and general conversation, while the audiovisual format has strong correlations with the transmission of content and self-description, and weak correlations with general conversation and the maintenance of interpersonal relationships. To confirm this result, we used partial correlations, a technique that allows isolating the exclusive relationship between two variables (such as self-description and audiovisual format), controlling for the effects associated with other variables (content transmission, general conversation). In this case, we conducted partial correlations in which the association between an identity objective and the audiovisual format was evaluated, controlling for the other identity objectives. With this control, we found that there were only significant correlations between the use of the audiovisual format and self-description objectives, and between this same format ($r=.446, p<.000$) and content transmission objectives ($r=.172, p<.009$). Likewise, when a stepwise regression was performed including all identity objectives as predictors of the audiovisual format use, the only objectives that remained within the model were self-description and content transmission objectives. This model was significant ($F(1,228)=65.74, p<.000$). This implies that the audiovisual format, unlike the written format, is mainly used to self-describe identity in the virtual context and to transmit identity choices.

These results indicate that the audiovisual format has effectively become a medium for self-description, i.e., for identity expression. This result extends previous literature that pointed out that social networks allow the emergence of a distributed identity (Corredor et al., 2011; Farquhar, 2013) and that such identity has strong audiovisual components. In this context, it is important to be clear: the association of public identity to cultural objects in audiovisual format (such as films, music videos) was possible before the emergence of social networks, for example, through opinion in oral format. However, the emergence of virtual social networks makes it possible to directly associate content in this format with the distributed identity presented in virtual environments.

To confirm this result, we performed a principal component factor analysis to find patterns of organization in multiple variables (Alcántar, Valdés, Carlos, Martínez-Ferrer, & García. 2018; Gálvez-Nieto, Vera Bachmann, Trizano-Hermosilla, Polanco, & Salvo. 2018).

	Written	Audiovisual	Other	Transm.	Interpersonal	Self-description	General
Written	1	.075	.153*	.300**	.323**	.079	.348**
Audiovisual		1	.040	.257**	.154*	.472**	.187**
Other			1	.204**	.128	.089	.149*
Transmission				1	.548**	.142*	.258**
Interpersonal					1	.056	.268**
Self-description						1	.411**
General							1

*.Significant at 0.05; **. Significant at 0.01.

Table 3. Correlations between the content and the action’s identity objective

Source: Own elaboration.

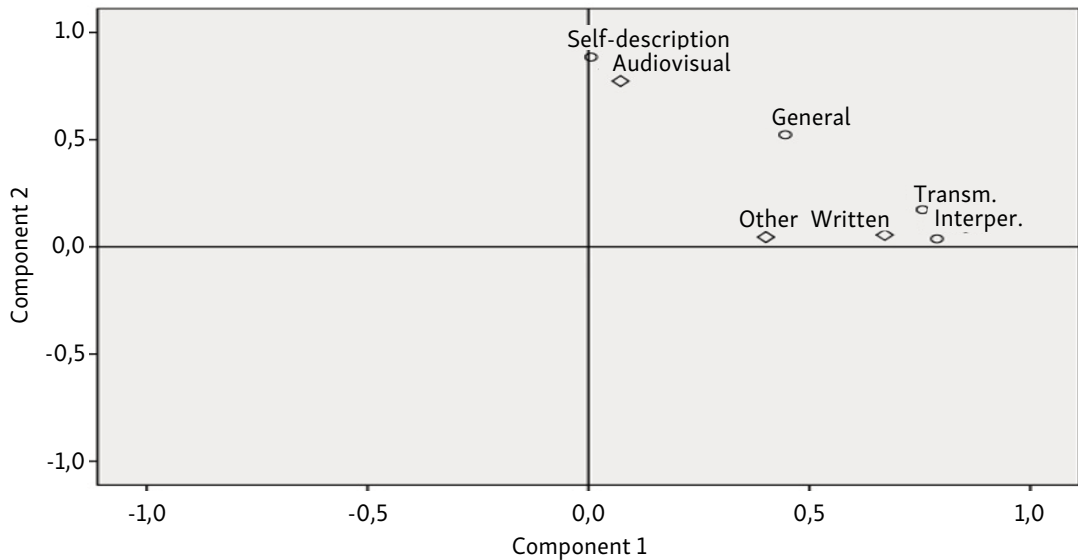


Figure 2. Graphical representation of the relationship between the types of content and the actions’ objectives in the virtual world.

Source: Own elaboration.

This result confirmed that the use of audiovisual content is strongly associated with self-description, while written and other types of content are related to other objectives (figure 2 shows the graphic solution). The objective of transmitting content did not appear associated with the audiovisual format in this analysis, probably because transmitting content has stronger associations with the written format (table 3). As can be seen in the graphical solution (figure 2), this might make content transmission closer to the written format than to the audiovisual one.

These results were obtained both for rotated solutions with the Varimax method and for unrotated solutions that are more robust to smaller sample sizes (Gouveia, de Moura, de Oliveira Santos, do Nascimento, de Oliveira Guedes, & Gouveia, 2018; Nunes & Mota, 2018). Specifically, the analysis identified two factors with eigenvalues greater than 1. The first factor explained 34% of the variance and in it were located the objectives of content transmission, interpersonal and general conversation, and written and other formats.

The second factor explained 18.8% of the variance and included the self-description objective and the audiovisual format. It is possible to interpret these two factors in terms of two uses of social networks: the first, linked to interaction in written format, and the second, with self-description of identity through publications in audiovisual format. Both the correlation analysis (table 3) and the factor analysis (figure 2) indicate that people who make a greater number of publications in audiovisual format also make a greater number of self-descriptions, while those who use the written format do so with other identity objectives.

CONCLUSIONS

This study shows that the use of the audiovisual format correlates strongly with the self-description and transmission of content and with the presentation of political, aesthetic, commercial, work, and personal issues. This result confirms the idea that virtual environments have transformed identity construction processes in a way that allows the exploration and presentation of options and choices in distributed environments (Bozkurt & Tu, 2016; Corredor et al., 2011; Manago et al., 2008; Zappavigna, 2014). This study further extends this idea by showing that the audiovisual format is constituted as a fundamental element of that process. It could even be said that Facebook has allowed the emergence of an audiovisual anchored identity. This is not strange if we consider that the construction of identity happens in response to the options available in the social environment (Côté & Levine, 2014). In that regard, the existence of virtual profiles and the connection of these with audiovisual elements is a characteristic of the times.

Previous literature points to the existence of hybrid or blended distributed identities that combine intrapsychological elements with virtual traces deployed on the Internet (Corredor et al., 2011). The fact that these traces use audiovisual formats is important because it indicates that subjects adapt to the available formats to express their preferences and interests. This negotiation between what one wants to present as part of one's identity and the expressive possibilities of the medium has been previously explored in relation to digital art production (Halverson, 2010). When considered in relation to the development of virtual identity, this result

points out that the possibilities of constructing the self are amplified and shaped by the characteristics of the media available on the Internet, which allows to construct, create, and recreate oneself through the audiovisual format.

This study has several limitations. The first is the sampling characteristic. Given that virtual behavior was only analyzed during one weekend, it is difficult to be sure that the patterns observed here would be exactly repeated over a longer period. In this regard, it is important to keep in mind that 1,514 posts were analyzed, of which only 340 were in audiovisual format; this makes it necessary to evaluate the relationships found using data-mining techniques that allow working with a larger sample. The second limitation is the fact that changes in Facebook algorithms may have modified the behavior of users on that network after this study was conducted. This is so because the role of the audiovisual in the construction of virtual identity depends on the decisions Facebook makes regarding users' posting choices. In other words, it is important to remember that the observed behavior is the result of the interaction between users' preferences and the affordances of the medium. Along the same vein, an additional limitation is that it explores the construction of virtual identity on Facebook, leaving out other networks of growing penetration such as Instagram, Tik-Tok and Twitter. In this regard, this study does not shed light on behavior in networks other than Facebook, to which users may be migrating. Future studies need to evaluate the role of audiovisuals in the construction of identity in those networks to confirm whether the construction of virtual identity also involves a strong use of the audiovisual format.

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