Comunicación y Sociedad

Media uses and production practices: case study with teens from Portugal, Spain and Italy

Usos mediáticos y prácticas de producción: estudio de caso con adolescentes de Portugal, España e Italia

SARA PEREIRA[1]
https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9978-3847

PEDRO MOURA[2]
http://orcid.org/0000-0003-1807-7447

MARIA-JOSE MASANET[3]
http://orcid.org/0000-0002-1217-9840

GABRIELLA TADDEO[4]
http://orcid.org/0000-0002-9544-336X

SIMONA TIROCCHI[5]
http://orcid.org/0000-0001-5052-4863

This paper presents some of the main results of a study conducted with teens from Portugal, Spain and Italy in the scope of the European project *Transmedia Literacy*. It analyses the media uses and production practices of teenagers aged 12-19 years. The results show that teenagers use the media very regularly but few have complex production and participation practices aimed at an audience other than their peers.

KEYWORDS: media uses, media production, *produsers*, transmedia, media literacy, teenagers.

Este artículo presenta algunos de los principales resultados de un estudio realizado con adolescentes de Portugal, España e Italia dentro del proyecto europeo Transmedia Literacy. *Analiza los usos de los medios y las prácticas de producción de los adolescentes entre los 12 y 19 años. Los resultados muestran que los adolescentes usan muy a menudo los medios pero pocos tienen prácticas complejas de producción y participación dirigidas a un público diferente al de sus pares.*

PALABRAS CLAVE: *usos mediáticos, producción mediática,* produsers*, transmedia, alfabetismo mediático, adolescentes.*

[1]   University of Minho, Portugal. E-mail: sarapereira@ics.uminho.pt
[2]   University of Minho, Portugal. E-mail: pedromourarsp@gmail.com
[3]   Universitat Pompeu Fabra, Spain. E-mail: mjose.masanet@upf.edu
[4]   INDIRE (National Institute for Documentation, Innovation and Research in Education), Italy. E-mail: g.taddeo@indire.it
[5]   University of Turin, Italy. E-mail: simona.tirocchi@unito.it

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INTRODUCTION

Within the participatory and convergence culture coined by Jenkins (2006), an emancipated and active audience is at work, taking the opportunities given by digital media and a new cultural environment for producing and participating. The members of this culture are expected to be committed *prosumers*, able to consume, but also to produce contents. But how widespread is this kind of engaged and committed publics?

The European project *Transmedia Literacy*[6] seeks to become acquainted with the transmedia practices and the learning strategies employed in non-formal educational contexts by teenagers. This paper presents some of the main results coming from three of the participant countries –Portugal, Spain and Italy–. The outcomes presented are focused on three key points: what teens are consuming and producing; what strategies and media are being used while performing the previous practices; and what their motivations are for doing it or not.

These points address fundamental preconditions to the fulfillment of the previous expectations regarding the audiences' role in the current media environment.

A PARTICIPATORY AND CONVERGENT CULTURE

According to Buckingham, Pini & Willett (2009), the increasing access to digital and online media are "believed to reconfigure the relationships of power between 'producers' and 'consumers', or 'professionals' and 'amateurs'" (p. 53). Rosen's account is a symbol of the most enthusiastic expectations: "the people formerly known as the audience wish to inform media people of our existence, and of a shift in power that goes with the platform shift you've all heard about" (Rosen, 2006, para. 1). Rosen's use of the word "platform" highlights "the egalitarian and populist appeal to ordinary users and grassroots creativity" (Gillespie, 2010, p. 358) that too often elides the fact that digital sites are not neutral, being inhabited by very different actors, from corporate media to amateur

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users. Buckingham (2006, p. 76) classifies this faith in technologies capable of producing radical changes as "visionary utopianism". van Dijck (2009) labels this supposed transformation of passive consumers into active users as an "historical fallacy" (p. 43).

Jenkins's conception of convergence culture is one of the most popular approaches to the reconfiguration of the relationship between the media and its audiences (Deuze, 2007; Hay & Couldry, 2011; Peil & Sparviero, 2017). According to Jenkins (2006), convergence culture is "where old and new media collide, where grassroots and corporate media intersect, where the power of the media producer and the power of the media consumer interact in unpredictable ways" (p. 2). The relationship established is, therefore, a complex, uncertain and ongoing process (Jenkins, 2006, p. 322). It is also uneven, because not all users have the same abilities and "corporations –and even individuals within corporate media– still exert greater power than any individual consumer or even the aggregate of consumers" (Jenkins, 2006, p. 3). However, the audiences empowered by new technologies (Jenkins, 2006, p. 24) and by a new cultural environment (Jenkins, 2006, pp. 15-16) "are demanding the right to participate" (p. 24) in the creation and circulation of contents. But who is demanding this right, according to Jenkins? His work is mostly centered on "early adopters" (p. 23), such as fans. This generalization was criticized by scholars such as van Dijck (2009), Bird (2011) and Couldry (2011).

According to Couldry (2011) convergence is an overused concept. The author identifies two general premises often paired with it and both are present in Jenkins's account of the convergence culture. The first premise states that there are key changes "in the infrastructure of cultural production" (Couldry, 2011, p. 489), such as the consequences of the open architecture of the Internet, the overlapping consumption of media contents or the increasing concentration of media (and related industries, such as telecommunications) in big and powerful corporations (Hesmondalgh, 2007). The second premise is centered on the emergence of a culture of convergence. However, "the status of this premise is much less clear than that of the first" (Couldry, 2011, p. 488).

Jenkins's proposal is criticized for suggesting a single convergence culture based on the generalization of fans' intensive and savvy

practices of consumption, participation and production. Couldry mentions several arguments against this simplification: fans are "highly untypical of the general audience in terms of their level of emotional investment" (Couldry, 2011, p. 492) and are too homogeneous regarding socio-demographic characteristics to be generalized –Jenkins himself (2006, p. 23) recognizes this limitation–. Besides, there is no warranty that fans' practices will remain stable, namely the ones performed by youngsters as they become adults with more complex lives. Finally, it is not certain that the changes that most strike us are "necessarily the most significant indicators of future development" (Couldry, 2011, p. 493). These critics are reinforced by data at national level.

For example, in Italy, empirical studies highlighted important differences in the distribution of creative skills, related to the socioeconomic status of teens (Gui, 2015) and to the school contexts in which students live and approach the use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) (Buffardi & Taddeo, 2017). In Portugal, a recent assessment of the media literacy levels of a national sample of teenagers found heavy media consumption, but scarce and rudimentary production practices (Pereira, Pinto & Moura, 2015). In Spain, a research on the media competence level of the Spanish youth (Ferrés et al., 2011; Masanet, Contreras Pulido, & Ferrés, 2013) showed that young people have serious deficiencies in dimensions linked to the languages, aesthetic and ideology and values, being the technological dimension an exception.

The expected transformation of the audiences paved the way to a concept much associated with Jenkins's convergence culture: the *produser* (Bird, 2011; Carpentier, 2011), which represents "the merging of the [media] producer and consumer in an interactive environment" (Bird, 2011, p. 502). While considering produsage a fact, Bird is doubtful about it being widespread. "In our embrace of the produser, we should not lose sight of the more mundane, internalized, even passive articulation with media that characterizes a great deal of media consumption" (Bird, 2011, p. 504). According to van Dijck (2009), "user agency comprises different levels of participation, varying from 'creators' to 'spectators' and 'inactives'" (pp. 45-46), all of them synonym of an active audience, either for acting on or for interacting with media contents (Carpentier,

2011). Besides, the shift of power is far from being unequivocal. While some fans may be "flexing their muscles against the power of media producers" (Bird, 2011, p. 506), others have already been co-opted by the industry. In this case, participation is disciplined by rules such as the "terms of service" (Bird, 2011, p. 507). Jenkins also acknowledges the industry's interest in audiences' participation, "in part because advertisers and media producers are so eager to attract and hold their attention" (Jenkins, 2006, p. 23). However, according to van Dijck (2009), the user's agency "comprises content production, consuming behavior and data generation; any theory highlighting only the first of these functions effectively downplays the tremendous influence of new media companies in directing users' agency" (p. 49). Besides, the saturation of contents does not permit "any one individual contributor's voice to be 'broadcast' in any meaningful sense of that term" (Kim, 2012, p. 62). For instance, "when looking at user-generated content, we also need to take account of a site's coded abilities to steer and direct users", noted van Dijck (2009, p. 46).

METHODS

The *Transmedia Literacy* project used different research tools to gain "several perspectives on the same phenomenon" (Jensen, 2002, p. 272). Short-term ethnography was favored during the fieldwork. Researchers were placed in a pivotal position with intense moments of interaction and observation, which allowed them to gain in-depth knowledge of the teens' practices and motivations. This, in turn, was a factor that influenced the option for a mostly qualitative and interpretative approach in this article. Schools were the recruitment base and the study used convenience samples; a total of 281 students from the three countries collaborated on the project. The sample was chosen according to the dichotomic criteria presented in the project's framework: the schools' distinction in terms such as location (central-periphery, urban-rural), sociodemographic characteristics (homogeneous-heterogeneous, high-low technological development, etc.) or funding (private-public). The Portuguese teens attended two public schools, one situated in a mostly

urban county (Braga) and the other in a mostly rural area (Montalegre), following a national classification typology. Four classes, two from each school, participated in the study –two from Basic Education and the other two from Secondary Education–.

In Spain the two selected schools were located in two different districts of Barcelona that differ in terms of location, cultural context, income level, and average educational level. One school was a public center situated in a district characterized as having a lower-middle income level and an educational level below the city's average. The other school was a double-funded center (public and private funding) situated in a district characterized as having an upper-middle income level and the education level is higher than the average in Barcelona. Four classes, two from each school, participated in the study –two from Compulsory Secondary Education and two from Baccalaureate–. In Italy, the four sampled schools were selected considering three criteria: level of school (two lower secondary schools and two upper secondary schools); urbanization (two schools in the city of Turin, two in the suburbs –a small city as Susa and another in the outskirts of Turin, La Loggia–) and ICT level (two schools with high levels of ICT adoption and infrastructures, two with lower ICT levels). A class from each school participated in the study.

Considering the fieldwork, four research tools were used: 1) a questionnaire, to assess teens' socio-cultural backgrounds and media access, uses and preferences; 2) participatory workshops, to explore the teens' practices and motivations while promoting content creation and gameplay; 3) in-depth interviews to a sample of participants with the most striking practices and/or motivations and 4) their media diaries, which would cover ideally a week of media practices. The total sample completed the questionnaires and participated in the workshops (divided in two groups per class). For the interviews and media diaries five students were invited from each group. Table 1 shows their distribution by research tool.

This article is based on part of the overall data of the project and follows these research questions: What, how and why are Portuguese, Spanish and Italian teens producing and sharing? Production and sharing (that is, creation and circulation of media contents) were the two dimensions chosen as they are essential preconditions of convergence

culture. Table 2 summarizes the specific research questions used to operationalize both dimensions.

With these specific questions we expected to find, by triangulating all research tools, if the teens of the sample are producers of contents (1) and to whom they address their creations (4a). Besides, we also intended to consider the sophistication of the contents created and the

TABLE 1

CONSTITUTION OF THE SAMPLE BY COUNTRY AND BY RESEARCH TOOL

Research tools	Sample								
	Portugal			Spain			Italy		
	Teens (n)		Age	Teens (n)		Age	Teens (n)		Age
Questionnaires	77	35	12-14	100	45	13-15	97	43	11-13
		42	15-16		55	16-18		54	14-19
Workshops	78	36	12-14	95	43	13-15	103	49	11-13
		42	15-16		52	16-17		54	14-19
Interviews	40	20	12-14	40	20	13-15	39	22	11-13
		20	15-16		20	16-17		17	14-19
Media diaries	33	15	12-14	22	7	13-15	24	12	11-13
		18	15-16		15	16-17		12	14-19

Source: Own creation based on the fieldwork of the three countries.

TABLE 2

SPECIFIC RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Creating		Sharing	
Practices	Motivations	Practices	Motivations
1. What do they create?	3. Why do	4. Do they	5. Why do
2. How do they create?	they create	share their	they share (or
a) Are their creations	(or not)?	productions?	not)?
spontaneous or		a) With whom?	
planned?		b) Using	
b) What media do they		what kind of	
use to create?		platforms?	

Source: Own creation.

place they have in teen's everyday lives: that is, we aim to understand how systematic (in recurrence and in purposes) their production practices were (2a), what their motivations were (3 and 5) and which tools they used (2b and 4b) to create and share.

A BRIEF SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERIZATION OF THE PARTICIPANTS

The samples (N=281) have homogeneous socio-demographic characteristics. The average age is between 14 and 15 years old and the distribution by gender is very similar: 50.5% are male and 49.5% are female. Around 75% of the teens live with their parents and siblings or just with their parents. This proportion is very similar in each country. Considering the educational level of both mothers and fathers, the vast majority (more than 91% in the first case and 82% in the second) completed secondary or higher education. A great number of these students (more than 6/10 of the Portuguese sample, 8/10 of the Spanish and Italian) have a leisure activity. The majority practice sports, such as football, basketball, futsal and gym sports.

TEENS' MEDIA USES AND PRACTICES

Considering teens' self-declared media accesses and uses, availability is not a problem in any country. More than 90% of the combined samples have access to TV, computers (desktop or laptop), mobile phones, WI-FI, game consoles and photo cameras. Besides, none of the media devices suggested in the questionnaire is unavailable for most teens: video recording cameras and radios have the lowest values and around 3/4 of the samples reported having access to them. Regarding uses, mobile phones, WI-FI and TV are the most regularly used in each country (Table 3).

This conclusion is reinforced by self-declared media practices: watching TV and using social networks have the highest mean, the only ones above 4 in a 5 points scale.[7] However, if we consider gender

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[7]   Every mean presented throughout this paper is related to a 5 points scale.

TABLE 3

WHAT DEVICES/MEDIA DO YOU USE REGULARLY? (n= 273)

	Mobile Phone	WI-FI	TV	Laptop	Tablet	Console	Desktop	MP3/MP4 player	Photo camera	Radio	DVD player	Portable console	Video camera
Portugal (n=77)	75	72	71	57	40	28	25	24	25	18	9	10	10
Italy (n=97)	94	82	80	49	39	47	33	39	17	14	14	12	9
Spain (n=99)	96	96	90	74	48	43	46	27	27	19	11	10	9
Total	97%	92%	88%	66%	47%	43%	38%	33%	25%	19%	12%	12%	10%

Source: Own creation based on the fieldwork of the three countries.

differences, playing videogames also reaches high values (4.08 for boys and 2.65 for girls). This is the activity where we observe a greater discrepancy; all the others register a difference smaller than one point.

TABLE 4

TIME THAT TEENS SPEND ON MEDIA ACTIVITIES IN EACH COUNTRY
(1: NEVER; 5: EVERYDAY)

Activities	Country		
	Portugal Mean	Italy Mean	Spain Mean
Watching TV *	4.77 [a]	4.31 [b]	4.67 [a, b]
Watching movies or series online *	3.48 [a]	3.46 [a]	3.08 [b]
Playing videogames	3.54	3.19	3.44
Playing boardgames	1.94	2.01	1.92
Listening to the radio *	3.75 [a]	2.59 [b]	2.51 [b]
Using PC to do homework *	2.66 [b]	2.96 [b]	3.77 [a]
Reading printed magazines & newspapers *	2.55 [a]	2.03 [b]	1.89 [b]
Reading books	3.01	2.59	2.79
Reading Comics	1.74	1.71	1.56
Going to the cinema	2.48	2.32	2.44
Using social networks *	4.78 [a]	4.45 [b]	4.7 [a, b]
Using email *	3.73 [a]	3.12 [b]	3.69 [a]
Participating in blogs, websites & fan forums	1.83	2.05	2.11

* Statistically significant differences (Kruskal-Wallis non-parametric test).
Source: Own creation based on the fieldwork of the three countries.

With regard to the social networks, students reported as having an account on, YouTube (97%) was placed first, followed by WhatsApp (88%) and by Instagram (73%). Facebook appears only in fourth place (68.5%). There are, however, some differences between countries. While YouTube is the first in all of them, WhatsApp is used more in Spain and Italy than in Portugal. In the latter, Facebook takes second place among the most used networks. Instagram ranks third in all three countries.

Considering software, the only one used regularly by most teens is the one related to word processors (66% in the overall sample). While

almost all the Spanish teens (87/100) and the majority of the Portuguese (45/77) reported using it regularly, most of Italian teens said they did not (50/97). Besides, Spanish teens use computers significantly more to do homework than their peers from Portugal and Italy. Photo editing software comes in second place as the most used in Portugal and Spain. In Italy this place is occupied by music production software.

Regarding practices and attitudes, teens were asked about what they do and what they like to do. The data show higher values for consumption in comparison to production and participation. To watch and to search tend to get values around or above 3.5 points. In the three countries, "to like to watch YouTube channels" is the preference that gets the highest mean values (always above 4). This conclusion was reinforced by what teens stated in the questionnaire open questions when they were asked about what interests them the most on the Internet. Transmedia skills related to navigation and cross-consumption, such as the online search for series, music, videos and tutorials also achieve relevant values –all them have means above 3.5 points–. Portuguese ($\bar{x} = 3.42$) and Italian ($\bar{x} = 3.09$) teens stand out in comparison with their peers from Spain ($\bar{x} = 2.51$) in an activity intrinsically related to the consumption of transmedia narratives: to search for other contents related to movies they liked.

Concerning creation and participation practices and attitudes, they have almost always modest values (Table 5). Nevertheless, sharing things with friends in social media (namely in Portugal and Italy) and taking and uploading a picture of their own online (mostly in Spain and Portugal) are commonly enjoyed. The same cannot be said about recording and uploading online videos. However, in Portugal, making videos with friends, but without uploading them, is a fairly usual practice. To create things for the public domain (or at least for a greater audience than their everyday friends) is not in spite of differences among countries.

The quantitative data and interpretation thereof was later confirmed by the other methodological tools: that is, Portuguese teens produce and share but mostly with and for their everyday peers; Spanish teens are more willing to expose their creations online and Italian production practices are less recurrent. The attitudinal evaluation was also part of the questionnaire and it showed that online privacy and security are

TABLE 5

PRODUCTION AND PARTICIPATION PRACTICES AND ATTITUDES

	Country		
	Portugal Mean	Italy Mean	Spain Mean
Records videos when goes to a friend's house *	2.77 [a]	1.68 [c]	2.22 [b]
Likes to record videos and upload them online *	1.68 [b]	1.5 [b]	2.16 [a]
Likes to comment things in social media	2.43	2.09	2.22
Likes to share things with friends *	3.67 [a]	3.62 [a]	2.83 [b]
Likes to take pictures and upload them online *	2.93 [a, b]	2.74 [b]	3.24 [a]
Likes to create fan fiction *	2.47 [a]	1.55 [c]	1.81 [b]
Likes cosplay *	2.14 [a]	1.43 [b]	1.75 [a]
Likes to tell stories about his/her favorite characters *	2.68 [a]	2.23 [b]	1.87 [c]
Likes to create stories, games, tutorials	2.25	1.84	2.11

(1: Totally disagree; 5: Totally agree)

* Statistically significant differences (Kruskal-Wallis non-parametric test).

Source: Own creation based on the fieldwork of the three countries.

major concerns to the overall sample. For instance, "to think twice before uploading a photo of them" and "to be afraid that someone might enter their personal account" reach means of 4.15 and 4.01, respectively. One interesting outcome related to privacy and security management is how much they report filtering friend requests in social media –"to accept every friend request" has a mean of 1.93–; the other research tools also highlighted these constraints.

IN A DIGITAL WORLD, WHAT ARE TEENAGERS PRODUCING AND SHARING?[8]

Portugal: main findings

The Portuguese teenagers are mostly consumers, feeling very comfortable in this role and, in some cases, showing very interesting

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[8]   The names of the young people presented in this section are fictitious.

levels of critical understanding. Traditionally, critical understanding is the cornerstone of media literacy (Potter, 2010). However, nowadays one would expect teens to also be regular producers of media contents and engaged participants in public digital and online spaces. That is not the Portuguese case. Among the 78 teens, very few used to create regularly and in a structured way, producing with some kind of an authorial dimension, going beyond unedited and automatic creations or interactions with their everyday social circle. Considering production and participation practices and attitudes, the most common is sharing with friends something they would enjoy ($\bar{x}$ = 3.67). This is the only one that reached a higher mean than three. The lowest was related to the production and uploading of videos online ($\bar{x}$ = 1.68). It did not come as a surprise when during the workshops, we found only one YouTuber, despite the immense popularity of YouTube and YouTubers.

This male student –Tiago– was 14 years old and he was a very committed gamer. His YouTube channel was devoted to gameplays and his videos were meant to show "how to play and how a game is developed". This was a recent endeavor: at the time of the interview, the first video had been uploaded about a month ago. Despite this recency and the fact that it had less than 350 subscribers, his channel was already paying off: he was doing game reviews for an online store in exchange for free access to games. He was also in talks with a Brazilian network in order to increase his channel's popularity and profit from ads and endorsements. He was also part of a group of fellow YouTubers with the purpose of "helping everyone grow at the same time" thanks to mutual "likes, comments on videos to help and everything else".

Tiago was also a member of some YouTubers' groups on Facebook, planning to share his videos among his peers, a practice he had not done yet: "this way we can help each other; as I watch their videos, maybe they'll watch mine". He usually shares his videos on his timeline, but they can only reach a very limited audience as Tiago restricts his account to his friends. He used Facebook "to talk with them, to see their images and stuff like that", he said during the interview. Despite these intentions and enthusiasm, this teen considered himself more of a gamer than a YouTuber. And shortly after the fieldwork, he deleted his YouTube channel.

Tiago, like the rest of the sample, had a strong preference for activities with everyday friends: besides playing online with fellow high-ranked gamers, he had bought a new and therefore, inferior Counter Strike account so that he could play with his friends, namely his classmates; the rest of the sample shares this preference. Production and participation have the closest social circles as almost exclusive audiences. For instance, private groups were extremely relevant places to share contents, such as news or information regarding school or hobbies with friends. Dinis, a 15-year-old male student, exemplifies these practices: he was a futsal player and was part of a Facebook private group that was used to share useful information, such as "the schedule and meeting point" for practice and matches. Concerning publishing on his timeline, he was "not into it".

Friends' birthdays were for many of the Portuguese teenagers, an opportunity to create and produce small videos. This was particularly evident among the senior class from the rural school and exemplifies the typical production made by the Portuguese sample: occasional, simple and meant to be a small-scale creation. These characteristics are visible in the two following descriptions. The first was made by a 15-year-old female student, Raquel, during the interview:

> Usually we collect photos during the year for instance at birthdays or festivities. We collect the photos and then, in Flipagram, we upload the images we want. We can choose the music, subtitles, effects; we only have to manage it the way we want it and click on save or publish and then it goes to social media.

This second description was extracted from an interview with a male student, Jerónimo (12 years old): "I usually share photos, but videos where I'm in, just with my parents' authorization ... And I share on WhatsApp or Messenger, but with friends". His videos weren't meant for a large audience because he wasn't comfortable with it. "I think I'm not old enough to share things", he said.

Privacy was a main issue among the Portuguese teens, as Jerónimo's statement showed. Publicly exposing personal tastes or their image was not welcomed. One student from the senior class from the urban

school jokingly said during the workshops (about sharing things related to videogames on social networks): "No, I have a reputation to preserve!". This small sentence summarized what was found in the overall Portuguese sample. Even among content creators, public exposition was not welcomed. Ema was a 13-year-old female student and she was a huge *Harry Potter* fan, having created an anonymous Instagram account to follow and interact with other fans and to upload images (slightly editing them, for instance, by adding some sentences) about this transmedia story. She was also a regular fan fiction reader and a writer herself. However, she never shared her own texts or tried to produce image-based stories. On the one hand, she felt she did not have the time and technical knowledge to do it. On the other hand, when we asked if she was also afraid of other people's comments, she just nodded her head.

Questionnaires also showed the importance of privacy/image management in the Portuguese teenagers' lives. Attitudes such as thinking twice before uploading a picture of themselves or about the impact their own videos might have if uploaded scored high mean values: 4.22 and 3.95. Besides, they also expect their peers to be cautious about their image: most would want them to use common sense or to ask for their permission first. These conclusions were transversal to the Portuguese sample: there was not found relevant differences between classes –senior or junior– or schools –urban or rural–. However, questionnaires showed that girls were more regular creators of contents, such videos recorded while at a friend's home ($\bar{x} = 3.04$), or pictures, were taken to be published online ($\bar{x} = 3.22$). Boys' means were 2.35 and 2.52, respectively. The rest of the research techniques, although, pointed to very simple, one-click creations.

Spain: main findings

Spanish teenagers are also mostly consumers, as the data from questionnaires show. They frequently watch TV ($\bar{x} = 4.67$), films and series ($\bar{x} = 3.08$) and play videogames ($\bar{x} = 3.44$). But the data also reveal that some are producing a great variety of contents, ranging from written texts to graphics or mods for videogames, among others. This diversity is very unequal in terms of distribution, intensity and

complexity. The most regular productions are related to photography and videos. In some cases, they are performed on a day-to-day basis. Two production trends have been observed: creations are either spontaneous or planned.

The type of production varies depending on its final goal, usually associated with its dissemination, but it also responds to certain motivations. In the case of spontaneous production, these are photos or videos that are made to be shared on different social media platforms that we could deem as "closed", such as WhatsApp or Snapchat. Planned production takes place in conjunction with the use of social media platforms that entail a broader and more public way of sharing, such as Instagram or YouTube. Spontaneous production, in most cases, seeks to represent daily life, through images and videos of the daily activities of adolescents and their interactions with peers. When they talk with their groups of friends or classmates in a non-public conversation, sometimes they insert photos of the activities or moments they are living, as exemplified by Nora, a female 17-year-old:

—Nora: Snapchat is more ... your life ... I don't know, maybe here [in Instagram] what you do is put up your pretty photos. You know? Edited and all … While Snapchat is more ... if you want to share a photo, you share it ...
—Researcher: So, you don't care about aesthetics on Snapchat?
—Nora: Yes, that's right.

These productions encompass some degree of planning, such as choosing frames, roles, positions and filters, but they are not as organized or structured as the ones meant to Instagram or YouTube, which are clearly less recurrent. In these cases, productions become a form of representation of their own public identity and they are carried out in a way that could be defined as more sophisticated. To achieve it, they have a series of media references that are mainly influencers, which serve as a source of inspiration. Teenagers find in them role models for the representation of their own selves. Some teenagers follow and imitate those influencers with whom they identify the most. The latter become, to a certain extent, aspirational models. These teenagers see themselves reflected in those influencers, adopting and

imitating the characteristics of their products. Therefore, when they create planned products, they sometimes perform an additional previous step in comparison to spontaneous products: conceiving the product by searching for inspiration and references. This is exemplified in the following extract from an interview with Laura, a 17-year-old female:

> Well, I follow sites like Tumblr and girly stuff that you can find online and share any photo. There are photos that give you many ideas on how to take your own ones. I use some of the ideas and I say "Oh, look, this must be fine". And sometimes, well, you try it and you say "Oh, yes, it's fine …".

Some adolescents plan their photos before creating them. We observe teenagers' planning skills when they look for special locations, when they plan the frames and their position within them, etc. This procedure is much more common when they are creating photos than when they are producing videos. They claim to be more spontaneous while recording videos, but we can also find organization, planning and structure, as exemplified by Victor, a 16-year-old male:

> It was a bit like "let's see what we are going to record, what ideas we have" ... We said "What game? Call Of Duty. Well, then, Call Of Duty. Team duel", like "Let's see, you make the intro and I say we're (name omitted), that we're here in my house ...". Well, we didn't write a script but we gotta try to organize ourselves a little bit. It was all on the fly. We didn't intend to do it totally professionally, at least at that moment, but well, at least we added a short introduction, who we are, what game we are going to play, for what ...

Some of these products are usually worked on at a later stage, in a post-production process. Before being shared, most of the adolescents apply different filters and some of them plan the whole editing stage. With this, they edit their photographs and videos with the aim of making aesthetic modifications. In these processes adolescents show their skills through the usage of digital tools such as Afterlight, VSCOCam or VivaVideo, among others: 17 teenagers stated they know and/or use digital tools for editing photos and 19 for videos.

All these products are created individually and collectively, depending on the context and environment. If the adolescents are sharing an activity and decide to take a photo to publish it, they carry it out collectively. But this does not prevent individual photos from also being taken spontaneously as well. The same happens in the case of planned productions. The main difference is in the skills they develop through the process. When they carry out group productions, they acquire other skills associated with social management, such as the ability to coordinate or lead, for example. It should be noted that in most cases collective productions are made within the peer group. As in the case of Portugal and Italy, Spanish teenagers are worried about the image of themselves that they project on social networks. This could justify both the predominance of spontaneous productions, created to be shared only with friends and family, and the obvious concern with planning and editing the ones meant to larger audiences.

Finally, the variety and complexity of their productions are also linked to motivations, namely entertainment (associated with pleasure and fun), relationship with peers and popularity. If they create for peers in closed contexts, their process is less complex and more intuitive. On the other hand, if they create for open contexts, with popularity as the main motivation, their process becomes much more complex and they acquire other skills through it. It is important to emphasize the importance of entertainment as the engine of the production process. Teenagers make these products because they enjoy carrying them out –they are not imposed tasks–. And this is also deeply associated with their relationship with peers.

In the Spanish context, we found some differences between schools and socio-cultural contexts. In Barcelona's educational context, there is a high correlation between the school typology and the socio-cultural and economic background of the students' families. Despite the existence of similar practices related to the production of photos and videos, the students from the double-founding school showed more sensibility with the cultural environment and were more engaged in practices such as, for example, writing. On the other hand, as in the case of Portugal and Italy girls were more regular creators of photos.

Italy: main findings

Italian teens show a quite traditional approach to media consumption, being mostly focused on "watching" videos and TV contents. Television is one of the most used media ($\bar{x} = 4.31$). During the workshops and the interviews, teens stated they watch TV because it gave them a sense of belonging and identification, also in the relationship with parents, creating an intergenerational bridge. It is important to underline that TV in Italy has historically played an important role in socializing. Already since that time, TV has established itself as a contemporary storyteller (Bechelloni, 1995). Subsequently, in the era of Berlusconi, TV played a political role, but it also turned out as an agent of strong change in Italian society (Abruzzese, 1994).

Today its role resists, even if the model of use of Italian adolescents has changed: TV consumption is more selective, also because, with the advent of digital TV, the offer has considerably increased (Scaglioni & Sfardini, 2017). So, in addition to the media contents typical of participatory cultures, a large number of teenagers choose traditional media genres closely linked to the generalist cultural industries: from Italian series to reality-shows or cult movies. This kind of media consumption is more relevant among females than among males, as well as among older teens compared to the 12-13-year-old ones. Regarding music, teens say that they use Spotify or watch videos on YouTube; they rarely create their own playlists or share contents. The use of social network sites is also relevant ($\bar{x} = 4.45$), but it must be noticed that, according to the media diaries, teens dedicate a lot of time, in their daily routine just checking the notifications on their social profiles, in particular on WhatsApp and Instagram. Furthermore, the majority of teenagers stated that their prevailing activity is watching the flow of online contents on social networks, rather than uploading original artefacts.

Among the teens who are producers, the most recurrent creativity practices confirmed by the questionnaire and the interviews, are related to sharing things with friends ($\bar{x} = 3.62$) and posting photos online ($\bar{x} = 2.74$). From the interviews and the diaries it emerges that Instagram and WhatsApp are the most used platforms for sharing pictures, adding in many cases phrases picked up from songs or poems.

Teenagers express several concerns about exposing themselves online: in the questionnaires they declare that their main concerns about digital life are related to uploading personal photos on the web ($\bar{x} = 4.10$), or to the impact that an own video could have on the online audience ($\bar{x} = 3.26$). In any case, they prefer not to be active users on their profiles, as exemplified by the following statement:

—Researcher: Why are you not active on social media? Is it because you don't like it? Don't you have enough time? Do you consider it in bad taste? Or is privacy the reason?

—Darío, male student, 16 years old: [The reason is] personal enough because I do not consider it bad taste ... in fact I have nothing against those who post photos every day, every week, that's okay …, but it's a personal choice, I prefer to follow others, to see what others do without ... posting my personal stuff.

Through the data, we notice that some socio-demographic aspects seem to have a significant role in defining digital practices and attitudes: in particular gender and age. In fact, we noticed that females ($\bar{x} = 1.28$) were less used to share personal videos than males ($\bar{x} = 1.65$). However, girls ($\bar{x} = 1.90$) produced and shared more narrative productions as for example in Wattpad, than boys ($\bar{x} = 1.30$). Secondly, we observed that younger subjects (in particular those from lower secondary school) were more involved in all the creative and sharing practices respect to the older ones.

The social and psychological concerns about exposing their own content online are different. The first reason, outlined in many interviews with both males and females, is an accentuated modesty in showing themselves off, revealing themselves both physically and emotionally. For example, Daniele, a 16-year-old male student, said:

Looking at my friends' pages, I see certain photos that make you say: "What are they doing?". Some girls like to show their breasts and sometimes their mouth, adding really philosophical phrases such as: "Oh, look at my mouth …". I really detest this kind of things.

Pressure and social control come not only from invisible and unknown publics (boyd, 2010), but also from their own social circle: parents, first of all, who often exercise a more or less indirect control over the teens media practices, suggesting they not exposing themselves too much, but also, in some cases, their peers. For example, Federica, a 16-year-old female student, during the interview talked a lot about how before posting anything online she must have "the approval" of her boyfriend, who directly controls (having the passwords) and censures all her social profiles. So, she just posts contents about landscapes, animals and generic pictures.

Furthermore, another reason, which seems to interfere with the media production by teenagers is their perception of not being able to fulfill the aesthetic expectations of an imaginary audience. Many of the interviewed feel that they do not have the skills required to be part of the social media "star system": this low sense of self-efficacy is rarely related to technical issues (for example, being able to edit a video), and in the majority of cases, is based on a rigorous and often sophisticated critical judgment about the quality of media content, the recognition of the several features and characteristics needed to be successful in the social media arena, leading them, therefore, to the conclusion that they themselves do not have the creative and artistic qualities to be appreciated online. Federico, a 14-year-old male student, gives us an example: "We made some challenges on video, as the 'Ice bucket challenge', but we didn't post them online since we are not famous or sufficiently amazing to go online". Following the same argument, Milena, a 12-year-old female student, stated:

> I would like to be a creator, but … not boring … there are some people so boring, they talk about how they decorated their bedroom, their agenda, it is something nobody is interested in … you must be a little bit crazy to entertain, not just stupid. I'm not able to be so.

For these reasons, remixing of popular contents, parodies, as well as generic landscape pictures or memes are the most produced contents, since they allow teenagers both to express their feelings in a mediated way and to shape them according to successful media and social formats.

To conclude, Italian teenagers showed they possess good skills when it comes to media awareness and attention to privacy. They in fact are able to evaluate media contents both from an aesthetical point of view both respect their ethical and social issues and to take into account of such evaluations before of producing and posting online. At the same time, in some cases these skills seem to function as inhibitors of online participation acting as factors for social and media conformism, rather than as drivers of autonomy, extraversion and digital creativity.

CLOSING REMARKS

To conclude, concerning media uses and practices, there seems to be a similar pattern between the youngsters from Portugal, Italy and Spain. The data from the multiple research tools revealed only slight differences and one general conclusion: the teenagers inquired do not lack access to media and use them regularly; however, their practices are far from matching the expectations surrounding concepts such as convergence culture or *produsage*. When production and participation exist, they are more properly placed in what Schäfer (2011) labeled implicit participation, which relies on "the automation of user activity processes" (p. 51). Using Fiske's (1992) distinction on fans' productivity, our samples are particularly committed to enunciative productivity, limited to their everyday social circles, despite the possibilities to create for and interact with larger audiences (that is, to perform textual productivity).

Their age –and the uncertainties surrounding the development of youth identity (boyd, 2014; Buckingham, 2008; Livingstone, 2008)– is necessarily linked to their practices. Some limits to the current creation and production practices are related to the fear of being judged by online audiences, as well as by peers; for this reason, teens prefer to interact in online spaces with just their closest friends, not exposing themselves to scrutiny on public media stages. This is coherent with what was found by Livingstone (2008) regarding social media, which, "despite the potential for global networking" (p. 395), were mostly used by teens to further develop the already existing relationships. "Deciding what not to say about oneself online is, for many teenagers, an agentic

act to protect their identity and their spaces of intimacy", concluded Livingstone (2008, p. 409). This caution can be, simultaneously, a sign of competence and a limiting fear. On the one hand, the ability to consciously regulate one's media use is a traditional goal of media literacy (Potter, 2010). On the other hand, being immobilized so as not to be judged by other people collides with an understanding of media literacy that goes beyond protection, seeking to foster and improve the uses of media in both individual and social dimensions.

Another reason for limiting their creation practices to their closest circle is a perceived low self-efficacy about their own creativity and capacity to expose interesting opinions for a wider audience. Regarding media, schools and society have stressed mostly privacy issues as well as self and social control in online practices. Less attention has been paid to promoting an active, and not only "defensive", approach to media. Transmedia skills related to navigation and cross-consumption are widely performed by teens, in contrast to those based on creating, sharing different points of view and publishing original contents.

These practices seem to be less encouraged but they can be further developed as tools of empowering teenagers as critical digital citizens. Therefore, from the point of view of media literacy, once the conditions of media access are assured, it is essential to develop the skills of critical analysis and understanding, as well as creation and production. To be able and to be aware of the possibilities to create and participate should be central. However, having as precondition a critical understanding of these opportunities and the risks associated with them. Not all creations and interventions in the mediated public sphere are meaningful: some, if coated with ignorance or, worse, bad intentions, can be quite toxic. Bearing this in mind, more relevant than to know if they comply with the convergence culture's prescriptions on creation and participation, is to understand their reasons for doing it or not, to assess and promote the quality of their practices. If they do not create despite wanting to, because they are lacking skills to go beyond automatic productions, then these should be developed. If they do not participate because they recognize they are not ready to say something meaningful, this could be regarded as a sign of media literacy competence and should be discussed and improved namely by teachers at school.

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