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INFLUENCE OF THE 'NEWS FINDS ME' PERCEPTION ON NEWS SHARING AND NEWS CONSUMPTION ON SOCIAL MEDIA

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ABSTRACT:

The study focuses on 'News Finds Me' perception, i.e. the belief that users can stay informed enough without actively following traditional news media while relying on social media and personal contacts. The text analyses the influence between this perception and news consumption ("news internalising") and sharing ("news externalising"). Uses & Gratifications sought ("information seeking", "social interaction" and "impression management") were considered as moderating variables. Survey based results (n = 96) show that 'News Finds Me' perception is positively correlated with news internalising but not with news externalising. It is thus concluded that the mere presence of the 'News Finds Me' perception does not encourage news sharing attitudes. The study also brings evidence to support a relationship between news internalising and news externalising habits, which influence each other mutually and can moderate other factors in news consumption and dissemination on social media. It is concluded that the presence of the 'News Finds Me' perception does not encourage news sharing attitudes.

KEY WORDS:

consumption of news, news externalising, 'News Finds Me' perception, news internalising, news sharing, social media

Introduction

Social media have profoundly changed the way users keep up to date with and consume news. Traditional mass media no longer monopolise the distribution of content and information about current events. Social networking sites and platforms like *Twitter* and *Facebook* have evolved into channels through which users are exposed to social and political issues.[1] Social media have potentially become the most important content distribution channels ever[2] and have risen as a relevant source for political and civic information among citizens

[1]   See: GUALLAR, J. et al.: Re-dissemination of News and Public Debate on Social Networks. In *El Profesional de la Información*, 2016, Vol. 25, No. 3, p. 358-366.
[2]   See: DAFONTE-GÓMEZ, A.: News Media and the Emotional Public Sphere. Audiences as Medium: Motivations and Emotions in News Sharing. In *International Journal of Communication*, 2018, Vol. 12, No. 1, p. 2133-2152.

worldwide.[3] The use of social media for news has thus become a global trend. For example, adults in the United States of America follow news on social media at least occasionally.[4] Social media have not only turned into a relevant news distribution channel in developed Western societies but also in Third World developing countries.[5] In the Spanish scenario, almost half of Internet users (48%) remark that they regularly get news through *Facebook*[6] and, even more importantly, 23% of *Facebook* users say that they have found news or events they were not even looking for.[7] The relevance of this new landscape is such that mass media strategists have turned to social media to maximise the reach of their content[8] as well as to strengthen their audiences' engagement.[9]

Yet, the impact of social media for news distribution is not only limited to its value as an additional venue for legacy and digital media to disseminate their content. In this new environment, users are no longer the final end of a transmission line but a node inside a wider network.[10] This means that the unidirectional concept of mass-mediated content distribution has been substituted by a new model of multidirectional user-led dissemination.[11] This change implies that users play an active role in spreading news by deciding what content and articles they share with their contacts via their different social media profiles.

From this perspective, news distribution and consumption on social media have two different, complementary and inseparable dimensions: "news internalising" and "news externalising". "News internalising" implies the activity of reading news shared by other users or by mass media profiles on social media, while "news externalising" refers to the act of sharing and providing news to other peers and contacts on the network.[12] These two dimensions are interlinked, with the frequency of news receiving being correlated with that of news sharing.[13]

One of the consequences of this brave new distribution model is that news consumption on social media is not limited to those who willingly follow journalists or 'traditional' media profiles. Users not interested *a priori* in news can stumble upon news or articles posted by their contacts, in what has been called "incidental exposure".[14] As a consequence, the relevance of social media news-sharing in news distribution appears to have led some people to stop actively following news media and instead to *"rely on distributed discovery (especially social media and search engines) to stay informed"*.[15] One of these 'distributed discovery' strategies is the so-called 'the information is out there'. This attitude is built upon *"beliefs that if one should want to seek out more information about an issue, (a) this information would in fact be available (whether from social media or other sources) and (b) it would be easy to find (primarily through Google search)"*.[16] Other of these new ways to access news is the so-called 'News Finds

Me' perception, or the belief that *"a combination of ambient news, incidental exposure, and sufficiently robust social networks means (...) that news will eventually come to them even without directly seeking"*.[17] In other words, users – especially younger ones – believe that they can keep up to date about current events through social media alone, given that relevant information will finally be received by users informally through their social network and, specially, through social media. Because these platforms provide all the relevant and meaningful information they are interested in, these users no longer feel any need to actively follow the mass media.[18] This detachment from traditional media has been proved to be negatively associated with both political knowledge and political interest.[19] The 'News Finds Me' perception not only discourages democratic participation but also risks exposing the users to lesser quality and less trustworthy information given that *"citizens become highly dependent on what is shown and presented to them within their social networks, which are furthermore colonised by fake news and in command of algorithms, controlled by a few, influential technological conglomerates"*.[20]

This 'News Finds Me' perception, as well as the other distributed discovery strategies defined by Toff and Nielsen can be understood as a set of habits and routines in line with the conceptions posited by the Media Attendance Theory. According to this theory, users do not always take rational decisions about which media they consume. Instead, they turn to a fixed set of media venues, products and technologies to access media content and news. In other words, users do not always use rational decision-making when they consume news, nor do they evaluate all the options available in the media landscape. Rather, they repeat previous habits and choose from a set of media and platforms they usually rely on. This fixed and pre-existent cluster of media and platforms influence users' news 'diet' and media consumption.[21] Such choices also shape other news-related activities. For example, users who rely more on Internet based repertoires are more prone to share or 'like' news on social media that those who rely more on traditional, legacy media.[22] Consequently, this work posits that the 'News Finds Me' perception influences users' news internalising and news externalising on social media.

Nevertheless, the Media Attendance Theory is far from being the only one theoretical approach to explain today's media and news consumption. According to the Uses & Gratifications Theory (U&GT), individuals use each particular medium differently, depending on the rewards they expect. These expectations shape the type of content they seek on each medium.[23] Different expectations, therefore, lead to different patterns of use. Accordingly, different motivations for using social media lead to different patterns of news sharing and consuming on those platforms.[24]

Specifically, social-interaction gratifications, impression management and information seeking are correlated with more intense news sharing activity on social media platforms.[25] First, the "impression management" refers to the features of social media that allow users to build and project their self-presentation.[26] Second, the "information

3   ANSPACH, N. et al.: A Little Bit of Knowledge: Facebook's News Feed and Self-perceptions of Knowledge. In *Research & Politics*, 2019, Vol. 6, No. 1, p. 9.
4   SHEARER, E., MATSA, K. E.: News Use across Social Media Platforms 2018. In *Journalism & Media*, 2018, Vol. 1, No. 1, p. 2. [online]. [2019-06-17]. Available at: <https://www.journalism.org/2018/09/10/news-use-across-social-media-platforms-2018/>.
5   MITCHELL, A. et al.: *People in Poorer Countries Just as Likely to Use Social Media for News as Those in Wealthier Countries*. Released on 11th January 2018. [online]. [2019-06-26]. Available at: <https://www.pewresearch.org/global/2018/01/11/people-in-poorer-countries-just-as-likely-to-use-social-media-for-news-as-those-in-wealthier-countries/>.
6   For more information about the Spanish research, see: NEWMAN, N. et al.: *Reuters Institute Digital News Report 2018*. Oxford : Reuters Institute, 2018.
7   See: SERRANO-PUCHE, J., FERNÁNDEZ, C. B., RODRÍGUEZ-VIRGILI, J.: Political Information and Incidental Exposure in Social Media: The Cases of Argentina, Chile, Spain and Mexico. In *Doxa*, 2018, Vol. 27, No. 1, p. 19-42.
8   See: VILLI, M., NOGUERA-VIVO, J. M.: Sharing Media Content in Social Media: The Challenges and Opportunities of User-distributed Content (UDC). In *Journal of Applied Journalism & Media Studies*, 2017, Vol. 6, No. 2, p. 207-223.
9   For more information, see: FERNÁNDEZ-GÓMEZ, E., MARTÍN-QUEVEDO, J.: La Estrategia Engagement de Netflix España En Twitter. In *El Profesional de La Informacion*, 2018, Vol. 27, No. 6, p. 1262-1272; KHUNTIA, J., SUN, H., YIM, D.: Sharing News through Social Networks. In *International Journal on Media Management*, 2016, Vol. 18, No. 1, p. 59-74.
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11   See: NOGUERA-VIVO, J. M.: You Get What You Give: Sharing as a New Radical Challenge for Journalism. In *Communication & Society*, 2018, Vol. 31, No. 4, p. 147-158.
12   See: CHOI, J.: News Internalizing and Externalizing: The Dimensions of News Sharing on Online Social Networking Sites. In *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, 2016, Vol. 93, No. 4, p. 816-835.
13   WEEKS, B. E., HOLBERT, R. L.: Predicting Dissemination of News Content in Social Media: A Focus on Reception, Friending, and Partisanship. In *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, 2013, Vol. 90, No. 2, p. 222.
14   FLETCHER, R., NIELSEN, R. K.: Are People Incidentally Exposed to News on Social Media? A Comparative Analysis. In *New Media and Society*, 2018, Vol. 20, No. 7, p. 2452. [online]. [2018-20-12]. Available at: <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/1461444817724170>.
15   See: TOFF, B., NIELSEN, R. K.: 'I Just Google It': Folk Theories of Distributed Discovery. In *Journal of Communication*, 2018, Vol. 68, No. 3, p. 636-657. [online]. [2019-03-02]. Available at: <https://academic.oup.com/joc/article/68/3/636/4972617>.
16   See: TOFF, B., NIELSEN, R. K.: 'I Just Google It': Folk Theories of Distributed Discovery. In *Journal of Communication*,

2018, Vol. 68, No. 3, p. 636-657. [online]. [2019-03-02]. Available at: <https://academic.oup.com/joc/article/68/3/636/4972617>.
17   See: TOFF, B., NIELSEN, R. K.: 'I Just Google It': Folk Theories of Distributed Discovery. In *Journal of Communication*, 2018, Vol. 68, No. 3, p. 636-657. [online]. [2019-03-02]. Available at: <https://academic.oup.com/joc/article/68/3/636/4972617>.
18   See: GIL DE ZÚÑIGA, H., WEEKS, B., ARDÈVOL-ABREU, A.: Effects of the News Finds Me Perception in Communication: Social Media Use Implications for News Seeking and Learning about Politics. In *Journal of Computer-mediated Communication*, 2017, Vol. 22, No. 3, p. 105-123. [online]. [2018-08-28]. Available at: <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/jcc4.12185>.
19   See: GIL DE ZÚÑIGA, H., DIEHL, T.: News Finds Me Perception and Democracy: Effects on Political Knowledge, Political Interest, and Voting. In *New Media & Society*, 2018, Vol. 14, No. 1, p. 1-19. [online]. [2018-08-20]. Available at: <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/1461444818817548?journalCode=nmsa>.
20   GIL DE ZÚÑIGA, H., HUBER, B., STRAUB, N.: Social Media and Democracy. In *El Profesional de La Información*, 2018, Vol. 27, No. 6, p. 1176.
21   See: LAROSE, R., EASTIN, M. S.: A Social Cognitive Theory of Internet Uses and Gratifications: Toward a New Model of Media Attendance. In *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, 2004, Vol. 48, No. 3, p. 358-377.
22   See: CHOI, J.: News Internalizing and Externalizing: The Dimensions of News Sharing on Online Social Networking Sites. In *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, 2016, Vol. 93, No. 4, p. 816-835; KARNOWSKI, V., LEONHARD, L., KÜMPEL, A. S.: Why Users Share the News: A Theory of Reasoned Action-based Study on the Antecedents of News-sharing Behavior. In *Communication Research Reports*, 2018, Vol. 35, No. 2, p. 91-100. [online]. [2018-12-03]. Available at: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/08824096.2017.1379984>.
23   See: McLEOD, J. M.: Media and Civic Socialization of Youth. In *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 2000, Vol. 27, No. 2, p. 45-51.
24   See: CHOI, J.: Why Do People Use News Differently on SNSs? An Investigation of the Role of Motivations, Media Repertoires, and Technology Cluster on Citizens' News-related Activities. In *Computers in Human Behavior*, 2016, Vol. 54, No. 1, p. 249-256.
25   LEE, C. S., MA, L.: News Sharing in Social Media: The Effect of Gratifications and Prior Experience. In *Computers in Human Behavior*, 2012, Vol. 28, No. 2, p. 331-339.
26   KRÄMER, N. C., WINTER, S.: Impression Management 2.0. In *Journal of Media Psychology*, 2008, Vol. 20, No. 3, p. 106.

seeking" suggests that users choose the medium to self-educate and to satisfy their informational needs.[27] Finally, the "social interaction" gratification refers to the motivation to communicate and interact with others.[28]

It has also been previously pointed out that socially oriented gratifications play a relevant role in influencing the sharing of media content.[29] For example, impression management or status seeking gratifications are related to news externalising.[30] In practice, this implies that sharing news is one of the social media features users rely on when they want to manage how they want to be perceived by other peers. Yet, these socially driven uses and gratifications do not only explain the practice of news sharing; they are also correlated with news internalising.[31]

Therefore, based on the previous findings and the existing body of scholarly literature, we expected the aforementioned Uses & Gratifications (i.e. Social Interaction, Impression Management and Information Seeking) to play a moderating role in the relationship between 'News Finds Me' perception and news activity on social media.

As mentioned above, news sharing on social media is at least partially driven by social gratifications. In fact, users share news as a way to improve their social relationships[32] and to feel they belong to a community and a cohesive social group.[33] These social integration expectations might be linked to beliefs in reciprocal behaviour and reciprocal practices.[34] In other words, when users share content on social media they expect similar contributions from the rest of the community, namely, they expect their contacts to act and contribute likewise.

Given that individuals with high levels of 'News Finds Me' perception consider social media and friends as relevant sources of information,[35] this work posits that individuals with a higher 'News Finds Me' perception will share news more often. In addition, this research anticipates another moderating factor, namely, the reciprocal relationship between news internalising and news externalising. Hence this research study attempts to demonstrate that news internalising will moderate the influence of 'News Finds Me' perception on news externalising and, simultaneously, that news externalising will moderate the influence of 'News Finds Me' perception on news internalising. In short, the research presented below posits the following hypotheses:

H1: 'News Finds Me' Perception is correlated with News Externalising.
H1.1: This relationship is moderated by Uses & Gratifications sought.
H1.2: This relationship is moderated by News Internalising.

H2: 'News Finds Me Perception' is correlated with News Internalising.
H2.1: This relationship is moderated by Uses & Gratifications sought.
H2.2: This relationship is moderated by News Externalising.

Methods

Data was extracted through an online self-administered questionnaire given to a sample of randomly recruited undergraduate students from different universities in the Madrid region, selected by a social survey company (*Societae*). To avoid a homogeneous academic background, the students were pooled from different degree courses. Participation was encouraged by offering a €25 gift voucher to each participant upon successfully completing the survey. The online questionnaire was active from 5th May to 3rd July 2017. A total of 96 participants completed the survey. The average age of the participants was 20.23 years (SD = 3) and the sample comprised 61.46% female respondents and 38.54% male respondents.

Young adults were studied for their particular orientation towards online news[36] and active news sharing on social media. Furthermore, news organisations make use of specific social media strategies to appeal to younger audiences.[37] This all suggests that young adults' habits in this regard will be a dominant influence on media content consumption and distribution models in the future.[38]

As part of a wider research project, the participants were asked several series of questions about: sociodemographic features (age, gender, yearly household income), 'News Finds Me' perception, social media Uses & Gratifications sought and their use of social media for news. The questionnaire also included other questions that are not discussed in this study.

The design of the questionnaire, the informed consent and the procedures to collect and analyse the data gathered from the participants were approved by the research ethics office in the authors' University Vice-Chancellorship for research. The first page of the online questionnaire provided information about the study, to which all the participants gave their informed consent to participate by clicking 'next' to begin the survey. Data was later analysed anonymously.

'News Finds Me' perception (α = 0.693) was measured as the sum of the responses to four Likert-type scaled questions (1 = lowest agreement, 7 = highest agreement)[39] (see Table 1).

Table 1: Measurements for 'News Finds Me' perception

I rely on my friends to tell me what's important when news happens.
I can be well informed even when I don't actively follow the news.
I don't worry about keeping up with the news because I know news will find me.
I rely on information from my friends based on what they like or follow through social media.

Source: GIL DE ZÚÑIGA, H., WEEKS, B., ARDÈVOL-ABREU, A.: Effects of the News Finds Me Perception in Communication: Social Media Use Implications for News Seeking and Learning about Politics. In Journal of Computer-mediated Communication, 2017, Vol. 22, No. 3, p. 112. [online]. [2018-08-28]. Available at: <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/jcc4.12185>.

27 KORGAONKAR, P. K., WOLIN, L. D.: A Multivariate Analysis of Web Usage. In *Journal of Advertising Research*, 1999, Vol. 19, No. 1, p. 25.
28 WHITING, A., WILLIAMS, D.: Why People Use Social Media: A Uses and Gratifications Approach. In *Qualitative Market Research: An International Journal*, 2013, Vol. 16, No. 4, p. 364.
29 See: JOHNSON, B. K., RANZINI, G.: Click Here to Look Clever: Self-presentation via Selective Sharing of Music and Film on Social Media. In *Computers in Human Behavior*, 2018, Vol. 82, No. 1, p. 148-158; COPPINI, D. et al.: When the Whole World Is Watching: A Motivations-based Account of Selective Expression and Exposure. In *Computers in Human Behavior*, 2017, Vol. 75, No. 1, p. 766-774.
30 See: PICONE, I., DE WOLF, R., ROBIJT, S.: Who Shares What with Whom and Why? In *Digital Journalism*, 2016, Vol. 4, No. 7, p. 921-932.
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33 See: GOH, D. et al.: News Sharing as Reciprocal Exchanges in Social Cohesion Maintenance. In *Information, Communication & Society*, 2019, Vol. 22, No. 8, p. 1128-1144.
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37 See: MARTÍN-QUEVEDO, J., FERNÁNDEZ-GÓMEZ, E., SEGADO-BOJ, F.: How to Engage with Younger Users on Instagram: A Comparative Analysis of HBO and Netflix in the Spanish and US Markets How to Engage with Younger Users on Instagram: A Comparative Analysis of HBO and Netflix in the Spanish. In *International Journal on Media Management*, 2019, Vol. 21, No. 2, p. 67-87; WU, Y.: How Age Affects Journalists' Adoption of Social Media as an Innovation. In *Journalism Practice*, 2019, Vol. 13, No. 5, p. 537-557.
38 See: DAFONTE-GÓMEZ, Á.: News Media and the Emotional Public Sphere. Audiences as Medium: Motivations and Emotions in News Sharing. In *International Journal of Communication*, 2018, Vol. 12, No. 1, p. 2143-2152.
39 See: GIL DE ZÚÑIGA, H., WEEKS, B., ARDÈVOL-ABREU, A.: Effects of the News Finds Me Perception in Communication: Social Media Use Implications for News Seeking and Learning about Politics. In *Journal of Computer-mediated Communication*, 2017, Vol. 22, No. 3, p. 105-123. [online]. [2018-08-28]. Available at: <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/jcc4.12185>.

News Externalising (α = 0.76)	How often do you post new links with friends?
	How often do you share new links with friends?
	How often do you post news on SNSs?

Source: CHOI, J., KOOK-LEE, J.: Investigating the Effects of News Sharing and Political Interest on Social Media Network Heterogeneity. In Computers in Human Behavior, 2015, Vol. 44, No. 1, p. 261.

A simple linear regression model was applied to analyse the correlation between 'News Finds Me' perception and News Externalizing and Internalizing. Such statistical tests are commonly applied in similar studies in communication,[42] as well as in other disciplines.[43] Results are shown in Figures 1 and 2.

To evaluate whether a variable is a moderator, we applied the bio-statistical Penn State University model. According to this model, when a coefficient considering a third variable changes more than 10% from the coefficient without that third variable, it is taken as a moderator. The formula applied was:

$$\% \ variation \ = \ \left(\frac{coef \text{ with no moderator variable} - coef \text{ with moderator variable}}{coef \text{ with no moderator variable}} \right) \times 100$$

When a variable reaches these moderating values, it is shown in bold in Tables 4 and 5. All the statistical tests were run on R software.

Results

Correlation between 'News Finds Me' perception and News Externalising

The correlation between 'News Finds Me' perception and News Externalising did not reach statistical significance (0.0827) with a 95% trust rate of (-0.0657, 0.2311) (see Figure 1).
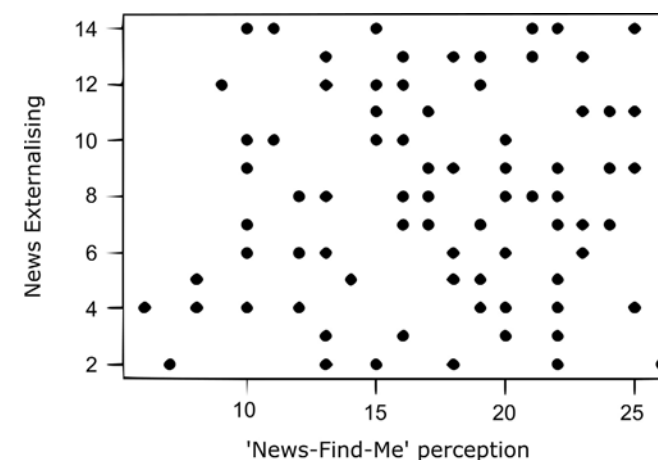

Figure 1: Relationship between News Externalising and 'News Finds Me' perception

Source: Own processing

Uses & Gratifications were measured in accordance with previous studies.[40] Thus, each item was constructed as the sum of independent Likert-type questions (1 = lowest agreement, 7 = highest agreement), as shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Measurements for Uses & Gratifications of social media use

Information Seeking (α = 0.9)	I can get a large amount of information quickly and easily.
	I can get useful information.
	I can get information at a lower cost.
	I can get information that I am interested in.
	I can use it to collect information for future use.
	I can learn a lot.
Social Interaction (α = 0.912)	I can get information about my friends.
	I can communicate and interact with my friends.
	I can show concern and support to my friends.
	I can get opinion and advice from my friends.
	I can express my ideas and advice to friends.
Impression Management (α = 0.91)	I can meet new people.
	I can feel connected.
	I can make others like me.
	I can make others think I am socially attractive.
	I can make others think I am competent.
	I can make others think I am friendly.

Source: GAO, Q., FENG, C.: Branding with Social Media: User Gratifications, Usage Patterns, and Brand Message Content Strategies. In Computers in Human Behavior, 2016, Vol. 63, No. 1, p. 875.

In accordance with previous research,[41] news internalising and news externalising were determined through the sum of the responses to the Likert-type scales (1 = never, 7 = every day), as shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Measurements for News Internalising and News Externalising

News Internalising (α = 0.687)	How often do you get news on SNSs?
	How often do you receive news links from news organisations?
	How often do you receive news links from other individuals?

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40   See: GAO, Q., FENG, C.: Branding with Social Media: User Gratifications, Usage Patterns, and Brand Message Content Strategies. In *Computers in Human Behavior*, 2016, Vol. 63, No. 1, p. 868-890.
41   See: CHOI, J., KOOK-LEE, J.: Investigating the Effects of News Sharing and Political Interest on Social Media Network Heterogeneity. In *Computers in Human Behavior*, 2015, Vol. 44, No. 1, p. 258-266.

42   For more information about similar studies on communication, see: CHYI, H. I., YANG, M. J.: Is Online News an Inferior Good? Examining the Economic Nature of Online News among Users. In *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, 2009, Vol. 86, No. 3, p. 594-612.
43   For more information about similar studies in other disciplines, see: KAUFMAN, A. R. et al.: Smoking-related Health Beliefs and Smoking Behavior in the National Lung Screening Trial. In *Addictive Behaviors*, 2018, Vol. 84, No. 1, p. 27-32.

Of all the considered variables, News Internalising played the strongest moderating role, followed by "Information Seeking" Use & Gratification (see Table 4). The rest of the Uses & Gratifications unrelated to information consumption, such as Social Interaction and Impression Management, had a much weaker moderating influence.

Table 4: Moderator variables measured for the relationship between 'News Finds Me' perception and News Externalising

Ordinal regression	95% CI. lower	95% CI. upper	% Change	Moderating variable
0.0827	-0.0657	0.2311		
-0.0278	-0.1799	0.1243	133.6155	Information Seeking
0.0209	-0.1301	0.1718	74.7279	Social Interaction
0.0424	-0.1131	0.1979	48.7304	Impression Management
-0.0758	-0.2134	0.0618	191.6566	News Internalising

Source: Own processing

Correlation between 'News Finds Me' perception and News Internalising

The simple linear regression model applied to the correlation between 'News Finds Me' perception and News Internalising reached statistical significance (0.3459) with a 95% trust rate of (0.1760, 0.5158). This means that with each point rise in 'News Finds Me' perception, News Internalizing rises 0.3459 points (see Figure 2).
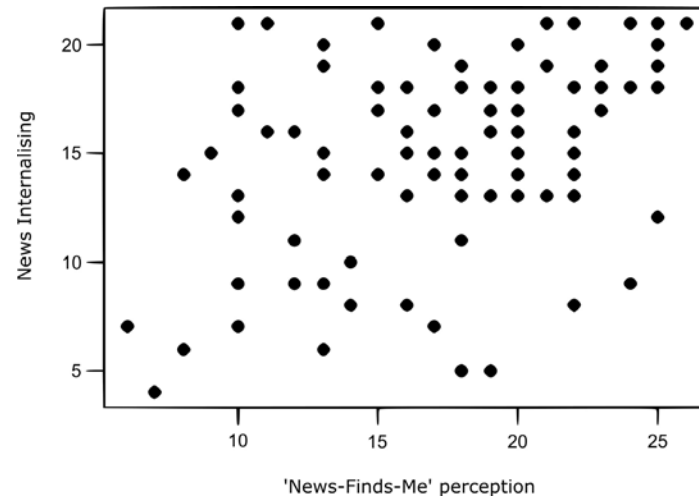

Figure 2: Relationship between News Internalising and 'News Finds Me' perception

Source: Own processing

As happened previously with News Externalising, all of the considered Uses & Gratifications acted as moderating variables, each one producing changes higher than 10% (see Table 5). Once again, the most significant changes were produced by the "Information Seeking" Use & Gratification.

Table 5: Moderator variables measured for the relationship between 'News Finds Me' perception and News Internalising

Linear coeff.	95% CI. lower	95% CI. upper	% Change	Moderating variable
0.3459*	0.1760	0.5158		
0.1603*	0.0011	0.3196	53.6571	Information Seeking
0.2493*	0.0823	0.4162	27.9271	Social Interaction
0.2773*	0.1023	0.4523	19.8323	Impression Management
0.2962*	0.1499	0.4426	14.3683	News Externalising

Source: Own processing

These results revealed an asymmetrical relationship between News Externalising, News Internalising and 'News Finds Me' perception. Or at least, this data shows that the considered factors were not related among themselves with the same intensity. News Externalising exerts the lowest moderating influence between 'News Finds Me' and News Internalising, contrary to what happened with the relationship between News Internalising and 'News Finds Me'.

Discussion

Research on reciprocity and news sharing indicates that users expect their peers to share news items among their network of contacts to feel integrated in their social groups.[44] This finding led us to validate the correlation between the 'News Finds Me' perception and the frequency of news sharing on social media. Our results, however, showed no relationship between the importance given to social media as a method of news discovery ('News Finds Me' Perception and News Externalising).

Yet, this difference might be explained by the qualitative method adopted in the research by Goh et al.[45] in contrast to the quantitative approach we used to obtain our results. Moreover, the different kinds of communities where sharing takes place could also explain these conflicting findings. Goh et al. focused on specific, private communities, unlike our survey, which studied users' sharing habits on social media in general, with no specification of any particular kind of community.

The difference in the results suggests that the structure and composition of online communities warrant special attention to explain news discovery and social media news sharing habits. Users do not behave in the same way in public or semi-public communities as they do in private or semi-private groups, in the so-called dark social web.[46]

Of all the considered Uses & Gratifications, "Information Seeking" exerts the strongest moderating effect over the influence of the 'News Finds Me' perception, which means that news consumption is mostly guided by informational rewards, both in its internalising and externalising aspects. Socially driven motivations, such as "Impression Management" or "Social Interaction", play a secondary role; at least when moderating the effects of the 'News Finds Me' perception.

All of this suggests that the influence of the 'News Finds Me' perception on media habits is more susceptible to information seeking attitudes than to socially oriented gratifications. The 'News Finds Me' perception has been related to lower expectations of news quality standards among users.[47] Given these concerns, the relevance of those information seeking attitudes should be taken into account when addressing educational issues and designing policies to buffer the effect of the 'News Finds Me' perception.

44   See: GOH, D. et al.: News Sharing as Reciprocal Exchanges in Social Cohesion Maintenance. In *Information, Communication & Society*, 2017, Vol. 20, No. 1, p. 1128-1144.
45   See: GOH, D. et al.: News Sharing as Reciprocal Exchanges in Social Cohesion Maintenance. In *Information, Communication & Society*, 2019, Vol. 20, No. 1, p. 1128-1144.
46   See: SWART, J., PETERS, C., BROERSMA, M.: Shedding Light on the Dark Social: The Connective Role of News and Journalism in Social Media Communities. In *New Media & Society*, 2018, Vol. 20, No. 11, p. 4329-4345. [online]. [2019-02-22]. Available at: <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/1461444818772063>.
47   See: SPOHR, D.: Fake News and Ideological Polarization. In *Business Information Review*, 2017, Vol. 34, No. 3, p. 150-160.

In line with precedent studies,[48] our study found new evidence to support a relationship between news internalising and news externalising habits beyond being merely correlated habits. The findings presented above seem to corroborate that these two habits (news internalising and news externalising) are deeply interlinked; namely, they influence each other mutually on social media attitudes. In addition, news internalising and news externalising can moderate the influence of third factors in news consumption and dissemination on social media; in this case that factor was the 'News Finds Me' perception. Thus, news externalising has a slight moderating role over the influence of the 'News Finds Me' perception, which in turn has an influence over news internalising. Yet, news internalising is the strongest moderating factor that influences the 'News Finds Me' perception over news externalising.

This data is consistent with the main finding, that the 'News Finds Me' perception is correlated with news internalising, but not with news externalising. This finding implies that these news consumption habits can influence each other, but they have weak links with news sharing habits such as news externalising.

Limitations and Further Research

In spite of the relevance of the findings exposed in the previous section, the data presented by this study refer to some limitations which should be considered when interpreting the results. First, Cronbach's α measurement of News Internalising and 'News Finds Me' perception, ranging from 0.6 to 0.7, was below the ideal value, although it qualifies them as acceptable constructs.[49]

It must also be cautioned that the limited number of participants might reduce the generalisation of the results for the Spanish scenario. Thus, the results and conclusions should be strictly extrapolated to undergraduate students. Surveys on other sociodemographic sectors such as adults or teenagers might show different trends and dynamics.

Similarly, the participants in our study had a similar cultural precedence, as they are all Spanish. Given that culture also plays a significant role in social media use[50] cross-cultural replication studies might help to better understand how different cultural backgrounds influence the relationship among the surveyed items.

The current study did not consider psychological aspects, which are a common factor considered alongside Uses & Gratifications when studying media effects.[51] Psychological features and constructs, such as the big five personality traits[52] might help to enhance our research model.

Conclusions

The results imply that the mere presence of the 'News Finds Me' perception does not encourage news sharing behaviour. In this sense, we suggest that personal beliefs on reciprocity[53] might help to explain this relationship. Future studies should incorporate this construct into their model for a better approach to the question at hand.

Furthermore, this research expands the Media Attendance Theory by linking it to the Folk Theories of Distributed Discovery, which demonstrates that the 'News Finds Me' perception, understood as a folk theory

of news discovery, is correlated with news consumption practices, specifically with news internalising. Further research should be extended to other 'folk theories' such as "I don't know what to believe" or "I can Google it",[54] to evaluate how they affect news consumption habits (internalising and externalising) on social media.

As mentioned above, users behave differently depending on the nature and structure of the community with which they interact. For instance, people are more reluctant to share messages when they perceive that their networks and contacts would disagree with the content or the ideas expressed in such messages.[55] On the contrary, when users perceive that others in their social network agree with their opinions, they engage much more frequently in online conversations.[56] Future research then could expand on this question by adopting the concept of "imagined audience"[57] and exploring how the individual's perception of their peers on social media affects their news consumption habits (news internalising and news externalising) in these environments. The findings of this study might be relevant to media companies, which are increasingly dependent on digital intermediaries, such as social media platforms like *Facebook*, which allow users to consume content without visiting the publisher's website. This landscape changes how news is distributed, produced and funded.[58]

Understanding the processes of how and why users share media content on such platforms is vital in the current media environment. This work sheds some light in this regard and points towards new directions for research. Moreover, when *Facebook* changed its algorithm in 2018 it prioritised posts written and shared by users while reducing the visibility of content on the users' news feeds posted by companies, including media companies. This new situation makes this kind of research even more meaningful.

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