The literary influencer through YouTube: analysis of its communication strategy

El influencer literario a través de YouTube: análisis de la estrategia comunicativa

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Abstract

A new literary prescriber has recently emerged in the digital environment, the BookTuber. The objective of this article is to determine the communication strategy of this new figure. Through the identification of 10 relevant BookTubers in Spain, we analyze the organizational structure of the information, their social network strategy and the video content that get more visits and interaction. The results show that a structure of content that follows a similar pattern can be identified in the studied cases. The results also identify what contents are more relevant, allowing to establish a first conceptual framework on the content and communication strategies in social networks to impact a young target audience and promote the taste for reading.

KEYWORDS

BookTubers, young, influencers, *reading, internet social networking.*

Resumen

Surge en el entorno digital la figura del booktuber. El nuevo prescriptor digital literario en la red. El objetivo de este trabajo busca conocer la estrategia de comunicación de esta nueva figura. Identificando los 10 booktubers más relevantes en España, se analiza la estructura organizativa de la información, qué contenido consigue más visitas e interacción, así como la estrategia en sus redes sociales. Los resultados muestran que se puede identificar una estructura de contenidos, e identifica los más relevantes, pudiéndose establecer un primer marco de carácter conceptual sobre estrategias de comunicación que impacten en un público joven en donde se consiga fomentar el gusto por la actividad lectora.

PALABRAS CLAVE

Booktubers, jóvenes, influencers, lectura, redes sociales.

1. INTRODUCCIÓN

Nowadays, social networks have been established as the preferred channel for young people to interact, stay informed about current events and share or generate content. Many sources confirm the penetration data of social networks and the frequency of interaction of this audience in the digital environment (AIMC, IAB, The Cocktail Analysis, 2015).

In this sense, Ravettino (2015) points out that ICT and specifically the use of the Internet is promoting new practices and approaches to the world of literature and reading in particular. In the same context, Urresti (2008) refers to these virtual spaces where a connection is established between young people and where content is shared and generated. He calls this phenomenon "juvenile cybercultures".

In this digital universe, one of the communities with the largest audience has been consolidated with more than one billion users: YouTube. And it is precisely under the protection of this network that a new figure known as BookTuber generates content. These are people of different ages, mostly young readers, who post comments about books on the web. This new figure stands as a possible new opinion leader whose main purpose is to share the pleasure of reading with a recognizable and plain language. Most of them are young teenagers that speak in front of a camera giving a personal opinion about the books they read.

The studied phenomenon acquires double relevance as an object of analysis. First, due to the importance of supporting the promotion of reading from the education sector and public administration, this is a key aspect in the edu-

cation of future generations. Second, the social reality before us reveals changes in access to reading in generations of young Spaniards. According to data from the Ministry of Culture, only 4,500 young people between 15 and 24 years of age read a book in the last year (MECD, 2015).

The main and specific objective of the work are described below. It offers a first approach to the emerging figure of a new influencer, the BookTuber, as a new literary prescriber and as a possible key figure in the development of a communication strategy that seeks the promotion of reading. Therefore, it is a matter of deepening the analysis of the structure and content of this new profile as a figure that promotes the habit of reading among an adolescent audience that usually manifests disagreement with the reading habit (Pindado, 2003).

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 THE FIGURE OF THE INFLUENCER IN THE DIGITAL CONTEXT

The use of social networks by some users as an environment to share content of interest to a large number of followers has led to the figure of the influencer. Behind this phenomenon there is a process of social influence that can be interpreted from the classic communication model of Katz and Lazerfield (1966) on opinion leaders, but it should be adapted to a new scenario. Mason, Corren and Smith (2007) propose a redefinition of the processes of interpersonal influence taking into account the context of occurrence and a broad temporal perspective. The influencers would have social networks on the Internet as a scenario, a very open space with many more possibilities of personal inter-

connection compared to spaces of interpersonal relationships. At the same time, processes of interpersonal influence emerge, such as the perceived similarity, credibility or authority of the source. It is necessary to add the phenomena of Internet networks, such as the processes of influence that emerge through the closest or related individuals, the structuring of networks around groups with similar interests and social validation based on the number of followers.

The appearance of a community around the literary world where books are discussed on the YouTube platform is what has been called BookTuber and can be studied from this perspective of influence as a particular case of the influencer. The reach of interpersonal influence through social networks is supported by the IAB (2015). According to their latest data, 36% of Spaniards declare that they use the Internet to follow influencers. This use has the third place in the ranking of Internet activities.

The BookTuber phenomenon has its origin in the United States. While some sources put the appearance of these users in 2012 (Bluemagazine, 2016), other authors such as Goldfield (2015) consider their start in the video blog called "Vlog brother" created by two American brothers that currently have 3 million subscribers. As of 2013, it mainly extended to Mexico, Argentina, Chile, Peru and Colombia. In 2014, the first figures of BookTubers begin to emerge in Spain. These literary influencers make book reviews on their YouTube channels and share it with others. Most of the profiles studied meet the following criteria: most are women, adolescents, read books on topics directed to their age and almost all have made some review about the books of the Harry Potter saga. At the time of producing the content, they record themselves in video where they present comments on the books they read. They usua-

lly have high mastery of multimedia and the content is fun and addictive.

2.2. YOUNG PEOPLE, READING AND SOCIAL NETWORKS

Reading has always been such a natural exercise in adults that we tend to forget the time it took us to acquire this habit. There is also a tendency to believe that the reading habit always develops in the same way without taking into account the changes produced by the technological development in which we find ourselves (Vandendorpe, 2011).

The dynamics of the literary market, which is in a moment of expansion, joins this belief. The publication of works grows; however, this phenomenon has not been accompanied by a similar movement in the number of average readings per person. More books are published exponentially than the reading activity grows. It could be said that this phenomenon is due to the emergence of new means of expression and more effective spaces from the communicative point of view (Cordón, 2016).

In addition, there are various public and private sources that collect data related to the appearance of these new digital spaces and analyze the participation of young Spaniards in social networks. These confirm the dimension of the interactive phenomenon in this population sector. These data will help us to understand the rise of figures like the BookTuber in digital media.

The population segments between 16 and 24 years old and between 25 and 34 years old are the most frequent Internet users with 96.2% and 89.9%, respectively. The figures for the use of social networks are even higher in the same segments, reaching 98.5% among young people aged 16 to 24 years and 96% among users between 25 and 34 years old (ONTSI, 2015).

According to The Cocktail Analysis (2015), the penetration of Internet users in social networks has been stable since 2011. 90% have at least one active profile in a social network and each user maintains an average of 2.3 active accounts. Another aspect of interest that the study provides is the change that is taking place in the interaction between the user and the social network where a more immediate, frequent and shallow model is imposed.

A reflection of this is the use of icons and the actions of retweeting or giving a like/favorite, which have a bigger perception of value for the user along with the greater consumption of audiovisual content. In this sense, it is worth highlighting the universal use of YouTube as a social network that has become a satellite platform that provides content to other social networks.

If we analyze the activity of these young people in the web (ONTSI, 2015) the following stand out: participate in social networks, download software, consult wikis and searches related to education or training.

Another important aspect in understanding what makes a publication more attractive for this audience is their perception of content as authentic (43%), relevant (32%) and transparent (23%) (Elite Daily's; Millennial Branding, 2015).

All these data corroborate that social networks have become an active space for encounter and content consumption, where users frequently generate, share and comment on topics. Within this profile, it is interesting to see the distinction between two types of behavior. The behaviors of a proactive user and a passive user. Understanding that an active user writes at least one post every week, comments or responds to others, shares links, uploads photos,

etc. While the passive user reviews emails, watches videos, listens to music, etc.

3. OBJECTIVES

Recent studies on the phenomenon of this new influence profile have identified formal aspects of the language used in their critical discourse on the literary content of the books they recommend. In this sense, it is worth mentioning the study conducted by Beatriz Domínguez (Domínguez, 2016), which highlights aspects such as the close and familiar language (such as they were addressing a friend), the use of wild-card phrases, the lack of depth in the analysis, the control of body language in front of the camera, etc. Important aspects that help us to understand the formal aspects of the phenomenon of influence and connection in young people, but that leave aside the analysis of other variables that complement knowledge about the success of certain contents over others.

This research focuses on the analysis of these variables based on the main objective of determining the content strategy developed by BookTubers, taking into account their organizational structure.

The study is limited to the most popular BookTubers in Spain that publish their contents in Spanish.

4. METHODOLOGY

This descriptive study on the structure and content generated by this new literary prescriber used non-probabilistic sampling, delimiting the universe of study to the most relevant cases in Spain. The study was limited to the 10 BookTubers with the largest number of subscribers in their channels until the completion of the field study. The analysis was conducted from November 2016 to January 2017. For the analysis of content, an average of 50/60 videos were reviewed in each channel.

The objectives sought in this work revolve around the following points:

- Analyze how they structure the contents in their channel.

- Determine the networks linked to their YouTube channels.

- Conduct a content analysis of the videos that generated a greater number of views and interactions.

The BookTubers selected from the data provided by Marquina (2016) are: (Table 1)

A worksheet capable of collecting first-hand data through navigation in each of the profiles was designed to analyze the structure. The application allowed to determine the date of creation of the channel, the linked networks and the number of subscribers.

Content analysis seeks to find the meaning of the video with the greatest number of visualizations. This analysis seeks to reveal what underlies and the unpublished message (Raigada, 2002). (Table 2)

Table 1. Classification of BookTubers based on number of followers.

BookTuber Name	Followers*
1. El coleccionista de mundos	190.763
2. Javier Ruescas	170.805
3. Fly like a butterfly	165.674
4. Andreo Rowling	112.500
5. May R Ayamonte	90.287
6. LibrosPorLeer	76.728
7. Never be Hopeless	74.998
8. Nube de palabras	73.944
9. MartitaraBookVlogs	58.092
10. Little Red Read	42.235

Number of followers up to January 2017

Table 2. Content analysis worksheet

Worksheet	
Date of creation of the channel	
Linked social networks	
Number of followers	
Highest number of views	
Content of the most visited video	
Number of interactions	

5. RESULTS

The analysis of the content structure of the studied cases reveals a great convergence in the number of sections created and how they are called. It emphasizes the use, in almost all the cases, of Anglicisms to classify them. The sections and what they represent under each denomination are described below:

· TBR o "to be read": short pieces where they announce what they are going to read.

· "Book hauls": content that is made at the end of the month about the books read in that period with a brief explanation of why they bought it.

· "Book Review": Booktubers express their opinion on a book with an informal tone, what they liked most or least.

· "Book tags": they develop questions to suggest books that deal with the same topic.

· "Wrap up": pieces of short duration where they comment the experience with the books read.

· "Unboxing": they seek to create expectation in this section since the content revolves around showing the book they have acquired without opening it.

· "Questions and answers" section: videos where they respond to questions that their followers send them.

· "Book shelf tours": it is the most sporadic video since the content revolves around showing the libraries with the books they bought over the months.

The analysis of the channel of the BookTuber taking the content with more views as reference, allows us to determine what topic and structure of message is being more attractive. For this purpose, we have developed some worksheets that include the profile of the BookTuber and the basic data of the analyzed pieces.

5.1. GENERAL CONTENT

(Table 3). The BookTuber "El coleccionista de mundos" has the largest number of followers at the time of this analysis. The piece that has achieved the greatest number of visualizations in its channel is not related to any book review but focuses on exposing what is reported when

reading, that is, the benefits of reading from an emotional level. A text with motivating and inspiring short messages appears through a simple succession planes of image, accompanied by library music. The piece barely reaches the 4 minutes of duration, which facilitates its visualization. (Table 3)

5.2. HUMORISTIC CONTENT

(Table 4). In the case of Javier Ruescas, the video with more visualizations is of a humoristic type and is related to a literary character, Harry Potter. Other BookTubers are added to the video, which he invites to know at the end of the piece. The content follows the easy-humor type of videos that work well on the web, with the ability to relate it to a character from the literary world and to a scene from the Harry Potter movie. There are more pieces of this type in his channel that have reported a large number of views. (Table 4)

5.3. CONTENT BY LITERARY GENRE

"Fly like a butterfly" and "Andreo Rowling" are the two BookTubers that are part of this classification. The first presents a ranking of her 10 favorite romance books. The second focuses on the recommendation of the Harry Potter fantasy saga, of which she claims to be an active fan. In both cases, the type of the recorded piece is simple and they address their audience in a simple and close language, typical of adolescents or young people (Table 5)

5.4. SUGGESTION FOR SIMILARITY CONTENT

The last case analyzed is distinguished from the rest by not focusing on any gender but by basing the recommendation on the "empathy" of the book. The BookTuber speaks to the ca-

Table 3. Content analysis worksheet

Worksheet of "El coleccionista de mundos"	
Date of creation of the channel	September 1, 2012
Linked social networks	Facebook, Instagram, Google+, Twitter
Number of followers	190.763
Highest number of views	206.545 views
Content of the most visited video	Why read?
Number of interactions	372 comments

Table 4. Content analysis worksheet

Worksheet of "Javier Ruescas"	
Date of creation of the channel	September 1, 2012
Linked social networks	Facebook, Instagram, Google+, Twitter
Number of followers	170.805
Highest number of views	206.545 views
Content of the most visited video	Harry Potter dragees Challenge
Number of interactions	356 comments

Table 5. Content analysis worksheet

Worksheet of "Fly like a butterfly"	
Date of creation of the channel	March 25, 2010
Linked social networks	Facebook, Instagram, Google+, Twitter
Number of followers	165.674
Highest number of views	550.308 views
Content of the most visited video	Young adult romance books
Number of interactions	667 comments

mera and shows the book that she liked and the book that by theme approaches this by similarity of plot and content. The criticism she makes differs from the press literary criticism. She simply highlights the moments that most hooked her from the story or the characters, always using plain and simple language.

Table 6. Content analysis worksheet

Worksheet of "Andreo Rowling"	
Date of creation of the channel	October 14, 2012
Linked social networks	Facebook, Instagram, Google+, Twitter
Number of followers	112.500
Highest number of views	202.063 views
Content of the most visited video	My Harry Potter collection
Number of interactions	589 comments

Table 7. Content analysis worksheet

Worksheet of "May R Ayamonte"	
Date of creation of the channel	June 5, 2011
Linked social networks	Facebook, Instagram, Google+, Twitter
Number of followers	90.287
Highest number of views	179.365 views
Content of the most visited video	Book recommendation, "if you like this … you'll like …"
Number of interactions	480 comments

6. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The results of this initial study on the incipient phenomenon of the profile of the BookTuber manifest the consolidation of this new influencer in the universe of social networks. These young readers, far from becoming literary critics as we know them today, seek to transmit the passion they have for reading by commenting on the latest titles they have acquired and giving a close and very personal view of their reading. With a frequency of at least one video per week, they share everything they read, when they read it and how they read it.

In general, the communicative opportunity offered by YouTube channels makes it easy to share and follow the generation of content. The dissemination strategy followed by these BookTubers to achieve a greater number of visualizations is to share each new video at the same time in the linked social networks. All the analyzed cases use the following platforms: Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and Google+; always having the YouTube platform as the content generating source.

The number of followers, although distant from other consolidated youtubers in this great social network, begins to have interesting figures of subscribers and content views. Something that is being undoubtedly used by some publishers in the launch of some titles. But above all, it will have to be taken into account by the public administration and the Ministry of Education as a key means to establish their communication strategy on the need to achieve a change in the tendency of reading habits towards which the youngest audience is heading today.

Although this study reflects the analysis of a first exploratory phase, conclusions can already be drawn about the classification of its tree

of contents clearly inspired by the Anglo-Saxon BookTubers. The model seems settled but humorous content as the analyzed in the case of Javier Ruescas makes us think of a strategy that, following other YouTube content, becomes the most shared.

Finally, it is worth mentioning the persuasive communication tone used by these influencers. Their language is based on a direct, simple, honest, flat and always passionate tone that approaches and impacts the consumption target of the social network. This tone and the authenticity of the commentaries on the literary works, will surely make them gain credibility in their discourse and will be reflected in the number of followers, an aspect that confirms the studies mentioned throughout the article.

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