

CSIC inquiry tests visual intelligence through Facebook

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A team of researchers from the Spanish National Research Council (CSIC) have developed a web application to test the visual intelligence of Facebook users through the social network. The new platform will enable researchers to test different cognitive skills and to obtain large amounts of data that determine what parameters affect the brain's visual capacity.

Any Facebook user can download this application (available in both Spanish and English languages), which consists of different tests for measuring visual intelligence and calculation ability.

Gonzalo García de Polavieja, CSIC researcher and head of the enquiry who works for Cajal Institute states: "It is the first time that we use a social network for a cognitive research. This will enable us to obtain large amounts of information on the cognitive capacity of Internet users worldwide. Once we collect that information, we will analyze it in order to obtain innovative models and results on visual ability".

Surveying visual ability

The application, programmed in PHP and Javascript, is presented as a simple game with a maximum duration of three minutes. Before participants start answering, they are asked for permission to use their profile and basic personal information, such as age or place of birth. After obtaining their consent, the startup screen appears and game rules

are presented.

CSIC researcher and tool developer Ángel Carlos Román specifies: "Then, two types of games start. Firstly, participants are asked to estimate, for instance, how many pencils can be seen in a specific figure. Then, they are also asked to estimate which of two choices has the largest number of pencils. Furthermore, some of these games can collect social information, such as the number of people that have chosen a specific answer".

Once they have answered all the questions, the program estimates the score on the basis of their correct answers and responding time. The result appears in a list, with all users' results, and below the application suggests that the user invites his friends to participate in the game too.

The generated data will be stored in a text file hosted in an external server of CSIC. According to the researchers, "the results will help us to determine what factors (time, social information, or age) affect the visual ability. This analysis will enable us to illustrate a model of these kinds of answers in human beings".

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