




Report: Mobile phones and video are increasingly important in young people's education

March 2 2023





Digital content consumption trends

The UOC has undertaken a study of how younger generations consume digital content. We found the following trends to be relevant:


1. Context trends

<p>The attention economy is taking over</p> <p>In a digital world that contains too much information, attention is the user's main filter when selecting information.</p> 	<p>Digital presence and influence are commodified</p> <p>Surveillance capitalism fosters hyperconnection, virtualization and the monetization of digital relationships.</p> 	<p>Digital consumption affects young people's mental health</p> <p>Marketing strategies take advantage of the increasing pathologies among young people resulting from technological exposure.</p> 
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2. Trends among new students

<p> Sociocultural environments determine consumption models</p> <p>Age, social class and leisure habits influence the ability to absorb knowledge.</p>	 <p>Generation Z prefers devirtualization</p> <p>The differences between Generation Z and Generation Y show that without experience there is no digital autonomy.</p>
 <p>The way people are taught to consume is crucial</p> <p>Digital formats lead to mind wandering, while paper facilitates concentration.</p>	 <p>Immediacy takes priority over quality</p> <p>The instant generation confuses "doing it well" with "doing it quickly"</p>

3. Trends in the new teaching model

<p>The teacher takes on a new role in educational ecosystems</p> <p>Young people prefer deinstitutionalization, reintermediation and socialization in teaching.</p> 	<p>The end of spontaneity in learning models</p> <p>The division of content and the fragmentation of the range of teaching created by digitalization ends ramifications and reflection.</p>	<p>Infotainment and gamification increase engagement</p> <p>Newsjacking, realism and proximity as a means of attraction</p> 
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Credit: Universitat Oberta de Catalunya

A study by the eLearning Innovation Center (eLinC) at the Universitat Oberta de Catalunya (UOC), in partnership with Accenture, has provided an overview of the main trends in how young people consume digital content. The results show that the mobile phone is the primary tool for reading digital content for 70% of people aged between 14 and 35.

The report also points out that digital formats make this group more prone to distraction than paper, which is more conducive to concentration. "The future of digital content consumption," which is available in an open access format in the UOC repository, points out that, in a context of information overload, the only organizations that will thrive will be those that are able to capture users' attention.

This is not surprising: according to the data included in the study, humans' attention span has fallen from 12 to 8.2 seconds in 15 years. Likewise, tools such as mobile phones, which we consult more than 150 times a day, place our ability to concentrate under further stress.

"It's quite obvious that multitasking reduces our efficiency. However, at the same time we're also seeing that young people exercise considerable judgment when making a distinction between how to use different devices, formats and channels, depending on what they're doing or what they're trying to achieve," explained Guillem Garcia Brustenga, an expert in trend spotting and analysis at the eLinC, and the coordinator of the study.

More than 100 indicators

In the first phase of the study, the researchers analyzed 111 reference indicators for digital content in order to identify the factors which have an impact on consumption, understand macro trends, extract data about young people's behavior and understand the market logic behind educational content.

They found that the students who had the greatest difficulties in concentrating prefer content in video format for discovering or clarifying concepts. Digital content now plays a central role in young people's lives, in a context in which there is a clear trend towards monetization and virtualization: a third of them want to be influencers, and one in five think they could become a professional gamer.

Impact on health

The UOC study also highlights the impact of digital overexposure on this group's mental health: 20% of young people experience symptoms of insomnia, 40% say they go online to overcome feelings of loneliness, and 81% suffer from nomophobia (fear of being without their [mobile phone](#)). According to the experts consulted, these expanding pathologies are exploited by all kinds of organizations to attract greater numbers of young users through various marketing strategies.

Another important point is that the [digital content](#) consumption model differs widely among young people, and its determining factors cannot be understood without knowing their lifestyle. The young people with the best reading comprehension skills are those with high levels of education, who also have a more positive socio-[economic environment](#) and do more physical and leisure activities outside the home. "Age, social class and leisure habits determine an individual's ability to absorb

knowledge," said Garcia Brustenga.

Generational differences

In the second phase of the study, qualitative research was carried out by means of interviews with experts in education and psychology at the UOC and elsewhere, as well as with students in Spain and Mexico. This showed that not all generations of [young people](#) are the same.

Members of generation Z (born in the late 1990s and early 2000s) prefer physical rather than virtual interactions—78% of them believe that the teacher plays a very important role in their learning and development—while members of generation Y (born from the early 1980s to the late 1990s), who have been studying for years, are seeking the flexibility offered by self-directed and 100% digital formats. In general terms, there is also some polarization among students according to what they expect from their university: some settle for the minimum, while others are highly motivated.

"After the data have been analyzed and the macro trends have been identified, the results of this study will help the specialists at the eLinC and the rest of the UOC to continue towards optimizing digital education, focusing their research on new models, formats and content that provide sufficient motivation and seek to establish an emotional bond with the student," explained the director of the eLinC, Sílvia Sivera.

More information: Report: [The future of digital content consumption](#) (2022). Universitat Oberta de Catalunya, Accenture.

Provided by Universitat Oberta de Catalunya

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