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"BookTube: a tool to promote reading"

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Resumen: En el presente estudio se desarrollará un análisis de BookTube, una comunidad literaria de YouTube, con el propósito de investigar si es una herramienta útil para la promoción de la lectura. Exploraremos esta comunidad, que cuenta con gran contenido sobre literatura, que existe en muchísimos países y que gana cada día más seguidoras/es.

Palabras clave: literatura, BookTube, promoción de lectura, YouTube, redes sociales, siglo XXl, recursos literarios online, la juventud.

Summary: In this study an analysis over BookTube, a literary community inside YouTube, will be developed in order to investigate whether it is or nor a useful tool to promote reading. We will explore this community that has a lot of literary content, exists in many countries and gains more and more followers everyday.

Keywords: literature, BookTube, reading promotion, YouTube, social network, 21th century, online literary resources, young people.

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1. Introduction and subject matter

It is widely known that technologies and the Internet have had a great impact on people's lives. This is probably the reason why each generation is so different from the previous one and why the world is changing so fast lately. Technological advances have also made an impact on reading, readers and the literary world itself. Many changes have taken place at publishing houses and all over the literary market and this also has affected the way readers relate among themselves and the way the academia approaches the reading world.

One of the great impacts of technologies and the Internet has been the development of BookTube, a totally unknown reading community for the academia that has grown quite a lot in the past decade and that is a essential for publishing houses' marketing tools. BookTube, which lies on YouTube, has a important influence on teenagers and young people.
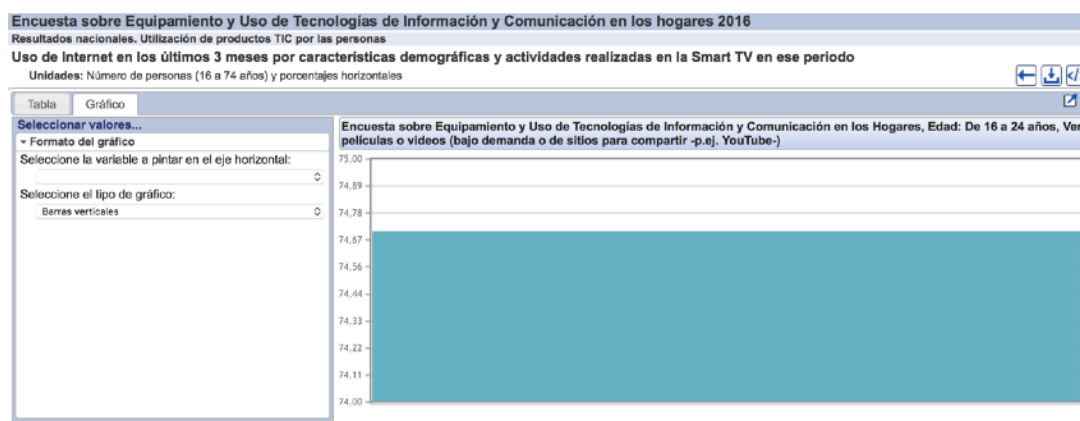
Therefore, it is a really interesting phenomenon and the fact that it has not been studied from academic spheres makes it even more attractive. There is a lack of information and academic approach it so it is difficult to study it. However, this circumstance is actually the main motivation for the present investigation, that is, I would like to explore BookTube from the academic sphere in my final degree project. Further on I will make an analysis of BookTube in order to get enough information to conclude whether it can be said to promote reading or not.

BookTube has many facets and it exists in many languages and countries around the world. Indeed, it is a tool used by public and private entities in order to encourage young people to read. Many readers rely on BookTube when selecting a new reading and this phenomenon has marked the difference in relation to how the reading promotion system worked long ago.

2. Subject justification

Choosing a topic to investigate is not easy when you are finishing a degree at university, and personally, I had several options in mind in relation to gender and literature, which is the area of study that I am really interested in. However, in spite of following a comfortable topic I decided to investigate about BookTube and reading promotion due to the lack of references and academic projects on this topic.

Before choosing this topic I searched for articles and academic references in order to get a conceptual basis and be able to write this study. In spite of that, I found myself really surprised as I could not find many references, although it is a really recent phenomenon that is mainly consumed by the youth. This fact was one of the factors that made me investigate about the impact that this online platform can have on teenagers. As it can be observed in the following graphic, in Spain in the last three months, 74% of the population between 16 and 24 years old has used YouTube and similar platforms to watch and share videos. This shows the obvious influence of YouTube on the youth and their need to use it as a tool in many aspects.

http://www.ine.es

Actually, I was one of the pioneer booktubers in Spain and I experienced its strong influence. I started to record videos promoting reading five years ago, being the only reader of my high school class who looked for a common space where sharing my reading interests. Nowadays I am considered one of the most important booktubers in

the world, not just in Spain. I have strong personal connections with this investigation and this leads me to analyze in a more academic way all those experiences I have seen during these years. I have found teenagers that did not consider themselves readers until they started to follow BookTube and became regular readers. I have met parents, teachers, ministers, librarians, publishing houses, editors, journalists, etc. They all have proved me that BookTube is an unknown and amazing tool to promote reading, and that there is just a need to write and investigate about it. Taking into account the following quote, it is easy to understand why booktubers' positive attitude towards reading help young readers,

> Research has repeatedly shown that motivation to read decreases with age, especially if pupils' attitudes towards reading become less positive… If children do not enjoy reading when they are young, then they are unlikely to do so when they get older. (The National Literacy Trust, 2014)

The study of BookTube could also give some light on the promotion of reading plans at more institutional levels, such as public education. Nowadays, promoting reading is one of the greatest challenges of the educational plans, teachers and even students. Creating a strategic reading promotion plan will build a stronger community inside high schools, as reading is also an important factor when building a sense of community among young people. Gaining a strong reading community in a school is a tool of integration as teenagers develop a lot of personal bonds when having common interests.

3. Objectives

The variety of possibilities in this investigation could be boundless, as there is not much information gathered. If we take into account that BookTube is a big area inside YouTube that does not just simply involve talking about books, but that it is also an interdisciplinary phenomenon that deals with many issues in relation to culture and young people, we would understand that it could be analyzed from many different points of views.

However, on this occasion all the aspects of BookTube related to reading promotion will be the central ones of this analysis, and, above all, its superficial characteristics, its classification and its main faces. This is a first academic approach to BookTube whose intention is to study the main ideas of the phenomenon while also trying to open lines of future investigation, because I will directly work with BookTube videos.

Taking into account all that was mentioned before and that there are not academic approaches to BookTube at any university (or at least there are not public investigations to which I could have access), the first objective coincides with the first step at any investigation: a recount of the available material. After that, and having discovered and studied it, a first line in relation to reading promotion could be drawn up. Studying BookTube contents, its relation with publishing houses and marketing, its activities outside YouTube, such as conferences and other reading promotion events, would be necessary.

Another objective would be to establish a relationship between BookTube content and the reading reality nowadays. Indeed, this investigation will not be a simple list of characteristics of the movement but an approach to a reading reality of the youth. Moreover, all these approaches would also help us understand the reading habits of the young people and their approaches to reading and literature. In conclusion, the main intention of this investigation is to prove whether BookTube is a tool to promote reading or not.

4. Methodology

In this project, the methodology that will be used is bibliographical and documental research. This strategy could be defined as a systematic and sequential process based on recollecting, selecting, classifying, evaluating and analyzing the content of the printed, empiric, graphic, physical or virtual material that will be used as theoretical, conceptual and methodological reference in our investigation.

The foundation of this technique is an operational strategy where realities will be observed, using a large variety of references. The technique consists in investigating, interpreting and presenting the data and information concerning our subject matter.

It is important to remark that, as in any investigation process, the search will be bound to the specific objectives of our project, "as they delimit each one of the operations and procedures that must be carried out to achieve its general objective"[1] (Rodríguez, 2013, my translation).

This type of investigation is characterized by the use of documents, its gathering, selection, analysis and presentation through a logical and mental process. It implies an adequate gathering of information that enables us to make a deeper analysis to rediscover facts, bring up problems, guide ourselves into other investigation references, look for interesting information and select adequate materials for form a theoretical framework (Rodríguez, 2013, my translation).

The essential steps to complete a research following Rodriguez (2013) will be:

1. In relation to our objectives and subject matter, define the type of necessary bibliographic references and documentaries. For this project monographs, theoretical approaches to the phenomena, articles, books, documentaries, theses, conferences or surveys will be used. Furthermore, taking into account the choice of subject matter, the main reference will be YouTube channels in relation to literature.

2. The second step will be to define our references with the development of their classification in relation to the function based on our

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[1] "en tanto que delimitan cada una de las operaciones y procedimientos que deben realizarse para alcanzar el objetivo general de ésta".

3. And thirdly, a register of references will be elaborated based on established regulations of APA that will be alphabetically listed at the end of this investigation.

The selection criteria of these references, following Rodríguez (2013), will be three:

- Belonging criteria, based on adaptation of references according to new knowledge, theories, concepts and experiences that will be useful to the investigation.

- Exhaustiveness criteria, which means that references will be, as it has already been said before, as many as possible, necessary for justifying this investigation.

- Current criteria, which implies that consulted references have to be up to date in order to assure that they reflect the latest progress of the discipline. For this project, due to the limited material, online articles and videos will be the main source of information. There is also a use of academic references as technical books that deal with the issue of the Internet and new media at education.

5. Theoretical framework

In order to understand and write about BookTube as a reading promotion tool we must also describe its theoretical framework. There are many concepts that should be understood to carry on with this investigation. First of all, there is a clear generational leap in relation to technology and the use of it. Technology and the social media itself is used differently depending on the generation as each generation has grown with different technological advances. In the case of the social media, the same effect takes place. Actually, according to Ramasubbu (2015), social media is another area where there is an age difference. Using the percentage of adults who use social media (72%), which is not that different from the youngsters (81%), he explains that there is a difference in the type of social media applications that is favored. He exposes that youngsters (teens and young adults) seem more prevalent in social media applications such as Facebook and Twitter while adults dominate Tumblr, Instagram and Pinterest while adults are largely passive or semi-active users of social media as seen in that adults typically add contacts only on request while adolescents actively seek new friendship.

As I mentioned before, there is a clear gap between the generation to which the reader belongs and his/her use of technology. This is the reason why I believe a theoretical framework is needed in order to narrow down the investigation. Thus, the theoretical framework of this study will be divided in several concepts that are detailed below.

YouTube

Since BookTube is a section that has its own space inside YouTube and its own characteristics, it would be interesting to define the latter. YouTube is an online platform to upload and share videos, and any user even without an account can have access to and use the website. For this reason, most of the contents of YouTube are created by amateurs, although there are also professional film makers that manage this tool regularly. YouTube is divided by content in different sections, although an user can consume contents from all the different sections. Content goes from wide issues such as

sports, lifestyle, cuisine, literature, culture, cinema…etc. to more specific issues, such as resolving specific problems or explaining the operating mode of an electrical appliance. YouTube was founded by Chad Hurley, Steve Chen and Jawed Karim in 2005 and acquired by Google in 2006 for USD $1.65 billion. Nowadays, YouTube is positioned as one of the most relevant platforms in Google and it has been the most important one for long time, located at the same level of social media platforms as Facebook. Many people professionally work at YouTube and it generates income through the positioning of advertisement at the videos that an user uploads to his/her channel. In order to be renowned at YouTube an user has to gain as many subscribers as possible, because YouTube lets users subscribe to channels so they can follow their content.

According to Lange (2014), "posting to YouTube is a choice from among other video-sharing options, each of which has ramifications on public negotiation of technical affiliations and identity associations". Most of the creators of content of the platform choose YouTube as the easiest and most comfortable way of creating online videos, and they upload from one to three videos every week in order to position themselves in the platform. The most renowned ones are the creators who started to develop a section inside the platform or at least were pioneers in the platform.

Having subscribers is the base to grow and develop a channel. Subscribers usually translate themselves into "likes", views and comments in the videos that a creator generates in their YouTube channel. There is a moment when all that engagement[2] starts to be monetary compensated from the advertisement of their videos and also from the campaigns that YouTube makes in their videos, advertising products in relation to their content.

BookTube

BookTube is one of the specific areas inside YouTube dedicated to a type of content that is narrowed down in order to provide users what they are looking for. BookTube is a section usually developed by young people, and specifically most of the creators of this section are from fifteen to thirty years old. BookTube refers to the specific community inside YouTube that creates literary content, and this area is

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[2] Engagement: type of measurement in the social media that usually takes into account likes, comments, views, sharing and any type of interaction between a content creator and their public.

dedicated to talk about books and any type of content related to literature. There are a lot of sections inside BookTube, and different types of videos that promote reading, create discussion in relation to books and develop a literary community with debates and a variety of opinions.

There would be a deeper and most detailed definition of BookTube later on in this investigation, but at this stage it was necessary to give this basic introduction of the term.

Social media

Defining the social media is not easy as they are changing everyday and every year statistics modify the perspective that was developed in relation to them. That is the reason why in this theoretical framework I will use the most current delimitation and definition.

According to Bryer and Zavatarro (2001), "social media are technologies that facilitate social interaction, make possible collaboration, and enable deliberation across stakeholders." These technologies now include blogs, wikis, media (audio, photo, video, text) sharing tools, networking platforms (including Facebook), and virtual worlds. Thus, for them, social media are different platforms that make users interact among them. They are normally used as a way to share part of their lives and to create specific communities for those who have common interests. Social media is really important when talking about BookTube, as most of its community uses social media as a communication channel between them and their subscribers. Readers nowadays use Instagram, Twitter, YouTube, Facebook and Goodreads as platforms to share their readings and opinions. Any booktuber must have all those social media in order to be in contact with their subscribers. Instagram is a platform just used with mobile phones as it is an App not designed for computers and its users share photos or short videos that last 24 hours. In Instagram there is a great integration of the book community by Bookstagram,[3] where a lot of booktubers and also bookstagramers share their readings

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[3] Bookstagram: A specific community inside Instagram whose profiles are completely dedicated to book photos or videos. There are not personal implications as creators' identity are never revealed. The connection between the creators and their followers is purely based on books' photos and not by their personal identity.
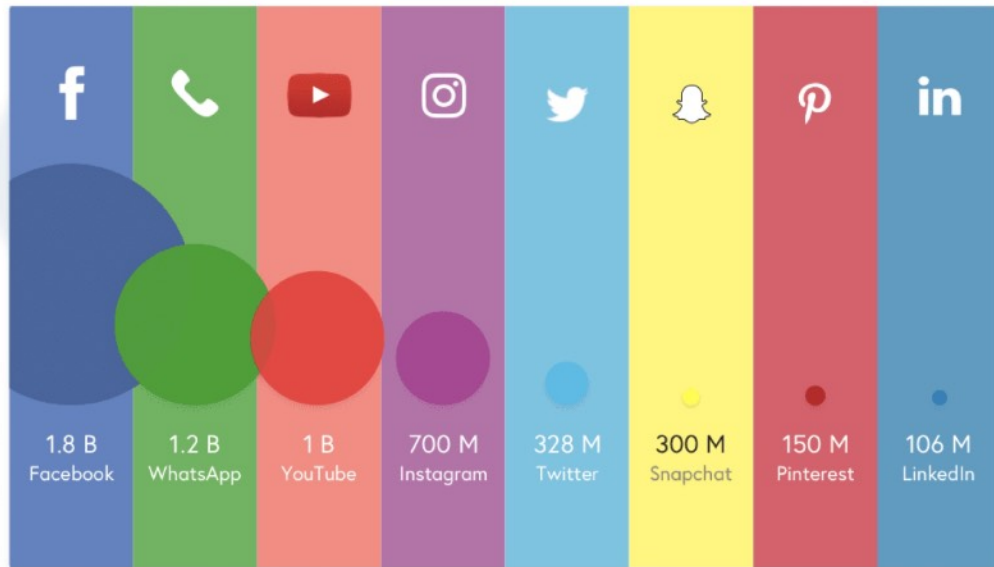
and opinions about books.

In the case of Twitter, which is a platform used to communicate short messages called "Tweets" where users can only write 280 characters, the book community is also integrated. There are many Twitter accounts dedicated to literature and the book community. In spite of the integration of literature in Twitter, booktubers have personal accounts in Twitter where they share their lives, not just their reading interests.

Facebook is also a tool used by the reading community as it has two different facets: personal accounts and Facebook pages. Although many booktubers have personal accounts in Facebook completely dedicated to their reading promotion activity, actually many of them use Facebook pages to share their videos and reading impressions.

Keeping on with the classification of social media that influence BookTube, Goodreads is probably the social platform mostly used by booktubers, bloggers and all the people that form the reading community. As defined in Wikipedia, Goodreads is a "social cataloging" website that allows individuals to search its database of books, annotations, and reviews. It explains that users can sign up and register books to generate library catalogs and reading lists and that they can also create their own groups of book suggestions, surveys, polls, blogs, and discussions. Goodreads is the social platform that was created for readers and that is used just by readers. Its users have public or private profiles as Facebook with the possibility of adding friends, they can share their readings, they can review books and even create their own online shelf with the books they have. Moreover, Goodreads also has the function of creating debates, groups, challenges… and more functions that make it the most used platform by readers. According to Furman (2015), Goodreads provides a social experience where readers can share their thoughts and ideas with others who have read the same book. Just to finish with the definition of social media, a statistic will be offered to think about the impact of social media in our world. This is based on the number of active users in each social media and Goodreads does not appear as it is a very specific social platform that is not used by billions of users as YouTube or Facebook, which is normal as it deals with a specific group of interest.

Number of monthly active users

| 1.8 B Facebook | 1.2 B WhatsApp | 1 B YouTube | 700 M Instagram | 328 M Twitter | 300 M Snapchat | 150 M Pinterest | 106 M LinkedIn |

https://www.juancmejia.com/marketing-digital/estadisticas-de-redes-sociales-usuarios-de-facebook-instagram-linkedin-twitter-whatsapp-y-otros-infografia

Influencers

A very controversial and not yet completely defined concept is that of "Influencers". This term is relatively new as this group of people really emerged two years ago, most of them coming from YouTube, others from Snapchat and a small part from Twitter. Although there is not an agreement when defining and limiting what an Influencer is, the reality is that nowadays Influencers exist, they are very important and they have a strong impact on society.

The concept Influencer could be defined as that person that developing a common interest as sports, music, culture, lifestyle, gaming, body positive…etc. creates an effect on their followers and influence people that are never near them. In other words, Influencers could not be people that influence their family, students or any person who is next to them. On the contrary, the influence is developed by social media. In relation to this investigation, the term Influencers may be introduced in our study, as many booktubers are nowadays also Influencers. This means that booktubers have an influence on their followers and not just in relation to books, but also to many other things.

Reading promotion

Reading promotion is the basis of this investigation and it is a really important concept as on it depends how much reading a society develops. Books and literature have to be promoted and reading promotion is a very wide exercise.

The promotion of reading could be defined as any action whose function is to stimulate society to read. It implies many specific actions, such as reading plans for primary and secondary education, the positioning of books in bookshops and even common spaces not linked to literature as the underground, squares, public spaces… with reading campaigns (usually developed and financed by public entities as town halls or the government itself) and even as BookTube videos.

There are different opinions in relation to what actions really promote reading and what do not. Indeed, BookTube and social media are still questioned by academic sections as not promoting reading, but this investigation will try to prove the contrary.

6. Development

6. 1. BookTube

There is a clear impact of technologies among young people due to the unstoppable growth of technologies and, specifically, the Internet. While generations before the appearance of the Internet had a vision of life that did not pass through screens and technological devices, nowadays generations' lives are totally influenced by those advances that have marked not just those generations but the entire world. This was explained by Bennet and Robards (2014), when they claim that "since the early 1990s the impacts of digital media have increasingly been felt among different parts of society in both the developed and, progressively, the developing world." As mentioned before, there is a clear gap between generations in relation to technology but, moreover, there are even clearer gaps between each generation that grows with more and more technological advances.

BookTube is a very recent phenomenon that appeared for the first time in February 2010. Since then, it has developed year by year, also changing its form. Nowadays BookTube is a very expanded community that takes form in many languages and that has representation in many countries. As a matter of fact, it has gained a large space in YouTube and it is highly valued outside YouTube.

The first booktuber was a Spanish literary blogger and Young Adult literature writer, Javier Ruescas, from the channel and the blog *Javier Ruescas.* Although the first BookTube video was uploaded to the platform by a Spanish creator, English ones did not stay behind, but when analyzing BookTube Spanish-speaking and English-speaking communities (as they appeared much before the Portuguese, French and the rest of them) it is interesting to check the pioneer ones. Thus, a differentiation must be underlined as although Javier Ruescas was the first booktuber, the English-speaking community emerged a couple of months later without any direct influence of the Spanish ones, as those pioneers from different countries did not have any contact between them and there is not any mark of influence. It is not complicated to come to this conclusion when watching pioneers from both languages as the content that they made in those first BookTube videos was completely different, but this will be deeply

commented further on.

Ruescas's experience is the one that sums up how BookTube appeared in YouTube as a community for the Spanish speakers. He had the literary blog commented before (although he also had several ones before as the Twilight official page or Laura Gallego's page) with different sections all related to literature (In my mailbox,[4] book's reviews[5] and Book Tags[6]). It was Ruescas who decided to upload a video to YouTube called "Javier Ruescas - 5º Video Blog (Los Juegos del Hambre)". This video was uploaded to be linked to one of the entries of his literary blog and actually that is the reason why the first name that he gave to this video was "Los juegos del hambre", which was a review for a section of his blog.

This experience is the one that represents the entire BookTube Spanish-speaking community, as all the pioneer booktubers were also bloggers who shared their videos in their blogs. As Ruescas, Esmeralda Verdú, Fa de las palabras de Fa, Raiza Revelles and Josu Diamond were also pioneers of the phenomenon in the Spanish community and they were also literary bloggers who decided to upload videos to YouTube as a complement of their blog. However, in the Spanish-speaking community the relationship between their BookTube channels and their literary blogs disappeared around 2013 and BookTube channels gained their own identity and importance to their creators, getting to be totally independent from the blogs they were attached to.

However, and as commented before, the Booktube English-speaking community emerged five months later than the Spanish-speaking one, which appeared without any influence from the previous one. This is clear when watching the first English-speaker booktuber –Christine Riccio from *PolandbananasBOOKS*– who uploaded the first BookTube video in English in June 2010. This video is completely different from the ones that the Spanish-speaking community uploaded as it is a booktalk about *The Short Second Life of Bree Tanner*, where she employs a different

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[4] In my mail box: also known as "IMM". It was a popular section in literary blogs that consisted on sharing photos of books that bloggers received from publishing houses or bought each month.

[5] Book Reviews: They were (and still are nowadays) sections of literary blogs where bloggers shared their opinions about a book that they had recently read with technical details of the book itself as the overview, the characters, the date of publication…

[6] Book Tags: specific challenges with questions related to books.

type of language than Ruescas in his book review. Moreover, Christine Riccio does not speak Spanish, which proves that she did not have any connection with Spanish-speaking booktubers. Riccio was the first English-speaking booktuber but other ones started to upload videos after her, following her lines as Booksandquills.

This is the reason why although English-speaking booktubers appeared later than the Spanish-speaking ones, they should also be considered pioneers, because they started and created the BookTube phenomenon in English. Further on there will be a characterization of both communities as due to the lack of communication between them, each one has developed in a similar but at the same time different way.

6. 1. 1. Characterization

Approaching how BookTube emerged on YouTube will help us characterize the movement. As commented before, both the Spanish-speaking community and the English one are different and developed differently. The starting point of this differentiation was also mentioned before, that is, they both started simultaneously without any contact between them and this means that each one developed in its way.

It is not easy to characterize BookTube as a whole, but in general terms it should be considered a literary movement inside YouTube whose creators are young people that usually are between 15 and 25 years old. It is true that there are exceptions of people who are below or over that age, but most of the booktubers comprise those ages.

BookTube is also characterized by the use of an accessible language and terminology in relation to literature. There are videos with names created by the community itself but we will see that in the following section. The terminology used by booktubers is accessible as it is characterized for being simple and of everyday use. Describing a book as if telling it to a friend makes the public of BookTube feel near and similar to the booktuber themselves, and this obviously facilitates a comfortable atmosphere that will make the audience be open to book recommendation.

As analyzed by Sullivan (2009), "Many of us love reading and express that love to children, but it is important to remember that communication is a two-way

street. It matters not only what we say but also what our listeners hear." Readers need to listen and hear things that connect with them. That is exactly the way booktubers communicate with their followers, that is, using an accessible language, common expression and simply transmitting what they feel and think about a book. Talking about feeling is a great characteristic of BookTube: booktubers do not have filters and they can recommend a book and describe it as the best reading they have made in years or in the same video, they talk about another reading giving it the worst mark and not recommending it. This sincerity and honesty is probably one of the key features of the BookTube community. Booktubers are also amateurs and they feel proud of that. They do not make videos about books as professional literary critics, and they do not give their opinion as categorically. However, they consider themselves readers that talk about books as any other reader could do, which positions them, again, near the rest of readers. Most of them also claim to be classic readers who love to read in paper instead of ebooks, which seems to be surprising as they belong to a generation that has grown with technologies and that uses technologies to share their reading opinions.

Moreover, another characteristic about BookTube is the fact that their creators mostly read Young Adult literature, which is the literature commonly read by the youth. This is a very important and curious characteristic about BookTube as they are expected by the critics to read classic or other genres, but they mostly read Young Adult literature and most of the books that are published every month (something that will be discussed below).

According to Sullivan (2009), "We must all create an environment where boys feel supported in their reading, and where reading itself is held up as a cultural value." Boys and girls need to start reading, they need a supportive environment and reading Sullivan, another characteristic of BookTube is clearly marked: the feeling of community that booktubers transmit in their videos. BookTube does not simply imply watching videos online about books, but also to be part of those videos commenting them and sharing your opinion. BookTube did not just create a platform for readers to record themselves talking about books, but also a strong reading community where subscribers of BookTube channels could also comment those videos starting or participating in discussions where most of the time the booktuber would also take part.

Creating a community where everyone can participate and discuss, where there is a feeling of support and friendship, is probably the most important characteristic in order to analyze if BookTube promotes reading.

6. 1. 2. Content division

Using the video as the format to create content always makes it easier for access and also for creating. Creating videos for YouTube can also be difficult as not everybody is prepared to transmit their feelings through a camera. Instead of writing in a blog or a reading platform as Goodreads, booktubers record themselves and upload it to YouTube. As Bennet and Robards (2014, 1) explained, "not surprisingly perhaps, young people have been fast to acquire digital media devices and incorporate them into their everyday lives."

The content that is created by booktubers varies from a language-speaking community to another. The English-speaking community is the one that does not follow specific sections (although sometimes they follow the classical ones) but that creates the same type of content as the French, Portuguese or Spanish ones. That is why a list of sections that booktubers develop seems necessary in order to understand better the community itself. So the type of videos that are created by BookTube are:

- Book Hauls: it is a common section, usually monthly uploaded to YouTube. It was based on bloggers' *In my mailbox* section explained before. Book Hauls are long videos (usually around 10 minutes) where booktubers show and talk about the books they have bought or received from publishing houses in the last month. It is a kind of video list where they talk about a lot of books just by showing their covers and giving some general lines about the plot, quickly moving into the next book they want to share with their public. This section has been received by the audience as a catalogue of books they can see in order to read them later if they are interested.

   For an example see: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pT_IaN4uqB0.

- Wrap up: it is also a very popular section, usually uploaded to YouTube every month. It is, as Book Hauls, a long video, where booktubers talk about all the

books they have read in that month. It is a video where the audience can find short books' reviews, as in this section booktubers explain their opinions about each book they read, giving details and at the end deciding whether they recommend it or not. As mentioned before, booktubers do not consider themselves literary critics but common readers giving their opinion about the book the read, so Wrap ups are videos where they express their opinion in a simple way using everyday language.

For an example see: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j8DCAjeJ2gQ.

▪ Reviews: this is probably the most characteristic section of BookTube and the one that has been more expected from booktubers. This type of videos consist in analyzing just one book during the whole video, giving details of the book itself and of the booktuber's opinion about it.

For an example seen: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4EL6QC50wOA.

▪ Book Tags and Challenges: this section is based on book games, where booktubers have a series of questions they answer with books. Book Tags and Challenges vary in the typology of questions and answers: they can be thematic (as the *Coffee Book Tag*) or adapted to any kind of situation (as the *Reader Problems Book Tag*). In these videos booktubers can recommend (or not) any book and discuss elements that do not fit in any type of BookTube videos.

For an example seen: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eGdvB7AIR3c.

These could be the four basic videos that every booktuber records for their channel, but there are more videos that are created by this literary community. Some of them are specific and recorded just by one booktuber, and others are commonly uploaded too by most of them as *Top 10 books*, where they list books depending on a theme; *Recommended books*, where they list books they simply recommend; or any type of video in relation to books and literature.

Recently, booktubers have also started to upload videos to their channels that are not just about literature but about themselves. And nowadays we find a hybrid combination of both types of content.

6. 1. 3. Booktubers

Booktubers should also be characterized in order to understand better this reading phenomenon on the Internet. Booktubers are readers that share their reading on the Internet; but, specifically, they are readers who love and enjoy reading and who are able to share this enjoyment with the world. Taking into account Willingham's words (2015: 22), "If you are a good reader, you're more likely to enjoy a story because reading it doesn't seem like work. That enjoyment means that you have a better attitude towards reading; that is, you believe that reading is a pleasurable, valuable thing to do". This is probably the best way of characterizing booktubers, that is, they are readers that have always enjoyed reading and that need to transmit the love they feel for books. Booktubers also started to share their readings as a mechanism of defense from being alone and of feeling part of something. Most famous booktubers claim that they have felt alone being readers before jumping into YouTube. This could probably explain the development of the reading community around them, as when creating their BookTube channels they were looking for reading company, for a community who could share their reading habits and opinions.

It was also mentioned before that there is no contact between these communities, as they speak different languages and live in separated parts of the world. This does not mean that there are not concrete cases of contact between an English booktuber and, for example, a Portuguese one. But the reality is that there had not been common physical spaces, like conferences, symposia, etc. in which booktubers from different languages can meet.What has already taken place are events with booktubers that share the same language but who live in different countries. There are common spaces for booktubers from The United Kingdom and The United States of America or from Spain and South America. It is really interesting to study these common spaces as there are cultural differences that are overcome in order to share this reading passion.

In order to finish this point of analysis, the most famous booktubers in the world can be found in the following list, which is organized based on number of subscribers:

-PolandbananasBOOKS: North American booktuber with 380000 subscribers.

-Abookutopia: North-American booktuber with 366.000 subscribers.

-Las Palabras de Fa: Mexican booktuber with 351000 subscribers.

-Clau Reads Books: Mexican booktuber with 316000 subscribers.

-JesseTheReader: North-American booktuber with 251000 subscribers.

-Katytastic: North-American booktuber with 250000 subscribers.

-Javier Ruescas: Spanish booktuber with 250000 subscribers.

-PeruseProject: North-American booktuber with 230000 subscribers.

-El Coleccionista de Mundos: Spanish booktuber with 220000 subscribers.

-Abriendo Libros: Mexican booktuber with 197000 subscribers.

-Fly Like a Butterfly: Spanish booktuber with 183000 subscribers.

-Little Book Owl: Australian booktuber with 175000 subscribers.

-Booksandquills: British booktuber with 173000 subscribers.

-Josu Diamond: Spanish booktuber with 160000 subscribers.

-Andreo Rowling: Spanish booktuber with 143000 subscribers.

-Ariel Bisset: North-American booktuber with 137000 subscribers.

-Tashapolis: North-American booktuber with 120000 subscribers.

-May R Ayamonte: Spanish booktuber with 113000 subscribers.

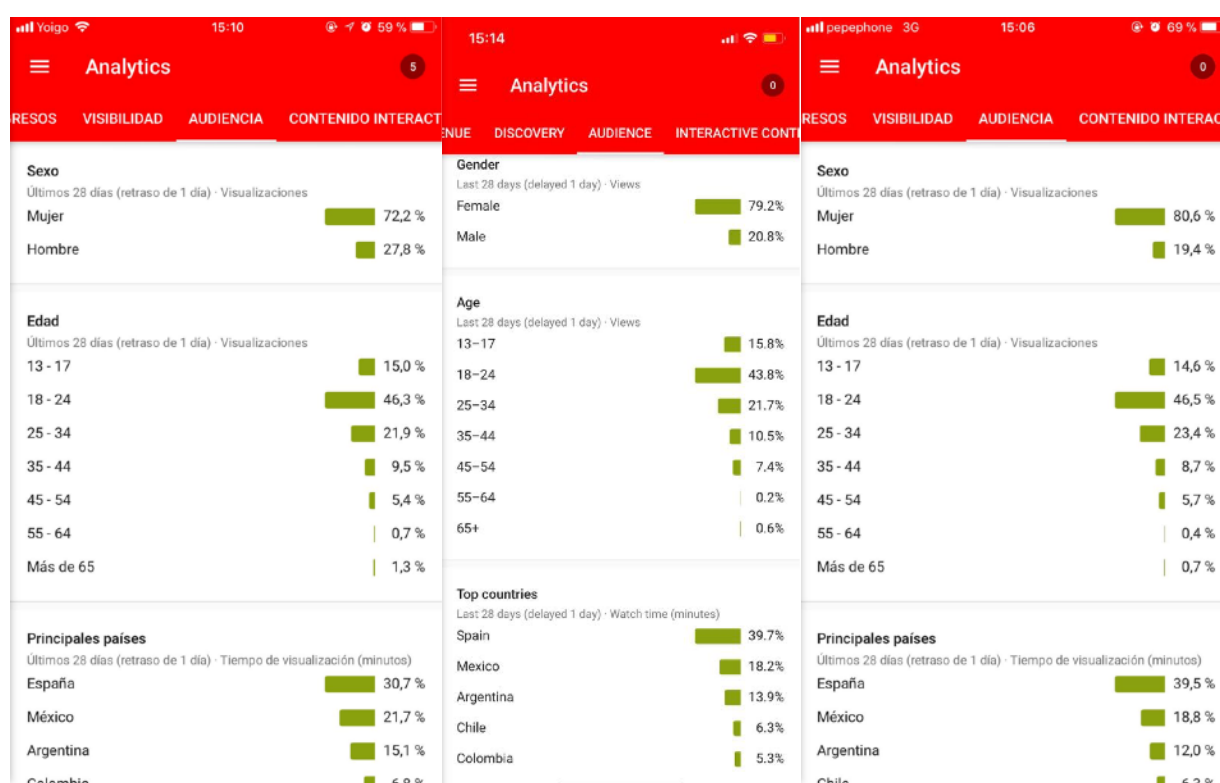-Ben Alderson: British booktuber with 54000 subscribers.

6. 2. Reading promotion?

One of the big problems when talking about BookTube is the question about reading promotion that the community arises. Should BookTube be considered a tool to promote reading? Should booktubers be considered part of the movement that saves the youth and motivates them to read? Do young people read? If so, do they read for pleasure or as part of the curriculum? These are some of the questions related to this reading phenomenon.

Taking into account that it is very difficult to get information about BookTube unless you are part of the community, and that there are not statistics in relation to it neither reliable sources outside the community itself, the best way of getting to know whether BookTube promotes reading or not is to directly treat the

audience and the content creators.I had and still have the opportunity to do so because of being one of the most followed booktubers in Spain, so in this analysis I will refer to my own experience as booktuber. Dealing with the audience of BookTube is easier than it seems. The subscribers of BookTube channels are young and easy-going people, and that is why there are many articles that support the idea of BookTube promoting reading as their public has answered many questions and even surveys.

Before analyzing which elements would make us think that BookTube promotes reading, I got statistics from three of the top BookTube channels in Spain so we can have a general idea of the public whose has been influenced.

Andreo Rowling's, Josu Diamond's and May R Ayamonte's demographic statistics.

As it can be easily observed, most of the BookTube public are women between 18 and 24 years old, who are still young but not teenagers anymore. In general we could say that the BookTube public are women between 13 and 34 years old, as below and over that age the percentages are minimum. Analyzing the age of the followers of the BookTube movement, we can also find that it is true that women between 18 and 24 years old are not as easily influenced as teenagers or children. However, the MEC[7]

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[7] MEC: Ministerio de Educación de España.

declared than in Spain, young people between 14 and 25 years old are the ones who read the most in the whole country, which is a statistics that can help us understand better this online literary phenomenon.

However, there are many elements that lead us to think that BookTube does promote reading and does have an influence on its audience. As claimed by Furman (2015, 42) "Video book talks are one of the simplest way to use technology to get kids engaged in reading. There is a plethora of book talks online (YouTube, Scholastic, and similar sites) that can be a great source of inspiration both for teachers and students".

If kids are able to get engaged in reading by the development of book talks (which are not a specific section of BookTube but it is indeed part of the whole content that is carried on by this community), why would not young people be also influenced and get engaged in reading by following and watching booktubers on YouTube? Let us analyze those elements.

The first thing that needs to be underlined is the fact that BookTube is up to date, that is, usually booktubers are reading and talking about books that have been recently published by big publishing houses and that everybody is expecting to read. The fact that booktubers select readings that are worldwide known (or at least they are very famous in their countries) also positions them as references for the YouTube audience. In spite of expecting BookTube audience to be readers, much of it firstly approach their channels with no interest in reading. It is curious to receive experiences of booktubers and their audience that show how many followers of BookTube did not regularly read when they started to follow this type of YouTube channels but did it after sometime watching them. However, as mentioned before, a key factor on BookTube influence is the fact that they read commercial books that are up to date.

There are other elements that contribute to generate the idea that BookTube is able to promote reading, like the fact that booktubers are the same age as their followers. As explained in the Digital Publishing (2016), "The secret behind the success of BookTube stems from the fact that these vloggers fall into the same, if not similar, demographic to those they aim their videos at. This means that they are creating visually appealing content that their audience are guaranteed to enjoy and engage with". Thus, booktubers can connect better with their audience than other subjects that promote

reading (as literary critics, teachers, parents, etc.) just because they have the same age as the people they want to influence and they share experiences and expectations of life.

Another interesting element to comment is the fact that booktubers use a channel to communicate with young people that is used by them all the time. The first thing to take into account is that they spend most of their time at home, and as explained by Sullivan (2009), "we must all —teachers, school administrators and librarians— acknowledge that children spend more time at home than they do at school. They are more influenced by the home environment than they are by the school environment."

So, taking this reality for granted, young people are, as Sullivan exposed, more influenced by the home environment than the school one. BookTube belongs to the private sphere as although in the public sphere there can be exchanges between booktubers and their public, the reality is that booktubers record their videos at home and the audience usually watch them from home.

But, in relation to this and going a little bit further on, booktubers use Internet and YouTube as medium to communicate and talk about books. This channel is the one used by young people, as we saw in previous statistics, so booktubers can get to their target audience more easily and influence them to read more quickly than critics in newspapers, literary criticism books, TV programs or any other channel that they use. And this basically happens because the youth do not usually read newspapers, do not watch TV and do not read literary criticism books. On the contrary, they watch YouTube and spend hours on the Internet, as was explained by Bennet and Robards (2014: 1): "As a feature of the digital media landscape situated at the centre of young people's engagement with different digital media devices, the internet continues to have a profound effect".

I will explain below the relationship between BookTube and the publishing houses, but it is important to comment this relationship as another element that facilitates the reading promotion in BookTube. As booktubers openly declare that they receive books from publishing houses and that they get privileged information from them, it is not difficult to imagine that BookTube's followers take booktubers as referents in relation to information of publishers and writers. If a Young Adult literature (which is the literature consumed by booktubers) reader wants some information about

a book that is going to be published or that has been recently published, they will turn to any BookTube channel. The fact that BookTube is a reference in the collective imaginary also contributes to its task of reading promotion.

Actually, I have mentioned interaction and engagement in this study before, but it is important to underline the relevance and impact that the former has on the BookTube public. As Lange claims (2014: 233), "When kids posted a video that communicated a message, and others responded by posting response videos or text comments, such moves resulted in interactions".

This explanation is useful to also understand the importance of interaction for a community. That is, on the Internet humans can be social, they can be social on YouTube and indeed, there is a need of being social even at YouTube as interaction is important for everyone.This interaction exists in BookTube and it is another element that contributes to its reading promotion because BookTube's audience does not just receive passively information and books recommendation; they can also be part of that community by recommending books in the comments below videos or in the social media, engaging further with booktubers and their audience.

Indeed, booktubers encourage their public to debate with and between them. Booktubers usually finish their videos arising debates in relation to the books they have mentioned before and asking their audience to intervene in those debates commenting the video, answering to the rest of the audience and interacting between them. This clearly facilitates the audience's feeling of belonging of and also affects the influence of the booktubers over their public.

BookTube was characterized before as a phenomenon whose basis was accessible language and content so that anybody can participate of the community, and this is, again, another fact that contributes to the reading promotion.

Finally, although there are many articles that claim that BookTube promotes reading, it was not until 2017 when Amazon Spain made public a statistics that proved this. This information has to do with affiliations and income traffic from other web pages, and it came as a surprise for many, and not so much as a surprise for others, as they claimed that each time a Spanish booktuber recommended a book its sales increased a 20%, which is a very interesting result. This statistic was published by La

Vanguardia: "Amazon's numbers assure that a positive critic from a booktuber can increase the 20% of a book's sales."[8]   Apart from this, this article is probably the one that opened many lines of investigation in relation to BookTube and its role in reading promotion.

6. 2. 2. Market relationship

As a tool to promote reading and as a big online phenomenon, BookTube has also been observed by publishing houses and other public and private entities that have decided to contact booktubers in order to establish working relationships. Although booktubers have many videos where they explain the relationship they have with the market, many critics still arise the question about booktubers being bought by publishing houses. This is not related to our topic at all, but it would be necessary to explain that this does not happen between BookTube and publishing houses. However, there is a clear working relationship between both that will be explained below. The fact that BookTube is successful as a marketing strategy for publishing houses is symptomatic, as there is a clear success also in the reading promotion actions that they develop. According to the Digital Publishing (2016), "The BookTubing community creates user-generated content which has contributed significantly to the success rate for the publishing industry in regards to online marketing." From the moment publishing houses hire booktubers to give visibility to their books, a clear statement can be made: BookTube is able to sell books, which deeply means that booktubers promote reading and encourage the book selling market.

Before analyzing small details of the relationship between BookTube and publishing houses, this relationship must be explained. Booktubers started independently and with no interest and expectations in the market. Actually, at the beginning booktubers were common readers with no followers who bought their books to review them in their BookTube channels. The truth is that after a couple of years and when they started to gain a name, publishing houses contacted them and started to send them books for free. The exchange was based on the idea that booktubers received

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[8] "Los datos de Amazon aseguran que una crítica positiva de un booktuber pueden llegar a aumentar el 20% de las ventas de un libro."

books for free and publishing houses received in exchange a public visibility of the books they wanted to position on the market.

Although at first this relationship was not very successful for publishing houses, they used (and still do) to send books anyway to press, so they had (and still have) a number of books of every edition that was (and is) set aside to marketing activities. As Asheley Brekelmans comments (2017), "The growing BookTube community has become a powerful marketing tool and publishers are beginning to take notice".

There is a clear and public image of the relationship between BookTube and publishing houses. This exchange that takes place between both sides does not mean that publishing houses expect or ask for good opinions. In fact, most of them declare that the relationship with booktubers is totally free, which means that booktubers can receive books and say whatever they think about them. This relationship also has its limitations, as booktubers cannot give visibility to all the books that are published every month and they can neither read them all. This obviously makes them choose between the offers they get, which has a clear consequence: the market is governed by big publishing houses as Penguin Random House, so that small publishing houses do not have enough spaces in BookTube, as booktubers prefer to read and work with big presses that offer them more possibilities. This is just a general idea of the relationship that BookTube has with the market in order that reveals the importance that this online phenomenon has even at publishing houses stages, where publishing houses with Young Adults collections totally depend on booktubers for their big books' campaigns.

6. 3. Education and academic application

Taking into account that governments are all the time looking for new strategies to promote reading among young people, and that even at secondary education level they still do not know how to promote reading beyond mandatory readings and exams, BookTube can be, and sometimes is nowadays, a good tool to intervene in education programes. For Willingham (2015: 20), "We want our kids to read because they have a positive attitude toward reading, because they find the activity

itself rewarding". In my opinion this is the main basis of reading: reward. If reading has to be rewarding, forcing teenagers to read books that do not connect with their personal experiences may not be the best strategy to encourage them read. Indeed, the main idea behind BookTube is connecting with the public by showing personal emotions in relation to their readings. If BookTube is about fun and reward when reading, would not a strategy based on those ideas be the perfect one to promote reading at education?

Although this could be just simply an idea to take into account, the reality is that booktubers professionally work as lecturers for public and private entities. All around the world, booktubers give lectures at universities, high schools and schools. Actually, a lot of private entities hire booktubers when they have a cultural event, and many of them teach at Technology, Entertainment and Design (TED) levels, which clearly proves the importance that they have nowadays in reading promotion.

Could BookTube improve reading promotion actions in the countries where it is implemented? These experiences have a clear answer: yes. They do it, indeed. But, can BookTube have more academic applications? BookTube is still starting to be considered at high academic levels. During the past eight years BookTube has been seen as a phenomenon for teenagers trying to reach literary critics position, which was totally false and incorrect. Nowadays, more and more public entities such as book fairs, universities, high schools, cultural events, etc… hire booktubers to invigorate readers and young people. However, there is still a big gap in relation to BookTube and a need to keep on investigating about this phenomenon so that it can be included at academic levels. My study is just a small approach that tries to open new investigation paths for future scholars.

7. Conclusions and limitations

After all that has been mentioned in this project, we should review if the objectives of this investigation have been achieved. My main objective was to study the BookTube phenomenon by means of reviewing all the available and reliable material in relation to it, which I believe has been done successfully, although with some difficulty. This material has also been classified in order to use the one that was really useful and that gave some lights about the lack of information of the phenomenon.

An analysis and characterization of the youth's reading habits in relation to BookTube have also taken place. This was a clear objective of this investigation as there are not academic approaches to this characterization, and this is basic in order to study whether BookTube promotes reading or not. Finally, an analysis of BookTube as reading promotion tool has also been done. There cannot be a clear statement in relation to its reading promotion as there is not enough information to be categorical, but at least some light has been given to the issue.

Similarly, I would also like to comment in this final section of my study all the limitations I have had when carrying on this investigation. The first and the most difficult limitation to overcome has been the lack of information available in relation to BookTube. There is information on the Internet but it was difficult to find reliable bibliography, as anyone can write something to be found on the Internet from blogs to Wikipedia. Moreover, when looking for information in relation to BookTube at academic levels, as universities' libraries, no information was available. As mentioned before, there are zero academic approaches to BookTube and not finding information at public libraries in relation to BookTube almost forced me to leave this study and change the topic of my project. It was really hard to find statistics, theoretical approaches to the phenomenon and reliable experiences that would help the general framework of this investigation to be more solid.

Furthermore, looking for information about reading promotion was also

difficult. Most of the academic books and articles that I found were really outdated, and I spent hours and hours looking for reading promotion strategies that had something to do with BookTube characteristics, but everyday I came back home with nothing in my hands. It is understandable that there is almost no approach to reading promotion actions that were based on the Internet and technologies, as it is a really new phenomenon, but my expectations were the opposite when I started to carry out this investigation.

There were more limitations when carrying on this investigation, such as the impossibility to contact English-speaking booktubers because they live in other countries, they do not have time to answer emails as they receive dozens of them each day and they do not really have close contact with Spanish-speaking ones. Getting information from Spanish-speaking booktubers was really easy, as I am one of the Spanish pioneers and I have professional relationships with all the BookTube Spanish-speaking community. Carrying on this investigation with no direct contact with English-speaking booktubers was also difficult as all the information that I got was through English and American publishing houses, apart from the Internet, articles and videos.

In spite of having a lot of limitations, we can conclude that BookTube is a solid literary phenomenon whose basis is the youth and it has all the necessary tools to promote reading. Deeper investigations should be carried out on counting with statistics from governments, bookshops and publishing houses to keep going deeper in this issue, but this investigation is open to contribute to offer a preliminary academic approach to BookTube.

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