

BATMEN

BUBBLE DEBUNK BOOST GUIDE

2022



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NO BUT SAY THE GALACTIC EMPIRE SHALL CALL YOU KING--FOREVER--MORE!

WATER! THERE ARE OTHER GIFTS THAT MAY BE YOURS!

EVIL ONE, YOU WEARY ME!

THE SPIRIT OF THE SILVER SURFER CANNOT BE BOUGHT WITH GLISTENING BAUBLES!

NOW, WHERE CAVALRY HAS FAILED -- LET CARNAGE SUCCEED!

AT MY COMMAND, LET THEM ROCKS THEMSELVES TAKE LIVES--TAKE FORM--AND DO MY BIDDING!

Bratislava Policy Institute, Slovakia
Association Amigos De Europa, Spain
CODEC, Belgium
Creative Minds For Culture, Latvia
Republikon Foundation, Hungary
Res Publica Foundation, Poland



BATMEN Guide



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Introduction

The objective of this Bubble Debunk Boost Guide aims to demonstrate the main challenges of young people in the online environment and how social bubbles, other echo chambers, and filter bubbles affect their behavior—examining the skills and expertise that are needed in behalf of young leaders, freelancers who are “willing” to fight these negative manifestations of the online environment in participating countries, to provide better quality services according to their needs even during emergencies such as the pandemic-COVID-19 which impacts all the learning activities of 2020. The impact of the pandemic on everyday life and our psychology is catalytic.

Based on the results of previous research conducted by Bratislava Policy Institute and Republikon Institute in so-called Visegrád Countries (qualitative and quantitative), the partners aim to provide support through the development of a specialized and targeted guide to be administered to young people who are operating in the online environment to fight these daily negative manifestations of the online world. Overall, this activity aims to identify and compare the situation of young people and the barriers that they face and do not allow them to become more independent of their social bubbles. This innovative guide with transferability potential can also make an impact on the performance of these young leaders, freelancers, and members of various initiatives/ organizations as it will provide in-depth insight on the factors that are creating those polarized social bubbles and do not allow their members to think contextual or even to be polite towards other ideas, other members and other worldviews.

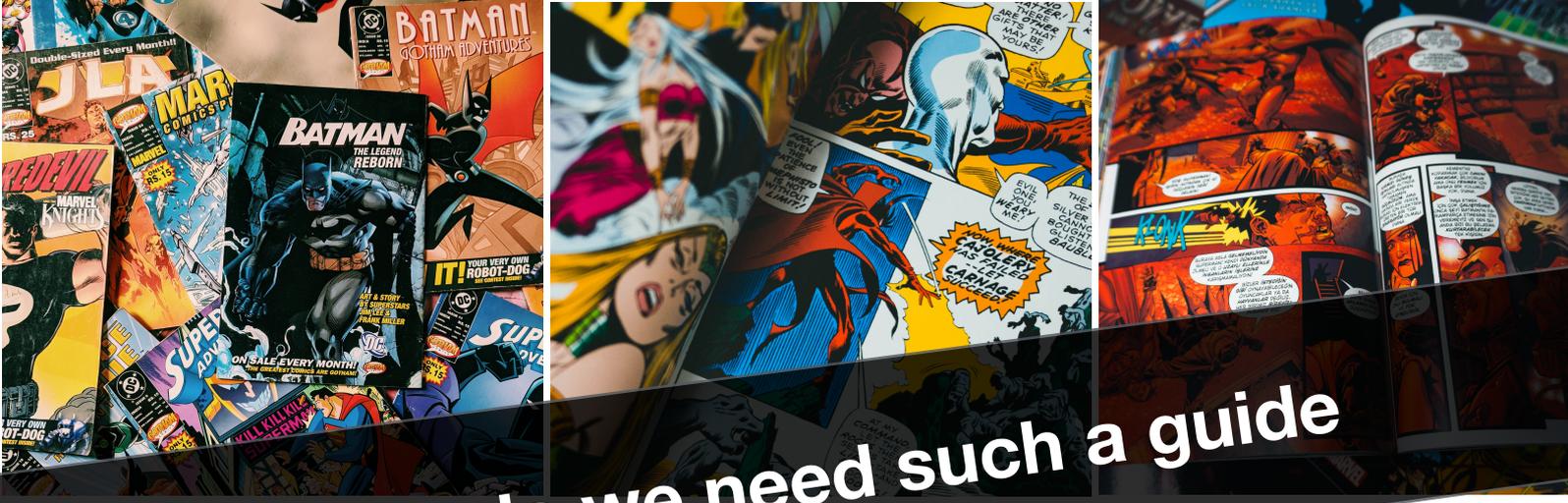
The Guide will also summarize the provisions in each participating country (Slovakia, Poland, Hungary, Belgium, Spain, and Latvia) in the field and the challenges each country faces. The educational guide will support and supervise young people, young leaders, and members of various youth initiatives. CSO is fighting the negative manifestation of online environment/ social bubbles.

THEORETICAL APPROACH

We live in an era where simple facts are not as simple as they seem to be. The so-called post-fact age is beginning, and nobody knows what it will look like in the future. Fake news and disinformation are becoming mainstream and impacting society and electoral turnouts. Their main strength is the ability to the perception of online users.

Fake news and disinformation are becoming a powerful weapon for extremists, foreign forces, and third parties that are willing to influence the development of regions, countries, or international organizations. These negative messages are also changing the behavior of the individuals in the societies, and they are becoming more and more polarized. Societies are turning back from mainstream politics and media, and they are becoming less critical of the context they are reading. This trend was seen in the Media Literacy Index 2019 and in comparison to the year 2017. CEE countries regress most with the Czech Republic, Slovakia, and Poland, marking the most significant deterioration. They were followed by Latvia, Lithuania, Croatia, Hungary and Romania, and Austria, Malta, and Serbia. The lack of critical and contextual thinking in the post-truth era also caused the gap and distrust between citizens. COVID-19 pandemic widened this gap and created a unique info-pandemic environment that affected all of us, especially young people sitting at home in front of their computers, because of lockdowns and restrictions.

The main aim of this education guide is to provide a coherent overview of how to debunk and fight social bubbles that are emerging in the online sphere that are dividing our future generation. Our guide is based on our research and former activities by some of the project partners in this area. It will provide an overview of recommendations, good practices, and an analysis of the perception of young influencers towards their activity inside the social network.



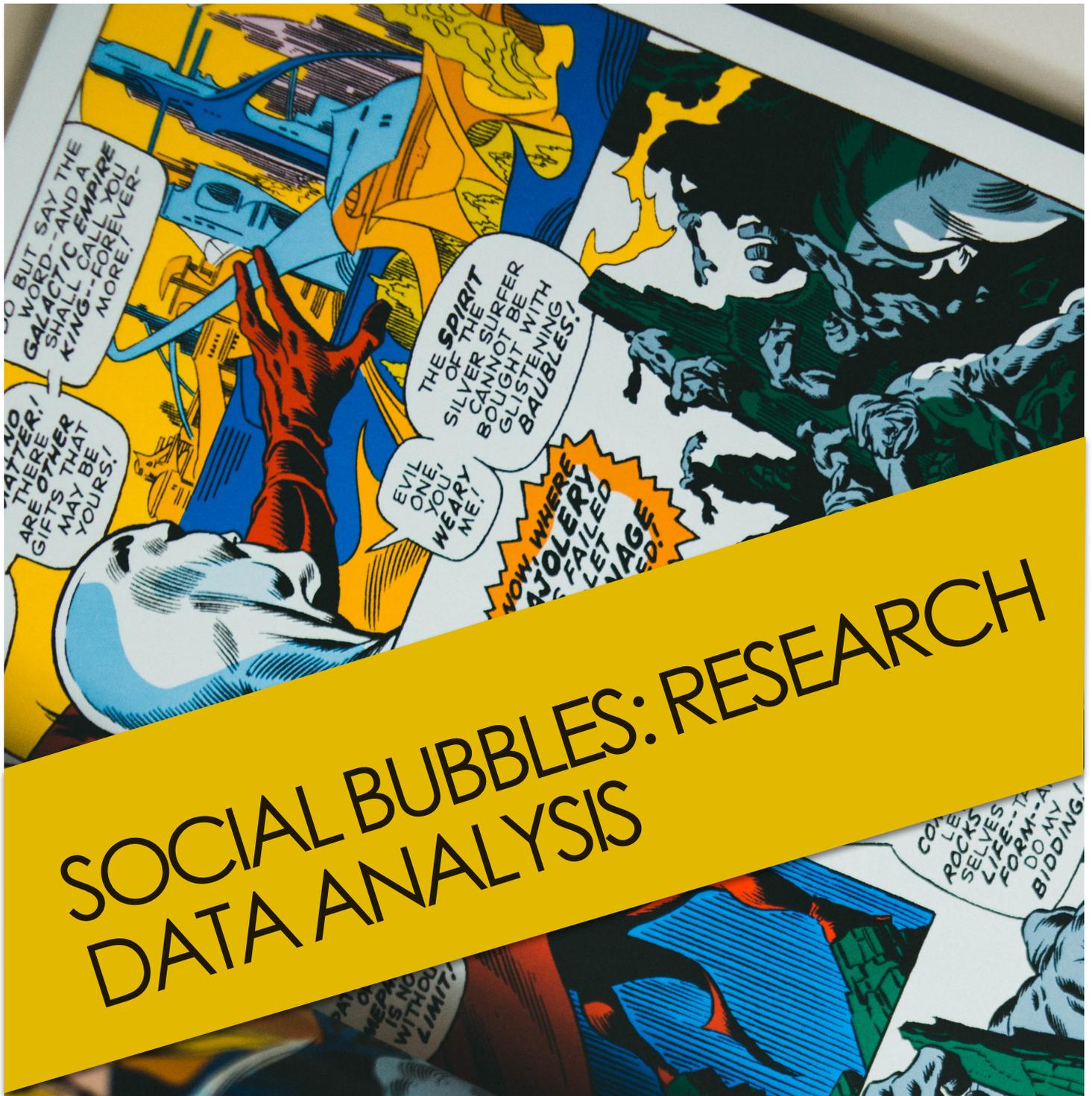
1.1. Why do we need such a guide

A good guide can take form in many ways. It should be a material that gives you the essential information about a particular subject, which helps you form an opinion, decide, or learn something new. As the project's name suggests, this guide was developed because of the harmful effects of the global pandemic on our everyday lives, our mental health, and mainly how we express our artistic sides. Therefore, this guide should be some form of an educational document to help people, especially young people around the world, understand the side effects of their online activity and the impact of social bubbles on their and their peer's behavior.

The guide is a new and unique way of giving useful information and tips for individuals who find it challenging to navigate the online space while expressing themselves through their perception of the world. Our guide aims to be easy-to-read material that will walk you through how social bubbles and social media positively and negatively affect your behavior and how to fight back when the bubble influences you incorrectly.

1.2. Who is this guide for?

Our primary target group is young leaders, young volunteers, and those working in formal or informal initiatives, NGOs, and CSOs that primary goal is to fight the negative impact of social media and the digital environment on youth behavior in Europe. Of course, this guide is not limited to just young people. Still, it is highly recommended also for teachers and educators that are elaborating on this topic and would like to have more insight, recommendations, and basic information on how to explain to pupils, minors, and children the dangers of social media, social bubbles and their impact towards their behavior.



In the 21st century, the social bubble effect is one of the most important problems in modern societies. People do not like to share their thoughts with strangers, just if they know that the audience has the same opinion. Citizens do not discuss social problems, but they upset those who have a similar point of view. They do not like to get out of their bubble, and they do believe that there are no other valid and reasonable arguments, just the only one: their own. And social media is just encouraging this tendency: on Facebook, people could select their audience, and ignore negative feedback.



2.1. METHODOLOGY

In our research, we wish to analyze the behavior of young influencers on social media platforms (as Facebook, Instagram, or Youtube). We think that these people are not only a good sample, representing the youth, but they also influence them with their habits and opinions. We focus on opinions of young leaders from different kinds of platforms (Instagram, Facebook, Youtube) and topics (Beauty, gaming, public affairs, lifestyle) to see how they use social media.

For questionnaire design, we choose the concept of intergroup relations. We assume that individuals are willing to place themselves into groups (bubbles) because they want to feel good; they have a solid emotional significance. Individuals also tend to put themselves into categories (social categories) as the natural cognitive process that places individuals into social groups.

We assumed that we would measure “how social bubbles are individuals” if we look at their degree of self-reflection and self-identification. We also believe that individuals joining a social bubble (group) share some knowledge of membership, social significance, and social comparison between their group and others.

Table 1. The number of targeted young influencers in Slovakia, Spain, Poland, Hungary, Belgium, and Latvia.

Country	Slovakia	Poland	Spain	Hungary	Belgium	Latvia
Number of targeted youth influencers	10	10	15	15	10	14

The profile of the influencers that were targeted via the online survey was diverse, we can say that mainly they are focused on a specific target group and a specific social media. This is especially relevant for those who are using social media as a professional tool. However, the participants who are using them just for hobbies are taking part in different social media. Also, it is relevant to mention that the ones who are using the social media as a professional tool, are taking part in the most popular social media like Instagram or Tik Tok, however, at the same time they are taking part in specific social media related to their professional background photography, crafts, acting social media.

We targeted between 10 - 15 influencers in each project country with different backgrounds and areas of specialization. The surveys were made privately one by one and the just our staff know the results. The answers were not anonymous and this allow us to know link better the answer with the profile of the participants in the research.

Definition influencers: Since the term influencer is not defined in law and the terminology may vary depending on different features of the underlying business models, this study, based on a review of various definitions proposed in the literature, defines the term as follows:

An influencer is a content creator with a commercial intent, who builds trust and authenticity based relationships with their audience (mainly on social media platforms) and engages online with commercial actors through different business models for monetization purposes.

The key features of an influencer are: 1. Content creation, namely the service provided by influencers; 2. Commercial intent is driven by direct revenue from brands (monetary and nonmonetary), revenues from audience engagement, or platform compensation; 3. Monetization, namely the generation of revenue through different business models (including but not limited to influencer marketing); 4. Trust and authenticity, namely the source of influence, are related to the parasocial relationship of trust established with the audience and the perceived authenticity and relatability of the content.

Definition of social bubbles: Digital echo chambers where users see content and posts that agree only with their preexisting beliefs. And where individuals are exposed mainly to conforming opinions and inspirations.

Synonymous: political bubbles, echo chambers, social cliques characterized by shared worldviews, ideological group memberships, and information consumption patterns.

Filter bubbles: algorithms inadvertently amplify ideological segregation by automatically recommending content an individual is likely to agree with.

Table 2. Methods used to answer research questions.

Research Question	Method Used to Answer Question
<p>What kind of content do youth social media influencers in Slovakia, Spain, Poland, Hungary, Belgium, and Latvia usually share, and with what goals?</p>	<p>Quantitative survey</p>
<p>What are the reasons behind the social media activity of youth social media influencers in Slovakia, Spain, Poland, Hungary, Belgium, and Latvia?</p>	<p>Quantitative survey</p>
<p>What kinds of content make up the youth influencers' social media walls in Slovakia, Spain, Poland, Hungary, Belgium, and Latvia?</p>	<p>Quantitative survey</p>
<p>What are the habits of social media youth influencers in Slovakia, Spain, Poland, Hungary, Belgium, and Latvia, when it comes to social media use?</p>	<p>Quantitative survey</p>



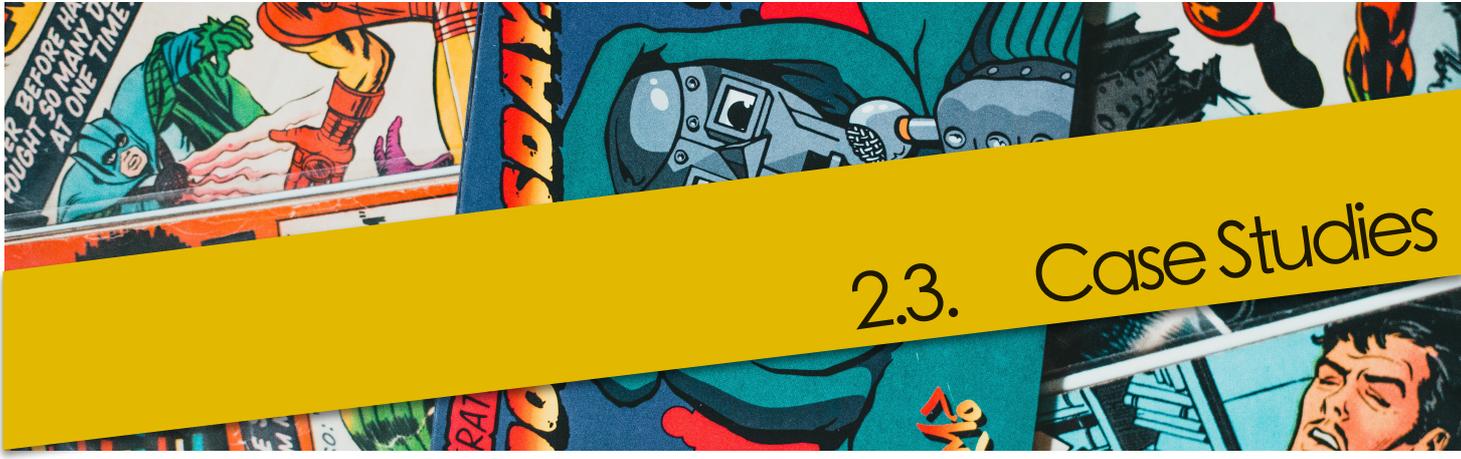
2.2. Key Findings and recommendations

Findings:

- Gaining and sharing knowledge, and work, are the primary motivators for the youth influencers to be active on social media.
- *Relevant information* and *compelling stories and news* tend to comprise the most significant proportion of their social media, while photos, memes, and tutorials, are the least popular.
- Most media influencers declare to open their social media accounts while traveling when they are bored.
- Influencers do not like to follow political issues and public affairs on social media.
- Social media is still a pass-time activity for private life. Not a platform for public debates
- Young opinion leaders use them in their free time as kill-time, not like there is no conscious use of the device.

Recommendations:

- We should consider more the role and the potential of the youth influencers in promoting views on issues related to society and politics/.
- The professionalization of social media influence should also be considered.
- The relational/community aspects of social media activity should be further investigated since it plays a significant role in creating and strengthening social media bubbles.
- The economy of knowledge exchange in social media should be further investigated.
- Policy-makers should see social media as a significant part of the public sphere and space with substantial educational potential.
- We should increase media literacy among the youth.
- As they are sharing any personal information, we should promote education about preventing the risk of using social media and the data transmitted on them.
- We need to discuss what social media means to us and the younger generation.



2.3. Case Studies

SPAIN

In total, 15 Spanish Instagram and Twitter influencers were invited to the questionnaire with a strong following among the youth (at least 2000 followers). Despite the survey results being strictly quantitative, we have tried to have some qualitative considerations to have a clear picture of the youngster who is using social media in Spain to influence. In this sense, we have searched for very different profiles and for people who are active on other social media like Instagram or Twitter. Also, we paid attention to the gender balance and their professional or educational background.

About the type of content shared by Spanish influencers, the option that more participants with seven votes chose, 46% was “Friends posts with personal information,” and “latest trends in my area of specialization” was the second answer selected. These answers show that Spanish youngsters use social media to prolong their lives, where their everyday lives have great importance. This use is coherent and linked with the second most chosen option, to share the latest trends in their area of specialization because it shows how they use social media for their professional life. As we will see later, the content shared is directly linked with the most searched content on social media. It shows coherence between the youngsters' attitudes as consumers and content creators. They create the content that they know will be consumed.

We can assume that the main reason for using social media in Spain is the influence. Proof of this is that 46% of the youngsters declared that they are using the media. They want to “expand their number of followers” because they associate the number of followers with several potential friends and customers of their services... The second most chosen answer also is related to social behavior because it was that “they want to check their friend reactions”. We can observe that this trend in their attitude increases if we ask them directly why they are active on the social media, having two answers that are chosen more than the others. The most chosen it represents the 33% of the participants and says that they are active because they want to see the reaction of their friends. Very close, with the 26%, which says they are engaged because it is part of their job.

In the Spanish case, we also observed that our focus group participants use social media as entertainment when they have free time. So the answer was divided between when they are Bored and when they need to rest from work. We presume that the one who is using the media for professional purposes marked the answer which says that they use them when they are bored beside the use they do for the professional sense. The ones who use social media for personal purposes can assume they use them when they need to rest of the work. Just two participants declared that they use them constantly when they have a notification.



2.3. Case Studies

SLOVAKIA

In the Slovak case, we were able to target 10 Slovak social media influencers active on Instagram, paying close attention to gender balance and diversity concerning their activities and background. We contacted them via e-mail (or via Direct Messages on Instagram), informed them about the project's purpose, and asked them to fill out the questionnaire. After not having received most answers, we resent the questionnaire and extended the list of potential respondents. This process was repeated three times.

The obtained data show us that all our respondents usually use their Instagram accounts to share the newest trends from their occupational area and news related to politics and civic society. Since our target group comprises influencers, who use social media as a means to earn income, these results come as no surprise. At the same time, their success is primarily dependent on their ability to influence the behavior or opinions of other people.

In addition, four out of six people consider “fun facts, memes, jokes” to be a part of their usually shared content. This may imply that these kinds of posts or stories are rather crucial for the growth of their profiles. The logic behind that is quite simple – this content, if done wisely, often tends to bring a high number of interactions, which afterward results in better performance overall because users like posts evoking emotions such as amusement or joy.

The majority of respondents indicate that increasing the number of followers is one of the aims behind their social media activities. This finding is not surprising since social media represent (in some cases at least partial) a source of income for our respondents. Only one person admits that they share content on social media to evoke a feeling of coherence to a particular social group. No respondents claim their activity has anything to do with social media being “trendy.” This may indicate that social media have already become an integral part of their lives.

On the contrary, the most-rated responses hint at the purpose of positively impacting the influencers' followers, hence society in general. Responses such as “I can share my knowledge with other people” / “I want to bring a positive impact on other people” have pushed into background reasons related to their occupation and the possibility to stay in contact with other people.



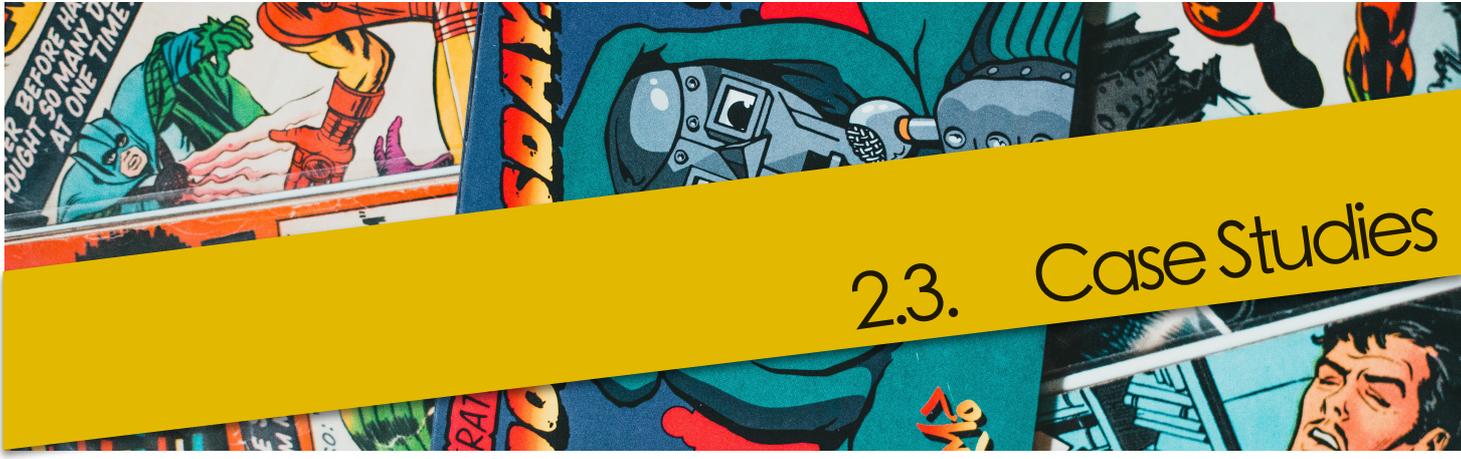
2.3. Case Studies

SLOVAKIA

When observing the answers to the last question, focusing on the kind of content shared on Instagram profiles by our respondents, they seem to indicate one trend – sharing relevant information and news or stories about political and social events seem to be of greater importance in comparison to memes and tutorials.

Moreover, five out of six respondents like to share content in their feed which might hint at the significance of social media in their lives but is also understandable since the questionnaire targets social media influencers.

Based on the findings in the last question, there does not seem to be any sort of divergence among our respondents in terms of the times and reasons that usually lead to social media applications. It appears to be by the conclusion of the above argument. We mention that social media have already become an integral part of people's lives. They tend to spend time in that online space whenever they are not actively involved in other activities. In addition, half of the respondents admit that they use social media applications when they seek relief or rest from other day-to-day activities.



2.3. Case Studies

POLAND

In the case of Poland, we were able to target 10 Polish Instagram influencers with a strong following among the youth. We reached out to them directly via messages on Instagram and via email, explained the purpose of the research, and asked for their contribution. We reached out to 50+ influencers but were eventually able to receive input from 10 of them. In constructing our sample, we paid attention to the significant number of followers on Instagram, gender balance, and a representation of different areas of specialization among these influencers.

Among the respondents, the “latest news about politics and society” and “latest trends in my area of specialization” were the two most important categories when it comes to the type of shared content - accounting for 50% of the content shared by the influencers. This points to the fact that content related to current events, politics, and society has a significant role for the youth influencers on Instagram and their audiences. The second important conclusion from these results is that influencers remain focused on the trends and areas of their specialization.

When it comes to answering the second part of the research question - namely, the goals of social media influencers when sharing their content - the majority of them, 80%, declare to share their content to expand their network. As many as 50% reports that they share with the goal to “feel included virtually in a social group,” further reinforcing the idea that sharing content on social media is primarily motivated relationally by the community - as its primary goal is motivated by getting social recognition - either through getting more followers or feeling more included in the virtual community.

Based on the responses to the question about the reasons for social media influencers’ activities on social media, we can conclude that sharing and gaining knowledge and simply working are the primary motivators for social media activity. Noteworthy is also that 60% of the respondents declared that they want to “have a positive impact on the society.” We suggest that the following two topics - namely, social media as a context where knowledge is circulated and exchanged and the influencers’ desire to contribute to the society through their outlets- are considered in further research. None of the respondents said that they are active on social media “because it’s trendy to be engaged online,” which can also point to the fact that social media has become so ingrained in our everyday life and work that it is no longer viewed through the categories of trendy/non-trendy.



2.3. Case Studies

POLAND

Only 10% of the respondents declared that they use social media to “stay close to [their] friends and family circle.” This result makes sense in the light that The surveyed sample are people who are social media professionals, so they also might be more likely to separate their professional-online lives from their private ones.

When it comes to the makeup of the Polish youth influencers’ social media walls, “relevant information” and “influential stories, news” tend to comprise the most significant proportion of their social media. Photos, tutorials, pictures, and memes are less likely to form a substantial part of the social media walls of the influencers.

Additionally, 60% of the respondents declare to “prefer not to share stuff on the social media wall,” which is noteworthy and perhaps contradictory, given that they are social media influencers. However, this might make sense in their attempts to protect their private lives and information from being shared online. Youth social media influencers declare to open their social media accounts primarily “when traveling to work/home/vacation” - 80% and “when they are bored” - 70%. The least popular time for social media influencers to open their social media accounts is when they are “stressed out and need something to calm [them] down.”



2.3. Case Studies

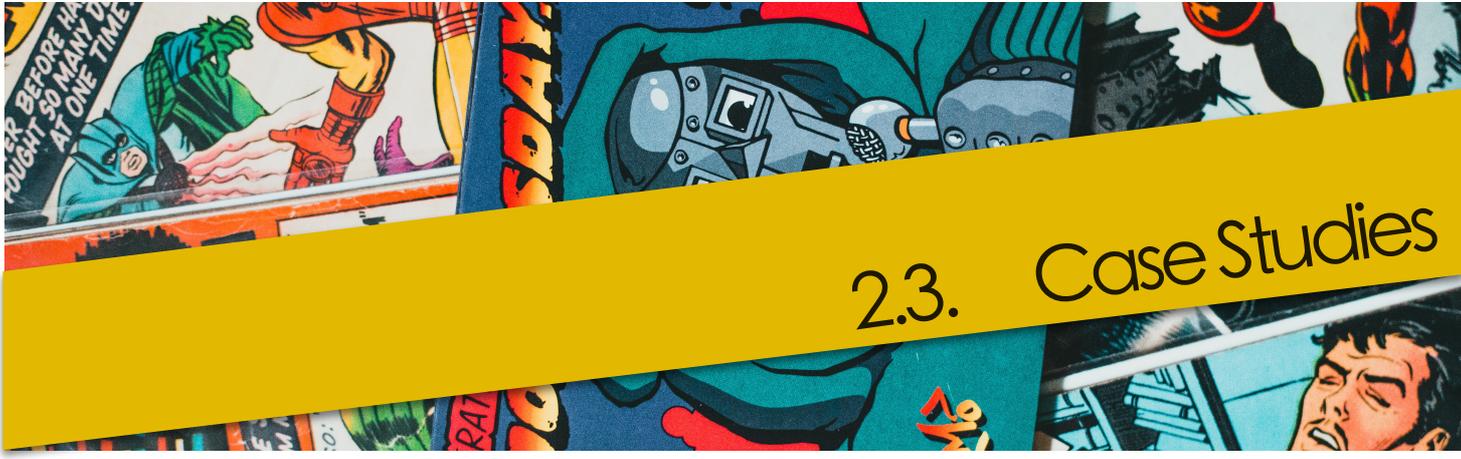
HUNGARY

When we created the questionnaire, we only wanted to ask social media influencers in the first place. We selected our sample carefully: we only invite social media opinion leaders from Hungary who have a relevant number of followers on one or more social media platforms. We invited them personally, via email, where we explained our research and asked for their help. We sent it out to 15 influencers, paying attention to the gender balance selected from the younger generation. We ensured that our responders would be successful on different kinds of social media platforms. Fortunately, 11 opinion leaders sent the questionnaire back to us.

More than half of the respondents claim that one of their key motivations for using social media platforms is to share their knowledge and opinion with the public. Almost the same number indicated that they want to positively affect society by being present on social media. Thus these two aspects correlate with each other. We can say that the respondents believe that by sharing their personal views and knowledge with the public, they can enhance the public good and create a better society.

Only one-fourth of Hungarian respondents - influencers use social media platforms to gain knowledge from others on the individual level. In contrast, half of them use it to keep in touch with relatives and friends, and 1/3 of them use these platforms because it is a part of their jobs. In general, the respondents want to have some kind of effect on the public, but at the same time, when it comes to their personal lives, they are using the platform also for their private matters. Two-thirds of the respondents said they use social media when they are bored, and half of them use it while traveling or waiting for somebody. The pattern shows that most respondents use these platforms mainly between activities or when they have nothing more important to do. One-third of the people indicated using social media for recreational purposes was also stated by one-third of the people, meaning that they use their accounts to relax after work or when they feel stressed. Unique content, that is, friends' posts and work-related posts, is the most regularly shared content by the respondents. The least shared contents were news about politics and society and new trends in their specialization. Overall, it can be said that influencers avoid sharing posts that focus on specific fields or issues and instead share more general content.

The respondents were radically diverse about their post-sharing habits: half of them often share content on their wall, while the other half never do this. However, in two aspects, the responses were quite diverse and square. About these two aspects, namely having relevant information on their feed and news about politics and society, we can say that the respondents do not always but often share this kind of content on their feeds. This stands in controversy with their habits about sharing content, where sharing political news was marked only by one-quarter of them.



2.3. Case Studies

BELGIUM

The findings and results of the Belgium case is based on an online survey amongst Belgians between the ages of 16 and 24, youth influencers, a literature review, and statistical data from the Statista Research Department. The data collection took place between February 2022 and April 2022. In Flanders, the distribution of the survey was achieved both through students, who distributed the survey to the target group and through the University's network. In Brussels and Wallonia, an online panel provider carried out the distribution of the study to the target group.

We conducted individual online qualitative interviews with a mix of Dutch-speaking and French-speaking young people and young influencers. These respondents were recruited via the quantitative sample considering age, gender, and region (provinces). All interviews took place online to gain insights regarding their individual use and experience of social media and influencers.

According to the most common answers from the Belgium respondents - influencers, Instagram is the most popular social media channel used by young people in the country. They use it several times a day. Next in line are YouTube, Facebook, Snapchat, TikTok, and WhatsApp. We also notice that even if Facebook remains essential for the influencers, the Facebook Messenger is used slightly more frequently than Facebook. This could be affected by the current trend, especially young people turning away from Facebook as an online platform but keeping the messenger as a communication channel.

The most interesting in the Belgium case was the regional difference in social media use, which should concern the future of other multi-ethnic and multi-languages communities. Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, and WhatsApp are more prevalent in the North, while TikTok, Snapchat, YouTube, Pinterest, and Twitch are more frequently used in the South.

Some social media are more prevalent among female vs. male young people. There are also some age differences in social media use; for example, user profile on Twitter, YouTube, LinkedIn, Twitch, and Discord is skewed toward men. Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, Snapchat and Pinterest have a more female user profiles.

The use of Snapchat and TikTok is higher among 16-18 years old, while Facebook, LinkedIn and Whatsapp become more popular as age increases. In Flanders, use of all channels but Facebook increased compared to last year. The considerable rise in TikTok use is particularly striking. Statistics on the use of Instagram remained unchanged.



2.3. Case Studies

LATVIA

In the case of Latvia, we invited a selected group of 14 Latvian influencers on Instagram with a significant following among young people and at least 11 000 followers in total. The selection of the influencers was made by using the fourth Latvian Golin Accelerators of Relevance index 2022, based on the international Golin Global data-based approach Accelerators of Relevance. The Latvian Golin Accelerators of Relevance index 2022 lists social media influencers in 3 categories according to the number of followers (micro, medium, macro) and 12 areas (public participation, education and self-growth, Tik Tok, family, lifestyle, beauty care, design, fashion and style, food, art and showbusiness, photo and video, sports and fitness). In the selection process we considered the following criteria – significant part of young followers, different profiles, various areas of influence (the content), balance for micro, medium and macro categories (at least 11 000 followers in total), gender balance.

80% of respondents admit that on their social networks most often they share the latest trends in their area of specialization and 70% with work related posts. Given that survey respondents include a wide variety of industries and professions, relatively fewer respondents share the latest news about politics and society (40%), fun facts, memes and jokes (30%) tutorials and lifestyle articles (30%) and friends posts with personal information (30%). As stated in the fourth Latvian Golin Accelerators of Relevance index 20223 – influencers have to be aware of fake news and the reliability of the content that they are sharing, because it makes their reputation. 54% of the Baltic (Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia) population are very worried that influencers do not check the facts and give false information.

Majority (80%) of the respondents points out that their aim of sharing and being active on social media is to expand their network of followers, to feel included virtually in a social group (70%) and to go with the trends (60%). As for this survey we selected influencers with various professional background, it can be concluded that nevertheless of the professional area, influencers are reaching out for more followers, follows the trends and wants to be virtually part of a social group.

Another survey of perceptions of “influencers” in 2021 in Latvia, shows that only 22% of followers had bought the product on the recommendation of “influencers”. Promoting products on social networks as a full-time profession and a source of basic income is only for a few people. For everyone else, it is an ambition for fame, a hobby or additional income. A large part of the influencers’ cooperation is low paid.



2.3. Case Studies

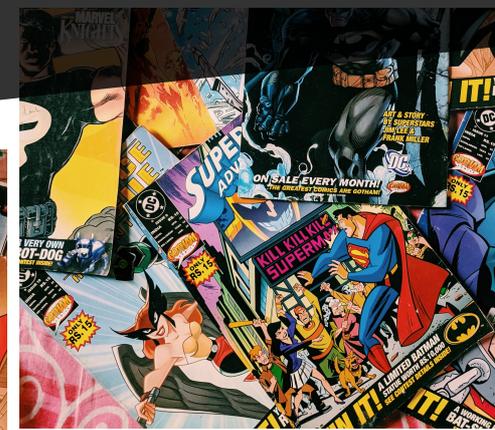
LATVIA

Almost all of the respondents (90%) are active on social media because they can share their knowledge and opinion and because they want to have positive impact on the society (90%). 70% of the influencers admits it is part of their job to be active on social media, this showing that most of the influencers consider it their job, despite the fact that the respondents are from different professions, for example, actors, athletes, musicians, comedians, photographers. Half of the respondents (50%) are active on social media because they follow the trends and considers it's trendy to be engaged online and because they can stay close to their friends and family circle (50%).

All the influencers (100%) that we have involved in this survey points out the usage of the social media as the reason to fill their time while waiting for something or someone. Most of the influencers (80%) open their social accounts when they receive a notification on their mobile phone, when travelling to home, work or vacation (70%) or when they are bored (60%). We can presume that our respondents use social media when they have nothing else to do, when they have short time between their activities, short free time that is not fulfilled with something else.



Training and education through gamification approach





This section is dedicated to those focusing on the education and training activities towards more digital literacy of the younger generation and their relations towards social media networks. We will provide you with valuable tips and approaches based on our expertise and past research activities on how to debunk and fight the harmful effects of the social bubbles in the virtual world. We use the gamification concept, whose primary purpose is to add game mechanics into nongame environments, like a website, online community, learning management system, or business intranet, to increase participation.

Gamification aims to engage with consumers, employees, and partners to inspire collaboration, sharing, and interaction. We have borrowed this approach because we think that virtual reality and online engagement run through the same “notes,” Most young people believe that everything happening online is just a game and fun.

In short:

You will be able to explain and know young people online and in virtual life reality;

You will learn how to define and be aware of bias inside the social bubbles;

Last but not least, we will teach you how to think - reak outside the box.



Game NO1: Online engagement of young people

Main aim of this game is to uncover the daily online activity of young people and their ability to reflect on how the online world affects their daily lives.

Duration: 20 - 30 minutes

Age: any

Size of the group: 10 - 15 participants

Tools: data projector, PowerPoint presentation with questions, computer, notebooks, or blank paper for notes.

Description: The participants of this game are standing in a line. And are moving if they agree with the question - statement and remain in their position if they disagree with the question - statement. The trainer presents different opinions in a PowerPoint Presentation, such as

1. I use my mobile phone every 5 minutes
2. I use my social media for fun facts rather than for information
3. We don't need to learn more about the effect of social bubbles and echo chambers; I'm aware of them.
4. Influencers and people that I follow always are telling the truth.
5. Young people have fewer problems recognizing the fake and reality in the virtual world than their older peers and relatives.
6. I believe in the opinion of people in the virtual environment that journalists are paid for their work to write compelling and biased articles.

After the last question, the trainer asks participants why they are moving or not moving, why they agree or don't agree, and let the participants start a discussion.

Tip for educators/ trainers: It is critical to observe if there are group dynamics where some participants follow the others instead of thinking by themselves to the answer, especially with the younger ones.



Game NO2: How social bubbles are you?

The main aim of this game is to uncover the daily online activity of young people and their ability to reflect on how the online world affects their daily lives. It will measure their dependency on the online environment and uncover the threats that affect their online and offline behavior.

Duration: 10 minutes via web application and 30 - 35 minutes after discussion

Age: any

Size of the group: 10 - 15 participants

Tools: mobile phone, Batman web application, notebooks, or blank papers for notes.

Description: The participants will be asked to fill out the web application and discuss with others the result of the profiling. They will ask to present their perception of their results and how they felt during the test and after.

Questions for the discussion: What was surprising? What was easy? What did we learn?

Tips for trainers/ educators: you should before even collect the most relevant topics and themes that favor young people in the virtual - online world.



Game NO3: Pass the ball to me!

The main aim of this game is to uncover the daily online activity of young people and their ability to reflect on how the online world affects their daily lives. It will measure their dependency on the online environment and uncover the threats that affect their online and offline behavior.

Duration: 30 minutes

Age: any

Size of the group: 10 - 15 participants

Tools: ball

Description: The person who has the ball needs to say one piece of information that he found in their social bubble. Whatever they say can be authentic or fake. While the person with the ball says the sentence about themselves, they pass the ball to another person. The person who takes the ball needs to guess if that statement is genuine or fake. If they think correctly, the person receiving the ball gets 1 point. If they guess wrong, the person sending the ball receives 1 point. You can make as many rounds as you want. This game aims to recognize how people could be affected by their social bubbles and if who is guessing or who is creating this information is aware of this effect.

Tips for trainers/ educators: give the participants a couple of minutes to think about their cases and ask them to write them down not to forget. If they are active, give them more time to elaborate on their information.



Game NO4: Emotions?! Not with me! Or?

The main aim of this game is to uncover the daily online activity of young people and their ability to reflect on how the online world affects their daily lives. You will learn about the main motives why young people share information online, and how they are emotionally affected by them.

Duration: 30 minutes

Age: any

Size of the group: 10 - 15 participants

Tools: blank paper for the notes

Description: Ask the participants to present two online stories - information that impacts them - one funny and one sad. How they were feeling, their first reaction, and what they did after they read - listened - watched the online content. Ask them if they would proceed differently and why when they have the chance to turn back the time.

Tips for trainers/ educators: give the participants a couple of minutes to think about their cases and ask them to write them down not to forget. If they are active, give them more time to elaborate on their information.



Game NO5: Influencer for 24 hours!

The main aim of this game is to uncover the daily online activity of young people and their ability to reflect on how the online world affects their daily lives. It makes young people aware of the long-lasting impact of the content published in the online environment.

Duration: 1,5 hours

Age: any

Size of the group: 6 - 10 participants

Tools: papers, pencils, colors, mobile phones.

Description: Young participants are invited to a discussion about who they follow and share opinions and points of the followed influencers, explaining why they are following him - her. After that, they split into groups of 2-3 people to become "Influencers": they will be asked to make a video for the online environment. The main target for them is to drive video viral. Once they make the videos, they will be shown to the whole group, followed by a group discussion.

Tips for trainers/ educators: Aske them directly how they felt doing this activity and if they would share it?



Conclusion

This conclusion emphasizes the importance of promoting the critical use of social networks and their responsible use. And it is that everyone knows that there is a huge potential group public, the temptation of manipulation and disinformation put at the service of particular interests becomes a reality.

For this reason, we must educate young people to know how to use quality sources of information, which are also found on social networks, and discard the information that reaches them in a manipulated way. In this sense, we must also hold them responsible for the personal use they make of them and for individual behavior since they cooperate with a collective behavior that can become personal persecution or speakers for hate speech that can cause serious social problems and even for people who do not find social approval in them, quite the contrary.

In addition, we must be clear that young people, as consumers and users of social networks, must be aware of the risks involved in sharing certain personal information on social networks since, on countless occasions, their inappropriate use has caused severe problems.

Finally, in the aspect of training for the correct use of social networks, we also understand that the new generations should also receive training on how to make effective and efficient use of them since, given their importance and influence, they have transcended the role of hobby or social complement, since they will have to use them in their professional future or even make them their profession, at least from non-formal training, education in them should be offered to young people.



And the role of influencers? It's more crucial!

First of all, it should be noted that current events, politics, and society form a very big part of the content shared on social media by the youth influencers. This is an important finding since these youth influencers, besides devoting a big part of their social media channels to their specialized areas, generally tend to be engaged in political and social topics. However, it is unclear whether they do it since they are addressing the youth that is interested in these topics, and therefore they are responding to these youth's demand for this kind of content; or whether, since they act as role models, they use their platform to promote political and social issues that are important to them.

Another important finding is that influencers are focused on the trends and areas of their specialization. This makes sense since often "influencing" remains a big part of their /professional activity – they create their profiles to allow the sharing of their knowledge with others. This could also be driven by their motivation to reach a bigger audience. Therefore motivation for economic benefits - more followers can eventually be exchanged for higher earnings or higher social and cultural capital, depending on the platform and specialization.

This is important in the context of the professionalization of influencing on social media. Photos, tutorials, pictures, and memes are less likely to form a significant part of the social media walls of the influencers, which can further reinforce the idea that these influencers are focused on the professional aspect of social media. They, therefore, engage with it less "for fun." The results from the survey could further supplement this kind of view - 60% of the respondents declare to "prefer not to share stuff on the social media wall," perhaps pointing to the fatigue with oversharing their personal information or other content on social media. The fact that none of the influencers said that they are engaged in social media "because it's trendy to be engaged online" can point to the fact that social media has become so ingrained in our everyday life and work that it is no longer viewed through the categories of trendy/non-trendy.

