The Audiovisual Content Downloads among University Students

Las descargas de contenidos audiovisuales en Internet entre estudiantes universitarios

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ABSTRACT

This article analyses the phenomenon of downloading audio-visual content –movies and television series– which is habitually practiced by university students via the Internet; their attitudes towards illegal downloads; and the education/training that they have about the legal status of this activity. These issues are a frequent reality but are little discussed in our academic context. Data was obtained from a questionnaire designed ad hoc. This was administered to students enrolled in different university degrees (Audio-visual Communication, Primary Education and Social Education). We believe that these college degrees require ethical and legal training on the issues regarding downloading of content from the web. This education is an urgently needed training for young people who will work in educating and informing the citizens of the 21st century. The study results show that university students habitually consume a high percentage of online content from the audio-visual industry (films and television series). Students have clearly favourable attitudes towards this form of consumption. However, students show little regards to the ethical and legal issues surrounding downloading from the Internet. In addition, they have a very low degree of education and training on these issues. The results suggest the need to implement training programs and to conduct information campaigns to improve their information and digital literacy.

RESUMEN

El presente trabajo analiza el fenómeno de las descargas de contenidos audiovisuales –películas y series de televisión– que habitualmente practican los universitarios a través de Internet; sus actitudes ante las descargas ilegales y la formación que tienen en relación a la situación legal de las mismas. Estas cuestiones conforman una realidad que aunque a priori parece ser demasiado frecuente, se encuentra todavía muy poco explorada y es escasamente tratada desde una perspectiva científica en nuestro contexto. Los datos se obtuvieron a partir de un cuestionario diseñado ad hoc, administrado a estudiantes de tres Grados universitarios (Comunicación Audiovisual, Educación Primaria y Educación Social), por considerar que se trata de titulaciones en las que un conocimiento de base ético y legal ante las descargas de contenidos en la red es urgente y necesario para unos jóvenes que se están preparando con el propósito de dedicarse a la formación e información de los futuros ciudadanos del siglo XXI. Los resultados del estudio muestran cómo el consumo de contenidos procedentes de la industria audiovisual (televisiva y cinematográfica), es una práctica asentada entre los universitarios, que tienen actitudes claramente favorables hacia ella pero que prestan escasa importancia a cuestiones éticas y legales ante las descargas no legales, además de tener muy baja formación en estas cuestiones. Los resultados sugieren la necesidad de poner en marcha acciones educomunicativas para mejorar sus competencias informacionales y digitales.

KEYWORDS | PALABRAS CLAVE

Download, uses, audiovisual, contents, illegal, Internet, students, University.
Descarga, usos, audiovisual, contenido, ilegal, Internet, estudiantes, Universidad

1. Introduction and state of the art

The Internet opens before our eyes a wide world of possibilities into which we can submerge ourselves and navigate among a multitude of content from diverse sources, this being extremely important in modern life. However, the unhindered nature of the Internet also comes with a great inconvenience. It has become a place where «self-service» is now the norm. It is now possible to download and use products that are hosted on a web that could be subject to copyright. This use does not have any kind of compensation –economic, moral, etc.– for the author or the «owner». This results in negative consequences for the audio-visual sector or the entertainment industry (León & Varela, 2009; 2010) and could also bring consequences for the economic and social development of many countries (Bai & Waldfogel, 2012; Ritzer & Jurgenson, 2010; Ruud, Heuvelman, Tan, & Peters, 2012).

More specifically, downloading content that belongs to the audio-visual sector, which is defined as «the heterogeneous set of markets that are characterized for directly or indirectly participating in the simultaneous supply and reception of sounds and moving images, independently of the transmission media used or if it is directed towards an individual or a group» (Pablo & Muñoz, 2001: 125-126), is a type of behaviour that is booming around the world. As pointed out at the time by the mentioned authors, the audio-visual industry's own content is very special, as «it can be transmitted and consumed in a physical as well as intangible form, so that the application of commercial restrictions to these types of products are even more so complicated».

Although it is true that from the point of view of the film industry and producing companies, the Internet has increased what is available and widened the range of distribution possibilities of their products, it has also became a highway of thousands of files that were transmitted without any control or restriction. This has resulted in digital piracy, becoming the «main worry of the audio-visual industry, in the same way that it became a daily worry to the music industry in its day» (Clares, 2008: 4). As discussed by Prasad and Mahajan (2003), digital piracy encompasses behaviours such as the non-legal copying of digital material, illegal installation, piracy on the Internet, and the installation of single-user licenses in more computer systems than allowed.

We agree with Moretto (2012: 17) when he affirms that «digital technology and the internet have produced a structural change of important consequences on intellectual property, in which the infrastructure is an important part of the solution, just as the law». This aspect is crucial for the protection of the author's and the users' rights (Breen, 2010; Dimagio, Hargittai, Neuman, & Robinson, 2001; Farre, 2008; López-Sintas, 2011; Regner & al., 2010).

The number of Internet users has increased in the last few years, as shown by studies conducted by Spanish and other international institutions. As a prime example, according to a poll conducted by the National Institute of Statistics (Instituto Nacional de Estadistica, INE)[1], Internet consumption and its frequency of use followed an upward trend in the year 2015, with 78.7% of homes having an Internet connection (almost five more percentage points than in 2014), and 74.7% of the Spanish population are frequent users of the Internet (in the last three months). Along the same lines, a report by the Information Society of Spain in 2014[2] revealed that 26.25 million Spanish citizens are internet users (an increase of 1.45 million from the previous year).

But the most worrying fact is that, just as internet consumption increases, so does the phenomenon of downloading without authorization or piracy. Although it is complicated to find exact statistics on the subject, due to the various ways and methods of downloading that currently exist (Ruud & al., 2012), if we focus on the report presented by the Observatory on Piracy and Digital Consumption Habits[3], in the case of Spain, the pirated contents between 2012 and 2014 were valued at more than 54 billion Euros. In Spain, 8476 accessing events to illegal content per minute have been registered (as compared to 5800 that were registered in 2012). And this is true even after a new Intellectual Protection Law came into effect at the start of 2015[4]. This law introduced a series of measures that were grouped into three blocks –measures that revise the system of private copies; measures that establish mechanisms of supervision of the entities that manage the intellectual property rights, and measures that are aimed at looking for infringements of said rights in the digital environment. Although it is still too early to analyse the effect of the law (Moreno, 2010), we believe that it would be interesting to understand the degree of education that the population has on the legal and ethical consequences that come from legislation related to intellectual property.

Based on the literature review (Akbulut, 2014; Buse, 2009; Cuadrado & Miquel, 2010; 2011; Cronan & Al-Rafee, 2008; Gupta & al., 2004; Higgins, 2007; Jambon & Smetana, 2012; Ribina, 2014; Ruud & al., 2012; Williams & al., 2010), it is possible to observe that many of the research works deal with the down-

loading of music-related products, and software in general, and not so much with the the downloading of film content and TV series (Ruud & al., 2012). This study takes into account Cuadrado and Miquel's work (2010), which analysed the attitude and ethics of the users towards musical piracy; it also takes into account the works by Akbulut (2014) and Cuadrado and Miquel (2011), where the authors analysed two models of structural equations centred on the pre-disposition of the users towards digital piracy in the first case, and towards music piracy in the second; as well as a comparative study by Gupta and others (2004) on the influence of ethics versus other variables in the making of decisions by the consumers when acquiring software.

In the first research work mentioned, the researchers focused their efforts on the analysis of general guidelines that people followed (aged between 14 and 45) when consuming music, and their attitude and ethics towards music piracy, mainly from the perspective of demand. They identified six factors (ethics, loss, legal, value, benefit and economy) as determining factors (explicative) of the attitudes shown by the study subjects.

In this study, the common nature of the consumption of illegally downloaded music was evidenced, but the participating subjects did not show a truly binding ethical position as for the correctness of non-legal downloading and/or selling music, and the authors even affirmed that «while it was generally agreed that buying from unlicensed street vendors was illegal, their opinion on the legality of a download from the internet was not explicitly shown» (Cuadrado & Miquel, 2010: 10).

Taking this result into account, the authors performed a second study (Cuadrado & Miquel, 2011), in which they considered the «past behaviours of non-authorized internet downloading» as fundamental issues that were important for delimiting the possible prevention measures and therefore overcoming of the problem that illegal downloading meant for the music industry.

Due to these past behaviours, the authors focused on diverse variables that had been identified in other theories and theoretical models. Variables such as social and demographic profiles, attitudes and motivation that belong to the Theory of Reasoned Action (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980); ethics and social acceptance of behaviour (issues raised in the Theory of Planned Behaviour (Ajzen, 1991); as well as explicative motivational models found in the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) (Davis & al., 1989).

Among the results, we should point out that although only two of the variables considered in their study seemed to have a direct influence on the intention of downloading music (attitude towards downloading and perceived abilities to do so), the other three had a specific influence on the attitude towards piracy (past behaviour, ethical pre-disposition and general

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degree of involvement).

On the other hand, the last work mentioned (Gupta & al., 2004: 261) was also centred on the attitudes of individuals towards piracy, although in this case it was focused on software, differentiating between ethical considerations and perceived legality, as well as other variables that were economic and legal in nature (such as being conscious of the criminal or punitive consequences and the social impact)

These research works have been used as our starting points and have guided the study performed on behaviours, attitudes and the uses given by the subjects with respect to downloading audio-visual contents from the internet. To these we add another dimension, which is more related to educative-communicative training and education of the youth, which has been proposed as being essential by diverse authors such as Aguaded (2012). This author affirms that «teaching and social institutions have frequently and excessively ignored present-day education, cultural and political changes found in the contemporary world».

2. Materials and methods

Similar to Martín-Moreno (2007) and Sanz-Casado (1994), our study is based on the study of users, within the lines of applied, empirical and exploratory

research, while also having descriptive, correlational and explicative requisites.

The objectives of the study were: To analyse the habits of audio-visual (movies and television series) consumption via the internet of university students; to detect their attitudes, knowledge and abilities as related to illegal downloading of content from the web; and to describe the education/training they perceive to have in relation to legal and ethical issues on the subject. With the combination of the information obtained through the literature review of academic and legal texts on the subject, along with the declarations by the study participants, we believe we can offer a more complete picture of the subject.

For the methods used for data acquisition, we followed authors such as Briones (2008), Rodríguez and others (1996), Sierra (1994), and opted for a mixed method. For the quantitative data, we obtained specific data from the answers given by the subjects to close-ended questions (yes/no answers). To these data, qualitative contributions were added, which originated from the literal responses given by the subjects to open-ended questions.

For the field study, we designed a questionnaire comprised of 32 items, structured into four large sections: Uses of ICT resources and their relation to downloading; Knowledge and Abilities; Attitudes and Motives for downloading free and unauthorized content from the internet; and Legal and Ethical education. For the creation of the questionnaire, a detailed review of the items used in previous research work was performed (Cuadrado & Miquel, 2010; 2011; Gupta & al., 2004).

After the review, the items were grouped according to content and spread among the four dimensions that we started with: uses, attitudes, knowledge and education. The next step was to re-formulate the questions, in order to make them more clear and concise. Then, the ones that were more adequate for our

object of study were selected, and to these other questions, which were not necessarily found in previous studies but were considered important for our study, were added.

Once the first revision was done, and to ensure the instrument's validity, it was evaluated using a panel of experts. For the selection criteria, we opted for a group of four experts that were renowned in the sub-

Table 1. Dimensions of the questionnaire	
Personal and demographic data	Gender, Education, Centre, professional and economic situation.
Use of ICTs and their relation to downloading	8 items related to the availability of technological means; to the use of these means for the downloading of content and their in-stream (on-line) viewing; types of downloads performed; habits of «sharing and recommending».
Knowledge and abilities for piracy	2 items on self-perception of their own computer abilities and knowledge for the non-authorized downloading of series and movie from the internet.
Attitudes and motives	5 items on their attitude and motives for the behaviour of downloading without authorization from the internet in the cases where the authorization was required.
Legal knowledge and education	12 questions on the degree of knowledge and education on current laws related to the free downloading of series and/or movies without authorization, as well as the buying-selling without a license of pirated files and their corresponding sanctions.
Ethics	5 items on ethical concerns on piracy in general (download, buying and selling)

ject matter (three professors from the University of Huelva, and one from the University of Extremadura, selected due to their experience in legal matters related to internet downloading as well as their expertise in communication, educational technology and research methodologies). These experts were asked to evaluate the instrument in its totality, the degree of relevance of each of the items included, and the degree of precision and appropriateness as well as the syntactic and semantic degrees. Once the questionnaire was corrected based on the answers by the experts, the instrument was configured as shown in table 1:

The items on the questionnaire can be classified into four types of questions, in agreement with Sierra (1994), as a function of the type of information that we sought to gather: Open-ended questions, dichotomous in character; categorized questions, also called multiple-choice questions; and questions with answers that used a Likert scale, used when the degree of intensity of the answer obtained was needed.

In order to ensure the reliability of the instrument from a statistical perspective, and similar to Bisquerra (1987), after the classification of the questions into three groups according to the type of answers given (a pre-requisite for finding the greatest reliability index possible), an Alpha value, or internal consistency index, above .75 in the three groups (G1α=.817; G2α=

.808; G3α=.793) was found. These results led us to conclude that the instrument used had a high reliability or internal consistency.

The selection of the sample was «intentionally directed» with the criteria for inclusion being: university students; enrolled in Degree programs related to education and communication; between 20 and 30 years of age. Therefore, our target population were the students enrolled in the Audio-visual Commu/nication Degree in the Library Science and Documentation Faculty at the University of Extremadura, and the Primary Education and Social Education Degrees at the University of Huelva. The field study took place in the months of April and May of 2014. The participation of the subjects was random, according to accessibility and availability of the student body during the completing of the questionnaire via the Moodle platform in the computer lab. The surveyors were two collaborating researcher students that had the prerequisite training for providing the surveys and the knowledge on how to act in case of doubts.

Lastly, the participating sample was comprised of 192 students, of which 46% were enrolled in the 3rd and 4th years of the Audio-visual Communication Degree (N=88); and the other 54% were enrolled in Education Degrees (N=104) (2nd year of Primary Education=37% and 2nd year Social Education= 17%). Of the 192 students, 40.22% were men, and 59.78% women. Age-wise, the mode was between 20-22 years of age (71.70%); 16.30% were 23-25 years of age, and only 12% were older than 25 (of which, only two attested to being older than 30).

For their professional/work situation, 22.47% were identified as university-study grant holders; almost 8% as looking for work, and the option «dedicated to household work» only comprised 2.25% from the total. As for their economic situation, most of those surveyed depended economically from third parties (98%), but half of them affirmed that they made it to the end of the month, while 38.13% also depended economically on other people, but affirmed that they had economic difficulties at the end of the month.

3. Analysis and results

The analysis of results was performed from a mixed perspective having both quantitative and qualitative natures: In first place, we quantitatively analysed the data obtained with the statistical package SPSS 15.0 (descriptive statistical measurements of central tendency and dispersion were obtained, as well as a factorial analysis for the extraction of principal components).

In second place, the data gathered from the open-ended questions were analysed, using qualitative content analysis in order to obtain the most complete explanation of the results found in the previous analysis. For this, the answers given by the participants were reviewed in «raw» format, extracting units of analysis (words and phrases) that were considered to be significant. At first, these were re-labelled into codes or keywords used for the main theme of the research, and posteriorly into exhaustive, exclusive, pertinent and objective categories (Cáceres, 2003). Once these categories were established, the different units of analysis were classified by two different coders, making sure that there was some degree of agreement between them at all times. This was done in order to ensure «semantic» validity (Briones, 1988).

For our first objective, «Understand the use given to ICT resources and their link to downloading», we specifically sought to detect: the availability of technological means; the use of these means for the downloading of content and for in-streaming viewing, as well as the type of download performed. In broad terms, we concluded that the participating sample had available a great number of computer resources. Overall, they had a desktop computer and a portable computer (94% of the sample affirmed to having a portable computer), as well as Smartphone-type devices (the figures revealed an expected result; 87.50% of the students attested to having this type of smart mobile device).

After analysing the Internet connectivity results, the results showed that the availability of a «private connection» was very high. 86.36% of the subjects positively responded to this question, as opposed to 12 subjects that indicated not having their own connection, and 4 who did not answer.

In the case of using some type of outside connection without authorization, only 17 of the participants (8.8% of the total) affirmed to having done so at some point in time, with this value considered not to be high.

As for the habits of consumption of television series or movies on the internet, 40% of the participants affirmed to never downloading, or in-stream viewing, series or movies on the internet with their desktop computer, as opposed to the other 60% who attested to having done so on certain occasions, and even many times. However, in the case of a portable computer, the values differed greatly. 89.29% of the sample agreed to having used it to download audio-visual content, and this figure even increased to 92.77% when discussing in-stream viewing, which was also done by using their smartphones or other mobile devices such as iPads or other type of tablet computers.
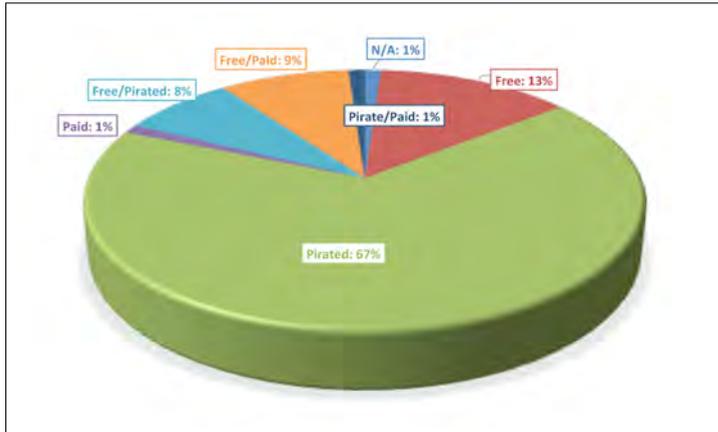
Figure 1. Types of downloads frequently done by those polled.

Economic issues, followed by the elevated cost of movie theatre tickets and films, and the due to convenience of downloading and the subsequent viewing at the place and time chosen by the user were the main motives for non-authorized downloading, as pointed out by the participants.

Another of the items that were considered interesting in this study were the polled subjects' favourite websites and applications for downloading, as well as their tendencies for sharing (or not) the illegally-downloaded content. In this case, the websites that were most-commonly mentioned were «Series.ly» and «Series Yonkis». For the in-stream viewing, «YouTube» and once again «Series.ly» were the most popular, as can be observed in figure 2.

It is interesting to note that from the total sample, most affirmed to having used their own connections to download as well as to view audio-visual content (65.2% and 68.5%, respectively), either while committing piracy or not.

Our second objective was centred on «To detect their students's knowledge, abilities and attitudes in light of illegal downloading of content from the web». The results related to the knowledge and abilities that the students attested to having for the non-authorized downloading of series and/or movies from the internet were very similar to previous questions: 85.85% of the students that completed the questionnaire said that they had the necessary abilities for downloading series and/or free movies from the internet. Also, 70.65% mentioned knowing very well about some program for downloading online content without cost and without authorization.

The subjects, through their answers to the open-ended questions, left a clear mark about a positive attitude for «sharing and recommending» the downloaded content. More specifically, 50% of them attested to having shared pirated content, and from this group, 80% recommended it.

The results of our third objective «To describe the education or training they perceive as having in relation to the legal issues of downloading», 45.05% of the students assured to be not familiar with the laws regarding non-authorized downloading from the internet. However, most of them seemed to be able to clearly identify the nature of «legal» or «illegal» downloading

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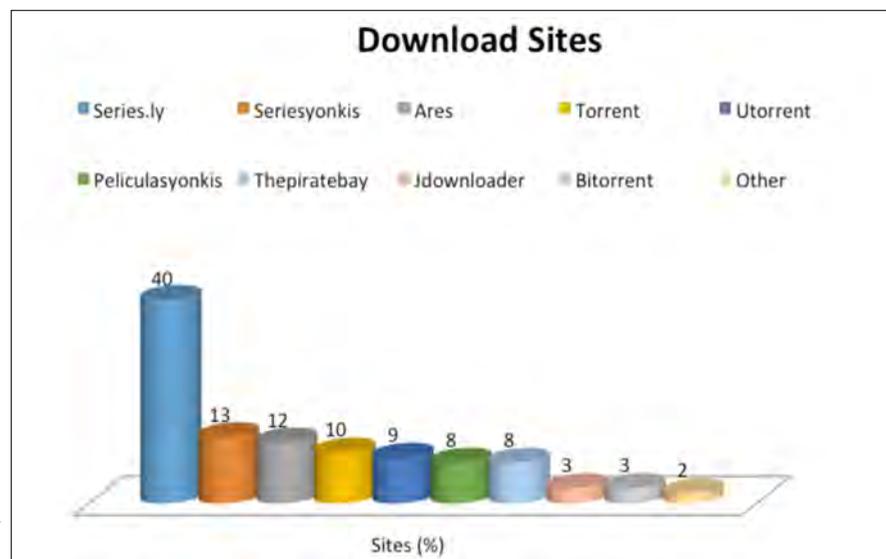

Figure 2. Download sites specified by those polled.

of series and/or movies from the internet without authorization, as well as the purchasing from unlicensed street vendors, with these behaviours recognized as non-legal by 76.1% and 88% of the sample, respectively.

As for the subject's perception on the consequences of these types of activities, we determined that 67.39% of the sample affirmed that the purchasing from unlicensed street vendors did not imply future (legal) consequences. For non-authorized downloading and for the consequences of being discovered performing this type of practice, 30.43% assured that it was very simple to pirate without being caught; and in case that they were, 21.17% manifested that there were no consequences. In fact, the great majority of those polled (92%) affirmed that they did not know the legal sanctions for pirating content or acquiring them through unlicensed street vendors.

Lastly, the results on the ethical dimension showed that only half the sample considered «non-ethic» the sharing of content of this type; only 82.6% of the sample considered «non-ethic» the selling of said content, and 77.2% buying them.

4. Discussion and conclusions

With the results obtained, and beginning with our interest for knowing what the nature of the television series and films the students downloaded was and what other type of content they accessed, we have determined that the downloaded products were mostly obtained freely and without authorization. This means that we can point to the clear presence of practices related to «piracy», in agreement with other results obtained in other studies (Gil, 2006; Meissner, 2011; Rybina, 2014; Taylor & al., 2009). To this, we should add that the subjects admitted to having the habit of sharing files –that others had downloaded from the web– with third parties, without them (interested in) knowing where they had been originally stored, and they even recommended these contents to other people.

Likewise, we have determined that the use of portable and desktop computers predominated for downloading, while wireless devices such as the Smartphone, the iPad or other Tablet PCs were used for instream viewing. This could be due to connection issues, as the downloading capability of each of ICT resource varied as a function of the available connection at each moment in time. As for the type of connection, the use of private and outside connections predominated, but this time with authorization.

On the motives that drove the students to downlo-

ad, similar to previous studies performed by Cuadrado and Miquel (2011), we can conclude that it was the economic issue that mostly impelled free downloading without authorization, followed by the elevated prices of movie theatre tickets and original films. To these results, we can add issues such as «convenience» (the students affirmed to download because it was more convenient). Downloading could lead towards a new precept of rupture of spatial and temporal barriers, imposed in the last few years by the new technologies: «available at any time and any place».

On the other hand, this study started with the idea that the student's knowledge of legal issues was scarce, which is directly related to the act of downloading. Based on the results obtained, we determined that they had a low degree of education and training in this type of issue (more than half of the participants ensured having little, some or no knowledge about this issue; while two thirds of the sample considered it insufficient). Also, we have assessed a certain confusion as to the existing consequences or legal sanctions in response to non-authorized downloads, although subjects were extremely clear on their opinions in the case of acquisitions of pirated CDs from unlicensed street vendors.

As for the «ethics» dimension, again the direction of the answers was clear: those polled believed that the purchasing, selling and the act of sharing downloaded series and/or movies without authorization was unethical. On this issue, they did not have enough or needed education and training, which we found to be worrisome, especially in the case of the young participants of our study, who at this time are being educated and are the ones who will have the responsibility of educating and informing the citizens of tomorrow.

To conclude, it should be mentioned that we are conscious of the need to confirm the data obtained in this research work with future research using a larger sample, in order to attain greater scientific validity. This is an initial study with data that is not yet applicable to the general population. But, we believe that the results elucidated from the analysis of the responses given by those polled allows for glimpsing a few conclusions that could be of interest, while at the same time re-affirming the results from past research studies.

We also believe that the instrument that we have developed and used to gather information has had the necessary consistency to be able to be applied to different contexts. It could be interesting to broaden the study to other popular content on the web, such music, software or videogames, so that relationships and differences can be established among them.

Last but not least, the research performed points to the urgent need for a more complete and consistent education on the responsible use of Information and Communication Technology for all the citizens of the 21st Century. This education should be oriented towards empowerment from the media, just as pointed out by Aguaded (2014: 7), «the best strategy is to consume (media) in an intelligent way, and enjoy and make the best use of them in our everyday lives; to learn about them, get to know them and relate to them».

Notes

[1] The results of the polls given at the national and the Autonomous Communities are available on the I.N.E website. (http://goo.gl/-Zi3DGw) (2015-09-22).

[2] The complete text can be found on the Fundación Telefónica website: (http://goo.gl/uj9Rki) (2015-11-10).

[3] Information gathered from the «Coalición de Creadores e Industrias de Contenidos» website. In this website, part of the cultural and entertainment sector from Spain in music, films, videogames and books is integrated in this website.
As indicated on the web, the coalition assumes that «working in the bolstering and development of a few activities are necessary in order to avoid the infringement of intellectual property rights on the internet. It promotes knowledge on the activity of the creators and the content industries, and enables agreements and alliances for promoting a digital environment that is respectful with intellectual property» (http://goo.gl/ofUMw5) (2015-02-15).

[4] Law 21/2014, from November 4th, which modifies the rewritten text found in the Intellectual Property Law, approved by the Legislative Royal Decree 1/1996, from April 12th, and the Law 1/2000, from January 7th, of Civil Procedure. Official Government Gazette n° 268, Spain, November 4th, 2014.

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