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Political and structural elements influencing the credibility of news on social networking sites

Abstract

During lockdown, as a consequence of the coronavirus crisis in 2020, the majority of Spanish people (70% of social media users) were exposed to a social media consumer space: news without journalistic filters, with a multitude of fake data and a systematic existence of misinformation that has had a close relationship with the perception of credibility. 1,000 surveys were conducted between March 30 and April 30, in Spain. This work describes the consumption patterns of political parties in social networking sites, describing the facts that determine to what extent Spanish people trust the news they receive. The amount of information consumed online, age and the party identification with Vox and Ciudadanos are the most relevant communicative, structural or political variables that explain the increase or decrease in the credibility of the information that Spaniards receive through these channels.

Keywords
Social media, communication, sociology, credibility, Covid19, political parallelism, incidental consumption.

1. Introduction

On 11th March 2020 the World Health Organisation declared the coronavirus disease caused by SARS-CoV-2 a pandemic. The disease, which has taken the lives of thousands of people across the world, has had implications not only for health, politics, society and the economy but huge changes have also occurred in the field of communication, ranging from forcing a change in the business model of media organisations, particularly digital media companies, to an increase in fake political news in the social networks that has had consequences for the credibility of the information (Apuke & Omar, 2021). Over the last few months, a plethora of studies have been published on communication and the Covid19, especially in the Global North, that could be summarized in three main blocks:

a) Infodemia and misinformation through the analysis of the content of traditional mass media, as well as citizen's consumption habits within a context marked by a strict lockdown, most specifically the case of the Spanish lockdown (Aleixandre-Benavent, Castelló-Cogollós & Valderrama-Zurian, 2020; Allahverdipour, 2020; Casero-Ripollés, 2020. Montaña-Blasco, Ollé-Castellà &Lavilla-Raso, 2020).

b) The information production circuit regarding both journalistic routines (select, produce, and distribute) and the impact on news companies and reputation (Olsen, Pickard & Westlund, 2020; Xifra, 2020).

c) Academic work on digital media and the use of social networking sites from metric analyses focused on the proliferation of hoaxes or fake news as well as on the verification mechanisms (Pennycook *et al.*, 2020; Ahmed *et al.*, 2020; Orso *et al.*, 2020) and their consequences on credibility.

In all information exchange environments, quality is considered as one key characteristic, and the same is true of social networks, where the content generated by their users (Haralabopoulos, Anagnostopoulos & Zeadally, 2016) and the identification of the news company become indicators of credibility. This fact, from the citizen's perspective, is of utmost importance as it affects the decision of whether to disseminate this news, or not (Floria, Leon & Logofătu, 2018) In line with uncertainty theory, according to the rules of Dempster-Shafer and Yager (Dempster, 1967; Shafer, 1976; Yager, 1987). This research falls into the second category of work as it seeks to analyse the reasons influencing the credibility that citizens in Spain give to information on social media.

1.1. *Social networking sites and credibility*

Social networking sites have changed the way in which news is generated, the mechanisms through which news is obtained and the manner in which individuals interact with it through either participation or dissemination (Casero-Ripollés, 2018). Besides, it introduces two new patterns of consumption that generate research challenges with repercussions for credibility and which have become apparent during the coronavirus crisis: one of them is the incidental consumption of news or "surprise of finding;" the other, consumption on second screens or multimedia consumption (Fernández, Proust & Nuñez, 2018).

The first logical consequence of the possibility of a greater democratization in the production and distribution of news has to do with a much more pluralistic offer with fewer journalistic checks (removal of economic barriers but also of the gatekeeper or the news values). This implies greater risks: proliferation of fake news (Shu *et al.*, 2017) but with its control mechanisms such as the fact-checking tools (Ciampaglia *et al.*, 2015).

Secondly, the consumption of this information has a direct impact on credibility: its brief, uninterrupted and incidental nature (Casero-Ripollés, 2018) leads to users accumulating information they are unable to assimilate, and which is hard to cross-check through different sources. Similarly, news with journalistic protocols exists alongside news lacking such protocols with both being placed at the same formal and visual level. They are mixed with the opinions of the digital community thus generating mobilization towards their consumption or rejection through attachments and emotions. This consumption through a "surprise of finding" is typical of this new digital environment in which citizens "bump" into the news without looking for it with the participation of users and algorithms (Fernández, Proust & Núñez, 2018), and other media, generating consumption on second screens. The effects of news consumption –especially that of a political nature– through social media, leads to the radicalization and polarization of the audience (van-Aelst *et al.*, 2017).

The study of the credibility of media news or news sources is not new in communication or journalism, but the development of the digital society has opened new spaces, for example, social networking sites that have a direct effect on it. One case in point of this concern is the phenomenon of fact-checking applied to Facebook or Twitter (Castillo, Mendoza & Poblete, 2013), which automates news fact-checking through the identification of its source, its content analysis and the direction of the different information flows through an algorithm that measures the credibility of the users in social media by analysing their behaviour online (Abbasi & Liu, 2013). In fact, one of the elements that most distort the perceived reliability, credibility and quality of the information has to do with the existence of bots, which deliberately seek to elaborate and comment on news and data deceitfully (Chatterjee *et al.*, 2020).

In communication and political marketing, several research works show that it is party accounts, particularly those of conservative parties, that have the most followers and the greatest commitment from automated accounts and therefore are exposed to lower credibility contents (Nikolov, Flammini & Menczer, 2021; Chen *et al.*, 2020; Grinberg *et al.*, 2019). Consequently, in terms of citizen perception, they occupy the space qualified as "less credible" among the new sources of online news, most particularly as regard political news (Johnson & Kaye, 2014). However, their use as a source of information partially challenges this perception, suggesting that the gratifications obtained can be so strong as to make users surrender part of the credibility to satisfy their need for information (Johnson & Kaye, 2015) and prevent episodes of cognitive dissonance through selective exposure (Flanagin & Metzger, 2017).

From a journalistic perspective, particularly in the approach by Spanish journalists, there is a paradox: the level of confidence in platforms, when compared to traditional organisations, is substantially lower, but they systematically resort to them to look for information and contact their sources (Herrero, 2015). In addition, the fact is that among Spanish journalists their use raises questions associated to attribution and their validation and cross-checking (Varona-Aramburu & Sánchez-Muñoz, 2016).

1.2. *The "partisan audience" in social networking sites in Spain*

The building and institutionalization of the political and the media system, as well as its reciprocal influences, would place Spain in the so-called model of "polarised pluralism" (Hallin & Mancini, 2009) characterized by a system of news organisations closely linked to politics and scarcely commercial, with scant professionalization or where the State plays a strong role. Beyond the description of this model, which falls outside the purview of this article and that has been studied in depth in several applied research projects (López-López & Oñate, 2019; Humanes *et al.*, 2013) it is interesting to single out one of its characteristics, the so-called "partisan audience" within the "political parallelism" (Blumler & Gurevitch, 1995) and its adaptation to the new digital context with tools such as social networking sites. The concept of political parallelism can be used in the hybrid ecosystem of communication (Chadwick, 2013) in Spain as the two conditions for its use are met (De Albuquerque, 2013): a political system of a competitive nature with clear divisions that can be replicated in both the media and social networking sites and, on the other hand, an institutionalized relation between networks, media and actors that is stable enough to identify recurring patterns of behaviour. In this regard, in the consumption of social networking sites for political information, ideology is a differentiating factor: the persons at the extremes use them more often (Vox and Podemos), thus consolidating a model of a centrifugal nature also in its dissemination (Oñate & López-López, 2020). This fact, which we will try to address in this work, is also related to credibility.

Consequently, social networking sites have been able to: a) supplement and even modify the political content of news organisations through the (limited) inversion of the process of construction of the agenda, reflecting certain political orientations; b) provide transparency to the intra-organisational relations between the news organisations and political parties themselves or other civil society organisations as they make it possible to ascertain the political attitudes of their workers or their managers as a result of the democratisation of the dissemination channels; c) become a space of consumption in themselves where the accounts of the different news organization are on an equal footing and where "partisanship" on the part of the audience can be seen, or to put it differently, social networking sites consumption for information or participation, which varies on the basis of the political party they vote or identify with; d) build a space of search for sources and news with an evident change in the pattern of news production and journalist work.

In this regard and as an example of the model, three issues are put forward in the literature. First, whether the effect of media polarisation is replicated or intensified in the social media in Spain as described in the traditional domain or off-line (Bustos & Capilla Del Fresno, 2014). Secondly, whether, on the basis of the characteristics described above, there is a selective exposure of audiences of a partisan nature (Humanes, 2014) also in social media, with the necessary intervention of digital communities in the orientation, definition and the framing of the news (López-López, Castro-Martínez & Oñate, 2020). Finally, whether the journalistic work carried out in media environments that are characterised by low degrees of political parallelism promotes a lower use of platforms such as Twitter when selecting sources or making comments as compared to those States where political parallelism is higher (Barberá, Vaccari & Valeriani, 2017).

These facts would have a fundamental effect on credibility, as perceived by the audience, acting in a number of different ways and partially challenging the previous literature in which intuitively lower levels of political parallelism and of State intervention, on the one hand, and greater levels of freedom, on the other hand, would result in greater credibility of information, including social networking sites. In fact, several studies have shown that there is no positive correlation between global classifications of freedom in the media and trust in them by citizens (Soon & How-Tan, 2016).

2. Materials and Methods

Spain has been one of the most affected countries by this pandemic in both number of deaths and number of people infected. This fact led the government to establish a strict sine die lockdown for the whole of population by resorting to successive "States of Emergency," thus changing –during the period under study– the daily life of citizens and consequently their habits, including news consumption and the use of social networking sites to receive information. This exceptionality is part of the justification of this work.

In this context, the objective of this research is to analyse the political, social and communication facts that have an influence on the credibility citizens give to the information they receive from social networking sites. The secondary objective is to describe the consumption habits during lockdown as well as to indicate the sociodemograhic and political profile of the users of these types of networks.

This work is a continuation of the research on the characterization and reasons for the use of social networking sites, especially from a political perspective (Calvo & Aruguete, 2018; Pereira-López, Mo-Groba & Lagares-Díez, 2019; Bimber, 2000; Paiz, 2017; Cacciatore *et al.*, 2018). These descriptive studies on the credibility of information and social networking sites abound, but none of them has addressed the political, social or communication reasons that explain this credibility. In this regard, this article puts forward three research questions focused on the case of Spain.

Q1. What is it that makes citizens give more or less credence to the news they receive on social networks?

Q2. Is there a differentiated "partisan" consumption model in social networking sites?

Q3. Is ideology a differentiating factor and one which establishes differences when it comes to lending more or less credibility to information on social networking sites?

In this context, the Equipo de Investigaciones Políticas of the University of Santiago de Compostela conducted a telephone survey between 30 March and 30 April 2020 (the period with the strictest mobility restriction) having as the total universe the whole of the Spanish population aged 18 and over. Sample size was n=1,000 so that in the most unfavourable scenario (p=q), and with a level of confidence of 95.5%, the margin of error is ±3.1%. The sample was stratified proportionality to real population by sex and age quotas. All the regions of Spain are included in the sample. The survey was carried out by telephone using the CATI system.

This study begins with a descriptive analysis of the main patterns of social network consumption, which are then used to establish the profile of information consumers. Subsequently, we analyse the differences between the credibility users give to the information on social networking sites on the basis of their sociodemographic characteristics, their habits of social network consumption and their electoral behaviour. Finally, a linear generalized model was performed with logit link function for those users who claim that they habitually use digital social networking sites, using as the dependent variable the following question: to what extent do you give credibility to the information received via social networking sites?[1] The dependent variable was treated as dummy variable (table 1), in other words, it was recorded as a dichotomic (1-0) variable, where 1 corresponds to the credibility of the information received through social networking sites (in the original question: much or quite) and 0 corresponds to giving no credibility to that information (in the original question little or no credibility).

Within the sociodemographic independent variables, education, professional status or political and economic situation will be used. As variables of a more political nature, we will use leader assessments and emotions towards leaders and parties in Spain. Finally, classical variables of vote explanation such as ideology will also be used.

The model has been adjusted by removing all the variables that have proved not to be statistically significant in an attempt to obtain the maximum explanatory level possible. The final adjusted model is shown in Table 5.

3. Results

3.1. *Profile of the user of social networking sites during the lockdown*

According to the study data (Table 1), 58.2% of women are regular users of social networking sites as opposed to 55.9% of men. These percentages (57.1% of the total population), in line with the data from Western Europe, reveal a slight increase for both sexes in the use of these tools with respect to other similar papers carried out weeks before the crisis, which showed a general percentage of 52%, such as for instance the "Estudio Postelectoral Elecciones Generales en España 10-N" conducted by the Equipo de Investigaciones Políticas. This five-point increase in the use of social networking sites during the lockdown may be an "activation" by certain citizens motivated by the search for political information or the adding of new users to these tools for a variety of reasons which might be different from strictly seeking information.

Table 1: Regular use of social networking sites by sex, age and recent vote as remembered (percent).

Social network sites users by	Sex		Age brackets (yrs)				Recent vote as remembered in November in 2019 General Elections					
	Male	Fem.	18-29	30-49	50-64	>65	PSOE	PP	Vox	UP	C´s	Abstention
Yes	55.9	58.2	90.7	60.9	51.8	18.4	51.5	59.4	65.6	73.1	54.3	54.4
No	43.9	41.4	9.3	38.8	47.7	81.1	48.5	40.6	34.4	26.9	45.7	44.8
Dk/Da	0.2	0.4	-	0.3	0.5	0.5	-	-				0.8

Source: Study of the perception by the Spanish population of the management of the Covid19, 2020.

By age brackets (Table 1), the generation pattern is followed. The highest use percentages are in those aged between 18 and 29 years and declining progressively in the following age

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[1] This is a previously filtered question which is made only to those who claim to be habitual users of social networks.

brackets, being 18.4% in those aged 65 and older. Presence varies depending on age, though. Young people are on Instagram (82%) and Twitter (54%). The rest of the groups mostly opt for Facebook (between 75% and 88%). This fact may derive from the different social and political uses that are typical of each age bracket: on the one hand, a more fragmented and ephemeral consumption; on the other, a less short-lived publishing that is more prone to debate, with more stable groups.

One consequence of this lockdown was the increase in the consumption of information because of having more spare time and the need to obtain information on a very unusual event whether through analogical media, digital media or the activation of the communities of users that viralize contents. Without considering mass media properly, almost 70% of Spanish people (users) found out through social networking sites during the months of March and April 2020. Of these, 31.2% did so intensively, with a consumption ranging between one and three hours a day (Table 2). 7.4% reported that they spent over three hours and only 29.9% reported that they had not consumed information on coronavirus.

On the basis of their recent vote as remembered in the November 2019 General Elections, habitual users of social networking sites are at opposite ends of the political spectrum: it is Vox (65.6%) and Unidas Podemos (71.3%) voters who show a greater percentage of activity (Table 1). These data corroborate earlier studies that place the voters of these parties as those who most frequently use social networking sites both to receive political information and to participate, being also the most active in both cases.

Finally (Table 2), another relevant fact during the lockdown has been the hours used in consuming information on social networking sites on coronavirus-related facts, which corroborate the results above: the lowest percentages of voters –those who do not consume any information whatsoever– are those who vote Vox and Unidas Podemos. At the same time, they have the highest consumption rates ("between one and three hours" and "over three hours") and constitute a model of partisan audience exposed to a great amount of information or infodemic, with a higher probability of encountering more fake news or hoaxes.

Table 2: Hours spent on use of social networking sites (percent).

Daily hours spent receiving information on Covid-19	Daily hours spent receiving information on Covid-19
Over eight hours a day	4
Between 5 and 8 hours a day	1.3
Between 3 and 5 hours a day	5.4
Between 1 and 3 hours a day	30.1
Less than one hour a day	30.9
Does not consume information on the coronavirus	30.3
Dk/Da	1.6
Total	100.0

Hours spent in consuming news in social networking sites	Recent vote in the November 2019 General Elections						
	PSOE	PP	Vox	UP	C´s	Abstention	Total
No news consumption	30.6	35.7	25	21.1	40.5	31.7	30.6
Less than one hour	28.9	27.4	25	33.3	27	31.3	31
Between one and three hours	32.2	21.4	42.5	35.1	27	26.9	30.2
Over three hours	6.6	11.9	7.5	8.8	2.7	7.5	6.8
Dk/Da	1.7	3.6	-	1.8	2.7	3	1.6

Source: Study of the perception by the Spanish population of the management of the Covid19, 2020.

3.2. *The perception of credibility in social networking sites*

Generally speaking, the level of credibility given to the information obtained from the social networking sites is quite low. 49.9% of the population gives them little credibility and 18.9% gives them no credibility (Table 3). Using as the dependent variable the credibility that citizens give to the information received via social networking sites (on the coronavirus in general, which includes political news but also health-related and economic news) the study data reveal certain interesting figures by cross referencing them with the most basic sociodemographic variables such as sex and age group.

The difference between the level of credibility that males lend to the information from social networking sites as compared to that lent by females is small but the percentage of females who give it no credibility is slightly higher (21.2%) compared to 16.4% in the case of males. Where there are notable differences is in the credibility given to information on the basis of age brackets, with a clear trend: the higher the age the lower the credibility given to the information received through social networking sites. Thus (Table 3), the highest percentages of credibility are found among those aged between 18 and 29 years (almost 36% give much or a lot of credibility to the information from social networking sites) and the lowest among people aged 65 and over, where a little over ten (10.8%) report that they give quite high credibility to the data and news that are disseminated in the digital domain. The distance between the group of respondents aged from 18 to 29 who claim that the credibility of the information from social networking sites is much or quite high and the corresponding group of respondents aged 65 and over is 24.9%, which suggests that there are strong reasons for this very wide difference. Similarly, the jumps between age brackets are quite homogenous and stable (8.3%; 8.0%, 8.6%), which shows a certain progressivity.

As to the credibility of this news and following Chi-square tests, it was observed that the more the consumption of information on the coronavirus grows in social networking sites, the higher the credibility of the news consumed through these platforms (Table 3). Likewise, the lower the consumption, the lower its credibility. In fact, those who report spending over three hours on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram to receive information, tend to give them more credibility, with a gap of almost 43 points in the case of those who give them no credibility compared with those who do not consume information on social networking sites.

As shown in Table 4, the analysis of the assessment of the political leaders of the main Spanish political parties on the basis of the credibility of the information on social networking sites reveals, at first glance, remarkable differences and characteristics. Although it is difficult to establish a pattern, it is however clear that, broadly speaking, those citizens with a lower level of credibility with regard to the information on social networking sites have a more negative assessment of politicians in general. In the case of Pedro Sánchez and Pablo Iglesias, the President and the then Vice-President of the current government respectively, low scores also occur among those who claim that they give much credibility to digital information.

On the other hand, it seems that leaders of center-right and right parties (C´s and PP, respectively) score higher among those who give more credence than those who distrust more the information provided on social networking sites. These slight differences seem to match with the ideological placements of respondents on the basis of the level of credibility they lend to this information (Table 3), as those who give them much credibility are slightly more to the right in an ideological scale (5.23) compared to average scores in the general population (4.75). However, this reading does not have a mimetic translation into left and right political parties when speaking of the credibility of social network-based information by recent vote (Table 4). A distinct separation could be made here: voters of major political parties do not give credence to the news and data, with the exception of those citizens that claim they have voted Vox, 48.7% of whom give them much or considerable credibility.

Table 3: Credibility of the information on the social networking sites by sex, age, consumption of information, assessment of political leaders and ideological self-placement (percent).

Credibility of information in/on social networking sites by …	Sex		Age groups				Consumption of information in social networking sites				Assessment of political leaders (average)					Ideological self-placement (average)
	Male	Fem.	18-29	30-49	50-64	> 65	> 3 h./ day	1-3 h./ day	< 1 h./ day	No consumption of information on coronavirus	Pedro Sánchez	Pablo Casado	Santiago Abascal	Pablo Iglesias	Inés Arrimadas	
Much	4.4	5.1	7.1	5.6			5.6	5.3	2.7		3.67	4.23	3.09	2.58	4.19	5.23
Quite	24.5	21.5	28.6	21.8	19.4	10.8	23.1	26.4	13.6	15.4	5.36	5.00	2.98	2.93	5.25	4.85
Little	50.7	49.2	44.9	47.9	60.2	62.2	54.6	47.5	55.5	23.1	4.27	3.81	3.57	3.09	4.13	4.59
None	16.4	21.2	17.9	21.8	13.6	18.9	11.1	19.0	21.8	53.8	3.69	3.22	2.45	2.66	3.52	4.90
Dk/Da	4.0	3.0	1.5	3.0	6.8	8.1	5.6	1.8	6.4	7.7	8.58	8.36	7.02	7.33	3.49	4.90

Source: Study of the perception by Spanish population of the management of the Covid19, 2020.

Where there seems to be no difference is with regard to the level of credibility on the basis of the social network from which information is obtained as approximately half of the respondents give little credibility to social networking sites regardless of whether it is Facebook, Instagram or Twitter (Table 4).

Table 5 shows the adjusted binary logistic regression model[2] to analyse the elements that define a high degree of credibility of the news received through the social networking sites (much/ quite) for those respondents who report that they use them regularly. Considering the value of the pseudo R[2] of the model[3], the degree of credibility would be explained in 29.4% of cases by the independent variables which have proved to be significant in the modelling and which will be discussed below. This is no small percentage considering that it is likely that some variables (whose presence in the model might have increased this global level of explanation) might have been left out.

Considering at the exponential values of the beta coefficients of each of the variables, we can say that the variable that has a greater positive effect on the dependent variable, thus increasing the probability of expressing a high degree of credibility as regards the information received through social networking sites, is the increase in Covid19-related consumption of information through digital means ($\beta=1,414$). On the other hand, we come across two variables of a political nature which would have a similar effect, albeit with a slightly lower weight. They indicate sympathy for two political parties: Ciudadanos and Vox ($\beta=1.217$ and $\beta=1.019$, respectively). It is important to note that in other studies the high level of social network consumption by voters of these two parties has been confirmed as opposed to that of the voters of other parties, as we also saw in the descriptive section. The fourth variable in terms of the positive effect on the dependent variable is a structural variable: the fact of being employed or self-employed would increase as many as 2.4 times the credibility given to information received via social networking sites ($\beta=0.879$). Another variable of a political nature that has a positive effect is the degree of interest in politics, with an influence ($\beta=0.139$) that is very similar to that which the assessment respondents make of the information they receive from the media ($\beta=0.150$).

However, if our focus so far has been on those explanatory factors that would increase the probability of showing a high level of credibility, we cannot lose sight of the presence of a model with four elements that would have a contrary effect. These elements are, as in the case of the previously mentioned variables, heterogeneous as far as their origin is concerned. We find, therefore, the effect of variables of a structural nature (age); of a contextual nature (the assessment of the future economic situation of the person): of a political nature (the degree of transparency of the government of Spain in the management of the crisis) or of a systemic nature (the feeling of distrust).

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[2] Although initially a greater number of variables was used, finally only those variables that have proved to be statistically significant for the modelisation (p-value associated to beta coefficients ≤ 0,05) have been included in the table.

[3] We interpret the adjustment measure, Nagelkerke´s R[2], as its value in effective terms is between the values 0-1, for which reason we consider that its interpretation is more effective.

Table 4: Level of credibility of social network-based information by ideological self-placement, vote and social network (percent).

Credibility of the information received through social media	Ideological self-placement (average)	Credibility of information in the social networking sites	Vote count at November 2019 General Elections						Credibility of information in social networking sites	Social networking sites the respondent uses		
			PSOE	PP	Vox	UP	C´s	Abstention		Facebook	Instagram	Twitter
Much	5.23	Much	4.1	5.9	7.7	3.4	10.8	5.9	Much	4.5	7.1	5.7
Quite	4.85	Quite	23.8	21.2	41.0	22.4	21.6	19.1	Quite	22.3	27.7	30.2
Little	4.59	Little	55.7	52.9	30.8	48.3	35.1	45.6	Little	50.9	46,50	46.5
None	4.90	None	12.3	18.8	12.8	24.1	32.4	23.5	None	19.4	17.4	14.6
Dk/Da	4.90	Dk/Da	4.1	1.2	7.7	1.7		5.9	Dk/Da	2.9	1.4	3.3

Source: Study of the perception by the Spanish population of the management
of the Covid19, 2020.

Therefore, as the age of respondents increases, the level of credibility would decrease, something that would also happen when the assessment of the personal economic situation in the foreseeable future scores higher. On the other hand, those who give a greater level of transparency in the management of the government of Spain would have a lower level of credibility for the information received through the social networking sites. Finally, higher levels of distrust towards politicians would also result in a decrease in the credibility level.

Table 5: Regression credibility of the information in social networking sites.

Summary Measurements of the model						
Logarithm of likelihood -2						439,918[a]
Cox and Snell R square						.205
Nagelkerke R square[4]						.294
	B	**Standard error**	**Wald**	**gl**	**Sig.**	**Exp(B)**
Age of the person interviewed	-.039	.010	15.523	1	.000	.962***
Laboral Status…Employee	.879	.256	11.782	1	.001	2.408***
Personal economic situation in the foreseeable future	-.145	.056	6.620	1	.010	.865**
Sympathy towards C´s	1.217	.414	8.649	1	.003	3.378***
Sympathy towards VOX	1.019	.443	5.285	1	.022	2.770**
Degree of interest towards politics	.139	.064	4.657	1	.031	1.149**
Feeling towards politics Distrust	-.176	.049	12.721	1	.000	.839***
Assessment of the information by the media	.150	.060	6.303	1	.012	1.162**
Degree of transparency of the Government of Spain	-.169	.056	8.958	1	.003	.845***
Increase of Covid19-related digital media consumption	1.414	.246	32.928	1	.000	4.113***
Constant	1.131	.743	2.314	1	.128	3.098

Source: Study of the perception by the Spanish population of the management of the Covid19, 2020. Levels of significance are the following: * p < .05; **p < .01; ***p < .001.

4. Discussion and conclusion

The profile of social network users has not changed during the months of lockdown in Spain (it is essentially female and young), nor have the Facebook, Instagram or Twitter target markets changed. However, if we compare it to recent studies, new groups of citizens have become habitual users, particularly in older age brackets (5 percentage points), of these platforms, mainly as a tool to communicate with relatives or friends and intending to look for alternative information on the coronavirus. On the basis of political variables, Vox and Podemos voters are those with the highest indexes of presence in social media, those who use them more frequently to be informed and participate (Oñate & López-López, 2020), with the particular characteristic during the lockdown that they have spent more time avidly looking for all kinds of information. These data lead us to a first conclusion: a model of consumption, use and distribution of a centrifugal nature is institutionalised also in complex contexts such as the current one, with an active "partisan audience" (P2) that actualises and enriches one of the indicators proposed for the study of political parallelism.

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[4] Variables specified in step 1: Age of the person interviewed, employee or self-employed worker, personal economic situation in the foreseeable future, Sympathy for C´s, Sympathy for VOX, Degree of interest in politics, Distrust, Interest, Assessment of the information on the mass media, Degree of transparency of the Government of Spain, Covid-19-related increase in the consumption of digital media.

On the other hand, some 70% of Spanish citizens who use social networking sites used them to be informed and almost a third of them did so intensively. Consequently, most Spaniards have, to a greater or lesser extent, been exposed to a space of incidental consumption of news with no journalistic filtering with a great deal of fake news and misinformation, that has been closely related to credibility. However, a paradox has occurred: the persons who have used social networking sites the most to be informed report higher credibility in them. This fact is reinforced by the results of the regression which indicate that the increase in the consumption of information through digital means has a greater positive effect on the variable under study. On the other hand, in the model developed, there are also variables that would have a contrary effect, in this case, age. Consequently, the second conclusion is that there are communicative reasons (consumption) and structural reasons (age) that are relevant when explaining credibility in social networking sites and which act in opposite dimensions: the more information consumed the greater its credibility; the higher the age, the lower the credibility (P1).

Finally (P3), it is important to note that there are variables of a political nature that also have an explanatory factor, albeit with a slightly lower weight, specifically, sympathy towards two political parties: Ciudadanos and Vox. Generally, a "framework of credibility" is generated by the very social networking sites built on a specific axis (the right) and which tend to be reinforced through the political uses and habits of resignification of the agenda assigned to digital communities. This fact manifests itself for instance in the assessment of left political leaders, which is lower in the case of those who give credibility to information from social networking sites while in the case of right leaders it tends to increase; and this is also exemplified in one of the few categories where the credibility of the social networking sites has higher absolute values: self-reported Vox voters.

This work discusses and complements the previous literature. On the one hand, the political variables that have a positive effect qualify the position of Nikolov, Flammini & Menczer (2021), Chen *et al.* (2020) and Grinberg *et al.* (2019) on the relationship between credibility and conservative parties. Secondly, it confirms the relationship between the level of consumption and credibility, theorized in another research (Casero-Ripollés, 2018).

It also opens new and interesting lines of research –most noticeable the following two: a) the study of the institutionalisation of the model of consumption and distribution of news in social networking sites in the context of an updated political parallelism; b) the creation of empirical evidence that corroborates from the perspective of express content the fact that information overload in digital domains generates higher levels of credibility among citizens.

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