From Social Media to Wikipedia: Youth Strategies for Assessing Digital Information in Chile

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Abstract

This project investigates how Chilean adolescents (ages 15–18) evaluate the reliability of information found on social media and collaborative platforms such as Wikipedia. Using a mixed-methods approach, it explores their criteria for trust, perceptions of platform credibility, and strategies for critical validation. The study aims to generate actionable insights to strengthen Wikimedia's platforms educational relevance among youth and support inclusive participation in knowledge building.

Introduction

As youth increasingly rely on digital platforms for information, their ability to assess content critically becomes essential for democratic participation. However, the abundance of unverified or misleading content poses significant challenges. This study addresses these issues by analyzing how adolescents in diverse Chilean contexts engage with digital information and perceive Wikipedia in contrast to social media. The results will help to guide Wikimedia's efforts to enhance youth engagement and digital literacy.
The research questions for this proposal are the following: What digital platforms do Chilean youth (15–18) most commonly use to access information?, What criteria do they use to assess reliability and validity across platforms?; How do they perceive Wikipedia compared to social media in terms of credibility and usefulness?
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Related work

Previous research in Chile highlights the growing distrust of traditional media among youth, who often perceive it as biased or disconnected from their realities. Studies such as Jóvenes populares urbanos frente a la prensa escrita y digital (CNTV, 2018) reveal a critical stance towards how media portray youth, often through stigmatizing or exclusionary narratives.

At the same time, digital platforms are increasingly valued by adolescents for their accessibility and diversity of voices. However, this shift also exposes them to misinformation. Literature on digital literacy and media pluralism suggests a need to better understand how youth critically assess content and navigate between platforms like TikTok and Wikipedia.

This project builds upon these findings by focusing specifically on how Chilean teenagers validate information and perceive Wikipedia compared to social media. It complements recent efforts within the Wikimedia movement to engage underrepresented populations and

improve critical digital literacy through collaborative knowledge platforms.

Methods

- Online perception survey (Likert scale) targeting 300 high school students from various socio-economic backgrounds.
- 4 to 6 focus groups to explore youth narratives around trust, representation, and stigmatization in the media.
- 12 semi-structured interviews to explore in-depth experiences and digital information habits.
- Mixed analysis combining descriptive statistics with qualitative coding (open and axial).

Expected output

The expected outputs of this project include a digital literacy teaching dossier that will be developed for high school teachers, offering ready-to-use tools to foster critical evaluation skills in the classroom. To ensure wider impact and accessibility, the project will also produce short video capsules highlighting key findings, targeted at youth, Wikimedia communities, and schools, and distributed through platforms such as Wikimedia Commons and YouTube to raise awareness about verifying online content.

Risks

Potential risks for this project include participant hesitation or self-censorship, particularly when addressing sensitive topics such as stigmatization and media representation. To mitigate this, all data collection activities will ensure anonymity, confidentiality, and a supportive environment. Another risk relates to the digital divide, as limited internet access in certain regions may hinder equitable participation. This will be addressed through a flexible sampling strategy, incorporating offline or in-person methods where necessary. Finally, ensuring identity diversity within the sample may be challenging; however, this will be actively managed through intentional recruitment across different genders, regions, and socio-educational contexts.

Community impact plan

This project seeks to strengthen the relationship between Chilean youth and the Wikimedia ecosystem by identifying how adolescents perceive and evaluate the platform. Findings will be shared with volunteer editors to improve youth-related content and inform editing practices. Additionally, the project will promote digital literacy through workshops and the creation of educational materials for teachers and students. Insights will also be presented to developers and affiliates to enhance usability and verification tools on Wikipedia, ultimately contributing to a more inclusive and participatory knowledge environment.

Evaluation

The evaluation of this project will follow a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative and qualitative indicators to assess both process and impact. Progress will be monitored through timely completion of each research phase—survey, focus groups, and interviews—while methodological rigor will be ensured through internal validation. The impact will be measured by changes in youth perceptions of Wikipedia, as well as the usefulness of the outputs for educators and Wikimedia communities. Feedback from stakeholders, participation in dissemination activities, and the adoption of project recommendations by community members will serve as key indicators of success.

Budget

Areas	Budget ($)
Coordination	12000
Fieldwork Assistants	8000
Open access publishing	2000
Materials	2300
Contingency	300
Subtotal	24600
Overhead (15%)	3690
Total	28290

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