

# **Digital literacy in social media on age groups**

## **Thesis Summary**

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Technology a defining element of today's social reality, we often hear about the technological era, where devices and online connections mediate communication and the information connection. Technological development is imminent. The unexpected and the adaptability needed being two certainties to respond to challenges generated by the technological development. Activities for digital literacy include a series of steps, starting from learning computer basic usage, to World Wide Wide, Google or Facebook navigation. However, Romania registered low digital skills, ranking among the last countries in Internet use or Internet skills compared to the European average (Institutul Național de Statistică, 2020; EUROSTAT, 2019). I see this context as a challenge to foster digital evolution and as an opportunity for growth through new methods of enhancing digital evolution through education and training.

Digital literacy represents the sum of digital knowledge, skills, abilities, attitudes and competencies that a person has, in using technology, to effectively achieve the purpose for which it is used. Along with traditional media literacy, digital literacy is part of the media literacy sphere. Digital literacy can also be considered holistically, but also by segmenting and defining its elements, information literacy, visual and creative literacy and social-emotional literacy.

The purpose of my work is to analyze the digital literacy of adults in social media. My objectives include defining and conceptualizing digital literacy and its components, analyzing the perception of digital literacy of older adults, researching the perception of digital literacy of adults on Instagram, and analyzing the perception of digital literacy of adults on TikTok.

The social networks discussed are Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, TikTok, and others mentioned being Youtube, LinkedIn. Adults in the studied groups have a medium to high level of digital literacy, they know the specifics of each application and use them independently. Respondents have high visual skills that allow them to easily use certain options of each platform, create content or distinguish between visually modified and original content. Communication and information seeking are the main motivations for social media use by all categories of adults.

According to the reports published by the Institutul Național de Statistică in 2020, the number of people using the Internet represented an increasing trend in recent years in Romania. Starting from 2016, the number of Internet users increased by 1.2 percent compared to the previous year, 2017 presented a difference of 3.8 percent compared to the previous year. (Institutul Național de Statistică, 2020).

The development of technology has also brought the increase in the importance of communication in the online environment, being present more and more in the everyday life. The online environment is used for individual and group communication, information on current events, for recreational purposes or to pass the time faster. Digital literacy is the ability to read, write and manage information using current technologies and formats (Bawden, 2008), in which the critical evaluation and reproduction of information is essential (Jones & Flannigan, 2006), the ability to extract data from a single interpretation (Sabatino, 2014).

Schifirnet (2014, pp. 29-36) points out that, although the means of communication have increased and continue to develop, informing the public did not have the same expected effects, the public being less informed. There is a transition from print advertising and print media to online advertising and newspapers in digital editions. Schifirneț claims that the press will undergo a change in that, in the age of the Internet, the press can be made even by the readers. He mentions that the new form of virtual communication to a chosen and well-defined public will negatively influence the other media that communicate in mass, whose public cannot fit into such characteristics. Schifirneț concludes that the reasons for using new media are the same as in the case of traditional media. The public wants to have information about the social events around them, to get out of the daily routine or to occupy their free time. The online environment involves joining a communication network that simplifies the connection between two instances of communication. Schifirneț (2014, p. 225) notes that new media are more important than communication, they are also producers of new forms of culture and subjectivity. The instant communication of messages makes social networks play a role in mobilizing groups, being possible a varied type of content, in the form of text, image or video.

Eshet-Alkalai and Chajut's (2009, 2010) research structured digital skills into predefined categories. I researched digital literacy as an assemblage of existing components that build into a holistic concept. I will therefore analyze informational digital literacy, visual digital literacy and social-emotional digital literacy. Each component of digital literacy has the role of specifically

developing that level of knowledge. What they have in common is the transition from a role of more advanced knowledge to the inclusion of the own factor of criticism on the received information, the involvement of the evaluation of information sources, attention to the receiver and the language adjustment to increase the efficiency in communication.

The first objective aims to provide a theoretical basis for the studied concept and to provide insight about the current level of digital literacy in Romania. In this endeavor I examined the digital literacy measurement scales, I investigated informational literacy as a main part of digital literacy, I explored photo-visual literacy in the context of digital literacy, I investigated social-emotional literacy as part of digital literacy; I noted the main factors of digital divide and the influence of functional illiteracy.

The second objective is to evaluate the degree of digital literacy in social media of older adults in the urban environment in Romania. Through this effort, I would like to determine the degree of digital literacy in social media of adults over 60 years old. The key concepts studied in this chapter are digital literacy, the use of digital applications, gender relations and technology. The research questions are as follows: Q1. What is the consumption behavior of digital applications and social media by the investigated target group?; Q2. What is the level of informational literacy in social media of older adults?; Q3. What is the level of visual literacy in social media of older adults?; Q4. What is the level of social-emotional literacy in social media of older adults?.

The third objective includes analysis of time spent on Instagram, frequency of use and main actions taken, assessment of perceived information literacy, assessment of visual literacy in the edited image recognition questionnaire, use of hashtags and assessment of literacy social-emotional on Instagram by addressing topics such as online communication, group integration, learning and data privacy. We then examined the relationship between social media usage habits and participants' self-esteem measured by the Rosenberg Scale.

The last objective of the research aims to analyze the daily use skills of digital devices and social media in a family context, by parents and children or members of the same family; determining the level of information literacy perceived by adults on TikTok, both about themselves and their children, by reference to information sought, TikTok usage pattern, congruence and preference for certain social media, perceived advantages and disadvantages. Then, we followed the level of visual literacy perceived by adults on TikTok, by describing the main elements of

content creation, the ability of TikTok to customize the photo, video, multimedia materials created, the ease of understanding the platform. The assessment of the level of social-emotional literacy perceived by parents on TikTok includes the use of TikTok for learning new things, the mechanisms of learning to use the application in a family context, the use of the network for communication and group integration, security rules and data privacy.

The concept of digital literacy is in the process of being defined, and its inclusion in a unanimously accepted and recognized definition is difficult to achieve. In the first part of this chapter I will highlight the studies that try to explain the concept of digital literacy. Digital literacy is the ability to understand and use information in different formats and from multiple sources through the computer. In a narrow sense, digital literacy represents the undertaking of effective actions in a digital environment (Jones & Flannigan, 2006, pp.5-6). Sabatino (2014) defines digital literacy as consisting of public communication, social networks formed through digital media, communication with other people through social media and the ability to decipher multiple information from a single interpretation. Claro et al. (2018) indicate an evolution on the concept of digital literacy, from a predominantly technical and restrictive element, which includes practical skills to use computer applications, towards an element based on critical thinking, solving cognitive problems with daily frequency and with a purpose well defined, with an active role in contemporary social life.

Ala-Mutka (2011, pp. 29-30) defines digital literacy as a set of characteristics corresponding with other types of literacy, such as media literacy, information literacy, Internet literacy and information and communication literacy, while other authors define it as the ability to write, read, spread information, evaluate and reproduce data in the online environment (Jones & Flannigan, 2006; Sabatino, 2014). Some researchers, such as Eshet (2002, 2004) and Eshet-Alkalai and Chajut (2009, 2010) believe that digital literacy is a holistic concept that includes different types of literacy, such as literacy, informational, photo-visual, socio-emotional, reproduction of content and ramification, being incomplete without the existence of all the mentioned elements.

Therefore, I propose the following model approaching the place of digital literacy in the conceptual universe, the closest being the one proposed by Eshet-Alkalai & Chajut (2010). Media literacy includes traditional media and new media. New media literacy or digital literacy includes all actions undertaken in the digital and has three main subcategories: informational literacy; visual

and creative literacy and social-emotional literacy. I propose that content reproduction literacy should be associated with each type of content created, so it is redundant to list it as an independent main category. Branching literacy, for the management of multiple sources of information to achieve the goal, I consider to be included in informational literacy.

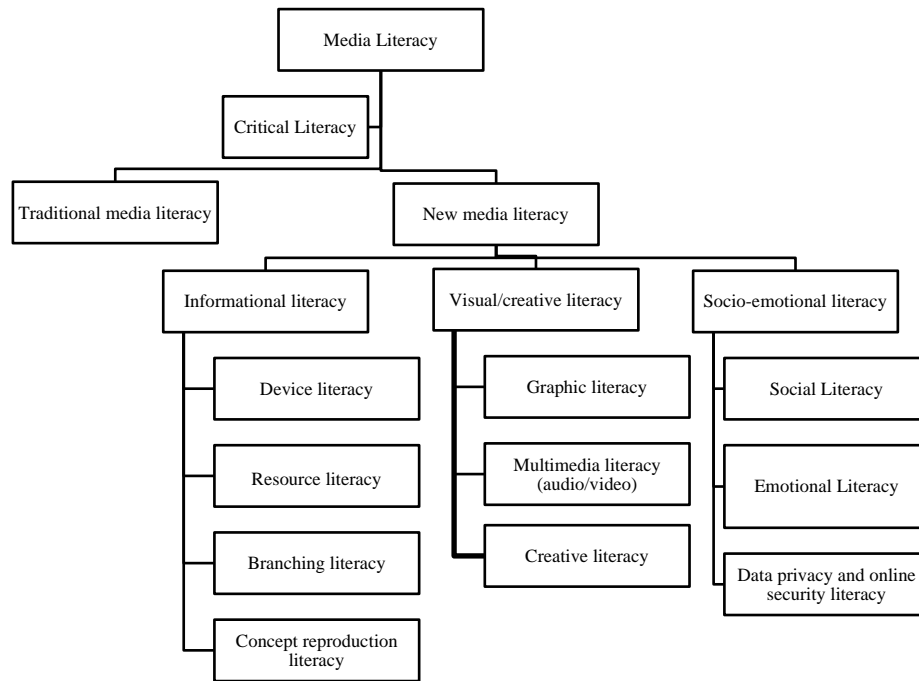


Figure 7. The conceptual framework of digital literacy proposed by the author

Informational literacy includes device literacy, which includes the ability to use various technical tools and databases. Resource literacy involves understanding the application or social network used, its format, specific slang, access methods and its interface. Branching literacy is the ability to find documents in a given digital setting, whether it is a website, online application, or social media.

Information literacy involves defining the need for information, access to data and using it ethically and legally. The factors that influence this type of literacy are control, disorientation, trial and error, problem-solving ability and intention, selecting the main idea and evaluating information (Coklar, Yaman & Yurdakul, 2017). Information literacy includes six stages: recognizing the need for data, discovering the type of data needed, searching and finding data, evaluating, organizing and using them to satisfy the need for information (Bawden, 2008, pp. 21-22). Frau-Meigs (2012) draws attention to the emergence of information literacy towards the

"transliteracy" paradigm, which is composed of the willingness to learning the use of all multimedia channels, to migrate from the offline environment to the online one and the ability to navigate through different pages , undertaking activities such as searching, evaluating, testing and modifying information according to the context in which it is used. Thomas et al. al (2007) define transliteracy as the ability to read, write and interact in a range of platforms, tools and media, through writing, television, radio and film, on social platforms. Ipri (2010) considers transliteracy as the definition of literate man in the 21st century, the concept emphasizing the relationship between human and technology, also referring to social networks. Transliteracy focuses on the social use of technology in general, encompassing any type of technology in its definition.

Visual and creative literacy includes graphic or photographic literacy, which is defined by the ability to find and interpret signs, graphics or any visual representation; multimedia literacy, involves identifying and deciphering messages in audial, videographic, games and other forms. Creative literacy includes using knowledge to create new content or recreate or re-interpret existing content in written, visual, audio or video form for the purpose of expressing a message online. Visual literacy is part of digital literacy, which deals with the management and communication of graphic elements. Trumbo (1999) studied the photo-visual element at the end of the 20th century, analyzing it together with new technologies. Trumbo defines visual literacy as a holistic construct that includes visual thinking, learning and visual communication. The aesthetic characteristics of the image include color, pattern, shape, brightness and angles. In social media, the image can be customized through additional elements such as applying filters, changing contrast, image effects, and including picture-in-picture. According to the mentioned studies, the visual universe in the digital environment is composed of elements such as: images, diagrams, graphs, signs, lines, sketches, maps, objects, graphic design, architecture and videos.

Visual literacy is more than intrinsic characteristics of the visual element. Along with informational and emotional elements, visual literacy helps to achieve quality online communication. I propose the following scheme for visual literacy, including the skills mentioned for effective communication in the digital environment:

- Receiving visual data in complex forms, which includes various forms, content and aesthetic characteristics of the image;
- Understanding the purpose for which visual information is used;

- Detecting the emotion created by images;
- Critical analysis and information logic;
- Analysis of the visual integrity of the image, taking into account cuts, corrections, editing and its effects and visual distortion;
- Data authenticity analysis – the visual consistency of the communicator, the content must express the user's personality and follow an authentic pattern;
- Decoding the image and deciphering the visual meaning;
- Creation of new visual content, involving constant learning and respect for copyright;
- Communication and promotion of the new visual content, respecting the previously mentioned steps for creating a quality image.

Social-emotional literacy includes social literacy, which addresses online communication skills, group integration and online learning. Emotional literacy includes managing emotions regarding online feedback, self-perception and self-representation online, managing Internet addiction and managing cyberbullying.

Eshet believes that social-emotional literacy is one of the most complex of the stated types and that it can decipher the unwritten rules of the Internet. A socio-emotionally literate person has as attributes: the openness to share data and knowledge with others, the correct evaluation of information and abstract thinking and the construction of knowledge together with other people (Eshet, 2004, p. 102). Social-emotional literacy means learning the rules to be applied in the virtual space and using them in communication and interaction with other surfers in the online environment (Eshet-Alkali & Amichai-Hamburger, 2004, p. 421). Ng (2012) also notes the importance of abstracting information from the online environment and believes that analytical and decision-making skills are imperative in social-emotional literacy.

Serrano-Puche (2016) analyzes social networks as a space for the display of emotions, mass emotional contagion and sentiment analysis. Social-emotional literacy consists of two parts: the social element and the emotional element. Emotional literacy includes emotional expressivity or the expression of emotions, emotional sensitivity, emotional control or emotion management skills, emotional intelligence and self-images. Social literacy incorporates social expressiveness, social sensitivity, social receptivity, open communication, social interaction and group cohesion, influence in the relationship with others. I note that both Riggio (1986) and Wyant et al. (2018)

mentioned elements of influence in the relationship with others and the possession of power in guiding the social relationship. Thus, Riggio (1986) mentions social control and social manipulation, and Wyant et al. (2018) includes negotiation and persuasion. The order I consider relevant is the negotiation of data exchange in communication with others, persuasion, manipulation, all of which lead to control over the existing situation.

The most used social networks in Romania in 2019-2020 are Facebook, Pinterest, Instagram, Twitter, Youtube, Tumblr, Reddit, LinkedIn and Vkontakte. It is notable the significant growth of Instagram from March 2019, when the platform had only 0.58% of users, to March 2020, the recent number is 2.17% of users. Pinterest and Youtube usage have decreased in a similar percentage, which may suggest a shift in both photo and video usage to Instagram and TikTok. Although Instagram had the increase in usage among all networks, of 1.59%, other platforms, specifically Facebook and Twitter also showed growth of approx. 1% each (Statcounter, 2020).

Facebook dominates the social media market, with 2.2 billion global users having an active Facebook account, and 1.4 billion of them logging in daily, spending an average of 50 minutes a day. The main benefits include connecting with friends, building social networks, and being exposed to a range of information (Mosquera, Odunowo, McNamara et al., 2020).

Instagram is a platform that has become popular very quickly. Ease of use and creative freedom provided to the user Instagram is a photo and video based application that allows users to express themselves by sharing personal experiences and developing content (Bahcecik, Akay, & Akdemir, 2019). Instagram is a platform with emphasis on the visual side, facilitating the adjustments of elements such as brightness, contrast or applying filters to photos or videos to personalize photos.

Musical.ly was a platform created in April 2014 with the aim of mimicking singing with an existing audio background. Users could choose songs that they could mime singing to, set the speed of the song, and perform dance routines that lasted between 15 seconds and 1 minute. In 2016, the company ByteDance launched a version for China, called Douyin, and the international version, TikTok for countries outside of China. ByteDance bought Musical.ly and merged it with TikTok in 2018 (Anderson, 2020). TikTok is, therefore, a video sharing application, called in the original Chinese language "Dou Yin" (Wang, 2020).



TikTok's functionalities include likes, comments, duets, i.e. creating two videos side by side with anyone in the world, and viral challenges ("Dares"). The main information wall is a continuous, unlimited chain of videos, as a result of to artificial intelligence, which provides content based on information collected about the user based on selections and behavior in the platform. Another attractive element of the platform is that it is free to use, both by having an account and accessing it, and without joining a TikTok account. (Beutell, 2020).

In a Statista global, excluding China, analysis of Android usage, the top activities on TikTok (Musical.ly) included communication and social exposure (50% in 2019), followed by video and entertainment (21% in 2019), followed by the games category (9% in 2019) and the other category (Statista, 2021a).

The first research notes the study of digital literacy of older adults. The objectives of my research include defining the degree of digital literacy following the previously mentioned coordinates for adults between the ages of 60 and 81, from Romania, by defining the degree of informational, visual and social-emotional literacy. The data were collected following two focus groups organized in Bucharest during one week, in September 2019. We selected elderly people who regularly use the Internet, having at least one Internet device. The interviews were audio recorded, with the consent of the participants, and then transcribed. The identification data of the participants are confidential. The group discussion lasted between 60 and 90 minutes.

Most of the participants mentioned that the daily use of at least one digital device for a defined period of time is integrated into the daily routine or is correlated with another ritual type activity: drinking coffee in the morning, lunch break or use before bedtime. For other participants, this activity is not segmented by time and use, the device being used constantly throughout the day, depending on the need. The third category of users are those who only use the devices for a specific, practical purpose, and the device, often the phone, is the only way to perform that activity, such as contacting family who are not in physical proximity or has the necessary time for face-to-face visits.

The preference for using devices starts with the smart phone, followed by the personal computer or laptop, and then the tablet. The main activities mentioned are communication, searching for news and novelties or recreational use. Information of interest to older adults is local

or international news about current events, which are viewed on specific websites or by following online newspapers in social media, data about household activities, migrated to online applications or received by e-mail, such as making payments or checking bills, news about personal hobbies and interests, such as searching for recipes, book reviews, gifts for the family. From the entertainment category, they mention accessing online games, spending time on Facebook Wall or accessing Youtube. For communication purposes, respondents use WhatsApp, Facebook Messenger or Skype.

Participants are receptive to visual stimuli, such as a short film presented before the group discussion, which generated complex discussions on the chosen topic. Visual literacy helped them place the film in the correct time frame, recognizing outdated props and digital communication. They mention using the observational method to learn various actions, including early computer use, by spending time and observing a family member and how they use the device. Not only that, but the visual capabilities also helped them to use the computer independently. An example is learning the keys and typing on the computer without visualizing them, after a certain period of experience, or learning the meanings of available options and computer-generated alerts in English without understanding the language. So the older adults in my study have a high level of visual literacy that helps them try new social networks, current games and apps, and keep their digital skills on an upward trend.

I discussed in the social-emotional literacy subject about: communication, learning for digital survival and self-perception in the use of technology.

Therefore, communication is an important element in adults' decision to use technology, whether it's with families in geographical proximity or those in another country. Older adults have a high perception of how they interact with technology, noting that they can independently perform actions of low difficulty, such as opening the computer, using peripherals, opening and web pages, as well as more complex actions, such as using social media, such as Facebook, Facebook Messenger, WhatsApp, searching for information on different pages, using mobile applications, using video calls or voice messages for communication. How they approach digital learning is distinct from case to case. The first interaction with the technology and the initial integration into the routine of the participants was due to either the access to the device, or the evolution of some professions or the desire to adapt to the new reality. Each of the participants has developed their own process of learning new functions, some of them want to formalize this process by enrolling

in learning programs for the elderly, which provide them with a structured framework, others use self-learning or the "step-by-step" perspective. step", each day trying a new option. In terms of learning, some of the participants are confident in the information they have, so they have taken the role of instructor for some of their family members for their partner or friends, being the ones who show them some simple actions.

Older adults recognize the fear of trying something new that they don't understand and the anxiety of making a mistake or breaking the device. Learning methods include creating written instructions, brochures, social support from a family member, or attending professional courses. These methods would reduce the feeling of anxiety, due to the perceived comfort of the additional support element.

I conclude that adults aged between 60 and 81 years have a high level of information literacy, visual literacy and an average level of social-emotional literacy. They operate multiple tasks, complex tasks independently, use devices, social networks and applications from a diverse range effectively. They have a good level of observation and high visual memory, which helps them to operate and learn the use of new devices. From the perspective of social-emotional literacy, they have a high self-perception in the use of technology and high communication skills, but they are reluctant to try new things and that they can improve the element of experimentation in online.

Limitations of the research include the unequal group of participants in terms of gender, which provides a view closer to that perceived by the female gender, with men being underrepresented in the research. Another limitation includes establishing the level of digital literacy declared by the participants, and not the actual one, as measured by practical skills analysis exercises. I propose for future research the creation of simple practical tests for measuring digital skills, which include finding information online, accessing social networks, online communication, creating written or visual content and measuring self-esteem through a specific scale (e.g. Rosenberg ).

The results record that the participants have a medium to high degree of digital literacy, using multiple devices and social networks independently, have a visual memory that helps them operate in the online environment and have increased communication skills.

The second research analyzes the digital literacy of adults in social media - Instagram. Data is collected by questionnaire, administered online through the Survey Monkey platform

(<https://www.surveymonkey.com/>) in August 2019. The form was available for completion and promoted on social media for one month. As a result of the research we collected 50 responses. The questionnaire had four sections: initial questions, questions with increasing difficulty about Instagram use and time spent on social media, questions about establishing self-esteem through the Rosenberg Scale, and socio-demographic information.

Instagram is the most used platform, measured in minutes per day, by my research respondents, followed by WhatsApp, Facebook and LinkedIn. The average number of posts per week is 1.74 and of Stories being 6.96 per week. Participants have a high level of information literacy, because they understand the specific language of the application and use Instagram to search for information. Respondents have a high level of visual literacy, they easily perform activities such as image processing, creating visual content, recognizing edited images or on which aesthetic changes are applied. Expressing creativity is one of the primary reasons for using Instagram.

The profile picture is selected for the easy recognition of the profile holder, for the uniqueness of the person accurately captured in the photo or because of the technical and visual quality of the image. The main reasons for using Instagram are checking out content shared by friends, researching information about hobbies and interests, and time passing considerations. Favorite photo type includes entertainment or sports, friends, portrait.

Participants have medium to high social-emotional literacy skills on Instagram. Communication is one of the main actions for using Instagram. A percentage of 89% of the respondents mentioned that they adapt their way of communication for the online environment, and 50% feel confident in communicating online. Participants are equally divided into two categories when using images on Instagram. Half of them post to be considered cool in their circle of friends, while the other half do so rarely or not at all. The participants know methods of increasing engagement. There is not enough evidence to prove the link between online presence and self-esteem - and the ones that do exist tend to be positive, not negative. We correlated usual activities for daily Instagram use and self-esteem, the links being weak and statistically insignificant. The activities of "posting to promote myself" and "so that my friends can see how cool I am" are directly related to self-esteem. The lower the self-esteem, the more frequent the use of the application to check what others are doing.

The third research analyzes the digital literacy of adults in social media - TikTok. TikTok is an app that has recently become popular among both children and youth, extending its usefulness to all age groups. The time allocated and importance given to content creation is more extensive than on other social networks such as Facebook or Instagram, there is a whole creative process to the final result. This video creation process is similar for Youtube as well. The differences between videos created for TikTok usage and those created for streaming via Youtube are as follows: the duration of a material differs, on TikTok it is a few seconds; the central topic of the video, the perceived quality of the data; the ease of reaching a large number of people, with TikTok being optimized to more easily send a video to a wider audience.

Adults know the app either through use, past use, or data provided by their children or other parents. They have a high level of information literacy on TikTok, knowing how to present the functions of the application, timing the beginning of the use of the application by children.

In the interviews, parents mention that TikTok is used by their children without assistance, they recognize the main functions of the application and their practicality, they know how to search and find new data through the application, and they even retrieve information about the topics of interest that they use. However, the flow of information includes more and more various. Parents mentioned the children's inability to discern between necessary and positive data and negative data, requiring either filtering support from the application, or the parent's help in clarifying aspects they were not ready to digest.

Visual and creative skills on TikTok are the central attraction of the app, the short content under one minute containing stories, funny life situations, dances and choreography, all encouraging the user to try and replicate them. It is necessary to mention that this subcategory of Visual Literacy, according to my study, has turned into Visual and Creative Literacy, because many of the elements in this content are not only related to the study of images and signs, but also to auditory and artistic skills.

I considered that adults have an average level of visual literacy on TikTok, that they know data about the utility of the application, but at an average level, due to the complexity of editing the platform. My hypothesis was confirmed, with adults having a medium to high level of visual literacy. The information is given to them either by their proximity to a family member who creates such videos or by following them on the platform.

Adults have visual skills, they know the elements necessary to create a TikTok video such as using filters, including pictures in TikTok, selecting the pictures used; auditory elements such as tones and music; videographic elements by filming sequences, processing them into a video and creative or artistic skills that include creating complex videos, creating and copying photos, combining videos, pictures and music for a complex element.

At the time children plan to create a TikTok video, there is a process from the idea to the promotion of the video, having actions such as finding the right idea by analysing content from the app, going through stages such as preparing the content, preparing the location, editing the video and promoting it.

Social-emotional literacy on TikTok includes communication and integration into communities, learning the app and the process of learning new skills on a new social media, and managing psychosocial processes such as app addiction, personal data management or cyberbullying. I hypothesized that adults have an average level of social-emotional literacy, which was confirmed. They have increased skills in the perspective of protection on the application, awareness of the risks related to TikTok, in the balanced perception of the advantages and disadvantages of social media. However, they mention that family members are the ones who passed on information to them, their strengths being in the area of professional computer use, more than in the optimal use of social media.

The interviews with adults show that child users have high online communication skills, unaided learning of the application, developed skills in training others and high group integration skills. There are, however, some elements that require improvement, children having low reaction skills to online intimidation and cyberbullying actions, have a predisposition to online addiction and difficulties in managing the time allocated to the application, behaviors being sometimes influenced by exposure to the content on TikTok, as mentioned by the parents.

Adults' perceived advantages of the TikTok app include stimulating children's creativity, finding videos suitable for relaxing moments in the day, communicating and developing online connections. Some of the downsides are addictive content, exposure to online bullying, fake accounts and phishing, incorrect or age inappropriate data, emotional harm. The changes perceived by adults in children following the use of TikTok are behavioral, verbal, clothing, and exposure to new topics and areas of interest.

For future research, I propose testing TikTok skills through observation, experiment and tasks to be performed on the application of children, as well as content analysis on the content of the TikTok application on each child's account.

My research started from the general to the specific, starting from the investigation of widely used social media, such as Facebook and WhatsApp, mobile applications, to some growing social media with a targeted audience, thus combining relevance with novelty. The structure of the data analysis is the same in all three empirical researches, classifying the competences declared following the study into three main categories, namely informational literacy, visual literacy and social-emotional literacy. The elements that were reconfirmed in at least two of the studies were: the importance of the family in disseminating information about social media and in learning new social networks, information seeking and communication are the most important motivations in using social media, followed by leisure, similar learning methods in different categories of adults, either through help from another family member or through trial and error. Adults in certain age groups (+40) according to my study attribute themselves more to the role of content watcher and consumer than content creator, but they clearly know the options and steps to develop visual content. Although there is a preferred social network, it is used in addition to others, Facebook for leisure and news, WhatsApp for private and group chats, LinkedIn for professional connections. And the children in the respondents' families have the same type of approach, TikTok is used in addition to Instagram or YouTube, and WhatsApp is accessed by all family members.

The advantages and disadvantages perceived by the two categories of adults and older adults show both similarities and differences. Spending too much time on social media or easily finding information and communication being mentioned by both categories. In contrast, older adults consider the lack of formal instruction, the longer time to learn new options, and the step-by-step sequential approach to accessing new technologies to be a disadvantage. They revealed that the disadvantages are the lack of control over the information viewed by them personally or by their families, the lack of authenticity of some images or photos and the frequency of using some social media.

The participants in my study have at least an average level in all categories of digital literacy, such as information literacy, visual and creative literacy, and social-emotional literacy, having the skills to navigate safely online and the critical spirit to select correct information. The

most accessed and used social networks are Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, TikTok and YouTube. They are open to improving their skills and curious to develop digital knowledge, they can select for themselves the preferred platform, the group of belonging having a main role towards this decision. They consider digital evolution as a natural process to which there must be receptivity. The main perceived advantages of technology are access to information, borderless communication, integration into communities, development of creativity and entertainment. The main perceived disadvantages are the investment of extensive time on digital platforms which can be addictive, the lack of control over the information received and online fraud.

Digital literacy is a phenomenon that is not only imminent, but also absolutely necessary to facilitate the flow of information at the global level and to facilitate the process of learning, information and culturalization.

I consider that the originality of my work concerns both the conceptual aspect of digital literacy and the practical mechanism by which it can be analyzed and measured.

The most important element of my work is the relevance of the theme. Communication in the digital environment, the use of technologies and digital literacy were also ideas of interest at the time of the start of my study, but it grew exponentially with the socio-economic changes during the study period. I also consider that adapting to the evolution of social media is a positive element in my work, by integrating the TikTok platform in my research to maintain the relevance of the work and the analysis of new trends.

Most studies either conceptually analyze the term Digital Literacy or analyze one of its facets empirically. From the studied literature, I have not found a paper that incorporates those, theoretical analysis and empirical analysis in an extensive study, as my study does.

Analysis of three of the most recognized social media is another original element (Facebook, Instagram and TikTok). The studies found are focused to measure Digital Literacy by focusing on one of them.

Most studies describe the digital skills related to digital literacy as the elements of Internet and computer use. I extrapolated in my research all these perspectives to the next level, that of digital literacy in social media.



We developed research instruments to measure Digital Literacy in qualitative and quantitative manner, integrating already existing scales and customizing them to measure perceived skills in social media, rather than on the Internet, as originally noted.

Digital literacy is, in my view, more accurately measured when each of its components is considered independently. So, we considered dividing the concept into three important elements, namely, Informational Literacy, Visual Literacy and Social-emotional Literacy.

Therefore, I consider that the main contributions to the field of communication from the perspective of digital literacy are: the relevance of the theme, the relevance of the work to the current socio-cultural environment, offering a different perspective that connects Digital Literacy with social media, offering a different vision by measuring the components of digital literacy measured in local context, considering different categories of adults to validate existing ideas.