


The presence of minors in commercial content and its negative effect on audience: sharenting and the youtuber Verdeliss

La aparición de menores en contenidos comerciales y su efecto negativo en la audiencia: el sharenting y la youtuber Verdeliss

A presença de menores em conteúdos comerciais e o seu efeito negativo no público: o sharenting e youtuber Verdeliss

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Recibido: 27/05/2021; Revisado: 14/07/2021; Aceptado: 04/11/2021; Publicado: 01/01/2022

To cite this article: Elorriaga Illera, A., Monge Benito, S., Olabarri Fernández, E. (2022). The presence of minors in commercial content and its negative effect on audience: sharenting and the youtuber Verdeliss, *Icono 14*, 20(1). <https://doi.org/10.7195/ri14.v20i1.1752>

Abstract



This article analyses the reaction of the audience of the Spanish youtuber Verdelliss, who has the largest community of Spanish followers in the field of parenting and motherhood, to the presence of her underage children in the contents that she posts on YouTube. A survey run among 1,336 followers of her YouTube channel found that the majority of them feel uncomfortable with the presence of minors in videos where commercial brands are also promoted. This group rates the youtuber worse in almost all dimensions related to her persuasive ability, and they also buy fewer products recommended by her. Likewise, in a qualitative analysis of 284 comments to open-ended questions, it was observed that there are several arguments within this group of uncomfortable followers, particularly their discomfort with the excessive exposure of minors, a complete rejection to commercialising their image, and a call on competent authorities to protect minors. Considering the differences in the evaluation of the youtuber, these results suggest that sharenting could produce negative effects on promoting brands.

Keywords: sharenting; overexposure of minors; influencers; youtubers; advertising; brands

Resumen

Este artículo analiza la reacción de la audiencia de la *youtuber* española Verdelliss, con la mayor comunidad de seguidoras en España en ámbito de la crianza y la maternidad, en relación a la presencia de sus hijas e hijos menores en los contenidos que publica en su canal de YouTube. En una encuesta realizada a 1.336 seguidoras, se constató que más de la mitad de las mismas se sienten incómodas por la presencia de menores en videos en los que además se promocionan marcas comerciales. Este grupo valora peor a la *youtuber* en casi todas las dimensiones relacionadas con su capacidad persuasiva y además compra menos productos recomendados por ella en sus vídeos. Asimismo, en un análisis cualitativo de 284 comentarios en preguntas de respuesta abierta se pudo apreciar que existen varios argumentos dentro de este grupo de seguidoras más críticas con la *youtuber*, entre los que destacan su malestar por la excesiva exposición de los menores, un rechazo frontal a la mercantilización de la imagen de estos y un llamamiento a las instituciones competentes a que protejan a los menores. A la vista de las diferencias en la valoración de la *youtuber*, los resultados sugieren que el *sharenting* puede producir efectos negativos en la promoción de marcas comerciales.

Palabras clave: sharenting; sobreexposición; influencers; youtubers; publicidad; marcas

Resumo

Este artigo discute a reação da audiência da youtuber espanhola Verdelliss, com a maior comunidade de seguidoras em Espanha no campo da parentalidade e da maternidade, em relação à presença das suas filhas e filhos menores nos conteúdos publicados no seu canal de YouTube. Em nossa pesquisa realizada a 1.336 seguidoras, verificou-se que a maioria deles se sentem desconfortáveis com a presença de menores em vídeos que também promovem marcas comerciais. Este grupo avalia a youtuber pior em quase todas as dimensões relacionadas com a sua capacidade persuasiva e também compra menos produtos recomendados por ela nos seus vídeos. Igualmente, em uma análise qualitativa de 284 comentários em questões abertas mostrou que existem vários argumentos dentro deste grupo de seguidoras mais críticas com a youtuber, entre os quais se destaca o seu mal-estar sobre a exposição excessiva de menores, uma rejeição frontal da mercantilização da sua imagem e um apelo às instituições competentes para que protegem os menores. Tendo em conta as diferenças na avaliação da youtuber, os resultados sugerem que o sharenting pode produzir efeitos negativos na promoção de marcas comerciais.

Palavras-chave: sharenting; sobre-exposição; influenciadores; youtubers; publicidade; marcas

1. Introduction

The practice of 'sharenting' is widespread. This term was coined to describe the trend of sharing content (photos and videos) of under-age children on social media, and it is attributed to *The Wall Street Journal*, as a derivative of the word 'oversharenting', which contained a mixture of the expressions 'overshare' and 'parenting'. Many parents are creating a digital footprint for their children, built up without the minors' permission, which leads to over-exposure on social media. This over-exposure can draw many hazards. A study by the AAP (*American Academy of Pediatrics*) published at the *National Conference & Exhibition* in San Francisco in 2016, stated that 50% of pictures on paedophile websites were obtained from social media.

Davis (2015) carried out a study on an American sample with children between 0 and 4 years old, concluding that parents who used social media had often seen other parents publish embarrassing information on their children (56%), offer personal data that might be used to identify their location (51%) or share inappropriate photos of their children (27%). According to the same study, 56% of the mothers and 34% of the fathers shared content relating to raising their children. Other papers confirm that sharenting is more widespread among mothers than fathers (Ammari et al., 2015; Duggan et al., 2015; Lazard et al., 2019).

In Turkey, Marasli et al. (2016) used a combination of content analysis with questionnaires among parents to conclude that the sharenting phenomenon is highly present. A British study (Nominet, 2016) discovered that, on average, British children have 1500 photographs published online by the time they turn 5 years old and, in the USA, 92% of children under two years old already have a digital footprint (Jo Sales, 2016).

The legislation on this matter varies by country. As one example, Spanish law acknowledges that children are persons and, as such, they have rights, such as the right to their own image, stated in article 18.1 of the Constitution. Sharing digital content featuring minors in your care can become a legal problem when your right to share what you consider opportune regarding your children comes into conflict with the right of minors to come of age with the capability to create their own digital footprint without prior conditioning (Steinberg, 2016). The latter could take their guardians to court if they believe that their rights have been violated, such as publishing pictures that might damage their image.

This domestic conflict takes on very different dimensions when whoever shares content is a public figure and has a large community of followers, whether they are a 'celebrity' (person previously known for their work in fashion, sport, TV, etc.) or a new-generation influencer who has risen to fame thanks to their content on social media. And the ethical dilemma

becomes even more complicated when influencers are paid by commercial brands to appear in the same content as the minors. The figure of the child television actor is well-established and has been specifically protected by legislation, but the same cannot be said for social media.

This article investigates the reaction from the audience of a youtuber called Verdeliss, a point of reference in world of parenting and motherhood, regarding exposure of minors in content featuring commercial brands. Verdeliss (<http://bit.ly/3aNMxVP>) is the name used by Estefanía Unzu Ripoll. She is a Spanish mother of 7 children and a youtuber with over 2 million followers. On her channel, she shares content on motherhood and parenting, including tips on pregnancy, and private moments from her family's life. Her most-viewed video has been seen over 20 million times and her husband and all 7 children appear in practically all her videos. As a professional influencer, paid advertising appears frequently in her posts. This case is particularly relevant because Verdeliss is the motherhood and parenting influencer with the most followers in Spain.

The general aim of this research is to find out if Verdeliss's audience reacts negatively to the presence of minors in content where commercial brands are promoted. This general aim is specified in the following objectives:

- 1)Reveal any differences that might exist between Verdeliss's followers who declare that they felt uncomfortable with the presence of children in commercial content and those who do not, in relation to her power of persuasion.
- 2)Identify which specific questions make the popular youtuber's audience uncomfortable regarding the appearance of minors.

1.1. Sharenting

Sharenting is a field of study where several points of view converge. There is a whole European tradition on the risks and opportunities for minors on the Internet, that has been backed by the EU Kids Online Project (Livingstone, 2009; Livingstone, 2011), also developed in Spain (Garmendia-Larrañaga et al., 2016; Jiménez et al., 2018; Garmendia et al., 2019). However, this research is more focussed on risks and opportunities outside the family and less on dangers that the actual parents might cause.

Other authors who have analysed sharenting more specifically have detected critical or reflective voices among the actual parents. Blum-Ross and Livingstone (2017) detected concern among parents regarding the digital footprint that they generate around minors. Another study (Brosch, 2016) confirms the concern for children's digital footprint and adds others, such as identifying limits to the parents' rights or the problem of embarrassing content (photos that sometimes include naked children).

1.2. *Influencers and working with commercial brands*

On the other hand, the case of Verdeliss takes the debate around sharenting and adds her work as an influencer and the commercial agreements that she has signed with brands to promote products. One study (Elorriaga & Monge, 2018) calculated that almost half (47.6%) of the videos published by the youtuber contained references to commercial brands and 83% of them were paid appearances.

The appearance of paid content among influencers is a rising trend in Spain, confirmed by several academic studies (Sanz-Marcos et al., 2019; Castelló-Martínez et al., 2015) and even studies from the business world (Bandmaniac, 2018; Socialpubli.com, 2019). Studies that have compared the persuasive power of conventional celebrities to influencers who have become famous through social media (Schouten et al., 2020; Jin et al., 2019) seem to show that the balance comes down in favour of the latter given that they inspire greater trust and are perceived as more similar.

When deciding which influencer to use for a promotion, the size of their follower community seems to be the key factor when quantifying the effect on sales (Zhang et al., 2018). However, other factors have also been studied in relation to the effect that they have on the audience's intention to purchase or the influencer's rating: identification of the advertising and characteristics attributed to the source (trustworthiness, attraction, friendliness, expert knowledge). In relation to the former, several studies have examined the negative impact of identifying advertising content on intention to buy (Evans et al., 2017; van Reijmersdal et al., 2016), or on intention to share it (Lee et al., 2016; Wojdyski & Evans, 2016). However, other studies show the opposite. In the aforementioned study by Lee et al. (2016), the negative impact of identifying advertising did not affect everyone equally: the most affected were those with greater persuasive knowledge or greater scepticism towards advertising. In a qualitative study, Jiang et al. (2017) discovered that some participants had positive perceptions of native advertising because they understood it to be useful, relevant and interesting. Carr and Hayes (2014) concluded that the perception of credibility for the influencer (blogger when appropriate) was greater when the interest of third parties in the message was made clear.

On the other hand, in relation to the latter, a series of prior studies that examined the characteristics of the source with traditional celebrities (Kamins, 1990, Kamins et al. 1994; Erdogan, 1999; Erdogan et al., 2001; Amos et al. 2008) indicated that certain factors influenced the power of persuasion: the honesty/trustworthiness, the expertise, the attraction (physical, due to similarity or simply liking), or the fit or match-up between the recommender and the recommended product. Much of the literature available refers to conventional celebrities, although more recent studies feature digital influencers, corroborating the importance of the same characteristics (Vijay et al., 2017; Martensen et al., 2018; Hughes et al., 2019).

Finally, some studies focus on content production and appearance of brands on YouTube channels starring children (Tur-Viñes et al., 2018; Vozmediano et al., 2018; Lopez-Villafranca, 2019; Tur-Viñes et al., 2019). This refers to so-called child youtubers or teenage youtubers such as *Las ratitas* (<https://bit.ly/2xiXdt3>), *La diversión de Martina* (<http://bit.ly/2RYccSP>) or *Mikeltube* (<http://bit.ly/3186WjY>). The minors that appear on these channels also promote products but most of their audience on these channels is under-age, so it is unlikely that the debate generated by sharenting is an issue among these followers or that it has any effect on the persuasive powers of these youtubers. However, in channels dedicated to maternity and parenting, where the audience is adult, there is potential to generate a different effect from these other channels.

Therefore, the academic literature has not sufficiently explored the effect of the appearance of minors in promotional videos on influencers' power of persuasion. Motherhood and parenting, the central topic of Verdeliss's videos, have not been studied in great depth, given that the most successful influencers work in areas such as videogames, technology, fashion, beauty or humour. Therefore, there are no specific studies that investigate the effect of the debates emerging around sharenting in the audience's reaction. Verdeliss's children appear in practically all her videos, where they frequently promote commercial brands, earning money.

As a consequence, it is worth asking, in this case...Does the audience react negatively when children appear in videos where commercial brands are promoted? To resolve this matter, the following hypothesis is raised:

Hypothesis 1: Most of this influencer's audience feels uncomfortable when children appear in videos where products are promoted.

On the other hand, even though Verdeliss's followers are not comfortable with this, it does not necessarily have a negative impact on her person or the brands that she promotes. What is the effect of the audience's potential rejection when minors appear in commercial content?

Hypothesis 2: Anyone who responds negatively to exposing minors rates the persuasive power of the influencer lower and is less influenced to buy the promoted products.

Finally, what are the sources of concern for the audience that rejects this practice? One question that has been debated in the literature is children's digital footprint and how, in the near future, these minors might be distressed by the image that has been generated around them.

Hypothesis 3: Children's digital footprint is the main critical argument in this influencer's audience.

2. Material and Methods

The data was compiled using a self-administrated questionnaire that remained open between 20 February 2018 and 31 March 2018. The participants in the study were contacted through a forum called cotilleando.com that has a specific thread on Verdeliss that ran to over 1000 pages at the time (currently more than 6000). The forum administrators agreed to distribute the call for participation and the only incentive offered to the participants was that the results of the questionnaire would be shared in this same forum.

1,336 valid answers were received over the 40 days (answers were deleted if it were suspected that they had been filled out at random or people who said that they had never seen a video posted by this youtuber). Although this type of survey is not usually open for such a long time, it was kept open throughout this extended period to collect as many answers as possible to the open questions and to collect the greatest number of points of view for the qualitative analysis.

During the preliminary exploration of the survey's open answers, a strong presence was detected of comments against the appearance of minors in content with sponsored products. This paper provides a qualitative analysis of these comments and complements it with a quantitative analysis of the two groups' differential perception within this audience: people that declare that they are uncomfortable with the presence of minors in this content and those who do not.

In relation to the materials and methods used, the answers were compiled using a Google Forms questionnaire. The data were processed using the IBM SPSS program. To check whether there was a significant difference between the two groups (troubled and untroubled survey respondents), *Student* t-tests were used for independent samples to find out if the differences in the means between two cases were significant, and Pearson Chi-squared tests, a non-parametric test that is used to check that two variables are independent of each other using contingency tables (the p values are offered in the corresponding tables and a difference is considered significant when the p-value is under 0.05).

In relation to the sample's demographic characteristics, the mean age of the survey respondents is 30 ± 7.7 years old (median 29, minimum 16, maximum 60), they are women (99.6%), and Spanish (95.6%). 37.5% are mothers, 6.3% are mothers-to-be, and the majority do not have children (56.2%). This distribution makes it clear that the content on motherhood does not only interest mothers but also people that might become mothers in the future or even just people who are curious about the youtuber's life. 57.6% were employed when they took the survey (42.4% do not have a job, and their age suggests that they are students). 36.5% watch almost all the videos, 10.6% less than half, 6.4% at least one quarter and 20.5% only see the odd video. There is also a considerable percentage

(25.9%) that no longer watches these videos although they have done in the past. Answers declaring that they had not ever seen one of her videos were discarded. When they were asked about their position concerning the youtuber, 21.6% declared that they were not fans of Verdeliss, 5.7% were fans, while 47.1% saw themselves as neutral and 25.6% had not considered it.

3. Results

To check the hypothesis of this article, the sample was divided between followers that declared they felt comfortable with the content featuring minors and those that declared they were uncomfortable. Two questions from the survey were used to make this division. The first asked if they had ever felt uncomfortable watching videos featuring commercial brands ("Have you ever felt uncomfortable watching Verdeliss videos featuring commercial brands?"). 77.5% answered 'Yes'. After answering this first question, they were asked about why they felt uncomfortable and 67.3% of people who had felt uncomfortable agreed (4) or completely agreed (5) that minors should not appear in the videos alongside commercial brands. In total, taking the sample as a whole, 52.2% declared they were uncomfortable because minors appeared alongside commercial brands, while the other 47.8% do not feel uncomfortable due to this specific issue. These are the two survey respondent groups that we later called "troubled" and "untroubled", respectively.

This makes it possible to confirm the first hypothesis, "Most of this influencer's audience feels uncomfortable when children appear in videos where products are promoted," although by a narrow margin of 52.2% to 47.8%. Verdeliss's audience is split down the middle on this issue and as we will see below, this polarisation makes them perceive the youtuber differently.

Table 1 shows the differences in the characteristics between these two groups (p-value under 0.05 is significant in the corresponding test, be it Student-t or Chi-squared). Although there are significant differences due to the size of the sample, the age differences are very small. People who declare that they are uncomfortable with the presence of minors are barely a year older than those who are not (30.58 years old compared to 29.46). There are no significant differences in the proportion of mothers (also seen in Table 1) or in other variables that are not included in the table, such as job and gender (we have already declared that 99.6% are women). Of course, everyone who is troubled by the presence of minors and brands has declared themselves to be "uncomfortable" with the advertising, as this was precisely the selection factor. However, in the group of people who do not declare themselves as uncomfortable due to the issue of minors, 53% are uncomfortable with the advertising present in the content for other reasons not related to the minors, such as the excessive presence of advertising, forced appearance of products, or they think that the products are not related to the youtuber's experience.

Table 1. Differences between troubled and untroubled by the presence of videos where minors and brands appear

	Troubled	Untroubled	Significant? (p-value)
Sample	698 (52.2%)	638 (47.8%)	n/a
Age	30.58 \pm 7.9	29.46 \pm 7.6	Yes (0.008)
Are you a mother? Yes/Mother to-be/No	38.4%/6.3%/55.3%	36.5%/6.3%/57.2%	No (0.85)
Have you ever felt uncomfortable with the videos that include commercial brands?	100%	53%	n/a

Source: own work using the survey results

However, when reviewing the scores in Table 2 awarded to Verdeliss in several dimensions related to her persuasive capability (similarity, physical attraction, liking, respect, honesty and her credibility recommending practically all the products), it is seen that followers who were troubled by her use of her children give a significantly lower score to the youtuber in all categories (using a t-test for independent samples). This is a robust effect, maintained in all dimensions of the evaluation except familiarity with the youtuber. In this specific case, there is also a significant difference, but the group that declares itself to be uncomfortable with the appearance of minors answers that they know more about the life of the influencer (greater familiarity, 3.41 vs 3.09) than the group that is untroubled by this issue.

Table 2. Differences in the evaluation of the characteristics of the Verdeliss source (on a 1-5 scale) including troubled (declared “uncomfortable”) and untroubled by minors appearing in videos that promote brands

Evaluated characteristic	Troubled	Untroubled	Significant? (p-value)
I consider that Verdeliss is similar to me in many ways (similarity)	1.74 _± 0.81	2.24 _± 1.01	Yes (0.000)
I consider that Verdeliss is a physically attractive woman (physical attraction).	2.60 _± 1.06	3.06 _± 1.07	Yes (0.000)
I consider that I know a lot about Verdeliss’s life (familiarity)	3.41 _± 1.18	3.09 _± 1.15	Yes (0.000)
I consider that Verdeliss to be one of my favourites (liking)	1.89 _± 0.94	2.67 _± 1.23	Yes (0.000)
I consider that Verdeliss deserves my respect (respect)	2.67 _± 1.18	3.44 _± 1.24	Yes (0.000)
Verdeliss has no reason to lie to her audience (honesty)	2.35 _± 1.24	2.92 _± 1.35	Yes (0.000)
In my opinion, Verdeliss knows about and is credible when she recommends products on: (Credibility)			

-Food	1.70 _± 0.91	2.68 _± 1.20	Yes (0.000)
- Cleaning	1.90 _± 0.97	2.79 _± 1.16	Yes (0.000)
-Books	1.94 _± 0.99	2.85 _± 1.27	Yes (0.000)
-Toys	2.31 _± 1.13	3.18 _± 1.19	Yes (0.000)
-Cosmetics	1.40 _± 0.72	2.16 _± 1.09	Yes (0.000)
-Holiday destinations	1.67 _± 0.89	2.49 _± 1.17	Yes (0.000)
-Pharmacy	1.77 _± 0.93	2.59 _± 1.18	Yes (0.000)
-NGOs	1.64 _± 0.93	2.66 _± 1.29	Yes (0.000)
-Fashion	1.46 _± 0.73	2.28 _± 1.12	Yes (0.000)
-Interior Design	1.56 _± 0.82	2.47 _± 1.15	Yes (0.000)
-Apps/websites	1.50 _± 0.77	2.32 _± 1.14	Yes (0.000)
-Children's products	3.20 _± 1.27	3.89 _± 1.02	Yes (0.000)

Source: own work using the survey results

As well as the worst score for the figure of the youtuber shown in Table 2, there is also a significant difference (Person Chi-squared) in the percentage of them who declares they have bought a recommended product: 7% from among followers troubled by the appearance of minors with commercial brands compared to 16% who were untroubled (Table 3).

Table 3. Percentage of the survey respondents who declare they have bought products depending on whether they declare they are uncomfortable (“troubled”) by the appearance of minors in publications with presence of commercial brands

	Troubled	Untroubled	Significant? (p-value)
They have bought products recommended by Verdeliss.	7%	16%	Yes (0.000)

Source: own work using the survey results

With the scores for Verdeliss (Table 2) and the purchasing percentages for products (Table 3), it is possible to confirm that the second hypothesis is also met: anyone who is against exposing minors rates the persuasive power of the influencer lower and is less influenced to buy the promoted products. The only exception to meeting this hypothesis appears in the familiarity dimension: the troubled followers declare that they know more about the youtuber’s life than the untroubled followers.

Finally, to resolve the third hypothesis, it is necessary to review the answers to the survey’s two open questions. The first can be answered by followers who had felt troubled by the appearance of commercial brands and who wished to clarify something on this point. The second was an open question at the end of the survey, asking if there was anything that had not been asked but which they would like to mention.

In total, 284 different comments were received (considering both open questions). Out of all of them, 147 (51.7% of the total) said they were uneasy with the youtuber’s clandestine advertising, with the lack of credibility and the excessive presence of advertising, each of them with a similar number of opinions. Positive comments are an exception: 15 reviews (5.3% of the total) praise the youtuber’s work without a trace of criticism.

To confirm or deny the third hypothesis, we must review the rest of the comments, 137 (48.2% of the total), that refer to the minors in Verdeliss’s videos, expressing different types of complaints that we can classify into four lines of argument (some of the comments are classified into more than one line of argument).

The first of these lines of argument (70 comments, 51% of the 137) comprises comments that allude to commercialising children. The comments describe a new form of stealth child exploitation, dressed up as everyday life, that consists of making money from putting children’s privacy on show: *“I think it’s dreadful to have children and use them as merchandise and put their lives on show to earn money so that the parents don’t have to work. Enough of this*

new stealth child exploitation.” The audience considered that her children are used to create content: *“She makes her children follow a script to sell products or puts them in situations that can be seen as advertising”,* even obliged: *“I find it very sad to see children force a smile just because their mother requires it to make money”.* She exposes them even when the advertised product has nothing to do with them: *“The problem is the use of children to earn money from brands, such as publishing a photo on Instagram of two girls aged under 2 with a ham.”* The comments describe the youtuber’s usual practice of using her children as a device to attract hits and they accuse her of turning her children’s life into a business: *“I keep watching them because the children are lovely, but they have been sold down the river.”*

Related to the above and with a very similar number of opinions (66 comments, 48.2% of the 137), the second line of argument refers to *overexposure* of minors. It alludes to irresponsible exhibition of children without any type of control or reason: *“Above all, I’m concerned about such random exposure of her children, it’s so constant, for no real reason... I think that’s what most bothers readers of this forum.”* In their opinion, this is constant, excessive exposure of her children’s lives: *“What I most disagree with is that she exposes her children’s lives in this way.”* There does not seem to be any thought into the future consequences of this activity: *“I believe that the thing about the children has got out of control that maybe deep down they don’t feel good about putting their entire private life on show like that (...).”*

The third line of argument refers to exposing the children in vulnerable situations (with 28 opinions, 20.4% of the 137). In their comments, the issue that emerges is the place for privacy, intimacy and mistrust of loved ones. This part of the audience describes the influencer as a mother who does not know how or want to protect her children. *“She should be more discerning regarding when her children appear.”* They wish to demonstrate that Verdeliss is selling their lives, taking something that belongs to them: *“She uses the intimacy of her under-age children for profit”* and *“She earns money by taking away her children’s privacy.”* This exposure of intimacy, in some cases, presents content that, according to the respondents, might be embarrassing or situations where the children seem awkward: *“She overexposes the children, particularly in the bath, naked, knowing that it’s dangerous...”* or *“She displays her children eating, sleeping, taking a bath, playing naked, falling over, puking.”* The audience is sensitive to their vulnerability: *“... Any sicko can use it for child pornography, you never know who’s on the other side of the screen.”* Along this line, there is an emerging concern, although not a majority issue, regarding digital footprints and their future consequences for children: *“...She doesn’t respect their intimacy, given that this could harm them in the future, both in their personal relationships and at work”* or *“She puts her children on show without worrying how they will turn out and she doesn’t consider that one day soon they might not like the fact their whole life is on the internet.”*

The fourth line of argument explains that children have rights that their parents sometimes forget, and a non-negligible part of people leaving angry comments are claiming these rights. What we can see in this line of argument is a call for the institutions to protect minors (21 opinions, 15.3% of the 137). The survey respondents seek competent

authorities to step in for this situation: *"(...) if the actual parents don't know how or want to protect them because they have used them for money (...) then the law should protect them."* They demand that the legislation adapts to the times, and they interpret the situation of Verdeliss's children as similar to child actors (who do have specific legislation). *"Protection of minors on youtube. They are child actors that their parents are exploiting economically (...)."*

Therefore, given the qualitative review of these comments, it is seen that the third hypothesis, "Children's digital footprint is the main critical argument in this influencer's audience" is only partially met. Although there is concern for the digital footprint, in other words the quantity of content still available on the internet over time with the image of these minors, it appears marginally less important than other more pressing concerns: commercialising minors (earning revenue from their image), overexposure of these children, violation of their intimacy and the call for authorities to step in. The digital footprint is a concern that is often mentioned in the scientific literature, although it is eclipsed by other issues in her audience's discourse.

4. Conclusions and discussion

The results show that Verdeliss's audience is divided between people who are uncomfortable with the appearance of commercial brands in content featuring minors and people who do not have a problem with it (groups we have called "troubled" and "untroubled" throughout the text). The first group scores the youtuber significantly worse in almost all dimensions related to her persuasive capacity (similarity, honesty, attraction, competence, etc.). Furthermore, a much lower percentage (under half the untroubled group) declare that they had bought products recommended by Verdeliss. The main arguments that justify this less friendly perception of the youtuber are related to considering this form of sharenting as a commercialisation of young children, understanding that their intimacy is not being properly protected and calling for action from the competent institutions.

The results from this study demonstrate that the appearance of minors in commercial content might be rejected by part of the audience. This should be considered by brands that work with influencers, given that their campaigns might be affected by that rejection. This rejection also connects with a social trend to be increasingly concerned about parents exposing children on social media (sharenting). One clear example of this negative trend is a petition on the change.org platform that displays a photo of Verdeliss, her husband and her children. "No a la explotación de menores en YouTube" (No to exploiting minors on YouTube) (<https://www.change.org/p/protegeles-no-a-la-explotaci%C3%B3n-de-menores-en-youtube>).

However, interaction between sharenting and promoting brands is a phenomenon that does not only affect influencers with children but also parents with influencer children,

and this was seen in the literature review that describes several cases of minors as generators of digital content with brand promotions (Tur-Viñes et al., 2018; Vozmediano et al., 2018; López-Villafranca & Olmedo-Salar, 2019; Tur-Viñes et al., 2019). Given that, in these cases, the audiences are mainly minors, it is possible that the negative effect that we see in Verdeliss's audience is not reproduced among these other youtubers. However, the companies that are promoted in these channels should at least consider this as a possibility. In addition, the audience of these child influencers could be the focus of a future investigation that might describe the differences with the results presented in this article.

In any case, the institutions should raise awareness in society regarding the dangers and ethical problems raised by sharenting. They should also propose best practices that address these issues properly. Other fields with responsibility that might take a stand in this regard are communication professionals' associations and the self-regulation systems for advertising such as Autocontrol. These associations might determine best practice guides on this matter. In Spanish legislation, for example, there are very clear limitations on the participation of minors when shooting advertisements and films. However, when the content producer is also the parent of the child, it seems that lines become blurred, and the legal limits evaporate.

Given the differences in the youtuber's rating and the percentage of products purchased, detecting other similar sources of rejection among audiences might be very interesting for brands that run influencer marketing. Identifying similar critical reactions in the influencer audiences with whom they work will mean they can make more appropriate and effective advertising investments.

Finally, the results described in this article have the limitation of corresponding to just one case. It would be interesting to broaden the case studies to other influencers, to areas other than motherhood and parenting, to discover whether there are other hidden factors which might be polarising their audience. On the other hand, anonymous mothers and fathers could be generating negative reactions similar to those observed in Verdeliss's audience when sharing content on their children, even though no commercialisation takes place. The reactions of these fathers and mothers to sharenting of friends or acquaintances would therefore be another interesting study topic to use as a comparison.

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