Personal Management of Digital Information in University Students from a Gender Perspective

1. Introduction

The competence to manage information and transform it into knowledge represents an important challenge for people in the digital world and for higher education institutions.

Objectives

1. To analyze what kinds of **Personal Information Management processes** are implemented by students during their final year at university.

2. To **identify** similarities or **differences** regarding gender in the implementation of Personal Information Management processes by students.

2. Method

✓ **Methodological design: non-experimental** of an exploratory type

✓ **Instrument: 48-item** questionnaire, a **0.944 Cronbach's alpha** coefficient

✓ **Sample: 2,054 students** from **75** public and private Spanish **universities**

Research questions

RQ1. Which resources and strategies do university student use when searching for information?

RQ2. Which are the criteria and strategies utilized to select the information?

RQ3. Which are the procedures and technologies used by university students to organize the information once it has been selected?

RQ4. Which strategies and technologies are utilized to process the information?

RQ5. When creating information, which strategies and instruments are used? Do they need extra help?

3. Results

RRQ1. **83.6%** of students utilize web browsers.

Resources used to a greater extent: **Blogs** or websites **(72%)**, online encyclopedias **(67.4%)**, tutorials (57.7%) and friends **(46.5%)**.

Female students **(69.1%)** outdo their male counterparts **(57.3%)** in the use of online media.

RRQ2. Criteria to select the information: frequently updated (82.6%), based on a clear blueprint **(76%)**, made to revise **(65.8%)**, recommended to be checked **(53.3%)**.

Preferences for the format of the information selected: iconic **(75.6%)**, video **(65.9%)** and multimedia **(57.8%)**.

Questioning of the information prior to selection: social media **(72.2%)**, discussion forums **(61.6%)**. **Men** question to a greater extent the information available in **online media (69.8%)**, **blogs** and **websites (61.2%)**, **traditional means of communication (67.5%)**, news they receive via **e-mail (61%)** and **family members** or **friends (53.9%)**.

Credibility of the information selected: **expert (89.8%)**, network articles, **books** or **videos (79.6%)**.

RRQ3. Strategies to organize the information: hierarchical folders **(94.6%)**.

Preferred storage spaces: physical and virtual network spaces **(92.5%)**.

RRQ5. They choose the information they consider relevant to create something new **(73.4%)**.

Female students show greater respect for copyrights **(83.3%)**, cite the source more often **(86.5%)** and are more respectful toward the license which protects that source **(71.8%)**.
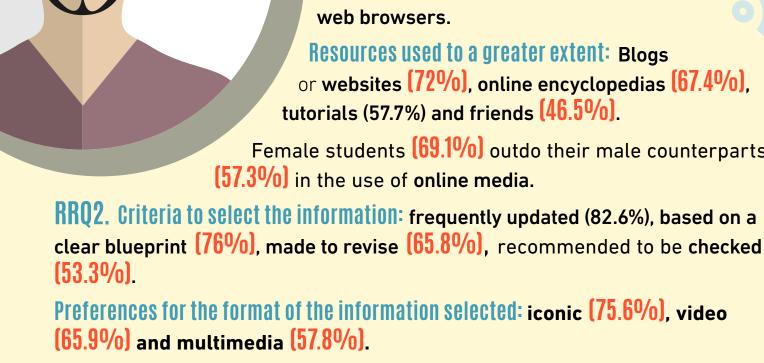
4. Conclusions

✓ There is a **growing inclusion of digital resources** in Personal Information Management.

✓ **Positive self-concept** about the abilities and capacities to search for and locate information.

✓ **Women** conduct searches through a **greater variety of resources** compared to men.

✓ **Men question** the information more when they select it.

✓ **Female students** process the information more deeply than their male counterparts when the information they find is published in audio or video format.

✓ **Women create** information in a more complex manner than men.