



## INSTAGRAM AND YOUTUBE, VISUAL CULTURE AND UNIVERSITY EDUCATION: A SYSTEMATIC REVIEW

BEATRIZ PEÑA-ACUÑA<sup>1</sup> AND JOSÉ FRANCISCO ALFONSO JARAMILLO<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> University of Huelva, Spain

---

### KEYWORDS

*Educative impact  
Higher education  
Instagram  
Social media  
Visual culture  
Visual learning  
YouTube*

### ABSTRACT

*In the technological age, higher education is at a crossroads that requires a redefinition of pedagogical paradigms. The analysis focuses on the integration of Instagram and YouTube as pedagogical tools for visual culture. The convergence of visual culture and social media poses challenges in the face of media saturation. The systematic review underpins the transformative potential of these platforms in higher education. Continuous teacher training and innovative pedagogical strategies are essential to optimise their impact. Envisioning the classroom as a space where visual culture and active methods converge opens up a promising pedagogical horizon for higher education.*

---

Received: 01 / 07 / 2024

Accepted: 03 / 02 / 2024

## 1. Introduction

In the 21st century, the academic environment of the university is immersed in a scenario of profound changes, characterised by the omnipresence of visual culture and the intrusion of technologies (Andión, 2019), the latter being erected as a systematic tool of visual production and reproduction, with contemporary devices such as the ubiquitous mobile phone being paradigmatic examples of this transformation (Miranda and Vicci, 2021).

The media saturation generated by the ubiquity of screens in modern environments poses an additional challenge: the difficulty of creating moments of reflexivity and critical analysis in the face of the constant flood of images that surround us daily (Head et al., 2020; Yilmaz et al., 2019). The communicative obsession and the need for permanent connection not only transform social dynamics, but also signal the emergence of a logic of connection that, according to Turke et al. (2021), requires constant renewal through the total availability of everyone.

Far from remaining oblivious to this influence, the university is immersed in a dynamic process in which technologies have a direct impact on research methodologies, forms of knowledge transmission and, ultimately, the role it plays in society (Ortega et al., 2021; Alcibar et al., 2018). In this context, it becomes crucial to address the complex interrelationship between higher education, visual culture and the constant technological evolution, because, as Flores and Paredes (2021) state, "visual culture is an essential aspect in human behaviour, as it favours the decision-making process" (p.121).

This context of social and technological change raises two key questions for university education. First, how are social networks, Instagram and YouTube, used as pedagogical tools in the teaching-learning process of university students to promote visual culture? Secondly, how is visual culture otherwise promoted at university level?

### ***1.1. The Use of Instagram and YouTube in University Education***

In today's digital age, Instagram and YouTube have emerged as powerful platforms that have transcended their initial role as entertainment media to become educational tools of considerable relevance (Zhu et al., 2020). The recognition that students are adept at using these social networks presents both a challenge and a critical opportunity in university education.

According to Zhu et al. (2020), it has been confirmed that social networks, especially Instagram and YouTube, provide a favourable environment for improving communication in the teaching process, stimulating students' attention, promoting meaningful learning and optimising the efforts of all involved. The reflection of Laurencia et al. (2018) highlights the importance of using these platforms with a pedagogical criterion, focusing on their usefulness for disseminating and deepening academic content.

In this line, the ability to use the inherent advantages of Instagram and YouTube, as well as the transmedia competences of students, to enrich the educational experience is highlighted. The involvement of teachers who use these social networks as channels of communication with students not only strengthens their credibility, but also demonstrates their adaptability to modern learning tools (Amici and Taddeo, 2018). Amici and Taddeo's (2018) assertion of the positive impact of understanding contemporary culture on the teacher-student relationship reinforces the importance of consciously integrating these platforms into the educational environment. Other studies, such as those by Barfi et al. (2021), Agbo et al. (2020) and Santoveña-Casal and Bernal-Bravo (2019), demonstrate the positive perception of social networks by students, considering them as motivational resources and essential educational tools.

### ***1.2. Visual Culture in the Context of University Education: Beyond Superficial Aesthetics***

Visual culture, in its broadest sense, is inherently interdisciplinary, as Mascarell (2020) points out. It is commonly defined as the set of practices, meanings and expressions manifested through images, symbols and visual representations in a society, understood in its historical, social and political moment. Its scope goes beyond the mere aesthetic appreciation of images to encompass a complex web of elements deployed through visual representation.

In the university educational environment, visual culture is revealed as an intricate tapestry in which the visual arts are not limited to being an isolated discipline. On the contrary, they intersect with other

subjects and present themselves as a bridge that facilitates the connection and understanding of the visual universe that goes beyond the conventional educational environment (Mascarell, 2020), such as the inclusion of an audiovisual technique to produce mini-videos, the Chroma Key, in the university classroom (Peña-Acuña and Cislowska, 2023). In this sense, for example, the consumption of visual formats such as video games (Orta and Peña-Acuña, 2022; Rubio et al., 2023) or television series (Peña-Acuña and Crismán-Pérez, 2023) during leisure time is widespread among university students.

Ligarretto's research (2020) presents the educational meme as an innovative teaching tool that enriches teaching practice. The active participation of students in the creation of memes demonstrates the potential of humour and visual culture to address teaching in digital environments, highlighting the link between learning and the diversity of opinions generated in social networks.

In this context, visual culture ranges from revered traditional works of art to the influential contemporary presence of digital media, providing an innovative way of exploring different forms of visual expression (Gil-Glazer, 2020). From the majesty of a Renaissance oil painting, to the visual resources of immersive technology, to the ephemeral yet powerful image shared on a social media platform. These resources allow adaptation to the contemporary sphere through an integrative approach that recognises the adaptation of visual expression in a constantly evolving society (Hoffmann and Cassino, 2020).

### ***1.3. Use of Instagram and YouTube in University Education for the Teaching-Learning of Visual Culture***

Today, the intersection between visual culture, social networks and education is emerging as an essential area for reflection. The unstoppable flow of visual information through digital platforms is redefining the dynamics of education and raising crucial questions about how to use these tools, considered as didactic and multimodal, in the teaching-learning process.

Social media, as prominent channels of visual communication, offer a vast repertoire of possibilities for enriching the educational experience (Gil-Glazer, 2020). These platforms, such as Instagram and YouTube, become spaces where visual culture is intertwined with the educational narrative. Students immersed in the digital age can access both textual and visual information, transforming the way they absorb and process knowledge.

Instagram, known for its emphasis on images and visual storytelling, has become a valuable tool for teaching and learning about visual culture in educational settings (Piragua and Ñañez, 2021). Teachers and students can take advantage of the visually focused nature of Instagram to share content that goes beyond mere aesthetic representation. The creation of educational profiles and the strategic use of specific hashtags make it possible to efficiently organise and search for relevant content. (Angelone, 2023) to create a virtual learning network.

In this context, Instagram is not limited to being a visual gallery, but becomes an interactive space where students can explore works of art, historical photographs and contemporary cultural manifestations. The Story feature, on the other hand, provides a platform for visual storytelling, allowing teachers and students to present complex concepts in an accessible and immersive way. (Saribas et al., 2023). This interactivity and accessibility make Instagram a versatile and stimulating teaching tool.

YouTube, as a leading platform for video content, stands out as a valuable resource for learning in educational settings, as established by authors such as (Cihangir and Çoklar, 2021; Iftikhar et al., 2019) and (Toluzhan et al., 2023). Teachers can create and share educational content in video format that addresses different topics (Alves and Botelho, 2023), as in the case of visual culture, where artistic theories, analysis of important works and enriching visual examples could be carried out through a more dynamic and engaging visual presentation, which would facilitate the understanding of complex concepts.

In addition, students can use YouTube as a medium to present visual projects, documentaries and analyses of works of art, encouraging creativity and participation. The possibility of commenting and sharing videos on the platform facilitates dialogue and collaboration between students and teachers, which further enriches the learning process. (Montes de Oca-Fiol, 2020)

## **2. Methodology**

This study is structured as a systematic documentary review, with the overarching objective of comprehending how Instagram and YouTube can be utilised effectively as pedagogical tools in the teaching-learning process of visual culture. This methodology seeks to consolidate and analyse existing scientific evidence, thereby offering a comprehensive and current perspective on the contribution of these platforms in the university educational domain.

### ***2.1 Design of the Review***

The systematic review is carried out in four recognised databases, each strategically selected to ensure broad coverage and representativeness in the field of education and science. The specialised education database, ERIC, is included to capture specific studies in this area, while Dialnet, Wos and Scopus, three generalist databases, provide a broader and more diverse perspective.

### ***2.2 Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria***

Rigorous inclusion criteria are established to ensure the relevance and quality of the selected studies. Only scientific articles published in the last five years (2018-2023) are considered as publication type. This ensures the timeliness and relevance of the information collected. Other forms of publication, such as books, chapters, non-peer-reviewed journal articles and reports, will be excluded from the final document sample, as the aim is to focus the review on specific scientific evidence and avoid the inclusion of less rigorous information.

### ***2.3 Search and Selection Process***

The search strategy is developed in a systematic and structured way, using key terms related to Instagram, YouTube, education, visual culture and their combinations. These terms are adapted to the specific needs and characteristics of each database. Date filters are used to limit the search to studies published in the specified period, as well as the use of the connector "AND" to carry out the relevant combinations.

The selection of studies is carried out in two stages: an initial assessment based on the titles and abstracts of the articles identified by the search, followed by a detailed review of the full texts of the articles selected in the first stage.

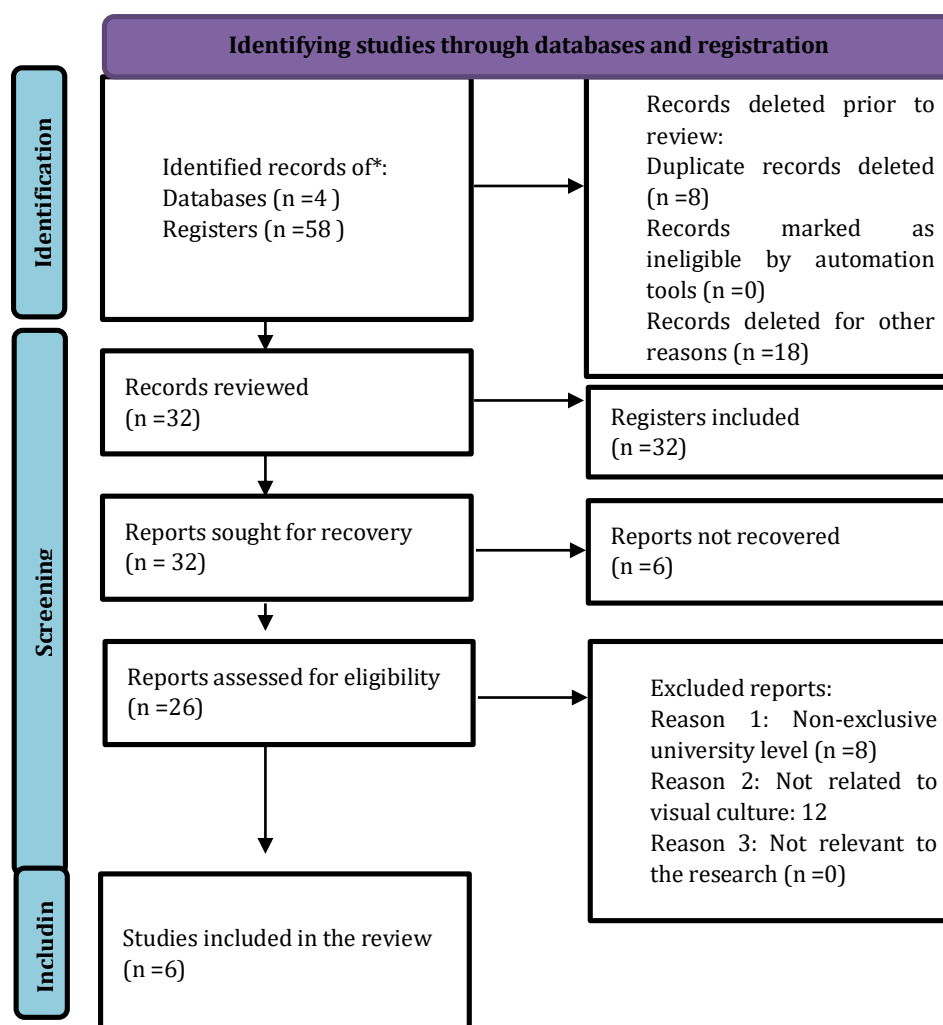
### ***2.4 Quality Assessment and Information Synthesis***

The methodological quality of the selected studies is assessed according to predefined criteria, taking into account aspects such as study design, the methodology used and the validity of the results. This assessment is carried out in a systematic and transparent manner that allows the identification and weighting of potential biases.

The information extracted from the included studies is synthesised in a coherent and structured way, highlighting patterns, trends and recurring results. It seeks to understand both the benefits and challenges associated with the use of Instagram and YouTube in the university educational context for the teaching and learning of visual culture.

The methodology follows the PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) approach (Figure 1) to structure the study selection process in a transparent and systematic way (Haddaway et al., 2022). (Haddaway et al., 2022). The diagram provides an internationally recognised framework for writing systematic reviews, highlighting the importance of clarity and transparency at each stage of the process. From the initial identification of records to the final inclusion of selected studies, the diagram establishes clear guidelines and specific criteria to ensure the consistency and validity of the analysis.

Figure 1. PRISMA diagram identification of studies



Source: Own elaboration

The process begins with the identification of a total of 58 records through the ERIC, Dialnet, Wos and Scopus databases, following a structured and specific search strategy using keywords such as Instagram, YouTube, higher education, visual culture, social media, educational impact, visual learning.

The process follows a systematic filtering procedure leading to a final sample of 6 studies that meet the criteria of methodological quality, relevance and timeliness.

### 3. Results

The results are presented in descending order by year of publication. The study by Salehudin (2021), entitled 'The Users' Experiences in Processing Visual Media for Creative and Online', aimed to analyse the impact of online creative learning through Instagram on the participants' ability to generate new products in the context of the Technology and Learning Media course. It also sought to determine the level of user experience in processing visual media using the Canva application on Android devices.

The research adopted a quantitative approach and used a quasi-experimental model with the participation of 58 students divided into experimental and control classes. Two evaluation instruments were used: a questionnaire on cognitive learning outcomes to assess the students' ability to create new products, and an instrument to measure the users' experience in processing visual media.

The results, analysed using one-way ANOVA, showed a significant effect of online creative learning via Instagram on the participants' ability to create innovative products. In addition, the users' experience of processing the Canva application on Android devices showed a strong creative stimulus, as evidenced by the ability to create and publish digital visual designs on Instagram.

The study by Guler (2021) argues that in the context of higher education, particularly in the education of art teachers, the need to integrate visual literacy into the curriculum becomes apparent. Traditional Special Teaching Methods (STM) courses need to evolve to address not only the teaching of the arts, but also the competencies and skills needed to effectively implement a visual culture-based curriculum. Updating teacher education programmes reflects the importance of developing 21st century skills such as critical thinking, problem solving and effective communication through interdisciplinary approaches based on visual culture.

The research, which covered a total of 8 weeks with prospective visual arts teachers, found that they taught lessons based on model visual culture curricula previously developed during their pre-service practice in primary and secondary schools. Data was collected through semi-structured interviews, document review and written reflections, which were analysed using descriptive methods.

The findings of this research indicate that pre-service visual arts teachers observed that students, when exposed to the visual culture curriculum, identified benefits in cognitive and communicative skills. They gained a critical perspective, increased their awareness of everyday problems, improved their expressive skills and honed their research skills. In addition, the implementation of the visual culture curriculum provided the trainee teachers with a variety of professional experiences and skills, underlining the effectiveness of this pedagogical approach in the holistic development of students and the professional growth of future visual arts educators.

Skar (2020) uses critical pedagogy as a starting point and proposes an intervention in which students use photographs to share on Instagram, combined with the technique of face-to-face discussion. The intervention aims to reflect on the theme of inclusion and equity in education in a sociology module. The intervention aims to influence critical skills in situational learning about complex concepts through the photovoice method. Students had to choose a picture to represent these complex concepts and then discuss it and their own educational experiences in class. The discussion part served to avoid ambiguity and to simplify the complexity of the visual photographic representation. Skar chose this method of photovoice on Instagram because it crosses the boundaries of formal and non-formal education, academic learning and learning for life. The research technique was mixed method with a sample of 60 people. A survey was conducted, 10 learners were interviewed and observational notes were taken during the intervention.

The article by Ligarretto (2020) focuses on exploring the use of the educational meme as a didactic tool for teaching practice, specifically in the subject "Cyberculture and Citizenship" at the Pontificia Universidad Javeriana. The methodology used follows a mixed approach, combining qualitative and quantitative elements. Bibliographic sources, participant observation and questionnaires were used to address the main objective of the educational experience: the use and interpretation of the meme as a didactic tool. The author highlights the meme as a specific cultural form that enriches the dynamics of teaching and learning.

The meme's status as a cultural unit implies that it not only conveys visual information, but also encapsulates meanings, values and shared references within certain social groups. Incorporating the meme into educational processes is presented as a strategy for harnessing this form of cultural expression in students' understanding and participation in the subject.

The results highlight the active participation of students in the creation of memes, the predominance of certain types, such as the Rage or Paint comic and the Photography meme, and the importance of humour as a means of approaching teaching in digital contexts. Furthermore, the link between learning and the diversity of opinions generated on social networks is evident, supporting the principles of connectivism. The experience confirms that reflection on the image and its pedagogical potential opens a way for technological mediation in teaching. This suggests that visual culture, from the perspective of technology and education, goes beyond aesthetic appreciation by encouraging students and teachers to engage in a critical analysis of images, unravelling their historical, social and cultural contexts (Gil-Glazer, 2020), (Kremen, 2020).

The study by Davies et al. (2019) focuses on the use of Instagram in higher education, with a particular emphasis on the critical analysis of visual methods. The importance of these in geography practice and pedagogy is highlighted. The research reports on the innovative implementation of Instagram in higher education field trips, and advocates for further research in this area. Through reflective journals and interviews, it was found that students were positive about their learning

experiences using Instagram. However, the need for constructive and critical use of instant visual methods in field learning is highlighted.

In activities such as 'Rephotography', Instagram enabled students to observe details of their urban environment and connect their conceptual geographical knowledge to real-world examples. In the 'Hashtag Geography' project, Instagram facilitated real-time interactions and in-depth discussions on relevant topics, promoting active learning through the visual medium.

Contrary to the aforementioned studies that advocate the optimal use of Instagram in the teaching-learning process, the study by Sakr (2020) stands out. This study addresses the intention of using image-based social networks, specifically Instagram, to develop students' critical thinking skills on concepts such as equality and diversity. The project, which involved 60 second year undergraduate students on a sociology module with a critical pedagogical approach, enabled the connection between students' everyday experiences and abstract concepts.

Thematic analysis of the interviews suggests that although the project facilitated the connection between everyday life and abstract concepts, students' criticality was hindered by their perception of the task as one of 'capturing' unambiguous representations of concepts. The need to support students in using the visual mode as part of liberatory theorising by incorporating image-based social networks into critical pedagogical approaches is emphasised. Consequently, it concludes with the importance of rethinking the conceptualisation of visual tasks, encouraging class discussion to deepen understanding, and recognising the limitations and challenges of integrating these practices into the classroom.

Moghavvemi et al. (2018) explore the usage patterns and purposes of YouTube use among university students. The study develops a scale to measure academic learning as a determinant of YouTube video usage. The findings reveal that students use YouTube for entertainment, information seeking and academic learning purposes through visual learning that enhances meaningful learning and performance. It is highlighted that social networking platforms such as YouTube can be used as complementary tools for teaching and learning. As a practical application, it is suggested that teachers integrate YouTube resources into course materials and activities.

The six studies reviewed in depth and described in this section are listed in descending chronological order in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Recent studies on Instagram and YouTube and/or Visual Culture

<b>Authors</b>	<b>Year</b>	<b>Thematic</b>	<b>Type of research</b>
Salehudin	2021	Instagram. Creative Learning Impact with Canva in Education	Quantitative method. Inferential test (ANOVA).
Guler	2021	Didactics of Art and Visual Culture	Mixed method and participant observation
Ligarretto	2020	Meme as an expressive medium included in Visual Culture	Mixed method
Sakr	2020	Instagram with a critical approach in Sociology	Qualitative method.
Davies et al.	2019	Instagram with a critical approach in Geography	Qualitative method
Moghavvemi et al.	2018	YouTube. Use of videos for visual learning of content in Management Studies.	Mixed method.

Source: own elaboration

It is concluded that some specific studies have been found that refer to evaluations of interventions for university students in which Instagram and YouTube have been used to promote visual culture. Other formats, such as memes, and other didactic approaches to promoting visual culture have also been

included in the interventions. On the other hand, effective methods and tests have been used for representative samples in order to go deeper into this field.

#### 4. Discussion

The systematic review of selected studies provides a comprehensive and up-to-date overview of the use of Instagram and YouTube as pedagogical tools in the teaching-learning process of visual culture in higher education. The analysis addresses the intersection of visual culture, social media and constantly evolving technology, highlighting both significant benefits and significant challenges. The findings answer both research questions.

Some of the benefits and opportunities presented in the research findings include the following:

- The positive impact on the creative experience and visual learning through the study of Salehudin (2021), which highlights the positive impact of Instagram on the creative ability of students, proving the effectiveness of the platform in promoting the creation of innovative products. (Casaló et al., 2021). Furthermore, the positive experience of users in processing visual media through the social network highlights its ability to stimulate creativity and enhance the learning experience.
- The study by Davies et al. (2019) highlights the role of Instagram in higher education field trips, allowing students to actively interact with their environment through photography and critical analysis. The use of hashtags and participation in specific projects on Instagram facilitated real-time discussions, promoting active learning through the visual medium.
- Guler's (2021) study, in agreement with Ligaretto (2020), highlights the importance of incorporating visual culture in art teacher education. The implementation of a visual culture curriculum showed significant improvements in students' critical perspectives, awareness of everyday issues and expressive skills, supporting the effectiveness of this pedagogical approach, in agreement with Flores and Paredes (2021) and Amici and Taddeo (2018).

At the same time, some challenges and considerations in the research process can be identified:

1. The need for constructive and critical use of image-based social networks, as evidenced in Sakr's (2020) study and further elaborated by Gil-Glazer (2020) and Kremen (2020). Students' perceptions of the task of 'capturing' unambiguous representations of concepts suggest a need to rethink the conceptualisation of visual tasks and encourage class discussion to deepen understanding.
2. Moghavvemi et al. (2018) investigated the use of YouTube by university students, focusing on its patterns and purposes. They highlighted that social networks, such as YouTube, can complement teaching and learning. They recommend that lecturers plan to incorporate YouTube resources into course materials and activities, highlighting the practical usefulness of the platform in university education.
3. The diversity of platforms and content on Instagram and YouTube poses challenges for the efficient selection and organisation of educational material. The strategic use of educational profiles, specific hashtags and features such as Instagram stories, and the creation and sharing of content in video format on YouTube are crucial to maximising educational impact.
4. Limitations of integration in critical pedagogical approaches when integrating visual practices, as discussed in Sakr's study (2020). The task of balancing visual creativity with reflective critique and the need to support students in liberatory theorising suggests the complexity of integrating these practices into the classroom.

In summary, the review highlights the positive impact of Instagram on creativity and visual learning at university, promoting active interaction in educational excursions. The integration of visual culture in teacher training enhances skills and perspectives. However, challenges are identified, such as the need for constructive use of image-based social networks and the diversity of platforms on Instagram



and YouTube, which requires strategies for efficient organisation. The integration of YouTube is suggested as a complementary tool for academic learning, but the complexity of balancing visual creativity with reflective critique in pedagogical approaches is highlighted.

## 5. Conclusions

The academic university environment in the 21st century is at a crossroads, requiring a redefinition of traditional paradigms in higher education. This is triggering significant changes in research methodologies, the transmission of knowledge and the role of the university in contemporary society (Andión, 2019; Ortega et al., 2021; Alcibar et al., 2018).

The intertwining of visual culture and social networks is an essential aspect of current educational dynamics (Flores and Paredes, 2021). The proliferation of images and the omnipresence of screens, especially through contemporary devices such as mobile phones, create a media saturation that poses significant challenges. The constant exposure to an uninterrupted flow of images makes it difficult to create moments of reflection and critical analysis in the face of this daily visual deluge (Yilmaz et al., 2019). In this context, the influence of the logic of connection, which according to Turke et al. (2021) demands constant availability, permeates not only the social dynamics but also the very nature of higher education.

The integration of Instagram and YouTube into the university educational environment emerges as an innovative response to this challenging scenario, as these platforms, initially conceived as entertainment media, have become educational tools of considerable relevance (Zhu et al., 2020). Nevertheless, the representativeness of the results is still scarce, so we understand that this is still a new field in expansion, but that it is arousing interest among academics due to the level of scientific in-depth that has been carried out in these studies on the interventions implemented.

The systematic documentary review was conducted with the aim of understanding how Instagram and YouTube can be used effectively as pedagogical tools in the teaching-learning process of visual culture. The analysis of the existing literature reveals a diversity of approaches and experiences that highlight the transformative potential of these platforms in higher education.

Instagram, with its emphasis on images and visual narratives, stands out as an interactive space where visual culture is integrated with educational narratives (Piragua and Ñañez, 2021). The ability to explore and share artworks, historical photographs and contemporary cultural manifestations through educational profiles and the strategic use of specific hashtags highlights its versatility and stimulation (Amici and Taddeo, 2018). The active participation of teachers not only reinforces their credibility, but also demonstrates their adaptability to modern learning tools.

The critical analysis of visual methods on YouTube highlights its value as an enriching educational resource (Cihangir and Çoklar, 2021). The ability to create and share educational content in video format provides a dynamic and engaging platform to address various topics related to visual culture. The ability of students to use YouTube as a medium to present visual projects, documentaries or analyses of artworks encourages creativity and participation in the learning process (Montes de Oca-Fiol, 2020).

The findings of the selected studies support the idea that Instagram and YouTube are valuable tools that can significantly enhance the teaching-learning process of visual culture in higher education. Salehudin's (2021) study, which focuses on the impact of creative online learning through Instagram, highlights the positive impact on participants' ability to create innovative products. Ligarretto's (2020) research, exploring the use of YouTube in university art education, highlights how YouTube can facilitate the understanding of complex concepts through visual and narrative presentations. Students, in turn, found these experiences more engaging and effective than traditional methods.

However, this analysis also highlights significant challenges that need to be addressed in order to maximise the educational impact of Instagram and YouTube in higher education. The conceptualisation of visual assignments is a recurring theme in the studies reviewed (Gil-Glazer, 2020; Kremen, 2020). The need to establish clear guidelines and specific objectives for visual tasks, as well as effective evaluation of the results, is a critical aspect of ensuring quality and coherence in the implementation of these platforms. The need to establish clear guidelines and specific objectives for visual assignments, as

well as effective assessment of outcomes, is crucial to ensure quality and consistency in the application of these platforms.

In addition, continuous teacher training emerges as an essential element to fully exploit the educational potential of Instagram and YouTube. Educators need not only to understand the technical functionalities of these platforms, but also to develop innovative pedagogical strategies that effectively integrate visual culture into the educational process (Unwin and Yandel, 2016). The ability to use these tools as a means of fostering visual literacy and critical participation in contemporary society requires robust and continuous training.

Despite these challenges, the conclusions of this systematic review point to a promising outlook. Instagram and YouTube, when used thoughtfully and strategically, offer an innovative and effective way to integrate visual culture into the university academic environment. The versatility of these platforms, combined with carefully designed pedagogical strategies, provides fertile ground for the development of critical and creative skills in students.

In this context, it is important to emphasise that the integration of Instagram and YouTube into higher education does not simply involve transferring traditional methods to a digital environment, but rather requires a profound reconceptualisation of visual pedagogy. Contemporary visuality, influenced by the dynamics of social media, demands pedagogical approaches that not only consider visual aesthetics but also nurture a critical understanding of how meaning is constructed and disseminated through images.

Higher education must rise to the challenge of preparing students to function competently in this image-saturated environment, where the ability to interpret, question and create visually becomes as crucial as textual literacy. Instagram and YouTube, as platforms that encapsulate the essence of visual communication in the digital age, provide fertile ground for achieving these goals.

In this sense, the need for pedagogical strategies that encourage student participation in the creation and analysis of visual content emerges as a central element. The creation of online educational communities, where students and teachers can share and discuss ideas visually, emerges as a valuable practice. Collaborative learning in a digital environment not only enhances the collective understanding of visual culture, but also reflects the collaborative dynamics inherent in social networks.

However, in order to maximise its educational impact, it is imperative to address challenges such as the conceptualisation of visual tasks and ongoing teacher training. The versatility of Instagram and YouTube, combined with innovative pedagogical strategies, offers a promising way to effectively integrate visual culture into university education. However, this successful integration requires a constant commitment to reflection and adaptation as technological and social dynamics evolve.

As a practical application of this study, it is suggested that higher education should embrace these tools not only as simple additions to its pedagogical arsenal, but as catalysts for a profound rethinking of visual teaching and learning. The ability to interpret, question and create meaning through images is becoming a critical skill in a world saturated with visual information. Instagram and YouTube, with their massive reach and ability to facilitate visual interaction, are crucial allies in developing these skills in students.

Ultimately, the integration of Instagram and YouTube into higher education not only enriches the learning experience, but also prepares students to understand and critically engage with the complex visual fabric of contemporary society. This analysis makes it clear that, while there are challenges, the transformative potential of these platforms in university visual culture is undeniable. The vision of the classroom as a space where visual culture and pedagogy converge sheds light on a vibrant educational horizon full of possibilities, where technology and visuality intertwine to shape the future of higher education.

In conclusion, higher education in the 21st century is at a crossroads, requiring a redefinition of paradigms. The interaction between visual culture and social networks is essential, but media saturation poses challenges. Instagram and YouTube are emerging as innovative responses, evolving from entertainment to relevant educational tools. Although their representation in research is limited, their transformative potential is recognised. These platforms offer fertile ground for the development of critical and creative skills, but face challenges such as the conceptualisation of visual tasks and the need for ongoing teacher training. Despite the challenges, thoughtful and strategic integration of Instagram and YouTube promises to enrich higher education and prepare students for the contemporary visual society.

## 6. Acknowledgements

This research is based on the doctoral thesis in progress by José Francisco Alfonso Jaramillo in the Doctoral Programme in Social Sciences and Education, supervised by Beatriz Peña-Acuña, at the University of Huelva. This research was funded by the R+D+I project Multiliteracies for adult at-risk learners of additional languages (MultiLits), REF. PID2020-113460RB-I00, funded by the Spanish Institution: Ministerio de Innovación y Ciencias, Agencia Estatal de Investigación MCIN/AEI/10.13039/501100011033.

## References

- Agbo, F. J., Olawumi, O., Oyelere, S. S., Kolog, E. A., Olaleye, S. A., Agjei, R. O. & Mogaji, E. (2020). Social Media Usage for Computing Education: The Effect of Tie Strength and Group Communication on Perceived Learning Outcome. *International Journal of Education and Development using Information and Communication Technology*, 16(1), 5-26. <https://urn.fi/URN:NBN:fi-fe2020050725658>
- Alcibar, M., Monroy, A., & Jiménez, M. (2018). Impact and Use of Information and Communication Technologies in Higher Education. *Technological Information*, 29(5), 101-110. <https://doi.org/10.4067/S0718-07642018000500101>
- Alonso, N., and Terol, R. (2020). Alfabetización Transmedia Y Redes Sociales: Instagram Como Herramienta Docente En El Aula Universitaria. *Revista ICONO 14. Revista Científica De Comunicación Y Tecnologías Emergentes*, 18(2), 38-61. <https://doi.org/10.7195/ri14.v18i2.1518>
- Alves, J., & Botelho, P. (2023). O lugar do Youtube no ensino de História: possibilidades para o uso do YouTube em sala de aula. *Outros Tempos: Pesquisa Em Foco - História*, 20(36), 317-334. <https://doi.org/10.18817/ot.v20i36.1003>
- Amici, S., and Taddeo, G. (2018). Harnessing transmedia competencies in the classroom. An action agenda. In C. Scolari (Ed.) *Adolescents, media and collaborative cultures. Harnessing young people's transmedia competences in the classroom* (pp. 125-135). Universitat Pompeu Fabra.
- Andión, M. (2019). *Universidad nodo: modelo para la formación de comunicadores en la era digital*. Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana. <https://biblioteca.clacso.edu.ar/Mexico/dcsh-uam-x/20201029031330/Universidad-nodo.pdf>
- Angelone, L. (2023). The "Perfect" Teacher: Discursive Formations of #teachersofinstagram. *Academy for Educational Studies*, 14(2), 107-119. <https://doi.org/http://academyforeducationalstudies.or>
- Barfi, K.A., Bervell, B. & Arkorful, V. (2021). Integration of social media for smart pedagogy: initial perceptions of senior high school students in Ghana. *Education and Information Technologies*, 26, 3033-3055. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10639-020-10405-y>
- Basak, R. (2021). Teacher Opinions and Perspectives of Visual Culture Theory and Material Culture Studies in Art Education. *Journal of Education in Black Sea Region*, 6(6), 186-211. <https://doi.org/https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED618016>.
- Belanche, D., Lozano, N., & Pérez-Rueda, A. (2019). Instagram as a learning tool in the university classroom. *In-Red Congress 2019*. Universitat Politècnica de València. <https://doi.org/10.4995/INRED2019.2019.10371>
- Casaló, L., Flavian, C., & Ibáñez-Sánchez, S. (2021). Be creative, my friend! Engaging users on Instagram by promoting positive emotions. *Journal of Business Research*, 130, 416-425. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2020.02.014>
- Cihangir, H. H., & Çoklar, A. N. (2021). Using YouTube as an Education Environment: Examining Follower Views. *International Technology and Education Journal*, 5(1), 50-60. <https://doi.org/http://itejournal.com/>
- Davies, T., Lorne, C., & Sealy-Huggins, L. (2019). Instagram photography and the geography field course: snapshots from Berlin. *Journal of Geography in Higher Education*, 43(3), 362-383. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03098265.2019.1608428>
- Flores, H., & Paredes, V. (2021). Automated learning tools in the development of a contemporary visual culture in students of humanities degrees in higher education. *Serie Científica de la Universidad de las Ciencias Informáticas*, 14(11), 121-134. <https://doi.org/https://dialnet.unirioja.es/servlet/articulo?codigo=8590572>
- García, M. (2020). The use of Instagram in the training of art students as a complement to face-to-face teaching and university network teaching. *In-Red 2020 Conference*. Universitat Politècnica de València. <https://doi.org/10.4995/INRED2020.2020.12015>
- Gil-Glazer, Y. (2020). Visual Culture and Critical Pedagogy: From Theory to Practice. *Critical Studies in Education*, 6(1), 66-85. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17508487.2017.1292298>

- Guler, E. (2021). Visual Culture as a Teaching Practice in Visual Arts Education in Turkey: Practitioner Inquiry. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education*, 46(7). <https://doi.org/10.14221/ajte.2021v46n7.2>
- Haddaway, N. R., Page, M. J., Pritchard, C. C., & McGuinness, L. A. (2022). An R package and Shiny app for producing PRISMA 2020-compliant flow diagrams, with interactivity for optimised digital transparency and Open Synthesis. *Campbell Systematic Reviews*. <https://doi.org/10.1002/cl2.1230>
- Head, A., Fister, B., & MacMillan, M. (2020). *Information Literacy in the Age of Algorithms: Student Experiences with News and Information, and the Need for Change*. Project Information Literacy. [https://projectinfolit.org/pubs/algorithm-study/pil\\_algorithm-study\\_2020-01-15.pdf](https://projectinfolit.org/pubs/algorithm-study/pil_algorithm-study_2020-01-15.pdf)
- Hoffmann, A., & Cassino, H. (2020). Childhood, visual culture, and education. *Childhood and Philosophy*, 16. <https://doi.org/10.12957/childphilo.2020.48432>
- Iftikhar, M., Riaz, S., & Yousaf, Z. (2019). Impact of YouTube Tutorials in Skill Development among University Students of Lahore. *Journal of Distance and Online Learning*, 5(2), 125-138. <https://ojs.aiou.edu.pk/index.php/pjdl/article/view/271>
- Kremen, V. (2020). Distance education in the context of visibility: pro and contra. *Interdisciplinary studies of Complex Systems* (17), 14-20. <https://doi.org/10.31392/iscs.2020.17.014>
- Laurencia, K., Pardo, M., and Izquierdo, J. (2018). Reflection on the use of social networks for educational purposes in Higher Education. *Opuntia Brava*, 10(3), 263-273. <https://doi.org/https://opuntiabrava.ult.edu.cu/index.php/opuntiabrava/article/view/557>
- Ligarretto, R. (2020). Educational meme: experience for a pedagogy of visual culture. *Revista Educación y Ciudad* (39), 131-145. <https://doi.org/10.36737/01230425.n39.2020.2341>
- Lozano-Blasco, R., Mira-Aladren, M., & Gil-Lamata, M. (2023). Social media influence on young people and children: Analysis on Instagram, Twitter and YouTube. *Comunicar*, 31(74), 125-137. <https://doi.org/10.3916/C74-2023-10>
- Mascarell Palau, D. (2020). Understanding visual culture in the classroom through the postmodern curriculum. ICTs as mediators in the productive process. *Revista de Ciencias Sociales Ambos Mundos* (1), 41-54. <https://doi.org/10.14198/ambos.2020.1.4>
- Medina, F. (2020). Instagram as a didactic resource to develop creative writing. Caso micro relato. *Cuaderno de Pedagogía Universitaria*, 17(33), 84-93. <https://doi.org/10.29197/cpu.v17i33.380>
- Miranda Somma, F., & Vicci Gianotti, G. (2021). Pandemic, images and education: latent challenges. *Voices of education*, 104-116. <https://www.revista.vocesdelaeducacion.com.mx/index.php/voces/article/view/454>
- Montes de Oca-Fiol, C. (2020). Dissemination of art history from Youtube. Participant observation for the analysis of the impact of prosumers in digital culture. *Communiars. Journal of Image, Arts and Critical and Social Education*, 3, 95-144. <https://doi.org/10.12795/Communiars.2020.i03.06>
- Moghavvemi, S., Sulaiman, A., Jaafar, N. I., & Kasem, N. (2018). Social media as a complementary learning tool for teaching and learning: The case of YouTube. *The International journal of management education*, 16(1), 37-42. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijme.2017.12.001>
- Ñáñez Rodríguez, J., and Piragua, C. (2021). Instagram, from social network to virtual learning environment: an experience with unexpected results. *Encuentros*, 19(1), 203-218. <http://ojs.uac.edu.co/index.php/encuentros/article/view/2485>
- Orta Casado, J., & Peña-Acuña, B. (2022). Video games lexicon included in Spanish language: a multiple case study. *Linguo Didáctica*, 1, 15-35. <https://doi.org/10.33776/linguodidactica.v1.7428>
- Ortega, J., Pérez, J., & González, R. (2021). The impact of open educational resources on the socialization of knowledge in the Ecuadorian educational system. *Serie Científica de la Universidad de las Ciencias Informáticas*, 14(6), 59-71. <https://publicaciones.uci.cu/index.php/serie/article/view/890>

- Peña-Acuña, B., & Cislowska, A. I. (2023). The chroma key perceived as a multimodal and multiliteracies teaching tool. *European Journal of Language Policy*, 15(2), 273-297. <https://doi.org/10.3828/ejlp.2023.1>
- Peña-Acuña, B., & Crismán Pérez, R. (2022). Projected reading versus actual consumption of Spanish-language narrative formats in university students of Spanish as L1. *Investigaciones Sobre Lectura*, 17(2). <https://doi.org/10.24310/isl.vi18.14308>
- Peña-Froment, F. (2020). Teacher-student communication through social networks. Students' perceptions of teacher credibility on Twitter. <https://doi.org/https://dialnet.unirioja.es/servlet/tesis?codigo=259367>
- Piragua, C., & Ñañez, J. (2021). Instagram, das redes sociais ao ambiente virtual de aprendizagem: uma experiência com resultados inesperados. *Encuentros*, 19(1), 203-218. <https://doi.org/https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1221-7050>
- Rahman, S., Ramakrishnan, T., & Ngamassi, L. (2020). Impact of social media use on student satisfaction in Higher Education, 74(3), 304-319. <https://doi.org/10.1111/hequ.12228>
- Rubio Alcalá, F., Hadjistassou, S., & Ferrero-Rodríguez, M. (2023). Study of English self-learning perceptions throughout video games of narrative and fantasy. *Linguo Didactica*, 2, 89-104. <https://doi.org/10.33776/linguodidactica.v2.7734>
- Sakr, M. (2020). It just opened my eyes a bit more: Student engagement with Instagram to develop understanding of complex concepts. *Teaching in Higher Education*, 25(7), 858-871. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13562517.2019.1613356>
- Salehudin, M. N. (2021). The Users' Experiences in Processing Visual Media for Creative and Online Learning Using Instagram. *European Journal of Educational Research*, 10(4), 1669-1682. <https://doi.org/10.12973/eu-jer.10.4.1669>
- Santoveña-Casal, S., & Bernal-Bravo, C. (2019). Exploring the influence of the teacher: Social participation on Twitter and academic perception. *Comunicar: Revista Científica Iberoamericana de Comunicación y Educación*, 58 (1), 75-84. <https://doi.org/10.3916/C58-2019-07>
- Saribas, S., Coskun, N., & Mamur, N. (2023). Teaching Visual Culture in the Context of Visual Arts Teacher Education. *Pedagogies: An International Journal*, 18(2), 221-248. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1554480X.2021.1975543>
- Toleuzhan, A., Sarzhanova, G., Romanenko, S., Uteubayeva, E., & Karbozova, G. (2023). The Educational Use of YouTube Videos in Communication Fluency Development in English: Digital Learning and Oral Skills in Secondary Education. *International Journal of Education in Mathematics, Science and Technology*, 11(1), 198-221. <https://doi.org/10.46328/ijemst.2983>
- Turke, S., Liu, E., & Oxtoby, D. (2021). Empathy and Our Future. *Bulletin of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences*, 74(4), 12-23. <https://doi.org/https://www.jstor.org/stable/27204504>
- Unwin, A., & Yandell, J. (2016). *No Nonsense Rethinking Education: Whose knowledge is it anyway?* New Internationalist.
- Uzun, Y. (2023). Visual Culture Approaches to the Selfie. *Art Style*, 12(12), 169-286. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780367206109-4>
- Yilmaz, M., Yilmaz, U., & Demir-Yimaz, E. (2019). The Relation between Social Learning and Visual Culture. *International Electronic Journal of Elementary Education*, 11(4), 421-427. <https://doi.org/10.26822/iejee.2019450837>
- Zhu, S., Yang, H., Xu, S., & MacLeod, J. (2020). Understanding Social Media Competence in Higher Education: Development and Validation of an Instrument. *Journal of Education Computing Research*, 57, 1935-1955. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0735633118820631>