Adolescents, digital media and romantic relationship

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Fifty-eight Italian boys and girls, aged 16-18

# Abstract

Digital media are an important part of adolescents’ everyday life who use these platforms not only to increase their knowledge, but also to enlarge their social network that they construct outside digital spaces.
Through the social network sites and the mobile media, the internet becomes the place where to speak about emotions, to play with them, to write about ourselves, to flirt, to define and redefine the seduction practices and the expectatives about the others: a potential partner or a friend.
This paper presents and discusses the results of a sociological research. The work involved fifty-eight Italian boys and girls from the age of sixteen to the age of eighteen.
Passing through the digital and fiscal spaces with the help of the youth who took part in my research I tried to explore the role of the digital media in the online and offline dynamics connected to affectivity and love.

# Outcome

"The research shows that adolescents often use digital media in relation to the affective sphere. They prefer mainly Social Network Sites and instant messaging services (cf. Lenhart, 2015). Platforms such as Facebook support adolescents during the first and embarrassing contact with the potential partner, proving advantageous to them, on the one hand, to show their own interest and, on the other hand, to understand if the attention is reciprocated.

[...] It seems that chatrooms can create a sort of defensive shield and give the user an easier way to exit from the situation when the interaction shows that the other person is not interested in in-depth knowledge. It is a useful strategy that can support mainly the more timid subject who, thanks to these instruments, can better cope with the anxiety that could derive from an eventual refusal.
[...] Having ascertained that the person who is on the other side of the screen could be curious about them, there starts the last phase of digital courting: a face-to-face date. The initial courting phase is composed of an alternation between “online” encounters, comments, “likes”, with face-to-face encounters that, frequently, happened in the presence of common friends or other people.
[...] In relation to love, the space offered by Social Network Sites is perceived by adolescents as a place where they are experimenting with their own seductive ability and testing their identity on an identity test bench. Identity is continuously being evaluated by users who have access to the information on social media.

(Scarcelli, 2015, p. 38-49)