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## Russia-Ukraine war. Blurred news boundaries: current affairs through profiles on TikTok

## Guerra Rusia-Ucrania. Difuminando los límites de las noticias: actualidad a través de perfiles en TikTok

**Deadlines** | Received: 07/07/2023 - Reviewed: 07/11/2023 - Accepted: 08/11/2023 - Published: 01/07/2024

### Abstract

TikTok has become a channel through which the Russia-Ukraine war is broadcast almost live. The dynamics of both social media and mass media combine in order to provide users with informative content that goes beyond the limits of traditional media. The evolution of the development and consumption of current affairs videos on TikTok was analysed. We studied journalistic genres, audio-visual features, and their objective in the videos published by unrecognised user-profiles, influencers, news media and verified journalists on TikTok. By way of content analysis, 415 videos on the war between the two countries within a forty-day time-frame (24/2/2022 – 5/4/2022) were coded. This confirmed that anonymous profiles and influencers are appropriating the genres of legacy media, and that journalists are adapting their work to the formats of social media. Videos solely containing music or voice attract the audience's attention more than those that combine audio-visual elements. The hybridisation of media logic was not detected in their purpose, due to a lack of plurality and the extensive use of emotion, mainly employed by influencers, this being the aspect that arouses the greatest interest in the audience.

### Keywords

Social media; war; current affairs; TikTok; journalistic genres; journalism; news.

### Resumen

TikTok se ha convertido en un canal en el que la guerra de Rusia y Ucrania se retransmite casi en directo. La dinámica de las redes sociales se combina con la de los medios para ofrecer a los usuarios contenidos informativos que traspasan los límites de los medios tradicionales. Se estudia la evolución de la construcción y consumo de los vídeos sobre hechos de actualidad en TikTok. Se investigan los géneros periodísticos, los elementos audiovisuales y su finalidad en los vídeos publicados por perfiles de usuarios no reconocidos, influencers, medios de comunicación y periodistas verificados en TikTok. Mediante análisis de contenido se decodifican 415 vídeos sobre la guerra entre ambos países durante 40 días (24/2/2022 – 5/04/2022). Se confirma que los perfiles no reconocidos e influencers se están apropiando de los géneros de los medios de comunicación tradicionales, y que los periodistas se están adaptando a los formatos propios de las redes sociales. El interés de la audiencia se centra en vídeos que no combinan elementos audiovisuales, sino que se decantan por vídeos con música solo o solo voz. En la finalidad no se detecta la hibridación de lógica de los medios de comunicación, por la falta de pluralidad y por el elevado uso de la emotividad, empleada principalmente por los influencers, y que es la que despierta más interés en la audiencia.

### Palabras clave

Redes sociales; guerra; actualidad; TikTok; géneros periodísticos; periodismo; noticias.

## 1. Introduction

This research aims to examine the impact of social media on the production of news content, its features, and even news consumption itself. Indeed, a paradigm shift is taking place regarding the role of journalists, largely due to the fact that algorithms and social media platforms are now taking their place as the gatekeepers. In short, technological innovation is shaping the production, consumption, and publication of news (Facchinetti, 2021).

Consequently, as this impact grows, it is strongly influencing the media access habits by young people. In the Digital News Report 2022, Newman et al. (2022) confirm that young people are showing a preference for more visual social media such as TikTok. On this channel, not only do users search for amusing content, dances, and choreography (Suárez-Álvarez and García-Jiménez, 2021), but they also want to be informed without relying on legacy media or official sources (Martínez-Sanz, Buitrago and Martín-García, 2023). Citizen interest in TikTok as a news source is confirmed by its growth. In 2021, 15% of worldwide users aged 18-25 consumed news on TikTok, compared to 7% in 2020 (Newman et al., 2021). The same authors also point to audience interest in the conflict between Russia and Ukraine (Newman et al., 2022), which has encouraged the use of this social media site for learning about the experiences of Ukrainians, thereby amassing millions of views. Thus, from a theoretical point of view, Makhortykh and Bastian (2022) have studied the reception of individualised news on the war in Ukraine through the recommendation algorithms of social media, and they conclude that this type of news consumption is capable of satisfying the information needs of consumers, yet users are exposed to coverage of the conflict that unduly represents military and political elites.

These phenomena compel researchers to investigate the way in which videos on current affairs are posted on social media and, more specifically, with a focus on the war between Russia and Ukraine. The starting point of this research is the concern about how social media audiences are being informed, not only through verified media and journalists, but also through videos posted by unidentified profiles and influencers, which is addressed in the present study. In addition, audience interest in the consumption of these videos is examined as well, which is considered an indicator that allows researchers to contextualise the proclivity of internet users toward viewing content related to the war between the two countries. To this end, an analysis has been conducted regarding the genres used for producing the videos disseminated on TikTok, the audio-visual features they include, and the purpose of the audio-visual productions shared on this social media channel.

## 2. State of the art

### 2.1. Logic of the media and social media

The influence of social media sites on the media ecosystem is so profound that authors such as Bell et al. (2017) point out that they have changed journalism more than the shift from print to digital formats. The rise of social media as providers of current news has created new communicative processes. This involves a different media logic (Deuze, 2017), which is grounded in the production and dissemination of current affairs information based on programming, popularity, datafication, and connectivity. These features can be added to key factors such as the speed of dissemination, visibility, and the constant updating of content (Martin, 2021; Omar, Al-Samarraie and Wright, 2020; Klinger and Svensson, 2014; 2018). Nevertheless, these processes are not independent of media logic (Altheide, 2015). Instead, the new media are simply a reconceptualisation of legacy media, in which both types of logic are interwoven and reinforce each other (Stiekolshchykova et al., 2022; Van Dijk and Poell, 2013; Klinger and Svensson, 2015). The result is what Tsuruel et al. (2021) denominated a hybrid media system, which is underpinned by the interdependence of the two kinds of logic (Chadwick, Dennis and Smith, 2016; Hjarvard, 2018).

Millions of individuals around the world choose to stay informed through social media, which is transforming the traditional nature of communication (Johansson, 2019). Journalists are no longer the guarantors of the relationship between citizens and the news (Eldridge II, García-Carretero and Broersma, 2019; Moreno and Sepúlveda, 2021). Their role as news providers is becoming blurred, giving way to a new logic in which algorithms play an increasingly key role (Lischka, 2021). Journalistic production is progressively eluding media control and the news selection process (Karnowski et al., 2021). Nowadays, the audience decides the relevance of news and facts rather than professional journalists (Bruns, 2018). News consumption is moving away from geographically defined communities where a media outlet formerly exerted its influence, and is being replaced by global communities of friends and like-minded people (Thurman et al., 2019; Wölker and Powell, 2021). In fact, audiences are now becoming hyper-segmented. This change has been founded on multidirectional communication (Bulovsky, 2019) and the establishment of dialogic relationships (Badham and Mykkänen, 2022).

In this sense, for Vázquez-Herrero, Negreira-Rey and López-García (2022), TikTok is another example of the implications of the social media logic described by Van Dijk and Poell (2013). The nature of

social media logic based on recommendation algorithms of social media varies depending on the social media site that users rely on for information. The algorithms of Facebook and X (formerly Twitter) decide their results based on whom their users follow, whereas TikTok's algorithms focus more on users' likes and dislikes (Newman et al., 2022). These algorithms have supplanted the role of news editors, or gatekeepers (Shoemaker, 2020), in deciding whether an event becomes news. Currently, news is delivered to citizens based on audience metrics and traffic estimates (Klinger and Svensson, 2015), rather than on citizens' right to receive truthful information in a transparent way (Cetina Presuel and Martínez Sierra, 2019).

However, even though the task of the gatekeeper has not disappeared, the role played by the media and journalists is now focused more on verification as part of their work routines. Furthermore, Musikhin et al. (2021) have criticized the commercial adaptation of social media platforms (Villi and Picard, 2019), which are structured toward monetising citizen data (Törnberg and Uitermark, 2022).

## **2.2. Journalistic practices and social media**

The transformation being driven by social media has consequences for journalism. Journalists' professional activity is being reorganised based on the fact that social media platforms are not homogeneous. As such, X is possibly more suited to an impartial journalist, whereas Instagram seems to be more focused on the social influencer. In short, journalists are now required to carry out their activities in an environment in which hybridisation is the norm (Hermida and Mellado 2020; Bentivegna and Marchetti, 2018).

For the moment, the news on TikTok is still generated mostly by social media influencers, activists, and ordinary people, and not so much by professional journalists. In this context, Newman (2022) affirms that many media outlets are looking for ways to adapt their operations to TikTok in order to attract a younger audience that is less accustomed to consuming journalistic information (Peña-Fernández, Larrondo-Ureta and Morales-i-Gras, 2022). Their adaptation to TikTok fluctuates between resorting to the experience of tiktokers, on the one hand, and focusing on the dissemination of news on the other, with minimal changes in form and tone. In addition, when it comes to current affairs, they follow the format of this channel due to the fact that it focuses on content that is humorous, agile, and alluring. In general, the media are adapting their content to the specific features of TikTok, whose figures for virality and engagement indicate that there is a specific niche for current news. They have been appropriating the use of platforms for news, with diversified adaptation to each of the networks (Hase, Boczek and Scharrow, 2022).

From the viewpoint of news consumption, a cross-phenomena is also underway. On the one hand, access to current news through social media continues to grow in many countries, as in the case of TikTok, Instagram and Telegram, yet it is decreasing on Facebook (Newman et al., 2023). On the other hand, the so-called "News Finds Me" phenomenon is also growing. This occurs when a population realises it is no longer necessary to actively search for news to stay well-informed, simply because their contacts in social media will provide them with the news or information they need (Gil de Zúñiga and Cheng, 2021).

At the same time, a new figure has now settled into the media ecosystem, which is the influencer, who is also engaged in providing current news. Influencers are able to address a wide range of issues using original content, including topics that are familiar and interesting to their followers (Alp and Öğüdücü, 2018; Mueller and Stumme, 2017). Moreover, influencers have the potential to become opinion leaders. In turbulent times, they are crucial for audiences seeking information and guidance in the face of uncertainty (Abidin et al., 2021). However, they sometimes use sensational messages which, according to Stern et al. (2018), appear as a source of information and opinion for citizens and even express hostility toward legacy media (Lewis, 2020).

In a context in which traditional news values (Harcup and O'Neill, 2017) play only a limited role in the editorial decision-making process (Hendrickx, 2021), new communities are emerging based on the professionals that appear on different platforms. However, while they value the idea of journalism as a public asset based on standardised rules, they do not intend to carry out similar roles (Maares and Hanusch, 2020). While traditional journalism is moving away from the ideal of objectivity (Hellmueller, Vos and Poepsel, 2013), partly as a result of the digital transformation of the profession, instagrammers are clinging to a definition of journalism that even traditional journalists may no longer be practicing. Furthermore, this comes at a time when professional journalists are engaged in self-branding similar to that of instagrammers, and the trend seems to be increasing.

Changes are also occurring in the way news content is produced. The interactive environment makes it possible to combine image, language, and music with animation (Boy, Bucher and Christ, 2020), filters, effects, text insertion, and emojis (Lee, 2022).

Van Krieken (2018) suggests the use of narratives such as the docuweb in the digital environment, and Colussi and Rocha (2020) recommend using debates, surveys, infographic content, and self-reportage with journalists as the main characters. Welbers and Opgenhaffen (2019) confirm the existence of a media shift toward more subjective and positive social media posts compared to traditional headlines and mastheads. The use of subjective language dominates, as information is also used as a form of self-expression (Tamir and Mitchell, 2012). Indeed, the media are adapting to the functionalities of both mobile consumption and social media platforms by offering content that is more visual, shorter, and more emotional (Vázquez-Herrero, Direito-Rebollal and López-García, 2019; Bell et al., 2017).

Having a presence on TikTok requires specific strategies and resources for this third-party platform, which is further disrupting news journalism (Ekström and Westlund, 2019). The objective is to reach new audiences thanks to the renewal of content, along with the dynamics of viralisation and co-creation on TikTok, including trending hashtags, audio tagging, participation in challenges, lip-syncing, user reactions to publications, and occasional participatory actions. New formats such as vertical viewing, short videos, and creative proposals adapted to mobile consumption are gaining ground, which also include the development and popularity of virtual reality and 360° format (Sidorenko-Bautista, Herranz de la Casa and Cantero de Julián, 2020).

Virality and the influence of recommendation algorithms are driving the dissemination of content over which the producer has no control, but which is closely related to the creation of content adapted to TikTok. Content creation and production methods are being simplified in order to curry the favour of audiences, where the hybridisation of the logic of both traditional and social media is a consequence of the legacy media's struggle to survive in the current environment (Hudíková, Pravdová and Gažicová, 2020).

New formats are being added alongside more traditional items such as news stories and interviews. These novel styles transmit information with an amusing, simple tone and appeal to positive emotions and empathy, which is in line with current trends (Harcup and O'Neill, 2017; Wahl-Jorgensen, 2020). Thus, according to Zulli and Zulli (2022), the logic and design of TikTok encourages the principles of mimesis (imitation and replication), which can be seen in the icons and video editing functions, and in the rules for user and video creation. This approach is expected to generate new ways of socialising and, as a consequence, new "imitation audiences" on TikTok based on the influence of recommendation algorithms that drive the diffusion of content over which the producer no longer has control.

### **2.3. Information, journalism, and conflict**

In journalistic research carried out during wartime, it is common to find analyses aimed at exploring the struggle between the political and military control of information and the reporting profession. Nygren et al. (2018) point out that from a journalistic perspective, the influence of aspects such as the journalistic culture of each country, self-censorship, and the degree of activism of journalists must also be considered.

For example, these aspects were evident in the media coverage of the conflict in Ukraine in 2014, where notable differences were found in four European countries (including Ukraine) regarding the portrayal of the conflict, the profile of the actors involved, and the choice of words used to describe the war.

Other studies use the idea of patriotic journalism as a starting point. This is a paradigm that deals with the deviation from objectivity that occurs on these occasions. One of the issues analysed is the relationship between journalists' own perceptions and their narratives. Thus, the work of Springer et al. (2022) found a commitment to objectivity by journalists in Sweden and Ukraine, which was not necessarily reflected in their reporting on the Ukrainian conflict in 2017-2018. However, as far as Ukraine is concerned, the news coverage used official Ukrainian sources, although they were not always presented in a positive light. This phenomenon could be evidence of a lack of trust, which is ultimately a decisive factor in applying a patriotic perspective to journalistic narratives.

In the end, the Ukrainian war was known as the "First TikTok War" (Chayka, 2022). Moreover, to the same extent as previous conflicts, this has serious implications for the media ecosystem, due to the potential for disinformation (Kreft, Boguszewicz-Kreft and Hliebova, 2023). The reality of disinformation has multiple consequences for journalistic tasks and is clearly related to the incorporation of social media as sources, agents, and mediators of the news. Moreover, the role of propaganda disseminated by the actors in the conflict must also be added to the mix. Journalists must focus on the importance of independent reporting, the relevance of journalism, and the implementation of new narratives that can broaden audience understanding and empathy (Pavlik, 2022), while at the same time using social media, specifically TikTok, to increase awareness and support from the outside (Colomina, 2023).

### 3. Objectives and research questions

This research examines news information from the perspective of the hybridisation of both media and social media logic. Firstly, the authors intend to reveal the journalistic genres used in social media for creating messages to keep society informed (Perreault, Perreault and Mares, 2022), which might influence their behaviour and decisions (Strömbäck and Karlsson, 2011). Secondly, we examine audio-visual features as key resources in developing the productions (Neumayer, 2022). Finally, the researchers explore the informative purpose shared by the profiles on TikTok, which enables the understanding of current events (Yarlott et al., 2018). These three facets are examined in the videos, as well as the degree of interest they generate in the audience. To achieve these objectives, the following research questions are posed:

RQ1. Which journalistic genres are used for the publications, and which generate the most audience interest in the Russia-Ukraine war on TikTok?

RQ2. What are the most common audio-visual features used, and which ones attract the most audience attention in the videos published about the war on TikTok?

RQ3. What is the purpose of the videos posted on TikTok with regard to the Russian-Ukrainian war, and which ones capture the most interest among the audience?

To answer the research questions, the study of genres, audio-visual features, and purpose is linked to the content published by the profiles analysed. In addition, an analysis is made of the most watched videos, as well as those that generate the most interest in terms of the number of views. To this end, a calculation was made both in absolute terms and average values. In this way, the "volume effect" is avoided in order to focus on the variable that obtains the most views in relation to the number of videos, which serves as a better indicator of audience interest.

### 4. Methodology

In order to examine news information on social media, the methodology used was content analysis with the intention of revealing the real and symbolic content of social phenomena (Huxley, 2020; Parry, 2019). A total of 415 videos published on TikTok were analysed from the day the war began, which was 24 February 2022, until the 40th day of the conflict, which was 5 April 2022. The fieldwork was carried out from 1-8 July of 2022, with searches having been conducted from Spain.

The research was designed in four phases. In the first stage, based on the bibliography consulted, the categories of analysis were selected and defined, as well as the key search words as follows: "ukraine", "russia", "war" in English; and "ucrania", "rusia", "guerra" in Spanish. In the second stage, a first viewing of the videos (n=35) was carried out in order to check the appropriateness of the categories of analysis. The three authors coded these videos, and the Krippendorff alpha coefficient was calculated to establish the level of agreement between coders. This indicator had to exceed 0.8 in order to ensure concordance between evaluators (Krippendorff, 2011). The reliability of the genres was  $K\alpha=0.91$ ; the purpose was  $K\alpha=0.85$ ; and the audio-visual features attained a score of  $K\alpha=0.95$ ; the average reliability was  $K\alpha=0.90$ . The third stage focused on viewing and recording the videos, which was done from an account created by one of the authors on this social media site. The fourth stage was dedicated to the statistical study and understanding of the results.

The selection criteria for the sample is based on videos that address the war between the two countries on TikTok. In order to guarantee audience interest in the content, the accounts that create and/or disseminate the material must have more than 10,000 followers, and the videos require more than 1,000 views, a figure from which audio-visual productions can be monetised on social media according to the revenue metric that calculates the rate known as RPM (Revenue per Thousand). The languages of the videos are English and Spanish, both in their voiceovers and those with inserted text. Audio-visual productions without voiceover or text have also been included.

Videos published in other languages have been excluded, as well as those not related to the object of study, even though they appear in the search results.

A One-Way ANOVA test was conducted, improved with the Brown-Forsythe Test, and further enhanced with Tukey's HSD Post Hoc Test, which have enabled additional statistical calculations with a large number of comparisons.

#### 4.1. Analysis categories

The classification of journalistic genres is based on the time-honoured models of legacy media such as news, interviews, opinion, and reportage (Barroso, 2002; Cebrían Herreros, 1992; Kim et al., 2011; Miller, 2021; Pérez-Guerra and Gómez-Navas, 2020). However, the authors have also incorporated new

audio-visual formats that have emerged from digital media and social networks. Such formats include proposals by Colussi and Rocha (2020), who have explored the hybridisation of journalistic genres in the broadcast of Facebook Live in newspapers, and who also suggest online surveys, debates, and self-reportage by journalists as dialogic genres specific to cyber media. Laurell and Söderman (2018), Liao (2019), and Lund, Scarles and Cohen (2020) add the importance of storytelling as an effective tool for the narration of discourse in social media, and Kunze et al. (2021) point out the relevance of infographics to increase audience attention in social media as well. Based on this literature, a proposal for the classification of journalistic genres on social media is put forth as follows:

- Self-reportage: the journalist or author includes him or herself in the news by self-recording using a mobile device.
- Online debate: the active participation of the audience on current issues is kept open continuously.
- Online surveys: these enable increased knowledge regarding the opinions and interests of the audience, with the potential for aggregating more participants compared to those carried out by legacy media.
- Interview: a dialogue between a journalist and an informed interviewee who is of interest to the audience, the aim of which is to obtain information or enhanced knowledge regarding the interviewee's personality. Moreover, in cyber media the audience also participates by being able to ask questions of the interviewee.
- Infographics: these consist of the visual portrayal of information; they receive more attention on the Internet than news stories on related topics that do not incorporate this feature.
- News item: a story about a current event that aims to reduce the complexity of an issue in order to make it easier to understand and interpret.
- Opinion: this is an interpretative genre that expresses the views of the media and, in the case of social media, those of the video creators as well.
- Reportage: a journalistic informative piece that delves into a news item, which is characterised by originality and subjective narration in covering and reporting the facts.
- Storytelling: a media and cultural practice in which internet users explain and share an event with their followers by expressing their feelings or emotions.
- Summary of headlines: this is intended to capture the attention of followers so that the audience can get a general idea of the news content.

With regard to audio-visual features, the authors have used the classic media model of a narrative structure taken from a daily television news programme as a starting point. For its analysis, the researchers of this study have consulted the work of the following authors: Zulli and Zulli (2022), who examine the functionalities of video editing on TikTok; Boy, Bucher and Christ (2020), who explore in depth the features used to create videos focusing on scientific communication on YouTube; finally, Lee (2022), and Tisdell and Loch (2016), who note the importance of inserting text into videos to enable better understanding of the audio narration. In this regard, the following aspects have been analysed:

- Insertion of sound codes:
  - Voice: the author's voice is heard narrating the event or making a comment.
  - Music: music is heard, which is selected and inserted into the video by the author.
  - Ambient sound: background sounds that are present in a scene or location can be heard.
  - Effects are introduced by the author.
- Text inserted in the videos – the following have been considered:
  - Whether they reinforce the spoken message, figures, or locations that are essential for a better understanding of the video.
  - If questions are posed to the audience.

Regarding the purpose of the content published, a review has been conducted of the following research as well: Kalogeropoulos, Cherubini and Newman (2016), who examine how emerging digital news formats on social media affect the tone of news coverage; Welbers and Opgenhaffen (2019), who argue that online news production is becoming increasingly subjective; Harcup and O'Neill (2017), and Wahl-Jorgensen (2020), who have observed a trend toward news content that is more emotive. In addition, studies by Vázquez-Herrero, Negreira-Rey and López-García (2022) have been considered, as they delve into the adaptation of media news to Instagram and TikTok (Table 1). The most commonly observed purpose of the videos has been recorded in order to code each video as an interpretable and reproducible unit of analysis (Parry, 2019).

**Table 1: Classification of purpose**

Purpose	Description
Referencing	- Informative: the author reports on a specific fact from a single point of view. - Informative with a link: reports an event and invites the user to follow the happenings on the website of a media outlet.
Pluralism	This aims to offer different points of view regarding an event.
Conative	Aims to make a call to action. It invites the user to take action regarding an issue.
Emotive	This refers to a video focused on provoking an emotional response in the user (sadness, fear, empathy, anger, contempt, etc.), either through emotional images or sound codes (music or effects).
Promotion	Videos focused on the self-promotion of the author.
Factual	This directs the audience to a media website or other source without an informative message in the video.

Source: prepared by the authors

## 5. Results

The 415 videos analysed belong to the first 113 profiles with more than 10,000 followers offered by TikTok's recommendation algorithm. The videos published that met the defined selection criteria were viewed. Of the 113 profiles, 66 belong to unidentified profiles, meaning those users who are not influencers (Martín and Vázquez, 2022) and who do not disclose their identity; 30 belong to influencers; 14 to verified media outlets; and 3 to verified journalists who share content on the conflict between the two countries. Verification of the profiles of media and journalists was carried out by the social network site by including a blue check (✓), which confirmed the authorship of the content and the authenticity of the owner. To achieve this status, the profiles must meet the following requirements: they must be active within the last six months; they must be authentic and represent a real organisation, person or company; the profiles must be complete with detailed and current information; they must be prominent, as evidence by their appearance in various news sources; and they must be secure accounts based on a two-factor authentication with a verified email (TikTok, 2023). The 415 videos attained 1,042,080,887 views, which shows the audience's interest in following the war through this social network site.

### 5.1. Journalistic genres

#### 5.1.1. Genres published by the profiles

The journalistic genre most widely used by the profiles analysed is news (69%). The rest of informative genres are divided among interviews (13%), opinion (8%), self-reportage (4%), storytelling (3%), infographics (2%) and headline summaries (1%). Only one report was recorded, which is not statistically representative, and there are no videos that publish online debates and polls.

According to the profiles, those who are unidentified (80%), and influencers (65%) use news as their main format, followed by the media (44%) and journalists (20%). The results show that unidentified profiles and influencers are adapting their content to the media's own journalistic genres. Another observation is that from their TikTok channels, journalists are adapting their operations to the specific journalistic genres that have emerged from social media, such as self-reportage (53%), in which the protagonists of the videos are the journalists who narrate an event themselves. This is not the case with the media, which focus on publishing traditional formats such as news (44%) and interviews (36%), with self-reportage being used only 13% of the time.

Storytelling is published by journalists (7%), unidentified profiles (3%), and influencers (2%). The media only use this format in their TikTok productions in 2% of their posts.

By conducting a One-Way ANOVA, which was improved with the Brown-Forsythe test, the relationship between the use of journalistic genres by the profiles was examined, and it was confirmed ( $F(3,7)=0.815, p>0.05$ ) that no statistically significant relationship between them was found. These results highlight the versatility of the profiles in using journalistic genres interchangeably in the war videos they create and share on TikTok.

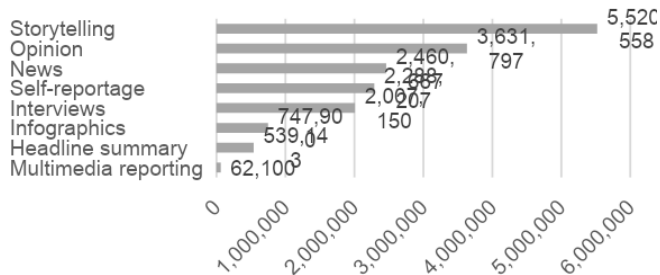
### 5.1.2. Genres viewed and audience interest

The format that was most widely viewed is news, with more than 706 million (M) views, followed by opinion with more than 119M, and interviews with more than 106M. These figures comply with the logic of news, as this genre is the most published and the one that receives the highest total number of views.

However, if we analyse audience interest measured by the average number of views per information genre, it becomes clear that despite being one of the least published genres by the different profiles, storytelling is the one that generates the greatest interest with the highest volume of reproductions at more than 5.5M.

This is followed by opinion with more than 3.6M, and in third place is news with more than 2.4M average views (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Number of views by format



Source: Prepared by the authors

### 5.2. Audio-visual features

Of all the videos analysed, 29% include ambient sound, 28% include music, and in 8% the author's voice can be heard. The use of effects, which the profiles have available as a resource, were not used in the videos about the war between the two countries. Regarding inserted text, 32% include this feature with the aim of reinforcing the spoken message, figures, or important locations, yet there are no videos in which the authors ask questions of the audience.

By profile, those who are unidentified use inserted text (34%), music (32%) and ambient sound (28%) in their posts. In the same order, and with similar percentages, influencers use mostly inserted text (32%), music (29%), and ambient sound together with their own voice as well (18%).

The media (54%) and journalists (41%) use ambient sound. Regarding their second most used feature, journalists prefer to complete their productions with music and inserted texts (26% in both cases), whereas the media insert text in their videos 27% of the time, yet they use music in only 9% of the videos.

By conducting a One-Way ANOVA (Brown-Forsythe test), an attempt was made to confirm whether there is a significant relationship between the profiles and the audio-visual resources used in the published content. The results ( $F(3,6)=4.575, p<0.05$ ) show that the profile is a determining factor in choosing which audio-visual features to use.

Therefore, a multiple comparison analysis, or post-hoc test, was carried out using Tukey's HSD in order to investigate the differences between the variables. The post-hoc rank test enables researchers to pinpoint the means that differ, and to identify homogeneous subsets. In this regard, significant differences ( $p<0.05$ ) can be observed between the media and journalists in comparison to the unidentified profiles. However, no statistically significant differences were found in connection with the other profiles (Table 2).



**Table 2. Tukey's HSD Post Hoc Test**

TUKEY HSD/KRAMER			alpha	0.05		
group	mean	n	ss	df	q-crit	
Influencer	38	5	1932			
The media	16.2	5	1220.8			
Journalists	5.4	5	77.2			
Unidentified profile	78.6	5	15063.2			
		20	18293.2	16	4.046	

Q TEST

Group 1	group 2	mean	std err	q-stat	lower	upper	p-value	mean-crit	Cohen d
Influencer	The media	21.8	15.1216732	1.44163941	-39.3822897	82.9822897	0.74075042	61.1822897	0.64472074
Influencer	Journalists	32.6	15.1216732	2.15584609	-28.5822897	93.7822897	0.44678783	61.1822897	0.96412368
Influencer	Unidentified profiles	40.6	15.1216732	2.68488807	-20.5822897	101.78229	0.2674355	61.1822897	1.20071845
The media	Journalists	10.8	15.1216732	0.71420668	-50.3822897	71.9822897	0.95670909	61.1822897	0.31940294
The media	unidentified profiles	62.4	15.1216732	4.12652748	1.21771028	123.58229	0.04481746	61.1822897	1.84543919
Journalist	Unidentified profiles	73.2	15.1216732	4.84073416	12.0177103	134.38229	0.01651852	61.1822897	2.16484213

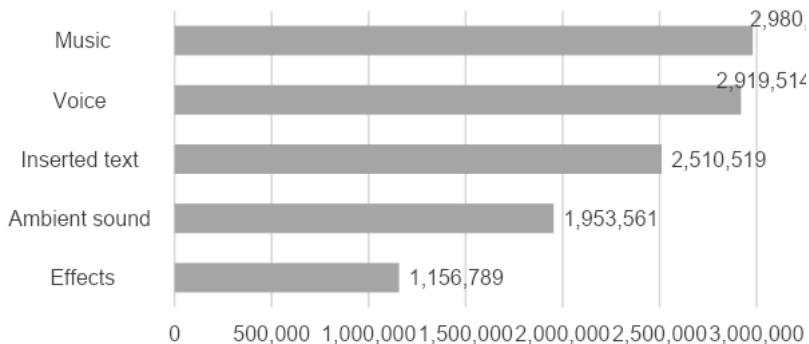
Source: Prepared by the authors. Significance level: 0.05

**5.2.1. Audio-visual features viewed and audience interest**

The audio-visual resources that were most widely viewed by the audience are videos using music (more than 581M views), inserted text (more than 559M views), and ambient sound (more than 390M views).

However, according to the results, the videos that receive the highest average number of views were those that incorporate music (nearly 3M views), those in which the author actively participates with his or her voice (more than 2.9M views), and those that integrate inserted text in the productions to reinforce the messages being transmitted (more than 2.5M views) (Figure 2).

**Figure 2. Number of views according to the audio-visual resources used**



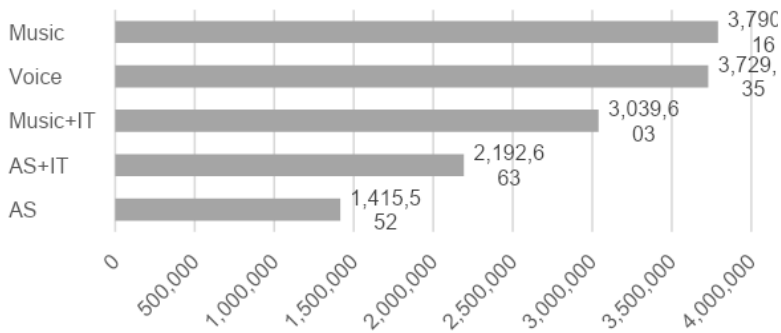
Source: Prepared by the authors

It was found that 60% of the TikTok profiles use a combination of audio-visual features. In other words, they incorporate more than one resource in their productions. For this reason, an analysis was conducted as to which combinations of audio-visual resources generate the highest number of views. According

to the findings, the audio-visual combinations that receive the most views are ranked as follows: videos that combine music and inserted text are the most viewed (over 325M); this is followed by those that use only music (over 189M); next are videos with ambient sound and inserted text (over 149M); and finally, videos with only ambient sound (over 117M). The rest of the possible combinations received less than 18% of the total number of views.

In spite of these figures, when measuring audience interest with regard to average values, the observation was made that the videos that generate the greatest interest among the audience do not combine audio-visual elements. Thus, the most widely viewed productions are those that incorporate only music (nearly 4M). Second place is held by those that only use voice (more than 3.7M). Third place is occupied by videos that combine music and inserted text (over 3M), as well as those that display inserted text together with ambient sound (over 2M) (Figure 3).

**Figure 3. Number of views of videos with combined audio-visual resources**



IT: Inserted Text; AS: Ambient Sound. Source: Prepared by the authors

### 5.3. Informative purpose

#### 5.3.1. The aim of the publications by the profiles

The most common purpose of the profiles analysed was informative referencing at 66%, followed by an emotive aim at 33%. The pluralistic, conative, and promotional purposes were not statistically represented, and the referential, informative with a link, and factual purposes were not recorded in any of the videos.

By profile, the highest figures achieved were related to the informational-referential purpose, which comprised the following: 87% of the productions of the media; 80% of those of journalists; 71% of those of unidentified profiles; and 42% of the productions of influencers. The emotive purpose was published by influencers (57%), followed by unidentified profiles (28%), journalists (20%), and the media (13%). The results show that the media and journalists prefer to offer informative content, while influencers prefer to publish content with an emotional aim.

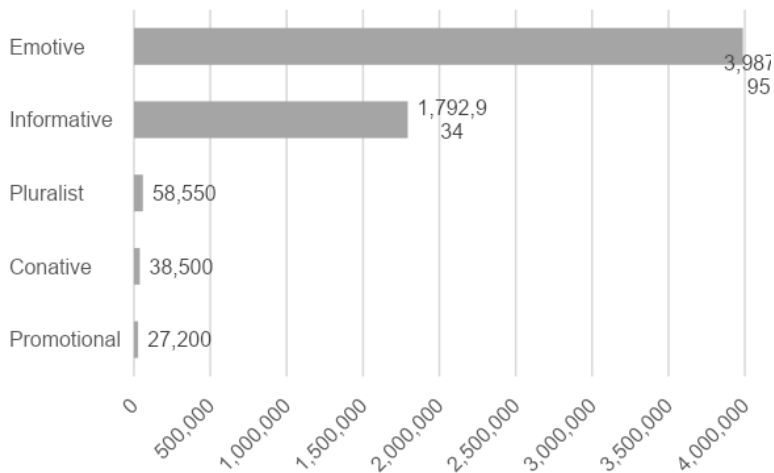
The possible existence of a significant relationship between the profiles and the purpose of their audio-visual productions was explored through a One-Way ANOVA test, and the results confirm that there is no statistically significant relationship ( $F(3.5)=0.421, p>0.05$ ). This finding once again confirms that the TikTok profiles do not adhere to any particular purpose, so that they can make their content interesting for the audience and not allow it to become repetitive.

#### 5.3.2. The visual display of purpose and audience interest

Although the most common purpose of the videos is informative-referential, the one that receives the highest number of views is emotive, with more than 554M, followed by informative-referential at more than 487M.

By observing the indicator of views according to purpose, which allows us to calculate the average number of views that each type of published content receives, on this occasion they coincide with the total number of views. The results show that the emotive purpose generates the most interest among users, with an average number of views of nearly 4M, followed by the informative purpose, which receives slightly less than half of the views with more than 1.7M. According to these figures, in addition to being the most commonly shared purposes in the TikTok videos, these two are also the objectives that capture the most attention from the audience, as they are viewed the most times on average (Figure 4).

Figure 4. Number of views according to purpose



Source: Prepared by the authors

## 6. Conclusions

The ever-increasing hybridisation of media logic is most evident in global events such as the Russian-Ukrainian war, whose protagonists are not only politicians and the military, but citizens who are both the victims and witnesses of the conflict. As such, social media play a significant role in the dissemination of events and actions that take place in the conflict zone and, in the particular case of this study, the focus is on TikTok. Moreover, this research confirms the transformation of journalism in social media in a dual direction. On the one hand, journalistic professionals are in the process of adapting their operations to social media, which have become an important source of information that is becoming increasingly competitive to the detriment of the media. On the other hand, yet related to this rivalry, non-professionals are now trying to place themselves at the same level as journalists. Moreover, the present study confirms that this scenario is extremely delicate in a situation such as the Russo-Ukrainian war.

Firstly, this article looks at the journalistic genres that are setting trends in the reporting of this war, whether they are journalistic or with more novel features, such as storytelling, which are being elaborately developed on social media. Consequently, news is the most recurrent genre for developing content. Unidentified profiles and influencers are the ones who rely on this genre to narrate what is happening through their videos, rather than communication professionals such as the media and journalists. Paradoxically, storytelling and self-reportage are published by journalists to a greater extent.

Although news is the genre that registers the most views, which answers the first research question posed in this paper, the calculations carried out to verify the genre that produces the highest average number of views are also highly relevant. Storytelling, which is used mainly by journalists, is the genre that generates the most interest among users, even more so than opinion and news, which are traditionally produced in the field of professional journalism. On the other hand, the media continue to offer the traditional genres of news and interviews.

The second question posed in this research attempts to reveal the most common audio-visual features used, in addition to those that generate the most audience interest in the videos published on TikTok about the war. Based on our findings, inserted text is the most frequently used resource. In every case, it is used to reinforce the rest of the content, yet it does not encourage interactivity with the user by posing questions.

By profile, the media and journalists use ambient sound to a greater extent. They try to provide a sense of neutrality and objectivity through the use of sound, without other auditory features to further enhance the user's emotion. Nevertheless, there is a nuance to this assertion; although the use of music by journalists is similar to that of non-professional profiles, the media hardly use this feature and prefer inserted text instead.

This situation indicates a possible shift from analogue to digital, yet with the legacy media maintaining its traditional approach rather than adopting the new languages and dynamics that characterise social media.

User interest is leaning toward the incorporation of music, a trend that is repeated in both absolute and average terms. Moreover, this is the only component that coincides in both calculations. The average values indicate that the author's voice is the second most engaging resource. Bearing in mind that influencers use this resource the most, this reinforces the findings of the present study regarding the skills that this profile develops to attain a higher number of views. Paradoxically, users prefer not to combine too many features in a video, despite the multimedia capability of social media (Boy, Bucher and Christ, 2020), yet there is still a significant number of videos that are recorded with two or more resources (60%). Again, average values are a key factor in this analysis, and it has been confirmed that TikTok users prefer content that incorporates only music or voice.

Authors such as Yarlott et al. (2018) emphasise the importance of looking at the purpose of the content in order to understand the facts. Thus, as a response to the third research question, the findings with regard to purpose show that the media and journalists maintain their professional principles of reporting content with an informative-referential aim. On the profiles of unidentified users, the informative-referential purpose is also more frequent. Influencers achieve more balance between informative and emotional purposes. They offer information to audiences yet with nuances, due to the fact that they maintain their subjectivity together with the emotional features that define the content they publish. Influencers display information with an aspect that is typical of journalism, yet interspersed with emotion. Moreover, this characteristic frequently appears in the content that generates the most interest among users.

## 7. Discussion

While audiences in legacy media are decreasing, the number of citizens who prefer to be informed through social media is steadily increasing (Newman et al., 2022). This is also the case with the Russia-Ukraine war. News consumption on TikTok related to the conflict seems to be moving away from legacy media and toward the use of videos selected by recommendation algorithms, which are also based on similar interests among friends and acquaintances (Thurman et al., 2019; Wölker and Powell, 2021). However, the authors question the disconnection between the logic of the media and that of social network sites for the following reason: If the media had not reported on the conflict and had not given it media relevance, perhaps millions of citizens would not be expressing such massive interest in staying informed about this issue.

Although the journalistic news genre dominates, professionals more often rely on self-reportage and storytelling, which affirms the hybridisation of media logic.

This trend reinforces the approach of authors such as Vázquez-Herrero, Direito-Rebollal and López-García (2019) and Bell et al. (2017). Moreover, it confirms the tendency of professionals to adapt journalistic genres to formats that enable more optimised algorithms in order to capture the attention of the audience (Deuze, 2017).

As argued by Karnowski et al. (2021), the trendsetters of the media agenda are changing. Nevertheless, our findings also indicate that the professional style of journalists has still not been fully assimilated in the diffusion of information carried out by those who operate outside the traditional journalistic domain.

In spite of this, media professionals continue to use more traditional formats, although this finding does not coincide completely, but rather partially, with the reconceptualisation proposed by Stiekolshchykova et al. (2022), among others. The media are starting to become aware of the appeal of social media and have adapted their operations to its speed and intense visibility (Martin, 2021; Omar, Al-Samarraie and Wright, 2020). Nevertheless, another contribution of the present study is the limited approach they take to the new genres that have developed in the social media domain. This also implies that despite the interactivity that characterises social networks, the audio-visual features analysed in this study do not try to encourage multidirectional communication, as Bulovsky (2019) suggests, nor do they attempt to establish dialogic relationships (Badham and Mykkänen, 2022).

On the other hand, the professionals analysed maintain their informative role that should define journalistic work, without falling into the trap of emotion. However, basic principles are neglected, such as pluralism, which is a complicated objective given the brevity of content on social media. This aspect fuels the demand for immediacy. Influencers also have an informative purpose in their videos, with the probable objective, as previously pointed out by Abidin et al. (2021), of competing with communication professionals and becoming opinion leaders. Nevertheless, this study has also shown that this is not their only objective, as they are aware that emotion increases interest in their content. Moreover, as they do not feel the pressure of journalistic rigour, they tend to display information with emotional content (Colomina, 2023; Pavlik, 2022), which is a key factor in increasing their popularity on the networks (Campbell and Farrell, 2020).

The present research has some limitations. The first is related to the recommendation algorithm of TikTok, which filters the profiles that appear in the results through searches for specific words. The second is linked to the TikTok audience, which has its own characteristics that prevent its extrapolation to other social network sites. The third limitation is connected to the findings of this research, which are limited to the profiles that post content regarding the war on this social media site, and to the audience that is interested in those profiles.

For future research, a study of the profiles could be standardised, or focus on one of the categories established in this paper. It would also be of interest to investigate whether by varying the characteristics of the sample, the results might show divergences that could enable the identification of different patterns in the videos about current events on TikTok. This would also provide insight into the approach that communication professionals take toward the content they publish on social media, their routines, and their perception of videos on news created by non-professional profiles. One final recommendation for future research would be to explore the sources from which influencers and tiktokers obtain information and the content they use, whether audio-visual or not.

## 7. Contributions

Specific contribution	Authors
Work concept and design	1, 2 and 3
Documentary search	1
Data collection	2
Data analysis and critical interpretation	1, 2 and 3
Review and version approval	1, 2 and 3

## 8. Acknowledgement

Translator: Charles Arthur.

## 9. Funding

This research was funded by the project entitled, *Repertorios y Prácticas Mediáticas en la Adolescencia y la Juventud: Usos, Ciberbienestar y Vulnerabilidades Digitales en Redes Sociales* [repertory of media practices regarding adolescence and youth: uses, cyber-wellness and digital vulnerabilities on social media] (PID2022-138281NB-C21), under the auspices of the *Plan de Generación del Conocimiento* [knowledge production programme].

This paper is part of the special issue "Communication, social innovation and sustainability" belonging to the R+D+I Project "Innovation ecosystems in the communication industry: players, technologies and configurations for the emergence of innovation in media and communication" (INNOVACOM), with reference PID2020-114007RB-I00. It was funded by the Ministry of Science, Innovation and Universities, AEI/10.13039/501100011033.

Proyecto **INNOVACOM PID2020-114007RB-I00** financiado por:



## 10. Conflict of interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest related to any of the content in this article.

## 11. Disclaimer on the use of Artificial Intelligence

The authors declare that they have not used Artificial Intelligence tools in conducting this research.

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