New Narratives for New Consumers: Influencers and the Millennial and Centennial Generations

Editors

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Editorial

OK, Boomer: New Users, Different Platforms, New Challenges

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Abstract
The popularization of new interaction spaces brings new narratives and social phenomena that merit attention from the scientific community. Based on the existing literature on the new challenges facing the communication discipline with these emerging narratives, this editorial summarizes the empirical and theoretical contributions of the thematic issue entitled "New Narratives for New Consumers: Influencers and the Millennial and Centennial Generations." The authors emphasize that the studies selected for this thematic issue explore the innovative features and opportunities of the emerging scenarios and offer a cautionary account of their structural problems and the urgency of a new media literacy.

Keywords
centennials; digital media; Facebook; influencers; Instagram; millenials; social networks; online participation; TikTok; YouTube

Issue
This editorial is part of the issue "New Narratives for New Consumers: Influencers and the Millennial and Centennial Generations," edited by Luis M. Romero-Rodríguez (Rey Juan Carlos University), Santiago Tejedor (Autonomous University of Barcelona), and Inmaculada Berlanga (International University of La Rioja).

The changing communication scenario has created significant challenges for academia. New user profiles, emerging social platforms, and disruptive ways of accessing, processing, and sharing content demand new studies and fresh approaches in an ecosystem marked by a growing mediatization process that leads us to a "distance society" (Pérez-Tornero, 2020).

Works such as Romero-Rodríguez, Tejedor, and Montealegre (2021) have focused on the attitudes and perceptions of citizens regarding the media in a situation characterized by the speed of change and the emergence of new formats and communication platforms. Among them, TikTok has acquired a leading role, becoming the most downloaded app after Whatsapp and Messenger. The social network, which in China retains its original name—Douyin—experienced growth at the beginning of 2019 when it already had 500 million users worldwide, especially teenagers of the so-called Generation Z. According to Bloomberg (Stokel-Walker, 2020), in Spain, France, and Italy, a third of the platform's members are minors, while in Germany and the United Kingdom the percentage is 24% and 18%, respectively.

The singularities of this new scenario warn of the relevance of promoting academic research, especially from media literacy and educommunication, to monitor the impact of these new social networks in the current media ecosystem. A study by Basch et al. (2020) has highlighted that teenagers, the primary users of TikTok, tend to search for political topics based on their tastes and through tags or hashtags that show their identity, whether gender, sexual diversity, or culture.

However, in this context, marked by speed, multitasking, and the economy of attention, there have also appeared journalistic and communicative projects that

bet on "slow" journalism (Romero-Rodríguez, Tejedor, & Castillo-Abdul, 2021) against the results of previous studies (Bernal & Angulo, 2013; Colás et al., 2013; Pérez-Tornero et al., 2015; or Piscitelli, 2010) that warned of a trend—worrying in several aspects— towards immediacy, celerity, and instantaneity.

This thematic issue addresses the research challenges derived from the new platforms and their impact on cyber-citizenship from new angles and disruptive thematic areas. The study of communication as a social experience demands a permanent reflection on messages that the current media and communication situation has progressively transformed into portable, personalized, and participatory pieces.

There is a wealth of topics that are conveyed and connected through the access and use that new generations of cybernauts make of online platforms: sponsorship on social networks, food content on YouTube, the journalistic role or music on TikTok, lifestyle promotion by influencers or Instagrammers, new communicative narratives from branded content, the return to video platforms at intergenerational level, micro-celebrities and their communicative strategies, edutubers nano-influencers, political influencers on YouTube, media competition in younger users, Spanish tipsters in the pandemic scenario, among others. This thematic issue aims to face the permanent challenge of studying an object of study in permanent and accelerated change, transformation, and reinvention.

Luisa Zozaya-Durazo and Charo Sádaba-Chalezquer (2022) analyze the sponsorship disclosure practices of Mexican Instamoms to conclude that advertising disclosure is not part of the usual protocol of collaboration between influencers and brands in this country. Meanwhile, Victoria Tur-Viñes et al. (2022) address the issue of childhood obesity through YouTube content related to food brands aimed at children and urge the adoption of deontological and legal measures to regulate this content.

On the other hand, María-Cruz Negreira-Rey et al. (2022) identify the roles and activities of journalists on TikTok who seek a space of influence in an audience of the millennial and centennial generations; while Arantxa Vizcaíno-Verdú and Ignacio Aguaded (2022) show us TikTok as a music venue for the empowerment of social storytelling, and a platform that advocates for equality and socio-musical diversity.

The study by Sarah Devos et al. (2022) presents the lifestyle of influencers observed through framing analysis and goes so far as to assert that the adapted roles are generalizable across cultures. The synergies between networks and fashion and the consequent impact of branded content on brand reputation are addressed by Bárbara Castillo-Abdul et al. (2022) through the study of women's fashion brands Manolo Blahnik and Loewe on Instagram. Additionally, Pedro Cuesta-Valiño et al. (2022) show the behavior of centennials and millennials on TikTok and their interest in short videos: A fact that can

help brands and organizations to develop new strategies in this channel.

The research conducted by Daniela Jaramillo-Dent et al. (2022) explores the creative practices of migrant TikTokers who have gained a significant number of followers on this platform. Mónica Bonilla-del-Río et al. (2022) address the issue of disability and position this network as privileged for eradicating barriers and facilitating the inclusion of people with intellectual disabilities in the public sphere.

Delia Balaban and Julia Szambolics (2022) address the authenticity of influencers and focus on both the authenticity of the source and the authenticity of the message. Javier Gil-Quintana et al. (2022) provide an insight into the media competence of Spanish teachers from the perspective of the families of primary school students.

Tasja Selina Fischer et al. (2022) take on a gap in current studies: political narratives and their producers on YouTube and address it with a comparison between Germany and the United States. In turn, the article by Diana Rivera-Rogel et al. (2022) deals with the narrative of YouTubers from the Andean Community and their digital literacy.

Finally, Almudena Barrientos-Báez et al. (2022) analyze the narrative of Spanish tipsters and the millennial and centennial generations in the pandemic scenario, full of iconic, symbolic, and linguistic elements typical of war periods.

The thematic issue closes with a thought-provoking book review by Susan Hopkins (2022) entitled "(Not) Very Important People: Millennial Fantasies of Mobility in the Age of Excess." Hopkins comments on sociologist and academic Ashley Mears' (2020) book *Very Important People: Status and Beauty in the Global Party Circuit*, and addresses the problem of gender and the elitist framing of many of today's social networks by making role models out of those who really should not be.

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Conflict of Interests

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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Article

Disguising Commercial Intentions: Sponsorship Disclosure Practices of Mexican Instamoms

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Abstract
Influencers have established themselves as key allies for brands by cultivating a powerful public image to promote them. In the case of Instamoms, these collaborations can offer moms a means of achieving economic stability. In a country like Mexico, where the gender gap in the labor market remains a contentious issue, digital work represents an opportunity for women. The similarity between the organic content and commercial content created by these profiles has strengthened the presence of hybrid advertising. This means of advertising has not spelled the end for the original content, and audiences may struggle to spot ads if sponsorship is not disclosed properly. It is important for consumers to be able to identify ads so their persuasion knowledge can be activated. This article examines the commercial messages and types of disclosure used by Mexican Instamoms to inform their followers of the commercial nature of their collaborations. The types of disclosure are analyzed based on language, location, and type of text. After a content analysis of 10,135 stories and more than 330 posts, 40% and 47% of the sample, respectively, was identified as advertising content. The analysis revealed that less than 5% of the Instamoms sponsored content was tagged as such and that sponsorship disclosure does not form part of the usual protocol for influencer-brand collaborations in a country where no legislation is yet in place and the sector is making little effort to control these practices.

Issue
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1. Introduction

In 2010, Instagram was launched as a social network to share images globally by means of hashtags. Since then, social networks have changed and taken on an increasingly commercial tone. This has given rise to a new form of advertising known as influencer marketing. In Mexico, 58% of the investment by influencer management is channeled to 100% digital influencers, where 53% of campaigns correspond to Instagram (IAB México, 2020c). Studies now indicate that Instagram is the most engaged social network in terms of users' interaction with posted content, which has made it brands' platform

of choice to carry out their business strategies (Briceño, 2020; Leone, 2018).

The rise of social media has boosted the emergence of new advertising formats characterized by less overt commercial intentions and this has highlighted the importance of being able to detect the persuasive nature of such content. The persuasion knowledge model proposed by Friestad and Wright (1994) contemplates the activation of strategies designed as self-defense mechanisms when individuals are exposed to persuasive messages and suggests that activating such strategies requires the explicit recognition of the persuasion or advertising intent. When faced with atypical advertising

formats, individuals lack the experience and reference points needed to identify them as ads (Evans et al., 2013; Kinard & Hartman, 2013).

The commercial messages on Instagram take different forms: posts by brands on their own channels, brand-sponsored posts that appear on a user's feed alongside other content, and brand-sponsored posts that appear on third-party channels. The first two models replicate advertising formats used in traditional media, so their identification as ads does not pose a challenge for users. The third variant, known as influencer marketing, represents more of a challenge, given that it is displayed in a novel format and is communicated by third parties who are trusted by their followers.

Influencer marketing has been defined as an advertising strategy that uses opinion leaders (i.e., influencers) to influence consumers' buying choices as a way of promoting a brand (Brown & Hayes, 2008; Scott, 2015). An influencer is essentially a content creator who is an expert in a specific area and has attracted several captive followers (who have marketing value for brands) through the regular creation of valuable content on social media (Lou & Yuan, 2019, p. 59). Influencers are viewed as celebrities who have developed an online reputation and created a business model based on the creation of social media content, which they share with the community they have built and with whom they have established a relationship of trust. This allows them to become commercial figures validated by an audience and referred to as brand spokespeople (Abidin, 2017; CONAR, 2018).

One of the key characteristics of influencers is that they develop credibility among their followers by building an intimate relationship with them, which enables them to persuade their followers through endorsements, since influencers are seen as personal, credible, and easy-to-relate-to sources (De Veirman et al., 2017). It has been suggested that influencers are more effective than traditional celebrities at selling certain products precisely because of the credibility and admiration they attract (Lou & Yuan, 2019; Trivedi & Sama, 2020). While the fame and success of traditional celebrities are based on their achievements or talent, the popularity of online celebrities is underpinned by the intimate and personal moments they share (Abidin, 2018).

Influencer collaborations are usually dynamic and have been referred to by several authors as "covert" or "hybrid" advertising, given that they are embedded in other content, thereby blurring the traditional lines between commercial messages and content with informative or entertainment value (Hoek et al., 2020; Hudders et al., 2017; van Reijmersdal et al., 2020).

Such adverts, which are camouflaged by general content due to their design and format, are also referred to as integrated advertising, embedded marketing, covert marketing, branded content, or native advertising (Evans et al., 2017). Consumers object to having their browsing experience interrupted, which helps explain why they accept ads disguised as organic content; however, these can, in turn, give rise to negative reactions when consumers realize that an endorsement is not genuine (Lee et al., 2016). Hybrid advertising is a phenomenon that combines entertainment and advertising and can help reduce the skepticism that prevents persuasion knowledge from being activated in certain individuals (Friestad & Wright, 1994). Given hybrid advertising's similarity to organic content, detecting, and processing it involves a higher degree of complexity (Rozendaal et al., 2016).

1.1. Regulation and Influencer Marketing Industry

As the phenomenon has grown in popularity, critical voices have started raising concerns over the lack of control of these messages and the excessive influence that content creators can exert on vulnerable audiences (Balaban & Mustăţea, 2019; Feijoo & González, 2019; Schwemmer & Ziewiecki, 2018). This new context requires responsible consumers who can develop a critical mindset based on knowledge and interpretation of the terminology used at all stages of the consumption chain (Area-Moreira & Pessoa, 2012; Berríos-Valenzuela & Buxarrais Estrada, 2015). Based on the principle that explicit recognition of advertising is key to activating knowledge of a persuasion attempt (Friestad & Wright, 1994), academics and public and private institutions have proposed that explicit disclosure be used in native advertising formats on social media to inform audiences of commercial collaborations.

There are growing calls for measures to balance the potential effects of these practices on consumers' online experiences, given the Western context, the regulations that have served as a guide for codes of conduct in Latin America have been spearheaded by international and North American organizations. The overarching argument of the OECD document is the need for transparency and the audience's right to know that they are being exposed to paid content. The document highlights four areas of online advertising: (a) misleading marketing practices, (b) ad identification, (c) endorsements, and (d) protection of children or vulnerable consumers. It also calls on the industry to design disclosures that are understandable and easily identifiable by users (OECD, 2019). The US Federal Trade Commission (2019) issued a document with indications for disclosing sponsorships on social media to inform followers of the commercial nature of collaborations.

There is also a need for ethical codes or regulation of these practices in the Ibero-American sphere; a recent study shows that only one in 10 Spanish fashion influencers has disclosed the commercial nature of their collaborations with brands (Sixto-García & Álvarez-Vázquez, 2020). In this context, Autocontrol (2020), the Spanish independent advertising self-regulatory organization, developed a code of ethics in 2020 that invited influencers to adequately disclose the commercial intent of their content.

Chile, Argentina, Peru, and Colombia are the only countries in Latin America that have launched public or private initiatives to ensure good practice in commercial messages on social media. As shown in Table 1, the initiatives in Chile and Argentina have been promoted by the advertising sector itself or by civil associations, while government institutions in Peru and Colombia have drafted good practice guides to protect consumers' online experience.

All the documents analyzed concurred that content should be properly identified when it relates to a paid collaboration. The different organizations specify that advertising must reflect the content creator's actual experience and must avoid exaggeration. With respect to

Table 1. Ethical codes for influencers in Latin America.

Restriction code	Organization	Indications
Chilean Code of Advertising Ethics (Chile) published in 2018	Council of Self-Regulation and Advertising Ethics (CONAR)	• Posts must be clearly and visibly tagged as advertising content. • Any financial payment or payment in kind for said posts must be disclosed. • Influencers' experience as consumers of the products or services used must be truthfully and openly communicated. • Children and adolescents must not be encouraged by influencers to participate in online commercial activities without their guardians' supervision.
Advertising Guide for Influencers (Peru) published in 2019	National Institute for the Defense of Free Competition and the Protection of Intellectual Property (INDECOPI)	• Commercial posts must be marked as sponsored adverts. • Content about experiences that are not authentic or recent must not be posted. • The legal system must be respected. • Restrictions and prohibitions on commercial practices on grounds of consumer health and safety must be respected. • Format: disclosures must be identifiable and appear in Spanish in a visible location. • Labels must not appear at the end of posts. • Abbreviations and ambiguous references must be avoided. • Disclosures must not appear at the end of videos. • The advertiser's name must not be combined with the disclosure or label. • The first hashtag should indicate the commercial nature of the post.
Guide to Good Practice in Influencer Advertising (Colombia) published in 2020	Superintendence of Industry and Commerce (SIC)	• Commercial relationships with advertisers must be identified. • Advertisers or agencies that hire influencers to provide their services should be asked to indicate their guidelines for fully identifying messages as adverts. • An advert must not be posted if a brand suggests concealing the nature of the collaboration. • Experiences or reactions relating to the product must not be faked.
Influencers: Guide to Commercial Communication (Argentina) published in 2020	Advertising Self-Regulation Council (CONARP)	• Posts corresponding to commercial collaborations must be clearly identified whenever a monetary benefit, exchange, discount, etc. has been agreed. • Disclosure should be clearly provided under the name of the influencer or at the beginning of the post. • The use of "Content in collaboration with... (brand)" or #SponsoredContent" is suggested. • All commercial posts must comply with the principles of legality, honesty, and social sensitivity. • Exaggeration and exploiting users' lack of experience should be avoided, and professional endorsements and recommendations that have not been obtained through the corresponding authorization must not be falsified. • Posts depicting demonstrations, promotions and comparative advertising are not recommended.

Sources: Compiled by the authors based on data from Consejo de Autorregulación y Ética Publicitaria (CONAR, 2018), Consejo de Autorregulación Publicitaria (CONARP, 2020), Instituto Nacional de Defensa de la Competencia (INDECOPI, 2019), and Superintendencia de Industria y Comercio (SIC, 2020).

disclosures, the organizations agree that followers must be informed of influencer-brand collaborations and that this should appear in Spanish and in a visible location under the name of the influencer or at the beginning of the post to avoid ambiguous references. There is clearly some consensus that sponsorship disclosure enables followers to recognize advertising messages by triggering their persuasion knowledge, thus allowing potential consumers to identify the advertiser's origin, target audience and persuasion intent (Boerman et al., 2012). In native advertising, the disclosure of collaborations is key to giving potential consumers the tools they need to protect themselves from persuasion attempts (Kim & Kim, 2020).

Legislation has yet to be developed in Mexico to regulate social media advertising and research could help to raise awareness of the phenomenon. The Federal Consumer Protection Law in Mexico, which was published in 1992, requires, in its most recent reform in the Official Journal of the Federation in 2014, that radio and television stations distinguish between commercial content and content for the purposes of entertainment, but its scope is limited to traditional media. Although some articles have been published in newspapers about these shady practices of influencers ("Abre Fisel investigación," 2021), there is a lack of proper studies or statistics on sponsorship disclosure in the Mexican influencer marketing industry.

1.2. Instagram and Instamoms in Mexico

Mexico has the most Instagram users of any Spanish-speaking Latin American country; there were 35,320,000 Instagram users in Mexico in May 2021, which accounted for 26% of its entire population (Napoleon Cat, 2021). A total of 93% of internet users in Mexico connect via a smartphone, and the most used applications are social networks, which are used by 90% of users; this has given rise to significant changes that have aligned Mexico with other countries in terms of advertising spending in digital media: in Spain, this spending represents 35% of the total; in Mexico, the figure stands at 43%; and in the United States, it stands at 55%. It is also the Latin American country with the highest number of mega-influencers and, in turn, the Latin American leader in terms of digital media investment, with 25% of the total according to Influencity (2020), a private company that provides updated market information about Latin American digital reality. In one year, investment in native advertising formats grew by 61% and Instagram was the main social network for campaigns with influencers (IAB México, 2020a, 2020b, 2020c).

Among many other subjects, sharing maternity or paternity related content online has been seen as a natural practice by many of the users on social networks and, in the case of influencers this type of content has been widely accepted by followers. This practice has become known as sharenting and some concerns and critical voices have been raised about the need to protect the digital memory of minors (Garmendia et al., 2021). In Mexico, the content created by mom influencers, or Instamoms, is particularly significant, since mothers represent one of the segments with the greatest impact on consumption in the country (Treviño, 2017) and are increasingly shifting toward online platforms. In addition, Mexican women are more likely than men to use cell phones (Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Geografía, 2020). These two variables have fed into this concept of the digital mom as someone who is adopting technology faster than any other consumers (Treviño, 2019). The traits that characterize Instamoms make them hugely valuable influencers for the country's brands.

The responsibilities undertaken by Mexican women are not dissimilar to traditional gender roles; they are family caregivers in a wide range of areas, including cooking, health, and provisions related to motherhood and femininity (Morton et al., 2020). Digital mothers in Mexico have been strengthening their ties with brands for more than a decade, through online purchases, visits to websites, ads and coupons received and shared by email and in online chats, and social media interactions (Treviño, 2019).

Instamoms can be defined as women with talent and an entrepreneurial spirit who create content on social networks with general or partial reference to their children, who can collaborate with brands to promote products (O'Neill, 2019) and who advertise by sharing their experiences as mothers as a way of earning income (Parsa & Akmeşe, 2019). The content they create varies; it usually starts in early pregnancy and covers shopping before and after the birth, and how to care for, feed, and meet the basic needs of the child. The work of Instamoms can be understood as a subtle balance between financial gains and the desire to create a community by sharing meaningful, supportive content (Archer, 2019; Holiday et al., 2020). For this article's purposes, Instamoms are mothers who share content related to motherhood, child-rearing and child development, and the impact of motherhood on their lives. Likewise, they share content relating to their interests, tastes, and other duties, which underpin their collaborations with brands and their interactions with their followers.

The originality of the study lies in its analysis of a field that has only recently started attracting the interest of academics in Mexico. Treviño (2019) and Treviño and Garelli (2019), after analyzing the motivations behind Mexican mothers' interactions with brands in the digital environment, have concluded that the main motivation of Mexican women content creators is to validate that the brands they use/wear are part of their lifestyle, and they share content using/wearing them in order to make them part of their self-image. Still here is currently no academic literature specifically on Instamoms in Mexico.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1. Research Objectives and Questions

The aim of this research was to record the commercial stories and posts shared by Mexican Instamoms to identify the percentage that were accompanied by disclosures. To achieve this, we categorized each commercial message as having (a) explicit, (b) subtle/ambiguous, or (c) zero disclosure. The purpose of the analysis was to offer in-depth knowledge of the sponsorship disclosure practices among Mexican Instamoms with a view to creating a precedent in a country where regulation is currently lacking, despite the huge impact of influencer marketing.

A group of academics and experts from Mexico and Spain was asked to validate and improve the study design, including the data collection tool, the time frame of the study, sample size, and research questions. The time frame selected (November 15, 2020–December 20, 2020) covers a season of international and national e-commerce events in Mexico: "El Buen Fin" ("The good weekend," November 15–22), an annual commercial event that takes place one week before Black Friday to promote national trade over US trade; Black Friday (November 23–28); Cyber Monday (November 29); and the start of the Christmas season (November 30–December 20). After validation, a pilot test was carried out on the tool to verify its effectiveness. A specific schedule was established for monitoring the profiles daily to ensure that no content was missed.

To meet the proposed objective, the following research questions were addressed:

RQ1: What percentage does the commercial content shared by Instamoms in stories and posts account for?

RQ2: What percentage of sponsored content is disclosed by Mexican Instamoms?

RQ3: When sponsorship is disclosed, is disclosure explicit or subtle/ambiguous?

RQ4: What are the common characteristics of the disclosed sponsored content with respect to language, visibility, and type of text?

2.2. Measurements

The research method chosen to achieve the objective and address the research questions was analysis of the compiled content. A data collection tool was developed, based on the literature review and the specifications recommended by existing documents in countries that require content creators to disclose (see Table 1). Content analysis was carried out manually every day at the same time in order to collect the content for the entire day. A single encoder performed the whole process based on knowledge of the cultural reality under study. The content of each publication was encoded by date, total brands mentioned, origin of brands, and the disclosure characteristics. In the case of stories, the date, total stories per day, total stories with daily advertising, and total brands mentioned per day were encoded, as well the origin of brands, and the disclosure characteristics. The links of the posts were stored, and in the case of stories, there was a daily double check of each encoding.

The protocol to determine the percentage of advertising compared to organic content consisted of recording each time a brand was mentioned by an influencer via a "mention" sticker or each time the product was shown or verbalized. From the record of each collaboration, we identified whether or not it was accompanied by a disclosure before noting whether this disclosure was explicit or ambiguous based on three conditions: (a) language used for the disclosure, (b) visibility (visible size and location), and (c) type of text (hashtag, phrase, abbreviations). When the disclosure met all three conditions (e.g., "Paid partnership with" or "#Advertising"), it was scored as explicit, and when it was written in English or abbreviated, contained euphemisms, and/or was not visible at first glance (e.g., "#Ad," "#Thanks," "Gifted," "#Sponsored," or "Sp"; Han et al., 2020), it was scored as subtle/ambiguous. When no disclosure was detected, it was scored as zero. Disclosures were measured by narrative unit. In the case of posts, disclosures were recorded by brand. For stories, given their ephemeral and flexible nature, the appearance of the brand counted as one narrative unit; therefore, the presence of the brand and the disclosure were scored as one if they formed part of the same narrative.

Types of actions used to promote products and services were categorized. To measure the type of interaction between the influencer and the promoted product, 19 possible advertising actions were analyzed (see Table 2).

2.3. Sample Description

Seventeen Instamoms were selected for the sample with the help of the HypeAuditor portal (www.hypeauditor.com); the classification of influencers is based on Mediakix (2021) and depends on the number of followers, and the name of each category that corresponds to it (nano: 1,000–10,000 followers; micro: 10,000–50,000 followers; mid-tier: 50,000–500,000 followers; macro: 500,000–1,000,000; mega influencer: 1,000,000+; see Table 3). The profiles chosen were Instamom accounts that appeared in the top 100 influencers by number of engaged followers in the categories "kids and toys" and "family." Since there is no official registry of influencers, it is not feasible to determine the exact number of Instagram users whose main economic activity involves creating content. Therefore, the selection of the sample was based on: (a) theme: Mexican

Table 2. Advertising actions by Instamoms.

	Advertising actions
1	Discount code
2	Giveaways
3	"How to" photo or video
4	Blogtrip
5	Event and/or visits to events, locations, etc.
6	Interview the brand or vice versa
7	Tags
8	Informs: in addition to tagging the brand, Instamom talks about the brand
9	Unboxing
10	Challenges
11	Swipe up
12	Link in bio
13	Redirect to the brand's page
14	Haul
15	Question sticker
16	Shares posts/stories by the brand in stories
17	Shares the telephone number for the brand
18	Location sticker
19	"Support local businesses" sticker

moms that share maternity content as part of their daily life; (b) geography: Instamoms living in Mexico; and (c) followers: at least five from each category (micro, mid-tier, and mega influencers). Selection was based on similar criteria used by Sixto-García and Álvarez-Vázquez (2020). This portal has a tried-and-tested algorithm for segmenting and evaluating accounts and their audiences. Some of the Instamoms occasionally collaborate on television and radio programs, and their mentions of television and radio stations were counted as commercial content. Mentions of family and friends were not counted.

3. Results

3.1. Commercial Content in Instamom Stories and Posts

Of a total 10,135 stories, 4,047 stories with commercial content were identified: 40% of the stories shared by the Instamoms had a brand presence. The study also documented 330 posts, 154 (47%) of which contained advertising messages (Figure 1). There is not a significant difference in the presence of commercial content between stories and posts (X^2 (1, N = 10,465) = 0.507, p = 0.476). The Instamoms mentioned a total of 1,062 brands on the days monitoring was carried out.

Table 3. Instamom categories.

@Instamom	Followers	Category
tambiensoymamamx	15.3 K	Micro-influencer
lamamadelospollitos	16.6 K	Micro-influencer
mamushkamx	20.7 K	Micro-influencer
loreniamm	27.7 K	Micro-influencer
mamaentenismx	42.3 K	Micro-influencer
michelleronay	63.9 K	Mid-tier influencer
nataliruizg	67.6 K	Mid-tier influencer
bettinaguisa	97.2 K	Mid-tier influencer
danigalvanz	109 K	Mid-tier influencer
trianalion	644 K	Macro-influencer
jazminconj	803 K	Macro-influencer
andibenavidesm	1 M	Mega-influencer
alerivera_comediante	1.3 M	Mega-influencer
musamistral	1.5 M	Mega-influencer
marianaecheve	2.2 M	Mega-influencer
inesgomezmont	2.3 M	Mega-influencer
claudiaalvarezo	2.6 M	Mega-influencer

	Stories	Posts
■ Commercial content	40%	47%
■ Organic content	60%	53%
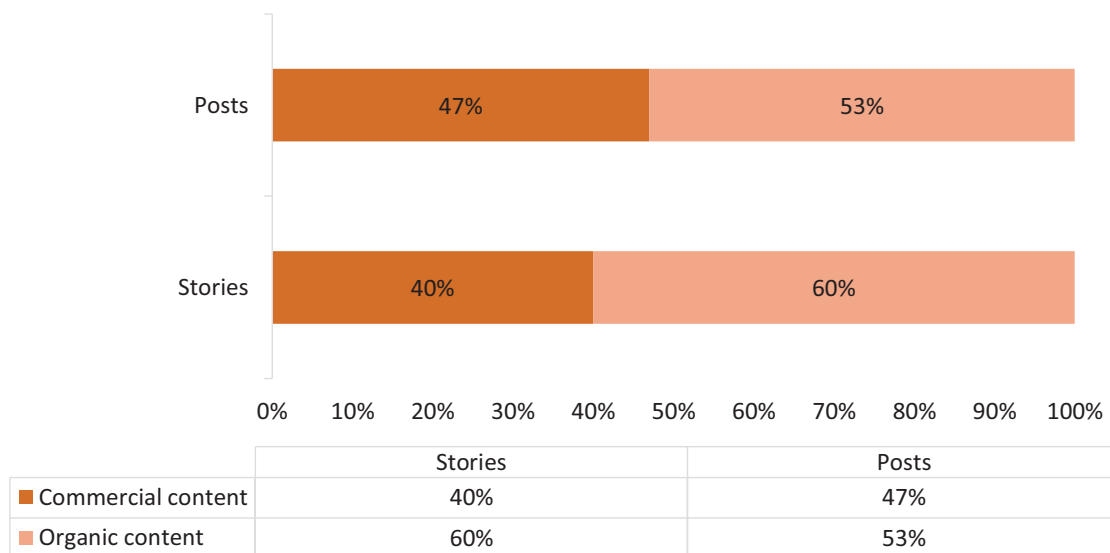
Figure 1. Commercial and organic content.

3.2. Sponsorship Disclosure

Of the 154 posts that mentioned a brand, only five (3.2%) disclosed the sponsorship collaboration. The percentage was even lower in the case of stories, in which the Instamoms disclosed the commercial nature of the collaboration just 0.4% of the time. This difference is statistically significant as can be seen in the chi-square value in Table 4.

The study identified seven Instamoms who, on at least one occasion, disclosed a brand collaboration in their stories. Of these seven, one stood out for doing so twice, while the others did so for one specific collaboration (see Table 5). Four of the Instamoms who disclosed advertising content were micro-influencers, one was a macro-influencer, one a mid-tier influencer, and one a mega-influencer.

However, our analysis of disclosed collaborations revealed a tendency to use subtle or ambiguous means of advertising in that only 8% of the stories explicitly disclosed sponsorship, and all were from the same influencer. In all other cases, the disclosure took the form of "#Ad," though it did appear in a visible location and size. This ambiguous disclosure was used 92% of the time when Instamoms communicated the commercial nature of the story (Table 5).

With respect to the actions used when sponsorships were disclosed, the study revealed the use of "swipe up" as the most common, followed by "how to" content, the second most common action (see Table 5).

In the case of posts, the analysis revealed that 3.2% of posts that mentioned a brand contained a disclosure. Five posts with labels that suggested a brand-influencer collaboration were detected. Two of these posts met the criteria for explicit communication by using the disclosure provided by Instagram, i.e., "paid partnership with…" The others used "#Ad," which appeared at the end of the text, a practice that requires users to click on "see more" to read it. In posts, 100% of Instamoms who disclosed sponsorships did so on just one occasion. As Table 5 shows, the number of brand sponsorships disclosed does not represent a significant proportion of the total number of collaborations. As with stories, three of the Instamoms who disclosed sponsorships were micro-influencers, one was a mega-influencer, and one was a macro-influencer (see Table 6).

In the case of posts disclosed as paid collaborations, "how to" content stood out: Three of the five posts shared by the Instamoms used this advertising format, while the other two featured photographs of the brand's products and mentioned the brand. Another feature shared by the posts with a sponsorship disclosure is that they all referred to brands of international origin, although international brands represented only 10% of the total brands mentioned by Instamoms (see Table 6).

Table 4. Disclosure in publications.

Stories			Posts		
Brands mentioned	Sponsorship disclosed	% disclosure	Brand collaboration posts	Posts with disclosure	% disclosure
1,062	5	0.4%	154	5	3.2%

Note: Chi-square test (α = 0.05) with Yates' continuity correction for disclosure in Stories and Posts (X^2 (1, N = 1,216) = 9.165, p = 0.002).

Table 5. Sponsorship disclosure by Instamoms in stories.

Category	Instamom	Total brands	Disclosed brand	Actions	Language	Text	Visibility
Mega-influencer	Andybenavides	217	Gucci	Event/visit and swipe up	English	#Ad	Yes
			Vickmexico	Swipe up	Spanish	#Publicidad	Yes
Mid-tier influencer	Nataliruizg	85		How to	English	#Ad	Yes
Micro-influencer	Mamaentenismx	85	ZiplocMexico	Swipe up	English	#Ad	Yes
				Swipe up	English	#Ad	Yes
Macro-influencer	Trianalion	15	DisneyPlus	Swipe up	English	#Ad	Yes
Micro-influencer	Mamushkamx	77		How to	English	#Ad	Yes
Micro-influencer	Lamamadelospollitos	73		Discount code and swipe up	English	#Ad	Yes
			Similac	Swipe up	English	#Ad	Yes
				How to	English	#Ad	Yes
Micro-influencer	Tambiensoymama	53		Mention	English	#Ad	Yes
				Informs	English	#Ad	Yes
				Question sticker	English	#Ad	Yes

The insufficient number of posts and stories that disclosed advertising in the collected sample did not provide sufficient data to understand if there were similarities in terms of language, text, or visibility in these disclosure practices. The only common feature of all the disclosed posts and stories, both explicit and ambiguous, is that the promoted products have an international origin.

4. Discussion

Five out of every 10 posts by the Instamoms contained sponsored content. The ads shared by Instamoms highlight the importance of collaborations for influencers, regardless of their category and number of followers. This balance between organic and commercial content

Table 6. Sponsorship disclosure by Instamoms in posts.

Category	Instamom	Total brands	Disclosed brand	Actions	Language	Text	Visibility
Mega-influencer	Andybenavides	111	Gucci	Mention	Spanish	"Paid partnership with" and "#Ad"	Yes
Micro-influencer	Mamaentenismx	15	ZiplocMexico	How to	English	#Ad	No
Macro-influencer	Trianalion	6	DisneyPlusla	Mention	Spanish	"Paid partnership with" and "#Ad"	Yes
Micro-influencer	Mamushkamx	17	Similac	How to	English	#Ad	No
Micro-influencer	Lamamadelospollitos	8	Similac	How to	English	#Ad	No

shared by Instamoms makes it clear that companies consistently embrace the potential of influencer marketing to promote their brands (Hoek et al., 2020; Hudders et al., 2017; van Reijmersdal et al., 2020). It is also consistent with the conclusions of Treviño and Garelli (2019) on how Mexican women creators share the brands they use/wear as a way to show off their self-image: In the case of Mexican Instamoms, they try to differentiate themselves from the average mother by posting about brands in half of their content.

Although the sample reveals five examples of brands that complied with sponsorship disclosure, this is not a significant number and does not indicate a tendency among profiles to disclose the commercial nature of content to their followers. Even though seven of the 17 profiles studied disclosed commercial content, they did so on just one occasion. As previous research has shown, the lack of clarity behind these practices should be addressed (Balaban & Mustăţea, 2019; Feijoo & González, 2019; Schwemmer & Ziewiecki, 2018), since the country still lacks sufficient media awareness of this novel advertising format. Although the online behavior of Instamoms shows a close relationship with brands, and their promoting actions are in line with the global definition of an influencer, when it comes to following the international recommendations for advertising disclosure, Instamoms choose not to imitate these transparency practices with their audience.

Although the percentage of disclosure in stories and posts was very low, posts were more likely to carry a disclosure than stories; similarly, sponsorship was more likely to be explicitly disclosed in posts than in stories. Still there is not a significant difference between the amount of commercial content in stories and posts. The study categorized the instances of sponsorship disclosure by Instamoms as isolated cases since they did form part of recurring behavior during the analysis. Research shows that, in the analyzed sample, publications with disguised advertising are the norm, whereas those that adhere to international criteria for sharing advertising are the exception.

Despite being anecdotal, another finding of the research was the Instamoms' preference for ambiguous sponsorship disclosure. Although Instagram offers the option of including "Paid partnership with..." below the name of the user in posts and stories, only 40% of the posts with disclosure and 8% of stories with disclosure made use of it. According to Kim and Kim (2020), disclosing the commercial intention of the content is key to help the consumer to properly understand it. Also, international indications specify that the advertising disclosure must be placed below the influencer's name, or at the beginning of the text, since fast and easy identification of collaboration is the first requirement for the audience to immediately recognize the commercial nature of the post (CONARP, 2020).

The study also detected two features that seemed to recur whenever a collaboration was disclosed: 100% of the brand sponsorships disclosed in posts and stories were international in origin and micro-influencers were more likely to disclose the commercial nature of both stories and posts. This result coincides with a previous study that highlights international pressure in collaborations to disclose advertising on social media (Sixto-García & Álvarez-Vázquez, 2020), and, as in the Mexican case, it can be seen how the lack of a regulation by the local government that invites brands and influencers to share the commercial nature of the collaborations does not favor the transparency suggested for the protection of audiences and consumers.

5. Conclusions

Hybrid advertising refers to formats and channels that make it difficult for audiences to spot commercial content. This has led European and Latin American countries to recognize that the lack of proper sponsorship disclosure in influencer marketing can have an impact on users. The study reveals that disclosures are rare, even though advertising plays a key role in the profiles of Instamoms. When sponsorship disclosures are made, little importance is given to their location, language, or text format. The brand-promotion practices of Mexican Instamoms emphasize the notion of advertising on Instagram as a form of hybrid marketing, given that Instamoms share commercial content under the guise of entertainment and do not disclose the commercial nature of their collaborations.

The study did not detect the existence of brand–Instamoms collaboration protocols for sponsorship disclosure. The lack of public and industry guidelines means that the decision on disclosing the commercial nature of posts is left in the hands of brands and/or influencers; this urges local governments to create a legal framework that commits all parties (brands, government, agencies, and influencers) to explicitly share the commercial purpose with their followers. The legal framework to protect online audiences must adhere to the needs of Mexican consumers and must therefore include the requirement that the advertising disclosure should preferably be in Spanish, the official language of the country, and should be placed under the name of the influencer, and at the beginning of the text, or in photographs or videos. It should also appear in a visible size, color, and font in order to be easily identified, and also to acknowledge that economic and material exchanges have a commercial intent. Finally, sponsorship disclosure could strengthen the influencer marketing industry by establishing practices to benefit and legitimize the use of this strategy based on the need to protect the audience. Legislative authorities in Mexico must take an active role in protecting online audiences and consumers from persuasive and embedded advertising and political communications by addressing the tax responsibilities of influencers and content creators, as well as the ethical responsibilities of their communications. Considering

the potential relationship between research and emerging interest in good practice, this study is designed to serve as a wake-up call on this subject in Mexico.

5.1. Future Research and Study Limitations

The study's limitations mainly involve the data collection and processing methods. Moreover, although the analysis period was chosen based on representative moments, a longer period might be necessary to identify a decisive trend in Instamom practices. The same can be said of the number of profiles studied. Another limitation of this study is that it analyzed identification alone, which is only one part of the persuasion model; studies that evaluate other aspects would provide more comprehensive analysis. Posts and stories were categorized as "zero" when, despite mentioning a commercial brand, no disclosure element was detected: It is true that this could also mean that the publication was not working in collaboration with a brand, but there is no way of knowing for sure since there is no regulation. Due to the cultural knowledge required to do suitable analysis, encoding was performed by a single researcher. In order to increase the reliability of data collection and interpretation, it would be highly recommendable to include at least two encoders in future research. It could also be of interest to explore other categories besides Instamoms for comparison purposes. Furthermore, to strengthen and improve the experience of minors, there is a pressing need to analyze the influencers who target them. The study of other advertising formats (reels, IGTV) and advertising on other social networks is recommended. A comparative study between countries where some measures have been taken to tackle this issue could also be relevant.

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Conflict of Interests

The authors declare no conflict of interests.

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Article

Obesogenic Features of Food-Related Content Aimed at Children on YouTube

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Abstract
Obesity, and particularly childhood obesity, is considered an epidemic by the WHO because of the health problems it causes and its impact on the lives and environment of those who suffer from it. In this article, the term "obesogenic features" refers to the set of supposedly aggravating risk factors that could intensify the proven effect on minors of exposure to food-related media content. The article explores the characteristics of food-related content in YouTube videos aimed at children, with the objective of identifying videos that pose a high risk due to the presence of obesogenic arguments, as well as videos with innovative media trends. It presents an exploratory study of 293 videos (22 hr 41 min) aimed at children and containing food and/or food brands, posted from May 2020 to April 2021 on 28 YouTube channels of food brands and child YouTubers with the largest numbers of subscribers. Child YouTubers often appear to explicitly promote calorie intake as a diet alternative and to disseminate content in which the presence of low-nutrition foods undermines childhood obesity prevention policies. The sensitivity of this target audience and the highly emotional nature of the formats in which messages with obesogenic features appear, such as "challenges," point to an urgent need to adopt ethical standards and legal measures to regulate such content.

Issue
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1. Introduction

1.1. Obesity and Obesogenic Factors

Obesity, and specifically childhood obesity, is considered an epidemic because of the health problems it causes and its impact on the lives and environment of those who suffer from it (Ebbeling et al., 2002; Lobstein et al., 2004). On the global level, the number of obese children and youth aged 5 to 19 has increased tenfold in the last 40 years (WHO, 2016). Obesity reflects an imbalance between what is ingested and what is consumed and is detected in the form of excess accumulated body fat (Castro et al., 2012; Correia, 2013; Giugliano & Melo,

2004; Miranda-Chaves et al., 2008; Tenorio & Cobayashi, 2011). In Spain, this condition is on the rise despite an overall decrease in Europe as a whole (Eurostat, 2020). In the last 30 years, the prevalence of child obesity in the country has quadrupled, reaching 10.3% in 2017 (Coduras-Martínez et al., 2019) for the population aged from 2 to 17.

As García-Cortés (2016) observes, obesity is a very complex phenomenon determined by the confluence of several internal and external factors (mass media, social influence, family habits, cultural traditions, etc.). Previous research (Mussini & Temporelli, 2013; Ruvalcaba-Ledezma et al., 2018; among others) has identified some influencing factors: expanded supply of

industrially processed foods; low prices of high-calorie foods containing high levels of salt, fat, and sugar; and high prices of fruit and vegetables (Drewnowski & Darmon, 2005; Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, 2008; French, 2003; Peña & Bacallao, 2005; Temporelli & Monterubbianessi, 2011); increased consumption of fast food and processed food outside of the home by a growing segment of the population (Powell et al., 2006); less free time for food preparation (Chou et al., 2004); and an increased quantity of advertising for convenient and accessible industrial food that facilitates daily intake with a minimum of preparation effort, encouraging sedentary lifestyles (Da-Silva-Pinto et al., 2010; Pergher et al., 2010; Philipson & Posner, 2003; Reis, Vasconcelos, & Barros, 2011; Reis, Vasconcelos, & Oliveira, 2011; Vázquez et al., 2010). Environmental factors are the primary causes of the development of obesity (Procter et al., 2008).

Cairns et al. (2009) reviewed the most rigorous studies of the effects of food product advertising. Children recognize that watching food advertising makes them feel hungry, increases their desire, and affects purchase intentions (Marshall et al., 2007). An Iranian study found that 90% of students surveyed made food choices under the influence of advertising (Maryam et al., 2005). A study by Olivares et al. (2003) reported that 40% of children surveyed had consumed food products that they had seen advertised. Studies by Aktaş-Arnas (2006) and Utter et al. (2006) provide evidence of a correlation between television viewing time and general consumption of the most frequently advertised foods. Exposure to food advertising has an impact on or is associated with significant changes in food preferences among children (Borzekowski & Robinson, 2001; Chernin, 2008; Halford et al., 2008b; Norton et al., 2000; Robinson et al., 2007).

It has also been shown that exposure to food advertising is associated with a more frequent selection of less healthy foods and that it leads to an overall increase in food intake (Halford et al., 2004, 2007, 2008a; Wiecha et al., 2006). Boynton-Jarrett et al. (2003) demonstrated that increased television viewing among children was associated with reduced consumption of fruit and vegetables. Buijzen et al. (2008) identified the influence of parents' income and communication style in the consumption of brand products advertised on television. A prospective observational study (Wiecha et al., 2006) found a positive association between watching television and food calorie intake. Coon et al. (2001) found a significant association between television viewing during mealtimes and a lower-quality diet.

According to a study by Borzekowski and Robinson (2001), exposure to food advertising significantly increased the probability that children would choose a food product advertised over a product that was not advertised. Robinson et al. (2007) discovered that children aged three to five preferred the flavor of food and beverages presented with the McDonald's brand logo to the flavor of exactly the same products without the brand. This reveals that brand presence contributes significant added value.

1.2. Brand Advertising on YouTube and the Role of the YouTuber

As reflected in the literature review, studies of food advertising and consumption have focused largely on television. Qutteina et al. (2019) point to the importance of researching the phenomenon in the digital environment. Since its very first video was posted on April 23, 2005 (*Me at the Zoo*: http://bit.ly/me-at-the-zoo-yt), YouTube has grown exponentially and is now the world's largest video viewing platform, offering a new way of creating and sharing audiovisual content: More than 1,9 billion users in 91 countries and with 80 different languages log into YouTube each month (YouTube, n.d.).

YouTube is also the most popular social media platform with advertisers for disseminating related content (Castelló-Martínez et al., 2016). Thanks to the big audiences that many of its videos attract, YouTube has become one of the most profitable sites to invest in advertising aimed at increasingly younger viewers, a target audience of great interest to food product brands. While the first studies of the platform highlighted its philanthropic and collaborative nature (Arthurs et al., 2018), De-Aguilera-Moyano et al. (2018) examine the professionalization of YouTube, showing how it has shifted from an approach that represented a participatory culture toward the creation and dissemination of audiovisual content with commercial objectives (Holland, 2016).

YouTubers express opinions in a very convincing and persuasive way, and food brands are discovering their potential as a means of promoting their products to children (Castelló-Martínez & Tur-Viñes, 2020). The community of followers that develop around their videos is the key to their success, although it is crucial to maintain a balance between specialized content and elements with a commercial objective (Ramos-Serrano & Herrero-Diz, 2016, p. 115). Tur-Viñes and González-Río define YouTubers as:

> Influencers who promote products, services, or ideas, authorized by their expertise in the area, who create experiences among their frequently massive audiences characterized by humor, the ability to entertain, and the presence of brands seeking spaces vested with credibility to communicate more effectively and empathetically. (2019, p. 1293)

YouTubers are key figures in teen culture, as influencers whose viewers spend their leisure time following them and are thus introduced to the use of multimedia platforms and formats aimed specifically at them (Aran-Ramspott et al., 2018; Montes-Vozmediano et al., 2018). The professionalization of child YouTubers on this platform is also worth highlighting, as their channels are characterized by a high level of sophistication, featuring

videos that have undergone elaborate post-production and that include products advertised in an extremely natural way (Aznar-Díaz et al., 2019; López-Villafranca & Olmedo-Salar, 2019).

The term "obesogenic features" refers to the set of supposedly aggravating risk factors that could intensify the proven effect on minors of exposure to food-related media content. Based on the contextualization offered above, we have posited the following as our first research question (RQ1): Is food and/or food brand-related content aimed at child audiences on YouTube founded on obesogenic arguments, such as low price, speed, convenience, short cooking time, and/or calorie intake as a diet alternative? Does it in any way encourage sedentary behavior?

1.3. The Food Sector and Food-Related Content on Social Media

The current challenge that the sector faces is responding effectively to new trends: a more aware consumer committed to caring for the environment, animal welfare, and healthier eating (Instituto Nacional del Consumo, 2014). The second research question is thus related to whether food and/or food brand-related content aimed at children on YouTube reflects these new trends (RQ2): Does the content engage with innovative media trends, such as the promotion of the environment, animal welfare, traditional production, or healthy eating practices?

More than half (53%) of all food products bought in Spanish supermarkets contain sugars on their list of ingredients and 64% of regularly consumed products are ultra-processed foods (minimal presence of natural ingredients and excessive saturated fats, salt, and sugars; "Hábitos de alimentación en España," 2019). Of all sectors in Spain, the food sector has the fifth biggest advertising presence on television (Barlovento Comunicación, 2020), with advertising accounting for 17% of total investments in 2018, amounting to 296,2 million euros (InfoAdex, 2019).

The food sector represents 20.4% of interactions occurring on social media (IAB Spain, 2019). The data reflect the increased presence of advertising by food brands on social media platforms, while advertising investment in television has been in decline (Coduras-Martínez et al., 2019, p. 109). Our third research question (RQ3) relates to the type of products with the biggest presence in food and/or food brand-related content aimed at children on YouTube: Does content related to ultra-processed foods predominate over content involving healthy foods?

2. Method

The objective of this study is to identify obesogenic arguments in food and/or food brand-related content aimed at children on YouTube and the presence of innovative media trends. Innovative media trends are used in the

article to refer to elements that promote healthy eating, environmental care, animal welfare, etc. An exploratory qualitative-quantitative study was conducted based on a content analysis of videos posted from May 2020 to April 2021 on the Spanish YouTube channels of food brands and child YouTubers with the most subscribers according to SocialBlade. The initial universe was made up of 1,031 videos: 733 videos from 15 child YouTuber channels and 298 videos from 13 food brand channels. The final sample, shown in Table 1, consists of 293 videos (22 hr 41 min) that combine the presence of children with the appearance of foods and/or food brands: 222 child YouTuber videos and 71 food brand videos.

A matrix was designed in Excel where the rows were assigned to the videos and the columns to the 11 variables studied (1: Low price; 2: Speed; 3: Convenience; 4: Short cooking time; 5: Calorie intake as a diet alternative; 6: Encouraging sedentary behavior; 7: Environment; 8: Animal welfare; 9: Traditional production; 10: Healthy food practices; 11: Prevalence of ultra-processed versus healthy foods). Data on the interaction with the video were added to complete the study (Subscribers; Videos since creation; Videos May 2020–April 2021; Videos analyzed), as well as the date of creation of each channel. The content analysis sheet is available as a Supplementary File.

Table 2 shows the congruence between the research questions, the dimensions of the study, and their relationship to the variables analyzed.

3. Results

We found obesogenic features in 50 (17.1%) out of the total sample of 293 videos. Of those 50, 41 are videos by child YouTubers (82%), and 18.5% of the videos in this subsample exhibit some kind of obesogenic feature. The most common obesogenic argument is calorie intake as a diet alternative, both in the subsample of brands (we found eight out of nine videos with this feature) and in the child YouTuber subsample (this feature appears in 38 out of 41 videos). Speed appears in two videos (one on the channel of the child YouTuber Lady Pecas and the other on the channel The Crazy Haacks); convenience is mentioned in one video on the Lady Pecas channel and low price is referred to on the Adam Foods brand channel.

Child YouTubers often appear to encourage calorie intake as a diet alternative, expressing it with statements like the following:

— The Crazy Haacks' Hugo is shopping online: "Only chocolate, only cookies…chocolate is very important and very healthy. I think 20 bars is good…we're going to add a heap of chocolate, cookies" and he quips: "My mother doesn't know how to shop" (http://bit.ly/youtubersmenoresvideo4).

— Adri's father in Juega con Adri asks: "Who wants hamburgers?" and everyone shouts: "Me!" They end

Table 1. Sample of YouTube channels.

Channel	Creation date (DD/ MM/YYYY)	Link	Subscribers	Videos since creation	Videos May 2020– April 2021	Videos analyzed
Child YouTuber						
Las ratitas	18/10/2015	http://bit.ly/lasratitas	23,100,000	204	34	12
MikelTube	30/08/2015	http://bit.ly/mikeltube-yt	7,180,000	757	55	9
The Crazy Haacks	09/03/2015	http://bit.ly/the-crazy-haacks	3,650,000	729	62	38
Los juguetes de Arantxa	02/01/2015	http://bit.ly/juguetes-arantxa	3,750,000	952	82	28
Las aventuras de Dani y Evan	22/01/2015	http://bit.ly/aventuras-dani-evan	2,740,000	550	83	19
La diversión de Martina	05/01/2015	http://bit.ly/ladiversiondemartina	4,070,000	368	53	13
Jugando con Aby	13/12/2015	http://bit.ly/jugandoconaby	2,940,000	433	31	17
El mundo de Clodett	27/12/2016	http://bit.ly/elmundodeclodett	2,760,000	343	63	10
TeamNico	04/11/2013	http://bit.ly/los-mundos-de-nico	3,450,000	532	58	9
Juega con Adri	26/03/2018	http://bit.ly/juegaconadri	3,970,000	153	40	18
Divertiguay	11/10/2016	http://bit.ly/divertiguay-yt	2,540,000	643	61	16
Leotube	15/01/2018	http://bit.ly/leotube-yt	2,340,000	143	48	12
Ladypecas	01/09/2015	http://bit.ly/ladypecas	1,930,000	512	52	19
Pino y Ares	16/04/2018	http://bit.ly/pinoyares	1,140,000	87	5	1
Juguetes MaryVer	09/06/2010	http://bit.ly/maryver	271,000	534	6	1
Food brand						
Nestlé Spain	15/02/2010	http://bit.ly/nestlesp	43,500	383	100	14
Casa Tarradellas	21/06/2011	http://bit.ly/casatarradellas	46,300	215	35	3
Grefusa	31/08/2012	http://bit.ly/grefusayt	21,700	83	12	4
Nocilla	09/02/2012	http://bit.ly/nocillayt	25,900	49	9	6
Dino Aventuras Danonino	19/04/2016	http://bit.ly/danoninoyt	11,700	13	7	7
The Phoskiters by Phoskitos	09/03/2018	http://bit.ly/phoskitosyt	5,100	112	7	7
Nesquik Spain	07/08/2008	http://bit.ly/nesquiksp	5,010	32	15	9
Kellogg's Spain	27/01/2016	http://bit.ly/kelloggs-sp	1,680	13	5	1
ColaCao	25/06/2007	http://bit.ly/colacaoyt	25,300	217	12	9
Hero Spain	11/03/2013	http://bit.ly/hero-sp-yt	1,390	90	10	0
Adams Foods	10/07/2015	http://bit.ly/adamfoods	5,670	60	29	11
Dulcesol	07/10/2015	http://bit.ly/dulcesol	2,230	144	46	0
Galletas Gullón	30/05/2017	http://bit.ly/galletasgullon	894	42	11	0
				Total	**1,031**	**293**

up eating at a Burger King (http://bit.ly/youtubers menoresvideo5).

— Nico's parents (in Los Mundos de Nico) buy a meal at McDonald's and Nico remarks: "Kids, this challenge is going to be really easy because I'm tired and what could be better than eating heaps, and top of that, that it's McDonald's," while his mother says: "He [referring to Nico] isn't going to like this challenge; he's going to love it," and she adds: "I haven't eaten all day!" (http://bit.ly/youtubersmenoresvideo6).

In the entire sample, a total of 45 videos with innovative trends in food-related content were identified (15.4%). Of these 45, 28 are videos by child YouTubers (12.6% of this subsample), while 23.9% of the subsample of food brand videos promote innovative trends (N = 17).

The most popular innovative trend is the promotion of healthy eating practices.

In the food brand subsample, animal welfare appears in six videos, the environment in three, traditional production in one, and healthy eating practices in seven. One video by the brand Nesquick includes the caption: "Eat breakfast every day" (http://bit.ly/nesquick-practicassaludables). In the case of the subsample of child YouTuber videos, two promote the environment, 12 advocate traditional production, and 14 encourage healthy eating practices. This last trend is reflected in statements or situations such as:

— Las Ratitas: "I got the lettuce. I love lettuce. Remember that you should eat a lot of fruit and a lot of vegetables" (http://bit.ly/youtubersmenores video7).

Table 2. Congruence between research questions, dimensions, and study variables.

Research questions	Dimensions	Study variables
RQ1: Is food and/or food brand-related content aimed at child audiences on YouTube founded on obesogenic arguments? Does it in any way encourage sedentary behavior?	Obesogenic features	1. Low price 2. Speed 3. Convenience 4. Short cooking time 5. Calorie intake as a diet alternative 6. Encouraging sedentary behavior
RQ2: Does the content engage with innovative media trends?	Innovative media trends	7. Environment 8. Animal welfare 9. Traditional production 10. Healthy eating practices
RQ3: Does content related to ultra-processed foods predominate over content involving healthy foods?	Food and food brands	11. Prevalence of ultra-processed vs. healthy foods

— Los juguetes de Arantxa: Arantxa is preparing a snack for her friends and one friend says to her: "Come on, you're even going to make orange juice?" Arantxa replies: "Yes, because it's very healthy" (http://bit.ly/youtubersmenoresvideo8).

Ultra-processed foods and healthy foods appear together in 65 videos (22.2%). Healthy foods appear on their own in 57 videos (19.5%), and ultra-processed foods in 171 videos (58.4%). This means that ultra-processed food products are present in 80.5% of the total sample, while healthy foods appear in 41.6% of the videos.

In the food brand subsample, we identified 67 videos with ultra-processed foods (94.4%) and four with healthy foods (5.6%). In this subsample, the two types of food never appear together in any video. Two of the 13 food brand channels (17 out of 71 videos, or 23%) with the most subscribers belong to healthy food brands (Nestlé and Casa Tarradellas). However, the three ultra-processed food brand channels (Nocilla, ColaCao, and Grefusa) are responsible for 19 (26.76%) of the 71 videos and they are also among the channels with the most subscribers in this subsample.

The percentage of videos featuring ultra-processed food products is higher in the specific case of the child YouTuber subsample, amounting to 76.1% (104 videos with ultra-processed foods alone and 65 videos with both ultra-processed and healthy foods). Healthy foods

appear on their own in 53 child YouTuber videos, which means they appear in a total of 118 videos in this subsample (53.2%). In addition, we identified communicative elements that indicate a preference for ultra-processed food products over healthy foods. For example, when Martina D'Antiochia doesn't like the meal prepared for her, her father offers to make her something else: "Right this minute I'll make you some fried eggs or lasagna or schnitzel, so you won't go hungry." Martina smiles and thanks him, but her mother scolds her, saying: "It's spinach with fish for dinner," to which Martina makes a retching gesture.

Focusing on the presence of food products in videos by child YouTubers, 128 videos feature foods without a recognizable brand. The most common food types are cakes, pastries, and pies (103 appearances), confections and candies (48 appearances), fruit, vegetables, and legumes (36 appearances), prepared dishes like pizzas, hamburgers, or nuggets (34 appearances), dairy products (25 appearances), and French fries (20 appearances).

Table 3 presents a summary of the study results. Although obesogenic features make more appearances in the sample as a whole than innovative media trends in food and/or food brand-related content aimed at children (17.1% compared to 15.4%), the two subsamples analyzed exhibit inverse patterns for these two dimensions. Videos by child YouTubers contain more

Table 3. Study results.

Dimension	Subsample: Child YouTuber channels (222 videos)		Subsample: Food brand channels (71 videos)		Total sample (293 videos)	
Obesogenic features	41	18.5%	9	12.7%	50	17.1%
Innovative media trends	28	12.6%	17	23.9%	45	15.4%
Ultra-processed food products	157	76.1%	67	94.4%	224	80.5%
Healthy foods	118	53.2%	4	5.6%	122	41.6%

arguments encouraging obesity (18.5% compared to 12.6% containing innovative media trends). Conversely, in food brand videos innovative media trends associated with consumer concerns are more prominent than obesogenic features (23.9% compared to 12.7%).

However, in both the total sample of videos analyzed and, in each subsample, ultra-processed food products make more appearances than healthy foods. In the case of food brands this constitutes a contradiction, as their videos include more arguments related to healthy eating practices but the food type, they display the most is ultra-processed.

4. Discussion and Conclusions

Based on the findings of this study, it is clear that content related to food products with low nutritional value on digital media platforms like YouTube is undermining obesity prevention policies aimed at children by encouraging them to ingest unhealthy food products by associating them with fun and enjoyment, consistent with the conclusions of Jiménez-Morales et al. (2019).

Although food brands advertising is less controversial than the content featured on child YouTuber channels, the communication of negative obesogenic features (low price, speed, convenience, short cooking time, calorie intake as a diet alternative, or sedentary behavior) offsets the presence of positive trends (promotion of environmentalism, animal welfare, traditional production, or healthy eating habits). The excessive presence of ultra-processed products is striking considering that they should not be present in a healthy diet for growing children.

The child YouTuber subsample is notable for videos featuring "challenges," tasks tackled by the YouTubers, who recount their experience to their followers in a narrative-based entertainment format. These challenges often involve the presence of foods and/or food brands and the inclusion of messages with a commercial objective, with obesogenic arguments like those identified in this study.

Brands want to show their commitment to effective health promotion by including advice like "walk for 30 minutes a day," "eat breakfast every day," "use the stairs," or "exercise and maintain a healthy diet" in their advertising. However, there are surprisingly few proactive messages of this kind on channels targeting children, which effectively squanders the greater influence and credibility that these channels enjoy with youngsters.

There is an urgent need to introduce ethical standards and legal measures to regulate this type of content in digital media. Further research is needed into digital content on social media starring, created by and/or targeting children.

Lines of future research could include international comparative studies designed to identify the weaknesses of self-regulatory systems. Perception studies of minor creators could also be helpful for identifying narrative

construction strategies, exploring how YouTubers have evolved from creating narratives with toys to introducing products from the food sector into their storylines, the spontaneous or directed nature of their self-editing of content, or the level of their awareness of the effects of their influence on the community. There is also a need for the proposal of actions to raise the awareness of marketing/communication decision-makers in companies that produce high-calorie products. Moreover, extending the analysis of food brands to other sectors, such as technology, toys, or fashion, could provide data on cross-sectoral prevalence. Parental mediation and the potential influence (positive, negative, or neutral) of parents on their children's content constitutes another interesting line of research.

On the other hand, the responsibility of parents, as their children's legal guardians, for YouTube practices is a controversial issue. Some families have found their children's YouTube channels to be a convenient source of income. The monetization of the channel raises the question of the potential exploitation of school-age children. Do parents understand the limits of what is acceptable? What kind of life lessons are they giving their children in an environment where anything goes for the sake of entertainment? What consequences might overexposure have on the child's future? Are parents aware of the consequences that promoting the consumption of unhealthy products can have on other children?

The results of this study, which constitute an original contribution to the literature given the lack of previous research on the media strategies of food brands aimed at children on YouTube, reveal some disturbing combinations of advertising, social media, and obesity-promoting content. If we want children to grow up healthy, we must ensure that the videos they consume provide them with proper guidance on good nutrition. The media, food brands, politicians, and audiences must all take their share of the responsibility for this as soon as possible.

Conflict of Interests

The authors declare no conflict of interests.

Supplementary Material

Supplementary material for this article is available online in the format provided by the author (unedited).

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Article

Blurring Boundaries Between Journalists and TikTokers: Journalistic Role Performance on TikTok

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Abstract
In recent years, media has adapted to the logic of each new social network to respond to renewed consumption habits and journalists have developed new roles on these platforms. TikTok is an emerging platform with its own influencer culture and in which the main audiences are the millennial and centennial generations. The main objective of this study is to analyze the presence of journalists on TikTok through the type of content and strategies used in adapting to this platform. The research is based on methodological triangulation. First, a database of journalists on TikTok (n_1 = 212) was developed and the profiles were reviewed. Second, a questionnaire survey (n_2 = 63) was developed. Finally, a content analysis (n_3 = 520) of profiles exceeding 100,000 followers was conducted. This research provides a first description of the activity of journalists on TikTok, where a variety of roles, usages, and strategies are identified, beyond those of their profession. They join the of-the-moment platform with different purposes (to inform, entertain, or introduce themselves) and targets (new audiences, young people, fans). Journalists adapt their presence to the TikTok social media logic, seeking a space of influence on a platform that is the natural habitat of younger generations.

Keywords
influencer; journalism; journalist; social media; TikTok

1. Introduction

Social networks have transformed the communicational scenario, forcing the news media to adapt to their logic (van Dijck & Poell, 2013) and reformulating the journalistic model (Bell & Owen, 2017). The media industry has become dependent on platform companies for the distribution of its content, redistributing power, and giving rise to the dislocation of news (Ekström & Westlund, 2019). Media companies and professionals are faced with the need to join the trends of emerging platforms to adapt to new content consumption habits. Thus, they have adapted to the ephemeral formats of Instagram (Vázquez-Herrero et al., 2019), experimented with Snapchat to reach new audiences with their news (Lee, 2019), developed strategies in private and instant messaging networks such as WhatsApp (Boczek & Koppers, 2020), and are observing how platforms such as Twitch are renewing the forms of consumption of streaming content (Bingham, 2020).

TikTok is one of these new platforms, which has burst onto the international market with its own logic and language. It is the seventh most used social network in the world (Hootsuite, 2021), and it became the first non-Facebook app to reach 3 billion global downloads (Chan, 2021). The interest in TikTok also rests on the young, belonging to the millennial and centennial generations, reaching 24% of those under 35 years old (Newman et al., 2021).

The rise of TikTok has motivated a line of research in which its forms of communication have been studied (Schellewald, 2021), as well as its celebrity culture

(Abidin, 2021), political communication and activism (Cervi & Marín-Lladó, 2021; Serrano et al., 2020; Vijay & Gekker, 2021), behaviors associated with their consumption (Cervi, 2021; Omar & Dequan, 2020), or how these are affected by the particularities of the functioning of the social network (Zulli & Zulli, 2020). At the same time, the first studies on news media's adaptation to TikTok have been developed (Vázquez-Herrero et al., 2020), issues such as misinformation and the role of fact-checkers in the social network have been addressed (Alonso-López et al., 2021) and specific cases have been studied such as how the media outlets have reported on Covid-19 on TikTok (Sidorenko-Bautista et al., 2020).

The analysis of the journalist's role performance has been addressed both in traditional and digital media and social networks. Considering that TikTok has a differentiated proposal with respect to other platforms, and given its worldwide popularity, it is time to address the perspective of journalists in this social network. The main objective of the study is to identify the type(s) of content they produce and the strategies that journalists implement in their adaptation to TikTok, a new scenario dominated by their own influencers in which they must fight for the attention of young audiences and attract them to their brands and content.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1. Roles of Journalists on Social Media

The use of social networks has become standardized for media and journalists, forcing them to build new rules and patterns of use adapted to the logic of these platforms (Mellado & Hermida, 2021). Social media has changed the way news is produced and how content is disseminated as well as interactions with the audience (Hermida, 2016; Hermida et al., 2012; Newman, 2011; Newman et al., 2013).

The appropriation of social networks by journalists is influenced by personal motivations and skills, as well as by professional and social factors (Djerf-Pierre et al., 2016). In a first stage, skeptical shunners resisted their use, pragmatic conformists adapted to them to take advantage of some of their potentialities, and enthusiastic activists embraced them to use them intensively for their informative work, personal positioning, and interaction with other users (Hedman & Djerf-Pierre, 2013). These different levels of appropriation are also observed in more recent studies. Thus, Mellado and Alfaro (2020) distinguish between journalists who maintain an adapted approach—preserving the traditional roles and values of their profession while incorporating the platforms into their work, i.e., a skeptical approach—when they tend to reject social networks as appropriate tools for their professional work, or a redefiner approach—when they tend to innovate and redefine their professional identities and roles through their activity in social networks.

The study of journalistic roles has been approached from several perspectives, studying their attitudes or working conditions in different countries in the 21st century (Weaver & Willnat, 2012), conceptualizing their roles based on normative and practical constructs of the profession and the place it occupies in society (Hanitzsch, 2011; Hanitzsch & Vos, 2018), defining journalistic roles associated with different perceptions and practices with audiences (Holton et al., 2016), or studying their function from a political perspective and in relation to political actors (Jamieson & Waldman, 2003). On the one hand, in the context of social networks, Hanusch and Tandoc (2019) point out that the roles assumed by journalists are determined by market conditions, the pressure exerted on them, and the conception of the audience. They distinguish between the citizen orientation, in which the desire for public service predominates, and the consumer orientation, which conceives users as consumers. On the other hand, Xia et al. (2020) relate the roles of journalists on social media to their conception and involvement with audience engagement, distinguishing between those who maintain a more distant position from users and those who actively engage in an exchange relationship with it.

The capacity for self-identity and self-expression in social networks results, according to Mellado and Hermida (2021), in "novel" roles for journalists. The authors differentiate between the promoter role (characterized by personal and professional branding, promotion of content, products, and services), the celebrity role (when fame is sought through exposure, association, and personal branding), and the joker role (when the aim is to be deliberately funny and humor is used to comment on the work and its routines, or to make jokes about oneself).

2.2. Norms, Personal Branding, and the Influence of Journalists on Social Networks

Journalism boundaries are permeable and leave twilight zones in which journalistic norms are challenged and the values associated with the profession are renewed, as a result of the coexistence of journalists and peripheral actors (Maares & Hanusch, 2020). Journalists adapt to social media while living with the traditional values and norms of journalism and the new codes of these platforms (Mellado & Hermida, 2021). Although the personal exposure of journalists in the networks and the interaction with users improves the audience's perception of the journalist in the personal dimension, it has a negative impact on the perception of the professional dimension and their news products (Lee, 2015). For this reason, some media corporations establish guidelines for the management of their journalists' personal profiles, in order to preserve the reputation and interests of the company (Opgenhaffen & Scheerlinck, 2014; Sacco & Bossio, 2017).

In recent years, journalists have bet on their personal brands to become news and opinion hubs and

increase their market value (Brems et al., 2017), taking advantage of the social media scenario for their personal and professional performance in front of their audience. This personal brand is hybrid, since it brings together organizational, professional, and personal identities (Hanusch & Bruns, 2017; Ottovordemgentschenfelde, 2017). In their personal branding strategies, journalists can develop celebrity identities through fame by association, asymmetric communication, and lifestreaming (Olausson, 2018).

Traditional media have always had prominent journalists—or journalists-influencers—who have pulled their own readers or listeners to whichever media they collaborate with, contributing to reinforcing their corporate image (Pérez Serrano & García Santamaría, 2021). In social networks, where the influencer economy (Mellado & Hermida, 2021) or the attention economy (Goldhaber, 2006) prevail, journalists and influencers can coexist, making the same type of content and sharing some common rules, especially in topics such as lifestyle (Maares & Hanusch, 2020). The blurring boundaries of journalism make it possible for these actors to coexist, to the point that journalists are not opposed to the idea that social media influencing can have journalistic characteristics or be considered journalism (Valkonen, 2019). However, the influencers maintain as a differentiating element "their ability to retain high visibility online" and their "monetizable status and potential career that one can pursue as a result of their internet celebrity" (Abidin, 2021, p. 79). Social networks create a sense of access to other people's private lives and this makes influencers more attractive than traditional media personalities (Abidin, 2015).

2.3. TikTok: New Logic and New Audience

TikTok is the fastest growing short video app worldwide. Owned by ByteDance, it was launched in 2016 in China as Douyin and then adapted to the international market (Kaye et al., 2021), absorbing Musical.ly in the process. TikTok is characterized by its own logic that differentiates it from Instagram Reels, YouTube Shorts, Byte, or other micro-video apps.

The main difference of TikTok is its algorithm and consumption experience. Unlike other platforms, the user does not see as a priority the recent content of the accounts they follow, but instead they are shown the content that the app's algorithm selects on the For You Page, in a continuous, never-ending succession of videos. TikTok's algorithm makes it possible for any video from any user—regardless of their number of followers—to be shown on this homepage. Determining factors to achieve this visibility and virality seem to be the use of trending sounds and hashtags, or the number of interactions—likes, comments, shares—achieved by the video in a given time among a reduced group of users (Klug et al., 2021).

TikTok's own language and logic bring with them new strategies for gaining visibility and becoming an influencer on this social network. Abidin (2021) explains that virality is sought with every post, so users are not forced to maintain a consistent and coherent personality or style. The functioning of TikTok also requires a rapid ability to adapt to the trends of the moment and to the different subcultures and communities of the network.

The content on the social network, characterized by its emotional dimension (Feng et al., 2019), has been diversifying from being mainly musical to hosting educational, social, public health, or celebrity videos (Klug et al., 2021). The predominant types of videos are lip-syncs, challenges, duets, and live streaming.

TikTok is associated with a young audience, mainly belonging to Gen Z (Pellicer, 2019; Schmidt, 2019). This is the audience that tends to be the most active (Montag et al., 2021), especially teenagers looking to expand their social network, gain fame, self-express themselves, and create an identity (Bucknell et al., 2020). The main reasons for using TikTok are self-presentation, trendiness, escapist addiction, and novelty (Scherr & Wang, 2021).

The exponential growth of the platform and its young audience have awakened the interest of journalistic media, which are adapting to the logic of TikTok in search of new audiences and with renewed languages (González, 2020; Klug, 2020; Schmidt, 2019; Vázquez-Herrero et al., 2020; Zaffarano, 2019). Journalism seeks its place in this emerging platform (Sidorenko & Herranz, 2020) and journalists use their personal profiles to experiment with new ways of disseminating information (Krasavina & Zolina, 2020), building their personal brand and interacting with a new audience.

3. Methods

With the aim of discovering the presence of journalists on TikTok, we developed an exploratory database, using scraping with a Python ad hoc application. First, we mapped the hashtags #journalism and #journalist, identifying the profiles in which the user defines themselves as a journalist, news anchor, reporter, photojournalist, TV/radio host, or media worker in one of several languages: English (500 publications reviewed in the hashtags), Spanish (200), French (200), and Portuguese (200). Secondly, similar profiles suggested by the platform for those users with more than 50,000 followers were reviewed (and those suggested in this case were reviewed in turn). Finally, 18 active profiles from the collaborative list promoted by Francesco Zaffarano (available at https://bit.ly/2T4PrRI) were added as we had not found them in the systematized search, and this is the first initiative for collecting journalists on TikTok. The database was updated on February 27, 2021.

The list of journalists identified on TikTok (n_1 = 212) provides a diverse set of professionals, from newly created accounts to consolidated and popular profiles. Judging by number of followers, four stand out with more than 1 million (February 2021): Marcus DiPaola (2.6 M), Jessica Pereira (1.3 M), Wandha Dwiutari (1.1 M), and

Owen Conflenti (1.1 M). The sample is international, with users from 42 nationalities (Supplementary File), including: United States (49), Brazil (30), United Kingdom (17), Peru (13), France (9), Argentina (8), and Indonesia (8)—according to the *Digital News Report 2021*, Indonesia and Peru entered the top 5 for use for news on TikTok (Newman et al., 2021).

The second phase consisted of a self-administered questionnaire survey (Hesse, 2017) sent to the 75 journalists who agreed to participate—89.6% of registered users in the database were located and invited to participate. The Likert-type response questions in the form use a 1–7 scale so that the central values are distributed rather than on a 1–5 scale. The execution period was from March 8 to April 9, 2021, with a response rate of 84.0% (n_2 = 63). The survey sample consisted of journalists from 25 countries, with an average age of 31 years and different levels of education (Supplementary File).

The third phase was based on content analysis, a quantitative method "to identify and count the occurrence of specified characteristics or dimensions" (Hansen & Machin, 2013, p. 89), specifically to retrieve profile data and classify published content (Table 1). For this purpose, the sample was limited to the 52 profiles with more than 100,000 followers (representing 24.5% of the registered users in the database, who reached a substantial level of popularity) in which we analyzed—between April 15 and 30, 2021—the 10 most recent posts (n_3 = 520), as the frequency of publication varies for each profile. Previously, a pretest was performed to design the typology and also an interrater reliability analysis to determine consistency among coders, obtaining "almost perfect agreement" (κ = 0.911; $p < 0.001$). During the pretest we defined these content categories:

- "Daily life" represents scenes of everyday life at home or at work;
- "Information" is the section that gathers news about current events, information that is disseminated as an overview of short and concise headlines, and videos that explain in greater depth aspects related to current affairs (such as ongoing legislative or electoral processes, which can be complex without context);
- "Humor" corresponds to funny content, silly situations, and jokes, as well as the reaction of journalists to comical or crazy situations;
- "Dance" is used for people dancing in the personal and professional sphere;
- "Tips" groups together advice, recommendations, and suggestions (on a variety of topics such as food, health, travel, and professional and spiritual development);
- "Promotion" represents videos promoting content or products;
- "Challenge" responds to TikTok's own dynamic of trends, in which users get involved by performing certain dances, viral actions, or demonstrating skills generally linked to a song.

4. Results

4.1. Journalists on TikTok: Presence, Use, Management, and Target Audience

The survey of journalists on TikTok (n_2 = 63) provides a novel perspective on their presence on this platform. The leading reason they joined TikTok was to reach new audiences (50.8%). However, a quarter is simply

Table 1. Analysis sheet.

Profile	Username Followers Likes Verification Bio Country	
Content	Daily life	Home scenes (personal) Work scenes
	Information	News Headlines Explanation, summary, and top (ranking)
	Humor	Funny and silly things Reactions, comments
	Dance	At home/outdoors At work
	Tips	
	Promotion	Content promotion Advertising (product)
	Challenge	

there because they are having fun (23.8%). There are journalists present because it is an additional channel for reporting (12.7%) or because it is trendy (3.2%). In "other answers" (9.5%), some expressed their interest "in exploring new platforms" and "to use new styles of storytelling" or specific objectives such as to "fight misinformation."

Regarding the use they make of their profile (Table 2), the priority option is "to present and reinforce my personal brand" (5.8 out of 7), with 46.0% indicating that they totally agree with this statement. In second place, they consider showing themselves as a professional of the organization, media, or program where they work (5.0), with 33.3% totally agreeing. The third option with the greatest consensus is "disseminating current information" (4.3) with 22.2% indicating total agreement. On the other hand, there are two activities that reach a high level of disagreement: "to show my daily and personal life" and "to promote content or products."

With the growth of new platforms, the management of personal social media is becoming more and more time consuming. The time devoted to this task each day by journalists (Table 3) varies significantly in each case, with 2–3 hours being the most common. Most spend less than 1 hour per day only on TikTok (52.5%). Analyzing the time dedicated to this platform (Table 4), we observe that 44% of those surveyed dedicate at least 50% of their daily time to social networks. Regarding the media or programs where they work, 32.3% have an official profile and 23.0% of journalists surveyed say that their organizations direct the activity of journalists on their personal profiles on social media.

If the main reason for being on TikTok is to reach new audiences, a key question is whether the journalists are targeting a specific audience. 68.3% are looking for a new audience that does not know them, while 49.2% are targeting young people of the millennial and centennial generations. 36.5% focus on audiences who are loyal to them or their program. Only three journalists indicated other answers: young journalists (3.2%) or no target (1.6%).

Regarding the adaptation of their activity to the logic of TikTok, journalists express their involvement: They interact with other users through answers to their questions, duets, or comments (5.9 out of 7; 58.7% "strongly agree"), and pay attention to the trends and challenges of the moment when generating new content (5.0).

Regarding journalistic activity, 44.4% have no doubt that TikTok is a suitable platform for disseminating information (5.8 out of 7). In the same way, they understand that journalistic media should be on TikTok to connect with the younger generations (6.4; 68.3% "strongly

Table 2. Use of profile.

Use	Avg	"Totally agree" (7 out of 7)
Present and reinforce my personal brand	5.8	46.0%
Introduce myself as a professional from an organization, media, or program	5.0	33.3%
Provide tips	4.4	22.2%
Disseminate current information	4.3	7.9%
Disseminate humorous content	4.0	7.9%
Participate in challenges and trends	3.7	17.5%
Show my daily and personal life	3.6	20.6%
Promote content or products	2.7	6.3%

Table 3. Average time spent on social media management.

Time	TikTok	Social media
<1 hr day	52.5%	9.8%
1 hr day	21.3%	26.2%
2–3 hrs day	21.3%	31.1%
4–5 hrs day	3.3%	18.0%
>5 hrs day	1.6%	14.8%

Table 4. Time spent on TikTok as proportion of total time spent on social media management.

Time on TikTok vs. social media	Number of journalists
100%	9
75.0–99.9%	6
50.0–74.9%	11
25.0–49.9%	14
0.1–24.9%	19

agree") and that journalistic values can be transferred to TikTok and thus turn the journalist into an influencer on this platform (6.3; 60.3% "strongly agree").

4.2. TikTok's Potential for Journalists

4.2.1. Looking for New Audiences

Journalists consider that TikTok's main potential lies in reaching new audiences. This is indicated by 47.6% of those surveyed, who allude both to reaching new users in general and, specifically, the younger generations. One of the points that stands out is that there is an important group of people who do not consume information in traditional media such as newspapers, television, or radio, or show no interest in information or avoid news. "The main potential of TikTok for journalists is to connect with an audience that does not or rarely uses traditional media" observed one French journalist.

Within this clear objective of reaching new audiences, for 30.2% of respondents, the great opportunity of this platform is to reach younger generations. In a platform dominated by Gen Z, journalists recognize that this audience is disconnected from traditional media—and the media from them—so TikTok is "a way to learn new ways to communicate news, to keep in touch with younger generations and to keep updated," as an Italian journalist observed. "Most media organizations have little knowledge of what younger audiences want from news so being on TikTok helps you understand that," added a journalist from Switzerland. 7.9% consider that it can be a space for direct interaction with the audience, to get to know them, to discover relevant topics, and to provide answers: "TikTok users want information and ask many critical questions which is great for us as journalists," said a head of social media strategy from Germany.

The platformization of journalism has led to the dispersion of content on third-party platforms, so journalists are also looking to transfer audiences from TikTok to other platforms: "This platform is a springboard…to Instagram, Facebook and YouTube, to look for broader journalistic content."

4.2.2. Content Is King, but Form Is Key

Twenty-seven percent of the journalists surveyed see TikTok's potential for their activity in the format. On the platform, they highlight entertaining, fun, and simple content, which also allows for the distribution of informative and educational messages that are, above all, brief, "bite-sized." The content is radically different from what we have seen in other social networks, also heavily conditioned by the algorithmic recommendation that dominates access to content. For this reason, a British journalist pointed out that "TikTok could be a great platform for content which is not time-framed," since it is not possible to control the order and timing of the videos shown to users.

The format is so particular that one journalist defined it differently from "social media," as "micro entertainment" and compared it to Twitter: "Because it's looped, it means people can watch it 2–3 times until they have absorbed all the content. Just as Twitter forced us to rethink the way we write to convey information in 140–280 characters, TikTok is doing the same with frame-by-frame vertical storytelling."

4.2.3. Behind the Cameras, Journalism Practice, and Personal Branding

Showcasing the journalists' work and building their personal brand is the third factor that explains their presence on TikTok. Making their professional activity visible and letting people see what goes on behind the scenes is where 9.5% of respondents see potential. The audience likes to know about such things, and it allows them to "humanize journalists as we are also normal people," as a Canadian journalist noted.

It is not only about showing what their daily life is like; it is also a new space to find "trending news stories and new voices," said a social media editor from the United States, and even "opinions from marginalized groups," added a British freelancer.

For 14.3%, it is another platform on which to establish and grow a personal brand. Some journalists directly alluded to the effect on credibility: "I can build their trust [of the audience] and they are more likely to listen and consume the news," said a British journalist. TikTok's boost to a journalist's profile relates to the ability to disseminate and viralize content (7.9%). "It can help in creating a powerful image of the journalist in order to be recognized for his or her work among the public," said one Spanish sports journalist. The rapid growth in followers and views is an incentive for 4.8% of the journalists surveyed, who recognize that success is more attainable than on other platforms:

> The reach and discoverability on TikTok is unparalleled. For an article that is breaking news, if you are able to talk your audience through the article, share it on the TikTok platform in a creative, video-centric, and personable way, it has the opportunity to reach millions of people within 24 hours. The sheer size of its reach is a social media manager and journalist's dream. (US journalist)

4.3. Content Analysis

The analysis of posts (n_3 = 520) of the 52 users with more than 100,000 followers allows us to classify the content published by journalists on TikTok and identify their use of this platform (Table 5).

28.4% of the posts correspond to the "daily life" category, which includes scenes at home, from their personal sphere, such as daily routines, family moments, personal care and beauty, outfits, free time, and opinions. We also

Table 5. Content published by journalists on TikTok.

Category		Number of posts	%
Daily life	Home scenes (personal)	75	14.4
	Work scenes	73	14.0
Information	News	47	9.0
	Headlines	1	0.2
	Explanation, summary, and top (ranking)	51	9.8
Humor	Funny and silly things	74	14.2
	Reactions, comments	22	4.2
Dance	At home/outdoors	30	5.8
	At work	43	8.3
Tips		62	11.9
Promotion	Content promotion	19	3.7
	Advertising (product)	14	2.7
Challenge		9	1.7

find work scenes, which show everyday aspects of their profession: how they prepare for a live show, what goes on behind the scenes, the tasks a reporter performs, answers to users' questions about their work, and more. This is the case of Rachael O'Neil showing her first day at work at CBS or Cinthel Ferreira (Sistema Brasileiro de Televisão) responding to a user asking why there is a delay in live connections or showing behind the cameras.

Information occupies the second most common category (19.0%). Here we must differentiate types of information: (a) news, i.e., short videos in which a current event is reported; (b) headlines of the day; and (c) explanatory content with more depth, summary, and rankings. A clear example is Marcus DiPaola anchoring daily news in short videos with a close-up shot of his face. Alternatively, there is Lisa Remillard (BEONDTV), who explains in more detail the processes and measures of US politics, or, with a more opinionated tone, Robert Breich (Inequality Media). The adaptation of journalistic information to TikTok is also found from other users, such as Sophia Smith Galer (BBC) or Max Foster (CNN), although in these cases it is not the only type of content they share.

This is followed by two popular categories on TikTok: humor and dances. Humor (18.4%) appears through funny and silly pieces (jokes, funny videos) and reactions to or comments about humorous content. Dancing (14.1%) is found both in the personal sphere (home or outdoors) and in the professional sphere (usually dancing with work colleagues on a set).

Other types of publications include: tips (11.9%), e.g., cooking, reading, coaching, languages, and a wide variety of topics; content promotion (3.7%) of its publications or media appearances; advertising of commercial products (2.7%); and participation in challenges (1.7%)—a key element of TikTok represented at a low frequency.

5. Conclusions

Journalists have had to adapt to TikTok as an emerging platform that is different from other social networks because of its main audience, language, and logic. The recent rise of TikTok and its new logic has led some journalists to develop an adapted approach, preserving the traditional values of the profession, while others bet on the redefiner approach, creating new ways of telling the news, participating in challenges, or showing their humorous side (Mellado & Alfaro, 2020). A significant proportion of them join with the main purpose of creating a personal brand and gaining visibility with new audiences—as has happened with other platforms like Twitter (Brems et al., 2017; Sacco & Bossio, 2017)—especially young people. They face the challenge of capturing the attention of users on a platform used mainly for entertainment and where personalities generate more interest than mainstream news, contrary to what happens on other networks such as Twitter or Facebook (Newman et al., 2021).

The development of their personal brand on TikTok has a hybrid nature and combines organizational, professional, and personal identities (Ottovordemgentschenfelde, 2017), making visible aspects of their work, the media, and their personal lives. The same journalist does not generally maintain a single and constant role, but combines the roles (Mellado & Hermida, 2021) of promoter (when they seek to reinforce their professional and personal brand, promote their informative content, or advertise a product), celebrity (which can occur in those profiles that achieve a high number of followers, acting as famous celebrities and benefiting from it in some way), and joker (when the journalist creates humorous content, comments in a funny way about their work or life, ridicules themselves, or reacts to TikTok's

own humorous content). As Abidin (2021) explains, virality is sought in each publication, so users are not obliged to maintain a style and a role.

They manifest a relevant informative purpose (to inform, disseminate, and promote content), although a major part of the consumer orientation (Hanusch & Tandoc, 2019) is identified as opposed to the public service vocation in the activity of journalists on TikTok, when providing entertainment to audiences and advice, tips, and directions for daily life. Some journalists' profiles reach high numbers of followers, but not all have the same type of content: Informative profiles converge with others that are more focused on entertainment. In the analysis, we observed a variety of content published by journalists, from the adaptation of their professional activity to mimic the predominant content on TikTok: daily life scenes—although journalists disagreed about showing their personal lives—information, comical videos, dances, content promotion, and challenges.

In the relationship between journalists and the audience, there are practices that differentiate between those who are farther away from engagement and those who are actively involved (Xia et al., 2020), especially when answering questions from other users about their work or when participating in duets and challenges. There is no evidence of a relevant use of TikTok, at the moment, for other dynamics of the production process that have been studied in other networks, such as live-reporting or newsgathering on Twitter (Canter, 2015), or source search or comment management on Instagram, Facebook, or LinkedIn (Brandtzaeg & Chaparro Domínguez, 2018). However, some journalists on TikTok claim to be on the platform to keep up to date with new trends or to get in touch with minority groups.

Journalists are present in a new communicational space, which has its own particular logic, and is the natural habitat of the younger generations. Can we say that journalists are influencers on TikTok? On the one hand, some of them have a high visibility and a large community of followers, they open a window into their private lives, but they do not monetize their content—at least not directly, although they seek to reinforce their personal brand. A crucial difference is that journalists' main occupation is not their activity on social media, but something complementary to their job. Nevertheless, journalists and influencers coexist in the same space with shared codes. As mentioned above, journalists believe that they can transfer journalistic values to TikTok and become influencers on this platform, in order to connect with the younger generation.

This research was developed at a still-early stage of TikTok and journalistic exploration of the platform and it presents some limitations. Although the search was systematized, it was difficult to draw up a census of all the journalists on TikTok. Moreover, the platform is still used by a minority of journalists, not all of them are regularly active on this social network and there are no established codes of conduct. For all these reasons, it

will require new approaches and analysis in the future to evaluate its consolidation as a channel for journalism and journalists. As has already happened on other social networks, the permanence of journalists on the platform will end up shaping norms or common patterns of behavior (Hedman, 2015; Hermida & Mellado, 2020), as well as media organizations developing guidelines for their professionals (Opgenhaffen & Scheerlinck, 2014). The consolidation of journalistic activity on TikTok will make it necessary to study the roles and dynamics that are established, as well as the relationship with audiences and the predominant news values on this platform, as explored on Instagram (Al-Rawi et al., 2021). Similarly, it will be necessary to address how the regulation of these platforms in the different countries conditions this reality, how journalists themselves welcome it, and how media organizations position themselves.

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Conflict of Interests

The authors declare no conflict of interests.

Supplementary Material

Supplementary material for this article is available online in the format provided by the author (unedited).

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Article

#ThisIsMeChallenge and Music for Empowerment of Marginalized Groups on TikTok

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Abstract
Media convergence is generating many collective performances on social media, where the rise of short-form videos has created a new opportunity for the empowerment of society on online platforms. In this context, TikTok appears as an application for creative expression through music clips and lip-syncs. Through the #ThisIsMeChallenge hashtag, which introduces the musical theme of *The Greatest Showman* film, we analyze a new online practice within messages from traditionally marginalized groups throughout individual and collective life events. In order to understand TikTok as a music venue for social empowerment, we conducted a quantitative content analysis of 100 TikTok posts under the hashtag, and an artificial intelligence sentiment analysis across 8,877 comments. The results show a wide range of performance work that addresses issues of gender, sexual orientation, racial discrimination, and other types of current hate speech. In short, we conclude that TikTok has become a platform that seems to motivate activism and empowerment of marginalized groups through music frameworks that challenge social discrimination.

Issue
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1. Introduction

Social media has become an essential space for the study of empowerment in terms of identity negotiation among individuals, and as a window into the self-expression by users interacting with each other and for each other (Literat & Kligler-Vilenchik, 2021). In this "post-Internet" environment merging digital networks, portable devices, and peer-to-peer knowledge sharing, users experience positive feedback which reflects the community's possibilities for motivation and perceived belongingness (Waugh, 2017). In other words, participatory culture facilitates individuals interacting in different digital networks to represent their identities through social perceptions and expectations (Literat et al., 2021).

TikTok plays a significant role in this context. The platform, available internationally in Apple, Android, and Amazon app stores since 2018, is an algorithm-driven app that presents short video content to users via various interaction and navigation options—likes, follows, views, among other affordances. The app is characterized by a video feed, "For You Page," in which users view one video at a time, swiping up or down for new or previous posts, and by an extensive music and audio library that supports each one. A spinning circle appears at the bottom of each video to click and learn more about the audio: videos that have used it, the song itself, or the option to add it to your favorites (Anderson, 2020). This sound appropriation process has generated a wide range of popular content and challenges, as well as a wave

of audio and video memes—audios and videos that are continuously replicated, acquiring and adding meanings of belonging among the user community (Zulli & Zulli, 2020). As noted by journalists and communication scholars Fang et al. (2019) in their study on the concept of "anesthesia" in short video apps, this dynamic consumption of content evolves into an "anesthetic effect" that provokes users to consume TikTok posts for long periods of time out of curiosity, similar to the algorithmic system of YouTube.

What makes TikTok particularly interesting is that as indicated by Internet anthropologist Abidin (2021) in her platform mapping from the perspective of celebrities, communities, and topic thresholds in this app have led to controversy and content removal when TikTokers—users who create content on the app—reach their popularity due to issues of social (in)justice. Since its launch, this social networking site has been trying to reach young people through silly, shameless, and unfiltered content. As a result, the app avoids the seriousness and the perfect variety of filters of Instagram, the ephemeral stress of Snapchat's 24-hour content, or the verbal warfare of Twitter's discussion threads (Kennedy, 2020). TikTok prevents these formats inviting users to create videos under the guise of normality, creativity, and realness, concealing the toxic nature of harassment and other social media conflicts. In other words, masking the "aggressive architecture" of the Internet (Harvey, 2019), which is based on urban studies, through which governments discourage some kinds of activities in public spaces. Such "aggressive architecture" on the Internet refers to hostile innovations that prevent undesirable interactions on platforms, constricting what creators consider desirable publics, and systematically disadvantaging those who have not been valued in the digital environment. Considering this, digital content created in other platforms around different minority communities such as immigrants (Civila et al., 2020; Jaramillo-Dent et al., 2021), LGBTIQ+ (Craig et al., 2021), people with disabilities (Harb & Sidani, 2020), among others, have resulted in representations involving expectations, prejudices, or prevailing norms. Albeit, individuals are not handicapped by these social and digital perspectives, cultivating close relationships with others that share similar interests to offer a more honest portrayal of themselves (Sachs et al., 2021). This insight is grounded in the online hate moods analyzed by media and culture scholar Kilvington (2021), who introduces a hateful belief that represses users on the Internet. Hence, content sharing on social media such as TikTok emerges as a liberating process for individuals and communities to express themselves, providing a diversity of identities that pursue positive emotions (Wahl-Jorgensen, 2020).

In this regard, music has become a source to share life experiences (Born & Tilley, 2011), which is the main feature of TikTok. The opportunities for identity self-expression lead to new forms of digital culture on TikTok, involving a music-making relationship that is understood as a democratization of music-based content (Chambers, 2021). Such approach is further strengthened on a study conducted by psychologists and musicians Anderson et al. (2020) about musical self-representation on Spotify, which concludes that personality is conveyed through musical preferences and performances. In this case, we discuss appropriation and musical sharing on TikTok through hashtags and music challenges, comprised as a trend preceded by hashtag symbol "#" to promote online events, discussions, and social phenomena (Vizcaíno-Verdú & Abidin, 2021). Thus, we are faced with social trends of self-representation and community imaginaries based on transmedia music, which is a practice for content spreading through user-appropriated music aimed at disseminating new storytelling meanings (Vizcaíno-Verdú et al., 2021).

Focused on the self-expression of identity through this short video storytelling perspective, we propose a study that aims to explore the role of the music #ThisIsMeChallenge phenomenon on TikTok to connect traditionally marginalized groups within an empowering digital activism posts. This music challenge comprises the hashtag and audio from "This Is Me" by Michael Gracey's musical drama film "The Greatest Showman," addressing the social demotion of "freak performers" in "Barnum's Circus." The challenge consisted of presenting discrimination and coping experiences by marginalized groups, seeking to emphasize their identity and value as a symbol of empowerment.

2. Social Media Movements and Empowerment

The plethora of social media has created a set of collective and multidimensional interactions characterized by constantly varying causes of social justice. From a sociological-anthropological approach, we need to understand a social movement as a collective, voluntary, and coordinated action, articulated around a cause or claim that defines an opponent or situation to be changed (Asún & Zúñiga, 2013). This means that social media movements pursue collaboration between individuals who combine efforts to express themselves as a group, trying to change or improve a situation of disadvantage (García-Galera et al., 2017). Beyond this macro-concept, we focused on the empowerment phenomenon. Empowerment is understood as the result of a process—social movement—which may occur in different degrees and areas of life, where power relations between individuals and social groups undergo transformation through three critical processes: (a) changing ideologies that justify inequalities; (b) changing patterns of economic, natural or intellectual access, or control; (c) changing structures that reinforce and maintain unequal powers; and (d) changing prejudices and preconceived values that denigrate people's human capabilities and conditions (Maiorano et al., 2021). This network-based power of communication and content convergence serves as an alternative tool for the discussion and

expression of communities that claim their rights and motivate equality (Kumari, 2020).

2.1. Discrimination and Marginalized Groups on the Internet

Collectives and individuals who are marginalized through discriminatory conditions such as racism, homophobia, ableism, gender identity, religion discrimination, ideology, among others (Place, 2021), employ emancipatory technologies such as digital platforms to expose the truth and drive social change (George et al., 2021). In this sense, in this study we considered significant understanding social discrimination and marginalized groups, since the song analyzed was related to coping the social exclusion.

From the perspective of social behavior, discrimination refers to the unequal treatment of individuals or groups based on racial, religious, physical, political, gender, age, sexual orientation, among other aspects (Velasquez & Montgomery, 2020). At this point, social media has caused great discrimination towards marginalized groups, which are communities excluded from mainstream society, as well as from economic, educational, and cultural life (Parson, 2019). This leads people to face prejudice, bullying, exclusion, violence, in the hopes for equality and social acceptance (Meyer, 2019). On the internet, intergroup contacts made these marginalized groups more sensitive to possible identity prejudice (Mancini & Imperato, 2020) and collective activism (Smith et al., 2020). In this regard, human behavior scholars Spears and Postmes (2015), on a study focused on group identity and social influence, pointed out that this online activist motivation can be turned into presentations of the self that reinforce in-group and out-group social identities.

2.2. Sympathy, Empathy, Representation, and Reflexivity on TikTok

The social media movements could be observed on platforms such as TikTok, where video activism—understood as an audio-visual complaint located outside governmental and marketing logics—is increasing (Askanius, 2013). This sort of message can attract the sympathy of public opinion and transform it into empathy (Chanan, 2011). This means that sympathy, which is understood as a subjective action, generally aimed at rescue, aid, or assistance (Olinick, 2014), may be transformed into an active and empathetic community. Thus, we understand empathy as the capacity to relate to another's emotional state, grounded in the emotion regulation theory—which is based on sharing sympathetic and familiar expressions (Yalcin & DiPaola, 2018). In this regard, video activism is transferred to TikTok and relies on the appropriation of a media and storytelling discourse through representation (the set of words, statements, and emotions concerning an injustice or inequality) and reflexivity (the

set of confronted values where community notions are expressed; Meneses-Rocha & Castillo-González, 2016). Therefore, reflexivity is a resilient process by which people express values that enhance a community sense of freedom, choice, and empowerment (Givropoulou & Tseliou, 2021).

On TikTok, we may find two different scientific perspectives. On the one hand, media scholars Weimann and Masri (2020) point out that the innocence of the platform is pushed back to a sinister side: the hate speech phenomenon. On the other hand, theologian Zhang (2020), in his study on the "infrastructuralization" of the platform as an entertainment channel, argues for an app that deepens power relations between the different groups of users. For this reason, in this article we try to understand the second perspective through the potential of TikTok music challenges for empowering different grouping social movements.

3. Methodology

We conducted a qualitative walkthrough method, and a quantitative and correlational analysis using content analysis and natural language processing with sentiment analysis (SA). The walkthrough method led us to understand the music challenge phenomenon by immersing ourselves daily on TikTok (Light et al., 2016). Quantitative content analysis is a systematic method concerning the characteristics of messages through accepted meanings (Neuendorf, 2016). These approaches allowed us to examine the social movements that characterize #ThisIsMeChallenge posts on TikTok. On the other hand, SA enabled the computational exploration of polarized and subjective opinions expressed by users viewing these contents (Medhat et al., 2014). Thus, these methods provided an understanding of both TikToker content (creator of content) and the user (receiver of content). We defined the following research questions to carry out the analysis:

RQ1: What role does music play on TikTok's #ThisIsMeChallenge posts?

RQ2: Is there a correlation between the representation and reflexivity (empowerment) of TikTok groups participating in the #ThisIsMeChallenge?

RQ3: The comments of #ThisIsMeChallenge posts on TikTok support the appearing marginalized groups?

3.1. The Hashtag Case #ThisIsMeChallenge

For the analysis of empowering social movements described by Place (2021) on TikTok, we selected the hashtag #ThisIsMeChallenge. This challenge, which had received 71.4 M views at the time of the analysis in February 2021, introduces a clip of the song "This Is Me" from the film *The Greatest Showman* released in

October 2017. This pop song was the promotional single for the film and won a Golden Globe for Best Original Song. We chose this challenge because of its popularity in terms of views, and the emotional impact on the individuals who participated in it.

3.2. Walkthrough Method and Quantitative Content Analysis of Video Empowerment

The first stage to understand the empowerment phenomenon on TikTok through the hashtag #ThisIsMeChallenge was use of music for storytelling on posts. We intended to comprehend how music moves beyond the fictional environment through other meanings (transmedia music; Vizcaíno-Verdú et al., 2021). To do so, we performed a walkthrough method (Light et al., 2016):

1. Registration and entry: Creation of a unique TikTok profile for analysis.
2. Everyday use: Immersion for one hour daily from February 7–18, identifying how TikTok music (audio) relates to visual content (image).
3. App suspension, closure, and leaving: Ending the analysis and interpreting the observations.

Content analysis is an empirical-systematic method used to analyze audio, text, and image data (Krippendorff, 2004). This process consists of analyzing content variables through units of analysis and a codebook. The units of analysis are the measurable content, and the codebook is a collection of observable codes (Bock et al., 2011). In the quantitative method process, these codes are labeled using a numerical system that facilitates the statistical analysis.

In this study we built a codebook based on studies about digital empowerment to define the sociodemographic variables of TikTokers (George et al., 2021), on the representation and reflexivity of identity (Meneses-Rocha & Castillo-González, 2016), as well as on hate speech on TikTok (Weimann & Masri, 2020) to analyze the performances (see complete codebook at https://doi.org/10.6084/m9.figshare.14903064.v1). As we highlighted above, representation referred to unjust or unequal issues (Meneses-Rocha & Castillo-González, 2016), and reflexivity concerned a resilience process whereby a community expresses its value (Givropoulou & Tseliou, 2021).

We validated this codebook using the Fleiss' kappa statistical test in the SPSS v. 25 software. The procedure consisted in testing the inter-rater agreement on the "representation" and "reflexivity" variables. The test was selected based on 15 random videos from the sample detailed below, involving the same rater in two different periods—December 2020 and March 2021 (Fleiss et al., 2003). For the variable "representation" we obtained a Fleiss' kappa coefficient $\kappa = .751$, $p = .001$, which reflected a statistically significant good agreement,

according to Cohen's kappa classification (between .61–.80 is good). With regards to the variable "reflexivity" we scored a Fleiss' kappa coefficient $\kappa = .825$, $p = .001$, which also represented a statistically significant very good agreement (between .81–1.00 is very good). Then, we proceeded to the descriptive and correlation analysis.

3.2.1. First Sample: The Creators

The sample comprising the first analysis was manually collected through the TikTok platform by following the next sequence:

1. Searching the #ThisIsMeChallenge hashtag on the "Discover tab";
2. Filtering the results by the "videos tab";
3. Filtering the contents by "All time" in "Date posted" and sorting by "Relevance."

The videos were registered and stored considering the following selection criteria: (a) posts featuring only one person and (b) posts employing the sounds "Original sound—itsbybrandon," "Original sound—Maria Clarin," "This Is Me—Keala Settle & The Greatest Showman Ensemble," "This Is Me (From The Greatest Showman)—Kesha," which introduced similar musical versions. The dataset consisted of 100 videos released between 2019 and 2021. The sample was targeted to answer the first two research questions, related to the TikToker (creator) and social movements.

3.3. SA of User Comments

SA is a natural language processing task aimed at mining opinions from texts. This technique is mainly used in the fields of affective computing research and emotion recognition (Poria et al., 2017), which are key to the development of artificial intelligence. This system is considered a text classification task because it performs two analyses: polarity (the level of positivity or negativity of a text) and subjectivity (the level of subjectivity or objectivity of a text; Birjali et al., 2021).

For the analysis of polarity and subjectivity we used the TextBlob library through a line of code with Python programming language in PyCharm. PyCharm is an integrated development environment for computer programming. Through this system we collected the sample detailed below and checked whether user comments viewing the 100 TikTok posts were mainly positive and subjective, i.e., whether they turn the viewers' sympathy into empathy. We related the polarity–subjectivity variables to sympathy–empathy by looking at the comments, considering those that introduced sympathetic expressions according to the emotional regulation theory (Yalcin & DiPaola, 2018).

3.3.1. Second Sample: The Users

The second sample, related to the third research question, comprised comments from users. We decided to apply the TextBlob library tool to comments because it worked exclusively with text, preventing the reading of files such as images or videos. Also, we decided to analyze the comments that users made on the videos to get an insight into how they felt about the marginalized groups in the #ThisIsMeChallenge.

To maintain an equal data pattern, we first downloaded 150 comments for each video. The data was then comprised in a dataset of 15,000 comments and transformed into an Excel spreadsheet. Then we processed the text on SA and excluded from the spreadsheet comments that obtained neutral values in polarity and subjectivity. When filtering the data on Excel, we realized that the detection system did not recognize text with emoji, words with split letters (e.g., "w o n d e r f u l"), and tags (e.g., @userexample). In other words, all the comments that did not give information were removed. Once filtered, we analyzed 8,877 comments through an automated content analysis which consisted of measuring the mean polarity–subjectivity of the entire sample. We also conducted a qualitative content analysis to group the comments by behavioral categories that would allow us to understand the community's perspective on marginalized groups.

Before submitting the data to the SA, we translated the comments into English using the TextBlob library. We identified comments in English, Spanish, French, German, Japanese, Korean, Thai, Indonesian, Malay, Danish, Tagalog, Russian, Swedish, Croatian, Italian, Catalan, Portuguese, Vietnamese, Arabic, Finnish, Dutch, Greek, Polish, and Norwegian.

3.4. Illustrated Examples and Ethical Concerns

The TikTok posts presented in this article were included after checking that their creators intended to circulate their posts publicly on the platform. Such reasoning was supported as the sample of 100 selected videos was derived from the "Relevance" tab of TikTok, which refers to the most searchable and findable posts by users. Thus, the posts illustrated below are considered as "superpublic" content (boyd, 2013), which consists of data that pursues high visibility (Abidin, 2016). In addition, to avoid infringing the image rights of individuals, the authors created illustrations about the most characteristic examples, anonymizing the data profiles.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. The Music Role on the #ThisIsMeChallenge Phenomenon

Following the walkthrough method, we delve into the music's role in the challenge. As we previously com-

mented, this hashtag refers to the song "This Is Me" composed by Keala Settle and released as a single in *The Greatest Showman: Original Motion Picture Soundtrack* for the 2017 film *The Greatest Showman*. During the analysis we found the following audios: "Original sound—itsbybrandon," "Original sound—Maria Clarin," "This Is Me—Keale Settle & The Greatest Showman Ensemble," "This Is Me (From the Greatest Showman)—Kesha," and "Original sound—Linda Marin Sanchez." Nevertheless, we found that the most significant sections of the song were repeated to highlight individual stories. According to the musical translation project of *The Greatest Showman* soundtrack (García-Moreno, 2020), we focused on organizing the challenge in two forms: audio-meaningful storytelling and image.

Firstly, we observed the same pattern in all the audios, i.e., mixing chorus sections in a different way than in the original song. As shown in Figure 1, the videos always started with "I am brave, I am bruised," referring to the TikTokers self-presentation. This kind of introduction could be related to the argument that marginalized groups are usually motivated to reinforce their in-group and out-group social identities on social media (Spears & Postmes, 2015).

During the next musical transition starting with the lyrics "Look out 'cause here I come" (1st, 2nd, and 3rd sections), the TikTokers linked several transitions gradually making-up their faces. Throughout this sequence, they kept a peaceful facial expression ending as the song claimed not to apologize for being who they are. Then, a new video transition showed the lyrics "When the sharpest words wanna cut me down" (4th section) with the female vocalist, without musical instruments, in which the TikTokers showed insulting words over their unhappy face. The most frequent insults were collected in Figure 2.

Once the sad section ended with "This Is Me" lyrics, we listened to the final chorus where all the music instruments were played again (5th section). Just like in the film, in this final video sequence we found several transitions, colors, and the challenging happiness of the TikTokers, showing that they successfully coped with all their social discrimination issues. Thus, we visually identified the following challenge stages (Figure 3).

4.2. Representation and Reflexivity Through #ThisIsMeChallenge

To answer the second research question, related to the 100 posts of the challenge, we performed a correlational statistical analysis between the code "representation" and "reflexivity." The aim was finding out whether there was any relationship between both variables involved in identifying the injustice perceived by the individual (referring to a marginalized group or social movement) and how this was a symbol of reflexivity throughout resilient stories (empowerment).

Figure 1. Comparing the original "This Is Me" lyrics and the audio's TikTok lyrics.

Considering that our aim in this stage of the analysis was to relate both variables, prior to the selection of the correlation statistical test we administered the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test of the equality of continuous and one-dimensional probability distributions (as $n \geq 50$). This test confirmed that the significance was not higher than $K\text{-}S(100) = .36$, $p = .001$. Following this criterion, we then followed the Spearman's test, which is a nonpara-metric measure of the strength and direction of association between two variables.

After mining the data, we found that some of the "representation" variables did not occur within the sample (for example, injustices or inequalities caused by age, language, ideology, or poverty). Below, we analyze the identified variables. In this sense, we coded the following number of videos for each one: racism

Figure 2. Self-perceived insults by TikTokers in #ThisIsMeChallenge.
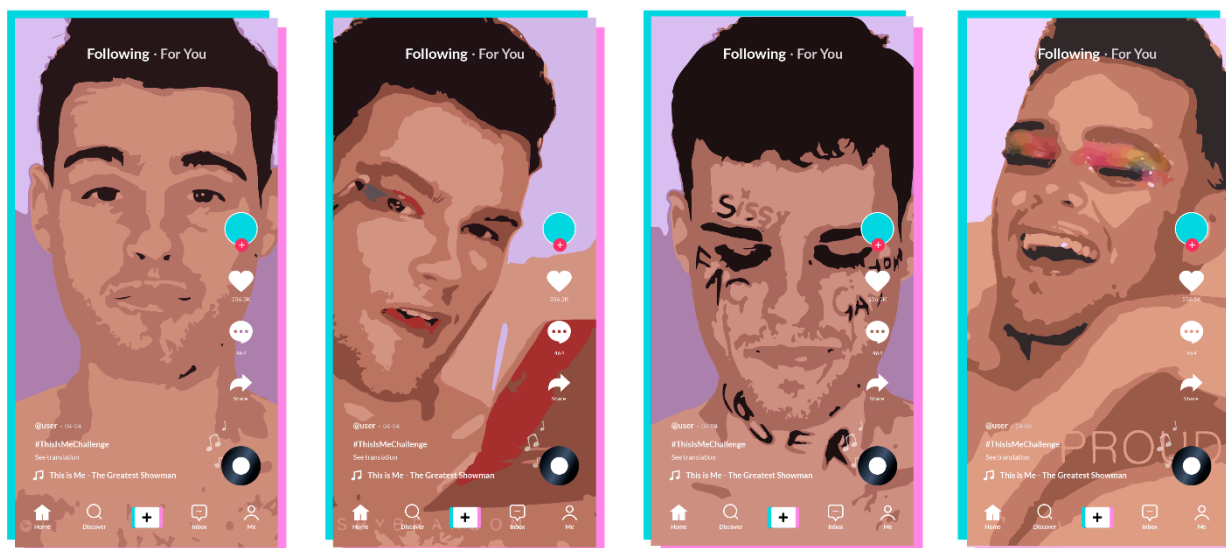
Figure 3. Main stages of #ThisIsMeChallenge. From left to right: TikTokers appearing in front of the camera in a close-up shot; singing the song as they make-up through several transitions; covering their face with negative words; appearing in colorful make-up, smiling, and singing happily.

(n = 9), colonialism (n = 2), homophobia (n = 30), ableism (n = 5), religion discrimination (n = 1), gender identity (n = 27), bullying (n = 26), culture (n = 2), other (n = 9). We observed cases where the same post could be classified into more than one category, e.g., a transgender TikToker could be targeted in homophobic and gender identity issues.

4.2.1. Racism

Racism is understood as an aggravation of the rational sense of an ethnic group that usually motivates the discrimination of individuals, which is usually extended to groups. In this sense, we are referring to the anthropological-philosophical perspective based on racial supremacy, which is scientifically fallacious and socially iniquitous, unjust, and dangerous (Urquidez, 2021). The most significant and generalizable correla-

tion was between racism and reflexivity: $rs(100)$ = .921, $p < .001$, r^2 = .95, $1 - \beta$ = .1. The TikTokers identified, besides negative words, their foreign status in a different country and in many cases its consequences (Figure 4). Many of the racism-related posts referenced accusations of theft and unjustified hatred towards physical aspects such as skin color. In fact, there were examples involving the #BlackLivesMatter message—which is a decentralized international movement to ensure justice and equality for black people since the death of the African American Trayvon Martin (Gatwiri et al., 2021).

Another statistically significant relationship was between racism and capability, $rs(100)$ = .836, $p < .001$, r^2 = .92, $1 - \beta$ = .1, through which self-described TikTokers highlighted their aptitude to adapt to foreign environments in spite of adversity and discrimination. Subsequently, in order of statistical significance and sample relevance, we highlighted tradition, $rs(100)$ = .521,

Figure 4. Illustrated TikTok post about racism and reflexivity.

$p < .001$, $r^2 = .72$, $1 - \beta = .1$; other, $rs(100) = .521$, $p < .001$, $r^2 = .72$, $1 - \beta = .1$; equality, $rs(100) = .463$, $p < .001$, $r^2 = .68$, $1 - \beta = .99$; pride, $rs(100) = .303$, $p < .002$, $r^2 = .55$, $1 - \beta = .99$; and acknowledgement, $rs(100) = .68$, $p < .001$, $r^2 = .82$, $1 - \beta = .1$.

4.2.2. Colonialism

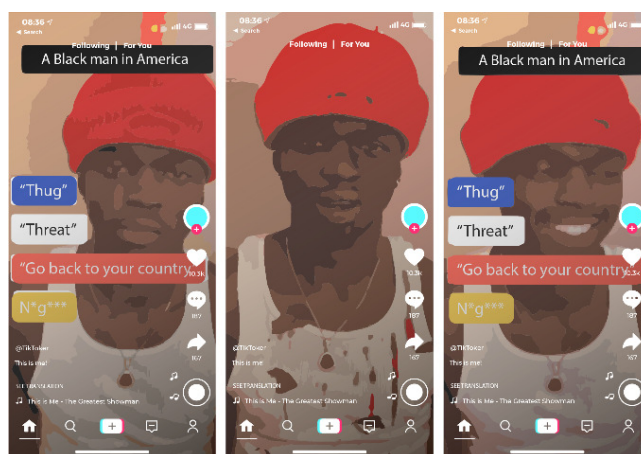Colonialism is defined as a social and economic system whereby a foreign state dominates and operates a territory, usually by military, political, economic, and social pressure, appropriating the land, resources, and culture of a community (Mouton & Burns, 2021). This variable showed a significant and meaningful relationship between colonialism and tradition, $rs(100) = .99$, $p < .001$, $r^2 = .99$, $1 - \beta = .1$, and colonialism and other, $rs(100) = .99$, $p < .001$, $r^2 = .99$, $1 - \beta = .1$, in which TikTokers discussed the traditional aspects appropriated from their ethnicity or territory (Figure 5). Compared to studies that have analyzed data colonialism (which consists of the commodification of the minority groups' information for capitalist purposes; Couldry & Mejias, 2019), we observed traditional protests about the cultural, territorial, and historical discrimination experienced by native communities.

It was followed by the correlations less statistically significant such as capability, $rs(100) = .623$, $p < .001$, $r^2 = .78$, $1 - \beta = .1$; reflexivity, $rs(100) = .565$, $p < .001$, $r^2 = .75$, $1 - \beta = .1$; acknowledgement, $rs(100) = .354$, $p < .001$, $r^2 = .59$, $1 - \beta = .99$; and equality, $rs(100) = .241$, $p < .001$, $r^2 = .49$, $1 - \beta = .99$. In this case, we did not find a significant relationship between colonialism and pride, as the results were not consistent in terms of $p < .05$.

4.2.3. Homophobia

Homophobia refers to the hostility towards homosexuality of both women and men, though it usually extends to people of sexual diversity (bisexual, transsexual, and transgender individuals), which in the latter two cases is referred to as transphobia. The term refers to the irrational rejection of these groups, frequently entailing violence and discrimination (Sell & Krims, 2021). The relationship between homophobia and equality was statistically significant, $rs(100) = .896$, $p < .001$, $r^2 = .94$, $1 - \beta = .1$, as many of the TikTokers identified in this category urged to end the hate towards them (Figure 6). This idea is supported by the great presence of LGBTQ+ collectives on
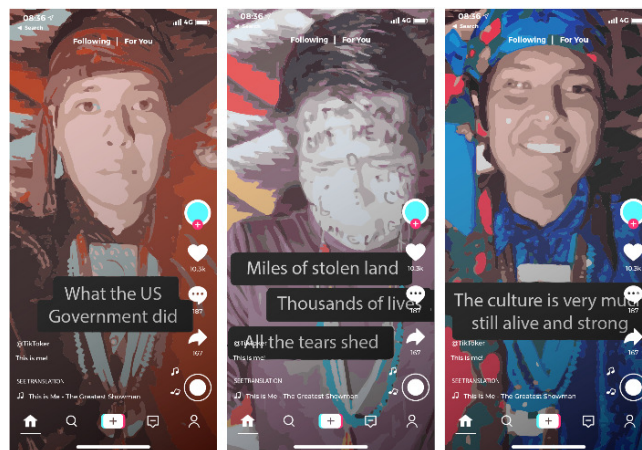

Figure 5. Illustrated TikTok post about colonialism and tradition.
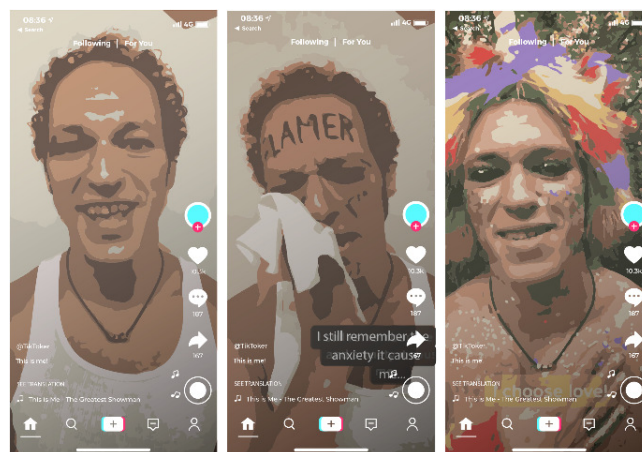
Figure 6. Illustrated TikTok post about homophobia and equality.

social media, where there is a praxis for creating, sharing, and caring for each other in community (Jenzen & Karl, 2014).

Also noteworthy, ranked by significance, were the relationships related to acknowledgement, $rs(100) = .760$, $p < .001$, $r^2 = .87$, $1 - \beta = .1$; pride, $rs(100) = .587$, $p < .002$, $r^2 = .76$, $1 - \beta = .1$; reflexivity, $rs(100) = .476$, $p < .001$, $r^2 = .68$, $1 - \beta = .99$; capability, $rs(100) = .432$, $p < .001$, $r^2 = .65$, $1 - \beta = .99$; tradition, $rs(100) = .269$, $p < .001$, $r^2 = .51$, $1 - \beta = .99$; and other, $rs(100) = .269$, $p < .001$, $r^2 = .51$, $1 - \beta = .99$.

4.2.4. Ableism

Ableism is a form of discrimination or social prejudice against people with disabilities (Cooper-Stoll & Egner, 2021), who are those that have developed a physical, intellectual, or sensory deficiency (Iezzoni et al., 2021). For this variable we found a significant and relevant relationship between ableism and capability, $rs(100) = .99$, $p < .001$, $r^2 = .99$, $1 - \beta = .1$, where TikTokers showed their professional success despite the difficulties (Figure 7).

Next, there were significant and statistical relationships with reflexivity, $rs(100) = .908$, $p < .001$, $r^2 = .95$, $1 - \beta = .1$; other, $rs(100) = .623$, $p < .001$, $r^2 = .78$, $1 - \beta = .1$; tradition, $rs(100) = .623$, $p < .001$, $r^2 = .78$, $1 - \beta = .1$; acknowledgement, $rs(100) = .569$, $p < .001$, $r^2 = .75$, $1 - \beta = .1$; equality, $rs(100) = .387$, $p < .001$, $r^2 = .62$, $1 - \beta = .99$; and pride categories, $rs(100) = .254$, $p < .002$, $r^2 = .50$, $1 - \beta = .99$.

4.2.5. Religion Discrimination

Religion is defined as a cultural system characterized by behaviors and practices, worldviews, ethics, texts, and other human history events that constitute group experiences, meanings, convictions, and beliefs based on a self-transcending dialectic (Paloutzian & Park, 2021). For this group we identified a significant relationship between religion and tradition, $rs(100) = .704$, $p < .001$, $r^2 = .83$, $1 - \beta = .1$. In this case, the TikTokers showed their beliefs as part of themselves mostly on a spiritual perspective (Figure 8).

Statistically less significant relationships were found in terms of other, $rs(100) = .701$, $p < .001$, $r^2 = .83$, $1 - \beta = .1$; capability, $rs(100) = .438$, $p < .001$, $r^2 = .66$, $1 - \beta = .99$; reflexivity, $rs(100) = .398$, $p < .001$, $r^2 = .63$, $1 - \beta = .99$; and acknowledgement, $rs(100) = .249$, $p < .001$,
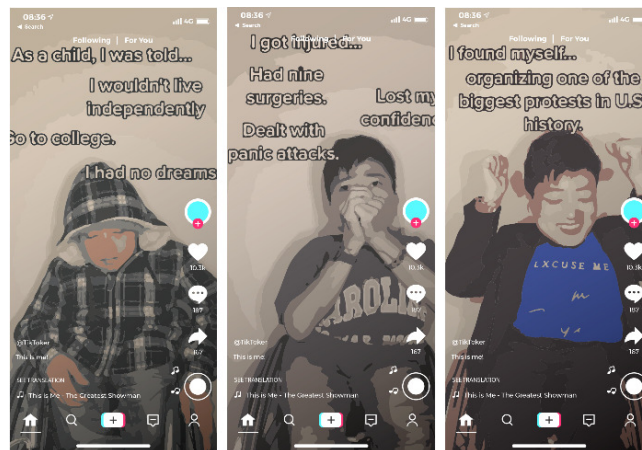
Figure 7. Illustrated TikTok post about ableism and capability.
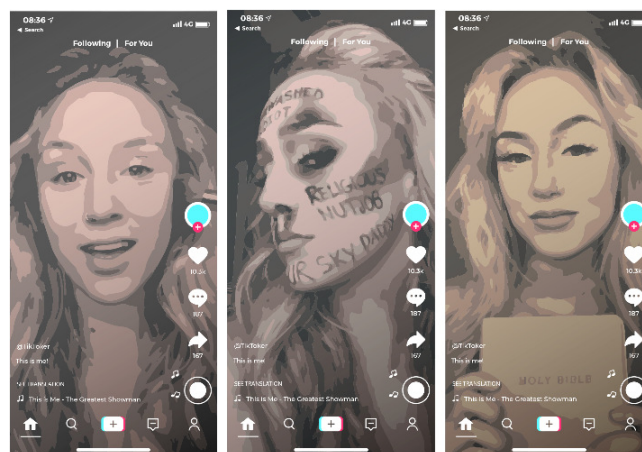
Figure 8. Illustrated TikTok post about religion and tradition.

r^2 = .49, 1 − β = .99. We found no relationship with equality and pride in the absence of the statistical assumption, p < .05.

4.2.6. Gender Identity

Using a social sciences approach, we understand gender identity as a concept that depicts human identity groups based on socially defined roles, behaviors, activities, and physical-psychological attributes (female, male, non-binary, and gender fluid; Kime-Scott, 2021). The most significant correlation was between gender and equality: rs(100) = .975, p < .001, r^2 = .98, 1 − β = .1. Similar to the homophobia variable, the TikTokers claimed equality because of their gender (Figure 9). In fact, the second relationship emphasized was between gender and pride: rs(100) = .672, p < .002, r^2 = .81, 1 − β = .1. Addressing the inclusion of an unsatisfactory democratic gendered citizenship approach to expressing digital self-identity debates (Ortega-Sánchez et al., 2021), in this study we found a positive and proactive counternarrative. The TikTokers who were classified in this group explained their identity, or else how they found themselves, i.e., their experience in identifying their gender in a healthy and comfortable manner.

The rest of the variables that were significantly correlated were related to acknowledgement, rs(100) = .663, p < .001, r^2 = .81, 1 − β = .1; reflexivity, rs(100) = .415, p < .001, r^2 = .64, 1 − β = .99; capability, rs(100) = .377, p < .001, r^2 = .61, 1 − β = .99; tradition, rs(100) = .235, p < .001, r^2 = .48, 1 − β = .99; and other, rs(100) = .235, p < .001, r^2 = .48, 1 − β = .99.

4.2.7. Bullying

Bullying is any form of psychological, verbal, or physical mistreatment directed towards a person repeatedly over a defined period of time in physical or digital space (cyberbullying). This kind of violence is characterized by targeting a person through intimidation, abuse of power and physical aggression, among others (Ansary, 2020). Bullying was significantly correlated with equality, rs(100) = .99, p < .001, r^2 = .99, 1 − β =.1, followed by acknowledgment, rs(100) = .681, p < .001, r^2 = .82, 1 − β = .1, and pride, rs(100) = .655, p < .002, r^2 = .80, 1 − β = .1. In these cases, the TikTokers highlighted the physical or psychological abuse perpetrated against them (Figure 10).

The other relationships, which were less significant, were related to reflexivity, rs(100) = .426, p < .001,
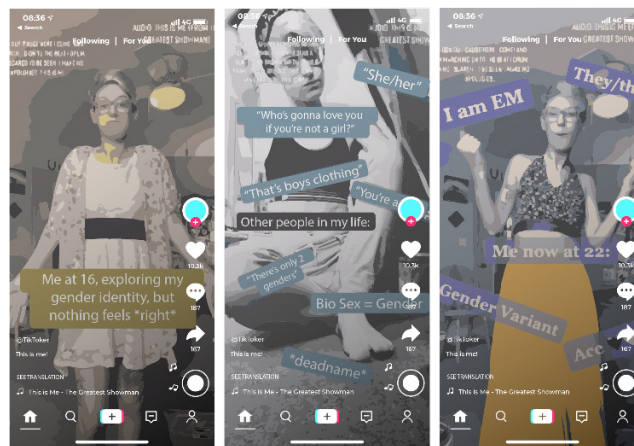
Figure 9. Illustrated TikTok post about gender and equality.
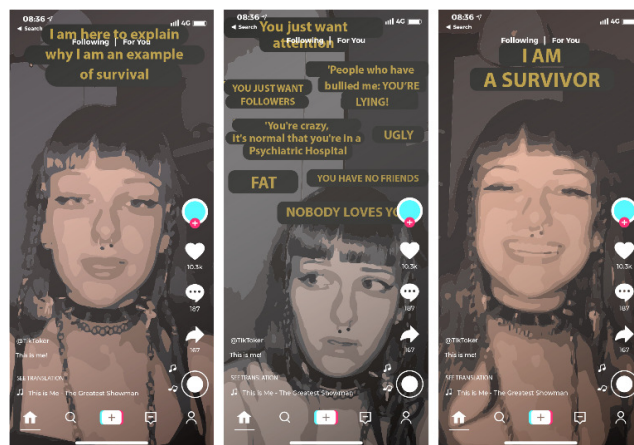
Figure 10. Illustrated TikTok post about bullying and equality.

r^2 = .65, 1 − β = .99; capability, $rs(100)$ = .387, $p < .001$, r^2 = .62, 1 − β = .99; tradition, $rs(100)$ = .241, $p < .001$, r^2 = .49, 1 − β = .97; and other, $rs(100)$ = .241, $p < .001$, r^2 = .49, 1 − β = .97.

4.2.8. Culture

Culture is a polysemous term extensively discussed by anthropologists, which is mainly grounded in the appreciation of fine arts and humanities, and in the knowledge, beliefs, and behaviors of a social group (Fox & King, 2020). We found a statistically significant relationship between culture and tradition, $rs(100)$ = .99, $p < .001$, r^2 = .99, 1 − β = .1, and culture and other, $rs(100)$ = .99, $p < .001$, r^2 = .99, 1 − β = .1. In the latter case we found a cosplayer, who is a person belonging to a Japanese culture phenomenon associated with dressing up as fandom characters, in which the TikToker showed her skills (Figure 11).

Relatively less significant were the relationships with capability, $rs(100)$ = .623, $p < .001$, r^2 = .78, 1 − β = .1; reflexivity, $rs(100)$ = .565, $p < .001$, r^2 = .75, 1 − β = .1; acknowledgement, $rs(100)$ = .354, $p < .001$, r^2 = .59, 1 − β = .99; and equality, $rs(100)$ = .241, $p < .001$, r^2 = .49, 1 − β = .99. The pride variable was excluded for not complying to the assumption of $p < .05$.

4.2.9. Other

Finally, we included those issues not considered previously, listing particular cases related to acknowledgment, $rs(100)$ = .99, $p < .001$, r^2 = .99, 1 − β = .1. We identified hate towards influencers for their popularity on TikTok (Figure 12), as well as skin-related and other diseases (alopecia or vitiligo), in which they proudly showed their identity and/or problem.

Less remarkable were the relations with equality, $rs(100)$ = .681, $p < .001$, r^2 = .82, 1 − β = .1; reflexivity, $rs(100)$ = .626, $p < .001$, r^2 = .79, 1 − β = .1; capability, $rs(100)$ = .569, $p < .001$, r^2 = .75, 1 − β = .1; pride, $rs(100)$ = .446, $p < .002$, r^2 = .66, 1 − β = .99; tradition, $rs(100)$ = .354, $p < .001$, r^2 = .59, 1 − β = .99; and other categories, $rs(100)$ = .354, $p < .001$, r^2 = .59, 1 − β = .99.

4.3. Supporting Marginalized Groups Through Polarity and Subjectivity

We analyzed the polarity and subjectivity of 8,877 comments to find out whether users viewing the 100 posts turned their sympathy toward empathy (Chanan, 2011; Olinick, 2014). First, we averaged both cases. Taking the SA criteria, by which values from 0 to 1 indicate positive
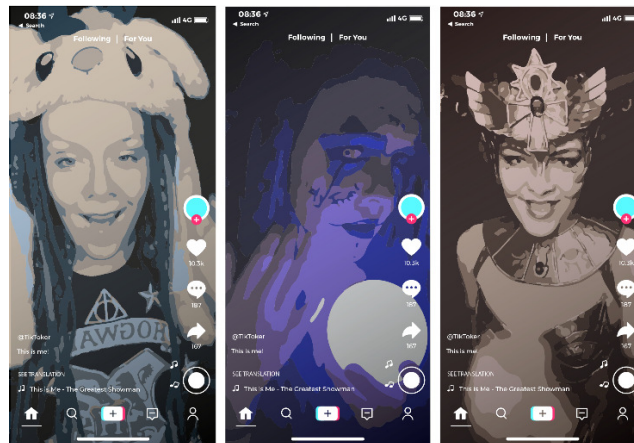
Figure 11. Illustrated TikTok post about culture and other (cosplay).
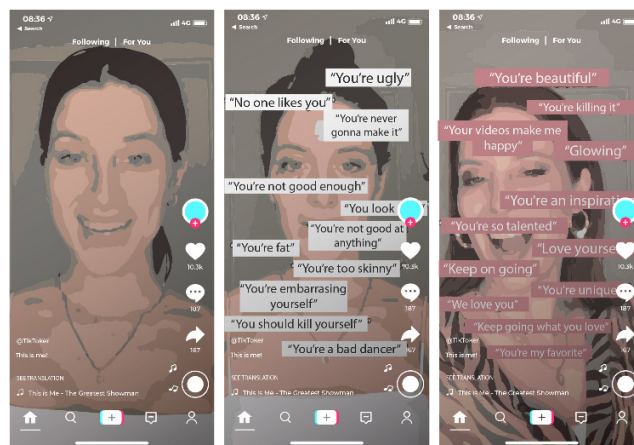
Figure 12. Illustrated TikTok post about other and acknowledgment.

content, and from 0 to –1 for negative content, we found a mean of .528 for polarity. Likewise, we found a mean of .788 for subjectivity. This means that the extensive community posted primarily positive insights with high subjective value. Beyond these data, we choose the most positive comments to understand if sympathy (positivity) reflected support for the identity/injustice shared by the TikTokers (Figure 13).

In contrast to the negative words introduced by the TikTokers, in the comments we found a large number of positive adjectives and emoji characterized, for example, by the LGBTIQ+ flag, and supportive speech (up to 784 comments reported 1 polarity point, i.e., maximum positivity). We found a wide variety of comments that emphasized the beauty of the TikTokers, e.g., "beautiful," "awesome," "amazing," "spectacular 🎊 ☺," "gorgeous," "perfect 👏 👏 👏," among others. We also found terms that referred to the empowerment of these marginalized groups with messages such as "powerful and strong message," "keep fighting for your dreams," or "it's empowering 😍 🥰 🖤." On the other hand, we found expressions that praised the content created by TikTokers: "your transitions are amazing 💯 🤙 👌," "look at that picture quality," "those transitions are cleaner than my face 😵," "super talented 😻 🤍," and "you are a crack and you deserve to be duetted." In most cases we observed that comments introduced multiple emoji with attitudinal meaning that differed from the linguistic prosodic pattern, making evident other emotions (Logi & Zappavigna, 2021). For the cases previously reported, we found facial expressions that consumer science scholars Jaeger and Ares (2017) classified as (a) ☺ = happy, satisfied; (b) 😍 = excited, happy; and (c) 😵 = surprised, shocked. As a result, we observed

a high degree of subjectivity in the comments, as well as a clear positive attitude, showing the community's support for the empowerment of these groups. These data demonstrated growing activist support for marginalized groups through expressions of free and inclusive self-choice (Givropoulou & Tseliou, 2021).

5. Conclusions

In this research we explored the role of music for cybercitizen empowerment within TikTok and the #ThisIsMeChallenge trend. This is a phenomenon based on the transmedia music concept (Vizcaíno-Verdú et al., 2021), whereby fictional songs serve as a driver for appropriating, creating, and sharing meaningful content. Departing from the "This Is Me" song theme and drawing explicit references to the self-improvement and self-esteem of traditionally marginalized groups, we focused on anthropological and sociological aspects related to participatory culture. This approach revealed how identities are shared through social movements that add cultural value using transmedia music (Vizcaíno-Verdú & Abidin, 2021; Vizcaíno-Verdú et al., 2021). Despite the animosity and the dark side of social media emphasized by Kilvington (2021) and Weimann and Masri (2020), in this analysis we have found the opportunities involving music-making interactions for citizen democratization (Chambers, 2021).

Our results reflect the contrasting nature of stories told by TikTokers, which are turned into a motif for reflexivity, equality, capability, acknowledgement, and pride, with the unconditional encouragement of users commenting the posts. If the personality shared through the pre-existing song (Anderson et al., 2020) already makes

Figure 13. Top positive comments on #ThisIsMeChallenge.

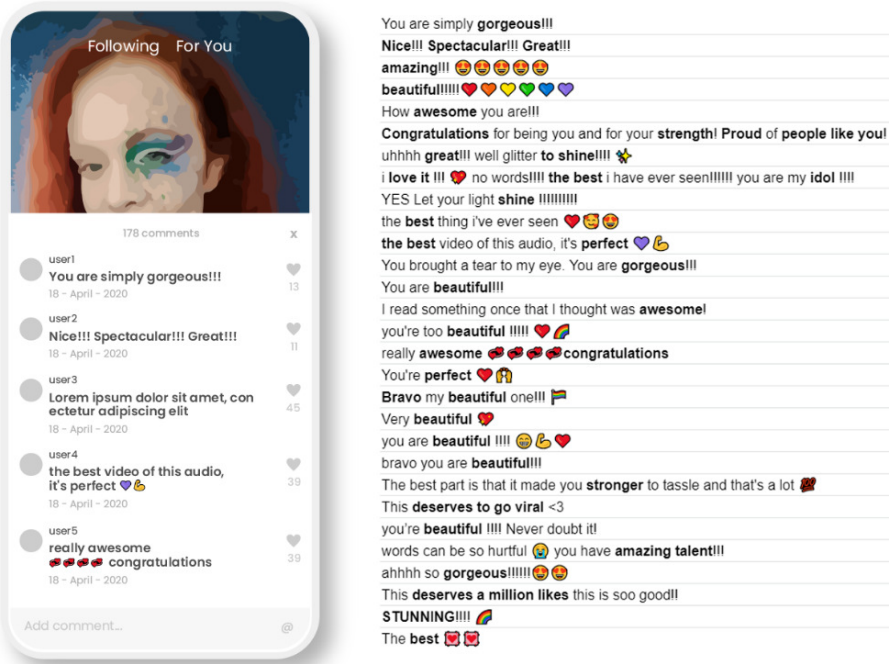us aware of how strong and capable the TikTokers are, even more so the thousands of comments contributing to the support of the individual or collective identity (Asún & Zúñiga, 2013). Albeit the interaction was asynchronous and there was no direct relationship between the TikToker and user (because the amount of comments may not necessarily be associated with true followers in view of the platform's varied content in the "For You Page" feed), the volunteer comments showed the result of what Maiorano et al. (2021) described as empowerment. Precisely, we relied on aspects related to changing preconceived prejudices about the human condition. In other words, the TikTokers shared fears, anxieties, and negative experiences that were supported by messages that ensured diversity, equality, affection and, ultimately, empathy (Chanan, 2011). As such, we could consider that these empowering practices, in which the assumedly normal and real content prevails, disrupts the "aggressive architecture" of the internet (Harvey, 2019). In this sense, we might also suspect that such marginalized groups occupy a high priority for TikTok, especially in the prevention of social discrimination.

In this context, we are faced with a transmedia-empowered video activism approach in which music is motivating individuals and collectives to learn about diversity in cultures and societies. This means that users have initiated a phenomenon that consists in the appropriation of an audio meme (Zulli & Zulli, 2020) inspired by the soundtrack of an original fiction text to express their emotions through a film's story about self-esteem (Vizcaíno-Verdú et al., 2021). Considering the injustices, individual coping, and community support observed, it seems that we are moving towards a transmedia music phenomenon that motivates the empowerment of traditionally marginalized groups (Spears & Postmes, 2015). While this music challenge became a trend with extensive views and engagement, the #ThisIsMeChallenge phenomenon emerging from a film's song lyrics represented a small sample of a broader international social movement related to the decolonization of the global south, LGBTQ+, #MeToo, or #BlackLivesMatter protests.

This study's major limitations are in terms of the sample, statistical power, and SA. Although the statistical-methodological proposal provided insights into a phenomenon grounded in the era of ephemeral content and memes, we found that the limited number of TikTok videos was not statistically significant for all the marginalized groups proposed. In fact, we observed that some of the previously introduced social discriminations (Velasquez & Montgomery, 2020) were not found in the sample. This issue was mainly due to the limited posts created for #ThisIsMeChallenge. In addition, we noted that the SA approach was created by predesigned algorithms that did not provide a semiotic discourse analysis of aspects such as emojis (Logi & Zappavigna, 2021), which produced biases between polarity–subjectivity and reality. Accordingly, we suggest that future research approaches music empowerment on social media using

the proposed codebook, as well as diving deeper into the aspects that make music a transmedia storytelling tool for platforms such as TikTok.

Conflict of Interests

The authors declare no conflict of interests.

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Article

Instagram Influencers as Superwomen: Influencers' Lifestyle Presentations Observed Through Framing Analysis

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Abstract
Female Instagram influencers presumably manipulate their online presentations to conform to the "superwoman ideal" (i.e., the idea that women have to excel in multiple roles). Knowledge of how they build such presentations is important to understand how young women's perception of the superwoman ideal might be affected by social media. As such, the current content analytical study (N = 1,200 posts, 60 influencers) examined how female health and beauty influencers present themselves in accordance with the superwoman ideal and whether such presentations vary by culture (i.e., the US, Belgium, and China). Inductive framing analysis revealed that they highlight their excellence in six roles, which focus on appearance, relationships, activities, achievements, wisdom, and expertise. Additional multilevel analyses suggested that besides beauty, it is most important to be perceived as an exciting and experienced individual. These roles are generalizable across cultures, implying that the superwoman ideal is presented identically worldwide.

1. Introduction

The lifestyles of most top Instagram influencers appear perfect to their followers (Chae, 2018), yet we know little about how they build such lifestyles. Female influencers likely engage in framing practices to comply with the superwoman ideal, which refers to the—predominantly Western—societal idea that women should "have it all" (e.g., be beautiful, have a successful career; McRobbie, 2010). This knowledge is important because the superwoman ideal is partially responsible for the role overload (i.e., being overwhelmed by the total number of roles one has to fulfill) experienced by a significant portion of young women (De Lenne et al., 2018; Glynn et al., 2009).

Drawing upon the principles of framing theory (Entman, 1993), the current study (60 influencers, 1,200 posts) aims to shed light on female Instagram influencers' lifestyle presentations by examining how macro- (i.e., minimum 10,000 followers) and mega- (i.e., minimum 100,000; Oliveira et al., 2019) influencers strategically combine visual (i.e., picture/video) and textual information to present themselves as excellent in multiple roles. Furthermore, contextual elements, such as sexualization and the number of likes, might shape how the audience interprets the superwoman ideal and which roles to focus on. As such, this study explores the extent to which influencers show themselves in a sexualized manner across roles and whether differences between roles exist in the number of likes they receive. Given that influencers presumably frame their lifestyle according to their pre-existing cultural beliefs, they might highlight certain roles more than others, depending on the

dominant values in their culture. Thus, we investigate female influencers from three distinctive cultures: US, Belgium, and China.

1.1. Influencers as Superwomen: Beyond Beauty

Instagram influencers have become famous through their Instagram profiles and position themselves as experts on one or several topics of interest (Khamis et al., 2017). The most popular topics are beauty, fashion, fitness, and food, which are predominantly approached by female influencers (Marwick, 2015). Influencers can be classified into four categories, depending on their number of followers: a) nano (0–1,000), b) micro (1,000–10,000), c) macro (10,000–100,000), and d) mega (above 100,000; Oliveira et al., 2019).

Previous studies on female influencers have predominantly focused on their (sexualized) appearances, and the findings suggested that they edit their posts, wear revealing clothes, and take on sexualized poses (Hund, 2017). Popular female influencers are highly criticized for such presentations, as they might trigger their followers—especially young women—to behave in a similar manner (Pilgrim & Bohnet-Joschko, 2019).

Although their appearances typically comply with the dominant norms of physical appearance, they do not solely focus on their beauty (Djafarova & Trofimenko, 2019). Women in today's society are encouraged to "have it all," meaning that they should build a successful career while also having a flourishing social life, interesting hobbies, and a lovely family (McRobbie, 2010; Sumra & Schillaci, 2015). The urge to concurrently excel in multiple life aspects, which is referred to as the superwoman ideal (McRobbie, 2010; Sumra & Schillaci, 2015), stems from the gradual shift in role expectations women have experienced over the past years. Besides taking care of their household, they are now concerned with successfully performing in multiple roles (Sumra & Schillaci, 2015). Although superwomen are expected to excel in multiple roles concurrently, some roles (e.g., successful career) might be more important to fulfill than others (e.g., practicing sports; Heather, 2008).

Research among followers of top female influencers has indicated that their lifestyle presentations comply with the superwoman ideal, yet systematic research on this subject is missing (Chae, 2018). How influencers build their lifestyle exactly and strategically focus on certain roles they fulfill can further be understood from the perspective of framing theory (Entman, 1993).

1.2. Understanding Influencers' Lifestyle Presentations from the Perspective of Framing Theory

Framing is defined as "selecting some aspects of a perceived reality and making them more salient" and refers to the manner in which the media present a topic (Entman, 1993, p. 52). Through carefully selecting and highlighting particular elements of a story, the media draw attention to them to influence individuals' perception of that story (Van Gorp, 2007). Hence, they provide a certain meaning to a message, also known as a frame, which guides how individuals process and interpret that message (Entman, 1993). Such frames generally emerge from a combination of visual and textual elements (Van Gorp, 2007).

Although framing theory is mostly used in political communication (Tewksbury & Scheufele, 2009), content analyses on social media have suggested that this theory can also provide an explanatory framework for entertainment media. Fountaine (2017) examined how female politicians framed themselves on Twitter and recognized two clear frames: one focusing on status as a busy politician (i.e., busy local MP), and the other focusing on relations with voters (i.e., relational politician). The politicians used these frames in varying degrees across their presentations. Moreover, they were nonexclusive, meaning that elements of both frames were often recognized within the same tweet. Such research suggests that women emphasize multiple roles in their online presentations.

Female influencers' lifestyle presentations in relation to the superwoman ideal can also be understood from the perspective of framing theory. The superwoman ideal implies that they highlight various events (e.g., family gatherings and business trips) to emphasize that they are doing well in this role (Leban et al., 2020). Framing theory suggests that each element of the Instagram post (i.e., picture/video and caption) should focus on this highlighted role. Hence, by using framing practices to accentuate different roles in different posts, female influencers can present themselves as complying with the superwoman ideal (Leban et al., 2020).

As no study has yet investigated which roles influencers emphasize, this study first inductively explores the elements (i.e., picture/video and caption) of popular female influencers' profile posts to reveal the recurrent roles (RQ1a). Not all roles of the superwoman ideal are equally important (McRobbie, 2010); some of them (e.g., being smart) might also be less suitable to cover in an entertaining Instagram post (Schreurs & Vandenbosch, 2021). As such, the current study also aims to deductively examine the extent to which each of the previously recognized roles occur (RQ1b). We thus assume that female influencers illustrate their compliance with the superwomen ideal by highlighting different roles across Instagram posts. However, the study on female politicians' framing on Twitter suggests that multiple roles can be promoted in a singular post (Fountaine, 2017). As such, the second research question explores the extent to which the recognized roles co-occur within posts (RQ2).

Moreover, some contextual elements may be so prominent that they deserve additional attention when studying the occurrence of female roles. Sexualization (i.e., to evaluate someone in terms of their physical appearance and sexiness; APA Task Force on the

Sexualization of Girls, 2007) might be such an element. Instagram's visual nature suggests that sexual attractiveness is an essential aspect to focus on, regardless of the emphasized role (Hund, 2017). Compliance with the prevailing standards of beauty and sexiness becomes so important that it is frequently accentuated while focusing on specific appearance- and non-appearance-related roles. Additionally, consistent sexualization corresponds with the ubiquitous "beauty is good" stereotype, which describes beauty as an essential precondition to be successful in other roles (Northup & Liebler, 2010). Even non-appearance-related roles are thus likely to be presented in a sexualized manner. By doing this, influencers can contribute to the idea that, overall, women have to be sexy and appealing (Pilgrim & Bohnet-Joschko, 2019). As such, the third research question asks to what extent influencers present themselves in a sexualized manner across different roles (RQ3).

Next, the metric information (i.e., likes) accompanying posts is also relevant to be examined. Some roles presumably receive more likes than others, which allows followers to detect the most prestigious roles to fulfill. Prior research has shown that, for instance, family posts receive an abundance of likes (Park & Lee, 2017), which suggests that having a lovely family is highly appreciated by the audience. Young women might attach greater importance to these roles than other less liked roles (Mascheroni et al., 2015). Hence, the fourth research question examines whether the number of likes varies across roles (RQ4).

The knowledge that follows from answering these research questions will help us to understand how young women's construction of the superwoman ideal can be affected by social media. Framing theory explains that individuals organize and interpret information using cognitive schemas, which are described as mental structures about a particular topic (Entman, 1993; Scheufele, 2004). Women presumably also possess schemas about the superwoman ideal, and influencers' presentations might activate and/or modify these schemas (Heather, 2008; Mensinger et al., 2007). As such, young women may perceive frequently highlighted roles as important to focus on and even add new roles to their schemas. Frequent activation (i.e., exposure) results in chronic accessibility, which implies that young women actively use these schemas to shape their own lifestyles (Scheufele, 2004).

Moreover, sexualized content and metric information (i.e., likes) might affect the construction of superwoman schemas. According to social cognitive theory, individuals are more likely to model reinforced behaviors (Bandura, 2001). Roles that receive more likes are thus presumably perceived as good and important to comply with. Additionally, sexualized content draws more attention than nonsexual content, which implies that roles depicted in a sexualized manner can be memorized better (Wirtz et al., 2018). However, sexualized content can also interfere with the highlighted role (e.g., nursing a baby in lingerie). Young women might perceive the influ-

encer as less successful in that domain and neglect the emphasized role (Harrison & Secarea, 2010).

1.3. Superwoman Lifestyle: Different Interpretations Across the Globe?

Generally, the meaning of a frame is rooted in a cultural context and thus based on pre-existing ideas (Van Gorp, 2007). Culture refers to the characteristics of a particular group of people sharing common values and ideas, which they use to provide meaning to messages and events (Gamson & Modigliani, 1989; Van Gorp, 2007). Thus, how a message is framed depends on cultural beliefs, and slight differences in focus between cultures are likely to occur (Van Gorp, 2007).

The superwoman ideal has emerged from modern Western societal values and matches the idea of the "American dream," which denotes that anyone can become successful if they work hard enough (Glynn et al., 2009; Sumra & Schillaci, 2015). Therefore, the superwoman concept tends to be rather individualistic, as it stresses women's own responsibility for success in multiple roles (Singelis et al., 1995). These roles are of varying importance, as young women in such cultures are typically encouraged to build a successful career before starting a family (Heather, 2008; McRobbie, 2010). However, Western cultures also differ from each other, as individualism can be divided into horizontal (i.e., equality) and vertical (i.e., inequality) variants (Singelis et al., 1995). West Europeans (e.g., Belgium) tend toward the horizontal axis as they value personal development and experiences over competition (Schwartz, 2014). For them, a superwoman is mainly occupied with self-development and exploration. North Americans (e.g., the US), on the other hand, tend toward the vertical axis as they encourage competition and progress (Schwartz, 2014).

However, globalization processes have ensured that this concept is also adopted by collectivistic cultures, such as China (Fang & Walker, 2015). Especially due to the global nature of social media, the self-presentation styles of Western influencers can be easily adopted by non-Western influencers (Schroeder, 2016). Yet, their presentations might still reflect their cultural background, as they are assumed to prioritize different roles. As such cultures emphasize relationships and solidarity (Schwartz, 2014), their idea of a superwoman presumably focuses more on taking good care of the family.

Thus, we assume that different cultures define a superwoman as someone who excels in multiple roles, but the allocated importance to each role likely varies across them. Female influencers might highlight various roles in their posts but systematically emphasize certain roles more than others because they correspond to dominant values in their culture. To examine whether such cultural differences are present in the superwoman ideal, this study compared whether female influencers from the US, Belgium, and China differ in the roles they emphasize more (RQ5a) and whether cultural differences exist

in the number of likes each of these roles receive (RQ5b). US-American and Chinese influencers were selected because they are both leading examples of a highly individualistic (i.e., US) and collectivistic culture (i.e., China; Schwartz, 2014). As their values are opposite to each other, comparing them will likely yield interesting results concerning how Western and non-Western cultures vary in their interpretation and disclosure of the superwoman ideal. Despite governmental restrictions, Instagram accounts for over 3,5 million users from mainland China, which are mostly adolescents and young adults (NapoleonCat, 2021). Additionally, influencers seem highly popular in this country, as most Chinese youth report following at least one influencer (Thomala, 2021). Therefore, knowledge of how Chinese influencers present themselves and their lifestyles on Instagram is important to understand how they possibly shape young Chinese women's ideas of the superwoman. Finally, Belgian influencers represent West European culture. Belgium was selected because of its international status and central position as the capital of the European Union (Bradford, 2020). Within this country and Europe in general, Instagram is one of the most popular social media applications, especially among adolescents and young adults (Statista, 2021a). Nearly one out of four Belgian young adults reported following or searching for influencers (Statista, 2021b). Moreover, Belgium is an individualistic country. However, compared to the US, it positions itself more moderately on typical individualistic values, such as power and competition (Schwartz, 2014). Thus, the popularity of influencers and moderate individualistic values make Belgium an interesting European case with which the disclosure of the superwoman ideal can be compared.

2. Method

2.1. Sample

To examine how the top female Instagram influencers frame their lifestyle, 60 profiles (i.e., 20 Flemish, 20 US American, and 20 Chinese) were analyzed (M_{age} = 26.02, SD = 2.73). The metrics of these accounts can be found online (see Supplementary Material). First, search terms related to health and beauty influencers were entered into the online search engine Google. The search terms included "top 10 popular Flemish beauty influencers" and "popular Chinese health influencers" (Boepple et al., 2016; Cohen et al., 2019). As we aimed to examine macro- and mega-influencers, the following selection criteria were used: a) a minimum of 10,000 followers, b) a minimum of 100 posts, and c) content related to fashion/beauty or exercising/food (Cohen et al., 2019; Oliveira et al., 2019). Per category, the first 10 influencers we encountered in rankings and who met the selection criteria were selected, ensuring variation in the content (e.g., food, fitness, yoga, make-up, fashion, and beauty products) and reach (10,000–12,820,800 follow-

ers). Finally, the 20 most recent posts were retrieved, resulting in a final sample of 1,200 Instagram posts. Likes on posts tend to stabilize after approximately one day (Cotter, 2019; Yau & Reich, 2019). Therefore the researchers ensured that the sampled posts remained online for at least two days at the moment of coding. Because embedded links were used during the coding process, a deleted post was replaced with the next most recent post of the influencer. Therefore, a small portion of the sample (0.4%) was online for less than two days. The researchers examined only the first picture or video of a post.

2.2. Qualitative Framing Analysis

To explore recurring roles in female influencers' lifestyle presentations (RQ1a), an inductive framing analysis was conducted. The main goal was the construction of a frame package, which included a core frame, the reasoning devices, and the framing devices (Van Gorp, 2007). The core frame involves the central idea (i.e., role), while the framing devices refer to the indicators from which the core frame can be recognized (e.g., images). Finally, reasoning devices indicate the frame's conceptual content (e.g., definition). Together, these concepts form a cognitive scheme to properly interpret the message (Gamson & Modigliani, 1989). To perform this analysis, a random subsample of 30% of the posts (N = 360) was selected.

2.2.1. Analysis Procedure

The framing analysis was performed in three phases by two experienced researchers (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). First, posts were analyzed using an open coding system. All textual and visual elements of the posts were assigned individual codes. Next, codes that referred to similar presentations were combined as overarching roles (i.e., axial coding). This final list was checked for completeness by verifying whether each post could be classified under at least one specified role. Finally, frame packages were created based on the identified framing and reasoning devices and can be found online (see Supplementary Material). The frame itself referred to a specific role that was expressed through a combination of visual and textual elements. The researchers repeatedly re-evaluated the constructed frames until a saturation point was reached and no new frames could be detected.

2.2.2. Six Dominant Roles

The inductive framing analysis resulted in six core frames or roles. The first role, named "the beauty," focuses on the influencer herself and her beauty. This role is expressed through posts in which she is mostly alone and does not engage in meaningful activities (e.g., selfie). In the second role, named "the caring person," the influencer attempts to emphasize meaningful relationships (e.g., family and friends). This role is expressed through

pictures with loved ones and expressing emotions toward them in the caption. In the third role, named "the busy bee," the influencer wants to be considered a busy and exciting person. This role is expressed through posts about noteworthy activities (e.g., social events and festivals). In the fourth role, named "the achiever," the influencer wants to be seen as a go-getter and hard worker. This role is expressed through posts about achievements (e.g., awards). In the fifth role, named "the role model," the influencer wants to be perceived as an inspiring person who encourages followers to improve themselves. This role is predominantly expressed through inspirational quotes in pictures or captions. The final role, named "the expert," emphasizes the influencer's expertise. She wants to portray herself as a knowledgeable and credible teacher. This role is expressed through posting, for example, beauty tips or food recipes.

2.3. Quantitative Coding Analysis

Next, a coding manual was developed to quantitatively analyze the complete sample of Instagram posts. In a preliminary phase, two independent coders tested the coding manual on a separate sample to compare coding decisions and resolve disagreements (N = 360, $κ$ = .73–1.00). Next, the first author extensively trained another independent coder, and each coded 20% of the full sample (N = 240) to evaluate intercoder reliability. The measures were reliable ($κ$ = .83–1; McHugh, 2012).

2.3.1. Coding Manual

First, the number of likes was assessed. Next, sexualization was measured by coding the influencer's facial expression (1 = *neutral*, 2 = *sexy*, 3 = *funny*, or 4 = *smiling*; Hund, 2017), visibility of body parts (0 = *none*, 1 = *low body-ism*, 2 = *average body-ism*, 3 = *high body-ism*, and 4 = *sexualized body parts*), type of clothing (1 = *unrevealing*, 2 = *tight fit*, 3 = *medium revealing*, and 4 = *revealing*), and amount of make-up (0 = *no*, 1 = *excessive*, and 2 = *natural*; Cohen et al., 2019; Smolak et al., 2014). Finally, the coder indicated whether or not (0 = *no*, 1 = *yes*) each of the roles were present. These roles were present when the post as a whole (i.e., picture/video and caption) clearly matched the definition. In cases where two (or more) roles appeared simultaneously, both were coded as present.

2.4. Measures

To accurately analyze differences in the number of likes between roles and across cultures (RQ3, RQ5b), a new variable (i.e., type of role) was created. The dichotomous roles were recoded into one categorical variable (1 = *the beauty*, 2 = *the caring person*, 3 = *the busy bee*, 4 = *the achiever*, 5 = *the role model*, 6 = *the expert*, and 7 = *a combination of roles*). Moreover, to analyze differences in sexualization (RQ4), the four sexualization variables were

transformed into dichotomous variables. Posts received a score of 1 if their facial expressions were sexy, their body parts were sexualized, their clothing was (medium) revealing, and they wore excessive make-up. Otherwise, they received a score of 0 on these variables. Afterwards, a new variable (i.e., level of sexualization) was created, with scores reaching from 0 = *not at all sexualized* to 4 = *extremely sexualized*.

2.5. Analytical Strategy

The presence of roles across and within posts (RQ1b, RQ2) was analyzed using descriptive statistics. As the sample included multiple posts per influencer, multilevel models were conducted in R using the *lme4* package (Bates et al., 2015). To assess differences in the level of sexualization (RQ3), we performed a multilevel linear regression with "type of role" as the explanatory variable and "level of sexualization" as the outcome variable. Similarly, to examine whether the recognized roles differed in the number of likes they received (RQ4), we performed a multilevel linear regression with "type of role" as the explanatory variable and the number of likes as the outcome variable. Given that the number of likes varied considerably among the influencers, this variable was weighted. Posts thus scored a higher (positive) or lower (negative) number of likes compared to the average number of likes (0) the influencer received. To assess whether these differences are culturally dependent (RQ5b), an interaction term between "type of role" and culture was entered into the previous multilevel linear regression. The new variable "type of role," culture, and an interaction term between these two were thus included as categorical explanatory variables, while the number of likes was included as the outcome variable. Since R automatically dummy codes the categorical variables, such linear regressions allow us to compare each of the roles and cultures with the reference category. The reference category in this case was the first category listed. For the type of role, this reference category was *the beauty*, and for culture, it was American. The reference categories can be changed with the *relevel()* function (Bates et al., 2015). Finally, to assess cultural differences in the occurrence of roles (RQ5a), multilevel binary logistic regressions were conducted, with culture as a categorical explanatory variable and the roles as binary outcome variables. Similar to multilevel linear regressions, the categorical variable was also automatically dummy-coded, which allowed us to discover whether the likelihood of using a certain role differed between cultures.

3. Results

3.1. Presence of Roles (RQ1b, RQ2)

The beauty was present in 32.7% of the posts (N = 392) and was therefore the most highlighted role. *The busy bee* (25.6%, N = 307) and *the expert* (17.9%, N = 215)

appeared to be the second and third most emphasized roles, while *the caring person*, *the achiever*, and *the role model* were less popular and present in 11.5% (*N* = 138), 2.9% (*N* = 35), and 0.9% (*N* = 11) of the posts, respectively. In 7.4% of the posts (*N* = 90), multiple roles appeared simultaneously. *The beauty* and *the busy bee* (4.4%, *N* = 53) appeared to be the most used combination of roles (e.g., vacation bikini selfie). Another popular combination was *the caring person* and *the busy bee* (1.3%, *N* = 16; e.g., group of friends celebrating a festival).

3.2. Differences in the Level of Sexualization (RQ3)

According to the results, none of the posts were extremely sexualized, 0.2% were sexualized (i.e., score of three on sexualization), and 10.2% were moderately sexualized (i.e., score of two on sexualization). A few posts depicting *the expert* (0.5%) and a combination of roles (1%) were sexualized. Similarly, a minority of the posts depicting *the beauty* (18.4%), *the role model* (9.1%), *the achiever* (8.6%), a combination of roles (7.8%), *the busy bee* (7.2%), *the caring person* (5.1%), and *the expert* (4.2%) were moderately sexualized.

Significant differences in sexualization were present (χ^2(6) = 132.61, *p* < .001). *The beauty* was more sexualized than *the caring person* (*p* < .001), *the busy bee* (*p* < .001), *the achiever* (*p* < .001), *the role model* (*p* < .001), and *the expert* (*p* < .001). *The caring person* was less sexualized than *the busy bee* (*p* = .02) and a combination of roles (*p* < .001). *The busy bee* was more sexualized than *the expert* (*p* < .001) but less sexualized than a combination of roles (*p* = .04). Finally, *the role model* (*p* = .04) and *the expert* (*p* < .001) were less sexualized than a combination of roles. An overview of all results can be found in Table 1.

3.3. Differences in Number of Likes (RQ4)

Significant differences in the number of likes were present as well (χ^2(6) = 66.20, *p* < .001). *The beauty* received more likes than *the busy bee* (*p* < .001), *the role model* (*p* < .001), and *the expert* (*p* < .001). Similarly, *the caring person* received more likes than *the busy bee* (*p* = .02), *the role model* (*p* < .001), and *the expert* (*p* < .001). *The busy bee*, in turn, received fewer likes than *the achiever* (*p* = .01) and a combination of roles (*p* < .001) but more likes than *the role model* (*p* < .001) and *the expert* (*p* = .02). *The achiever* received more likes than *the role model* (*p* < .001) and *the expert* (*p* < .001), while *the role model* received fewer likes than *the expert* (*p* = .03) and *a combination of roles* (*p* < .001). Finally, *the expert* received fewer likes than a combination of roles (*p* < .001). An overview of all results can be found in Table 2.

3.4. Cultural Differences (RQ5)

The beauty, *the caring person*, and *the role model* were emphasized more in the posts of Chinese and

US-American influencers than Flemish ones. Next, *the busy bee* was emphasized more in the posts of Flemish and Chinese influencers, compared to US-American influencers. This difference appeared to be significant (χ^2(2) = 13.98, *p* < .001) for both Flemish (*p* < .001) and Chinese influencers (*p* = .03). Flemish influencers were 3.11 times and Chinese influencers were 1.95 times more likely to emphasize *the busy bee* than US-American influencers. Moreover, *the expert* and *the achiever* occurred more in the posts of Flemish and US-American influencers than those of Chinese. For *the achiever*, this difference was significant (χ^2(2) = 6.76, *p* = .03) for both US-American (*p* = .01) and Flemish influencers (*p* = .03). Chinese influencers were 4.35 times less likely to emphasize this role compared to US-American influencers and 3.33 times less likely compared to Flemish influencers. An overview of all results can be found in Table 3. Finally, both culture (χ^2(2) = .17, *p* = .92) and the interaction term between type of role and culture (χ^2(12) = 13.32, *p* = .35) were not significant predictors of differences in the number of likes.

4. Discussion

A framing analysis of 60 female Instagram influencers' profile posts (*N* = 1,200) revealed that they generally emphasize six roles in their presentations, which focus on their appearance (i.e., *the beauty*), relationships (i.e., *the caring person*), activities (i.e., *the busy bee*), achievements (i.e., *the achiever*), wisdom (i.e., *the role model*), and expertise (i.e., *the expert*). By highlighting these roles, influencers illustrate their excellence and compliance with the superwoman ideal. However, not all these roles seem to be equally important to focus on. *The beauty*, *the busy bee*, and *the expert* are the most commonly highlighted roles, meaning that it is most important to be beautiful, have an exciting life, and be an expert in your field. Similar to Fountaine's (2017) study, multiple roles often appear within one post to further emphasize their perfection in various life domains simultaneously.

Although *the beauty*, *the busy bee*, and *the expert* occur most frequently, *the expert* received fewer likes compared to the other roles. *The achiever*, *the caring person*, and *the beauty* received, on average, the most likes. In line with previous research, appearance and meaningful relationships are most appreciated by the audience (Park & Lee, 2017). Furthermore, moderate forms of sexualization largely appear in posts highlighting *beauty* and to a lesser extent in other posts, which is not surprising given that *beauty* is mainly focused on appearance and therefore lends itself more to sexualization. Female influencers are presumably aware of the fact that sexualized content might be inconsistent with other, non-appearance-related roles and therefore reduce sexualized content to secure their status as a superwoman (Harrison & Secarea, 2010). As *beauty* is the most common, the most popular, as well as the

Table 1. Differences in sexualization between roles.

	1.			2.			3.			4.			5.			6.		
	B	*SE*	*t*	*B*	*SE*	*t*	*B*	*SE*	*t*	*B*	*SE*	*t*	*B*	*SE*	*t*	*B*	*SE*	*t*
1. The beauty M = .85	—	—	—															
2. The caring person M = .36	−.44***	.06	−7.25	—	—													
3. The busy bee M = .53	−.30***	.05	−6.47	.15*	.06	2.31	—	—										
4. The achiever M = .63	−.35***	.11	−3.28	.09	.11	.80	−.06	.11	−.52	—	—	—						
5. The role model M = .18	−.55***	.19	−2.95	−.11	.19	−.58	−.26	.19	−1.37	−.20	.21	−.95	—	—	—			
6. The expert M = .24	−.58***	.06	−10.37	−.13	.07	−1.90	−.28***	.06	−4.87	−.22	.11	−2.00	−.02	.19	−.11	—	—	—
7. Combination M = .65	−.14	.07	−1.96	.30***	.08	3.61	.16*	.07	2.09	.21	.12	1.73	.41*	.20	2.10	.43***	.08	5.45

Notes: This table represents the differences in level of sexualization (outcome variable) between each of the roles (predictor variable); Columns represent the reference category (= 0); The value of *M* represents the average level of sexualization within each role (on a scale of 0 to 4) * *p* < .05, ** *p* < .01, *** *p* < .001.

Table 2. Differences in the number of likes between roles.

	1.			2.			3.			4.			5.			6.		
	B	SE	t	B	SE	t	B	SE	t	B	SE	t	B	SE	t	B	SE	t
1. The beauty M = 38,652.50	—	—	—															
2. The caring person M = 51,460.75	−.06	.09	−.66	—	—	—												
3. The busy bee M = 23,333.85	−.29***	.07	−4.05	−.23*	.10	−2.38	—	—	—									
4. The achiever M = 74,464	.12	.17	.47	.18	.18	1.02	.42*	.17	2.45	—	—	—						
5. The role model M = 19,407.45	−1.15***	.29	−3.95	−1.09***	.29	−3.65	−.85**	.29	−2.93	−1.27***	.33	−3.86	—	—				
6. The expert M = 14,622.73	−.50***	.08	−6.17	−.44***	.10	−4.21	−.20*	.08	−2.42	−.62***	.17	−3.58	.65*	.29	2.21	—	—	
7. Combination M = 6,253.97	.06	.11	.61	.27	.13	1.02	.36**	.11	3.29	−.06	.19	−.31	1.21***	.30	4.02	.56***	.11	4.92

Notes: This table represents the differences in the number of likes (outcome variable) between each of the roles (predictor variable); Columns represent the reference category (= 0); The value of M represents the average number of likes on each role; * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

Table 3. Cultural differences in the use of roles.

	B	SE	OR	95% CI Lower bound	95% CI Upper bound	Flemish %	US American %	Chinese %
1. The beauty	−.08[a]	.40[a]	.92[a]	.42[a]	2.02[a]	21.5%	36.3%	40.3%
	.32[b]	.39[b]	1.37[b]	.63[b]	2.97[b]			
	−.39[c]	.40[c]	.67[c]	.31[c]	1.47[c]			
2. The caring person	−.38[a]	.37[a]	.68[a]	.33[a]	1.42[a]	8.0%	14.2%	12.3%
	−.06[b]	.36[b]	.94[b]	.46[b]	1.92[b]			
	−.33[c]	.37[c]	.72[c]	.35[c]	1.50[c]			
3. The busy bee	1.13***[a]	.30[a]	3.11[a]	1.71[a]	5.65[a]	28.2%	19.5%	29%
	.67*[b]	.31[b]	1.95[b]	1.07[b]	3.56[b]			
	.46[c]	.30[c]	1.59[c]	.89[c]	2.85[c]			
4. The achiever	−.23[a]	.42[a]	.79[a]	.35[a]	1.81[a]	3.3%	4.8%	.8%
	−1.45*[b]	.56[b]	.23[b]	.08[b]	.71[b]			
	1.22*[c]	.57[c]	3.39[c]	1.10[c]	10.46[c]			
5. The role model	−.25[a]	1.40[a]	.28[a]	.02[a]	4.35[a]	.3%	1.3%	1.3%
	−1.28[b]	1.11[b]	.78[b]	.09[b]	6.84[b]			
	−1.03[c]	1.44[c]	.36[c]	.02[c]	5.99[c]			
6. The expert	.02[a]	.45[a]	1.02[a]	.42[a]	2.50[a]	19.5%	22.8%	11.5%
	−.76[b]	.47[b]	.47[b]	.19[b]	1.18[b]			
	.78[c]	.47[c]	2.19[c]	.87[c]	5.48[c]			

Notes: This table represents the differences in usage of roles (outcome variable) between each of the cultures (predictor variable); [a] Flemish influencers compared to US-American influencers; [b] Chinese influencers compared to US-American influencers; [c] Flemish influencers compared to Chinese influencers; *$p < .05$, **$p < .01$, ***$p < .001$.

most sexualized role, followers will probably acknowledge this role as most important to focus on (Wirtz et al., 2018). As such, the critique on the sexualized nature of female influencers is justified as the idea remains that, above all, one has to be beautiful and sexy (Pilgrim & Bohnet-Joschko, 2019).

As young women are engaged in the process of identity formation, they might internalize the idea that they have to be superwomen to succeed in life (Heather, 2008). Therefore, knowledge of how influencers strategically frame their lifestyle is important, because such presentations presumably shape young women's understanding of what it means to be a superwoman (Heather, 2008). As such, they are constantly encouraged to excel in multiple domains (e.g., appearance and social life) to avoid the fear of not performing well enough (Glynn et al., 2009). This constant pressure possibly leads to role overload, which refers to the feeling of being overwhelmed by the high number of roles one has to manage (Glynn et al., 2009). However, such presentations might also be inspirational and encourage young women to improve themselves (Meier & Schäfer, 2018). Future research should explore how influencers' superwomen presentations can both negatively and positively affect young women and under which circumstances such outcomes occur.

Finally, the most important roles (i.e., beauty, experience, and expertise) have an individualistic connotation, which supports the idea that the superwoman ideal is predominantly Western (Glynn et al., 2009; Mensinger et al., 2007). According to the results, small cultural differences exist regarding the roles of the busy bee and the achiever. In line with the literature on cultural orientations (Schwartz, 2014), US-American influencers seem less focused on exciting activities than Flemish and Chinese influencers but more focused on achievements. The absence of other cultural differences suggests that the superwoman ideal is similar across cultures, which supports the idea of the Westernization of cultural constructs, such as the superwoman ideal (Schroeder, 2016).

Although this study reveals interesting insights, some limitations exist. First, we focused only on Instagram, while other platforms (e.g., TikTok) generate different types of content and might therefore highlight different roles. Second, only persistent content was analyzed (e.g., pictures), while influencers presumably present themselves as less flawless in ephemeral content (e.g., stories) given the temporal nature of such content. Additionally, Instagram has recently added the option to conceal the number of likes on posts. At the time of sampling, this option was not yet available and therefore does not bias our results. However, future

research should explore whether this option affects how influencers present themselves according to the super-woman ideal. Moreover, as Instagram is inaccessible to Chinese inhabitants, the selected Chinese influencers supposedly reside in a neighboring country or use a VPN to access Instagram. As they cannot properly reach their Chinese audience, they might have adapted their content to an international audience, which explains the absence of cultural differences. Finally, only health and beauty influencers were taken into account, which might explain the dominance of the appearance role. Future research should explore whether influencers on different topics (e.g., travel) provide different superwoman roles.

We can conclude that although beauty was the most important role that influencers emphasized, being a caring, exciting, high-achieving, inspiring, and knowledgeable person seems to be a substantial part of a superwoman as well. These roles are generalizable across cultures, which implies that young women worldwide are exposed to nearly identical presentations of what it means to be a successful superwoman.

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Conflict of Interests

The authors declare no conflict of interests.

Supplementary Material

Supplementary material for this article is available online at: https://osf.io/fzyge

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Article

Promoting Social Media Engagement Via Branded Content Communication: A Fashion Brands Study on Instagram

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Abstract

Social networks have become crucial communication channels for brands through awareness, engagement, and word of mouth. Instagram is firmly positioned as a direct gateway between brands and consumers, as it became the fifth most-used social network globally in 2021. As such, branded content is expected to increase the brand's likability, by capturing the interest and attention of the consumer, which could differ depending on what social media platform is used. This study aims to analyze whether there is a relationship between the branded content published on the Instagram profile of luxury brands (Manolo Blahnik and Loewe) and the interactions of and with its followers, focusing on branded content communication associated to industrial, social responsibility, and commercial issues. A correlational study is presented using a quantitative methodology to test the hypotheses through an ANOVA analysis. The results show which type of content is more productive on Instagram's social network profile, helping diffusion of the firm, as it provokes more reactions from followers when using branded content related to social responsibility. It is also worth noting the extent of the interactions that branded content shows within the brand, whose influence is detected not in averages but in reach. The study's conclusions allow us to affirm that branded content directly impacts brand reputation, generating positive engagement in all the cases analyzed. The study contributes to a better understanding of the branded content effect on consumers.

Keywords

branded content; digital communication; engagement; Instagram; luxury; social media

Issue

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1. Introduction

Consumption, interaction, and communication mediated by social media and mobile apps (Pérez-Escoda et al., 2016) have undergone a considerable transformation in all their processes, giving rise to new narratives for an audience that is continuously connected through mobile devices, mainly fostered by digital platforms (Pérez-Tornero & Pedrero-Esteban, 2020). The mediation of the internet has extensively modified relationships between brands and customers. Social networks have transformed consumers' role, emerging like active users where brands interact directly with them (Castillo-Abdul, Pérez-Escoda, & Civila, 2021). Branded content as a network marketing technique is firmly positioning itself in the online environment not only as an effective strategy for the creation of content related to brands (Chen & Shupei, 2019), but also as an effective narrative tool

in the fight against the recent phenomenon known as infodemic, which emerged and was fostered during the Covid-19 pandemic situation with fake news (Pérez-Escoda et al., 2021).

One of the most crucial issues that arises within this framework is the engagement produced by the branded content, which reaches users during this interaction. As described by Voorveld et al. (2018), "social media engagement is defined as the emotional, intuitive experiences or perceptions that people undergo when using a particular medium at a particular moment" and we can also add, when interacting with a particular brand. As previously indicated by Voorveld (2019), this situation establishes theoretical and practical implications for research in this field. Theoretical implications relate to the ongoing evolution of communicative processes involving new strategies and phenomena, such as engagement (Sádaba & Pérez-Escoda, 2020). Practical implications change relationships between brands and customers, who can now communicate with each other in a direct and bidirectional manner.

In this regard, this article asks if a relationship exists between the brand content published on the Instagram accounts of two luxury brands in the textile sector, and the interactions with their followers. Specifically, we analyze the extent to which brand content influences the luxury retailers Manolo Blahnik and Loewe's Instagram audience and their interactions on the network as social media consumers of these fashion brands. This study allows us to determine what type of content is more productive on the Instagram social network, by helping with the diffusion of the firm, as it provokes more reactions among the followers.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1. Branded Content as Digital Narrative for Engagement

Digital narratives can be described as a set of communication techniques arranged in a digital context that can be designed with different purposes, depending on who designs them and what is designed for them. The increasing use of social media in advertising and marketing has positioned branded content as a beneficial strategy promoting and positioning brands and activating interaction processes with clients (Castillo-Abdul et al., 2020). It is worth mentioning that the conceptualization of branded content has integrated different scopes. On the one hand, some authors have highlighted the communicative perspective, considering branded content as an emergent form of marketing communication media (Sánchez-Cobarro et al., 2021). On the other hand, we found creative perspectives in which content was understood explicitly as a tool for consumers' entertainment (Ashley & Tuten, 2015). Aside from the perspective taken, according to Bezbaruah and Trivedi, branded content can be differentiated from advertising in terms of its

objectives. While the objective of advertising is to sell the product, the objective of branded content is to provide consumers with valuable information to achieve other goals, being considered "more of a pull strategy than a push one" (2020, p. 2).

According to this point of view, branded content generates engagement with users/clients, thereby establishing an interaction-based relationship, as shown in previous literature (Dessart, 2017). In this study, we use a three-part approach to the concept, by firstly including the communicative perspective, secondly the entertainment one, and thirdly the interactive one related to engagement. Regarding this perspective, Castillo-Abdul et al. (2020) have previously defined branded content as a topic of interest within the area of marketing and commerce, because brands must make themselves known, must promote continuously, update their content in order to be recognized and attain better positioning and, above all, maintain that content through different distribution channels, to generate value for customers and followers.

Engagement has been defined as a multi-dimensional phenomenon with different stages of commitment, but generally starting from a psychological state of motivation that results from the act of following (Barger & Labrecque, 2013). The degree of commitment is shown in different ways, gaining a greater importance since social media became a relevant scenario for brands to establish new relationships with their clients. As previously highlighted by Voorveld et al. (2018), defining engagement is a challenging task, considering the different experiences found in digital platforms. Therefore, this research will focus on the user consumption of shared content through their active participation in commenting. Thus, our conceptualization of the term is in line with Bentley et al. (2021), in which engagement is considered as intense behaviour or media use (likes, shares, and comments), to create, generate online word-of-mouth, and communicate with brands and other consumers and not as a predictive issue for consumption (Calder et al., 2016).

2.2. Fashion Brands and Social Media

The opportunities provided by social media for companies and brands to communicate with users and potential clients has increased the use of social media and the creation of branded content as an essential tool in the digital communication process, promoting an extensive transformation in the way brand content is created, distributed, and released (Núñez-Barriopedro et al., 2013; Wahid & Gunarto, 2021). Moreover, communication processes have been enhanced by the direct dialogue offered by social media among brands and clients, becoming two-way and real-time interactions favored by the penetration of networks among all the populations that use them intensively, and promoting different experiences such as happiness (Castillo-Abdul, Pérez-Escoda,

& Civila, 2021; Cuesta-Valiño et al., 2021), positive feelings (Casaló et al., 2020), or sharing attitudes (Choi & Lee, 2019). In this sense, social media emerges as a more suitable scenario for maintaining continuous and ubiquitous communication, establishing an in-depth relationship with audiences that demand increasing amounts of information from brands (Castillo-Abdul, Bonilla-del-Río, & Núñez-Barriopedro, 2021). In the current situation of the global pandemic lockdown, in which peer-to-peer interaction was globally and massively canceled, Instagram has become one of the most engaging social networks. According to Kemp (2021) *Digital 2021: Global Overview* report, Instagram was the third most important social media in average time spent, with 10.3 hours per month, and the fifth most used platform globally, only surpassed by Facebook, YouTube, WhatsApp, and FB Messenger. Focusing on the fashion industry, Instagram is considered one of the most critical and influential branded content promotion strategies (Jin & Ryu, 2020; Sánchez-Cobarro et al., 2021).

The fashion sector has changed in a profitable way with audiences since the projection, distribution, positioning, and consumption processes were highly transformed due to the online environment. These undeniable changes have given way to innovative fashion marketing strategies, in which consumers and users stopped being passive and have become prosumers, consuming, and generating content in a very playful way as stated by Belanche et al. (2021). As highlighted by Kong et al. (2021), luxury fashion brands have been the main contributors to the slow but steady growth rate within the global luxury market, with an estimated value of 1,015 billion euros by 2021 and 465 million consumers. In this respect, the fashion luxury industry plays a relevant role in the transformation of marketing and advertising mediated by social media. The branded content strategies associated with engagement, and promoted among audiences by luxury brands, seem to be mainly of interest in the field of new communication narratives, crucial for understanding present-day marketing (Pérez-Curiel & Sanz-Marcos, 2019).

3. Objectives and Hypothesis

The main objective of this work is to explore if there is a relationship between the brand content published on the Instagram accounts of two luxury brands in the textile sector and the interactions of their followers. Specifically, we analyze the extent to which brand content influences the luxury retailers Manolo Blahnik and Loewe's Instagram audience and their interactions on the network as social media consumers of this fashion brand. This study allows us to determine what type of content is the most productive on the Instagram social network, helping to promote the brand as it provokes more reactions from followers. With this objective in mind, the following hypotheses were posited:

H1: Brand content influences the follower's feelings towards the brand.

The effect of brand content on social media, specifically in its interaction through digital platforms, is not limited to being just another means of promotion by creating a "new paradigm" in the fashion sector, but it is committed to boosting the marketing of fashion, actively including the customer, their experience with the brand, creative advertising, and new business opportunities (Kim & Kim, 2020). In this way, brands and consumers have become active social actors in the networks, because, in addition to becoming prescribers of the brand and generating trust among their peers by reacting with likes to certain publications of brand content, they seek to expand their network of contacts and thus manage to effectively extend the dissemination of the message (Capriotti, 2013):

H2: Brand content influences positive feedback.

Previous research (Casaló et al., 2017) argues that perceived originality is the most relevant content feature for developing perceived hedonism. Perceived hedonism, in turn, affects the intention to interact, and the actual interaction on a brand's Instagram account as well. Thus, hedonism creates interaction in networks (Correia-Loureiro et al., 2018). In this line of research, one of the original contributions of the present work was to discover if the type of brand content published on the Instagram account of a luxury fashion brand has a positive influence on the generation of positive comments or positive feedback on the brand and/or products it markets:

H3: Brand content influences neutral commentary.

The fashion industry has developed its own manner of communication in digital media, which is a key instrument for promoting its commercialization. Therefore, social networks offer the possibility for companies to communicate with their current and potential customers publicly, which in turn allows them to carry out market research (Wu et al., 2020) and to collect comments from them, which, despite being neutral, can serve as a source of information. Therefore, another original contribution of the present work is to discover what type of brand content generates more neutral comments and contributes as a source of information:

H4: Brand content influences negative comments.

Digital marketing has become an essential tool for promoting luxury brands to younger audiences, as stated by González-Romo and Plaza-Romero (2015). Therefore, the evaluation of social network users' emotional response, whether positive, neutral, or negative, to a firm's brand content has become a fundamental task in the design

of products for the fashion industry. Thus, this work increases knowledge on what kind of brand content influences each of the user's comments in the network, even the negative ones. From a practical point of view, this information can be exploited to reformulate the digital communication strategies of brands (Bonilla et al., 2019).

4. Method

An exploratory quantitative study was carried out with an in-depth review of the most relevant literature, followed by a correlational study to test the hypotheses, using an ANOVA analysis with the SPSS version 27.

In digital communication, an ANOVA analysis is appropriate (Hair et al., 2010), as it allows the analysis of behaviors in response to different stimuli (Castañeda et al., 2020; Pinto & Yagnik, 2017). Specifically, the influence of each category of the independent variable (branded content) on the dependent variable (consumer interactions) was analyzed. It is particularly suitable for research which seeks to analyze behavior in a digital information context. In this way, the effect of each of the categories from the independent categorical variable "brand content," on the dependent variable "consumer interactions" was analyzed. In this way, the ANOVA analysis allows us to examine the variance within a data

set to determine the existence of significant differences between the mean values of a dependent variable (Hair et al., 2010).

The independent variable considered was brand content, categorized into industrial, corporate social responsibility, commercial, and influencers. On the other hand, the explanatory or dependent variable would be the interactions of the social media consumers on Instagram. The following variables were considered here: sentiments towards the brand (likes) and comments (negative, neutral, and positive).

Based on the literature review, a mapping of theoretical and categorical variables was carried out to analyze content and discourse on the Instagram social network, as well as to identify dimensions and performance indicators (KPIs), interactions, and engagement. For this screening, all the emerging categories of analysis in the different documents were used, integrating those that analyzed the same objects with the same or different names (homologation procedure) into integrated dimensions.

This instrument was configured by independent variables (date, time, day of the week), co-variables (type of post, type of image, colors, message…), and dependent variables (reactions, comments, likes…), as can be observed in Table 1, which made it possible to posteriorly

Table 1. Definition of the study's variables, dimensions, and indicators.

Type of variable	Dimension	Indicators	Type of analysis
Independent	Date	Date	Quantitative
	Day of the week	M = 1; T = 2; W = 3; Th = 4; F = 5; S = 6; Su = 7	
	Time of publication	Time of publication (Spain)	
	Type of post	Text and photo (TP)	
		Text and video (TV)	
		Photo only (P)	
		Photo reel (MP)	
		Video only (V)	
	Text	Textual and discourse analysis through QDA	Qualitative
	Post content type	Commercial (C)	Quantitative
		Personal (P)	
		Industrial and manufacturing (I)	
		Corporate Social Responsibility (RSC)	
	Chromatics of the image(s)	Monochromatic (BW)	
		Chromatic (FC)	
	Image(s)	Analysis of photographic or audiovisual content	Qualitative
Dependent	Dependent	Positive (FPC)	Quantitative, through lexical categorization
		Neutral (F0C)	
		Negative (FNC)	
	Reactions	Likes (IL)	

contrast different types of variables to obtain correlations with different measurement scales.

Some of these structured dimensions allow for dichotomous or polytomous coding, while others will be possible using interpretive content analysis and textual discourse analysis with lexicon cataloging. Specifically, adjectives or emoticons were used to identify and categorize emerging feelings (positive, negative, and neutral).

Once the theoretical instrument was constructed, a round of expert judgment was carried out to determine its reliability, construct, and content validity, to be able to determine variables that were considered dispensable and others that may emerge from the different observations of the panel's specialists. As for the overall assessment of the instrument, a score of over 3 (VG = ≥3) was obtained as a unit of measurement that reports the averages provided by each judge to the taxonomy as a whole, thereby providing its internal consistency.

The data was obtained and collected from the messages published on the Instagram social network about the luxury fashion brand Manolo Blahnik and the luxury brand Loewe in one quarter, more specifically in March, April, and May 2020. Therefore, a three-month sample has been selected using a convenience sampling system (Otzen & Manterola, 2017). This period was selected to coincide with the first wave of the Covid-19 pandemic, as the first lockdown took place during this period, and it could contribute to a better understanding of consumer behavior on the network. Likewise, each of the follower interactions provoked by each message disseminated by the brand was measured.

4.1. Sample

One of the novelties of this research is that the luxury brands Manolo Blahnik and Loewe were chosen due to their high brand awareness as leading international luxury fashion brands. The brands under study are Spanish, either because they were born in Spain, as in the case of Loewe, or because they were created abroad by a designer of Spanish origin, such as Manolo Blahnik.

Loewe has been in the market for more than 100 years, while Manolo Blahnik has been in the market for 48 years, all with a presence in the Spanish domestic market and with a presence in more than 40 countries around the world. In addition, the selection criteria for these luxury fashion brands were based on their participation in the *haute couture* of the most essential fashion catwalks in the world and for being brands that have received recognition, not only from the international market, but also from the top critics in the industry.

The brands in question have received awards and prizes both in Spain and the rest of the world. There has been so much exposure of the brands origin country, Spain, that it has been part of the top film industry in Hollywood through these fashion brands. Along this lines, Loewe and Manolo Blahnik are emblematic brands that refer to Spanish art and culture in their designs.

Additionally, Manolo Blahnik currently has more than 300 shops worldwide, in addition to 20 flagship stores in key locations such as Madrid, New York, Hong Kong, and Geneva (Castillo-Abdul, Bonilla-del-Río, & Núñez-Barriopedro, 2021). It is also one of the luxury brands chosen by the film industry, for example, in the series *Sex and the City*, where it is shown as successful branded entertainment (Bug & Blau, 2020). In addition, it is recommended by the most popular influencers and celebrities. On its part, the firm Loewe is considered an international luxury brand that belongs to a leading holding company in the field of fashion. Loewe exports more than 75% of its production and has around 150 points of sale in 32 countries, including its shops and franchises. Its flagship shops are located in Madrid, Beijing, Tokyo, London, and Singapore (Cantista & Sádaba, 2020). On social networks, Manolo Blahnik has more than 328,000 followers on Facebook and more than 3,325,000 followers on Instagram. Likewise, Loewe has 669,823 followers on Facebook and 2,9 million followers on Instagram. Instagram is therefore the most convenient social network for our study because it has, among brands, a larger number of followers as current or potential consumers.

5. Results

In each of the following sub-sections, the hypotheses proposed in the model shown in Figure 1 are tested.

A standard behavior among the followers of Manolo Blahnik and Loewe brands is to share the feelings of liking, which can be generated by each of the publications on Instagram. Therefore, we return to the hypotheses drawn in Section 3:

H1: Brand content influences the follower's feelings towards the brand.

Table 2 shows that followers of the Manolo Blahnik brand react with an average of 21632.4 likes to industrial publications, with an average of 22955.9 likes found in social responsibility publications, 26229.94 likes on average for commercial publications, and 24542 likes on average for influencer publications.

Meanwhile, followers of the Loewe brand react to industrial publications with an average of 27539.85 likes, with an average of 14652.58 likes to social responsibility publications, with 6276.6 likes on average to commercial publications, and with 116385.56 likes on average to influencer publications. Likewise, for all categories of brand content, the standard deviation was very high, which is usual when studying behaviors in social networks, since the type of sentiment materialized as likes by followers is very diverse.

Table 3 shows that according to the F statistic of the ANOVA analysis for 95% confidence, the differences between the average likes of followers of the Manolo Blahnik brand and the different categories of brand content are not significant, with an F of 0.10 and a

Figure 1. Model showing the effect of the Instagram brand context on followers interactions of the Manolo Blahnik and Loewe brands.

sig. 0.959 > 0.05. Also, the differences between the average likes of the followers of the Loewe brand and the different categories of brand content are not significant, with an F of 1.268 and a sig. 0.959 > 0.05.

On the other hand, in the Manolo Blahnik brand, the range of reactions received a minimum of 4461 and a maximum of 50084 in the case of industrial publications, with the range being very wide, this range increased considerably if the publications were social responsibility publications, going from 5,437 to 89,104 likes, and even

greater if they showed commercial content, moving from a range of 3,897 minimum likes and 139,984 maximum likes, with the latter figure being overwhelming.

Meanwhile, in the Loewe brand, the range of reactions had a minimum of 2,414 and a maximum of 407,548 in the case of industrial publications, with this range being extremely wide, although this range increased considerably if they were social responsibility publications, from 2,854 to 123,466 likes. Lastly, if they included commercial content, we moved to a range of

Table 2. Descriptive statistics of the sentiments "likes" generated as a function of brand content.

Brands			N	M	SD	SE	Min.	Max.
Manolo Blahnik	Likes	Industrial	5	21632.40	18509.533	8277.715	4461	50084
		Social Responsability	21	22955.90	19704.289	4299.828	5437	89104
		Commercial	34	26229.94	28551.822	4896.597	3897	139984
		Influencers	1	24542.00			24542	24542
		Total	61	24698.30	24572.324	3146.164	3897	139984
Loewe	Likes	Industrial	20	27539.85	89730.057	20064.251	2414	407548
		Social Responsability	38	14652.58	21406.253	3472.553	2854	123466
		Commercial	42	6276.60	3311.325	510.949	297	15559
		Influencers	9	16385.56	15284.727	5094.909	5446	49644
		Total	109	13932.86	40653.225	3893.873	297	407548

Table 3. ANOVA statistic of sentiments "likes" as a function of brand content.

Brands			Sum of squares	gl	Root mean square	F	p
Manolo Blahnik	Likes	Between groups	190539347.797	3	63513115.932	0.100	0.959
		Within groups	36037407966.892	57	632235227.489		
		Total	36227947314.689	60			
Loewe	Likes	Between groups	6238801184.781	3	2079600394.927	1.268	0.289
		Within groups	172251145770.154	105	1640487102.573		
		Total	178489946954.936	108			

297 minimum likes and 15,559 maximum likes, and in influencer publications, this was 5,446 minimum likes and 49,644 maximum likes.

Therefore, H1 is partially rejected, as brand content does not influence the average number of likes or followers, but it does influence the range of likes depending on the type of content.

Therefore, brand content does not influence the average sentiment generated in the form of likes by followers, but it does influence the reach of those likes. The average number of likes is very high in any of the types of brand content considered, so the sentiment generated by the brand was very positive in any case. This behavior was found in both Manolo Blahnik and Loewe, who achieved a high reach with their industrial brand content, and it substantially improved when the brand content dealt with social responsibility. However, the reach was very notable when it was commercial and influencer content, which may be because this is a luxury brand whose products are very expensive.

Another aspect that could be studied in followers of a brand on Instagram is their comments, since they perform word of mouth of the brand through this social network, thus becoming recommenders, especially when these comments are positive. Therefore, we hypothesise H2, H3, and H4 for their analysis:

H2: Brand content influences positive comments.

Table 4 shows that followers of the Manolo Blahnik brand reacted with 82 positive comments to industrial publications, with an average of 84.57 positive comments for social responsibility publications and 91.62 positive comments on average for commercial publications, and 121 positive comments for influencers.

Meanwhile, followers of the Loewe brand reacted to industrial publications with 17.65 average of positive comments, with an average of 54.74 positive comments for social responsibility publications, with 22.64 positive comments on average for commercial publications, and 49.56 positive comments for influencers.

Again, for all brand content typologies, the standard deviation was very high, which is expected when studying behaviors on Instagram, because the type of reactions materialized in positive comments by followers is very diverse.

Table 5 shows that according to the F statistic of the ANOVA analysis for a 95% level of confidence, the differences between the average positive comments of the followers of the Manolo Blahnik brand and the different categories of br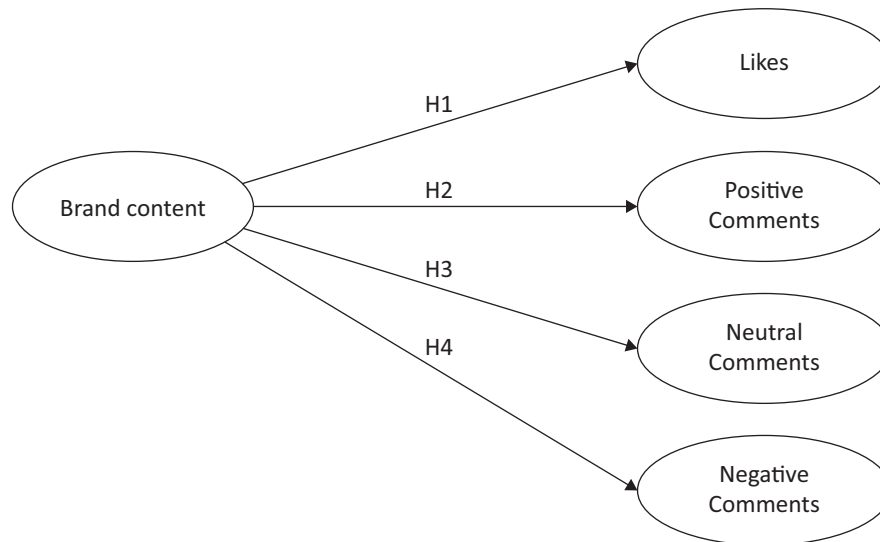and content were not significant, with an F of 0.109 and a sig. 0.954 > 0.05. However, the differences between the average positive comments of the followers of Loewe and the different categories of brand content were significant, with an F of 7.292 and a sig. 0.000 < 0.05.

On the other hand, in the Manolo Blahnik brand, the range of positive comments had a minimum of 25 and a maximum of 144 in the case of industrial publications, with this range being extensive. This range increased if they were social responsibility publications, from 25 to 258 positive comments, and even more if they were about commercial content, with a broad range from 14 to 340 maximum likes.

Table 4. Descriptive statistics of the positive comments generated according to brand content.

Brands			N	M	SD	SE	Min.	Max.
Manolo Blahnik	Positive Comments	Industrial	5	82.00	55.027	24.609	25	144
		Social Responsibility	21	84.57	54.579	11.910	25	258
		Commercial	34	91.62	88.961	15.257	14	340
		Influencers	1	121.00			121	121
		Total	61	88.89	74.696	9.564	14	340
Loewe	Positive Comments	Industrial	20	17.65	13.531	3.026	4	57
		Social Responsibility	38	54.74	52.705	8.550	8	253
		Commercial	42	22.64	14.632	2.258	5	59
		Influencers	9	49.56	55.709	18.570	18	195
		Total	109	35.14	39.558	3.789	4	253

Table 5. ANOVA statistic of positive comments as a function of brand content.

Brands			Sum of squares	gl	Root mean square	F	p
Manolo Blahnik	Positive Comments	Between groups	1913.024	3	637.675	0.109	0.954
		Within groups	332853.172	57	5839.529		
		Total	334766.197	60			
Loewe	Positive Comments	Between groups	29141.152	3	9713.717	7.292	0.000
		Within groups	139861.784	105	1332.017		
		Total	169002.936	108			

In the Loewe brand, the range of positive comments ranged from 4 to 57 in the case of industrial publications, with this being a wide range. This range increased considerably if they were publications of social responsibility, from 8 to 253 positive comments, and if they were of commercial content, from 5 to 59 likes. Lastly, if the publications were about influencers, positive comments ranged from 18 to 195 likes.

Therefore, in the Manolo Blahnik brand, H2 is partially rejected, as the brand content did not influence the average number of positive comments from followers, although it did influence the maximum number of positive comments reached depending on the type of content. However, in the Loewe brand, H2 was confirmed, as the brand content influenced the average number of positive comments from followers and influenced the maximum number of positive comments achieved depending on the type of content.

So, the behavior of the follower comments in the two brands analyzed was different. In Manolo Blahnik, the type of brand content did not influence the average comments generated by followers, but it did influence their reach. The average number of positive comments was very considerable in any of the types of brand content considered, so the reputation generated by the brand was very positive in any case. Manolo Blahnik achieved a high reach with its industrial brand content typologies, which substantially improved when the brand content deals with social responsibility. However, its positive comments were even more remarkable when the brand content was commercial. This shows that current and potential consumers of the brand are susceptible to commercial publications, given that it is a luxury product. In Loewe, the positive comments did show significant differences depending on the type of brand content. Social responsibility brand content was the most effective, followed by influencer, commercial, and industrial brand content:

H3: Brand content influences neutral comments.

In Table 6, for the Manolo Blahnik brand, we can observe that industrial brand content generated only 3.20 neutral comments, while the social responsibility brand content had a similar reaction to commercial brand content, as in both cases, it generated a reaction of just over 11 neutral comments, and in the influencers brand content, only four neutral comments.

Meanwhile, for Loewe, it can be observed that industrial brand content generated on average only 1.45 neutral comments, while social responsibility brand content generated 7 neutral comments, commercial brand content 4.1, and the case of influencers generated a reaction of 11.56 neutral comments, generating the most comments.

The ANOVA analysis (see Table 7) for a 95% level of confidence, of the Manolo Blahnik brand, shows an F of 0.79 and a sig. $0.505 < 0.05$. Therefore, there were no significant differences in the followers' reactions regarding average neutral comments depending on brand content. Therefore, H3 is rejected. This may be because the average neutral comment reaction was similar between commercial and social responsibility contents.

Table 6. Descriptive statistics of neutral comments generated based on brand content.

Brands			N	M	SD	SE	Min.	Max.
Manolo Blahnik	Neutral Comments	Industrial	5	3.20	2.490	1.114	0	5
		Social Responsibility	21	11.33	15.885	3.466	0	71
		Commercial	34	11.41	10.115	1.735	1	41
		Influencers	1	4.00			4	4
		Total	61	10.59	12.110	1.550	0	71
Loewe	Neutral Comments	Industrial	20	1.45	1.849	0.413	0	6
		Social Responsibility	38	7.03	6.541	1.061	0	27
		Commercial	42	4.10	4.460	0.688	0	19
		Influencers	9	11.56	11.897	3.966	2	40
		Total	109	5.25	6.396	0.613	0	40

Table 7. ANOVA statistic of the neutral comments as a function of brand content.

Brands			Sum of squares	gl	Root mean square	F	p
Manolo Blahnik	Neutral Comments	Between groups	351.052	3	117.017	0.790	0.505
		Within groups	8447.702	57	148.205		
		Total	8798.754	60			
Loewe	Neutral Comments	Between groups	822.547	3	274.182	8.006	0.000
		Within groups	3595.765	105	34.245		
		Total	4418.312	108			

However, in the Loewe brand, the ANOVA showed an *F* of 8.006 and a sig. 0.000 < 0.05. Therefore, there were significant differences in the followers' reactions regarding average neutral comments depending on brand content. Therefore, H3 is confirmed, with influencer publications generating the most neutral comments, followed by social responsibility publications.

As for the neutral comments generated by the different types of brand content among followers, the results showed that the average neutral comments were similar between commercial and social responsibility contents and scarce in industrial content for Manolo Blahnik. For Loewe, there were significant differences, with more neutral comments generated by influencer publications, followed by social responsibility, commercial, and industrial content:

H4: Brand content influences negative comments.

Table 8 shows how the negative comments from followers were not substantial in any of the cases. Specifically, in the Manolo Blahnik brand on average, 0.8 in industrial brand content, 2.62 in social responsibility brand content, 1.83 in commercial, and 5 in influencers. With null minimums in most cases and maximums of 2 for industrial, 27 in social responsibility, and 19 in commercial contents.

Meanwhile, there was an average of 0.55 in industrial brand content for the Loewe brand, 0.87 in social responsibility brand content, 1.1 in commercial content, and 2.56 in influencers content. With null minimums in all cases and maximums of 2 for industrial, 5 for

social responsibility, 4 for commercial, and 13 for influencers content.

Concerning the ANOVA analysis (Table 9) for a 95% confidence level, for the Manolo Blahnik brand, it can be observed that there were no significant differences in the negative comments average about the type of brand content disseminated by the firm, so H4 is rejected. However, for the Loewe brand, it can be affirmed that there were significant differences in the average of negative comments about the type of brand content disseminated by the company, so H4 is confirmed.

In general terms, industrial, social responsibility, and commercial brand content publications did not generate negative comments in either firm or the influencer brand content type, with these results being very favorable for the brands' reputation.

6. Discussion and Conclusions

According to Castillo-Abdul et al. (2020), branded content as a communication and marketing strategy allows positioning fashion brands and promoting interactions with their audiences. In this sense, this research concludes that branded content does not influence the average number of sentiments generated in the interactions represented by likes in the samples studied. However, it did impact their scope, with this finding considered as a contribution to the theoretical implications of this study.

On the one hand, the study showed a high average number of likes in all types of branded content considered, implying a very positive brand sentiment in every case. This behavior was observed in both the Manolo

Table 8. Descriptive statistics of the negative comments generated according to brand content.

Brands			*N*	*M*	*SD*	*SE*	Min.	Max.
Manolo Blahnik	Negative Comments	Industrial	5	0.80	0.837	0.374	0	2
		Social Responsibility	21	2.62	5.775	1.260	0	27
		Commercial	34	1.74	3.440	0.590	0	19
		Influencers	1	5.00			5	5
		Total	61	2.02	4.256	0.545	0	27
Loewe	Negative Comments	Industrial	20	0.55	0.826	0.185	0	2
		Social Responsibility	38	0.87	1.234	0.200	0	5
		Commercial	42	1.10	1.206	0.186	0	4
		Influencers	9	2.56	4.246	1.415	0	13
		Total	109	1.04	1.666	0.160	0	13

Table 9. ANOVA statistic of negative comments as a function of brand content.

Brands			Sum of squares	gl	Root mean square	F	Sig.
Manolo Blahnik	Negative Comments	Between groups	26.614	3	8.871	0.477	0.700
		Within groups	1060.370	57	18.603		
		Total	1086.984	60			
Loewe	Negative Comments	Between groups	26.720	3	8.907	3.424	0.020
		Within groups	273.133	105	2.601		
		Total	299.853	108			

Blahnik and Loewe brands, which achieved a high reach for their industrial content, and even improved substantially when the publication dealt with social responsibility. It should be considered that this empathy towards social responsibility content is framed within the Covid-19 pandemic, which undoubtedly affected consumers' interests and the way they acted on specific content. This study allows us to recognize the diversity of reactions and comments of the same strategy by two luxury fashion brands. In this sense, the characteristics of each audience profile should be considered when communicating content.

The comments analyzed in both brands were different. In the case of Manolo Blahnik, the type of brand content did not influence the average number of comments generated by followers, but it did influence their reach. The average number of positive comments was very considerable for any of the content types considered. According to this point of view, branded content generates engagement with users, determining a relationship based on interaction, as demonstrated in previous literature (Dessart, 2017). Manolo Blahnik achieved a large reach with its industrial brand content typologies, which substantially improved when the content dealt with social responsibility, but the reach of its positive comments was even more remarkable when it was commercial. This denotes that the brand's current and potential consumers are susceptible to commercial posts, which are often eye-catching, leading them to purchases. At Loewe, positive comments did show significant differences according to the type of brand content. Social responsibility content seemed to be the most effective, followed by the influencer, commercial, and industrial ones. This brand strengthened its links with society through initiatives related to the pandemic and reinforced its social responsibility content, which positively impacted its image and reputation.

Regarding the comments generated by the different types of brand content among followers, in the case of Manolo Blahnik, the results showed that the average number of neutral comments was similar between commercial and social responsibility content and low in industrial content. In the case of Loewe, there were significant differences, with more neutral comments generated by influencers' publications, followed by social responsibility, commercial and industrial content. In general terms, in both companies, the publications of industrial, social responsibility, commercial, and influencer content did not generate negative comments, which allows us to establish with certainty that the use of these contents achieved the main objective of the brands, to connect positively with the public.

Among the limitations of the study, it is worth noting the importance of the analysis of the values, considering that when counting the reaction frequencies, if these exceeded a thousand, the figures observed were only approximate to a hundred, so that the exact data in these cases could be affected.

On the other hand, conventionally, sentiment analysis considers positive, negative, and neutral dimensions in the classification of texts. However, in sentiment analysis, some pictograms used in social network communication were difficult to classify simply as positive or negative, as they could be reductionist or simplifying. The accuracy of the lexicon-supported approach is drastically diminished in the presence of emoticons and abbreviated texts, as they are not part of the predefined sentiment lexicon

This research confirms that content categorization into industrial, commercial, social responsibility, or influencer is helpful for brands and advertising agencies and even more so when establishing future communication and marketing actions. However, in future research, outside the pandemic framework, it will be necessary to observe whether socially responsible content surpasses the positive reactions to commercial content or not.

The implications of the study reach both theory and practice of luxury fashion marketing in social media. In theory, the study presents a new perspective on the dynamics of content creation in social media and exhibits the application of a methodology for analysis, thereby facilitating the understanding of the meanings of images for the consumer. In terms of practice and management, it offers new knowledge about communication and marketing in social networks, especially related to interaction with the brand and its products.

This work offers advances in the theory and practice of advertising effectiveness of brands, particularly luxury brands, by decoding consumer engagement with the brand. The fashion industry should continue to support branded content publishing on social networks such as Instagram, which favor interactions with audiences and the sales funnel, and the dissemination of new formats that attract and generate engagement with users. It should be noted that the Instagram network itself is facilitating these new formats over time; we have moved from photos to stories, IGTV, and the most recent, reels.

Finally, it is essential to establish this study as a reference framework for future longitudinal research studies to learn about the progress and changes in consumer behavior and interactions generated in this type of branded content, with the suggestion of incorporating new tools into networks such as Instagram. Similarly, among the future lines of research, it is necessary to discover the implications between the use of this type of strategy and the impact it causes on the reputation of fashion brands.

Conflict of Interests

The authors declare no conflict of interests.

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Article

Why Do People Return to Video Platforms? Millennials and Centennials on TikTok

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Abstract
While some social networks like Facebook are losing interest among digital influencers, TikTok continues to grow, capturing and impacting centennials and millennials alike. This situation highlights the new generations' increasing interest in short video formats, which are also becoming a new window of communication between companies and consumers. TikTok allows users to create, share, and discover short, user-generated videos in hopes of attracting viewers. But it is necessary to understand the variables that attract and engage users of these particular social networks. This article analyses the variables of continuance motivation, video sharing behaviour, and video creation capabilities, which allow users to enjoy such networks, and service providers and companies to obtain results from them. The aim is to understand how these variables motivate social media users to return to and spend more time on this video-sharing platform. This is measured through the stickiness variable. In this context—and due to the particular relevance of the topic—the authors also aim to reveal any potential differences in the behaviour of centennials and millennials when using TikTok. Therefore, a cross-sectional study was conducted through a questionnaire answered by 2,301 millennials and centennials who use TikTok. The data were analysed through a structural equation model to measure the relevance of each of the variables to stickiness. The results provide guidelines for improving research on video social media platforms, as well as an opportunity to explore the importance of the selected variables to the stickiness variable across different user segments.

Issue
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1. Introduction

The digital era, in which users are increasingly online, presents challenges and opportunities for both online service providers and companies that want to communicate and sell their products. Social media has transformed the landscape of interaction between people, and between brands and consumers. In this situation, the best-known social networks such as Facebook,

YouTube, WhatsApp, or Instagram have added millions of users worldwide. Faced with these successful formats, TikTok has differentiated itself as a mobile application that serves mainly to create and share short, entertaining videos. The essence of this social network is what is known as user-generated content; in other words, the content on the network is generated by the users themselves. TikTok's success has been immediate, and it became the most downloaded non-game mobile app of

2020, also ranking second in consumer spending (Sydow, 2020). This confirms the rapid growth of the industry of short video platforms (Liu et al., 2019).

It is therefore necessary to better understand the variables and strategies that determine a development that ensures billions of people are so in love with social networks that they spend several hours a day posting and commenting on them. This variable is stickiness, and it is of great importance in the study of social networks. Nevertheless, there is another range of different variables that have a direct and indirect influence on social networks' stickiness. This study examines stickiness to TikTok, the international version of China's mobile short video platform (Chen et al., 2019). Different studies have shown the evident impact of variables such as continuance motivation (Hsu et al., 2015; Klobas et al., 2018; Wu et al., 2010), sharing behaviour (Khan, 2017; Törhönen et al., 2020), and perceived video creation ability (Chiang & Hsiao, 2015) on TikTok's stickiness. This article aims to go beyond existing research to find out whether there is a difference between the behaviour of centennials and millennials on TikTok based on the variables analysed.

2. Conceptual Framework and Hypothesis

Many researchers have studied the concept of stickiness in recent years. Zott et al. (2000) define stickiness as the power of a website to retain and attract new customers. This power motivates them to stay on the platform (Marchand, 2000). According to Hsu and Liao (2014, p. 836) "a website is considered sticky when its users spend an above-average amount of time browsing it, when they visit the site frequently." The main means of generating stickiness on a website or social platform are the content (Hu et al., 2020; Lu & Lee, 2010; Xu et al., 2018) and communication style (Fitriani et al., 2020). Lu and Lee (2010) indicate that if you know your audiences, companies from all sectors can create specific contents which give them the opportunity to increase stickiness. Different researchers have studied the influence of stickiness in many sectors, including Lien et al. (2017) in instant messaging applications such as WeChat, Wang et al. (2016) in e-commerce, and Chiang and Hsiao (2015) in video platforms like YouTube. Others such as Zhang et al. (2017) have studied the term to give companies practical guidance on how to encourage customer engagement and increase the stickiness of company social networks through content. Recently, other researchers have focused on the role of digital influencers in generating follower stickiness (Hu et al., 2020), focusing on parasocial relationships and wishful identification as a key to social network stickiness.

Stickiness on social media platforms and smartphones has also received some attention. Wu et al. (2016) argue that, in the case of smartphones, stickiness is achieved by making whatever is appropriate to influence users' affective state, such as emotions, part of their life. Another way of generating stickiness on social media

platforms takes the form of communities and external influences. According to Yen (2016), stickiness to the social media site occurs when an individual's intention to contribute knowledge is highly influenced by their peers. In this sense, Chiang and Hsiao (2015) employ the uses and gratifications theory to research factors that influence the stickiness of YouTube. They also use social cognitive theory to test how YouTube users' continuance motivation and sharing behaviour are influenced by environmental and personal factors. However, while many studies have examined social media platforms and smartphone stickiness from the individual and collective point of view, little research has been done on TikTok stickiness and video behaviour.

Motivation seems to have a more relevant role than emotions, insomuch as motivations can explain a user's satisfaction with social network services regardless of whether the users feel positive or negative emotions (Pappas et al., 2020). From another perspective, Camilleri and Falzon (2020) indicate the importance of ritualized motivations in the use of streaming technologies, and Fitriani et al. (2020) show that the utilitarian motivation (credibility) influences channel engagement. As a consequence, it can be said that motivation is an extension of demand, which will lead to the emergence of behaviour (Bi & Tang, 2017).

Continuance motivation has a strong relationship with uses and gratifications theory because satisfaction is treated as an important antecedent of continued use of social media (Hsu et al., 2015; Wu et al., 2010). Linking in with this point, Wu et al. (2010) show that gratifications have a significant role in continuance motivation, whereas Park et al. (2021) identify social reward as an important motivational factor. Nevertheless, it is known that there are other constructs such as "presence" that do not have a relationship with continuance motivation (Wu et al., 2010).

On video creation platforms, motivations—such as enjoyment and social interaction—have a positive impact on continued engagement and, furthermore, they are necessary to drive the continuity of the activity (Lee & Quillian, 2019; Törhönen et al., 2020). Other factors have been shown to have significant influence on continuance motivation too (Chiang & Hsiao, 2015) but some of these motivations—such as social interaction—represent a way for customers to show their brand inclinations to other people while they use social channels (Lee & Quillian, 2019). In the same study, continuance motivation refers to the ongoing internal drive to watch and share videos through TikTok.

There are few studies on the relationship between continuance motivation and stickiness. These aim to identify a positive relationship between motivation and people's preference for a choice of media or content (Konstantinos et al., 2002). In the case of online games, Wu et al. (2010) find that the continuance motivation in this type of amusement enhances the stickiness of entertainment media. Following the same relationship,

stickiness can be further increased if there is motivation for continuity on platforms that use video such as YouTube (Chiang & Hsiao, 2015).

Taking into account all of the above, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H1: Continuance motivation has a positive relationship on stickiness.

Another construct that is perceived as a trigger in the use of social platforms is "sharing behaviour." A user who arrives in a social media environment or a virtual community is not just looking for information or knowledge; this user also harnesses the platform to meet other people, develop a sense of belonging and build friendships (Chiu et al., 2006). This triggers a consumers' referral tendency, which reflects their propensity to share information with friends, relatives, and other social groups (Koster et al., 2020). As Lee and Ma (2011) note, social media sharing experience and socializing are the two most salient factors that influence intention to share. The rise in popularity of social video content could be ascribed to "increasing prosumerism, the development of live streaming technologies, and popular social video sharing sites such as YouTube, Twitch, Snapchat and Instagram" (Törhönen et al., 2020, p. 166). And in this process, Vermeulen et al. (2018) show that users enjoy receiving likes and positive comments on their positive emotions.

There is a wealth of research analysing sharing behaviour through social media platforms such Facebook or Instagram and video content platforms such as YouTube, Twitch, or TikTok. Vermeulen et al. (2018) focus on how adolescents use different social media platforms, while Lim et al. (2015) study how users of various online social networks create and share information. Ma and Chan (2014) explore the factors contributing to knowledge-sharing behaviour on Facebook and Twitter, and Lee et al. (2015) examine the motivations that drive users to share photos on Instagram. In the video content industry, Khan (2017) analyses what motivates user participation and consumption on YouTube, while Törhönen et al. (2020) look at why people create content on video platforms.

The relationship between sharing behaviour and stickiness is well known. In recent years, some research has shown a strong connection between both constructs. As Yen (2016, p. 127) says, "members' knowledge-sharing intention significantly affects collaborative stickiness intention"; thus, social interactions could help to create stickiness (Xu et al., 2018). Taking account of this correlation, it is considered that enhancing the collaboration between others "will make users stick to the service and further motivate them to use" (Lien et al., 2017, p. 409) the services that the platforms offer.

In this sense, users that maintain a closer relationship and share moments and content with others in an online community will develop the power to absorb large amounts of information, generating more stickiness

between them (Hsu & Liao, 2014). Furthermore, Chiang and Hsiao (2015) reflect in relation to video platforms that sharing behaviours are important antecedents of YouTube's stickiness.

Therefore, the following research hypothesis is proposed:

H2: Sharing behaviour has a positive influence on stickiness.

Different users may be driven by different motivations for sharing content on social platforms. In online networking environments, content creation is referred to as user-generated content, which gives to the users the opportunity to report their opinions, thoughts, and original and artistic content with others online (Boyd & Ellison, 2008). But, as Weeks et al. (2017) state, not every social media user writes a post on Facebook, republishes stories on Instagram, or generates and shares news videos. In this case—TikTok—video is the principal content created by users, so it is necessary to analyse this construct and its influence on the use of social media platforms.

Video content creation is a dynamic activity that encompasses personal satisfaction and social approval (Balakrishnan & Griffiths, 2017). So, the influence of perceived video creation ability—which is defined by Chiang and Hsiao (2015, p. 90) as "a person's judgment of his or her ability to create valuable or interesting video," an opinion that is shared by Page et al. (2014)—must be taken into account. In this field, Kwane et al. (2020) indicate that perceived competence influences whether to engage or not to engage, and to disclose or not disclose personal information. Meanwhile, Kim et al. (2017) indicate that if the focus is on social approval, enjoyment and social recognition are important motivators for content creation. Furthermore, negative comments have a huge impact on users' desire to share content. As Lortie and Guitton (2013) point out, for some users the fear of being insulted, cursed at, or receiving any other offensive comment is a reason to abstain from uploading personal videos.

Cao et al. (2021) indicate that content creation is the highest level of engagement. This theory has been studied in relation to YouTube by Balakrishnan and Griffiths (2017) who found that content creation had a considerable effect on addiction. Following this perception, Lortie and Guitton (2013) point out that social involvement may have a possible influence on internet addiction behaviours, while Zhang et al. (2017) show that customer engagement has a direct and positive influence on customer stickiness and indirect influence through customer value creation.

If we focus on the values that have a relationship with perceived value, Yang and Lin (2014) showed that hedonic and social value had a significant impact on stickiness. Yen (2016) identifies that social capital and social identity have an effect on knowledge-sharing intention,

which subsequently has a positive relation on collective stickiness intention towards social networks. Hsu and Chuan-Chuan Lin (2016) reveal that attitude and satisfaction appear to have significant and positive effects on stickiness. Consequently, we consider that if a user feels a perceived video creation ability, the user is going to develop stickiness to the platform.

Taking into account all of the above, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H3: Perceived video creation has a positive relationship on stickiness.

Figure 1 summarizes the relationships proposed in the model between the different variables.

3. Method

A descriptive transversal method was carried out to develop the research through a questionnaire that was answered by people between 16 and 40 years old (centennials and millennials) who used TikTok in Spain. The questionnaire was answered between February and May 2021. A total of 2,301 validated questionnaires were collected.

A focus group was held before starting the survey in order to determine that the items in the questionnaire were relevant, and it was made up of eight people: four regular TikTok users (two millennials and two centennials), two executives of social networks companies, and two university professors who teach management on social media. The final questionnaire was obtained as a result of this qualitative research. This questionnaire, in its first part, includes questions about demographic characteristics and items related to the use of TikTok by respondents. And the second section of the questionnaire examines the four dimensions analysed of the proposed model through a 5-point Likert-type scale from 1 (*completely disagree*) to 5 (*completely agree*). These measurement scales, that were adapted from the liter-

ature review, help to guarantee the validity of the measurement scales and comprise the following: three items for continuance motivation, three for sharing, three for video creation, and three for stickiness (Chiang & Hsiao, 2015; see Table 1).

A pretest was developed in January 2021 and was answered by 60 people between 16 to 40 years old (30 centennials and 30 millennials) who used TikTok. The objective of this pretest of the questionnaire consisted in assessing whether people understood the items of the questionnaire, as well as validate that the scales were perfectly constructed. Considering all these aspects, the final questionnaire was launched on the main social networks in February 2021. The discretionary non-probabilistic sampling by quotas method was used in order to obtain a representative sample of the Spanish population of TikTok.

The total number of validated questionnaires received was 2,301. The configuration of the sample was 43% male and 57% female. By ages, 62% were 16–25 years old and 38% were 26–40 years old. By educational level, 9% had a basic education, 30% intermediate studies, and 61% higher education. By TikTok usage frequency, 47% used it every day, 14% every 2–3 days, 16% every 1–4 weeks, and 24% less than once a month. And finally, from the point of view of TikTok usage time on a typical day, 35% used it between 0–15 minutes, 22% between 16–30 minutes, 25% between 31–60 minutes, and 18% for more than one hour (see Table 2).

4. Results

Partial least squares (PLS) combines the benefits of multiple regression and principal component analysis in a single technique. Its use has been shown to be particularly valid when, from a large number of independent variables, a set of dependent variables is predicted. A number of observable variables represents a variable that is not directly observable and is called a latent variable. To configure these variables, researchers have previously
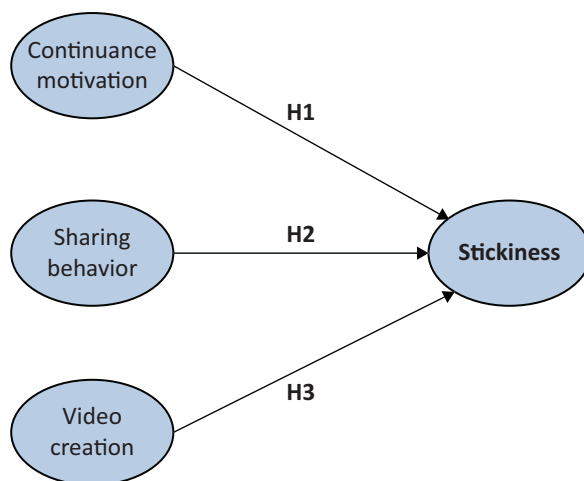

Figure 1. Proposed model.

Table 1. Items, factor loading, reliability, and validity.

Factor Loadings		Sources
Continuance motivation		
Reliability and validity measures: Cronbach's alpha = 0.94, Composite reliability = 0.94, AVE = 0.89		
I have the motivation to continue sharing videos on this social media	0.94	
If I could, I would like to continue sharing videos on this social media	0.95	Chiang and Hsiao (2015)
The past experience motivates me to continue sharing videos on this social media	0.94	
Sharing behaviour		
Reliability and validity measures: Cronbach's alpha = 0.86, Composite reliability = 0.91, AVE = 0.78		
I usually actively share my experiences with others on this social media	0.91	
I have contributed knowledge to other members on this social media	0.89	Chiang and Hsiao (2015)
I have tried to share my videos with other members on this social media	0.85	
Video creation		
Reliability and validity measures: Cronbach's alpha = 0.87, Composite reliability = 0.92, AVE = 0.79		
I can create some interesting video	0.83	
I am good at creating some interesting video	0.93	Chiang and Hsiao (2015)
I often create some interesting video	0.91	
Stickiness		
Reliability and validity measures: Cronbach's alpha = 0.84, Composite reliability = 0.90, AVE = 0.76		
I would stay longer on this social media than on others	0.78	
I would stay on this social media as often as I can	0.93	Chiang and Hsiao (2015)
I am willing to continuously visit this social media	0.89	

turned to theory. This technique is capable of expressing theoretical concepts through complex variables (constructs) to study their relationships, using a structural model. The configuration of the observable indicators and their relationships is caused by the theoretical concepts, i.e., the theoretical concept previously analyzed must be the cause of the union of the observable indicators (Benítez et al., 2020). In this case, the reflective measurement model is used because the outer weights are the correlations between the construct and the indicators. The analyses of this study have been carried out using SmartPLS 3.3.2 (Ringle et al., 2015).

Table 2. Sample information.

Gender	%	Total 2,301
Male	43.1	922
Female	56.9	1,309
Age	%	Total 2,301
16–25 (centennials)	61.7	1419
26–40 (millennials)	38.3	882
Educational level	%	Total 2,301
Basic education	8.9	204
Intermediate studies	30.2	694
Higher education	61.0	1,403
TikTok usage frequency	%	Total 2,301
Every day	46.9	1,080
Every 2–3 days	13.6	314
Every 1–4 weeks	15.9	365
Less than once a month	23.6	542
TikTok usage time on a typical day	%	Total 2,301
0–15 minutes	35.0	806
16–30 minutes	22.1	508
31–60 minutes	25.3	583
More than 1 hour	17.6	404

Assessing the reliability and validity of PLS modeling (PLS-SEM) should be the first step to be taken. The first result to analyze is the relationship that each item shows with its own latent construct (see Table 1). In this case, all loadings have a higher value on their construct than on any other and exceed the value of 0.78. Items with loadings of 0.707 or more are accepted as they reach the level of acceptable reliability (Hair et al., 2011). The next step is to assess internal consistency. For this purpose, Cronbach's alpha has traditionally been used and, more recently, composite reliability. For this study, all constructs (reflective measures) obtain a coefficient for both indices above 0.84, as shown in Table 1. Therefore, even in the case of demanding strict reliability, the values exceed 0.80 (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). Internal consistency is also measured through the average variance extracted (AVE), in this case, in all the coefficients of each construct the AVE exceeds 0.76. A value at least equal to 0.5 is recommended. Finally, the discriminant validity in the model is recently measured through the heterotrait-monotrait ratio of correlations. If the value is less than 0.90, discriminant validity between two reflective constructs has been established (all values of the model coefficients are below 0.72).

The Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) was established as a goodness-of-fit measure for PLS-SEM, indicating how well a model fits the sample data. For this model, SRMR is 0.051, suggesting a good fitting model. The results of the model also suggest that the variables explain a good amount of variance in stickiness, with R^2 value of 0.36.

The results of the model are presented by dividing the sample between millennials and centennials.

The results (see Figures 2 and 3) show how stickiness is related to each of its causal variables in each of the segments analysed. With coefficients of 0.23 and 0.33, for centennials and millennials respectively, the results suggest that sharing behaviour is the most important positive influence on stickiness, followed by video creation. The coefficient of the relationship between these variables is 0.21 for centennials and 0.28 for millennials. In both cases, it is a positive relationship. Finally, continuance motivation is also influencing positively on stickiness in a relevant way (with coefficient values of 0.18 and 0.13 for centennials and millennials, respectively). Consequently, all hypotheses proposed (H1, H2, and H3) are not rejected in both established segments.

5. Discussion and Conclusions

The relationships proposed in the model have been generally accepted in the literature (Chiang & Hsiao, 2015; Törhönen et al., 2020). However, with the model validated in this work, the authors of this study have gone beyond the existing literature in the sense that they include all the variables in the same model for the case of a social network based on videos. In addition, the differences have been analysed for the case of centennials and millennials. This study shows that the sharing behaviour variable is the variable that has the strongest relationship with stickiness. The study also examines the important impact of continuance motivation in the constant use of this platform. One of the variables included in this study was video creation. In this type of video-based social network, the perceived ability to create videos plays an important role in social network stickiness. If users
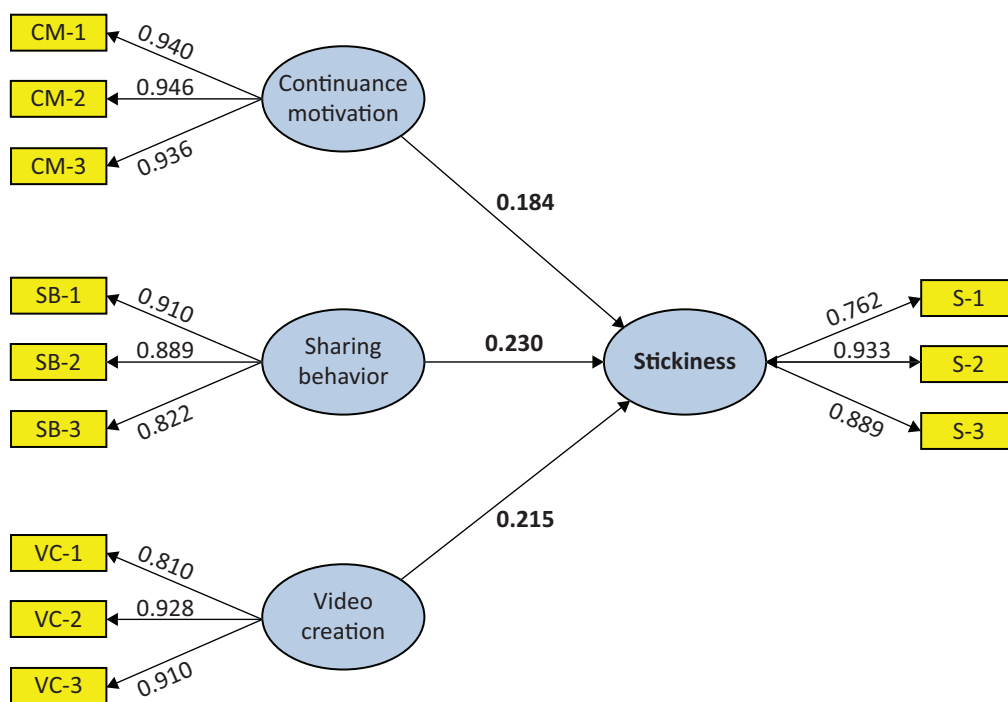

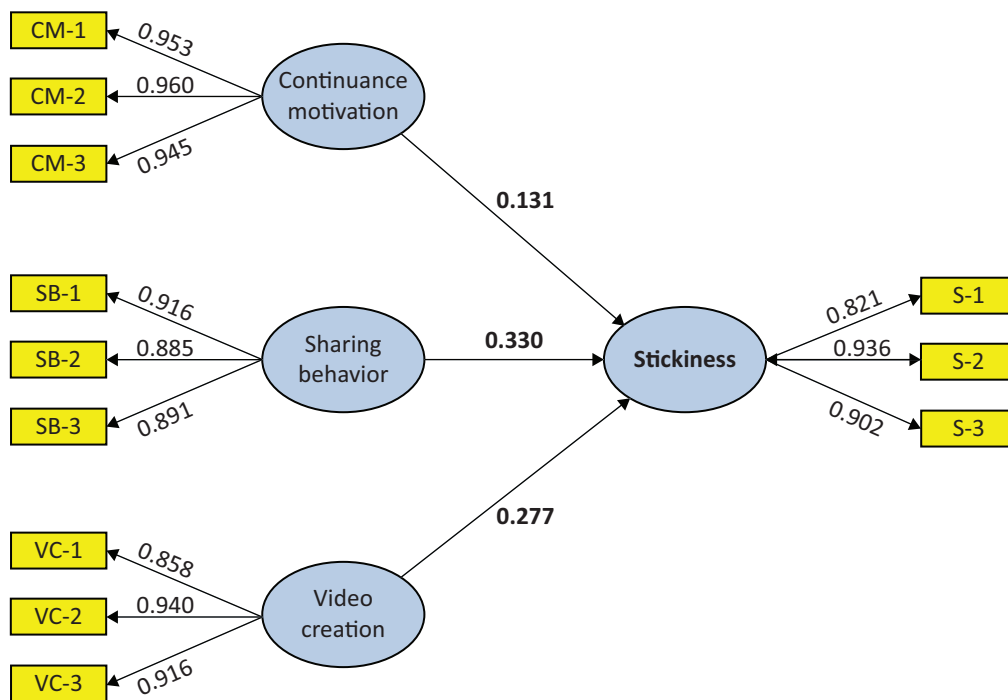**Figure 2.** Model result for centennials.

Figure 3. Model result for millennials.

feel that they have the ability to create good and valuable content on TikTok, their stickiness towards the platform is likely to be higher. Therefore, the results of this study again demonstrate the evident effect of sharing behaviour, continuance motivation, and video creation on stickiness. The findings are consistent with previous studies in various contexts (e.g., Chiang & Hsiao, 2015; Cuesta-Valiño et al., 2020; Törhönen et al., 2020). In these studies, sharing behaviour shows a strong influence on stickiness, while continuance motivation has a weak influence. In the case of video creation perception, this variable did not obtain either a direct or indirect relevant relationship with stickiness in different social networks or digital services. Moreover, these results occur in both segments analysed: centennials and millennials. Indeed, the main differences emerge in the greater relevance of sharing behaviour for millennials than for centennials. Thus, millennials show a strong relationship between sharing behaviour and stickiness that is not comparable with the relationship in the case of centennials. The video creation variable also has a greater importance for millennials. The opposite is true for the variable that has the least influence on stickiness: Continuance motivation shows greater relevance for centennials than for millennials.

Given the importance of continuous motivation, in terms of the practical implications, these results allow us to establish that companies have the opportunity to motivate their audiences to increase adherence to the social network and, in turn, increase engagement. To do this, they could comment on and/or share fan publications to give them greater visibility. This type of action is especially useful in the case of centennials. This study provides the keys for social network developers to continue to expand into the creation of simpler interfaces, ensuring that audiences feel comfortable creating visual content. If they perceive that they are able to create content, so stickiness to the platform will grow. These types of actions are especially noteworthy for millennials. Finally, companies on TikTok should try to provide a unique experience, creating a connection to attract users to share that content with their like-minded peers. They can incentivize their followers and customers through TikTok by rewarding the most creative content of the week or month and they can reward the profiles with the most activity and engagement. Given that the industry of short and fast consumption videos is growing (Liu et al., 2019) and has a special impact on centennials and millennials, it is important that companies begin to familiarize themselves with the production of digital content based on this format, thus building a bridge with these potential audiences. These types of actions are relevant to both centennials and millennials but above all to millennials, who choose to promote particular experiences that reflect their individuality. Thus, it is important that companies understand how to identify what users are trying to express.

In short, the results of this study once again demonstrate the evident effect of sharing behaviour, continuance motivation and video creation on stickiness. The article expands our understanding of social media network stickiness—specifically on TikTok. While studies on stickiness have previously focused on platforms such as YouTube, Facebook, Twitter, and general apps or websites, this study centres on TikTok, currently one of the most important platforms and one that makes

use of video formats. It also provides some guidelines to enhance investigation into video platforms, which are differentiated by the type of content that users upload and consume, providing an opportunity to explore the relationship between the range of variables and segments.

Acknowledgments

Conflict of Interests

The authors declare no conflict of interests.

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Article

Immigrant Influencers on TikTok: Diverse Microcelebrity Profiles and Algorithmic (In)Visibility

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Abstract
Internet celebrity has become a phenomenon of great interest for scholars in the last few years. This is partly due to its impact in contemporary media ecosystems, and its influence in political, social, cultural, and commercial behaviors around the world. Meanwhile, some segments of the population continue to be marginalized by sociotechnical configurations that perpetuate structures of dominance in the digital sphere and on social media platforms. This is the case of immigrants, who often face diverse digital, symbolic, and physical borders that neglect their voice and agency. Thus, the present study aims to explore the creative practices of immigrant tiktokers who have achieved a significant following on this platform. Using a case study approach, we explore four immigrant creator profiles with a following of 17,000 to 500,000 through in-depth interviews and a multimodal content analysis of 252 of their videos to delve into their platformed practices on TikTok. The participants are Latin American immigrant creators living in the US and Spain, identified as part of a larger study on the uses of TikTok by Latinx immigrants in these two countries exploring 53 immigrant creator profiles with more than 10,000 followers. Their practices related to algorithmic (in)visibility, and their unfolding identities including their digital, creative, political, activist, cultural, and national personas are noteworthy, and suggest unique pathways to reclaim agency through social media influence and construct multi-dimensional microcelebrity identities beyond migratory status.

Issue
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1. Introduction

Internet research has traditionally focused on microcelebrity phenomena anchored in the Global North, which have shaped and framed our understanding of the modes of popularity that are native to online contexts. This has been observed by internet scholars who have approached this issue by emphasizing diverse microcelebrity cases in understudied regions and minority groups (Abidin, 2019; Abidin & Brown, 2019; Semati & Zambon, 2021). Meanwhile, the digital practices of immigrants have traditionally been studied in terms of their unique integration and adaptation needs (Alencar, 2020), as well as their self-representations and archiving practices (Leurs, 2017), emphasizing their unique vulnerabilities to datafication and categorization by private and state actors within their receiving societies (Witteborn, 2021). Thus, their agency and uniqueness as influencers within their own communities and beyond has been largely overlooked by research in media and migration

as well as internet research, with the few exceptions mentioned before. The present study attempts to bridge this gap by highlighting the role of Latinx immigrants in Spain and the US who have reached a significant following on TikTok, to assess the ways in which they achieve a position of influence and negotiate their own identities within the algorithmic (in)visibility enabled by the platform.

For this, we start with an overview of previous scholarship on the subject, considering the lens of internet microcelebrity (Abidin, 2018; Marwick, 2013; Senft, 2013), the dimensions of the online persona (Moore et al., 2017) and a constructivist perspective of identity (Hall, 2019). We then explore the negotiation with platform policies and politics (Gillespie, 2010, 2018) and algorithmic visibility (Bishop, 2019; Bucher, 2012). Media and migration scholarship will also be instrumental to understand the approaches and motivations of immigrants to engage in content creation (Leurs, 2017) and the possible opportunities of niche internet celebrity and (in)visibility strategies that reflect their agency within the platform. We then move to describe the research process with a focus on the appropriateness of the narrative case study approach to delve into the vast diversity among Latinx immigrant tiktokers. This enables us to delve into the main objective of our study which is to explore how their creative practices and life experiences shape their microcelebrity identities and strategies for algorithmic (in)visibility. The results provide insights about their multidimensional online personas, including their platformed strategies to present controversial political content, their creative approaches to moderation, and the ways in which their content models the "correct" ways to be an immigrant and take action in their own unique microcelebrity styles.

2. Literature Review

2.1. TikTok in the Social Media Ecosystem

TikTok is a social media platform owned by the Chinese company ByteDance that merged with Musical.ly in 2018 after ByteDance purchased it and incorporated it to the existing TikTok platform (Anderson, 2020). The social media app has grown exponentially to become the 7th largest with 689 million active users accessing every month as of the first quarter of 2021 (Mohsin, 2021).

The unique affordances of TikTok are relevant to the study of influencers and content creators due to the singularities of this platform in terms of visibility and mimesis (Abidin, 2021; Zulli & Zulli, 2020). It offers a sole content format (15-to-180-seconds vertical video) and a unique "For You" algorithmic wall that enables content to become highly viral regardless of the connections between users (De-Casas-Moreno et al., 2020) expanding the viralization possibilities for creators. Moreover, authors have explored the structurally mimetic nature of TikTok (Zulli & Zulli, 2020) and the functionalities and content creation configurations it offers (Figure 1), which are relevant to understand how the platform shapes content creators' negotiations of their own (in)visibility and interactions with other tiktokers and their viewers/followers.
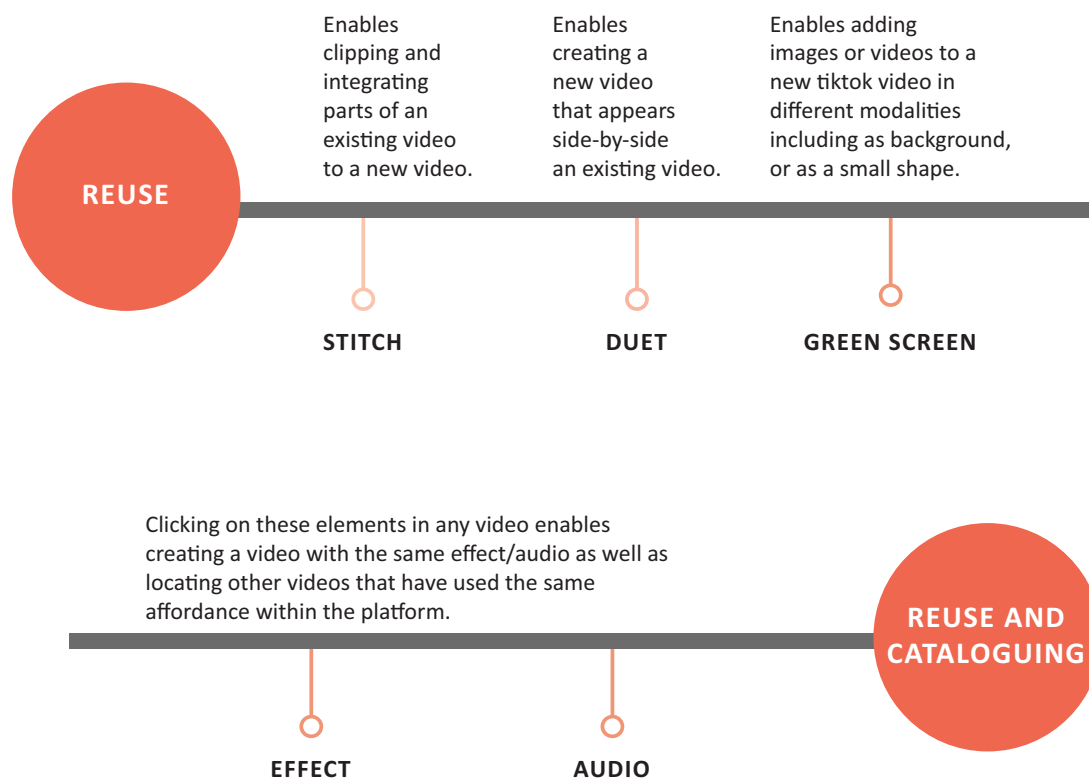

Figure 1. TikTok's content reuse and cataloguing possibilities of interest for this study (not comprehensive).

The platform's community guidelines specifically mention a variety of protected groups in their hateful behavior moderation norms that are relevant to our study. These guidelines include speech that attacks people because of their race, ethnicity, national origin, religion, caste, and immigration status (TikTok, n.d.). However, minority creators have recently voiced their concerns, and some have even left the platform due to unequal treatment in moderation policies. A recent example includes Black creators who have attempted to flag racist accounts and content through response videos and had their content taken down by the platform due to "harassment and bullying" while the original racist posts and accounts were not deleted (Contreras & Martinez, 2021). In response to censorship and moderation issues that disproportionally affect minority creators, TikTok has justified them as algorithmic glitches and errors. Meanwhile, minority creators have also pointed to problematic differences that allow phrases such as "I am a neo nazi" to be accepted and "Supporting Black voices" to be flagged as inappropriate (Ohlheiser, 2021). This aligns with previous literature on systemic algorithmic oppression issues for the Black community in search engines (Noble, 2018) and the ways in which new technologies perpetuate offline inequalities through biased code (Benjamin, 2019). The problems racial and ethnic minorities face could be applicable to immigrants, who are often members of these minority groups, while the hybrid human-algorithmic moderation model of social media platforms such as TikTok lends itself to the analysis of moderation (in)justice issues and the ways in which content creators negotiate their own visibility with these systems.

Moreover, TikTok is a mobile app, where content creation possibilities are available mainly through its mobile version. This is relevant, as research on media and migration has suggested that mobile connectivity provides immigrants with access to information of interest, content creation, and archiving possibilities.

2.2. Immigrant Identities, Online Personas, and Social Media Practices

In the present article we take a social constructivist approach to identity as a trait that is not static but shaped and changed through a process of negotiation within the contexts where the individual exists (Hall, 2019). These identities develop beyond their traditional connotations—such as religion, gender, race, and ethnicity—to include online identities shaped by their platformed actions and behaviors (Senft, 2013). In the case of internet microcelebrities, some aspects of their identity are shaped through strategic self-branding (Marwick, 2013). In this case, TikTok functions as a digital environment where creators position themselves in relation to their mediated contexts and stated connections on and offline, as portrayed in their content and in our conversations with them.

In this case, Moore's et al. (2017) online persona lens provides a multidimensional framework to understanding these behaviors and strategies as they occur in online spaces through five dimensions:

1. The public persona (which is shaped by the shift towards an increasingly public exposure and visibility) is often a sharper and perfected version of the self that follows established conventions of correct publicness in the face of a growing audience;
2. The mediatized persona refers to the media formats and skills that shape today's digital content creation and sharing, in a constant negotiation with the platform and online communities, resulting in a set of media identities shaped by interactions and meaning making between audiences and creator;
3. The performative persona emphasizes actions and content creation practices that reflect the different aspects of the creator's identity such as gender, interests, profession, stances, among others, and this is done in a way that combines the authentic and fictitious self, in a complex blend of various aspects that are part of identity;
4. The collective persona reflects the individual as a node that connects with various publics of different sizes and characteristics;
5. The value dimension refers to the intentions behind the creation of specific personas and the shift between different persona registers and self-presentations to cater to diverse publics, intentions, and the achievement of goals such as prestige, fame, among others.

The role of social media in identity formation and online persona presentation through its archiving and place-making possibilities has been solidified in media and migration literature. Thus, the possibilities of social media to collect migratory experiences and their implications for identities and belongings in different immigration stages are reflected in studies related to the narration of life stories, from migratory journeys (Labayen & Gutierrez, 2021) to the practices of self-representation as devices to establish deservingness (Nikunen, 2019). Moreover, others have focused on the affinity and affective connection facilitated by social media (Marino, 2015; Marlowe et al., 2017) and the aspirations and achievements enabled by mobile social media (Witteborn, 2015, 2019). The political immigrant identities established through social media content for agency and rights claims (Leurs, 2017) and their negotiation with real and symbolic borders (Chouliaraki & Georgiou, 2019) have also been explored. In the case of the Latin American community in the US specifically, researchers have focused on the ways in which social media enables simple and multi-present connectivity among families, who often share online content and digital materials (Bodinger-deUriarte & Valgeirsson, 2019). These

perspectives are relevant to contextualize the functions of social media content creation by immigrants with those of immigrant microcelebrities to assess how these evolve once creators become more popular.

An important consideration for the exploration of identity is the diversity among Latinx immigrant populations in terms of national origins and migratory experiences, as well as political and ideological stances, which in many cases will shape their public-facing affiliations and online personas. In this sense both countries boast large and diverse Latin American immigrant populations due to aspects such as culture, geography, legislation, and financial opportunity, that motivate them to choose these two destinations (Connor & Massey, 2010). The political heterogeneity of the Latinx community is also relevant, as recent research suggests that immigration issues are not prioritized equally across Hispanics in the US, and Trump has attracted a relevant following among this group (Galbraith & Callister, 2020).

It is noteworthy that throughout this article we use the terms Latin American and Latinx to refer to the specific creators we targeted. In the case of "Latin American," the term refers to people from countries in the region spanning 19 countries in North and South America who speak Romance languages, mainly Spanish and Portuguese (Bodenheimer, 2019). In the case of Latinx, it is a non-gendered term that goes beyond the common language dimension to comprise diverse ethnicities and cultures across various national origins that is in constant flux (Bodinger-deUriarte & Valgeirsson, 2019).

2.3. Diversity in Internet Microcelebrity

The current celebrity ecosystem has been described as one where a range of networked, transnational publics navigate and negotiate ideologically diverse provocations, and where a range of identities related to race, nationality, and class are performed (Semati & Zambon, 2021). Similarly, internet microcelebrity has been conceptualized based on strategic practices and processes (Abidin, 2018) where metrics like the number of followers are less important than the feeling of authenticity and interactivity conveyed (Marwick, 2013). Thus, in these processes and strategic actions, the relationship established with followers is critical (Abidin, 2018) as well as the negotiation of visibility and popularity with the platform (Gillespie, 2010, 2018) and the algorithm (Bishop, 2019; Bucher, 2012). In terms of specific celebrity profiles applicable to the present study, Abidin (2019) defined minority celebrities as online creators who shape their brand and popularity by harnessing their status as part of a marginalized group and one where different layers of identity and celebrity converge.

Additional scholarship of interest has explored examples of microcelebrity with a global, culturally diverse, and minority perspective (Abidin & Brown, 2019); the instrumentalization of celebrity immigrants to promote linguistic integration in Germany (Zambon, 2021); and

the analysis of linguistic and cultural practices of Chinese diasporic and rural microinfluencers residing abroad (Zhang & Zhao, 2020; Zhang, 2020). The scarcity of literature on immigrant influencers reflects a gap that may provide some alternatives to the well-documented fact that immigrants become voiceless in their own narratives and subject to symbolic bordering (Chouliaraki & Georgiou, 2019).

It is important to note that for the purposes of the present study, we use the umbrella term "immigrant" to refer to content creators who self-identify as foreigners living abroad. It is worth noting that this term does not have a legal definition and is often used interchangeably with terms such as "migrant" to refer to a vast diversity of mobile and foreign populations. Thus, the term "immigrant" is preferred instead of the term "migrant" because it is more effective in validating a more permanent status within the country of residence, and one that is unlikely to change, as observed by Anderson and Blinder (2019).

3. Methods

To capture the evolving nature of Latinx immigrant microcelebrity with a focus on identity and algorithmic (in)visibility practices, we take a narrative case study approach to four exemplary profiles within this niche TikTok ecosystem. The case study involves the multimodal content and discourse analysis of 252 TikTok videos and in-depth interviews with four immigrant creators. This study does not intend to enable generalization but to understand specific, diverse examples (Flyvbjerg, 2006) that illustrate the variation that exists among Latin American immigrant influencers and their voices, and to reflect on the importance of emphasizing the diversity within seemingly homogeneous minority groups. The objective of the study is to explore how their creative practices and life experiences shape their microcelebrity identities and strategies for (in)visibility. We do this within the framework of Hall's (2019) view of identity as shaped and constructed through life experiences and social, contextual negotiation and considering Senft's (2013) definition of digital identities, which are molded through online actions and behaviors. The research procedure is described in Figure 2.

3.1. Sampling, Data Collection, and Analysis

The sampling process was carried out as part of a larger research project through the initial analysis of 53 profiles of Latin American immigrant creators on TikTok residing in the US and Spain, with more than 10,000 followers in each country, as this is the threshold where creators begin receiving payments from TikTok (Cariaga, 2021). Between August 2020 and January 2021, we observed videos in these profiles daily and took field notes. The resulting selection criteria included: adherence to topics related to immigration, periodic growth in terms of followers and overall likes, and posting con-

PREP	SAMPLING		DATA COLLECTION		ANALYSIS
RESEARCH ACCOUNTS	**IDENTIFICATION OF CONTENT**	**ASSESSMENT OF MIGRANT STATUS**	**SCRAPING**	**INTERVIEWS**	**ATLAS.TI**
We created two research accounts to observe immigrant creator profiles in Spain and the US separately between August 2020 and January 2021.	We searched for content using hashtags of interest, which included #inmigrante #migrante #emigrante to identify content by Hispanic immigrants. We identified a significant number of videos and profiles in this process. We assessed the cooccurring hashtags within these videos to identify other immigrant status and residence in the US and Spain such as #latinaespaña or #venezolanaenusa and by clicking on these hashtags, identified new videos of interest.	By observing and exploring each of the creators' profiles we assessed the status of the creator as a Latin American national residing in the US or Spain. When this assessment could not be made, we excluded such content. We identified 53 profiles with more than 10K followers and observed them for several months to assess whether they create content regularly.	Scraped the last 65 videos and metadata from each of the four accounts selected using a Python script, after excluding duplicates and eliminated videos, the final sample includes 252 videos from 4 accounts.	We conducted in-depth interviews with 4 creators to assess their motivations, identities and practices on the platform. We chose a sample of 10 videos to collaboratively analyze the intentions of the participants in creating such content.	We prepared the data and uploaded to Atlas.ti. The analysis of interview transcripts and TikTok video was conducted separately.

Figure 2. Research procedure.

tent regularly. It is worth noting the challenge of contacting TikTok creators because of the platform's limitations in terms of private messaging. After failed attempts, we identified alternative contact forms including email addresses or profiles on Instagram and Facebook and contacted them through those profiles. This excluded creators who did not have alternative contact options. Using this strategy, we contacted a total of 23 creators (11 in the US and 12 in Spain) who aligned with the selection criteria and got responses from five, with a final sample of four profiles chosen purposively (Palys, 2008) as depicted in Table 1.

In-depth interviews were conducted in Spanish between March and May 2021 with a semi-structured script derived from the initial observation and field notes from 53 profiles. The interviews covered 5 topics: general data, self-described identities, use of TikTok affordances and functionalities, strategies for algorithmic visibility, and relationship with followers. The complete list of topics is included as supplementary material. During

the interviews, participants provided informed consent for us to scrape their videos and to use their profile information and content in the present study. Due to the possible risks for participants and considering the ethical implications of exposing immigrant creators, we made the decision to exclude identifying information from the results and use pseudonyms that exemplify their real names without exposing them. The figures and hashtag examples have been modified in some cases to avoid the identification of the creator but to enable us to illustrate our argument. The analysis of data was carried out using an iterative process of analysis whereby we selected a subset of 10 videos to illustrate practices of interest during the interviews and included participants' perspectives and rationale for content creation. This complemented the subsequent critical multimodal content and discourse analysis of their videos (see Table 2).

Scraping was done on 11 June, 2021 using the unofficial API wrapper for TikTok in Python (Teather, 2021). This API enabled us to download each profile's last 65 videos

Table 1. Profiles included in the sample.

Pseudonym	Followers	Likes	Other profiles	Gender	Country	Posting Periodicity	Sampled videos
@ICE_hunter	502 K	3.9 M	IG, YT	Male	US	Daily or more	63
@Emy_blondie	56.6 K	446.7 K	IG, YT	Female	US	Daily or more	65
@PetehonduranDJ	57.3 K	485.3 K	IG, FB	Male	Spain	Every 3 days	63
@JanSuarez	17.5 K	188.3 K	IG, FB	Female	Spain	Every 2 days	61

Notes: Number of followers and likes as of September 24, 2021. Total sample consists of 252 videos. Posting regularity is approximate and in some cases, there are periods with no posts due to content moderation and suspension by the platform.

Table 2. Code groups for TikTok video content analysis.

Code Group	Definition
MLTMD	Multimodal linguistic elements (e.g, emoji/hashtags/text)
TKTK	Specific TikTok affordances and creative configurations (e.g, duet/stitch/audio/effects)
IDENT	Creative elements and narratives that suggest specific national, cultural, political, ideological, creative, and digital identities.
BRAND	Personal branding elements.
FOLWERS	Promotion of interactions with followers.
PLATF	Content creation strategies to negotiate platform visibility and content moderation.

and related metadata by writing and executing a Python script. Videos and related metadata were uploaded to Atlas.Ti and analyzed using inductively derived code groups related to phenomena of interest in relation to the research objective and the conversations with creators (see Table 2).

4. Findings

In the next sections we will describe each microcelebrity profile and their use of TikTok affordances as relevant to understand some of the commonalities among those who have achieved a significant number of followers, as well as the intricate identities of these creators. Emphasis is placed in the intersections with their microcelebrity identities and algorithmic visibility strategies.

4.1. Fearless Political Activism for TikTok Visibility

ICEhunter defines himself as a Latin American activist in favor of human rights. His brand name is present as embedded text signatures and hashtags which illustrate his identity as a creator. His content reflects a combination of footage of himself and others following and facing

ICE (Immigration and Customs Enforcement) agents and the promotion of human rights for immigrants regardless of their status (Figure 3). He provides practical information for immigrants facing deportation, emphasizing the strategies of ICE officers. His experience as an undocumented immigrant for 22 years motivates and shapes his content. His visibility strategies in the use of multimodal elements are relevant as part of his identifying creative practices.

For this creator, losing his account on Facebook severely impacted his current approach to moderation. He describes his experience:

> I started on TikTok in December, after my Facebook was cancelled…as part of Facebook's mass closure of MAGA, neo-Nazi and white supremacist accounts. The algorithm took my activist and personal accounts for good because I was confronting them and exposing them.

This personal anecdote with Facebook's algorithmic moderation resembles Black creators' claims of unequal treatment on TikTok, where their content flagging racist videos is deleted (Contreras & Martinez, 2021; Ohlheiser,
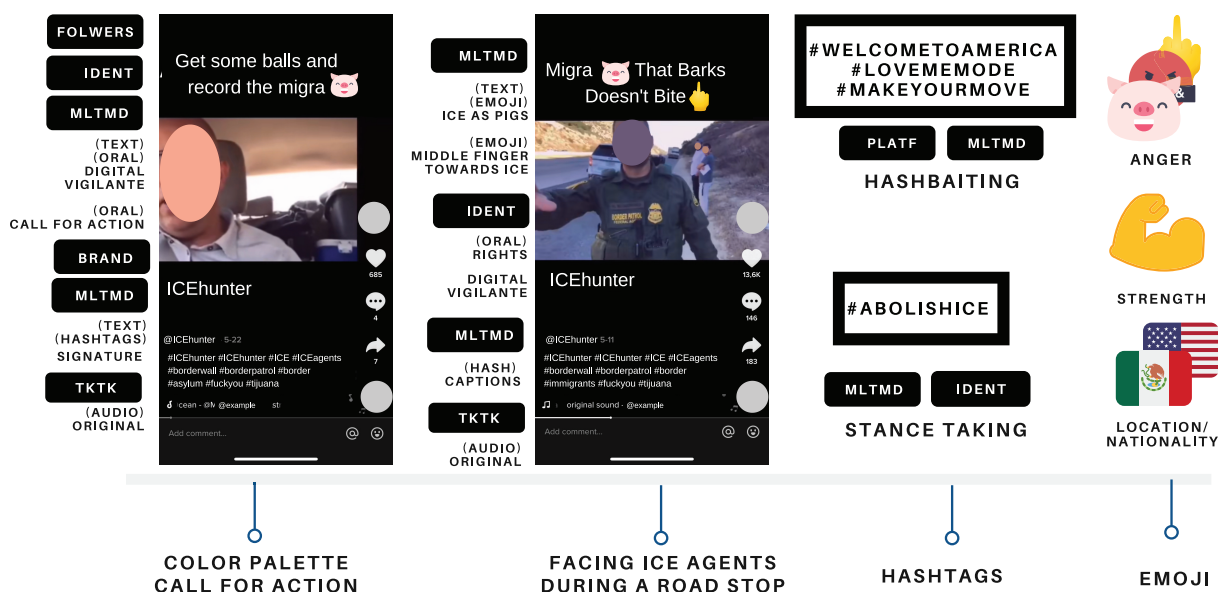

Figure 3. ICEhunter's use of multimodal elements and TikTok configurations.

2021). He describes this experience as "Jail" and when asked about TikTok's moderation algorithm he describes it as "completely unpredictable." Due to this unpredictability, ICEhunter was unable to describe the sort of content that gets flagged because he usually doesn't understand the reason, but he explained his negotiation with the platform:

> When a video gets flagged, I erase it, and then edit it, change the editing cuts, or add effects such as snow falling or colors, which confuses the algorithm, and I post it again. If it gets flagged again, I take it down. If TikTok determines that it doesn't want to see the video, I don't post it again and I do something different.

This reflects his current self-moderating approach of trial-and-error, in line with Gillespie's (2018) description of platform content removal and account suspension impacting present and future speech by forcing creators to move to other platforms and become wary of the guidelines and the need to adapt their content to abide by the rules. It also illustrates his management of his mediatized persona (Moore et al., 2017) by skillfully modifying the format and presentation of his message to find a way across platform moderation. This also supports previous research about immigrants' use of social media to present different identities through content creation (Leurs, 2017), in this case curating content to avoid deletion. It is noteworthy that his approach to content moderation does not include mentioning eliminated or flagged content in his videos, as opposed to @Emy_Blondie, as we will explain later.

Moreover, for increased viewership he reported including "eye-catching, dramatic headlines" as illustrated in Figure 3 with the headline "get some balls

and record the migra." He also describes in his strategy identifying trending hashtags that fit his content topics through TikTok searches to foster algorithmic visibility. His content reflects the use of hashtags created for the launch of the movie #WelcometoAmerica to label his content supporting immigration. These actions reflect a refined strategy to be picked up by the For You page and expand his reach in line with previous research (Abidin, 2021; Zulli & Zulli, 2020). We have coined this practice "hashbaiting" due to its similarities with clickbaiting. Hashbaiting is defined as the use of trending hashtags that connotationally relate to the hashtagged content but refer to mediated events that are thematically different. This practice enables a creator to take advantage of highly popular campaigns without sacrificing thematic coherence, while targeting his intended audience and prospective new publics through cooccurring hashtags that combine profile branding (#ICEhunter; MLTMD/BRAND) and stance taking (#abolishICE) that reflects his political identity as part of his self-branding practices (Marwick, 2013) and is in line with previous research on hashtag branding functions (Page, 2012).

These strategic, multimodal practices illustrate a careful understanding of the sociotechnical nature of TikTok visibility and its algorithm. His use of the black and white color palette and visual cues (emoji) are part of his visual identity and are strategically deployed to maintain the attention of new For You viewers beyond the one-time viewership opportunity afforded by TikTok. Figure 4 reflects his use of the duet function to highlight other tiktokers while emphasizing his TikTok creator self as described in his interview by (a) expressing his support for deportees and showing ICE agents visiting people at home; (b) highlighting instances of language-based discrimination and highlighting the linguistic rights of people in the US while featuring the voice of the original
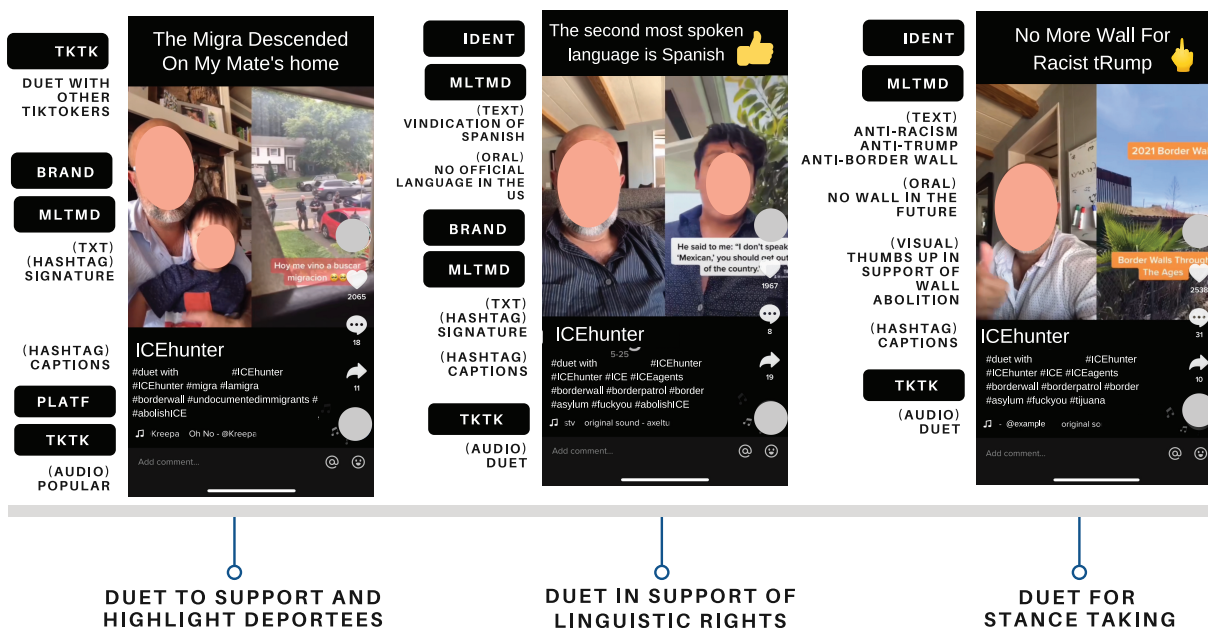

Figure 4. ICEhunter's use of the duet function, multimodal elements, and TikTok configurations.

creator; and (c) by stating his political stance in relation to Trump and the border wall as racist and oppressive symbols of the current US policies towards immigration.

His account features content that is mainly in Spanish, although we found some English terms, pronunciations, and hashtags, reflecting his dual linguistic profile as a long-term Latin American immigrant in the US. When asked about his followers and the nature of his interactions with them, he said:

> Ninety-eight percent of the people who watch the videos are grateful because many have no idea about the level of racism in this country....Most people didn't know that their rights are guaranteed by the Constitution...even if you're undocumented. Occasionally white supremacists threaten to kill me, to the point where I must go to the Sheriff's office with screenshots of images of AR-15s pointed at me.

Thus, his relationships with supporters, opponents, other tiktokers, and the algorithm shape the performative nature of his digital vigilante persona (Gabdulhakov, 2019) by systematically involving his viewers in diverse ways. This ranges from prompting action in their own context as seen in Figure 3, where he provides detailed instructions on the best ways to face ICE agents and calls for followers to submit this content to him to post in videos that often follow his model of rights-based interaction with ICE agents. By following and facing ICE agents after a road stop of two immigrants and establishing his right to record and be around with questions and statements such as "why did you stop them?," "you don't have the right to touch me," or "I have a right to record" he provides an illustrated how-to guide. In many cases, his vigilante self converges with his mediatized persona (Moore et al., 2017), which is reflected in his cre-

ative practices and anonymization of information about the immigrants portrayed on videos submitted to him. We could argue that, by sharing these anonymized third-party videos, he effectively becomes the visible face of the collective experiences of immigrants in the US, which often depict systematic oppression and unlawful prosecution, which are prevalent themes in his content. This also highlights his awareness of the threats and opportunities afforded by algorithmic visibility (Bucher, 2012), with an understanding of the unique implications of this visibility for vulnerable populations (Witteborn, 2015, 2021). He expresses no fear of continuing to create and share this content regardless of the online or in-person attacks he receives because "I see this as key work; I need to leave a better country for my son."

4.2. Unexpected Politics and Unwilling Co-Creation

Emy_blondie self-identifies as a conservative immigrant from Mexico who has lived in the US for 10 years and in her own words "aims to promote the right of Latinos in the US to think differently." She states that she does not want people to think like her, but her aim is to provide an alternative political perspective. She fits within Lewis' (2020) description of "reactionary microcelebrity" due to her opposition to social justice movements and mainstream media, especially Hispanic media outlets in the US. Her content ranges from sarcastic political stances to fierce responses to criticism. She routinely positions herself politically through the involvement of tiktokers across the political spectrum using the "stitch" function—which enables creators to take a portion of an existing video and attach their content to it—as well as the "respond to comment" and "green screen" functionalities in a practice we have called "unwilling co-creation" (see Figure 5).
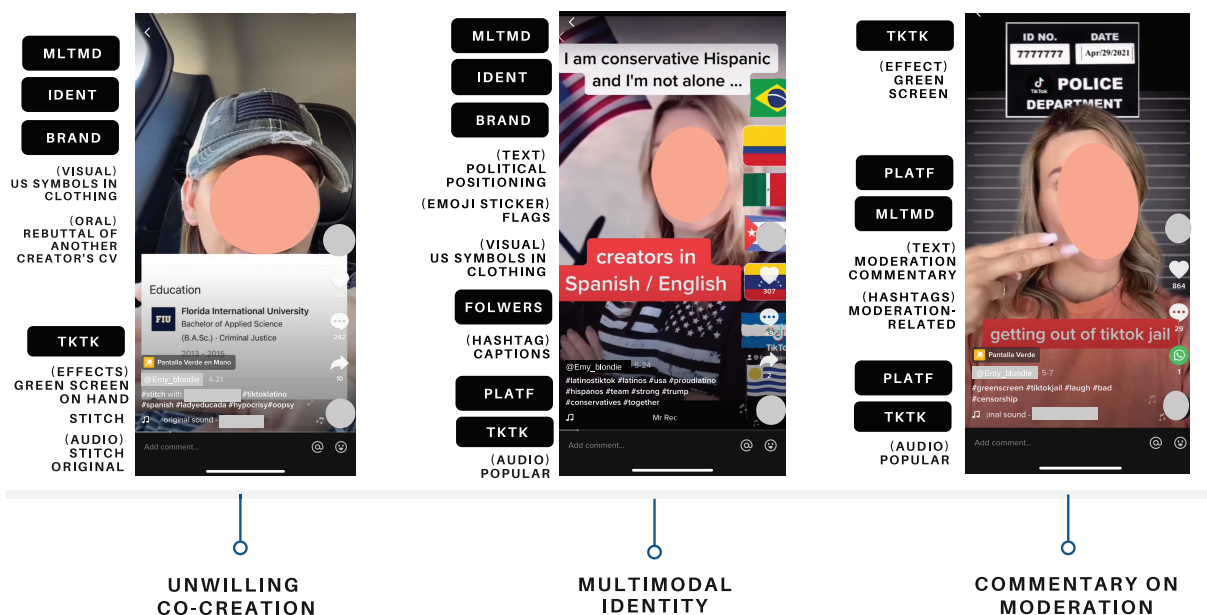

Figure 5. Emy_blondie's use of multimodal elements and TikTok configurations.

We define unwilling co-creation as the use of platform affordances to coopt another person's content (including videos, comments, or audio) using the editing possibilities afforded by the platform, in an aim to criticize the original creator or solidify a stance (see Figure 5). This could be considered a TikTok-enabled sub-genre of "response videos," a YouTube genre that involves a creator from one political side editing a video by a creator from the opposing political side to simulate a debate (Lewis et al., 2021). TikTok is a particularly fertile ground for this kind of practice due to its mimetic structure that facilitates imitation, reuse, and resignification of existing content (Zulli & Zulli, 2020). Thus, Emy_blondie's unwilling co-creation practices include viewers and other tiktokers whose content enables her to contextualize and validate her various identities, but especially her political stance, often without regard for the (mis)representation of an issue or a person. It is possible to suggest that this also constitutes an attempt at visibility through controversy (Gillespie, 2018). In contrast with ICEhunter, her content is mainly in English, and she routinely argues for "language as integration" in line with previous research on immigrant celebrities as icons for "proper" integration (Zambon, 2021, p. 216). During her interview, she reflects on her shift to English content:

> When I just started on TikTok, I posted a message in Spanish criticizing BLM protesters saying "I don't agree that they are using the Mexican flag when they are destroying and burning places." The next day I received messages threatening to kill me and my family…just for saying that I didn't agree.….I decided to use English because…a lot of young people who grew up in the US don't speak Spanish…and they don't have very good information…and I have found a lot of support from the American community.

This episode profoundly shaped her public persona (Moore et al., 2017) in response to attacks by her Spanish-speaking community and the support of the native US community on TikTok. In this sense, her multilayered persona includes performative dimensions of her Latin American immigrant background, conservative politics, and an emphasis on patriotism towards the US, which suggests an extreme attempt at establishing herself as a deserving immigrant through a display of cultural and national values (Chouliaraki & Georgiou, 2019; Nikunen, 2019).

The inclusion of other like-minded Latinx tiktokers in her content suggests a unique form of digitally enabled claims of belonging (Marino, 2015; Marlowe et al., 2017) with the added layer of political affinity and the construction of common enemies that exist beyond their common national and cultural identities. Moreover, this community of like-minded creators engage in collectively generated content to suggest that moderation policies disproportionally affect Hispanic conservatives and place part of the blame on individuals who flag their content.

She describes TikTok's moderation practices as "censorship" and akin to ICEhunter mentions "TikTok jail" as a period when content is obscured, or the account is suspended. In her videos (Figure 5), she discusses this perceived suppression in her self-described sarcastic, humorous tone, illustrating an overlap of her mediatized, performative, and public personas (Moore et al., 2017). Her approach to moderation is sternly different to ICEhunter's as she uses her videos to highlight periods of suspension and "obscuring" of her content while he adapts his content quietly and attempts to abide by the platform's moderation rules. In this regard, Gillespie (2018) reminds us that social media are privately owned and therefore entitled to limit users' speech, albeit with implications that are problematic in a highly mediatized and platformed information ecosystem.

4.3. Fearless Empowerment and Motivation From the Margins

JanSuarez is a Honduran immigrant who moved to Spain three years ago. Her content centers on the promotion of rights, empowerment, and motivation for fellow immigrants and other TikTok users. She creates empathetic content that stems from her self-described difficulties and migratory experiences. Her videos display a mixture of humor, nostalgia, affirmations for resilience and nods to her multilayered identities, as can be seen in Figure 6.

JanSuarez considers viewer engagement as central in her success as a creator. She attempts to make her content light and positive while highlighting a balanced perspective on her life as a foreigner in Spain. Her content displays fewer consistent branding elements in comparison to the rest of the creators, which supports Abidin's (2021) argument that TikTok's algorithmic configuration has meant that creators rely on video-based popularity rather than cohesive profiles. Her platformed cultural and national identities are shaped by the use of emoji flags, hashtags, punta music and occasionally through clothing to convey her Honduran background as can be seen in Figure 6. She regularly posts content about immigrant rights. Her content goes from serious statements, to anger towards immigrant abuse and light humor imitating trendy TikTok content to touch upon controversial issues such as entering as a tourist and staying in Spain as shown in Figure 6. When asked about this content she replied:

> The simple fact of being a human being means you have rights, you must know them. Being in the country with no papers does not mean you have to become a slave.…We must open people's eyes to the fact that they have many rights.…For example, they should receive respect from their boss, from their coworkers, they cannot be physically and verbally abused.

Her stance on immigrant rights reflects and influences much of the videos she produces and the way in which
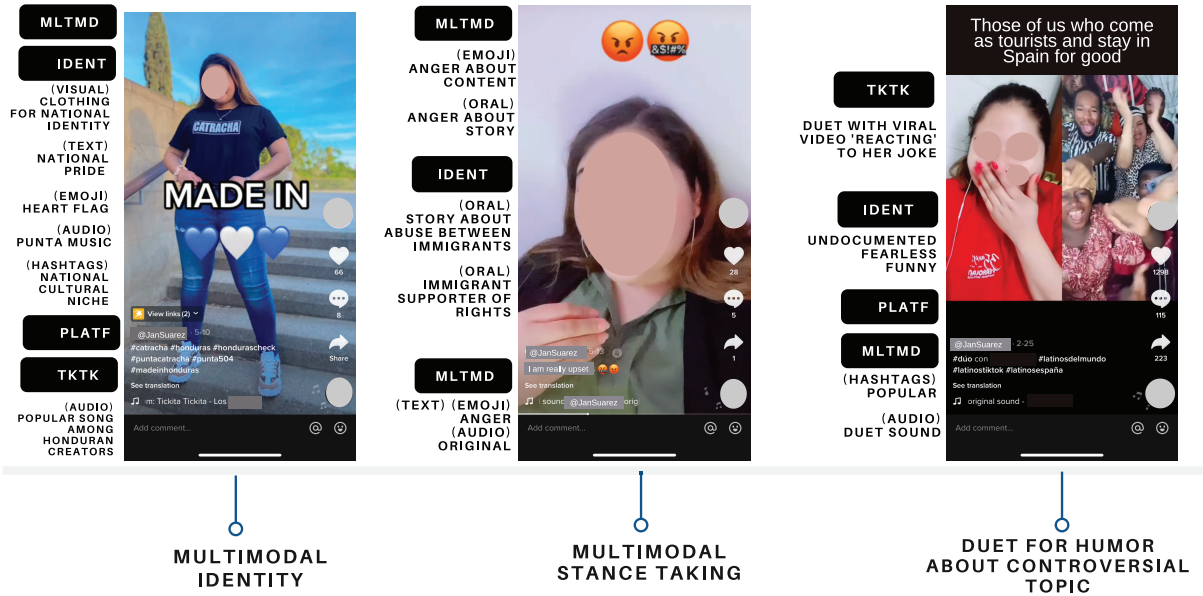
Figure 6. JanSuarez's multimodal identity and persona-related practices.

her migratory experience shapes her identity as a creator highlights the socially constructed (Hall, 2019) and evolving nature of online identities, through her creative actions and decisions (Senft, 2013). On the one hand, the mediatized and value dimensions of her online persona (Moore et al., 2017) are portrayed in the creation of original audio tracks of motivation, empowerment, and self-esteem to be reused by others. This reflects her understanding of the mimetic nature of the platform (Zulli & Zulli, 2020) as well as the role of audio memes as vehicles for storytelling and connection between creators and viewers (Abidin, 2021).

Figure 7 illustrates her labels of this type of audio track using the hashtag #voiceeffects and in some cases including embedded text and captions that read "use this

audio track." The deployment of multimodal elements to promote interaction beyond likes and views reflects an insider knowledge of algorithmic visibility within this specific platform (Bishop, 2019; Bucher, 2012). Some of these audio tracks stem from personal experiences that are applicable to the immigrant community:

> Every migrant has his or her own story….It is very difficult to start anew in a new country, new languages, new cultures…far away from your family. I know I am going to make it; I am going to achieve everything I set out to do (@JenSuarez's audio track)

It is noteworthy that—like ICEhunter—she reports no fear of retaliation or hate by followers due to content
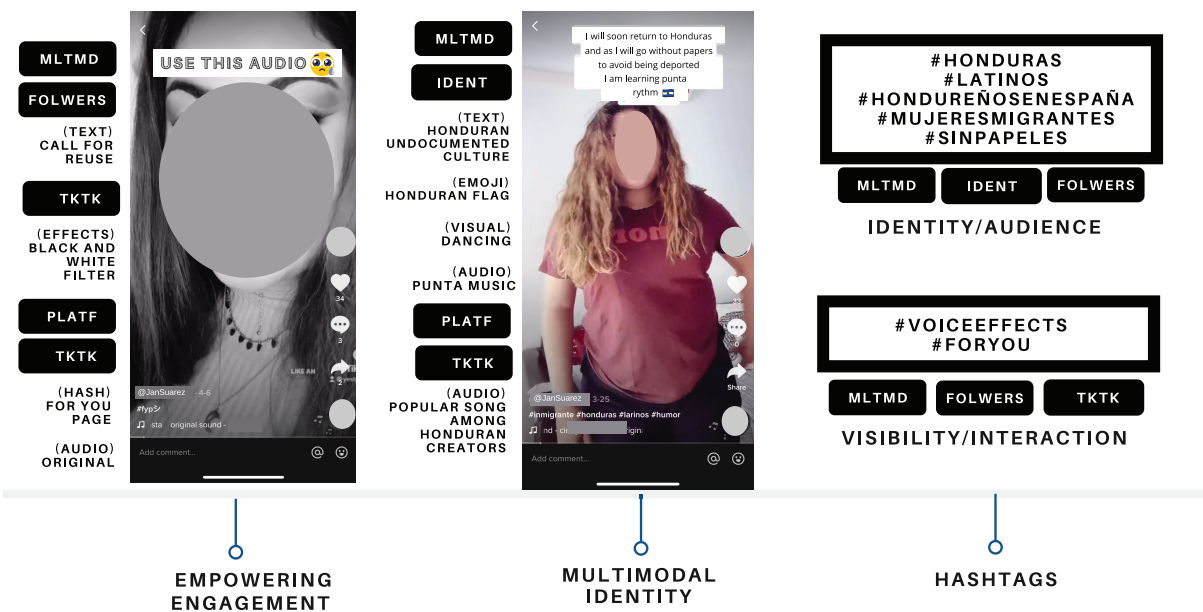
Figure 7. JanSuarez's multimodal and visibility practices.

that touches on issues such as undocumented immigration. She constitutes an unlikely example considering the fear many immigrants experience when creating online content due to symbolic and digital bordering (Chouliaraki & Georgiou, 2019) and in line with the idea of social media content creation as a claim for communication rights and political positioning (Leurs, 2017). She also notes that none of her content has been filtered or eliminated by the platform, suggesting that she is able to balance controversial topics with humor and an acquired familiarity with TikTok's algorithmic visibility. This seems to have allowed her to develop a more "platform friendly" political style that enables her to bypass moderation and flagging while presenting information that may be contentious for some users.

4.4. Crossmedia Cultural and National Pride

PeteHonduranDJ self-describes as a proud Honduran, a journalist who has lived in Spain for the past 16 years but has never lost his connection with his country of birth. He explains that he understands that Spanish media prefers to hire native journalists, so he has mostly worked in media aimed at the Latin American public. He works as a DJ in a radio station based in Barcelona geared to Honduran nationals and uses TikTok to expand his reach. His content features advice for love and life, often related to immigration and being Honduran as well as messages of support for fellow Latin Americans.

PeteHonduranDJ features the most comprehensive branding strategy among participating creators. It is shaped by what he calls the "character" he becomes when he wears his glasses and clothing that reflects his Honduran identity or his public persona (Moore et al., 2017). His use of branded clothing and punta

music is similar to JanSuarez's but much more consistent and strategic. Figure 8 illustrates his logo and slogan "Honduras in the house 504" and objects that visually reflect his branding. His crossmedia strategy combines visual props for TikTok and audio branding at the end of all his TikTok videos "PeteHonduranDJ….I'm gone…hahahaha." This is a creative way to ensure reuses of his audio include his signature among this platform's imitation publics (Zulli & Zulli, 2020) in line with his concern related to audio reuse enabled by the platform "what sometimes annoys me is that…they use the audio and don't give you the credits."

His entire creative strategy and personal brand are in stern contradiction with previous research that suggests that immigrants attempt to reflect their integration through allegiance to the receiving country's values, culture, and patriotism (Nikunen, 2019) which could be due to his relative privilege in comparison with other immigrants and his professional status, working in niche media targeted at Latin American audiences.

He discusses various issues related to immigration such as advice for undocumented immigrants who want to travel by plane and his take on linguistic integration by Honduran immigrants:

> When you come to these countries, the United States or Spain, if you want to speak like a Spaniard…speak however you want. Now my advice is that, when you are with fellow Hondurans…you should try to speak like a Catracho [word Hondurans use to refer to themselves].

His position of influence makes this especially relevant as he advices and models a specific way to migrate without losing one's national/cultural identities. His perception

Figure 8. PeteHonduranDJ's multimodal branding and hashtag uses.

of identity seems to negate multiplicity, in favor of one "authentic" self that should align with one's national background and native language/dialect rather than linguistic and cultural adaptations to become integrated in the country of residence. This reflects a stern opposition to Emy_blondie, who takes an extreme stance about the need to culturally and linguistically adapt in order to belong.

He negotiates his algorithmic visibility using culturally relevant hashtags and the remix and parody of trending audio tracks. He uses his knowledge of musical mixing to create parodic content that fits his creative, humorous TikTok persona while including slight nods to his own culture and nationality. This aligns with Zulli and Zulli's (2020) description of the partial imitation of popular audio tracks as a strategy to increase visibility on TikTok but with the added layer of culturally relevant creative elements within mainstream trending audio tracks.

5. Conclusions

The multilayered profiles and creative practices of these tiktokers reflect complex and diverse identities and online personas that exist among Latin American immigrants in both countries. We argue that these smaller niche communities of followers enable the emergence of microinfluencers whose life trajectory, identity, and politics often diverge from what is expected, simultaneously exemplifying the diverse profiles that exist among Latinx immigrants who may engage in rights claims (Leurs, 2017) to unexpected ideas of ideological freedom and seemingly contradictory identities that have been studied in terms of political participation by Hispanics in the US (Galbraith & Callister, 2020).

All the creators reflected the goal to reach as many people as possible with statements that reflect a stance on issues, claims for rights, and motivating affirmations that illustrate the presence of an immigrant identity, reflected by a focus on culturally relevant life experiences and different approaches to political engagement. The ways in which these creators understand and harness TikTok's possibilities for co-creation shape their behavior-based microcelebrity personas (Abidin, 2018; Moore et al., 2017; Senft, 2013) but also build upon their immigrant experiences as identity-shaping narratives. Their creative strategies position them in relation to political issues such as the border wall or linguistic integration, while platformed practices such as hashbaiting and unwilling co-creation reflect some of the algorithmic visibility and identity construction strategies enabled by the platform and harnessed by these creators.

Thus, algorithmic (in)visibility actions by these creators are threefold. First, they reflect an understanding of the unique technical nature of the TikTok algorithm using hashtags, effects, remixed audio, and visually impactful content. Second, they promote specific actions to viewers that may range from likes and shares to co-creation enabled by the platform. Third, they

show different approaches to content moderation that enable them to present contentious political content and engage with their followers in unique ways. For this, they often rely on personal traits to establish affinity with their followers, based on their immigrant experience, linguistic preferences, political leaning, or national/cultural selves. Their approach to moderation, censorship, and relevant politics illustrates a multitude of ways in which they navigate real and perceived injustice as outsiders in their respective societies, and within TikTok. It also reflects their distinct perspectives of integration and immigrant rights, shaped by their own migratory experience and their position of (relative) privilege.

This study included a small sample that provides an initial overview of diverse microinfluencers and may benefit from further studies that delve into the larger community of immigrant creators and their algorithmic and creative practices.

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Conflict of Interests

The authors declare no conflict of interests.

Supplementary Material

Supplementary material for this article is available online in the format provided by the author (unedited).

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Article

Influencers With Intellectual Disability in Digital Society: An Opportunity to Advance in Social Inclusion

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Abstract
Social networks are appointed as an opportunity to socially normalize disability, as demonstrated by the growing number of influencers with a disability who are followed by millions of users. Likewise, intellectual disability has its place in the networks, with special relevance among influencers with Down syndrome. In this study, a content analysis of 10 accounts of influencers with Down syndrome from seven different countries was performed. Images, videos, comments, and other interactions with their followers were analyzed. The preliminary results described the influencer profiles, the type of content posted, and their relationship with sponsoring brands. These results indicate that social networks allow them to make their interests visible, take part in the digital environment, and interact with their audience, being a positive influence that promotes respect for diversity. These platforms are positioned as powerful tools for the construction and dissemination of inclusive values and the empowerment of disabled people, minimizing controversial questions such as the instrumentalization of the disability and its association with clichés. With all the analyzed results, it is possible to evidence that Instagram can be considered a privileged network that could be utilized for the eradication of barriers and to ease the inclusion of people with intellectual disabilities in the public sphere. The conclusions are relevant for the scientific community given that they will allow us to achieve social inclusion, thanks to the impact of the posts from the influencers with disability.

Keywords
digital inclusion; disability; down syndrome; influencer; Instagram; social inclusion; social networks

Issue
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1. Introduction

Social networks (SNs) offer new ways of communicating on the internet and allow interactive activities through the use of different formats for the diffusion and exchange of audiovisual content. Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, WhatsApp, Instagram, and Tiktok are the SNs with the most significant number of followers worldwide.

Instagram is the SN with the most considerable growth in the number of users and visits, obtaining 1,221 million active users worldwide, implying an increase of 22.1% with respect to the previous year (Kemp, 2020). It is positioned as the fifth SN with the greatest number of users, whose profile is eminently young, and female to a greater degree (Caldeira, 2021). However, the changes added recently, such as filters, reels, and the widespread

growth of the shopping option have improved its impact. This study aims to identify the practices and interactions of influencers with Down syndrome on Instagram, starting with the content analysis of their profiles and interactions with their audience. The study includes an important analysis of a little-studied reality, as similar studies are not expected. Suggestions are provided on how to improve the visibility of intellectual disability through SNs, and actions are suggested at the social, educational, and political levels to take advantage of the influencers' impact and improve the inclusion of this collective.

2. Social Networks, Disability, and the Role of Influencers

The SNs have implied a significant advance in the improvement of the quality of life of people with disability, easing their access to education, enriching their leisure time, and improving their relationships with others. However, a challenge still exists in achieving the full participation of this collective in a society that is becoming more technology-centered, as digital inclusion is influenced by multiple factors and the diversity of experiences (Tsatsou, 2019, 2020). The use of these media by disabled youth is a recurring worry in the scientific literature, mainly from the start of this century (Caton & Chapman, 2016), and it is still a challenge, as shown by the analysis of themes such as risks and vulnerabilities, opportunities, sexuality, identity, barriers, and supports (Borgström et al., 2019). The work by Bayor et al. (2018) indicates that this collective has different interests as a function of the SN in which they participate, namely, they use YouTube to entertain themselves, Facebook to connect with family members, and Snapchat and Instagram to interact with strangers in a leisurely manner.

Despite the increase in the use of SNs by individuals with disabilities, shifting from being simple users to protagonists, and therefore improving their opportunities of social participation, in some cases, these platforms still have barriers concerning accessibility and usability, which translates into a digital divide that is difficult to overcome (Werner & Shpigelman, 2019). In this sense, in agreement with Saz-Torralba et al. (2011), resources that should initially ease the access to information and social interaction create inequalities, so that e-inclusion is set as a fundamental element in current societies, which must wager on the promotion of solutions at the technical level, and the design and development of tailored devices that are linked to the principle of universal accessibility or the universal design for learning (UDL).

Indeed, this sense of universality and diversity has accompanied the long and intense road towards conceptualization in the area of disability. Disabled individuals and their social fabric have constantly demanded laws, procedures, and concepts that are aware of differences. Tradition in most countries is the most important influence of the medical-clinical focus (Shume, 2020).

Faced with the hegemony which impregnates language and the professional practice of many collectives, there is a social model of disability with an emancipating ideology that tries to project a positive image of disability, placing value on the competencies as opposed to the needs; the opportunities as opposed to the difficulties, and overall, the importance of the context as opposed to individual limitations. For this, we find the International Classification Functioning, Disability, and Health (ICF), which comprises the current conceptual framework of disability (World Health Organization, 2001), for a new understanding of functioning, disability, and health. This universal classification system establishes a standardized framework and language that encompass three essential components: body/structure functions, activity, and participation integrated under the terms "functioning" and "disability," which depend on the health conditions and their interaction with contextual factors.

The ICF is a universal classification benchmark and currently serves as the framework for the United Nations and other specialized agencies, such as the UN Statistics Division, UNESCO, and the International Labour Organization. Also, the ICF has a close relationship with the demands from the Independent Living Movement (Carbonell, 2019) and is also the basis for the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (United Nations, 2006).

Due to this, the term "disability" is used in the present work, although the focus of the research and the intention of its dissemination is entirely inclusive as a contribution towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG). Sustainability is a significant global challenge, which the SDG associate with training and social participation (UNESCO, 2015a). Inclusion and sustainability are closely related, and the fundamental principles of social equity and equality are interdependent and fundamental for sustainable development. The main objective is to broaden the opportunities for everyone and to guarantee the social presence, participation, and progress of every individual, especially those with a disability.

Within the values defined by Booth and Ainscow (2015), from an inclusive perspective, the value of sustainability is essential, as inclusion is defined as belonging, being valued, and obtaining the necessary support for progress to be made (Goodall, 2020). Therefore, the processes of educational inclusion are associated with the achievement of the 17 SDG (UNESCO, 2015b). The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is an instrument that underlines the mutual dependency that exists between the inclusion processes, inclusive training, social participation, and sustainable development (UNESCO, 2015c).

2.1. Risk and Benefits of Use of Social Networks by Disabled Youth

Being a SN user and taking advantage of their opportunities implies being exposed to content that is risky,

especially among the youth, so it is necessary, according to Vissenberg and d'Haenens (2020), to create a safe environment that favors the use of communicational and proactive coping strategies, in which resilience plays a fundamental role. The studies by Sallafranque-St-Louis and Normand (2017) or Chiner et al. (2017) show evidence about how the youth with an intellectual disability or autism experienced distressing situations on the use of the internet and needed support for overcoming them (friends, family, professionals, etc.). Therefore, it is necessary to guarantee the safe and positive use of the internet with special emphasis on this collective agreement with these experts on the crucial role of education in this area. Likewise, Setchell et al. (2020) pointed out that the use and access of technology by disabled individuals can be harmful, create greater exclusion, and broaden the digital divide if they are not adapted or are not accessible. For example, if we are trying to promote the use of SNs, but the user does not have many friends for this (White & Forrester-Jones, 2019), this can have a negative effect.

At the same time, SNs offer individuals with disabilities the opportunity to participate in a digital environment, allowing them to exchange supports (Suriá, 2017), increase their social participation (Raghavendra et al., 2015), and therefore, their social-educational inclusion (Kim & Quian, 2019; Román & Rodríguez-Martín, 2019), at the same time that they favor their visibility. Along the same line, Chadwick et al. (2016) suggest the need to improve the online access of this collective to take greater advantage of their benefits, given that, according to Ramstem et al. (2018), despite the use of the ICT by these youth, they do so to a lesser degree than their peers, and with a different pattern of use (Alfredsson et al., 2019), being dependent on the support from their environment (Borgström et al., 2019). Research studies such as those by Kim and Quian (2019) have shown that the use of SNs by individuals with an intellectual disability provides benefits, such as the improvement in social capital, self-confidence, and a positive image of oneself. They also point out that SNs are tools that favor social inclusion but require the efficient support of one's surroundings to guarantee their safe use. Other networks such as YouTube are used by the youth to build their own identity, presenting and expressing themselves, and searching the identification of their users with their own identity (Pérez-Torres et al., 2018).

2.2. Social Networks to Show Disability

More and more individuals with a disability are utilizing SNs as a tool to make their collective visible. Individuals with a disability make use of different SNs such as YouTube, Instagram, or their own blogs to make themselves known, to show their identity (Borgström et al., 2019), and to have an influence on their followers, using them as a loudspeaker to communicate multiple messages, and not only with a commercial aim. This opportunity to visualize their own identity allows them to overcome tags or clichés such as "learning disability," emphasizing other aspects of their identity (Borgström et al., 2019), achieving greater participation in the digital sphere, and therefore favoring their social inclusion, aspects which will guide the present research study.

In this way, Instagram has established itself as a platform that favors the development of identity and the self-expression of youth with disabilities, facilitating the construction of community, both online and in their social surroundings (Tollan, 2020). Likewise, just as with other SNs, Instagram allows the self-representation of individuals with disabilities through different socio-technical possibilities, which lead to novel behaviors, the revelation of information about oneself, and new interactions between individuals, which up to now were unthinkable. Self-representation on Instagram can be analyzed starting with the theory by Goffman (1959) about self-representation which sustains that people play social roles in their interactions with others, being able to be more or less aware or sensitive to how they play this role, which is critically important when dealing with individuals who belong to a collective that can be marginalized or stigmatized, such as the case of individuals with a disability or LGTBI individuals (Birnholtz & Macapagal, 2021).

The possibilities offered by SNs for individuals with disabilities to define their profiles and select how they want to show themselves in the digital sphere also allow for the overcoming of the instrumentalization of disability which has derived into a social image (Ledesma, 2008; Vidal-García, 2021; Viñarás-Abad et al., 2021) which does not always correspond to the reality shown by influencers in SNs.

2.3. The Role of Influencers in the Public Sphere

The term influencer is not new and did not appear along with the appearance of SNs since, according to Castelló-Martínez (2016), influencers in the 1960s were defined as famous people or celebrities who influenced consumers regarding purchasing recommendations. Presently, they are defined as individuals with a high number of followers and a high level of engagement, meaning that they create loyalty in their followers through the creation of solid relationships.

Influencers are defined by Marketing Directo (2020) as individuals through which SNs generate information about brands, products, or services, and interact with their followers by sharing ideas and opinions. According to Alassani and Göretz (2019), influencers can be classified as a function of the number of followers into the following categories: nano-influencers, micro-influencers, macro-influencers, and mega-influencers. The number of followers reached by micro-influencers, who will be the object of study in the present work, along with the macro-influencers, lies between four and five figures. On their part, the macro-influencers have a number of followers that reach six to seven digits, which results in a decrease in the level of commitment of 5–25% in this sector.

As for the brands, the marketing of influence through digital platforms is established as one of the most efficient strategies of communication and marketing, increasing the notoriety of the brand, creating commercial opportunities, and client loyalty (del-Pino-Romero & Castelló-Martínez, 2017). In this sense, in agreement with Augure (2015), the most frequent situations in which brands resort to relationships with influencers are the creation and distribution of content or the launching of products. On their part, the main motivation of the influencers for collaborating with different brands is to increase their reach or audience, create the brand image, obtain advantages (discounts or gifts), economic gain, or live new experiences.

3. Method

For this, a study was conducted comprising of two differentiated phases.

3.1. Sample

The sample was composed of 10 accounts of influencers with Down syndrome (Table 1). The influencer accounts were obtained through the Social Blade website by selecting those that met the following criteria:

- Accounts managed directly by individuals with Down syndrome and not by families or associations.
- The number of followers.
- Belonged to the micro-influencers category.
- The nationality of the Instagrammers, who belonged to seven different countries.
- Published in alphabetic languages and not in ideographic languages (i.e., Chinese or Japanese).

From the accounts that met these requirements, a sample of 10 accounts was selected, which were diverse in their geographical origin (America, Europe, and Oceania),

Table 1. Sample characteristics.

Name	Username	Followers	Country	Category and/or Instagram bio	Link
Madeline Stuart	@madelinesmodelling	356 K	Australia	Public figure/super model with Down syndrom	https://bit.ly/3qz8lg2
Gabriel Bernardes	@downlicia_oficial	339 K	Brazil	Entrepreneur/ ambassador: @bis and @Formula NaturalOficial	https://bit.ly/3qyk0vo
Chelsea Werner	@showtimewerner	193 K	USA	2X World champion gymnast, 4X Special Olympics champion @womwnbest athlete	https://bit.ly/3DTP4wf
Kate Grant	@kategrantmodel	43.7 K	Ireland	1st model in NI with Down's syndrome	https://bit.ly/3zHY9pn
Sofía Jirau	@sofiajirau	121 K	Puerto Rico	Model/professional model	https://bit.ly/3qzvrTV
Cacai Bauer	@cacaibauer	369 K	Brazil	Digital creator/ 1st digital inf. with Down syndrome. Model, actress, activist, Ativa 21 ambassador	https://bit.ly/3AjxgJ9
Juliana K. Vieira	@juju.kav	70.6 K	Brazil	Personal blog/ YouTuber	https://bit.ly/3jquBqI
María José Paiz	@segunmajo	37 K	Panama	Blogger	https://bit.ly/3tl1yYQ
Patricia Fuentes	@patrifashion	102 K	Spain	Public figure	https://bit.ly/3DHgzc6
Christopher González	@chrisinlimites	23 K	Puerto Rico	Entrepreneur, motivational speaker, and chef	https://bit.ly/2UJwc0x

major languages (English, Portuguese, and Spanish), and sex (most of the accounts belong to women, and this was reflected in the sample selected).

From the accounts selected, the last 20 posts shared between May and June 2021 were analyzed. The procedure followed for this is detailed in Section 3.2.

3.2. Measurements

In first place, a content analysis technique was utilized from a quantitative approach, starting with the variables developed in other research studies and which we have adapted to our object of study. In this manner, the following categories and their corresponding indicators are established to quantify the interactions produced in the selected accounts, divided into two types of variables: nominal and scale.

3.2.1. Nominal

Among the nominal variables, the type of format (González-Romo & Iriarte-Aguirre, 2020; Romero-Coves et al., 2020) is shown through indicators about the type of publication on Instagram (video, gif, photograph, reel, IGTV, or carousel).

Another variable is the type of content (Gonzalez-Romo & Iriarte-Aguirre, 2020) based on indicators on the publication themes. This variable, given that it had very diverse values that impeded a quantitative analysis was re-codified to classify, in the cases in which the theme was clear and unambiguous, into one of five options. These have been selected according to the characteristics of the profiles of the influencers analysed and in line with McRoberts et al. (2016), Romero-Coves et al.. (2020), González-Romo and Iriarte-Aguirre, (2020), and Villena-Alarcón and Fernández-Torres, (2020). In this way, the following dimensions and categories have been established to analyze the contents of the profiles of different influencers: a) interaction with the audience; b) beauty, fashion, and health; c) inclusion, acceptance, and awareness about Down syndrome; d) lifestyle—parties, celebrations, and leisure; e) gastronomy. This allowed us to classify a total of 96 posts, 48% of the sample, permitting a statistical analysis of these cases. The themes from the rest could not be analyzed given that the themes overlapped (for example, lifestyle and inclusion in many cases) or given that they belonged to isolated categories (for example, a joke is shared on one occasion).

Finally, among the nominal variables is the presence of brands or sponsors (González-Romo & Iriarte-Aguirre, 2020; Smith et al., 2012) through indicators such as the presence of sponsored posts.

3.2.2. Scale

Among the scale variables is the degree of engagement between users and Instagramers (González-Romo & Iriarte-Aguirre, 2020; Villena-Alarcón & Fernández-Torres, 2020), whose indicators are the number of followers, as well as the interactions allowed by Instagram in each post: positive and negative comments, likes, and views (in the case of videos, likes are not an option), as well as the sum of the positive interactions (likes, more positive comments).

In the second phase, and from a qualitative approach, the publications with more significant positive interactions were analyzed (sum of likes and positive comments) of each of the profiles. For this, starting with Romero-Coves et al. (2020) and Villena-Alarcón and Fernández-Torres (2020), the following variables were established: a) type of content, starting with the following characteristics extracted from the quantitative analysis and the biographical information of the profiles themselves—1) beauty, fashion, and health; 2) entrepreneurship and gastronomy; 3) content creators; b) Format of the post; c) presence in SNs—presence or absence of the influencer in the post and type of presence (individual, as a couple, secondary, others); d) hashtags—Use of generic hashtags and/or related with disability.

4. Results

4.1. Quantitative Analysis

The results obtained from the statistical analysis were analyzed with the SPSS v.25 software. The descriptive study of the variables allowed us to observe that the account and posts analyzed corresponded to the category of micro-influencer, with a high number of likes, views, and positive interactions obtained (Table 2). It should be pointed out, nevertheless, that although the mean values were high, the standard deviations were high as well, thereby showing the great diversity between the accounts. This is especially derived from the number of followers of each account, which varied between 23,000 and 370,000, which has a strong influence on the rest of the variables. On the other hand, the number of negative interactions, in the shape of negative comments, was almost inexistent, and only one post had two negative comments, and another obtained only one negative comment, so that these values were considered marginal, and it was observed that the interaction was generally positive.

Also, it was observed that from the total number of accounts, 30% did not have a presence beyond Instagram, 20% also had a presence on YouTube, and the other 5% had a greater presence in other networks: one of them had a presence in a blog, Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube; another also had a blog, Facebook, and Instagram; another in email, YouTube, and TikTok, aside from Instagram; and the last was also on YouTube and Facebook.

As shown in Table 3, the types of publications in these accounts were overall photographs—29.5% of the total—

Table 2. Degree of commitment between users and Instagrammers.

	Mean	SD	Minimum	Maximum
Number of followers	165,240	132,943.33	23,000	370,000
Likes	8,868.91	43,312.52	93	516,173
Views	20,538	30,278.60	1,236	118,531
Positive interactions	9,027.96	43,677.46	100	520,523

and reels—in 29% of the accounts. Lastly, it was observed that more than half of the publications had a presence of sponsors (69.5%), a sign of the frequent collaboration of these accounts with other businesses.

4.1.1. Inferential Analysis

A statistically significant and positive correlation was observed, with a large size effect, between the number of views and the number of followers ($r(34) = .71$, $p < .001$). Thus, the greater number of followers the greater number of views, which is evident due to the weight that the number of followers could have on the rest of the interactions. Nevertheless, and perhaps surprisingly, this variable did not have a significant effect on the number of likes and comments.

No differences were observed from the presence or absence of sponsors, neither to aspects related to the number of views of the videos and IGTV ($t(34) = -.679$, $p = .50$), the number of likes ($t(162) = -1.051$, $p = .29$), the number of positive comments ($t(198) = -.757$, $p = .45$), nor the total number of positive interactions ($t(162) = -1.05$, $p = .29$).

On the other hand, a positive and statistically significant correlation with a large size effect was observed between the number of likes and the number of positive comments ($r(162) = .94$, $p < .001$). This result is coherent given that a post that awakens positive emotions in the shape of likes will also likely receive positive comments and vice-versa. At the same time, as expected, the total number of positive interactions was correlated in a positive and significant manner, and with a large size effect, with the number of likes ($r(162) = 1.00$, $p < .001$] and

the number of positive comments ($r(162) = .95$, $p < .001$). Lastly, this was the same between the number of positive comments and the number of views of the posts in the shape of video or IGTV ($r(162) = .60$, $p < .001$).

The type of publication did not seem to have a significant influence on the number of likes ($F(160, 3) = 1.35$, $p = .25$) or positive interactions ($F(160, 33) = 1.36$, $p = .25$), although it was observed that the type of post did have an influence on the number of positive comments as a general trend ($F(193, 6) = 1.81$, $p = .098$). Likewise, differences were observed between the number of followers and the presence in other networks ($F(193, 6) = 14.26$, $p < .001$). However, the post hoc test did not show a clear trend—for example, that more networks mean more followers—and the small number of cases forces us to consider this test with caution, given that the differences in the number of followers were very notable, and could have had an influence, as previously mentioned.

A trending difference was found between the type of publication and the presence of sponsors (see Table 4; $X^2 (6, 200) = 10.95$, $p = .09$, $C = .22$], in that we wanted to analyze if having a sponsor or not had an influence on the type of publication. A greater sponsor presence was observed in the carousel posts, which could indicate that this type of post offered a greater richness or a more interesting platform for the promotion of products. This coincides with Social Insider data (Chaves, 2020) which argued that the carousel was the type of publication with greater engagement. However, this could not be verified with an ANOVA test, as no significant differences were found in the engagement as a function of type of post.

Lastly, the publication theme was only relevant with respect to the presence of sponsors ($F(90, 5) = 5.032$,

Table 3. Type of format of the posts.

Type of post	Percentage
Photograph	29.5
Reel	29
Carousel	23
Gif	2
IGTV	9.5
Video	6.5
Other	.5

Table 4. Presence of brands or sponsors.

Type of post	Presence of Sponsor (%)		X^2	p	C
	Yes	No	10.95	.090	.22
Video	4.9	7.2			
Gif	0	2.9			
Photograph	29.5	29.5			
Reel	23	31.7			
IGTV	6.6	10.8			
Carousel	36.1	17.3			
Other	0	0.7			

$p < .001$), which was superior in the fashion, beauty, or health posts where product sponsorship is usually frequent.

4.2. Qualitative Analysis

The qualitative analysis performed concerning the content published highlights the important presence of women influencers as compared to men and the privileged space of fashion and gastronomy as important spheres in which to become socially visible. Other accounts were also notable, where the users disseminated their everyday actions with closeness and a certain naturalness.

In every publication analyzed, the influencer seeks to create engagement by mentioning the external accounts or questions from users, interactions, or user responses. Another common feature between these accounts was the presence of the Instagrammer, who appeared in each of the posts as a protagonist of the visual content shared. Likewise, it should be highlighted that they did not appear in the company of others in any of the publications with the greatest number of positive interactions.

The followers, through their comments, positively and emphatically interact, showing tokens of affection, support, and solidarity in every publication. Negative comments were not found in most of the contents analyzed, except for specific cases with a positive intention, associated with health and avoiding overweightness (specifically to the user Gabriel Bernardes, given the amount of food normally consumed, according to the posts that are mainly related with baking).

Next, we analyze the posts with the highest number of positive interactions in each of the accounts analyzed, classified according to the type of content shared in their profiles, and starting with the beauty, fashion, and health categories (see Figure 1). Here we find the predominance of colourful photographs with the recurrence of the following hashtags: #inclusion, #diversity, #downsyndrome, #youarebeautiful, #differentisbeautiful, #downsyndromemodel, and #SDOwnYourBeauty. These posts underline the recognition and exaltation of female beauty of women with Down syndrome. It should be underlined that two of the photographs in Figure 1 show the spontaneity of the influencers, while the rest is showing the photographic production of visual content.

Despite the fact that the influencers in Figure 2 are associated with entrepreneurship and gastronomy, the publications with a higher number of positive interactions were associated with lifestyle, activities, or
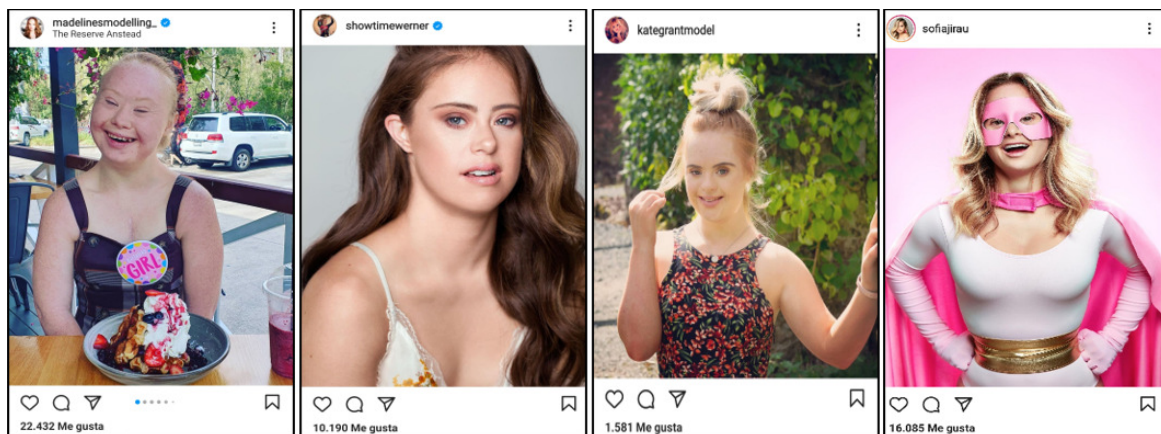

Figure 1. Beauty, fashion, and health categories.

Figure 2. Entrepreneurship and gastronomy categories.

celebrations in their day-to-day. As for the type of content, the publication from Gabriel Bernardes is a reel, while the one from Christopher González is a photographic carousel. Among the hashtags present in these contents, we found: #downsyndrome #cheflife, #inclusionmatters, #reels, #reelsinstagram, #corleone, #barberiacorleone, #dance, and #sabadou. Both the reels and the carousel rely on a variety of colors, which characterize the posts.

According to the type of post the importance of reels is highlighted, except for the content created by María José Paiz, which is a photographic carousel. All of them share content related to leisure activities and celebrations. Despite all of these influencers in this category (see Figure 3) producing content related to their daily life, it is also common for them to directly allude to Down syndrome, except for Patricia Fuentes. In this sense, the most recurring hashtags in these posts were: #dowsyndrome, #inclusão, #empoderamentofeminino, #diversidade, #meninassuperpoderosa, #dance, #baile, #moving, #love, and #amordown. Likewise, we should highlight a strategy utilized for provoking a response from the audience that is present in all the posts analyzed. That is, the micro-influencers in this category formulate questions in the descriptive text that are directed towards the users to generate interaction with their followers through the comments. Lastly, we should highlight that all the publications used a variety of colors.

5. Discussion and Conclusions

SNs provide valuable opportunities to connect with others, forge friendships, find support, and contact groups of peers. SNs can be the first point of contact, beyond the education environment, of people with disabilities with other individuals who have the same characteristics, interests, and needs. They are an opportunity to overcome the population's imagination about Down syndrome and intellectual disability in general as a collective of dependent individuals who need support at the academic, social, and professional levels.

The analysis of the selected influencer profiles in this study shows us individuals who are able to be independent in different areas of professional and social life. The accounts analyzed were managed by micro- and macro-influencers who have professions as models, cooks, digital creators, or YouTubers, which show their worthiness as verified in the posts analyzed in the present work.

If we delve into the subjects found in the posts, beyond their nature associated with dissemination (fashion, food, digital information, day-to-day aspects, etc.), a generalized interest for showing images, videos, and reels about day-to-day situations was observed. It should be underlined that among the subjects mentioned above, the most representative concerning the presence of sponsors were the contents about fashion, beauty, and health.

As for the nature and spontaneity of the main contents analyzed, these showed a completely normalized image of disability which disappears from the main focus of the posts, becoming an anecdotal aspect, as a personal characteristic without importance.

There is an evident diversity in the accounts; however, the types of posts are recurrent in all the profiles, with photography being prominent. This Instagram carousel dissemination format denoted the increase in the presence of the sponsor as compared to other styles, which resulted in a greater number of positive comments. This, without a doubt, creates a precedent for the planning of future publications for the sake of creating engagement between the followers and influencers or the brands associated with them.

In agreement with Castillo-Abdul et al. (2021), the presence of brands that include support for SNs profiles such as Instagram, as part of their corporate social responsibility, has a positive impact on the image and relationship with groups of interest. This relationship foments positive feedback, and as shown in the results of the present research study, a post that awakens positive emotions as "likes" will perhaps also receive positive comments and vice-versa.

Figure 3. Content creators category.

A clear intention was evidenced for driving and promoting equality, the achievement of goals, and the personal acceptance and self-realization beyond the limits that are habitually associated with individuals with disabilities. The data obtained highlighted that the accounts analyzed break away from the social image present in the collective ideology. The accounts analyzed showed that we can overcome this strongly stereotyped, sensationalist, un-personalized view, which presents the people with disabilities as a homogenous collective (Ledesma, 2008; Vidal-García, 2021; Viñarás-Abad et al., 2021), thanks to publications of young people such as those analyzed in the present work.

Among the limitations, we find, in the first place, the construction of the variable "positive interactions," which combines the number of likes with the number of positive comments, given that they are not two equivalent categories—the proportion of comments is much lower than the likes; they are, therefore, more "valuable." At the same time, in the video or IGTV posts, the likes are not counted, so this variable was not calculated. Nevertheless, we independently measured the likes, comments, and in the case of the videos and IGTV, views, which showed a high correlation between them and with the volume of positive interactions. As such, this variable was kept in an exploratory manner, although we must be cautious when reporting these data. On the other hand, it is possible that the reduced number of accounts analyzed could have limited the observations so that these are not statistically significant; this is particularly true in the case of the theme, as less than half of the cases could be clearly and unambiguously classified into a category that allowed their quantitative analysis. Likewise, another limitation of the study is the terminological designations utilized, as the concept of "disability," although internationally accepted, has diverse connotations according to the national context in each country. Thus, it is also important to delve into the language utilized because the use of one type of language over another leads to different manners of thinking, feeling, and acting, and therefore, of social awareness. With respect to this, SNs also have a great impact, especially in light of the recognition of sensitive collectives such as the one studied.

In future studies, it would be necessary to delve into these aspects with larger samples; nevertheless, the present article serves as an initial exploratory analysis, combining quantitative data with a deeper qualitative analysis. Also, the data obtained can serve for the reflection and actions that could be included in training materials for teachers and communication professionals, who can become aware of the importance and impact that SNs can have in their respective fields. For this, the present study, and the larger project within which it is framed, allow us to reflect on the involvement that SNs could have for being elements that facilitate the process of inclusion, and that without a doubt play a determinant role. In the words by Marchesi (2019), it is about pro-

moting an inclusive process that requires three bridges: a political bridge to adopt policies and budgets oriented towards this aim; a sociocultural bridge, which tries to create favorable citizen attitudes towards inclusion; and lastly, an educational bridge that involves attention to diversity as a key axis of the system, and teacher training. However, we must also add a fourth bridge, communication and digitalization, which implies addressing the impact of SNs on the public sphere as they create attitudes, favoring different opinions and promoting awareness and sensitivity towards differences and diversity. It is also about dealing with a re-thinking of the initial and permanent training of education professionals, communication, and social intervention, to address the legal and ethical professional responsibilities towards the construction of a more just, equal, and inclusive context.

Along the way, digital competence training is a fundamental aspect. For this, in the socio-educational sphere, the UDL (Centre for Assistive Special Technologies, 2013) is revealed as a theoretical-practical approach that allows for the development of profound inclusive socio-educational proposals. The UDL was developed by the Centre for Assistive Special Technologies (2013) and is founded on advances in neurosciences, learning theories, the results from educational practices and research, and the fundamental contributions from technology (Meyer et al., 2016). Scientific evidence backs the reach of UDL, as it increases the access and participation of all the students, improves academic results and social participation, as indicated by the results from the research by Wook-Ok et al. (2017), Capp (2017, 2020), and Rodríguez-Martín et al. (2020). Likewise, the social fabric has an unprecedented opportunity for creating new relationships, and increasing the reach and visibility, which could be harnessed to improve the quality of life conditions of individuals with intellectual disabilities, and, at the same time, to continue to assert their rights and equality of opportunities.

Thus, we can conclude that Instagram is not only a tool that is able to provide visibility to individuals with intellectual disabilities but is also able to change the collective imagination concerning people with Down syndrome. All of this is a turning point for achieving social and work inclusion of this collective and to provide evidence of the positive impact that SNs could have in their personal, educational, and community spheres.

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Conflict of Interests

The authors declare no conflict of interests.

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Article

A Proposed Model of Self-Perceived Authenticity of Social Media Influencers

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Abstract
It is rather contradictory that there is a high demand for authenticity in today's virtual space, where some platforms encourage the proliferation of idealized images, the products of digital alteration. Previous studies have examined how social media users perceive the authenticity and credibility of new digital celebrities—influencers—and the impacts on advertising outcomes. Authenticity in media communication has been defined in many ways, but most definitions include factors such as sincerity, trustworthiness, accuracy, originality, and spontaneity. Prior research on authenticity in computer-mediated communication emphasized the importance of three levels of authenticity, that of the source, of the message, and of the interaction. How social media influencers (SMIs) perceive their own authenticity is an understudied topic. SMIs are simultaneously perceived by their audiences as celebrities, experts, and consumers. Expanding their audiences is one of their goals. Being authentic at the beginning of one's SMI career as a content creator might be simple, but it becomes much more challenging after one's audience has grown significantly. Sponsorship can pose a challenge to an SMI's authenticity. The present study aims to explore the role that authenticity plays for SMIs and develop a theoretical framework for understanding the self-perceived authenticity of SMIs. For this purpose, in-depth interviews were conducted with SMIs that have both national and international audiences (N = 20). Sincerity, expertise, uniqueness, commitment to values, mediated realness, visibility, communication style, spontaneity, transparent and creative brand endorsement, commitment to followers, and frequency of interaction are the components of the proposed model.

Keywords
authenticity; Instagram; interaction; social media; social media influencers; TikTok; YouTube

1. Introduction

In today's society dominated by digital communication, there is an ongoing discussion about the relevance of authenticity not only for brands and professional communicators but also for social media users. What does it mean to be authentic? Being true to oneself—that is the simple definition (Wood et al., 2008). The essence of authenticity is realness, which Hopwood et al. (2021) define as the tendency for one to act in keeping with

the way one feels on the inside. Authenticity is highly discussed when it comes to social media. When we think of things that are authentic, our thoughts would likely not turn to the digitally altered idealized images that flood today's social media landscape (Naderer, Matthes, et al., 2021). Furthermore, the study of authenticity in this context involves looking at related elements: trustworthiness, accuracy, originality, and spontaneity (Enli, 2015).

In recent years, we have witnessed the rise of social media influencers (SMIs). Their popularity has grown

astronomically among social media users and marketers (Hudders et al., 2020; Vrontis et al., 2021). SMIs are people with large communities of followers who post on social media in exchange for compensation (Campbell & Grimm, 2019) and perform purposeful strategic communication to achieve organizational goals (Enke & Borchers, 2019). They wear many hats; they are content creators, advertising developers, opinion leaders, and entrepreneurs (Childers et al., 2019). For SMIs to be seen as effective opinion leaders, in particular, it is essential that they be perceived as authentic (Casaló et al., 2020). SMIs are also considered by their audiences to be celebrities, experts, and consumers. Expanding their audience is one of their main goals and being perceived as authentic by their community of followers can contribute to meeting this objective (Campbell & Farrell, 2020). Like traditional celebrities, perceived authenticity is critical for fostering SMIs' relationships with their followers (Pöyry et al., 2019).

Some scholars argue that authenticity is positively associated with SMIs' advertising activities, with their genuine intention to recommend products or services for external compensation (Evans et al., 2017; Kim & Kim, 2021). Sponsorship transparency has been found to improve relationships between SMIs and followers and even to make SMIs' persuasive messages more effective (Campbell & Evans, 2018; Evans et al., 2019; Johnson et al., 2019). In contrast, Audrezet et al. (2020) have stressed that SMIs who frequently post sponsored content are perceived as less authentic. Influencer marketing can be viewed as a multi-layered relationship, as SMIs are connected not only to their followers but also to the brands they endorse (Kim & Kim, 2021). Authenticity is a relevant asset when it comes to the communication outcomes of SMIs, but it is perceived differently by different actors involved in the communication process (Pöyry et al., 2019). Therefore, the perspectives of SMIs, their followers, and the brands they represent need to be taken into consideration when elaborating on SMIs and authenticity.

Despite the ongoing academic interest in analyzing authenticity on social media, prior studies have mostly examined followers' perceived authenticity of SMIs and their effect on advertising outcomes (Hudders et al., 2020). Existing scholarship on authenticity and SMIs focuses mainly on the persuasive communication's impact on affective and behavioral outcomes. Furthermore, authenticity is relevant for brand communication because brand authenticity has been demonstrated to have a positive impact on brand attitude (Schallehn et al., 2014) and purchase intention (Fritz et al., 2017). Authenticity is one of the elements contributing to the source credibility of SMIs (Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017; Djafarova & Trofimenko, 2018; Lou & Yuan, 2019). Authenticity, together with expertise, has an impact on developing trust in SMIs among their followers (Kim & Kim, 2021).

Prior research differentiates between social media users' perceptions of the authenticity of influencers

(Pöyry et al., 2019; Shoenberger et al., 2020) and SMIs' self-perception of authenticity, both of which contribute to advertising message effectiveness (Lee & Eastin, 2021a). The concept of "self" is a multifaceted and malleable notion (Chen, 2019), and, therefore, when elaborating on self-perceived authenticity, the context of the communication needs to be examined as well.

Empirical evidence proves that authenticity plays an essential role in effective traditional and native advertising (Becker et al., 2019). Furthermore, in the case of influencer advertising, the perceived authenticity of an SMI has a positive impact not only on advertising outcome but also on behavioral intention toward the SMI (Lee & Eastin, 2021a). Empirical data indicate that from the user perspective SMI authenticity consists of five components: sincerity, sponsorship transparency, utility, expertise, and uniqueness (Lee & Eastin, 2021b). Being authentic at the beginning of one's SMI career as a content creator might be simple, but it becomes much more challenging after one's audience has grown significantly. In addition, too much advertising content and a lack of sponsorship transparency can negatively affect users' perceptions of digital influencer authenticity (Audrezet et al., 2020). There is a robust body of literature dealing with the impact of advertising disclosures made by SMIs (Naderer, Peter, et al., 2021). However, within the context of sponsorship transparency, the role of authenticity has not yet been systematically explored.

Despite the interest in analyzing the authenticity of SMIs, prior studies have mostly approached authenticity from the perspective of SMI followers and how their perceptions affect advertising outcomes. How SMIs view authenticity and its role in content development and interacting with followers, however, is underrepresented in the literature (Audrezet et al., 2020). The present study addresses this gap, focusing on how SMIs define authenticity and understand the role of authenticity in their profession. Taking into account specific aspects of SMIs' professional activities, which include content creation and strategic social media management (Campbell & Farrell, 2020), we have developed a conceptual framework for explaining the self-perceived authenticity of SMIs based on Lee's (2020) authenticity model of (mass-oriented) computer-mediated communication. We aim to explore the self-perceived authenticity of SMIs by looking at more than just source characteristics and their impacts on consumer outcomes, which have been addressed in prior research (Breves et al., 2019; Lou & Yuan, 2019; Pöyry et al., 2019; Reinikainen et al., 2020; Sokolova & Kefi, 2020; Xiao et al., 2018). We intend to build upon existing scholarship by developing a nuanced model of the self-perceived authenticity of SMIs that differentiates between awareness and expression elements and explains the complex mechanism of how SMIs interact with their followers and elaborate on the endorser–brand relationship.

2. Theoretical Background

2.1. Defining Authenticity

In recent years, authenticity has become a key focus in a wide array of fields (e.g., sociology, marketing, etc.). The concept of authenticity, although important and frequently invoked by scholars, has proven rather elusive to define (Pöyry et al., 2019). As a result, this notion has been conceptualized in diverse ways (Lehman et al., 2019). Many factors determine authenticity, such as ethical behavior, consciousness, subjectivity, self-processes, and social or relational contexts, and make it hard to define. Nonetheless, authenticity has been defined in contrast to "whatever is fake, unreal, or false" (Lindholm, 2008, p. 2) and in contrast to inauthenticity, that is, false behavior or self-deception (Kernis & Goldman, 2006).

According to the constructivist approach, authenticity is linked to one's beliefs, perspectives, and expectations (Wang, 1999). Furthermore, authenticity cannot be defined objectively (Ebster & Guist, 2005); instead, it is a context-related and ideology-driven concept (Leigh et al., 2006). In marketing, authenticity is defined as a brand's ability to match consumers' expectations (Beverland et al., 2008).

Previous literature focusing on authenticity (Knoll et al., 2015) in professional environments distinguished between self-directed and expression-oriented authenticity, which according to empirical evidence coexist. Moreover, at work, authentic self-awareness and authentic self-expression contribute to health and well-being (Knoll et al., 2015). Considering the distinct nature of SMIs as communicators concerned about their image, brand endorsers, and people who express themselves with the means of digital content development (Campbell & Farrell, 2020), authentic self-awareness and self-expression are important factors that need to be addressed in the context of the self-perceived authenticity of SMIs. For professional communicators like SMIs, self-awareness can contribute to their efforts to build a personal brand (Vasconcelos & Rua, 2021). Self-expression, in turn, is reflected in content creation. Self-awareness and self-expression can be connected to the three components (source, message, and interaction) of the authenticity model developed by Lee (2020), which will be presented in the following section.

2.2. Authenticity and Social Media Influencers

On social media, where we encounter what Marwick (2013) calls *edited personas*, authenticity is subjective, personally defined, and socially constructed. Research on authenticity and social media has underlined the role of authenticity in self-disclosure (Reinecke & Trepte, 2014) and authenticity's usual association with well-being (Wood et al., 2008). Furthermore, for social media users, projecting authenticity is also a reflection of personally held standards. Hence, to stay authentic both

offline and online, people must sometimes stand for the values in which they believe, even if that translates into negative experiences (Smallenbroek et al., 2017). Even platform affordance plays an important role in the authentic self-presentation of all social media users. Ephemeral tools such as Instagram stories have a positive impact on perceived authenticity for common users (Kreling et al., 2021).

Recent studies have underlined the importance of authenticity for the advertising activities of SMIs (Audrezet et al., 2020; Lee & Eastin, 2021a, 2021b). Prior research mostly approached authenticity from the perspective of followers, examining the impact that authenticity has on persuasive messages. Followers prefer SMIs that are perceived to be authentic, and this preference is reflected in the affective and behavioral outcomes of SMI communication (Jin, 2018). Pöyry et al. (2019) have highlighted the importance of the "aura of authenticity" possessed or performed by digital celebrities. They also found that posting sponsored content that aligns with SMIs' ideals and values has a positive impact on advertising behavioral outcomes, such as purchase intention. Based on empirical evidence, Duffy (2017) determined that realness, visibility, and uniqueness contribute to SMIs being viewed as authentic.

The success of an SMI relies on balancing an authentic voice with brand advertising strategies (Balaban & Mustăţea, 2019). Exploring SMIs as brand endorsers, Audrezet et al. (2020) have introduced a four-path framework that provides a conceptualization of how influencers can manage authenticity. They found that SMIs deliberately use two strategies to manage the tensions they face when dealing with commercial opportunities: the passionate authenticity strategy and the transparent authenticity strategy. SMIs use the passionate authenticity strategy when creating digital content that is enjoyable and intrinsically gratifying. In contrast, they employ the transparent authenticity strategy when providing fact-based information about a product or service (Audrezet et al., 2020). Furthermore, posting unedited content or disclosing information about a partnership between the SMI and a brand are forms of transparent authenticity. Abidin (2018) coined the term *porous authenticity* to describe the results of making unedited posts. To project *porous authenticity*, SMIs strategically create self-presentation practices in digital spaces that allow followers to evaluate and validate how genuine their personas are. SMIs use this approach to emphasize two distinct spheres, their digital personas, and their offline selves. They intentionally show "behind-the-scenes" details from their daily lives to disclose more of their "authentic" selves (Abidin, 2018).

Exploring how SMIs perceive their role models, Kühn and Riesmeyer (2021) highlighted the fact that SMIs are aware of the importance of authenticity. Thus, for SMIs being a role model means being close to their followers, maintaining a balanced media persona, and staying committed to their own values. Lee and Eastin (2021b)

consider the user perception of SMI authenticity to be a multi-dimensional construct based on five elements: sincerity, transparent endorsement, visibility, expertise, and uniqueness. The dominant factor is sincerity. SMIs with *sincerity* are perceived as being warm. Social media users tend to have more favorable attitudes toward SMIs displaying high sincerity compared to SMIs with low sincerity. The *transparent endorsement* dimension is exposed in SMIs' brand-endorsement practices and can be identified in their engagement in authentic behavior when endorsing brands. This factor has an impact on purchase intention. The third dimension, *visibility*, refers to when SMIs expose intimate aspects of their lives or are open. *Expertise*, the fourth factor, increases the influencer's credibility as an opinion leader. Lastly, *uniqueness* concerns audience perceptions of influencers being original or distinct from others.

2.3. The Authenticity Model of (Mass-Oriented) Computer-Mediated Communication and Its Relevance for Social Media Influencers

Lee (2020) has proposed an integrative conceptual framework for studying computer-mediated communication, focusing on authenticity as a core unifying construct. The original model does not deal in particular with SMIs. It aims to bring together several approaches that have been used separately to examine authenticity and conceptualize notions such as message credibility, perceived realism, parasocial interaction, and credibility. Lee identified three subcomponents: authenticity of the source, authenticity of the message, and authenticity of interaction. Authenticity of source concerns whether a communicator is really who he or she claims to be. In this framework, authenticity of source represents the authenticity of the person who (supposedly) produced a message. In interpersonal relationships, people tend to assume honesty and truthfulness, but in the case of internet-enabled many-to-many communication and rapid developments in artificial intelligence technologies, it is challenging or even futile to talk about those two values (Lee, 2020). According to Lee, when a communication source is unknown, stereotypes about social categories will frame the observer's expectancy. Moreover, the authenticity of the source is associated with source credibility, trustworthiness, and expertise. Hence, this subcomponent of authenticity is related to the source credibility of SMIs.

The perceived credibility of SMIs has a decisive effect on the outcome of their advertising campaigns (Reinikainen et al., 2020; Sokolova & Kefi, 2020). Empirical evidence highlights the role of SMI source credibility in the affective and behavioral outcomes for both the SMIs themselves and the brands they endorse (De Veirman et al., 2017; Munnukka et al., 2016). Pöyry et al. (2019) highlighted that, alongside expertise, authenticity is often mentioned as a source characteristic that contributes to message effectiveness,

attractiveness, trustworthiness, uniqueness, and similarity. Several studies have identified authenticity as an element contributing to the source credibility of SMIs (Balaban & Mustățea, 2019; Lou & Yuan, 2019) and hence to the success of influencer marketing campaigns (Wiedmann & von Mettenheim, 2021). Source credibility has a strong direct impact on both brand attitude and behavioral intentions. The credibility of an SMI can be determined not only by the product- or brand-endorser fit (Schouten et al., 2020) but also by familiarity (Breves et al., 2019).

The second subcomponent of Lee's (2020) model is authenticity of message, which refers to whether a message truthfully represents its object. This object can be a person (even the source), an event, or an issue. Perceived message authenticity is linked to the degree to which a message conforms to the receiver's expectancy (people do not doubt the authenticity of a message unless it violates their expectancy in some way), as well as to the degree to which a message is congruent with the receiver's prior knowledge, beliefs, values, or opinions, and even whether the chosen medium for the given communication task is perceived as appropriate (Lee, 2020). Empirical evidence indicates that messages from SMIs perceived to be authentic have an impact on followers' purchase intentions of the promoted products (Kühn & Riesmeyer, 2021; Pöyry et al., 2019).

The third subcomponent of authenticity in Lee's (2020) model, authenticity of interaction, centers around the idea of whether an interaction is real or not. It also concerns how closely people feel that they are a part of an actual interaction. Reciprocity and spontaneity can increase the perceived authenticity of interaction. In computer-mediated communication, reciprocity can be achieved through message contingency, which distinguishes conversations from broadcasting. Spontaneity may differentiate between fake and authentic interactions (Lee, 2020). For SMIs interacting with their followers is particularly important. Focusing on growing their follower base has economic relevance because large follower communities bring in advertising revenue (Campbell & Farrell, 2020). SMIs tend to cultivate a strong bond with their followers, creating a sense of community and "stoking perceptions of authenticity" (Campbell & Farrell, 2020, p. 7). Followers seek and enjoy authenticity in social media content from celebrities because it fosters a feeling of engagement or emotional attachment between them and the celebrity (Kowalczyk & Pounders, 2016). The strength of an SMI relies on the emotional bond they build with their followers and being a source of inspiration, enjoyability, and competence (Ki et al., 2020).

Daily interactions between SMIs and their followers nourish a parasocial or even a trans-parasocial connection. Understanding the nature of the interactions between SMIs and their followers is essential when discussing the (self-)perceived authenticity of influencers. Parasocial interactions are similar to social interactions. The psychological processes in this context are parallel

to those in face-to-face social activities and relationship building (Giles, 2002). Lou (2021) has updated the concept of parasocial relations, introducing the notion of trans-parasocial relations that take into account the type of interactivity and the frequency with which SMIs produce content. These types of relationships are collectively reciprocal, (a)synchronously interactive, and regulated by a co-created relation between SMIs and followers. Platform features provide the opportunity for mutual communication through direct messaging or query functions that can enhance interaction (Kühn & Riesmeyer, 2021). Social media facilitates user engagement in interacting with media personalities via liking, commenting on, and sharing their posts. In this co-created relationship, SMIs can express their authenticity by sharing stories from their lives or replying to comments from their followers. Furthermore, in some cases, SMIs create content in response to audience requests (Abidin, 2015). Lou's (2021) findings show that followers trust their favorite SMIs and consider their shared posts (whether organic or sponsored) to be largely genuine. SMIs seek to appear authentic to create closeness to their followers (Kühn & Riesmeyer, 2021). Close relationships with followers can contribute to increasing positive attitudes and purchase intention. Such closeness plays a moderating role in the relationship between SMIs and their followers. Moreover, closeness can act as a buffer in the sense that SMIs that lack attractiveness can compensate by being closer to their followers (Taillon et al., 2020).

The three subcomponents of authenticity described above are intertwined and related, and they can enhance the level of perceived authenticity. According to Lee's (2020) model, perceived authenticity can have three possible types of outcomes: cognitive (such as uncertainty reduction, reality perception, and knowledge acquisition), affective (it can intensify dominant reactions, both positive or negative), and behavioral (it can facilitate or inhibit a particular behavior). Lee's (2020) three subcomponents of authenticity should thus be considered when analyzing the self-perceived authenticity of SMIs. Aiming to contribute to a more detailed understanding of how SMIs perceive authenticity, we formulate the following research questions:

RQ1: How do SMIs define authenticity?

RQ2: What role does authenticity play for SMIs?

RQ3: What are the constituent elements of a model of the self-perceived authenticity of SMIs?

3. Methods

The purpose of our exploratory study was to gain insights into SMIs' perspective on the role of authenticity and develop a theoretical model of how SMIs perceive their own authenticity. We chose a qualitative approach that can help us gain in-depth knowledge (Tuchman, 2002), and explain the meaning of authenticity for SMIs and the role of authenticity for their profession. Conducting detailed interviews allowed us to explore how research participants construct meaning related to the concept of authenticity based on their daily online activity. Non-probability sampling, an adequate approach for qualitative research (Easterby-Smith et al., 2015), was used. This methodological approach has been used in previous qualitative studies that contribute to theory building in the field of SMI credibility and relationships between SMIs and their followers (Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017; Kühn & Riesmeyer, 2021).

We aimed to have a broad sample of SMIs in terms of number of followers, subject area, age, and gender, which reflected the worldwide population of SMIs. Potential participants had to have publicly accessible accounts on Instagram or TikTok or a public YouTube channel and post advertising content. We direct messaged 35 SMIs and received a positive response from 20 (*N* = 20). We conducted semi-structured guideline-based interviews with them from September 2020 to June 2021. Our sample consists of 15 females and 5 males, ages 21 to 40, from a European country. They all participated voluntarily. The majority of the SMIs we interviewed were women, which is consistent with the fact that in 2019 women represented 84% of the influencers on Instagram (Statista, 2021b).

Similar to other researchers, we included in our sample SMIs that have at least 5,000 followers (Kühn & Riesmeyer, 2021). The highest number of followers was 1,100,000. However, most interviewees had between 5,000 and 100,000 followers, and, therefore, the sample reflects the structure of the worldwide SMI population in 2020 (Statista, 2021a). They are active in the main subject areas of influencer marketing: lifestyle, fashion, beauty and make-up, photography, music, hairstyling, entertainment, food, and fitness. Some of the SMIs included in our sample address international audiences and produce content not only in their native language but also in English. The interviews, lasting between 45 and 60 minutes, were conducted mostly online, using Zoom or Facebook video calls. In some cases, subjects chose to participate via email. Detailed information is provided in Table 1.

Data analysis was performed based on categories related to the themes (Creswell, 2009; Tuchman, 2002). The interview guidelines were theory-driven. First, the SMIs were asked to define authenticity and to elaborate on the role of authenticity for them as SMIs. The following themes related to authenticity were also addressed: the history of their activity as an SMI, increasing visibility, differentiation strategies, the principles and values that guide SMIs' activities, relationships with brands, sponsorship transparency, and interaction with followers. We linked these aspects to Lee's (2020) model and to Lee and Eastin's (2021a) approach to studying the perceived authenticity of SMIs.

Table 1. Description of the sample.

	Gender	Number of followers on Instagram	Number of followers on TikTok	Number of subscribers on YouTube	Subject area
ID.1	f	5,8 K			Food
ID.2	f	8 K			Lifestyle
ID.3	f	5 K	13,1 K		Music
ID.4	m	16,2 K		55,5 K	Music
ID.5	f	35 K	6,6 K	4,93 K	Lifestyle/music
ID.6	f	10,4 K			Food/lifestyle
ID.7	f	76,4 K		3,05 K	Beauty/make-up
ID.8	f	45 K	18,7 K	3,65 K	Entertainment
ID.9	m	15,6 K			Photography
ID.10	f	10,5 K			Hairstyling
ID.11	f	12,6 K			Hairstyling
ID.12	m	100 K	66,5 K	128 K	Hairstyling
ID.13	m	106 K	41,2 K	1,42 K	Entertainment
ID.14	m	14,6 K	142,2 K		Fitness
ID.15	f	15,1 K	193,2 K	1,43 K	Hairstyling
ID.16	f	305 K	288,9 K	423 K	Lifestyle
ID.17	f	375 K	30,8 K	2,33 K	Music
ID.18	f	835 K	16,8 K		Fashion/lifestyle
ID.19	f	668 K	1,1 M	515 K	Music
ID.20	f	1 M		35,4 K	Lifestyle

4. Findings

4.1. Social Media Influencers' Understanding of Authenticity and Its Role in Their Professional Lives

Regardless of the size of their community of followers and their experience as SMIs, all respondents emphasized the importance of authenticity for their online activities. However, authenticity was defined in different ways. Most SMIs interviewed associated authenticity with sincerity, realness, transparency, and, above all, genuineness. The perspective of our respondents was that being an authentic SMI means "presenting yourself to the audience the way you are, not the way you think others would like you to be" (ID.20). Furthermore, authenticity is "in the first place, the sincerity you must have to yourself. Authenticity means to remain faithful to yourself in any situation" (ID.18).

For SMIs, being authentic means following their principles and values, even if that translates into avoiding collaborations with incompatible brands. It is important "to be yourself, not to go against your principles and values for recognition or money, to promote the products you believe in" and "to promote exactly those values and principles that guide both your professional and personal life, so that people can see the consistency between what you 'preach' and what you practice. This is where

authenticity comes from" (ID.1). Authenticity is associated with spontaneity, and being authentic gives SMIs freedom in their professional lives:

> Authenticity, for me, is the freedom to make the choices I want, to post what I want, to dress the way I want, the way I am and not to be somehow because that's what I'm told, because that's what the herd wants, to conform to what is cool or what is viral. (ID.16)

4.2. The Components of Social Media Influencers' Authenticity

4.2.1. The Authenticity of the Source

Authenticity is context-related, and SMIs' perceived authenticity is no exception. Some respondents underlined the fact that being an SMI and posting online is just a professional role, a layer of their identity: "Everyone starts from the bottom in social media, and if you become famous on a platform, you must not forget where you came from" (ID.2). SMIs must be constantly active on the digital platforms on which they have organically developed a community of followers. However, even though SMIs are constantly exposing themselves online, they can still afford to have a private

life. The interviewees highlighted that to feel authentic the values that guide both the personal and professional aspects of their lives must be consistent.

Even though the majority of SMIs involved in this research are young adults, some of them started working as digital content creators as teenagers. Thus, growing up as content creators overlapped with becoming an adult. The maturation process also meant making certain changes, ones that were often not easy, as one of our respondents underlined: "I had to compromise at one point and see what I liked, even at the risk of losing the audience. Had I continued to do what my followers asked for, I would have been unhappy" (ID.16).

Besides sincerity, research participants also mentioned expertise as an important element of their activity as SMIs. The respondents claimed that being a professional content creator means offering followers quality and reliable content. Although some of the SMIs avoided calling themselves experts, all argued that the content they deliver is relevant to their online communities. One of the respondents had a fitting motto: "Post quality content and know what you are good at. For example, if you are good at cooking, post about cooking; if you are good at something else, post about it" (ID.2).

We also discovered that uniqueness is a relevant factor in SMIs' self-perceived authenticity. The respondents were aware of the highly competitive business in which they operate. Differentiation is the solution to standing out from the competition: "differentiation concerning followers and differentiation concerning collaborators, sponsors" (ID.3). In the fast-growing landscape of professional content creation, authenticity makes SMIs recognizable. In other words, "authenticity makes others talk about you without saying your name, but let the world know it's about you" (ID.1). In the context of maintaining authenticity, personal branding, as part of a differentiation strategy, was also mentioned: "I'm still working on developing my brand" (ID.3) or "I created a personal brand that developed into a brand with national awareness" (ID.4).

4.2.2. The Authenticity of the Message

Followers expect SMIs to post content with a certain frequency. This can contribute to organically growing followers, an important goal for SMIs. Visibility and differentiation were associated with authentic content creation. Editing pictures and using filters were not associated with inauthenticity, but with differentiation. As one participant noted, an SMI:

> Needs to have at least one element that differentiates [them] from the others, maybe a style of posts, maybe a style of pictures, maybe a style of props you use, maybe a certain style of editing, or a filter that you choose to put it in all your pictures. Something to make followers say "this is X's picture" before they see the name of the person who posted. But from

what I've noticed, "pure" authenticity is not necessarily attractive. It takes a balance between doing what you think represents you 100% and following some current trends. (ID.1)

Most of the SMIs interviewed are active on several platforms and practice a cross-platform approach; however, preferences for particular platforms were expressed. On the one hand, some of the SMIs we spoke to talked about their positive experiences with TikTok, which allowed them to spontaneously create content in contrast to Instagram, which due to its aesthetic nature requires more preparation. On the other hand, ephemeral instruments such as Instagram stories were mentioned by other SMIs as encouraging spontaneity and thus contributing to the self-perceived authenticity of the SMIs. Professional content creators often directly address followers via Instagram stories and emotional appeals. Displaying sincerity in such messages, going beyond social media's positivity bias, and talking about issues that are relevant for the audience contribute to high levels of self-perceived authenticity among the interviewees.

Sponsored messages can also be authentic, according to the SMIs interviewed. Consistency of communication style contributes to the self-perceived authenticity of the message: "There must be no style differences between sponsored and non-sponsored content. Everything you do needs to be personalized" (ID.4). Honesty is important, and advertising disclosure is an expression of it: "It shows your respect for your followers" (ID.10).

4.2.3. The Authenticity of the Interaction

SMIs are careful with their community of followers and cultivate constant interaction with them. Thus, responding to their questions and comments is an activity that SMIs perform daily. Followers react to a lack of authenticity. Authenticity must prevail in SMIs' interactions with followers, as well. Interacting with the community of followers contributes to SMIs' well-being, as one of the interviewees said: "I often feel more confident when I see that my followers appreciate me. I happened to have some bad day, but by trying to make them [my followers] feel better, they changed my state as well" (ID.3). Interacting with followers is critical to developing a strong parasocial relation. One of the interviewees expressed the following idea: "I liked to create for the public, from which I received positive feedback since I am a performer. That motivated me to develop my own content" (ID.18).

5. Discussion: A Model of the Self-Perceived Authenticity of Social Media Influencers

Drawing from our analysis of the interviews, we propose a model of the self-perceived authenticity of SMIs based

on persona-, content-, and interaction-driven attributes. Self-awareness is identified with the authenticity of the source, and self-expression with the authenticity of the message. As for the authenticity of the interaction, self-awareness and self-expression are combined. Our results support the idea that followers' perceptions of authenticity highlighted in previous literature (Lee & Eastin, 2021b) overlap with those of SMIs. Expertise and uniqueness, source characteristics that affect persuasive communication outcome (Pöyry et al., 2019), were identified by SMIs alongside sincerity as elements that define their self-perceived authenticity. SMIs are "human brands" that seek uniqueness or try to differentiate themselves in a highly competitive market (Ki et al., 2020). That SMIs define authenticity in terms of uniqueness is a novel finding. Digital celebrities stage their authenticity (Hou, 2019), and thus, our respondents talked about mediated realness and about being able to separate between their online and their offline selves while still considering themselves to be authentic.

Authenticity is reflected in content creation, an important part of SMIs' activities. The authenticity of the message stems from visibility, a consistent communication style, transparent and creative brand endorsement, and spontaneity. To stay visible, SMIs must post frequently. Spontaneity is encouraged by platform affordance; ephemeral tools are preferred. Authenticity of interaction stems from commitment to followers expressed by closeness, constantly answering their questions, and frequently interacting with them. The model is depicted in Table 2.

6. Conclusions

The present research contributes to an in-depth understanding of the concept of self-perceived authenticity for SMIs and the role that authenticity plays in the professional lives of digital content creators. The proposed model adds to the existing literature and can be further developed into a scale measuring the self-perceived authenticity of SMIs that can be applied in future quantitative studies.

SMIs play multiple social roles that change in different contexts (Trepte & Reinecke, 2011), but they always seek to stay authentic in their interactions with followers and brands. Our research unveiled new aspects of the relationship between SMIs and authenticity. We found that, in the case of SMIs, professionalization does not rule out authenticity. On the contrary, the experience of interacting with followers helps SMIs emphasize their uniqueness and highlight their differentiating attributes (see also Hudders et al., 2020). According to the interviewed SMIs, authenticity is defined by differentiation, and thus personal branding strategies enhance SMIs' self-perceived authenticity. However, their advertising activities pose a challenge to their authenticity. When SMIs have the freedom to choose the brands that they endorse, when they endorse brands that are associated with the values they stand for, and when they are allowed to express their creativity in developing advertising messages, it contributes to the self-perceived authenticity of SMIs. One of the principles SMIs adhere to is to recommend and promote only products that they have tested. Transparency of sponsorship as an expression of honesty to followers is positively associated with the self-perceived authenticity of SMIs. This finding is also in line with previous scholarship that empirically demonstrated transparent authenticity as a strategy that SMIs use for authenticity (Audrezet et al., 2020).

Platform affordances were also identified by SMIs as a relevant factor that can contribute to creating authentic messages. Ephemerality encourages spontaneity (Kreling et al., 2021). Spontaneity is an important element of authenticity for SMIs, and, in this regard, they are not different from any other social media user. To stay authentic, a consistent communication style is required. In line with previous literature (Taillon et al., 2020), we found that SMIs are aware that closeness to followers is a relevant professional asset.

This study is of an exploratory nature and, thus, has inherent limits. First, the results of our qualitative approach must be interpreted in the context studied and cannot be generalized (Bryman, 2015). Second, the sample itself presented a limitation. Interviewing SMIs from different countries or even different continents would have provided greater insight into how authenticity is seen by professional content creators. Third, when interviewing professional communicators, researchers generally receive socially desirable answers.

The present article contributes to the academic research on SMIs and furthers understanding of this phenomenon. The model we have presented here can

Table 2. The components of SMIs' self-perception of authenticity.

The authenticity of the source (Authentic self-awareness)	The authenticity of the message (Authentic self-expression)	The authenticity of the interaction (Authentic self-awareness and authentic self-expression)
Sincerity	Visibility	Commitment to the followers
Expertise	Communication style	Frequency
Uniqueness (differentiation)	Spontaneity	
Commitment to own values	Transparent and creative brand endorsement	
Mediated realness		

be operationalized by developing a scale that measures the self-perceived authenticity of SMIs and by testing it in future quantitative research. We could then compare how followers and SMIs perceive authenticity. This study also has practical implications: Marketers should consider analyzing previous content posted by particular SMIs to launch compatible collaborations between brands and SMIs, taking into consideration the importance of finding matches between the products being advertised and the profiles of SMIs in terms of authenticity. Our findings can also be relevant to influencers, who should be aware of the importance of the authenticity of the source and of the message in building long-lasting relationships with their followers.

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Conflict of Interests

The authors declare no conflict of interests.

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Article

Nano-Influencers Edutubers: Perspective of Centennial Generation Families in Spain

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Abstract

In recent decades, the incipient technological development has generated a radical change in the way people access and transmit knowledge. Educational institutions must have a teaching staff adapted to new forms of consuming information. The purpose of this research is to know the media competence of Spanish teachers, from the perspective of families of schoolchildren in primary education. This analysis is based on the investigation published by 50 renowned international experts in media competence, which revolves around six major dimensions. In our analysis, we focused on the processes of interaction, production, and dissemination of content by teachers on YouTube. A questionnaire has been devised with a sample formed by 1228 families, a personal interview with a sample formed by 20 families, and a comparative analysis of the productions and interaction of amateur teachers on YouTube platform and of recognized "edutubers," as well as the use given to the dissemination of content on social networks. In the results obtained, the profile of a teaching staff that is increasingly disseminating and producing on social networks stands out, becoming content creators through their own YouTube channels, which also proposes tools for an interaction adapted to the centennial generation, using different digital communication tools. Differences were found comparing the three dimensions involved in this analysis, with teachers obtaining more positive evaluations as producers and as interactors in private schools than in subsidized and public schools. Likewise, differences were found between nano-influencers and macro-influencers in the use of aesthetic elements that make up the videos analyzed among the "edutubers."

Issue

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1. Introduction

1.1. Educational Challenges Facing the Centennial Generation

The aim of this article is to offer an approach on the media competence of Spanish teachers in the use of social networks, specifically nano-influencers on YouTube, to generate distance learning situations adapted to the new ways in which students access the information. The contemporary society requires the availability of teaching theories appropriate to the learning ecologies arising from the new digital spaces in formal and informal educational settings (Monsalve & Aguasanta, 2020). These must be forged in response to the demands of the new generations, characterized by their dependence on and close link with digital technologies from their earliest childhood and known

as centennial generation or generation Z (Manzanares, 2020). This generation, within the educational context, finds in social networks and digital platforms interaction environments adapted to their way of understanding the world, where great possibilities for knowledge construction and professional transfer are generated (Gil-Quintana & Martínez, 2018). The societies of the future require an education that promotes the participation of students and teachers in virtual learning spaces (Craig, 2007; Stiles, 2007), with a horizontal and bidirectional communicative model (Kaplún, 1998), favoring the collective construction of knowledge (Meskill & Ranglova, 2000) and opening up to the environment and involving society, through the dissemination of the processes with the use of social networks. The families of the centennial generation play a highly relevant role in supporting students at the earliest ages in accessing digital spaces (Sánchez et al., 2018), from their position as agents involved in the educational processes of future generations and as possible consumers, active or passive, of the content generated around social networks (Dans et al., 2019). This way of proceeding in learning within virtual contexts provides the basis for forming a citizenship prepared for responsible action in digital environments, enabling it to act within and outside the contexts of formal education, socially committed and involved in lifelong learning. There are many e-learning models that have been developed in recent decades to give consistency to virtual learning environments as a result of technological advance, among them we can highlight the five-stage model of Salmon (2002, 2004) , the virtual learning environment model for higher education institutions (Alhogail & Mirza, 2011) or the learning technology system architecture developed by the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (Barr, 2017). Computer supported collaborative learning (Silverman, 1995; Stahl et al., 2006) integrates the use of various applications of communication tools (Slack, Edmodo, Skype, ClassDojo, etc.) and moves towards the design of learning experiences through the use of social networks (YouTube, Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, etc.; Chen & Chang, 2012). The new generations stand out for preferring visual supports to text formats (Navarro Robles & Vázquez Barrio, 2020), finding in YouTube content adapted to their consumption habits, where in Spain more than 5.5 million minors regularly consume content on YouTube, which translates into more than 15% of users in this territory (Min Shum, 2021).

1.2. Media Skills of Edutubers: Production, Dissemination, and Interaction

The continuous technological advances and the digitized society in which we live, force education to adapt to new learning environments to reach an increasingly prosumer and interacting student body in various social networks, where the figure of the teaching staff as influencer of learning is yet to be investigated. Over the

years, YouTube has been overcoming the various obstacles that technological and social changes have generated in a globalized world, showing a great capacity for dynamism. Among the changes that have arisen and the different actors that have been emerging, perhaps the figure of the youtuber is one of the most talked about. The youtuber or content producer is a person who is in charge of producing videos and managing his channel, generating certain interest in the community through his transmedia message, being part of the influencers (López Aguilar, 2017), as well as people who, by their position in the network, generate relevant influence on audiences. These content producers diversify attending to the different themes that give identity to their channels, finding among some of the most popular themes among consumers: vlogs, video games, or tutorials (Martínez et al., 2018). If we extrapolate the meaning of youtuber to the productions that focus their themes on disciplines of formal and/or informal education, in order to favor the training and learning of their followers, we find the figure of edutubers as influencers on YouTube (López et al., 2019). Thanks to the advance of digital technologies, the professionalization of the figure of the producer, disseminator, and interacting content, it is increasingly common to find productions with truly professional elements in these channels, which generate great impact on the networks and reach a large number of followers. Social networks have an innumerable list of influencers that produce content on a daily basis, being able to be classified according to the number of followers they have into: nano-influencers, micro-influencers, macro-influencers, fame-influencers, and mega-influencers (Campbell & Farrell, 2020). Due to the interests of this study, it is relevant that we highlight the figure of nano-influencers as those users who offer content of interest to a certain group, reaching up to ten thousand followers (Mesarić & Gregurec, 2020). But to effectively manage influencer marketing that youtubers and, therefore, edutubers must face in their channels, it is necessary to acquire certain media skills, understood as the set of skills that allow users to develop in the media, as prosumers, from a critical and creative point of view (Conde & Delgado, 2021). In this regard, Ferrés and Piscitelli (2012) established six dimensions with which to analyze media competence, based on the contributions made by 50 international experts, namely: languages, technology, interaction processes, production and dissemination processes, ideology and values, and aesthetics. From the perspective of the practical use of social networks, the dimensions of interaction, production and dissemination processes offer our study a favorable starting point to analyze the media competence of edutubers, with the intention of determining their ability to produce content, to use the media to disseminate their transmedia production and to use the communicative tools of these environments to interact with their followers.

2. Method and Sample

2.1. Method

The main objective of this research is to determine the media competence of Spanish teachers who position themselves as edutubers and nano-influencers on YouTube in terms of production, dissemination, and interaction. For this purpose, we have selected these three indicators of analysis presented by Ferrés and Piscitelli (2012) organized around two different focuses: The perspective of the families of primary school students in Spain and, subsequently, in order to consolidate what was indicated by the families, the analysis of edutubers' accounts is carried out. The secondary objectives established provide references on which to guide the study:

O1: Study the characteristics of teacher nano-influencers as producers of content for YouTube.
O2: Determine the ability of faculty nano-influencers to disseminate their transmedia message on YouTube.
O3: Analyze the interaction mechanisms of nano-influencers to generate an exchange with their audiences.
O4: To study the correlations between the valuations of faculty nano-influencers as producers, disseminators, and interactors.

Based on these specific objectives, the following hypotheses are proposed to guide the research:

H1: Nano-influencers edutubers use production elements typical of macro-influencers youtubers.
H2: Edutubers nano-influencers use social networks platforms to disseminate their transmedia message.
H3: Nano-influencers edutubers suggest alternative communication tools to YouTube to interact with their audiences.
H4: Competencies of edutuber nano-influencers as producers, disseminators, and interactors on YouTube are correlated.

A mixed method of analysis has been chosen, developing quantitative analysis procedures, combined with qualitative ones, in order to generate a more precise vision of the state of the question to be investigated. As part of the quantitative paradigm, a questionnaire was applied, from which eight questions were selected and answered by Spanish families of the centennial generation, in which the response consisted of a Likert-type scale from 0 to 4, establishing for each case: 0 = *nothing*, 1 = *a little*, 2 = *acceptable*, 3 = *quite*, and 4 = *much*. The analysis was carried out using SPSS software, applying descriptive analyses of means, frequencies, and variances; as well as correlations between different variables involved in the study with the application of Pearson.

Within the qualitative approaches, semi-structured interviews were conducted with Spanish families of the centennial generation, through four questions:

1. What do you think about the content shared by teachers on YouTube?
2. How would you describe the quality of the videos offered to the students?
3. How has the interaction been generated by the teacher with his students?
4. What aspects of the interaction offered through YouTube would you highlight?

With the data obtained with Social Blade and through the observatory analysis of the analyzed accounts, we have completed the quantitative information to perform a comparative analysis between edutubers macro-influencers and nano-influencers. When presenting the data obtained from each category, an attempt was made to complement the quantitative approaches of the study with the qualitative ones, reinforcing or not the results obtained from both perspectives. To guarantee the validity of the questionnaire and the progress of the analysis from a parametric perspective, the principle of normality was applied to the items that make up our categories, using the normal curve test, the Kolmogorov-Smirnov-Lilliefors test (in all cases $p > .05$) and the analysis of the normal Q-Q graphs. Likewise, the validation of the questionnaire and the interview by expert judgment has corresponded to the interuniversity research group Social Media and Inclusive and Ubiquitous Media Education at Spain's Distance Education National University.

2.2. Sample

In view of the different ways of analysis open in this study, the sample should be specified according to the different means of data collection. The questionnaires answered have reached a total sample of 1,228 families from all over Spain, for the interviews the sample has been applied to 20 families. Regarding the analysis of the YouTube social network, 12 edutubers' accounts were selected, divided into 6 macro-influencer accounts (Sing and Learn, The Eduteca, Smile and Learn, Happy Learning, Kids Learn by Playing, and Academia Play) and 6 other nano-influencer accounts with a short trajectory in the YouTube social network (Luis Miguel Aroca, Profe Manu, Maestro Javier, José María Mayor López, Sara, and El Villa moves).

3. Analysis

3.1. Nano-Influencers Edutubers as Content Producers

Item X1 determines the use of YouTube by the teachers to generate learning experiences. Looking at the frequency table referring to this item (Table 1), we find a very significant first piece of data, which establishes

Table 1. Frequency descriptives (producer–X1).

		Frequency	Percentage
Valid	*Nothing*	499	40.6
	Little	132	10.7
	Acceptable	186	15.1
	Quite	214	17.4
	Much	197	16.0
	Total	1228	100.0

that, among the 1,228 families surveyed, 40.6% of the total say that teachers do not have or do not use a YouTube channel during the learning process. It should be noted that a majority (59.4%) confirms the trend towards its use by teaching staff, although the percentages are very evenly distributed in terms of frequency of use, with the options *quite* (17.4%) and *much* (16%) being slightly ahead. We observe how a strong trend is emerging among teachers of the centennial generation to project their communicative and educational action through this social network.

Within the teacher as producer indicator, after checking the homoscedasticity test using Levene's test and reviewing the ANOVA results between the dependent variables in question and the continuous interval variables that form part of our database (type of institution, number of children, school year, etc.), the existence of significant differences in the dependent variable X1—do teachers use their own YouTube channel to generate learning processes and/or explain certain content?—and the variable referring to the type of academic institution

(private, subsidized, and public) was deduced. After proceeding parametrically, the post-hoc analysis using the Tukey test confirmed the existence of statistically significant differences between the pairs of means involved (Figure 1). Thus, families with children in private institutions stand out positively, in terms of the amount of use their teachers make of YouTube to build learning, in comparison with families with children in public and subsidized institutions that present valuations below the intermediate value (option 2).

In the other two items that are part of the category referring to the "producer" teacher, we find that the sample drops from the 1228 families surveyed to 729, which confirm the use of YouTube by teachers (Table 2). The value $M = 2.26$, offered by item X2—do teachers provide enough educational content to YouTube?—determines a slightly positive evaluation of the families with respect to the production of content by the teaching teams on YouTube. Item X3 shows the value $M = 2.85$, which indicates a fairly positive evaluation by the families regarding the teacher's ability to produce a
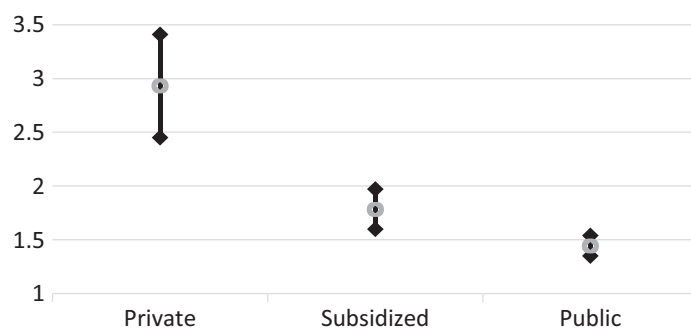

Figure 1. Error bars (item X1 and type of educational institution).

Table 2. Descriptive statistics (producer).

		Producer–X2	Producer–X3
N	Valid	729	729
	Lost	499	499
M		2.26	2.85
Mode		4	4
SD		1.46	1.14
Minimum		0	0
Maximum		4	4

clear message to the students in order to advance in the various learning processes. The contributions offered in the interviews with the families complement the data obtained in the questionnaires with references such as "the tutor has made a great effort to explain the subjects with quality" or "they were very clear and useful videos."

To better understand the reality surrounding the production of content by teachers who position themselves as edutubers, Table 3 is available. It shows data on the start date of activity on the selected channels and the number of videos produced by six edutubers macro-influencers and six nano-influencer accounts. Likewise, data is collected on the use of strategies in the creation and development of narrative styles for the production of content that are usually present in productions of macro-influencer youtubers: video header, use of graphic resources, use of musical resources, and the introduction of edited images (Rajas & Bastida, 2017). Firstly, the large amount of content shared on YouTube by some of the edutubers accounts with the most relevant and longest presence, such as *Smile and Learn* with 508 videos. As usual, the selected nano-influencer accounts have a much more limited time in use, which also leads to a lower number of productions on their channels. However, the *Maestro Javier* account, despite its short period of activity, has 176 productions. On the other hand, the use of influencer marketing communication strategies in the analyzed productions leaves some very interesting data. Accounts with a longer trajectory fully comply with the creation and development of narrative styles typical of influencer marketing, both in the use of headers in their productions to identify the channel, as well as graphic resources (animated images, animated signs, etc.), the introduction of musical elements to give greater dynamism to the content and the elaboration of a main image for each production, using image editing software. In the case of nano-influencers,

it can be observed that they introduce diverse musical resources and headers in their productions, although the final result is of lower quality. As for the graphic resources and the main image, in the accounts with less experience, these techniques are not observed, being productions in which a teacher appears explaining the program or the activities to be carried out, from a traditional teaching model and a hierarchical and vertical communicative model, without paying attention to aesthetic aspects taken care of by the influencer marketing. As main video images, these accounts seem to use some random frame from the production itself.

3.2. The Nano-Influencers Edutubers as Content Disseminators

Table 4 shows the descriptive statistics of the items that address the edutubers nano-influencers as disseminators on YouTube. The data presented show a slightly positive evaluation by families ($M = 2.23$) regarding the previous training offered by teachers to their students in order to provide greater usability and accessibility of this social network (X4). However, the data obtained in the interviews contrasts with this assessment, reflecting that the centennial generation has needed family help to access this type of content. In the other two items we found values slightly lower than the intermediate value $M = 2$ of our Likert scale; the families do not fully agree that the teachers broadcast on their YouTube channel adequate academic content, especially in specific periods as was the confinement for Covid-19 (X5), and a critique is evident for not offering other YouTube channels of other edutubers to deepen the certain contents of the learning process (X6). The parametric analysis of variance ruled out the existence of significant differences for the dependent variables of teacher as disseminator in relation to the established continuous interval variables.

Table 3. Characteristics of the transmedia production of edutubers.

	Channel Creation	Number of Videos	Video Header	Graphic Resources	Musical Resources	Principal Image of the Video
Recognized Edutubers						
Sing and Learn	5/1/2017	82	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
The Eduteca	20/2/2012	196	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Smile and Learn	15/11/2016	508	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Happy Learning	25/2/2015	305	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Kids learn by playing	20/1/2016	69	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Academia Play	7/9/2015	256	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Nano-Edutubers						
Luis Miguel Aroca	22/3/2020	14	Yes	No	Yes	No
Profe Manu	12/4/2020	6	Yes	No	Yes	No
Maestro Javier	18/3/2020	176	No	No	No	No
José María Mayor López	23/3/2020	10	Yes	No	Yes	No
Sara	18/3/2020	30	No	No	Yes	No
El Villa moves	19/3/2020	75	Yes	No	Yes	No

Table 4. Descriptive statistics (disseminator).

		Disseminator–X4	Disseminator–X5	Disseminator–X6
N	Valid	729	729	729
	Lost	499	499	499
M		2.23	1.97	1.83
Mode		2	2	2
SD		1.256	1.249	1.355
Minimum		0	0	0
Maximum		4	4	4

When analyzing the data of the edutubers influencers presented in Table 5, it is not observed that there is, in terms of dissemination and impact, a real proportion between the number of followers and the number of total views. Profiles such as Smile and Learn (155,770,130 views) or Happy Learning (209,803,437 views) have a similar or higher number of views than the Academia Play account (157,223,933 views), with less than half the number of subscribers. The number of total views shows the impact that nano-influencers and edutubers macro-influencers have on the networks, generating millions of views. Among nano-influencer accounts, the impact of these profiles is much lower than that of macro-influencers. Some of these accounts have managed to reach thousands of followers: Luis Miguel Aroca (3,550), Sara (3,210), or El Villa moves (2,200). In fact, the three mentioned profiles are the ones with the highest number of reproductions among the nano-influencer accounts, reaching numbers such as 444,390 (Luis Miguel Aroca) or 868,460 (Sara). The results regarding hyperlinked and transmedia navigation to other virtual scenarios show large differences between the competencies as information disseminators. Almost all of the profiles that have experience on YouTube introduce links to their Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram accounts, so that they can generate a greater impact of their productions on the network. Among the nano-influencer profiles, the results show a lack of influencer marketing strategies to disseminate their content and generate repercussion of their productions.

3.3. The Interacting Edutubers Nano-Influencers

Table 6 shows the scores for item X7 of the questionnaire, referring to the evaluation of the interaction offered by the teachers with their students. Most of the participating sample values the interaction offered by the teaching staff positively or very positively, with the highest values being found in the *acceptable* (25.2%), *quite* (25.9%), and *much* (25.2%) responses. The data collected from the interviews reaffirms this trend, with a general feeling of gratitude towards the involvement of teachers, in periods such as the confinement caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, for encouraging interaction "he always gave feedback to my son's contributions," "his teacher has made a great effort and was concerned about maintaining continuous contact." This confirms the qualities of nano-influencers, by manifesting a first-hand "word-of-mouth" relationship with their followers, greater engagement and interaction, normal, accessible, and social people.

As in item X1, significant differences were found between the dependent variable X7 and the independent variable "type of institution," applying the same parametric procedure, this fact was confirmed by

Table 5. Dissemination and impact of content.

	Subscribers	Total Views	Facebook Link	Twitter Link	Instagram Link
Macro-influencers Edutubers					
Sing and Learn	25,200	5,693,686	Yes	Yes	Yes
The Eduteca	188.000	49,810,719	Yes	Yes	Yes
Smile and Learn	710.000	155,770,130	No	No	No
Happy Learning	1,080,000	209,803,437	Yes	Yes	Yes
Kids learn by playing	108.000	6,627,029	Yes	Yes	No
Academia Play	2,130,000	157,223,933	Yes	Yes	Yes
Nano-influencers Edutubers					
Luis Miguel Aroca	3550	444,390	No	No	No
Profe Manu	420	36,320	No	No	No
Maestro Javier	180	13,560	No	No	No
José María Mayor López	609	81,558	No	No	No
Sara	3.210	868.460	No	No	No
El Villa moves	2.200	340,049	Yes	No	No

Table 6. Frequency descriptive (interactor–X7).

		Frequency	Percentage
Valid	*Nothing*	44	6.1
	Little	128	17.5
	Acceptable	184	25.2
	Quite	189	25.9
	Much	184	25.2
	Total	729	100.0

post-hoc analysis (Tukey test), being reflected graphically, through the error bars, in which it shows how the families of the centennial generation in private institutions offer better evaluations regarding the interaction offered by teachers than in the case of families in public or subsidized institutions.

As we can see in Table 7, the use of marketing specific to nano-influencers gives greater meaning to the interaction. Thus, in the data collected from the perspective of the families of the centennial generation, it has revealed the communicative tools that nano-influencers or teachers who position themselves as amateurs have used to project, from the media convergence, a more dynamic interaction with their students (X8). The data show two communication tools that stand out above the rest as a complement to interaction on YouTube: Email (34%) and Google Classroom (27.7%). Other tools used for teacher–student interaction are: Classdojo, Whatsapp, Moodle, or Virtual Classroom, etc., all of them with percentages below 10%.

Table 8 provides information on how edutubers macro-influencers and nano-influencers develop the interaction with their followers. The study shows the use in the creation of the narrative of influencer marketing strategies in various topics, such as: the suggestion to Like, encourage their audiences to write in the comments, remind them to subscribe to the channel and

reply to their audiences in the comments by Like or written text. Interaction habits are far from the procedures that favor closer contact between senders and receivers, since practically all the channels analyzed treat their followers as interacted, except for the channel The Eduteca, which interacts with invitations such as "Like." To this lack of interaction, we have observed how the macro-influencers edutubers have blocked comments, so that they show no interest in favoring communication within their channels. In this sense, nano-edutubers show more interaction with their audiences, responding to comments through Likes or written messages. Finally, it is worth noting that the most experienced edutubers on the platform do invite their audiences to subscribe to the channel in each of their videos, a fact that is not observed in the less experienced accounts.

3.4. Nano-Influencers Edutubers as Producers, Disseminators, and Interactors on Youtube

To conclude the presentation of the data, Table 9 establishes the correlation analysis applied to the variables "producer" and "disseminator," which imply the average evaluation that families have of the figure of the teacher in his/her work as a producer and as a disseminator on YouTube, according to the items that make up these categories. Also included in the analysis is item X7—how

Table 7. Frequency descriptor (interactor–X8).

		Frequency	Percentage
Valid	Email	248	34.0
	Google Classroom	202	27.7
	Classdojo	64	8.7
	WhatsApp	37	5.0
	Moodle	35	4.8
	Virtual Classroom	23	3.1
	Blog	22	3.0
	Ipasen	21	2.8
	Zoom	19	2.6
	Teams	15	2.0
	Telegram	12	1.6
	Webex	9	1.2
	Tokapp	9	1.2
	Phone calls	7	0.9
	None	6	0.8
	Total	729	100.0

Table 8. Mechanics of interaction on YouTube.

	Get Likes	Get a Comment	Get to Subscribe	Comment interaction
Macro-Influencers Edutubers				
Sing and Learn	No	No	No	Yes
The Eduteca	Yes	No	Yes	Disabled
Smile and Learn	No	No	Yes	Disabled
Happy Learning	No	No	Yes	Disabled
Kids learn by playing	No	No	Yes	Disabled
Academia Play	No	No	Yes	Yes
Nano-Influencers Edutubers				
Luis Miguel Aroca	No	No	No	Yes
Profe Manu	No	No	No	Disabled
Maestro Javier	No	No	No	Yes
José María Mayor López	No	No	No	Yes
Sara	No	No	No	Yes
El Villa moves	No	No	No	Yes

would you rate the interaction offered by the teachers with your child?—which determines the families' assessment of the interaction generated by the teaching staff with the students. The data show a moderate correlation coefficient between the variables of teachers as producers and disseminators (p = .485), which shows that there is a positive linear correlation implying that when the value of one of these variables increases, the other also increases moderately. The level of correlation between the variable "disseminator" and the item X7 (p = .489) referring to teachers as interactors is in the same terms. However, between the variable "producer" and item x7 of the questionnaire there is a positive linear correlation with a strong value of strength (p = .786), which implies that the higher the families' evaluation of the teacher as a producer, the higher their evaluation of the teacher as an interacting person (item X7).

4. Discussion

Influencers edutubers as producers, disseminators, and interactors, use YouTube to offer educational content to people who are interested in learning, using productions in which they apply influencer marketing strategies to generate interest in their followers, build loyalty through subscriptions and, little by little, position their transmedia production in the educational field. The study has revealed a high projection of primary education teachers on YouTube to face, among other difficulties, distance education during the confinement period of the Covid-19 pandemic (Tello & Llanas, 2020). The families of the centennial generation were positive about the content produced by teachers on YouTube, since it allowed them to give continuity to their students' education (Navarrete & Flores, 2021). Despite the fact that some of the edutubers nano-influencers analyzed generated a large amount of content in a very short time, this has not translated into a higher impact on YouTube, which leads to deduce that other factors come into play such as: originality, unique content, recognition in the network, and quality of the content, that work as challenges to be achieved on their part (Antolín & Clemente, 2017). Nano-edutubers present a marked deficit with respect to the technical quality they show in the final result compared

Table 9. Correlation analysis (producer, disseminator, and interactor).

		Producer_Media	Disseminator_Media	Interactor–X7
Producer_Media	Pearson Correlation	1	.485**	.786**
	Sig. (bilateral)		.000	.000
	N	729	729	729
Disseminator_Media	Pearson Correlation	.485**	1	.489**
	Sig. (bilateral)	.000		.000
	N	729	729	729
Interactor–X7	Pearson Correlation	.786**	.489**	1
	Sig. (bilateral)	.000	.000	
	N	729	729	729

Note: ** The correlation is significant at the .01 level (bilateral).

to macro-influencers, where it is also observed the lack of introduction of animated images in their narratives or the use of edited main images (H1 was not confirmed).

Macro-influencers edutubers are experts in the use of social networks as disseminators (Romero-Tena et al., 2017). However, the comparative analysis of this study has shown that nano-influencers with less experience in YouTube, do not implement these practices in their channels, missing hyperlinked and transmedia navigation in other social networks such as Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram (H2 was not confirmed). Despite this, some nano-influencers have achieved between March and June 2020, the period of confinement in Spain, thousands of views on their channels, with quite positive data for the short period of life of these channels. From the perspective of the families, the teachers have been positively valued in this area since they have offered guidance to the students in order to be able to adequately follow the dissemination of content on YouTube. Despite this, it seems not to have explored the possibilities of YouTube to the fullest by not encouraging the viewing of other edutubers' channels with which to reinforce the learning of its students or with which to provide support in various areas of knowledge. The teachers who position themselves as influencers, from the perspective of centennial families, do not seem to have disseminated adequate content for the students, which may influence the fact that their dissemination has not reached as many followers, which encourages rethinking educational priorities in the face of future crisis situations (Tejedor et al., 2020). On the other hand, in the area of interaction, edutubers macro-influencers have little interaction with their followers, since they do not use the communicative tools offered to generate a communicative exchange with the people who view their productions, in some cases even disabling comments on the channel, thus cutting off the communication process. This situation largely blocks the possible feed-feed that can be generated among potential interactors, clearly contrasting with the main intention of social networks which is to favor the exchange between users who coexist in the various platforms (Tur-Viñes & González-Río, 2019). In this sense, nano-influencers have shown themselves to be more open to exchange with their followers, by offering greater interaction in the comments of their productions. Likewise, the families of the centennial generation detail how these influencers and teachers who position themselves as amateurs, have opened other ways to generate a more direct and personal communication with their students, highlighting platforms such as Google Classroom and Email (H3 was confirmed), coming to value the interaction very positively. The comparative analysis between macro-influencers and nano-influencers in the educational field offers significant differences in terms of the efforts made by the former to gain the loyalty of their followers through subscriptions, a strategy that is not applied by the more novice content creators.

Considering the data that have emerged when studying each of the three variables established for this article (production, interaction, and dissemination processes), we can determine some facets of teachers referring to their media competence, as part of the six dimensions proposed by Ferrés and Piscitelli (2012). Among the three dimensions selected to analyze media competence, it is possible to point out the good practices shown by nano-influencers in the interaction dimension; however, they should devote greater efforts to the dimensions related to the production and dissemination of their channels. It is essential to point out that the existence of correlations between the evaluations of the media competencies analyzed in Spanish teachers who are nano-influencers or position themselves as amateurs is confirmed. There is a correlation between the three categories selected, highlighting the correlation between the evaluation of production and interactions due to the strength and nature shown. It has become clear in the study that a production with a good valuation will trigger a good valuation of the interaction generated by the teachers and vice versa (H4 was confirmed).

5. Conclusions

YouTube continues to maintain its position as the leading social network in content generation, showing since its creation a high capacity for innovation and adaptation to the uncertain society in which we live, in which the centennial generation consumes, produces, and interacts with content. In the educational field, edutubers are positioned in social networks as experts in certain educational fields, taking advantage of YouTube to produce, disseminate, and interact with content, through the implementation of various social networks (Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram). This platform has been chosen by educational teams to transmit their transmedia message, both before, during, and in the post Covid-19 period, taking advantage of the consumption habits of the generation they train. The nano-influencers edutubers or amateur teachers had to adapt to the communication strategies of influencer marketing, showing limitations in this regard and difficulties in adapting to the platforms in which they have expanded their online presence. Specifically, we must highlight the following conclusions:

1. Nano-influencers do not use production elements typical of macro-influencers youtubers.
2. Nano-influencers do not use social networks platforms to disseminate their transmedia message.
3. Nano-influencers suggest alternative communication tools to YouTube to interact with their audiences.
4. The competences of nano-influencers as producers, disseminators, and interactors on YouTube are correlated.

This shows educational nano-influencers as teachers who give great importance to interaction with the community, offering various ways for it to occur; but this group shows real deficiencies when we refer to the dimensions related to the production and dissemination of the channels, being two areas to improve as part of the teachers' media competencies. The data of nano-influencers are the opposite of those marked by the macro-influencers edutubers, who show a deficit of media competence in the interaction with their followers, turning them into mere consumers of information; showing themselves as true experts in the other two areas analyzed, in which they follow the mechanics of digital marketing and global influencers.

This research highlights the significant growth of edutubers as trainers of the centennial generation following in the footsteps of influencers. In this sense, we continue to bet on promoting the profile that goes beyond the edutuber and is positioned as learning influencers. Using influencer marketing strategies and changing production, dissemination, and interaction, we must promote a more democratic sense of citizenship, ensuring access to life-long learning for each individual in the new training and socialization processes, expanding educational environments, contexts, and scenarios beyond the classroom and for the benefit of the common. In addition, thanks to this research, the doors are opened to future studies in which the remaining dimensions to determine the media competence of teachers as edutubers can be covered.

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Conflict of Interests

The authors declare no conflict of interests.

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Article

Political Influencers on YouTube: Business Strategies and Content Characteristics

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Abstract

Young media users increasingly engage with public affairs via social media such as YouTube, where content is increasingly produced by influencers who neither represent established professional news media nor political parties. Although the audience of these channels is already substantial in absolute terms and still growing enormously—making alternative influencers serious competitors to professional journalism—we still know little about their ways of attracting and monetizing audiences, the topics they emphasize, or the specific content they provide. To address this void, the present study examines political videos and their producers on YouTube in an explorative and comparative way for English- and German-speaking YouTube channels. We conducted a content analysis of the five most popular YouTube videos for each of the 20 most successful English- and German-speaking political influencers in 2020. Our analyses show that, although English YouTubers already appear to be more professionalized, similar patterns emerge in both language regions, particularly with regards to increasing efforts to manage microcelebrity status. In terms of content, two main types of political YouTube videos were identified: "partisan mockery" and "engaging education." Results will be discussed in terms of their implications for political discourse, youth participation, and established journalistic media.

Issue

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1. Introduction

Social media has become particularly important to young media users looking for information and inspiration about (socio-)political developments and public affairs. In 2021, YouTube ranked second among the world's most influential social media platforms, closely behind Facebook in terms of frequency of general use as well as news use (Reuters Institute, 2021, p. 51). However, while Facebook has received much scholarly attention in recent years, research on political communication on YouTube is still in its beginnings. The present study aims to contribute to this rapidly evolving area by look-ing at new political influencers who increasingly shape and potentially transform public discourse through their YouTube channels.

Although many of the most influential political channels on YouTube can be traced back to established media organisations—similar to what we see on other social media platforms (Soares et al., 2018)—there is a rising number of new influential channels that do not fall into this category (Scolari & Fraticelli, 2019). These channels are operated by (groups of) private individuals or alternative media institutions that usually create their content independently and, thus, without being officially affiliated with mass media organisations or

political parties (De Jans et al., 2019). In recent years, such YouTubers have become increasingly professionalised in how they attract their audience. While using their YouTube channels as their main platforms, they often simultaneously engage in cross-media activities to build brand identities of digital activism based on authenticity and community principles (Cunningham & Craig, 2017; Hutchinson, 2021). These activities are not limited to other social media platforms but additionally include collaborations with professional journalistic media (Lichtenstein et al., 2021). Cross-media activities are often pursued with some regularity, as audiences usually demand regular interaction and up-to-date information (Koliska et al., 2021). Meeting this demand is of considerable economic value, as it fuels web traffic, content sharing, and thereby reputation (Luo & Zhang, 2013). YouTubers have also professionalised in terms of how they generate revenue based on the microcelebrity status they have achieved through their YouTube channels (Hou, 2019). One major way to turn audience success into revenue is to provide space for paid advertising, mostly through pre-roll ads or sponsored content and product promotion within videos (Cunningham & Craig, 2017; De Jans et al., 2019). In addition to advertising the products of others, some influencers—including political influencers—have also started selling their own merchandise (Schwemmer & Ziewiecki, 2018). However, these trends have been systematically examined so far, mainly concerning fashion and lifestyle vlogs, which usually have a wider reach (in terms of views) than political information. We, therefore, aim to extend this line of research to political YouTube channels by addressing the following research question:

RQ1: How do new political influencers on YouTube build their audience and monetise their activities?

Becoming a successful political influencer on YouTube depends not only on one's business strategy but also on the content offered to the audience. Previous research in this area indicates that political communication on YouTube tends to resemble general social media trends. First, social media platforms—including YouTube—provide space for alternative forms of journalism that "modernise" traditional journalistic news in terms of topics, formats, and style (Lichtenstein et al., 2021; Peer & Ksiazek, 2011). Political YouTubers with journalistic role conceptions commit themselves to journalistic ethics, but often with an alternative set of normative standards to fulfil traditional journalistic roles such as being a watchdog or giving voice to minorities—thereby embracing partiality to a greater extent than mainstream journalists (Harlow, 2019). This trend, which we refer to as "journalistic extension," is complemented by a second development towards an increasing blending of political information with entertainment. This trend of "entertainment packaging" is crucial for YouTubers to attract young audiences (Möller et al., 2019; Scolari &

Fraticelli, 2019). There is some indication that this trend towards entertainment—having already become an integral part of traditional journalism along the lines of politainment or soft news (Reinemann et al., 2011)—extends to YouTube's political arena (Djerf-Pierre et al., 2019; Keyling et al., 2015; Lichtenstein et al., 2021). However, a systematic examination of entertainment in political YouTube videos across a wider range of political topics is still pending. This also applies to the third trend of "partisan indignation" prevailing on social media. This development refers to an increasing share of morally charged, one-sided content on political issues, which thereby fosters misinformation spreading, often in conjunction with right-wing extremism (Munger & Phillips, 2020; Rauchfleisch & Kaiser, 2020) and expressions of distrust in mainstream news media (Figenschou & Ihlebæk, 2019; Lewis, 2020). As this development can have serious implications for democratic societies along the lines of public misperception and audience polarisation, there is an increasing number of studies investigating YouTube content in this regard (e.g., Finlayson, 2020; Van der Vegt et al., 2021). Although these studies provide valuable insights into socio-political debates, previous research has mainly focused on specific topics or cases. To map political communication on YouTube in more general terms, we therefore ask:

RQ2: In what way do new political influencers on YouTube deal with politics?

2. Method

2.1. Sampling

To address our research questions, we conducted a content analysis among the most influential political English- and German-language YouTube channels, with 20 channels per language region. The two regions were chosen to reflect political YouTube on both an international and national scale. The German-language region was selected to contrast the mobilising potential of international YouTube with more national qualities of YouTube, such as urging political parties and professional media to take a stand towards new political influencers (Allgaier, 2020). The two different groups of influencers might partly reach the same audience. However, language barriers limit engagement with political content in a foreign language, which particularly applies to non-English language content. Consequently, the audiences reached by the two groups of influencers may not only differ with regards to their nationalities and cultural backgrounds—as reflected, for instance, in the cultural values they represent (see, e.g., Beugelsdijk & Welzel, 2018)—but also in terms of their regional scope. Hence, we used language differences as one of the least arbitrary proxies for two distinct spheres of public discourse to examine systematic differences (or similarities) between influencers with an international vs a more regionally confined scope.

To identify relevant influencers without an institutional background in the established media and/or political system, we used the Top100 lists that YouTube assigned to the category of "news and politics" in the respective language regions as of April 19, 2020 (Channel Crawler, n.d.). The selected Top100 lists are based on the number of subscribers to a channel and comprise both channels of politicians, parties, and established journalistic media as well as channels operated by (groups of) private individuals or alternative media institutions. Since only the latter group was to be considered for the analysis, these "new" political influencers of each language region were identified by additional qualitative research on the (groups of) people and institutions in charge of each YouTube channel. This additional analysis was carried out between May 1 and May 21, 2020, and resulted in the exclusion of all those channels that were at that time operated by elected officials of a political party, by political parties themselves, or by established journalistic media outlets and/or their representatives (e.g., TV and radio stations, newspapers, news magazines). Mere party membership or affinity to a specific party did not serve as criteria for exclusion. Also not excluded from the sample were new digital news organisations or start-ups particularly focused on social media production (e.g., NowThis World) or protagonists who had gained a certain popularity due to their (former) activities in the media or political context but operate their YouTube channels independently of this background (i.e., Larry King). Furthermore, being funded by institutions affiliated with public broadcasting was no exclusion criterion either, if the influencers had set up their channels with self-invented formats independently before such cooperation had started (i.e., as MrWissen2Go did with *funk*, a German public broadcasting-related initiative which cooperates with several influencers). An additional cut included influencers who had shared less than five political content videos over the selected period of analysis.

This strategy led to a substantial and slightly uneven reduction of eligible cases per language region (i.e., to 16 of the English and 26 of the German Top100 list). To include an equal number of channels for each language region, we went beyond the top 100 in the English case and simultaneously reduced the total number of selected channels in the German case, starting from the least popular and finally arriving at the 20 most prominent channels with the widest reach per language region and, thus, a total of 40 channels. Regarding the English-language channels, 17 originated from the US (e.g., Mark Dice), while the remaining three were based in the UK (e.g., Sargon of Akkad). Of the 20 German-language channels, 19 contained content produced in Germany (e.g., MrWissen2Go), while one was operated from Austria (i.e., Martin Sellner Live). Table 1 gives a descriptive overview of each channel included in the analysis—revealing large differences between English- and German-language channels regarding their reach, with five English but only one German channel having millions of subscriptions.

Having identified the 20 alternative influencers with the widest reach per language region according to YouTube data, the five most viewed videos of each channel published between February 1, 2019, and February 29, 2020, were selected for the analysis. The viewer statistics were determined in May 2020. This selection procedure resulted in 100 videos per language region and, thus, 200 videos in total.

The number of 20 influencers for each sample—instead of a much larger sample size—was chosen based on a thorough examination of the distribution of the numbers of subscribers to the channels. The audience size in both samples follows so-called "power laws" as described in a variety of studies on social media, starting with early blogs and websites (Shirky, 2003)—with an R^2 of remarkable 95% in the German language sample and even 99% in the English language sample. This can be understood as the result of general network dynamics (see, e.g., Schnegg, 2006, for an overview on its mathematical foundations). As Shirky (2003, p. 46) suggests, "in systems where many people are free to choose between many options, a small subset of the whole will get a disproportionate amount of…attention…even if no members of the system actively work towards such an outcome." Hence, since any blog (or channel, in our case) chosen by one user is—be it only by a fraction of an amount—more likely to be chosen by another user, "the system changes dramatically" (Shirky, 2003, p. 49) in that this network logic leads to a skewed distribution in favour of a few high-reach influencers. Such phenomena are consistent with other empirical studies on communication flows in the tradition of Lazarsfeld's two-step flow model (Katz, 1957) that emphasise the importance of a small number of opinion leaders for public discourse. Although the early model was criticised for its simplistic view, modifications have still been found relevant today (e.g., Hilbert et al., 2017)—also and in particular with regards to the social media communication environment (e.g., Carr & Hayes, 2014; Choi, 2015).

2.2. Codebook

To analyse the main features of the 20 most popular political influencers per language region, a content analysis was carried out by one coder in June 2020. The codebook comprised categories on two units of analysis: The first refers to the individual operating the YouTube channel, and the second pertains to the videos posted on these channels (i.e., the five videos per channel with the widest reach in terms of views). Given the short period of coding (one month), an intracoder reliability test was not considered meaningful since it is highly probable, in this case, that coders would still remember their initial coding. However, the coder was intensively trained regarding all categories in the codebook, while the codebook itself was thoroughly reviewed and adapted in a pretest

phase based on test material from outside the analysis period. Furthermore, four videos, two German and two English, were randomly selected and viewed by another coder. The intercoder reliability score calculated based on this small subset of videos reflects good reliability (Cohen's κ = .84; p < .001).

On the video level (N = 200), the sample was analysed in terms of content characteristics, that is, the political topics that alternative influencers addressed, as well as the formats and style features that they made use of. On the topic dimension, first, the contents' broader "geographic focus" (e.g., "domestic politics," "transnational politics") was coded and, in a second step, 22 specific "policy areas" (e.g., "Human rights and democracy," "Foreign policy and security") were examined based on a classification proposed by Blum and Schubert (2018).

Table 1. Descriptive overview of alternative political YouTube channels in the sample.

English-Language Channels (Rank in YouTube Listing)	Total Number of Subscribers (April, 2020)	Total Number of Videos (May, 2020)	Total Number of Views (May, 2020)	Date of YouTube Launch	Country of Origin
The Young Turks (11)	4,710,000	39,106	48,300,000,000	Dec 21, 2005	US
NowThis World (20)	2,110,000	1,386	489,000,000	Jan 24, 2013	US
The Daily Wire (23)	1,890,000	5,804	507,000,000	Aug 20, 2015	US
Mark Dice (26)	1,550,000	1,238	323,000,000	Jan 24, 2007	US
The Rubin Report (40)	1,180,000	2,155	255,000,000	Sep 05, 2012	US
Sargon of Akkad (48)	961,000	1,182	304,000,000	Oct 13, 2010	UK
Tom Pool (61)	718,000	1,366	178,000,000	Dec 22, 2011	US
The Jimmy Dore Show (62)	713,000	3,872	290,000,000	May 19, 2011	US
WeAreChange (68)	624,000	2,419	137,000,000	Jun 13, 2007	US
Jonathan Pie (69)	616,000	237	70,400,000	Nov 18, 2007	UK
The Amazing Lucas (79)	484,000	1,182	109,000,000	Nov 15, 2014	US
Nathan Rich (83)	467,000	102	23,800,000	Jan 02, 2015	US
The Officer Tantrum (84)	455,000	651	42,500,000	Jan 01, 2012	US
Brian Tyler Cohen (88)	431,000	595	234,000,000	Oct 16, 2011	US
Black Conservative Patriot (92)	415,000	718	80,800,000	Feb 23, 2009	US
Larry King (95)	406,000	6,612	197,000,000	Jun 28, 2012	US
The Liberty Hound (101)	369,000	355	22,500,000	Mar 21, 2017	US
Anthony Brian Logan (102)	365,000	1,471	59,300,000	May 20, 2006	US
TLDR News (103)	365,000	360	45,300,000	May 30, 2017	UK
The Damage Report (108)	347,000	3,532	160,000,000	Apr 17, 2010	US
German-Language Channels (Rank in YouTube Listing)	Total Number of Subscribers (April, 2020)	Total Number of Videos (May, 2020)	Total Number of Views (May, 2020)	Date of YouTube Launch	Country of Origin
MrWissen2Go (2)	1,220,000	619	153,000,000	May 14, 2012	Germany
Tilo Jung (11)	375,000	2,806	90,500,000	Nov 06, 2006	Germany
SchrangTV (22)	162,000	419	34,000,000	Aug 22, 2014	Germany
Oliver Janich (30)	133,000	740	41,100,000	Feb 01, 2011	Germany
Rayk Anders (33)	117,000	290	24,100,000	Aug 21, 2013	Germany
achse:ostwest (39)	96,700	72	6,020,000	Dec 01, 2016	Germany
Silberjunge (40)	92,800	93	12,600,000	Oct 13, 2009	Germany
eingeSCHENKt.tv (45)	82,100	363	11,000,000	Feb 08, 2015	Germany
Christoph Hörstel (52)	74,700	536	13,700,000	Feb 06, 2007	Germany
451 Grad (59)	56,700	348	9,120,000	Jan 25, 2017	Germany
Achgut.Pogo (63)	53,000	195	10,300,000	Apr 04, 2017	Germany
Charles Krüger (64)	51,700	454	8,690,000	Jul 15, 2014	Germany
Digitaler Chronist Alternative (65)	51,100	284	18,390,000	Oct 10, 2019	Germany
Freie Propaganda (72)	47,400	444	35,300,000	Oct 11, 2014	Germany
NachDenkSeiten (78)	42,700	1,117	7,310,000	Jan 05, 2009	Germany
Anti-Spiegel (79)	42,600	41	383,000	Jan 16, 2015	Germany
Martin Sellner Live (80)	42,100	98	2,440,000	Dec 29, 2017	Austria
Lisa Licentia (85)	38,400	27	164,000,000	Apr 26, 2019	Germany
Marvin Neumann (86)	38,300	263	4,260,000	Mar 22, 2016	Germany
Stefan Bauer (87)	37,700	103	6,600,000	Jul 30, 2009	Germany

On the format dimension, we differentiated between seven "format" types, adapting earlier conceptualisations of video formats (e.g., Bachl, 2011; Haarkötter, 2019) to address the three main trends in content contribution on social media as laid out in the theory section. Four video formats relate to the influencers' function of "journalistic extension," either through the provision of "news" (i.e., neutral reporting on current affairs), "explanatory videos" (i.e., explanation of complex political topics in an easily understandable way), "news recycling" (i.e., compilation of news from journalistic media without additional information, analyses, or interpretation), or "eyewitness reports" (i.e., the YouTubers' own footage of events such as demonstrations or natural disasters). To address the second trend of "entertainment packaging" on social media, "politainment" was included as a fifth format, providing a mix of political information and entertainment in a positive, cheerful, and leisurely manner (Keyling et al., 2015). Finally, "partisan indignation" as the third trend on social media was measured via two formats relating to opinion expression either seriously through "political commentary" (i.e., conveying a clear political attitude in relation to political actors, events, or developments) or humorously through "political satire" (i.e., devaluation of political outgroups by means of irony and exaggeration).

The examination of these formats was further informed by analysing specific style elements often used in relation to one of the above-mentioned trends. To address "journalistic extension" on the style dimension, two elements were coded: "interactivity" ("yes"/"no"), defined as the explicit invitation to viewers to engage further with the contents by liking, sharing, commenting on the video or subscribing to the channel, and "mobilisation" ("yes"/"no") as a direct call to action to the audience on a specific political issue (Djerf-Pierre et al., 2019; Lichtenstein et al., 2021). To further substantiate our analysis of "entertainment packaging" as a second trend on social media on the style dimension, we adapted three soft news-categories proposed by Reinemann et al. (2011): "Personal view" captured whether a video included explicit statements of the protagonists about their personal impressions (−1 = *purely or predominantly impersonal*, 0 = *mix of personal and impersonal elements*, 1 = *purely and predominantly personal*); "emotionality" measured the use of verbal, visual, or auditive means to arouse or amplify viewers' emotions, for instance, through dramatisation, affective wording, or emotional expressions (−1 = *purely or predominantly unemotional*, 0 = *mix of emotional and unemotional elements*, 1 = *purely and predominantly emotional*); "episodic narration" finally captured whether the presentation of (often complex) political topics followed an event-driven, case-study-like narrative style (−1 = *purely or predominantly thematic*, 0 = *mix of episodic and thematic*, 1 = *purely and predominantly episodic*). To capture stylistic elements along the lines of the third examined trend of "partisan indig-

nation," we further included "partisanship," measuring whether a clear political stance is discernible in a video ("yes"/"no"), and "mass media criticism" ("yes"/"no"), capturing whether established journalistic media and their reporting are criticised or denounced in verbal, visual, or auditory terms (Figenschou & Ihlebæk, 2019; Lewis, 2020).

Within the second unit of analysis, that is, the influencer operating a YouTube channel ($N = 40$), we examined how influencers build popularity, reach their audience, and monetise these activities for economic success. For that purpose, we looked at three main dimensions. We first analysed the main business models underlying political influencer activities on YouTube. More precisely, following the conceptualisation of business models according to Wirtz et al. (2016), we investigated the revenue models of political influencers. The different potential revenue models were derived from recent studies on the entrepreneurial aspects of influencers (Kolo, 2019; Schwemmer & Ziewiecki, 2018) and investigated over the period that our analysis covered. The first model examined relates to the strategy of accumulating revenue through providing space for advertising that either precedes the actual video as a pre-roll ad or pervades it in the sense of sponsored content ("YouTube advertising"). The second model relies on placing ads on the YouTuber's complimentary individual website ("website advertising"). The third model refers to a "shop model" where income is generated through merchandising products. A fourth model is "TV presence," capturing whether YouTubers appear on mainstream news or talk shows to increase (and further monetise) their popularity. The fifth model is based on "ticket sales" for YouTubers' live shows. Each of the five models was coded separately as either being "present" or "absent," given that influencers can apply several revenue models at once. To adequately determine the presence of each model, the analyses relied on extensive additional research on each of the 40 influencers regarding their media presence, their websites (including webshop activities), and the general structure of their YouTube channels.

Furthermore, YouTube influencers were analysed in terms of their cross-media activities, that is, whether they use multiple ways to increase audience attention (Cunningham & Craig, 2017). The codebook, therefore, examined whether YouTubers solely communicated via YouTube or additionally involved other online platforms to reach their audience. Platform activities beyond YouTube were determined based on information provided by the YouTube channel itself (e.g., via links to other platforms) and supplemented by online searches and searches on other social media platforms for accounts with names identical to the respective YouTube channel's name. The platforms included in the codebook were "Twitter," "Facebook," "Instagram," "Snapchat," and "TikTok," as well as "individual websites" operated by YouTube influencers—each measured on a dichotomous scale ("yes"/"no").

Finally, all YouTube channels were examined regarding the frequency with which new videos are usually posted on these channels. Given that "upload frequency" can be a decisive factor in attracting and maintaining news audience attention (Koliska et al., 2021), this category represents another perspective on a channel's success beyond the specific content provided. The frequency with which new videos are usually uploaded to the channel was determined in two ways: If information regarding upload frequency was given in the channel info, this frequency was coded. However, 84% of the German-language and 45% of the English-language channels did not provide such information. For these channels, the frequency of uploads was coded based on the upload activities of the past two months prior to coding.

3. Results

Regarding the question as to how alternative political YouTubers build popularity, reach their audience, and monetise their activities (RQ1), we first analysed the frequency of several business models' revenue strategies. Our analysis of the German-language sample revealed no clearly discernible revenue model in 50% of the cases (n = 10). For the other half of the sample, five of the German-speaking YouTubers pursued a revenue model that generates income through YouTube advertising (e.g., Freie Propaganda). Only one German-language political influencer achieved advertising income via his website (i.e., Anti-Spiegel), while four influencers sold their own products (e.g., Christoph Hörstel). In the case of the English-language sample, in contrast, an underlying revenue model could be identified for most channels (n = 16). Here, 10 YouTubers—twice as many as in the German sample—relied on the revenue model of YouTube advertising (e.g., The Liberty Hound), 10 channels additionally sold their products in shops on their websites (e.g., Nathan Rich). In both samples, YouTubers often pursued more than one of the examined revenue models, making use of several sources of income simultaneously. For instance, some of the YouTubers additionally performed live in front of an audience and sold their tickets for this purpose. Ticketing represents a revenue model used by two of the German- and two of the English-speaking YouTubers. Furthermore, one of the German- and six of the English-speaking YouTubers also made use of TV appearances on political talk shows or newscasts to increase their popularity (e.g., The Rubin Report).

Related to the business model strategy of fostering one's own presence in established media, many influencers also used cross-media activities on the internet to communicate via other platforms than YouTube. Among German-language channels, "Twitter" was the most widely used platform (n = 18) to share political content beyond YouTube, followed by "Facebook" (n = 16). "Instagram" was only used by half of the German-speaking YouTubers (n = 10), while "Snapchat"

(n = 1) and "TikTok" (n = 1) were hardly used at all. Among the English-language YouTube influencers, "Twitter" and "Facebook" were equally frequently used with 85%, respectively (n = 17). The use of other social media platforms was also higher than in the German-language sample, with 16 English-speaking YouTubers using "Instagram" and three "TikTok" and "Snapchat," respectively. Furthermore, 13 of the German- and 14 of the English-speaking YouTubers operated their own websites, which can be an effective means of increasing success by increasing one's popularity even if such websites are not used for revenue purposes via merchandising. Here, they shared further information via texts and blog entries, posted their videos, and gave more background information about themselves. Each of the English YouTubers operated at least one other channel to communicate to their audience beyond YouTube. In the German sample, only one YouTuber did not make use of any of these additional platforms.

In terms of the third examined factor, which can potentially affect audience and economic success, the frequency of video uploads was examined on each YouTube channel. The weekly upload format proved to be particularly characteristic of the German-language channels (n = 16), while only three channels established daily uploads, and only one YouTuber uploaded videos once a month. The English-language channels showed daily uploads to be most prevalent, with 14 channels using this strategy. Six channels uploaded videos on a weekly basis, while no channel fell into the category of only having monthly uploads.

After an initial clarification of how new political influencers on YouTube make their channels popular and profitable, RQ2 focused on the political content of the videos themselves. Based on the operational definition of main political topics, the geographic focus with which these topics were addressed, and a broader range of format and style characteristics (derived from the three main identified trends in political communication in the age of social media), we conducted a hierarchical cluster analysis of the 200 videos across both language regions, using "linkage between groups" as the cluster method and calculating case proximity based on the squared Euclidean distance. Language region itself was also included as a variable in the analysis. All nominal variables were either dummy-coded or dichotomised. The analysis suggested a two-cluster solution: For the transition from a solution with three clusters to a solution with two clusters, distance increased most discernibly by jumping from 17.56 to 31.54, while distance increased only slightly from 15.46 to 17.56 regarding the transition from a four- to a three-cluster solution, and even less clearly for earlier transitions with more clusters. The two suggested clusters applied to both language regions equally, as the English- and German-language sample did not differ in terms of the distribution of videos across clusters (see Table 2). In both samples, the first cluster contained substantially more cases than the second one. Given that

only videos of the widest reach were included in both samples, this finding also indicates a greater popularity of videos pertaining to cluster one.

The first cluster, which we propose calling "partisan mockery," predominantly contained videos that emphasised issues of general human rights and democracy, followed by national politics and elections, issues of cultural identity and change, as well as questions of constitutionality by addressing topics of law and funda-

mental rights. Geographically, the videos mainly focused on domestic politics. In terms of format and style, videos of the first cluster stood out for dealing with political topics in an opinionated, one-sided, emotional, and therein partly satirical way—along the lines of the third mentioned social media trend of "partisan indignation." Also, criticism of established journalistic media was a crucial component of videos of this type. Simultaneously, the second-mentioned trend of "entertainment packaging"

Table 2. Cluster analysis on types of alternative influencers based on content characteristics.

Dimension	Overall Distribution (N = 200)	Cluster 1: Partisan Mockery (N = 160)	Cluster 2: Engaging Education (N = 39)	Statistical Difference Between Clusters
Language Region				
English-speaking	50%	49.4%	51.3%	X^2 (1, N = 199) = .1,
German-speaking	50%	50.6%	48.7%	p > .80
Typical English YouTube Example		Mark Dice	NowThis World	
Typical German YouTube Examples		Charles Krüger	Rayk Anders	
Topics				
Geographic Focus				
Domestic politics of the own country	66%	70%	48.7%	
Foreign politics of the own country	3%	0%	15.4%	X^2 (3, N = 199) = 27.5,
Transnational politics	27.5%	26.3%	33.3%	p < .001,
Domestic politics of other countries	3.5%	3.8%	2.6%	Cramer's V = .37
Policy Areas				
Education, training, and youth	3%	0%	15.4%	
Foreign policy and security	11%	0%	56.4%	
Employment and social affairs	3.5%	0%	17.9%	
Domestic market	1%	0%	5.1%	
Energy	1%	0%	5.1%	
Development and cooperation	0%	0%	0%	
Research and innovation	.5%	.6%	0%	
Public health	2%	2.5%	0%	
Trade	1%	1.3%	0%	
Humanitarian aid and civil protection	4%	5.0%	0%	X^2 (14, N = 199) = 199,
Law and fundamental rights	8.5%	10.6%	0%	p < .001,
Culture	10.5%	12.5%	0%	Cramer's V = 1
Agriculture	0%	0%	0%	
Food safety	0%	0%	0%	
Human rights and democracy	33%	41.3%	0%	
National politics and elections	18%	22.5%	0%	
Taxation	.5%	.6%	0%	
Environment	2.5%	3.1%	0%	
Industry	0%	0%	0%	
Transport	0%	0%	0%	
Market competition	0%	0%	0%	
Customs	0%	0%	0%	

Table 2. (Cont.) Cluster analysis on types of alternative influencers based on content characteristics.

Dimension	Overall Distribution (N = 200)	Cluster 1: Partisan Mockery (N = 160)	Cluster 2: Engaging Education (N = 39)	Statistical Difference Between Clusters
Format				
Journalistic Extension				
News	8.5%	5.6%	20.5%	X^2 (6, N = 199) = 17.5, p = .008, Cramer's V = .30
Explanatory video	7.5%	6.3%	12.8%	
News recycling	5%	4.4%	7.7%	
Eyewitness report	6.5%	7.5%	2.6%	
Entertainment Packaging				
Politainment	28%	26.3%	33.3%	
Partisan Indignation				
Political commentary	17.5%	30.6%	12.8%	
Political satire	27%	19.4%	10.3%	
Style				
Journalistic Extension				
Interactivity	83%	82.5%	84.6%	X^2 (1, N = 199) = .1, p > .70
Mobilization	27.5%	27.5%	25.6%	X^2 (1, N = 199) = .1, p > .80
Entertainment Packaging				
Personal view	M = .03, SD = .63	M = .09, SD = .60	M = −.23, SD = .67	t(197) = 2.9, p = .004, Cohen's d = .53
Emotionality	M = −.07, SD = .68	M = −.01, SD = .67	M = −.31, SD = .66	t(197) = 2.5, p < .014, Cohen's d = .44
Episodic narration	M = −.04, SD = .65	M = .02, SD = .64	M = −.26, SD = .67	t(197) = 2.4, p < .018, Cohen's d = .43
Partisan Indignation				
Partisanship	58.8%	61.9%	46.2%	X^2 (1, N = 199) = 3.2, p = .07, Cramer's V = .13
Mass media criticism	50%	52.5%	38.5%	X^2 (1, N = 199) = 2.5, p > .10

was also present in this cluster: As videos in cluster one strongly relied on emotional opinion expression, soft news features of "personal view" and "emotionality" were automatically served as well. Also, the video's narration remained episodic more often than the videos of the second type. Hence, entertainment and partisanship complemented each other in these political contents, which made use of emotional attacks or sarcastic denigration of political outgroups.

The second cluster of videos, which we refer to as "engaging education," revealed some similarities to the first cluster in that its videos also showed a certain extent of politainment and, thus, of "entertainment packaging" as a proceeding trend in online political communication. However, entertainment was substantially less related to

one-sided opinion expression and sarcasm than in cluster one. In contrast, it was more often used in relation to positively engaging emotions in connection with neutral reporting as known from traditional journalistic news—often supplemented by detailed explanations of complex issues. Hence, entertainment features were used, but not to the extent that would classify videos of this cluster as soft news: they were substantially less emotional than cluster one videos, their narratives were more thematic than episodic, and the expression of personal views was significantly lower. Also, videos of the second cluster revolved around different topics: while cluster one was—broadly speaking—concerned with the constitution of one's own nation and the competences of political elites acting within it in times of change, videos of the second

cluster more frequently dealt with social issues related to education, foreign policy, and general social affairs in a broader international context. Potentially, it is this topical focus on social issues, in addition to a more pronounced thematic narration and explanatory approach, that accounts for the still very high frequency of traditional media criticism in cluster two. The combination of traditional journalistic approaches in cluster two with new ways of zooming in on and dealing with political affairs thus sheds some light on how the first mentioned trend of "journalistic extension" manifests itself on YouTube and why established journalistic media may not always be seen as sufficient from that perspective.

Taken together, the three main trends in political communication in a social media environment manifested themselves to different degrees in the two clusters. "Partisan mockery" videos relied significantly more often on formats and style features facilitating "partisan indignation'—complemented by a higher degree of "entertainment packing" features on the style dimension (see Figure 1). "Engaging education" videos, in contrast, showed a significantly higher use of formats that help realise "journalistic extension" in a social media environment—with significantly lower levels of "entertainment packaging" and "partisan indignation" on the style dimension.

4. Conclusions

The aim of the present study was to investigate the success strategies and content characteristics of political

influencers on English- and German-language YouTube who are neither associated with journalistic mainstream media nor with political parties. Such alternative channels of political communication can facilitate access to political issues and public affairs for a young and/or more politically inattentive audience (Raby et al., 2017; Zimmermann et al., 2020). The present study, therefore, aimed to advance our understanding of whom these YouTube channels are run by, how these alternative influencers reach their audience, and how they address political topics.

Overall, our analyses corroborate a gradual transition of political YouTube from the (idealistic) image of an independent, participatory culture into a "hybrid cultural–commercial space" (Lobato, 2016, p. 357). Many political YouTubers investigated in the present study engage in microcelebrity management: They start to create economic revenue, mainly based on advertising, and build their brands through cross-media activities, both of which is more professionalised among English-language influencers (RQ1). Hence, channels reaching a broader international audience appear to be more successful in implementing business strategies than channels that are limited to more specific language regions and, thus, more regional public arenas. These patterns may continue to change over time, and it may be that only a small group of influencers will potentially be able to achieve and maintain economic success. How many of the new political influencers actually want to and/or successfully manage to enter into serious competition with more established institutions, most of all journalistic media, remains
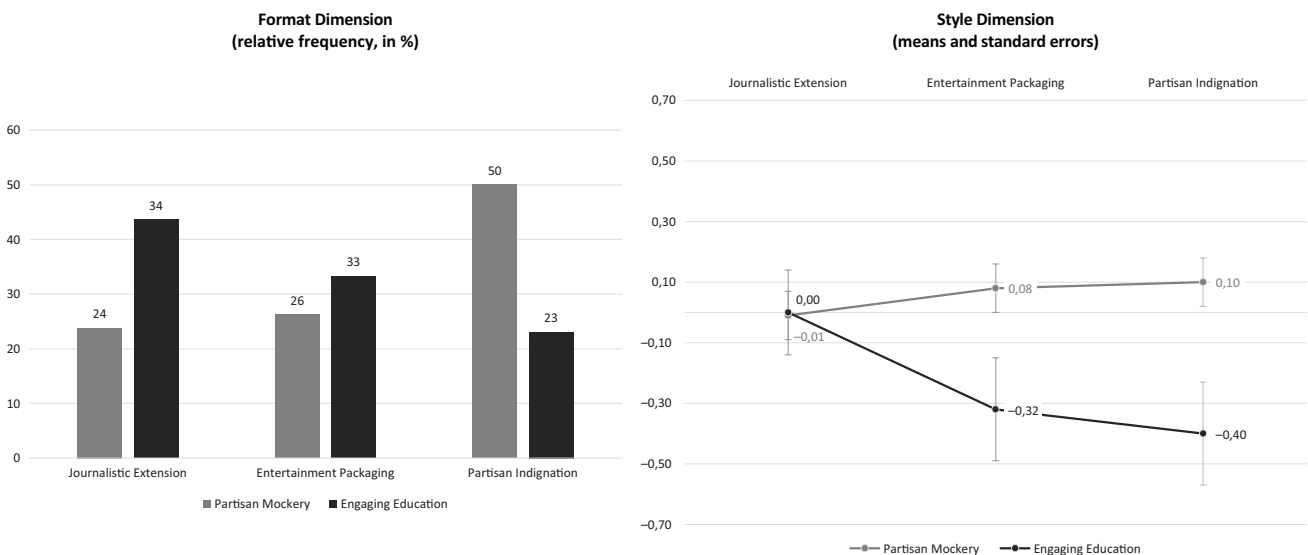
Figure 1. Format and style differences between clusters in terms of social media trends in political communication. Notes: Regarding format-related trends, "journalistic extension" depicts the relative frequency of news, explanatory videos, news recycling, and eyewitness reports; "entertainment packaging" pertains to the relative frequency of politainment; and "partisan indignation" indicates the relative frequency of political commentary and political satire. Regarding style-related trends, "journalistic extension" is represented by the standardised summative index of interactivity and mobilisation; "partisan indignation" reflects the standardised summative index of partisanship and mass media criticism, and "entertainment packaging" relies on the standardised mean index of personal view, emotionality, and episodic narration. Numbers indicate the mean values of each index per cluster; bars represent the respective standard errors.

an open question. In any case, influencers should ensure that their business strategies on YouTube remain transparent to users (De Jans et al., 2019).

Another professionalisation strategy that relies on economic success was found with regard to the frequency with which political YouTubers provide content. Again, English-language channels are more professionalised than German-language channels in this regard: While English-language channels mainly use daily formats to pick up and comment on political issues, the German-language channels are characterised by slower upload frequencies at weekly intervals. Although YouTubers may benefit from a faster pace of communication in terms of user engagement and retention (Koliska et al., 2021), both types of upload regularity might endure, as it ultimately depends on the topics addressed and the way in which they are presented—similar to how slower forms of professional journalism have established alongside breaking news reporting (Mast et al., 2019).

Accordingly, content and presentation styles are crucial in how political YouTubers may succeed in reaching and building their audience. We thus examined influencers' videos along three dimensions: topics, format, and style (RQ2). Our cluster analysis showed that most videos in our sample represent "partisan mockery" by expressing strong opinions about an issue in often emotional ways and by frequently attacking political outgroups, including mainstream journalism. Given that our analysis focused on the most popular videos of the most influential channels on English and German YouTube, the predominance of "partisan mockery" (combining "partisan indignation" with "entertainment packaging") implies that videos using such features are particularly likely to attract viewers. Although we did not explicitly capture the specific political attitude conveyed in these videos, which limits this study, this (substantially larger) cluster of videos frequently includes right-wing protagonists. Such protagonists, due to their popularity, could exacerbate the trend of "partisan indignation" and contribute to the spread of political extremism, misperception, and polarisation in society (Finlayson, 2020). However, as the higher amount of "partisan mockery" videos in our sample already suggests, the examined political YouTube influencers do not consistently fall into just one of the two categories with all five videos examined per channel. In contrast, only six of the German and seven of the English YouTube influencers were found to solely provide videos of precisely one of the two clusters. Hence, for most influencers, a mix of "partisan mockery" and "engaging education" videos can be found among their most influential videos—many of them with three to four "partisan mockery" videos (n_{German} = 13, $n_{English}$ = 11). Although this finding is disconcerting in terms of how alternative political influencers deal with politics and public affairs, it may also reflect an overall development towards hybrid communication cultures that increasingly blend formerly distinct role orientations so that opinion expression, entertainment, and a ratio-

nal presentation of facts become more likely to co-occur (Humanes et al., 2021).

Nevertheless, some roles appear to dominate the political discourse on YouTube more than others, as suggested by the second and much smaller cluster of videos found in our analysis. This cluster mainly represents the trend of "journalistic extension." These videos pursue and critically reflect professional journalistic standards by combining them with newer approaches of authenticity, civic education, and mobilisation (Harlow, 2019; Hutchinson, 2021). While these videos may have the potential of appealing to a young audience, they are often sandwiched between videos of "partisan mockery," and therefore, may miss the opportunity to engage young people in politics and public affairs news.

Our study has several limitations. Apart from the caveat that the political orientation of the examined contents was not explicitly captured, another limitation of our study lies in the sampling technique used to select political influencers. Our investigation relies on the Top100 lists provided by YouTube. Therefore, some influential channels were excluded from our analysis, such as the channel run by the popular German musician Rezo who had become famous for his (sporadically posted) political videos. Such undisputedly important influencers had to be left out, as—although engaging substantially in political discussions—their contributions remain irregular and are therefore not classified as "news and politics" by YouTube. We, therefore, excluded such YouTubers from the analyses in order to enable a sampling procedure that is as transparent and reproducible as possible and independent of subjective assessments.

Another limitation of our sampling procedure can be seen in relying on language regions instead of nationality. However, the German language sample consisted mostly of influencers of German nationality (based on information given by the influencers), while the English language sample was US-dominated. An ex-post sensitivity analysis of the key results with strict restriction to the predominant nationalities confirmed the reported findings, with only slightly lower significance levels (as could be expected by smaller sample sizes).

Also, against the background of "power laws" in social networks, our sample is limited to the 20 most influential YouTube channels per language region. Given such power laws in audience distribution, there is no "natural" cut-off value at a certain number of influencers. From a statistical perspective, an increase in the number of cases could have further improved statistical power, but 20 influencers per sub-sample with five videos each proved sufficient to yield significant results. From the perspective of the generalisability of our findings, however, caution is advised, as our results can only speak for the most influential channels and videos in both language regions, but not for the "long tail" (Anderson, 2006) of less influential contributors, who might follow economic logics and address political topics in entirely different ways.

Hence, it will be interesting for future research to continue observing the evolution and development of political influencers on YouTube, to monitor whether approaches of "engaging education" can actually counteract problematic effects triggered by "partisan mockery," and to examine how these attempts may prove themselves against established media on YouTube and in terms of economic viability.

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Conflict of Interests

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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COGITATIO

Article

Narrative of Young YouTubers From the Andean Community and Their Media Competence

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Abstract
Young people spend an increasing amount of time in front of a screen, developing new forms of content consumption and production. In this context, the so-called YouTubers emerge. They are the new actors of the information society, who acquire prominence specially in the creation of audiovisual content. This article studies the narrative of YouTubers and the media competition behind the process. To accomplish this task we have selected the 10 most relevant young YouTubers in the Andean Community (Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, and Peru), ranked by number of followers. Their products were analyzed with the following criteria: the narrative that they use, the impact that they generate, and the media competence that they demonstrate. The research we have made is descriptive and uses a mixed-methods approach, which employs technical datasheets that collect general information on the channels studied and the impact of their accounts. In general terms, we have observed that the videos contemplate new standards, which are not related to the contents of traditional media; the narrative is self-referential and through it, YouTubers manage to identify with niches of younger audiences, that can see in them similar life experiences. An interesting aspect is that a good part of the language used is violent and even foul, considering that young people are a vulnerable population group on the internet. Finally, the use and mastery of technological tools is evident on YouTubers, as well as the interest in self-training in content production processes.

Keywords
Andean Community; digital literacy; media competence; narratives; social media; YouTube

1. Introduction

In the last decade, YouTubers have become subjects of studies related to audiovisual content management. The term refers to vloggers or video bloggers who periodically publish content on YouTube, a platform on which they are endemically born (Pérez-Torres et al., 2018), and which they use to showcase their creations; the most ingenious ones multiply their followers and become influential figures.

YouTubers have been given the role of "internet celebrities" and cultural models for their followers (Jerslev, 2016; Marwick, 2013), due to the influence

they have on the audiences way of thinking and their behaviors (Jerslev, 2016). This is mainly because followers identify qualities and ways of life in them that they see in their own, along with the need to build an identity through active online participation, and integration in thematic communities (Chamberlain, 2010; Montes-Vozmediano et al., 2018). On the other hand, as Usher (2018) writes on the concept of internet celebrity, it is nothing more than the perpetuation of the components, techniques, and tools for the spectacularization of content, already shaped in traditional media. This kind of staged authenticity proposed in the language of YouTubers, contrary to its generalized conception of

being an emerging process that is situated outside corporate practices, is rather a well-thought-out process that involves the work of communication professionals and creatives, who artificially work these representations with the aim of positioning a brand and that constitutes one of the new commercial imperatives of contemporary creative industries.

Teenagers are the main users of the platform, although their purpose is not exclusively the production of content, but to see what others create (Castillo-Abdul et al., 2020; Westenberg, 2016). According to Montes-Vozmediano et al. (2018), YouTube is the social network with which young people, and even children, begin their consumption of digital content (Kligler-Vilenchik & Literat, 2020) and which they later transform into a tool that is part of their lifestyle, and that allows them to connect with others through the consumption of trending content (Defy Media, 2017).

YouTube usage increased with the Covid-19 crisis, according to Statista (2021). Although the use of YouTube had already grown hand in hand with social networks and their new uses, the global confinement caused by the pandemic doubled the consumption of digital video, not only on YouTube, but also on TikTok and Instagram. A key driver of these changes is in the use of smartphones, which is the main device for accessing content on the internet (Tejedor et al., 2021) for 66.6% of the world's population, which increased between 2020 and 2021, by 1.8% (93 million) since January 2020, while the total number of mobile connections has increased by 72 million (0.9%) to reach a total of 8.02 billion by early 2021 (We Are Social, 2021).

While young people are the population with the largest YouTube consumption (Mohsin, 2020; We Are Social, 2021), they are also the most vulnerable due to the amount of harmful content they are exposed to on the platform (Neumann & Herodotou, 2020; Renés Arellano et al., 2020; Rodríguez-Virgili et al., 2021). This content has credibility, especially when it comes from content creators that they recognize and follow. In addition, the fact that YouTube is today the second most popular social media platform in the world, implies a clear reconfiguration of both its functionalities—almost 20 years after its creation—and of its users and the way in which they produce content. The management of a huge amount of content created by the users, followers, or fans themselves, the so-called "user generated content," promotes the adaptation of these creators towards collaborative strategies of management, modification, and dissemination of content (Castillo-Abdul et al., 2020). This paradigm suggests a preference for personal experiences, emotionality, passion, and closeness, which together with the "call to action," (CTA) figure as protagonists of the videos (Muda & Hamzah, 2021; Wang, 2021).

Narratives have been the main resource to leave a mark on YouTube. Content creators use, in their way, sound and visual resources to narrate their experiences, their opinions, or what comes from their imagination,

without the need for a commercial strategy, but in some contexts, their creations become a viral phenomenon on the internet.

The emergence of ICT and their development have disrupted traditional audiovisual techniques, taking them to the field of digital narratives or storytelling in which new styles of anecdote sharing appear, and the possibilities of narrative are expanded with new elements (Scolari, 2014). In addition to these factors, there is a variety of topics that are barely present in other audiovisual media such as film or television; in other words, YouTubers talk about topics that traditional media has left aside or does not address sufficiently, such as video games, fashion, tutorials for self-learning of various topics, stories, among others (López, 2016).

This type of content allows us to tell apart the target audience. Furthermore, the identification of content aimed exclusively at adult audiences becomes evident, although the use of algorithms is not completely accurate when limiting content related to violence, sex, and other disturbing topics for minors (Papadamou et al., 2019).

The present research has been conducted in the Andean Community, a context in which YouTubers acquire relevance, although their production value is reduced in comparison to first world countries; hence, there aren't many studies that focus on the work of YouTubers from this region. Previous research has addressed the YouTuber phenomenon in the Andean Community from the perspective of the language and topic of their creations (Córdova Tapia & Rivera-Rogel, 2020). Other studies have focused on the discourse and resources that they use (Beltrán-Flandoli et al., 2020), but there has not yet been an in-depth study of the production process and media competence.

The purpose of this article is to study the narrative that the 10 most popular young YouTubers in the Andean Community use in the creation of their content, based on analysis of the resources and technical elements they use to produce their audiovisual content, together with the media and digital competence they demonstrate in the process.

The structure of the article contemplates, in the first place, a review of literature, with the aim of conceptualizing the YouTuber phenomenon, and the characteristics of their narrative in the context of media competence. Next, the methodology, objectives, sample, and instruments used are explained. Subsequently, the preliminary results are organized according to the techniques proposed in the methodological part. Finally, the conclusions developed so far are included, in light of the information obtained with the different instruments, which allow us to see some of the significant contributions of this research.

1.1. Content Creation and Media Competence

At the center of the paradigm shift in today's society brought about by digital interconnection to an

unmatched extent, we find that the users of the audio-visual and digital communications are both protagonists and beneficiaries (Hillrichs, 2016), who promote a series of behaviors that go from the mere context of information dominance (Lee et al., 2019; Stornaiuolo et al., 2017) to a continuous escalation of social media and platforms as socializing agents (García-Ruiz et al., 2018; Kennedy & Hill, 2018).

From this point of view, YouTubers truly represent the values mentioned above, and Latin America is one of the places with the greatest projections of YouTube, where many content creators are earning income from this platform. Thus, if 10 years ago there were more consumers than creators, the scenario has changed to the production of local content that is consumed worldwide (Statista, 2020); and with this, the long tail theory proposed by Anderson (2004) takes force, in which specialized market niches will mark the future of internet entertainment, allowing smaller and less conventional content to find audiences, forming larger markets than those of conventional products.

In this context, the skills and aptitudes for content creation, along with the new narratives, contemplate the study of media competence in a system of emerging prosumers (Díez-Gutiérrez & Díaz-Nafría, 2018), conceived from the pyramidal basis of its conception (Ferrés & Piscitelli, 2012; Leaning, 2019; Pérez-Rodríguez & Delgado-Ponce, 2012) but also framed within a formerly digital and now transmedia experience (Buckingham, 2018; Jenkins et al., 2009; Scolari & Fraticelli, 2019; Scolari et al., 2018). These factors include, for example, the versatility in the performance of YouTubers in terms of technical aspects of production and post-production, of which Masanet et al. (2019) as well as Buckingham (2011, 2018) mention that there is a diverse typology that is not stationary at all. This classification ranges from what is considered aspiring or amateur producers to expert digital producers.

Interactivity, set as a defining element of contemporary media cultures, now at the scale of the virtual, underlines its influence in the changing denomination of the agents involved in this process of media creation. The passage from a merely receptive audience to categories more typical of the "new media" such as "prosumer" or "produser," are indicative of a certain inclusion in the processes of multimedia production (Sugihartati et al., 2020). In this vertiginous change, the role of technology as a dependent apparatus of society is undeniable, at the same time; it drives and renews it, shaping itself through cultural relations (Pérez-Rodríguez & Delgado-Ponce, 2012; Praprotnik, 2015).

The result is that in the age of content self-actualization, the ways of presenting media formats such as angles, tone and color, narrative voice modality, and the use of certain gestures, abbreviations, and specific image motifs, including dress codes, are, in addition to technical advances, symbols of the new dialectic of interaction creation.

Likewise, it is worth mentioning digital learning as a competence to be analyzed in the YouTuber area, which is defined as the ability to increase the knowledge of the platforms and media suitable for disseminating the contents that they produce, and that, according to Gil-Quintana et al. (2020), happens mainly in social network scenarios. Finally, performative skills also affect the aforementioned aspects, where, promoted by the reality–virtuality mix in which digital technology users act, the approach of discursive strategies with a consequent degree of interaction–deliberation in audiences is facilitated (Aran-Ramspott et al., 2018; Dahlen & Rosengren, 2016).

2. Methodology

In this study a mixed-methods approach was used, employing quantitative and qualitative methods that allowed us to obtain the necessary information from young YouTubers in the Andean Community. By combining the methodologies, it was possible to understand the phenomena under study because these "refer to complex fields where the human being and its diversity are involved" (Pereira, 2011, p. 17).

This research aims to observe the processes of audiovisual creation, that is, the narrative of YouTubers in the Andean Community, in addition to the impact that they generate, and the levels of media competence reflected by their creators. This is a descriptive type of study. According to Sampieri Hernández et al. (2006, p. 81), in this type of research "a series of questions are selected, and information is measured or collected on each one of them, in order to describe what is being investigated." Through the content analysis technique, the videos of the selected YouTubers were examined, and using an in-depth interview, it was possible to evaluate their media competence.

To carry this task out, the most relevant young YouTubers in the region were selected, taking as reference the data provided by the Social Blade tool, in addition to considering the following inclusion criteria: (a) the age of the YouTuber is between 18 and 25 years old; (b) their nationality of origin is from one of the four countries that make up the Andean Community (Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, and Peru); and (c) the content is produced by individuals, not organizations or companies, excluding the media, artists, or singers.

With these considerations in mind, a list was made for each of the four countries in order to compile the top 10 YouTubers of the Andean Community with the largest number of subscribers, resulting in the sample detailed in Table 1. YouTubers from Bolivia were not included because the number of followers is significantly lower.

Once the profiles were identified, each channel was accessed to collect general information, and through content analysis of the first and last videos published, the narrative used in their productions was examined using several criteria (see Table 2).

Table 1. Top 10 young YouTubers of the Andean Community.

Channel name	Subscribers	Topic	Age	Sex	Country
Lulu99	11.4 M	Entertainment	18	Woman	Colombia
RaptorGamer	9.28 M	Videogames	20	Man	Ecuador
Amara Que Linda	8.45 M	People & Blogs	18	Woman	Colombia
MrStiven Tc	7.96 M	Videogames	21	Man	Colombia
Calle y Poché	7.57 M	People & Blogs	24 and 25	Woman	Colombia
Flex Vega	6.13 M	Entertaiment	19	Man	Colombia
Luay	5.31 M	Videogames	23	Man	Peru
JeanCarlo León	5.16 M	People & Blogs	24	Man	Colombia
Libardo Isaza	4.26 M	People & Blogs	22	Man	Colombia
Criss Huera	4.16 M	Entertaiment	21	Woman	Ecuador

Table 2. Categories of analysis for the videos.

Channel name	
Variables	Video 1
Title	
Lenght	
Technical aspects	
Sound	Original audio
	Background music
	Voice-over
	Sound effects
Visuals	Correct use of shots
	Correct use of angles
Post-production	Support resources
	Animated introduction
	Closing template
	Watermark
	Subtitles
	Cards
	Final screen
Discursive aspects	
Video description	Summary of the vídeo
	Chapters
	Additional information
	Contact information
Degree of deliberation	Debate
	Suggestions
	CTA
Discourse strategies	Type of narrative
	Language function
	Good oratory skills
	Simple language
	Humor
	Content classification
Remarks	

With the selection of the first and last video, the aim was to determine the evolution of the YouTuber based on the technical and discursive aspects used to produce the contents. Within the first section, the sound, visual, and post-production areas were analyzed. In the discursive area, the additional information provided by the YouTuber in the video description was evaluated, as well as the degree of deliberation that the influencer tries to exert on his followers, encouraging them to comment suggestions for future videos, their opinion on certain topics (debate), or CTAs: like the video, comment, or subscribe. Lastly, the discursive strategies used by the YouTuber to attract and maintain the attention of his audience were considered, including the categorization of YouTube content to evaluate whether there is foul language, nudity, sexual content, violence, drugs, or strobe lights.

To complement the analysis, statistical tests were carried out to determine the degree of certainty and significance of the results, including Pearson's correlation for quantitative data, mean differences through McNemar's test for paired categorical variables, and T-Student for scale variables.

Finally, in-depth interviews were conducted with the most popular YouTubers in each country of the Andean Community, to learn about their work in the creation and dissemination of content, to demonstrate their degree of media competence. The interview consisted of 14 questions framed in the dynamics of content production for their channels: pre-production, production and post-production, content preparation, and strategies considered for its dissemination.

Given the difficulty of obtaining a response from the top 10 YouTubers in the Andean Community, a group of the 10 most relevant YouTubers in each country was considered, according to the number of subscribers, which are part of the study universe of this research. Eventually, a total of three interviews were conducted with one representative from each country (see Table 3).

3. Results and Discussion

The topics addressed by the 10 most prolific young YouTubers of the Andean Community, whose channels are in the category "People & Blogs" predominate (4 out of 10 channels); their videos show the lifestyle of the creators in an apparent natural style. Three channels have content related mainly to video games and three channels to entertainment content.

Concerning the general video data, it is important to note the length of the clips analyzed, considering that the YouTube platform allows hosting videos of a maximum of 15 minutes by default, that is, for all users with a Google account; while for verified channels, this limit is extended and allows videos of up to 12 hours in length. In the sample, clips ranging from 55 seconds to 27 minutes and 14 seconds in length were found. To statistically determine the predominant range of duration in the sample, three groups were determined according to the length of the video: (a) 00:01 to 09:59, (b) 10:00 to 19:59, and (c) 20:00 to 29:59. With this division, we obtained the mode of 1, i.e., short videos predominate.

3.1. Narrative of Young YouTubers in the Andean Community

The first variable in the analysis sheet is the video description, which is a section that allows YouTubers to provide additional information in text format. Four key points were considered in this part: the first is a summary of what the video is about, an aspect that is evident in 12 out of the 20 contents analyzed. Concerning this particularity, a very common practice was observed among the videos of the analyzed channels since most of the YouTubers of the Andean Community do not personalize the description of their videos but use a generic description for all their publications.

The second parameter shows that none of the videos in this study are divided into chapters. It should be remembered that this option allows the viewer to know the exact minutes at which specific topics are addressed. Considering that the sample of the present research covers the first and the last video published on the YouTuber's channel, none of the analyzed videos implemented this function, which was incorporated in YouTube in mid-2020.

According to the additional information that can be added in the video description, less than half of the videos analyzed (8 out of 20) provide their audience with links of interest or data that allow them to expand on the topic. Finally, most of the videos (18 out of 20) provide contact information of the YouTuber through links to their social networks, email, or other channels where followers or interested brands can establish direct communication with the influencer.

Regarding the discursive strategies used by YouTubers to enhance their videos and keep the audience entertained, the type of narrative they use is

Table 3. Profile of the YouTubers interviewed.

Name	Country	Channel	Country ranking	No. of subscribers	Thematic content
Jhamil Marca Ramos	Bolivia	Kapléx	6	153 K	Entertainment, tourism
Jorge Isaac Guerra	Ecuador	JorgeIsaac115	8	1.56 M	Video games
Isabel Paipay	Peru	Isabel Paipay	8	1.42 M	Instructions and style

analyzed, considering the classification of Sabich and Steinberg (2017). Within the sample, it is noticed that most of the contents belong to the group of self-referential narratives (19 out of 20 videos) as these videos seek to show the YouTuber naturally, with "an apparently neutral and casual enunciative structure" (Sabich & Steinberg, 2017, p. 179). On the other hand, one of the videos is aligned to cliché narratives, that is, materials that demonstrate a better production or more rigid script, so they involve representations, mostly comical, of reality.

The section on discursive strategies also addresses the language functions used by YouTubers, taking Jakobson's (1984) categorization as a reference. Most of the videos (12 out of 20) employ referential language. This function is used for referring in a way that is attached to reality, focusing on communication. Next, we have the conative and expressive functions (three videos in each category). It should be noted that these two modes of language focus on the receiver and sender respectively. YouTubers intend to cause an effect on their followers either by motivating them to act or, on the contrary, by showing their emotions to be close and real with their audience. Lastly, we can mention the poetic function (2 out of 20 videos) in which the intention is to modify the language to make it more attractive or to give it varied nuances in line with what one attempts to achieve.

Regarding the specific strategies employed by the YouTubers (Figure 1), all the analyzed videos use simple language as a mechanism to maintain a close connection with the viewers, except for one. This is one of the characteristics of audiovisual content on YouTube, especially in those channels that deal with entertainment topics. In addition, in 14 out of the 20 videos, the YouTuber has good oratory skills. This means that they express them-

selves eloquently, clearly, and fluently. Finally, 7 out of the 20 videos use humor as a discursive strategy, to awaken the user's interest with comments that the audience finds funny.

To conclude with the discursive strategies, we consider the classification proposed by YouTube, which labels the content suitable for adults (Figure 2). The first dimension addresses explicit or offensive language, which is found in seven videos. This is evident in the materials produced by gamers, who, in the euphoria of the game, use foul language. Regarding violence, the same number of videos refer to or show slightly violent acts (seven), such as the case of gameplays, where references are made to killing the opponent. In the section on sexual references and content, three videos show explicit or implicit references to sexual acts, while one of the videos show partial nudity and another one allusion to drugs. It is necessary to specify that in these last two categories, videos whose background music contained this type of reference were considered.

3.2. Impact of Young YouTubers in the Andean Community

Regarding the reception of the contents of young YouTubers in the Andean Community, the interaction figures received by the videos published in April 2021 were monitored, considering that, during this period, there are no special festivities (Christmas and others) that may alter the schedule of videos that the YouTuber manages or the audience's response. Figure 3 shows that as the number of videos increases, the interaction increases. The Pearson's correlation coefficient was calculated between these two variables, with a result of 0.949. This value was statistically significant ($p < 0.01$),
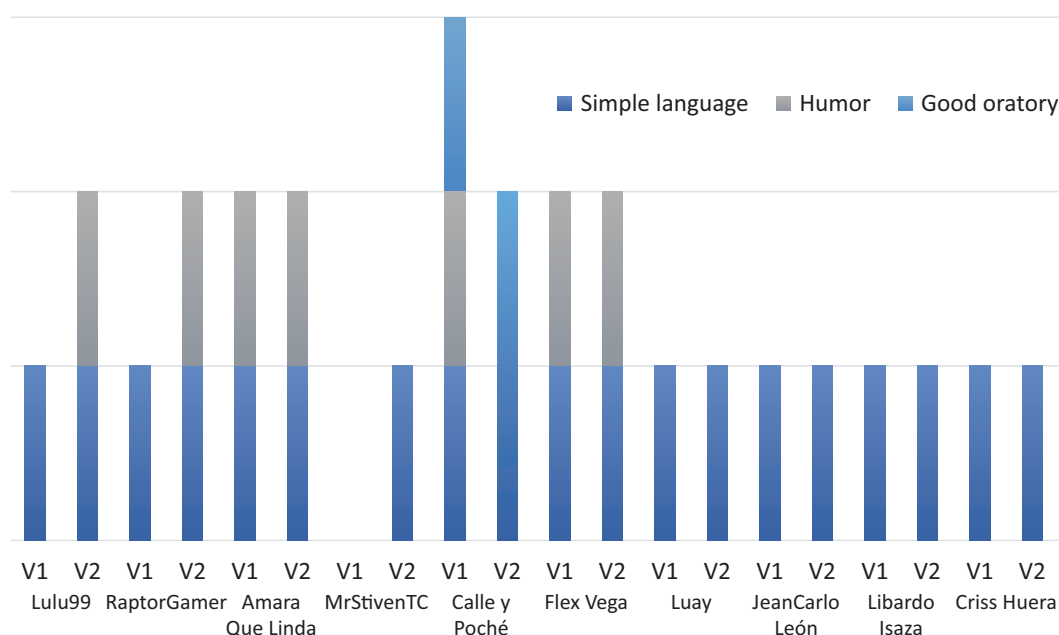

Figure 1. Discursive strategies used by YouTubers from the Andean Community.
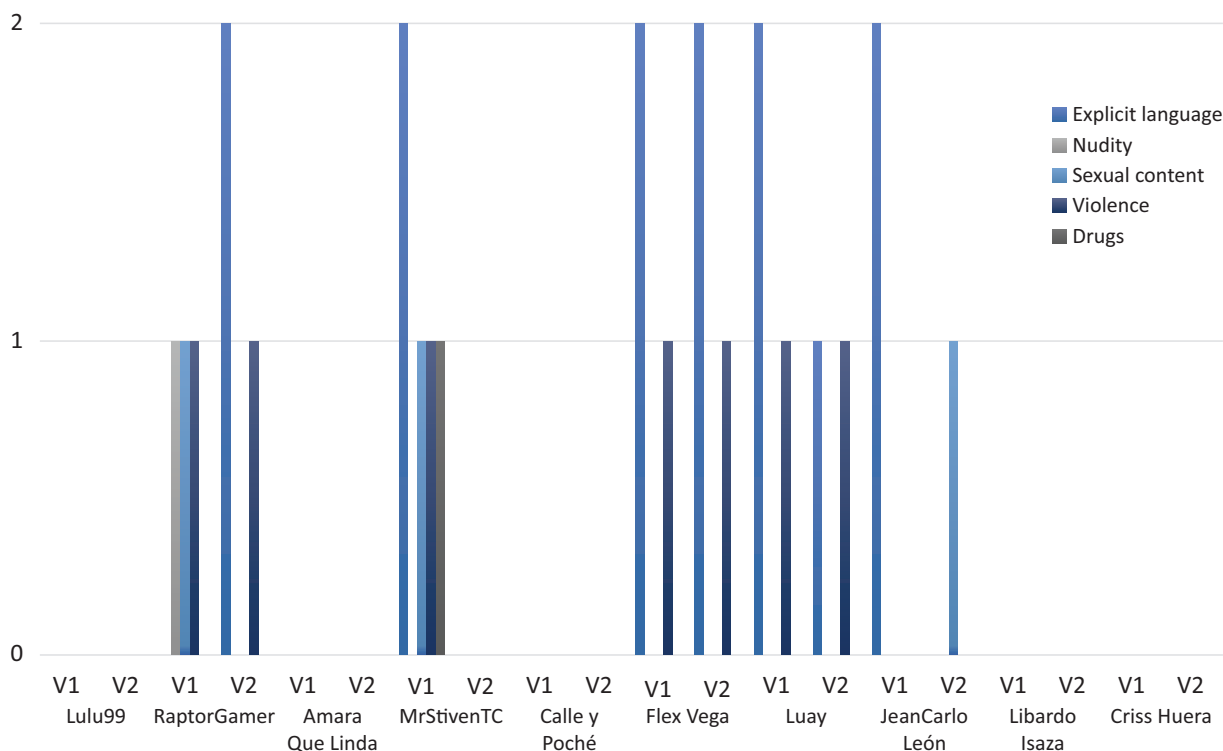
Figure 2. Content classification of YouTubers in the Andean Community.

and it confirms what was stated by Feixas et al. (2014), which is that the frequency of publication and consistency when uploading content to YouTube are key to success on the platform.

Table 4 shows that the channel that published the most videos during the study period was RaptorGamer, followed by Luay, both YouTubers dedicated to the gamer theme. This situation could justify, to some extent, the difference between the amount of content published by these influencers versus their colleagues. A lot of the material produced by these profiles are gameplays, and these videos involve a simpler editing process. Globally

(considering all the videos published since the creation of the channel) the channel that has more videos is MrStivenTC, a profile dedicated to video games.

To comprehensively interpret the figures shown in Table 4, and to determine whether there is a relationship between the number of videos a YouTuber publishes, and the numbers or impact accumulated by his or her channel, the Pearson correlation coefficient was calculated, concluding that the impact variables are closely related to the overall number of videos published by the YouTubers and that there are statistically significant correlations. On the other hand, the likes have a statistically
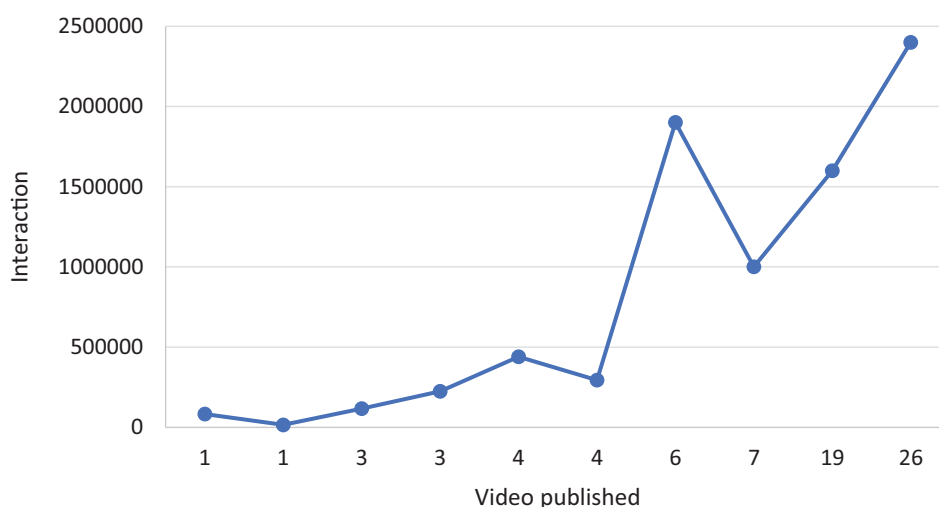

Figure 3. Correlation between channel interaction and number of videos published.

Table 4. Impact of YouTubers' channels in the Andean Community.

Channel	Videos published globally	Views	Likes	Dislikes	Comments
Lulu99	378	12.2 M	875 K	2.2 K	18 K
Raptor Gamer	972	36.8 M	2.2 M	1.5 K	3.2 K
Amara Que Linda	133	2.8 M	273 K	1.6 K	3.7 K
MrStiven Tc	1174	12.4 M	1.8 M	4.9 K	10 K
Calle y Poché	193	913 K	78 K	783	3.2 K
Flex Vega	250	2.8 M	206 K	1 K	5 K
Luay	724	13.5 M	1.6 M	850	3 K
JeanCarlo León	210	3.9 M	417 K	1.5 K	4.3 K
Libardo Isaza	105	67 K	15 K	117	1.4 K
Criss Huera	96	1.8 M	104 K	699	3.4 K

Note: Data collected with the fanpage Karma tool.

significant relationship ($p < 0.01$) of 95.3% with the overall number of videos published. While dislikes show a statistically significant relationship ($p < 0.01$) of 65.8% with the overall number of videos posted.

As the last point in the analysis of the impact of the influencers, a T-Student test was performed on the interactions obtained by the videos. We considered likes, dislikes, and comments, both for video 1 (V1) and video 2 (V2), taking as a control variable the CTA made by the influencers to their followers within the video (Table 5). The results show that there are no statistically significant differences in total interactions ($p > 0.05$), which implies that the user is the one who makes decisions based on the content that they observe and do not necessarily react to the YouTuber's requests.

To determine the existence of improvements in videos produced by YouTubers, McNemar's nonparametric test was used, considering the technical aspects of the first video published and the most recent one on the channel (see Table 6). The results show that there are no statistically significant differences between the two videos analyzed concerning technical and discursive aspects since these characteristics tend to be the same at both times.

However, the sample shows a slight improvement in image and sound quality in the latest videos posted, which could mean that, as YouTubers gain ground on the platform, they invest in better production teams.

From the perspective of the YouTubers interviewed, there has been an evolution in the creation of videos. In this process, the key has been training, especially in terms of recording and editing, as explained by the Bolivian YouTuber Kapléx, who recognizes that in the beginning, he developed these processes intuitively and for leisure purposes. However, after his first viral video, he understood the need to keep people's attention and improve his creations. JorgeIsaac115 agrees with the previously mentioned opinion. For him, video games were a hobby, and today they are the main source of income for his family.

3.3. Media and Digital Competence of Young YouTubers in the Andean Community

YouTubers' creations consider a series of elements that evidence the mastery of certain skills and abilities, which according to Scolari and Fraticelli (2019, p. 5) implies that YouTubers, apart from being young people uploading things to the internet, are "creating their individuality through those videos," and in that process, they develop a series of competencies. Therefore, "they should be considered relevant subjects of the media" (Scolari & Fraticelli, 2019, p. 5). For example, with respect to background music, use of original audio, and sound effects, it is observed that most creators use the first two resources (19 out of 20 and 18 out of 20, respectively); and only 12 out of the 20 videos used sound effects.

In terms of the use of shots and angles, 13 videos make considerable use of shots variety, while 12 of the 20, show use of diverse camera angles. It is worth considering that in the video game recordings, where the gamer's reactions did not appear, the use of shots or

Table 5. T-Student test: CTA and video interaction.

		N	M	SD	Sig. (bilateral)
V1_CTA Interaction	Yes	7	590428,57	863847,567	0.248
	No	3	1313333,33	771059,877	
V2_CTA Interaction	Yes	7	833285,71	889480,132	0.895
	No	3	746666,67	1000274,629	

Table 6. McNemar test: Technical aspects of Videos 1 and 2.

		Video 1		Video 2		McNemar test
		N°	% of N Columns	N°	% of N Columns	Sig.
Voice-over	Yes	2	20.0%	2	20.0%	1.000
	No	8	80.0%	8	80.0%	
	n/a	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	
Sound effects	Yes	3	30.0%	9	90.0%	0.070
	No	7	70.0%	1	10.0%	
	n/a	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	
Support resources	Yes	5	50.0%	8	80.0%	0.625
	No	4	40.0%	2	20.0%	
	n/a	1	10.0%	0	0.0%	
Animated introduction	Yes	1	10.0%	1	10.0%	1.000
	No	9	90.0%	9	90.0%	
	n/a	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	
Closing template	Yes	3	30.0%	3	30.0%	1.000
	No	7	70.0%	7	70.0%	
	n/a	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	
Watermark	Yes	7	70.0%	7	70.0%	1.000
	No	3	30.0%	3	30.0%	
	n/a	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	
Subtitles	Yes	6	60.0%	8	80.0%	0.625
	No	4	40.0%	2	20.0%	
	n/a	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	
Final template	Yes	3	30.0%	7	70.0%	0.289
	No	7	70.0%	3	30.0%	
	n/a	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	

angles did not apply. Finally, there is the voice-over variable, with four videos that use this resource, which is not very common in the sample.

However, the absence of shots, angles, and sound or visual effects does not reflect a lack of competence on the part of YouTubers (Usher, 2018), since these resources are not required in all cases, as explained by Ecuadorian YouTuber JorgeIsaac115. On the other hand, it must be considered that most of the content created by YouTubers appeals to the naturalness of the experience, which does not imply the use of a technical script that specifies the types of shots to be used.

Next, the post-production decisions were evaluated. These aspects refer to the functionalities offered by YouTube at the time of uploading the video. Starting with the watermark, 14 out of the 20 videos have this option, which is represented by an icon that can be added in the corners of the videos and offers the option of subscribing to the channel by clicking on it.

The second most common tool is subtitles, present in 14 out of the 20 videos, remembering that this option, in some cases, is automatically generated when the language of the video is chosen in the settings before publishing it. Thirdly, there are support resources added by

the YouTuber when editing the video. In this sense, 13 out of the 20 videos implement text or images that reinforce what the YouTuber points out in his narration.

The next field is the use of end screens, a function promoted by YouTube to promote previous videos of the channel, in addition to a subscription button. This is presented in the last 5 or 20 seconds of the video. This function is adopted by half of the contents (10 out of 20), highlighting that 7 out of the 10 that use this resource do so in the most recent video. Then, it is observed that 6 out of the 20 videos have a closing template. This design that appears at the end of the videos usually contains the usernames of the YouTuber's social networks, in addition to a screen card thanking the audience for watching the video and promoting the subscription to the channel. As the name suggests, these are templates that are used generically for all videos and are added when editing them.

For Peruvian Isabel Paipay, the graphic part is an important point for the dissemination and generation of expectation before launching her videos. This coincides with the statements of Leon (2018), who refers to the insistence of YouTubers on these details. She also highlights that the platform itself offers a guide for its structuring. Others, such as JorgeIsaac115, prefer to hire

professional designers so that their content stands out and acquires a differentiating element.

One activity that requires more knowledge of illustration tools is the animated introduction. Out of the 20 videos, only two have an animated welcome established. At last, the cards option is presented, which is a function almost nonexistent in the analyzed sample (only one). This tool adds interactive buttons that appear during the video and suggest other videos of the channel with similar content (Figure 4).

A skill on the map of media competencies of emerging prosumers is the ability to create and work collaboratively (Gil-Quintana et al., 2020). YouTuber Isabel Paipay highlights that her content is the result of a team specialized in social networks and digital marketing, which leads her to talk about the way she disseminates her content: "I publish or mention them in my other social networks (Instagram, Facebook)," she says. This is similar to what Kapléx does. While for JorgeIsaac115 advertising YouTube content on other social networks does not have a major effect, he argues that the key is in the striking presentation of the video, either in its name or in the graphic part, and the platform itself is responsible for promoting it.

For JorgeIsaac115, the most important thing is the narrative of the creator rather than the visual resources he uses. Regarding this, he recalls that the success of his channel was due to the creation of Fortnite theories, a videogame in which there are curious events that sometimes happen. These events attract the attention of his followers, who try to guess what these events are about. Despite these situations, he maintains that the contents of his channel have a professional creative process since he works with a video editor and sometimes graphic designers.

None of the YouTubers interviewed is over 25 years old. However, they have established themselves as content creators and receive an economic income that has allowed them to buy better production equipment such as high-end smartphones, tripods, softbox lights, microphones, LED rings, and drones. They have been also able to build a recording studio, travel, purchase goods, and hire staff. Likewise, although they did not know the processes of content production initially, over time, they acquired training from tutorials and other sources. With this training, they went from using free and user-friendly software to purchasing licenses for more sophisticated software such as Adobe Premiere Pro, Photoshop, and Audition that allows them to produce videos with better quality.

4. Conclusions

Given the objective of this research, important findings about the language that sustains the creations of the most representative YouTubers of the Andean Community and the respective relationship with the aesthetic, visual, and enunciative aspects in their representations have been typified and discussed. In this sense, the narrative of young YouTubers from the Andean Community is mainly self-referential and, thanks to this their followers, identify with their qualities and find their ways of life similar to their own (Chamberlain, 2010; Montes-Vozmediano et al., 2018). The use of language is mostly referential, and a lot of videos show explicit or offensive language or make use of foul language, and this is mostly observed in the videos of gamers, also 7 out of the 20 studied videos, show slightly violent acts. This finding corresponds to that found by Rego and Romero-Rodríguez (2016), who analyzed the videos of the most popular Spanish "gamer" YouTubers, and recurrently found foul language in the clips, which is a relevant aspect considering that young people are the most vulnerable population on YouTube (Castillo-Abdul et al., 2020; Mohsin, 2020; We Are Social, 2021). This shows that the classification of adult content on YouTube is not enough. The key is in the media competence education of prosumers (Papadamou et al., 2019). For these reasons, it is important to conduct further studies that focus on analyzing the discourse and messages that these new opinion leaders transmit, especially considering that many times a lot of their followers tend to be minors, a highly influential audience (Renés Arellano et al., 2020; Rodríguez-Virgili et al., 2021).

Regarding the impact of YouTubers, it was assured that with a higher number of videos the interaction in their channels would increase, implying that they
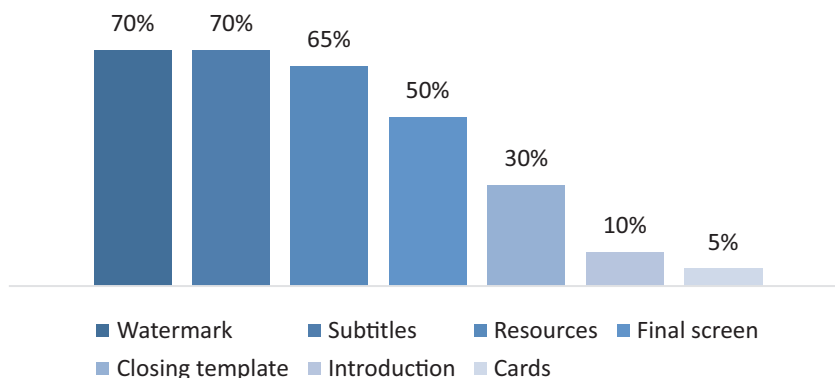

Figure 4. Post-production aspects in videos of YouTubers from the Andean Community.

produce entertainment content consumed by a significant part of the YouTube market. Also, these creators produce less conventional content in relation to traditional media, and thus increase their audiences (Anderson, 2004). An example of this is found in the increased number of likes, with a ratio of 95.3% over the overall number of videos published by YouTubers. In this study, the profiles that published the most videos were RaptorGamer and Luay, both dedicated to gaming themes.

YouTubers use voice-over, sound effects, background music, animated intro, different shots, etc. according to the subject matter of the content. This shows an interest in developing skills related to audiovisual production that were self-taught by watching other YouTubers, tutorials, and even through formal training. This situation shows the participatory culture that emerges in this platform and the emergence of new content producers that are different from traditional media and processes (Berlanga & Fernández-Ramírez, 2020).

From this framework, researchers such as Lobato (2016) and Leon (2019) indicate that YouTube content creators notice the particularities that arise in terms of the dynamics of the platform, i.e., they have a considerable degree of awareness about this. Hence, they seek to improve the quality of their content.

The authors of this research recognize that the process of evaluating the narrative of young YouTubers from the Andean Community is not sufficient to determine the quality of the channels and their media and digital competence, since only the first and last videos were analyzed. However, this constitutes a starting point for future studies that could examine other aspects in depth of the content published by YouTubers or even the business models of this industry.

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Conflict of Interests

The authors declare no conflict of interests.

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Article

Spanish Tipsters and the Millennial and Centennial Generations in the Scenario of a Pandemic

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Abstract

The growth and popularization of sports betting have led to the emergence of a new type of influencer: Tipsters, people and betting houses who influence and advise through social networks on the bets they consider most profitable. Both agents are also content-generating, forming a particular ecosystem with a specific narrative. The research examines the narratives of both the personal and betting houses profiles that make up the category of tipsters and their impact on younger generations. It also takes an in-depth look at the content and languages used by tipsters on social media and what determines their success in terms of followers and interactions. The period and place analyzed is the year 2020 in Spain, because it allows observing the differences between the periods of free transit and the quarantine period caused by Covid-19. The selection of the studied profiles is based on the five most recommended profiles, according to 10 rankings in the sports betting sector. The results show how the tipsters' narrative was adapted to the context of the pandemic to maintain interest during the quarantine and not lose its influence towards millennials and centennials. Especially relevant is the period after the quarantine, with long periods of stay at home by young people, where the narrative has iconic, symbolic, and linguistic elements typical of war periods.

Issue

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1. Introduction

1.1. New Generations, Consumption Habits, and Use of Influencers

According to García-Marín (2021) and Martín Critikián and Medina Núñez (2021), there are four clearly differentiated types of consumer generations: Baby Boomers (1945–1964); Generation X (1965–1980); Millennials (1981–1994); and Generation Z or centennials (1995–2010). The most frequently employed digital trends for Baby Boomers are email, television, as well as print media. As for the social networks used most frequently in this generation, they are Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn. Second, for Generation X, the media in which they mainly move are email, radio, and in terms of the most used social networks, Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram stand out. Third, for millennials there is a change compared to the two previous generations, since the media in which they are found are mainly digital, having as reference social networks Facebook, YouTube, and Instagram. Finally, Generation Z, they are found both on

television and on social networks, and the social networks they prefer are YouTube, TikTok, and Instagram (Conde del Río, 2021).

These last two generations are the first to have been fully born in a widely implemented digital age. This has caused them to change their habits in digital media and shopping, compared to previous generations (Rossi Casé et al., 2018). With the emergence of millennials and centennials, a whole range of content creators emerges that stand out for arousing interest through social networks and in different groups. This influence is generated through their charisma, the image they represent, and the credibility of what they communicate (Martín García, 2021). Influencers express opinions about different products and services, using a language close to their target audience to communicate, which generates a certain trust and they manage to attract attention so that they are followed (Caldevilla-Domínguez et al., 2021).

Influencers transmit certainty, transparency, and trust about the different products or services they offer (Gonzalez-Carrion & Aguaded, 2020). There are five basic characteristics that influencers must meet to be successful (Jahnke, 2018; Nieto, 2018), starting with the reach since their opinions must go viral, reaching from the traditional media to the digital ones. Second, the experience to share what they transmit to all their followers. Third, credibility, that is, being transparent so that their audience trusts them. Fourth, the congregation capacity, since they must have the capacity to mobilize users. And finally, the ability to generate trust and familiarity with users so that they feel close and that their followers are part of their life.

One of the most used marketing strategies is influencer marketing since users trust the opinions of other users (known or not) more than traditional advertising campaigns (De Bordóns & Niño, 2021). These generations place much more emphasis on the experiences they see through social networks and, through these or similar examples, the loyalty of this market segment can be built, forging a strong connection with these consumers (Grafström et al., 2018). The role of influencers is constantly growing and changing as more millennials and centennials use social networks for purposes other than communication (Van Dijck & Poell, 2013).

1.2. Millennials, Centennials, and Online Gambling

For Gonzálvez-Vallés et al. (2021), betting on sporting events through the use of mobile devices and wireless networks has become a daily activity for many young people, especially for the so-called millennials and centennials. The main advantage of online sports betting is that it allows immediate access to any product at any time, so people enjoy faster services on the site they want, even at live events.

Over the past few years, technology and the internet have been widely used and received increasing attention. This constitutes an essential factor for the growth of the habit in sports betting and leads to an increase in the volume of money wagered and the number of users, as mentioned by Rubio García (2018) and Chóliz and Saiz-Ruiz (2016). Concerning the millennial generation, they describe it as one of the influential and determining generations of the market because it reacts to their demands, which are based on technological evolution, having adapted to the digital age (Suh et al., 2017).

For their part, centennials are considered as the generation that was born in a virtual and technological environment, which is why they grow and live with technology. Hence, they may be interested in using the internet and mobile web channels to enhance bets (Kolandai-Matchett & Abbott, 2021). In this sense, these generations have different characteristics of consumption in products and services, so companies try to analyze them to understand their needs, but above all how to satisfy them (Sharma, 2019).

The importance of this study in populations such as millennials and centennials lies in the fact that these generations demand different forms of entertainment with high variability of money income and different personal motivations (Wartella et al., 2016). They are classified as hyperconnected generations as they have access to the digital world and, for this reason, it is the population that can make the most use of the services offered by betting houses through virtual media (Håkansson et al., 2020).

1.3. Tipsters: Content Creators and Influencers

The figure of the tipster appeared as a betting predictor that analyzes different sporting events and finds valuable odds (Establés et al., 2019). The business model has two aspects: On the one hand, they make money by betting on their own; on the other hand, they earn extra income by sharing their tips with subscribers, who can only access their tips if they have previously paid. Furthermore, the tipster must meet these two characteristics for the user to choose them: profitability and speed (Martín-Critikián et al., 2021).

In a research on the 15 most successful tipsters in Spain ("El oscuro mundo de los 'tipsters,'" 2020) the main conclusion is that the language and audiovisual elements used are those of a tele-preacher or a tarot seer. Trust in them is not based on rational arguments but the principle of trust in the expert (Guijarro et al., 2018), but they are not an expert who puts their money at stake, but rather they use communication to exert their influence.

1.4. The Language of Tipsters Towards Millennials and Centennials

Given that the behavior of millennials and centennials is multiplatform, even alternating between them, brands and tipsters analyze which social networks are the best for communication, and which are the most convenient to implement their profiles (López et al., 2019). The use

of empathetic language is also a key factor since millennials and centennials do not accept rhetoric or institutional language. It is necessary to involve both groups in an honest communication process through two-way dialogue, which means giving them a certain degree of control in the conversation (Palacio Samitier et al., 2021).

On the other hand, the content generated by tipsters must be relevant to millennials and centennials. This means generating interesting, useful, or emotionally connected content with these generations, sharing values, lifestyles, and desires with users (Ramos-Serrano, 2016). Linked to this concept is that of authenticity and sincerity since truth and simplicity are important values of these generations. The tipster must be open, honest, and clearly explain what it is, what it wants from the audience, and what it offers (Fernández Gómez et al., 2018).

All of the above results in the work as a prescriber of the tipster. The message and tone of communication should be consistent with the values and personalities of the millennial and centennial generations. When tipsters allow these generations to use their content or their channels as a way of expressing themselves, more powerful communication is achieved and consistent with their values (Caldevilla-Domínguez et al., 2019; Gordo et al., 2019).

Regarding the use of formats, video is one of the most effective means of reaching these audiences. However, the use of emoticons in the construction of messages should not be overlooked, as well as the references to certain keywords that attract the attention of millennials and centennials (Bosch & Revilla, 2021). Similarly, baits and rewards are elements widely used by tipsters since they are very effective and, in online betting houses, bonuses are a key point for attracting new users (Spann & Skiera, 2017).

For all the above, the research establishes the general objective of examining the tipsters' narratives and their impact on the younger generations through the generated interactions.

The proposed objectives are intended to answer the following research questions:

RQ1: Is the content generated by tipsters on Twitter about online sports betting more shared among millennials and centennials for being a reference influencer?

RQ2: Does the content generated by tipsters on Twitter about online sports betting generate positive or negative feelings in the comments to their posts by millennials and centennials?

RQ3: Does the content generated by tipsters on Twitter about online sports betting generate emotions in millennials and centennials?

2. Materials and Methods

This study was conducted through descriptive research, using quantitative methods that focus on impact evaluation. This method makes clear both the descriptive part and the relationship between the variables, after collecting information and managing it (Buendía Eisman et al., 1998). This analysis helps to identify the most effective content on social networks and to identify it through the existence of certain terms, hashtags, emoticons, audiovisual elements, etc. The interactive part will show the activities of the followers and the conversations they generate with the tipsters (Serrano Oceja et al., 2019).

Twitter was chosen because it is the social network where these profiles accumulate more followers. Moreover, it is the only network that all the analyzed profiles have in common since, although some are present on Facebook or Instagram, not all are. Twitter brings together great innovation and its correct use will serve to document the issued communications and the correct generation and acquisition of information (Bell, 2016). Twitter is a great tool to spread content and receive information.

Subsequently, the relationship between the variables was studied. The analysis of the average of the variances allowed us to verify the established research questions after processing them (Herbas Torrico & Rocha Gonzales, 2018) using the IBM SPSS computer program and the sentiment analysis tools in Twitter and Python. The chosen period is 2020 and the place is Spain since it allowed us to observe if there were differences between the quarantine periods and those of free transit, given the pandemic caused by Covid-19. The primary data was collected from the five most recommended tipster profiles, according to 10 rankings in the sports betting sector. Specifically, they are Pensador de Apuestas (@PensApuestas), Juan Gayá (@juangayasalom), Tipster Apuesta (@tipsterapuesta), Casas de Apuestas (@casasdeapuestas), and José María Mabet (@josemmabet). These rankings (IAapuestas, Pyckio, Tipstersland, Ranking de Tipsters, Apuestas Online, Casas de Apuestas, Index Book, Bettin Runner, Apuestes, and Apuestas de Murcia) established their clasifications by several criteria, such as the number of followers or total monthly profit.

A total of 6,140 tweets were accumulated and, subsequently, two types of divisions were established. First, the messages were classified according to their date of issue, setting March 14th, 2020, the start date of the first state of alarm in Spain as the point of separation between the pre-pandemic and post-pandemic messages. Second, three discriminating-between-them categories were created to avoid duplication of content and that covered the entire sample: War, Information, and Others. The first category grouped all the tweets that contained warlike language and/or the use of war-related emoticons (Diccionarios en la Red, n.d.). The second category contained the messages that dealt with sports betting without the previous elements. The third

and last category grouped those tweets that dealt with other topics, mainly of a political nature.

Lastly, the interactions these tweets received from users were measured. The analysis of the variances was able to determine if there were significant differences between and within the groups (Sánchez Carrión, 1995). In this study, the dependent variable found is the interaction generated by the user. At this point, it is particularly important to analyze the impact of each content category on the dependent variable (Nguyen & Catalan, 2020).

3. Results

The research questions posed are connected to the studied variables, which links the analysis of the results that have been carried out for everything related to the communication exercised by the tipsters through their Twitter profiles. Regarding RQ1, hitting the retweet button is the action with the highest degree of engagement, since it means assuming the content generated by another user in one's own profile, in this research the content of the tipsters.

The first results (see Table 1) show that a total of 648 tweets were published in the pre-pandemic period while 5,492 messages were published in the post-pandemic. Activity is much higher in this second period and, although it is true that it covers a longer period, so is the fact that for three months the confinement in Spain was total or partial and the volume of communications was ostensibly lower. The average of the pre-pandemic period obtains its best value in the Informative tweets, with an average of 152.71 times a content was shared. However, the average is much higher in the case of the post-pandemic period and messages with War content (198.99) as well as the number of communications issued in this category (3,099).

On the other hand, and leaving aside the Others category, messages with War content in the pre-pandemic period obtain the lowest value in terms of the number of times it was shared (218) and also in terms of the average number of times it was shared (103.51). Finally, the greater interaction of the post-pandemic period with a much higher average of shared content (106.11) than the previous period (87.91) stands out. That is to say, much

more is published and much more is interacted with the content, according to the obtained results.

Regarding the analysis of the averages of the variances, the statistical value F for a level of 95% trust gave as a result that there were statistically significant differences between the average of the user who shared the publications and the different categories established for the tweets. These differences apply to the division throughout the analyzed period, with an F equal to 1.341 and a sig. of 0.033 < 0.05. The same occurs with the division of the different groups, with an F equal to 1.495 and a sig. of 0.000 < 0.05. When fulfilled in both cases, the first research question (RQ1) is answered positively for both the post-pandemic period and for the War content, but negatively for the pre-pandemic period and the Informative content. The high averages of the post-pandemic period and the War content, and of the same period with the Informative content, in both cases above 180 mentions, almost above 190, make it clear that this period is when tipsters' communications are most promoted. In the same way, a change in trend can be seen regarding the contents in the two periods, with the War content having a special relevance in the post-pandemic period, reaching almost 240 mentions (see Table 2).

After studying the variables that were related to RQ1, all the issues that referred to RQ2 were analyzed, that is, the positive, neutral, or negative feelings generated by the tipsters' communications on Twitter in the studied period. The messages of these influencers are distinguished by generating emotions that are reflected in the comments issued in response to the previous communication.

Table 3 shows very clear differences between the post-pandemic War content and the rest of the categories. The average of negative comments reaches the second-highest value of the entire series and the highest in its category in any period and with any type of content (12.91). Especially noteworthy are the positive comments that generate an average that triples the second highest value (39.01). Regarding the lowest values, and excluding Other content due to its residual impact, the comments generated by the post-pandemic Informative content stand out, with few positive comments (4.01) but even less negative ones (3.34). That is, they hardly generate interaction between users.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics on RQ1.

| | | N | Minimum | Maximum | Average | | |
					Statistical	Dev. Error	Dev. Deviation
Pre-pandemic	Warlike	218	0	49,488	103.51	227.008	3,351.730
	Informative	424	0	68,696	152.71	162.735	3,350.909
	Others	6	0	21	7.50	4.161	10.193
Post-pandemic	Warlike	3,099	0	233,135	198.99	80.654	4,489.905
	Informative	2,362	0	189,120	119.20	80.872	3,930.436
	Others	30	0	2	0.13	0.079	0.434

Table 2. Statistics of the analysis of the averages of the variances for RQ1.

	Sum of squares	gl	Quadratic mean	F	Sig.
		Content			
Between groups	55.847	145	0.385	1.495	0.000
Within groups	1,543.617	5,993	0.258		
Total	1,599.463	6,138			
		Period			
Between groups	12.905	145	0.089	1.341	0.033
Within groups	566.696	5,993	0.095		
Total	579.601	6,138			

The results of the analysis of the averages of the variances (see Table 4) worked with 95% trust and made it clear that there were statistically significant differences regarding the average of the users' comments and the positive and negative messages reflected in the tweets issued by the tipsters on Twitter. The value of F in these categories barely varies, from 1.703 to 1.528, and the sig. in both cases 0.000 < 0.05 with which the second research question (RQ2) is answered positively.

How users relate through comments to communications is clearly different. The tweets do not leave those who receive them indifferent and provoke polarized feelings, especially in the case of the War content of the post-pandemic period. In the case of positive comments, there is a difference of 35 basis points between the value of this category compared to the lowest (4.01) which is that of the Informative contents in post-pandemic, and excluding the records of the Other contents, due

to their residual value. The oscillation is even greater between the total average of positive comments on post-pandemic War content and negative comments on Informative content for the same period, with a total of more than thirty-five basis points (35.67).

In the last phase of the research, the relationships between the variables that dealt with the aspects collected in RQ3 were established, that is, the relationship between the content generated by the tipsters on Twitter in 2020 and the emotions of the users. This variable was measured through the number of likes received for each message and grouped in the categories and subcategories previously established.

The results (see Table 5) show that messages with War content in the post-pandemic period are the ones that generate the most emotions, with an average of 23.29 out of a total of 3,099 published tweets. Below is the same type of content but in the period before the

Table 3. Descriptive statistics on RQ2.

			N	Range	Minimum	Maximum	Average Statistical	Average Dev. Error	Dev. Deviation
Pre-pandemic	Warlike	Negative	218	10	0	10	5.01	0.202	2.975
		Neutral	218	9	0	9	4.72	0.189	2.793
		Positive	218	11	0	11	5.90	0.238	3.519
	Informative	Negative	424	14	0	14	6.79	0.208	4.291
		Neutral	424	5	0	5	2.57	0.077	1.583
		Positive	424	11	0	11	5.46	0.169	3.482
	Others	Negative	6	10	2	12	8.83	1.537	3.764
		Neutral	6	1	0	1	0.67	0.211	0.516
		Positive	6	9	1	10	7.50	1.432	3.507
Post-pandemic	Warlike	Negative	3,099	22	22	44	12.91	0.118	6.559
		Neutral	3,099	2	2	4	3.17	0.013	0.728
		Positive	3,099	6	6	12	39.01	0.033	1.844
	Informative	Negative	2,362	7	0	7	3.34	0.042	2.058
		Neutral	2,362	5	0	5	2.73	0.034	1.643
		Positive	2,362	8	0	8	4.01	0.051	2.480
	Others	Negative	30	4	0	4	1.87	0.257	1.408
		Neutral	30	0	0	0	0.00	0.000	0.000
		Positive	30	1	0	1	0.53	0.093	0.507

Table 4. Statistics of the analysis of the averages of the variances for RQ2.

		Sum of squares	gl	Quadratic mean	F	Sig.
Negative	Between groups	57,218.375	145	394.609	1.703	0.000
	Within groups	1,388,676.418	5,993	231.716		
	Total	1,445,894.793	6,138			
Neutral	Between groups	301.336	145	2.078	1.060	0.296
	Within groups	11,744.585	5,993	1.960		
	Total	12,045.921	6,138			
Positive	Between groups	2,441.668	145	16.839	1.528	0.000
	Within groups	66,046.829	5,993	11.021		
	Total	68,488.497	6,138			

Coronavirus pandemic, with an average of more than ten points less (−11.60) for a total of 11.69. It can be seen that the standard deviation is very high since the generation of emotions among Twitter users includes different sensitivities.

Table 6 shows the analysis of the averages of the variances with a trust level of 95%, establishing statistically significant differences between the average of the emotions expressed by the users through likes and the different categories established for tweets generated by tipsters on Twitter during 2020. The value of $F(1.495)$ coupled with a sig. $0.000 < 0.05$ makes it clear that the answer to the third research question (RQ3) is positive and that the produced content generates emotions in users. Similarly, there are statistically significant differences for the same average regarding the period during which these messages were issued. The value of $F(0.941)$ and a sig. $0.017 < 0.05$ once again shows that the relationship is positive and that there are differences between both periods in terms of the generated emotions.

The explanation for these data may lie in the ease with which giving likes is executed, which means that the absolute values reached are high. It is evident that the War content in the post-pandemic is the one that generates the most emotions since its average is the highest of all the categories (23.29) and the highest value in the maximum number of likes (318). Informative content in the pre-pandemic is the one with the lowest average (11.64), excluding other content in any period due to its residual nature.

4. Discussion

The world of social networks brings with it a volume of information so vast that it is difficult to unravel the reliable content from the content of low or no level (Aguaded & Romero, 2015). For this reason, the figure of content curators emerged who, in the case of online sports betting, are identified with tipsters (Guallar, 2015). The research carried out relates the figure of tipsters

Table 5. Descriptive statistics on RQ3.

		N	Minimum	Maximum	Average		Dev. Deviation
					Statistical	Dev. Error	
Pre-pandemic	Warlike	218	0	96	11.69	0.582	8.590
	Informative	424	0	198	11.64	0.536	11.041
	Others	6	0	72	2.50	12.460	30.520
Post-pandemic	Warlike	3,099	0	318	23.29	0.285	15.890
	Informative	2,362	0	240	12.12	0.210	10.207
	Others	30	0	14	0.80	0.495	2.709

Table 6. Statistics of the analysis of the averages of the variances for RQ3.

		Sum of squares	gl	Quadratic mean	F	Sig.
Period	Between groups	12.905	145	0.089	0.941	0.017
	Within groups	566.696	5,993	0.095		
	Total	579.601	6,138			
Group	Between groups	55.847	145	0.385	1.495	0.000
	Within groups	1,543.617	5,993	0.258		
	Total	1,599.463	6,138			

to how they impact millennials and centennials through Twitter in the pandemic period. This main objective highlights the potential of social networks for the transmission and viralization of content (Barrientos-Báez et al., 2018; Casero-Ripollés, 2018).

The results show that the messages issued by the gambling influencers are aimed at a broad potential spectrum but, due to the characteristics of their messages, they put both millennials and centennials at the center of their target, adapting their textual, visual, and audiovisual language to impact them (Rivera et al., 2017). One of the most relevant aspects when evaluating the messages emitted by tipsters on Twitter towards millennials and centennials is the interaction they generate (Ruiz Blanco et al., 2016). The numbers themselves do not represent a moderating construct, but they do mark an intention and feedback in the flow of communication, revealing who their preferred target audience is (Orozco Macias, 2021). The perceived credibility, marked by the authority bias and the trust accumulated by the tipster, mark the necessary milestone for the assumption of messages in the profiles of these generations or the assumption of the brand that demonstrates their preference for the prescriber (Correa, 2021).

Having studied the potential of Web 2.0 in terms of feedback and participation, the field of interaction is a fertile ground to measure the relationship between Twitter users and tipsters' profiles (Santiago Campión & Navaridas Nalda, 2012). The pure quantitative analysis is useful, it provides a possible vision of the generated content, but the distinction between the different emotions creates a qualitative method that complements the previous method and allows assigning value to the interaction (Pozzi et al., 2016; Tan et al., 2011).

4.1. Implications

Previous research works have already warned about the role of tipsters in communication through social networks and other channels and platforms (Spann & Skiera, 2017). The danger posed by these communications has even been studied, which can even lead their audiences towards addictive behaviors (Gonzálvez-Vallés et al., 2021). Studies have also been carried out that affect other sectors where influencers are present, such as fashion (Castillo-Abdul et al., 2020), the financial world (Kogan et al., 2018), or healthcare (García Rivero et al., 2021).

However, this research makes it clear that there is evidence of the relationship between the messages delivered by tipsters and millennials and centennials. Both in the format and in the way of constructing the content, the issuers are clear about their preferred audience. Furthermore, the interactions received and the emotions generated make it clear that the pandemic marked a before and after in the way of communicating. The war content became the protagonist, confirming one of the possible traumatic effects of this post-Covid-19 period (Silver, 2020).

4.2. Limitations

The main limitation of this research is that it is focused on demonstrating the relationship between the Twitter profiles of tipsters and millennials and centennials, leaving aside other channels. Future research must find a way to penetrate other networks such as Telegram, which can complement the analysis carried out. It is also possible to incorporate variables as interesting as segmentation by gender, age, or available economic capacity. Another limitation is that the analysis goes into assessing what type of feelings the content produces but does not specify the most used for this type of comment. This allows this line of research to be extended over time and can give an idea of how tipsters approach content production to impact millennials and centennials.

The main focus of this research is on the five profiles analyzed, but future research could specialize in individual profiles or divide those that are nominal from those that use a corporate brand. Similarly, and when dealing with the online sports betting sector, other intervening agents can be taken into account. This would be the case of betting houses, sports clubs, athletes themselves…and how they build their content to accommodate the flow of bets.

5. Conclusions

Regarding the first research question, the results show statistically significant differences in the degree of interaction through the action of sharing content. Being the action that requires a greater degree of engagement from the user concerning the content of the tipster, the post-pandemic War content receives a higher engagement than the rest of the content. In fact, the average stands at almost two hundred basis points, while the rest of the content in either of the two periods is a long way off. The appeal of war-related text, emoticon, video, or audio messages encourages users to want to share them. However, the merely informative contents obtain a medium relevance and, especially in the post-pandemic, they lose a lot of traction force.

Regarding the second research question, the one related to user comments, tipsters dramatically increased the volume of positive comments about War content in the post-pandemic period. It is no less true that negative comments also increase, which can affect the credibility of the influencers of the bets. However, the formers are more than triple that of the latter and raise the average number of comments for this period well above the previous one.

Answering the third research question, it can be concluded that the content generated by tipsters receives a large number of likes, also taking into account the large volume of tweets issued. The category of War content from the post-pandemic period is especially relevant again since this content is received positively by millennials and centennials. Similarly, the statistically significant
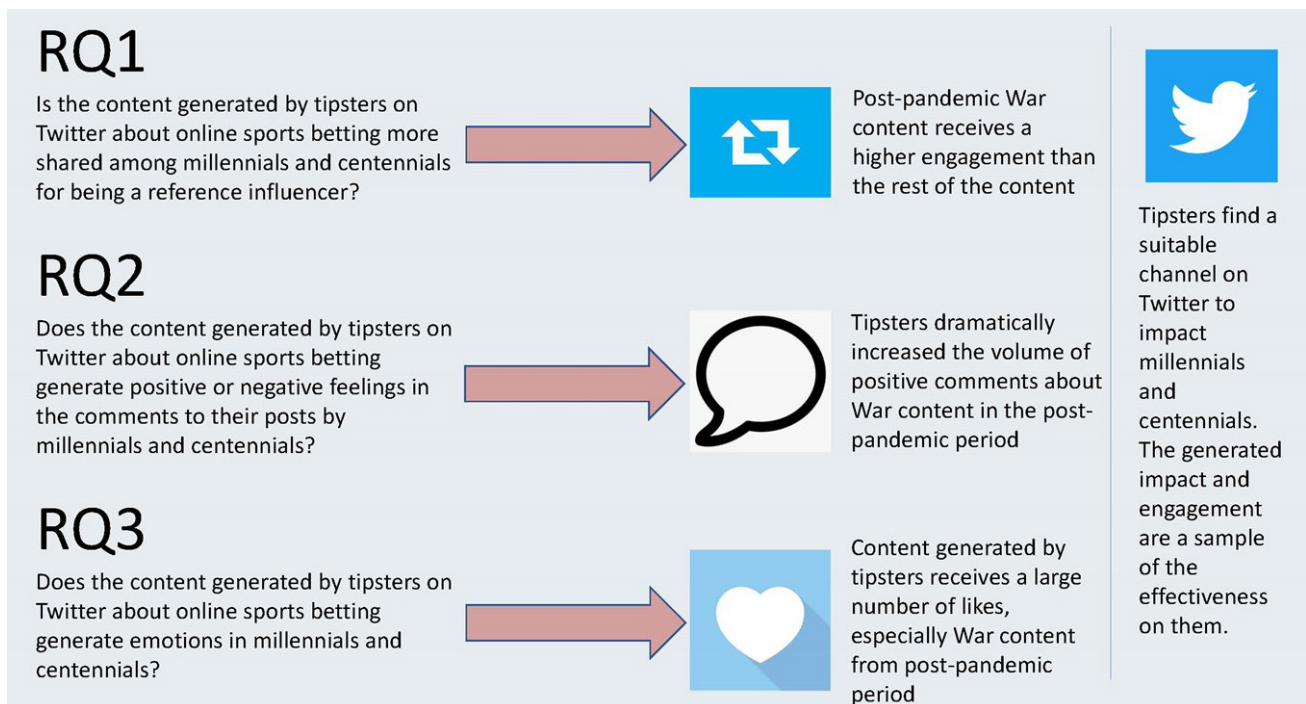
RQ1

Is the content generated by tipsters on Twitter about online sports betting more shared among millennials and centennials for being a reference influencer?

Post-pandemic War content receives a higher engagement than the rest of the content

RQ2

Does the content generated by tipsters on Twitter about online sports betting generate positive or negative feelings in the comments to their posts by millennials and centennials?

Tipsters dramatically increased the volume of positive comments about War content in the post-pandemic period

RQ3

Does the content generated by tipsters on Twitter about online sports betting generate emotions in millennials and centennials?

Content generated by tipsters receives a large number of likes, especially War content from post-pandemic period

Tipsters find a suitable channel on Twitter to impact millennials and centennials. The generated impact and engagement are a sample of the effectiveness on them.

Figure 1. Main findings.

differences allow us to conclude that this category is the one that is perceived more satisfactorily, although in the pre-pandemic period it was the Informative content the one that accumulated the most likes.

If we relate the conclusions found (see Figure 1), it can be established that tipsters find a suitable channel on Twitter to impact millennials and centennials. They know what the characteristics of their target audience are, where they are, what their hobbies are, and what kind of language appeals to them. Furthermore, they do not hesitate to change their strategy when an episode as dramatic as the appearance of the Coronavirus pandemic occurs. The generated impact and engagement are a sample of the effectiveness of their approach, which, together with the previously analyzed postulates, generates a greater impact on millennials and centennials.

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Conflict of Interests

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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Book Review

(Not) Very Important People: Millennial Fantasies of Mobility in the Age of Excess

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Abstract

In her fascinating but frustrating new book, *Very Important People: Status and Beauty in the Global Party Circuit*, American sociologist, Ashley Mears (2020) offers both academic and mainstream readers a titillating, cross-over tour around the "cool" nightclub and party scene of the "global elite." It is perhaps not so much global, however, as American, in the sense of the heteropatriarchal, middle-aged, male, working rich of America (or more precisely of its financial capital New York), jetting into their traditional party hotspots of Miami, Saint-Tropez, or the French Riviera, to party with young women who are (indirectly) paid (in-kind) to pose with them. Whether intentional or unintentional, along the way Mears also offers a dark mirror to the fears and fantasies of a rather lost millennial generation, raised in a new media, image age, which has coupled fast and furious performative excess to old fashioned sexual objectification, in the guise of fun and empowerment for the beautiful people.

Keywords

beauty capital; ethnography; fashion models; global elites; hustle culture

1. Introduction

If you were raised by television (not the internet), as part of the generation or demographic group widely known as "X," you might think you know something already about the glamourous "global party circuit," as you grew up, after all, watching postmodern television programs like *Miami Vice* or *Lifestyles of the Rich and Famous*. Perhaps you have seen the wonderful film *Casino* and think you know something already about the murky world of "whales"—or big spending high rollers—and the well-dressed women who float around them. In this assumption, reader, you would be wrong. Worse still, you might be revealing not only how old you are, but how ordinary, working-class, and unattractive you would be, seen through the (internalized) male gaze of the new "global elite" of rich men and young women documented in *Very Important People: Status and Beauty in the Global*

Party Circuit (Mears, 2020). This is where we get to a core, commercial selling point and point of difference of this book, as well as the powerful (not so secret) weapon of its academic research methodology; the author Ashley Mears is not only a successful academic, but a former fashion model who is invited into the inner workings of the murky, man's world of nightlife impresarios and thus can provide an "insider" perspective on this closed, youth (sub)culture.

As Mears (2020, p. 247) herself points out, she uses her own "bodily capital" to solve the research access problem known as "studying up." To put it simply, Ashley is already "up" in the eyes of the male nightlife power brokers and wealthy whales because she is able to "pass" as a fashion model and thus can study her subjects at close range in the clubs, while simultaneously tapping sociological observations and field notes into her smartphone. Mears is doing important and timely work in the

field of sociology, by laying bare the precarious "working" lives of millennials, as she traces the exploits of nightlife or party players in an influential social milieu which would presumably be invisible or closed to less attractive or less well-connected ethnographers.

Offering an educated but insider commentary on such interesting or "juicy" content as the lifestyles of the heteropatriarchal super-rich, and those who feed off them, this book is almost certain to attract more media attention and popular success. From a more critical, feminist standpoint, however, the strength of the book could also suggest a weakness. So immersed is Mears at times in this culture, so understanding and sympathetic the portrayals of its male players, you do wonder at times if she has drunk the Cristal Kool-Aid. Moreover, the book would have benefited from more critical and feminist informed analysis of how these moonlighting female fashion model "elites" might be empowered and entrapped at the same time—especially in the context of this #MeToo historical moment and in light of recent revelations of sexual misconduct and ritual humiliation of models in the fashion industry. It would have been interesting to explore more the risks of betting on beauty capital in the culture industries—especially in light of how predatory and abusive these industries can apparently be for some.

2. Gangster Capitalism: Whales or Sharks?

I am happy to admit, as a reader with an interest in gender studies, I couldn't put this book down; but that was mostly because I was waiting for the author to critically deconstruct the identity narratives and justifications of some of the fashion models—and the nightclub promoters who apparently recruit and use them. I will also admit I wanted to see her more enthusiastically "harpoon" the billionaire whales, who seemed to me not much more complicated than the entitled, judgmental, middle-aged, ruling class men who you might actually *expect* to rise to the top of the real estate or finance industries in these ruthlessly competitive, deregulated, neoliberal times. Spoiler alert: this doesn't happen in the end. In fact, I was left with the impression Mears had much less research access to the true, big, swinging power-brokers of this status hierarchy than she might have liked.

We receive comparatively more access to the apparently lower-ranking, more multicultural males of this shadowy scene, the nightclub promoters, who are perhaps mere whale wannabes, but hardly members of the ruling "elite." The apparent protestation of the fashion models, that what they do (essentially selling their appearance to rich, older men in exchange for gifts and luxury experiences) is new and has nothing in common with the work of high class "call girls," doesn't always ring true—in fact, it sounded like yet another way privileged "beauty elite" types may rank and judge other women, through the lens of internalized misogyny. Also,

it is still not clear how this new gendered nightlife economy is so different from the traditional strip club wherein men may bond and network while gazing upon the bodies of young women (for a price). Presumably, the glamourous fashion model types would make the distinction that strippers are lower status, lower-class females on the body capital circuit—and this would be of course yet another class-based assumption about taste and style which deserved further critical interrogation.

3. Hustle Culture: Leisure as Work

Some of the scenes from this book reminded me of the 2019 Hollywood film *Hustlers*. Almost all the VIP players in this book, from the "girls" to the nightclub promoters, come across as entrepreneurial "hustlers" trying rather desperately to make it in a ruthless, deregulated, hyper-competitive "hustle" economy of advanced capitalism. You could argue, of course, that the young people described here are just trying their best to make it in hard times, or secure some upward social mobility, in an inherently unequal and unfair system, by any shady means necessary. Feminists should be warned, however, that some of the scenes described in this book will leave you feeling enraged at the blatant sexism and classism on this "elite" party circuit, which is really only "global" in the sense that it is obviously facilitated by global finance and the unfettered mobility of wealthy men and their money.

Moreover, if these players are really so powerful and "elite" why, well may you ask, are they so manifestly desperate to be seen, to be recognized as worthy, that they must pay for it by purchasing luxury experiences of social positioning—and how is this different from what lonely people have always done? This supposedly glamourous and exciting nightlife economy is also rife with old-fashioned misogyny (including internalized misogyny) as Mears (2020, p. 23) relays: "To describe a club that was perceived as lower quality, one promoter flatly stated: 'The girls were fat.'" Mears freely observes that fashion models are at the top of this hierarchy of female bodies, while women who do not meet the criteria of male clients and promoters are not only denied entry but dismissed as "worthless and contaminating." Moreover, Mears (2020, p. 147) observes: "Part of the fun is getting to join a world that excludes and devalues others."

At the risk of sounding like a sore loser in the beauty stakes, I have to say that standing around in high heels all night, at the behest of wealthy, middle-aged strangers, holding out hope for a free dinner or a luxury handbag, doesn't actually sound very glamourous or fun to me. Surely these well-educated and empowered young women, of the so-called millennial generation, value themselves more highly—or perhaps they are only making the best of the fewer financial opportunities available to them than previous generations, pursuing (post)modern, postfeminist, neoliberal fantasies of easy money and fast upward mobility. If permitted an

autoethnographic note of my own, I will add that as a young woman I too, went out nightclubbing two to three nights a week (albeit in a far-flung working-class town of regional Australia, not in the world's financial capital) and routinely received free entry, free drinks, and free meals—but we were there to dance and romance other working-class people, not to facilitate, the illusion of, performative wealth and upward social mobility.

I suspect what has occurred since is a generational, as well as socio-cultural, shift around young people and youth culture wherein leisure is remade as work and social life becomes increasingly transactional as part of a growing "hustle" economy. Hence, what I found most fascinating about this important book was what it reveals indirectly about the collective cultural anxieties of the millennial generation; the fear of being overlooked, not important or invisible, against a wider cultural backdrop of cold, hard competition, and individualism. No one in this sexualized, status-obsessed business (think more "hunger games" than "global party") appears "innocent," but it is a cultural trend which academics, parents, and teachers, should certainly be reading and talking about.

4. Millennial Media Landscape

What is really new about this material is also what makes it characteristically millennial: The intersections of (micro)celebrity, performative identity construction, and the new networking and communication technologies of social media that grease the wheels of this global party economy. Mears makes little mention, however, of the wider generational shifts or millennial media landscape, despite explaining how Facebook is used in her own research methodology to make the right connections.

The book would have benefited from further discussion of how internet examples of do-it-yourself celebrity or micro-celebrity have facilitated and obviously fed into this narcissistic cultural obsession with being seen, and seen with, the "right" people, via internet-enabled mobile communication technologies. Paris Hilton gets a passing mention as a "pioneer in paid club appearances who created her own celebrity through the VIP scene" (Mears, 2020, p. 25), although I would have liked more exploration of how celebrity paid appearances intersect with the global elite party scene, how social media is integral to this party scene and also some recognition of how and why monetizing this kind of leisure as work is more difficult than it first appears for most young women.

Taking the wider view, we might also note that academia too, is after all, an increasingly competitive "hustle" culture, wherein academics must not only publish, but stand out and be "seen" and self-promote through (new) media to survive—and wherein young people must be attracted, recruited, and absorbed into the ever-growing information economy by (corporatized and marketized) institutions. I would have liked to see more critical commentary on this broader gendered political landscape of "hustle" neoliberalism in the Mears book. Feminism as a theoretical framework is surprisingly absent from most of this book, which is essentially about young women turning their beauty into a commodity to be traded on the nightlife and party scene. Instead of building on feminist works, Mears seems to rely most heavily on the seminal work of the French sociologist Bourdieu, especially his most influential work on distinction and judgments of taste, which was published in the 1970s and the 1980s. But if we are going right back to the 1970s era, it would have been very interesting to connect with the classic British post-war sociology and ethnography of youth cultures captured in classic works like *Resistance Through Rituals*, if only to demonstrate just how much youth culture—and the academic engagement with it—has changed so dramatically over the past 50 years. Certainly, the romantic youth culture as resistance thesis is completely overturned by the rather ruthless, sell-out culture Mears lovingly and thoroughly documents—there is no place for romanticism of any kind, it seems, among the global party people and those who follow them.

If, like me, you have spent your working life teaching and supporting working class and marginalised young people, it is hard not to feel a little depressed by the stratified, ruthless world of "Very Important People" and even a little lost nostalgia for the naïve optimism of youth and the old-school youth studies of previous generations. The Mears book is one long, hard look at a contemporary youth subculture of young women and men who are not resisting or speaking back to power, but rather strategically playing up to it, in exchange for a (temporary) status bump thrill and other luxury experiences.

This is an important, well-researched book that deserves its popular and academic success—I can't say, however, it left me feeling very optimistic. It made me feel almost sad for these tall, thin, beautiful young women who are apparently so desperate to be seen as somebody important (VIPs), that they will waste their youth hanging around a bunch of entitled, middle-aged bankers and stockbrokers—and even sadder for the "fat" friends who are apparently humiliated and dumped outside the exclusive club. As a Generation Xer it made me want to listen to Nirvana or The Smiths, reflect on progress, or the lack of it, and perhaps just have a good cry—cry even for the beautiful people, trapped in their gilded cages.

Conflict of Interests

The author declares no conflict of interests.

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