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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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