



THE USE OF THE SOCIAL NETWORK INSTAGRAM AS A PLATFORM FOR JOURNALISTIC DISSEMINATION The Case of the European Edition of *Politico*

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ABSTRACT

This research analyses the Instagram profile of the European edition of Politico (@politicoeurope), a political newspaper focusing on Europe, in order to ascertain the communication strategies employed and the means by which greater interaction with readers is achieved. The objective is to ascertain whether the news content is adapted to the audiovisual formats of this social network. To this end, a content analysis will be conducted on the profile from its inception in August 2020 until February 2024. The objective is to conduct a detailed analysis of a series of variables related to the design and content of the publications in question.

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1. Introduction

The media are currently "undergoing a process of migration and adaptation to new forms of news production, distribution and circulation. This is a consequence of the growing popularity of new digital platforms" (Mitchelstein et al., 2018, p. 158). In this context, social networks have become a significant platform for communication and the dissemination of news content, providing valuable support to news organisations in terms of publicity, audience engagement and brand loyalty (González Fernández, 2021, p. 437).

Furthermore, social networks have resulted in alterations to the nature of news itself, leading to the emergence of distinct editorial models within the realm of online journalism. Furthermore, journalistic genres have undergone a significant transformation, with digital storytelling offering a vast array of possibilities for these novel forms of storytelling, as well as the emergence of the aforementioned social networks. In this context, social networks such as Instagram play a significant role. They offer a multitude of possibilities for communication and journalism, particularly in terms of "visual storytelling, user engagement, and the expansion of narratives through transmedia storytelling" (Arreguez & Merlo, 2020, p. 7). The term was first used by Jenkins (2003) to describe a process whereby the key elements of a narrative are distributed across a range of channels with the aim of creating a unified and coherent entertainment experience. This involves a shift from a unidirectional approach to one that is transmedia, whereby the concept of 'all media count' (Góngora Díaz & Lavilla Muñoz, 2020, p. 134) is embraced).

As González Fernández notes:

This transformation in the information dynamic is reflected in the preponderance of audiovisual content over textual content. This shift has been accelerated by social networks, which have contributed to the prominence of images, whether still or moving, as the primary form of content. It is evident that digital users dedicate a significant portion of their time to consuming visual, dynamic, and interactive content. Consequently, for informative content to effectively engage and capture their attention, it must possess analogous formal and aesthetic qualities (González Fernández, 2021, p. 432).

In addition, the author posits the following:

The visual element possesses intrinsic capacity to engender engagement, given its efficacy in communicating and transmitting information. This, in turn, incites user participation and involvement with the content, thereby motivating and inspiring enthusiasm (González Fernández, 2021, p. 440).

The field of journalism is undergoing a period of significant transformation in response to the advent of new platforms and tools for the creation and dissemination of information, particularly those offered by social networks. This has led to the development of innovative strategies for engaging with audiences on these new media (García & López, 2016, p. 126).

In these novel modes of interaction between media and their audiences, Instagram occupies a preeminent position. This social network disseminates predominantly visual content that "is designed to facilitate a perception of mobility, immediacy, and authenticity in visual communication" (Selva-Ruiz & Caro-Castaño, 2017, p. 904).

Since its inception in October 2010 by Kevin Systrom and Mike Krieger, Instagram has amassed a user base exceeding 1.2 billion individuals across the globe. Of this figure, over 500 million users log on daily, with 80% of users following a company or brand on the network (IAB, 2024).

As Figuereo-Benítez et al. observed in 2016, "the vast majority of media outlets have a presence on the platform, which has also transformed the way individuals engage with news and current affairs" (2021, p. 10).

In this way, Instagram, like other tools in the mobile world, is presented as an emerging space for journalistic innovation due to its versatility, visual impact and capacity to transmit live information (Arreguez & Merlo, 2020). This offers the media and journalists a new way of addressing the public, especially the youngest, with a more audiovisual format (Carrasco-Polaino et al., 2020, p. 76).

This research is situated within this context and focuses on the analysis of the publications offered by the European edition of Politico, a well-established newspaper since its foundation in 2014, on its

Instagram profile (@politicoeurope). The objective is to ascertain the communication strategies deployed by the publication in order to disseminate information and foster engagement among its readership, as well as to attract new users.

The focus of this study is on Instagram, which merits examination for a number of reasons. Firstly, it is one of the fastest growing social networks at the time of this research, in terms of both the number of users it registers and its success and popularity. As González Fernández notes, the platform's capacity to engage users through interaction and the appeal of its visual content has contributed to its status as one of the most popular social platforms, particularly among younger demographics, for both information and socialization and entertainment purposes (González Fernández, 2021). Moreover, IAB Spain (2024) identifies Instagram as one of the most significant social networks in Spain, ranking second in spontaneous recognition and daily usage (1:08 minutes per day). Additionally, it is the network that has generated the most interaction in 2022. Conversely, the IAB Spain Annual Social Networks Study indicates that, while TikTok is the social network with the highest user satisfaction, Instagram is the most utilized by professionals.

Secondly, with regard to the specific case of Politico, the choice of this social network is also due to its eminently visual nature. This is because the publications present a primacy of the image (still or moving) over text. Consequently, it can be argued that "it is the social network that is best characterised as a field of observation to explore these new forms of representation and persuasive strategies" (Mattei, 2015, p. 97).

Conversely, the European edition of Politico has been selected as the subject of investigation due to its status as the most influential media outlet among opinion leaders and members of European institutions, as reported by the consultancy firm Burson Cohn & Wolfe (BCW, 2023). This places it ahead of other prominent publications such as The Economist and Financial Times, making it an international benchmark.

In light of the aforementioned considerations, the rationale behind concentrating this study on the utilisation of Instagram by this newspaper is that the character of political media is not inherently visual, particularly in comparison to the visual emphasis observed in headlines on subjects such as fashion or sport, to cite two examples.

Indeed, there is a substantial body of scientific literature on the use of Instagram as a dissemination tool in media from a range of other fields and subjects. For example, studies have been conducted on the use of Instagram by generalist media outlets (Carrasco-Polaino, 2022; Díaz-Lucena & Mora de la Torre, 2022; Longhi-Heredia & Quezada-Tello, 2021; Mañas-Viniegra et al, 2019; Martínez-Fresneda & Zazo, 2021; Sancho-Belinchón, 2023), free media (Longhi-Heredia, 2022), and outlets specialising in fashion and beauty (Gómez de Travesedo & Gil, 2020; Vinader-Segura et al, 2022), sports studies, (Galván, 2022; Paúl & Moreno, 2019; Rojas & Panal, 2017), while Carballeda & Ruiz del Olmo (2022) and De Vicente & Carballeda (2021) have made significant contributions to the field of science. However, there has been a notable absence of studies in the field of politics. Consequently, this field of study is relatively uncommon due to its tangible nature, and it is this approach that represents the core interest of the research.

2. Methodology

The main objective of this paper is to deal with the characteristics of the profile of the European edition of Politico on the social network Instagram, from a descriptive point of view - since it is based on the description and evaluation of certain characteristics of a specific situation in an object of study - and longitudinal - since it is an observational study that collects data that are repeated over a long period of time - in order to identify the communicative strategies it uses, both from the point of view of graphic design and content. To achieve this, the specific objectives are as follows:

- To study the main contents of the publications made by the headline under study on this social network.
- To study the design of these publications in order to identify the technical and stylistic resources used in the posts analysed, in order to determine whether the medium under study exploits the visual potential of Instagram.

- To analyse the impact of the messages and to observe the engagement of the audience in order to evaluate it.

This is therefore descriptive research, as we approached the object of study - Politico's publications on the social network Instagram - through observation, with the aim of outlining its characteristics and peculiarities, based on the collection of data, in this specific case on its graphic design, its content and the interaction it maintains with its users. As Guevara et al. point out, "descriptive research is carried out when we want to describe a reality in all its main components" (Guevara et al., 2020, p. 165).

To this end, we will carry out a quantitative and qualitative content analysis of the Instagram posts published in the European edition of Politico, a benchmark for political journalism on our continent. We consider this technique appropriate because, as López Noguero points out,

content analysis is situated in the field of descriptive research, it aims above all to discover the basic components of a given phenomenon by extracting them from a given content through a process characterised by an attempt at rigorous measurement (López Noguero, 2002, p. 174).

On the other hand, Krippendorff (2002) considers content analysis to be one of the most important techniques in communication research, stating that its aim is to study, in a rigorous and systematic way, the nature of the different messages that are exchanged in the acts of communication that we carry out. This technique also allows, as Berelson (1971) points out, the objective, systematic and quantitative description of the content of communication, although it can also be used in other fields, such as the qualitative analysis of variables or the study of the complexity of a phenomenon. In any case, this analytical technique will allow us, as Bardin points out, "to obtain indicators (quantitative or not) through systematic and objective procedures of describing the content of messages, allowing the inference of knowledge about the conditions of production/reception of these messages" (Bardin, 2002, p. 32).

In this study, it is precisely the content analysis that will allow us to draw conclusions from the visual or audiovisual content published by @politicoeurope on Instagram, which will allow us to understand the communicative strategy adopted by this medium to inform and connect with its users.

As for the period analysed, it runs from August 2020 - the date of the appearance of his profile on Instagram - to 1 February 2024 - the date of the conclusion of this research. During these years, according to the observational analysis carried out, we can distinguish three stages in terms of the formal aspect of the publications made: the first extends from August 2020 to July 2022, the second from August to December 2022, and the third from January 2022 to the present.

With a total of 1,522 posts on Instagram, it was necessary to select a sample with a smaller number of units of analysis in order to successfully address the study. To do this, we used Kayser's constructed week technique, which we adapted ad hoc for our study. A non-probabilistic, strategic and systematic sample is proposed, following the parameters of Kayser's (1982) constructed week, but with an adaptation of the same to the period indicated. Thus, 43 days have been analysed, one for each month of the period covered by this research, making up the sample as follows: the first day corresponds to Thursday 6 August 2020 - the date of the appearance of the @politicoeurope profile on Instagram - and from there the adaptation of Kayser's constructed week takes place, choosing as the second day the first Friday of the following month - 4 September 2020 -, the first Saturday of October, the first Sunday of November, the first Monday of December and so on until the end of 1 February 2024. This sampling system allows us to ensure the presence of all months of the year and all days of the week. In short, a total of 62 entries or publications were analysed.

In order to collect the data, we have designed an *ad hoc* coding instrument comprising fourteen variables, which have been grouped by logical affinity into four sections:

- General data (three variables) where the data of the publication is collected to facilitate its location and its basic characteristics (the case number, the date of its publication and the link on Instagram).
- Post format (two variables), where it is recorded firstly whether it is a single publication or a gallery and, secondly, whether the image is dynamic (video or animation) or static (photograph, illustration, infographic, collage or typography with iconic value). In the case of

photographs, the form also allows you to record whether it is a full-bleed image, a silhouette or an image of the cover of the printed edition of the masthead.

- Content of the post, both textual and visual or image content (five variables). In terms of textual content, the file considers whether there is a description, if there is a mention or if there is a hashtag; in terms of visual content, it first reflects whether a headline is incorporated on the image, and then identifies the main protagonist of the image (character, object, context or typographic element).
- Impact of the message (three variables): where we record those items that allow us to evaluate the propagation of the message and the reaction of the audience (likes, comments and, in the case of videos, reproductions).

Finally, there is an open variable that allows the coders to record any observation that they consider to be of interest at the time of recording the data.

In order to carry out this research work, the degree of reliability of the content analysis was tested. The intercoder reliability index was calculated in two phases: first, a pretest was carried out using Holsti's formula, which resulted in an initial 0.75 agreement. This served to qualify the variables and categories initially considered. Subsequently, a two-coder test was carried out using Krippendorff's alpha (Marzi et al, 2024), resulting in an index of 0.90, which is considered sufficient in terms of reliability.

3. Results

A preliminary examination of the selected sample reveals the existence of three clearly delineated stages in the content, as previously mentioned. These stages are distinguished by a notable divergence in the manner of treatment accorded to the related publications.

The initial phase, which spanned a period of two years, commenced with the inauguration of @politicoeurope's Instagram profile on 6 August 2020 and concluded in August 2022. This period is characterised by two key aspects: a low level of posting and a low level of content editing.

This is evidenced by the absence of daily posts, particularly on weekends, and the predominance of unedited, textless images in the account's feed. Consequently, in order to comprehend the content, users were compelled to peruse the description of the content, a commentary that was occasionally succinct and designed solely for the purpose of consulting the referenced stories by navigating directly to the pertinent media outlet via the indicated links.

This initial phase of the account demonstrates a markedly conservative approach to the tool, which is employed solely as a means of driving traffic, rather than as a content creation channel in its own right. This is understandable, given that it marks the beginning of the publication's activity on the social network. However, it is also significant because the creative possibilities deployed on Instagram between 2020 and 2022 by other media outlets demonstrated a considerably higher level of complexity.

Of the 62 publications included in the sample, 25 can be attributed to this initial period. In accordance with the characteristics of an initiation phase, the number of followers and the level of community interaction are notably limited during this period.

The second phase, which commenced in August 2022 and persisted for a mere few months until the end of the year, was markedly brief in comparison. Therefore, it can be concluded that this is a transitional phase, to which five publications from the selected sample belong.

In these publications, a slight change can be observed with respect to the previous stage, namely the incorporation of text into the visual elements of the publication. Nevertheless, this is done in a rather basic and instrumental manner, through the replication of textual publications from the masthead on the social network X (which was, at the time, Twitter) by means of captures. Although the resource is used on an ad hoc basis during the initial two months of this phase, from October 2022 onwards, visual publications of images are interspersed with captures of texts taken from X.

At the conclusion of January 2023, the third stage commences, which demonstrates a more mature and elaborate utilisation of the platform. The Instagram account no longer serves as a conduit for directing traffic to the headline, as was the case in the initial phase, nor does it function as a repository for repurposing content from other social networks, as was the practice in the subsequent phase.

Instead, it establishes its own visual identity and demonstrates a notable advancement in the sophistication of its published content.

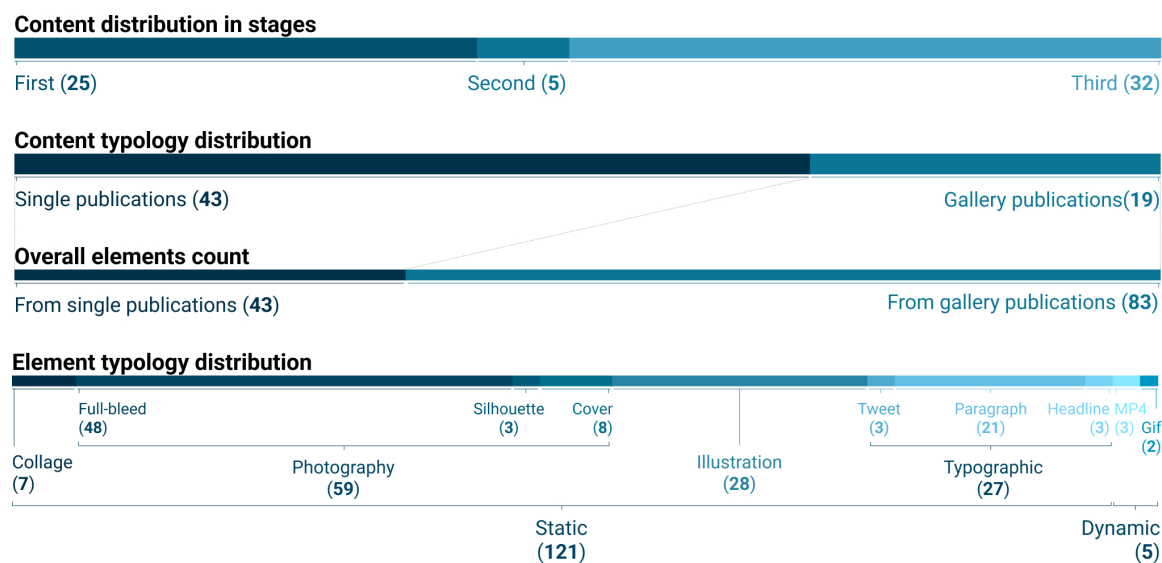
This period, which will persist until the conclusion of the selected exhibition, encompasses 32 posts in which the overprinted text serves as a supplementary format to the visual elements alone. The publications cease to be two-dimensional and instead employ a narrative approach, utilising visual elements and textual descriptions as complementary formats. During this period, the Instagram account assumes the role of a narrative resource in its own right, thereby precipitating a notable increase in user interaction and participation.

It is crucial to delineate this preliminary distinction, as the discrepancies in utilisation and volume necessitate a differentiated interpretation of the data, rather than a comprehensive representation of the entire sample.

Similarly, in order to conduct an initial examination of the sample analysed (Figure 1), it is important to consider that Instagram is a social network that allows the publication of individual posts, comprising a single visual element. However, it also permits the creation of 'galleries', which can link up to ten visual elements in a single post.

It is therefore important to quantify the content in the sample collected, which reveals that 43 single publications (the preferred way of sharing content) and 19 'in galleries' were shared. This results in a total of 83 visual elements for analysis. The sample analysed has collected nine galleries of two visual elements, three of four, one of five, two of six, one of eight, two of nine and one of ten. Therefore, the sample is composed of 62 publications comprising 126 visual elements, 43 of which are single publications and 83 of which are parts of 19 'gallery' publications.

Figure 1. Quantification of the sample analysed in stages, type of publications, number of total visual elements and types of visual elements.



Source: Own elaboration, 2024.

The general portrait of the sample analysed, apart from the aforementioned division into stages, demonstrates a clear predominance of static visual elements (121 cases) over dynamic ones (5 cases), which refer to videos or animations. Of the static visual elements, 59 cases were found to employ photographs, 28 cases used illustrations, and 27 cases used typographic content, which refers to instances where text is the primary visual element. The technique of collage is employed in only seven of the visual elements. It is noteworthy that infographics, a prevalent resource in visual information, are absent from all the publications in the sample.

It is also pertinent to provide a detailed account of the specific typology of some of the visual elements analysed within the context of the aforementioned general typology, as defined in the coding sheet used for the sample. Three distinct categories of photograph were identified: full-bleed, the most prevalent with 48 instances, denoting images occupying the entire surface area of the post; silhouette, with three occurrences, depicting figures with only the head and shoulders visible, eliminating the background;

and cover, present in eight cases, alluding to visual elements featuring the front page of the printed edition of the publication as a central component, through a self-referential approach.

In the case of typographic visual elements, three distinct categories have been identified. The first category comprises visual elements where the text is presented as a paragraph, which was observed in 21 instances. The second category includes visual elements where the text is presented as a headline, which was observed in three instances. The third category comprises visual elements where the text is presented as a publication replicated from social network X, which was observed in three instances. Finally, within the category of dynamic visual elements, three videos in the MP4 format and two animations in the GIF format were identified.

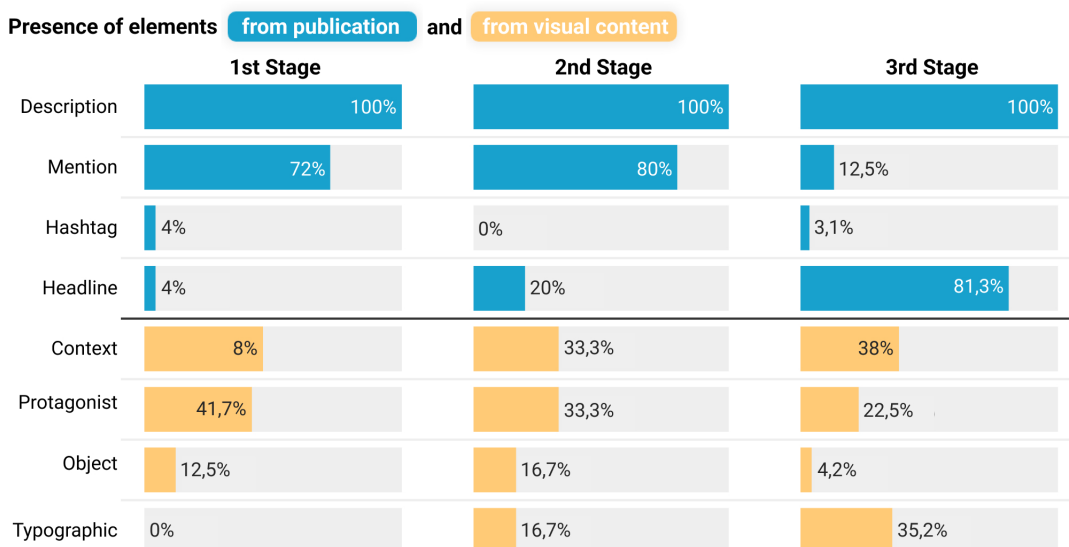
Regarding the categorisation of content into stages, it becomes evident that specific types of visual elements are more frequently observed at certain times. To illustrate, while 'gallery' publications are observed to be employed in a similar manner between the initial and third stages – those with the highest number of posts – their utilisation is not uniform. Of the nine galleries observed in the initial stage, six have two visual elements, one has four, one has six and one has ten. In contrast, of the nine galleries observed in the third period, only two are comprised of two visual elements, another two have four, and the remainder have a greater number.

This, in conjunction with the aforementioned observation regarding the greater investment in comprehensive storytelling in the third stage, suggests that the galleries are employed as a means of conveying more intricate narratives in an episodic manner. A review of the one large gallery in the first stage serves to confirm this hypothesis. It is a succession of images of Donald Trump, captured at different moments during an event, which convey no additional information beyond the images themselves.

The different phases not only influence the type of visual elements used, but also the meta-elements employed with the posts and the manner in which they may be interpreted. The term 'meta-elements' is used to describe those components that exist beyond the visual element, and which can be used to construct a post on Instagram. In particular, the description, or text accompanying the post, the mention of people, institutions, or other accounts, either in plain format or linking to these accounts within the text of the mention, the hashtags, which refer to topics linked to the social network, also within the mention, and the headline, which is overprinted on the visual resource.

To this end, a quantification of the presence of the aforementioned elements is provided throughout the different stages (Figure 2), which allows for the observation of clear trends and notable differences between the different stages.

Figure 2. Quantification of the presence of the different meta-elements during the different stages.



Source: Own elaboration, 2024

It is important to note that all the publications, regardless of the stage, contain a textual description accompanying the visual elements. This demonstrates that none of them function autonomously from the written content. Secondly, it should be noted that none of the publications in question labels any of the protagonists of the visual elements. This is likely due to the subject matter of the magazine, which pertains to political, economic, or social leaders, primarily from the European Union or related bodies.

Secondly, it is observed that the descriptions of the selected sample exhibit a very small and homogeneous volume of hashtags. These appear in barely 4% of the total in the first phase and in a very similar 3.1% in the third phase. It is absent from the second stage but given the limited size of the sample during that period, it is not deemed significant. This minimal but constant presence demonstrates that there is no discernible strategy to achieve engagement or visibility through the potential republishing of the notable figures who feature in the coverage of the headline under investigation.

In conclusion, the most noteworthy divergence is evident in the utilisation of mentions and headlines. The former appear in 72% of the publications in the initial two stages, declining to 12.5% in the third stage. This can be interpreted as a deliberate decision not to cite the Instagram profiles of the individuals in question, whether by linking to them explicitly or implicitly, or by mentioning the authors of the stories or their visual resources.

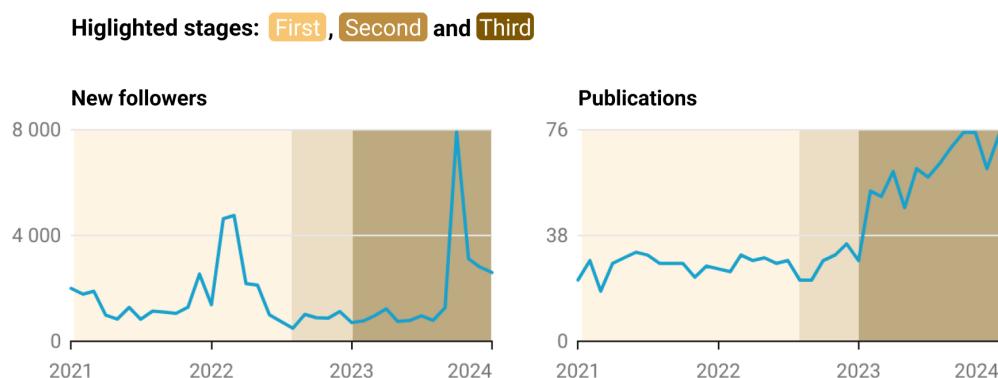
With regard to headlines, they are barely present in 4% of the publications in the first stage, which is characterised by their absence. They begin to appear in 20% of the publications in the second stage and reach 81.3% in the third stage. This indicates, as previously explained when the periods were delimited, a greater narrative effort in the use of the platform during this last temporal division.

Regarding the reach of Politico's profile posts, it should be noted as an initial consideration that it is logical that the number of followers on social profiles tends to grow over time. This is due to the fact that it is more common for individuals to add members to their social networks than to lose them. Additionally, numerous studies have demonstrated that there is a 'more is more' effect that directly influences engagement with social content. The greater the volume of publications, the higher the number of followers, which is even employed as a tool for political communication on social networks (Alonso-Muñoz, 2020).

To ascertain whether this trend was applicable to the profile under examination, the data provided by the Social Blade tool, which offers comprehensive insights into the monthly evolution of Politico, was utilised. In particular, the data set comprises the number of posts published in each month and the number of new followers (see Figure 3).

The existing series of data does not commence at the account's inception, which was in August 2020, but rather in January 2021. Nevertheless, it provides a useful illustrative reference point for the account's growth.

Figure 3. Monthly number of posts and new followers for @politicoeurope's Instagram account (January 2021 - January 2024)



Source: Own elaboration, with data from Social Blade, 2024.

As can be observed, the number of publications during the initial two phases was relatively low, with an average of 1,582 new followers per month. However, during the third phase, the number of publications increased twofold, while the number of new followers per month rose by an average of 1,897.

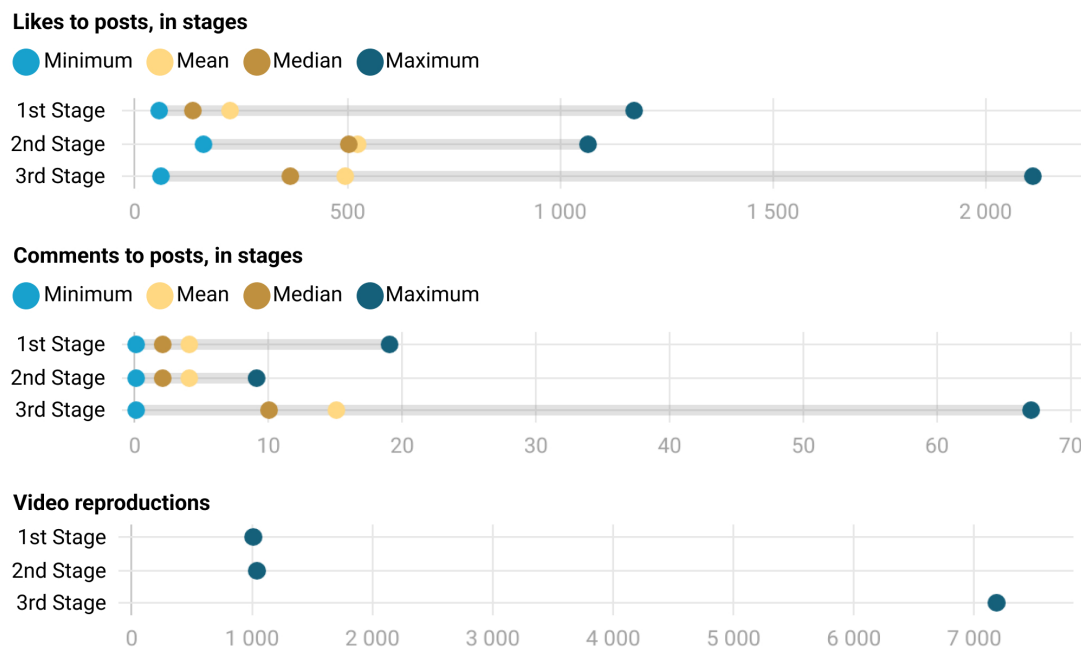
In the absence of evidence regarding the existence of targeted marketing campaigns during the periods under examination, the data indicate that the surge in publication frequency and the enhancement in narrative quality are temporally aligned with a 19.9% monthly increase in the number of followers.

This data is significant when considering that followers represent the foundation of all interaction, as evidenced by the positive correlation between the number of followers and the ratio of comments and likes to posts. This is nevertheless the case on Instagram, where the mere technical fact of following an account allows the user to interact with the content published by that account. Indeed, following an account implies receiving its updates, which makes it more likely – although not necessary – that the user will be able to interact with a piece of content if they access it.

To provide a comprehensive analysis, we have also quantified the typical Instagram engagement indicators at each stage (Figure 4). This allows us to assess whether the observed growth in platform usage has resulted in greater engagement and commitment from the follower community. Our data indicate that this is indeed the case, with follower numbers increasing in line with the rise in publication volume and improvements in narrative quality.

The data demonstrate that, in general terms, there are notable discrepancies between the initial two stages and the third.

Figure 4. Quantification of the *engagement* of the Instagram account @politicoeurope in comments and *likes* to posts, divided by stages.



Source: Own elaboration, 2024.

It is notable that the number of likes exceeds that of comments, a phenomenon commonly observed in social networks where interaction is often expedient and effortless, as compared to the time and effort required to compose a comment. In this regard, the greatest number of comments on a single post within the selected sample is 67, in comparison to a maximum of 2,109 likes.

To illustrate the data, the minimum and maximum values for each element of engagement are presented, differentiated by stages. Additionally, the mean and median values are included to facilitate the observation of the typical behaviour of the community beyond one-off publications.

The data indicate that the initial two phases exhibit markedly low means and medians for both comments and likes. Consequently, the mean and median for the initial two stages were four comments and two, respectively. In the third stage, however, the mean increases to 15, with a median of 10.

With regard to the number of likes, the initial period exhibited a mean of 221 and a median of 135. Due to the limited sample size in the second period, the mean and median values were highly similar, with a mean of 521 and a median of 500, respectively.

In the third stage, the peak in likes is twice as high as in the previous stages, although the median is somewhat lower at -364. This is compensated for by a consistent average over a much longer period of time at -493.

4. Discussion and conclusions

The rationale behind the utilisation of social media profiles by media outlets can be attributed to the necessity to engage with their readership in a manner that aligns with the characteristics of digital social environments. This entails a proactive approach to community-building, whereby the media outlets in question seek to establish a presence within the digital space and foster connections with their target audiences.

The specific case of Politico is no different, even on Instagram, where a clear intention to increase website traffic can be observed. It can be observed that all the publications analysed lead to a 'link in bio', a common formula on the platform as it does not allow individual URLs to be inserted in a usable way. In the specific case of this header, the single link leads to a page within its own website in which the Instagram profile is replicated as a mirror in its design, offering identical tiles to those of the social network, which in this case are linked directly.

In this way, as is the case with many other media outlets, Politico employs this social network for the promotion and evaluation of content (stories, reports, etc.), directing its followers to its primary platforms, which contributes to the distribution of content, in addition to increasing website traffic. The distinctive aspect of this research is that the subject matter of the selected headline, namely politics and economics, does not typically receive the same visual treatment as other reference media on this highly visual social network.

In light of the data obtained from the analysis of the use of Instagram by the European edition of this newspaper, it is evident that there has been a discernible evolution and enhancement in the utilisation of the platform, manifested in the meticulous attention devoted to their publications, the regularity of their posting, and the extent of their reach. Consequently, the content published has evolved from a lack of sophistication and occasional repurposing of material from other social media platforms to a coherent and consistent approach to format, aesthetic and content. The increase in the number of followers, as well as the enhanced performance of their publications in terms of likes and views, serve as evidence of this.

The focus of Instagram on visual and multimedia content enables media organisations, including Politico, to share images, videos and animations that have been carefully crafted. This is particularly recommended for the rapid and effective conveyance of information. The publications included in the sample demonstrate effective graphic design and a coherent strategy for content creation, resulting in the establishment of a distinctive identity that aligns with the style of the masthead.

Nevertheless, there is potential for enhancement to achieve optimal performance on this social network, which is one of the most successful in the world, particularly among younger audiences. For instance, there is a notable absence of the utilisation of colour as a communicative instrument, particularly as a source of semantic associations and meanings (ideology, countries, and so forth) or as a means of identifying topics and sections. In any case, it can be argued that this masthead makes effective use of the potential offered by Instagram to establish its own communicative style.

Furthermore, they do not utilise the additional tools provided by the platform, such as direct engagement with the audience through comments, responses or the generation of debate; polls; or interpellations and questions within the description of the publications themselves. Such a strategy would enable Politico to obtain immediate feedback and gain deeper insights into the needs and interests of its followers.

Similarly, the creation and promotion of specific hashtags for particular topics could be employed to attract new audiences and encourage their participation, thereby facilitating the expansion and reinforcement of their community around pertinent issues and content. Furthermore, it would be beneficial to tag the individuals referenced in the content, as well as the authors of the linked information and those responsible for the shared graphic content, whenever feasible.

In conclusion, there are additional content formats that could enhance the utilisation of this social network by the publication in question. For instance, greater utilisation of animations and videos – a resource that is underused, particularly given the audiovisual nature of Instagram – or the incorporation of iconic elements such as infographics could be encouraged.

This would enable Politico to gain a more profound comprehension of its existing readership and user base by discerning their underlying motivations, which would in turn facilitate more effective outreach to other prospective users.

As González Fernández notes:

The proximity, sincerity, and involvement conveyed by images in the digital age have resulted in social networks becoming a prominent platform for both existing and potential audiences. Consequently, media entities must establish a presence on these platforms to connect with an audience that is increasingly disengaged from traditional news outlets and gravitating towards transmediality and multiplatforms (González Fernández, 2021, p. 434).

In essence, the utilisation of Instagram by both legacy and digital media represents the ongoing evolution of the media ecosystem, which is shaped by shifts in consumer behaviour and technological advancements. Consequently, the media's presence on this network constitutes a fundamental component of a broader strategy that enables them to compete in the digital domain, where information is increasingly consumed through digital media and social networks. The adoption of digital platforms such as Instagram thus reflects the necessity for traditional media outlets to adapt to the digital age and diversify their content distribution strategies. Politico, a prominent European political journalism media outlet, plays a pivotal role in the field.

Although the sample selected has permitted the initial approximation to be carried out, the selection of a larger sample would facilitate a more profound investigation and the drawing of more robust conclusions. Similarly, with a view to future research, in addition to the publications analysed in this article, it would be beneficial to consider the use made of the platform's ephemeral formats (stories) and the management of this ephemerality (the stories highlighted by the headline itself in its profile). It is therefore proposed that the sample be increased in future studies in order to corroborate whether the identified trends are maintained or, conversely, whether new communicative strategies are adopted.

Furthermore, future studies should aim to ascertain the prevailing themes in Politico posts across different stages. Following an initial observational approach, it would be feasible to analyse the recurrence of specific issues, such as climate change, cybersecurity, reviews, and so forth. Additionally, it would be possible to examine the linkage between these recurring issues and current events, including the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the Qatargate scandal, and the war in Ukraine. Similarly, a subsequent examination could be conducted to determine which political leaders or influential personalities in international geopolitics are most frequently mentioned and the content of which countries is predominantly reflected in the majority of posts on their Instagram profiles.

Similarly, another potential avenue for future research would be to contrast the findings from this social media platform with those from other social networks, such as X. Additionally, it would be beneficial to compare the results with those from Politico's original headline, the American version, or even with other publications on similar topics or with a comparable scope.

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