



‘GRANDFLUENCERS’: HOW OLDER ADULTS REINVENT THEMSELVES ON TIKTOK

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KEYWORDS

*TikTok
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ABSTRACT

In the context of an ageing population, social media platforms provide older adults with a space to engage in the public sphere and challenge ageist stereotypes. This study examines the use of TikTok by 11 Spanish grandfluencers, aiming to categorise their messages, identify which types generate higher engagement, and determine their target audiences. A combination of content analysis and in-depth interviews with the creators and their families was employed. The grandfluencer phenomenon stands out for promoting intergenerational interactions and breaking down age-related prejudices. Through strategies such as humour and storytelling, these users create emotional connections with their audiences and highlight generational diversity on digital platforms typically dominated by young people. The findings offer insights for designing inclusive policies and communication strategies that promote generational equity and support active ageing.

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1. Introduction

Social networks are regarded as interactive and relational applications, spaces for contact between information, entertainment and people. It is generally accepted within the field of research on social platforms that the primary objective of these platforms is to facilitate the aforementioned interaction (Montero Corrales, 2017), with the requirement for bidirectional communication.

The most evident sign of evolution was at the beginning of the century, with the popularisation of general social networks such as Facebook and Twitter. The opening of new channels brought about transformations in the entire communication process, from the type of message to the multiplicity of audiences and senders. The user becomes both the receiver and sender of the communication, leaving aside the brand or company as the sole transmitter of the messages.





















Consequently, social networks have transformed the dynamics of communication, primarily by obscuring the conventional boundaries between the sender and receiver of communication, thereby transforming the receiver into an active sender. Secondly, social media platforms position the sender in a position of equality, given that they have the potential to reach as many users of these target audiences as large corporations (media or otherwise) that have more economic and technological means (Díez Bueso, 2018).

In the context of contemporary social networking, the application TikTok has emerged as a notable success story, representing the latest development in the realm of interactive and relational applications on the social web (Fernandez-Peña et al., 2014). TikTok rapidly ascended to the zenith of the most utilised social networks (IAB Spain, 2023), a position previously held by well-established platforms such as Facebook, X (previously known as Twitter), and Instagram, attributable to both intrinsic and extrinsic factors.

The growth of TikTok users has been exponential: the latest Datareportal report, from January 2024, puts the number of users on the platform at 1.56 billion worldwide, based on its advertising potential. The report's focus on users aged 18 and over is noteworthy, as TikTok's official age requirement is 13 (though unofficial access is reported as early as 7, as noted in Europapress, 2024). As stated in the aforementioned report, this application is the most widely used when compared to other social media platforms. Its users spend an average of 34 hours per month viewing content, thus placing it at the top of the list above YouTube and Facebook.

TikTok's unique status as an Asian-born platform, a distinctive feature within an ecosystem predominantly dominated by American platforms, is well-documented. The app's genesis, which arose from the merger with Musical.ly, is also a well-known fact. As is its global popularity: According to SensorTower (2024), the application has been installed more than 500 million times, placing it second only to Instagram in terms of popularity. However, it is the first one on which users spend the majority of their time.

Image 1. Top Apps from iOS and Google Play Store.

CONSUMER SPEND			DOWNLOADS		
Rank	Change	App Name	Rank	Change	App Name
1	=	 TikTok	1	▲ 1	 Instagram
2	=	 YouTube	2	▼ 1	 TikTok
3	=	 Google One	3	=	 Facebook
4	=	 Disney+	4	=	 WhatsApp Messenger
5	=	 Tinder	5	▲ 1	 CapCut
6	=	 Tencent Video	6	▲ 1	 Telegram
7	▲ 1	 Max	7	▼ 2	 Temu
8	▼ 1	 iQIYI	8	▲ 1	 Spotify
9	▲ 2	 LinkedIn	9	▼ 1	 Snapchat
10	▼ 1	 Bumble	10	=	 WhatsApp Business

Source: SensorTower (2024)

The factors intrinsic to the popularisation of TikTok are diverse, as evidenced by the numerous factors outlined in the book 'Attention Factory'. The Story of TikTok & China's Bytedance (2020), Matthew Brennan's work, focuses on the technological configuration of the application, which engenders addictive behaviour. As a pivotal extrinsic factor, the pandemic caused by COVID-19 can be mentioned, representing a pivotal moment in the growth of the app, as evidenced by the app's download statistics (SensorTower, 2023).

The aforementioned pandemic resulted in the platform's utilisation by users from both younger generations and older adults, who have been shown to utilise social networks as a means of support and communication (Carretón-Ballester & Ramos-Soler, 2011). Nevertheless, older adults have not merely passively consumed the content of social networks; rather, they have become influential profiles. This article explores the presence of older adults on TikTok who fulfil this role, and the relationship between this phenomenon and prevailing stereotypes.

2. State of Play

A study entitled 'Not too old for TikTok' was published by Ng and Idran in The Gerontologist in 2022. The study focuses on how older adults challenge socially constructed narratives about old age on this social network.

This perspective is a relatively recent one, with research indicating that individuals over the age of 60 (the age categorised by the WHO as 'older adults') are a demographic frequently subjected to negative and ageist stereotypes. These stereotypes have been demonstrated to have a detrimental impact on the physical, mental and emotional well-being of this group (Dionigi, 2015). Oscarona et al. (2016) conducted a review of the main studies on negative self-stereotypes and ageing, thereby reinforcing the harmful nature of this view:

Table 1. Review of the main studies on negative self-stereotypes and ageing.

Author (year and country)	Population, study design and methodology	Target	Results
Levy <i>et al.</i> (2012) USA	Patient cohort: <i>Baltimore Longitudinal Study of Aging</i> (BLSA), 38 years follow-up. Assessment instrument: <i>Attitudes toward Old People scale</i> (ATOP).	The influence of negative stereotypes of ageing on memory	Memory decline was greater in patients with more negative stereotypes of ageing, especially those with self-relevant self-stereotypes ("self-fulfilling prophecies" effect on memory).
Levy <i>et al.</i> (2012) USA	Evaluation of 598 people over 70 years of age. Measurement of activities of daily living. Age stereotype question: " <i>When you think of older people, what are the first 5 words or phrases that come to mind?</i> "	Association between positive age stereotypes and disability recovery in older people	Older people with positive age stereotypes were 44% more likely to recover from severe disability than those with negative stereotypes.
Swift <i>et al.</i> (2012) United Kingdom	Randomised study of 56 people with a mean age of 82.25 years. Measurement of manual pressure force and pressure persistence measured with a stopwatch, with or without comparison with young people.	Influence of negative stereotyping of muscle strength on performance in the elderly	Age matching creates a stereotype threat that reduces muscle strength above 50% of the normal age-related range.
Miller <i>et al.</i> (2013) USA	Evaluation of 76 young people (average age: 26 years). Methodology: <i>priming</i> of age-	Influence of negative stereotypes of	Negative stereotypes of ageing decrease gait speed and word recall; however,

	related stereotypes.	ageing on olfactory function (sensitivity, discrimination, identification, intensity, pleasantness and familiarity), gait speed and word recall.	they do not influence olfactory function.
St. John and Montgomery (2013) Canada	Secondary analysis of a prospective cohort study of 1,751 adult (> 64 years of age) residents.	Association with frailty in 5-year follow-up period of acceptance of relationship between age and disability. Question analysed: <i>"When you reach my age, you have to accept a certain degree of discomfort and physical disability"</i> .	Acceptance of disability as part of ageing is strongly associated with frailty at time 1: the adjusted <i>odds ratio</i> (OR) and 95% confidence interval (CI) was 1.47 (1.25, 1.72). This association persisted after adjusting for confounding factors.

Source: Oscarona et al. (2016)

Cortés et al. (2024) have recently conducted a review of the existing literature on the subject, but their findings do not present a different scenario, especially in terms of health. Indeed, the negative stereotypes associated with older adults include vulnerability, dependence, learning difficulties and being a burden on those around them:

Table 2. Positive and negative stereotypes associated with old age

Dimensions	Positive stereotypes	Negative stereotypes
Health	Not identified	Vulnerable, memory loss, learning difficulties, dependent, easily fall ill, are a burden.
Participation and social bonding	Educated, principled. Women-symbols of family togetherness	Loneliness, exclusion, abandonment
Social identity	Calm, reliable	Sad, aggressive, lonely

Source: Cortés & Lulle (2024)

The advent of social media has led to the dissemination of studies that have yielded less than favourable outcomes. A notable example is that of Levy et al. (2013) in the United States, who undertook an analysis of the content of 84 public Facebook groups centred on older adults. The study revealed that 74% of the descriptions criticised this group, 27% infantilised them and 37% advocated banning them from participating in public activities. Contrary to the initial hypothesis that Facebook promoted enhanced intergenerational understanding, the final results indicated that, instead of dismantling generational barriers, the social network may in fact be generating new ones.

In the span of less than a decade, a novel phenomenon has emerged in Spain with the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic: an unexpected increase in the adoption of technology by the elderly, marked by a heightened utilisation of video calls and WhatsApp messages, with the aim of mitigating feelings of social isolation. Research by Flores Tena (2020) found that social media platforms contribute to improving the health and well-being of this group by encouraging social interaction.

This increased adoption of technology is corroborated by the study by Viñarás et al. (2022), which analysed the online shopping behaviour of 450 older adults between the ages of 60 and 79. The primary

conclusion of this study is that a significant proportion of older adults who possess fundamental digital competencies perceive themselves as competent in the domain of online shopping.

However, the factors that facilitate the use of technology by older adults are associated with their level of education and family environment, as indicated by Papí-Gálvez and La Parra-Casado (2023). Specifically, older adults with a higher level of education, prior experience with technology, and a social environment comprising younger family members encounter fewer challenges in their technology use.

In their 2023 study, Kolotouchkina et al. explored the training and active participation of older people in the digital ecosystem as a means of addressing digital ageism. They argued that this issue poses a challenge for local governments and institutions, which find themselves between the digitalisation of their services and the perceived exclusion of older adults from digital life.

In the contemporary context, there is an increasing prevalence of challenging profiles, which can be attributed to the emergence of ageism stereotyping and the growing influence of older adult influencers. Ghosh's (2023) study on Instagram concludes that older adult influencers challenge stereotypes by demonstrating active lives full of opportunities, thereby empowering their followers and fostering a community without age barriers. The term 'influencer', historically associated with young people who exert a significant influence on social media, is being broadened to include these older adults who are proposing new ways of ageing, challenging gender norms and establishing new perspectives on old age and ageing.

These influential older adults have been dubbed 'grandfluencers'. The term, which was popularised by the BBC in 2019, refers to older adults (aged 53 and over) or 'grandparents' who have become influencers, sharing content on one or more social media platforms and followed by a large community of followers. The article stated that these profiles had increased their communities by 24% since 2017, providing a global overview of the interest they were generating.

The term 'grandfluencer' itself is defined as a term used to describe an influencer who is of an advanced age, and who shares content online on a variety of topics, including fashion, lifestyle, humour, and personal advice and experiences. These subjects have been observed to encourage the gradual growth of their respective communities of followers and to attract the attention of brands seeking to reach their target audience (The Social Standard, n.d.). It should be noted that this target audience does not necessarily have to be in the same age range as the grandfluencer.

The main objective of this work focuses on the study of the use of TikTok as a communication channel of older adults, with presence and influence in the social network. The specific objectives of the study are as follows:

01. To analyse the use of TikTok by Spanish grandfluencers in relation to the categories of content in which they publish.

02. To analyse the communication strategy and the type of content used by older adult influencers on TikTok.

03. To analyse the tone and style of older adult influencers' TikTok posts in relation to age stereotypes.

The following hypotheses were formulated:

H1. Grandfluencers' communication strategy on TikTok is mostly spontaneous, and its content typology and periodicity depend on what the grandfluencer wants to communicate at a given moment.

H2. By posting on TikTok, the grandfluencer implicitly seeks to break stereotypes associated with age.

H3. The impact of content posted by grandfluencers on TikTok has a direct impact on different age groups, and this visibility contributes to breaking down stereotypes about older adults.

3. Methodology and Research Design

In order to achieve the aforementioned objectives and hypotheses, an exploratory and cross-sectional study was carried out, with a correlational research design. The information was collected in two phases. Firstly, a quantitative content analysis was conducted. Secondly, a qualitative analysis centred on four in-depth interviews was carried out.

3.1. Content Analysis: Sample Design and Selection, Categories and Variables of Analysis.

The content analysis is based on previous studies on the use of content published on TikTok (Ng and Indran, 2022; Arias et al., 2023; Sidorenko-Bautista et al., 2022). The sample was selected by searching TikTok for profiles that met the criteria established in this study:

- a) They have at least 100,000 followers (since they are considered influencers by IAB Spain, 2023, and Díaz del Dedo, 2017).
- b) The protagonists of the account (in 90% or more of the videos) are over 60 years old.
- c) The country of residence is Spain.
- d) They have published at least 6 videos on TikTok in the 12 months prior to the study.

After an initial exploration of TikTok profiles of older adults in Spain, 11 TikTok profiles of older adult content creators were selected for content analysis.

Table 3. List of grandfluencers studied.

	User TikTok	Followers	Publis hed videos**	Sex	Age	Country of residence
1	@conbuenhumor	9.400.000	1.200	Woman	84 years old	Spain
2	@dolores.morenoo	4.300.000	3.900	Woman	70 years	Spain
3	@antonialachunga1***.	650.400	903	Woman	88 years old	Spain
4	@mrosariobellidolopez	568.500	2.700	Woman	63 years	Spain
5	@abueladedragones	387.200	149	Woman	90 years	Spain
6	@layayamaricarmen	386.400	386	Woman	83 years	Spain
7	@laabucarmentxu	345.200	64	Woman	75 years	Spain
8	@learn.maths	244.200	274	Man	74 years old	Spain
9	@mulero_ok	236.000	5.400	Man	80 years	Spain
10	@libradainfluencer	225.800	246	Woman	71 years old	Spain
11	@patricio4500losgemelos	222.700	319	Man	79 years	Spain

Source: Own elaboration, 2025.

* Followers as of 30/10/2024

** Total account videos as of 30/10/2024

***Died in July 2024

Given the novelty of the research on older adults and TikTok, the classification of content is based on previous research both on this platform and on other social networks. The most recent are those proposed by Arias et al. (2023), Ng and Indran (2022) and Sidorenko-Bautista et al.

The analysis focused on aspects such as the virality indices defined by Congosto (2015) and the engagement described by Rojas and Redondo (2013). In order to quantify these indices, they were measured:

- Total number of 'likes' per video.
- Total number of comments per video.
- Total number of shares per video.
- Total number of downloads per video.
- Total number of favourites per video.
- Total number of views per video.

These metrics are public within the TikTok platform and are considered the most common engagement and reach metrics in social networks, according to Mejía-Llano (2023) and González

Fernández-Villavicencio et al. (2013). The formula used to calculate the level of engagement of each video analysed in this study was the following:

$(\text{Total likes per video} + \text{total comments per video} + \text{total shares per video} + \text{total downloads per video} + \text{total favourites per video}) \times 100 / \text{number of views per video}.$

The profiles of each grandfluencer's followers are also created. The data taken into account are

- Age range
- Gender
- Geographical location (country)

To extract these metrics, the study relies on the Exolyt tool. These profiles allow conclusions to be drawn about the impact of the content of grandfluencers on social networks in certain age groups.

Based on the literature review, the comparative analysis of the previous analysis tables and the proposal of original analysis criteria to achieve the research objectives, the following analysis variables are proposed for the sample:

3.1.1. Protagonism

The content analysis revealed that the protagonism in the videos of the grandfluencers on TikTok refers to who assumes the main role. Two forms of protagonism are identified:

1. The concept of the grandfluencer as the central character of content is predicated on the notion that this older adult is able to express opinions, share experiences, perform viral challenges or generate interactions with the audience.
2. A third party is defined as an individual who is not a family member, friend or collaborator of the grandfluencer. It is evident that the older adult can function as either a co-protagonist or a secondary character. In contrast, the third party assumes a pivotal role in providing contextual information, narrating events, or interacting with the grandfluencer.

3.2. Thematic

3.2.1. Challenging Aging Stereotypes

This includes content where older adults break with traditional expectations about their age.

- Independence and autonomy: content showing older adults doing things usually associated with younger people, such as travelling alone, driving or using technology.
- Lifestyle: Content showing older adults doing sports, engaging in dynamic leisure activities or taking part in cultural and social events.
- Breaking taboos about sexuality: Content that explores desire, relationships and emotional wellbeing as we age, demystifying the idea that ageing means giving up on love and sexuality.
- Participation in digital trends: Videos in which older adults participate in viral challenges, dances, memes or humorous interactions typical of social media culture. Video is used to share life anecdotes or dramatise situations.
- Leadership and teaching: Content in which older adults share their knowledge in various fields, teach skills (cooking, art, technology, etc.) or give advice based on their life experience.
- Age-related diseases: Content that addresses the management of common health conditions in old age in a realistic and empowering way, without reducing older adults to their health status.
- Active family collaboration: Publications in which family members (children, grandchildren, nieces and nephews) actively participate alongside older adults, not just as spectators or helpers, but as companions in the experience.
- Promotion and sponsorship: Publications that feature older adults in advertising campaigns, brand collaborations or product promotions, breaking the marketing industry's exclusion of this group.

3.2.2. Reinforcing Ageing Stereotypes

Content that perpetuates a limited or negative view of ageing by reproducing images of dependency, fragility or disconnection from modernity.

- Humorous ageism: Use of jokes and exaggerated portrayals in which older adults portray themselves (or others) as clumsy, disoriented, or unable to understand trends and technologies.
- Infantilisation of older people: Content that portrays older people as if they were children, highlighting their vulnerability, dependence on family members and lack of autonomy.
- Vulnerability: Publications that reduce the identity of older adults to their health problems or physical limitations, without showing other dimensions of their lives.
- Rejection of change: Content that reinforces the idea that older people are averse to technology, progress or new forms of communication.
- Exclusive support role: Content in which older adults appear only as support figures for the family, with no interests or projects of their own.

3.2.3. Educational and Activist Content

This type of content aims to raise awareness of ageism and promote active and inclusive ageing.

- Denouncing ageism: Videos in which older adults share their experiences of ageism and reflect on how to change these attitudes.
- Promoting active ageing: Content that presents old age as a stage with opportunities for personal growth, learning and participation in society.
- Visibility of diversity in ageing: Publications that show different ways of ageing, including diversity of gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity and health status.
- Digital inclusion: Content that promotes older adults' access to technology and digital literacy, and encourages their participation in the digital environment.

3.3. Tone and Text Resources

Analyses the communicative tone used in the publications and the textual resources used to complement the audiovisual content.

3.3.1. Tone

Tone refers to the intention and style with which the message is presented in publications. The following types can be identified

- Humorous: The main aim is to generate laughter or entertainment. Jokes, irony or comic situations are used to challenge age stereotypes and connect with the audience in a light and fun way.
- Emotional: Appeals to the viewer's sensibilities through memories, personal experiences or moving stories. This tone aims to create empathy, nostalgia or inspiration.
- Explanatory or demonstrative: Focuses on conveying information in a clear and structured way, showing solutions, benefits or instructions on a topic, product or service.
- Testimonial: Presents personal accounts of lived experience, where an older person tells their story of using a product or service, validating its effectiveness or impact on their life.

3.3.2. Text resources

These resources accompany the visual content and increase its reach and impact within the platform.

- Description: Indicates the presence of descriptive text that contextualises the content of the video, providing details about the subject, message or intention of the release.
- Use of hashtags: Evaluates whether hashtags are being used to increase the visibility of the content and reach a wider audience within TikTok. These can be related to the topic of the video or popular trends on TikTok.

This approach makes it possible to analyse how creators structure their message and what strategies they use to connect with their audience.

3.4. Interaction

Evaluates the impact and level of engagement grandfluencers generate with their audience within TikTok. Interaction is measured through a number of quantifiable metrics that reflect the audience's response to their posts.

Key metrics analysed include:

- Views: The number of times a video has been played within TikTok.
- Likes: Number of users who have indicated that they like the content.
- Comments: Number of messages left by followers, which allows us to measure the level of participation and conversation generated around the content.
- Shares: Number of times the video has been shared with other users. This metric is related to virality.
- Favourites: Number of times users have saved the video to their Favourites list.
- Downloads: Number of times the video has been downloaded, indicating that users find the content interesting enough to keep off the platform.

Analysis of these indicators provides insight into the level of influence of grandfluencers and the effectiveness of their content strategies in generating audience engagement.

3.5. Publications Frequency

The study examines the regularity with which prominent content creators on the social media platform TikTok, known as 'grandfluencers', disseminate content, thereby directly influencing their level of visibility and impact on the platform.

In this category, the following analysis is conducted:

- Periodicity: The frequency with which videos are uploaded in the time period analysed is categorised as follows: daily, weekly, monthly, or occasional.
- Consistency: Assessment on whether the publication of content follows a stable pattern or varies significantly over time.
- Activity trends: The identification of potential pivotal moments when the frequency of video posting is likely to increase, such as special dates, promotional campaigns or significant events.

This analysis facilitates the determination of the manner in which posting frequency exerts influence on the interaction and growth of grandfluencers, in addition to their ranking within the TikTok algorithm.

3.6. In-Depth Interviews

Subsequent to the attainment of the results of the quantitative phase, these were subjected to a process of confrontation with qualitative fieldwork (Álvarez-Gayou, 2003), through semi-structured, flexible and dynamic in-depth interviews, which allowed the findings of the quantitative phase to be contextualised (Taylor and Bogdan, 2008).

The questionnaire consists of 12 questions. The interviews were conducted in January 2025. Five profiles were selected from among the study's grandfluencers and their family members.

Table 4. *Grandfluencers* and family members interviewed in depth

Name and Surname	Related TikTok profile	Relationship with the <i>Grandfluencer</i>	Location	Position/Profession
Rosa Vallejo	@conbuenhumor	Not applicable	Barcelona	Retired/ <i>Grandfluencer</i>
Christian Morales	@conbuenhumor	Nieto	Barcelona	Journalist
Antonia Fita	@antonialachunga	Daughter	Valencia	Cleaner
Librada Solar	@libradainfluencer	Not applicable	Fuengirola (Málaga)	Retired/ <i>Grandfluencer</i>
Alejandro Posada	@libradainfluencer	Nieto	Fuengirola (Málaga)	Commercial and trader

Source: Own elaboration, 2025.

4. Results

4.1. *Grandfluencers' Followers Profiles*

The analysis of the grandfluencers revealed a predominance of female followers, with a mean age of between 20 and 29 years (representing between 50% and 75% of the total follower population). The majority of these followers resided in Spain.

As supplementary substantial data, adherents aged 40 and over comprise a residual percentage (5% or less), with no adherents in the 70-79 age group.

4.2. *Broadcasted Content Type and Engagement*

An analysis of the 1,440 videos posted by grandfluencers between November 2023 and October 2024 reveals a marked trend towards creating content that challenges stereotypes of ageing. The most prevalent formats include engaging with digital trends, employing humour and reinterpreting popular jokes to appeal to a younger audience.

The utilisation of humour has been identified as a pivotal strategy for the propagation of content by prominent content creators. It is notable that profiles such as @conbuenhumor and @libradainfluencer are distinguished by their capacity to engender interactions through the medium of comedy, thereby humanising the experience of ageing and establishing an intergenerational bridge.

In the study, profiles such as @dolores.morenoo and @mulero_ok were found to be of particular note due to their utilisation of a language and style that is consistent with that of Generation Z, a factor which has been demonstrated to increase their level of engagement. Conversely, accounts such as @conbuenhumor and @libradainfluencer employ humour and spontaneity to produce high-impact content, achieving a significant audience reach.

Furthermore, educational topics have been found to exhibit a satisfactory level of interaction, as evidenced by the case of @aprende.mates, who offers didactic content. Furthermore, a number of prominent content creators specialising in culinary pursuits, such as @patricio4500losgemelos, employ their online platforms to transcend conventional age and gender stereotypes through their culinary expertise.

A salient aspect pertains to the depiction of diseases associated with the ageing process, which is approached with a positive perspective, without reducing the creators to their health condition. It is evident that @antonialachunga1 provides an exemplary illustration of this phenomenon, adopting a

narrative approach that is characterised by a sense of empowerment in the context of Alzheimer's disease.

The mean engagement of the accounts under scrutiny ranges from 3.8% to 15.4%, with @conbuenhumor exhibiting the lowest rank despite its substantial following, while @laabuelacarmentxu attains the highest level of interaction.

In terms of frequency of publication, grandfluencers can be divided into two groups. The first group consists of those with sporadic publications, typically on a monthly or weekly basis. These individuals usually rely on the collaboration of family members for the production of their videos. The second group consists of those with daily or frequent publications. These individuals are characterised by a simple and autonomous production of content. While the initial group demonstrates a more pronounced digital strategy, the latter group is characterised by a notable closeness and spontaneity in their interactions with the audience.

5. Contrast Stage

The results obtained in the quantitative stage are then contrasted and contextualised with the findings from five in-depth interviews. These interviews were conducted with the grandfluencers and their family members. These family members were involved in the creation and dissemination of content on TikTok. The points of convergence and divergence are subsequently emphasised, alongside the most salient findings.

5.1. Communicative Strategy and Content Typology

The initial foray of grandfluencers into the domain of communication occurred intuitively on the TikTok platform. It is acknowledged by Christian Morales (grandson of @conbuenhumor), Alejandro Posada (grandson of @libradainfluencer) and Antonia Fita (daughter of @antonalachunga1) that prior engagement with other social media platforms, including Instagram, preceded their initiation of TikTok. The decision to utilise the platform was made intuitively, without prior planning or strategizing. The initial success and virality of the content shared on the platform, which featured family members, served as a motivating factor for the continuation of their activities on TikTok.

With regard to the planning stage, both Morales and Posada concede that, despite the spontaneous nature of their family grandfluencers' behaviour, they do engage in prior planning and ideation prior to the recording of the video clips. In Fita's case, due to Antonia Amador's (@antonalachunga1) illness, the recordings were contingent on Antonia's state of health. In all cases, the decision on the subject matter of the content rests with the family members.

It is imperative to acknowledge the necessity for content adaptation in order to align with the specific characteristics and needs of the intended audience. Morales states that, given the characteristics of their community, demand for content is increasing, and that the type of content influences the age of the follower. He provides the example of their initial recipe videos, which were aimed at a audience of 50-year-olds and older. In contrast, he states that the current hidden camera content is reaching a younger audience, which is the demographic they wish to impact.

The preferred subject matter and approach of the interviewees is humour: both Librada Solar and Rosa Vallejo state that they like to make humour videos "so that people have a good time and enjoy themselves", a view shared by their grandchildren. In the case of Fita, it was also evident that she preferred videos with a humorous tone when sharing her mother's content.

5.2. Breaking Down Stereotypes Associated with Ageing

Regarding the image projected by these prominent influencers, opinions are divided. Fita asserts that the image projected corresponds to an older adult suffering from Alzheimer's disease, while Posada maintains a neutral stance, stating that there is parity between the videos in which Librada portrays "a Spanish grandmother" and those in which she presents a wholly different image. Morales challenges the conventional stereotype of the elderly, asserting that Rosa Vallejo defies the typical 'grandmother' archetype.

Morales (2024) refers to the negative characteristics of this stereotype, as previously cited by Cortes & Lulle (2024): It is not a case of an aged, uninteresting grandmother who spends her days on the sofa.

Not many possess such vitality and joie de vivre; it is as if they are anticipating death. A mere walk, the television, dinner, and that concludes the day's activities."

In general, the reactions to these older adults sharing content on TikTok have been positive, although both Fita and Morales report that they were initially criticised for the visibility of their elders. The critics claimed that the pair were profiting at their expense or putting them in less than respectable situations. Conversely, as their popularity increased, the criticism decreased. Librada Solar asserts that her content is highly popular: "I have always had a lot of support from my followers".

It is asserted by both Solar, Morales and Vallejo that their content is instrumental in effecting a shift in perception with regard to older people. Solar asserts that their objective is "to imbue older individuals with a sense of vitality, to enable them to engage in activities, and to dispel the notion that they must remain sedentary throughout the day".

Both prominent content creators interviewed asserted that creating content for TikTok contributes to their personal wellbeing. Vallejo states that she derives great pleasure from eliciting laughter from others, while Solar expresses a profound affection for video creation, stating "I love it, and it helps me a lot".

5.3. Generational Impact

It is notable that Vallejo, Solar and Fita appear to lack an accurate understanding of the demographics of their community, a proficiency that Morales and Posada evidently possess. Solar, however, has been observed to engage with his followers' comments on a daily basis, as well as observing the videos of other prominent content creators.

It is noteworthy that all interviewees observed a predominantly favourable disposition in the comments, particularly among younger demographics. Posada asserts that the demographic exhibiting the highest levels of engagement is the younger segment, with older individuals (41+) predominantly acting as passive consumers of content. The platform has been referenced extensively, and its content has been shared or repurposed in the form of duets, a feature unique to TikTok. Fita has noted negative comments from people over 40, as well as the creation of Facebook groups unrelated to her, with content derived from her account, which she describes as "devastating".

Morales and Posada further posit that their content has motivated other seniors to engage with the platform, with @conbuenhumor being the inaugural social media grandfluencer. Additionally, Librada herself has been known to send her grandson videos of seniors creating content that mirrors her own.

In relation to brand collaborations, grandfluencers have engaged in partnerships with entities associated with younger demographics, such as @conbuenhumor with Bavaria, Kellogg's, and Sony Music; and @libradainfluencer with Bifrutas, Juicy Drop, Temu, and a local escape room enterprise. Additionally, they have collaborated with brands that align with their own age demographic, including GAES, Maximiliana, and Cuidum.

6. Discussion and Conclusions

6.1. Discussion

The phenomenon of grandfluencers on TikTok represents a significant shift in the way ageing is perceived in the digital age. Contrary to conventional stereotypes that link old age with passivity or social isolation, the study's findings demonstrate that older adults are utilising digital platforms to redefine their societal role. The integration of humour, storytelling and active participation in viral trends facilitates a connection with younger demographics and TikTok natives.

In the initial hypothesis, the communicative strategy employed by prominent content creators on the TikTok platform was presumed to be spontaneous. However, this assumption is only partially fulfilled, as participation in TikTok by older adults does not occur in isolation, but is often facilitated by younger family members, who play a key role in recording, planning and disseminating content.

The success of these profiles is evidenced by the predominance of a young audience, with minimal representation of users of the same age as the grandfluencers. While the positive impact and outreach to this age group is visible (as hypothesised in the third hypothesis), it also raises questions about the extent to which this phenomenon contributes to the digital inclusion of other older adults or whether it continues to reproduce the generation gap in the use of social networks. Consequently, the hypothesis can only be partially confirmed.

A content analysis of prominent influencers reveals a notable challenge to prevailing age stereotypes, though certain formats may inadvertently perpetuate traditional narratives surrounding ageing, such as the depiction of dependency on grandchildren. Notwithstanding this fact, the visibility achieved by these content creators suggests that digital platforms can play a pivotal role in transforming social perceptions of ageing.

6.2. Conclusions

The study confirms that grandfluencers are contributing to the redefinition of ageing in the digital environment, offering new forms of representation that challenge traditional stereotypes. TikTok has emerged as a platform where older adults have not only found a space to express themselves and connect with younger audiences but have also managed to position themselves as influential figures within digital marketing and the influencer economy.

The study's primary findings offer several noteworthy conclusions regarding its impact on the social perception of ageing and intergenerational interaction on social networks. Chief among these is the evident challenge to ageist stereotypes. As Ng and Indran (2022) observe, older adults on TikTok are challenging conventional narratives about ageing by positioning themselves as content creators capable of generating interaction and engagement. Grandfluencers demonstrate that the process of ageing does not necessarily entail passivity or digital disconnection. Instead, it has been observed that this period of life can be associated with creativity, humour and authenticity, thereby contributing to the re-signification of this stage of life.

The utilisation of strategies such as humour, storytelling and spontaneity has been identified as a pivotal factor in the viralisation of grandfluencer content (Arias et al., 2023). These techniques have been demonstrated to engender elevated levels of interaction with the audience, whilst concomitantly enabling older adults to assimilate into contemporary digital dynamics, thereby serving to attenuate generational barriers within the digital ecosystem.

The role of digitalisation of the grandfluencer also leads to greater social inclusion, as Flores Tena (2020) has noted. The role of social networks is key in reducing the isolation of older adults. This perspective has been further substantiated by Librada Solar (@libradainfluencer) in the context of the contrast phase. The participation of this group in TikTok serves to reinforce the notion that digitalisation can serve as a pivotal instrument for fostering social inclusion, thereby encouraging their involvement in domains that have historically been dominated by younger demographics.

This increased visibility has been shown to have a very positive impact on the physical and emotional health of older adults. Research by Levy et al. (2012) has already demonstrated how negative stereotypes of older adults affect them in these areas. The visibility of grandfluencers on TikTok represents a valuable opportunity to challenge prevailing narratives and promote a more positive image of ageing. This can influence societal perceptions and valuations of this age group, thereby counteracting the effect of negative stereotyping.

Despite the growing participation of older adults in TikTok, the study demonstrates that the predominant audience remains youthful, thus prompting the question of whether this phenomenon is contributing to the digital inclusion of other older adults or whether it continues to reproduce the generational digital divide (Papí-Gálvez and La Parra-Casado, 2023). Moreover, research such as Kolotouchkina et al. (2023) has indicated the necessity for public policies that address digital ageism and encourage more equitable access to digital platforms.

The proliferation of grandfluencers has garnered the attention of brands and advertisers, thereby substantiating the broadening of the notion of digital influence beyond the confines of younger demographics (Ghosh, 2023). A salient challenge posed by this trend pertains to the imperative of ensuring that it does not perpetuate forms of commercial exploitation of the image of older adults. Instead, there is a need to foster authentic representations of old age. The analysis of the representation of the commercial image of the grandfluencer on social media is a subject that merits further investigation.

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