





Social web and photojournalism: User-generated content of the Russo-Ukrainian war

Web social y fotoperiodismo: Contenido generado por el usuario
en la guerra ruso-ucraniana

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ABSTRACT

The research is focused on the emerging practices of digital photojournalism in war contexts, in relation to the use of user-generated content from social networks. The focal point is the coverage of the Russo-Ukrainian conflict by the two main online newspapers of the belligerent countries: Ukrayinska Pravda and Rossiyskaya Gazeta. From the analysis of an initial sample of 7,194 articles (6,646 Ukrainian and 548 Russian), published during the first semester of the war, the preferred type of graphic content and the degree of presence of images from the different social platforms will be determined. Likewise, the article offers a theoretical innovation on the current state of the routine of war digital photojournalism, introducing the definition of the concept of “false collective source” due to the appropriation of mechanisms of collective intelligence for potential propaganda purposes. The informative use of the social web has generated a transition from “gatekeeping” to “gatewatching” that makes it necessary to review the state of the art to avoid a possible instrumentalization of the role of users. Finally, a decalogue is proposed to combat digital illiteracy and identify new appropriation practices, by distinguishing the use of the social web as an information source versus its use as a mere distribution channel.

RESUMEN

La investigación enfoca su interés en las prácticas emergentes del fotoperiodismo digital en contextos bélicos en relación con el uso de contenidos generados por usuarios desde las redes sociales. El estudio se centra en la cobertura del conflicto ruso-ucraniano por parte de los dos principales diarios digitales de los países beligerantes: Ukrayinska Pravda y Rossiyskaya Gazeta. A partir del análisis de una muestra inicial de 7.194 artículos (6.646 ucranianos y 548 rusos), publicados durante el primer semestre de la guerra, se determinó el tipo de contenido gráfico preferente y el grado de presencia de imágenes procedentes de las distintas plataformas sociales. Asimismo, el artículo ofrece una aportación de innovación teórica sobre el estado actual de la rutina del fotoperiodismo digital bélico, introduciendo la definición del concepto de «falsa fuente colectiva» como resultado de la apropiación de mecanismos propios de la inteligencia colectiva con fines potencialmente propagandísticos. El uso informativo de la web social ha generado una transición del «gatekeeping» al «gatewatching» que requiere una revisión del estado de la cuestión con el fin de evitar una posible instrumentalización del papel del usuario. Por último, se plantea un decálogo para combatir la desalfabetización digital e identificar las nuevas prácticas de corte apropiacionista, mediante la distinción del uso de la web social como fuente informativa frente a su utilización como mero canal de distribución.

KEYWORDS | PALABRAS CLAVE

User-generated content, digital illiteracy, war photojournalism, collaborative journalism, post-truth, and social networks.

Contenido generado por el usuario, desalfabetización digital, fotoperiodismo bélico, periodismo colaborativo, posverdad, redes sociales.



1. Introduction and state of the art

In an era marked by the global fight against disinformation, this study examines the status of photojournalism in relation to the incorporation of User-Generated Content (UGC). The growing concern about the dissemination of false images through the Internet is a consequence of the influx of Web 2.0 in the dynamics of production, access, and distribution of visual information through the media in the last two decades (Kümpel & Springer, 2016; López-García et al., 2017). Infocination and media overload in the face of the overexposure of images on the web calls for a profound revision of the role of informative photography in the post-digital era, especially in the case of war conflicts (Zelizer, 2005; Griffin, 2010; Khaldarova & Pantti, 2016). Recent studies on the risks and opportunities of collaborative journalism have focused on the need to refine data verification practices and techniques in the face of the growth of Web 3.0 (Carson & Farhall, 2018; Ballesteros-Aguayo et al., 2022). However, as Benaissa Pedriza points out, "no quantitative research has been found that specifically analyzes the use, presence, and relevance of content published in social networks as a source of journalistic information" (2018: 17).

Within 2.0 sources, Canavilhas and Ivars-Nicolás distinguish contributions from blogs and microblogs, forums or mailing lists, chats, wikis, multimedia repositories, and social networks. According to their research, Web 2.0 sources are based on the "contribution of collective intelligence and, in this sense, are predominantly unofficial" (2012: 65). In the present research, we will examine whether this premise is fulfilled in the case of the presence of social networks in the photojournalistic coverage of the Russo-Ukrainian war by the two leading digital media in the belligerent countries: *Ukrayinska Pravda* and *Rossiyskaya Gazeta* (Similarweb, 2023a; 2023b).

As Pavlik (2001) points out, the use of the Internet has introduced new ways of searching for information, contacting unofficial sources, and finding expert sources. The incorporation of social networks into journalistic practices entails the introduction of new models of information production (Hedman & Djerf-Pierre, 2013; García-Avilés, 2014) and the need to distinguish between their role as sources of journalistic information (Gans, 2004) or as distribution channels (Janssen Observer-FAPE-ANIS, 2017). Within the so-called "reciprocal journalism" (Lewis et al., 2013), based on the development of a horizontal relationship between journalists and users in the exchange of information and opinions (Paulussen & Harder, 2014), it is necessary to distinguish valuable information from rumors and disinformation.

The current trend in the use of UGCs is to resort to these sources of information when it is impossible to contact official sources (De-Keyser & Raeymaeckers, 2012). This situation is increasingly common in photojournalistic coverage of crisis situations. However, informative monitoring through the screen entails a lower diversity of sources and the risk of spreading "fast news" (Sacco & Bossio, 2015). Likewise, this research raises the risks involved in the appropriation of the collective intelligence dynamics by the official sources.

1.1. From "gatekeeper" to "gatewatcher". Towards collaborative journalism?

Nowadays, the power of images lies in their appropriation and distribution by Internet users. The user, who has become a "produser" (Bruns, 2008), not only consumes information but also assumes a more active role, interacting and contributing to the production and viralization of hypermedia information (Parra, 2017; Sabés & Parra, 2014; Marchionni, 2013). New ways have opened the production (Hermida & Thurman, 2008), consumption (Casero-Ripollés, 2012), and distribution of content (Fernández-Castrillo, 2014), which have contributed to blurring the distinction between reporting and covering events (Kermani, 2018). According to Sánchez and Martos, "we are currently witnessing a continuous, personalized and participatory journalism with multimedia capabilities, which acquires its identity on the Web". In this open and interactive sphere, the former differentiated roles between sources, producers, and consumers of news and information are eroding, and the continuous flows of content can no longer be owned or controlled (Heinrich 2012; Hermida 2013). The shift from a "one-to-many" to a "many-to-many" communication model (Jahng & Littau, 2016; Newman, 2009) has made social networks the primary means of accessing information for most users (Tranche, 2019; Sánchez, 2016). In some cases, the media simply reproduce what is viralized on the World Wide Web, without providing information about

the difference between who creates, edits, and distributes the images. This confusion of roles carries a high risk of engaging in disinformation practices when primary sources are not contrasted or the difference between authorship and distribution of content is not identified. According to data from the 2022 Edelman Trust Barometer, the issue of disinformation and fake news ranks among the top concerns of the world's population, being a cause for concern for 76% of respondents. In addition, 46% of participants view the media as agents of societal disintegration and place journalists among the least trustworthy groups. In the ranking of the country's main problems, the Spanish population places the role of the media and social networks (disinformation, manipulation, and the spread of hoaxes) ahead of housing and the environment (CIS, 2022).

According to Bruns (2003), in the online environment, the overabundance of content has led to an evolution of the role of the journalist from "gatekeeper" to "gatewatcher". That is, a function based not so much on filtering or blocking data or images, but on "content curation" (Stanoevska-Slabeva et al., 2012; Loo et al., 2015), through the selection and dissemination of mostly foreign information. While in the first modality, the information may come from any type of source, the second typology includes only the contents available through the Internet.

On the other hand, the blurring of the role of the user as a source of information—due to the proximity and immediacy in the absence of the journalist and in favor of a pluralistic view of reality—can lead to a single discourse camouflaged behind an apparent collective creation of knowledge. In other words, the growing presence of institutional sources in social networks can overshadow UGCs, representing a setback in the progress achieved by collective journalism. Another of the great challenges of photojournalism today is that of authorship, "(...) from the illegal copying and distribution of an author's images to the lack of attribution, that is, the absence of citation of the author of the image" (Robles, 2020: 419). The editing and viralization of images made by others belong to the field of distribution and never to that of authorship, two categories that tend to be confused due to the tyranny of immediacy in the dissemination of news, especially in the context of war.

1.2. The social web in the coverage of the Russo-Ukrainian war

Previous research highlights the dominant role of Russia in the use of propaganda and disinformation (Helmus et al., 2018; Tarín et al., 2018; Van-Herpen, 2016). On the other hand, Olivares-García et al. (2022) argue that in the first thirty days of the Russo-Ukrainian war of 2022, Ukraine controlled the narrative of the conflict from social platforms, largely thanks to the contribution of the Ukrainian president himself from his Instagram and Telegram profiles. According to this research group, "Zelensky uses social networks as a means of information to disseminate images of the destruction of his country and to connect with his people in a direct way, beyond the information that traditional media can provide through the press, radio, or television" (Olivares-García et al., 2022: 5). In their study, they highlight the scope and effectiveness of this strategy based on the use of social networks from two main factors: first, the fact that during a conflict, the means of journalistic production may be limited—or even unavailable at certain times—; and also because the reporting of events through the social networks makes it possible to completely control the narrative without having to rely on the cooperation of journalists and—more specifically—media editors.

A survey on perceptions of media coverage of the Russo-Ukrainian war at the beginning of the conflict—conducted by the British research agency YouGov for the Reuters Institute's Digital News Report 2022—gathered important data on the presence of social media as a source of information. Between 29th March and 7th April 2022, a total of 1,000 people from five different countries—based on their proximity to the conflict—were interviewed. The main findings include a low level of trust in the media's perspective on the conflict—especially among the younger generations—and the fact that, although television is still the main medium through which citizens learn about the war, most information is consumed online—whether from media websites, non-mainstream websites, or social platforms— (Newman et al., 2022).

In the YouGov study, geographic proximity was one of the factors that determined the results obtained. Fahmy and Kim (2008) also suggest that patriotism predominates in media coverage of war conflicts when the journalists' country of origin is involved in the conflict. Similarly, in their research on the Iraq War,

they pointed out that "news coverage of international events tends to favor government voices"¹ (Fahmy & Kim, 2008: 447), although the media do not always systematically support their governments' foreign policies. According to Mast and Hanegreefs (2015), "amateur" images gain presence and "discursive authority" in times of crisis, especially when they are repurposed by the media. In "the contemporary digital, image-saturated media ecology, the range of visual content generated and disseminated by media-savvy bystanders and participants has expanded significantly, invigorating the 'mediatization' of war conflict and human suffering in the process" (Mast & Hanegreefs 2015: 594). In the analysis of the photojournalistic content coming from the social networks that are the object of this study, we will see if the "hierarchy of credibility" (Becker, 1967) is replicated in the selection of sources by journalists, with the consequent prevalence of official sources –politicians and senior public figures– over unofficial sources –in this case, users, or anonymous citizens– and professional sources –war reporters, agencies, and media–.

2. Objectives and hypothesis

This research focuses on the use of graphic resources from social networks in the digital newspapers *Rossiyskaya Gazeta* (RG)² –an official organ of the Russian government founded in 1990 by a decree of the Supreme Soviet of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic– and *Ukrayinska Pravda* (UP)³ –founded in 2000 by Georgiy R. Gongadze– during the first half of the conflict. We analyzed the uses and functions that content generated and distributed by non-professional sources through social networks have in the published news through four phases: quantitative analysis of the use of social networks as a source of graphic content for news production; determination of the preferred type of graphic content; study of the importance of content generated by unofficial social networks –influencers, ordinary citizens and anonymous profiles– and official social networks –state leaders and officials, public administrations, police, civil protection, etc.– compared to content generated by journalists; and study of the differences in the use of the social web as a source of information versus its use as a mere distribution channel. The initial hypotheses are:

- H1. The photojournalistic coverage of the Russo-Ukrainian war by the studied newspapers with content from social networks gives priority to graphic content distributed and created by non-professional profiles (institutional, political-military and UGC).
- H2. There are significant difficulties in determining the authorship of much of the graphic content since the real author of the content is confused with the distributor.
- H3. Despite the changes in information consumption and the proliferation of different hypermedia resources, most of the graphic content coming from social platforms for news production is photography.

Finally, we propose a decalogue for the development of photographic fact-checking tools to avoid visual infoxication in connective environments.

3. Material and methods

3.1. Sample and design

The sample corpus consists of 7,194 news articles about the Russo-Ukrainian war with content from social media platforms (6,646 Ukrainian and 548 Russian) published during the first semester of the conflict in UP and RG. Web scraping technique was used to select the sample, and "R" was used as the programming environment to acquire and process massive data sources. Following previous studies which focused on the interaction between social media and information published in the digital press (Broersma & Graham, 2013; Paulussen & Harder, 2014; Mast & Hanegreefs, 2015; Benaissa Pedriza, 2018), the research methodology employed was based on content analysis with a mixed approach, combining qualitative and quantitative analysis of the data obtained, as we believe that the triangulation of these perspectives allows a better understanding of the journalistic messages.

3.2. Data acquisition and procedure

We began by tracking all news articles published between February 24 and August 24, 2022, that explicitly referred to the conflict and contained the terms "Facebook", "Instagram", "Rutube", "Telegram",

"TikTok", "Twitter", "VK", or "YouTube" either in the headline, caption, or body of the article. The selection criteria of these social platforms correspond to the data of DataReportal (2023a; 2023b)⁴ and Statcounter (2023)⁵, which rank them as the most popular in Russia and Ukraine. Thus, 7,194 articles with content from at least one of the mentioned social networks were detected. The second part of the study consisted of a quantitative analysis of those articles with graphic resources (videos, photos, maps, illustrations, collages, and infographics) from the social networks. Based on the results obtained, the typology of this content was categorized to identify the majority type of graphic content and the most-used social networks. The categories for classifying each article are exclusive; only one category was assigned to each article, based on the type of prevalent social web content. When the number of multimedia elements was equal, the article was classified based on the arrangement of the content within the news body, prioritizing the one closest to the headline, which has greater visual prominence.

Finally, we conducted a qualitative analysis of the non-professional social media photos (2,532 articles from UP and 135 from RG) from the predominant social platforms in each medium (Telegram and Facebook in UP and Telegram and VK in RG), as these were the predominant sources used to illustrate the news. Based on research using probability sampling methods for media content analysis (Kim et al., 2018; Lacy et al., 2015), a manageable representative sample of 334 UP and 101 RG articles was calculated. The articles to be analyzed were selected by applying simple random sampling through Random.org to avoid any bias in the selection. The Google Lens and InVID tools were used to investigate the authorship of the images in these articles. Below, we present the coding scheme with the most significant variables applied in this study:

- Medium: UP; RG.
- Type of content: photography; video; video capture; full video and screenshot; text; others (infographics, maps, collages, and illustrations).
- Social network: Facebook; Instagram; Rutube; Telegram; Twitter; VK; YouTube; unspecified.
- Distribution source: journalist; unofficial social network or UGC; official social network (institutional and political-military); unspecified.
- Authorship: journalist; unofficial social network or UGC; official social network (institutional and political-military); unspecified.
- Theme: political actors; combat actions; weapons; destruction; armed forces; victims; civil society; resource images.
- Photo caption: contains; does not contain.

4. Analysis and results

According to the analysis of the sample (N=7,194), the results are consistent with previous research and indicate that Telegram is the social network preferred by both newspapers as a source of graphic and textual information about the war (Fernández-Castrillo & Ramos, 2023). News articles containing Telegram content make up 48.15% of articles in UP and 62.22% in RG. In UP, Facebook content also stands out (42.86%), while in RG, YouTube (19.16%) and VK (15.14%) content prevail. Regarding the type of content, in 57.58% of cases in UP and 92.33% in RG, journalists turn to social media in search of graphic resources for news coverage (Tables 1 and 2).

Social network	Photo	Text	Video	Full video and screenshot	Video screenshot	Others	Total
Facebook	1,473	1,003	171	102	30	70	2,849
Instagram	22	5	6	0	3	0	36
Telegram	1,161	1,572	172	65	111	119	3,200
Twitter	94	165	32	22	2	19	334
YouTube	2	72	81	37	26	0	218
N/S	7	2	0	0	0	0	9
Total general	2,759	2,819	462	226	172	208	6,646

In UP, photography is the main graphic content, accounting for 72.09% of articles that include visual resources from social networks (n=3,827 articles with graphic material). In addition, when journalists of the Ukrainian newspaper reproduce textual information –quotes and literal statements– from social platforms (n=2,819), they turn to official social networks (institutional and political-military) in 86.37% of

cases (Table 3), thus reproducing the direct discourse of the administration. Video predominates in RG (49.27%), followed by photography (29.74%). It is significant that more than half of the recorded YouTube videos have restricted access and can be viewed only from Russia.

Social network	Photo	Text	Video	Full video and screenshot	Video screenshot	Others	Not available	Total
Instagram	2	0	1	0	0	0	0	3
Rutube	0	0	9	0	0	0	0	9
Telegram	144	41	144	0	2	3	7	341
Twitter	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	3
VK	10	1	72	0	0	0	0	83
YouTube	0	0	44	1	9	0	51	105
N/S	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	4
Total	163	42	270	1	11	3	58	548

The results show that journalists give priority to non-journalistic profiles when extracting content from the social web (89.18% in UP and 56.93% in RG). Within the non-journalistic sources, we found differences between the two media (Table 3). In UP, national official social networks predominate (institutional, 47.66%; and political-military, 38.77%), with profiles such as that of the General Staff of the Armed Forces, cited 761 times; the Governor of Lugansk, Sergei Gaidai (333); the State Emergency Service (206); or the Governor of Donetsk, Pavlo Kyrlyenko (183). Thus, the "hierarchy of credibility" of sources is respected, with journalists giving more weight to the content of official sources' social platforms than to that of UGCs. In RG, unofficial social networks or UGCs stand out (36.67%), with generally impersonal and pro-nationalist profiles such as the Telegram channel @ogilvi (30); @milinfofive (19) or @RVvoenkor (17). In both cases, national sources are privileged, which warns of the unidirectionality of the journalistic coverage of both digital newspapers, reinforcing the discourse of their governments in times of war.

	Institutional	Political-military	UGC	Professional	N/A	Total
Rossiyskaya Gazeta						
Photo	14	10	111	22	6	163
Video	36	10	84	140	0	270
Full video and screenshot	1	0	0	0	0	1
Video screenshot	0	0	1	3	7	11
Text	20	17	1	4	0	42
Others	3	0	0	0	0	3
Not available	0	0	4	3	51	58
Total	74	37	201	172	64	548
Ukrayinska Pravda						
Photo	1,402	1,054	76	131	96	2,759
Video	225	140	32	65	0	462
Full video and screenshot	110	63	11	41	1	226
Video screenshot	55	58	10	44	5	172
Text	1,264	1,171	52	332	0	2,819
Others	112	91	1	4	0	208
Total	3,168	2,577	182	617	102	6,646

For the thematic analysis and the study of differences between distributor and author, we focused on the analysis of photographs from non-professional social networks (2,532 articles from UP and 135 from RG), as these are the predominant visual sources in both media.



Note. From left to right: photo associated with Zelensky by UP, while its real author is Ronaldo Schemidt (Getty Images); image associated with the General Staff of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, its real author Ivor Prickett (The New York Times).

It was observed that photographs of "weapons" predominate in RG (52.47%), distinguishing between Ukrainian weapons and armored vehicles captured as "trophies" by the Russian army (49.05%) and those

of Russian weaponry (50.95%). This is followed by photographs of "destruction" (20.80%), focused on the damage caused by Russia to enemy military equipment; "armed forces" (16.83%); "political actors" (3.96%); "resource images" (3.96%); and "victims" (1.98%). In UP there is an opposite representation centered on images of "destruction" (43.41%) caused by the Russian army. As for the protagonists, "armed forces" (13.47%) and "political actors" (13.47%) stand out, whose representation is focused on the Ukrainian side. Other categories in descending order are "resource images" (8.08%), "weapons" (6%), "civil society" (6%), and "combat actions" (5.38%). As with RG, the minority representation of "victims" (4.19%) –Ukrainian dead and wounded– is significant.

Some 91.05% of RG photos have no caption because they are embedded content directly from the social web. The remaining images (8.95%) are accompanied by a non-explanatory caption that only identifies the distributing source. In UP, 45.50% of the articles have captions that refer only to the source and 8.47% refer to the "illustrative" function of the images. In this regard, it is noteworthy that 72.45% of UP articles with a preponderance of photographs include a single image, which points to the illustrative rather than the narrative function of photography in the Ukrainian newspaper, which brings photography closer to decorative rather than informative purposes.

Figure 2. Generic attribution of authorship



Note. Photograph from the General Staff of the Ukrainian Armed Forces, which does not reveal the photographer's identity.

On the other hand, the source of distribution can be identified in 98.6% of the articles in UP and 88.32% in RG (Table 3), but it was not possible to identify the authorship of 56.43% of the images in RG and 41.31% in UP. In addition, the identification of the authorship of the photographs is partial, generally attributed to the corresponding organizations or media (Figure 2) and, to a lesser extent, to the individual author of the photographs (2% RG and 5.08% UP).

Figure 3. Decontextualization



Note. Photo from the Ministry of Defense of Ukraine, published in 2018 and used by UP as current by extracting it from the Facebook page of "KB LUCH".

5. Discussion and conclusions

Based on the results obtained, we confirm that, in the hierarchy of news content, images generated by users still rank above audience comments (Mast & Hanegreefs, 2015), but in no case do they reach the visibility of institutional sources. The initial hypothesis about the predominance of unofficial 2.0 sources is only fulfilled for RG, since official ones are prioritized in UP. In the case of the Russian media, the UGCs belong to nationalist profiles –generally anonymous accounts–, and it should be borne in mind that this is an official body. Therefore, what we have before us is the reproduction of the old informational selection system camouflaged under a co-creative appearance.

Regarding H2, the results reflect a lack of journalistic discipline in both media regarding the authorship of the images, in terms of copying, unauthorized distribution, and lack of attribution. The indeterminacy between the figures of producer and distributor gives rise to appropriation practices in which authorship is associated by default with the person who edits and distributes the photographs instead of being attributed to the original creator of the content. As for H3, despite the proliferation of a wide range of hypermedia resources, the fixed image continues to lead the graphic content. Also, the use of social networks in the photojournalism coverage of the Russo-Ukrainian war is part of the professional routine of the newspapers analyzed and focuses on the clipping of graphic resources for creating news about the war (57.58% of the articles in UP and 92.33% in RG).

One of the main findings of this research lies in the lack of transparency on the part of UP and RG in relation to visual content authorship. This alerts us to the unverifiable nature of a large part of the photographs taken from the social web. It is probable that those images in which the authorship is not specified (56.43% of the images of RG and 41.31% of UP) are non-professional photographs taken mainly by military personnel, emergency and State security services, and local residents –that is, we presuppose, due to the quality of the images, the vertical format (presumably taken from mobile devices) and the difficulty of accessing some of the locations–.

This reality requires the accomplishment of a series of measures to fight against digital illiteracy both on the part of professionals and users to promote the use of social networks as a source of information instead of merely a distribution channel:

- Insert an explanatory caption including the author, distributor, place, date, circumstances in which the photograph was taken, alterations or cuts.
- Distinguish between authorship and distribution.
- Incorporate original content that includes EXIF (“Exchangeable Image File Format”) data in order to prevent the images from losing relevant information about the capture (geolocation, time, camera properties, etc.).
- Include hyperlinks to the original post of the image.
- Verify the origin of the images by using visual content fact-checking tools (for example, Google Lens and InVID).
- Support documentary photography of a narrative type to face the rise of “photo-news” or “photo-illustration”.
- Require ethical responsibility from those people and entities that participate in the selection, search, and dissemination of photographs.
- Take care of the relationship with users by promoting co-creative dynamics based on transmedia communication. It requires an update of the information verification processes.
- Retrieve the graphic editor instead of reinforcing the role of the “multitask” reporter.
- Develop media-digital literacy initiatives that provide a basic knowledge of the elements of visual language both to the public and to professionals.

This new media ecology requires a more active role from the user, who is implicitly displaced by the duty to evaluate and corroborate the quality of a wide – even unfathomable – range of information on offer. In future research, it is intended to delve into the proposal of edu-communicative guidelines for the prevention of this modus operandi based on the presumption of a high level of digital literacy of citizens in hypertextual skills that generates a “media hyper-responsibility”. It also relegates the function of the journalist to that of a mere intermediary between primary sources and users. Based on the data collected, we verified that the

presence of the social networks in the photojournalistic coverage of the Russo-Ukrainian war corresponds to the category of a feigned collaborative journalism. The UGC is still a minority, overshadowed by what we call «false collaborative sources», consisting of the appropriation of the Social Web by part of institutional sources to reinforce their messages through the colonization of the fifth estate.

Notes

¹The paper has been translated from the original version by Harvey Holtom, official translator at the Department of Communication and Media Studies (UC3M).

²Visits Rossiyskaya Gazeta last quarter 2022/23: November 35.6 million; December 36.1 million and January 40.6 million. (<https://bit.ly/3kgmpwh>).

³Visits Ukrayinska Pravda last quarter 2022/23: November 70 million; December 66.5 million and January 65.9 million (<https://bit.ly/3xJ4IOA>).

⁴Social networks most used in Russia by January 2023: VK (75.3%); WhatsApp (71.5%); Telegram (64.4%); Odnoklassniki (43.5%); TikTok (42.6%); Instagram (24%); Skype (11.7%); Facebook (7%) and Twitter (5.7%), among others (<http://bit.ly/3xL9JRg>).

⁵Social networks most used in Ukraine by January 2023: Facebook (42.67%); Twitter (13.39%); Instagram (13.29%); YouTube (8.54%) (<http://bit.ly/3SmERjx>).

Authors' Contribution

Idea, C.F.C., C.R.; Literature review (state of the art), C.F.C.; Methodology, C.F.C., C.R.; Data analysis, C.R.; Results, C.F.C., C.R.; Discussion and conclusions, C.F.C., C.R.; Writing (original draft), C.F.C., C.R.; Final revisions, C.F.C., C.R.; Project design and funding agency, C.F.C.

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