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## TikTokisation of the News: News Media Content Production Strategies in Portugal

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## **[TikTokization of the news: news media content production strategies in Portugal]**

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**ABSTRACT:**

The platformisation of journalism (van Dijck et al., 2018), has compelled news media to adapt to network media logic (Klinger & Svensson, 2015), affecting journalistic practices and norms (Hermida & Mellado, 2020). Several challenges emerged for media outlets, including competition for attention, news avoidance, and the dominance of social media as primary news sources (Freelon & Wells, 2020; Newman et al., 2023). Among platforms, TikTok represents an opportunity for news media to engage with new audiences, particularly those who tend to avoid traditional news sources. TikTok's algorithm assesses content virality based on factors like sound, hashtags, and content itself (Klug, 2020), prompting media outlets to develop new strategies to compete in this space (Vázquez-Herrero et al., 2022).

Our study focuses on Portuguese media, which received limited attention despite TikTok's rapid adoption rate growth, rising from 13% in 2020 to 45% in 2023 (Newman et al., 2023).

We analysed the last 58 TikTok posts of the most popular Portuguese media according to the Digital News report 2023 starting from 2023-09-01, identifying various elements, such as music, hashtags, featured subjects, topic, etc. (Negreira-Rey et al., 2022; Vázquez-Herrero, et al., 2022). To uncover newsroom strategies, we applied Multiple Correspondence Analysis and Hierarchical Clustering on Principal Components to identify post clusters. These strategies have been then be correlated with the number of views to determine their effectiveness in engaging audiences.

**KEYWORDS:**

(Please supply 6-10 keywords for your Chapter to help with depository and online searches)

1. TikTok
2. Journalism
3. Media
4. Social Media
5. Platformisation
6. News production strategies

## **Platformisation of journalism**

The platformisation of journalism (van Dijck et al., 2018) has compelled news media to adapt to network media logic (Klinger & Svensson, 2015), thereby affecting journalistic practices and norms (Hermida & Mellado, 2020).

Although there are differences due to countries' and audiences' particular characteristics (Nielsen & Fletcher, 2023), platformisation has reinforced (or introduced) several challenges for media outlets, including heightened competition for attention, increased news avoidance, and the rise of social media as primary news sources (Freelon & Wells, 2020; Newman et al., 2023).

Firstly, platforms are high-choice media environments in which very different contents and producers vie for users' attention and time in an exacerbated competition (Freelon & Wells, 2020). These environments not only contribute to the further fragmentation of audiences; they also foster information avoidance, even among individuals who have no particular aversion to news (Skovsgaard & Andersen, 2020). Indeed, 'when it comes to news, audiences say they pay more attention to celebrities, influencers, and social media personalities than journalists in networks like TikTok, Instagram, and Snapchat' (Newman et al., 2023, p. 10). Moreover, especially younger people prefer entertainment-oriented news (Geers, 2020), or at least news presented in an entertaining format (Costera Meijer, 2007).

Algorithms play a central role in the platformisation of information and in the case of content distribution through recommendation systems. Indeed, while the goal of platforms is to show content that is relevant to the audiences to which it is offered, those who produce the news also seek to provide specific content to the most promising audiences (Hagar & Diakopoulos, 2023). However, this intersection of aims can easily contribute to unintentional news avoidance because potential publics are not reached.

For many years, social media have become increasingly important in accessing news – often being the primary source of it – and not only for younger audiences, complicating the attempt by media outlets to engage audiences (Newman et al., 2023). Moreover, the integration of social media with mobile technologies introduces new constraints and production strategies for media organizations, which must adapt their content and formats to align with platform affordances (Hill & Bradshaw, 2018).

In this context, the above-mentioned algorithmic intervention for content distribution poses further challenges for news media. On the one hand, media have to produce content according to algorithmic curation practices in order to intercept niche-audiences' newsfeeds across various platforms (Caplan & boyd, 2018). On the other hand, the gatekeeping function performed by the interaction between algorithms and audience preferences produces a highly unbalanced power relationship between platforms and media outlets that are increasingly dependent on the former for content distribution and reaching audiences (Ekström & Westlund, 2019). Not by chance, changes in social media algorithms have given rise to significant issues in the visibility of content, especially for legacy media (Tandoc & Maitra, 2018). Consequently, the agency of newsrooms is increasingly limited: editorial teams can choose or modify organizational and production methods according to their own historical, cultural, and economic context (Christin, 2020) but they have to adapt to the standards prevailing in the platform market.

In other words, platforms, and especially social media, are changing journalistic practices, blurring the boundaries between news and entertainment, and forcing the adoption of different strategies according to platforms' dynamics and affordances (Vázquez-Herrero, Negreira-Rey, & Zago, 2022)

## News media and TikTok

TikTok is a short video app that is the fourth social media in terms of monthly users worldwide (1 billion), 60% of whom are women.<sup>1</sup> Moreover it reaches 44% of young people (aged 18–24) globally and 20% for news (Newman et al., 2023). Therefore, it represents an opportunity for news media to reach those audience segments most affected by news avoidance (Newman et al., 2023). Indeed, the engagement of new and younger audiences is a fundamental goal for media and journalists (Vázquez-Herrero et al., 2022), who are currently seeking new strategies with which to adapt to the new opportunities and dynamics of TikTok (Klug & Autenrieth, 2022; Vázquez-Herrero et al., 2021). One of the main and most novel characteristics of TikTok is the For You Page, which provides a personalised feed of videos exclusively driven by algorithmic recommendations mainly based on three elements: users' preferences; content features (i.e. hashtag, sounds, etc.); and account details (i.e. language or country) (Hagar & Diakopoulos, 2023).

The first consequence is that TikTok algorithms apparently do not take into account the chronological order of the events and the date of publication of posts, so that TikTok is a challenging environment for news chronicles and daily news (Negreira-Rey et al., 2022). Furthermore, unlike other social media, the flow of content on TikTok is completely disconnected from the network of followers/followings, leading to the irrelevance of online and offline popularity to content dissemination. All these characteristics seem to contribute to the development of increasingly diverse and fragmented audiences (Peña-Fernández et al., 2022), resulting in personal news feeds that are closely customized to individual preferences (Boccia Artieri et al., 2022).

Consequently, the curation of each content becomes more necessary than ever within TikTok (Martella & Cepernich, 2024), where authority is built almost from scratch through constant production that must contend with new formats, genres, and actors that gain more relevance as they align more closely with algorithmically determined interests and audiences (García-Ortega & García-Avilés, 2023; Newman, 2022).

Thus, news producers need new strategies that fit the different logic and affordances of TikTok to gain visibility. They must take advantage of the algorithmic amplification inherent in the platform (Vázquez-Herrero, Negreira-Rey, & López-García, 2022) but also overcome the apparent resistance of the algorithm to including news and information in users' feeds (Hagar & Diakopoulos, 2023). Nevertheless, and differently from the beginning, Tik Tok content has become increasingly diverse, and it now includes educational, social and public health items, along with entertainment (Klug et al., 2021). Indeed, Zhu and colleagues (2019) found that TikTok was used to disseminate information about Covid-19 by institutional and media actors, while other studies have highlighted that the platform is used for ground reporting and footage of protests and wars (Boccia Artieri et al., 2022; Cheng & Li, 2024).

Previous research on how news media approach TikTok has found that there are no precise strategies or recipes, but it has identified some general patterns. Chobanyan and Nikolskaya (2021) found that television often posts political content, soundbites and adapted formats (i.e. brief highlights and program cuts). Other studies have underlined that informative content in media production is prevalent also on TikTok, followed by funny and humorous scenes, promotion, and TikTok challenges (Vázquez-Herrero, Negreira-Rey, & López-García, 2022). Klug and Autenrieth (2022) instead identified three distinct approaches employed by traditional news outlets on TikTok: first, repackaging existing news content with original audio; second, providing behind-the-scenes insights with news explanations; and third, posting soft news accompanied by popular sounds and filters.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.searchlogistics.com/learn/statistics/tiktok-user-statistics/>

Regarding the online engagement on TikTok, some studies have found that shorter videos engage users more, along with dance and image slide shows (Li et al., 2021; Zhu et al., 2019). The same studies have highlighted that also the presence of human actors or specific subjects in videos, as well as experts or celebrities, can foster content virality.

Also background music plays an important role in content diffusion. It does so for several reasons, including the peculiar origin of the platform related to lip-syncing and dancing (Boccia Artieri et al., 2022), and the searchability of soundtracks and their relation to challenge and trend spreading within the environment (Serrano et al., 2020).

Regarding technical elements, subtitles and captions foster content virality (Li et al., 2021) because they make videos easier to understand and watch also in public spaces (Mudra & Kitsa, 2022), sometimes emphasising specific speech moments (Alonso-López et al., 2021).

Finally, as on Twitter, hashtags can help content diffusion especially when they address current events or soft news stories that could become trending topics on TikTok (Negreira-Rey et al., 2022)

### Research Questions

Previous research on news media strategies within TikTok (Chobanyan & Nikolskaya, 2021; Klug & Autenrieth, 2022; Vázquez-Herrero et al., 2021; Vázquez-Herrero, Negreira-Rey, & López-García, 2022) has rarely sought to identify strategies with statistical methods. Moreover, Portuguese media have received limited attention despite TikTok's rapid adoption-rate growth, rising from 13% in 2020 to 45% in 2023 (Newman et al., 2023). To the best of our knowledge, our study is the first attempts to identify statistically the production strategies adopted by main Portuguese media.

RQ1. What content production strategies do Portuguese news media adopt on TikTok?

As already highlighted, TikTok's algorithm assesses content virality on the basis of factors like sound, hashtags, and content, prompting media outlets to increasingly fit with the platform's affordances in order to gain content visibility (Vázquez-Herrero et al., 2022).

RQ2. What strategies prove most successful in engaging TikTok audiences across different media outlets?

### Case Study

To answer the above research questions, we selected the most popular media (online) in Portugal (Newman et al., 2023): SIC Notícias, Jornal de Notícias, CNN Portugal, Observador, Expresso, Público, TVI News, Diário de Notícias, Rádio Comercial, RTP News, RFM online. We removed SAPO and MSN News from the original list provided in Newman et al. (2023) because they mainly serve as news aggregators. Moreover, Correio da Manhã has been inactive since 2020, and although Notícias ao Minuto is one of the most popular online news sources, we were unable to find its TikTok profile. To be noted is that Portuguese media and journalists have developed a high degree of professionalism, moving away from the polarized pluralist model that characterized the country's media system until the 1970s (Hallin & Mancini, 2017). Indeed, Portugal 'remains one of the highest-ranking markets for trust in news [58%, overall trust], due to low political polarisation and a generalised sense of the press as free' (Newman et al., 2023, p. 93).

Regarding news consumption, about 81% of Portuguese citizens get news from social media.<sup>2</sup> TikTok is adopted by 26% of people and the adoption rate is rising faster and more than those of the other social media (Newman et al., 2023).

Table 1 shows that the most followed accounts on TikTok are television and radio, while daily and weekly news media are rather unpopular. As already highlighted by other studies (Klug & Autenrieth,

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<sup>2</sup> See <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/02673231231189043#supplementary-materials>

2022; Martella & Cepernich, 2024), also Portuguese media outlets do not follow others in social media.

Among the ones most followed, Rádio Comercial emerges as the platform's earliest adopter (2016) while others did not publish their first post until 2020. The last ones to adopt the platform were Jornal de Notícias and TVI News, both in 2023.

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*TABLE 1 HERE*  
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## **Methodology**

We manually collected the last 57 posts starting from September 7, 2023 along with available data and metadata, gathering a total of 594 videos.

Three trained coders identified the presence/absence of: a summary (on-screen news summary), subtitles, data/numbers, speaker identification, news media logos, hashtags related to the topic covered, hashtags related to media outlets (e.g. #TVI, #sicnoticias, etc.), journalists' names, images in the video, stickers, media fragments (TV programs, other media, etc.), sounds (environment, voice and music).

To identify topics we used a list of frequent themes on social media (Martella & Roncarolo, 2023) Following Bracciale et al. (2018) we identified six main categories of actors in videos: 1) Politicians and institutions; 2) Journalists and media; 3) Sport and entertainment; 4) Citizens; 5) Civil society actors (associations, unions, professionals, etc.); 6) Social media experts (spin doctors, social media managers, TikTok influencers etc.).

Video duration was transformed into a categorical variable: >60s or <= 60s because a 60-second threshold represented the original limit of videos that could be published on TikTok.

Following previous studies (Martella & Cepernich, 2024) we also identified Journalistic genres/formats (Table 2) as well as reportage, investigation, news chronicle, etc. emerged from studies on journalism and TikTok (Ferrignolo, 2003; Moscato et al., 2023; Sorrentino, 2002; Steensen, 2018; Vázquez-Herrero, Negreira-Rey, & López-García, 2022; Zhu et al., 2019)

Several training sessions made it possible to reach satisfying values (Hayes & Krippendorff, 2007) of intercoder reliability among the coders: Krippendorff's  $\alpha$  ranged from 0.65 to 1.

We used Multiple correspondence analysis (MCA) to summarize the variables identified in a limited number of dimensions. Then we applied Hierarchical clustering (HCPC) on the first 8 dimensions, representing 99% of the total variance re-evaluated (Benzecri, 1973), to identify clusters of videos that we interpreted as production strategies (Martella & Cepernich, 2024).

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*TABLE 2 HERE*  
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## **Production strategies on TikTok**

The hierarchical clustering on principal components (HCPC) enabled us to identify thirteen consistent clusters of TikTok videos based on the variables identified. Despite some differences, it was possible to aggregate the production strategies into seven categories: Promotion, Entertainment, Interviews, Long stories, Short stories, Reports, and Chronicles.

### *Promotion (89 videos)*

Promotion is an already-known practice by media on TikTok that often includes short excerpts from programs (Mudra & Kitsa, 2022; Peña-Fernández et al., 2022), previews and announcements (Vázquez-Herrero et al., 2021). Our results show that explicit promotion includes 89 videos (14%) and divides into two different categories: Tv short clips, Short promotional clips.

#### TV short clips (44)

Here promotion is represented by subtitled (89% of the cluster), short (82%), non-native videos from TV or other media (98%) focused on entertainment (95%). The main aim of these videos is to promote TV programs (87%) through the repurposing of program fragments like Taskmaster, I Love Portugal, Dois à Dez and Goucha. Consequently, the actors featured are especially from entertainment (91%) or the media (86%).

This strategy is mainly adopted by RTP<sup>3</sup> (75% of the cluster and 61% of its videos), and TVI<sup>4</sup> (20% of the cluster).

#### Short promotional clips (45)

There are two main differences with respect to TV short clips: first, some videos seem more aimed at promotion, resembling teasers. Second, program fragments (Vázquez-Herrero, Negreira-Rey, & López-García, 2022) appear less TikToked. They lack subtitles and brand logos, and sometimes the video format does not align with the platform's standards<sup>5</sup> as already reported by other studies (Vázquez-Herrero et al., 2021). Moreover, along with entertainment and gossip (63%) videos also address themes like culture and curiosity (18%). From a journalistic perspective, the main format adopted is promotion (69% of the posts).

This production strategy is mainly adopted by TVI<sup>6</sup> (49% of the cluster and 61% of their videos).

### *Entertainment (134)*

Entertainment is the strategy most adopted by Portuguese media (22% of posts) and it includes Media/Newsroom fun and Radio Entertainment Clips. Some research studies focused on news media (Vázquez-Herrero, Negreira-Rey, & López-García, 2022) have included newsrooms' backstage in promotion, considering that these videos are often made to promote a brand. We decided to identify Promotion as a specific format/genre (see Table 2), therefore distinguishing between videos aimed at explicit promotion and entertainment. Accordingly, we considered newsroom behind-the-scenes content as promotion, but we included scenes of humour and dancing by media members in entertainment, as in the case of Media/Newsroom fun.

#### Media/newsroom fun (41)

This strategy is mainly embodied (66% of the cluster) by videos reporting humorous scenes by media hosts and newsrooms (Negreira-Rey et al., 2022) complemented by music (90%). Consequently, the main actors in these videos are journalists and media workers (69%) or celebrities (51%). Unlike clips, these TikToks are not subtitled and the brand is not explicitly placed on videos.

This strategy is mainly adopted by Rádio Comercial<sup>7</sup> (46%) and TVI<sup>8</sup> (24%).

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.tiktok.com/@rtppt/video/7226391692721540357>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.tiktok.com/@tvioficial/video/7275661544136920352>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.tiktok.com/@tvioficial/video/7270974767140785441>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.tiktok.com/@tvioficial/video/7270898452521831713>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.tiktok.com/@radiocomercial/video/7174465806003211526>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.tiktok.com/@tvioficial/video/7269452351935761697>

### Radio entertainment clips (93)

Most videos in this strategy last more than 60s (75%), and the journalistic formats most adopted are interviews (47%), commentaries (11%) and newsroom/backstage scenes (12%).

The topic most addressed is entertainment (90%), and as to be expected, media hosts (88%) and celebrities (69%) are the main actors in videos.

Considering all these elements, the aim of this strategy is to propose fragments of programs adapted to TikTok (Vázquez-Herrero et al., 2021).

This strategy is mainly adopted by radio stations: RFM<sup>9</sup> (37% of the cluster and 63% of its production), and Rádio Comercial<sup>10</sup> (20%). Considering the significant presence of radio in this cluster, our results confirm previous research indicating that radio stations and channels disseminate fragments of their programs on TikTok, covering various topics adopting different formats. (Vázquez-Herrero et al., 2021).

### Interviews (73 videos)

Differently from what has been found by studies on other countries (Martella & Cepernich, 2024; Vázquez-Herrero, Negreira-Rey, & López-García, 2022), interviews seem quite numerous and varied in the Portuguese TikTok sphere. Indeed, this classic journalistic genre is staged according to two strategies that differ mainly in terms of the themes addressed and the actors featured. Both strategies consist of videos that last longer than 60 seconds, with the brand logo and journalists featured in videos and in captions; and they often relate to podcast series broadcast by media outlets on TikTok.

### Hard news interviews (45)

These interviews are mainly focused on Politics and Institutions (53%) and Economy and Welfare (31%). Consequently, political and institutional actors are the ones most featured in videos (76%). Media that adopt this strategy the most are: Diário de Notícias (44%), especially through the show 'Alta tensão'<sup>11</sup> or 'Em alta voz'<sup>12</sup>, SIC Notícias (20%), through its video podcast 'Geração 70'<sup>13</sup>, and Expresso (20%), with its podcast 'Liberdade para Pensar'<sup>14</sup>.

### Health Interviews (28)

In this strategy, the majority of videos are subtitled (93%). They address health & healthcare (82%) featuring journalists (75%) and people from civil society (i.e. professionals, associations, etc.; 57%). Expresso is the most involved in this strategy (75% of the cluster) and this is mainly due to its podcast devoted to mental health problems: 'Que Voz é Esta?'<sup>15</sup>.

### Long Stories (51)

This strategy is characterised by videos lasting longer than a minute (55%) that often include images (43%) and address various topics: Culture & curiosity (31%), Economy & Welfare (14%) and Other (18%).

The most significant journalistic genres are: 'How to/Well explained' (24%) and interviews (49%).

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<sup>9</sup> <https://www.tiktok.com/@rfmportugal/video/7272352685267979553>

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.tiktok.com/@radiocomercial/video/7231985806922026266>

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.tiktok.com/@diario.de.noticias/video/7265255363501477153>

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.tiktok.com/@diario.de.noticias/video/7236739604894797082>

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.tiktok.com/@sicnoticiaspt/video/7265264696960290081>

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.tiktok.com/@jornalexpresso/video/7259400412741111066>

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.tiktok.com/@jornalexpresso/video/7245311072192711963>

## RUNNING HEADER: [TikTokization of the news in Portugal]

This strategy closely resembles that of explainer videos (Schneiders, 2020), already adopted by Italian newspapers on TikTok (Martella & Cepernich, 2024), in which journalists delve into specific issues using images and data.

Media outlets that adopt this strategy the most are: Diário de Notícias<sup>16</sup> (35%), Público<sup>17</sup> (26%), SIC Notícias<sup>18</sup> (18%).

### *Short stories (49 videos)*

Differently from the findings of previous studies (Martella & Cepernich, 2024), the features that characterise 'Short Stories' in Portuguese TikTok split between two different strategies: explanation and summaries. Both strategies include short videos in which news stories are summarized through video captions (more than 95%) accompanied by images (from 68% to 89%). This category of strategies oscillated between explanation videos and scrollytelling (Schneiders, 2020), but it is adapted to platform affordances.

### Short explanations (27)

This strategy is mainly characterised by the large presence of images (89%) and by the topics addressed: Politics and Institutions (41%), Health & Healthcare (22%), and Other (19%).

The most frequent format is the 'How to/Well explained' one (81%), thus resembling the explainer video described by Schneiders (2020), in which images, words, spoken language, and data combine in narrative videos with a didactic purpose.

This strategy is constituted by videos from Observador (74%), especially through the series 'Isso é mesmo verdade?'<sup>19</sup>, and Público<sup>20</sup> (22%).

### Data summaries (27)

Differently from Short explanations, all Data summaries condense the most important news stories of the day (100%) often featuring data and numbers (86%).

This strategy is mainly constituted by video from Observador<sup>21</sup> (90%).

### Reports (59 videos)

The journalistic reports on the Portuguese TikTok are characterised by the strong presence of ordinary citizens on video (between 70% and 80%) and are divided according two categories.

### Feature reportage (43)

This production strategy consists of several elements that recall feature journalism (Steensen, 2018), ranging from the most significant format in the cluster, 'feature news' (58%), through the focus on entertainment, which includes sport, celebrities, etc. (58%), to short videos (84%) accompanied by music (63%) and featuring citizens (70%) and entertainment actors (51%).

There are no media outlets statically significant for this cluster. However, we found posts by Expresso<sup>22</sup>, Jornal de Notícias<sup>23</sup>, and RFM online<sup>24</sup>.

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<sup>16</sup> <https://www.tiktok.com/@diario.de.noticias/video/7244828605023276314>

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.tiktok.com/@publicopt/video/7254215412584434971>

<sup>18</sup> <https://www.tiktok.com/@sicnoticiaspt/video/7272135024802106657>

<sup>19</sup> [https://www.tiktok.com/@observador\\_/video/6907245312922979585](https://www.tiktok.com/@observador_/video/6907245312922979585)

<sup>20</sup> <https://www.tiktok.com/@publicopt/video/7249326437113613594>

<sup>21</sup> [https://www.tiktok.com/@observador\\_/video/6841245584024800518](https://www.tiktok.com/@observador_/video/6841245584024800518)

<sup>22</sup> <https://www.tiktok.com/@jornalexpresso/video/7255705060598893851>

<sup>23</sup> <https://www.tiktok.com/@jornaldenoticias/video/7271008566302035233>

<sup>24</sup> <https://www.tiktok.com/@rfmportugal/video/7265812239154810144>

### Social issues reportage (16)

Unlike Feature reportage, videos included in this strategy are captioned (94%), last longer than one minute (75%), and often address civil rights (44%) but also social problems in a reportage-like format (56%). Along with citizens (81%), the actors most featured come from civil society (38%).

The media outlets most significant for this strategy are SIC Notícias<sup>25</sup> (38%) and CNN Portugal<sup>26</sup> (31%).

### Chronicles (116 videos)

News chronicles are predominantly focused on current events, and they feature politics and institutions in videos that are often characterized by live audio. Both strategies are presented in a news chronicle format (about 90% of videos), and the main difference between the two clusters is the adoption of some features of TikTok.

### Branded News Chronicle (82)

This strategy appears to be the TikTokised version of chronicle due to the presence of many of the platform's features, including video titles (48%), captions summarising the news (62%) accompanied by hashtags related to the topic (93%), and the prominent presence of the media brand on videos (96%).

This strategy consists in videos by Jornal de Notícias (34%), Público (26%), SIC Notícias (20%)

### News Chronicle (34)

A slight difference with respect to the previous strategy relates to the topics addressed (Current events: 65%, and Other: 24%), and consequently to the actors featured (political and institutional: 53%). However, the most important difference consists in the absence of some technical features like titles, summary, hashtags, etc. in these TikToks, which indicates a low engagement with the platform by the newsrooms.

This cluster consists almost entirely of videos by CNN Portugal<sup>27</sup> (91%).

## Strategies adoption

Table 3 shows the distribution of production strategies according to media type. First, radio production appears to be strongly focused on entertainment (73%), while televisions mainly engage in promotion (52%) and chronicle (25%). Due to their podcast programmes, weekly newspapers appear rather focused on interviews (47%), while only daily newspapers choose Short stories as a production strategy on TikTok (30%).

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*TABLE 3 HERE*  
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Figure 1 shows the production strategies adopted by each newsroom on TikTok. First, some media outlets appear very focused on specific strategies. Radio stations clearly prefer to entertain their audiences (more than 70% of their production) and sometimes promote themselves and their shows (ranging from 9% to 17%). Except for CNN Portugal, the production strategies of TVI and RTP (TV)

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<sup>25</sup> <https://www.tiktok.com/@sicnoticiaspt/video/7274661971562138913>

<sup>26</sup> <https://www.tiktok.com/@cnnportugal/video/7273121088471584033>

<sup>27</sup> <https://www.tiktok.com/@cnnportugal/video/7270915933542108449>

appear to mirror those of radio stations: promotion is the most frequently adopted strategy (74%), followed by entertainment (more than 15% of videos).

Also other media outlets appear to be quite focused on specific strategies: Observador devotes 70% of its posts to Short Stories and 19% to Entertainment, while CNN Portugal focuses on Chronicle (65%) and Reports (19%). The latter also posts some interviews (9%).

The other media outlets vary their production somewhat, although it is possible to discern some patterns. Weekly newspapers, namely Diário de Notícias and Expresso, invest in their podcast production in order to address TikTok audiences. Due to the platform's demographic (Meltwater & We Are Social, 2023) this could be an interesting choice for legacy media, considering that podcasts 'resonate strongly with young people because they have become integral to how they spend time on their mobile phones in general, and how they share and discuss content' (Galan et al., 2019, p. 55)(Galan et al., 2019, p. 55)(Galan et al., 2019, p. 55). Conversely, daily newspapers, namely Jornal de Notícias and Público, prefer to maintain their traditional news function in more than 40% of their videos.

If we look at the consistent adoption of strategies by the media,<sup>28</sup> it is possible to highlight that only three news outlets adopt more than 3 production strategies: Jornal de Notícias, Público, and SIC Notícias. Considering that the first two are newspapers, this is a rather unexpected result. Indeed, as found by previous studies, legacy media, and newspapers in particular, struggle to adapt quickly to the changes imposed by platformisation and new media environments (Tandoc & Maitra, 2018). Moreover, Público and SIC Notícias consistently produce 'Long Stories' and 'Short Stories' that could be considered some of the most innovative formats/genres that emerged in our analysis. In this regard, also Observador and Diário de Notícias are interesting cases due to the attention given to these two strategies: respectively, Short Stories account for 70% of Observador's production (more than 80% of all posts in this strategy) while Long Stories cover a third of Diário's posts.

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*FIG 1 HERE*  
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Therefore, our answer to RQ1 (What content production strategies do Portuguese news media adopt on TikTok?) is that news media adopt several strategies aimed at different goals including promotion, entertainment, information, and insights into non-news events. The most common strategies are Promotion, Chronicle, Entertainment and Interviews, representing more than 73% of posts. However, the adoption is rather uneven, many media outlets prefer to focus on specific strategies, only a few exhibit a wide range of content.

### **The success of online strategies**

Figure 2 shows the success of production strategies in terms of visualization. To be borne in mind is that visualization on TikTok strongly depends on its algorithm, which suggests content to users independently of the popularity of the accounts but on the basis of users' actions and preferences (Klug et al., 2021).

Among the categories of strategies, Promotion is the clearly the most successful one in terms of visualization. This is mainly due to TV short clips that consist in short subtitled program fragments mostly focused on entertainment and accompanied by thematic hashtags. As reported in the literature, all these elements seem to be drivers of engagement, especially for younger cohorts.

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<sup>28</sup> We considered to be consistent a strategy with at least five posts.

Indeed, subtitles facilitate the 'perception of information' and enable the viewing of videos in public (Mudra & Kitsa, 2022). Thus along with entertainment, they are able to attract wider and younger audiences (Geers, 2020). Also hashtags, especially if related to current affairs or trending challenges, are known as drivers of content within the platform due to their searchability (Negreira-Rey et al., 2022; Vázquez-Herrero, Negreira-Rey, & López-García, 2022).

The second most visualised category of strategies is Entertainment, especially due to Newsroom/Media fun videos. Besides the aspect already highlighted, i.e. entertainment, this strategy has other components useful for virality. For example, background music plays a major role in content diffusion due to both its ability to emphasise visual content and its searchability within the platform (Alonso-López et al., 2021; Boccia Artieri et al., 2022; Serrano et al., 2020). Furthermore, backstage or newsroom scenes have been considered appropriate for TikTok audiences because of their humorous and fun content often accompanied by music (Vázquez-Herrero, Negreira-Rey, & López-García, 2022).

Figure 2 evidences that also two traditional journalistic formats can become viral on TikTok. Indeed, the distribution of visualizations of Reports, especially of Feature Reports, shows a higher median and several outliers. This is not new: other studies have shown that short reports are being adopted by various media outlets on TikTok even with a fair amount of success in terms of visibility (Martella & Cepernich, 2024; Vázquez-Herrero, Negreira-Rey, & Zago, 2022). Moreover, Feature reports are characterised by several features that fit the environment, including shortness, background music, emotionality, and a prevalent focus on entertainment (Feng et al., 2019; Peña-Fernández et al., 2022; Vázquez-Herrero, Negreira-Rey, & López-García, 2022). Regarding Social issue reports, to be stressed is that, although these topics are preferred by younger cohorts (Newman et al., 2022) and gain a fair amount of visualization in Italy (Martella & Cepernich, 2024), Portuguese audiences seem to like them to a lesser extent.

Regarding Chronicle, the most successful strategy is the most TikTokised one: Branded Chronicle. This results highlights that addressing current events is not sufficient to gain visibility, but the presence of socio-technical features like captioned summaries, hashtags, etc. is probably useful to boost content in TikTok.

Differently from other studies in which interviews were mostly devoted to entertainment (Martella & Cepernich, 2024), interviews in Portuguese media divided by topic: Health and Hard news. Between these two, Health interviews were able to gain more attention. On the one hand, this was probably because the specific topic is frequently debated on social media and TikTok (Lischka & Garz, 2023; Zhu et al., 2019); on the other hand, because it is preferred by younger audiences compared to hard news (Newman et al., 2022). Furthermore, to be borne in mind is that both interviews strategies (Health and Hard news) mainly consist in podcasts fragments that resonate with educated and younger audiences (Newman et al., 2023). Our hypothesis is that the specific topic along with subtitles attracts the most attention of viewers.

Long Stories visualizations are very close to those of interviews despite the novelty of the format, the wide range of topics covered (including soft news), the adoption of different formats, as well as interviews and 'How to / well explained' which could help virality (Boccia Artieri et al., 2022; Klug & Autenrieth, 2022). However, these results are in line with those of other studies in which this strategy performed even worse (Martella & Cepernich, 2024).

In line with the findings of previous studies (Martella & Cepernich, 2024), Short Stories are not successful on TikTok. Both strategies, Short explanations and Data summaries, like Long Stories address a wide range of topics but last less time. The most frequent formats are 'How to / Well explained' or summaries of the daily news, and content is summarised by video captions. However, although these characteristics fit the TikTok aesthetic and practices – Data summaries are even accompanied by background music – our hypothesis is that the topics addressed and the specific

formats recalling explainer videos (Short explanations) and Scrollytelling (Data Summaries) do not meet with audience favour.

Therefore, our answer to RQ2 (What strategies prove most successful in engaging TikTok audiences across different media outlets?) is that Promotion is absolutely the most successful strategy followed by Entertainment, Chronicle, and Reports, partially confirming that TikTok is strongly aimed at entertaining audiences.

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*FIG 2 HERE*  
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## **Conclusion**

Differently from other studies that have highlighted the prevalence of information in news media production on TikTok (Chobanyan & Nikolskaya, 2021; Vázquez-Herrero et al., 2022), our results shows that more than 40% of posts are dedicated to Entertainment and Promotion. However, it is worth noting that 1) posts in the Chronicle category are quite frequent (20% of the database); and 2) the adoption of strategies is rather uneven, with Radio Comercial and RFM producing approximately 60% of Entertainment content, while RTP and TVI produce about 75% of Promotional content. Regarding Promotion, quite surprising is the success of TV Short Clips, which are the most visualized strategy ever. This strategy has been already adopted by other media (Vázquez-Herrero et al., 2021) and now we can add that it seems to perfectly fit with TikTok audiences probably due to the focus on entertainment and the presence of celebrities.

Generally speaking, our analysis has revealed several 'new' or adapted (TikTokised) production strategies, as well as the repurposing of pre-existing content with minimal adaptation as emerged in other studies (Klug & Autenrieth, 2022).

Among the most innovative strategies, we identified two types of Short Stories: Short Explanation and Data Summaries, which respectively resemble video explanations and scrollytelling formats adapted from Instagram and other social media (Schneiders, 2020). Despite their novelty, neither strategy was successful in attracting user attention on TikTok. This finding is particularly insightful given that Short Promotional Clips, although it is among the ones least suited to TikTok, was one of the most viewed strategies, along with Chronicle.

More specifically, News Chronicle lacks several features characteristic of the platform; however, it still manages to capture more audience attention than other strategies. On the other hand, Branded Chronicle performs better, probably due to its suitability for the platform, considering that both strategies address current events.

On the contrary, Long Stories, despite incorporating images, data, sound effects, covering various topics, and sometimes adopting tutorial formats, achieve limited online success.

In Portuguese TikTok sphere, Interviews primarily involves the repurposing of existing podcast fragments, which could be an interesting choice for media outlets considering the platform's demographic (Newman et al., 2023). However, both Health Interviews and Hard News Interviews do not receive significant attention.

Therefore, our conclusion is that success on TikTok is very difficult to predict. Adapting formats and including platform affordances does not necessarily lead to more views. In other words, several variables affect the intersection of algorithmic logic and audience preferences that drive success in terms of views. Moreover, the same variables seem to affect the number of visualizations in a different way according to the specific ensemble of elements. Put briefly, entertainment seems to be the most important driver of success although it's not guaranteed.

Finally, unlike other research studies (Klug & Autenrieth, 2022; Vázquez-Herrero et al., 2021), we did not observe a significant adoption of typical TikTok practices such as duets and challenges, or features like filters and effects. This suggests that we are still in the early stages of media adoption of TikTok, at least in Portugal. Therefore, we anticipate that strategies could evolve in the near future.

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Table 1. Most popular media in Portugal - Reuters Digital News Report 2023

Media	Type	Followers	Followings	n	First post
SIC Notícias	TV	71,200	0	239	2021-11-08
Jornal de Notícias	Daily news	7,053	16	230	2023-02-10
CNN Portugal	TV	<b>136,000</b>	4	<b>670</b>	2021-11-22
Observador	Daily news	796	0	93	2020-04-23
Expresso	Weekly news	23,600	<b>38</b>	232	2022-09-29
Público	Daily News	8,793	1	151	2022-03-09
TVI News	TV	<b>394,200</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>770</b>	2023-01-03
Diário de Notícias	Weekly news	481	4	119	2022-11-16
Rádio Comercial	Radio	<b>123,200</b>	19	139	<b>2016-12-09</b>
RTP News	TV	99,500	6	175	2020-10-12
RFM online	Radio	<b>135,700</b>	<b>37</b>	70	2020-12-01

Table 2. Journalistic genres/formats

Genre/Format	Definition
Chronicle	Reporting of facts in chronological order. Reporting on what has happened and is about to happen or will happen
Investigation	A report resulting from investigative activity conducted by journalists. In-depth reconstruction of a fact/event, with collection of evidence, testimonies, etc.
Reportage	A comprehensive account of a local reality, of a social phenomenon, of a historical process that aims at thematization or in-depth analysis. Reportage therefore goes beyond mere reporting: it is a story linked to current events that seeks to highlight all aspects of a phenomenon and involves a journalistic

	presence in the field of study
Interviews	Questions and answers. Between journalist and interviewee(s)
Summary or review	Summary of a fact in a few lines, e.g. small town news episodes or news summaries of the last 24 hours. Brief reviews of the most important daily news.
Commentary/editorial /excerpt	Commentary and opinions on facts expressed by the journalist, editor or a columnist.
Feature news	Narrative of an environment, an atmosphere, a mood related to an event or occasion, or the simple discovery of a place or social environment. Descriptive topical article with vivid and colorful depictions of the environment/mood.
Biographies or commemorative articles	News focused on the life or death of significant people
HowTo / Well explained	Thematic insights on facts that are not news: guides, recipes, horoscopes, and "well-explained" topics
Humour & Dance (from editorial team)	Funny content, silly situations, and jokes, journalists' reactions to comic situations. People dancing in personal and professional spheres.
Promotion	Promotion of content or products. Editorial backstage, news announcement, brand promotion. Trailers of interviews.
TikTok challenge	TikTok challenges involving journalists or members of the editorial team.

Source: Martella A., Cepernich, C. (2024, p. 75)

Table 3. Production strategies and media type

Media type	Chronicle%	Entertainment%	Interviews%	Long Stories%	Promotion%	Reports%	Short Stories%	Total
Daily News	<b>31.5</b>	13.6	1.9	11.1	3.1	9.3	<b>29.6</b>	162
Radio	0	<b>73.1</b>	0	1.9	13.9	10.2	0.9	108
TV	<b>25</b>	13	8.8	4.2	<b>38.9</b>	10.2	0	216
Weekly	10.2	4.6	<b>47.2</b>	20.4	7.4	10.2	0	108

**FIGURE**

Figure 1. Media adoption of production strategies (n=54)

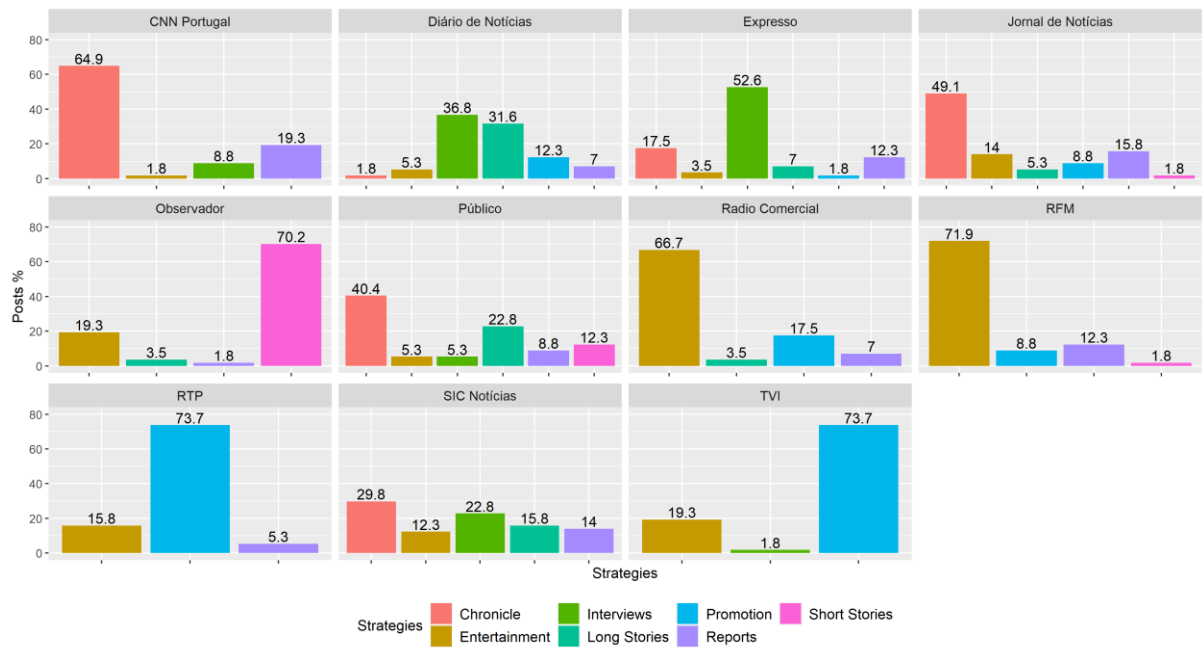


Figure 2. Distribution of visualizations for each strategy

