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Social media communication management in the media sector

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Abstract

The production, distribution, and consumption of news have undergone fundamental changes, with social media providing an essential point of access to information. On these digital platforms, visual content has become increasingly important for the media sector. Nowadays, social media are a bridge for obtaining information, particularly on Instagram reels. The objective of this study was to investigate how news organisations make visual information available to the public, in particular the way in which reels are being used on social media. The profiles of three Portuguese national newspapers on the Instagram social network are analysed using a quantitative and qualitative approach. The variation of followers, the differences and similarities in the strategies used to distribute reels and how short videos are included to engage the target audience are analysed over the period. The way in which different journalistic genres are integrated into social media for the distribution of news is also presented, relating it to changes in communication management with the use of reels. The findings of this study suggest that social networks' influence on journalistic management and practices is changing digital journalism.

Keywords: communication management; newspapers; social media; Instagram; reels.

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Gestión de la comunicación en redes sociales en el sector de los medios de comunicación

Resumen

La producción, distribución y consumo de noticias han experimentado cambios fundamentales, y las redes sociales proporcionan un punto esencial de acceso a la información. En estas plataformas digitales, el contenido visual se ha vuelto cada vez más importante para el sector de los medios. Hoy en día las redes sociales son un puente para obtener información, particularmente en los reels de Instagram. El objetivo de este estudio fue investigar cómo las organizaciones de noticias ponen la información visual a disposición del público, en particular la forma en que se utilizan los reels en las redes sociales. Se analizan los perfiles de tres periódicos nacionales portugueses en la red social Instagram mediante un enfoque cuantitativo y cualitativo. A lo largo del periodo se analiza la variación de seguidores, las diferencias y similitudes en las estrategias utilizadas para distribuir los reels y cómo se incluyen vídeos cortos para atraer al público objetivo. También se presenta la forma en la que distintos géneros periodísticos se integran a las redes sociales para la distribución de noticias, relacionándola con los cambios en la gestión comunicativa identificados con el uso de reels. Los hallazgos de este estudio sugieren que la influencia de las redes sociales en la gestión y las prácticas periodísticas está cambiando el periodismo digital.

Palabras clave: gestión de la comunicación; periódicos; social media; Instagram; reels.

1. Introduction

Social media platforms are a constant presence in our daily lives, constituting one of the main sources of information and transforming the way the media sector manages and practices journalism (Paulussen & Harder, 2014; Kostić & Šarenac, 2020). The consumption of video content has undergone significant growth, mainly attributed to advancements in technology and the widespread adoption of mobile devices (Apasrawirote et al, 2022; O'Hara et al, 2007). The short video format,

commonly referred to on Instagram as reels, has gained prominence in recent times. Social media platforms such as TikTok, Instagram and YouTube are used as strategic tools for this type of content (Zhao et al, 2021; Allam & Dinana, 2021; Shutsko, 2020; Wang & Wu, 2021).

With social media, responsibility for the circulation of information has become a significant aspect of news work (Braun, 2019; Newman, 2022). The impact of these tools on distribution dynamics led to changes in the production dynamics of news organisations, with the optimisation of news circulation through

social networks becoming an editorial responsibility (Hemsley & Mason, 2012; Newman, 2023). This study intends to investigate the impact of short videos on social media engagement and audience growth for the media sector, specifically for newspapers, analysing the strategies, best practices and challenges involved in this process (Nelson, 2020; Nielsen et al, 2016; Ferrucci, 2018). We expected to contribute to the development of more effective and innovative approaches in the field of social media communication management in newspapers (Lopezosa et al, 2021; Strukov, 2021; Wahl-Jorgensen et al, 2016) and highlighting the importance of visual information in the decision-making (Lischer-Katz, 2022; Pearce et al, 2018). Visual information plays an important role in effectively communicating complex information (Zou, 2023; Ekström et al, 2020).

The paper is structured as follows: it begins with a theoretical foundation that highlights the value of short videos for newspapers. This is followed by a description of the study methodology, and the subsequent presentation and discussion of the results. Finally, the article concludes with final considerations, which include limitations and future lines of research.

2. Theoretical Background

Social media has allowed short videos to become profoundly important digital resources in our society (Wang et al, 2021). With the improvement of those platforms, the value of short video traffic has increased, leading to potential cash flow and increased business opportunities (Kang, 2023). Short videos becoming a key strategy, transforming audio-visual habits and journalistic management and practices (Xiong, 2022). Nowadays,

the online newspapers and information that users can choose from are more diverse, and the emergence of short video communication on Instagram is becoming popular (Hsiu-Chia & Dian-Han, 2019). This trend reflects the changing preferences of users who seek quick and engaging content (Shutsko, 2020; Gurbani, Migliosi, State, Payette, Cilli & Engel, 2015). Short video communication allows users to consume information more efficiently and provides a platform for creative expression through visual storytelling (Finkler & León, 2019).

The success of platforms such as TikTok, Instagram and YouTube highlight the importance of short videos in the communication management in the social media landscape (Apasrawirote et al, 2022).

In this sense, the media sector has taken advantage of the short video format to innovate in the presentation and distribution of information, as well as to attract younger audiences who are used to consuming fast and dynamic content (Newman, 2023; Swart, 2023). Short videos produced by media outlets can present the basic journalist genres normally used in news coverage, such as news, interviews, reviews, reportage, and other formats that adapt to the language and style of these social media (Jaakkola, 2021; Steensen & Westlund, 2023).

The use of short videos in journalism can promote greater public engagement, facilitate understanding of complex topics and reach a more diverse audience (Kramp & Loosen, 2018; Vanegas et al, 2020). However, relying on short videos for news can lead to oversimplification of important issues, a lack of in-depth analysis, and potential misinformation due to limited context and time constraints (Liu & Zhang, 2022).

Short video communication enables journalists to incorporate different storytelling techniques, making the news more engaging and accessible to a wider range of viewers. This not only enhances the overall user experience but also promotes inclusivity and diversity in the dissemination of information (Ferrucci, 2018; Jha & Verma, 2023; Yurder & Akdol, 2020).

Short videos significantly boost audience engagement and digital content impact, as evidenced by studies indicating a correlation between their use and increased likes, views, comments, and audience retention (Molyneux & Mourão, 2019; Tandoc & Maitra, 2018). Furthermore, audience engagement is significantly influenced by the quality of the content, the relevance of the information and the interactivity provided by short videos (Webster & Ksiazek, 2012). The distribution of the content on platforms like TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube can enhance news exposure and attract new audiences (Apasawirote et al, 2022). Short videos are easily shareable on those social media platforms, allowing for wider reach and potential virality. This result in increased visibility and exposure (Molyneux & Mourão, 2019), attracting new viewers and potential followers. Incorporating short videos into journalistic content can significantly enhance audience engagement and help build a strong and loyal following (Tandoc & Maitra, 2018; Shin, 2022).

Therefore, media outlets can reach a younger and more diverse audience by investing in short videos on Instagram. This audience is accustomed to consuming content in more dynamic and faster formats, having grown up in a digital environment (Newman, 2023; Swart, 2023). It is suggested that this

approach can help rejuvenate the reader base and adapt to changes in information consumption habits (Steensen & Westlund, 2023; Eru, 2020). Additionally, media outlets can experiment and innovate with the presentation and distribution of information using short videos, experimenting with various formats, styles, and narrative approaches (Kramp & Loosen, 2018). Creative flexibility in the media sector can lead to new information production methods, a wider range of topics, and innovative storytelling techniques. This enriches the sector, making it more appealing to audiences. This flexibility can ensure relevance in the digital age, promoting a more informed society (Salb, 2021).

To fully capitalize on the potential of short videos, it is important to adapt informative content to make it attractive and easy to consume in this format. Summarizing complex information, using simple and direct language, and prioritizing visual elements that capture the public's attention are examples of strategies that can be adopted (Jacome et al, 2022; Tariq et al, 2022; Erdal et al, 2019).

Additionally, social media communication management tactics include exploring with various narrative and visual approaches to produce visual content that enables to communicate ideas succinctly and clearly (Van Krieken, 2018). To establish a strategy designed at a closer relationship and personalized content, media outlets must encourage the public to actively participate. Fostering interaction and engagement with the audience is also essential to increasing the visibility and relevance of short videos (Tandoc & Maitra, 2018). Engaging with digital influencers allows expand the reach and visibility of short videos. A collaborative approach not

only enhances the newspaper visibility but also reinforces the credibility of the journalistic content. Furthermore, partnering with other organisations, such as academic institutions, can provide a platform to share short videos with a wider audience. This alliance can help attract new audiences who may not typically engage with traditional journalism, thus diversifying the newspaper's readership (Molyneux & Mourão, 2019; Córdova-Durán et al, 2020; Chávez-Zirena et al, 2020).

Finally, to determine the most successful tactics and content, it is essential to monitor and evaluate short video metrics and performance. Outlet media can refine their techniques and modify their strategies based on audience preferences and demands by evaluating indicators like views, likes, shares, and comments (Tandoc & Maitra, 2018).

3. Methodological perspective

This study was based on a mixed research design to examine how reels are reshaping the way media outlets make visual information available to audiences. The research included the analysis of publications from the Instagram profiles of three Portuguese newspapers throughout January 2023. The selection of general information newspapers was made based on their digital circulation (APCT, 2023). The chosen newspapers were *Jornal de Notícias*, *Correio da Manhã*, and *Público*.

The data was manually gathered from the official Instagram accounts of the newspapers: @jornaldenoticias, @publico.pt and @correiodamanhaoficial. A total of 377 posts from the feed were analysed, with particular focus on the 127 posts that included short videos.

Data analysis was conducted using a hybrid approach, integrating both quantitative and qualitative analysis. The quantitative analysis assessed the engagement metrics of the posts, which included the followers count, post count, likes count, reel views count, average reel length, average number of characters in post captions, hashtags, and emojis per post.

The qualitative analysis focused on evaluating the specific attributes of the reels, including their journalistic genre, themes, and geographical extent, whether national or international. By combining both quantitative and qualitative analysis, a comprehensive understanding of the newspaper's social media presence and its impact on the target audience was obtained.

The study, analysing three national newspapers and focusing on a single month, offers valuable insights for media organizations exploring the potential of short videos on social media. Despite limitations, the findings can help media organisations maximize resources and assess their influence on society, highlighting the importance of evaluating and controlling the results.

4. Results and Discussion

This study analyses data from three main Portuguese media outlets in January 2023, providing insights into their communication strategies and social media use. It offers a broader view of Portugal's media landscape and suggests potential application in other contexts.

4.1. Growth in the number of followers

When analysing the followers of the

three selected newspapers, it is possible to observe that all had an increase in the

number of followers during the month (Table 1).

Table 1
New followers and daily average

Newspaper	01/01/2023	31/01/2023	New followers	Avg/day
@correiodamanhaoficial	160 600	161 052	452	15.1
@jornaldenoticias	310 167	313 882	3 715	123.8
@publico.pt	571 931	576 345	4 414	147.1

Source: own elaboration.

The newspaper with the highest number of followers was Público, with a total of 576 345 on 31/01/2023, followed by Jornal de Notícias and Correio da Manhã both with a lower number, 313 882 and 161 052 followers, respectively. Analysing the daily averages of new followers, Público had the biggest increase, with an average of 147.1 new followers per day, followed by Jornal de Notícias with an average of 123.8 new followers per day. Correio da Manhã had an average of 15.1 new followers per day.

When comparing the three newspapers, it can be observed that Público has the highest number of followers on the last day of January, with a difference of more than 260 thousand followers in relation to the second placed, Jornal de Notícias. In comparison Correio da Manhã had a considerably lower number of followers. In terms of daily average of new followers, Público also performed better, with an average of 147.1 new followers per day and Jornal de Notícias with an average of 123.8.

The newspaper Correio da Manhã had considerably lower daily averages compared to the other two. These results suggest that the increase in the number of followers is a common trend among the selected media outlets, with

all having an increase in the number of followers over the period of this study. However, it should be noted that the size of the follower base and the daily average of new followers can vary according to several factors, such as the type of content published, and the social media strategy used factors, such as the type of content published and the social media strategy used.

4.2. Use of short videos

377 posts were analysed, of which 127 were short videos (reels). During the month of January, Jornal de Notícias published, on average, 5.9 posts per day, 53% of which in the form of short videos, which demonstrates that this newspaper has paid special attention to this type of content to connect with your audience on social media. The newspaper Público published, on average, 5.3 posts per day in January 2023, with only 12% in the format of short videos.

This suggests a different communication strategy approach towards the use of short videos, prioritizing other content formats. Finally, Correio da Manhã published only 1.3 posts per day, on average, in January 2023, but with a significant use of short videos, representing 37% of the published

content. This suggests that using this type of content to draw the public's attention on social media could be a strategy for this

newspaper. Table 2 presents the number of posts and the number of reels published by each media outlet.

Table 2
Number of posts and reels by media outlet

Newspaper	Posts	Avg/day	Reels	Avg/day
@correiodamanhaoficial	38	1,3	14	0,5
@jornaldenoticias	178	5,9	94	3,1
@publico.pt	160	5,3	19	0,6

Source: own elaboration.

The daily Jornal de Notícias was the organization that published the most content on social media in January 2023, with an average of 5.9 posts per day. Correio da Manhã was the newspaper that published the least, with only 1,3 posts per day, on average. Jornal de Notícias and Correio da Manhã were the newspapers that most used short videos in their publications, with 53% and 37% of published content, respectively. Meanwhile, Público was the newspaper that used the least this format, with only 12% of the content published in short video format.

Jornal de Notícias also stood out in the daily average of short videos published, with an average of 3.1 short

videos per day. Correio da Manhã published, on average, 0.5 short videos per day. Numbers and statistics make it possible to highlight differences and similarities in the strategies used in short videos by national newspapers.

4.3. Engagement: likes and comments

Regarding the average of likes and comments per post in the feed in other formats (photos and carousel) and in reels (Table 3), Public has an average of 9 994 likes and 248 comments per post in other formats, while in short videos the average of likes is 4 391 and of comments 117.

Table 3
Engagement in different content formats

Newspaper	Other formats		Reels	
	Likes/post	Comments/post	Likes/post	Comments/post
@correiodamanhaoficial	382	22	453	30
@jornaldenoticias	1 310	45	1 861	65
@publico.pt	9 994	248	4 391	117

Source: own elaboration.

These numbers represent 31% in average number of likes and 32% in average of comments on short videos compared to other formats (69% and 68% respectively). *Jornal de Notícias* presents an average of 1 310 likes and 45 comments per post in other formats, while that in short videos the average of likes rises to 1 861 and of comments to 65. These numbers represent 59% in average number of likes and comments on short videos compared to other formats (41%).

Correio da Manhã has the lowest average number of likes and comments per post in other formats, with 382 likes and 22 comments. However, in short videos the average of likes increases to 453, representing an increase of 9%. The average number of comments on short videos is 30, which represents an increase of 15%. The results generally show that short videos have a different impact on different newspapers. While

Jornal de Notícias and *Correio da Manhã* had a higher average number of likes on short videos compared to other formats, *Público* had a smaller number of comments on average for short videos.

4.4. Posts previews and features

The results also reveal some relevant differences in communication strategies in terms of views, reel lengths, numbers of characters, emojis and hashtag used (Table 4). The newspaper *Público* leads in terms of reel views, with an average of 146 268 views per reel. This result may indicate that this newspaper has been more efficient in drawing public attention to its short videos. *Público's* reels' length maintains an average time of 1 minute and 23 seconds, *Jornal de Notícias* 1 minute and 20 seconds and *Correio da Manhã* 47 seconds.

Table 4
Characterization of posts

Newspaper	Views / reels	Avg Duration /Reels	Avg No. Characters / post	Avg No. Hashtags / post	Avg No. Emojis /post	Avg. No. Tag /post
@jornaldenoticias	37 471	00:00:46	343	1.9	1.2	0
@correiodamanhaoficial	76 991	00:01:20	273	4.9	0.1	0
@publico.pt	146 268	00:01:23	640	5.5	1.2	0.1

Source: own elaboration.

These differences in reel length reflect the varying editorial styles and preferences of each publication. *Público* aims to provide in-depth coverage and analysis, which is why their reels are slightly longer. *Jornal de Notícias* focuses on delivering concise and informative news, while *Correio da Manhã* prioritizes quick and catchy updates. Despite these variations, all three publications

understand the importance of engaging their audience within a limited timeframe.

Regarding the average number of characters in the caption per post, *Público* has an average of 640 characters per post, which demonstrates its commitment to more descriptive and detailed news. Additionally, the newspaper uses an average of 5.5 hashtags per post, which can help increase the visibility and reach

of your posts. This indicates that Público is actively trying to engage its audience and attract more readers with hashtags. Additionally, the newspaper's descriptive and thorough approach, as well as its use of hashtags, can help with search engine optimization and increase the likelihood that more people will find your posts. Overall, Público's social media strategy appears to be effective in maximizing engagement and expanding its online presence. Público typically incorporates an average of 1.2 emojis in their posts, which adds a touch of emotion to their content.

This not only makes their posts visually appealing but also helps to connect with their audience on a more personal level. By incorporating emojis, Público can convey their message effectively and make their posts more relatable. This attention to detail and understanding of their audience's preferences further contributes to the success of Público's social media strategy. Furthermore, Público is the only newspaper to tag followers in its posts.

This unique approach not only makes followers feel valued and appreciated but also encourages them to engage with Público's content. Through this strategy, Público fosters a sense of community and loyalty among their followers, ultimately solidifying their position as a leader in the social media sphere.

The average character count of Jornal de Notícias is 273, indicating a strategy of emphasizing visual content. This aligns with the preferences of Instagram users, who are attracted to engaging and eye-catching visuals. As a result, Jornal de Notícias can effectively reach and resonate with its target audience on this popular social media platform. By focusing on visual content,

Jornal de Notícias can capture the attention of Instagram users who tend to have shorter attention spans and prefer consuming information in a more visually appealing format.

This strategy allows the newspaper to stand out among the vast amount of text-based content on the platform, increasing the likelihood of users engaging with their posts and ultimately driving more traffic to their website. Additionally, the use of visual content also enables Jornal de Notícias to convey information quickly and effectively, making it easier for their audience to digest and remember the news they are delivering. The newspaper uses an average of 4.9 hashtags per post, which can increase the visibility and reach of its posts. By using hashtags, Jornal de Notícias can tap into popular topics and trends, attracting a wider audience and gaining more exposure. This strategy helps the newspaper to stay relevant and maintain a strong online presence. Moreover, the use of hashtags also allows Jornal de Notícias to categorize their posts, making it easier for users to find specific content and explore related news articles.

Correio da Manhã has the lowest number of reel views, with an average of 37 471 views per reel, which may indicate that the newspaper needs to improve its promotion and distribution strategies for its short videos. Regarding the average duration of the reels, this newspaper maintains an average time of 47 seconds, which is relatively short compared to other newspapers.

This analysis reveals differences in communication strategies among three newspapers, with Público leading in reel views with an average of 146 268 views per reel. The reels' lengths vary, reflecting the editorial styles and preferences of

each publication. Público aims for in-depth coverage and analysis, while Jornal de Notícias focuses on concise and informative news. Público's social media strategy is effective in maximizing engagement and expanding its online presence. The newspaper incorporates 1.2 emojis in its posts, making their posts more relatable and engaging. Público is the only newspaper to tag followers in its posts, fostering a sense of community and loyalty. Jornal de Notícias focuses on visual content, aligning with Instagram users' preferences. The newspaper uses an average of 4.9 hashtags per post, tapping into popular topics and trends, attracting a wider audience, and gaining

more exposure. Correio da Manhã has the lowest number of reel views, with an average of 37 471 views per reel. The average duration of the reels is relatively short compared to other newspapers.

4.5. Journalistic genre

In terms of the journalistic genre of the contents published online by the three newspapers (Table 5), Correio da Manhã did not publish any content in the review and reportage category, with most of its content being news, with 11 publications. In relation to other genres, the newspaper published 2 interviews and 1 infographic.

Table 5
Reels by journalistic genre

Newspaper	News	Review	Reportage	Interview	Infographic
@correiodamanhaoficial	11	0	0	2	1
@jornaldenoticias	68	8	12	6	0
@publico.pt	7	0	3	6	3

Source: own elaboration.

On the other hand, Jornal de Notícias had a more diverse range of journalistic genres in its online content. They published 68 news, 8 reviews, 12 reportages, and 6 interviews. This indicates a broader coverage and a more varied approach to journalism compared to Correio da Manhã. The inclusion of different formats and genres allows Jornal de Notícias to cater to a wider audience and provide more comprehensive news coverage.

Compared to Correio da Manhã, Público published just 5 reels more, but its visual content is more widely distributed by genre. The newspaper has 7 news, 3 reportages, 6 interviews, and 3 infographics. This distribution of

journalistic genres in Público shows a focus on providing in-depth analysis and in-depth reporting. The inclusion of infographics also indicates a commitment to presenting information in a visually engaging way. Overall, Público's combination of news, reportage, interviews, and infographics allows them to offer a well-rounded and informative reading experience for their audience.

The three newspapers, Correio da Manhã, Jornal de Notícias, and Público, have different journalistic genres and formats.

Correio da Manhã primarily publishes news, with 11 publications, while Jornal de Notícias has a more diverse range of news, reviews,

reportages, and interviews. This allows them to cater to a wider audience and provide more comprehensive news coverage. Público, on the other hand, publishes just 5 reels more than Correio da Manhã but has a more diverse visual content, including 7 news, 3 reportages, 6 interviews, and 3 infographics. This approach focuses on providing in-depth analysis and reporting, and the inclusion of infographics ensures a visually

engaging reading experience.

4.6. Thematic categories and scope of news

Based on the analysis performed, 12 thematic categories were defined (Table 6). The category with the most news is Economy & Politics, with 59 news in total, 37 of them national and 22 international.

Table 6
Thematic and scope of news

Categories	Internacional	Nacional	Total
Accidents & Disasters	16	22	38
Art & Culture	12	41	53
Economics & Politics	22	37	59
Health & Nutrition	4	17	21
Justice & Security	14	11	25
Meteorology & Environment	2	8	10
Protest & Activism	15	19	34
Religion	7	1	8
Science & Technology	0	9	9
Society	20	31	51
Sports	24	11	35
War & Conflicts	33	0	33

Source: own elaboration.

The category of Art & Culture dominated the news, with the majority being national news. On the other hand, Religion had the fewest number of news articles, with the majority being international news. The category of War & Conflicts solely consisted of international news, specifically related to the ongoing War in Ukraine. Interestingly, the Art & Culture category had the highest percentage of national news articles, indicating a focus on cultural events.

Therefore, it is possible to denote that the news about Economy & Politics

and Society are more national, while the news about War & Conflicts and Sports and sports tends to be more international. The Protest & Activism category had a balanced distribution between national and international news.

5. Conclusions

Social media platforms have significantly impacted journalism practices, with short videos becoming a key strategy in digital journalism. Instagram enabled users to consume

information more efficiently and creatively through visual storytelling. The media sector uses short videos to innovate in information presentation and distribution, attracting younger audiences and promoting public engagement. Investing in short videos allows media outlets rejuvenate the reader base, and experiment with different formats, styles, and narrative approaches. To fully leverage the potential of short videos, it is essential to adapt informative content to the platform and publish quality content to increase the credibility of shared information.

The study analysed the use of short videos on social media by three Portuguese media outlets in January 2023. The results showed an increase in followers in all newspapers. The use of short videos is not common in all newspapers.

Organisations that used short videos in their strategies engaged their target audience more and reinforced typical characteristics of this type of content, such as hashtags, emojis and tags. These findings suggest that incorporating short videos into social media strategies can be an effective way for media outlets to increase their reach and engage with their audience. This study provides valuable insights for media outlets looking to enhance their online presence and credibility with short videos on social media platforms.

However, the data was collected in a single month, which may not reflect the situation in the long term. Additionally, the data analysis was restricted to Instagram, which does not necessarily reflect the global communication strategy of each newspaper. Future studies should include more newspapers, extend data collection over a longer period, consider other social networks,

and explore consumers' perspectives and engagement with short video informational content to provide more information on effective communication management strategies.

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