

This is the preprint version of the article published in the European Journal of Communication (citation below)

Jaramillo-Dent, D., Contreras-Pulido, P., & Pérez-Rodríguez, M. A. (2021). Right-wing immigration narratives in Spain: A study of persuasion on Instagram Stories. *European Journal of Communication*.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/02673231211012157>

Right-wing immigration narratives in Spain: A study of persuasion on Instagram Stories

Ephemeral media has become a staple of today's social media ecology. This study advances the first exploratory analysis of Instagram Stories as a format for political communication. Through an initial content analysis of 832 stories in three verified Vox accounts and a secondary content and discourse analysis of 114 stories, we delve into the strategies used by right-wing party Vox in Spain to portray immigration as an issue for ideological positioning. The findings shed light onto the ways in which the representation of migrants is employed as an instrument for anti-migratory policy support, through the construction of a very specific profile of migrant in terms of age and gender and the exclusion of significant migrant populations from the argument. Moreover, the party employs the content creation functionalities of Instagram Stories to construct arguments and storylines where diverse information sources converge, effectively bypassing traditional media and reaching their supporter base directly.

Keywords: Right-wing; immigration; Instagram; persuasion; media representation; social media; ephemeral media; content analysis; discourse analysis

Introduction

Immigration is one of the main issues employed by right-wing parties around the world to advance their political agendas. The critical role of this topic and related, highly mediatized events, are harnessed as persuasive instruments for political positioning in electoral processes (Pardos-Prado, 2020). Moreover, in order to fulfill specific ideological intentions, (im)migration issues are constructed and represented in unique ways that in many cases formulate an imaginary where these characters —the (im)migrants— comprise characteristics

that position them as the outgroup (Krämer, 2017) by framing them as a threat (Jengelle and Clawson, 2019) to legality (Horsti, 2007) or economic wellbeing and a danger to dominant social norms (Dennison and Geddes, 2018) in discourse that dehumanizes migrants¹ (Ekman, 2019).

Thus, in a media environment that is characterized by convergence and the ability to connect with audiences directly (Mihailidis and Viotty, 2017) the tendency of right-wing populist political groups to bypass mainstream media both ideologically and in practice (Krämer, 2017), has led to the instrumentalization of social media and its user-generated-content capabilities for the deployment of narrative strategies that support and perpetuate migratory storylines aligned with certain communicative intentions, to maintain and attract their like-minded following.

In this context, Instagram emerges as the fastest-growing social media platform—from five hundred million to one billion monthly active users from 2016 to 2018 (Statista, 2018)—positioning itself as one of the most influential digital contexts. This study focuses on Instagram due to its growth, unique traits, and users. Its content configurations are worthy of exploration, to gain a deeper understanding of how these functionalities are being harnessed for political communication. Furthermore, Instagram Stories (IG Stories) represent the most successful content format in the platform in terms of daily users (Leaver, et al., 2020). The case of Spanish far-right party Vox is used as an example of a party that has attracted a large following on social media, especially Instagram (Viejo and Alonso, 2018) while obtaining

¹ Although visual and textual elements analyzed in this study regularly make reference to a well-defined profile of migrant in terms of gender and race (which will be described below) it is not possible to determine if the content refers to a specific type of migrant. Given this limitation, we opted for the umbrella terms “migrant”, “immigrant” and “(im)migrant”, which are used interchangeably throughout the paper to refer to the vast diversity of populations who migrate, including refugees and asylum seekers.

parliamentary representation to become the third political force in Spain in the last two election cycles (Turnbull-Dugarte, 2019b).

This paper begins with a discussion of the theoretical basis of interest for this study, including the issue of immigration and its implications as a unique topic for political positioning and polarization. We then move to an overview of ideology and persuasion, followed by a contextualization of Vox and the Spanish case and IG Stories as a worthy format for the exploration of political communication. The coding procedure is then laid out, to end with the findings and discussion.

Immigration as a topic for political polarization

Polarizing content in social media has been described as rhetorically alienating and incendiary, displaying flawed reasoning and/or misleading data (Howard et.al., 2017). When issues such as immigration are concerned, these narrative phenomena are especially problematic, considering that migrants are pervasively absent from the discourse (Jaramillo-Dent and Pérez-Rodríguez, 2021; Said, 2008), unable to defend themselves, making them uniquely vulnerable to become the subject of misleading information and targets for violent discourse and attacks (Ekman, 2019). For instance, Clark-Ibanez and Swan (2019) found that social media is instrumental—due to its configuration as well as its content creation and dissemination functionalities—in the construction of migratory narratives that serve the communicative intentions of specific ideologies and persuasive messages, regardless of their veracity.

Moreover, Ekman (2019) describes how racist anti-immigrant discourse on social media is effectively violent and creates symbolic boundaries that in turn, establish migrants and refugees as valid targets for violence. This goes in line with Chouliaraki and Georgiou's (2019) definition of the digital border that includes discursive practices that attempt to classify migrants as perennial 'others'.

In this sense, Dennison and Geddes (2018) pinpoint to issue salience as the culprit for the recent increase in the support for anti-immigration parties in Western Europe. Moreover, these authors describe how issue salience is defined by individual and collective social interests, as well as events that attract national attention. Pardos-Prado (2020) describes how the media’s portrayal of immigration seems to have a greater impact in Spanish public opinion about this issue to a greater degree than actual migratory flows.

In the case of Spain, McMahon (2017) described seven frames used in parliamentary debates in the 2008-2011 period used to discuss immigration issues. These frames are represented on Figure 1.

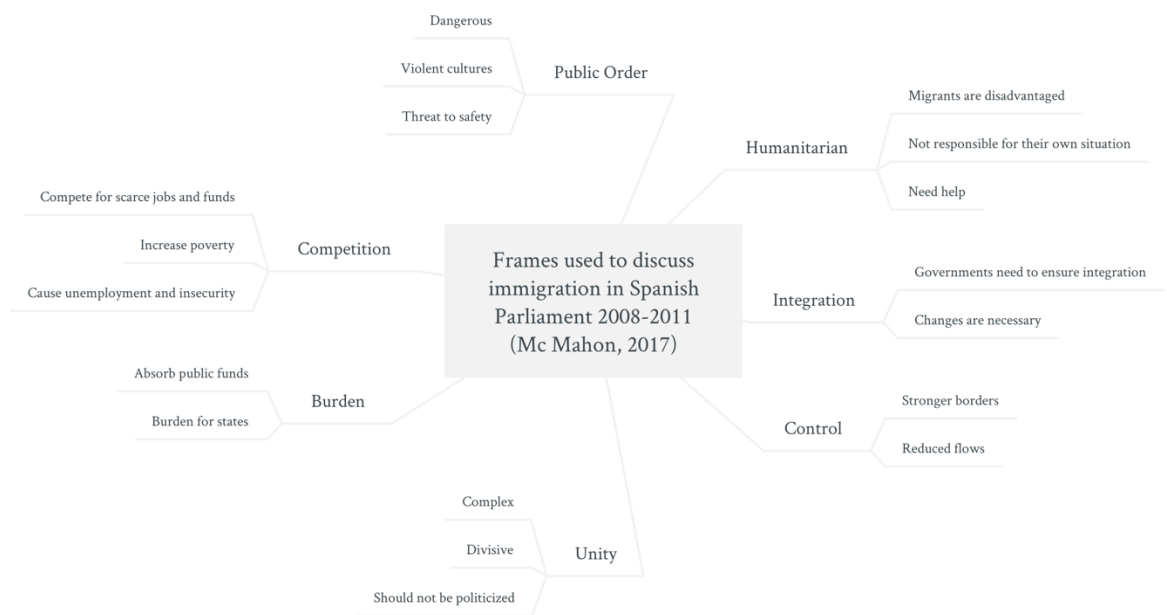


Figure 1. Frames used to discuss immigration in Spanish Parliament 2008–2011. Created by the authors.

The importance of immigration as a topic for political polarization and the ways in which representatives in the Spanish congress have framed this issue represents a small part of the complex discursive configurations that develop and spread online, with the aim to persuade the public. In the next section, the characteristics of online persuasive messages are laid out, as well as the Spanish case and Vox as an example.

Political Persuasion on Social Media: The case of Spain and Vox

The ways in which User-Generated-Content on social media impacts opinion formation processes has been established in recent literature. In this sense, Diehl et al. (2015) found that people's uses of social media platforms are closely linked to political persuasion. Furthermore, studies have found that social media users favor content according to its narrative, displaying a preference for those that reinforce their beliefs while fostering polarization (Del Vicario et al., 2016). According to Garner and Palmer (2011), citizens today base their policy preferences more closely upon their group interests, core values, and party identifications than they did several decades ago, making their opinions less variable and more predictable from these core political predispositions. Moreover, the authors suggest that this preference leads to the propagation of biased information based on rumors.

In their study of the different types of information shared on social media during the 2016 US election, Howard et al. (2017) established a typology of sources for information being shared on social media platforms, included in Figure 2. This classification is interesting in light of the social media content analyzed in the present study, as it compartmentalizes content according to defined classifications, and it is of interest to assess its applicability to our sample.

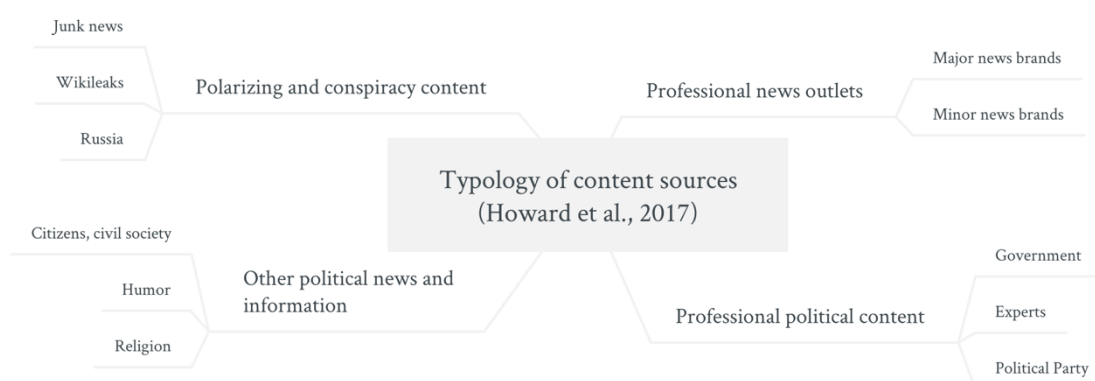


Figure 2. Typology of content sources on social media. Created by the authors.

In order to contextualize Vox's situation in Spain, it is important to understand that until the end of the decade of 2010 Spain was considered an exceptional case —alongside other countries such as Germany— for not having a far-right party with parliamentary representation (Pardos-Prado, 2020; Turnbull-Dugarte, 2019b). Moreover, Vox's ideology has been described as far-right, displaying nativist and authoritarian traits (Ferreira, 2019). In this sense, Simón (2020) describes Vox's stance on immigration as severe, advocating for the deportation of undocumented migrants and the elimination of social benefits that purportedly attract further immigration flows, in the so-called *call effect*. Moreover, Turnbull-Dugarte (2019b) argues that Vox's ideology is far from being uniquely anti-immigration, covering a wide array of topics including hardline positions on gender-related issues, including same-sex marriage, abortion, gender quotas, gender-based violence, among others.

Previous studies in other countries have delved into narrative practices of political parties on Instagram, focusing on politicians' self-representation (Lalancette and Raynauld, 2019; Muñoz and Towner, 2017). In the case of Vox, its rise and ideological traits have been analyzed in depth, but few studies have focused on Vox and social media, while even fewer have pinpointed the party's rhetorical and ideological presence on Instagram. Traditional media have identified and described Vox's presence on social media, emphasizing its role on Instagram and the electoral/democratic implications of its popularity on this platform (Calabrés and Vicente, 2019; Viejo and Alonso, 2018) suggesting that this is a significant aspect in Vox's success and a matter of public interest. Moreover, Turnbull-Dugarte (2019a) explored the use of Instagram by the major Spanish parties in the general elections of 2015 and 2016, but his analysis precedes Vox's significance in the Spanish political landscape, and it is not included in his paper.

The present paper represents an innovative perspective in terms of its analysis of IG Stories as a format for political communication and persuasion, in the case of a party that has

been successful in harnessing a significant following on this platform while gaining representation in congress. In the next section, the unique traits of the platform are described.

Instagram as a platform: Stories and ephemeral content

In 2019, 766 million users accessed Instagram monthly worldwide and this number is projected to reach almost 1 billion monthly users by 2023 (Statista, 2020). In Spain, Instagram is the social platform with the highest growth at 49%, with 70% of its users belonging to the 18 to 30 age bracket and 62% of them female (IAB Spain, 2019). This makes Instagram a platform of interest for the examination of political content, due to its increasing penetration and the segment of the population it serves—a significant group in electoral terms.

The popularity of ephemeral social media content was led by Snapchat Stories. Scholars have described the disappearing nature of Snapchat communication as a return to conversation-like interactions (Rettberg, 2014; Soffer, 2016). In the case of Instagram, it introduced its Stories function in August 2016 in an attempt to increase time spent on the app (Leaver, et al., 2020). These authors locate the success of Stories—identified as the main success factor for Instagram as a whole—in their limited 24-hour duration, since users feel the need to check their friends' and followed profiles' feeds every day, to avoid missing out on their latest content. Since then, the Stories function has grown to become the most successful Instagram content sharing mode, with more than 500 million daily users (Instagram Business, 2020).

The creativity enabled by the Stories format includes a range of filters, GIFs and regular stickers, polls, sliders, music and other interactive add-ons. Videos, GIFs and photos can be shared within this configuration, with the ability to combine an array of content in each Story. Their prominent position within the platform—at the top, in a highly visible place for users—make them significant. The possibility to archive stories at the top of the profile's wall—

through story highlights— means that content creators can make these messages available to users permanently. In the case of Vox, story highlights are grouped by issue, initiative or type of content, making stories uniquely relevant in terms of the availability of user-generated, persuasive and in some cases even propagandistic content.

The unique approach advanced in this study is the consideration of Instagram as a medium for political communication, where a large segment of the young adult population is consuming news (Newman et al., 2020) and information, effectively becoming one of the settings where symbolic understandings of socially-constructed reality are molded (Searle and Willis, 1995).

Methods

The present exploratory research study involved content analysis and subsequent discourse analysis. To carry out the present study, three specific research objectives were set out:

(O1) Describe the characteristics of Instagram stories related to immigration in the three official Vox Instagram profiles.

(O2) Identify the representations of characters involved in migratory narratives, including the depiction of those telling the story, the characteristics of the migrant groups involved, and the portrayal of migratory experiences.

(O3) Identify persuasive strategies made possible by textual/visual representations and the use of functionalities and affordances of the platform within migratory narratives.

The codebook was developed through a combination of deductive methods —involving code groups based on broad dimensions that were set from the literature review prior to commencing the analysis— and inductive methods —referring to the derivation of codes from the data itself, as proposed by Glaser and Strauss (2006). The majority of the codes were derived inductively

within three pre-established, broad dimensions, guided by the objectives of the study. In this case, the exploratory approach and the inclusion of inductively derived codes is appropriate due to the scarcity of previous research available on the phenomena analyzed (Hsieh and Shannon, 2005), namely the study of political communication about (im)migration on IG Stories.

Moreover, the analysis included a mix of qualitative and quantitative methods. The quantitative approach involved assessing single code frequencies (f) and code cooccurrence frequencies enabled by the Atlas.ti (v.8.4.3) content analysis software. This assessment was complemented by a qualitative approach —conducting a deeper analysis of the contents in their context, considering the affordances of the platform, the temporal qualities of this format (7 to 15 seconds) and their multimodal nature. This process was implemented through iterative rounds of coding to identify trends in the data that point to phenomena of interest —in this case, to pinpoint the characteristics of narratives and discourse referring to migrants and migratory phenomena. A final qualitative analysis provided a deeper understanding of what these images, functionalities and texts imply for persuasive strategies involving narratives about migration within the platformed context, in official political accounts of the far-right party Vox in Spain. Figure 3 reflects the research design and process that guided the present study.

EXPLORATORY RESEARCH DESIGN

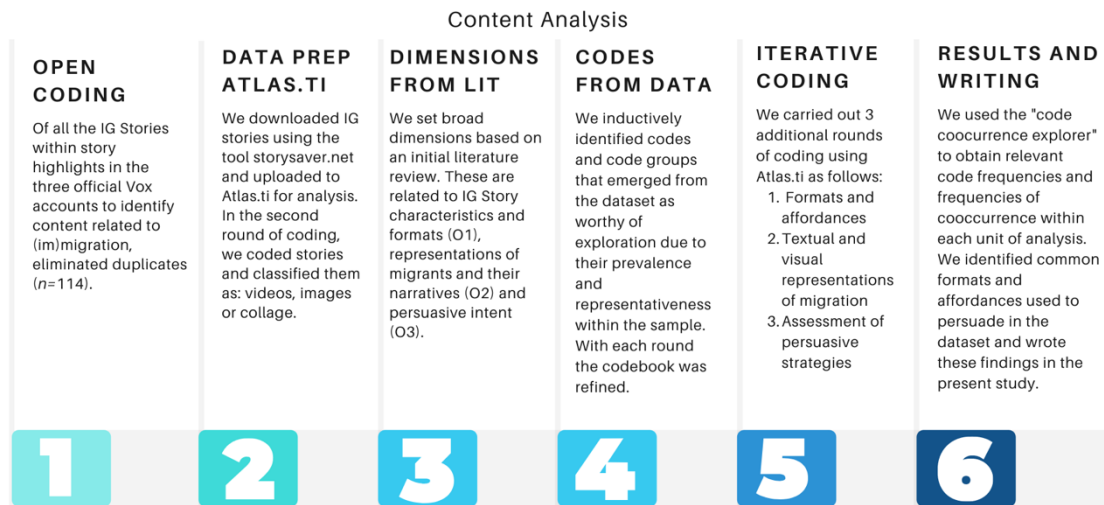


Figure 3. Research design. Created by the authors.

Data Collection and Sample

Three official Instagram accounts for Vox were selected to extract the sample. These accounts were selected on the basis of a search of all official, verified accounts for the party. Story collections are used consistently in these accounts over long periods of time, enabling the analysis of this type of content. In this sense, the sampling was purposive, as defined by Palys (2008). The accounts included, and relevant information about them, are reflected in Table 1.

Table 1. Account information and sampling process

Account	Followers	Total Stories	Immig. Stories
@voxnoticias	150K	486	79
@vox_es	560K	280	42
@voxjovenes	116K	66	1
		Total posts	122
		Final sample	114

Note: 8 stories were excluded because they were duplicates (cross-posted in different accounts)

The Stories were included based on their mention of any topic directly related to immigration issues excluding IG Stories about racism and other similar but unrelated topics. As of 29 March 2020, we carried out a first round of open coding in a total of 832 Instagram stories in story collections for immigration content to exclude all unrelated content from the sample. This resulted in a sample of $n = 122$ which after excluding duplicates, yielded a final sample of $n = 114$ stories. The only post related to immigration in the @voxjovenes account was a duplicate and was therefore eliminated from the final sample. It is important to note that Vox has the largest following of all the Spanish parties on Instagram (Viejo and Alonso, 2018). Meanwhile, of all the social networks the party uses, Instagram is their most successful social media platform in terms of number of followers. Moreover, Vox has repeatedly attacked the mainstream media, and one of the three profiles analyzed is called @voxnoticias or vox news, suggesting an attempt at bypassing traditional news media gatekeepers and reaching their audience directly with their own version of the facts.

Codebook development

The first step in the development of the codebook involved the identification of relevant theoretical perspectives to respond to each of the research objectives set forth, as described by Riffe et al. (2013). In terms of O1, previous studies have explored the variety and significance of Instagram formats and affordances, including IG Stories (Jaramillo-Dent et al., 2020; Leaver et al., 2020) and provided guidance to approach multimodal content such as the one analyzed in the present study (Highfield and Leaver, 2016). Moreover, in relation to O2, McMahon (2017) pointed to immigration frames used in Spanish parliamentary debates as shown in Figure 1. It is worth noting that these don't apply to the complexity of social media content

because they don't consider the visual aspect nor the characteristics of the speaker, thus, after testing the frames in an initial round of coding, we decided to derive inductive codes to more accurately describe the ways in which political discourse about immigration is shaped in this ephemeral, multimodal format. Finally, regarding O3, we were interested in assessing the persuasive intent of these messages. For the purposes of this paper, we define persuasive intent as a narrative configuration that reflects an intention to shape attitudes, beliefs or actions (Blair, 2012). For this goal, after several rounds of coding to respond to O1 and O2, we identified trends within the coded content that suggested the intention to persuade.

Thus, through iterative coding rounds, a code chart was developed on Atlas.ti. In the process, some code groups were derived from previous single codes. Such is the case of the code group EMOJI which was initially an individual code to signal the presence of emoji but the need to include nuance in the emotions represented by emoji motivated the derivation of a new code group. The final code chart is extensive, but the code groups analyzed in this paper are included in Table 2.

Table 2. Code groups used for analysis. Created by the Authors

<u>Objective</u>	<u>Code group</u>	<u>Definition</u>
O1 Describe the characteristics of Instagram stories	MEDTY	This code group includes images, videos/GIFs and collage (these last understood as stories where at least 2 types of content from different sources appear together which may include screenshots, stickers, GIFs and text)
	SCSH	This code group describes the types of screenshot content including Instagram posts/profiles, tweets, YouTube videos, news platforms, TV videos.
	AEST	This code group includes aesthetic characteristics such as the use of filters and color schemes.
	INSTA	This code group includes specific functionalities of the Instagram platform such as stickers, emoji, hashtags, @tags, swipe/arrows/see more.
	EMOJI	This code group serves to describe the communicative intention/emotion conveyed by specific emoji used.

	NEWS SOURCE	This code group describes whether the name of the source of news is included in the post.
O2 Identify the representations of characters involved in migratory narratives	POLIT IMAGE	This code group includes the visual characteristics of politicians when they are portrayed visually.
	IMMIG IMAGE	This code group describes the visual depiction of (im)migrants.
	IMMIG TXT	This code group includes textual terms used to represent/describe (im)migrants.
	VICTIM IM	This code group identifies characters portrayed as victims of (im)migrants and the human mobility phenomenon.
O3 Identify persuasive strategies	PERS INTENT	This code group identifies aspects of the narrative that suggest an intention to persuade, including formats, affordances, representations and storylines that constitute rhetorical devices.

Findings

In this section, the analysis of Vox's Instagram stories about immigration is laid out, considering the IG Stories' formats and affordances used, their portrayal of migrants and migratory narratives and finally, their persuasive strategies considering the aforementioned aspects. In order to exemplify the strategies and contents discussed, representative stories in the dataset have been replicated and translated by the authors using Adobe Illustrator and included as figures.

Characteristics of IG Stories about immigration on official Vox accounts

In this section we will describe IG Stories in terms of formats and affordances across the sample to respond to O1.

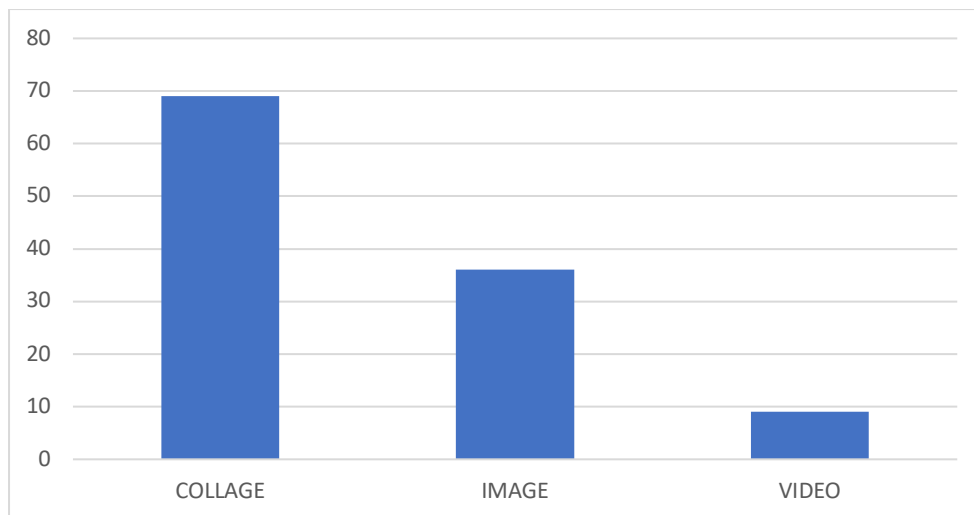


Figure 4. Story media types' frequencies by format. Prepared by the authors.

As can be seen in Figure 4, the collage media format—understood as a story with a combination of a minimum of 2 types of content from different sources—was prevalent within the sample ($f=69$). Notably, screenshots were prevalent within collage stories ($f=91$) from a total of 109 screenshots across the sample. Figure 5 is a representative example of a collage media story comprised, in this case, by three screenshots from different sources. Among screenshots (SCSH), the NEWS SOURCE code group is noteworthy ($f=58$) and is exemplified, in this case, by a screenshot of a news headline and another one portraying an unidentified news source. Overall, among screenshots of news content, some did not identify their sources ($f=17$) and others did ($f=41$). Some of these sources include traditional media platforms and so-called junk news platforms, which, in this case include blogs and other pseudo journalistic content.



Figure 5. Translated illustration of a collage story format example. Created by the authors.

Instagram functionalities and affordances

The use of Instagram Story functionalities includes the use of emoji ($f=72$), both within screenshots from other social media platforms as well as emoji-related affordances from Instagram. This suggests a cross-media strategy, as well as an attempt to appeal to the audience in very specific ways. Figure 6 includes the analysis of the use of emoji in this sample, including the functions and emotions conveyed by this visual component.

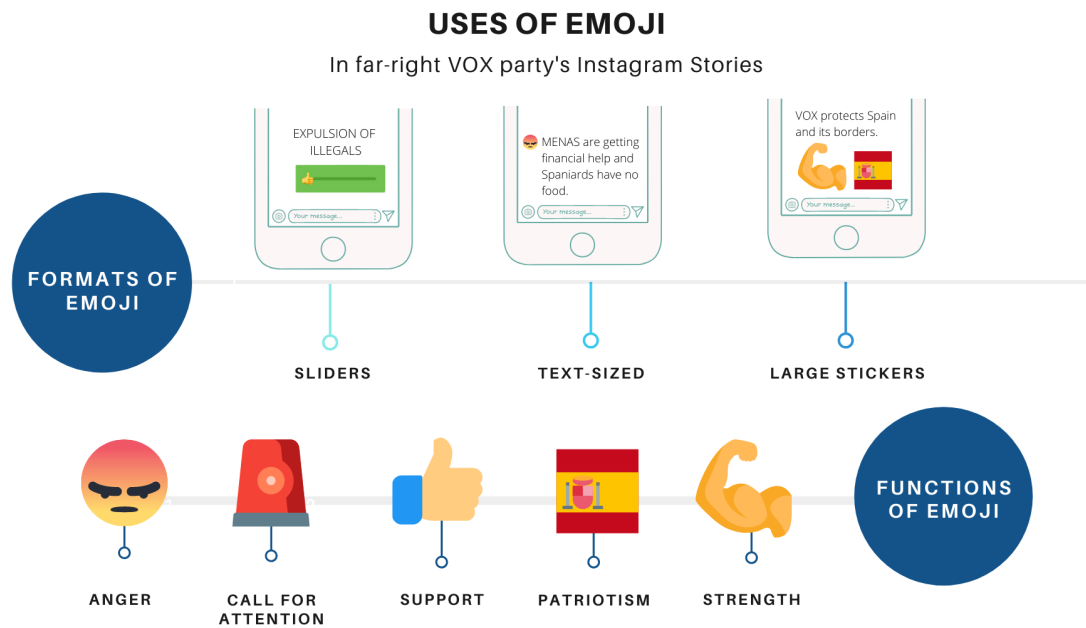


Figure 6. Uses of emoji. Created by the authors.

In terms of aesthetics, coded within the AEST code group, collage stories overwhelmingly use a white background with small details in green, and Instagram affordances such as sliders also align with this palette, while the red/yellow scheme is secondary, but also important. This supports the findings of Sampietro and Sánchez-Castillo (2020) in their analysis of Abascal's Instagram account, suggesting that the use of Vox's brand and national Spanish colors is part of a larger social media strategy across personal and party-wide accounts.

Traits of migrants and migratory narratives

In this section we will describe the visual and textual representation of migrants in the sample, as well as the actors who convey migratory narratives in response to O2.

It is worth noting that only 21 units of analysis (stories) depicted migrants visually, and the rest of the sample included 28 visual depictions of politicians, while the remaining stories included text and other unrelated or general stock images.

Visually, the depiction of migrants in this sample reflects a prevalence of *unidentified, black, male migrants* who are mostly portrayed as *part of a group*, as can be evidenced from

the frequency of cooccurrence of visual codes within the sample. Textually, the words used in migratory narratives describe the characters, using words such as *massive*, *MENAS* (unaccompanied migrant minors), *illegal*, *aggressive* and *violent*. Figure 7 depicts the highest frequencies of cooccurrence among pairs of IMMIG codes, involving three possibilities of cooccurring pairs: two visual codes, two textual codes and one visual and one textual code. The frequency of cooccurrence is an analysis function available in Atlas.ti and it refers to the number of times two codes appear together in the same unit of analysis and it serves to obtain an overview of the type of migrant portrayed in this sample.

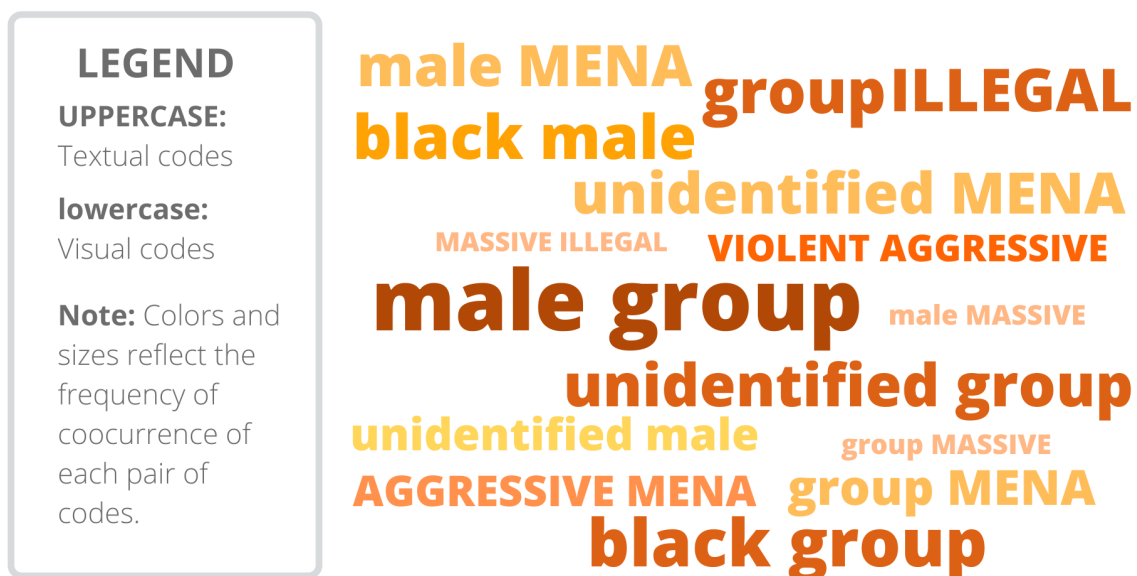


Figure 7. Word cloud depicting pairs of cooccurring textual and visual codes used to describe migrants on the basis of Atlas.ti co-occurrence explorer. Created by the authors.

The use of the term *MENA* suggests a pejorative representation of migrants who are minors and often accompanies arguments about their need for financial support by the government, in line with McMahon's (2017) burden frame and supporting previous analyses of traditional media that suggest that the term *MENA* has become a metaphor of crime and welfare-dependence (Gómez-Quintero et al., 2021). It is interesting to consider Vox's focus on the youth of these migrant populations, which could imply a humanitarian frame (Benson,

2013), since it may elicit empathy and a desire to help, but in this case their youth is presented as a problem.

The focus on the illegality factor aligns with Horsti (2007), centering on the violence they bring and the criminality of their actions. This representation of migrants supports the idea of them as a threat, in line with Jengelle and Clawson (2019) and resembling the control and public order frames proposed by McMahon (2017). This threat is established in the social/civic sense as well as the economic/financial sense (Dennison and Geddes, 2018) due to discourse that focuses on their *massive* numbers and their status as *minors*.

The formats and configurations in which these arguments are presented, combined with the representations of migrants, are of special interest to theorize about their persuasive nature and are described in the next section.

Persuasive strategies in the use of textual/visual representations of migration and platform formats and affordances

In this section we will bring together the findings related to Instagram's formats and affordances with the visual and textual representation of migrants to identify how these are instrumentalized in an attempt to persuade their followers (O3).

In terms of the formats, the use of collage stories to present an argument about immigration suggests an attempt to construct a complex discursive configuration and fit it into the 7 to 15 seconds that an Instagram Story lasts on screen. We could argue that these temporal and spatial limitations make it hard for users to read and process the information presented, possibly impairing their ability to make decisions about the veracity or trustworthiness of said information. By including ideas from different sources, and combining them on a white background, the content creator forces the user to focus on specific parts of the message, in an attempt to process it as a whole and not as the different parts put together to create it.

Furthermore, specific emoji and emoji sliders constitute rhetorical devices for persuasion, with functions similar as those described by Ge and Gretzel (2018). In this case they are used to trigger specific emotions — attention, anger, support, strength, patriotism— by offering limited interaction possibilities —through sliders— supporting the idea of a persuasive message configuration (coded under PERS INT).

Moreover, images portraying migrants mostly fall into two categories: the first category includes screenshots from external sources such as other social media profiles and news media platforms, in many cases as part of collage posts (Figure 7). The second category involves posts that use design items including highly contrasting colors and symbols, combined with filters and other affordances unique to Instagram, to portray migrant populations as exemplified in Figure 8. This is worth noting in light of the status of Instagram as the visual platform par excellence. These characteristics, in combination with the very specific portrayal of migrants described in the previous section, supports Clark-Ibanez and Swan's (2019) claim that social media presents a perfect context for disinformation about migration due to its functions and configurations.

An interesting aspect within Vox's representation of the human mobility phenomena is defined by the migrant profiles that are excluded from these narratives, which become noticeable in Figure 7. Examples of these are female or older migrants, families, as well as unaccompanied younger children, who would also be considered *MENAS* but are not included in these representations. The significance of these excluded migrant profiles lies in a possible attempt to persuade followers to support certain policies and political proposals, by presenting a unique perspective on migrant populations, and one that gives way to an array of problems for the Spanish society.

The migrant profile advanced by Vox involves a very clear age range and gender, alongside negative traits, as described before, establishing the basis for their strict deportation

policy proposals (Simón, 2020), in the face of migratory phenomena taking place in Spain. Both posts in Figure 8 convey this idea very clearly through the messages “Expulsion of illegals now” and “immediate expulsion” accompanied by images and text that emphasize an aggressive stance of migrant groups and the large groups crossing the border. Moreover, the exclusion of the aforementioned migrant groups may respond to a need to position migrants in opposition to the needs of Vox supporters, including their need for safety, a stable job and in some cases government aid.

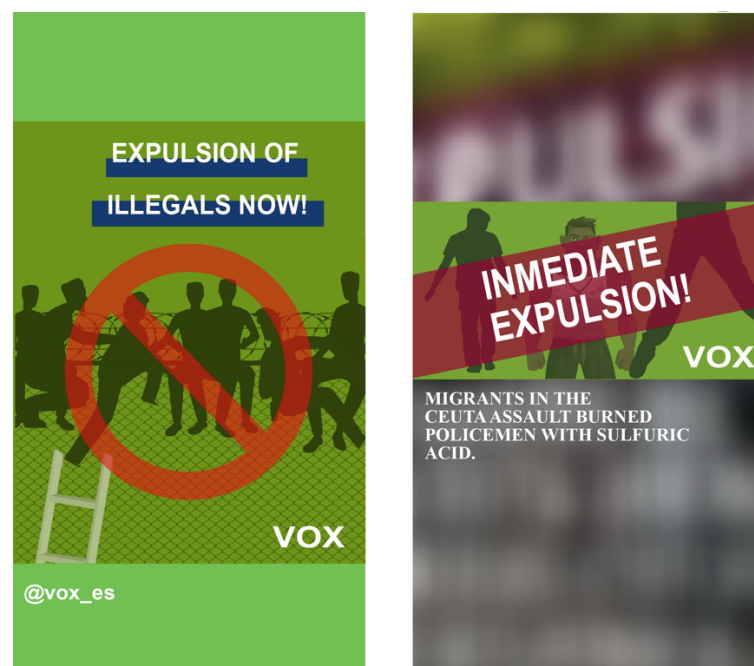


Figure 8. Translated illustration of two stories using filters and other representative AEST. Created by the authors.

Within arguments about violence perpetrated by migrants, the frequencies of codes related to migrants' victims in this sample are represented in Figure 9. The prevalence of females as victims is related to two argumentative lines: one involves an argument by Vox that states that gang rapes in Spain are mostly perpetrated by foreign individuals; the second is related to the argument that migrants use fake gender-based violence claims to access additional humanitarian aid, in turn minimizing the experience of real violence suffered by Spanish women. These storylines support Turnbull-Dugarte's (2019b) argument suggesting that Vox is

not only anti-immigration, as they use other unrelated issues in conjunction with immigration to advance ideological and legislative proposals. Moreover, positioning law enforcement officers as victims also serves Vox's strategy of establishing migrants as direct, violent opponents of social order.

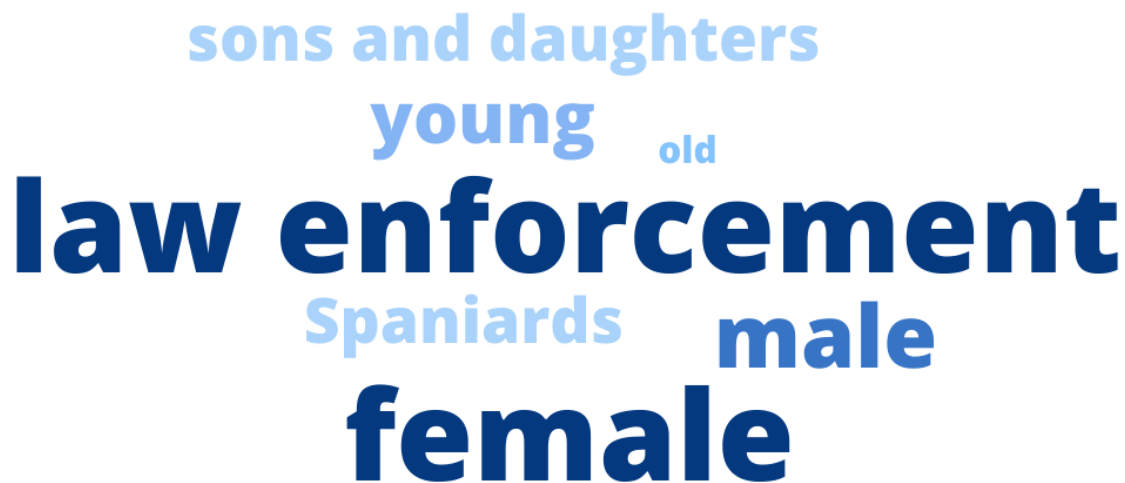


Figure 9. Word cloud of the frequencies of textual codes for content that describes the victims of migrants. Created by the authors on the basis of Atlas.ti co-occurrence explorer.

The portrayal of politicians in images includes, in its majority, members of the party delivering a speech alone, with Santiago Abascal, the leader of Vox, portrayed more often than any other member of the party. Text is often added to include quotes from the speech on images and videos, emphasizing certain words from the speech using red and green fonts. Moreover, flags often appear on posts with politicians, in the form of emoji or in the image.

As described before, the use of color is relevant as it reflects, in some cases, an overview of the nature of the message and in others, it strengthens and highlights the messages conveyed by the text. Within the AEST code group, the use of a specific hue of green as the branded content of the party is present across the sample, as can be seen in Figure 8. White is a major color in this sample, used in contrast with the party's green and also in collage posts, where information from different sources is presented. The use of red is employed to highlight and

urge as exemplified in Figures 8 and 10 and to emphasize negative aspects of migrants and opposition—including opposing parties and activists. Red also appears with yellow in some cases, highlighting the flag colors as the national symbol and usually accompanying messages that extol national values/needs/interests in the face of (im)migration, further strengthening nativist ideas (Ferreira, 2019).

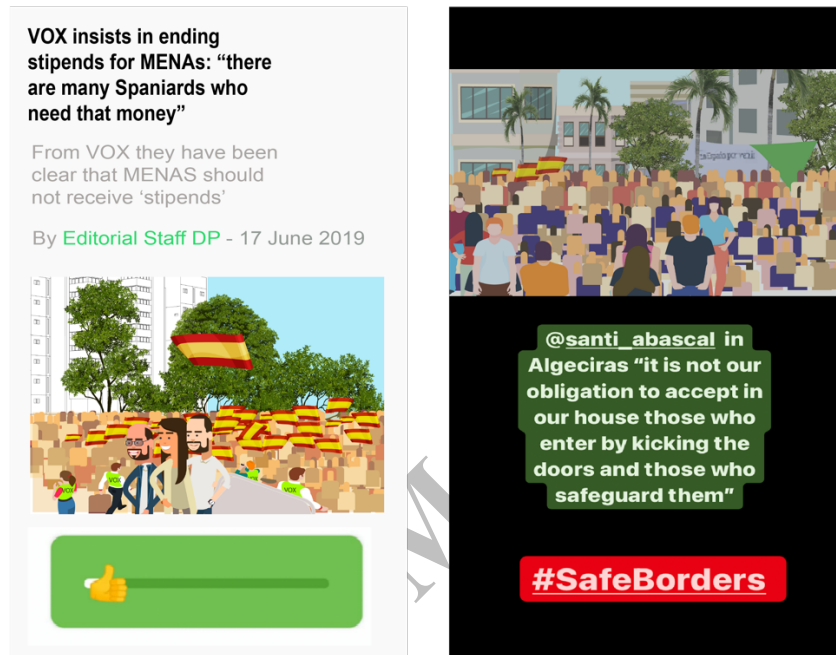


Figure 10. Translated illustration of two stories portraying politicians and audiences. Created by the authors.

Another visual portrayal of interest includes massive audiences and Spanish flags with Vox politicians. Two representative examples of this portrayal are shown in Figure 10. In the context of migratory narratives, the presence of flags may respond to the need to strengthen the national identity in contrast with globalization and multiculturalism, which, alongside support for Spaniards and their interests, as displayed in the text of Figure 10, are advanced as more valuable than those of migrants, in line with Vox's nativist ideology as suggested by Ferreira (2019). The portrayal of large audiences conveys the idea of massive support for their policies and them as a party and constitutes a relevant visual rhetorical device, supporting Blair's (2012) idea of the one-sidedness of visual persuasion.

Other persuasive storylines

Alongside the visual and textual representation of migrants, the dominant ideas presented by Vox in this sample of IG Stories, include arguments that are thematically based on two main claims: the *call effect* (Simón, 2020) and the risk of *violence* brought by migrants, the former is in line with McMahon's (2017) burden and competition frames and the latter follows his control and public order frames. Two additional relevant ideas that appear less often and are instrumentalized for these arguments include, on the one hand, the idea that migrants commit *fraud* to access public aid and are therefore undeserving of this assistance; on the other hand and in contrast, Vox argues that Spaniards have no jobs/resources and *should be helped first* and foremost. These ideas give way to policy proposals that argue that providing aid to migrants will, in turn cause increased (im)migration (call effect), while burdening the national economy and threatening safety and social order. It follows that humanitarian financial support for migrants needs to be eliminated to reduce financial and social burdens.

In terms of argumentative strategy, Vox's Instagram communication messages reflect a tendency to interpret news items and external source pieces. In this sense, Figure 11 exemplifies a collage post featuring, from the top: a screenshot of a tweet from Vox's official Twitter account interpreting the content of the article below and giving their opinion. Below, the story displays a news article from an identified source (abc.es) describing the expenditure of the Autonomic region of Aragon on housing for unaccompanied migrant minors or MENAS.

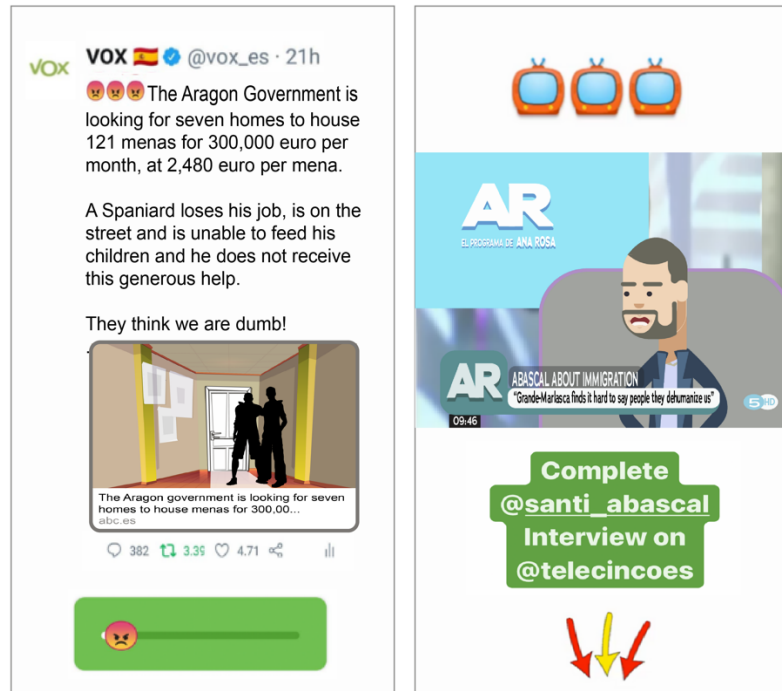


Figure 11. Translated illustration of two collage stories. Created by the authors.

This approach, which in most cases displays Vox’s opinion and interpretation on top and the source at the bottom of the Instagram story, highlights the information given by Vox —strengthened through the use of aesthetic affordances such as the green and red colors on a white background and Instagram functionalities including emoji, stickers and hashtags— and emphasizing emotional appeals towards the reader —specifically anger or support. This configuration, when positioned alongside studies such as the one by Del Vicario et al. (2016) and considering the rhetorical functions of emoji (Ge and Gretzel, 2018) suggests that by providing users with fewer interaction options, Vox is effectively attempting to persuade its followers towards a limited range of opinions about immigration.

Conclusions

In this paper, we have taken a closer look at the use of Instagram story highlights as tools for political and ideological communication and persuasion, focusing on far-right immigration

narratives. The results point to a cross-media strategy by Vox reflected in the use of collage posts comprised of screenshots from external Vox accounts and other media sources, with original content in the form of interpretations and paraphrased information by Vox, to construct arguments and policy proposals. These narratives develop and change when adapted to the Instagram ecosystem by incorporating unique affordances offered in this platform, effectively establishing a multimodal and visual rhetorical and persuasive structure using the Story format, by appealing the reader to interact with the content within its limited interaction options: support or anger towards the presented content.

We could argue that the use of collage content in 7 to 15-second, ephemeral, Instagram story posts can make it very difficult for readers to find out more about each piece of information included—especially considering that in many cases there are no links, as most are screenshots. Moreover, unidentified content sources that often include so-called junk news, obscure the validity of these arguments and make it hard for the reader to discern facts from ideological opinions. As Chadwick et al. (2018) argue, the use of tabloid and other lower-quality news on social media is detrimental to a healthy democracy. Thus, this type of post is especially problematic, due to its seemingly natural argumentative line and conclusion, leaving very little space for reflection and opinion formation.

Typically, the construction of very specific migrant profiles and victims of migrant groups are very limited to those that support Vox's policies and proposed laws. These narratives are constructed by strongly emphasizing a nativist and nationalist character and establishing Vox as the sole party who understands what it means to care for Spaniards and their needs, in opposition to foreign interests. This is supported visually, and through the use of emoji and similar components that are visually appealing and enable a quick and, one could argue, thoughtless interpretation of the message.

The portrayal of politicians is secondary in this sample, but it gives footing to the idea of a strong and serious party that represents Spain through vast support in the form of large audiences, implying majority support for their proposals—in this case, migratory policies. The large number of followers that Vox displays in its three official Instagram profiles suggests that they are successful in their social media strategy, by maintaining and increasing their base in this context.

This study has a few limitations including its focus on one platform rather than a cross-platform overview, as well as the intrinsic limitations related to the content and discourse analysis method, which doesn't provide a full picture of the effectiveness of their persuasive strategies, but only a point of reference as to what they are attempting to do through their discourse and use of the platform. These limitations could be approached by future studies focused on audiences and the user experience in the face of these narratives to measure their response to them.

Acknowledgements

The authors would like to thank Dr. Amanda Paz Alencar for her generosity in reviewing this manuscript prior to submission. We would also like to thank the reviewers for their thoughtful comments that have made this paper better.

Funding

This work was supported by 'Alfamed' (Euro-American Research Network), under Grant R+D+I Project (2019-2021), entitled "Youtubers and Intagrammers: Media competence in emerging prosumers", with code RTI2018-093303-B-I00, financed by the Spanish Ministry of Science, Innovation and Universities and the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), and the R+D-i Project (2020-2022), entitled "Instagrammers and youtubers for the transmedia empowerment of Andalusian citizens. The media competence of instatubers", with code P18-RT-756, financed by the Andalusian Regional Government in the 2018 call (Andalusian Research, Development and Innovation Plan, 2020) and the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF).

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