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ABSTRACT

In the context of the rise of TikTok and short-form audiovisual media content, this article addresses the adaptation attempts by traditional or institutional media outlets operating in a regional or minority language. Whilst prior research has focused on media outlets' use of Facebook and Twitter, and individual's use of TikTok in minority languages, this article identifies a research gap for the situation of institutional use of TikTok. Basque, Catalan and Galician media spheres are used as case studies to explore the usage of minority language television, radio and newspapers on TikTok through analysis of 26 accounts. The results point to a mixed performance, with more engagement success through using sub-brand accounts – which in some cases have reached millions of views or likes. The analysis suggests that by offering content with a cultural or geographic proximity to the audience, some media actors have had success in the competitive environment of TikTok.

1 INTRODUCTION

The emergence of social media and its mass adoption across society through the mid-2000s and into the 2010s constituted a significant change to the media landscape. The use of Facebook and Twitter as the first two platforms to achieve mass societal adoption, was initially driven by individual users. Within the context of minority languages, this was seen as being of benefit by creating 'online breathing spaces' (Belmar and Glass, 2019). These new media platforms were originally primarily text-based, beginning to also incorporate images/photos particularly after the arrival of Instagram and its subsequent acquisition by Facebook. Traditional media outlets such as broadcasters and newspapers slowly began to create institutional accounts on these platforms, utilising new avenues of reaching certain audience segments (particularly younger generations) but also then addressing the competition of social media was constituting. For the most part, this was largely through linking to existing content on their own websites, or clipping video content as short previews – mostly on Twitter, Facebook and YouTube. This included also minority language media outlets, particularly in large or well-funded minority language contexts such as Basque, Catalan and Galician but also Frisian, Scottish Gaelic and Welsh (Costecalde, 2019; Díaz-Campo and Fernández-Gómez, 2020; Bober and Willis, 2023).

A marked shift to social / new media habits began to occur with the growth of TikTok in the late 2010s. Although initially known for its niche of dancing and lip-syncing, it has since moved beyond this to cement itself as a market leader with younger demographics (Ipsos European Public Affairs, 2022), including consumption of news content (Newman, 2022). The sharp rise of TikTok alongside the stark contrast in terms of generational use is what makes this channel of particular interest. Whilst 49% of 15-24 year olds surveyed by Ipsos stated they had used TikTok in the past 7 days, this falls to 22% for 25-39 year olds and then even lower beyond this – Instagram on the other hand has a much more stable curve (Ipsos European Public Affairs, 2022, p. 30). Due to this growth, research on TikTok usage and the intersection with traditional media outlets has also increased since 2020. This includes in the context of news (Salb, 2021), as well as television more broadly – Vázquez-Herrero *et al.* (2021) comparatively explored 133 television channels globally. In addition, the perspective of newspapers and the specific content they create for TikTok has been analysed in what is described as a 'fourth wave of news production, diffusion and consumption' (Hendrickx, 2023). Within all of these articles, no minority language outlets or perspectives were included and this element therefore remains largely missing in the literature (Willis, 2024). This is not surprising given that minority language media tend to follow majority trends and can therefore sometimes be lagging in terms of adoption. However, in light of the expansion and prominence of TikTok as both a medium for and competition to traditional media, an exploration of whether minority language media outlets in particular use TikTok – and if so, how – is certainly necessary.

Whilst many of the challenges are similar, minority language media carry the additional remit of language maintenance / revitalisation and thus ought to also be considered as a standalone field of study aside from media more broadly (Cormack, 2013, p. 255). Within this context, scholars have long stressed the need for minority language media outlets to create relevant content for younger audiences and changing consumption habits, warning this would be a significant challenge to the industry (Moring, 2013; Jones *et al.*, 2020). This has also been demonstrated by research across 10 minority language spheres, showing a reduction of physical outlets of 15% between 2009-2016, against a rise of 118% of online-only outlets (Zabaleta et al, 2019, p. 242). Thus, the challenge of remaining relevant is an acute one for minority language media and adopting the latest consumption trends is one means of doing so. Within which, the usage of TikTok to reach different audience segments is a significant research gap, addressing this would therefore build upon both the research on minority language media outlets' use of social media but also contribute to the growing literature on institutional media's use of TikTok more broadly.

In attempting to explore this phenomenon, this article uses the case of Spain and the linguistic spheres of Basque, Catalan and Galician, to analyse the usage of institutional media actors in a minority language engaging on TikTok. These spheres are chosen due to their (comparatively) long history of media in minority languages since the 1980s (Amezaga *et al.*, 2013), thus offering enough traditional outlets to explore quantitatively and comparatively, but also within a plausibly comparable frame – i.e. the Spanish state.

In terms of structure, an overview of minority language media research in the context of the social media age is first provided, This is followed by a more concentrated evaluation focusing in particular on the engagement of both individual users and institutional actors on social media – mostly prominently Facebook and Twitter/X. A methodology is then provided, explaining the rationale for an exploratory approach and outlining the specific assessment criteria of the TikTok accounts used in the subsequent results. The empirical contribution of the article then shows the performance of the 26 selected TikTok channels across television, radio and news outlets – including sub-brand channels. This covers the date joined, number of followers, number of likes on pinned posts (if applicable), total number of posts. These quantitative figures are unpacked in a subsequent analysis section, focusing on comparisons between the three autonomous regions as well as across the different mediums.

2   MINORITY LANGUAGE MEDIA – LITERATURE REVIEW / THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Research on the use of social media in minority languages began to emerge at the turn of the 2010s, initially as a separate phenomenon to traditional media and then posited as a part of a

threat to such outlets in the challenge to adapt to digitalisation. I have argued that these themes can be seen as a characterising a second wave of minority language media research (Willis, 2024), building upon a first wave of literature through the 1990s and early-2000s which was concerned with the purposes and challenges of media in minority languages. This section first outlines the context in which traditional media outlets were operating in this age of mass social media (mid-2000s to late-2010s) and how social media was first used in minority language settings. A separate subsection then assesses the research on traditional media outlets utilising social media accounts, including literature specifically in the context of the three linguistic spheres in focus: Basque, Catalan and Galician.

2.1   Minority Language Use on Social Media and Threats to Traditional Media.

The topic of social media in minority languages was most prominently covered in an edited volume by Jones and Uribe-Jongbloed (2013) which included elements of both aspects mentioned above – examples of minority languages on social media and issues facing traditional media outlets. Regarding the former, many standalone articles also analysed the use of minority languages on Facebook and Twitter (Cunliffe *et al.*, 2013; Dołowy-Rybińska, 2014; Nic Giolla Mhichíl *et al.* 2018; Soria *et al.*, 2018; McMonagle *et al.*, 2019), as well as Instagram (Belmar and Heyen, 2021; Jongbloed-Faber, 2021). Such use was said to compensate for a lack of traditional media outlets in underserved linguistic communities and to create a more interactive and communal environment for speakers – in comparison to the more passive use of watching television or reading a newspaper. Joshua Fishman's concept of (a need for) breathing spaces for minority languages (Fishman, 2001) was subsequently applied to the context of social media, suggesting they offered an 'online breathing space' (Belmar and Glass, 2019; Cunliffe, 2019). Moreover, Moring (2013) suggested that younger individuals were more likely to produce than consume content online in their regional or minority language – thus a positive for such online breathing spaces but a threat to traditional media outlets.

Indeed, the emergence of online competition was discussed as constituting a threat to traditional media outlets if they could not adapt their content (Moring, 2013) and sustain a level of genre completeness (Moring, 2007). As mentioned in the introduction, the trend of a reduced number of traditional media outlets was later quantitatively evidenced in Zabaleta *et al.*'s (2013) comparative analysis of 10 spheres – which included Basque, Catalan and Galician. Furthermore, the level of online presence for the same outlets was shown to shift, with the figure of 29% without any online presence in 2009 decreasing to just 9% in 2016 (Ferré-Pavia *et al.*, 2018). Relating to the genre completeness aspect, the importance of entertainment was stressed by Iruretagoiena (2022) in the context of Basque public television. Despite having a strong historic record in this area, the broadcaster ETB was facing difficulties due to the broader challenges facing linear television in the current media landscape. This is line with the report on the impact of digitalisation on minority language media outlets for the Council of Europe's Committee of Experts on the ECRML, which concluded that traditional forms of

media were facing severe threats – particularly printed press (Jones *et al.*, 2020). The report also suggested that the existing preference of new forms of media with younger audience groups would eventually spread to older generations and thus further endanger traditional media (Jones *et al.*, 2020, p. 60). More broadly, there has also been an increasing focus on the challenges and precarious situation, particularly post-2008, in Spain. In more recent years, the acute funding crisis has been said to have significantly weakened public service media outlets in particular – including those in the regional languages (Guimerà Orts and Bonet, 2020).

2.2   Minority Language Media Outlets Use of Social Media

Literature on the use of social media by institutional media actors in minority languages has slowly begun to appear towards the end of the 2010s. Expectedly, the main two platforms in focus have been Facebook and Twitter, given their wider societal prominence and usage amongst over 30s (Willis, 2024). Comparative international research on minority language broadcasters included an angle of such outlets' use of social media as a method of viewers accessing their content (Costecalde, 2019). In the context of regional broadcasting in Spain, Díaz-Campo and Fernández-Gómez (2020) analysed the use of Facebook by broadcasters – including in Catalan and Galician – finding that broadcasters were mostly using the platform to promote their content rather than interact with users. The authors therefore suggest it is quite an ineffective strategy which requires a rethink. Within the medium of newspapers specifically, Bober and Willis (2023) highlighted the use of social media by minority language newspapers as part of adapting to challenges of digitalisation, most predominantly in the context of Facebook and Twitter. Similar results were found by Chibuwe (2021), suggesting the use of social media by the Kwayedza language newspaper in Zimbabwe has been a strategic move to retain readership.

In addition, the Covid-19 pandemic demonstrated the possibilities for traditional media outlets to engage with their audience through social media. In a comparative study across 10 spheres, Bober and Willis (2021) found several examples of viewer-generated content through social media, as well as a general increase in engagement online with traditional media outlets – including from majority audiences (p. 11).

2.3   TikTok in Minority Languages

Given its relatively recent rise to prominence in the last few years, the lack of academic work examining the use of TikTok in minority languages is arguably not overly surprising. A few notable exceptions to this can be mentioned. The work of Tudela-Isanta and Milà-Garcia (2022), looked at the rise of Catalan on TikTok during the Covid-19 pandemic, with the authors analysing the use of a popular hashtag which indicated the user was posting in Catalan - demonstrating its popularity and rapid rise amongst Catalan speakers on TikTok. Similarly, Urionaguena *et al.* (2023) provided some insight to the use of TikTok in Basque, with analysis of 11 users and their motivations for using the Basque language in this medium. In the context

of Welsh, Cunliffe (2021, 2024) has explored the use of the Welsh language on TikTok. Whilst his research does include one channel related to broadcaster S4C, the majority of the focus is on individual users rather than institutional actors (Cunliffe, 2024). However, these articles look at individual users rather than institutional actors. Institutional actors have been briefly covered in the form of scientific blogposts, showing particularly successful usage for one sub-brand of the Galician public broadcaster (Willis, 2023). This notwithstanding, a research gap persists; the *institutional* use of *TikTok* in *minority* languages.

3   METHODOLOGY

The article is intended as an exploratory study, thus consciously choosing not to frame this through a prior hypothesis. This is line with the approach of John Gerring who stated that exploratory research has an advantage due to its very 'fuzziness' (Gerring, 2004), and that descriptive approaches need not be linked to causal inference embedded in a theoretical hypothesis (Gerring, 2012). In the case of this article, taking an exploratory approach allows for a holistic consideration of the usage of TikTok by the institutional media outlets studied.

Accordingly, in exploring the research gap of whether/how minority language media outlets have adapted to the rise of TikTok, this article compares accounts in three linguistic spheres: Basque, Catalan and Galician. The geographic scope taken is that of the three Autonomous Communities in Spain with the longest history of institutionalised media in the three languages and thus focuses on the Basque Country, Catalonia and Galicia. Within these contexts, the scope of the analysis is limited to television, radio and newspaper outlets at the regional level – thus excluding local or sub-regional outlets. This will allow the analysis to feasibly compare a similar number of outlets per sphere. Accordingly, the number of TikTok accounts assessed totals 26, with Figure 1 below outlining these by region and by media type. The data were collected on 02.02.2024. Thus, a descriptive statistics approach is applied, analysing a data set with 26 cases over 5 years, beginning with the first account created, in 2019 (see Figure 2).

Figure 1. Media Outlets Assessed , by Region and Type.

	TV	Radio	Newspapers	*Total*
Basque Country	4	2	1	7
Catalonia	7	3	3	13
Galicia	6	0	0	6
Total	17	5	4	26

Notes: Author's own representation.

In terms of assessment criteria, the analysis takes into consideration all the publicly available data of each TikTok account / post. This consists of: Number of followers; Number of likes; Number of views on most watched pinned video; Date of first post; Total number of videos posted. This list therefore incorporates the basic data for any TikTok video and allows for comparison across the 26 selected accounts operated by broadcasters and news outlets in the three regions. The main method of data collection was to search directly in TikTok and then also in the accounts which the institutional accounts follow – usually this is just a handful and thus easy to spot, particularly the case for sub-brands which are usually followed by their parent account. Sub-brand accounts with less than 1,000 followers were not considered – there were a few examples of sub-brand accounts which had very few followers or posts. Further, there were a number of outlets considered which either did not have a TikTok account or only posted in Castilian language. Prominent examples of the latter include the two largest newspapers in Catalonia, La Vanguardia and El Periódico which have both Catalan and Castilian versions in print from but only operate TikTok accounts in Spanish. Other outlets considered but not having TikTok accounts include Galician newspaper Nós Diario and Galician public radio station Radio Galega. The 26 total media outlets (including sub-brands) are provided in Figure 2 below.

Figure 2. Details of TikTok Channels Assessed.

Medium	Region	Outlet	TikTok handle	Date of first post	Followers (approx..)	Likes	Top pinned video views	Total videos
Television	Basque Country	EITB	@eitbeus	05.10.2021	3,419	167,000	N/A	594
Television – sub-brand	Basque Country	Go!azen	@goazen_ofiziala	20.08.2021	13,000	274,000	N/A	186
Television – sub-brand	Basque Country	Herri Txiki	@herritxiki_etb	27.12.2022	7,564	215,000	N/A	321
Television – sub-brand	Basque Country	Lotsagabeak ETB	@lotsagabeaketb	13.07.2023	2,992	7,427	50,100	176
Television	Catalonia	TV3	@som3cat	18.05.2020	78,000	2,100,000	244,000	1,029
Television – sub-brand	Catalonia	Alguna Pregunta Més?	@apm_official	07.09.2020	342,000	9,900,000	7,900,000	856
Television – sub-brand	Catalonia	Eurforia	@euforia3cat	17.12.2021	25,000	849,000	32,200	674
Television – sub-brand	Catalonia	Polonia	@polonia3cat	06.01.2022	72,600	1,600,000	1,700,000	390
Television – sub-brand	Catalonia	Quin Guirigall	@quinguirigall	03.10.2019	6,800	436,000	773,000	324
Television – sub-brand	Catalonia	SX3	@somsx3	28.09.2022	18,000	330,000	N/A	596
Television	Catalonia	RTVE Catalunya	@rtvecatalunya	17.03.2022	94,000	2,000,000	N/A	674
Television	Galicia	TVG	@tvgalicia	01.03.2021	37,600	723,000	N/A	870
Television – sub-brand	Galicia	DigochoEu	@digochoeu	18.09.2020	329,000	9,200,000	1,200,000	1,351
Television – sub-brand	Galicia	Land Rober	@landrobertunaishow	19.09.2020	18,000	161,000	894,000	358
Television – sub-brand	Galicia	Luar	@luartvg	26.04.2021	1,385	8,109	N/A	146
Television – sub-brand	Galicia	Malicia Noticias	@malicianoticias	03.09.2020	7,550	57,000	425,000	67
Television – sub-brand	Galicia	Virtudes	@virtudestvg	31.01.2023	19,500	429,000	269,000	100
Radio	Basque Country	Euskadi Irratia	@euskadi_irratia	20.02.2023	1,879	45,600	42,400	388
Radio – sub-brand	Basque Country	Gaztea	@gaztea	23.01.2020	15,400	437,000	N/A	351
Radio	Catalonia	Catalunya Radio	@catalunyaradio	24.05.2020	26,000	665,000	1,300,000	553
Radio – sub-brand	Catalonia	Eva	@someva_	19.09.2022	41,900	3,200,000	N/A	1,442
Radio	Catalonia	RAC1	@rac1oficial	14.03.2023	8,800	129,700	526,000	73
Newspaper	Basque Country	Berria	@berriaegunkaria	03.04.2023	846	2,883	N/A	189
Newspaper	Catalonia	Ara	@diariara	22.03.2023	483	2,575	N/A	53
Newspaper	Catalonia	Regió7	@diari.regio7	26.05.2022	2,249	27,700	N/A	295
Newspaper (Online)	Catalonia	VilaWeb	@vilaweb	09.09.2022	6,983	231,000	N/A	606

Notes: data collected on 02.02.2024 from each TikTok account.

4   RESULTS

As outlined in the methodology above, five quantitative assessment criteria are considered in the analysis of the 26 TikTok accounts. These are represented across several graphs within this subsection of the article. Firstly, Figure 3 depicts a timeline of when each account first posted a video.
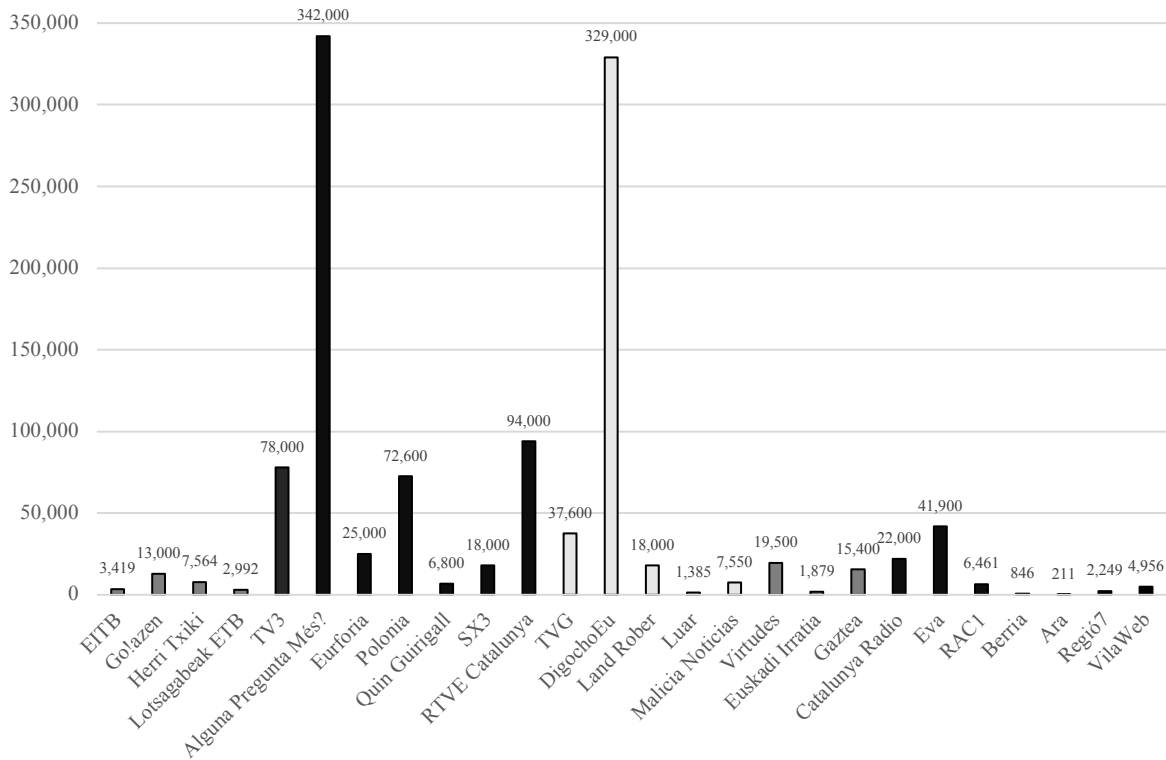
Figure 3. Date of First Post.
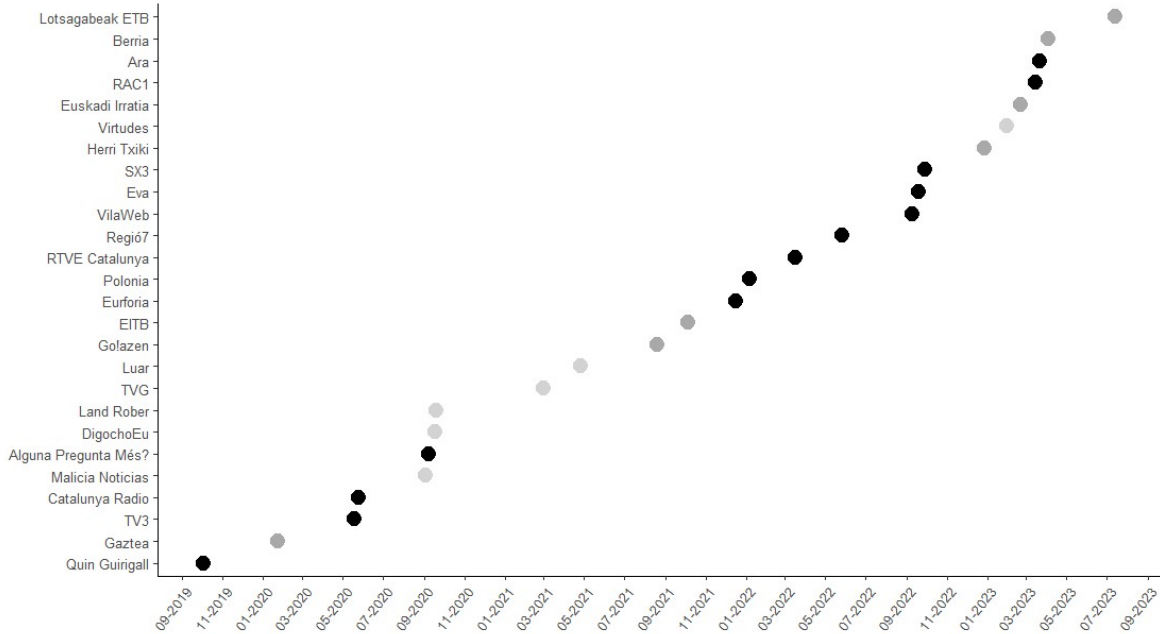
Notes: Author's own representation, full data in Figure 3.2. Dark grey represents the Basque Country, black represents Catalonia and light grey represents Galicia.

Observing the y-axis (in conjunction with the 'medium' column in Figure 2) shows that the early-adopters were mostly sub-brands of television channels – such as Quin Guinigall and Alguna Pregunta Més?, of TV3 – or radio – such as Gaztea of EITB – and that newspapers generally joined later – VilaWeb, Berria, Ara. In fact, the x-axis shows that just two accounts – Quin Guingall and Gaztea – were created before the Covid-19 pandemic began in March 2020. This was followed by one account during the first-wave in May 2020, then five more accounts in autumn 2020, five in 2021, seven in 2022, and the remaining six in 2023.
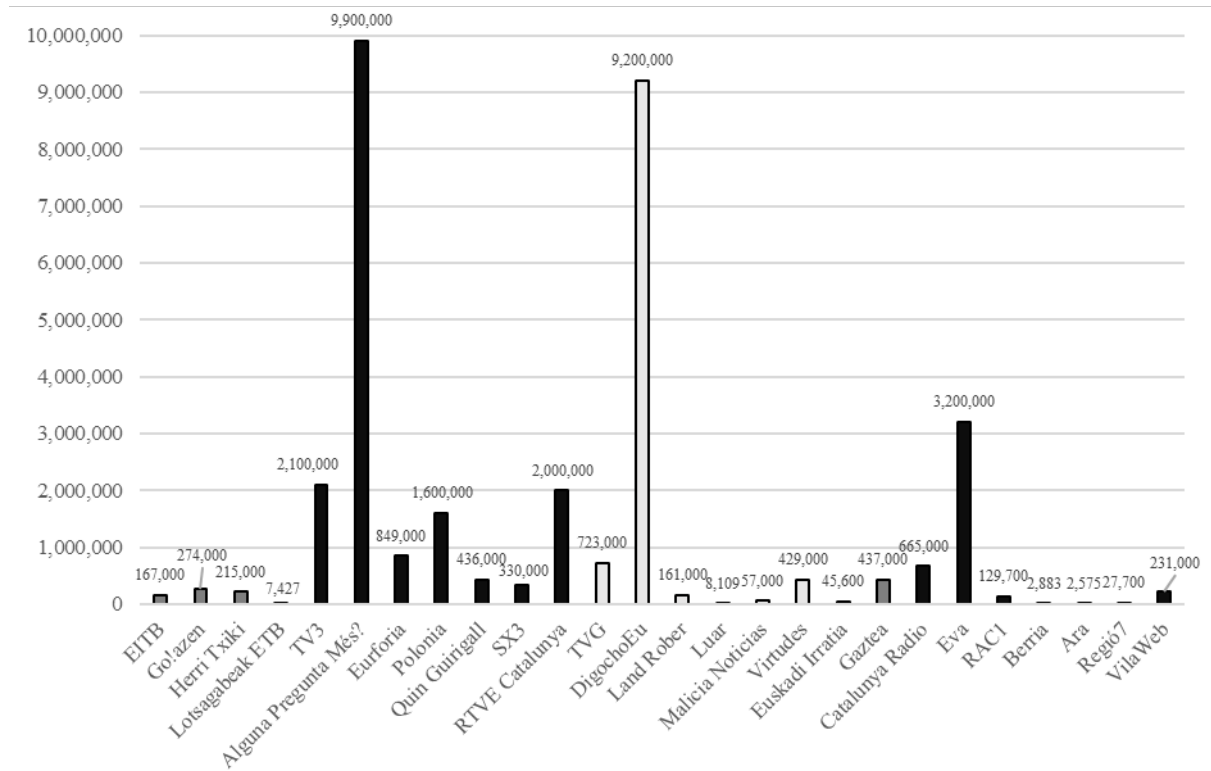
Figure 4. Number of Followers.

Notes: Author's own representation, full data in Figure 3.2. Labels of x-axis follow order of television, radio, press. Dark grey represents the Basque Country, black represents Catalonia and light grey represents Galicia.

In terms of the engagement numbers, Figure 4 shows the total number of followers each account has, the majority of which are less than 50,000 and some as low as a few thousand or less. The subsequent two figures, 5 and 6, demonstrate that the number of followers is much lower than the number of views and likes these accounts have – totalling sometimes into several million.

Across these figures, there are two clear outliers in terms of engagement numbers, both of which are sub-brands of television – Alguna Pregunta Més? of TV3 and DigochoEu of TVG. Their total likes are both above nine million, which is particularly noteworthy in the case of DigochoEu considering the relative sizes of the two regions / speakers groups – Catalan being much larger than Galician. Overall, the Basque language accounts have much lower numbers than either Catalan or Galician. Yet, there are some accounts – Gaztea and Go!azen – which perform as well as some of the lower Catalan and Galician examples. With regard to medium, it is clear that newspapers have the lowest engagement numbers – Berria, Ara, Regió7 and VilaWeb.

Figure 5. Number of Likes.

Notes: Author's own representation, full data in Figure 2. Labels of x-axis follow order of television, radio, press. Dark grey represents the Basque Country, black represents Catalonia and light grey represents Galicia.

Figure 6. Number of Views on Top Pinned Post.
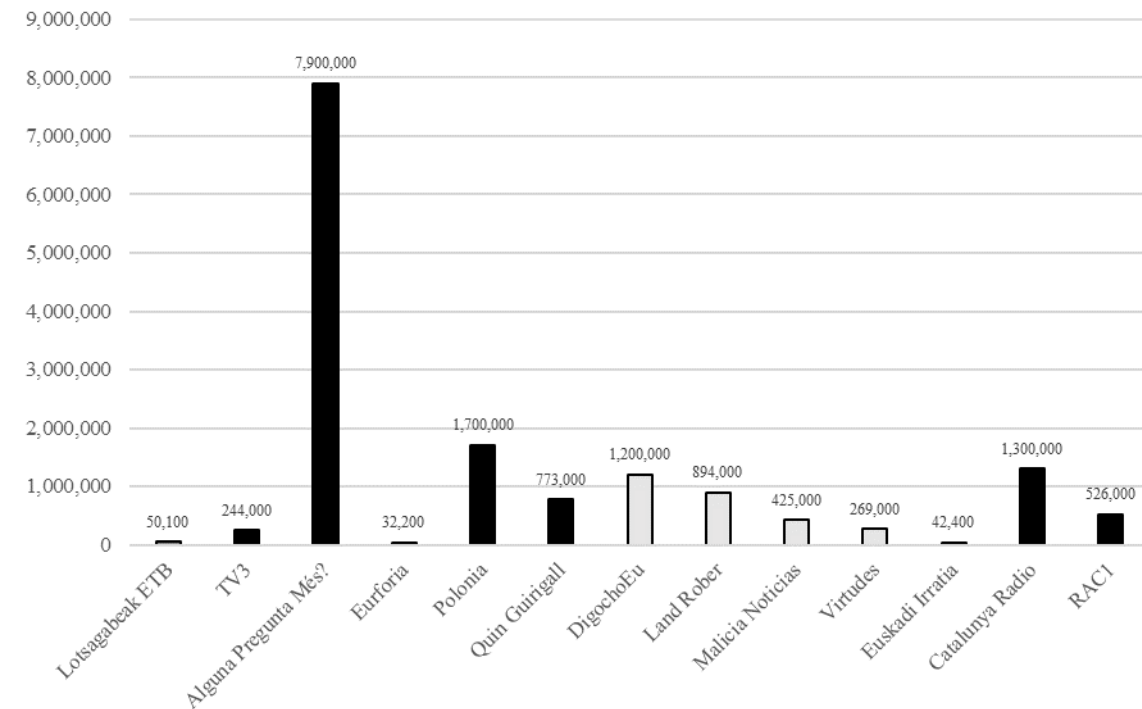
Notes: Author's own representation, full data in Figure 2. Only 13 of the accounts had pinned videos. Labels of x-axis follow order of television, radio, press. Dark grey represents the Basque Country, black represents Catalonia and light grey represents Galicia.

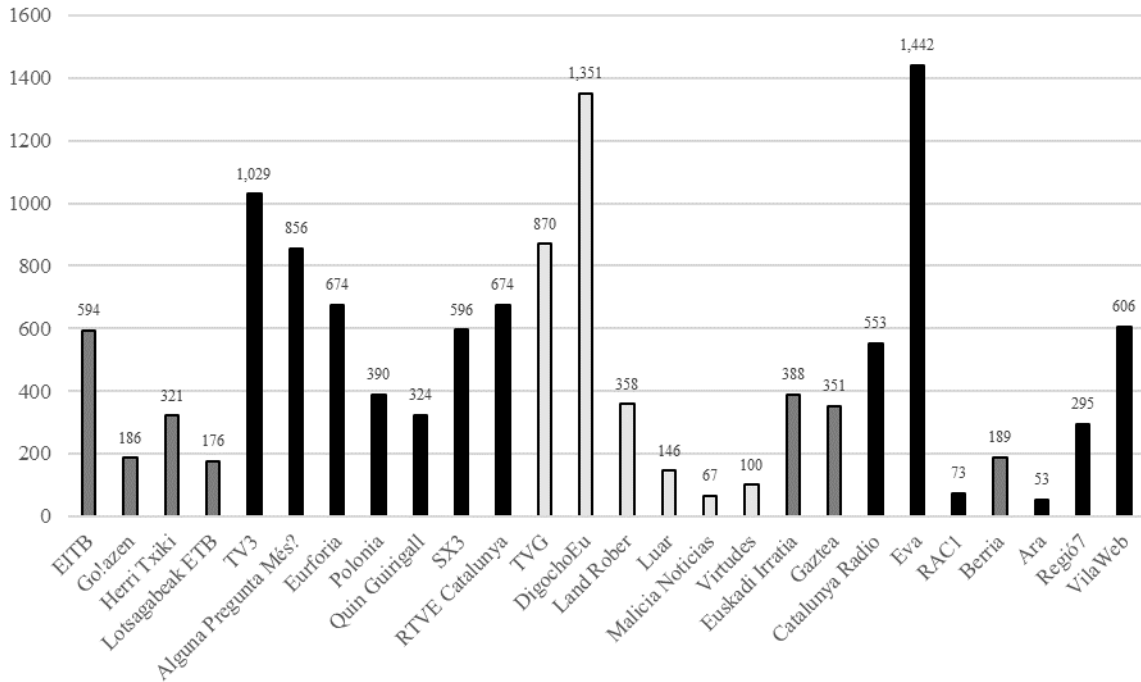**Figure 7. Total Number of Video Posts.**

Notes: Author's own representation, full data in Figure 2. Labels of x-axis follow order of television, radio, press. Dark grey represents the Basque Country, black represents Catalonia and light grey represents Galicia.

Not all accounts chose to pin videos to the top of the profile (at the time of assessment), but of those who did, four reach above a million views for a single video. These numbers are much more difficult to assess in terms of performance, given the account could choose to pin videos which pertain to a certain theme rather than their most viewed. Nonetheless, the high engagement numbers of some of the accounts are indicative of a broad popularity or visibility amongst general TikTok users.

Figure 7 then shows the total number of posts each account has made. There is no immediate pattern with regard to when each account joined and the number of posts, or indeed the number of posts made and the success in terms of engagement numbers. Nor is there a general trend to be found in relation to the medium of the institutional actor behind the account; most newspapers post less often, but VilaWeb is an outlier here, whilst television channels vary greatly in terms of the number of posts.

Figure 8. Relationship Between Posts and Likes.
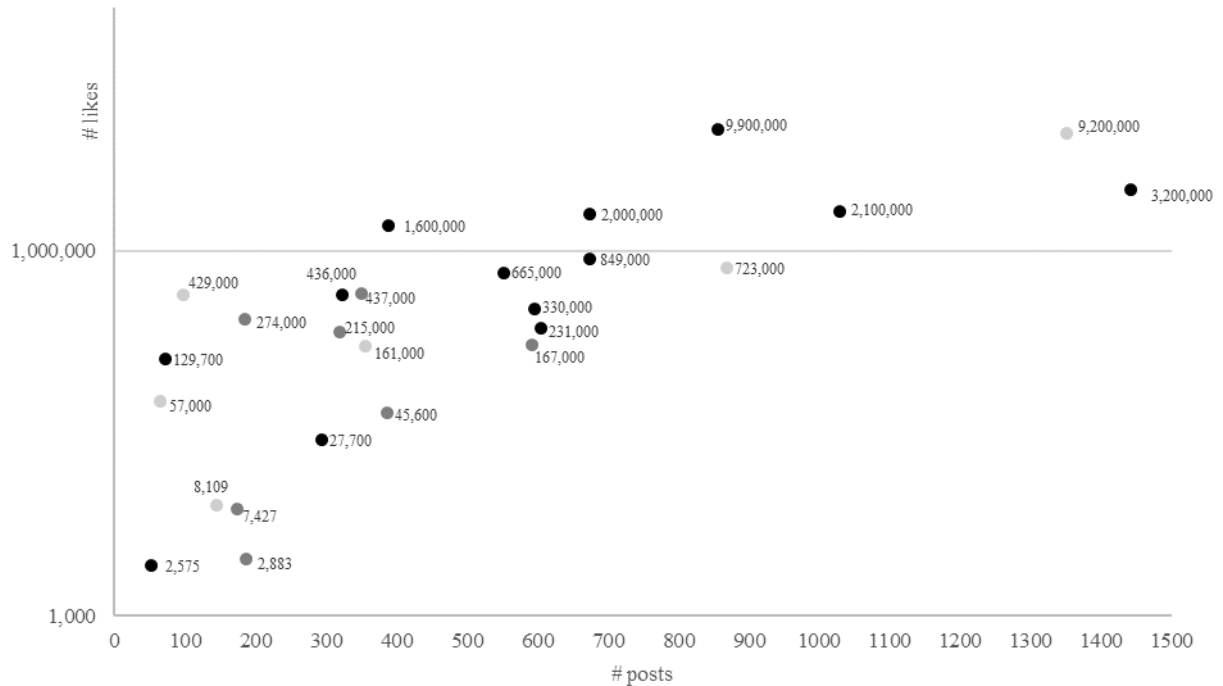
Notes: Author's own representation, full data in Figure 2. Data labels represent the y-axis, y-axis is plotted on a logarithmic scale in order to better convey the values below 1,000,000. Dark grey represents the Basque Country, black represents Catalonia and light grey represents Galicia.

In order to demonstrate the relatively weak link between each account's number of posts and engagement figures, Figure 8 provides a scatter plot with number of likes as the y-axis. As there are two significant outliers (with values over 9 million), the y-axis is formatted as a logarithmic scale so to improve the visualisation of the figure. The trend line is very weak, whilst it logically does increase the number of total likes if posting more, there are many examples which don't fit. Taking the two outliers, Alguna Pregunta Més? and DigochoEu, the former has achieved 700,000 more likes in approximately 500 less posts. To provide a more comparable example in terms of linguistic setting, Alguna Pregunta Més? has achieved 6.7 million more likes than Eva despite posting almost 600 less videos. At the lower end of the scale, the two Basque radio accounts – Euskadi Irratia and Gaztea – have posted a similar number of videos but generated vastly different number of likes, with the latter almost ten times higher (45,600 and 437,000 respectively). Many more similar comparisons can be found, even within the same language group and medium. What can be interpreted from such findings is the subject of the following analysis section.

5   ANALYSIS

A multitude of comparisons can be made across the 26 accounts, this section seeks to draw out the broad trends but also unpack some of the less obvious differences between some of the institutional TikTok accounts. A first noticeable finding is that accounts related to television

are on the whole more popular than those related to a radio channel or a newspaper – given the audiovisual nature of television, this is not a surprise. Within this however, all three of the regional broadcasters in focus have at least one sub-brand's TikTok account with a more successful set of engagement numbers than the TikTok account of the parent brand. For the Basque broadcaster ETB, it is the shows Go!azen and Herri Txiki which both have far greater reach than the main ETB TikTok account. With Catalan broadcaster TV3, Alguna Pregunta Més? vastly outperforms the main TV3 TikTok channel, whilst Polonia has comparable figures. Finally, the TikTok account of Galician broadcaster TVG is vastly outperformed by the account of its sub-brand DigochoEu. It is interesting to observe therefore that a TikTok account for the broadcaster is not a sum of all its parts, in the sense that linear broadcasting viewing figures would be. Similarly with radio, sub-brands Gaztea and Eva – in Basque and Catalan, respectively – both outperform their parent brands. Newspapers due to their more focused content (news) perhaps unsurprisingly just stick to one TikTok account, with VilaWeb having the highest engagement numbers of the four regional newspapers covered – this may well be due to the fact that VilaWeb is indeed an online-only format anyway. Nonetheless, the fact that newspapers like Berria are making TikTok videos is quite an interesting insight which serves as a reminder of how much the media landscape is changing / has changed. One other general point of note is that often sub-brands had joined TikTok earlier than the parent brand – the case with Go!azen and ETB, Quin Guirigall and TV3, plus DigochoEu, Land Rober and Malicia Noticias, with TVG. As noted above, only 2 of the 26 accounts were created before the Covid-19 pandemic and subsequent first period of lockdowns in March 2020, with many following during 2020 and 2021. This seems very much in line with similar trends observed with the acceleration of digitalisation in the media sector, including in the context of minority languages – as detailed by Bober and Willis (2021).

Analysing across regions / languages, there are several factors which need to be considered when considering the engagement numbers. Catalan and Galician are much more widely spoken than Basque, a factor accentuated by the linguistic distance between these languages and Castilian. That is, Catalan and Galician benefit from being relatively comprehensible even for non-speakers, whereas Basque does not. In this sense, it is not surprising that the account with the highest engagement numbers is much lower in the Basque media, with the 437,000 likes of Gaztea's videos. On top of the linguistic distance and smaller number of speakers, the Basque media sphere is also affected by the segregated approach of ETB, having two separate television channels. As Amezaga *et al.* (2013) pointed out, this has not aided the wider normalisation of Basque language in the media sphere and it is quite plausible to assume that there is a knock-on effect also to the viewing of such channels through TikTok as well.

This compares with 9.9 million and 9.2 million for Alguna Preguna Més? and DigochoEu in the Catalan and Galician spheres, which given Catalan's relatively larger number of speakers, makes the success of DigochoEu in Galician even more remarkable. It seems to be a pattern that some sub-brands perform very well and others less so – possibly due to the genre or the

target audience. For example with TVG, DigochoEu is clearly aimed at a younger audience, whereas Luar has a much older typical audience – which may explain the lower engagement numbers the latter's TikTok channel has. However, it does seem that most sub-brand accounts are more geared towards entertainment than other genres – something which could support the points made by Iruretagoiena (2022).

Regarding the total number of posts each account has made, there is no clear relationship between this and the number of likes or followers. As pointed out above, there are several outliers here and one particular trend seems to be regarding newspapers – with very low followers and likes but still a fairly high number of posts. Berria is a particularly stark example of this, with total likes of less than 3,000 but still posting almost 200 videos. Could this suggest that they use TikTok to create content but then post it elsewhere such as Instagram or Facebook where they may have more engagement? This is an area which warrants further exploration onto different platforms, but it is intriguing to see that TikTok evidently garners considerable effort from this newspaper in terms of content production.

6   CONCLUSION

Overall, the breadth of TikTok accounts should be seen as a positive from the perspective of minority language media practitioners and scholars. The number of institutional actors engaging with TikTok now in each setting shows that these institutionalised media outlets are trying (albeit with varying success) to utilise new platforms and media trends to reach different audience segments. This provides some evidence that minority language media outlets continue to engage with new trends and provide content to younger generations – as Moring (2013) had advised would be necessary. Further, the findings also suggest that the issues expressed by Jones *et al.* (2020) across the Council of Europe area are at least on the agenda of the outlets covered in this analysis. With printed press, the grave concern expressed in the report – that this medium is under specific threat due to ever-reducing physical sales and a lack of adoption of such habits by younger audiences (ibid., p. 60) – is perhaps not as quite straightforward as previously thought; the examples of Catalan and Basque press on TikTok suggests they are taking a flexible approach to communicating news. This very much drives home the point that the media landscape has dramatically changed and that printed press in particular are having to adapt – in this instance to content in an audiovisual style (short-form videos) which is a significant departure from written articles such journalists would have been used to, even when posting on Facebook or Twitter/X.

One the main aspects which sets minority language media apart from majority language media is the fragility of the sphere – there are simply less outlets than in majority languages – even in Catalan when considering the broader media context of Spain. As such, they hold crucial roles in fulfilling institutional completeness (Moring, 2007) – i.e., if Berria was not on TikTok then no Basque language newspaper would be. The widespread adoption of TikTok

across television, radio and newspapers, suggests traditional or legacy media are aware of the changing trends – it is therefore a necessity that minority language media scholars follow suit, as I have also outlined previously (Willis, 2024).

A critique of the outlets' actions could be that a strategy focusing on TikTok is naïve given the huge competition for content – both from institutions and individual content creators. Yet, particularly for public service media, it could be counterargued that there is a duty to supply regardless of whether there is yet demand. However, from this quantitative overview, it is not possible to ascertain to what extent broadcasters use TikTok to engage more closely with their audience – as was the previous critique of Facebook highlighted by Díaz-Campo and Fernández-Gómez (2020). Although certain sub-brand channels do seem to be in that direction, for example DigochoEu. In terms of broader competition, TikTok should overall be viewed in the same light as the broadcasting spectrum or indeed the newspaper stand has previously been – it is a marketplace where majority actors/outlets will also be present, thus the opportunity lies in differentiating one's content and offering the audience something unique. The successful accounts identified here have clearly managed to achieve this, quite likely through offering content with a cultural or geographic proximity to the audience as well as a linguistic one.

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