

Russia-Ukraine, a comparative analysis of the Twitter audience of the profiles of the Government of the Russian Federation and the Office of the President of Ukraine

Rusia-Ucrania, un análisis comparativo de la audiencia en Twitter de los perfiles del Gobierno de la Federación Rusa y la Oficina del Presidente de Ucrania

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RESUMEN

Introducción: El 24 de febrero de 2022 empezaba la invasión rusa de Ucrania. El conflicto se ha propagado también en las redes sociales, donde tanto el invasor como el invadido construyen su propio relato. **Objetivos.** Realizar un análisis comparativo de la audiencia social en Twitter de los perfiles del

Gobierno de la Federación Rusa (@GovernmentRF) y la Oficina del Presidente de Ucrania (@APUkraine). **Metodología.** Se han utilizado dos herramientas de analítica social basadas en la aplicación de algoritmos de inteligencia de audiencias, con un doble objetivo: realizar un análisis de la composición de la audiencia social de los perfiles escogidos e identificar qué perfiles consiguen un mayor alcance y autoridad. **Discusión y resultados.** Las aplicaciones permiten el estudio de las audiencias de los perfiles seleccionados, proporcionando una descripción detallada sobre los segmentos que conforman esa audiencia, sus datos demográficos y psicográficos, a la vez que permiten conectar segmentos de audiencias con otras plataformas de escucha social y análisis, herramientas de *influencer* marketing, plataformas de publicidad digital y otras aplicaciones de analítica social. **Conclusiones.** El análisis realizado resulta de gran importancia para conocer el perfil y los intereses de la audiencia en Twitter de los seguidores de las cuentas oficiales de Rusia y Ucrania, evidenciando que palabras como "no war" o "reject" están entre las más repetidas en los tuits publicados entre el 18 de marzo y el 17 de abril de 2022, así como *Hashtags* sobre ciudades golpeadas por la guerra resultan de los más utilizados en dichas publicaciones.

PALABRAS CLAVE:

Audiencia social; guerra; redes sociales; Rusia; Twitter; Ucrania; Vladímir Putin

ABSTRACT

Introduction: On February 24, 2022, the Russian invasion of Ukraine began. The conflict has also spread on social networks, where both the invader and the invaded are responsible for building their own story. Objectives: To carry out a comparative analysis of the social audience on Twitter of the profiles of the Government of the Russian Federation (@GovernmentRF) and the Office of the President of Ukraine (@APUkraine). **Methodology:** Two social analytics tools based on the application of audience intelligence algorithms have been used, with a double objective: on the one hand, to carry out an analysis of the composition of the social audience of the chosen profiles; and on the other hand, through the choice of keywords, identify which profiles achieve greater reach and authority. **Discussion and results:** The applications have allowed us to study the audiences of the two selected profiles, providing a detailed description of the segments or communities that shape that audience, and their demographic and psychographic data, while allowing segments to be connected. of audiences with other social listening and analytics platforms, *influencer* marketing tools, digital advertising platforms, and other social analytics applications. **Conclusions:** The analysis carried out is of great importance to know the profile and interests of the Twitter audience of the followers of the official accounts of Russia and Ukraine, showing that words such as "no war" or "reject" are among the most repeated. in the tweets published between March 18th and April 17th, 2022, as well as *Hashtags* about cities hit by war are the most used in these publications.

KEYWORDS:

Social audience; war; social media; Russia; Twitter; Ukraine; Vladimir Putin.

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Translation by **Paula González** (Universidad Católica Andrés Bello, Venezuela)

1. INTRODUCTION

On February 24th, 2022, the Russian invasion of Ukraine began. This is the most important war conflict on European soil since the Yugoslav wars of the 1990s. A military attack that has already generated thousands of fatalities, as well as the largest refugee crisis on the continent since the Second World War. The conflict has also spread on social networks, where both the invader and the invaded are responsible for building their own story and managing to generate, through their communications, support or neutrality in the face of the conflict. Therefore, it is a war that is being fought on different levels. In the first place, in the rhetorical-linguistic field, in which the Russians define the conflict as a “special military operation”, while the Ukrainians insist that it is a war and/or an invasion. The dispute has also moved into the propaganda-information field, in which both sides show their interest in relating the development of the conflict, denying hoaxes, fake news, or gross manipulations, as in the case of the false cover of Time magazine, where under the title “The Return of History” a photo montage of the portrait of Vladimir Putin and Adolf Hitler appeared. They also clash in the iconographic-symbolic field, in which the use of the letter Z by the Russian government and armed forces stands out as a sign of support for their invasion, to the point that some countries have already banned the public exhibition of the symbol or, as in the case of the government of the Czech Republic, the symbol “Z” has come to be considered as an equivalent to the swastika. Finally, the conflict affects the economic-financial field, which is finding its staging in international sanctions, the boycott of national companies and products, and the blockade of access to bank funds.

Lastly, in the area of our interest, social networks, in which not only the citizens of both countries act, sharing videos of the Ukrainian popular resistance or the advances of the Russian forces; they also highlight government activity, which finds in social networks a space in which to inform, transmit their vision of the conflict, generate support, etc. And, among the different communication channels, “Twitter, a much more politicized and polarized network” stands out (Rivera et al., 2021, p. 193).

2. CONTEXT: the first war over social networks?

Dealing with the issue of relations between Russia and Ukraine is not an easy task, since there are multiple “historical antecedents of the complex, but at the same time close, interdependent, and intense bilateral relationship that has existed between Russia and Ukraine for more than a thousand years, since the creation of Kievskaya Russ (Kievite Russia) in the 9th century” (Sánchez, 2016, p. 473). The

tensions between Russia and Ukraine go back in time since the dissolution of the Soviet Union, having moments of special tension such as: the presidential elections in Ukraine in 2005 that caused a crisis that led to the so-called Orange Revolution, "a milestone in the Ukrainian politics of the time, and for many citizens it meant the beginning of a new stage for the young country. But this initial effervescence faded over time" (López, 2022, p. 22); the 2010 Ukrainian presidential elections that once again pitted a pro-Russian candidate against a "Europeanist" candidate; the so-called Euromaidan (Europlaza) protests, a series of demonstrations and riots led by pro-European and nationalist groups in Ukraine that led to the overthrow of President Viktor Yanukovich, leader of the pro-Russian political formation Party of Regions (November 2013- February 2014); Crimea's accession to Russia in March 2014 and the Donbas War - where "for the first time since the end of the Cold War, [...] an armed conflict in which different powers assist, albeit unequally, each of the contenders" (Ruiz, 2016, p. 7)-, which began in April 2014 with the creation of the Donetsk People's Republics (DPR) and Lugansk (RPL) supported by Russia; the signing of the Minsk Protocol in September 2014. The election of Volodymyr Zelensky in May 2019 as President of Ukraine "had given the Kremlin the hope of reconciling with Kyiv", while in reality, it ended up intensifying "the policy of breaking with the 'Russian world' undertaken by his predecessor" (Teurtrie, 2022).

In September 2020, Zelensky approved the National Security Strategy, which provided for the "development of strategic relations with key foreign partners, primarily the European Union and NATO and their member states, the United States" (Unian, 2020). The approval of this document has been considered by Vladimir Putin as a demonstration of NATO's interest in expanding to the East. For this reason, in the weeks before the invasion, the Russian president demanded both compliance with the Minsk Protocol and a halt to Ukraine's process of rapprochement with NATO, the EU, and the US, an action considered by Russia as a direct threat to its national security. One of the great connoisseurs of geopolitics and promoter of the containment of the USSR, George Kennan, warned of the danger of keeping the Atlantic Alliance active and even expanding it: "The enlargement of NATO would be the most fatal mistake of US policy since the end of the Cold War. This decision is likely to awaken nationalist, anti-Western, and militarist currents in Russian public opinion, revive a Cold War atmosphere in East-West relations and move Russian foreign policy in a direction that will certainly not be what we want" (Kennan, 1997). The shadow of the United States was particularly annoying for Putin, since the Eurasian giant "systematically considers, and with perceptible discomfort, that European countries are hopelessly incapable of maintaining strategic autonomy from the United States and that they refuse to assume their responsibility for the deterioration of the strategic and international situation" (Facon, 2019). Thus, it has gone from the strategy of tension to the ultimatum and from this to the Russian military intervention in Ukraine. Since he assumed the presidency of the country, Putin has stressed that "although Russia has ceased to be an empire, it has not lost its status as a great power" (Kozin, 2000).

In recent years, the confrontation between Ukraine and Russia has taken on new connotations: in the last decade, the war in areas such as social networks has been intensifying, to the point that it cannot be said that we are at the beginning of a "social media war". The signs of the confrontation go back in time, with the war in the field of disinformation having a longer history: already in 2014, entities such as the Internet Research Agency (IRA) created disinformation campaigns, using hashtags such as #savedonbasspeople, #SaveDonbassFromKievNazis or #SaveDonbassSkyFromNazis. Led by Evgeny Prigozhin, it is considered to be "one of the most notorious troll farms", which has been expanding its "online activity related to the Ukraine crisis and Russia's annexation of Crimea" (Morrison, 2021, p. 11). Linked to the Russian Federal Security Service -former KGB-, its workers write messages and

information for platforms such as "LiveJournal, Vkontakte, Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. Comments were also left in the comments section of the media" (Morrison, 2021, p.11). Likewise, this entity, with a marked international projection, has created different profiles on social networks and other media in different countries to spread fake news and disinformation.

Especially since 2014, both Russian and Ukrainian government forces have censored and banned the use of social networks to prevent news or images that are not in line with their objectives from circulating, as in the case of Russian soldiers in Crimea. On this occasion, they were prohibited from accessing the VKontakte social network in which they showed the bombings, while state propaganda was in charge of presenting the Russian entry into the territory as acclaimed by the local population and with hardly any shots. "Russian annexation of Crimea in 2014 heralded yet more efforts to control the Internet," becoming especially aggressive on Twitter against protesters in Ukraine, whose Maidan uprising, named after Kyiv's square, had sparked the crisis. Maidan protests also scared Putin" (Soldatov and Borogan, 2015, p. 77).

From this date, evidently, accounts were blocked, Ukrainian protesters were called "fascists", and cyber-attacks were carried out against Ukrainian websites: "false reports from eastern Ukraine and fake photographs of alleged atrocities and victims flooded VKontakte and Facebook. The photographs of the victims of the war in Syria were manipulated and presented as coming from the Ukrainian provinces of Lugansk or Donetsk" (Soldatov and Borogan, 2015, p. 98). Images from movies and video games were used - as has been done in the media in recent months -: "The trolls claimed that the violence was caused by the Ukrainian 'fascists' and sometimes borrowed images from war movies to prove their point of view. There was a heartbreaking photograph of a grieving young woman, sitting next to the body of a dead woman lying on the ground and bearing the caption: 'This is democracy, baby, the Ukrainian army is killing the people of Donbass'" (Soldatov and Borogan, 2015, p. 98).

For its part, as indicated in the Computational Propaganda in Ukraine: caught between external threats and internal challenges of the University of Oxford, practically on the same dates, Ukraine began to systematically apply the disinformation industry in social networks as a counterattack strategy: "the case of Ukraine [...] represents a vivid example of how post-truth circumstances have shaped events in an entire country over the past three years," adding that "since the EuroMaidan revolution and Russia's annexation of Crimea, Ukraine has become the front line of numerous disinformation campaigns in Europe" (Zhdanova & Orlova, 2017, p. 3). Faced with the numerous aggressive media campaigns generated against Ukraine (Khaldarova and Petti, 2016), the response has been to launch "bots, trolls, and fake accounts as instruments of online manipulation of public opinion" (Zhdanova & Orlova, 2017, p.9) in the country.

Currently, "the information disseminated by the mass media produces the context of shared sociocultural meanings, in a group and collectively, to the point that today there is practically no socialization without mediation by the public action of the mass media" (Sierra, 1999, p. 185). In the political field, the management of social networks is of great importance: "every day, social networks become more important in political communication, fundamentally due to three reasons: the first is the high cost of traditional media (radio, press, and television) compared to social networks whose cost is [practically] zero. The second is the great power of dissemination and the third is the great immediacy of the medium" (Chaves, 2018, p. 39). For this reason, social networks are a fundamental element of political communication: "Twitter has become a consolidated medium in political communication [...]. Since its birth in 2006, it has had a growing importance in electoral campaigns and has been applied in a wide range of —local, national, and international— political contexts, which has led to a

substantial variation in its scope and nature" (Campos-Domínguez, 2017, p. 785). War could not be an exception and that is why, in the conflicts of the 21st century, the actors involved have shown special interest in this sphere. The control of social networks means marking and conditioning the story, the narrative of the conflicts. And not only this: in the case of war, the use of social networks could even be interpreted as a form of guerrilla tactics (Rivero, 2022).

In the war between Russia and Ukraine, as in other conflicts, "Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and Tumblr have become a battlefield where threats and offensive images buzz and where the offensives of both sides are reported in time real" (BBC, 2012). For this reason, governments give it special importance: it is where the construction of reality for viewers is determined. Furthermore, the control of information is essential to redirect -national and international- public opinion in the desired direction: politicians are especially concerned about monitoring the information that circulates on the internet, and the propaganda that is found on the different platforms, preferring to censor adverse news and give greater prominence to the government media.

To achieve these goals, official government accounts pay close attention to the community that follows them and try to adjust their communications to their profile and interests. Attending to electoral marketing techniques, they monitor and segment their followers, this being one of the keys to getting the message right; they identify, individualize, and group the largest number of users to design their communication. And the audience reacts to these tactics, deciding to follow or not a certain account. In their choice, their tastes and interests usually influence, but also their concerns -as in the case of a conflict- or the possible consequences in their professional field, as we will see in the analysis of the socioeconomic data.

The decision to focus our research on Twitter is due both to its prominence in current politics and to the possibilities that this social network offers its users. Each platform has certain characteristics and it is important to know its nature, since "not all messages apply to all channels and it is well known that there are communicative formulas that are much more effective than others to deliver certain information content" (Caldevilla, 2009, p. 35). The importance of this platform has been growing over time, although it is true that the interest in it and its prominence both in the political and academic spheres have been growing after the United States elections, in which the time to govern through tweets and post-truth seemed to have arrived (Gutiérrez-Rubí, 2017). Both during the electoral campaign and from the presidency of the United States, Trump used his personal Twitter account (@realDonaldTrump) to directly address his followers, without intermediaries, thus turning this platform into an extension of his public personality. Trump's digital strategy connected with voters in ways never seen before (Donofrio and Rubio, 2019, p. 121). Thus, in recent years, Twitter has become "one of the most powerful communication mechanisms in history" (Piscitelli, 2011, p. 15) and "has changed the internet and has completed the social turn that blogs began at the end of the nineties" (Orihuela, 2011, p. 21).

Lastly, in what interests us for our research, we would highlight two characteristics of Twitter: first, each user has "a capacity proportional to their number of followers, but the message can be retransmitted through a retweet (RT) by the followers of their followers without any limitation, which makes Twitter one of the largest sources of information dissemination in real-time" (Congosto et al., 2011, p. 12). And, secondly, "Twitter is conceived as a space for public communication, in which there may or may not be transitive relationships, a user can follow a candidate or party, but they may not follow the user" (Chaves-Montero, 2018, page 40).

In conclusion, despite having highlighted the importance of social networks and the Internet today, and especially in this conflict, it is not the first war on social networks, but rather the first conflict in which conventional war converges with cyber war. That is to say, we are facing an event in which social networks play a prominent role in a scenario marked by violence and the tragic effects of war. Therefore, it could be said that the two countries have been at war on social networks since shortly after February 2014 (EuroMaidan) and in conventional war since February 2022.

3. METHODOLOGY

The comparative analysis of the social audience on Twitter carried out in this research has taken as its object of study the profiles of the Government of the Russian Federation (@GovernmentRF) and the Office of the President of Ukraine (@APUkraine) during the period between February 24th (start date of the Russian invasion of Ukraine) and April 24th, 2022. In both cases, the legitimacy of both accounts has been verified through Twitter's authentication system.

The selection of the two analyzed profiles is justified for several reasons. The first of these is that both profiles, to analyze the different characteristics of their social audience, had to be active at the time of the analysis, something that does not happen with several of the profiles that initially formed part of the preliminary study that gave rise to the present research; secondly, to analyze the scope and sociodemographic characteristics of the audience, both inside and outside the country to whose government they belong, only those profiles that published all or part of their content in English or in languages other than those of the country of origin have been considered; thirdly, to be able to compare the audiences not only from a quantitative point of view, but, above all, from aspects such as sociodemographic composition, the segments of interest to which said audiences belong, the personality of the users, or the monitoring they make of other online and offline media, profiles with a significant number of followers have been taken into account (399,293 in the case of the Office of the President of Ukraine and 352,7932 in the case of the Office of the Prime Minister and the Government of Russia) and who, in turn, followed other users on the social network (415 in the case of the Ukrainian profile and 23 in the case of the Russian profile).

Due to non-compliance with these established requirements, other initially selected profiles, considered, a priori, more appropriate, have had to be rejected, such as, for example, that of the President of Ukraine, Volodimir Zelenski (@ZelenskyyUa), and that of the President of the Russian Federation, Vladimir Putin (@KremlinRussia_E). In the first case, the Ukrainian president does not follow any other user on the social network, although he meets the rest of the requirements established for this research. For its part, the official profile of the Russian President has not published any content through Twitter since March 15th and has transferred all its activity on social networks to the instant messaging platform Telegram. Putin's decision may respond to different factors, such as the difficulty in controlling a social network like Twitter with western ascendancy or his interest in giving more weight to an alternative network, an objective he has been pursuing for about a decade.

Regarding the analysis carried out, and despite the interest that this could have, the possibility of carrying out a study of the activity of the two selected profiles has been rejected, since this would place us before challenges that are difficult to solve to achieve an optimal result. The difficulties in discerning the activity of human users compared to bots, the limitations imposed by the state control of social networks, or, even, the merely linguistic obstacles, presented difficulties that exceeded the objective initially proposed for the present research: to compare the social audience on Twitter of the two selected profiles and understand the different segments that make them up through the

interconnections established between users. Knowledge of these social audiences allows those responsible for the communication strategy to personalize the message of their campaigns according to each audience or segment, thus enhancing the intended effect in each of the messages published on the social network.

To carry out this comparative study of the social audience of both profiles, two social analytics tools based on the application of audience intelligence algorithms have been used. On the one hand, Audiense Insights (<https://audiense.com/>), an app that, through machine learning systems, allows analyzing the composition of the social audience of a profile based on eight different combinable criteria: Demographics, Relationships, Behavior (activity), Conversations, IBM Watson Personality Insights, Location, Interests, and Twitter profile. These criteria have allowed us to obtain up to 20 different identifiers structured in six sections (demographic data, socioeconomic data, influencers and brands, audience interests, media followed by the audience, and content shared by the audience), which will be analyzed in the following sections. Social audience analysis using Audiense Insights does not group and analyze followers by a primary identifier, but instead examines communities of connected people that are grouped based on individuals with whom they share content or maintain affinity. To do this, the algorithm also takes into account users who show little participation when it comes to sharing content or participating in online conversations and eliminates fake positives and informational noise generated around certain conversations. Finally, the software used focuses specifically on the analysis of each of the profiles' audience's engagements and not on the bio/interest keywords, thus avoiding obtaining information based on often outdated, selective, and subjective data.

To complement the information strictly related to the accounts under study, Followerwonk (<https://followerwonk.com/>) has also been used, an app that allows audience analysis through the search for keywords within the 'bios' or activities of Twitter users, thus allowing to identify the profiles that have the greatest reach and authority, offering, in turn, the possibility of comparing accounts and their performance and carrying out an analysis of similar accounts.

Both apps have allowed us to study the audiences of the two profiles selected from the analysis of individual and aggregate data on the followers of both accounts, providing a detailed description of the segments or communities that shape that audience, their demographic and psychographic data, while allowing to connect audience segments with other social listening and analytics platforms, influencer marketing tools, digital advertising platforms, and other social analytics apps.

4. RESULTS

4.1. Analysis of the social audience of the Twitter profiles of the Government of the Russian Federation (@GovernmentRF) and the Office of the President of Ukraine (@APUkraine)

The analysis of the characteristics and activity of the social audience of the selected profiles has been carried out from the collection of data around 20 criteria structured in 6 main sections collected in Table 1 and which we will develop below.

Table 1. *Analysis criteria*

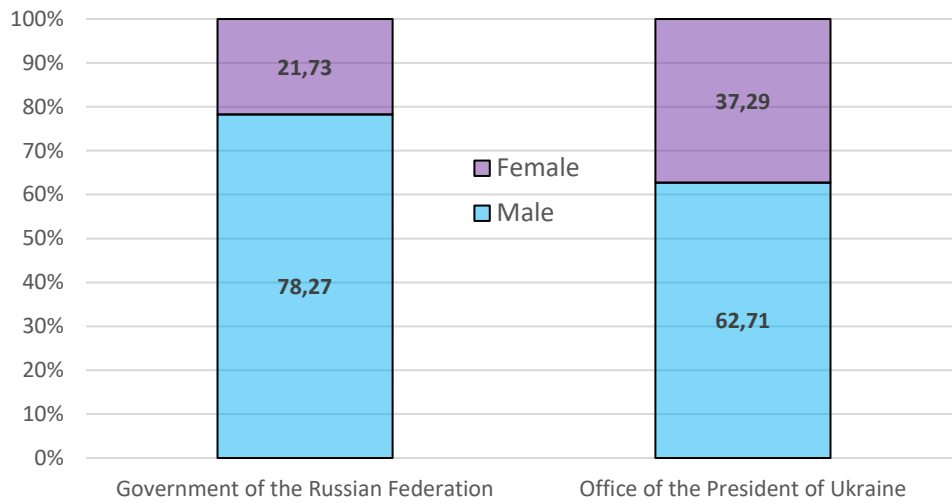
Demographic data	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Gender2. Nationality3. City of residence4. Language5. Biography - Profile Description6. Age
Socioeconomic data	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Education level2. Work sector3. Personal situation4. Family situation
Influencers and brands	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Real audience2. Follower/Brand Affinity
Audience interests	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Main interests/topics of the audience2. Audience Segmentation
Media followed by the audience	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Offline media (tv, radio, newspapers, and specialized journals)2. Online media (web pages, online programs, and apps)
Content shared by the audience	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Most shared domains2. Most cited users3. Most common keywords4. Most common media formats (images, gifs, videos, etc.)

Source: Own elaboration.

4.1.1. Demographic characteristics of the social audience

One of the data that is very striking in the comparative analysis of the social audience of the two selected profiles is the clear predominance of the male gender among the followers of both profiles (Fig. 1). If the profile of the Office of the Ukrainian President has an audience of 62.71% of men, in the case of the Russian Government account, the following by men is even higher, 78.27%.

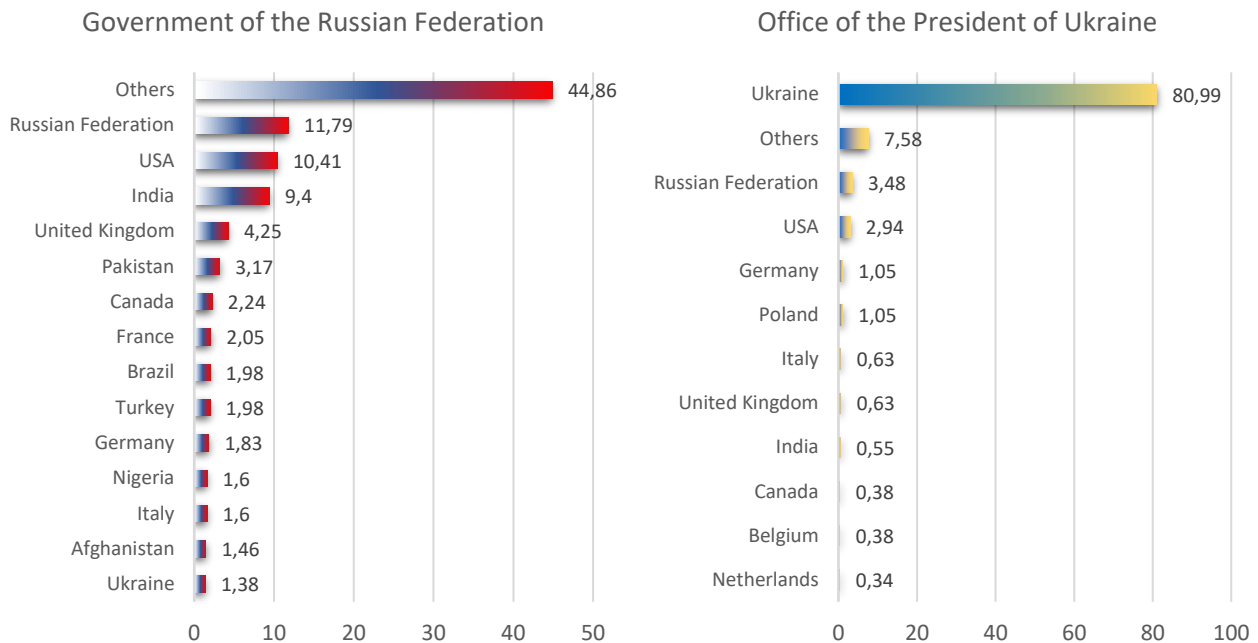
Figure 1. Distribution by gender of the social audience of the analyzed profiles.



Source: Own elaboration, based on the data of *Audiense Insights*.

Regarding nationality (Fig. 2), the considerable geographical dispersion of the social audience of the Russian government profile is also striking. Although the majority nationality is Russian (11.79%), the rest of the audience is divided between the United States (10.41%), India (9.40%), the United Kingdom (4.25%), Pakistan (3.17%), and, to lesser extent, other countries such as Canada, France, Turkey, Brazil, or Germany (2.24%-1.83%). Concerning the place of residence, Moscow concentrates 9.47% of the audience of the profile, standing out among the rest of the cities, although far from the first, there are followers from cities such as London (2.94%), Delhi (2.31 %), Paris (1.67%), or Dhaka (1.35%). This territorial dispersion disappears, however, in the analysis of the profile of the Office of the Ukrainian President since 80.99% of its audience is of Ukrainian nationality compared to 3.48% of Russian nationality or 2.94% of American nationality. Such a difference has its corresponding correlation with the data on the city of residence since 33.94% of the audience is concentrated in the country's capital, Kyiv, while the rest of the social audience is scattered among the largest cities of the Ukrainian territory (Kharkiv, L'viv, Odesa, Dnipro) and also in the Russian capital, Moscow, with 2.16% of the total audience.

Figure 2. Distribution by nationality of the social audience (in %)

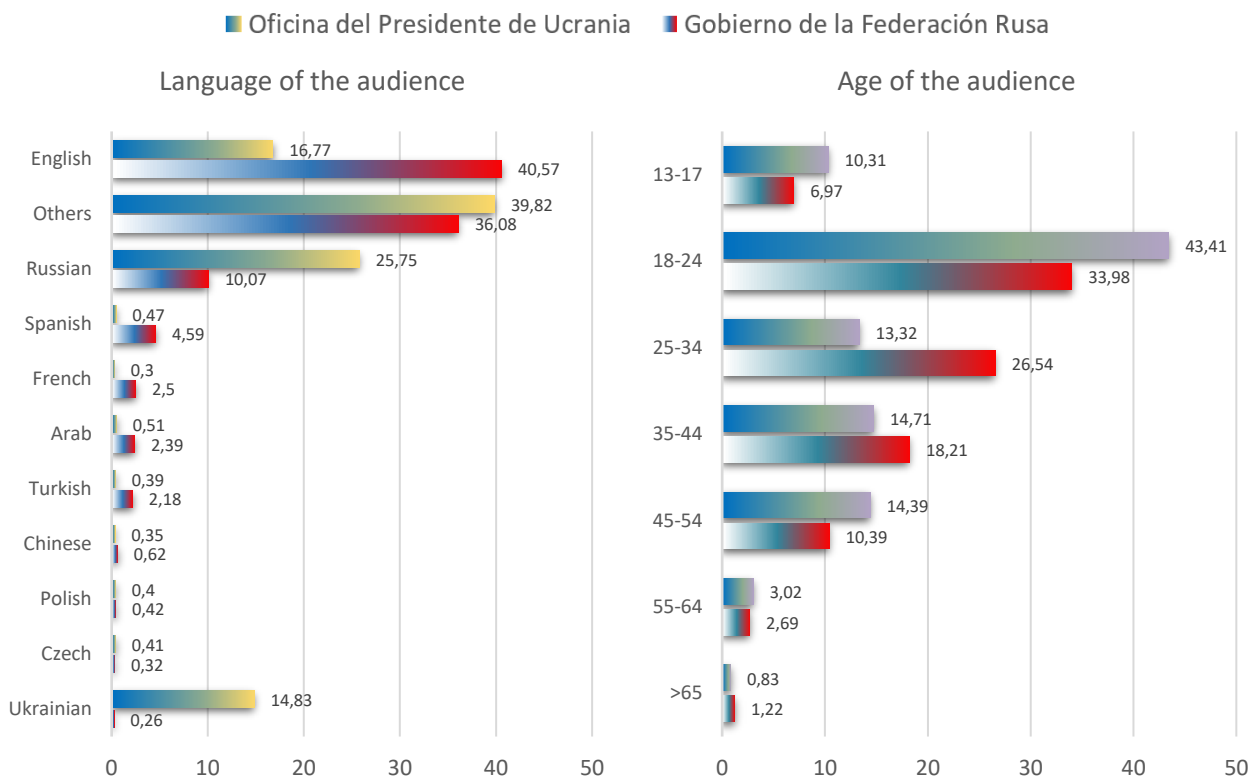


Source: Own elaboration, based on the data of *Audiense Insights*.

Regarding language (Fig. 3), 49.57% of the social audience of the Russian government profile use English as their preferred language in their publications on the social network, while only 10.07% do so in Russian, and, curiously, 4.59% in Spanish. The Ukrainian case reflects very different data, as Russian, with 25.75%, is the majority language among the social audience, followed by English (16.77%), and, to a lesser extent, Ukrainian (14.83%).

A certain similarity can be seen in the analysis of the audience of both profiles concerning age. In both cases, the majority audience is concentrated in the age group between 18 and 24 years old (33.98% in the Russian case and 43.41% in the Ukrainian), although the rest of the audience offers greater differences. Thus, the second majority sector among the public that follows the Russian government profile corresponds to users aged between 25 and 34 years (26.54%) and, in third place, those between 35 and 44 years (18.21%), while, in the case of the profile of the Ukrainian presidential office, 14.71% of the audience is between 35 and 44 years old, 14.39% between 45 and 54 years old; and only 13.32% belong to the 25-34 age group.

Figure 3. Distribution by language and age of the social audience (in %)



Source: Own elaboration, based on the data of *Audiense Insights*.

Finally, through the analysis of the biographical descriptions of the users that make up the social audience of the two analyzed profiles, the predominance of terms that appeal mainly to emotional issues (love, life, world, peace, pride) and, to a lesser extent, to current affairs or the professional world (Ukraine, students, politicians, journalists, business) stands out in both cases.

4.1.2. Socioeconomic analysis of the social audience

The study of the socioeconomic variables of the audience of the two selected profiles allows us to reflect on the characteristics of this audience based on their education level, the labor sector in which they work, their personal situation, and the composition of the family unit.

From the point of view of education, the majority of the audience of both profiles have university studies or have passed, at least, the different levels of secondary education. Thus, for example, in the case of the Ukrainian profile audience, 14% are university graduates, 4.67% are high school graduates, and 3.36% are pursuing university studies. The order is identical in the case of the audience of the Russian profile, although the percentages vary considerably since 26.69% of the audience are university graduates; 11.54% of the total have, at least, completed secondary school studies, and 2.65% are pursuing a university degree.

Regarding the labor sector in which the audience of both profiles works, taking into account self-reported data on social networks, most of the audience of the two analyzed cases occupies positions related to public administration (1.97% in the Russian case and 0.16% in the Ukrainian case), although

there is a huge dispersion and the data reflect very small percentages. Thus, in the case of the Russian government profile audience, 1.53% of users perform different administrative functions, 1.09% hold executive or production positions, 0.84% identify with the arts, entertainment, sports, and the media, and the same percentage (0.84%) performed tasks related to Education. For its part, in the case of the profile of the Ukrainian presidential office, the second position is for the arts, entertainment, sports, and media sector (0.11%), the third for administrative functions (0.10%), and the fourth for the computing and mathematics sector (0.09%), to cite only the most outstanding cases.

The data relating to the distribution of income per household is only available for the analysis of the audience of American profiles and/or users, so they have not been collected in this study, since these profiles represent a very small percentage of the total audience that follow the two analyzed accounts.

Lastly, within this socioeconomic analysis section, the marital status 'married' clearly stands out as a descriptor of the social audience of both profiles (14.69% of the audience of the Russian profile and 11.69% of the audience of the Ukrainian profile), followed by the 'singles' (11.54% of the Russian audience and 3.45% of the Ukrainian audience), and those who claim to be 'in a relationship' (4.95% of the Russian audience and 2.29% of the Ukrainian audience). Regarding family status, in both audiences, the status of parents clearly predominates. Along these lines, and although percentage-wise it is a relatively low figure, most of the audience is defined as 'parents with adult children (18-26 years old)' (4.87% of the audience of the Russian profile and 0.78% of the audience of the Ukrainian profile).

4.1.3. Evolution of the analyzed profiles and analysis of the affinity with the Audience

As of April 18th, 2022, the Twitter account of the Government of the Russian Federation (@GovernmentRF) has a total of 343,365 followers while the profile of the Office of the President of Ukraine (@APUkraine) has a total of 389,865 followers. Only 1.3% of the total are followers of both accounts (9,428 users), among which are, mainly, international journalists such as Julia Davis (*The Daily Beast*), Christopher Miller (Politician), Oliver Carroll (*The Economist*), media such as *CNBC*, *Amna News*, *The New York Times*, or *Bangladesh News*, and institutions such as the United Nations, the Ministries of Foreign Affairs of Russia and Ukraine, the Peruvian Foreign Ministry, or the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), among many others.

Since its creation in July 2012, the Russian Government Twitter account has experienced an average weekly growth of 4,744 followers, compared to 12,219 followers on average for the Ukrainian Presidential Office profile, created two years later (July 2014). Since then, the Ukrainian government account has published a total of 19,442 tweets (with a weekly average of 27) compared to 6,691 tweets published from the Russian Federation Government account. This considerable difference between the activity of one account and the other explains why the Social Authority index, that is, the scale that measures the influence capacity of the content published on Twitter, is much lower in the case of the profile of the Russian government (55/100) compared to that reached by the account of the Ukrainian Presidency (81/100).

When analyzing the main influencers and brands that are part of the social audience of the two analyzed profiles, the criterion of affinity between the profile of the analyzed account and the accounts of the followers or potential followers that are part of its audience has been taken into account, observing, for this, the number of shared users and the thematic lines. Thus, in the case of the Government of the Russian Federation, the first five positions appear to be occupied by the Twitter profiles of the President of Russia himself (@KremlinRussia_E), with 77.12% affinity, followed by the profile of

former US President Barack Obama (@BarackObama, with 58.91%), The New York Times account (@nytimes, with 50.09%), the archive of former US President Donald Trump's activity on social networks (@WhiteHouse45, with 48.41%), and the profile of the Vice President of the Security Council of the Russian Federation, Dmitri Medvedev (@MedvedevRussiaE, with 48.23%). Faced with the heterogeneity of the profiles with the greatest affinity with the Russian government account, in the Ukrainian case, the direct relationship with profiles of politicians or diplomats from Ukraine itself predominates. Thus, in the first place, the account of the former Ukrainian president, Petró Poroshenko (@poroshenko), stands out, with 67.18% affinity; followed by the politician and former Ukrainian Interior Minister, Arsen Avakov (@AvakovArsen, with 49.68% affinity), the Ukrainian Security Service Twitter account (@ServiceSsu, with 49.57%), the diplomat and former Ukrainian Foreign Minister Pavló Klimkin (@PavloKlimkin, with 46.69%), and musician and social activist Sviatoslav Vakarchuk (@s_vakarchuk, with 43.95% affinity).

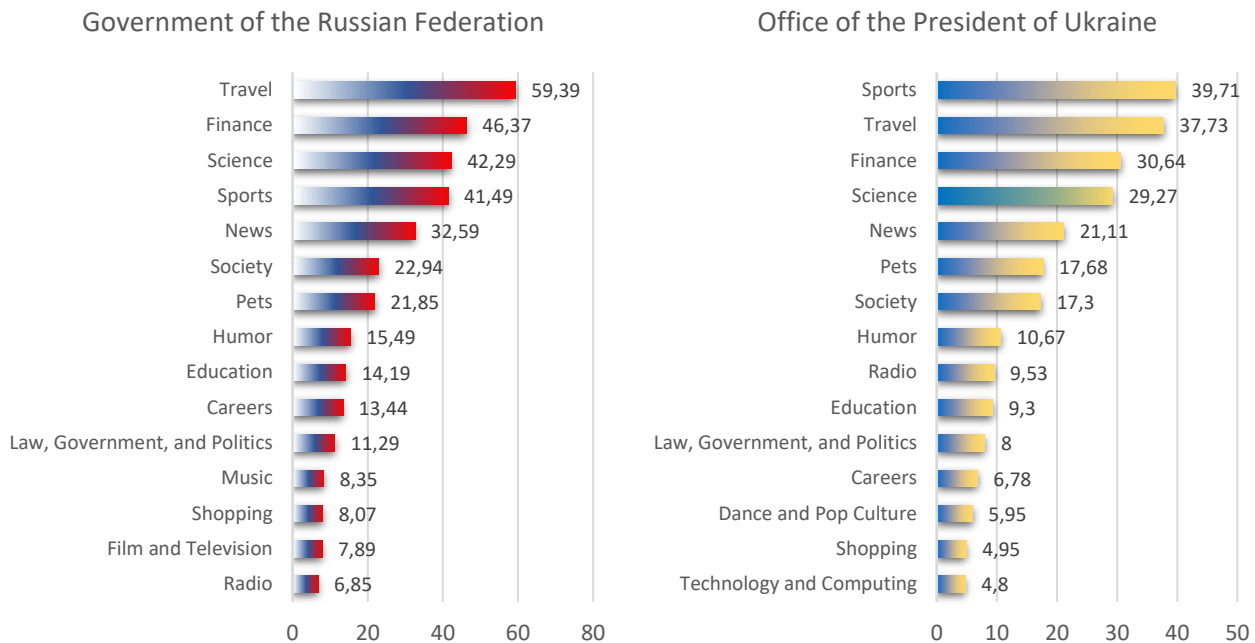
4.1.4. Topics of interest and audience segmentation

For the study on the topics of interest of the social audience of the analyzed profiles (Fig. 4), the network analytics tools used analyze the most used content, keywords, and hashtags in the profiles of the users that make up the audience, organizing the results into 33 different sections that range from political issues to entertainment, going through professional issues and the personal habits of the audience.

Thus, through the analysis of the topics of interest most discussed by the social audience of the profile of the Government of the Russian Federation, five large blocks stand out, ranging from travel (59.39%) to news (32.59%), going through the economy and finances (46.37%), issues related to science (42.29%), and sports (41.49%). On the other hand, among the topics that generate less interest among this audience, we find those related to issues such as housing and the purchase of a house (0.60% and 0.36%, respectively), the automotive industry and visual art and design (both with 0.44%), and, finally, comics and animation (0.16%).

For its part, the audience of the profile of the Ukrainian Presidency shows greater interest in sports issues (39.71%, especially football, basketball, and tennis), travel (37.73%), the economy and finances (30.64%), science (29.27%), and news (21.11%). On the other hand, the issues that arouse less interest among this audience, as in the previous case, are issues related to housing (0.23%), visual art and design (0.23%), the automotive industry (0.15%), and comics and animation (0.08%).

Figure 4. Distribution by topics of interest of the social audience (first 15 topics in %)



Source: Own elaboration, based on the data of *Audiense Insights*.

To analyze audience segmentation, we follow the procedure implemented by Audiense Insights based on segmentation by interconnection. To do this, once the clusters/groups have been identified, how the users of each segment know each other is analyzed, that is, what are the hidden trends that the social network and the activity of the users in it have revealed, including their interests, the psychographics, and the influential people around whom the interconnections are generated. The data provided by this segmentation allows us to delve into the different groups that make up the entire audience, obtaining much more specific and niche information for each group.

Thus, according to the data provided by Audiense Insights, the social audience of the profile of the Government of the Russian Federation is organized around three large groups that revolve around Development and International Affairs (4.54%), the topics and news of current affairs (3.53%), and politics (2.98%). For its part, the audience of the Ukrainian profile appears segmented into three large groups that are mostly about Ukraine (13.28%), personal relationships (10.12%), and news and economic issues (8.02%).

4.1.5. Offline and online media

The study of the media for which the social audience of a profile feels preference is of special interest to optimize the engagement of the audience with the profile and the content published on it, for example, through an advertising campaign on specific channels or media and during the programs or spaces that excite the audience. The analysis of the media affinity of the social audience of the analyzed accounts is structured into two large blocks: Offline media and online media, which, in turn, are subdivided into sections such as television, radio, newspapers, magazines, and events for offline media, and websites and digital content, online programs, and apps for online media.

The result of this analysis is strongly conditioned by the different geographical origins of the followers, an aspect that we referred to in the demographic analysis of the social audience of these profiles. This explains, for example, that among the media for which the audience of the Government of the Russian Federation shows the most interest, international media stand out in all their formats (television, radio, press, and specialized magazines), especially of American and British origin. This is the case of Television, where the preference of the audience of the Russian profile is mostly for the BBC (47.4%), CNN (46.9%), or Fox News (30%) while only 35.1% showed greater interest in Russian Television. A similar situation occurs with radio, where BBC (47.4%), NBC (24.9%), Bloomberg (23.8%), and CBS (23.3%) occupy the first positions, while, in the case of the printed press, the first positions are for The New York Times (50.1%), The Washington Post (39.8%), The Wall Street Journal (36.8%), The Economist (36.4%), and The Guardian (31.5%). The same pattern is found in the preferences for specialized press, with the interest in Time Magazine (32.8%), Forbes (27.3%), and The New Yorker (16.6%) standing out widely.

Regarding online media, the preference of the social audience of the Russian government profile is again on the side of blogs and web pages of international origin, highlighting the great interest that the audience shows for the website of the popular North American presenter, Oprah Winfrey (18.7%), followed by the technological portals Gizmodo (4.8%), Engadget (4.1%), and LifeHacker (3.5%). As for digital magazines and online news media, the BBC stands out again as the first option (47.4%), followed by the Reuters Agency (42.1%), The Associated Press (36.8%), and the Agence France-Press (17%).

Lastly, it is especially noteworthy that, in the section of online programs, the social audience of this profile shows their preference (5%) for Kate Clapp's YouTube portal (<https://www.youtube.com/c/TheKateClapp/>), a popular Russian influencer who has 7 million subscribers on that platform and more than 8 million followers on Instagram. As for the online apps that arouse the greatest interest among the social audience of the Russian government profile, the instant messaging tools WhatsApp (5.7%) and Telegram (3.2%), the app for monitoring flights in time real, FlightRadar24 (3.8%), and the social network management website, CrowdFire (3%), stand out.

The predominance of international media in the previous profile contrasts with the absolute preference for national media that can be seen in the audience analysis of the profile of the Office of the Ukrainian President. Thus, in the case of Television, the preference of the audience is concentrated on the fact-checker Hromadske (42.8%) and the channels TCH (35.6%), Espresso TV (22.2%), and TV Rain (22.5%), with only CNN (17.1%) and the BBC (15.3%) appearing among the audience's preferences, but at a considerable distance from the previous ones. A similar situation occurs with radio, where Radio Libertad (38.7%), Crimea Realidad (11.4%), and Echo of Moscow (8%) occupy the first positions with the sole exception of BBC News, located in second place of the preferences of the audience with 14.8%. Concerning the printed press, Ukrainian Truth (40.2%), The Voice of America in Ukraine (35.7%), and the LB newspaper (27.3%) are the media that arouse the greatest interest among the audience, while among the magazines and the specialized press, Korrespondent (18.5%) is the one with the greatest following among the audience, followed by the technological publication AIN (9.1%) and the magazine Semana (8.9%).

Regarding the online media, we found a greater similarity with the audience of the previous profile in relation to the monitoring of blogs and web pages, since the website of the North American presenter, Oprah Winfrey, is once again positioned in the first place (5.8%), followed by the technological portals Gizmodo (1.4%), Xataka (1.3%), and Android Police (0.3%). As for digital magazines and online news

media, the BBC once again stands out as the first option (30.1%), followed by the Reuters Agency (12.5%), The Associated Press (10.5%), the Russian agency RIA Novosti (10.1%), and Agence France-Press (4%).

Lastly, attention in the section of the online programs is focused on the YouTube channel 'Toronto Television' (21.3%), the portal's main channel in Ukraine, with more than 600,000 subscribers, which offers information on the war between Russia and Ukraine from a different perspective than traditional media. As for the online apps that arouse the greatest interest among the social audience of the Ukrainian profile, the instant messaging tools Telegram (1.9%), WhatsApp (0.6%), and Viber (0.5%) stand out, as well as the real-time flight monitoring application, FlightRadar24 (1.1%).

4.1.6. Content analysis and composition of audience posts

The analysis of the content generated by the audience of the two profiles under study is, without a doubt, where we can most clearly appreciate the situation of warlike confrontation between the two countries to whose respective governments these profiles belong and which serves as the context of the present research. To carry out this analysis, only values related to the composition and characteristics of the tweets generated and/or shared by the social audience of these profiles have been taken into account. Specifically, the most repeated keywords in the tweets published between March 18th and April 17th, 2022, have been analyzed, as well as the most used hashtags in these publications, the most frequently cited institutions and users, the URLs and external sources most referenced in the content, and, finally, the type of format that, besides the text, predominates in the content published and shared, differentiating between photographs, GIFs, and videos.

Regarding the social audience of the profile of the Government of the Russian Federation, the keywords (Fig. 5) that clearly stand out are those that are directly related to the conflict situation in which these countries live. Thus, references to the countries themselves, the population, and their respective governments (Ukraine, Russia, Russian, people, govern) are mixed with expressions of rejection of the conflict (no war, reject). This predominance can also be seen in the keyword analysis of the content published by the audience of the profile of the Office of the President of Ukraine. In this case, the appeals to the nation and its citizens are constant (Ukraine, East, Ukrainian, Україні, Україне, Україні) as well as references to the enemy country (Russian, Russia, России). Regarding the use of hashtags, the most frequent ones in the case of the audience of the Russian government profile also refer to the conflict situation, the following standing out in order of frequency: #ukraine, #russia, #nato, and #mariupol. The same happens in the case of the audience of the profile of the Ukrainian presidency, although here the variety is greater and the labels used clearly reflect the rejection of the war and the request for international aid (#ukraine, #russia, #новини, #buchа, #mariupol, #russian, #stoprussia, #standwithukraine, #kyiv, and #putin).

The last aspect analyzed of the content published by the audiences of the respective profiles is related to the use of different formats complementary to the text. In this sense, the coincidence regarding the preference of the format is absolute, although the percentages of use vary. Thus, images, mainly photographs related to the current situation of the conflict, predominate in 70.6% of the publications of the audience of the Russian profile and 85.7% of the tweets of the audience of the Ukrainian profile. Videos are the second most used format with 23.5% for Russian publications and 12.4% for Ukrainian publications. Lastly, animated images in GIF format are the least common resource with 5.9% in the publications of the audience of the Russian government profile and only 1.9% in the tweets of the audience of the Office of the President from Ukraine.

5. DISCUSSION

Regarding the demographic characteristics of the social audience of the two accounts, the analysis has revealed similarities and differences. Concerning the first point, it is worth noting the following: firstly, the predominance of the male gender among supporters of the Government of the Russian Federation and the Office of the President of Ukraine; secondly, a certain generational similarity also stands out, in the sense that the followers of both profiles have similar ages; and, thirdly, about the biographical descriptions, as has been shown in the analysis, the audience of the two profiles share "interests", that is, taking into account the words most followed by the followers of both accounts, we can highlight the interest in values and areas such as love, peace, and life. Moving on to the differences, the most noticeable are the nationality and the city of residence of the followers. Compared with the considerable geographical dispersion of the social audience of the Russian government profile -which shows very high percentages in the US and India among others-, more than 80% of the followers of the profile of the Ukrainian President's Office are Ukrainians. Analogous behavior concerning the place of residence, data in which the territorial dispersion is maintained in the case of the followers of the Russian account, and the preponderance of users from the largest cities of the Ukrainian territory for the official account of this country. Although it is expected that this last figure regarding Ukraine will change as the war progresses. In other words, a growing trend of foreign followers of the official Ukraine account is predicted in the coming months, an evolution that could be the subject of future research. It is also worth exposing the absence of a country like China, a fact that is mainly due to the inability of its users to use a platform like Twitter.

Regarding the socioeconomic analysis of the audience of the two selected profiles, similarities prevail. As indicated above, in the educational sphere, the majority of the audience of both profiles have university studies or have passed, at least, the different levels of secondary education. The data shows that users are people with a certain level of education and training, with an interest in knowing the information provided by these two official accounts. It is also worth noting that the labor sector in which most of the audience of both profiles is found is related to public administration. Although this is not a very large percentage, it shows the interest of public workers in receiving government information from official sources. Turning to the personal and family situation, the 'married' marital status is the majority in the social audience of both profiles, as well as the status of 'parents'.

Concerning the audience, the first data that we would highlight refers to the fact that, on the date of our analysis, the profile of the Office of the President of Ukraine has more followers than the Twitter account of the Government of the Russian Federation, despite having been created two years before the Ukrainian one. The second reflection would be about the percentage of followers shared by both accounts: it is a relatively low number, in which the media and government agencies, official accounts of governments, and institutions stand out. Likewise, the evolution of the accounts shows that the

average weekly growth rate of the profile of the Presidential Office of Ukraine is higher than that of Russia.

Regarding the activity in this social network, the Ukrainian government account shows greater activity and interest in publishing content. As indicated, the difference is considerable: the greater interest of the Ukrainian Presidency account in informing and producing content and thus increasing the number of followers is evident.

The analysis of the main influencers and brands that are part of the social audience of the two analyzed profiles is especially interesting. In the case of the Government of the Russian Federation, the interest in a world inherited from the cold war is evident in the first five profiles that appear: the president and vice president of Russia, two former US presidents, and The New York Times, one of the main newspapers on a worldwide scale, winner of 132 Pulitzer Prizes. The followers show their interest in international relations and the publications of the protagonists of the global scene. In the case of Ukraine, the direct relationship with politicians and diplomats of the country itself predominates, showing a special interest in national news and the internal situation of the country. Interesting is the huge number of followers for Poroshenko, considered one of the most influential figures in Ukrainian politics and a prominent businessman.

In the part related to the interests of the social audience of the analyzed profiles, it is worth mentioning the variety of these, from political issues to information, from travel -which stands out in the audience of the Government of the Russian Federation- to sports -of special interest to the audience of the profile of the Ukrainian Presidency-. A common theme followed by both audiences is economics and finance.

In our research, the analysis of the media affinity of the social audience has been divided into two large blocks: offline media and online media. The result is consistent with what is indicated in the part related to the demographic analysis of the social audience of these profiles. The audience of the profile of the Government of the Russian Federation continues to show special interest in international politics and information, once again prioritizing the monitoring of these areas in its US aspect. As far as television is concerned, it is striking that almost half of the audience turns to well-known media such as the BBC and CNN for information, preferring these options to Russian Television. This same pattern is maintained with the other traditional media, that is, radio and printed media. In this section on the social audience of the Russian government profile, it is worth highlighting 3 elements: the enormous following of the BBC in all its formats; the great interest that the audience shows in Oprah Winfrey, one of the most popular people in the world of entertainment and information, whose popularity is global, and Kate Clapp, one of the most popular video bloggers on YouTube. As in the section on demographic data, in the audience analysis of the profile of the Office of the Ukrainian President, the preference for national media over international media predominates. Even with CNN and the BBC among the most prominent media, the distance from the national media is considerable. However, regarding online media, we find a situation more similar to the audience of the previous profile, in which the following of Oprah Winfrey and similar technology portals stands out. Finally, the high following of the YouTube channel 'Toronto Television' is especially interesting, which, as mentioned above, offers information about the war between Russia and Ukraine from a different perspective than that of traditional media. The data demonstrates the interest in learning about the conflict through an alternative channel, possibly less politicized and more impartial.

The war conflict is evident in the analysis of the tweets generated and/or shared by the social audience of these profiles in the period between March 18th and April 17th, 2022. The keywords that stand out

in the social audience of the profile of the Government of the Russian Federation are related to the conflict, especially with anti-invasion expressions such as no to war or the word "rejection". A similar trend can be seen in the content published by the audience of the profile of the Office of the Presidency of Ukraine, where references to the invading country also stand out. The current war situation is evident in the hashtags since in both profiles reference is made to the opponents, the cities under assault by Russian troops, and the international community. In the case of the audience of the Office of the Presidency of Ukraine, we also find the appeal for international intervention in the form of military aid and, above all, the president of Russia, Vladimir Putin, appears, considered to be responsible for the war.

The disparity is evident concerning the users cited by the two audiences: it is interesting to underline how in the Russian case, among the most cited users are the President of the United States and the Prime Minister of Pakistan. In the case of the Ukrainian audience, the main references are to the media and news agencies, as a demonstration of the intent to interact with them, provide them with information, or corroborate their headlines. When it comes to URLs, it is not surprising that YouTube is the most cited: this platform is a world leader in the transmission of videos.

In conclusion, it is also worth highlighting the use of images, photographs, and videos, as the main complementary formats to text. We live in a society characterized by "the primacy of the image, that is, of the preponderance of the visible over the intelligible, which leads us to see without understanding", as Sartori pessimistically warned (1998, p. 12). What is certain is that images and videos directly transmit the atrocity of the conflict and directly capture the attention of social network users.

6. CONCLUSIONS

The war between Russia and Ukraine and its consequences are of particular interest not only to the scientific community: "the crisis around Ukraine is part of a broader confrontation between Russia and the West, which has persisted in varying degrees of intensity since the fall of the Soviet Union despite periods when the West as a whole refused to acknowledge that there was any conflict of strategic interest with Russia" (Giles, 2015, p. 19). The analysis carried out is of great importance to know the profile and interests of the audience on Twitter regarding the conflict between Russia and Ukraine. Based on this information, the Government of the Russian Federation and the Office of the President of Ukraine can use social networks to directly deliver their respective messages to Internet users, without obstacles or barriers: "the message is delivered directly by the politician and reaches the citizen without any type of filter" (Rodríguez and Ureña, 2011, p. 93). The analysis and knowledge of the audience are essential to segment the message.

Both Russia and Ukraine have implemented and reinforced their digital disinformation campaigns. As demonstrated throughout the text, "social network users can build and participate in the information network with users similar to themselves, ultimately limiting exposure to other perspectives and reinforcing existing worldviews" (Stewart et al., 2018, p.1). Based on this, users determine how loyal they are to government profiles, how to interact with them, and which other accounts to follow. And although misinformation and trolls polarize social networks and make it difficult to understand users, the data presented is especially useful for those who manage official accounts. However, as has been indicated in the first pages, it is appropriate not to underestimate the action of entities such as the IRA, which, in the case of the war with Ukraine, "blurring the distinction between fact and fiction, news and propaganda", is resorting to a "multi-platform action that used news websites and social networks to

distort, distract, dismiss, and deny Russia's participation in the conflict" (Doroshenko & Lukito, 2021, p. 4683).

Currently, "social networks expand the number and type of actors that interact and negotiate in the field of political communication" (Casero-Ripollés, 2018, p. 967). Therefore, it is undeniable that "social networks act as the engine of connective intelligence, a different way of thinking and relating in the new network society" (Cabezuelo-Lorenzo and Manfredi, 2019, p. 474). As has been shown throughout the research, the audiences share some characteristics, especially concerning demographic data and their interests. However, the most outstanding point is related to the content shared by the audience.

As stated in the first part of our research, "it is very difficult to navigate through the Russian media minefield and determine whether a particular piece of information is false or not" (Ledeneva, 2006, p. 72). The same goes for Ukraine, and today, in a context like a war, the task is even more complicated. For this reason, periodic monitoring of the evolution of the social audience of each profile would be recommended, to determine variations and analyze the reasons for possible changes. The disinformation industry causes severe changes in this area, especially if we take into account the existence of agencies -independent or directly dependent on the government- that act in this scenario and with this purpose.

Among the results revealed by our research, it is appropriate to highlight some aspects such as the following: in the case of the Russian profile, the interest of users belonging to the so-called BRICS countries (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa) is evident, as these are areas in which Russian geopolitical interests are very clear. On the other hand, the presence of countries such as Turkey or Pakistan can generate some kind of mistrust, since, according to different studies, in various circumstances, they have harbored "troll farms" on their territory. It is also worth noting how the audience of the Ukrainian government profile has a majority of this nationality compared to the geographical dispersion of the social audience of the Russian government profile. As explained in the text, it is foreseeable that this figure will vary in the coming months and the number of followers of the profile of the Office of the President of Ukraine in the rest of the world will considerably increase. It would be a demonstration of international interest in the conflict and the country's official communications. The increase could also depend on Zelenski's communicative success since "Russian aggression has transformed President Volodímir Zelenski into a political leader with heroic traits" (González Martín, 2022, p. 4).

This research has the merit of highlighting the analogies and differences in the social audiences of the two profiles in areas such as demographics and socioeconomics. Likewise, the interests of each of the audiences, the media they follow, and the content they share are evidenced. All the information provided allows knowing the habits and tastes of the followers of each profile and thus being able to "calibrate" the information in this regard. The study is part of the debate on the so-called political engagement of the social audience, considered as the "response rate of users on comments made through social networks" (Fontenla-Pedreira et al., 2020, p. 4). Different authors point to "social network engagement" (Paine, 2011) or "digital engagement" (Valerio et al., 2015) to refer to "a greater participation of users in social networks as a consequence of publications shared by other users" (Zamora-Medina and Rebolledo, 2021, p. 379). It is possible that, in this specific case, engagement is also generated, although more than in terms of action or participation, in terms of reaction and mobilization of public opinion.

Social networks have become a strategic value for political communication since besides keeping users informed, they are also an information source for journalists and news agencies (Chaves-Montero, 2018, p. 45).

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