Self-Produced Video Contents in the Digital Press: Finding the Balance between Quality and Immediacy

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Abstract
Introduction. Broadcasting news by using videos is no longer exclusive of television in the digital scenario. It is more and more common to find this kind of contents also in traditional press websites. This research is focused on the study of the usage of self-produced video stories made by the British newspaper *The Guardian* to cover the Scottish Referendum. **Aim**: The aim of this paper is to determine the characteristics of this type of exclusive videos. **Method:** Therefore, all the articles and live blogs published within the Scottish Independent Blog section have been analysed using a quantitative content analysis method. The period of the analysis covers the week of the celebration of the referendum. **Results and Conclusions:** Main results determine that self-produced videos published in articles have a greater quality and take special care for aesthetic than those produced for the live blog, where immediacy is more important than contents' quality.

Keywords
Digital press; Live blog; Self-produced Videos; Scottish Referendum; *The Guardian*.

Contents
1. Introduction. 2. Characteristics of videos published in websites. 3. Live blog or hypermedia live chronicle. 4. Method. 5. Results. 5.1. Origin of video stories. 5.2. Shooting and editing style of videos. 5.3. Script formats of self-produced videos. 5.4. Information sources typology. 5.5. Users' interaction. 6. Conclusions. 7. References.

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1. Introduction

Internet eliminates the exclusiveness of television media to broadcast news in real time by using moving images. This boundary disappears in the current digital scenario. Digital media include videos within their news catalogue to a greater or lesser degree. The strategies adopted by traditional news companies to integrate this kind of contents in the 2.0. environment is quite different. Regarding television networks -in early years- they chose to adapt the contents originally produced to be consumed offline and publish them in their websites. The strategies followed by radio and press differ, as they could not include videos in their traditional format. In the case of newspapers, they integrate video news in their online versions providing contents that were traditionally exclusive from television (Guallar, Rovira & Ruiz, 2012).

Currently, these media combine the use of self-produced videos with those coming from external sources; which are the most used. The aim of this research is to determine the weight of self-produced videos and their characteristics in the digital press. This paper analyses the case of the British newspaper *The Guardian*. The period of analysis covers the celebration of the Scottish Referendum voting. This issue is included in all media's agendas. Therefore, it allows verifying the volume of resources destined to the production of video stories to broadcast this event.

This paper analyses all the self-produced videos published by *The Guardian* during the voting week included in the special section: *Scottish Independence Blog*; including both articles and live blogs. This sample allows detecting differences related to the content and the production process between the article-type posts and those published by the live blogs. It also offers a global view of the characteristics of self-produced video stories.

Main results reveal that the presence of self-produced video stories is still reduced. They also verify that there are differences between the videos produced for the articles and those created to be consumed through the entries of the live blogs.

2. Characteristics of videos published in websites

The integration of video stories in newspapers can only be possible within the frame of the digital scenario. The adaptation to the virtual environment implies traditional news companies redesigning their business model and their strategies to tell the news. A series of decisions and opportunities that directly influence the journalistic production routines now becoming, in theory, multitask journalists able to work for different platforms and environments (Rintala & Suolanen, 2005; Scolari *et al.*, 2008; Micó-Sanz, 2011; González-Molina & Ortells-Badenes, 2012).

Among the new functions digital journalists must assumed we found producing video news. Although, it is obvious that text news and still images are still the main strategy used by digital media to tell the news -following the traditional model (Marrero Santana, 2008; Guallar, Rovira & Ruiz, 2010)- we can also observe a greater use of infographics and, especially, of informative videos to broadcast the news (Reevell, 2007; Masic & Micó-Sanz, 2008; Mayoral & Edo, 2014).

The use of videos in the digital media began to be relevant in 2007 (Guallar, 2008). López (2008) explains that this more generalized use of audiovisual reports is due to the drop of the weight of video files, thanks to the new compression techniques, the reduction of the internet access fees for

users, the increase of the data downloading speed and the decrease of the price of the technological devices needed to produce video news.

Currently, videos coming from external sources, especially those coming from news agencies are still the main source to obtain this kind of contents (Mayoral & Edo, 2014). Self-produced videos are experiencing a gradual growth but it seems that there is still a lot to do; as the greatest part of these videos present a very basic editing (Masip, 2008). The vast majority of these news videos share common characteristics such as using a basic editing technique or publishing soundbites directly from press conferences. They are conceived as complementary elements to the text, which aim almost exclusively to contextualize the information or to show information difficult to explain (Thurman & Lupton, 2008; Masio, Micó-Sanz & Meso, 2010; Mayoral & Edo, 2014).

Internet boosts the use of alternative narratives that could lead to the production of exclusive content for the digital context. This phenomenon creates a format imposing a new audiovisual narrative based on fugacity, the compulsive consumption of short news pills and brevity (Díaz Arias, 2009). Watching these pieces of news is characterized by individuality and interaction. Therefore, they require an adaptation of the language and image to fit into the new conception of consumption (Cebrián Herreros, 2009: Bradshaw & Rohumaa, 2011).

Moreover, there are a series of key factors making the difference between online video-journalism and videos produced for traditional television. Within the virtual context, deadlines are more flexible and the *à la carte* consumption break the boundaries of emission and programming which television video-news are subjected to. In addition, these publications have their own tools, such as interactivity. An option that television -as a unidirectional media outlet- cannot offer. Thus, this type of video contents should not be understood as "television in the web" (Bradshaw & Rohumaa, 2011: 106). Digital videojournalism should also not be linked to low quality or amateur quality contents. In fact, the unlimited capability given by Internet allows producing longer videos; even including characteristics coming from documentary formats (Bock, 2012).

The quality of the image in this kind of contents is directly linked to the aim of the journalist for the publication of the video. In the case of live blogs or hypermedia live chronicles immediacy comes first. Therefore, as the informative value prevails over image quality, good images are not expected (Salaverría, 2005). On the opposite side, in the rest of publications image quality and longer duration of videos is prioritized.

3. Live blog or hypermedia live chronicle

Despite several researches have been carried out tackling the live blog or the live hypermedia report focused on the analysis of the publication frequency, the contents and the public reception (Thurman & Walters, 2012; Gárciga-Rodríguez & Gómez-Másjuan, 2013), there are no researches analysing specifically the characteristics of the videos published by this new format.

Salaverría (2005) proposed the term live chronicle to identify a new multimedia genre where audio, video and infographics are integrated perfectly with the text (Navarro, 2010). A proposal that afterwards Gárciga-Rodríguez and Gómez-Másjuan (2013) change into hypermedia live chronicle including in this way an approach to all the elements that can be integrated in each of the entries published in this type of publication. Live blog has been defined as a new journalistic genre emerged

as a web native format (Newman, 2011) as Internet requires new ways to tell the information. Hypermedia live chronicle allows narrating in real time news events through continuous updates. Thurman & Walters (2012) define live blogging as "A single blog post on a specific topic to which time-stamped content is progressively added for a finite period–anywhere between half an hour and 24 hours" (Thurman & Walters, 2012: 83).

Unlike live chronicles on radio and television, this type of live-updated publications allows combining different elements such as text, image or video to narrate the events. This provides complementary information to the news that could help to contextualize the topic or to understand it better.

The Guardian first used this dynamic publication in 1999 to broadcast a football match (Thurman & Walters, 2012). For the first years, this type of publication was exclusively used to the sports section. Nowadays, this technique is used to narrate both scheduled events, like prize awards or electoral processes, and breaking news, for instance, the terrorist attack to the French magazine Charlie Hebdo in January 2015.

Live blog is a genre based on sharing links and opinions. This is a very social genre that uses the protagonists' interventions. It is made collectively coordinated by a content manager who shapes and gives continuity to the discourse. In fact, the terrorist attack to the London underground in July 2005 marked a turning point. *The Guardian* used this format to give information about the attacks publishing material provided by the audience, especially photos and videos.

The use of live blogs has become a format usually used by digital media outlets to give information in real time regarding any kind of events. Therefore, it is necessary to analyse in-depth the type of contents provided by this new exclusive genre of Internet, for instance the videos published in the different entries, as in the case of this study.

4. Method

On 3rd December 2012 *The Guardian* activated a special section called *Scottish Independence Blog* in order to track all the news related to the Scottish Referendum. The last article was published on 5th May 2015. Along this period they realised publications periodically, experiencing a peak during the week of the voting. Therefore, the period of the sample covers from 15th to 19th September 2014, including the previous days of the voting, carried out on 18th September 2014, and the day after. In order to quantify the weight of self-produced videos and identify their characteristics all the publications published during that week has been analysed.

It let monitoring in real time the pre-campaign, the voting and the final balance after knowing the results. Publications have been divided into articles and live blogs entries. Articles refer to those pieces of news presented in the homepage of the special section *Scottish Independence Blog*, published independently by different journalists. Live blogs entries are those short pieces of news having their own-sense inserted in a constantly updated timeline, which are ordered chronologically and are presented as a whole, as a single piece of news.

In the 5 days analysed 281 articles and 6 live blogs were published. The average duration of the live blogs was 12 hours. Except for the voting day were two live blogs were published to do a 24 for

hours coverage including the voting process and the votes' counting. 684 entries were published by the live blogs.

A preliminary analysis was carried out over the 965 pieces of information published in order to identify and classify those including videos. 38 articles and 77 live blog entries contained videos. After classifying the 115 videos, those coming from external sources were dismissed. The final sample was formed by 70 videos, 6 published by articles and 64 by live blogs.

In order to carry out this research a quantitative content analysis method has been used. Once all the self-produced videos were identified the analysis model was designed. It is divided into five sections: a) identification of the video: origin and publication technique, b) stylistic features: shooting, editing and presentation, c) script format, d) informative sources type, e) interaction techniques. Now the different variables integrated in this analysis model are detailed:

Table 1. Short model of analysis

1. Identification of the video	This section is used to identify the video-news stories. It is also used to classify them depending of the source: self-produced or external source. In the case of the self-produced video-news several variables are used to classify the technique used to include the video within the live blog: video directly integrated in the timeline, video coming from a Tweet containing a Vine video, video coming from a Tweet containing a Youtube video or video directly share from Youtube. In the case of those videos coming from an external source, its classification is made depending on their precedence: news agencies, other media outlets, Youtube or other sources. Moreover, this analysis model contains a variable that allows detecting whether the videos published in the live blog have also been published by the blog in order to find out similarities and check if self-produced contents are well exploited.
2. Stylistic features	This section gathers data linked to both formal characteristics like duration and production and editing features.
3. Script format	This section is used to identify the different script formats used to produce the videos. The following news formats have been selected:

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	classic video, video with no voice over but including natural sound, soundbites and images, video with no voice over but including natural sound, soundbites and images and the questions made by the journalist, Soundbites (SOT), soundbites including the questions made by the journalist, only images video, reports, others.
4. Information sources typology	This section is used to classify the different types of information sources used in the videos. Only the type of information source has been counted. The whole amount of sources has not been taking into account. The sources' typology selected is: institutional (politicians), citizens and experts. In the same way, in this section the role of journalists as information sources with the use of stand ups or their appearance in the video while doing the interviews is also analysed.
5. Interaction tools	This section is used to analyse the different social media used to share news contents. It takes into account social media as Twitter, Facebook, Google+, LinkedIn and mail, and also comments left by the readers directly in the publication.

Source: elaborated by the author

5. Results
5.1. Origin of video stories

The results of the analysis determine that in *The Guardian* digital edition the use of videos has a modest representation regarding all the contents published. 965 pieces of news have been published and only 115 (11.9%) include video stories. Only 70 of them (7.2%) are self-produced videos. Therefore, if we compare the volume of self-produced videos and external videos in general figures, the volume of news produced by *The Guardian* journalists reaches a representation of 60,8% showing a slight tendency of the medium for publishing exclusive video contents. If we analyse these figures considering the type of publication, articles or live blogs entries, results vary. 281 articles have been analysed, only 38 (13.5%) include video. The 63% of these videos, 32 in total, come from external sources, mainly from press agencies and other media outlets. Only 6 videos (37%) have been produced by *The Guardian*.

This trend changes considerably in live blogs. In this case, despite the volume of publications with videos only represents a 11.8%, 77 publications of the 648 analysed entries, the volume of self-produced videos is bigger. In this case, and differing from the strategy used by the articles, the 83% of the videos -64 in total- have been produced by journalist working for the British newspaper. Only 13 (17%) come from external sources (Graphic 1).

Graphic 1. Self-produced video stories and distribution per publication
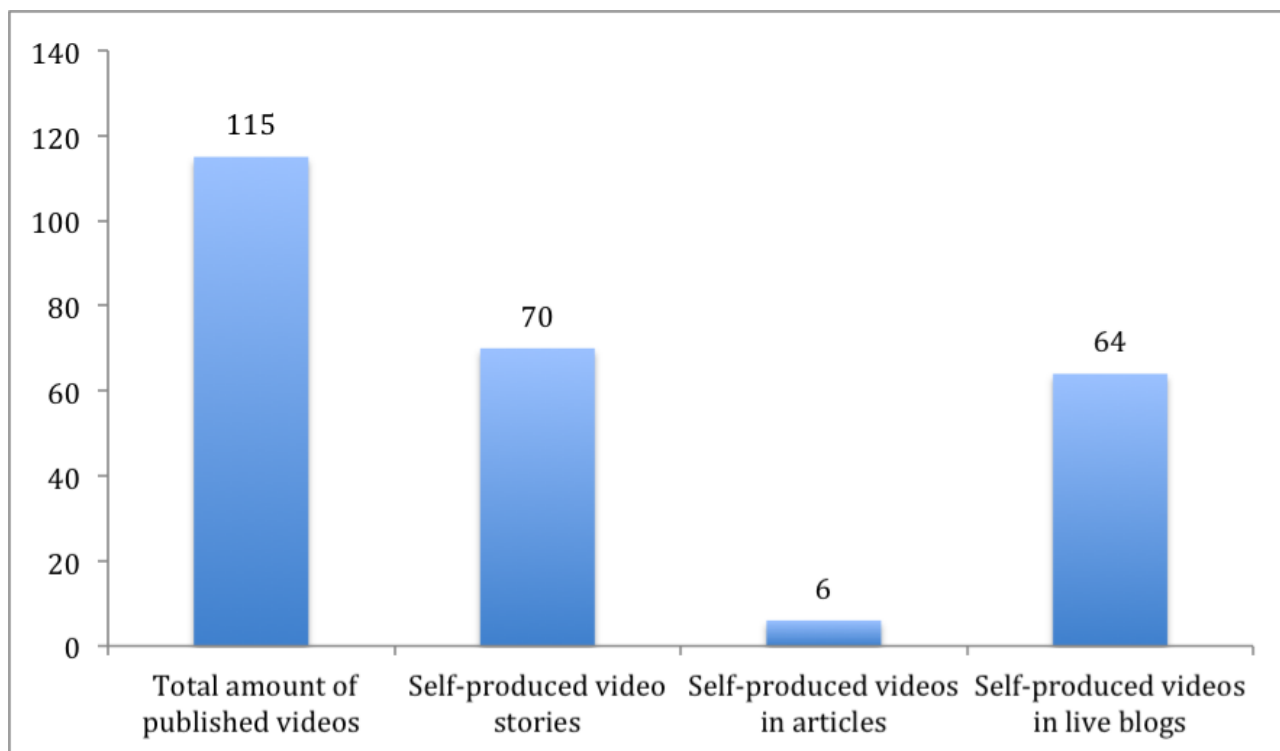
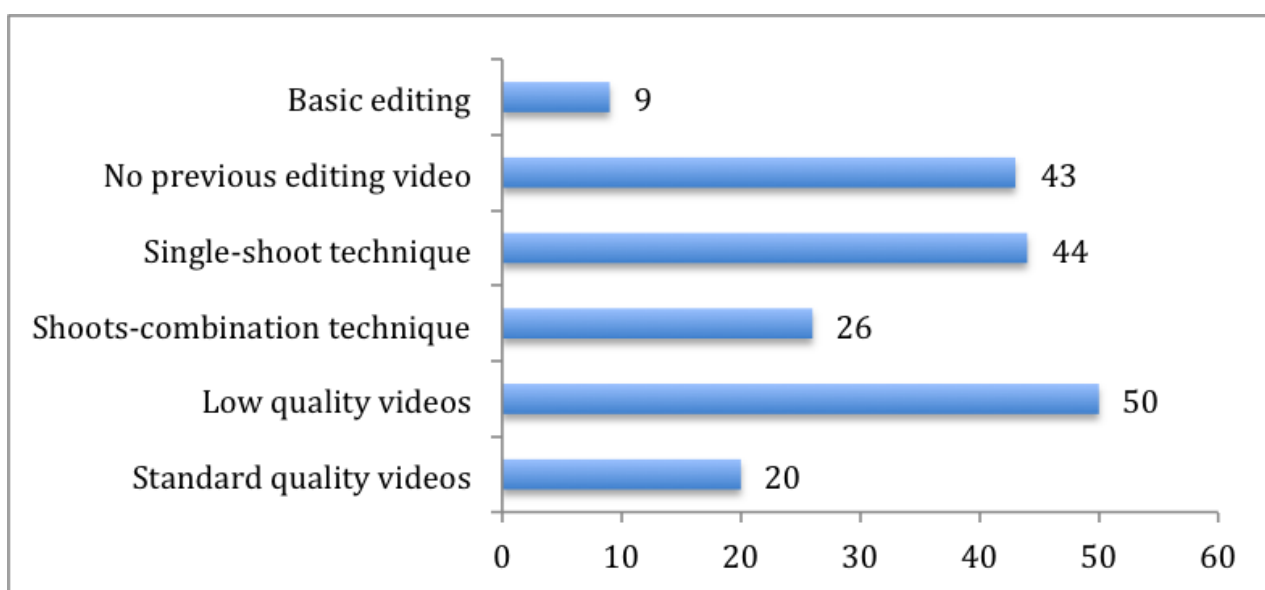**Source: elaborated by the author**

5.2. Shooting and editing style of videos

There are also some differences between those videos produced for the articles and those produced to be consumed through the live blogs timeline. Videos broadcast through articles share the characteristic of having a high quality. These videos tend to be similar to reports. Their duration ranges from two minutes and a half to nine minutes. All these videos have been shot with professional cameras, mainly using the freehand shooting technique, although sometimes it is also combined with the use of tripod. Moreover, they use a wide range of framings and sequence shots providing the video with dynamism. All the video stories content music and use the journalist's voice over to structure the report. The only video not following this trend is a videographic exclusively produced with infographics and animations. In this video the voice over is used to shape the content. Sound effects and music are also used to reinforce the video dynamism.

In the case of the videos produced for the live blog we found a totally opposed trend. The unique videos conserving the previous mentioned characteristics are precisely those videos, which have also

been published by the articles, 3 in total, as they were originally produced for the articles. The rest, are short videos, some of them shorter than 10 seconds. 64 videos have been published and only 11 (17.1%) have been shot using cameras with professional quality. The most used technique have been using non professional cameras such as mobile devices (50 in total, 78.1%) or webcams (3, 4.6%). Moreover, in this case, as some of these news stories have a short duration, they do not usually use different shoot scale. In fact, 68.7% (44 videos) use a steady shoot, while the 31.2% (20 in total) combines different types of framings. This factor has also influence in the editing strategy becoming inexistent or basic and there are few cases where editing is accurate as in the videos produced for the articles. The 67.1% (43 videos) has not been edited before its publication. 9 (14%) have a basic editing and only 12 (18.7%) could be classified as using a high-quality editing technique (Graphic 2).

Graphic 2. Technical characteristics of self-produced videos
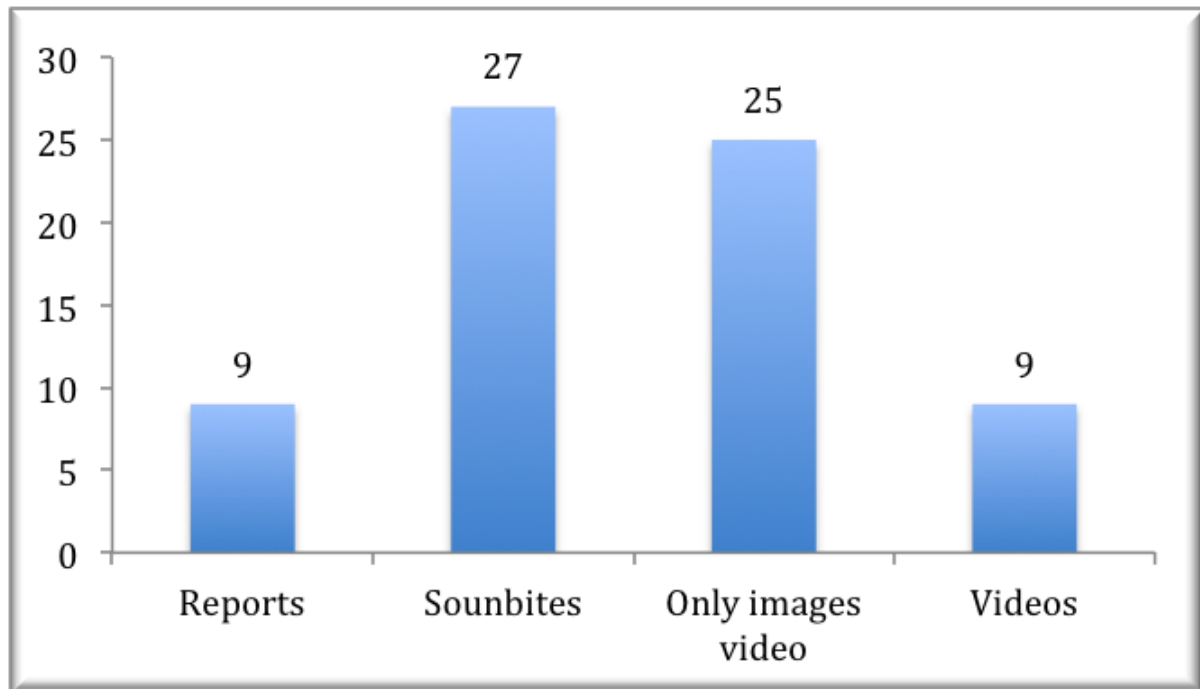

Source: elaborated by the author

These results determine that from the analysed videos only 20 of them (28.5%) can be classified as high-quality videos regarding technique and the other 50 (71.4%) could be classified as low-medium quality videos.

5.3. Script formats of self-produced videos

Regarding the type of news used for the Scottish Referendum coverage we find 9 reports, 25 just images video, 27 soundbites and 9 videos (Graphic 3). Articles only use reports, which present an accurate and professional scene. In the case of live blogs, it uses different formats. Soundbites are the most used format. There are 27 SOTs, 14 present the traditional format used by television news programs; that is to say, we can only hear the source. There are also 13 soundbites where a part from hearing the source we can also hear the question formulated by the journalist. Only images video, 25 videos, the vast majority with no editing or using a basic editing produced while shooting with Vine app. There are also 9 videos similar to those broadcasted by traditional news programs. It is important to highlight that there are some differences between these videos and those used by

television as only 3 of them include voice over and soundbites. 2 of them use images, soundbites and uses headlines to structure the information, as it includes no voice over. There are 4 videos not using voice over but instead of using headlines to structure the information uses the natural sound of the shooting including the voice of the journalist making questions to the interviewee. The only 3 reports published in the live blog coincide with those posted also in the articles. In fact, this news stories become the unique coincidence between articles and live blogs publications.

Graphic 3. News formats used

Source: elaborated by the author

5.4. Information sources typology

One of the main characteristics of self-produced video stories *of The Guardian* is the type of information sources used to document them. In this kind of news citizen sources displace institutional sources despite of being a hard news issue. In the case of the videos posted in the articles, except for the videographic, all of the videos include citizen sources. Just one video combines them with political sources. In the same way, all of these videos include stand ups so the journalist become a co-protagonist of the information and appears on the screen accompanying the interviewee. In the case of the live blog, 21 videos include citizens' soundbites, 13 are expert journalists' soundbites who had been interviewed or just send their assessments regarding the evolution of the electoral night. Only 3 videos include political sources. 27 of the videos do not include soundbites giving more importance to images (Graphic 4).

Graphic 4. News resources typology used
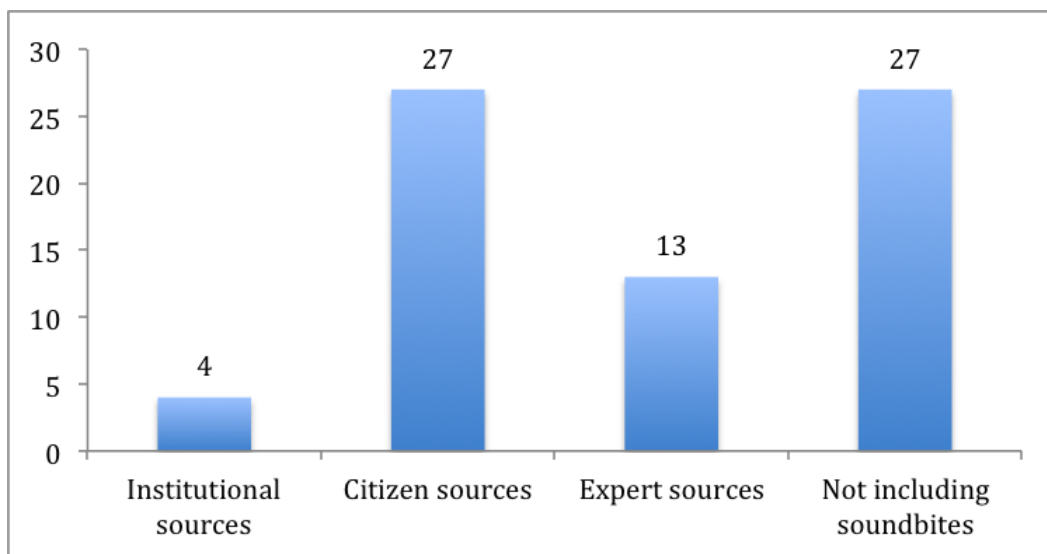
Source: elaborated by the author

Despite Scottish Referendum being a political issue and, thus, a hard news topic, the presence of political actors is mainly gathered by videos coming from agencies, official signals or TV channels, that is to say, videos coming from external sources. In this sense, it can be deduced from the results that *The Guardian* prefers using other type of sources, exclusive sources providing complementary content helping to distance from competence. In the analysed self-produced videos citizens gain importance. Moreover, journalist considered expert analysts of the voting also constitute a prominent and accessible source. The journalists working for *The Guardian* take part with their statements to camera in the elaboration of the live blog providing their contents.

5.5. Users interaction

Social media are one of the tools that allow testing in real time the effect of publications on the audience. Therefore, it has been analysed the available information of each video related to the number of shares and comments done by the audience. In the case of the articles it has been easy as each of these self-produced videos is individually inserted in the medium video library. Therefore it is easy to count the number of interactions made. In live blogs this is not possible. In this case we have obtained the total number of shares of each live blog. In the case of those videos published in Youtube, we have obtained the number of views, but it has not been possible to find figures related to individual views of the videos posted through Vine or inserted directly in the timeline.

In the case of the videos published in the articles it is important to highlight that a total amount of 128,891 shares has been made. The average goes from 300 to 2,554 shares, except for the videographic that exceptionally received 119,137 shares (Graphic 5). The social network used the most to share these contents has been Facebook reaching 125,159 interactions. Twitter has only 3,798 interactions. *The Guardian* also offers the possibility to used Google+ and LinkedIn but during

the period analysed no users used them. Moreover, readers have left 1,075 comments about these videos.

Graphic 5. Users interaction
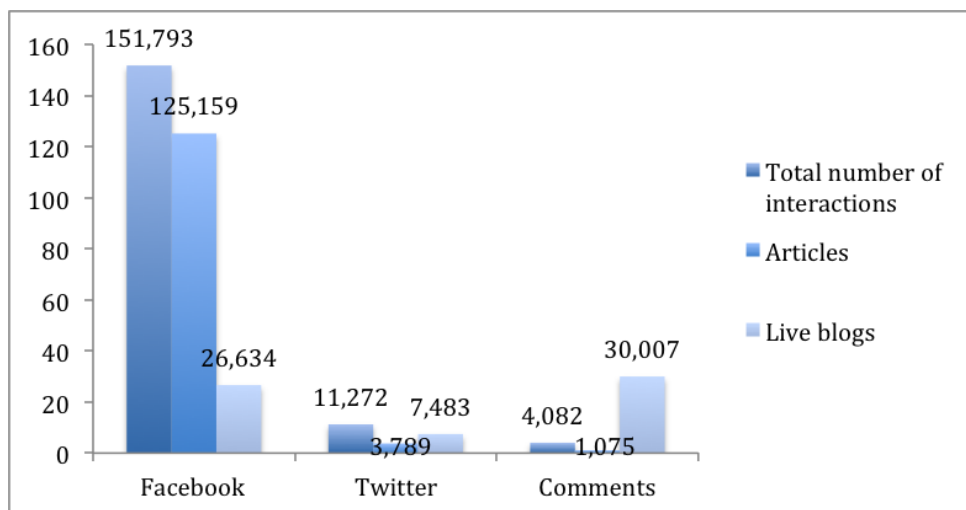
Source: elaborated by the author

Regarding the live blog, results reveal that 34,117 shares have been made using different social media. In this case, Facebook leads this type of actions with 26,634 interactions while Twitter has 7,483. It is important to highlight that in the previous days of the Referendum celebration, Twitter was the most used social media. But as the Election Day got closer, Facebook experienced an incensement of activity. Comments per day go from 3,260 to 6,824. The day registering more comments was the 18th September. A total amount of 30,007 comments have been directly posted in the live blogs. However, we cannot determine the influence of videos in the volume of shares and comments.

Regarding the number of views of the videos, as it has been said before, it is difficult to quantify the volume of interaction fostered by each of the videos, as they are not integrated in the video library of the medium. It has only been possible to check the views and "like" and "dislike" of those videos published in Youtube, that is to say, 43 video stories. The views of this self-produced videos goes from 367 to 4,988, although the average number is about 1,000 views. Only 24 of the videos have been assessed with "like" or "dislike", but none of them have received comments.

6. Conclusions

Results reveal the usage of videos by *The Guardian* is still reduced. Only 11,9% of the news published to cover the Scottish Referendum during the voting week include videos. However, it must be highlighted that despite the total volume of videos being minimum, the 60.8% of them are self-produced videos. This datum demonstrates that the British newspaper prefers to elaborate its own video stories in order to get exclusive products and gain distance from the competence.

Nowadays, two different types of self-produced videos co-exists: a) those documentary-style videos having a professional quality and, b) those where image quality is not so important as immediacy prevails. The main part of these videos are still having a basic structure with low quality and using a simple editing, as previous researches about the use of videos in digital media state (Masip, 2008; Micó y Masip, 2008). In the same way, it is also confirmed that production timing influences the resulting video. In the case of live blogs, as updates are made constantly, videos tend to be simpler (Salaverría, 2005). Only images video script predominates as they are shot with mobile devices and are edited while being shot by using apps like Vine. Soundbites are also important as they are also shot with mobile cameras and are shared using Youtube. These are two digital platforms to share video that speed up the shooting and editing process, mainly in the first case, and allow sharing contents directly through links. They are presented as short news pills where immediacy to share the contents prevails over the quality of presentation of the information.

It is necessary to highlight that all the videos produced in advanced, that is to say, having a previous pre-production and have been generally posted in the articles, present a quality shooting and editing reminding to the documentary style. In fact, their stylistic characteristics are similar to those used by infotainment programs (Ortells-Badenes, 2015a), as handfree style shooting, quality editing and use of music prevail. They are high-quality video stories having a duration exceeding the two minutes and, therefore, distancing from the concept of traditional TV news video, as the flexibility regarding deadlines and placement in Internet allows offering new types of news.

Despite of the stylistic differences, those videos having an accurate editing as well as those simpler share a common denominator: the use of citizen and expert sources displacing institutional information sources. This is also a feature of the infotainment style (Ortells-Badenes, 2015b).

In the case of *The Guardian*, official sources are still having an important relevance but their use is almost limited to those videos coming from external sources, that is to say, those videos coming from news agencies, official signals or other media outlets. These results let determining that *The Guardian* looks for alternative and exclusive sources able to provide a different point of view to those given by agencies and shared by all the media.

Regarding the dissemination of self-produced videos through social media by citizens, Facebook become the most used platform by users. Data reveal that those videos having a more careful editing receive more shares and views than those having a lower quality. Therefore, it would be interesting to pose whether it is justifiable translating immediacy, in most cases, into low quality, as readers seems to get more engaged with those contents where both the content and the editing are well elaborated and are complementary to narrate the information.

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