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Spanish historical memory coverage on TikTok: profiles, content and messages
Tratamiento de la memoria histórica española en TikTok: perfiles, contenidos y mensajes

Abstract
The evolution of the Internet and the platforms that emerge from it, as well as the deployment of mobile technologies, has enhanced the prosumer character of users. Nowadays, social networks are spaces where a topic is not only addressed but also debated by people who do not always have the criteria or elements to deal with them as they should, or who lack access to the best sources for such purposes. TikTok emerges as a new social space where ephemeral and visually-charged content prevails. Through a content analysis, this study sought to highlight how Spanish Historical Memory is addressed on this platform. The results reveal a historical and objective coverage of the data in most of the occasions, the intervention of influencers around historical and social issues, and a clear and majority polarisation regarding the sides and actors of the corresponding historical periods.

Resumen
La evolución de internet y de las plataformas que allí surgen, así como el despliegue de las tecnologías móviles, ha profundizado el carácter prosumidor de los usuarios. Hoy las redes sociales son terrenos donde cualquier tema no solo es abordado sino debatido por personas que no siempre tienen criterio o elementos para tratarlos como se debiera, o que no tienen acceso a las mejores fuentes para tales fines. TikTok emerge como un nuevo terreno social donde impera el contenido efímero y con alta carga visual. A través de un análisis de contenido esta investigación ha buscado poner de manifiesto cómo se aborda el tema de la Memoria Histórica española en esta plataforma. Los resultados apuntan a un trato histórico y objetivo de los datos en gran parte de las ocasiones, la irrupción de influencers en torno a temas históricos y de carácter social y una polarización manifiesta y mayoritaria respecto a los bandos y actores de los períodos históricos correspondientes.

Keywords
Historical Memory; Spain; TikTok; History; Digital Communication; Social Media

Palabras clave
Memoria Histórica; España; TikTok; Historia; Comunicación Digital; Redes Sociales

1. Introduction

On the 27th of December 2007, Law 52/2007 was published in Spain's Official State Gazette. This law, 'recognising and extending rights and establishing measures for persons who suffered persecution or violence during the [Spanish] Civil War and the [Franco] dictatorship, is commonly known in Spain as the *Ley de Memoria Histórica* ('Historical Memory Act'). As stated in the preliminary recitals of the Act itself, this law 'lays the foundations for public authorities to implement policies aimed at teaching the public about our history and promoting our democratic memory,' (Ley 52/2007). This initiative has been the subject of some controversy and dispute in Spain (Velasco-Mesa, 2017; Fuertes, 2014), as it refers to a recent conflict that endures in the nation's collective memory. The Spanish Civil War (1936-1939) and the dictatorship that followed it constitute a historical period that is often interpreted quite differently depending on each individual's ideology and point of view (Rueda, 2015). Indeed, a few years after the law was introduced, a change of government in Spain resulted in the law being left without funding in the 2013 national budget (*El Mundo*, 2012). Some years later, in July 2021, Spain's Council of Ministers approved a new bill known as the *Proyecto de Ley de la Memoria Democrática* ('Democratic Memory Bill'). Under this new name, the proposed legislation was structured around 'comprehensive reparations for victims of the Civil War and the Dictatorship, as well as the policies of truth, justice, reparation, and guarantees of non-repetition' (La Moncloa, 2021).

Community action has been one of the factors that has promoted legislative action related to historical memory. In the last twenty years, associative movements have played an extremely important role in the process of recovering historical memory in Spain (Gálvez, 2006). Barranquero (2017) points out that especially since the year 2000, a social movement to recover historical information on the Civil War and the Franco dictatorship has developed, spearheaded by researchers and family members of victims, which has included the search for the disappeared and the location of mass graves.

In this sense, the subjective interpretations mentioned above can result in the construction of identifies that form part of the everyday lives of both individuals and collectives (Villa Gómez, Avendaño & Agudelo, 2018; Sepúlveda et al., 2015). This in turn will determine their perspective on certain events, especially those with an ideological or emotional component or those that have been understood based on the way they have been retold over time (Vázquez Liñán & Leetoy, 2016). Agents of communication such as the mass media play a key role in this dissemination and interpretation of the social and political dimensions of different historical periods, a well as their major conflicts (Velasco-Mesa, 2019; Zvereva, 2018). Indeed, as Yeste suggests, it is:

> [t]he media, together with the historiographic community, that ultimately explains and writes history, especially when it targets generations that have not experienced it personally and therefore have no memory of it (2008: 4).

This idea can also be extrapolated to contemporary issues. The influence of the media on our perception of current events has been analysed from different perspectives by numerous researchers. In the specific case of a more recent socio-political conflict in Spain, i.e., the Catalan secession crisis, studies by López-Olano & Fenoll (2019) and Valera-Ordaz (2018) highlight how information is framed in media coverage and the role of both Spanish and international media in the segmentation of audiences based on national identities.

Moreover, at a time when the options for accessing information have multiplied and diversified, social media platforms have become forums for the production and channelling of information. In the contemporary media ecosystem, characterised by hyperconnectivity and technological advances, the concept of the prosumer (Toffler, 1992) refers to the ability of individuals to produce and post their own content, thereby generating a two-way communication flow that can contribute to political and social polarisation through exposure to certain information on social media (Orbegozo-Terradillos, Morales-i-Gras & Larrondo-Ureta, 2020; Aruguete, 2019). In the case of historical memory, social media can influence the development of user opinions in genres such as fiction, as viewers of fiction television series may feel a need to engage in conversation on social media about the ideas conveyed in the content they are viewing, which in many cases may have a political dimension (Chamorro, 2016). On the other hand, research by San Francisco (2020) explores the role played by social media platforms, especially Facebook and Twitter, in the reconstruction of the collective memory of the Spanish Civil War and the Franco years. San Francisco's study makes reference to institutions, foundations, and individuals who share information on social media with the aim of recovering the memories of ordinary people who are rarely represented in historical narratives, and to facilitate access to content by current generations.

In view of the above, it is reasonable to conclude that social media play an important role in the way content related to historical memory is produced and consumed, and especially in the way it is understood and interpreted on different platforms and the particular narrative approach of each one. With this in mind, the aim of this study is to analyse the profiles and content associated with historical

memory posted on TikTok, a trending social media platform whose users are predominantly in the 18- to 24-year-old age bracket (We Are Social & Hootsuite, 2022), although in 2020 there was a significant increase in the number of Generation X and millennial users on the platform due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

1.1. TikTok: more than dances, challenges, and viral videos

TikTok is one of the six most widely used social media platforms in the world today (We Are Social & Hootsuite, 2022). According to statistics provided by the platform itself, in 2021 its user numbers reached 1 billion worldwide. Created in 2016 by the Chinese company Bytedance, it has since been consolidated as one of the world's most popular social media platforms. It was the most downloaded social media app of 2020 (Ditrendia, 2020; Kaye, Chen & Zeng, 2020) and rivals other social media and audiovisual platforms in terms of the amount of time users spend on it (Sánchez-Castillo & Mercado-Sáez, 2021), trending in a media industry that was already considered heavily saturated (Cid, 2021).

TikTok uses a narrative code based on dynamism and speed of both production and consumption of content, with videos ranging from 15 to 60 seconds in length (Zeng, Abidin & Schäfer, 2021; Omar & Dequan, 2020; Li, Xiaohui & Zhengwu, 2019; Shuai, Yuzhen & Yifang, 2019). As the platform is designed mainly for use on smartphones, the format is based on vertical videos that any app user with a smart device and internet connection can record and post. In addition to its usability, one of TikTok's key features is its algorithm, which adapts to each user to offer a customised experience. Each interaction allows the system to learn more about users' interests so that it can show them specific content based on the videos they like and share, the comments they post, the accounts they follow and the content they themselves create (Galeano, 2020; Wang, 2020). This means that TikTok users will be shown content that is increasingly skewed towards their own personal tastes and interests.

This aspect is highly relevant to the issues of ideology and disinformation, and in fact, TikTok has been identified as a forum for misleading content (Alonso-López, Sidorenko-Bautista & Giacomelli, 2021) and for messaging by political organisations (Castro & Díaz, 2021).

The viral potential of the app's content, which is based mainly on dances and challenges, has prompted professionals in sectors such as healthcare and journalism to create their own accounts on the platform in order to disseminate their content, in some cases becoming TikTok influencers (Negreira-Rey, Vázquez-Herrero & López-García, 2022). At the same time, the popularity of the platform reflects the need for media literacy and control mechanisms for content consumption, especially for under-age users (Martín-Ramadall & Ruiz-Mondaza, 2022).

TikTok's ease of access and the virality of its content is attracting an increasing number of users to the app, revealing its potential in fields such as healthcare and journalism (Sidorenko, Herranz de la Casa & Cantero, 2020; Vázquez-Herrero, Negreira-Rey & López-García, 2020). However, there do not appear to be any studies exploring how questions related to Spanish historical memory, a topical issue for media and social studies, are addressed on this social media platform.

1.2. Objectives

The main objective of this study is to examine how a topic as complex and controversial in Spain as the Civil War and the Franco dictatorship, which together constitute the subject matter of Law 52/2007, of 26 December, known as the *Ley de Memoria Histórica* ('Historical Memory Act'), is addressed on a digital social media platform characterised by visual overstimulation, humorous anecdotes, thought-provoking and mind-relaxing content (Yu-Liang, Chun-Chin & Shu-Ming, 2019), and the increasingly popular format of the 'long story short' (see https://bit.ly/3u3VXse), i.e., very brief videos that tell a story.

Secondary objectives include:

• To identify the profile of the type of user who addresses these issues on TikTok.

• To define the topics and content explored in relation to historical memory.

• To analyse whether the issue of historical memory involves taking a contemporary position on the conflict between republican and Francoist ideologies.

This research takes an exploratory approach in an attempt to answer the following questions:

• Q1. Is the limited space offered on TikTok sufficient to address a topic as complex and controversial as Spanish historical memory?

• Q2. How is Spanish historical memory approached on TikTok?

- Q3. What is the profile of the users who address topics related to Spanish historical memory on TikTok?

In consonance with these questions, the following hypotheses are proposed:

- H1. Because TikTok's messaging is oriented mainly towards entertainment and challenges, it is difficult to address the topic of Spanish historical memory on the platform.

- H2. Users who talk about Spanish historical memory on TikTok tend to have standard profiles, with limited knowledge of the topic.

- H3. Discussion of Spanish historical memory on TikTok reflects a polarisation between the two opposing sides in the conflict (republicans and Francoists).

2. Methodology

Based on the concept of historical memory established in Law 52/2007 of 26 December, which sought to acknowledge the victims of the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939) and of General Francisco Franco's dictatorship (1939-1975), this study offers an analysis of TikTok users who address this topic and how they do it on this kind of digital social media platform, which requires a condensed, brief narrative with constant visual stimuli. Although research has previously been published on how this issue is addressed on other social media platforms, there are no existing studies dealing specifically with its treatment on TikTok, which is a new, quickly evolving platform.

The research technique adopted for this study was content analysis (López, 2002), as a qualitative approach made it possible to obtain the data needed to meet the research objectives and test the hypotheses.

To obtain the data, searches were conducted on the Spanish-language version of the platform using the terms '*Memoria histórica España*' ('Historical Memory Spain'), '*Franquismo*' ('Francoism'), '*Guerra Civil España*' ('Civil War Spain'), and '*República España*' ('Republic Spain'), and results were chosen from the '*Populares*' tab (known in English as the 'Top' tab).

The study sample was thus compiled based on 10 results of each search, excluding multiple videos by the same user, i.e., where a user had several videos in a single search result, only one was selected, prioritising videos of a political, fanatical, or propagandistic nature. The selection was limited to content with a historical discourse or that attempts to follow some kine of narrative, regardless of the profundity of the message.

In all four search processes the results were reviewed through to the end of the selection. On average, the results of each search exceeded 400 videos: '*Memoria histórica España*' (403 videos), '*Franquismo*' (386 videos), '*Guerra Civil España*' (410 videos) and '*República España*' (513 videos). The review of the results was conducted in the month of January 2022.

Given that TikTok was created in 2016, many years after the enactment of Spain's Historical Memory Act in 2007, this study is not confined to a specific period, but focuses on how different users have engaged with this topic on this particular digital platform, regardless of the historical moment they refer to within the period delimited by the aforementioned legislation.

As a variable to be considered, the criteria for the selection of the top videos for each term search are established by the social media platform's algorithm based on all engagement variables: likes, comments, and shares on other digital platforms. It is also important to note that a video may be considered entertaining if it conforms to this platform's formulas or formats: trends, challenges, 'how to' videos, or memes.

The users who address the topic in question have been classified according to the following user profile categories:

- Influencer (IF): users with more than 10,000 followers, who are not necessarily associated with the area of study and who for the purposes of this research may belong to the group of 'micro-influencers', 'influencers', or 'macro-influencers' (Sidorenko, Herranz de la Casa & Moya Ruiz, 2021).

- Standard User (SU): users with fewer than 10,000 followers who do not have an academic or institutional profile associated with the topic. In some cases, the user may have assumed a false identity.

- Academic profile (AP): regardless of the number of followers, these users present themselves as experts in the area of study or aim to educate or teach through their content.

- Institutional Profile (IP): refers to accounts on the platform that belong to a public institution.

- Political Profile (PP): refers to accounts on the platform that belong to a political party or to a particular political figure.

- Historical Profile (HP): refers to accounts on the platform that construct their identity and reputation strictly around historical content.

- Organisational Profile (OP): refers to accounts on the platform belonging to non-governmental organisations or associations.

Given how easy it is on TikTok to react to content, while it is not as easy to amass a large number of followers as it is on other social media platforms, it was determined to establish the minimum audience number for an influencer on the platform at 10,000.

In addition, in order to determine the types of topics or content addressed in relation to Spanish historical memory, the sample was classified as follows:

- Strictly Historical Content (HC): content focusing on a specific historical figure or event without arguing in favour of either side in the conflict.

- Support for the Republican Faction or for the Republic (SRF/SR): posts that clearly seek to legitimise and reaffirm events and figures of the republican faction.

- Support for the Rebel Uprising or for the Nationalist Faction (SRU/SNF): posts that clearly seek to support or legitimise events and figures of the Nationalist faction or what at the start of the Civil War was referred to as the rebel uprising.

- Support for the Francoist Dictatorship (SFD): posts that clearly seek to legitimise and reaffirm events and figures of Franco's dictatorship.

- Anti-Franco Content (AF): posts with a tone that is explicitly antagonistic towards Francoism in their references to historical events and/or figures.

- Other (O).

Content in the 'HC' category consists of videos that are exclusively dedicated to narrating an episode in the historical periods referred to above with a focus on Spain's historical memory. Conversely, although they also contain historical information, 'SRF/SR', 'SRU/SNF' and 'SFD' posts specifically aim to vindicate or justify the factions they refer to, while 'AF' posts adopt an antagonistic attitude towards the Franco dictatorship.

3. Results

According to the data obtained from the internal searches on TikTok, as summarised in Table 8 and Figure 2, historical content posted by profiles with a significant follower base predominate in messaging related to Spain's historical memory up to January 2022.

Table 1: Profile characteristics of posts in the 'Top' tab on TikTok for the search term '*Memoria histórica España*' between 1 and 31 January 2022

No.	User and Content	Category	Followers	Likes
1	@amarepublica https://bit.ly/3G4371T	SU	3,757	113,500
2	@franciscojosebermudez3 https://bit.ly/3AE4x1V	IF*	64,500	1.7 million
3	@cosmebonet https://bit.ly/3rVwdM2	SU	302	2,844
4	@exilioespanol https://bit.ly/3H3WiPc	HP	201	1,139
5	@isabelsd99 https://bit.ly/3ARLxNT	IF	24,800	812,300

No.	User and Content	Category	Followers	Likes
6	@anhele_yeah https://bit.ly/3o5STYO	IF	268,800	9 million
7	@moseguello https://bit.ly/3GbUEtA	SU	245	1,544
8	@akrata91 https://bit.ly/3G9DOvr	IF*	12,700	354,900
9	@gustavoobermeller https://bit.ly/3ABqBu4	SU	2,058	35,800
10	@enriquerb97 https://bit.ly/3GkGJBL	IF	23,000	570,400

Most active profile type: IF

Source: prepared by authors

Table 2: Content characteristics of posts in the 'Top' tab on TikTok for the search term '*Memoria histórica España*' between 1 and 31 January 2022

No.	Content Type	Comments	Shares	Likes
1	SRF/SR	222	37	1071
2	O	36	195	1,419
3	AF	0	67	216
4	HC	65	102	659
5	SRU/SNF	307	81	3,224
6	AF	67	13	1,368
7	SRU/SNF	14	100	271
8	AF	0	2	40
9	SRF/SR	46	22	363
10	SRF/SR	77	13	460

Topics(s) addressed the most: SRF/SR and SRU/SNF

Source: prepared by authors

Looking more closely at these data for each search term, it becomes clear that users with large audiences predominate among the profiles that speak specifically about historical memory, although the activity and interest of standard users is also notable. However, an analysis of the type of message reveals a polarisation characterised by those that vindicate, praise, or justify one or the other of the factions in the conflict known to historians as the Spanish Civil War (see Table 1 and Table 2).

Users with a political profile appear chiefly in relation to the topic of Francoism (Table 3), although in the study sample these profiles do not tend to have many followers or very high rates of engagement. In other words, their messages have quite a limited impact. However, for the purposes of the results obtained, their interest and activity levels are similar to those of standard users.

Table 3: Profile characteristics of posts in the 'Top' tab on TikTok for the search term '*Franquismo*' between 1 and 31 January 2022

No.	User and Content	Category	Followers	Likes
1	@elprofesergio1 https://bit.ly/3o4JzEF	AP	159,600	3.2 million
2	@adolfomayo_el_minero https://bit.ly/3KN7wdb	SU	1,311	19,800
3	@isluciaferrero_ https://bit.ly/3KQhpqp	IF	63,000	2.3 million
4	@clifford_oficial https://bit.ly/3AFolC0	SU	1,939	115,600
5	@juan_angulo_sanse https://bit.ly/3u78ifd	PP	1,073	18,500
6	@ecorepublicano https://bit.ly/3KTsmYj	SU	1,040	6,218
7	@_manu19_sp2001 https://bit.ly/3uelO0q	IF*	13,000	101,200
8	@rodriguezamorin https://bit.ly/3KP0dSa	PP	3,064	51,400
9	@angelea_10 https://bit.ly/32Gg58p	SU	1,163	15,100
10	@ionebelarra_ https://bit.ly/3KUfAJ0	PP	7,842	54,200

Most active profile type: SU and PP

Source: prepared by authors

Table 4: Content characteristics of posts in the 'Top' tab on TikTok for the search term '*Franquismo*' between 1 and 31 January 2022

No.	Content Type	Comments	Shares	Likes
1	HC	23	36	246
2	SRF/SR	289	588	1,878
3	AF	67	15	4,252
4	HC	0	2	24
5	HC	56	12	250
6	HC	1	1	54
7	HC	1	4	169
8	AF	5	0	106
9	AF	489	46	2,997
10	AF	6	26	419

Topics(s) addressed the most: HC

Source: prepared by authors

Moreover, there is a significant degree of polarisation in the purpose of the content related to this topic, ranging from the purely historical to stances that are clearly antagonistic towards the period, its political figures, and its principal architect, General Francisco Franco (see Table 4).

Table 5: Profile characteristics of posts in the 'Top' tab on TikTok for the search term '*Guerra Civil España*' between 1 and 31 January 2022

No.	User and Content	Category	Followers	Likes
1	@spanish_army11 https://bit.ly/3IMM5Hd	SU	5,417	43,400
2	@tcuentounahistoria https://bit.ly/3IH8Lc3	AP	60,900	822,800
3	@_imperio_espanol._ https://bit.ly/3IGf27O	SU	2,674	20,700
4	@mmarcq10 https://bit.ly/3G7SV8z	IF*	75,800	845,900
5	@pasea_madrid https://bit.ly/3s3zHw6	IF	39,700	309,600
6	@brunocrates https://bit.ly/3r6GuWj	IF	126,500	2.1 million
7	@miopiayastigmatismo https://bit.ly/3HcJpCw	SU	2,234	47,200
8	@hanekito https://bit.ly/3o4u0wH	IF	11,200	447,700
9	@meravigliablog https://bit.ly/3g5Yz0m	SU	9,908	160,600
10	@marcianosn https://bit.ly/3gakELb	IF	39,900	1.4 million

Most active profile type: IF

Source: prepared by authors

Table 6: Content characteristics of posts in the 'Top' tab on TikTok for the search term '*Guerra Civil España*' between 1 and 31 January 2022

No.	Content Type	Comments	Shares	Likes
1	HC	974	1,257	28,400
2	HC	90	43	3,294
3	SRU/SNF	11	3	204
4	HC	234	563	46,300
5	HC	84	1,862	6,948
6	SRF/SR	81	85	1,582
7	HC	64	116	1,307
8	HC	1,483	320	27,800
9	HC	3	30	243
10	HC	54	265	2,287

Topics(s) addressed the most: HC

Source: prepared by authors

In relation to the topic of the Spanish Civil War (see Table 6), once again, purely historical content predominates. In specific references to this episode in Spanish history, there is little interest in taking a more subjective or decisive stance in relation to the parties involved. This is not the case, however, when the Spanish Republic is referred to, as most of the content found on this topic refers to its actors, historical episodes, laws, etc., with a more subjective discourse, and some even offer explicitly anti-Francoist messages and images (see Table 7 and Table 8). It was unusual to come across antagonistic attitudes towards the Republic in these search results.

Table 7: Profile characteristics of posts in the 'Top' tab on TikTok for the search term '*República España*' between 1 and 31 January 2022

No.	User and Content	Category	Followers	Likes
1	@jsvallecas https://bit.ly/34dRiJs	PP	583	14,600
2	@carlagaleote https://bit.ly/33Yu3TR	IF	253,100	5.1 million
3	@historiacondibujitos https://bit.ly/3HbnefX	AP	2,273	11,100
4	@spanishrevolution https://bit.ly/3H8fT0T	OP	59,400	730,100
5	@luciadcr https://bit.ly/3AFPFAs	IF	44,100	505,500
6	@pasea_madrid https://bit.ly/3H8RND7	IF	39,700	309,600
7	@historiaen1minuto https://bit.ly/3H8S74N	AP	69,200	395,500
8	@vestigyver https://bit.ly/3o4x1wM	IF	20,200	526,400
9	@amarepublica https://bit.ly/3AEVpKx	SU	3,757	113,500
10	@corazonsiemprealnorte https://bit.ly/32E56wn	SU	1,023	10,100

Most active profile type: IF

Source: prepared by authors

Table 8: Content characteristics of posts in the 'Top' tab on TikTok for the search term '*República España*' between 1 and 31 January 2022

No.	Content Type	Comments	Shares	Likes
1	SRF/SR	16	12	69
2	SRF/SR	3,711	2,603	45,400
3	HC	115	121	9,595
4	AF	91	3,781	6,320
5	SRF/SR	671	1,048	21,900
6	SRF/SR	0	581	10,200
7	HC	220	141	1902
8	AF	39	136	472
9	HC	44	2	181
10	HC	227	49	2,844

Topics(s) addressed the most: HC and SRF/SR

Source: prepared by authors

In Tables 1, 3, and 5, some of the users identified as influencers have been marked with an asterisk. This is to indicate cases where, although the number of followers meets the criteria established in the Methodology section, the accounts do not have a visible face and most of the content they post comes from other digital platforms.
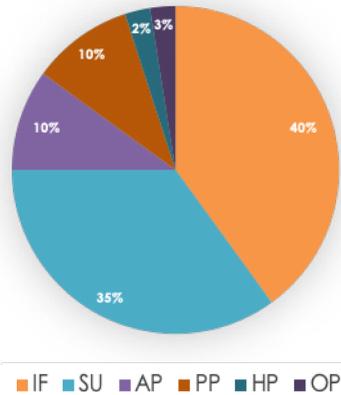
Table 9: Summary of content obtained by search term in the 'Top' tab on TikTok on the topic of historical memory in Spain between 1 and 31 January 2022

| Search Term	HC	SRF/SR	SRU/SNF	AF	O
Memoria histórica España	1	3	2	3	1
Franquismo	5	1	0	4	0
Guerra Civil España	8	1	1	0	0
República España	4	4	0	2	0
TOTAL	18	9	3	9	1

Source: prepared by authors

As Table 9 shows, it is possible to identify historical content on the topic with various nuances: strictly historical, content tending to vindicate one faction, or content with a totally antagonistic attitude towards the Franco dictatorship based on specific events, dates, and figures.

Figure 1: Proportion of users most active in relation to Spain's historical memory from 1 and 31 January 2022 based on the sample

Source: prepared by authors

Figure 2: Percentages of content obtained by search term in the 'Top' tab on TikTok on the topic of historical memory in Spain between 1 and 31 January 2022
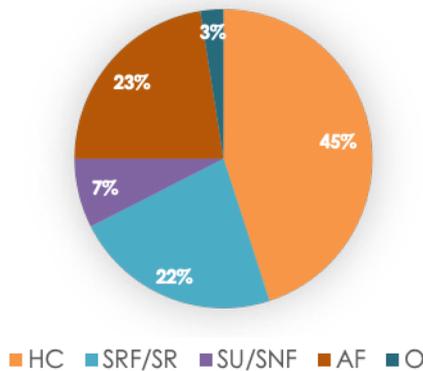
Source: prepared by authors

4. Discussion

At the time this study was proposed there was some concern about the tone of the messages posted on TikTok on a topic as complex as historical memory in Spain, especially given that the enactment of the new Democratic Memory Act is a political issue that is currently the subject of much debate.

In this respect, in relation to the first research question, it is clear that despite TikTok's informal aesthetic, the condensed nature of the format and the tendency toward visual overstimulation, it is possible to address the issue from various perspectives on this social media platform.

The selection of posts in the 'Top' tab on the platform's internal search function ensured the inclusion of videos with high engagement levels, regardless of their number. The algorithm retrieves this content because it is effectively receiving attention from the TikTok community of users. This finding is in consonance with studies by researchers such as López-Olano & Fenoll (2020), who, in their analysis of the Catalan independence process, note that the algorithms on social media platforms direct us to content that reinforce our own points of view, thereby increasing our dependence.

It was therefore not possible to confirm the first research hypothesis, related to whether the fact that TikTok's messaging is focused primarily on entertainment (according to the criteria established in the methodology) makes it difficult to address the issue of historical memory in Spain on the platform. The search process described above yielded a large volume of posts (more than 400 for each search term) that hindered the selection of the data dealt with here.

From the results obtained it was also possible to identify videos where one of the topics used to build the sample was coloured by political bias, intolerance, radicalism, exaggeration, speculation and propaganda. Examples of this can be found in videos such as 'Untitled' (see Figure 3 and https://bit. ly/3KRvMLf) and '*Esa bandera no existe imbécil no tiene ni emoji*' ('That flag doesn't exist you idiot it doesn't even have an emoji') by @prohibidoslosrojos (see https://bit.ly/3Ge6B1X).

Figure 3. Untitled video with dogmatic content

Source: @memeca76 on TikTok

It was common to find contemporary political affairs and issues mixed in with the terms 'Historical Memory', 'Francoism', and even 'Civil War'. A contemporary reference to the term 'Republic' is perhaps more obviously a call for a change to the political model in Spain than a historical evocation, although it inevitably involves allusions to past decades.

There is one particular post reviewed in this study, featuring a speech by a member of the Spanish far-right political party VOX (the identity of the member is not specified and no further details are given on the context of the speech) putting forward a series of historical arguments for why the Catalan republican leader Lluís Companys should not be considered a role model. It is important to stress that the video does not provide details of the circumstances of this speech (see No. 2 in Tables 1 and 2). However, based on information drawn from the press, it appears to be taken from a debate in the Catalan parliament. In this particular video, while the individual is speaking the VOX party logo is superimposed over the image together with the caption '*toma memoria histórica*' ('historical memory footage').

Many of the videos identified with the search terms applied are untitled and provide minimal contextual information beyond what the images convey (and the general level of cultural knowledge and information on the topic that the receiving user may have access to).

It is worth highlighting that numerous videos feature multimedia content from other digital platforms; in other words, native content that conforms to the standards and format of the social media platform seems to be largely reserved for the moments when the creator of the video appears on screen. In many cases this makes an objective approach to the topic very difficult, as although the original content may be taken from a TV or YouTube documentary produced by recognised media outlets or other types of content, the clips shown are taken out of context and do not provide the information necessary to properly understand their content.

To respond to the third research question, regarding the type of users posting content on TikTok related to the issue of historical memory, in line with the second hypothesis that users discussing Spanish historical memory on TikTok tend to have a standard profile and a limited understanding of the topic, a number of observations need to be made. First of all, for each specific topic one particular user profile tended to predominate over the others. For example, the evidence presented in Tables 1, 5 and 7 suggests that the most active profile is that of users with a large follower base, ensuring them a wide dissemination of their messages regardless of their quality. In other words, users in the 'influencer' category report the most activity in relation to the topics of historical memory, the Spanish Civil War, and the Spanish Republic.

The particular case of number 2 in Tables 1 and 2, with 64,600 followers and a total of nearly 2 million likes as of the date of data collection, reflects the complex nature of communication on social media today. This user has been marked with an asterisk because the number of followers of the account in question places it in the 'influencer' category according to the research criteria, but the account administrator's face Is not shown and all of the content posted is taken from other platforms. In other words, this account has none of its own content, although the videos posted do include superimposed messages and GIFs that reframe the message that the footage may have originally conveyed (see Figure 4).

Figure 4. Third-party video with text and GIF superimposed

Source: @franciscojosebermudez3 on TikTok

Moreover, this is not an account that focuses on the topic to which this study refers, or even on historical topics in general. The account's feed is filled with posts about politics in Spain, mostly with a conservative tone.

A similar case is that of No. 8 in the same table, with nearly 13,000 followers and more than 350,000 likes. The bio for this user reads: 'The rebellion begins by reading. Here is a very useful link to an anarchistic library.' This is another user who takes content from other social media platforms and sometimes superimposes text or GIFs in an effort to reframe the images. In this case, the prevailing discourse is progressive.

This kind of dynamic can also be found in case 7 in Tables 3 and 4 and case 4 in Tables 5 and 6. The latter of these two is particularly striking because it features content that explains different conflicts around the world with illustrations. The most notable feature is the informal and even vulgar tone of the dialogue. This user's account has no description or identifying image, and the account handle does not suggest a focus on any particular subject matter.

Of the users who do seek to focus their attention on subject areas such as the Spanish Republic or the Civil War, it is worth highlighting cases 5, 6 and 10 in Tables 5 and 6 and cases 2 and 5 in Tables 7 and 8. In Tables 5 and 6, case numbers 5 and 10 are accounts that offer reviews of different locations, notably including some of a historical nature, which contextualise the location and offer interesting facts to encourage other users to visit the destination in question. Case No. 6, whose bio reads 'In the universe, change; in life, firmness. Philosophy on TikTok,' addresses a range of cultural topics in a concise manner in keeping with the narrative imposed by the platform, but with very good handling of information and sources. On the other hand, Cases No. 2 and 5 in Tables 7 and 8 are accounts belonging to two young women who express ideas with an enlightened discourse, but with a strong left-leaning tendency.

In short, as shown in Figure 1, the predominant profile in discourse about historical memory was found to be the influencer category, followed closely by standard users with a considerably lower number of followers and, therefore, less influence on the platform. Conversely, political figures and academics are much less prominent in this context.

However, worthy of special mention here are users engaging in explicitly educational activity on this social media platform. Examples of this include Case No. 1 in Tables 3 and 4, Case No. 2 in Tables 5 and 6, and Cases No. 3 and 7 in Tables 7 and 8. The user @elprofesergio1 (No. 1 in Tables 3 and 4) is described in his TikTok bio as a history and geography teacher. With nearly 160,000 followers and more than 3 million likes for his posts, this content creator offers simple explanations of different events related to his field of study. On the other hand, @tcuentounahistoria (No. 2 in Tables 5 and 6) with nearly 61,000 followers and more than 820,000 likes, is an account belonging to a young woman whose bio reads 'a different history is possible.' This user addresses historical topics with a professional tone in a short, entertaining format filled with visual references.

Figure 5. TikTok profile of @elprofesergio1
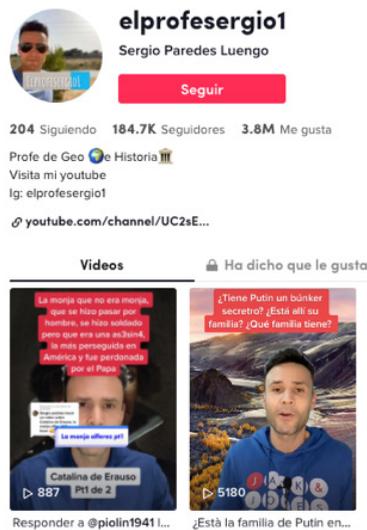
Source: TikTok

Also worthy of mention is @historiacondibujitos (No. 3 in Tables 7 and 8), who makes use mainly of visual storytelling to explain certain historical events. Finally, @historiaen1minuto (No. 7 in Tables 7 and 8) offers an outline of a historical fact in a one-minute video. This user's entertaining and explicit form of storytelling has earned him more than 70,000 followers and 400,000 likes on his posts.

Figure 6. TikTok bio of the profile @historiaen1minuto

historiaen1minuto
Historia en 1 minuto

Seguir

408 Siguiendo   74.2K Seguidores   421.8K Me gusta

"La historia no se repite si no es en la mente de quien no la conoce"

🔗 youtube.com/channel/UCGe...

Source: TikTok

Recognition of these efforts is important because although the social media platform's algorithm encourages interest and engagement among the community of users when a video is posted, in a context with an increasing number of creators vying for audience attention with more captivating content, it is commendable that users like these are addressing these topics and even promoting hashtags such as #edutok and #aprendeentiktok (literally, 'learn on TikTok'), effectively reducing the potential impact of speculative content and disinformation on the platform.

In discourse related to arguments in favour of one of the two opposing sides in the Spanish Civil War and the subsequent dictatorship, the results of this study show that a historical approach to the events predominates, except for content obtained in the '*Memoria histórica España*' search, which revealed a polarisation (staunch support by the content creator for one side or the other).

Returning to the third research hypothesis, as reflected in Table 9 and Figure 2, a majority of the videos are biased or put forward an argument in favour of one of the two factions referred to in the Spanish Historical Memory Act, with 'Anti-Franco Content' and 'Support for the Republican Faction or for the Republic' predominating. This is in line with other studies of political content on TikTok, which have found that posts on the platform aim to elicit an emotional response from users and to promote a dichotomous view of the world (Cervi, Tejedor & Marín Lladó, 2021). This finding also points to the potential 'echo chamber' effect of social media, especially in relation to political polarisation, preventing users from coming into contact with any form of information or content that contradicts their beliefs (Kubin & Von Sikorski, 2021; Bail, Argvie & Volfovsky, 2018).

5. Conclusions

This exploratory approximation study has demonstrated that despite the abundance of superficial or strictly entertaining content on the platform, TikTok can be used to address any kind of topic.

However, it is important to acknowledge that the aesthetic, time limitations, and coding of its messages differentiates its content sharply from that of other digital social media platforms. On TikTok, it is essential to be very concise and precise in the proposition of ideas, ensuring the presence of as much visual support as possible to reinforce the text or audio (Abidin, 2021; Anderson, 2020).

TikTok is a platform whose algorithm displays content that receives the highest levels of engagement, i.e., that receives the most attention in the form of likes, comments, or shares on other digital media. Indeed, one of this platform's key features is the ease with which its videos can be shared on other online channels, thereby enhancing their capacity to expand their audiences and go viral (Vijay & Gekker, 2021; Cervi, 2021).

As Alonso-López, Sidorenko-Bautista & Giacomelli (2021) point out, as the production of all kinds of audiovisual content grows on this social media platform, the presence of disinformation becomes increasingly evident, appearing in various forms and often compromising the reception of information by young audiences whose lack of exposure to news media (Casero-Ripollés, 2020) leaves them with no way of verifying these messages by alternative means.

As the concept of historical memory and the possible implications of the repealed law and the new proposed legislation on the issue constitute a complex topic that is currently being debated in Spain, not to mention the fact that many witnesses to these tragic episodes in Spanish history are still alive, it is understandable that its treatment on social media would be more visceral than factual.

The issue of historical memory tends to polarise the people who discuss it, and this study has clearly demonstrated that although there is a significant volume of purely historical content, there is a larger proportion of content that is obviously skewed.

None of the users analysed here appear to construct their digital identity or image on this platform in relation to the specific topic of historical memory. However, there are some accounts with an academic profile that address historical topics with a serious and rigorous approach, posting content that offers a precise, simple, and visual explanation of certain aspects of this issue. These users tend to work with hashtags like #edutok or #aprendeentiktok ('learn on TikTok') that receive high levels of attention (more than 141 billion views in the first case and more than 48 billion views in the second), promoting their educational activity and having a positive effect on any user interested in the topic, but obviously with special emphasis on younger audiences, which represent the largest segment of TikTok users.

The limitations encountered in the development of this research were related mainly to the complexity of the topic addressed and the difficulty of approaching it objectively. Indeed, many of the posts analysed make use of content taken out of context that fails to provide the information necessary to fully understand it. Moreover, TikTok's particular narrative structure, centred around entertainment and challenges, makes it difficult to explore the issue of historical memory in Spain, as there is a considerable volume of posts that have nothing to do with the topic in question and complicate the data selection process.

Due to the complexity of the topic and the lack of prior research dealing with this specific issue on TikTok, we believe that this study can lay the foundations and offer a starting point for future comparative and transnational studies exploring questions related to historical and collective memory and its treatment on TikTok in other countries from different perspectives.

6. Specific contributions of each author

Contributions	Authors
Conception and design of the work	Author 1 and Author 2
Document search	Author 1
Data collection	Author 2
Critical interpretation and analysis of data	Author 1 and Author 2
Drafting, formatting, revision and approval of versions	Author 1 and Author 2

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