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Towards a new audiovisual narrative: an analysis of videos published by five online Spanish newspapers

Abstract

The objective of the research reported in this article was to analyse and quantify the narrative techniques employed in videos embedded in the home pages of five Spanish online newspapers. For the purpose of tracing the evolution of the approaches taken by these digital dailies away from the traditional narrative models used in television production, two separate study samples representing video reporting published online in 2011 and 2014 were examined. Findings show that material outsourced from agencies largely comprised short videos with voiceovers that conformed to the narrative structures of traditional journalism whereas those produced in-house by the five online dailies studied offered an innovative model that borrowed freely from other genres, involved longer stories supported by sound bites rather than voiceovers and were structured along lines other than those of the classic inverted pyramid.

Keywords

Digital press, online media, audiovisual narrative, video, video journalism

1. A new platform for audiovisual journalism

The audiovisual content featured in digital media has been well analysed from the perspective of media convergence (Deuze, 2004; Aquino et al., 2002). However, although it has been occasionally suggested (Mark Deuze, 2003) that the use of various combinations of narrative codes such as sound, images and text enriches the expressive quality of online audiovisual journalism, it has not yet become a clearly defined and articulated facet of new digital news media. This may explain the delayed and limited interest (Masip et al., 2010) that has been paid to multimediality as opposed to the two other supposedly definitive aspects of online journalism, hypertextuality and interactivity.

The terms hypertextuality, interactivity and multimediality have been used repeatedly (Murray, 1999; Nielsen, 2000; Díaz Noci, 2001;

Deuze, 2001, 2004; Manovich, 2005; Salaverría, 2005; Canavilhas, 2007; Masip, 2010; Fondevila Gascón et al., 2014) to describe the characteristics of online journalism. Although other aspects of online news such as personalisation and the continual updating of contents have also been frequently addressed, what stands out is this media's capacity to forge links between traditional news reporting and a new non-linear narrative made possible by multimedia and interactive technologies (Boczkowski, 2004: 21).

Audiovisual reporting¹ has almost always been a standard feature of online journalism (Neuberger et al., 1998; Shultz, 1999). Although in practice the full theoretical potential of audiovisual content has yet to be exploited (Russial, 2009), numerous authors have observed its rising importance over the past few years (Micó & Masip, 2008; Guallar, 2008) and conceded its growing prominence in online newspapers (Greer & Mensing, 2006; Guallar, Rovira & Ruiz, 2010).

The evolution of digital newspapers in Spain conforms to this pattern, although progress has been a slow and uneven. Nevertheless, there is evidence (Micó & Masip, 2008; Marrero, 2008; Masip & Micó, 2010; Masip, Micó & Meso, 2012; Cassany et al., 2013) that leads one to conclude that online journalism practices in Spain follow the general trend of featuring an increasing number of audiovisual elements alongside traditional articles.

As writers such as Masip (2010) have noted, a number of researchers (Neuberger et al., 1998; Schultz, 1999; Greer and Mensing, 2006; Russial, 2009) have used content analysis to quantify the degree to which online newspapers have incorporated video elements. Other authors (Cottle & Asthon, 1999; Boczkowski, 2004; Williams & Franklin, 2007; Thurman & Lupton, 2009; Bock, 2012; Lancaster, 2012) have focused on the production and technology aspects of online journalism. A third group less interested in ethnographic methods and content analysis has explored the issue of message reception (Berry, 1999; Sundar, 2000) and, more particularly, how sound, image and text can be combined to enhance understanding and retention (Deuze, 2001; Canavilhas, 2007; Micó & Masip, 2008; Zamorra López, 2010).

The perspectives of the latter group merit closer examination, especially in the context of narrative journalism. Díaz Noci (2014: 173) has noted in a recent study that although narrative journalism is a frequent topic of research articles and lectures on audiovisual communication at the university level, it is by no means the predominant format employed by professional journalists. While classic studies on narratology (Biber, 1989; García Landa, 1998; Bell, 1999; Bal, 2009; Jahn, 2005; Pier & Berthelot, 2010) and others written from a journalism perspective (Van Dijk, 1980; Charaudeaux, 1997; Oblak, 2005; Ryan, 2009) provide insight into this subject, fewer authors (Ryan, 2009; Cuevas, 2009; Díaz Noci, 2011; Bock, 2012) have applied the key concepts of narratology specifically to online journalism.

Given that it is now well established that online audiovisual journalism should be considered more than just "television on the web" (Bradshaw & Rohumaa, 2011:106), it is useful to approach it from a multimedia rather than an audiovisual perspective. Audiovisual elements used in digital journalism contexts have a unique relationship to news stories that set them apart from those used in conventional television. A number of authors have explored the special characteristics of video journalism (Bock, 2012; Lancaster, 2012; Marshall, 2012) and the relationships between videos and multiplatform content (Erdal, 2009).

The lines of investigation followed by other authors (García Jiménez, 1993; Vale, 1996; Gordillo, 1999; Selinger, 2008, among others), although perhaps more modest in scope,

¹ Throughout this article we have opted to use terms such as "online journalism", "online newspaper videos", "audiovisual content of digital media" and "audiovisual reporting. The word "video" is used in a general sense to describe the object of research and should not be confused with format (VTR).

facilitate comparisons between videos published by online newspapers and those featured in conventional television news broadcasts. Given that the forms and protocols of online audiovisual journalism appear to be solidifying, it is a good moment to analyse to what extent online newspapers have forged new narrative models.

2. Objectives, samples and methodology

The main objective of this study² was to analyse the narrative structures of audiovisual elements featured in five Spanish online newspapers: *elmundo.es*, *elpais.com*, *abc.es*, *elconfidencial.com* and *lavanguardia.com*, which were, according to Comscore, the online dailies registering the highest number of page views during the month of December 2012. That particular month was used as a reference because it marked the midpoint between the two periods to be analysed: November 2011 and March 2014.

Although interest in measuring the audiences of Spanish online newspapers dates back to the beginning of the century, for more than a decade there was little consensus on the system to be employed. Nevertheless, in 2011 the IAB (Interactive Advertising Bureau) and the AIMC (*Asociación para la Investigación de Medios de Comunicación*, Association for Media Research) allied to recommend that measurement be done by Comscore. Since that time, this firm has been consolidating its position in the Spanish market, although statistics issued by the *Oficina de Justificación de la Difusión* (OJD, Audit Bureau of Circulation), another verification body, are also accepted. A decision was made to measure page views rather than unique visitors as the former would provide a more accurate picture of actual readership, although other measurements such as “daily average visitors”, a metric that indicates readership fidelity, were not considered.

The sample for the first analysis carried out for this study was drawn from videos published on the home pages of the five selected online newspapers from November 23 through December 5, 2011. The second sample, which was drawn from the same publications, corresponded to home-page videos published March 18–31 2014. In all, a total number of 1,095 videos (477 from 2011 and 618 from 2014) were analysed.

During the selection of both samples, only one screening was carried out per day. These were conducted in the morning after 11:00 am on odd days and in the evening after 9 pm on even days. In both cases, a single coder coded all the material. Standard coding sheets (See Table 1) that included some questions not directly related to the main objectives of the study were prepared in advance to ensure that coding was systematically performed.

Table 1. Data analysis sheets used in this research

DAY:	
ONLINE NEWSPAPER:	
VIDEO	
GENRE	BREAKING NEWS, NEWS FEATURE, INTERVIEW, FEATURE, SEGMENT, OTHER

²This study was undertaken as part of a larger research project conceived to trace the evolution of audiovisual production carried out by the five previously cited online newspapers between 2010 and 2015, including the narrative techniques and structural approaches they applied to this medium. Initial findings of the first phase of this project were presented under the title “El incipiente desarrollo del ciberperiodismo audiovisual. Análisis de ocho cibermedios españoles” (The Incipient Development of Online Audiovisual Journalism: an Analysis of Eight Spanish Online Newspapers) at the III Congreso de Ciberperiodismo y Web 2.0 held in Bilbao, Spain, November 9–11, 2011. All charts and tables contained in this article were prepared by the authors. Generally speaking, the charts and tables contain data in absolute values corresponding to the two samples as whole. Whenever appropriate, relative figures and comparisons are provided in the body of the text.

FORMAT	VTR VO, NAT/VO, SOUND BITE (S), NAT/VO/SOT, CLIP, OTHER
LOCATION	LOC 1, LOC 2, LOC 3
LENGTH	
AUTHORSHIP / ORIGIN	IN-HOUSE, AGENCY, THIRD-PARTY
GENERAL THEMATIC CATEGORY	INTERNATIONAL, NATIONAL, ECONOMY, SOCIETY, MUSIC, CULTURE, FILMS, SOCCER, OTHER
SPECIFIC TOPIC	
TYPE OF STRUCTURE	INVERTED PYRAMID, MODIFIED INVERTED PYRAMID OF PYRAMID, EXPOSITIVE ARGUMENTATIVE, CHRONOLOGICAL, OTHER
Lead-in line	[For qualitative analysis]
Ending line	[For qualitative analysis]
Internal elements	[For qualitative analysis: structural function]
EDITING TECHNIQUE	CUE IN - CUE OUT, ELEMENTARY EDITING, LEVEL 1 EDITING, LEVEL 2 EDITING
CREDIT /SOURCE	ON SCREEN, SUPER, OTHER.
TYPE OF NARRATION	WITH VOCAL DELIVERY, WITH VOICE CLIP OR ON-CAMERA DELIVERY, WITHOUT VOCAL DELIVERY (NO VOICE CLIP OR ON-CAMERA DELIVERY), OTHER
CAMERA ANGLES / SHOTS	
SUPERS	
Number of supers	
Types of supers	THEME, IDENTIFICATION, TIME AND DATE, SUBTITLES, INFORMATION, OTHER.
IMAGE TEXT RELATIONSHIPS	
Types	PARTIAL/TOTAL HIERARCHY, PARTIAL /TOTAL COMPLEMENTARITY
Observations	
SOUND BITES	
Structural elements and techniques of interest	
Other	

The principal novelty of this research compared to previous studies in the field was its emphasis on the evolution of online newspapers' approach to audiovisual reporting over time. A rigorous comparison of the findings of the two separate sample analyses was therefore of crucial importance as it afforded an opportunity to observe changing trends in the way this type of content was structured and presented.

Particular attention was paid to any detail that indicated a departure from approaches used in conventional television broadcasting and the development of new forms of narrative journalism. The hypothesis that such a change was, in fact, taking place, which had previously been tested in other studies (see, for example, Cassany et al., 2013), was based on the observation that new digital media had opened the doors for the development of a style of communication very different from that which television technology supported. This type of research calls for a focus on the audiovisual discourse per se (that is on the video itself)

rather than a profound analysis of the relationship between videos and the online newspaper articles they are embedded in. The essential characteristics of televisual narrative have been documented and analysed in a significant number of prior studies (among them, García Jiménez, 1993; Oliva & Sitjà, 1992; Vale, 1996; Prósper & López, 1998; Gordillo, 1999; Selinger, 2008; Canet & Prósper, 2009; Mas Manchón, 2011). We will refer to the work of these authors later on when drawing comparisons between the characteristics of the narratives of videos featured in online newspapers and those of conventional television.

The first task at hand was to define and classify the textual structures employed in the videos in each study sample. The next step was to determine the nature of the relationships between the narrative codes (texts, sound and images) that each sample unit contained following a method of categorisation used in previous studies on the subject (Mayoral et al., 2008; Canet & Prósper, 2009; Zamorra López, 2010). Once this was completed, the genre (text type) and format of each video were classified.

This process required the use of quantitative techniques that facilitated the extraction of precise data on each of our established points of inquiry. Given that the fundamental objective of our research was to analyse narrative practices, the results of the initial studies described above served merely as a point of departure for the second, interpretive, phase of our research, for which we employed standard methods of discourse analysis. As the purpose of this work was not simply to categorise narrative structures but also determine the degree to which they had been employed in the videos examined, this was a crucial step. Qualitative analysis was used with any emphasis on detecting any phenomena related to the hypothetical emergence of new forms of audiovisual narrative in digital media.

Our starting hypothesis was that such a new narrative model was beginning to crystallise and that the online Spanish newspapers analysed for this study were developing and consolidating new narrative principles for video production. We also sought to test a secondary hypothesis, which was that there was a relationship between the degree to which these online dailies had been able to liberate themselves from the limiting paradigms of conventional television and their development of distinctly new and different narrative models.

A clear example of these limitations is the “minute-to-minute” method used to measure television audiences, which for the last few decades has driven a trend towards increasingly shorter news stories and an informative rather than a narrative approach to TV reporting (Oliva & Sitjà, 1992: 23; González Requena, 1999: 93-94; Marín, 2006: 122; Mayoral, 2013: 85-88). While audiences for online news are also measured comprehensively, this is done “story-by-story” rather than “minute-by-minute”. Digital newspapers’ shift away from a time-based metric can be directly attributed to a fundamental difference between conventional and online news media: whereas in television editors are in a position to determine the timing of the public’s access to a particular news story, in the world of digital publishing, users control the timing and order of the news content they consume. Generally speaking, videos featured in digital newspapers are longer than those included in television news broadcasts and also tend to be discursive or narrative rather than merely informative.

3. Genres, subgenres and formats

A total of 1,095 videos extracted from the previously mentioned online newspapers were analysed for this study. The first round of sampling (carried out in November 2011) yielded 477 units and the second round (conducted in March 2014) yielded 618. The overall lengths of these two samples were very similar: a total of 1,399 minutes of material for 2011 compared to 1,447 for 2014 – a difference of 48 minutes that represented a small increase of 3.43%. However, the difference in the number of actual units identified for each period (there were

141 more in the sample corresponding to 2014) represented a 30% increase in the number of video elements published by these online dailies from one period to another. A comparison of the overall length of each sample to the number of units each contained revealed that the average length of individual videos fell from 2 minutes and 56 seconds in 2011 to 2 minutes and 20 seconds in 2014.

The substantial difference between the lengths of videos embedded in online newspapers and those included in television newscasts merits particular attention. Various authors have observed (Oliva & Sitjà, 1992: 138-158; Cebrián, 1998: 211-217; Pérez, 2003: 101-102; Mayoral et al., 2008: 63-70) that the time allowed for every format employed in television news production is predictable and stable. For example, the average duration of a VO in television broadcasting is 30 seconds. VOs as short as 10 seconds or as long as a minute are rarely contemplated. Apart from a few exceptions, VTR VOs and live segments run between 50 seconds and two minutes. In contrast, online newspapers routinely publish video segments that run anywhere between 30 seconds and 5 minutes. The length of VOs featured in online newspapers also varies widely; some are as short as 20 seconds and others are as long as 3 or 4 minutes. The wide variation in the overall length of these videos has an impact on how other elements such as sound bites, look live segments and clips are handled.

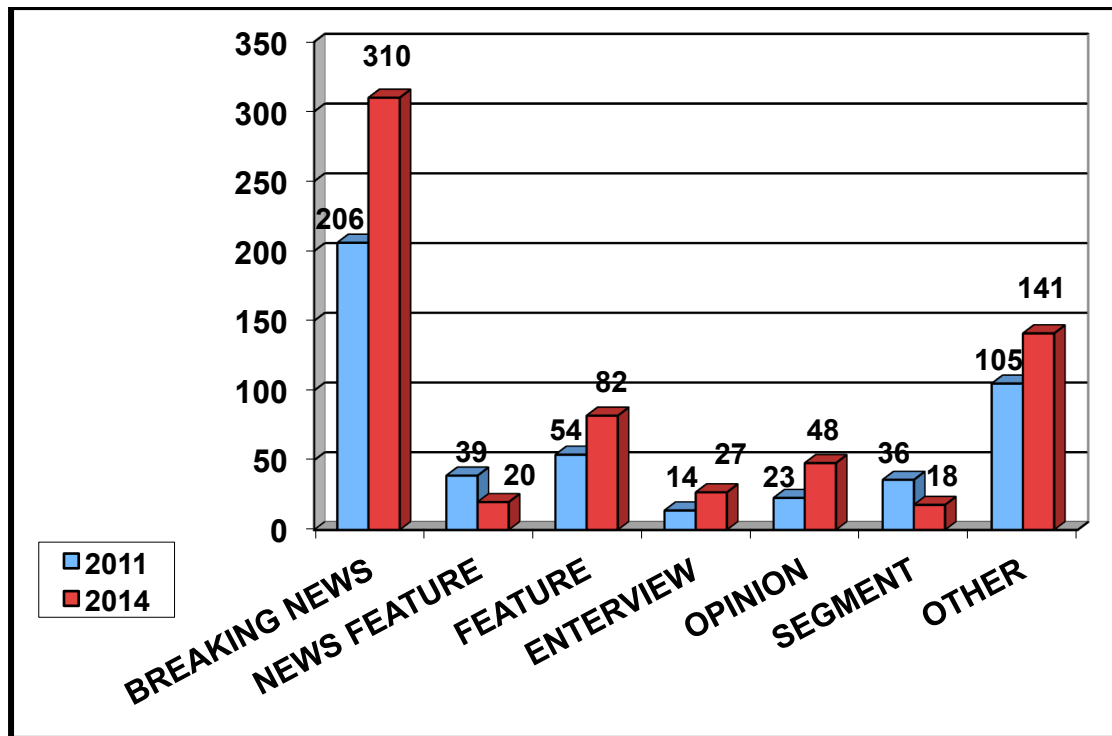
As the breakdown provided in Table 2 makes clear, the online newspapers analysed relied heavily on externally produced videos, which made up 73.38% of the total of videos contained in the 2011 sample. In-house videos, which made up 26.62% of the units contained in the 2011 sample, made up a slightly higher proportion (31.23%) of the 2014 sample. Although the proportion of externally produced videos fell moderately by 4.61 percentage points between the two periods studied, this decline was relative given the greater number of videos in the second sample (425 compared to 350). In terms of the sources tapped by the newspapers analysed for externally produced videos, the number supplied by press agencies (EFE and Atlas in particular) rose from 123 during the period covered in the 2011 sample to 189 during the period covered by the sample collected in 2014. Agency-produced videos tended to be brief (between one and two minutes in length) and conform to the conventions of traditional television video production in the sense that they had structures that respected the top-down order of inverted pyramid or modified inverted pyramid formulas.

Table 2. Sources of videos analysed

	November 2011	March 2014
Videos published (total)	477	618
INTERNAL PRODUCTION	127 (26.62%)	193 (31.23%)
EXTERNAL PRODUCTION	350 (73.38%)	425 (68.77%)
News agencies	123 (25.78%)	189 (30.58%)

As the breakdown in Figure 1 shows, the overwhelming majority of videos featured in these newspapers during the periods studied conformed to a straight news format. Audiovisual elements published by online newspapers rarely contained what could be considered as pure analysis or interpretation, although elements of these aspects of journalism did surface in news feature videos and in videos that employed multiple formats. Although fewer than 5% (4.82%) of the videos in the 2011 sample were opinion oriented, this format accounted for a greater proportion of videos in the sample for 2014 (7.77%). Opinion tended to be concentrated in look live coverage.

Figure 1. Distribution of videos by genre and subgenre



In terms of news-related audiovisual formats, our findings show that online newspapers have a clear preference for breaking news stories. Furthermore, if one compares the percentages of breaking news videos contained in the samples for 2011 and 2014 (keeping in mind that the latter was substantially larger) one sees that content in this category rose by almost 7% in the second period examined. Gains made by other news-related and interpretive genres were far more modest. The interview, which is one of the least frequently used genres in conventional television news, is also seldom exploited by online newspapers. Only 2.94% of the videos in the first sample and 4.37% of the videos in the second sample fell into this category. Although the number of feature pieces also rose by almost two points between the two periods studied, this genre already accounted for a fair percentage of sample units (11.32% in 2011 and 13.27% in 2014). In contrast, the presence of news features slid almost five per cent from 8.18% in the first sample to only 3.24% in the second.

The predominance of videos related to breaking news can be attributed to at least two main factors. The first is the legacy of television newscasting, which has always favoured short, breaking news stories and constant content churn over longer, more in-depth features and interviews. The second determining factor is the growing role that agencies now play in the audiovisual discourse maintained by the five Spanish online newspapers in question. By serving as major suppliers of breaking news footage, agencies have allowed newspapers' audiovisual news teams to devote more time and resources to genres such as interviews, features and opinion pieces that require more originality and an editorial point of view.

Externally produced videos other than those sourced from agencies are key to the interpretation of the two final categories noted in Figure 1. The near parity between news features (39) and television clips (36) in the 2011 sample is striking. As the newspapers analysed during this period frequently embedded videos directly captured from sources

such as YouTube on their home pages, the publication of videos in these categories did not suppose the significant investment of time or energy in editing. The decrease in the use of this type of video, which accounted for 7.55% of the total in 2011 but only 2.91% in 2014, leads one to suppose that online newspapers studied had refined their selection criteria for video content between the two periods studied. The fact that a significant percentage of the videos published fell in the category of “other” is also interesting. This category covered content that did not fit into the genres of traditional journalism. It is worth noting that whereas the number of videos falling into in this category in the 2011 sample (105) was practically equal to the combined sum of news features, features and interview videos for the same period (107), the spread between these types of content widened noticeably in the 2014 sample, of which 141 videos (22.82%) were classifiable as “other” compared to the 129 videos (20.87%) that fell within in the feature, news feature and interview categories.

Table 3. Topics covered in videos analysed

	2011 sample	2014 sample
National news	43 (9.01%)	81 (13.11%)
International news	15 (3.14%)	48 (7.77%)
Society	123 (25.79%)	182 (29.45%)
Economy	10 (2.1%)	23 (3.72%)
Music	24 (5.03%)	31 (5.02%)
Culture	28 (5.87%)	19 (3.07%)
Movies	66 (13.84%)	43 (6.96%)
European football (soccer)	68 (14.26%)	73 (11.81%)
Other	100 (20.96%)	118 (19.09%)

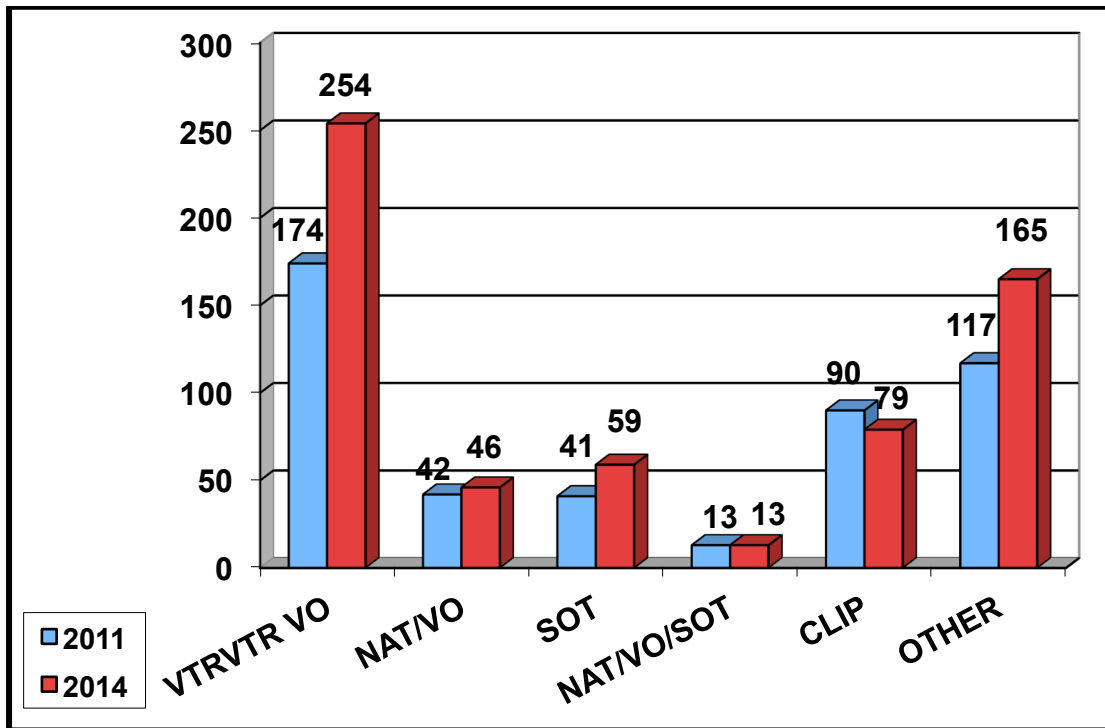
The impossibility of classifying so many of these videos within the classic genres of journalism becomes clearer if one takes a closer look at shifts in editorial priorities between the two periods examined. As can be observed in Table 3, video coverage of national and international affairs and society news was considerably higher during the second period than it was during the first. Surprisingly, videos not conforming to classic journalistic genres and therefore classified as “other” ranked just below society news in terms of volume in both samples. The high number of sample units in this category can be attributed to these papers’ practice of placing “eye candy” videos with little or no news value on their home pages for the sole purpose of capturing readers’ attention. The tone and characteristics of these videos can be summed up in the captions that accompanied three that appeared in *elconfidencial.com* on March 18, 22 and 24 2014: “How to fold a shirt”, “dogs that crawl like children” and “a dad cries when his son receives passing grade in mathematics”.

“Movies”, “music” and “culture” have been listed as separate categories in Table 3 to facilitate the tracking and comparison of the sources from which these videos had been drawn and the degree to which they had been produced/edited. The majority of the film and music videos contained in the samples analysed proved to be externally produced. As nine out of every ten sports videos focused specifically on European football (soccer), this category was labelled “soccer” rather than “sports”.

Figure 2, which provides a breakdown of the videos analysed by format, shows that online newspapers had made liberal use of formats (See columns for “clips” and “other”) not commonly employed in conventional television news production. Online newspapers use look live video for the same reason that television news teams use live coverage: to situate a story in a specific time and place and give it character. In contrast to the 2011 sample, which

did not contain a single example of live broadcast, a number of units in the 2014 sample were devoted to live coverage. For example, in 2014, *elpais.com* provided live coverage of events related to the death of former Spanish president Adolfo Suárez.

Figure 2. Formats of video units analysed



VTR/VO consolidated its position as a favourite format during the two periods examined. It accounted for 36.48% of the total units in the 2011 sample, a percentage that rose to 41.10% in the 2014 sample. NAT/VO plays a lesser role in online newspaper video production than in conventional television news production. Only 8.81% of the videos in the 2011 sample and 7.44% in the 2014 conformed to that format. The scant use of NAT/VO/SOT in the online newspaper videos analysed (a format used in only 2.10% of the units in the 2014 sample) was surprising given the popularity of this format in television journalism.

4. A diversity of narrative structures

Online newspapers have –at least in theory– an interest in differentiating the ways in which they combine sound, text and images in videos from the conventions followed in television news production. Television news producers adopted traditional print journalism formulas such as the “inverted pyramid” or “bottom line up front” model (Cebrián, 1998: 201). However, this model slowly evolved over the last quarter of the twentieth century until a looser, hybrid model known as the “modified inverted pyramid” became consolidated (Mayoral, 2008: 119). By giving journalists the freedom to develop more complex narratives, the modified inverted pyramid formula makes it easier for them to maintain a reader or viewer’s attention through the end of a story (Pérez, 2003: 105-117).

The inverted pyramid structure worked well in print journalism, in that it allowed readers to gauge their personal interest in a given subject and move on to the next article at whatever point their curiosity was satisfied. However, the same model posed a risk in television journalism, given that a viewer with an urge to move on to a different story

could well decide to do so by changing channels. Television news is therefore geared to prevent viewers from losing interest even after their curiosity about a topic has been sated (Oliva & Sitjà, 1992: 147). The main objective is to capture viewers and subsequently dissuade them from switching to another channel.

Table 4. Structure of videos analysed

	November 2011	March 2014
Videos published (total)	477	618
STRUCTURED	157 (32.91%)	304 (49.19%)
UNSTRUCTURED	320 (67.09%)	314 (50.81%)
VTR VO and clip	264 (55.35%)	333 (53.88%)

One of the most striking findings of this study was that both samples analysed contained a low proportion of “structured” videos. As can be seen in Table 4, more than two-thirds of the videos and a substantial proportion of the VTR VO and clips contained in the 2011 sample lacked a recognisable internal structure. Many of the units in the sample for this period constituted raw or semi-edited footage sourced from news agencies, which following the practices of traditional television would normally be crafted into a cohesive story prior to public release. An analysis of the second sample, however, indicated that this situation had improved by 2014: almost half of all the videos (49.19%) and more than half of the combined categories of VTR VO and clip (53.88%) featured some kind of internal structure.

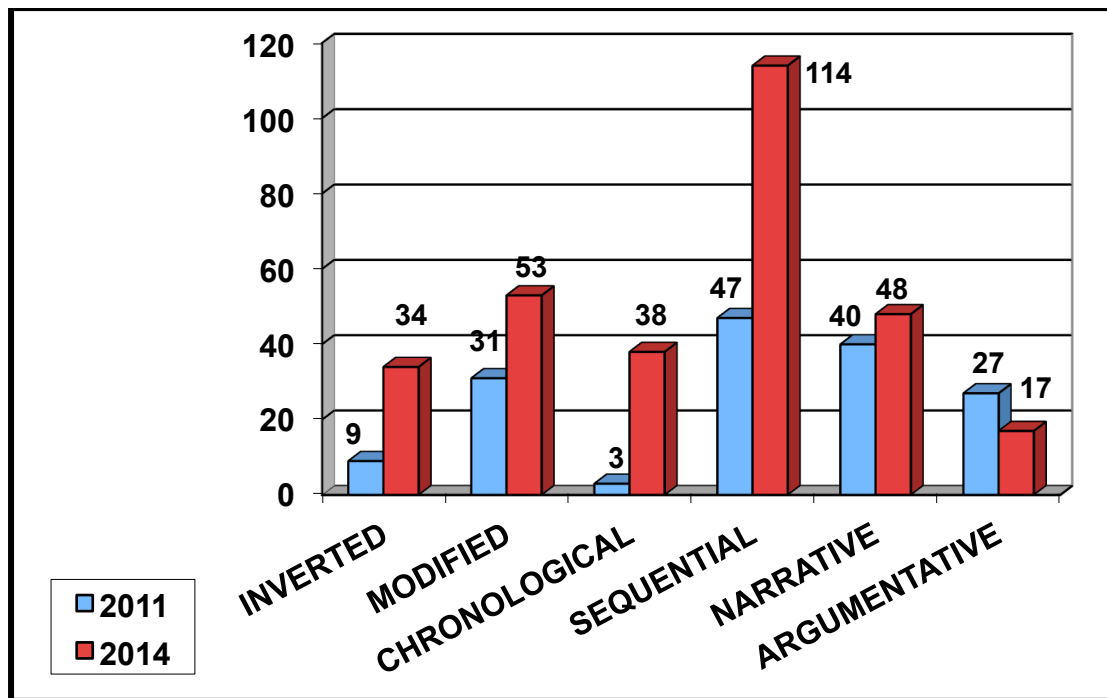
The breakdown provided in Figure 3 reveals that the videos in the samples analysed employed a wide spectrum of narrative structures. As the figures in the first two columns show, online newspapers continued to use inverted pyramid and modified inverted pyramid models. The latter was utilised to a greater extent than the former in both samples. Together they constituted the narrative backbone of 8.39% of the videos in the first sample and 14.08% of the second sample. If viewed within the context of only those videos that had some form of recognisable structure, those with inverted pyramid and modified inverted pyramid structures accounted for 25.48% of the 2011 sample and 28.62% of the 2014 sample. It should be kept in mind that news agencies habitually utilise these time-honoured formulas. A comparison of the figures provided in Figure 3 and Table 2 reveals that the increase in agency videos in 2014 corresponds neatly with the increase in the use of these structural devices: both rose by 5 percentage points.

Regarding the exploitation of other formulas listed in Figure 3, the dramatic rise in the use of sequential structures stands out. This category does not refer to the chronological ordering of information but rather to the technique of editing a series of elements in succession. Although sequential structures are by their nature related to both narrative structures (which tell a story point by point without making any type of argument or judgement) and argumentative structures (in that they present information in a logical order), the category “argumentative” (represented by the far right column in Figure 3) is solely devoted to argumentation, judgements, syllogisms and any other type of reflection or speculation.

Findings show that during the period examined in 2011, videos employing a sequential (or, in other words, expository) structure already outnumbered the sum total of those based on inverted pyramid and modified inverted pyramid formulas. However, the percentage they accounted for rose dramatically from 29.94% in 2011 to 37.5% in 2014, by which time they far outnumbered those employing more traditional narrative formulas and had become the preferred model for online video news production. Although they made up only a scant percentage of the 2011 sample, videos with chronological structures outnumbered those

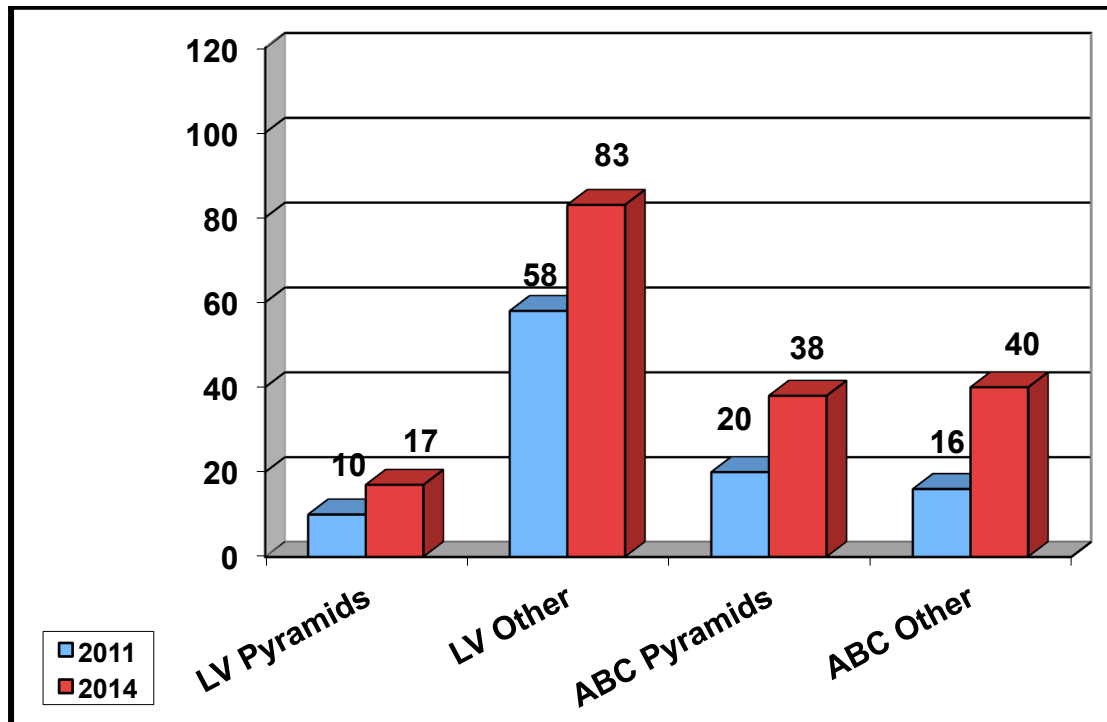
based on the inverted pyramid in the 2014 sample, accounting for 12.5% of the videos that had a recognisable structure in that group. The penultimate category in Figure 3 covers videos with a story format that, as a rule, had a beginning or initial exposition, middle and an end or denouement). Although the number of videos in this category rose in absolute terms between the two periods, this format lost weight within the group classified as having some sort of structure, of which it accounted for 25.48% in 2011 but only 15.79% in 2014. The decline in the number of videos with purely argumentative structures was even sharper (from 17.20% to 5.59%).

Figure 3. Structural categories of VTR VO, look live and clips



To provide a more precise picture of the evolving dynamics of the approaches to video production this heterogeneous group of online newspapers adopted, we divided the models they employed during the period studied into two broad categories: those that conformed with classic pyramidal formulas and those that did not (a group structured along expository chronological, sequential, narrative and argumentative lines). Although these formulas may at first appear to be diametrically opposed, in practice they are very compatible and were employed to a greater or lesser degree in tandem by all the newspapers studied.

Of the two newspapers compared in Figure 4, *lavanguardia.com* made the greatest shift away from classic pyramidal formulas. Although the percentage of videos it based on this structure rose from 14.71% of the total it published during the period studied in 2011 to 17% of the total it published during the second period studied in 2014, other approaches were used in 85.29% of the videos in the 2011 sample and 83% of the videos in the 2014 sample. This newspaper, whose interest in pursuing alternative structures was made clear by an analysis of its in-house video production (the highest of any of the online dailies included in this study), showed a marked inclination towards narrative and expository structures.

Figure 4. Structures of videos published by *lavanguardia.es* and *abc.es* by type

In contrast, the distribution of videos published by *abc.es* into these two main categories was far more even. Videos with a pyramidal structure published by *abc.es* (“ABC Pyramid”) accounted for 55.56% of the videos attributable to this newspaper in the 2011 sample and 48.72% of the same group in the 2014 sample. Generally speaking, *abc.es* videos conformed more closely to the formulas of traditional journalism. Nevertheless, over time, *abc.es* did run an increasing number that featured alternative structures (“ABC Other”), a category that represented 51.28% of the videos attributed to this newspaper in the 2014 sample compared to only 44.44% in the 2011 sample. Although *abc.es* continued to adhere to a model that was radically different from that used by *lavanguardia.com*, the weight of its in-house video production increased significantly between the two periods: in-house production, which accounted for only 6.66% of the *abc.es* videos in the 2011 sample, accounted for 20.51% of the videos attributable to that newspaper in the 2014 sample. This increase explains the rise in videos falling in the category of “other”.

5. Intercodical relations and types of narrative voice

It is clear from the findings reported above that any examination of online video news narratives must be primarily based on structure. Nevertheless, it is also worth exploring other elements that round out their identifying characteristics, two of which particularly stand out: the combinations possible between the various codes they contain (words, sound and images) and the type of narrative voice (voiceover delivered by a reporter or presenter or sound bites of statements made by subjects) employed.

Although the first, intercodical relations, constitutes a key element of audiovisual discourse, this angle has paradoxically seldom been analysed in depth. We used a classification system developed for the analysis of news videos (Mayoral, 2008: 184; Benaissa, 2012: 202-227) to explore this issue. Table 5 provides a summary of the four types of relations that exist in news videos between linguistic codes (usually delivered orally by a news presenter or journalist) and images. Although reductive in terms of theory, this division is directly applicable to samples such as those employed in this study.

Table 5. Types of relationships between image and text in news videos

<p>HIERARCHICAL RELATIONSHIPS</p>	<p>TOTALLY HIERARCHICAL: Spoken text without a supporting image or an image unaccompanied by text</p> <p>PARTIALLY HIERARCHICAL: Predominance of either text (accompanied by an illustrative image) or image (accompanied by an explanatory text)</p>
<p>COMPLEMENTARY RELATIONSHIPS</p>	<p>PARTIALLY COMPLEMENTARY: Text subordinate to image or image subordinate to text</p> <p>TOTALLY COMPLEMENTARY: absolute equilibrium between image and text.</p>

While the chart above covers all the basic variations employed in television news production (Barroso, 1992: 242; Prósper & López, 1998: 23-24; Benaissa, 2012: 224), some of the combinations it lists are standard practice and others are only used as a last resort. The first group includes the option of using voice delivery (prepared or improvised) without a supporting image. If news editors perceive that a story is of critical importance, they are willing (or resigned) to running it without a related visual component. On the other end of the spectrum is visual content that can convey a story on its own without the help of textual commentary. This kind of material is considered to be solid gold in video journalism, even when the event or topic in question is banal in terms of public interest.

Figure 5. Breakdown of videos by type of image / text combination

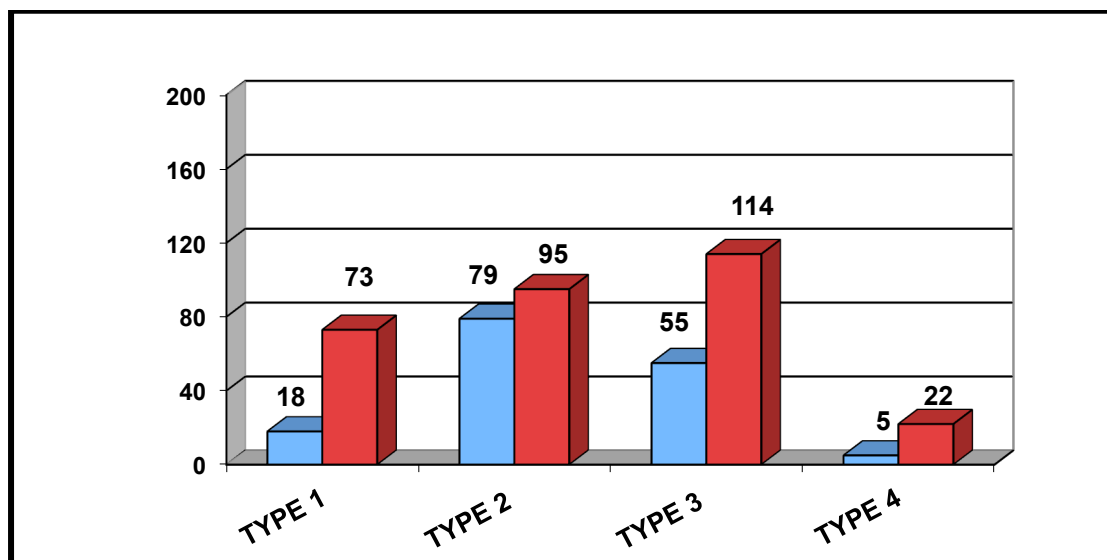


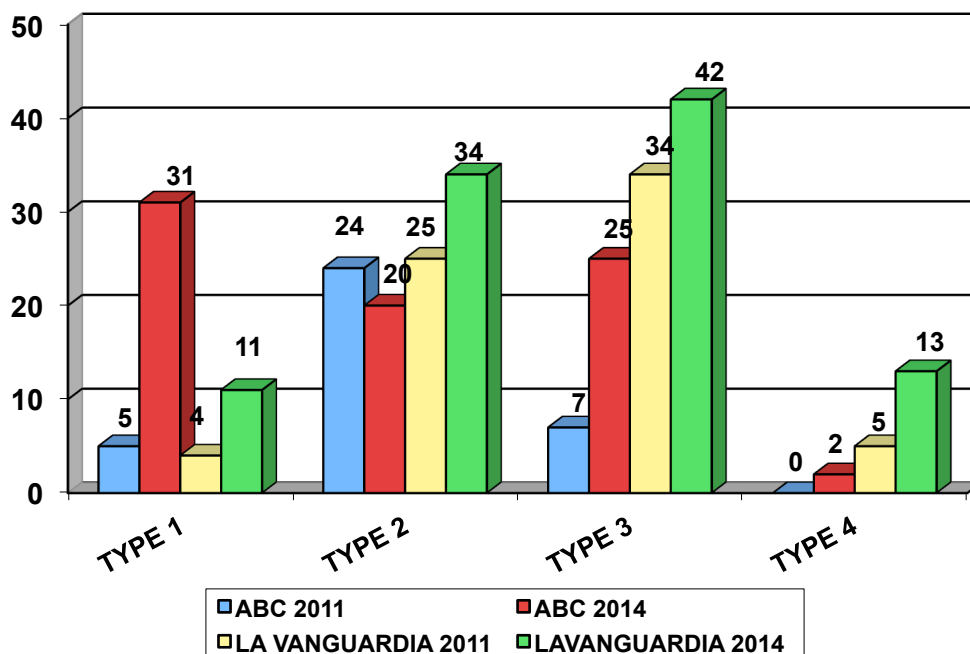
Figure 5 provides a breakdown of the videos analysed by the types of text/ image relationships outlined in Table 5). “Type 1” refers to totally hierarchical relationships. The number of videos falling into this category rose significantly from one sample to the next (11.46% in 2011 compared to 24.01% in 2014). Oral presentation held absolute sway in the

videos in this group. Keeping in mind that presenting news without any kind of supporting image is a tactic of last resort, the increase in the number of videos that conformed to this format between 2011 and 2014 could well be interpreted as a step backwards. However, this group also accounted for much of the nearly two-fold increase in the number of videos in which one could clearly make out a structure and intercodical relations (from 157 in 2011 compared to 304 in 2014). Whereas many of the units analysed in the 2011 sample lacked a recognisable structure, a significant number in the 2014 sample featured a combination of video and voiceover, a jump that coincides with an increase in the number of videos sourced from agencies (from 123 in 2011 to 189 in 2014) and a rise in the number of videos with a VTR VO format (174 in 2011 compared to 254 in 2014).

Type 2 refers to partially hierarchical relationships in which one element predominates over another. In news videos voice usually predominates over image. Images that accompany a text read aloud by a journalist or news presenter often play an illustrative rather than informative role. As Figure 5 shows, the combination of codes at play in the majority of the videos in the 2011 sample (50.32%) proved to be type 2. Nevertheless, far fewer videos in the 2014 sample conformed to type 2 characteristics (31.25%). During this period, editors showed a marked preference for partially complementary (type 3) combinations, which were detected in 37.5% of the sample units. The number of type 4 (totally complementary combinations) combinations also rose in 2014. Whereas only 3.18% of the videos in the first sample were type 4, 7.24% in the second sample fell into this category.

The pursuit of a balance between image and text was particularly notable in the videos produced internally by the newspapers studied. Whereas Figure 4 provided a comparison of the models adhered to by *lavanguardia.com* (the online newspaper that produced the most in-house videos) and *abc.es*, (the online newspaper that relied most heavily on externally produced videos) in terms of basic structures, Figure 6 compares the videos these newspapers published from the perspective of the types of image/text relationships they contained.

Figure 6. Breakdown of videos published by *lavanguardia.es* and *abc.es*

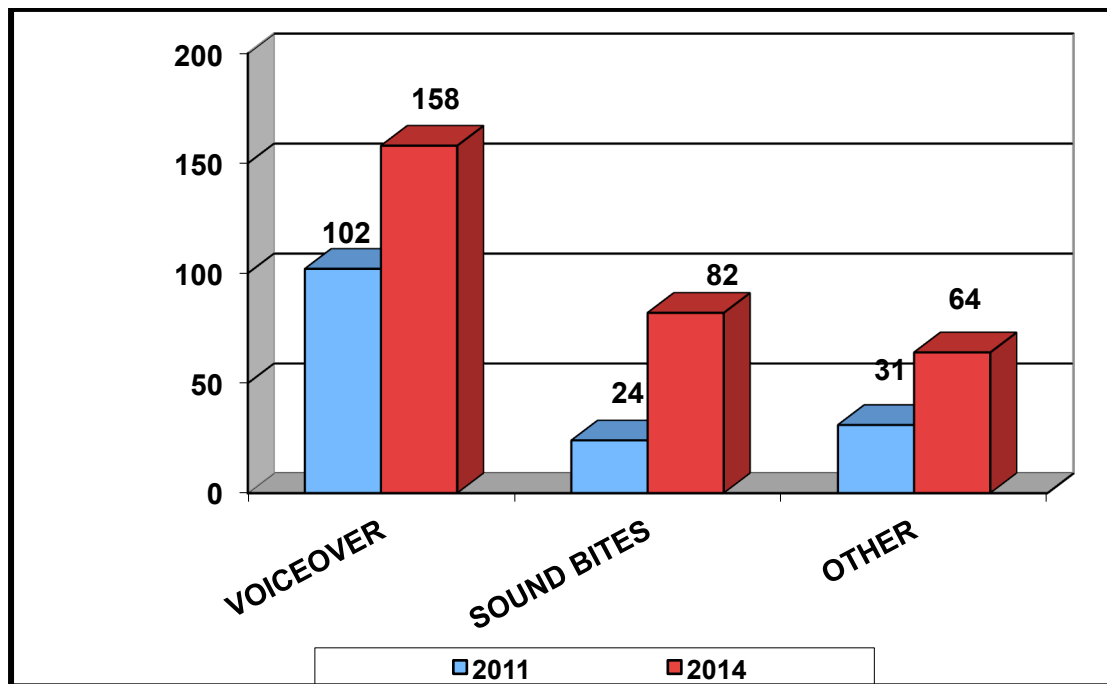


In the case of *abc.es*, there was a drop in the number of videos lacking structures and identifiable image/text relations (which were prevalent in the 2011 sample) and a corresponding rise in type 1 videos in the 2014 sample. A similar decrease in type 2 category videos suggests an increasing preference for type 3 combinations, a category that demonstrated strong growth. In contrast, the wide range of image/text combinations detected in videos published by *lavanguardia.com* revealed that newspaper's growing interest in exploiting all available options for varying these elements. By 2014 it had established a marked preference for complementary relationships between image and text: taken together, type 3 videos (partially complementary combinations) and type 4 videos (totally complementary combinations) accounted for 55% of the videos attributable to *lavanguardia.com* in the second sample whereas those with hierarchical combinations (types 1 and 2) made up the other 45%. Findings show that although all five newspapers analysed are making a shift towards a complementary combination model, those that rely primarily on externally produced videos are moving at a significantly slower pace.

As is the case in conventional television news, vocal delivery and voiceover were the primary narrative devices used in the videos published by the five newspapers analysed for this study. These types of narration were used in 64.7% of the videos in the 2011 sample. Although the percentage that used spoken narration rose in absolute terms in the 2014 sample, if measured using only the subgroup of videos (304) that had a recognisable structure as a reference, the percentage actually fell to 51.97%. To provide a context for the revolution this implies, one must imagine a television newscast in which voiceovers were only used in about 50% of the video segments broadcast.

Figure 7 tracks the growing popularity of another still marginal mode of narration employed in video news production: the sound bite as a central narrative device.

Figure 7. Types of narration employed in videos analysed



Sound bites, which are primarily used in features and interviews, allow journalists to minimize, at least in the physical sense, their presence in a news story. The fast pace of breaking news stories precludes the extensive use of sound bites. Nevertheless, online

media frequently use this device: 26.97% of the online newspaper videos in the 2014 sample contained sound bites unaccompanied by voiceovers. Look live narration provided by journalists themselves accounted for much of the category “other”.

The extensive use of sound bites (short statements by subjects interviewed) with or without supplementary narration was striking. The first sample contained 768 and the second 1046. The frequency with which they appeared (an average of 1.61 per video in the 2011 sample and 1.69 per video in the 2014 sample) is an indicator that they will most likely continue to be a standard component of online newspaper videos going forward. Like their predecessors in television, the editors of online newspapers are fully aware of the narrative power of sound bites, which enrich news content and convey the personality of a subject being quoted in a way that print media can never hope to match. This device also helps vary the pace of a video and makes it more dynamic, especially when voiceovers are used, as every change of voice adds variety and freshness to the overall piece.

6. Conclusions

The initial hypothesis of this study was that the model of audiovisual narration used by the five online newspapers examined was undergoing a process of development that was still at an incipient stage. Throughout our research, this was found to be the case: although all five newspapers studied employed audiovisual narrative techniques inherited from conventional television production, they were also clearly moving towards a new model that exploited the possibilities offered by digital media.

To start, our research confirmed a trend observed in previous studies (Greer & Mensing, 2006; Micó & Masip, 2008; Marrero, 2008; Masip & Micó, 2010; Guallar, Rovira & Ruiz, 2010; Masip, Micó & Meso, 2012; Cassany et al., 2013): that online newspapers were publishing an increasing number of videos. The number of videos identified during the collection of the second sample was greater than that identified for the first (618 in March 2014 compared to 477 in the November 2011). The average length of these videos fell from just short of three minutes in the 2011 sample to two minutes and twenty seconds in the 2014 sample. Digital media also proved to be extremely flexible in the sense that the length of videos these online newspapers published was not predetermined by either a set rundown (master discourse) or rigid format requirements. The most important finding was not that videos published by online newspapers were longer than video segments featured in television newscasts (Cassany et al., 2013: 43), but rather that online newspapers had begun to break with the conventions of television news, by which VOs should be between 30 and 60 seconds and VTR VOs should last anywhere between two and three minutes.

Regarding the source and authorship of videos published by online newspapers, this study confirms the assertions of previous authors (Micó & Masip, 2008; Masip, 2010; Masip, Micó & Ayerdi, 2011) that a gradual shift towards in-house production is underway but has yet to be consolidated across the board in Spain. Our findings show that less than a third of the newspapers analysed produced a significant number of in-house videos: externally produced videos accounted for 73.38% of the 2011 sample and a somewhat lower proportion (68.77%) in the 2014 sample.

Certain authors (Díaz Arias, 2009: 68; Masip, 2010: 183) who have pointed out that online newspapers tend to cull material from online sites that feature novel and attention-getting videos have not been off the mark. The newspapers analysed during this study relied heavily on content sourced from Internet platforms such as YouTube that specialise in weird, original, high-impact videos. However, news agencies, which were responsible for 30.58% of the videos contained in our 2014 sample, have had a significant impact on the style and practices of online journalism in that they adhere closely to the aesthetics and narrative structures of conventional television. Agencies tend to produce short videos (VTR VOs)

between one and two minutes in length that often include sound bites and voiceovers, conform to classic narrative structures such as the inverted pyramid or modified inverted pyramid and contain complementary image and text relationships. The model followed by agencies has imposed a sequential order that has to a certain extent brought videos published by online newspapers in line with the aesthetics of conventional television. The impact of agency practices runs parallel to the jump in agency-produced videos between the two periods examined: only a third of the videos in the 2011 sample had a recognisable structure whereas some type of structure was detected in 49.19% of the videos contained in the 2014 sample.

In contrast, videos produced internally over the same period demonstrated clear progress towards an innovative model that could offer an alternative to the narrative conventions of television. That is not to say that externally produced videos had not diverged in any way from the narrative models provided by conventional television. Although significant shifts away from traditional structures could be detected in the externally produced videos examined, a consistently coherent alternative model had not yet gelled. Although the in-house videos we analysed did not demonstrate any radical departures from established conventions, they did appear to be paving the way for distinctive approaches from a number of key perspectives.

The first is that videos produced in-house were clearly superior in terms of their mix and balance of image, voice and sound. The findings of this study show that externally produced videos conformed much more closely to conventional hierarchical schemes. In contrast, the majority of the intercodical relations in the videos produced in-house by newspapers such as *lavanguardia.com* were complementary.

The second is that videos produced in-house exploited alternatives to the classic voiceover. The devices most often used in this respect were sound bites of interviews (accompanied by footage with ambient sound) and look live narration. Narration by means of sound bites backed by visuals and supers was used in one out of four videos in the 2014 sample (26.97%) and was particularly exploited in features and interviews. Although several authors have noted that using this combination helps avoid synchronisation problems in television broad cast news (Cassany et al., 2013: 44), more research is needed to determine why video journalists working for online newspapers show a preference for this narrative structure.

The third important point is that videos produced in-house (as opposed to those sourced from agencies) tend to have expositive-narrative rather than pyramidal structures (which rigidly present elements arranged in descending order of interest). Our findings show that of the online newspapers analysed, *lavanguardia.com* featured the lowest percentage (17% or less) of videos with inverted pyramid or modified inverted pyramid structures. Future research could possibly focus on determining the extent to which the videos published by these newspapers (including those produced by news agencies) eventually exploit alternative narrative structures.

Our fourth and final observation is that in-house production has broadened the range of genres, formats and themes explored by online newspapers. Although breaking news continues to be the preferred news format online, features and interviews accounted respectively for 4.37% and 13.27% of the videos in the 2014 sample, an indication that they play a larger role in online news reporting than they do in conventional television newscasts. Videos falling into the “other” category, which accounted for 22.82% of the 2014 sample, had characteristics not found in conventional television news. The subgenres now emerging in the context of online journalism would be an interesting subject for future studies. Equal attention could well be paid to emerging formats and themes: further studies analysing innovation and creativity in this area would be valuable additions to the existing literature.

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