Children as content creators on YouTube and Instagram. Analysis of the formats used, parental presence and brand presence

Los niños como creadores de contenido en YouTube e Instagram. Análisis de los formatos empleados, la presencia de padres y marcas comerciales

Crianças como criadoras de conteúdo no YouTube e Instagram. Análise das formatos utilizados, presença de pais e marcas registradas

Erika Fernández-Gómez[1] iD
Jessica Fernández Vázquez[2] iD
Beatriz Feijóo Fernández[3] iD
[1] Universidad Internacional de la Rioja (UNIR), España
[2] Universidad Internacional de la Rioja (UNIR), España
[3] Universidad Internacional de la Rioja (UNIR), España

To cite this article: Fernández Gómez, E., Fernández Vázquez, J. y Feijóo Fernández, B. (2022). Children as content creators on YouTube and Instagram. Analysis of the formats used, parental presence and brand presence, *Icono 14, 20 (1).* https://doi.org/10.7195/ri14.v20i1.1762

Abstract

The findings of a project aimed at exploring how kidfluencers (influencers under 15) create content which is uploaded on YouTube and Instagram, and how branded content is integrated into videos are presented in this article. Twelve active and highly followed profiles of Spanish speaking kidfluencers were analyzed to explore how brand presence is incorporated into audiovisual formats, what information is provided and how storytelling and creativity are used to connect with their audience.

Along with self-promotional content, brands play a relevant role, particularly those presented through games. Scripting is detected and used to make content more attractive. However, despite post-production being evident, branded content includes linguistic errors, opinions and comments that reveal that videos are created by kids. Notably, the videos themselves and their titles fail to signal their commercial content on both of the studied social networks.

Keywords: kidfluencers; YouTube; Instagram; branded content; content creation; storytelling

Resumen

En este artículo se estudia de qué manera los *kidfluencers .influencers* menores de 15 años) construyen contenido en YouTube e Instagram y cómo integran el *brandedcontent* para marcas. Para ello, se toman como referencia los doce perfiles de *kidfluencers* en español activos y con un mayor número de seguidores y se analiza cómo incorporan la presencia de marca en los formatos audiovisuales que crean, qué información proporcionan y cómo a través del *storytelling* y la creatividad conectan con su audiencia. Además de contenido autopromocional, las marcas llegan a tener un importante protagonismo, especialmente aquellas presentadas a través de los juegos. Si bien se detecta la guionización para hacerlo más atractivo, las marcas conviven con una alta presencia de errores lingüísticos, opiniones y comentarios que evidencian cómo los videos son creados por menores a pesar de que se incorpore la postproducción. Es destacable que en ambas redes sociales se evita señalizar el contenido comercial, tanto en el video como en el título del mismo.

Palabras clave: niños influyentes; YouTube; Instagram; creación de contenido; Branded Content; storytelling

Resumo

Este artigo estuda como os kidfluencers (influenciadores com menos de 15 anos) criam conteúdo no YouTube e no Instagram e como integram o conteúdo para marcas. Para isso, são tomados como referência os doze perfis de kidfluencers ativos na Espanha com maior número de seguidores e analisa-se como incorporam a presença da marca nos formatos audiovisuais que criam, que informações disponibilizam e de que forma, através do conteúdo e da criatividade, eles se conectam com seu público. Além do conteúdo autopromocional, as marcas passam a ter um papel importante, principalmente aqueles apresentados por meio de games. Embora se detecte que o roteiro audiovisual o torna mais atraente, as marcas convivem com uma alta presença de erros linguísticos, opiniões e comentários que mostram como os vídeos são criados por menores apesar da incorporação da pós-produção. Vale ressaltar que em ambas as redes sociais evita-se sinalizar conteúdo comercial, tanto no vídeo quanto no título.

Palavras-chave: influenciador infantil; YouTube; Instagram; conteúdo de marca; criação de conteúdo; storytelling

1. Introduction

1.1 Branded content and new advertising formats

Consumers are currently the central focus and driving force of marketing strategies and digital advertising. Consumer engagement is key to the success of brands (Videla and Piñeiro, 2013). Engagement is understood as consumer implication, more specifically as an "emotional involvement shown by company followers on social networks" (Ballesteros, 2019, p. 221) or as "user commitment to published content" (López-Navarrete, Cabrera-Méndez, Díez-Somavilla and Calduch-Losa 2021, p. 144). Becoming engaged or involved is about establishing relationships, sharing and offering experiences (Del Pino, Castelló & Ramos-Soler, 2013, p. 20).

The new habits of media consumption that have emerged with the development of social networks have led to an environment in which the unidirectionality proclaimed by Laswell's paradigm has been debunked and now users have room to intervene for themselves, given that consumers wish to be part of and participate in generating opinion (Roca, 2014).

In this context, branded content has had to adapt to the active role consumers have taken upon themselves in advertising by creating messages oriented towards motivating users to participate in the dialog that has emerged between consumers and brands. Users "want brands to be capable of telling their own story and fulfilling their value proposition" (Del Pino and Castelló, 2015, p. 124), and are moving away from more traditional media and messages (Burgess and Green, 2009). Thus, new formats emerge that allow brands to share their messages while creating a closer, loyal and lasting relationship with users (Castelló-Martínez, 2014). Content goes beyond pitching sales, consumers look for something more: they want their criticisms and recommendations to be listened to, they wish to satisfy a need to communicate with brands (Matosas-López, 2020).

Content creation does not solely fall on brands, users can also create content, and in doing so become opinion leaders. Influencers are able to affect the behavior of others (Gómez Nieto, 2018), while their messages are hallmarked by their own personality (Fernández, Hernandez-Santaolla and Sanz, 2018). Additionally, new platforms such as Twitch allow for users to stream content, producing live video with an open chat which encourages interaction (Gutiérrez and Cuartero, 2020).

The presence of prescriptive influencers (Ramos-Serrano, Herrero-Diz, 2016) capable of extending the reach of their content (Castelló-Martínez, 2016, p. 51), has proven that brand created content published on brand channels does not suffice.

Influencers have opened a new path to the creation of branded content, or as some experts have labeled, branded entertainment which can be described as "the way in which branded content is adopted when its content is entertainment, whatever its form, and which can be disseminated across multiple channels and platforms" (De Aguilera-Moyano, Baños-González and Ramírez-Perdiguero, 2015). For some authors, branded content is "a fusion of advertising and entertainment" (Horrigan, 2009, p. 51), in which the line between these two concepts is becoming increasingly diffuse.

In this scenario, most of the thousands of worldwide followers and consumers of influencer content who are amused by, entertained by, and comment on the content they consume are mostly unaware about how this business operates (The New York Times Editorial Staff, 2020).

1.2 The branded content integrated into the storytelling of kidfluencers

Kidfluencers (influencers under 15) stand out for being capable of creating and publishing content on their YouTube and Instagram social profiles, and developing and being loyal to the brand image they create (Feijoo and Fernandez-Gómez, 2021). YouTube is the social network of choice of kidfluencers, over platforms such as Netflix or television channels (Ofcom, 2020; AIMC, 2018). It is for this reason that YouTubeKids was developed, a children's application aimed at protecting minors which enforces a series of legal restrictions and which currently reaches 35 million weekly views in 80 countries (YouTube, 2000). This channel's audience increased as the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic boosted children's online activity, to 180% during the first weeks of March 2020 by way of example (Qustodio, 2020; MarketingDirecto, 2020).

Video watching has become a common hobby among children, and becoming YouTubers, one of their professional aspirations among these digital natives (Castelló-Martínez and Tur-Viñes, 2020; AIMC, 2018). These two trends are far from declining in the near future (Bermúdez, 2020) as both have become part of child and preteen culture (Aran-Ramspott, Fedele and Tarragó, 2018).

Video success originates from their potential to create experiential, emotional, didactic and participatory content with a child's outlook. Videos depict children's daily language, situations or stories with which minors can identify. Minors upload and distribute their videos on their profiles across different platforms and in doing so aim to boost the impact of their content and to attract traffic to their channels (Chamizo-Sánchez and Fernández-

Torres, 2020). Thus, with no communication plan nor promotional advertising investment, minors can help lead the brands of their choice to top positions (Hidalgo-Marí and Segarra-Saavedra, 2017).

The greater the number of followers, likes and comments on each publication, the greater the degree of loyalty, which can be used as a measure of success (Feijóo and Fernández-Gómez, 2021). Increasingly professionalized and attention-grabbing profiles amass larger numbers of followers that may strike the interest of brands (Turiel and Bonaga, 2016) which aim to have influencers promote their products and, through storytelling, connect with consumers (Costa Sánchez, 2014) and influence purchases (Sánchez-Labella, 2020).

Storytelling is gamified in children's profiles, and products that normally would not be present in their videos make an appearance (Van Berlo, Van Reijmersdal and Eisend, 2021). An example are the unboxing videos produced by toy influencers, in which minors, in a natural manner, open boxes of toys and reveal their content, give their opinions and highlight product virtues; and by doing so are able to influence other minors (Scirri, 2021).

This content is perceived as advertising, but minors do not consider it as invasive given that what they are in the pursuit of is information (Sabate, Berbegal-Mirabent, Cañabate, & Lebherz, 2014), what they watch is entertaining and viewers appreciate the creativity displayed by influencers and how well content is presented (Jorge, Marôpo and Nunes, 2018).

1.3 The role of kidfluencer families

Not much literature is available in this regard. The study by Fernández and Chamizo (2019) refers to the detection of the relevant role played by families in these children's channels, particularly parents, who become protagonists in some occasions.

Martínez Pastor, Vizcaíno-Laorga, Nicolás Ojeda, Serrano Maíllo and García Maroto (2018) published a report on the business of YouTuber children which emphasizes how different cultures determine which adult figure appears in kidfluencer videos: in Spain, it is parents; in the United Kingdom, siblings; and in the United States, people beyond close family.

Most studies have focused on the legal limits of child exposure and the concept of overexposure on media. As an example, we can cite the studies conducted by López-Villafranca and Olmedo-Salar (2019, p.10), who perceive that parents do not seem to be aware of the risks of exposing their private life, and those by Florit Fernández (2021), who focused on the legal implications linked to the development of professional or economic activities by minors.

2. Material and methods

2.1 General objective and specific objectives

The general objective of this study is to address audiovisual content creation by kidfluencers, on YouTube and on Instagram.

On the one hand, video watching is one of the main activities in which children participate (Aznar-Díaz et al., 2019). On the other, brands seek new ways to communicate with their audiences and, given the rise of kidfluencers, minors have become the new creators of content for toys, video games or fashion, among others, with Instagram and YouTube being the most used networks (Núñez-Cansado, López-López and Somarriba-Arechavala, 2021). Previous literature had focused on YouTube (Tur-Viñes et al., 2019; Martínez-Pastor, Núñez and Cherigny, 2021); however, influencers have extended their reach and become multiplatform, and thus children now mainly follow their favorite YouTubers on Instagram, followed by Snapchat and TikTok (Tolbert and Drogos, 2019).

The specific objectives of this study are to:

- Determine the formats that appear the aforementioned channels and establish whether differences with Instagram are present. Production elements and the degree of video professionalization are addressed.
Previous studies have identified challenges, tutorials or storytelling as predominant formats on YouTube (Aznar-Díaz et al., 2019), as well as testimonial videos or vlogging (Tur-Viñes et al., 2019). To this date, no information on the formats used in Instagram is available.
- Explore parental presence in the creation of content, on YouTube and on Instagram.

The aim is to explore the degree parental involvement in content creation following the suggestions of Tur-Viñes et al. (2019, who claims that children are able to become influencers thanks to the active role assumed by parents.
- Determine the types of formats most used in creating brand content.

Unboxing has been pointed out as the most prevalent format on YouTube (Aznar-Díaz et al., 2019; Tur-Viñez, et al. 2019). This study intends to explore the presence of other commercial formats and assess the extent to which these signal the promotional nature of their content, considering that YouTubers fail to do so (Núñez-Cansado, López-López and Somarriba-Arechavala, 2021).

2.2 Material and methodology

Twelve profiles of Spanish-speaking kidfluencers who are active on both YouTube and Instagram and have strong national and international following have been studied (Social Blade, 2020; Alonso, 2020).

The following were analyzed: ((1) Las Ratitas; (2) MikelTube; (3) La Diversión de Martina; (4) The Crazy Haacks; (5) Alexity; (6) Los Juguetes de Arantxa; (7) Karina&Marina; (8) TeamNico; (9) Jugando con Aby; (10) Las Aventuras de Dani y Evan; (11) Pino and (12) Neno&Family. In total, the sample includes 154 videos on YouTube and Instagram (see table 2).

Content analysis emphasizing interpretation over quantification was conducted (Andreu, 2002). To this end, an analysis sheet was prepared (adapted from Smith, et al., 2012; Ramos-Serrano and Herrero-Diz, 2016; Tur-Viñes et al., 2018; Feijoo and Pavez, 2019; Feijoo and García, 2020; Feijoo and Fernández-Gómez, 2021) as a tool to record the types of formats used by influencer profiles (particularly influencers who create brand content), level of parental involvement and positioning. Table 1 lists the analyzed variables for each profile.

Materials were collected between March 14 and April 26, 2020, a period marked by increased YouTube viewing and by the first confinement due to Covid-19 in Spain (Qustodio, 2020; MarketingDirecto, 2020).

Table 1. Content analysis table

RQ 1	Formats used in the video	Type of content:	- Game: content revolves around a game proposal. - Challenge: content revolves around challenge proposal. - Tutorial: covers the phases of a certain action. - Vlog (routine): related to daily routines at home - Scripted story: the protagonists act out a situation (recreation). - Comment / reflection / testimony: more existential contributions, confessions, testimonies. Videos of a more intimate character. - Others: dances, home tour ...	Ramos-Serrano and Herrero-Diz, 2016; Feijoo and Pavez, 2019
		Quality	- Amateur: substantially non-edited video. Sequence shots (no montage shots) with non-preplanned movements and sudden camera movements. Frequently recorded with a mobile phone and a single camera. - Semiprofessional: an editing process is identified. Recorded with one or two cameras, a basic sequence of shots is displayed (Shot-counter shot) and the use of recurring shots (general, medium, detail). - Professional: Multiple-camera recording, with a relatively elaborate editing process and a wealth of shots.	
		Post production	- No - Yes (effects, music, overlays, text rolls ...)	
		Form mistakes	- No Yes: technical errors (technical realization, match cuts, lighting, pixelation, assembly ...) - Yes: linguistic errors (spelling, punctuation, diacritics ... in the video itself or in the description)	
OB 2	Parental presence		Diegetic and extradiegetic presence of parents (for example, parents do not appear in the shot, but are alluded to or their voices are heard)- No - Sí	Feijoo and Fernández-Gómez, 2021

OB 3	Brand presence per video	Brand centrality	Dichotomous variable: brands appear/do not as main protagonist	Smith et al., 2012; Tur-Viñes et al., 2018; Feijoo and García, 2020; Feijoo and Fernández-Gómez, 2021
		Number of identifiable brands per video	Numeric variable: count of the number of brands in the shots (independently of whether or not a promotional intent is identifiable)	
		Advertising technique	- Self-promotion: references to the influencer's own products/brands (books, websites, channels, merchandising…) - Promotion: explicit references to third party products/brands (similar to testimonials) - Active/passive placement: product/brand appearance on camera. Active, if influencer interacts with products/brands; passive if product/brands simply appear on camera - Unboxing: products/brands are removed from boxes. - Raffles - Others: room tours, challenges…	
		Promotional signage	Dichotomous variable: elements (texts, audios or images) clearly identifying content as product promotion are/are not present.	
		Brand information	Dichotomous variable: Explicit descriptive allusions by influencer regarding product/brand are/are not present.	
		Brand feeling	Dichotomous variable: Explicit emotional allusion by influencer regarding product/brand are/are not present (such as ("I love it", "Can't live without", "it rocks")	

Source: Data compiled by the authors from Smith et al., (2012); Ramos-Serrano and Herrero-Diz, (2016); Tur-Viñes et al., (2018); Feijoo and Pavez, (2019); Feijoo and García, (2020); Feijoo and Fernández-Gómez, (2021).

3. Results

3.1 Types of formats used in YouTube and Instagram

Table 2 shows that content creation by kidfluencers for YouTube and Instagram mainly adhere to five main formats: scripted stories (36), challenges (35), games (27); vlogs (23) and others (33). The format termed other includes videos covering a variety of content such as

dances (closely linked to Tik Tok), and room tours in which influencers show their rooms or advertising content such as unboxing.

Social networks show a diversity of formats. The most common format on YouTube is challenges (26), followed by the scripted stories (25), games (22), vlogs (19) and others (17). On Instagram, the format other takes the lead (16) (mostly in the form of musical videos), followed by scripted stories (11), challenges (9), games (5) and vlogs (4). Thus, format selection for content creation to be uploaded on Instagram does apply, and influencers approach topics differently depending on whether content is to be uploaded on the photo or video platforms.

This study acknowledges the presence of comments and reflections (4 videos), and tutorials (9 videos) in the two social networks and for the period analyzed. However, the analysis focuses on the five most widely used formats given the low presence of the aforementioned formats.

In addition to differences in format stemming from the social network to which content is uploaded, format is affected by the profile of the channel. By way of example, in *Pino*, challenges took the lead; in *Las Aventuras de Dani y Evan*, games; and in *Karina y Marina* it was scripted stories. Likewise, some Instagram channels limit their content to images, as in *Las Ratitas* or *Los juguetes de Arantxa* who upload no videos.

Table 2. Audiovisual formats on YouTube (YT) and Instagram (IG)

	Scripted story		Challenge		Other		Games		Vlog		TOTAL
	YT	IG	YT	IG	YT	IG	YT	IG	YT	IG	
	Formal errors										
Yes, linguistic	17	4	14	3	7	5	17	0	6	0	73
No	8	7	12	6	10	11	5	5	13	4	81
Quality of video											
Amateur	13	8	26	6	14	13	19	5	17	4	125
Semiprofessional	12	2	9	3	3	3	3	0	2	0	28
Professional	0	1	0	0	0	0		0	0	0	1
Post-production											
Yes	25	10	25	4	15	8	22	0	19	0	128
No	0	1	1	5	2	8	0	5	0	4	22
Parental presence											
Yes	11	5	20	5	8	4	7	5	16	4	54
No	14	6	6	4	9	12	15	0	3	0	69
TOTAL VIDEOS	25	11	26	9	17	16	22	5	19	4	154
TOTAL FORMAT	36		35		33		27		23		

Source: Data collected by authors

Spelling errors are the most common on YouTube. Thus, capital letters in titles are missing accent marks "EL ULTIMO EN DEJAR DE JUGAR A FUTBOL GANA" (*Team Nico*, March

29, 2021) or "DESAFIO HOT WHEELS saltos de DINOSAURIOS Dani y Evan CHALLENGE" (*Las Aventuras de Dani y Evan*, March 28, 2021).

Regarding content per format scripted stories abound, particularly those in which minors interpret chapters of their own series, books or video games. This is the case of channels such as *Los Juguetes de Arantxa* with "Las historias de mi cole" or *Karina y Marina* and their series "Fantasmas en mi nueva casa." *The Crazy Haacks* or *Las Aventuras de Dani y Evan* use this format linked to the theme of their books (a cruise ship or dinosaurs) and *Mikel Tube* to that of a video game.

Image 1. Example of a scripted story

Source: *Los juguetes de Arantxa*, retrieved from https://cutt.ly/Nn96Vut

The way in which these scripted stories are presented and their continuation in various consecutive installments contributes to developing seriality, as does the construction of a transmedia universe with a storytelling extending across different platforms.

Challenges, the second most predominant content creation strategy, show a degree of variety. Minors are challenged to last the longest doing some trick while playing soccer, doing some activity in the yard, or while talking, for instance. These are made for brands

such as Nike, Hot Wheels or Fortnite. Table 2 shows that challenges are closely linked to YouTube.

Challenges proposed by or for brands are generally more frequent on male channels; in YouTube channels such as *Pino* or *Las Aventuras de Dani y Evan*, and in Instagram, *Mikel Tube*.

Continuity and frequency are concepts that are also present among challenges. Nike's challenge is particularly present on *Mikel Tube*'s Instagram profile as it was maintained for several weeks with the aim of motivating followers to do sports at home during the Covid-19 confinement.

Image 2. Nike example over several weeks on *Mikel Tube*

Source: *Mikel Tube*'s Instagram account, retrived from https://cutt.ly/dn3qRXd

The content classified as belonging to the format termed other is characterized by variety, mainly by music related contents and include dances, video clips and lip dubs. Lip dubs are linked to Tik Tok and its apps which allows users to synchronize mouthing words, gestures and movements while singing a popular song. Per social network, the other format predominates on Instagram, and on YouTube, and per gender, in girl-oriented channels such as *Alexity* or *Karina y Marina*.

Sports, car or video game challenges are part of male-oriented profiles and musical ones are more present in those oriented to girls.

Image 3. Example of a dance challenge in *La diversión de Martina*
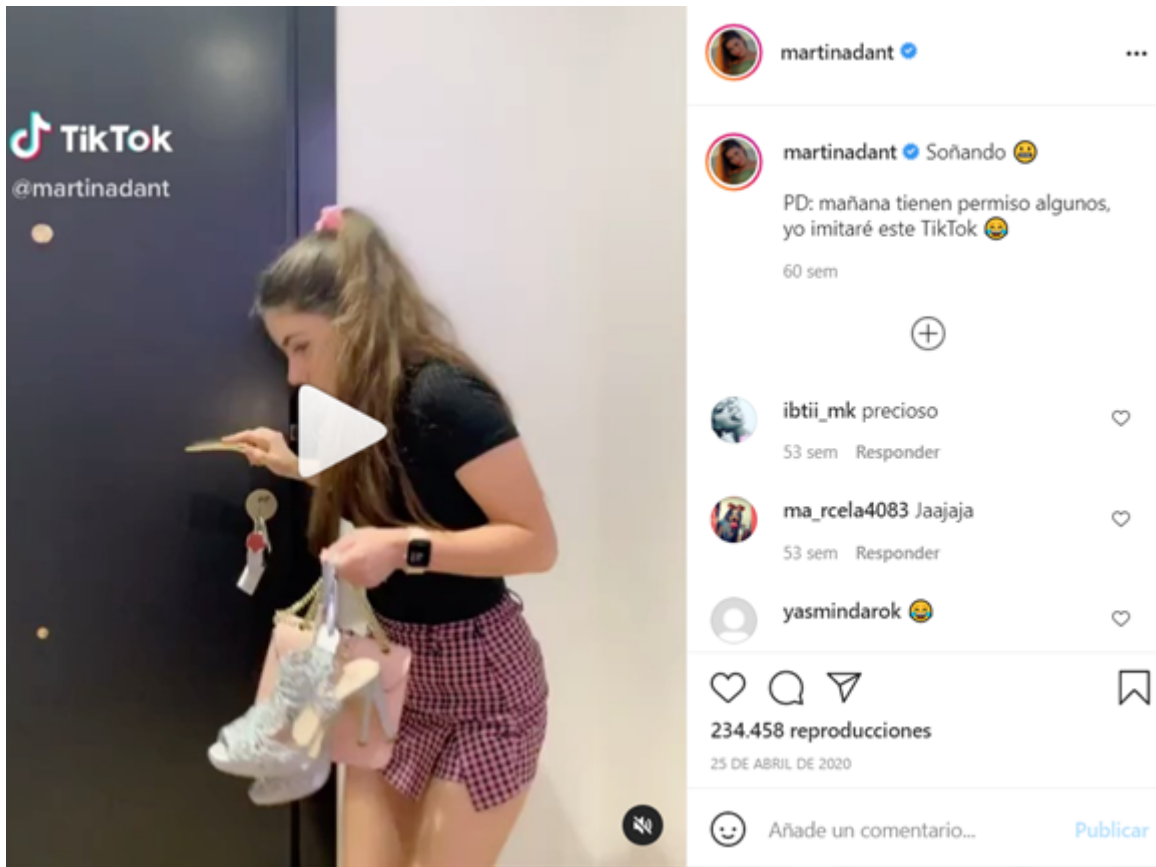
Source: Martina Dant's Instagram account, retrieved from https://cutt.ly/hn3qOWC

In the case of games, on YouTube toy brands are easily recognizable in the video content or are mentioned in the title (Fortnite, PinyPon, Kinder Sopresa, Jurassica World Evolution, etc.), which matches channel targets. The same proves to be true on Instagram, with only one out of four providing no reference to a brand.

As will be developed in the content section for brands, games are one of the formats in which brands are most present. It may be surmised that theme selection is conditioned by the insertion of one or more toy or video game brands, among others.

Image 4. Example of a game linked to a brand in *Pino*

Source: *Pino*'s YouTube channel, retrieved from https://cutt.ly/fn3qGJq

Finally, for vlogs, the content created by influencers covers daily life activities such as exercising, schoolwork or cooking in a rather natural way. Given the ongoing covid-19 confinement at the time the sample was collected, publications were linked to containment routines. In some cases, such as *Los Juguetes de Arantxa*, archived videos were shared such as "VLOG de mis VACACIONES en Andorra (una SEMANA antes de LA CUARENTENA)" (March 20, 2020).

3.2 Parental Presence

As can be seen in table 2, no parental presence predominates in the videos created by kidfluencers and uploaded to their social networks there being one exception: when minors require the presence of a parent for content creation purposes. This situation strongly correlates with two formats, namely, challenges and vlogs. On YouTube, 20 of the 26 challenges and 16 of the 19 vlogs included parental participation.

In vlogs, parental presence occurs naturally within a home setting, and as part of daily activities. Parental participation is needed to be able to conduct the challenge, whether it be holding out the longest in the yard or in the car or who plays a certain game the longest. Winners of this type of challenges usually receive a considerable monetary compensation, around € 1,000 or € 2,000.

Differences among channels are present. For instance, in channels such as *Las Aventuras de Dani y Evan* a father figure is always present, in *Team Nico* both parents are present; in *Pino* and *The Crazy Hacks* it is the mother who appears. In doing so, parents themselves become influencers along with their children and take the opportunity to promote their own accounts on social networks. In the three aforementioned channels parents lead the script of the story to be told, the challenge to conducted or accompany their children as they play a game. More parental presence can be seen in challenges and routines conducted by male YouTubers than by female ones.

Image 5. *Las Aventuras de Dani y Evan*. Channel with a constant presence of the paternal figure

DESAFIO HOT WHEELS saltos de DINOSAURIOS Dani y Evan CHALLENGE

5.513.499 visualizaciones • 28 mar 2020   46.245   7277   COMPARTIR   GUARDAR   ...

Source: *Las Aventuras de Dani y Evan*'s YouTube channel, retrieved from https://cutt.ly/Kn3qZ9T

Finally, the location of challenges was strongly influenced by studied period, with homes being the most frequent indoor setting, and yards, the prime outdoor location.

Image 6. Home Challenge example in *The Crazy Haacks*

3.3 Brand contents

In 50% of the videos analyzed (77 out of 154) brand centrality is evident. Brands occasionally play a pivotal role, for example, some videos on games simply revolve around one product. On YouTube, an average of five brands per video was recorded, while on Instagram, there were two per post.

Figure 1. Number of publications with brand centrality by social networks and audiovisual formats
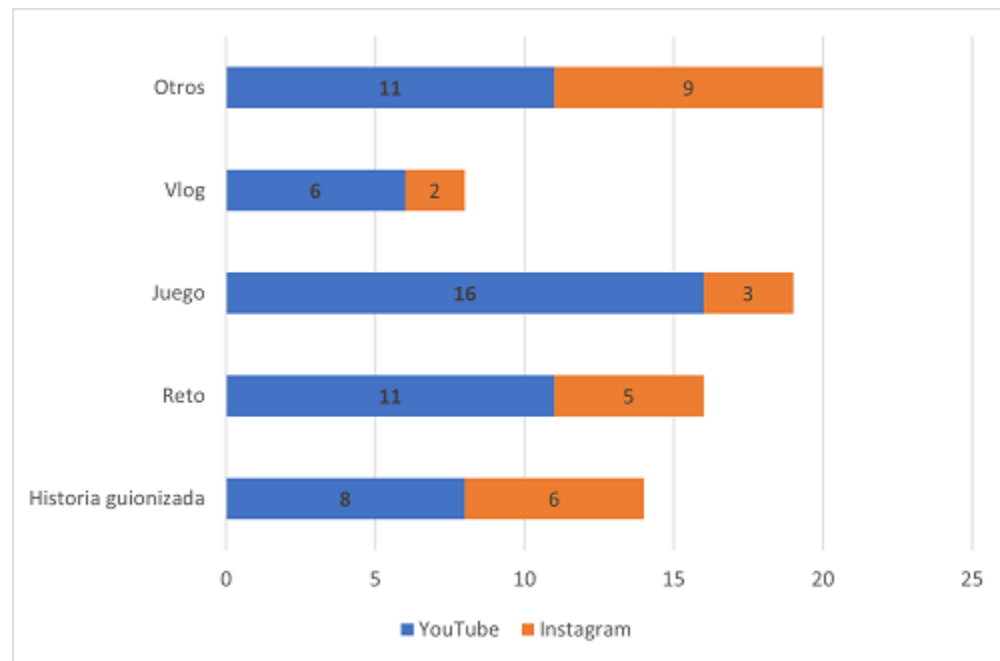
Source: Data compiled by the authors

Figure 1 shows that videos categorized as belonging to the Other format were the most prevalent compared to formats which have already been established in previous literature. One interpretation could be that influencers, in fact, do create their own brand content. By way of example, some of these other formats include room tours, dances (mainly made for self-promotion) or more commercial formats such as unboxings.

Two cases are worth mentioning, the channels of *Los Juguetes de Arantxa* and *Alexity*. Both channels uploaded unboxing videos for a doll brand (Barbie Reveal). *Alexity* went further and scripted the partipant herself becoming Barbie to promote the brand.

In the video "#Alexity #Barbie #Mattel ME CONVIERTO EN UNA BARBIE - ALEXITY" (Alexity, March 20, 2020) the protagonist runs through the features of the new Mattel dolls as she unboxes them, dresses like one of them and then goes off shopping.

Another way of displaying toys, video games or brands targeted to children is by playing with them. Despite being conditioned by the presence of the brand, these videos are set up in more natural surroundings in which children appear playing. Scripting intended at making these videos more attractive is detected, and post-production editing is present, as in *Las Aventuras de Dani y Evan* who pretend to be pirates to promote The Pirate Island of Captain Caminan from PinyPon Action (image 3).

Image 8. Pirate game for PinyPon Action in *Las Aventuras de Dani y Evan*

Some influencers choose challenges to present brands to their followers. Challenges are a consolidated format on TikTok, and were also found in social networks analyzed in this study, especially on Instagram. On *Mikel Tube*'s channel, with Nike's collaboration, two brothers challenge each other to perform certain 1-minute exercises to encourage physical activity at home during the covid-19 confinement.

Additional natural-seeming and spontaneous settings can also be found as ways of presenting brands such as room tours, particularly among girl influencers who, for instance, while touring their bedroom show home decorations and mention a brand of mattresses, a product that can be deemed to be far from children's interest.

In addition product information, videos are accompanied by brand feelings. To this end, influencers express their opinion in a emotional ways (figure 2). This is most noticeable on YouTube, where 45 of the 77 brand-centric videos reinforce persuasive intention by incorporating minors uttering brand feelings. In *Alexity*'s Barbie Reveal video, some of brand feeling expressions the protagonist proclaims are "they rock" ("molan un montonazo"), "I love the packaging" ("me encanta el envoltorio"), "their looks rock" ("los looks son muy chulos"), to quote just a few.

It is important to note the absence of any references to the presence of intentional branding in both studied social networks, the content itself, the description and video titles.

Figure 2. Number of publications with branding content: signage and information
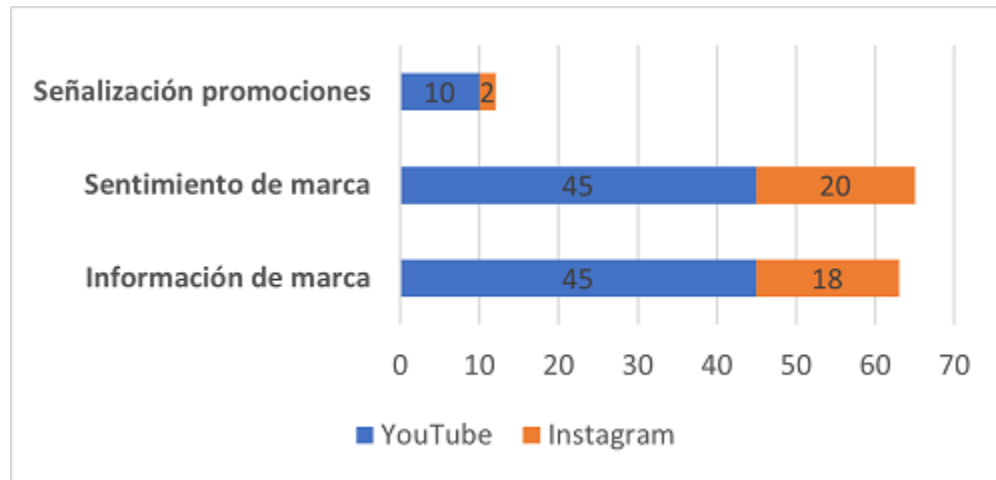
Source: Data compiled by the authors

Classic formats such as promotion, self-promotion, and active and passive product placement were present among the audiovisual materials that were sampled. Thus, the elements of originality that set some of these videos apart from previously published categorizations, were determined by the choices influencers made on how to integrate brands into their video, as by playing, telling a story, setting challenges or disclosing their daily life. Some channels integrate video games in a rather natural way such as *Pino* or *Team Nico*, others dolls as in *Los juguetes de Arantxa*, cars and dinosaurs in *Las Aventuras de Dani y Evan*, or fashion and technology in *The Crazy Haacks*.

Self-promotion by kidfluencers is strongly present in all the channels, and a clear effort is made to promote their own profiles on social networks and the products associated with their personal brand image, such as books, T-shirts, web pages, even their own video games. Self-promotion is a constant in all their publications, either explicitly in their videos as overlays or comments from YouTubers themselves, or in the content description section.

This study shows the wide variety of brands, categories, products and price range to which these kidfluencers are exposed, which ranges from food products to technological devices (consoles, latest generation smartphones and tablets, computers or smart watches) and reveals their belonging to higher economic groups. Many products are staged with active product placement, are identifiable at all times and YouTubers make constant use of them. Moreover, the use of these gadgets is implicit in most of the published content, especially those related to the display of video games (Fortnite and Animal Crossing) in which the consoles (PlayStation and Nintendo Switch) are essential to the purpose.

4. Discussion and Conclusions

This study verifies the presence of YouTubers on Instagram, despite the differences in content of these two social networks. Thus, YouTubers approach the photo and video sharing social networking service by uploading musical formats like those that are usually published on video-focused social networking services such as Tik Tok.

Scripted stories and challenges are also present in the contents uploaded by kidfluencers (Aznar-Díaz et al., 2019) and in which branding is strongly present. The creation of branded content for brands does not prevent influencers from incorporating promotional content which totally adheres to the personality they have previous developed on their own channels, as Jorge, Marôpo and Nunes (2018) already highlighted. That is, influencers accept and excel at the challenge of creating content that naturally merges into a different social network.

Despite not being the focus of this study, gender-dependent differences in content creation were detected, a fact that affects the types of brands which appear or are promoted. Girl-led channels develop content in which dolls or household items such as mattresses are present, while boy-led channels prioritize sports brands or cars.

Scripted stories are present in both social networks and used by kidfluencers to promote their own products. The transmedia strategy these influencers build across multiple platforms and media (books, video games, merchandising products) and around the audiovisual content generated for their YouTube channels allows them to create and maintain their brand and expand their message by increasing the number of followers and by consolidating their fan phenomenon. This business infrastructure is possible thanks to the counseling and management of specialized marketing agencies (Aznar-Díaz et al., 2019; Feijoo and Fernández-Gómez, 2021), although content may seem homemade, familiar, and spontaneous. Despite scriptwriting and post-production editing, brand videos display linguistic and spelling errors, which reveals a certain lack of interest in the formal aspects of the content.

Regarding the second objective of this study, as previously highlighted by Tur-Viñes et al. (2019) it is assumed that content creation is conducted by influencers with parental support. Parents are predominantly absent from videos, except for challenges or the in vlogs which require their help and occur in a home setting in this sampling. Strategies differ per channel, particularly those in which one of the parents becomes one more YouTubers or Instagramers. In certain instances, parents are successful enough to open their own channels, feeding the transmedia strategy started by their children.

The strong presence of brands and a lack of explicit signage is present all along as previous researchers have already reported (Núñez-Cansado, López-López and Somarriba-Arechavala, 2021; Feijoo and Fernández-Gómez, 2021). The presence of brands mostly

occurs in two traditional formats, namely games and challenges. The work of influencers is most noticeable in the formats as it can be easily seen how they bet on the use of new formats to generate branded content. Original unboxings, room tours or dances become brand-centric content. In general, content creation in whatever format it may be delivered, is accompanied by brand information and feeling.

Thus, although attempts are made to regulate the inclusion of brands in these channels so that promotional videos can be correctly identified by minors (Núñez-Cansado, López-López and Somarriba-Arechavala, 2021), commercial content of a self-promotional nature which qualifies as advertisement placement is strongly present. Future research should explore the prescribing power these referents exert on youth digital culture (Aran-Ramspott, Fedele and Tarragó, 2018) across social networks.

References

AIMC. (2018). *AIMC niñ@s 2018*. https://cutt.ly/inGsa1p

Alonso, L. (2020, March 10). *20 niños youtubers que triunfan en España... y el mundo (2020)* (20 youtubers children who succeed in Spain ... and the world (2020). https://cutt.ly/wn9MKEj

Andreu, J. (2002). *Las técnicas de análisis de contenido: una revisión actualizada*. Fundación Centro de Estudios Andaluces.

Aran-Ramspott, S., Fedele, M., y Tarragó, A. (2018). YouTubers' social functions and their influence on pre-adolescence. *Comunicar*, (57), 71-80. https://doi.org/10.3916/C57-2018-07

Aznar-Díaz, I., Trujillo-Torres, J. M., Romero-Rodríguez, J. M. y Campos-Soto, M. N. (2019). Generación Niños YouTubers: análisis de los canales YouTube de los nuevos fenómenos infantiles. *Píxel-BIT. Revista de medios y comunicación,* (56), 113-128. https://doi.org/10.12795/pixelbit.2019.i56.06

Ballesteros Herencia, C. (2019). La representación digital del engagement: hacia una percepción del compromiso a través de acciones simbólicas. *Revista de Comunicación, 18*(1), 215-233. https://doi.org/10.26441/RC18.1-2019-A11

Bermúdez, S. (2020). *Lo que debes saber de la Generación Alpha para llegar al futuro.* https://bit.ly/2URBrMd

Burgess, J. y Green, J. (2009). *YouTube: Online Video and Participatory Culture.* PolitePress

Castelló-Martínez, A. (2014). La agencia de medios en el nuevo escenario comunicativo. *Revista Mediterránea de Comunicación*, 5(2), 65-90. http://dx.doi.org/10.14198/MEDCOM2014.5.2.06

Castelló-Martínez, A. (2016). El marketing de influencia: Un caso práctico. En I. Zacipa, V. Tur-Viñes y J. Segarra-Saavedra (Coords.), *Tendencias publicitarias en Iberoamérica: Diálogo de saberes y experiencias* (pp. 49-65). Colección Mundo Digital. http://dx.doi.org/10.14198/MEDCOM/2016/8

Castelló Martínez, A., del Pino Romero, C. y Tur Viñes, V. (2016). Estrategias de contenido con famosos en marcas dirigidas a público adolescente. *Icono 14,* (14), 123-154. https://doi.org/10.7195/ri14.v14i1.883

Castelló-Martínez, A. y Tur-Viñes, V. (2020). Obesity and food#related content aimed at children on YouTube. *Clinical Obesity, 10*(5). https://doi.org/10.1111/cob.12389

Chamizo-Sanchez, R. y Fernández-Torres, M. (2020). *Youtubers infantiles, los nuevos protagonistas de la comunicación comercial*. Universidad de Málaga. Contribuciones a congresos científicos. https://hdl.handle.net/10630/19225

De Aguilera-Moyano, J.; Baños-González, M. y Ramírez-Perdiguero, J. (2015). Branded entertainment: los contenidos de entretenimiento como herramienta de comunicación de marketing. Un estudio de su situación actual en España. *Revista Latina de Comunicación Social*, (70), 519-538. 10.4185/RLCS-2015-1057

Del Pino, C., Castelló, A. y Ramos-Soler, I. (2013). *La comunicación en cambio constante. Branded content, Community Management, Comunicación 2.0 y Estrategia en medios sociales*. Fragua.

Del Pino, C. y Castelló, A. (2015). La comunicación publicitaria se pone de moda: branded content y fashion films. *Revista Mediterránea de Comunicación, 6*(1), 105-128. https://doi.org/10.14198/MEDCOM2015.6.1.07

Feijoo, B. & Fernández-Gómez, E. (2021). Niños y niñas influyentes en YouTube e Instagram: contenidos y presencia de marcas durante el confinamiento. *Cuadernos.Info*, (49), 302-330. https://doi.org/10.7764/cdi.49.27309

Feijoo, B. & García, A. (2020). Publicidad y entretenimiento en los soportes online. Youtubers como embajadores de marca a través del estudio de caso de Makiman131. *Perspectivas de la Comunicación, 13*(1), 133-154. https://cutt.ly/nn9MXUZ

Feijoo, B. & Pavez, I. (2019). Audiovisual content with advertising intention in children's videos on YouTube: the case of the Soy Luna series. *Communication & Society*, 32(1), 313-331 http://dx.doi.org/10.15581/003.32.1.313-331

Fernández, J., Hernandez-Santaolla, V. y Sanz Marcos, P. (2018). Influencers, marca personal e ideología política en Twitter. *Cuadernos.info*, (42), 19-37. http://dx.doi.org/10.7764/cdi.42.1348

Fernández Torres, M.J. y Chamizo Sánchez, R. (2019). Youtubers infantiles, los nuevos protagonistas de la comunicación comercial. En Liberal Ormaechea, S.; Mañas Viniegra, L. (Coords), *Las Redes Sociales como herramienta de comunicación Persuasiva* (pp. 311-340). McGraw-Hill.

Florit Fernández, C. (2021). Kidfluencers: menores de edad emancipados autónomos en internet. *Actualidad Civil*, (2). https://dialnet.unirioja.es/servlet/articulo?codigo=7796807

Gómez Nieto, B. (2018). El influencer: herramienta clave en el contexto digital de la publicidad engañosa. *Methaodos.Revista De Ciencias Sociales, 6*(1), 149-156. https://doi.org/10.17502/m.rcs.v6i1.212

Gutiérrez Lozano, J.F. y Cuartero Naranjo, A. (2020). El auge de Twitch: nuevas ofertas audiovisuales y cambios del consumo televisivo entre la audiencia juvenil. *Ámbitos: Revista internacional de comunicación*, (50), 159-175. 10.12795/Ambitos.2020.i50.11

Hidalgo-Marí, T. y Segarra-Saavedra, J. (2017). El fenómeno youtuber y su expansión transmedia. Análisis del empoderamiento juvenil en redes sociales. *Fonseca, Journal of Communication, 15*(15), 43-56. https://doi.org/10.14201/fjc2017154356

Horrigan, D. (2009). Branded content: a new model for driving Tourism via film and branding strategies. *Tourismos: an international multidisciplinary refereed journal of tourism, IV*(3), 51-65. https://cutt.ly/Bn3s5Nb

Jorge, A., Marôpo, L. y Nunes, T. (2018). 'I am not being sponsored to say this': a teen youtuber and her audience negotiate branded content. *Observatorio (OBS*),* 76-96. https://doi.org/10.15847/obsOBS0001382

Labrecque, L., Markos, E. y Milne, G. (2011). Online personal branding: Processes, challenges, and implications. *Journal of interactive marketing, 25*(1), 37-50. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.intmar.2010.09.002

López-Villafranca, P. y Olmedo-Salar, S. (2019). Menores en YouTube, ¿ocio o negocio? Análisis de casos en España y EUA. *El profesional de la información, 28*(5). https://doi.org/10.3145/epi.2019.sep.20

López-Navarrete, A.J., Cabrera-Méndez, M., Díez-Somavilla, R. y Calduch-Losa, A. (2021). Fórmula para medir el engagement del espectador en YouTube: investigación exploratoria sobre los principales youtubers españoles. *Revista Mediterránea de Comunicación, 12*(1), 143-156. https://doi.org/10.14198/MEDCOM000013

Marketing Directo (13 de abril de 2020). *El consumo de vídeo en YouTube aumenta un 55% durante el confinamiento y el contenido infantil se convierten en el rey.* https://cutt.ly/On9MNZP

Martínez Pastor, E., Núñez, P. y Cherigny, F. (2021). Entertainment or advertising? YouTube channels displaying content created by kids. En de La Ville, V-I., Garnier, P., Gilles Brougère (Eds). *Cultural and Creative Industries of Childhood and Youth: An interdisciplinary exploration of new frontiers* (63-87) Peter Lang: ICCA – Industries Culturelles, Création, Numérique. https://hal.archives-ouvertes.fr/hal-03171710

Martínez Pastor, E., Vizcaíno-Laorga, M., Nicolás Ojeda, M. A., Serrano Maíllo, M. I. y García Maroto, S. (2018). *Familias y niños: el negocio de los canales de los niños youtubers.* Fundación BBVA. https://cutt.ly/jn9M1Rm

Matosas-López, L. (2020). *Cómo distintos tipos de organización gestionan su presencia en plataformas sociales*. XX International Conference on Knowledge, Culture, and Change in Organizations

Ofcom. (2020). *Children and parents: media use and attitudes report 2019.* OFCOM. https://cutt.ly/onGfEib

Núñez-Cansado, M., López-López, A. y Somarriba-Arechavala, N. (2021). Publicidad encubierta en los kidsfluencers. Una propuesta metodológica aplicada al estudio de caso de los diez youtubers menores con más seguidores de España. *Profesional De La Información, 30*(2). https://doi.org/10.3145/epi.2021.mar.19

Qustodio. (noviembre 2020). *Centennials, el antes y el después de una generación marcada por el Covid-19*. https://cutt.ly/TnGfU9Y

Ramos-Serrano, M. y Herrero-Diz, P. (2016). Unboxing and brands: youtubers phenomenon through the case study of evantubehd. *Revista Prisma Social*, Especial. 90-120. https://revistaprismasocial.es/article/view/1315

Roca, M. (2014). La transformación de la industria publicitaria en la era digital. Percepciones de los profesionales en Estados Unidos: retos y oportunidades. *Telos: Cuadernos de comunicación e innovación*, (99), 64-74. https://cutt.ly/UnGfLex

Sabate, F., Berbegal-Mirabent, J., Cañabate, A. y Lebherz, P. R. (2014). Factors influencing popularity of branded content in Facebook fan pages. *European Management Journal, 32*(6), 1001-1011. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.emj.2014.05.001

Sánchez-Labella Martín, I. (2020). Youtubers infantiles: los menores como recurso para generar nuevas tendencias publicitarias. *Austral Comunicacion, 9*(2). https://doi.org/10.26422/aucom.2020.0902.san

Scirri, K. (2021). The *bussines of being a toy influencer.* Capstone Press.

Smith, A., Fischer, E. y Yongjia, C. (2012). How does Brand-related user-generated content differ across YouTube, Facebook and Twitter. *Journal of Interactive advertising, 26*(2), 102-113. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.intmar.2012.01.002

Social Blade (2020). *Top 100 Youtubers in Spain sorted by SB Rank.* https://goo.gl/otszEm

The New York Times Educational Publishing (2020). *Social Media Influencers: Apps, Algorithms and Celebrities.* Nueva York: The Rosen Publishing Group.

Tolbert, A.N, y Drogos, K.L. (2019). Tweens' Wishful Identification and Parasocial Relationships With YouTubers. *Frontiers in Psychology*, (10). https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2019.02781

Tur-Viñes, V., Núñez-Gómez, P. y Martínez-Pastor, E. (2019). YouTube, menores y cultura colaborativa. Revisión bibliográfica de la investigación académica. *Historia y comunicación social 24*(1). 331-351. http://dx.doi.org/10.5209/HICS.64498

Tur-Viñes, V., Núñez Gómez, P. y González-Río, M. J. (2018). Menores influyentes en YouTube. Un espacio para la responsabilidad (Kid influencers on YouTube. A space for responsibility). *Revista Latina de Comunicación Social*, (73), 1211-1230. https://doi.org/10.4185/RLCS-2018-1303

Turiel, H. y Bonaga, C. (2016). *Mamá quiero ser YouTuber*. Barcelona: Editorial Planeta.

Van Berlo, Z.M.C., Van Reijmersdal, E. A., y Eisend, M. (2021) The Gamification of Branded Content: A Meta-Analysis of Advergame Effects. *Journal of Advertising, 50*(2), 179-196. 10.1080/00913367.2020.1858462

Videla, J. J. y Piñeiro-Otero, T. (2013). Hacia una "radio social": Interacción, proyección y repercusión de las cadenas españolas en redes sociales. *Icono14, 11(*2), 83–113. https://doi.org/10.7195/ri14.v11i2.592

YouTube. (2020). *Investing in YouTube Kids*. https://cutt.ly/znGf2u2