

# YouTube as a platform for the exercise of cyber journalism: a case study of the Cuban media *Escambray* and *Invasor*

## YouTube como plataforma para el ejercicio del ciberperiodismo: estudio de caso de los medios cubanos *Escambray* e *Invasor*

*O YouTube como plataforma para o exercício do ciberjornalismo: estudo de caso dos meios de comunicação cubanos Escambray e Invasor*

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**ABSTRACT** | Assessing YouTube audiovisual cyber journalism by Cuban State-owned media shows the methodological and practical limitations of working on the platform within the national media ecosystem. This research analyzes the audiovisual content published on YouTube by the cybermedia *Escambray* and *Invasor* during the first semester of 2022. From a mixed approach and with qualitative content analysis as a fundamental method, 64 videos from the channels of both media are studied considering the models of production and distribution of content and the Internet codes of audiovisual language. The results allow identifying deficiencies in the production mechanisms and in the use of audiovisual language elements that favor the exercise of effective journalism from the YouTube channels of the analyzed media. The main conclusions show the need for Cuban media to rethink the ways of performing cyber journalism on YouTube; this, from a characterization that has deficiencies in the ways of realization and use of the platform's resources in times when access to the Internet and digital sites by Cuban citizens is growing. Giving greater priority and autonomy to digital newsrooms, being more effective in the distribution of content, and using the tools of cyber journalistic discourse with greater intentionality are transcendental to achieve this goal.

**KEYWORDS:** cyber journalism; audiovisual journalism; YouTube; audiovisual language.

### HOW TO CITE

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**RESUMEN** | *La evaluación del ciberperiodismo audiovisual en YouTube realizado por los medios de comunicación estatales cubanos muestra las limitaciones metodológicas y prácticas del trabajo en la plataforma dentro del ecosistema mediático nacional. Esta investigación analiza el contenido audiovisual publicado en YouTube por los cibermedios Escambray e Invasor durante el primer semestre de 2022. A partir de un enfoque mixto y con el análisis de contenido cualitativo como método fundamental, se evalúan 64 videos provenientes de los canales de ambos medios considerando los modelos de producción y distribución de contenido y los códigos del lenguaje audiovisual en Internet. Los resultados permiten identificar deficiencias en los mecanismos de producción y en el empleo de elementos del lenguaje audiovisual que favorezcan el ejercicio de un periodismo efectivo desde los canales de YouTube de los medios analizados. Las principales conclusiones dan cuenta de la necesidad de los medios cubanos de replantearse las formas de realizar el ciberperiodismo en YouTube; esto, desde una caracterización que demuestra carencias en las formas de realización y aprovechamiento de los recursos de la plataforma en tiempos en los que el acceso a Internet y a sitios digitales por parte de los ciudadanos cubanos crece. Ofrecer mayor prioridad y autonomía a las redacciones digitales, tener mayor efectividad en la distribución de contenido y emplear con mayor intencionalidad las herramientas del discurso ciberperiodístico resultan trascendentales para alcanzar este fin.*

**PALABRAS CLAVE:** *ciberperiodismo, periodismo audiovisual, YouTube, lenguaje audiovisual.*

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**RESUMO** | *A avaliação do ciberjornalismo audiovisual no YouTube realizada pela mídia estadual cubana mostra as limitações metodológicas e práticas de trabalho na plataforma dentro do ecossistema midiático nacional. Esta pesquisa analisa o conteúdo audiovisual publicado no site YouTube pelas mídias digitais Escambray e Invasor durante o primeiro semestre de 2022. Através de uma abordagem mista e tendo como método fundamental a análise de conteúdo qualitativa, são avaliados 64 vídeos de ambos os canais midiáticos, considerando os modelos de produção e distribuição de conteúdo e os códigos da linguagem audiovisual na Internet. Os resultados permitem identificar deficiências nos mecanismos de produção e no uso de elementos próprios da linguagem audiovisual que favoreçam o exercício de um jornalismo efetivo desde os canais do YouTube dos meios analisados. As principais conclusões demonstram a necessidade de os meios de comunicação cubanos repensarem as formas de realização do ciberjornalismo no YouTube; isto, a partir de uma caracterização que evidencia deficiências nas formas de realização e aproveitamento dos recursos da plataforma em tempos em que o acesso à Internet e aos sítios digitais por parte dos cidadãos cubanos é crescente. Para isso, é imprescindível dar mais prioridade e autonomia às redações digitais, distribuir melhor os conteúdos e utilizar de forma mais intencional as ferramentas do discurso ciberjornalístico.*

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** *ciberjornalismo; jornalismo audiovisual; YouTube; linguagem audiovisual.*

## INTRODUCTION

The paradigm shifts in the consumption behavior of digital users confirm a growing interest in audio and digital video formats. The inclination of recipients coincides with the attention of the media. According to the Reuters Institute data, 67% of the 303 media managers surveyed stated that they will allocate more resources to video content in 2023 (Newman, 2023).

Despite the rise of Instagram and TikTok, YouTube remains an important platform for the distribution of journalistic content, especially among Hispanic audiences. In Cuba, the Digital 2022 report shows that both the words “videos” and “YouTube” are the fourth and twelfth most searched terms on Google on the island. Both show growth compared to previous studies (Kemp, 2022). Consequently, national media have an opportunity on this social network to diversify their media profiles, engage with new audiences and improve interaction with users and the content they produce.

However, the use of YouTube in Cuba is at an underdeveloped stage of the media landscape. An earlier analysis of Cuban State media by researchers showed that they all have a YouTube channel for publishing audiovisual content. Nevertheless, the qualitative assessment revealed deficiencies in the regularity of posts and content, a limited number of followers and a lack of interaction that encourages dialog and interest in consumption. TV channels publish the most videos, but the analysis shows that the focus is on replicating traditional media content.

A more deliberate use can be observed in the profiles of the national media. *Dominio Cuba* and *Cubadebate*, especially its *Canal USB* section, are characterized by the production of audiovisual media tailored to social media standards. In other parts of the country, provincial newspapers such as *Girón*, *Vanguardia*, *Escambray*, *Invasor*, *Periódico 26* and *¡Ahora!* have tried to do innovative work on YouTube, but have faced technical and human resources problems, but above all a lack of methodologies that provide guidelines and tools for the development of quality information work.

Of these, the channels of *Escambray of Santi Spiritus* and *Invasor of Ciego de Ávila* have experienced the highest growth in subscriptions between July and September 2022, along with improved criteria for updates, periodicity and typological diversity of published content. The results indicate that the current pace of growth at *Escambray* and *Invasor*, although not exceptional, supports the systematic nature and editorial priority of the work on the platform within the management structures of both cybermedia during this period.

Therefore, it is useful to analyze the peculiarities of audiovisual cyber journalism on YouTube that can be seen in the content published by Cuban media on this platform. To this end, this study poses the following research question: What characteristics of audiovisual cyber journalism on YouTube can be found in the content published on this platform by the Cuban State cybermedia *Escambray* and *Invasor* in the first half of 2022?

To answer this question, the general objective is to characterize the audiovisual content published on YouTube by cybermedia *Escambray* and *Invasor* in the first semester of 2022. The specific objectives are to identify the characteristics of the journalistic models of content production and dissemination on the YouTube channels of cybermedia *Escambray* and *Invasor* and to determine the characteristics of the audiovisual language of the content published by cybermedia *Escambray* and *Invasor* on this platform in the first half of 2022.

The study is based on the lack of scientific production on this topic in the country and serves as a first step towards building its own theoretical-methodological base that takes into account the specificities of Cuban State media on YouTube.

### **YouTube as an expansion of audiovisual journalism in the context of the Internet and social networks**

There is no doubt that the digital medium has created a new way of interacting, a new way of communicating and ultimately a new way of telling stories through words, images and sounds. The media's interest in videos for journalistic purposes on the Internet corresponds to the changing habits of an audience, especially young people, who are dedicated to creating and sharing information on social networks from different content creators. Thus, Díaz-Lucena and colleagues (2022) see the search for engagement and co-creation as the main way to innovate in an environment of great fragmentation, strong competition, great uncertainties and audience empowerment.

Mayoral Sánchez and colleagues (2016) argue that “cybermedia videos represent an ideal scenario to analyze the always complex coexistence between traditional journalistic approaches and new – less orthodox and perhaps more attractive – products that appeal to a different logic” (p. 778). This reasoning suggests that, despite experimenting with the new tools offered by the Internet, digital media would continue with the online publication of audiovisual content more akin to traditional television stories.

Various research studies show the rise of journalistic videos on YouTube and other social networks, driven by the growing inclination of users towards image and video content. Studies show the simultaneous migration of audiences

and media to informative online audiovisual content in countries such as Spain (Lopezosa et al., 2019; Sixto García and Rodríguez-Vázquez, 2021; Díaz-Lucena et al., 2022) and the United States (Stocking et al., 2020).

The bibliography consulted (Liuzzi, 2015; Ortiz, 2018; Pérez Rufi & Gómez Pérez, 2010) shows that – starting from a justification of the image, its value and the integration of languages – one of the most pronounced theoretical conflicts among researchers of audiovisual journalism in social media or video journalism is the formulation of formal characteristics that separate the digital medium, with its own values, services and content, from traditional audiovisual journalism or television journalism.

The hybridization of narrative codes attracts users based on four basic components detailed by Liuzzi (2015) and used in this research: Immersion (they dive much deeper into the story), Interactivity (they change/influence story elements and engage with other users in the narrative world), Integration (they consume a story that spans multiple platforms), and Impact (they are inspired to take action in the real world). The expressive possibilities of video journalism on the Internet therefore go far beyond the purely visual and auditory.

This video journalism designed for platforms such as YouTube must incorporate elements of cyberjournalistic language such as hypermedia, multimedia and interactivity into a process that (de)constructs and builds around the internal expression of the audiovisual and the framework of its subsequent presentation and dissemination. In other words, video journalism requires not only the introduction of new means of production, but also the integration of the finished work into an environment that takes full advantage of digital journalism.

Álvarez Guerrero (2020) mentions components of audiovisual language such as image composition, framing, camera angles, camera movements, lighting, aspect ratio, sound codes, dramaturgy guided by editing and the editing itself. However, with the advent of video on the Internet, any analysis must consider the revolution brought about by the unique characteristics of cyberspace in each of the processes involved in the construction of audiovisual language.

In this context, audiovisual journalism comes into contact with hypertextuality, interactivity, multimediality and asynchronicity, which are inherent to the cyberjournalistic environment. Nevertheless, a considerable number of online audiovisuals remain anchored in a language inherited from traditional media (Álvarez Guerrero, 2020).

On the other hand, YouTube allows the customization of content through subscriptions, the creation of messages and comments, the organization

of customized material lists, and the possibility of sharing and linking content to platforms outside the site (López, 2016). This contributes to its dissemination and virality.

Authors such as Pardo Abril (2008) argue that videos destined for YouTube lack the technical and specific requirements because users have the ability to produce audiovisual content on a larger scale. These criteria are in contrast to those of López (2016), who points out that videos are usually enriched by various editing and post-production effects. He notes that the average duration of videos is often around 15 minutes, as their main objective is to convey a series of information as clearly and simply as possible without losing the audience's attention. Colángelo and Soto (2020) add that the uniqueness of the content generated for this platform and the entry of journalistic companies into this platform have led to an increasing professionalization of productions.

Given the convergence of formats, the decentralization of consumption and the democratization of production, media companies need to understand YouTube as a pillar for the development of transmedia narratives or as a distinct space with a distinctive language that connects two broad disciplines. Despite theoretical advances in the last decade, there is still no comprehensive methodological system for this.

## **METHODOLOGY**

For the purposes of this study, typical methods of qualitative research are used, such as the bibliographic-documentary method and qualitative content analysis. It also uses quantitative content analysis techniques that allow counting data, such as the number of views, subscribers and videos of the channels, and identifying trends among the indicators analyzed in the videos. Thus, a mixed approach to the object of study is adopted, allowing the integration of both qualitative and quantitative approaches for a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under study.

The study is based on the proposal of Álvarez Álvarez and Ramos Rico (2003) and Álvarez Álvarez and Barreto Argilagos (2010) for content analysis. According to Díaz and Navarro (cited in Álvarez Álvarez & Barreto Argilagos, 2010), this method is “conceived as a methodological perspective whose aim is the study of (at least some of) the expressive possibilities of expressions in general” (p. 197).

In the audiovisual text, this proposal allows the characterization of qualitative elements in audiovisual cyber journalism on YouTube by Cuban media. In accordance with this method, content analysis sheets and the intensive text analysis strategy are applied.





In addition, semi-structured interviews with journalists responsible for the YouTube channels of the selected media, with managers and with people considered experts by the research are conducted for methodological triangulation<sup>1</sup>.

This study analyzes all videos published on the YouTube channels of the cyber media *Escambray* and *Invasor* in the first half of 2022. The temporal selection aims to form a representative sample of the work of the selected units of analysis, covering different types of programs, journalistic genres and variations in the use of different elements of audiovisual and cyber journalistic language. The sample must also be recent enough to reflect the recent practices of the selected media on YouTube.

Considering the above, the videos corresponding to the specified period are analyzed, with 156 from *Escambray* and 16 from *Invasor*. Tables 1 and 2 show the data from the sample.

| No. | Video name   | Lenght   | Views |
|-----|--|----------|-------|
| 1   | Arte joven en Morón  | 00:03:54 | 68    |
| 2   | 2021, el año más duro de la COVID-19 en <i>Ciego de Ávila</i>                | 00:04:59 | 95    |
| 3   | Ingresos y gastos: cuentas en tres y dos                                     | 00:05:54 | 166   |
| 4   | Salvar un estratégico sector   | 00:06:02 | 148   |
| 5   | Ensemble, la concreción de un sueño  | 00:04:48 | 106   |
| 6   | Unión de hecho afectiva ¿Es lo mismo que matrimonio?                         | 00:07:24 | 118   |
| 7   | <i>Invasor</i> escucha a las madres  | 00:05:24 | 89    |
| 8   | Percepción de riesgo: reducir consecuencias                                  | 00:02:47 | 111   |
| 9   | El combate de Francia  | 00:07:41 | 134   |
| 10  | Sírvase quien pueda  | 00:05:17 | 248   |
| 11  | Entrevista al músico Elaín Morales, a propósito de su gira por #CiegodeAvila | 00:05:08 | 73    |
| 12  | Proyecto de formación vocacional a estudiantes del IPVCE avileño             | 00:07:43 | 123   |
| 13  | El historiador se confiesa   | 00:17:36 | 114   |
| 14  | CIEGOPLAST: ejemplo de implementación de economía circular                   | 00:06:01 | 145   |
| 15  | Celebrar a los papás   | 00:02:42 | 75    |
| 16  | Impactan mejoras constructivas en calidad del servicio en Morón              | 00:04:42 | 152   |

**Table 1. Data from the videos that compose the sample of *Invasor*'s YouTube channel**

Source: Own elaboration.

1. The journalists interviewed were Carmen Milagros Martín García, web editor of *Telecubanacán*; Arletty White Morales, journalist of *Invasor*'s YouTube channel; Giselle Morales Rodríguez, director of *Escambray*; Roberto Carlos Delgado Burgos, director of *Invasor*, and professors and researchers Max Barbosa Miranda and Miguel Ernesto Gómez Masjuán.



| No. | Video name   | Lenght   | Views |
|-----|--|----------|-------|
| 1   | <i>El homo cubensis de Santi Spiritus</i>  | 00:00:25 | 18    |
| 5   | <i>La esquina de Escambray: ¿Estamos obligados a convivir con los fantasmas de nuestros errores?</i> | 00:06:40 | 49    |
| 8   | <i>Matemáticos cubanos pronostican escaladas de casos de covid</i>                                   | 00:01:52 | 86    |
| 10  | <i>La Tarea Ordenamiento en la vox pópuli</i>  | 00:03:02 | 30    |
| 16  | <i>¿Cómo lidian los espirituanos con el rebrote de covid en 2022?</i>                                | 00:02:44 | 75    |
| 17  | <i>VisionEs: ¿Por qué una libra de queso cuesta 187 pesos en Santi Spiritus?</i>                     | 00:08:56 | 2 280 |
| 28  | <i>Cuba siempre está presente en todo lo que uno hace</i>  | 00:03:24 | 353   |
| 29  | <i>VisionEs: Preven mejoría en el abasto de agua a Santi Spiritus y Cabaiguán</i>                    | 00:09:43 | 177   |
| 31  | <i>La superación de entrenadores una urgencia para elevar la calidad del judo</i>                    | 00:01:41 | 29    |
| 37  | <i>La covid sigue dispersa en Santi Spiritus</i>   | 00:01:38 | 47    |
| 39  | <i>Agua que no has de beber... ¿se irá por los salideros?</i>  | 00:02:49 | 74    |
| 40  | <i>Ventas de garaje se acomodan en los portales</i>  | 00:01:25 | 70    |
| 41  | <i>VisionEs: Para opinar sobre el proyecto de Código de las familias, hay que leerlo</i>             | 00:07:51 | 140   |
| 43  | <i>La ganadería sin control es un potrero sin cercas</i>   | 00:00:29 | 34    |
| 45  | <i>El proyecto del código de las familias merece una opinión responsable</i>                         | 00:02:57 | 62    |
| 47  | <i>"Soy la mujer que soñé cuando tenía 12 años"</i>  | 00:05:11 | 1 779 |
| 48  | <i>¿Qué opinan los epidemiólogos espirituanos sobre la persistencia de la Covid en la provincia?</i> | 00:02:07 | 65    |
| 52  | <i>VisionEs: Lo que debes saber sobre Calendario, la teleserie cubana de la que todos hablan</i>     | 00:10:02 | 952   |
| 59  | <i>VisionEs: Más de 700 días con la covid, ¿cómo sobrevivir a una pandemia en Cuba?</i>              | 00:08:14 | 146   |
| 60  | <i>Estafas virtuales: en la confianza está el peligro</i>  | 00:00:28 | 23    |
| 61  | <i>Doctor Manuel Rivero Abella: Si enfermo de covid, este es el mejor momento</i>                    | 00:03:18 | 117   |
| 64  | <i>Dos guerreras frente al SARS-CoV-2</i>  | 00:02:38 | 36    |
| 65  | <i>La esquina de Escambray: Hay que desterrar de la Cultura la filosofía del "no se puede"</i>       | 00:07:06 | 42    |
| 72  | <i>VisionEs: Culeros desechables por la libreta, ¿aunque no tengas bebé?</i>                         | 00:09:31 | 301   |
| 76  | <i>¿Por qué vendieron culeros desechables por la libreta?</i>  | 00:03:32 | 64    |
| 78  | <i>Jóvenes acordes en el contrabajo</i>  | 00:03:20 | 50    |
| 79  | <i>VisionEs: Combustible intermitente, el trauma de los choferes cubanos</i>                         | 00:08:23 | 184   |
| 81  | <i>En Santi Spiritus sesionó el Primer Taller de Arquitectura en contextos patrimoniales</i>         | 00:01:18 | 40    |
| 82  | <i>Baloncesto espirituario aspira a la cima</i>  | 00:01:20 | 73    |
| 83  | <i>Trío Ilú, sello musical desde el folclor</i>  | 00:03:25 | 28    |
| 86  | <i>Con 42 años, hay Cepeda para rato</i>   | 00:01:33 | 109   |
| 88  | <i>¿Cuáles son los frutos de la Gastronomía en Perfeccionamiento?</i>                                | 00:02:28 | 37    |
| 94  | <i>Empresas con pérdidas en Santi Spiritus, un panorama desalentador</i>                             | 00:01:32 | 109   |
| 100 | <i>¿Qué opinan los espirituanos sobre las opciones recreativas en la ciudad capital?</i>             | 00:02:49 | 33    |
| 101 | <i>Desde las redes: Todo lo que Santi Spiritus no tiene</i>  | 00:01:58 | 101   |
| 106 | <i>Café por medio con Anait Gómez: De Ingeniera Química a directora de Patrimonio</i>                | 00:28:11 | 57    |
| 109 | <i>Ada González Curbelo, una radialista leal</i>   | 00:02:13 | 22    |
| 111 | <i>Primero de Mayo en Santi Spiritus: el pueblo está en la calle</i>                                 | 00:00:58 | 353   |
| 119 | <i>En el Día de las Madres: ¡Gracias, abuela!</i>  | 00:01:41 | 30    |
| 120 | <i>Alberto Juantorena: "El principal reto es buscar el sustituto de Enrique Figuerola"</i>           | 00:01:30 | 123   |

Table 2 continued ▶

|     |  |          |       |
|-----|--|----------|-------|
| 134 | <i>¿Cuál es el pronóstico de las afectaciones eléctricas en Santi Spiritus?</i>                          | 00:04:41 | 171   |
| 135 | <i>Liga Superior de Baloncesto a punto de cerrar etapa clasificatoria</i>                                | 00:00:58 | 49    |
| 143 | <i>Crecida del Yayabo sorprende a Santi Spiritus</i>   | 00:00:41 | 1 767 |
| 144 | <i>ExpoAnir Soluciones Cuba, oportunidad para el desarrollo</i>  | 00:02:51 | 51    |
| 147 | <i>Sexo online o Cómo la prostitución se muda a internet</i>   | 00:02:36 | 62    |
| 151 | <i>Abdel Martínez en Café por medio: Santi Spiritus es una joya desaprovechada</i>                       | 00:30:26 | 63    |
| 154 | <i>Dirección Municipal de Cultura: “No habrá carnavales en Santi Spiritus, serán fiestas veraniegas”</i> | 00:01:06 | 108   |
| 156 | <i>¿En qué fase se encuentra la reparación del edificio cuyos balcones colapsaron el 31 de mayo?</i>     | 00:04:01 | 94    |

**Table 2. Data from the videos that compose the sample of Escambray’s YouTube channel**

Source: Own elaboration.

For *Escambray*, a representative sample of 48 videos was selected by simple random sampling due to the high number of releases during this period. The sample was drawn via the website <https://www.calculator.net/sample-size-calculator.html> with the following parameters: confidence level 90%,%; margin of error 10 population proportion, 50 and size of the population 156). Thus, a total of 64 videos published on the YouTube channels of the provincial cyber media *Escambray* and *Invasor* between January 1, 2022 and June 30, 2022 were available for analysis in the study.

## RESULTS

### ***Escambray and Invasor, (de)constructing journalistic practices on YouTube in Cuba***

The evaluation of audiovisual cyber journalism on YouTube in a media company requires, at least in advance, an assessment of the virtual environment in which the journalistic works are positioned. This environment, known as a channel on YouTube, has a specific architecture and characteristics that mediate the activities of cybermedia as producers and users as consumers.

When applying the content analysis sheet on July 28, 2022, and considering the time frame of the study, a series of differences in the evaluated aspects between the publishing house of *Santi Spiritus* and that of *Ciego de Ávila* are detected. *Escambray* assumes a publishing frequency that can be categorized as daily, although occasionally more than one video is uploaded per day or a day may pass without updates. *Invasor* assumes a weekly frequency as an editorial decision and organizes the productive routines of the team dedicated to working on YouTube (A. White Morales, personal communication, September 1, 2022).

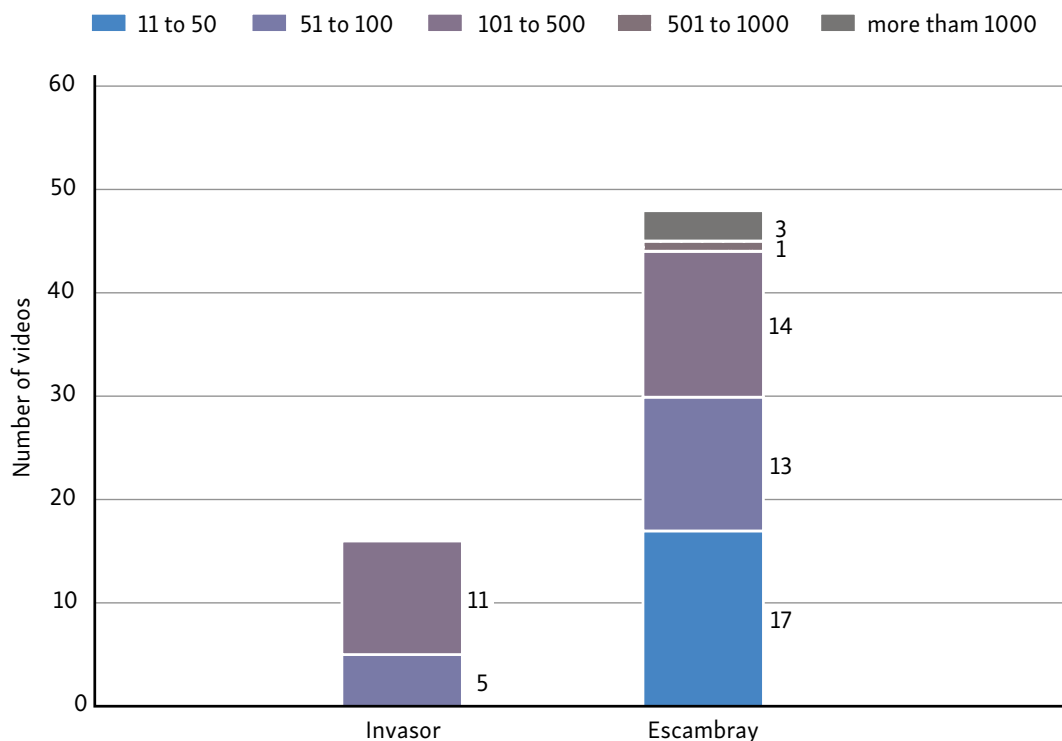
The daily newspaper in *Escambray* published 156 videos in the first half of 2022, reflecting the media's commitment to content on YouTube. It demonstrates the constant updating of content in line with the issues that shape the public and media agenda of its province, offering a diversity of genres, topics and formats that cannot be compared to *Invasor*'s small sample of 16 videos. However, this volume may be counterproductive in several ways.

One feature of *Escambray*'s updating system is the presence of the news program *VisionEs*, which regularly compiles various journalistic works of different genres in a non-daily news format. These are then uploaded to the platform as individual videos. In this way, some content is published twice, firstly within the logic of *VisionEs* and secondly as independent journalistic products. Although this strategy makes it possible to maintain the channel's publication frequency by reusing the material produced for the news program individually, and can be useful for users who only want to see a specific post and not the entire news program, the figures show that *VisionEs*' statistics overshadow the rest of the derivative publications and highlight one of the shortcomings of this high publication frequency.

Regarding views, there is a certain homogeneity in the media from *Ciego de Ávila*, which is due to the weekly periodicity of the publications and the thematic, generic and technical similarities of the videos analyzed. In the case of *Invasor*, 62.5% of the 16 videos analyzed have reproductions between 101 and 200. The case of *Escambray* has its peculiarities, partly due to the sample of 48 videos and the fact that it was randomly selected from a total of 156 videos published during the period analyzed.

The figures presented in figure 1 show a greater diversity in the distribution of videos from the media company *Santi Spiritus*. It can be deduced that the quantity and diversity of content cause the appearance of both high reach videos (by Cuban media standards) and medium reach videos, as well as a significant number of videos with a view statistic of less than 100 plays, showing the uneven reception of these audiovisual materials.

In the interaction indicator, similar logics operate between both media. *Invasor*'s corpus shows a more compact range: 43.75% show between one and five likes, 31.25% between six and 10, and 25% between 11 and 20. *Escambray*, in turn, records a video with no interactions and another with more than 20, confirming the differences between *Santi Spiritus* and *Ciego de Ávila*, an influence that is determined both probabilistically and qualitatively by the quantity and frequency of publications. Of the videos from *Escambray*, 72.1% of the audiovisual posts received between one and five likes, 14.5% between six and 10 and 8.3% between 11 and 20.



**Figure 1. Number of videos by reproductions range**

Source: Own elaboration.

The analysis of the figures in terms of comments shows a weakness in both cybermedia. *Invasor* recorded 11 videos (68.75%) without comments and *Escambray*, 37 (77%). Out of a total of 64 videos analyzed, there was not a single recording on YouTube with more than five comments, confirming the lack of user interaction within the channels.

In this context, White Morales referred to *Invasor*: “It is not the most frequent in our content; almost always the comments we receive are from sectors related to our work, although we have had some from other Internet users, it is not much” (personal communication, September 1, 2022).

In general, no evidence of the channel being penalized for copyright infringement was found in the videos analyzed. However, it should be noted that while the journalists state that they are concerned about the availability of audio files, they do not refer to images, which may also be subject to usage restrictions.

Although both acknowledge that they review the metrics provided by YouTube Studio, they lack a developed system to process data from these statistics and utilize it in video production. It is a reactive strategy to understand the performance of certain content without moving into an active policy that changes channel routines.

In the cross-promotion section between the cybermedia website and YouTube and vice versa, both publishers include the YouTube link in their website designs and at the same time refer to the official address of the cybermedia page in the channel description.

The content of the YouTube channel is not an appendix or extra to the *Invasor* newspaper; it is part of the content of *Invasor*. Therefore, it is shared on social networks such as Facebook and Twitter, and there is a section on the website called *Invasor Multimedia* where a short note is written and then the video is uploaded (A. White Morales, personal communication, September 1, 2022).

In the case of *Escambray*, “social networks are used to create a certain expectation before and after the broadcast of the news program. The networks not only replicate the broadcast, but also record some of the content in separate capsules. The networks where this happens are generally Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and Telegram” (G. Morales Rodríguez, personal communication, September 4, 2022).

Regarding cross-promotion between YouTube and other social media, *Invasor* includes links to its profiles on digital social networks (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and Telegram) in the channel description. The ads on Facebook and Twitter redirect users to the YouTube video. In contrast, *Escambray* does not display profiles for other platforms in the channel information. Links advertised on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and Telegram generally redirect to the entry with the video on the cybermedia website and not specifically to YouTube. On Instagram, the full video is posted directly as a regular feed publication.

This data explains why *Invasor* misses out on advertising opportunities on platforms such as Instagram and Telegram. On the other hand, *Escambray* does not offer full integration of its social platforms and potentially loses advertising effectiveness by not redirecting links on its social media directly to YouTube. This decision increases traffic to the website, but has the opposite effect on the YouTube channel.

This initial analysis forms the basis for the study of audiovisual language in the videos of *Escambray* and *Invasor*'s channels using indicators from the language codes proposed by Sánchez Noriega (2018). In online audiovisual journalism, there are three international approaches to creating videos for platforms such as YouTube: The first approach consists of transposing the language of traditional television, including camera angles and transitions, to the digital environment; the second approach embraces the YouTuber esthetic, with vlogs as the flagship genre, emphasizing creativity and the extensive use of visual and auditory resources as hallmarks; and the last approach opts for the creation of a decidedly journalistic but hybrid language adapted to the esthetics of cyberspace.

For Bernal and Carvajal (2020), “it is complicated to create a typology of online video because the audiovisual genres of television journalism coexist with a variety of native formats” (p. 27).

Within the visual codes, in terms of framing, it is noteworthy that medium shots predominate, being used in 93.75% of the 16 videos analyzed from *Invasor* and 89.58% of the 48 videos selected from *Escambray*. This dominance is related to the use of the journalist in front of the camera in *Invasor* (93.75%) and *Escambray* (83.3%), as the medium shot is the most frequently used in these cases. The distribution of the other shot types in *Invasor* can be summarized as follows: 56.25% use the long shot, 18.75% the medium long shot, 87.5% the close-up and 25% the extreme close-up.

In the case of *Invasor*, as director Roberto Carlos Delgado (personal communication, September 5, 2022) explains, the difference between the two phases of audiovisual production on YouTube has a significant impact on the use of television-style shots. In videos from this second phase, such as videos 14 and 16, the intensive use of different types of shots can be observed, including all five types described. In the first phase, a YouTuber esthetic prevailed, using only medium and close-up shots, as can be seen in videos 1, 2, 3 and 6.

For *Escambray*, the shot selection included 72.9% of videos with long shots, 37.5% with close-ups, 12.5% with extreme close-ups and none with medium shots. At first glance, there seems to be less variety in the types of shots compared to *Invasor*, except for long shots. Interestingly, most videos are limited to one (33.3%) or two types of shots (29.1%), while only five (10.4%) use at least four types of shots. Within this last group, there is no discernible pattern that justifies their appearance within the generic or thematic logic of the videos, apart from the possible esthetic choice of the creators at the time. These five videos include two interviews, a VisionEs news segment, a chronicle and a commentary.

Overall, the balance of visual codes in the analyzed videos from both channels shows the hybridization of approaches within the audiovisual cyber journalism of these media on YouTube. On the one hand, the limited variety of shots and camera movements illustrates the inadequate preparation of these domestic print media for the specificities of audiovisual language, which unintentionally adapts to the straightforward production of much of the video journalism circulating on the Internet. Nevertheless, some videos experiment with a more television-like visual style, often finding a middle ground between the complexity of television and the specificities of producing certain journalistic genres specific to the web, such as the video blog or a commentary intended for social media.



The evaluation of the sound codes shows that *Invasor* dispenses with sound effects in six (37.5 %) of the videos and uses them only ornamentally in the remaining 10 videos. However, in the other functions –environment, expression and narration– there are no sound effects. Of these 10 videos with ornamental effects, six are commentaries, two are reports and one each for interviews and vox populi. In many cases, they are used as supplementary effects for intermediate sequences or transitions. Notably, in commentaries such as video 8 and 10, they are used to emphasize the on-screen insertion of text or graphic elements that accompany the discourse. This use of sound effects is common in digital spaces and is observed in both YouTubers and foreign media journalistic content, making their use in *Invasor* noteworthy.

When it comes to the inclusion of music, the picture is different, as 62.5% of videos do not include it. Of the six videos in which music appears, all use music as a means of expression (Blanco, 1999), while two add a grammatical function (Kaplún, 2005). The six videos that feature music can be divided into two groups based on the two identified phases of *Invasor*'s work on YouTube. In the first phase, three out of 13 videos use musical resources, spread across two interviews and one commentary. In the second phase, all three videos analyzed contain music, although they differ in genre: a report, a vox populi and a news item.

On *Escambray*'s YouTube channel, 14.5% of the 48 videos analyzed have sound effects, exclusively in the form of embellishments. The seven videos correspond to an equal number of VisionEs news segments analyzed; these represent the only type of video that contains sound effects within the sample of Santi Spiritus' newspaper. As for music, 79.1% of the videos do not use it. Of the 10 videos in which music is used, five have an expressive function, three have an ecological function and two have a grammatical function.

The sound codes, both sound effects and music, lack systematic and typological diversity in *Escambray* and *Invasor*. Table 3 shows their distribution according to the number of videos for each. The newspaper *Santi Spiritus* limits sound effects to its news segment, missing the appeal they have for digital consumers in the other videos, while the use of music proves to be incidental.

In the publication from *Ciego de Ávila*, the sound effects are more present, although limited to a single function, and the music seems more systematic after the change of channel routines and the inclusion of a television journalist in the YouTube channel.

As for the paratexts and graphics, *Invasor* includes an introductory caption in all 16 videos, while 14 videos have credits at the end. In addition, all content features the newspaper's logo for better identification — a feature that corresponds to the audiovisual cyber journalism on YouTube practiced by international media.



| INDICATOR     | FUNCTIONS              | <i>Escambray</i> | <i>Invasor</i> |
|---------------|------------------------|------------------|----------------|
| Sound effects | Environmental function | -                | -              |
|               | Expressive function    | -                | -              |
|               | Narrative function     | -                | -              |
|               | Ornamental function    | 7                | 10             |
|               | Does not have          | 41               | 6              |
| Music         | Grammatical function   | 2                | 2              |
|               | Expressive function    | 5                | 6              |
|               | Descriptive function   | -                | -              |
|               | Reflexive function     | -                | -              |
|               | Environmental function | 3                | -              |
|               | Does not have          | 38               | 10             |

**Table 3. Presence of the sound codes in the analyzed videos**

*Source: Own elaboration.*

| INDICATOR              | RESOURCES            | <i>Escambray</i> | <i>Invasor</i> |
|------------------------|----------------------|------------------|----------------|
| Paratexts and Graphics | Subtitles            | -                | -              |
|                        | Lower third graphics | 18               | 14             |
|                        | Images               | 15               | 9              |
|                        | Infographics         | -                | -              |
|                        | Intro                | 45               | 16             |
|                        | Labels               | 4                | 11             |
|                        | Bumpers              | 9                | 12             |
|                        | Credits              | 2                | 14             |
|                        | None                 | 3                | -              |

**Table 4. Presence of paratexts and graphics on the analyzed videos**

*Source: Own elaboration.*

Similarly, banners are frequently used to identify journalists and sources (14 videos), bumpers to mark transitions (12) and subtitles (11). Subtitles are one of the most important features of web videos: in *Invasor*, they are used both to emphasize key words in the discourse and to display new information on the screen. Table 4 shows the number of videos using each of these resources.

Since viewing habits on YouTube are decidedly eclectic, the presence of on-screen graphics makes the information more interesting and accessible to users. In this context, the presence of screen graphics is highlighted in nine *Invasor* videos.

In total, up to eight videos use five identified graphic resources on the channel, which corresponds to half of the sample and illustrates the importance given to graphics in the media. However, the absence of infographics and subtitles, both valuable resources for building audiovisual discourse online, is notable.

The situation in *Escambray* is diametrically opposed: 45 videos begin with a header presentation, and the only three that do not do so also do not use any graphic or paratextual resources (videos 78, 143 and 144). It is understandable that in a larger and more diverse sample of genres, origins and characteristics of videos such as *Escambray's*, particularities emerge that are not present in the smaller corpus of *Invasor*; this is the case of videos such as these, which lack graphic elaboration and even the complexity of editing found in the rest of the videos.

As for the images, in *Invasor* they are used as an auxiliary element on the screen to reinforce speech fragments with graphics. In *Escambray*, on the other hand, they are generally used as fixed images that replace videos and serve to illustrate passages of the audiovisual, without the complementary and enriching character that is assumed in *Invasor*. This, combined with the lack of subtitles and infographics common to both weeklies, confirms the limitations and irregularities in the inclusion of paratexts and graphics in the audiovisual discourse of the *Escambray* channel.

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

In general, the Cuban State media set up YouTube channels in the period 2010-2015. However, the presence on the platform over time has not been reflected in a gradual improvement in the quality of the content, nor in its systematic or theoretical-methodological foundation. The review of the channels of 48 provincial media has shown that improvisation, instability and the dumping of formats from the original medium, especially in provincial television channels, are common elements in the practice of journalism on YouTube by Cuban cybermedia.

These asymmetries are explained by the difficulties and errors faced by video journalism in the country (Ruiz Desdín, 2021). Some of these situations arise from the lack of autonomy, where neither the graphic identity, the adaptation of the timing, nor the language that differs from the traditional medium are at the forefront (Rodríguez Bazán & Martín Castillo, 2020). The interviewees supporting the results obtained, as well as previous research conducted in the country (Molina Rodríguez, 2022; Rodríguez Bazán & Martín Castillo, 2020, Reloba de la Cruz, 2020; Rodríguez Guerrero & Gómez Masjuán, 2018), address the practices of cyber journalism in Cuba, its limitations, possibilities, perspectives and challenges, highlighting gaps in both practice and theoretical production.

However, few studies address the use of YouTube as a platform for cyber journalism and the priority given to the creation of original content for YouTube channels in most Cuban State media.

Among the main obstacles to the performance of national media on the platform are the observed labor turnover, lack of personnel and insufficient training to adopt the codes of the digital environment, as well as the absence of productive routines and professional cultures oriented to audiovisual cyber journalism. *Escambray* and *Invasor*'s analysis has shown that there is an inefficient use of the resources that cyber journalism offers to animate content. Sánchez Torres (2022) agrees on this point and associates the challenges in audiovisual production in the Cuban media with technological updates, a better understanding of the logic of Internet consumption and the use of social networks with greater coherence and systematicity.

In the specific case of *Escambray* and *Invasor*, the production carried out by these newspapers for their channels shows a focus on the search for working models in cyberspace. This is a first step that must be combined with the modifications proposed by the theory in order to establish a new programming policy, change the role of users, adopt new ways of distributing audiovisual content and use commercial flows that are better suited to the platform.

Regarding the production of videos for journalistic purposes on Cuban media social networks, Ruiz Desdín (2021) recommends varying different genres and thematic lines, using a narrative in the form of a story, integrating the inclusion of general and detailed shots, as well as combining different types of angles.

The problem is that the web teams are not given creative autonomy. The journalists of these media have to take on the task of updating content for social networks, YouTube channels and online sites in addition to their work for the traditional medium. This duality is a feature that affects the quality of the communicative products (Molina Rodríguez, 2022; Rodríguez Guerrero & Gómez Masjuán, 2018).

This situation is not only found in Cuba, but also in other journalistic organizations that do not use YouTube sufficiently for professional purposes. Media organizations can develop strategies for this platform to build a personal brand, strengthen their digital reputation and increase their professional authority. If they are not using the platform to its full potential, they are missing the opportunity to reach new audiences, explore the boundaries of the profession, improve their employment opportunities or even contribute to the transparency of their activities to counteract misinformation (Blanco & Palomo, 2019).

Another peculiarity of working on YouTube from Cuba is the impossibility of monetizing the published content due to political constraints related to the

economic blockade imposed by the United States government. Studies such as that by Fuenzalida (2019) show a shift of commercial content to the Internet. Although there is still no defined editorial policy in Cuba that regulates the guidelines for marketing and advertising on digital platforms, international practices show the need to find mechanisms that allow self-financing and thus the restructuring of Cuban media.

Analyzing the videos of the *Invasor* and *Escambray* channels not only takes stock of the shortcomings, but also provides an insight into the way the work on these platforms is conceived by two of the state media with the greatest influence on sustainable work in cyberspace. Understanding how genres, themes and elements of audiovisual language are articulated in their media context is an assessment of the validity of these cybermedia as paradigms in comparison to their counterparts and a review of their own flaws.

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