Polarization, virality and contrary sentiments for LGTB content on *Instagram*, *TikTok*, and *Twitter*
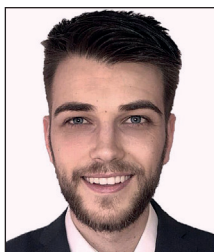
Carlos Barroso-Moreno; **Laura Rayón-Rumayor**; **Elena Bañares-Marivela**; **José Hernández-Ortega**

Carlos Barroso-Moreno ✉
https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1609-2267

Universidad Complutense de Madrid
Facultad de Educación-Centro de
Formación del Profesorado
Rector Royo Villanova, 1
28040 Madrid, Spain
carbarro@ucm.es

Laura Rayón-Rumayor
https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0339-8221

Universidad Complutense de Madrid
Facultad de Educación-Centro de
Formación del Profesorado
Rector Royo Villanova, 1
28040 Madrid, Spain
larayon@ucm.es

Elena Bañares-Marivela
https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9384-0193

Universidad Complutense de Madrid
Facultad de Educación-Centro de
Formación del Profesorado
Rector Royo Villanova, 1
28040 Madrid, Spain
elebanar@ucm.es

José Hernández-Ortega
https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3556-5688

Universidad Complutense de Madrid
Facultad de Educación-Centro de
Formación del Profesorado
Rector Royo Villanova, 1
28040 Madrid, Spain
josehernandezortega@ucm.es

Abstract

Digital platforms are spaces for social participation with significant value in the development of the identity of adolescents and emerging adults. The objective is to identify the behavior and visibility of LGBT content using *Instagram*, *TikTok*, and *Twitter* posts of such content from May 16 to November 16, 2022, collecting 539,389 posts. Social media monitoring techniques gathered the posts with the keywords "LGTB" or "LGBT" in Spanish and English, forming the database. The methodology is based on a mixed design: first, the database is analyzed using Big Data techniques and, second, the 10 most viral posts from each social network are selected. The results show that dissemination of gender identity in content and meaning is uneven across the various social networks. *Twitter* profiles have a higher number of posts (61%), polarization, and lower virality and exhibit visible LGBTphobia. *Instagram* has a number of posts (37%) and average virality, with positive sentiments. *TikTok* has fewer posts (2%), less polarization, positive messages, and extreme virality. The three networks consider the *Pride* demonstrations to be a symbol of the community because they destabilize and confront LGBTphobic oppression by occupying public spaces, opening the closet without stigma or shame, as is reflected on social networks. The behavior of LGBT content on these platforms is multidimensional, uneven, and differentiated, which demonstrates the necessity of ensuring respect for the diversity of sexual orientation and gender identity on digital platforms.

Keywords

1. Introduction

Digital platforms are spaces of participation for communities that are treated unequally due to sexual orientation and gender identity, and they play a valuable role in the development of identity for adolescents and emerging adults (**Jenzen**, 2017). These platforms host information, discussions, and creative performances confronting the traditional media, which continue to represent the LGBT community in a one-dimensional and stereotypical way, ignoring many subgroups (**Fox**; **Ralston**, 2016; **Craig**; **McInroy**, 2014; **Craig** *et al.*, 2017; **McInroy**; **Craig**, 2017). This is an important issue because, as demonstrated by **Linville** and **Lee** (2010), high school students in face-to-face settings construct narratives about their experiences with lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, and queer peers based on ethical decisions about sexuality and gender identity they seek to embody –reflective and elaborate representations that challenge stigmatizing public discourse with the reality of being queer (**Carlson**, 2014). Digital platforms can amplify and reinforce these representations and also meet the LGBT community's need for visibility and recognition by allowing content to be anonymously and securely shared with many users simultaneously (**Lucero**, 2017). The studies reviewed all highlight the online sites' power when it comes to constructing authentic alternative narratives (**Gray**, 2009; **Cavalcante**, 2020), which are particularly creative in fandoms (online fan communities), where participants create choreography, "fanfiction," video clips, and "fan art" (**McInroy**; **Craig**, 2018; **Kuo** *et al.*, 2022).

Another important function is related to empowerment and political protests surrounding sexual and gender identity. **Hanckel** and **Morris** (2014) found that participating in an online community enabled young people to question the heteronormative structures that perpetuate their marginality and to identify actions of political engagement online and outside of the networks. This issue is important because the LGBT community's best-known protests are held on *Pride Day*, a symbol of the community that, without stigma or shame, destabilizes and confronts LGBTphobic oppression in the public arena. However, the community runs the risk of being turned into a "cheerful and fun" brand for million-dollar businesses –what **Lily** (2016) calls "gaypitalism"– stripping the LGBT movement's protests of their liberating nature as well as their fight against LGBTphobia (**Enguix-Grau**, 2019). However, in other studies, the tension between activism and the market is considered beneficial for the community (**Enguix-Grau**, 2017; 2019). Furthermore, in the context of communicative capitalism, **Dean** (2005) demonstrates the depoliticization of social movements, which is related to the glorification of the individual over the community.

Content-producing social networking sites (SNSs) such as *Facebook*, *Instagram*, or *YouTube* can also meet the friendship and erotic-sexual needs of youth and adults when there are constraints on or a lack of opportunities for experiencing differences in sexuality, as this may be restricted in the offline environments that they move in (**Hillier**; **Harrison**, 2007). As demonstrated by **Craig** *et al*. (2021), the benefits that this type of social network provides to the LGBT community and its subgroups are clear, although the negative effects cannot be overlooked.

There is a higher probability of this community experiencing harassment and bullying in online spaces (**Abreu**; **Kenny**, 2018). According to **Messner** (2016), in these spaces, new forms of masculinity that are vulnerable to these movements emerge and paradoxically spark an outpouring of hate messages to these communities and minorities. **Evelyn** *et al*. (2022) and **Hindujan** and **Patchin** (2020) show that these often take the form of highly threatening transphobic content, cloaked in anonymity, as is the case on *Twitter*. However, for certain topics related to disadvantaged groups, there is no tension and consequent polarization (**Barroso-Moreno**; **Rayón-Rumayor**; **Bautista-García-Vera**, 2023); networks can even be used as a space for effective political expression to provide visibility (**Núñez-Puente**; **D'Antonio-Maceiras**; **Fernández-Romero**, 2021). Although there is little analysis of *TikTok*, precisely due to the complexity of gathering posts (**Guiñez-Cabrera**; **Mansilla-Obando**, 2022), **Weimann** and **Masri** (2020) warn about the extreme right's propagation of hatred on this network –a practice that these authors find even more problematic because of the unique characteristics of *TikTok*: a space used by adolescents and young people that lacks filters that would protect users from harmful messages, as opposed to other networks that do have protection systems (**Cheng-Stahl**; **Literat**, 2022). Furthermore, a study by **Cheng-Stahl** and **Literat** (2022) demonstrates that the playful component of *TikTok* lets young people portray themselves as a powerful and self-confident generation, while remaining vulnerable. Social networks are also central in the dissemination and circulation of disinformation and hate speech from certain political elites (**Adjin-Tettey**, 2022). Although they use different methods aimed at eroding public support for LGBT rights, they all contribute to the informational clutter that affects issues and the community (**Campos-Domínguez**; **Esteve-del-Valle**; **Renedo-Farpón**, 2022; **Strand**; **Svensson**, 2021).

With all of the benefits and threats associated with using digital platforms, we know that, through their design, algorithms, and the sentiments to the content, these platforms influence the nature of the interactions and messages shared (**Arce-García**; **Orviz-Martínez**; **Cuervo-Carabel**, 2020; **Lozano-Blasco**; **Mira-Aladrén**; **Gil-Lamata**, 2023). As **Carpenter** *et al*. (2020) propose, *Instagram*'s visual nature could lead users to focus on esthetic ally pleasing content, in contrast

to *Twitter*, where written text dominates. Also, demographics such as sex, age, and social class affect the use of networks, as does interaction (**López-de-Ayala**; **Vizcaíno-Laorga**; **Montes-Vozmediano**, 2020). As an added benefit, *Instagram*'s visual narrative promotes wellbeing in young people, in contrast to *Twitter*'s written text, which does not provide this positive aspect (**Pittman**; **Reich**, 2016).

> " Digital platforms are spaces for social participation with significant value in the development of the identity of adolescents and young adults "

A similar statement can be made regarding *TikTok* use, given its audiovisual nature. It is evident that these networks are distinctive semiotic spaces, which could have an effect on the type of messages that are shared and their virality, which has implications for LGBT content. Analyzing and systematizing these issues help elucidate how these social networks contribute to the freedom of expression associated with sexual and gender diversity, either as identity practices or as expressions of LGBT activism. In addition, the results provide critical information such that LGBT lives and stories are affirmed and recognized as complete sexual orientations and gender identities –goals that are part of an area of great scientific interest related to human rights and equal opportunities (**Pérez-Jorge** *et al*., 2020).

The study we present here corresponds to two research questions:

> Q1. How does the behavior of each of the selected social networks manifest itself with regard to LGBT content in relation to time and space, virality, and sentiments?

> Q2. What are the most viral topics and profiles for LGBT content on *Instagram*, *TikTok*, and *Twitter*?

In view of these questions, which are derived from the review the current situation, this study has two objectives:

> O1. Identify LGBT behaviors on *Instagram*, *TikTok*, and *Twitter*, paying attention to virality, temporality, and sentiments.

> O2. Analyze and provide examples of the most viral topics on these social networks as discursive spaces of power.

2. Materials and method

The "social listening" technique monitors social networks to listen to what is developing in regard to a topic, extracting analysis parameters for the number of likes, hashtags, and time trends, among others. The social listening technique delves deeply to qualitatively analyze the emotions underlying each piece of data. This article analyzes all of the posts on the aforementioned SNSs that contain the terms "LGTB" or "LGBT" in text, with a grand total of more than 500,000 posts during the six months of collection. The database is sorted by digital platform and number of likes to analyze the 10 most viral posts on *Instagram*, *TikTok*, and *Twitter*.

2.1. Process flow in the methodology

A mixed methodology is used, with a quantitative analysis of all the posts of the aforementioned SNSs and a qualitative analysis of the posts that gained the most interest with the aim of answering the research questions. There are 5 phases, described in Figure 1 and detailed below:

- Phase 1: Identifying the keywords of the issue, "LGTB" or "LGBT." The selected words correspond to gender identity and sexual orientation on digital platforms because the topic revolves around these words and related ones such as "LGBTI+" or "LGBTTI." As they contain the same letters, these are captured by the tool regardless of the language of diffusion.

- Phase 2: Applying the social listening technique to *Instagram*, *TikTok*, and *Twitter* (**Stewart**; **Arnold**, 2018; **Reid**; **Duffy**, 2018). This is applied with the specific software *Social Networks Tools*, owned by the *Detecese* research group, which has high computing capacity (**Barroso-Moreno**; **Rayón-Rumayor**; **Bautista-García-Vera**, 2023). This tool collects all the posts from the aforementioned platforms in real time and analyzes the text to check whether it contains the required keywords; if it has them, the posts are stored in the database, and if not, they are discarded. For this reason, it is not possible to compile posts retroactively. The collection time period is from May 16 to November 16 –half a year.

- Phase 3: Analyzing the structured database computationally and manually. After applying the algorithms for data cleaning, the database consisted of 539,389 posts. The quantitative-computational subphase uses the *IBM Statistical Package for Social Sciences* (*SPSS*) statistical software with machine learning algorithms, text analysis, and integration with Big Data, allowing us to adjust the data to extract hidden patterns and models in the data (**Wagner**, 2019). This process makes
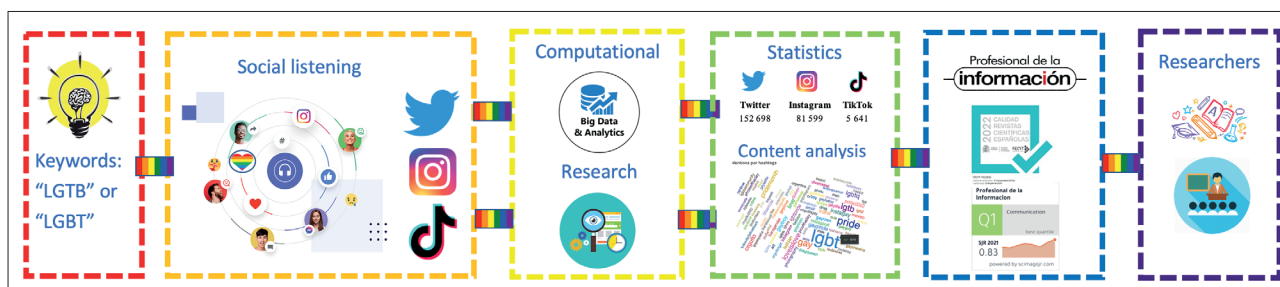

Figure 1. Research flowchart

it possible to identify the number of daily posts, sentiments, and the number of likes, among others, which is a large volume of data. Sentiments are classified into three categories –neutral, positive, and negative– using text mining techniques (**Medhat**; **Hassan**; **Korashy**, 2014). The qualitative-manual subphase is carried out by researchers on the 10 posts with the highest number of likes on each social network in a deliberative sampling to analyze the content through text –image, irony, music, and profile influence groups. There is no standard approach with regard to virality (**Zamora**; **Gómez-García**; **Martínez-Martínez**, 2021); however, upon analyzing the three different social networks, the common link used to estimate the most viral posts and profiles was the number of likes, ordered from highest to lowest. This subphase is developed through collaborative coding, carried out simultaneously by the research authors and subsequently verified by two peer reviews by the research group (**Rädiker**; **Kuckartz**, 2020).

> The objective of this study is to identify the behavior and visibility of LGBT content in social networks through monitoring techniques

- Phase 4: Generating general statistics and analysis of a significant case study. On the one hand, the *SPSS* tool comprehensively analyzes all of the stored data to generate contextual information on the volumetrics associated with each digital platform through cloud computing. On the other hand, researchers select posts that exemplify the resolution of research questions. Regarding the creation of the word cloud, the desired posts from each social network, piece of content, or sentiment, among other options, are selected. First, the content is tokenized to separate each word in the post's text. Second, "stopwords" are applied to eliminate words that do not provide information, such as prepositions or determiners. Finally, a visualization of the most frequent words, and the correlating size, is generated; this allows for the detection of thematic axes in the most viral posts.

This methodology enables us to make the results visible by disseminating and disclosing scientific knowledge in the form of findings. It also makes it possible to offer relevant content to other researchers interested in issues of equity and respect for the diversity of sexual orientations and gender identities on social media.

3. Analysis and results

The database consisted of 539,389 posts, with 331,488 corresponding to *Twitter*, 200,977 corresponding to *Instagram*, and 6,924 corresponding to *TikTok*. The data set was so large and complex that it required Big Data techniques with specialized software for effective data management.

3.1. Virality and associated sentiments on social networks

Figure 2 depicts the dataset of posts collected over 184 days associated with the sentiments of the text, relating them to international commemorative days with the aim of elucidating the volumetrics highlighted. The results obtained showed peaks in posts on international commemorative days and a constant rate of posts on days without protest dates. There are numerous international commemorative days that reflect the diversity of the LGBT community and its demonstrations that take place annually:

- July 17 is the *International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia, and Biphobia*;
- June 1 is *International Parents' Day*;
- June 28 is *International LGBT Day*;
- July 16 is *International Drag Day*; and
- October 26 is *International Intersex Awareness Day*.

Around *LGBT Pride week*, the volume of posts is high (47,826 posts), due to the numerous demonstrations around the world. This result is seen on June 25; although it is not an international day, it is the Saturday before *International Pride Day*, which leads to a huge volume of videos, photos, and text related to the celebrations around the world.

The largest number of posts and polarizations, for and against the LGBT movement, were concentrated around *International Pride Day*. Quantitatively, there were 10,593 neutral posts, 6,706 positive posts, and 2,833 negative posts. Although there were millions on the network related to this day, remember that the identification was done using the keywords contained in the text of the post, not in the image or in synonyms; for this reason, we said that the daily volume was in the thousands.

The demonstrations on SNSs on international days had a high impact due to the symbols, emotions, and polarity of the messages. The multimodality of the messages, mainly from *Instagram* and *TikTok*, showcased creative audiovisual materials, with emblematic songs that reflect the progress of activism. Gloria Gaynor's *I Will Survive* (1978) became an LGBT anthem as did Alaska's *A quién le importa* (1986). These stand as timeless anthems that represent the transition of the movement from an oppressive situation rife with strong stigmatization to showing the right to be different as a demand for freedom of expression of sexual orientation and gender identity.

Another aspect of the impact on SNSs is the advocacy of the younger population against LGBTphobia. On *TikTok*, multimodal messages and comments had positive connotations to a greater degree than on the other two networks. *Twitter*, on the other hand, which has an older user profile and a monomodal message, had the highest number of posts with negative connotations. Overall, *Twitter* had more posts like this than *Instagram* and *TikTok* combined. In fact, negative sentiments were associated with the terms "parade" and positive feelings with the term "demonstration". In summary,
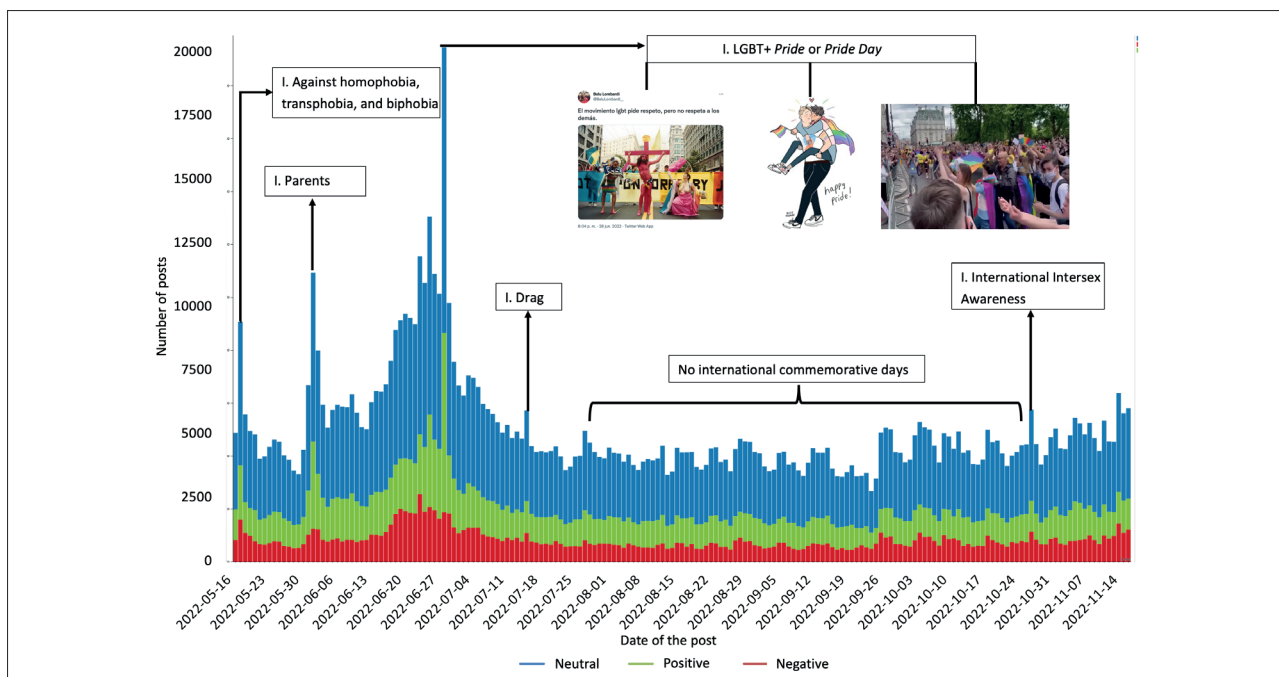
Figure 2. Timeline of the number of posts by associated sentiment and international days important to the LGBT community

international commemorative days gave more viral visibility to the LGBT community, but the content had a lasting presence in the time span analyzed.

3.2. Viral content and topics on social networks

In the following sections, the analysis of the 10 most viral posts for each social network is presented. Table 1 has been created so that the reader can follow the main idea and corroborate the information presented. We have also provided a link to *Figshare* (*https://bit.ly/3VO0Lfn*) with information on the complete analysis of the posts in Table A.1 (Annex). To add value to the results presented, access to the database of the most viral post on *TikTok* is allowed, since its analysis with Big Data is novel.

Table 1. Top 10 most viral posts on *Instagram, TikTok,* and *Twitter* with LGBT content

Social network	ID	Link	Social network	ID	Link	Social network	ID	Link
TikTok	TT01	*https://bit.ly/3rg8vKf*	**Instagram**	IG01	*https://bit.ly/3fxA3sh*	**Twitter**	TW01	*https://bit.ly/3E49kxm*
	TT02	*https://bit.ly/3SsrzRM*		IG02	*https://bit.ly/3SvvZaA*		TW02	*https://bit.ly/3y2aupE*
	TT03	*https://bit.ly/3Sq6CXl*		IG03	*https://bit.ly/3LS4iGa*		TW03	*https://bit.ly/3Sqmk4R*
	TT04	*https://bit.ly/3LUcXYD*		IG04	*https://bit.ly/3Ci1eQu*		TW04	*https://bit.ly/3re7DpL*
	TT05	*https://bit.ly/3ftYnLB*		IG05	*https://bit.ly/3Ckwsqh*		TW05*	*https://bit.ly/3dZibWx*
	TT06	*https://bit.ly/3Spd1SR*		IG06	*https://bit.ly/3CkFBiA*		TW06	*https://bit.ly/3QtZSb2*
	TT07	*https://bit.ly/3rfolVN*		IG07	*https://bit.ly/3RoLSOr*		TW07	*https://bit.ly/3SqrzS3*
	TT08	*https://bit.ly/3y291Qa*		IG08	*https://bit.ly/3UPy0jd*		TW08	*https://bit.ly/3Rm8ajN*
	TT09*	*https://bit.ly/3dNFYJf*		IG09*	*https://bit.ly/3riiE9t*		TW09	*https://bit.ly/3rjMfiU*
	TT10	*https://bit.ly/3E14Ml7*		IG10	*https://bit.ly/3LQVlgp*		TW10	*https://bit.ly/3CkxvGJ*

*The links to posts TT09, IG09 and TW05 have been removed from digital platforms due to user complaints about the content of the publication, but the description and verification of them are available on *Figshare*: *https://bit.ly/3VO0Lfn*

3.2.1. *Twitter*

Text production on *Twitter* was the most prolific, with 61% of posts. It is the simplest due to its multimodal structure: written text predominates. Compared with *TikTok* or *Instagram* –multimodal platforms that are conceptualized from discursive polymorphism– *Twitter* is the most active and intensive platform in terms of posts and comments. The viscerality of the comments was an identifying characteristic of the contributions of those commenting on the LGBT subject: Insults, harassment, generalized claims, and links to news or videos as proof of validity were the means most often used.

Messages on *Twitter* received greater engagement from recipients (average of 1,566 retweets), going beyond simply reading with more visceral and irrational behavior than on other platforms. These posts, with a high percentage of positive or negative sentiments, had a direct impact on the topics and spaces for dialogue.

Analysis of the messages showed a polarized dialogue. An LGBT rights demonstration led to anti-LGBT messages. The thematic blocks and underlying themes are represented in Table 2, indicating the most representative tweet for each theme, permitting visualization without needing to access the links.

A first axis sought to reclaim the rights of the LGBT community based on opinions as a defense against opposing views (TW01). This message had the highest number of likes (17,743) and the second highest number of retweets (3,987). This type of message received comments that reinforced people's identification with the message, told their personal story, and, as criticism, spouted fallacies through generalization or ad hominem to try to discredit the central idea proposed.

A second axis, more extensive and prolific in terms of messages and subject matter, was made up of criticism and defense at all costs, which took the form of the following themes:

- Film and television. Allusions to *Disney* movies served as a pretext to launch scathing attacks and make representations in traditional media invisible (TW04).
- Rights and freedoms. They were criticized through irony with rhetorical questions to delegitimize the discussions related to the community (TW03).
- *Pride Day*. Dissemination of the demonstrations around the world with a festive atmosphere with music and dance to give visibility (TW09), although these were also used by users to criticize or defend the community.
- Politics. A retweet of a biased interview with the Minister of Equality was used to question the claims and generate false information. The debate that arose among users caused a division. Supporters of the Minister's point of view took care to justify the content of the interview through links to other media outlets with the full interview: *https://bit.ly/3CkxvGJ*
- Criticism. The most significant case –with the most retweets (5,131) and the second, with the second most likes (17,352)– contained an image with a semiotic charge aimed at delegitimizing and questioning the respect that the community requests for itself. This led to a climate of comments received that bordered on censorship and rhetoric centered around "aberration, degenerates or psychological problems" (TW05). Subsequently, the participating accounts were reported and removed from the network, but the history and screenshots of the post in question were retained.

Table 2. Themes detected on *Twitter* and a significant post associated with it

Personal opinions	Film and television	Rights and freedoms
TW01	TW04	TW03
International commemorative day	**Politics**	**Criticism**
TW09	TW10	TW05

3.2.2. *Instagram*

This social network accounted for 37% of total posts. The LGBT community drew upon static images for its *Instagram* posts. The multimodal narratives that unfolded one after the other on this network combine static images (photographs, drawings, or icons) with textual combinations where typologies and color schemes were changed up.

Instagram offers the option of posting content as either static images or videos ("reels"), but these are not considered in the selection for interactions received. Posts with static images can be combined into more than one image (IG03 and IG08) or a single rendering (IG01 or IG02). The use of hashtags was higher compared with other social networks, as it is a characteristic feature of *Instagram*. While *TikTok* had an average of 7 hashtags per post, *Instagram* reached 12 hashtags on average. The LGBT issue on *Instagram* was presented through different semiotic renderings:

- Static infographics. A combination of text with icons that were used with an intention of educating and vindicating, especially during specific dates of the year (IG05, IG10).
- Manicured images. Photographs with esthetic appeal to contextualize motivational messages or to overcome difficulties (IG01) or to protest and fight against social stereotypes of the community (IG08).
- Irony. News published on other media outlets (*Twitter*) that served as a pretext to speak out against the community's situation, especially in the Middle East (IG02).
- Politics. Political representatives from around the world took a stance on the LGBT movement. One exemplification is that the political parties of Spain, except one, added the rainbow flag to their logo to commemorate pride (IG07).
- Information. Dissemination of information about the semantic explanation of the terminology of the different groups that make up the LGBT community (IG03).

Of these posts, the post that received the highest number of likes and comments stood out. The *CNN* post that explains the meaning of the different concepts of the LGBT semantic field was the one that received the most user interaction (72,331 likes) and the one that received the highest number of comments (11,315), influenced by the day of posting. Minimalist esthetics, text that showed both the concept and explanation, and an appropriate selection of color scheme were the keys to its success, as shown in Figure 3.

This post had a total number of 9 slides, which helped to expand upon the essential information to establish and disseminate some of the basic concepts regarding the

Figure 3. Post IG03 exemplifying LGBT terminology

community. The post with the most user interactions was also the one with the highest number of comments. This fact corroborated a practice that was more evident on *Instagram* than on *TikTok*: derogatory comments. Those posts that have them enabled received comments that showed their disapproval through value judgments, absolute assertions, fallacies, or biblical references used as counterarguments to the post, or by regurgitating political slogans. This practice was present in both posts from LGBT community and those of political entities with not ideologically allied with the community.

Also noteworthy was the self-serving use of the #LGBT hashtags for other –mostly commercial– purposes. A cosplay gamer with a sexualized outfit (IG06) or a photo of a model in lingerie advertising a sexual encounters website (IG09) exemplified practices that are a far cry from the core purposes of the community, using its reach to transmit commercial messages to the public.

3.3. *Pride* and the virality of a news item on *Instagram*, *TikTok*, and *Twitter*

Table 3 presents the most viral post on each social network about the *Pride* demonstration on Saturday, July 2, 2022, at *London Pride*, which were handled in conflicting ways to impose self-serving meanings. This comparative analysis –which has not been analyzed previously– proved to be a specific case study that confirmed the trends from each social network as described above. The situation was that a young man approached the barricades during the parade to remove an anti-LGBT banner, at which point the anti-*Pride* protesters grabbed his arm and demanded the presence of the police, who arrived at the scene, where the young man managed to escape. At this point, the actors of the *Netflix* series "Heartstopper," Locke, Croft, and Browne, started dancing while giving them the middle finger with the refrain of "I want to dance with somebody" by Whitney Houston playing in the background. After this incident, the rest of the protesters entered the shot and continued the march.

This single event was used in various ways deliberately because the visual and sound composition were altered, and the original video had been manipulated. On each SNS, the audiovisual material focused the users' attention on different details with the aim of, on *Twitter*, triggering the delegitimization of the community and, on *Instagram* and *TikTok*, supporting it.

In terms of number of likes, *TikTok* consolidated its position as the network with the most interactions, with 18.9M views, followed by *Instagram* and *Twitter*. In reference to the profiles, there was consonance between the disseminators of posts, being specialized digital creators, and the media, which supported the reason for such virality. The text and the associated sentiment according to social network followed the same trend presented above: *Twitter* had negative sentiment, with terms such as "defiant", whereas, on *Instagram,* positive text for words like "more love" and heart emoticons were used. Finally, on *TikTok*, positive messages such as "favorite things" were used. Regarding images, on *Twitter,* the news focused on the violent gesture –the grabbing and shaking of the demonstrator's arm– prompting comments against the demonstration, linked to the polarization of this platform. On *Instagram*, the young man tugging on the arm was removed from the scene, and the *Netflix* actors' dancing and giving the middle finger to the anti-LGBT protesters was shown with minimalist editing of the video and watermarks with advertising. Finally, on *TikTok,* the news item was presented with careful editing, with the anti-LGBT protester pulling the arm and hair of the young man and, in protest, showing the subsequent joyful dance of the *Pride* marchers.

We consider the video fragment analyzed to be of particular importance since it was deliberately used by ideologies antagonistic to defending LGBT rights. The framing showed the clash between those marching on the right of the image, wrapped in the rainbow flag and dressed in more youthful and casual attire as compared with those who were protesting with written banners who were dressed in more conservative attire on the other side of the barricade with the police nearby. In the video, the chorus of Whitney Houston's "I want to dance with somebody" played in the background, and the message was a clear plea for love regardless of the shape of those taking part in the parade. However, depending on what message was to be transmitted, the ambient sound was kept or replaced with a more emotionally charged song or music. Composition was used deliberately on social media by both viewpoints since it offers a narrative that can be used to manipulate the connotation as one wants. From the point of view of the demonstrators (the LGBT community), an attack on rights and the freedom of expression was denounced in using the first seconds of the video, where some spectators (opposed to the demonstration) forcibly detained some of the demonstrators, demanding that the police stop them. The same video, seconds later, was used by the conservative sector to criticize the lack of respect and empathy through the use of protesters' gestures/insults the against them. The conservative sector condemned the demonstrators wanting to tear the banners that openly criticized the parade's motives from the barricades.

Therefore, we can determine that the user profiles were different on the SNSs, similar to the danger of generating so-called echo chambers by listening only to related information without understanding the context of the situation and

Table 3. Case study of the LGBT protest in London on July 2, 2022 on social networks

Social network	Virality	User	Content	Screenshot and music
Twitter	Position 9 of 331,488. The most viral on 7/2/2022. Likes: 3,054 Retweets: 11.4M Comments: 616 *https://bit.ly/3dSGS73*	**Seriéfil@s Enfurecid@s** Digital cinema content creator	The cast of #Heartstopper standing up to anti-LGBT protesters at the United Kingdom's #Pride	Ambient sound of whistling and shouting with *I wanna dance with somebody*
Instagram	Position 153 of 200,977. The most viral on 7/4/2022. Likes: 8,285 Reposts: 36,726 Comments: 155 *https://bit.ly/3Cm3iXC*	**Bousnid** Digital creator of trending content	For a world with less hate and more love 🧡💛💚💙💜 the actors from "Heartstopper" face off against an anti-LGBTQ+ group at London *Pride* (...) #heartstopper #joelocke #pride #lgbtq #lgbt #gay #bi #pride #kitconnor #pridemarch	Music: *I wanna dance with somebody*
TikTok	Position 6 of 6,924. The most viral on 7/2/2022. Likes: 2.7 M Reposts: 18.9 M Comments: 21.8 K *https://bit.ly/3Spd1SR*	**Kitnickaep** *Heartstopper* fan platform (*Netflix*)	joe & bash ending homophobes is now my favorite thing #joelockeedit #sebastiancroftedit #heartstoppercast #londonpride #lgbt	Music: *You're the man but I got the power*

events that have occurred. This situation is favored by digital platforms to engage more user time and obtain higher diffusion ratios. It is the news media who must ensure the eradication of these informative biases in social networks and avoid political and social polarization by combating manipulated content, or fake news.

> ❛ The tension between activism and the market provokes the distortion of divergent narratives to impose interested meanings on the demands on *Pride Day* ❜

4. Discussion and conclusions

The results obtained showed the viral and sustained presence of LGBT content on the analyzed networks, and answered Q1. The social networks' behavior varied, and this revealed homophobia and LGBT activism that users were not indifferent to, generating large-scale participation. The way in which the LGBT content performed is relevant for two opposing reasons: first, the need for expression, acceptance, awareness, inclusion, and recognition of the community's rights was made visible with evident impact, not only on international commemorative days. Second, there was evidence of polarization and negative feelings linked to LGBTphobia, aimed at delegitimizing expressions of identity and protest (**Campos-Domínguez**; **Esteve-Del-Valle**; **Renedo-Farpón**, 2022; **Strand**; **Svensson**, 2020), which was more intense when LGBT activism was more visible offline, on *Pride Day* and other international commemorative days.

However, this behavior was not the same across digital platforms, as indicated by the previous studies of **Arce-García**, **Orviz-Martínez** and **Cuervo-Carabel** (2020), and **Lozano-Blasco**, **Mira-Aladrén** and **Gil-Lamata** (2023). *Twitter* had the highest number of posts, greater polarization, and lower virality, and brought together adult age profiles for the most part. *Instagram* collected varied content related to the need to express sexual orientation and gender, erotic-sexual, and emotional identity, and had occasional virality and middle-aged profiles. *TikTok* had the absolutely highest virality due to positive messages of an esthetic and emotional nature and young profiles. However, the polarization and negative messages linked to *Twitter* with topics related to inequality for disabled communities do not follow this pattern of behavior (**Barroso-Moreno**; **Rayón-Rumayor**; **Bautista-García-Vera**, 2023). Along the same lines pointed out by **Abreu** and **Kenny** (2018), as well as by **Evelyn** *et al*. (2022), *Twitter* was the network most prone to LGBTphobic demonstrations, some of which could constitute a crime. Keep in mind that the polarized subject matter and sentiment on this network contrasted with the more positive and accepting behavior on *Instagram* and *TikTok*. The polarization of messages generated a space of discursive conflict that hindered debate and analysis in questioning the heteronormative structures that perpetuate the marginality and oppression of the LGBT community, as **Hanckel** and **Morris** (2014) point out. Undoubtedly, *Twitter* provided the greatest evidence that *Pride Day* destabilizes and confrontse LGBTphobic oppression (**Enguix-Grau**, 2019). The results obtained suggest that it would be advisable to study the strategies of disinformation and hate speech on this social network in depth, in the line proposed by **Campos-Domínguez**, **Esteve-del-Valle** and **Renedo-Farpón** (2022) and **Strand** and **Svensson** (2020). This content would be relevant for developing of training programs that contribute to educating citizens to be informed and think critically in the face of strategies and groups that attack the rights of the LGBT community, and as an alternative in combatting cyberbullying.

In relation to Q2, it is evident that the social networks analyzed in the context of the LGBT movement were discursive spaces of power and counter-power that defined a struggle to impose themes and discredit their purpose of protest. This condition was evident for *Twitter* (**Núñez-Puente**; **D'Antonio-Maceiras**; **Fernández-Romero**, 2021), but not so evident for *Instagram* and *TikTok*. In contrast to *Twitter*, these networks were revealed to be more accepting spaces to disseminate protest stories that legitimize the expression of sexual orientation and gender identities.

TikTok showed that it is a space for expression through emotional narratives with a creative esthetic component, just like *Instagram*, which hosts motivational messages of self-improvement. In this sense, as evidenced by the works of **Fox** and **Ralston** (2016), **Graig** and **McInroy** (2014), **Graig** *et al*. (2017), and **McInroy** and **Graig** (2017), both networks could serve the needs of expressing gender identities. Two factors justify this statement: the age of the users (**López-de-Ayala**; **Vizcaíno-Laorga**; **Montes-Vozmediano**, 2020) and the audiovisual component of both networks. If the adolescents and young people's loyalty to these networks is to be maintained, both platforms must continue to embrace a creative and polyphonic multimodal production, such that the esthetic component could be put at the service of subversive and political narratives, as proposed by **McInroy** and **Craig** (2018) and **Kuo** *et al*. (2022). The connotative openness of the audiovisual narrative could be used for such purposes. Note that *TikTok* was the least polarized platform, with more positive messages and an extreme virality that reached millions of users.

The visual nature of *Instagram* and *TikTok* oriented users to emphasize positive and esthetically pleasing content due to the visual component; however, the predominant presence of text on *Twitter* did not provide these positive aspects, as evidenced by the studies of **Carpenter** *et al*. (2020) and **Pittman** and **Reich** (2016). Communicating with images requires a rhetorical argument and, therefore, a more complex reception than that required by written messages. This fact would explain why the predominance of written text on *Twitter* encouraged hate speeches, given that communicating aversion, dislike, rejection, and even insults to a community through a visual narrative requires creation time and its decoding will always be more open to interpretation. Social networks' asymmetric behavior turned the analyzed networks into discursive spaces of power and counter-power. The results analyzed through the most viral posts also showed that these networks are a space of discursive conflict in which content creators, traditional media, and paid audiovisual platforms –*Netflix* in

our analysis– are involved. *London Pride*'s surprising virality on *TikTok*, orchestrated by a fan platform for a *Netflix* series, legitimized LGBT activism and indicated what **Enguix-Grau** (2017; 2019) posits: the tension between activism and market can be productive. However, digital platforms cannot be isolated from the communicative capitalism defined by **Dean** (2005), so they could have a future division, fragmenting and individualizing the LGBT movement.

> There is no doubt that it is necessary to foster a digital citizenry capable of critical thinking to ensure respect for sexual orientation and gender identity diversity on social networks

The results obtained showed a multidimensional, varied, and diverse behavior for LGBT content on the analyzed platforms. The dynamic evolution of these digital sites made it difficult to predict the consolidation of some of the features identified, which may contribute to the visibility and understanding of the LGBT community. There is no doubt that it is necessary to foster a digital citizenry capable of critical thinking to ensure respect for sexual orientation and gender identity diversity on social networks. In this sense, it seems reasonable that the content creators in favor of or demanding rights for the LGBT community take into account the differentiated behavior on social networks and the roles that *Instagram* and *TikTok* could play in communicating the needs, interests, and demands of the community in a more effective and positive way.

The social network *TikTok* presented a limitation to this study due to two reasons: the focus of the trends detected that would require a more exhaustive analysis of the profiles, and the expansion and the dominant character that this network has acquired among the social media. Therefore, as a future line of study, we propose studying in depth the performance of LGBT content on *TikTok* and what kind of expressions protesting on behalf of diversity are more viral and how they are constructed from a multimodal point of view.

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6. Annexes

A.1. Terminology

The term "LGTBQI+" ["*LGTBIQ+*"] stands for "Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Transsexual, Transvestite, Queer, and Intersex." The acronym has evolved; in the early 1990s, it was just "LGB" to stand for other gender identities and sexual orientations. A lesbian woman is attracted to another woman, and a gay man is attracted to another man; both terms are grouped under the heading "homosexual" because they are attracted to people of the same sex. A bisexual person is attracted to women or men emotionally or physically. Continuing the explanation, the letter "T" was introduced as a

reference to various categories of transgender, which refers to people who are born with male or female physical characteristics but feel they are the opposite sex. "T" includes transsexuals, who are transgender people who take medication or undergo surgery to change to the sex that they feel they truly are. "T" also encompasses transvestites, people who dress and behave as the opposite gender in public or private. Subsequently, the letter "I" was included; it refers to intersexuals, who are born with both male and female genitalia, and a combination of chromosomes prevents the identification of a specific sex. For this reason, you can find the gender term with triple "T," resulting in the word "LGBTTTQI+" ["*LGBTTTIQ+*"] The final letter, "Q," comes from the word "queer," which means "unusual" ["*raro*"]. In the 1990s, it was a derogatory term, but the LGBTQI community has reclaimed it to mean people who live freely without labels. The + symbol encompasses minorities within the LGBTIQ+ community (**Carlson**, 2014), such as demisexuals, pansexuals, or omnisexuals, among others. Demisexuals feel attracted to a person based on getting to know them very personally. Pansexuals and omnisexuals are attracted to people who do not identify as any particular gender (**Enguix-Grau**, 2019; **Caceres** *et al.*, 2020). For these reasons, the term "LGTBQI+" is understood to comprise and include all of the groups that compose it; however, apart from here, the text refers to the community as "LGBT," as this was the most common term used in the dissemination and even in titles of journals such as the *Journal of LGBT Youth*.

A.2. Top 10 most viral posts on *Instagram*, *TikTok*, and *Twitter* with LGBT content

Social network	Identifier	Link	*Likes*	Retweets o comments	*Following*	*Followers*
TikTok	TT01	*https://bit.ly/3rg8vKf*	4 723 984	20 163	495	31 761
	TT02	*https://bit.ly/3SsrzRM*	4 352 815	23 632	147	67 125
	TT03	*https://bit.ly/3Sq6CXl*	2 379 263	26 731	3 143	72 784
	TT04	*https://bit.ly/3LUcXYD*	9 664 592	108 262	2 015	828 411
	TT05	*https://bit.ly/3ftYnLB*	3 219 328	48 253	768	15 038 610
	TT06	*https://bit.ly/3Spd1SR*	2 743 001	22 129	355	71 329
	TT07	*https://bit.ly/3rfolVN*	2 202 128	11 347	231	28 931
	TT08	*https://bit.ly/3y291Qa*	2 003 229	8 512	139	106 892
	TT09*	*https://bit.ly/3dNFYJf*	1 732 641	11 529	99	42 432
	TT10	*https://bit.ly/3E14Ml7*	2 112 325	13 608	105	20 456
	Promedio		3 040 932	29 417	750	1 630 873
Instagram	IG01	*https://bit.ly/3fxA3sh*	50 206	0	1 871	26 725
	IG02	*https://bit.ly/3SvvZaA*	40 922	384	170	1 185 783
	IG03	*https://bit.ly/3LS4iGa*	72 331	11 315	405	6 672 817
	IG04	*https://bit.ly/3Ci1eQu*	52 575	0	992	1 045 919
	IG05	*https://bit.ly/3Ckwsqh*	39 471	409	0	2 005 815
	IG06	*https://bit.ly/3CkFBiA*	24 882	76	119	457 312
	IG07	*https://bit.ly/3RoLSOr*	23 161	1 381	290	650 981
	IG08	*https://bit.ly/3UPy0jd*	21 813	234	1 774	125 673
	IG09*	*https://bit.ly/3riiE9t*	47 721	335	992	1 045 919
	IG10	*https://bit.ly/3LQVlgp*	42 981	367	0	2 005 815
	Promedio		41 606	1 450	661	1 522 276
Twitter	TW01	*https://bit.ly/3E49kxm*	17 743	3 972	951	50 129
	TW02	*https://bit.ly/3y2aupE*	6 277	1 251	623	194 267
	TW03	*https://bit.ly/3Sqmk4R*	5 194	1 356	1 724	280 942
	TW04	*https://bit.ly/3re7DpL*	8 556	428	86	3 872 304
	TW05*	*https://bit.ly/3dZibWx*	17 252	5 131	37	30 941
	TW06	*https://bit.ly/3QtZSb2*	3 692	915	1 453	64 916
	TW07	*https://bit.ly/3SqrzS3*	9 377	1 044	1 921	1 741
	TW08	*https://bit.ly/3Rm8ajN*	2 640	284	2 331	620 728
	TW09	*https://bit.ly/3rjMfiU*	3 061	616	2 993	15 321
	TW10	*https://bit.ly/3CkxvGJ*	3 029	658	1 233	9 562
	Promedio		7 682	1 566	1 335	514 085

* Note: Some of the posts have been removed by the social networks themselves after accumulating complaints from users for unlawful interference with the right to honor (civil consequences) and for public libel and slander with insults against individuals or communities (criminal consequences). In addition, certain sexual content in text (S€x) or photographs (intimate parts) has been removed from the aforementioned digital platforms, causing the links to become inaccessible over time.