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BLOGS AND DRUG TRAFFICKING: CONTENT ANALYSIS OF MESSAGES OF ORGANIZED CRIME IN MEXICO

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ABSTRACT

The pages "specialized" in spreading live crimes and even murders committed by members of organized crime cartels in northeastern Mexico get thousands of visits from Internet users daily. The Mexican Mafias, through blogs disseminated in the web, mix and spread information from newspapers with rumors and threats against rival Mafia groups or even the Mexican State. This reality is what is discussed in this paper. On these sites, through his computer or cell phone, the ordinary citizen watches executions, attacks, inert beheaded, hanged or mutilated bodies; knows about the disputes between organized crime groups; accesses videos and pictures where the torture and rape of kidnapped civilians or members of opposing groups is advertised. He virtually knows about weapons, cars, jewelry and lifestyles of those who work for the Mafia. In such sites, criminals show their crimes with impunity; victims are shown in their pain with photographs and videos taken by the criminals themselves and all this happens in advertising pages of prestigious brands through the hosting services, most of them are free. Drug traffickers operating in northeastern Mexico, mainly belonging to the groups called "Los Zetas" or "Gulf Cartel", have found in the networks of Internet users a way to show their scope and power through war, not only weapons but also the media, where the Internet is a powerful weapon of war to reach the public, scare their opponents and even challenge the Mexican State as regards public and national security.

KEY WORDS

Drug trafficking - Organized Crime - Blogs - Violence - Insecurity - Media Coverage - Sensationalism - Journalism - Blogging.

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BLOGS Y NARCOTRÁFICO: ANÁLISIS DE CONTENIDO DE LOS MENSAJES DE LA CRIMINALIDAD ORGANIZADA EN MÉXICO

RESUMEN

Páginas “especializadas” en difundir crímenes y hasta homicidios en vivo perpetrados por miembros de los cárteles del crimen organizado en la zona Noreste de México, obtienen miles de visitas de internautas diariamente. Las mafias mexicanas a través de blogs divulgados en la red, mezclan y difunden información proveniente de medios periodísticos, con rumores y amenazas dirigidas a grupos mafiosos contrarios o hasta el propio Estado mexicano. Esta es la realidad analizada durante el desarrollo del presente trabajo. En estos sitios, el ciudadano común observa desde su computadora o celular, ejecuciones, atentados; cuerpos inertes decapitados, ahorcados o mutilados; conoce las disputas entre los grupos de la criminalidad organizada; accede a videos y fotografías donde se publicita las torturas y violaciones hechas sobre personas secuestradas civiles o plagiados de grupos contrarios. Conoce virtualmente las armas, automóviles, joyas y estilos de vida de quienes trabajan para las mafias. Aquí, en la red, los delincuentes exhiben impunemente sus crímenes; las víctimas son mostradas en su dolor con fotografías y videos tomados por la propia criminalidad y, todo ello, sucede en medio de páginas que tienen publicidad con marcas de prestigio a través del servicio de “hosting”, en su mayoría gratuitos. Los narcotraficantes operantes en el Noreste de México, mayoritariamente pertenecientes a los grupos denominados “los Zetas” o del “Cártel del Golfo”, han encontrado en las redes de internautas un modo para hacer sentir sus alcances y poderío a través de la guerra no sólo de armas, sino también mediática, donde el internet es un poderoso artefacto bélico para llegar a la ciudadanía; amedrentar a sus oponentes y hasta desafiar al Estado mexicano en materia de seguridad pública y nacional.

PALABRAS CLAVE

Narcotráfico - Crimen organizado - Blogs - Violencia - Inseguridad - Cobertura Mediática - Amarillismo - Periodismo - Blogging.

1. INTRODUCTION

Traditional media theoretically governed by ethical principles and deontological codes restrict the publication of contents in which violent acts extolling morbidity or sensationalism are explicitly shown.

However, dissemination of violent contents remains in multiple spaces. Today, with the emergence of blogs and open spaces on the Internet, anyone with minimal computer knowledge is able to distribute online content of any kind.

The sites with high violent and uncensored contents, where crimes and attacks carried out by Mexican organized crime cells are shown, arouse interest among the internet users.

These innovative information media are also a vehicle for organized crime to disseminate messages of all kinds. Texts, videos and photos with explicitly violent contents are distributed on websites without censorship and, commonly, this information is reproduced in social networks, becoming a viral phenomenon.

These sites include the so-called "*blogdelnarco.com*"; "*Tierradelnarco.com*" and "*historiasdelnarco.com*". In these pages, managers publish "*narco-messages*", videos, texts and images of the crimes committed by organized crime groups in northeastern Mexico. These sites have a considerable number of users who visit them in order to learn about the latest developments related to drug trafficking. This information does not have the characteristics proper to journalistic rigor; the data traveling on the network are not always reliable.

These pages - according to what is published in them - are run by ordinary citizens who argue from their perspective that they disseminate this kind of information that is usually removed not only because of its exaltation of violence and morbidity but also because spreading it endangers newspapers and journalists due to the attacks to the press often performed by some members of the organized crime in Mexico.

Through this piece of research, we analyze the type of information that organized crime disseminates through networks and the way in which it is published in three major blogs dedicated to disseminate information stemming from crimes committed by organized crime cells in the northeastern region of Mexico, composed of institutions of Nuevo Leon; Coahuila and Tamaulipas.

1.1 Theoretical framework

According to the Royal Academy of the Spanish Language (2014), the digital logs, cyber logs, cyber diaries or weblogs, commonly known as "blogs", are "websites that include, as a personal diary of their author or authors, contents of interest, frequently updated and often commented on by readers."

1.1.1. Background: Origin and evolution of blogs

Previous to the emergence of blogs, there was in the network a proliferation of digital communities and programs to create online forums, where users could engage in conversation through "threads"; that is, a series of messages that are related to the main topic of the forum.

Blogs as we know them today are the direct descendants of online journals; sites where users on the network spread all that happened in their personal life. At the beginning, blogs were updated versions of common web sites; however, the evolution of these tools facilitated the process of publishing information on the network, addressing a wider audience, even if they do not have expertise.

These sites can be built and stored using blog hosting services they can be created through tools like Blogger or WordPress or by current hosting services. Usually, these spaces are free for users of the network.

Some of the features that settled the proliferation of these sites are the possibility of publishing content in short periods of time; these sites welcome comments from readers and allow the development of a community around the author, allowing two-way communication.

The success of blogs is due to the possibility offered to the users to become generators of contents and to provide a free and open space where any citizen can state his opinions on any topic of interest.

1.1.2. Blogs as journalistic tools

In the media world, journalists and media only competed with other journalists and media for the information published in them. That is, the informational task was carried out mainly by media organizations and information professionals. At this stage, the audience had no way to take part, the process was unilateral.

The development of media through the network; the evolution of technology; ease of web tools and easy access to them have caused citizens, media users, to be able to provide data and become producers of content through the network. Also, these sites are to journalists a space for expression away from the rigor of the rules imposed by the media organizations they work for.

This fact causes that, on the Internet, issues unaddressed in traditional media find a broadcasting place through which they reach a large audience.

In this regard, Cruccianelli (2013) states that:

Subjects who could not find a space in the mass media (mass media), either for editorial or advertising reasons or out of mere lack of interest from publishers, are gaining more and more space from the findings of the audience, and their non-inclusion in information routines increases the risk of undermining the principal stock of journalists and media: their credibility. Just because they go away from reality, a reality that is now more exposed and difficult to conceal.

The ability to publish online without any restriction allows journalists to find a place to spread their ideas. Among the variety of topics on the network, it is possible to find a specialized site for each of them. Also, blogs are also a form of communication and feedback between journalists and readers.

Moreover, the development of these Websites gave way to the emergence of the so-called "*citizen journalism*". An outline of bilateral participation in which users, who are usually passive, become active agents in the process of generation and dissemination of information.

The information disseminated by these pathways lacks the proper rigor of journalism. It is not a product of an exhaustive process of research and testing of sources, where truthfulness and quality are the cornerstones of its construction.

It is here where the main detractors of citizen journalism are based on. Because those working professionally in this business argue that there must be a methodology and

a technique to exercise it for its correct development. In this regard, Monsivais (2005) wrote that:

With the advent of internet in the nineties, the outline of the creative surprise is repeated again and is learned on the fly, it is extracted from theory to practice then, curiously, practice corrects. Again, technological advances are so extraordinary that the convincing performance is slow in coming and often unconvincing. Internet, means of information and communication, radically transforms the landscape by giving a role to the user. Everyone, if he tries, is his own news director.

Meanwhile, Dario Restrepo argues that:

Neither "tweeters" nor "graffiti drawers" nor "bloggers" who have no active account on Facebook can be called journalists on the basis of these communication activities. It is true that they connect with audiences who can become more extensive than those of any newspaper; they can communicate more frequently than a newspaper; they may have the same periodicity as a newspaper in their communication. However, they are not journalists.

According to the opinions of Monsivais and Restrepo, the information posted on blogs cannot be considered journalism. Usually, the news broadcast on these sites merely reproduces data released on other media or it is constituted in a space of opinion where journalists can express their opinions without the limitations imposed by the journalistic community to which they belong.

Though blogs represent an area of opportunity for journalists, when misused, they can cause negative effects on the audience. Such is the case of blogs aimed at disseminating information where drug-related images, videos and pictures uncensored showing the cruelty of the crimes perpetrated by organized crime cells are shown.

1.1.3. Journalism in times of drug trafficking

Currently, the Mexican society lives a climate of insecurity unprecedented in the history of that country. Specifically, the increase in violence in northeastern Mexico was, for the citizens inhabiting this area, a fact that upset virtually every aspect of society and largely increased fear and the perception of insecurity.

Violent acts, murders, shootings in broad daylight and crimes committed by organized crime cells were the scenario that the citizens of northeastern Mexico had to face during the past five years. As regards the media, these events monopolized the front pages of newspapers and the headlines of the news broadcast in the region.

Monica Medel (2010) states that information about drug trafficking in Mexico was based on isolated reports of confiscations and homicides published on the inside pages of newspapers. However, the increase in murders, massacres and the level of brutality (torture, decapitations and dismemberment) caused this information to have more emphasis, placing it on the front pages of newspapers.

This climate of violence has led to problems and challenges arising from curiosity and the language used in covering these facts. Also, the importance given by the

media to such events has become the "organs of communication" of cartels which, through the so-called "narco mantas", can send their messages and threats to the government, the rival bands and citizens.

The media saturation and overexposure to these contents causes the audience to get used to violence, with notes in which the reasons are not explored nor is a human face to information given, as with those news that count the dead without any social or historical context (Medel, 2010).

In this situation, the Mexican press and coverage of drug-related violence face a number of challenges that directly affect the kinds of stories that are written about this phenomenon and its quality.

The media also had to change their way of operation in this situation, as they were located in the midst of pressure, threats and direct attacks by the organized crime cells; mainly in areas of the country that serve as routes to smuggle drugs into the United States. This caused that, as level of rawness in the facts increased, the information will cease to be disclosed in the media.

According to Monica Medel (2010), the operating margin of the Mexican media is not easy, so they have had to make the decision of gradually reducing the published material, along with increasing self-censorship in order to protect the integrity of the medium and the journalists. The author argues that:

The reporter's job has become so risky that sixty journalists have been killed in Mexico from 2000 to 2010, twelve of them in 2009 alone, while the murder of five others has been reported up to April 2010, according to official data. Eight more are missing and, in the same period, seven media have undergone bombing, which has made Mexico one of the world's most dangerous countries for journalists (P.14).

This combination of factors, the climate of violence and insecurity and drug cartels operating in various areas of Mexico has also negatively affected the coverage of information and the quality of the notes disclosed in this regard or, where appropriate, to "long silences" (Medel, 2010) by the editors.

At the meeting called "cross-border drug trafficking coverage between the US and Mexico" organized in 2010 by the Knight Center for Journalism in the Americas (University of Texas at Austin), the main shortcomings and difficulties faced by journalists who practice this profession in the regions of Mexico where drug cartels operate were analyzed.

Among the major shortcomings were the language used to inform; the curiosity and simplifications to accept certain stereotypes as valid. According to the findings issued in that meeting...

In the best case, the type of note that ends up covering -the official version constrained to counting victims without socioeconomic and historical context- is just the cocktail of these factors. At worst, it is a media blackout following the killing of journalists encouraged by the fear that is installed on the rest of their colleagues.

In this scenario in which the media were threatened, a new way of disseminating this information came up. Free blogs and sites across the network became the way in which this news was disclosed to the audience. However, the information disseminated at these sites lacked reliability. Raw images of killings, beheadings and mutilations were the order of the day.

At the beginning, these sites enjoyed great popularity among Internet users; mainly because they could find information that could otherwise not get to be censored in traditional newspapers and newscasts.

One of the main blogs, mainly focused on disseminating news related to crimes committed by drug trafficking, is the so-called "*Blog del Narco*". The objective of this site, which operates since March 2, 2010, according to its creators, is the following:

The idea of creating Blog del Narco arises when the media and the government are trying to pretend that nothing happens in Mexico, because the media are threatened and the government is apparently purchased, it was then that we decided to create a means of communication through which we can inform people what happens, write about events exactly as they were, with no alterations or modifications to our convenience.

As mentioned above, blogs are places where anyone, even with little technical and computer knowledge, can become a content generator and publish the content he wants on the network even if it lacks the rigor of the journalistic work. Unsubstantiated information derived from gossip or rumors of social networking without proper research and exercise of the profession are the common denominators of these sites where there is no quality control of data.

In that sense, the authors of "*Blog del narco*" say their intention is "to publish notes in a journalistic way"; however, they make it clear that:

We are aware that we are only a "homemade" blog the purpose of which is to inform (unfortunately to many), with much greater efficiency, reliability and better documentation than many other sites and professional journalists. We strive even in details like correct spelling, writing and design of the "big" so that the reader can be benefitted from being properly informed and not half informed or information-conditioned.

They also highlight that the use of this communication tool contributes to freedom of expression and the information disseminated through these sites does not serve the interests of any journalistic corporation or any organized crime group:

Our intention has not been, neither is it nor will it be to compete with large companies that are dedicated to publishing 100% local, state and national news for which, presumably, they are paid. We refer specifically to employees who are only following orders. Here is different ... maybe we can be "*pirates*" but never laborers or slaves. We are free and as such we express. We do not serve any interest nor are we at the feet of anyone. Neither are we paid for publishing or stop publishing such and such as it suits us. We do not do it under any kind of pressure or threat, least of all we buy or sell to the best bidder.

According to the managers of this site, disclosing information related to the crimes committed by organized crime cells allows society to be better informed and know what happens around them. To do this, it uses information from other sites and enriches it to provide the best news to users.

This is a modest blog not intended to mislead anyone. It is not a news agency and yet, it is much better documented and reports better than many of them. Its header reiterates that it takes the best from some places and enriches the information with others. And even if those who consider themselves defenders of their "*own and exclusive*" arrested, executed, "*raised*", wounded, kidnapped, released, injured, imprisoned and a large list of etcetera's turn to us, get annoyed when visiting us or just check what we do, it is a sign that we are not doing it badly ...

The new information technologies and tools derived from them open up new channels for the dissemination of news and data relevant to the events that occur in an area or region, drug trafficking and organized crime have not been an exception in this regard.

2. OBJECTIVES

Analyze the type and the way in which messages are published on blogs focused on disseminating information about the crimes committed by organized crime in the northeastern region of Mexico. Specific focus on analyze how often events related to the crimes committed by organized cells are reported on blogs and sites specializing in this information. Examine whether the information provided on these sites and blogs regarding the actions of organized crime cells meets the basic requirements of journalistic writing (journalism and firm structure). Assess the origin (source), classification and amount of material (videos, photographs and / or audio) with respect to offenses committed by organized crime groups reported through these sites. Analyze the modus operandi of organized crime groups (major crimes, motives, weapons) whose criminal actions are advertised through specialized sites and blogs. Explore what is the profile (personal and criminal) of individuals that make up the organized crime cells and their role in these groups and their criminal and criminological background. Evaluate the manner in which the participation of the Security Corporations in the criminal acts perpetrated by members of organized crime is mentioned; and the level to which these belong (municipal, state or federal).

3. METHODOLOGY

This paper begins with an exploratory-descriptive approach aimed at analyzing the contents and how they are disseminated through pages and blogs specialized in informing of crimes and attacks by groups of organized crime in the Northeast of Mexico. To carry out the exploratory and descriptive cross-sectional analysis, a technique of content analysis of 261 notes published in three different blogs (historiasdelnarco.com; blogdelnarco.es; tierradelnarco.com) is used in which only

the relevant information concerning the states of Nuevo Leon, Tamaulipas and Coahuila will be examined. The population considered for this piece of research corresponds to all the information published through blogs and unofficial pages about the attacks and crimes committed by members of organized crime in Mexico, in the northeast of the country. For this piece of research, 261 notes published from August 2013 to June 2014 regarding criminal acts committed by organized crime cells in the northeastern region of Mexico were considered. Such facts were disseminated through blogs focused on the dissemination of such information called *historiasdelnarco.com*; *blogdelnarco.es* and *tierradelnarco.com*.

Table 1. Notes analyzed by state.

Blog	State		
	Nuevo León	Tamaulipas	Coahuila
Blog del Narco	22 notas	19 notas	22 notas
Historias del Narco	20 notas	42 notas	25 notas
Tierra del Narco	10 notas	93 notas	9 notas
Total	52 notas	154 notas	56 notas

Source: Authors (2014)

Content analysis of the news published on blogs where drug-related information is disseminated will be carried out from the following analytical perspectives or categories:

1. Presentation of the note on the blog;
2. Structure of the news;
3. Information on the phenomenon that is published;
4. Participation of security corporations;
5. Profile of the drug trafficker and the organized crime cell that is reported.

Two hundred and sixty-one notes about crimes committed by cartels and organized crime cells were examined. For this purpose, the pages called "*El Blog del Narco*", "*Tierra del Narco*" and "*Historias del Narco*" were consulted. Content analysis includes the information posted on these sites from August 2013 to June 2014 and it was conducted with the participation of the group of students of the learning unit of Investigative Journalism and Opinion taught by Dr. Patricia Liliana Cerda Pérez in the period stretching from August to December 2014. An encoding format was developed through which the variables and indicators analyzed in 261 notes related to organized crime published on drug-trafficking-specialized blogs and sites were analyzed. For processing data from this piece of research, the blogs and specialized sites to disseminate drug-trafficking-related information were documentarily evaluated at first instance. It was done in order to find those notes in which events that took place in northeastern Mexico were disclosed.

Subsequently, these notes having been identified, they were analyzed and classified in a format specifically designed for this purpose. Finally, the results of this analysis

were included in a database designed in SPSS (*Statistical Package for the Social Sciences, version 20*) for statistical processing and preparing charts and graphs that make it possible to illustrate what is found in this paper.

4. RESULTS

Out of the 261 pieces of news published in blogs specialized in disclosing the crimes of organized crime in Mexico; the results indicate that the site named "tierradelnarco.com" was more active during the period analyzed as 109 notes (41.8 percent of the total analyzed) were counted; followed by "historiasdelnarco.com" with 89 notes (34.1 percent) and "blogdelnarco.com" with 63 notes (24 percent).

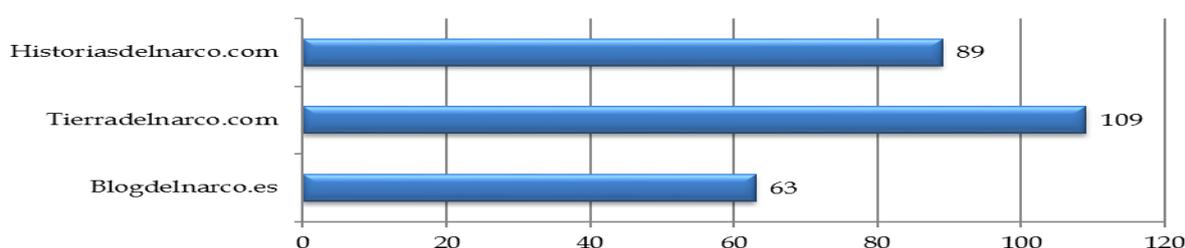


Figure 1. Publication Blog
Source: Authors (2014)

In this analysis comprising notes published in the three sites described above from May 2013 to July 2014, it was found out that, in 2013, the largest numbers of violent information were published during the months of October and November, with 19 news; while, in 2014, that happened during the months of May and June, with 48 and 63 notes, respectively.

In the period from October 2013 to June 2014, the highest rate of publication of news related to organized crime in these sites to post a total of 194 notes (74.3 percent). A large percentage of this information (23.4 percent) is taken up from news published in various local newspapers or national magazines and newspapers.

Table 2. Date of publication of the articles published on blogs

Month	2013		2014		Frequency	
	Freq.	Perct.	Freq.	Perct.	Freq.	Perct.
January	0	0.0	17	8.6	17	6.5
February	0	0.0	15	7.6	15	5.7
March	0	0.0	23	11.6	23	8.8
April	0	0.0	26	13.1	26	10.0
May	1	1.6	48	24.2	49	18.8
June	1	1.6	63	31.8	64	24.5
July	0	0.0	1	0.5	1	0.4
August	1	1.6	0	0.0	1	0.4

September	7	11.1	0	0.0	7	2.7
October	19	30.2	0	0.0	19	7.3
November	19	30.2	3	1.5	22	8.4
December	15	23.8	2	1.0	17	6.5
Total	63	100.0	198	100.0	261	100.0

Source: Authors (2014)

Importantly, out of the 261 analyzed notes, the findings show that in neither of them the name of the journalist or person responsible for its preparation is included. This indicates that those responsible for managing these blogs take precautionary measures to safeguard the integrity of those who disclose this information, or that the newspapers or the formal media themselves omit the name of their reporters or collaborators to protect them from possible reprisals.

4.1. Structure news

As part of this piece of research, we analyzed if the notes published in these blogs meet minimum structural standards of journalistic writing. In this regard, it was found that 253 out of the 261 notes (96.9 percent) have a headline; whereas only 8 (3.1 percent) did not include it.

In addition, we assessed whether the notes published in these sites where information about drug trafficking is disseminated include the lead; that is, the first paragraph of the note answers the basic questions of journalism -which, how, when, where and why-. In this connection, the data indicate that 143 out of the 261 tested notes (54.8 percent) have this element; in 118 notes (45.2 percent) this element is omitted.

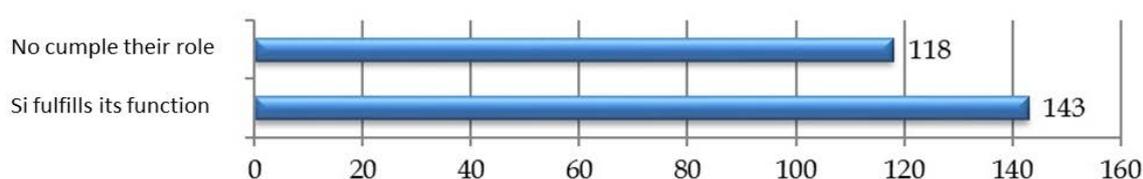


Figure 2. The lead the published notice fulfills its function

Source: Authors (2014)

In order to know if the notes fulfill the function of informing, two classifications according to their presentation and extent were established. The note fulfills its main function of informing and, secondly, the brief one mentions only what is most relevant in the note or leads the reader to another page via hyperlinks. In this sense, the results indicate that, out of 261 analyzed notes, 164 of them (62.8 percent) are presented comprehensively; that is, with all relevant and necessary information to

facilitate interpretation by the reader. Moreover, 97 notes (37.2 percent) are briefly disclosed.

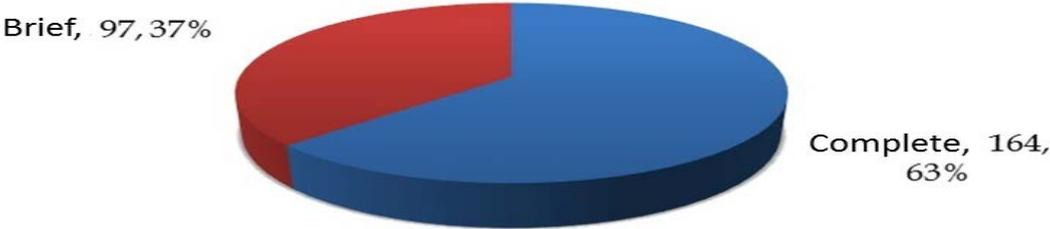


Figure 3. Type of published note
Source: Authors (2014)

The Internet differs from other media because different resources can be combined to complement a note; that is, that in one single piece of news, texts, photographs, videos and audios can be presented for the purpose of transmitting information more effectively. The results of the analysis indicate that in 186 out of the 261 analyzed notes (71.3 percent), the textual information is supplemented by photographs; while in 53 notes (20.3 percent), it appears only in writing.

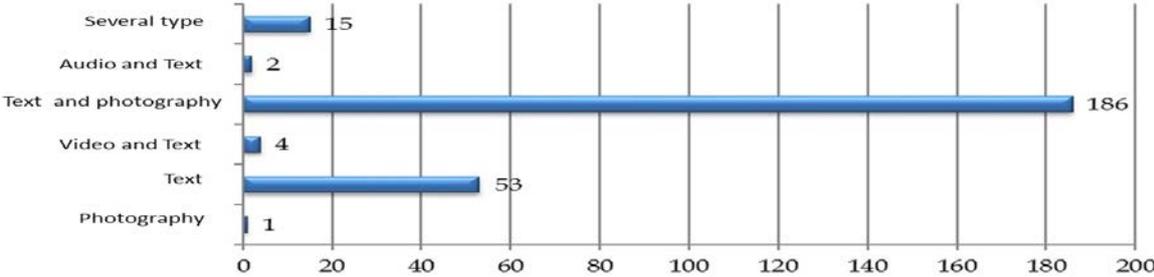


Figure 4. Type of material published on blogs
Source: Authors (2014)

With regard to the pictures, the data indicate that out of the 201 notes that include this type of material (we considered the 186 that include text and pictures; 14 that include various types of material and one that contains images in full), in 178 cases there is only one photograph; in 11 cases two, while in 12 cases 3 or more images. When classifying them, it was found that, in 91 notes, the published images are intended to inform on violent events in various communities; in 52 cases the figure of the criminal is presented; 29 times they are photographs of location, and in 15 notes, the figure of the victim is disclosed. Regarding the source of information, 50 percent of photos come from anonymous sources that do not allow you to check their authenticity; 46 come from media and 26 stem from organized crime organizations.

As relates the 53 notes that are published using text as the only information resource, the data indicate that the average length of them is 9 paragraphs. Also, out of the 13 analyzed notes that include a video in their presentation, it was found that their average duration is 25 seconds and they are mostly photo slides (6 videos); presentations of explicit violent events (6 videos) and a recreation. Some of the articles published in these sites are complemented by audio or recordings; in this respect, it was found that this material appears in just 7 times. Out of them, 3 correspond to recorded news. Likewise, their source is mostly anonymous. Furthermore, another important aspect of blogging is advertising. Importantly, these ads are the responsibility of the provider of the "hosting" service -mostly free of charge- who adds these elements to the sites and not the manager thereof; however, it is interesting to analyze it due to the prestige and recognition of the brands advertised on these pages. Of the 261 tested notes, it was found that, in 7 out of 10 (73.9 percent), the published information includes some sort of advertising in its structure.

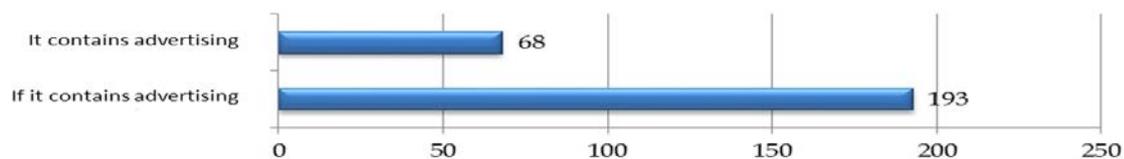


Figure 5. The published notes contain advertising
Source: Authors (2014)

The analyzed blogs address issues of risk. Mostly, they contain information on drug trafficking and crimes committed by organized crime cells. On this basis, the source of the information disclosed in these blogs was analyzed. Out of the 261 tested notes, 130 (49 percent) have new information; in 61 cases (23.4 percent) the information is reproduced from other media.

Table 3. Origin of the information published on blogs

Source of Information	Frequency	Percentage
The origin is not set	9	3.4
Playing other means unpublished information	61	23.4
Social media	130	49.8
Media playback, and info. unpublished untold	30	11.5
	25	9.6

All info and social networks	1	0.4
Playing other means, Info.	5	1.9
Unpublished and social networks		
Total	261	100.0

Source: Authors (2014)

Out of the 91 analyzed notes showing information from other media; 78 pieces of news (85.7 percent) are taken from other organized-crime-related blogs. The rest of the information originates in magazines like Process that is nationally distributed or in newspapers or northeastern Mexico.

This is important because sometimes the information published in the media does not have the necessary support from the journalistic point of view. That is, that the news disclosed by these media have neither a filter nor a method which ensures the accuracy of the data they disseminate. When evaluating the origin of the data disclosed in the notes posted on these sites; It was found that 139 of them (53 percent) specify the information source; while 122 (47 percent) omit this data.

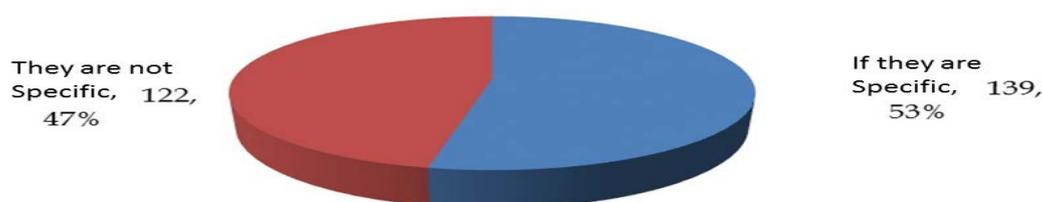


Figure 6. Sources in notes published on blogs
Source: Authors (2014)

Out of the 139 notes in which data sources are specified in the publications; in 81 cases (58.3 percent) the information comes from official agencies (governmental authorities or security corporations); while the unofficial information (transcended or rumors) occurred in 29 out of the analyzed notes (20.9 percent). Importantly, this analysis found that, in seven assessed notes, the primary sources of information were blankets and / or banners left at crime scenes by organized crime groups.

4.3. Information regarding the published phenomenon

According to the results of the analysis, Tamaulipas is the northeastern region of Mexico where there is more information on these sites as 147 out of the 261 tested notes (56.3 percent) were published there. It was followed by Nuevo Leon, where 53 out of the analyzed news originated (20.3 percent) and Coahuila, where 50 notes (19.2 percent) were counted.

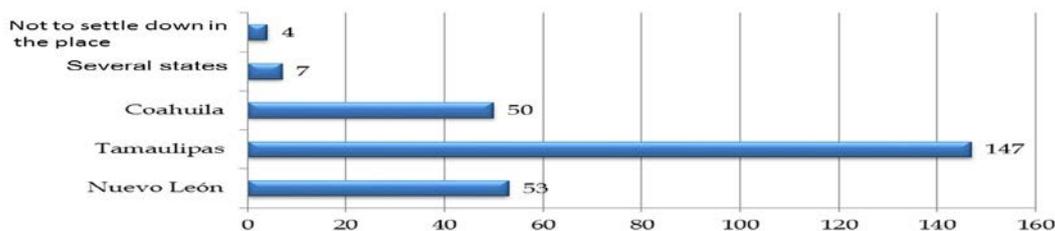


Figure 7. State of origin of the notes published on blogs
Source: Authors (2014)

The information disclosed through blogs focused on publicizing the activities and crimes carried out by organized crime cells in northeastern Mexico is characterized by the use of raw and uncensored images where the magnitude of the facts is established. In that sense, the results indicate that such images are included in 62 out of the 261 (24 percent) evaluated news; while 199 (76 percent) do not use this resource.

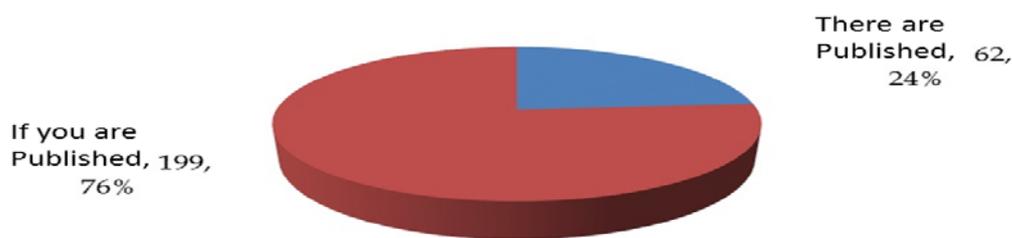


Figure 8. Publication of raw graphic images in the notes disclosed on the blogs
Source: Authors (2014)

In the 62 analyzed notes that publish images crudely, in 36 of them -58.1 per cent- the news are related to murders. Clashes are published on 19 occasions. While 4.8 percent of images show beaten people, the same number as the images of corpses.

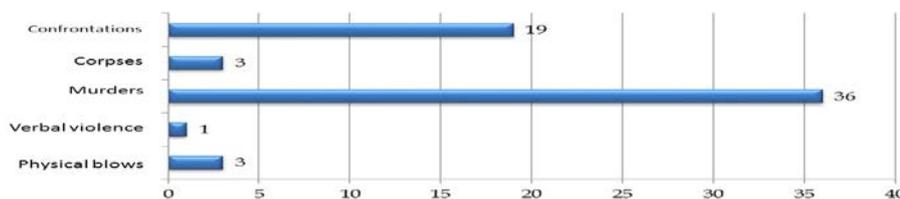


Figure 9. Type of raw images disclosed in the notes on blogs.
Source: Authors (2014)

The results of the analysis indicate that 182 out of the evaluated notes disclosed some kind of armed and / or violent conflict. Ninety-nine notes (37.8 percent) reported two or more crimes related to organized crime. The crime that occurs most often is homicide when counting 43 notes (23.6 percent); other crimes such as extortion, burning of cars, drug or people trafficking or shootings recorded lower percentages. Moreover, seven notes dealt with operations implemented by the authorities to

combat these groups and, in the same number of notes, the participation of government officials in drug trafficking is mentioned.

While all the analyzed news are linked to organized crime, not in all cases there were clashes between opposed gangs or groups. According to information published in 226 out of the 261 tested notes (86.6 percent) there was no such an act; while 35 pieces of news (13.4 percent) affirmed there were conflicts between opposing groups.

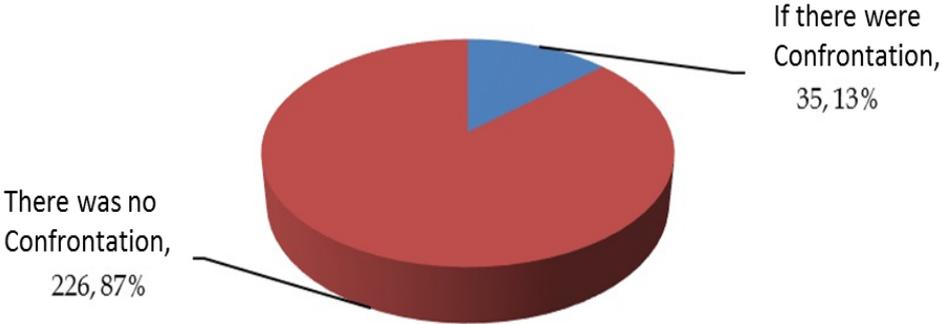


Figure 10. Clashes between cartels
Source: Authors (2014)

Of the notes affirming there was a conflict between different groups of organized crime, it was found that threats or territorial disputes occurred in 13 of them (37.1 percent); in 9 cases (25.7 percent) internal clashes between members of the cartels; while 8 notes (22.9 percent) reported several clashes.

Based on the information that presented the participation of gangs, it was found in most of the analyzed notes (60.9 percent) that these organized crime groups are involved in the published events; 4 out of every 10 notes reported that the criminal group known as "Los Zetas" is involved; while in 2 out of every 10 notes, the Gulf Cartel is the one responsible for the reported events. On the other hand, 39.1 percent of them the information is not enough to determine whether these group are involved or not in the events.

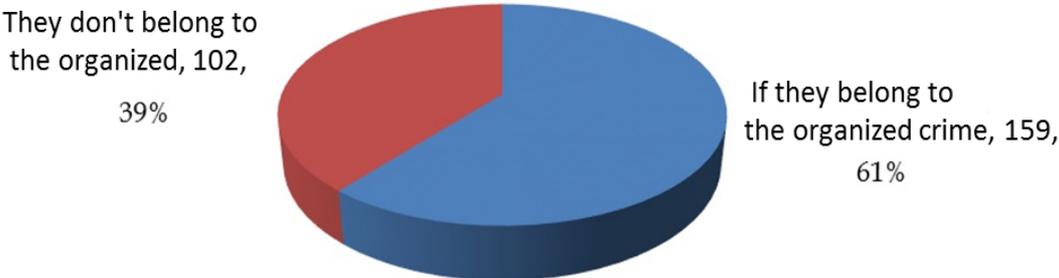


Figure 11. Involvement of organized crime gangs in the event
Source: Authors (2014)

With regard to the use of weapons, the results indicate that 124 out of the 261 tested notes (48 percent) reported that the criminals had some kind of weapon; that is, in 5

out of 10 events reported on these blogs, the criminals used firearms. Also, out of the 124 notes affirming there was use of weapons, in 81 (59.1 percent) the criminals used firearms (pistols, machine guns or rifles) to commit the crime. These data indicate that organized crime groups have ample weaponry that allows them to deal with the authorities or get involved in confrontations with other organized crime groups.

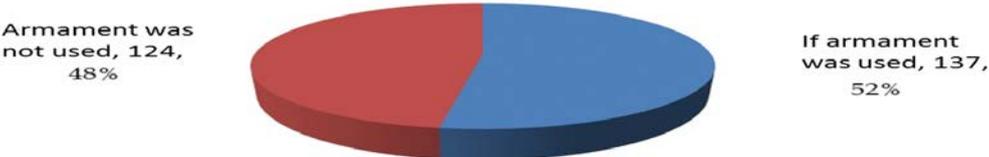


Figure 12. The note states that some type of weapon was used
 Source: Authors (2014)

Of the actions of the authorities to prevent and combat organized crime; 66 out of the 261 tested notes (25.3 percent) stated that some people were arrested during the incident; while 195 (74.7 percent) affirmed that the authorities did not capture any members of an organized crime cell. Out of the 66 notes stating that a member of organized crime was arrested; in 27 of them (41.5 percent) the arrested person was the leader of the cartel; in 22 notes (33.8 percent) they were ordinary members of these cells; five notes affirmed that several persons had been arrested. Furthermore, 128 out of the 261 notes (49 percent) stated that the participants had committed previous offenses; while in 133 notes (51 percent) the information does not tell whether the criminals had been involved in previous criminal actions.

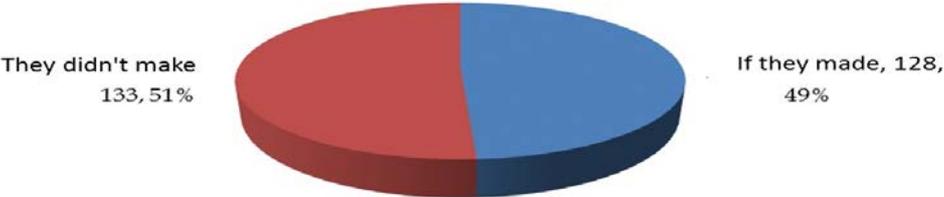


Figure 13. Involvement in previous crimes
 Source: Authors (2014)

De las 128 notas publicadas donde se menciona si presentan actos delictivos del delincuente detenido, se analizó cuál era el suceso ilícito que ellos cometieron antes de su detención. De estas, en 29 (22.7 por ciento) la información indica que el detenido cometió un homicidio previamente; en 12 casos (9.4 por ciento) se afirma que participó en tráfico de drogas; misma cifra de aquellas noticias en las que se informa que un funcionario gubernamental está relacionado con células del crimen organizado. Así mismo, en 8 notas (6.3 por ciento) el delincuente colaboró previamente en un secuestro; en 4 notas (3.1 por ciento) la información indica su

participación en balaceras, misma cifra de aquellos que se involucraron en operativos. En 48 (37.5 por ciento) de las notas divulgadas los integrantes del crimen organizado tenían más de un delito cometido previamente. Como parte de este análisis se analizó si en la información publicada en las páginas web se establece el hallazgo de fosas donde los carteles del crimen organizado depositaban los cadáveres de sus víctimas. El resultado del análisis de las 261 publicaciones en los blogs, 11 notas mencionan que si hallaron narco-fosas.; en una de ellas se encontraron aproximadamente 100 cuerpos.

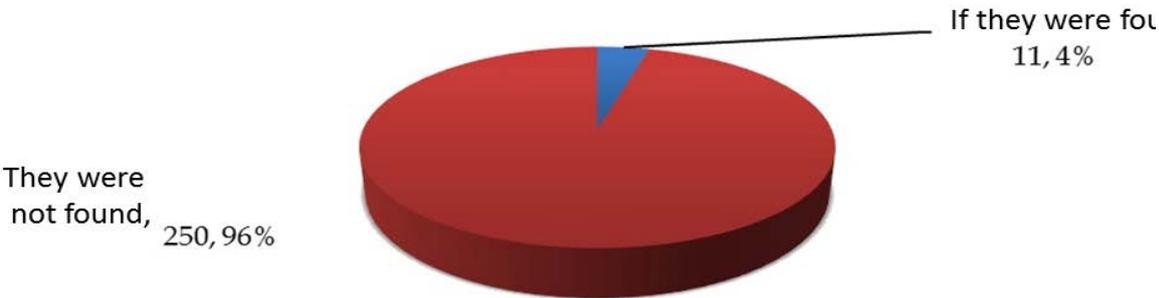


Figure 14. Finding of graves
Source: Authors (2014)

In order to know the exact location of the graves, the 11 notes mentioning the places where they had been found by the security authorities were examined. Five of the graves were found in the northern state of Nuevo Leon, in the municipalities of Zaragoza, Hidalgo and El Carmen. One more was located in the state of Tamaulipas and, in five cases, the finding is mentioned, however, its location is not established. Moreover, 34 out of the 261 tested notes stated that the organized crime groups made threats. Fourteen of them show that they refer to conflicts and threats among cartels; in two cases the threats were aimed at relatives of drug traffickers, the same number of cases was aimed at security corporations and political leaders; in four cases there were various types of threats.

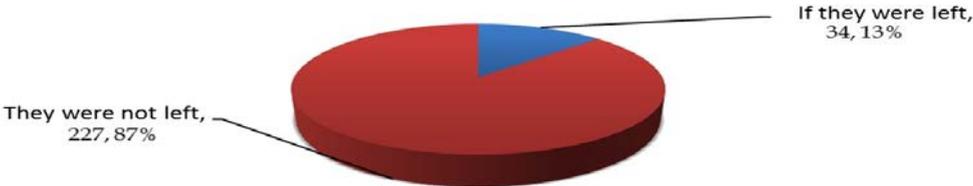


Figure 15. Threats left at the scene
Source: Authors (2014)

Regarding the place where intimidating messages and threats by organized crime were left, the results show that, in 12 out of the 34 notes (35.3 percent), they

correspond to "narco mantas" (messages of great dimension printed on fabrics and placed on pedestrian bridges or sites of great visibility for pedestrians); 8 notes (23.5 percent) to cartels; 3 notes (. 8.8 percent) to messages nailed on people executed by them; while 9 notes (26.5 percent) did not mention the place.

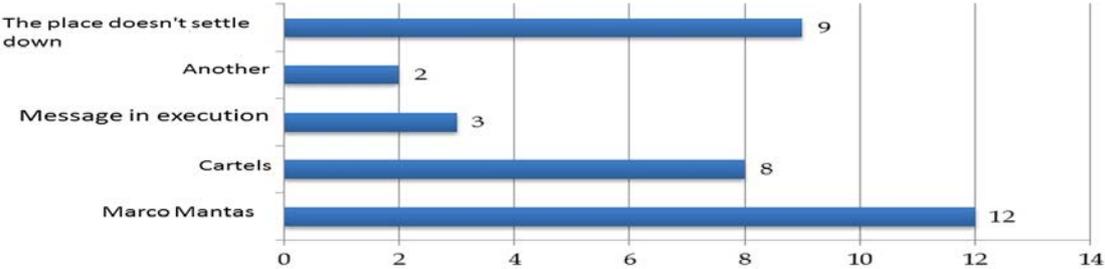


Figure 16. Place where threats were left
Source: Authors (2014)

Of the 261 tested notes, it was found that 167 of them (64 percent) mentioned the involvement of a security corporation, while 94 notes (36 percent) did not mention it.

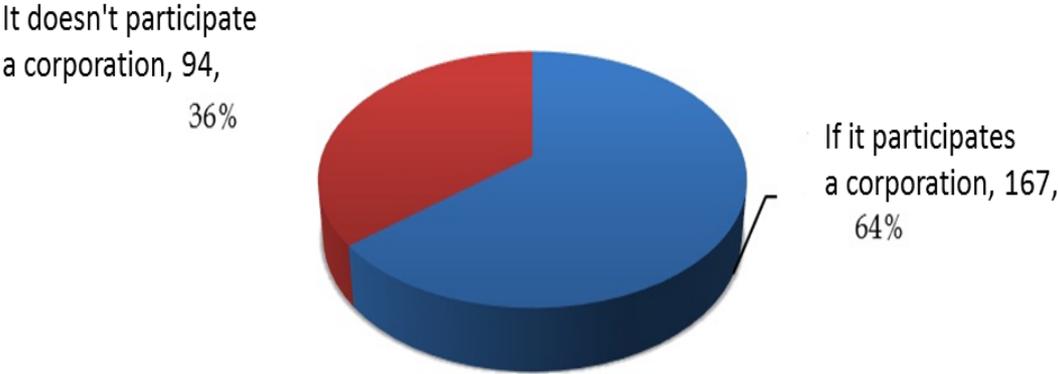


Figure 17. Mention of security corporations in published notes
Source: Authors (2014)

In 51 notes (30.5 percent), the information establishes the involvement of a state-level security corporation; in 42 (25.1 percent) it is a federal institution; in 27 pieces of news (16.2 percent) authorities of all levels were involved, and in 13 (7.8 percent) local or municipal authorities were involved. Furthermore, in 20 notes (12 percent) state and federal authorities combined their efforts; in eight cases (4.8 percent) municipal and state institutions participated.

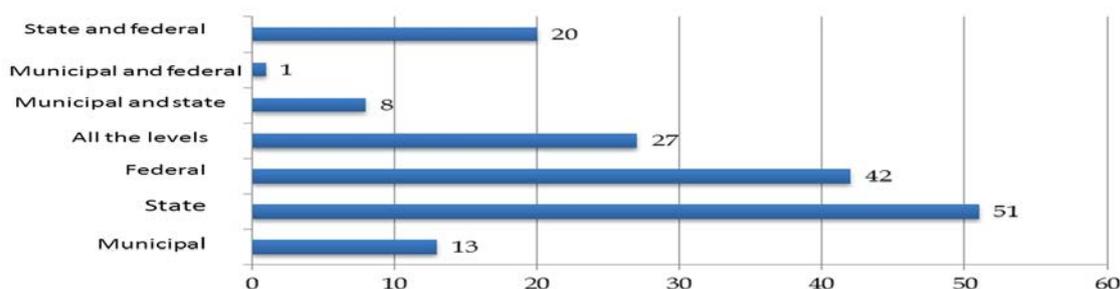


Figure 18. Level of the security corporation involved

Source: Authors (2014)

Regarding security corporations participating in the events disclosed in the analyzed notes; it was identified that, in 27 out of the 167 pieces of news (16.2 percent) mentioning the intervention of the authorities, several institutions were involved. Also, 21 notes (12.6 percent) stated that the Secretariat of National Defense (SEDENA) had participated; the same number of the news stating that federal authorities were involved.

On the other hand, state officials participated in 18 cases (10.8 percent); the Attorney General of the State of Nuevo Leon in 16 (9.6 percent); the Ministry of Public Security (without mentioning the state) was mentioned in 12 (7.2 percent). Other corporations such as the Civil Force of Nuevo Leon State appeared in 9 cases (5.4 percent); the Public Ministry in 8 (4.8 percent); the Attorney General of Mexico in 4 (2.4 percent).

Table 4. Security Corporation participant

Corporation	Frequency	Percentage
State Investigation Agency	3	1.8
State authorities	18	10.8
Federal authorities	21	12.6
municipal authorities	5	3.0
C4	1	0.6
State Security Committee	1	0.6
Federal Court of Brownsville (Texas)	1	0.6
Civil force	9	5.4
GROM	1	0.6
Public ministry	8	4.8
The name is not mentioned	14	8.4
PGJ Nuevo León	16	9.6
PGJ Tamaulipas	1	0.6
PGR	4	2.4
Civil Protection	1	0.6
SAGARPA	1	0.6
Ministry of Public Security	12	7.2
SEDENA	21	12.6
SEIDO	2	1.2
Several corporations	27	16.2
Total	167	100.0

* They are only considered the 167 notes in those that he/she mentions himself the participation of a corporation of security. Source: Own elaboration (2014)

Once we analyzed how many notes affirmed a security institution was involved; we evaluated their actions in the event. Regarding the actions identified as positive, it was found that, in 38 (24.4 percent), an investigation was conducted in the scene; in 35 (22.4 percent), the responsible criminals were captured, the same number of those notes stating they had been involved in several actions; in 10 pieces of news (6.4 percent), operations and / or patrols were implemented; in 7 cases (4.5 percent), they provided care for civilian victims.

Table 5. Shares of the corporations participating security.

Shares of the corporation	Frequency	Percentage
Capture criminals	35	22.4
Attention to civilian casualties	7	4.5
Investigation in the place of the facts	38	24.4
Recovery armament	4	2.6
I confiscate of drug	1	0.6
Surveillance	6	3.8
Operative and/or you redye	10	6.4
None	9	5.8
Another	11	7.1
Several actions	35	22.4

* They are only considered the 167 notes in those that he/she mentions himself the participation of a corporation of security. Source: Own elaboration (2014)

Moreover, in the analyzed notes, we found information concerning the participation of several municipal, state and federal security corporations related to organized crime. In that sense, the evaluation indicates that 22 notes (13 percent) out of the 167 in which the intervention of a security institution is claimed, stated that it had ties with criminal groups.

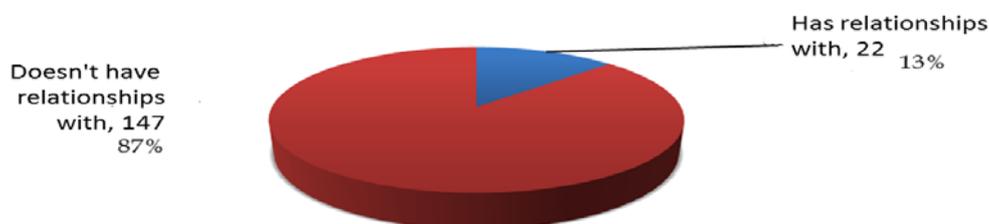


Figure 19. Ties of the authorities with organized crime groups
Source: Authors (2014)

Of the 22 notes mentioning the existence of links between security corporations and organized crime groups, monitoring or surveillance (colloquially known as halconeo)

is the one that occurs most frequently as 5 notes were counted (22.7 percent), the same number of notes indicating various types of links. Furthermore, 4 notes (18.2 percent), indicated the existence of bribes and / or payments; while 4 notes (18.2 percent) indicated that the authorities provide protection to organized crime groups; 3 notes (13.6 percent) affirmed there are undercover criminals in the security institutions.

As a whole, the events reported in the analyzed blogs are related to activities carried out by organized crime groups; however, not all the news provide information about those involved, in some cases, the published information only reports the fact without paying attention to the participants. The results of the analysis indicate that, in 126 out of the 261 tested notes (48.3 percent), there were individuals involved in the incident.

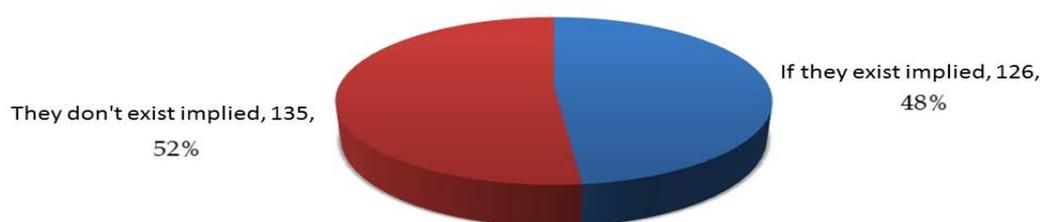


Figure 20. Subjects involved in the published event.
Source: Authors (2014)

According to the results of the analysis, in each of the cases reported in the notes published on the blogs, the average is of three participants. Out of the 126 notes, in 66 (52.4 percent) the criminal acted alone. While in 47 notes (37.3 percent) they worked in groups of two to five individuals and, in 13 pieces of news (10.3 percent), in groups of six or more individuals.

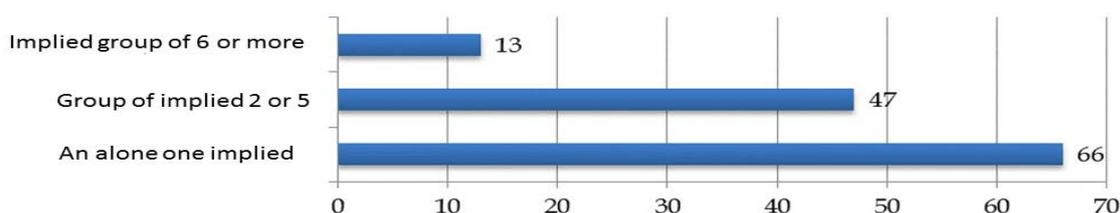


Figure 21. Number of individuals involved in the published event
Source: Authors (2014)

As for the gender of those involved, in 108 out of the 126 notes (85.7 percent), they are masculine; only in 9 notes (7.1 percent) the involvement of women is indicated, and, in 7 cases (5.6 percent), individuals of both genders are involved.

Likewise, in 101 notes (38.7 percent), the published information includes the age of the subjects involved. The results indicate that, in 46 out of the 101 notes (45.5

percent), the participants are young adults (22-35 years old); in 36 cases (35.6 percent) those involved are adults (35-55 years old); in 9 cases (8.9 percent), subjects of different ages are involved; while in 4 notes (4 percent), elderly people are involved. Just 5 notes indicate the involvement participation of young people (under 21 years) and, in one case, it is said that a minor was involved.

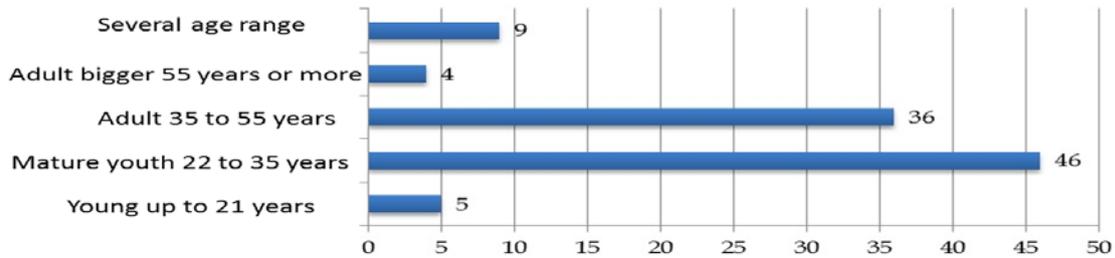


Figure 22. Age range of the subjects involved
Source: Authors (2014)

Another aspect analyzed during the development of this piece of research is the job the suspects had before joining the organized crime or if they carried both activities at the same time. In that sense, it was found that, only in 57 of the notes (21.8 percent), the data make it possible to establish the previous job.

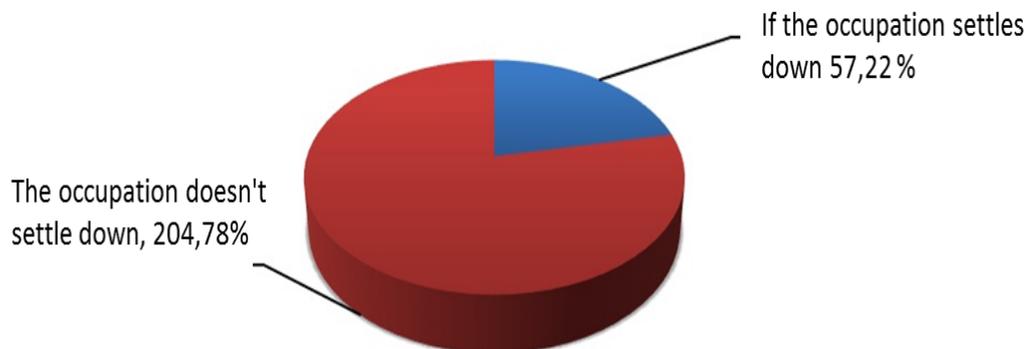


Figure 23. Job of those involved
Source: Authors (2014)

For the results obtained from the analysis of the jobs of those involved in various criminal acts, first we considered to rank if they had any other job in addition to engaging in the crime of drug trafficking and, subsequently, to record additional occupations of those involved. The overall results indicate that, out of 261 notes, only 57 mentioned the job of those involved.

Of this group of activities classified in the analysis of blogs, we found that, in 32 cases (56.1 percent), the person involved was already a member an organized crime cell; five (8.8 percent) were members of the police; in three cases (5.3 percent), the state governor was involved; the same number of those notes mentioning the involvement

of any member of the administration; in two cases (3.5 percent), the collaboration of mayors is indicated.

Table 6. Occupation those involved

Occupation of involved	Frequency	Percentage
Alcalde	2	3.5
driver	1	1.8
Accountant	2	3.5
Director of Communications	1	1.8
businessman	1	1.8
Student	1	1.8
Governor	3	5.3
Involved in organized crime	32	56.1
Member of administration	3	5.3
Police officer	5	8.8
operator	1	1.8
Political	2	3.5
Delivery man	1	1.8
cabdriver	1	1.8
sales	1	1.8
Total	261	100.0

* They are only considered the 57 notes in those that the occupation settles down of those implied.

Finally, when analyzing the participation of the girlfriend of the members of organized crime; in this connection it was found that there was no participation in 257 pieces of news (98.5 percent), while the remaining frequency of notes in which the girlfriend did participate, the frequency was 4, ie 1.5 percent of the analyzed universe.

5. CONCLUSIONS

The Northeast region of Mexico is one of the areas where organized crime has had a strong criminal impact as regards homicides, people and arms trafficking and kidnappings. In this region of Mexico, cartels as the "Gulf Cartel" or "Los Zetas" operate with impunity and carry out violent actions in broad daylight, as it is found on blogs, whose main objective is the dissemination of the crimes committed by these cells. Once the analysis of 261 articles published in these sites is complete, it is concluded that:

The information circulating on the network lacks filters and / or control. Such contents can be accessed by young children who, through the network, know the

criminal reality and the outline of anti-values and impunity about which the members of the criminal gangs boast. These sites are visited and controlled by members of the cells of organized crime, who spread their crimes; wealth and challenges either against the State or against their Mexican rival groups, without any limitation.

Worryingly, the "viralization" existing in Mexico through the social networks, in violent and criminal contents generated and transmitted anonymously by blogs from citizens and various groups of criminality. The Mexican State, as happens in other places, and even in highly developed countries, has been unable to stop it for technical legal reasons and the defense of crime made in them and the exaltation of lifestyles and negative values that easy money brews within gangs.

When analyzing the frequency with which this information is released through blogs where there is no censorship, it was found that, from May 2013 to December, 63 organized-crime-related news were published; this equates to an average of eight monthly pieces of news (one every four days); while 198 were recorded in 2014; that is, an average of 16 notes per month (every other day). Overall, the data indicate that, on average, 13 monthly notes are published; a note about every three days. The most active site is the one called "tierradelnarco.com" that recorded a higher number of published news during the period of analysis (109 pieces of news).

A lot of the information published through these sites is unprecedented; ie it has not been disclosed through any other means. This suggests that the management of these sites is under the control of organized crime groups or, alternatively, the same members of these organizations are those who "leak" information to those responsible for managing these sites.

On the other hand, we analyzed the way in which these events are reported and if they meet the minimum criteria for the journalistic practice. In this respect, it was found that all of the notes issued through these pages are unsigned; This is because the original media from which these notes are taken reports them without the signature of the journalist in charge of writing in order to avoid reprisals. Likewise, when the notes are unpublished, the person responsible for uploading the information or the one who manages the site omitted the name of the author.

Regarding the graphic section; It was found that 217 out of 261 evaluated notes did not have any images with a high degree of harshness. However, the published images showed the figure of the criminals; either showing artifacts, being arrested, or even during celebrations of organized crime groups. Of the notes that are supplemented with raw images, they illustrate the violence with which various organized crime cells clash.

Threats between different cartels and territorial disputes are the main activities in the included in the analyzed information; that is to say, in 4 out of 10 notes, there is a conflict of this kind. These conflicts -contrary to popular belief- do not take place late at night; they may occur at any time of day. Furthermore, in 3 out of 10 notes, the existence of the internal conflicts of these cells is established.

When observing the involvement of various organized crime gangs, it was found that the organization known as "Los Zetas", which operates in northeastern Mexico and southern Texas (EU), is the most active. Followed by "The Gulf Cartel."

According to the analyzed notes, these crime gangs have high caliber weapons; mainly firearms.

Many of the notes published in these sites address incidents regardless of whether or not people are arrested. However, it is important to note that when there are arrested people, they are males, the approximate age ranging from 22 to 35 years and mostly corresponds to cartel leaders. Likewise, the analyzed information allowed us to conclude that the arrested individuals have a criminal record in which crimes such as drug trafficking are included.

As for the participation of security corporations in the disclosed events, data indicate that the state and federal authorities were those that were more active; because, among other reasons, of the type of criminals they face.

Violence and the spread of organized crime infiltrates in security corporations have prompted the distrust of citizens in these institutions. However, contrary to this belief, the information posted on the blogs of drug trafficking indicates that, in 9 out of 10 cases in which the participation of some authority is indicated, this is not related to the cells of crime.

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