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PERSUASIVE *DISPOSITIO* AND HYBRIDITY IN DIGITAL SCIENCE CROWDFUNDING: THE GENERIC STRUCTURE OF PROJECT VIDEOS

Abstract

Since grant applications have become a highly demanding administrative procedure, scientists have recently turned to alternative funding sources, such as crowdfunding, to raise money for their experiments. One of the most significant digital genres embedded in online crowdfunding platforms is the science crowdfunding video (SCV), in which scientists have only a few minutes to promote their research projects. This genre has proved to produce a substantial persuasive effect on potential donors; however, no genre studies to date have examined the contents to be included and their arrangement. Relying primarily on Swales's move analysis model (1990, 2004), this study explores the rhetorical structure of this innovative digital genre. For this purpose, a sample of 50 SCVs was collected from *Experiment.com*, and their moves were identified and coded with the qualitative analysis software *Atlas.ti 8*. In addition, contextual inquiries were made by examining texts from *Experiment.com* and conducting three interviews with scientists involved in the production of SCVs. The analysis identified seven compulsory moves, persuasively arranged, through which scientists convey their communicative purposes. Moreover, the results demonstrate the hybrid nature of this genre, sharing discursive features with other promotional and scientific genres.

Key words

digital genres, rhetorical move analysis, science crowdfunding video, persuasion, science communication, genre hybridity.

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1. INTRODUCTION

In an increasingly competitive academic landscape, where many scholars are racing for a career in academia, science crowdfunding addresses a significant challenge in financing research, especially for novice researchers. As Luzón and Pérez-Llantada (2022) discuss, scientists are urged to publish quality research in high-impact journals and achieve international visibility to meet institutional standards, which often requires conducting costly research. With science crowdfunding, scientists can collect online donations from people to finance their experiments in a much shorter timeframe than with official research grants (Mehlenbacher, 2019). This allows them to advance faster in their merit-based careers and engage lay audiences in scientific issues, following the Open Science demands (Vicente-Sáez & Martínez-Fuentes, 2018).

Experiment.com is probably the best-known international crowdfunding platform for funding research (Sauermann et al., 2019) in a variety of hard and soft disciplines. Scientists seeking funds can launch a campaign on this platform by posting a crowdfunding proposal, composed of a written description of their project (Mehlenbacher, 2019; Pérez-Llantada, 2021; Vela-Rodrigo, 2023) and a short science crowdfunding video promoting the project in a few minutes (Vivas-Peraza, 2022, in press). Placed in the header and overlaying a visually appealing image, the science crowdfunding video (henceforth, SCV) is the most eye-catching element of the crowdfunding proposal (see Figure 1[1]). In fact, previous studies on science crowdfunding have emphasised the positive impact that the SCV has on the success of the campaigns because of its persuasive potential (Mollick, 2014; Sauermann et al., 2019; Vachelard et al., 2016).

The SCV constitutes a digital genre within the emerging range of possibilities that the Internet offers scientists to communicate science and bring it closer to society. In terms of how to produce an SCV on Experiment, the platform guidelines establish that videos should be under three minutes in length and include four key components: the experimental hypothesis, the project's impact and challenges, and a clear pitch on why it should be funded (Experiment, 2024d). However, no detailed guidelines are provided on how these contents should be arranged or developed throughout the video. While previous genre studies on the science crowdfunding proposal have shed light on the rhetorical structure of the written description (Mehlenbacher, 2017, 2019), no previous research, to my knowledge, has provided a thorough description of the rhetorical structure of SCVs, despite their relevance within the science crowdfunding proposal. To fill this gap, this paper will adopt genre analysis as a framework to answer the following research questions:

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[1] Figure 1 illustrates an example of a crowdfunding proposal from *Experiment.com*. As shown, the SCV is positioned in the header beneath a visually striking image, which helps it stand out from the rest of the description, thereby emphasising the SCV's importance within the proposal.

RQ1. What are the generic moves that convey the communicative purpose(s) of SCVs on *Experiment.com*? In which order do these moves occur?

RQ2. Is there any similarity between the rhetorical structure of this genre and that of other academic and professional genres?

Figure 1. An example of a crowdfunding proposal on *Experiment.com*

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This study aims to answer these questions with a twofold purpose. On the one hand, it offers empirical data to better understand how SCVs are organised to convey their communicative function. On the other hand, it serves a pedagogical purpose by offering insights that can inform science crowdfunding platforms and scientists interested in promoting their research projects online.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. The affordances of digital genres for research communication

For some time now, genre studies have paid attention to communicative events that take place over the Internet (Belcher, 2023). In the scientific realm, modern digital environments have allowed researchers the production of new digital texts to disseminate scientific knowledge among specialised and non-specialised audiences (Luzón & Pérez-Llantada, 2019, 2022). Some examples are science blogs (Kouper, 2010), conference tweets (Luzón & Albero-Posac, 2020), scientific dissemination texts (Mur-Dueñas, 2025), online science videos (Luzón, 2019), three-minute thesis (3MT) presentations (Kathpalia, 2024), and science crowdfunding proposals (Mehlenbacher, 2019). These digital genres are defined by Luzón and Pérez-Llantada (2022) as "genres which harness the affordances of the Internet to varying degrees" (p. 2). These affordances include, in addition to reaching broad and diverse audiences, the possibility of merging different semiotic modes such as spoken/written language, images, and sound, into a single multimodal artefact (Hafner, 2019). In this regard, a number of studies have focused on the meanings conveyed through the interplay of semiotic modes in multimodal digital genres for science communication (Guillén-Galve & Vela-Tafalla, 2023); such as graphical abstracts (Ma & Jiang, 2023), academic trailers (Maier & Engberg, 2023), video methods articles (VMAs) (Hafner, 2018), TED talks on science (Valeiras-Jurado et al., 2018; Xia, 2023), video abstracts (Dontcheva-Navratilova, 2023), research pitches (Ruiz-Madrid, 2021), and SCVs (Vivas-Peraza, in press).

Apart from multimodality, another prominent feature of digital genres is *hybridity* (Luzón & Albero-Posac, 2023). This refers to the fact that many digital genres are the hybrid result of "mixing", "embedding", or "bending" generic conventions and discursive patterns of several existing genres (Bhatia, 2004). Some traditional genres like the research article have been enhanced with add-on genres when migrating to the Internet, such as research highlights, graphical abstracts, interactive graphs, embedded videos, and hyperlinks, to share research more comprehensively and facilitate replicability (Pérez-Llantada, 2013). The science crowdfunding proposal, although an unprecedented and more emergent genre, results also in the combination of a written description (Mehlenbacher, 2019; Pérez-Llantada, 2021; Vela-Rodrigo, 2023) and an SCV (Vivas-Peraza, 2022, in press), each

of which works together to promote a research project online. Some other hybrid genres are identified by their mix of discourses. For instance, Motta Roth and Scherer (2016) argued that science popularisation digital genres such as news texts and scientific articles combine features of scientific, journalistic, and pedagogical discourse, as scientists intend not only to disseminate scientific knowledge to the public sphere of the media, but also to perform a pedagogical function. Similarly, Zhang (2018) observed that the genre of online science news stories results from a hybridisation of promotional and scientific discourse to fulfil both a commercial and dissemination purpose. In the present study, interdiscursive patterns of the SCV will also be discussed, in order to observe on which genres and discursive forms scientists rely to convey their communicative intentions through this innovative genre.

2.2. Move analysis to investigate the rhetorical structure of genres

Already in Ancient Roman times, two masters of oratory, Cicero and Quintilian, established the arrangement of text (*dispositio*, in Latin) as one of the main pillars of rhetoric (Spang, 2005). In order to engage the audience, any type of discourse must be arranged in a logical, systematic, and persuasive order, and thus the rhetorical organisation of a text needs to be consciously performed by the text producer (Cockcroft et al., 2013). Moreover, a proper text arrangement involves not only "assessing audience and context" but also "selecting an appropriate genre" (p. 183), since the very genre to which the text belongs will often determine the rhetorical structure to be followed. The analysis of the organisational structure of texts is thus key in genre studies.

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One of the most theoretically-sound frameworks for the study of the organisational structure of genres is Swales's *move analysis* (1990, 2004). This approach classifies the discourse units of a text into rhetorical *moves* that, through a series of *steps*, fulfil specific communicative purposes, each of which contributes to the achievement of the overall communicative purpose of the text. Swales (1990, 2004) pioneered this method to study the generic structure of research article introductions (RAIs) and identified three moves through which authors justify the work being presented in the article. In the first move, authors contextualise the research; in the second, they point out at a gap or research need; and in the third, they present their work as the solution to the niche established in the previous move. Move analysis methodology has been adopted by a large international community of researchers along the past 30 years to analyse the rhetorical structure of a plethora of academic and professional genres. It has been applied to the study of traditional grant proposals (Connor, 2000; Connor & Mauranen, 1999), fundraising letters (Bhatia, 2004), printed advertisements (Bhatia 2004, 2005), conference proceedings (Sidek et al., 2016), and academic presentations (Ágnes, 2023); and more contemporary genres such as the spoken genres of entrepreneurial

pitches (Daly & Davy, 2016) and 3MT presentations (Hu & Liu, 2018). In the case of digital genres, this methodology can be challenging since the reading paths to follow in digital spaces such as website homepages are not linear as in traditional written and spoken genres. For these genres, generic structures could be identified by using eye-tracking methods that reveal reader paths (Bateman et al., 2017) or by analysing the multimodal or digital genre design (Benson, 2017). Still, digital genres that follow linear stages that unfold over time, such as text or video dominated genres (Xia, 2020) do not pose a problem in this sense. Because of this, the structure of SCVs can be analysed in the traditional way.

Previous move analyses on digital and video genres have examined the multimodal realisations of the moves; namely, how the visual, aural, and verbal modes of communication interplay to convey the communicative function of the moves (Xia, 2020). Some studies have focused on the salient semiotic modes of each genre move, such as Salete Florek and Rabuske Hendges's (2023) on graphical abstracts. Some other studies have explored multimodality within specific genre moves, like Hafner's (2018) research on VMAs and Ruiz-Madrid's (2021) work on research pitches. As Hafner (2018) acknowledges, constraints of space in research articles do not allow for a full explanation of all the multimodal realisations of every move within a genre in one single article. For this reason, this paper focuses only on the rhetorical work that SCV moves accomplish through spoken narration, yet with some hints on their visual realisation, in order to give the reader an idea of the affordances of digital video in the production of this genre. If the reader wishes to learn more about the multimodality of this genre, Vivas-Peraza (2022, in press) can be consulted.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Sources of data

The primary source of data is a sample of 50 SCVs collected from *Experiment.com*, all in English, and each promoting a science crowdfunding campaign run between 2017 and 2021 in the fields of Biology, Ecology and Medicine (see Appendix 1 for more details). This sample was used to identify patterns in the generic structure of SCVs. The Experiment platform was chosen because, unlike other more business-oriented crowdfunding platforms (e.g., *kickstarter*, *indiegogo*, etc.), it is designed specifically for science projects, which probably makes it the preferred fundraising portal for scientists (Sauermann et al., 2019). As for the choice of language and fields, it was motivated by the fact that this study is part of a larger national research project that focuses on the analysis of digital genres for science communication in English related to health and the environment.

The formal move analysis of the 50 SCVs was complemented with two secondary sources of data that provided insight into the communicative context of

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SCVs and thus allowed for a better understanding of the genre and its rhetorical organisation, similar to the approach followed by Hafner (2018) in his move analysis of VMAs. One of them was a collection of texts extracted from relevant pages of *Experiment.com*, namely "How it Works" (Experiment, 2024a), "About Experiment" (Experiment, 2024b), "Our Mission and Values" (Experiment, 2024c), and "Researcher Guide" (Experiment, 2024d). The other data source included three online semi-structured interviews (Dörnyei, 2007) conducted to Anna Dawson, Emily Crawford, and Sunan Wongyai (pseudonyms), the author scientists of three SCVs of the sample. During these interviews, scientists would answer questions about their communicative intentions and the production process of SCVs (see Appendix 2 for the interview protocol). The three interviewees also participated in an earlier study (Vivas-Peraza, in press), where they were among the authors of the top-ranked SCVs in the same sample of 50 videos, which were then analysed in terms of multimodal engagement. The selection of these participants was based on two key criteria from the previous study: (i) the semiotic richness and persuasiveness of their respective SCV, and (ii) their willingness to participate in an interview (a factor that presented challenges, as reaching the scientists was not always straightforward). In addition, I aimed to maintain coherence between the two studies while maximising the reliability of the data.

3.2. Methodological procedure

To study the generic structure of SCVs, I drew on the ESP genre tradition, in particular on Swales's move analysis methodology (1990, 2004), which involved the following analytical steps.

First, an exploration of the context of SCV production was made to better interpret the generic structure of SCVs. With the information gathered from the Experiment texts and the responses obtained from the interviews, I gleaned the communicative purposes of this genre as well as the participants involved in the production and reception of this genre.

Second, the 50 SCVs were transcribed to observe how the content is organised into the different moves that convey the communicative purpose/s of the genre. The generic structure was therefore analysed through the voice-over narration because it was assumed that scientists plan the content of the SCVs through a language-driven script as encouraged by Experiment (2023d). To identify and label the moves (and their corresponding steps, where applicable) I relied on previous move analyses of the written description of science crowdfunding proposals (Mehlenbacher, 2019), research article introductions (Swales, 1990, 2004), grant proposals (Connor, 2000; Connor & Mauranen, 1999), fundraising letters (Bhatia, 2004), advertisements (Bhatia, 2004, 2005), entrepreneurial pitches (Daly & Davy, 2016), and three-minute thesis presentations (Hu & Liu, 2018). These genres and

the SCV share similar communicative purposes (e.g., promoting an idea or initiative), and thus were expected to share similar discursive patterns.

Third, research software *Atlas.ti 8* was used to code the SCVs with the moves identified. *Atlas.ti* allows the segmentation and codification of large amounts of video data (Friese, 2019); and although it is intended for qualitative analysis, it also facilitates the quantification of segments and codes used. Hence, after segmenting and coding the videos with their corresponding moves, I obtained frequencies on the move occurrences to observe patterns of genre prototypicality. Following previous genre studies (Halleck & Connor, 2006; Hu & Liu, 2018), the cut-off value for a move to be considered obligatory was set at 80%.

Fourth, I investigated whether the SCVs follow a recurrent move sequence that enhances persuasion in this genre. This stage of analysis took place once all the videos had been coded with the moves, and it was done manually. The process involved examining each video transcription multiple times to identify a likely common order of moves, and then calculating the percentages of occurrences of each move in the estimated order. This process was systematic, involving the careful documentation of the sequence of moves in each SCV. In other words, the identified moves were placed in what seemed to be the most common order of appearance (e.g., Move A- Move B- Move C- Move D, etc.). I then verified whether this order was indeed the most frequent by noting the number of videos in which Move A appeared first, Move B appeared after Move A, Move C appeared after Move B, Move D appeared after Move C, and so on, and then calculating percentages of representativeness. It should be noted that since not all the moves appear in all the videos, the percentage of occurrence of a move in a particular order was calculated based on the number of videos where that move was present, thus providing a more objective measure of the recurrent move order.

Finally, the moves were discussed with the three interviewed scientists for further research validity and reliability, similar to what Connor (2000) did for the validation of the analysis of the rhetorical moves in traditional grant proposals.

4. RESULTS

4.1. The context of production of SCVs

Since crowdfunding platforms can be accessed by a vast online audience, Experiment (2024d) recommends targeting the proposals – and by extension, the SCV – to the audiences that could be most impacted by the research in question. This approach was followed by the three interviewed scientists before crafting their crowdfunding proposal. To conduct her research on the endangered Palo Santo trees, Crawford reached out to companies that sell Palo Santo oil, since these companies also benefit from her research endeavours in conserving the species. Dawson and Wongyai, on their side, had all types of audiences in mind, ranging from

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immediate contacts such as friends, family, and colleagues; to anyone to whom these could spread the campaign. Regarding the profile of the scientists doing crowdfunding, these seem to be novice researchers in large part, since 37 out of the 50 selected SCVs were created by PhD students and other early-career researchers (see Appendix 1). These are probably the ones who most need quick funding to embark on their academic journeys. Nonetheless, some senior researchers are also venturing into crowdfunding to gain personal recognition, visibility, and expand their network. As Dawson pointed out, "if you're an advanced researcher, it's also a good way to disseminate your information and get your name out there" (Interview).

The main function of SCVs is to promote a research project to secure funding in a short period of time (Experiment, 2024a). However, scientists also produce this video to satisfy other individual purposes (Swales, 1990). In addition to getting the necessary funding for sequencing her materials, crowdfunding allowed Crawford to connect with stakeholders that otherwise would not have read her work. Dawson and Wongyai also got to know other scientists by sharing the campaign on their social media. Furthermore, the three interviewed scientists agreed that crowdfunding has some value to science communication and persuasive communication. These skills are essential for making their research accessible, transparent, and engaging to all types of audiences, following the Open Science values of science democratisation (Vicente-Sáez & Martínez-Fuentes, 2018), which are also embraced by the Experiment platform (Experiment, 2024b, 2024c). In sum, the rationale of SCVs encompasses at least the following communicative purposes:

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i) To persuade the public to back the project (i.e., to follow-up, share, and donate).
ii) To build a research network for future collaborations with other scientists.
iii) To gain international visibility and disseminate their work.
iv) To educate lay audiences in science and engage them in scientific issues.
v) To improve science communication and develop persuasion skills.

4.2. The generic structure of SCVs

As shown in Table 1, the spoken narration in SCVs is structured into seven rhetorical moves, each of which was validated by the three interviewed scientists. The first column shows the moves from top to bottom in the most frequent order, according to the frequency indicated in the second column. The third column presents the frequency of occurrence of those moves in the sample analysed. As for the fourth column, it provides respectively the steps that can realise the moves.

Regarding the order of appearance, the moves with the most fixed order are the first (75%) and the last (93%), while the other five moves in the middle present more variation. As for the frequency of use, it can be observed that all the moves are obligatory, as they are present at least in 80% of the SCVs selected. In the following

subsections, an explanation of the rhetorical work done by each move is offered and illustrated with examples.

	MOVES	FREQUENCY OF MOVE ORDER*	FREQUENCY OF MOVE USE		STEPS	
1	**CLAIMING COMPETENCE**	75%	98%	1A	Establishing Credentials	
				1B	Indicating Area of Expertise	
				1C	Reporting Previous Achievements	
				1D	Displaying Passion	
2	**CONTEXTUALISING RESEARCH**	60%	92%	2A	Describing Object of Study and/or its Context	
				2B	Mentioning Previous Studies that Contribute to Research Background	
3	**INDICATING GAP OR PROBLEM**	60%	80%	3A	Identifying Problems in Territory	
				3B	Arguing the Need for Further Research	
4	**PRESENTING RESEARCH GOALS**	56%	100%	4A	Providing Solutions to Problems	
				4B	Fulfilling Research Needs	
5	**OUTLINING MEANS**	64%	90%			
6	**STATING PROJECT BENEFITS**	69%	84%	6A	Presenting Benefits to Biodiversity and/or Human Health	
				6B	Indicating Intended Policy Influence	
				6C	Pointing out Economic Benefits	
7	**APPEALING FOR SUPPORT**	93%	90%	7A	Making a Direct/ Indirect Appeal	
				7B	Stating Potential Value of Donations	
				7C	Justifying Expenses	
				7D	Thanking Potential Backers	

* All frequencies are shown in percentages.

**Table 1.** The generic structure of SCVs

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4.2.1. Move 1: Claiming Competence

In Move 1, scientists demonstrate that they are sufficiently qualified, experienced, and passionate to carry out the project, which is essential for gaining trust from the audience and persuading them to participate. In most videos (75%), this move is used at the beginning, and can be realised through four different rhetorical steps, each of which can be seen in Example 1: *Establishing Credentials* (1A), *Indicating Area of Expertise* (1B), *Reporting Previous Achievements* (1C), and *Displaying Passion* (1D).

(1) [1A] "I'm [name omitted]. I'm working on my Master's in Environmental Science at the University of South Carolina. [1C] I got to play Division One softball at Winthrop University and I'm lucky enough to continue to work with softball here as well. [1B] Over the years I've spent a lot of time at the softball field, where I've taken notice of the maintenance practices including fertilisers, pesticides, and herbicides. [1D] That's when I knew this project was the perfect way for me to combine my two loves: Athletics and the environment." (SCV19)

In this introductory section, scientists usually introduce themselves on camera and, in addition to stating their name and credentials, they sometimes also do so in writing using lower thirds[2] that appear on screen, as in SCV9 and SCV45 (see Figure 2). This makes scientists look like a journalist on the news or a host in any other television show, and shows how SCVs adopt discursive and multimodal features from popular mass media programmes, probably as a way to add prestige and credibility to the scientist presenting the project. A similar finding was obtained by Hafner's (2018) study on VMAs, where scientists combine discursive features of popular media with, in the case of VMAs, specialised scientific discourse. This shows that the hybrid nature that characterises digital genres is also present in the SCV, as will also be discussed in Section 4.3.

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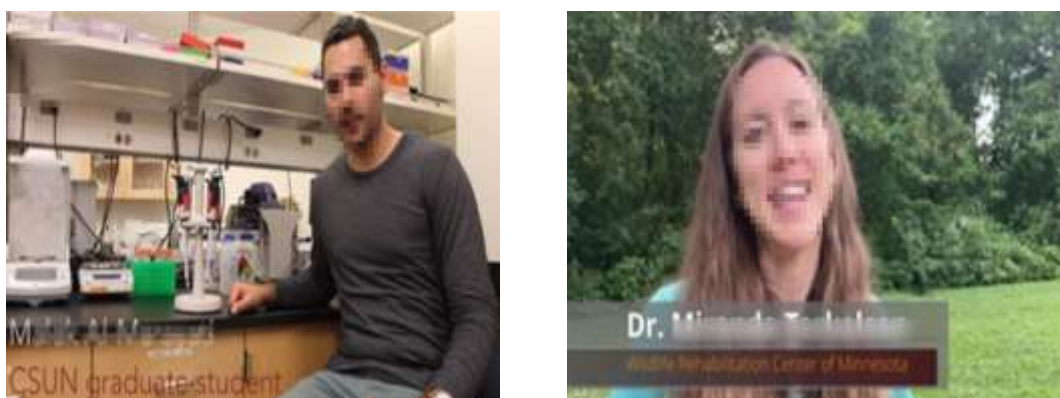
Figure 2. *Establishing Credentials* with lower thirds in SCV9 and SCV45

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[2] The term *lower third* is often used in the television industry to refer to a graphic overlay frequently (but not necessarily) placed in the lower area of the screen to indicate some relevant information.

4.2.2. Move 2: Contextualising Research

Move 2 provides the necessary research background to contextualise the project, including general information about the research object and location. In more than half of the videos (60%), *Contextualising Research* appears after *Claiming Competence*, and can be realised into two steps: *Describing Object of Study and/or its Context* (2A) and *Mentioning Previous Studies that Contribute to Research Background* (2B).

> (2) [2A] "So, what is blood lactate? Lactate is a molecule produced by most tissues with the highest production found in muscles (…). The build-up of lactic acid and tissues is what gives you that burning sensation during or after a hard workout. Elevated blood lactate levels are indicative of high perfusion or decreased tissue oxygenation (…). [2B] From the few studies that have looked at avian blood lactate levels, we know that lactate increases with stress, as in capture and handling in field studies." (SCV44)

In order to attract the attention and interest of non-disciplinary audiences, scientific explanations are not too complex and include linguistic devices to engage viewers (Hyland, 2005), such as the use of rhetorical questions (Example 2, "So, what is blood lactate?") or second person pronouns ("you"). Furthermore, as can be seen in Figure 3, the oral narration of this move can also be accompanied by text or visuals on screen as a way of facilitating comprehension and making the content more fun and engaging.

Figure 3. *Contextualising Research* in SCV44

4.2.3. Move 3: Indicating Gap or Problem

Occurring after *Contextualising Research* in 60% of videos, Move 3 poses a scientific challenge or need whose solution is offered in Move 4 (i.e., *Presenting Research Goals*, see 4.2.4.). As illustrated in Example 3, scientists perform this move by *Identifying Problems in Territory* (Step 3A) and/or by *Arguing the Need for Further Research* (Step 3B) where scientists point at an underexplored area of knowledge.

(3) [3B] "We really have a very limited understanding of what [wolverine's] habitat requirements are. And this is especially true on the Arctic tundra where there's only been a single other attempt ever to study them. [3A] There are two things happening in the Arctic right now that could pose a threat to wolverines, and those are climate change and fossil fuel extraction. But since we don't really know what wolverines need, we have a very limited ability to say how much of a threat these things actually are." (SCV4)

Since it presents the main justification of doing the project, this is a move that has persuasive effects, as it first creates a need of scientific importance to offer the solution afterwards. To that purpose, spoken discourse is accompanied by text or graphs on screen displaying alarming data or images showing the addressed problems to sensitise the audience. As shown in Figure 4, the spoken narration of Example 3 interplays with (from left to right) a graph showing oil and gas leasing in the wolverines' habitat, a video footage showing the snowmelt in that area as a result of global warming, and a close-up of a wolverine seemingly looking at the viewers, to appeal to the viewers' emotions and convince them of the urgency of saving the species.

Figure 4. *Indicating Gap or Problem* in SCV4

4.2.4. Move 4: Presenting Research Goals

This move presents the objectives of the research and therefore sets out the cause for which funding is needed, which is essential knowledge for potential donors. In the majority of cases, the order in which this move appears is after Move 3 (56% of videos), with the purpose of *Providing Solutions to Problems* (Step 4A), and *Fulfilling Research Needs* (Step 4B) stated in the previous move. To illustrate Move 4 and show how it engages with Move 3 in a "slot-and-filler relationship", as Connor and Mauranen (1999) establish for grant proposals (p. 55), SCV4 dealing with wolverines has been selected again in Example 4. During the performance of this move, the researcher comes back on screen and shows other images of wolverines on snow to keep viewers engaged (Figure 5).

(4) "[4B] So, for example, they [wolverines] might require a certain depth of snow to protect them from wolves or to adequately insulate them from the cold; or they might only use sites that melt after a certain date in spring to raise their kids. Now, these are all just hypotheses, they're unanswered questions. Our goal is to answer them. [4A] By addressing these questions we'll provide insight into how we can most effectively manage ourselves as the users of this landscape and the landscape itself to meet the requirements of this really incredible species." (SCV4)
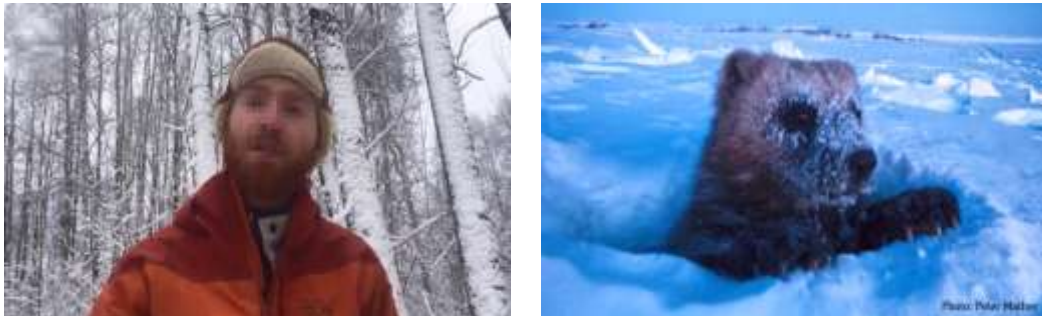
Figure 5. *Presenting Research Goals* in SCV4

4.2.5. Move 5: **Outlining Means**

Move 5 explains the materials, methods, procedures, plans or tasks necessary to achieve the research goals, as well as the facilities or workplaces where the research will be carried out. Results show that this move typically occurs after stating the research goals in Move 4 (64% of videos).

> (5) "I've now been conducting field work in Okinawa for roughly two years trying to figure out what types of habitats these bats require (…). As part of that goal, I caught bats and (…) put them in a soft cloth bag which helps to calm them down while they wait for getting measured and having transmitters attached, and also if we're lucky they'll poop for us in the bag. By extracting and analyzing the DNA inside of these faeces' samples, we can figure out what types of insects or arthropods that these bats are eating, and therefore, what kind of areas are important for them to inhabit." (SCV37)

As shown in Figure 6, this move is accompanied by images that illustrate the research methods. In this particular instance, the images are paired with captions in Japanese. This bilingual approach aims to engage potential donors who are located near the research site in Okinawa, particularly those who may have a stronger emotional connection to the indigenous species being preserved.

Figure 6. *Outlining Means* in SCV37

4.2.6. Move 6: Stating Project Benefits

Move 6 claims the importance of the research project in terms of the benefits that it can potentially bring, with the purpose of demonstrating that it is worth donating for. In 69% of the videos, it is found after Move 5 *Outlining Means*, and can be realised in three different steps: *Presenting Benefits to Biodiversity and/or Human Health* (6A), *Indicating Intended Policy Influence* (6B), and *Pointing out Economic Benefits* (6C). Each of these steps is illustrated in the following examples (6.1. – 6.3.) and as can be seen in Figure 7, the spoken narrations interplay with images of the scientists and the research object in question.

> (6.1.) [6A] "This type of research has the potential to help patients with both autoimmunity and cancer and it will help us to better understand how the environment affects our health." (SCV5)

> (6.2.) [6B] "If we find there is a risk to people from mercury and fog, this research may persuade environmental policy makers to enact laws that would prohibit the release of mercury into the atmosphere." (SCV42)

> (6.3.) [6C] "My goal is that this can be an efficient and cost-effective way for athletic fields to be maintained." (SCV19)

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Figure 7. *Stating Project Benefits* in SCV5, SCV42, and SCV19

4.2.7. Move 7: **Appealing for Support**

In Move 7, scientists solicit support from the audience and in most cases (93% of videos) this takes place at the end of the video; that is, once the researcher's credentials have been established and the characteristics, goals, and relevance of the project have been communicated. Support can be appealed through four steps: *Making a Direct/Indirect Appeal* (7A), *Stating Potential Value of Donations* (7B), *Justifying Expenses* (7C), and *Thanking Potential Backers* (7D). Scientists in the following examples (7.1. – 7.4.) return to the screen to perform this move, as shown in Figure 8.

> (7.1.) [7A] "Every bit counts and no donation is too small. If you don't have the funds to help donate now, then you can help by sharing our campaign within your network." (SCV8)

> (7.2.) [7B] "We need your assistance to find a way to help these birds survive not just to save a life but to help save a species." (SCV28)

> (7.3.) [7C] "By funding my research would help me cover the costs associated with this field work: eating, my travel to, and housing in Ruskin, Florida, where I'll perform these experiments next January in 2019." (SCV26)

> (7.4.) [7D] "Thank you so much for listening and thank you so much in advance for your donations to help amphibian conservation." (SCV25)

Figure 8. *Appealing for Support* in SCV8, SCV28, SCV26, and SCV25

5. DISCUSSION

The primary communicative purpose of SCVs is to persuade an imagined Internet audience to support a research project in need of funding, and since every rhetorical move identified in this genre contributes to the achievement of this overall purpose, every move is meant to persuade. Likewise, the chronological order through which the moves unfold over time is also intended to persuade. As seen in Section 2.2., structuring persuasive discourse is a conscious task (Cockcroft et al., 2013), as the statements and arguments of any piece of rhetoric need to be organised in the way that can best influence their audience (Spang, 2005). Experiment guidelines (2024d) recommend scientists the content to be included in SCVs but nothing is stated about

the order in which those contents should be presented. Yet, the SCVs analysed show a generally stable move sequence.

Scientists first capture the audience's attention by introducing themselves and establishing their credentials (Move 1). Then, they provide the necessary information about the project in question (Moves 2, 3, 4, and 5) and claim the importance of their research (Move 6). Finally, they conclude with a call to action asking the audience to donate money and/or share the campaign on social media (Move 7). This move order is inherently persuasive. Building a competent scientific persona at the beginning may help the audience trust what is explained about the project in the middle moves (Moves 2 to 6). This may be so because a qualified and experienced scientist is expected to have a good understanding of their field of study, the research methods needed to carry out their work, and the potential benefits that their projects can bring to society. Once the authority of the scientist and the quality of the prospective research project have been established, an appeal for support follows. As shown in Table 1, this final move has the most fixed order (93% of cases) and this does not seem to be accidental. The three interviewed scientists agreed that even if they were not so aware about their choice of move order, they all found sense in asking for support at the end. Dawson noted that people are unlikely to support something they do not know about, and she may have had the "unconscious thought that [she] should probably tell people first what they were going to fund" (Interview). Similarly, Wongyai and Crawford considered that this move would be more appropriate for the end, after presenting themselves and pitching the research idea. In sum, the results from this genre analysis show that the most persuasive configuration of the moves to influence viewers involves claiming competence at the beginning, claiming research importance in the middle, and asking for support at the end.

Another relevant finding from this analysis is that the SCV is characterised by genre hybridity as a result of mixing generic norms from different communicative professional practices. The rhetorical moves identified are not specific to this genre since they can be found in different traditional and digital genres that share similar communicative goals with the SCV, such as research articles (RAs), grant proposals (GPs), fundraising letters (FLs), print advertisements, entrepreneurial pitches (EPs), and 3MT presentations. In fact, each of the three interviewed scientists used one of these genres as a model to organise the spoken narration of SCVs. Wongyai commented that he had followed the format of a conventional grant proposal to write the first draft of what he would include in his SCV narrative. Likewise, entrepreneurial pitches and three-minute thesis presentations were used as a genre model by Dawson and Crawford for the creation of their respective SCVs. This borrowing of generic moves typical of scientific and popular discourses is determined by the communicative purpose and intended audience of SCVs, and shows how scientists transfer their genre knowledge to produce new digital artefacts for their science communications.

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The moves that present the research territory, gap and goals (Moves 2, 3, and 4) have long been well-established as the moves that researchers and academics should follow to create a research space in RAIs (Swales, 1990, 2004), and in the same level of prototypicality, are expected to appear in GPs (Connor, 2000; Connor & Mauranen, 1999). As for the moves that indicate the methods (Move 5) and (potential or real) research contributions (Move 6), these are also present in other sections of the RA and the GP. All these moves display the necessary information to justify, explain, and promote a research project, and as such, they have also been adopted in emergent research genres such as 3MT presentations, as recent studies have shown (Hu & Liu, 2018). In the same manner, the results of this study show that SCVs have a clear tendency to organise the information of a research project as has traditionally been done in these conventional research genres. This suggests that even if the SCV is intended for diversified audiences, scientists stick to the structure of any other research proposal to produce this genre, thus demonstrating that they follow the generic norms of scientific genres and that they know how to talk about their research. That is, the conventions accepted by specialised discourse communities are transferred to the SCV and thus to a context of diverse audiences.

Move 1 is also used in GPs (Connor, 2000; Connor & Mauranen, 1999) as a way of claiming the competence of the scientist to prove that the research project in question is in capable hands and thus deserves funding. The SCV thus shares a great deal of affinity with GPs, as it shares the majority of rhetorical moves with it (from Move 1 to Move 6). This is not surprising as the communicative purpose of both genres is very similar. In GPs, as in SCVs, the aim is to persuade an audience to get funds for the proposed research (Connor & Mauranen, 1999). Differences can be found, however, in the types of audiences they need to persuade. Whereas GPs aim to convince grant agency officials to get the requested funding from a single institution, SCVs target a broad, imaginary Internet audience that will individually donate small amounts of money, so the more donors, the better. In other words, GPs are intended for a specific specialised audience, and SCVs are intended for a mass diversified audience. And it is precisely the intended audience of SCVs that explains the affinity also found between SCVs and other popular promotional non-research genres closer to advertising discourse.

In particular, Move 7 shows how the rhetoric of SCVs has also been influenced by promotional genres such as traditional FLs and printed ads (Bhatia, 2004, 2005) or the emergent speech genre of EPs (Daly & Davy, 2016). In SCVs, this move invites the audience to participate in a science crowdfunding campaign by donating, sharing, and following a research project, just as any company or non-profit organisation asks the public to buy a product, hire a service, or contribute to a social cause through the genres just mentioned. In addition, these promotional genres also establish the credentials of the organisation or individual seller to build trust between them and the audience, as it is done in GPs and SCVs in Move 1. This use of generic resources combining features of scientific discourse with advertising discourse enhances persuasion in SCVs, is compatible with Zhang's (2018) work on

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online science news stories, and demonstrates that the SCV constitutes a para-scientific genre (Mehlenbacher, 2019), as it includes moves that overlap with specialised genres and others that better align with popular discourses.

6. PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

The findings of this study offer valuable insights for novice researchers and science communication educators seeking to enhance public engagement with science through digital genres like the science crowdfunding video. By understanding the rhetorical structure and persuasive moves identified in SCVs, science communication training can be tailored to better equip researchers with the skills to create effective crowdfunding videos. Training workshops could be developed to guide researchers through the process of crafting SCVs, emphasising the importance of establishing credibility, clearly presenting research problems and methods, and making compelling calls to action. Educators could also use this study's findings to develop SCV creation guidelines, helping novice researchers structure their videos to maximise both impact and clarity. Furthermore, practical takeaways can include multimodal communication, particularly how visual, aural, and verbal elements can be integrated to enhance the persuasive power of the videos (Vivas-Peraza, in press).

A concrete pedagogical proposal could involve a multi-step project-based learning approach (Thomas, 2000). In this approach, participants could first be introduced to the rhetorical moves identified in SCVs through interactive workshops and case study analyses. Following this, participants could engage in practical exercises, such as creating mock crowdfunding videos, where they would receive feedback not only from peers but also from experienced science communicators and crowdfunding experts. These sessions would encourage collaborative learning and peer review (Johnson & Johnson, 2009), fostering an environment of continuous improvement. Additionally, incorporating digital tools and platforms would allow researchers to experiment with different multimedia elements, gaining hands-on experience with various techniques to effectively combine visual storytelling with scientific messaging. By integrating a reflective component into the curriculum, participants could also evaluate their videos in terms of rhetorical effectiveness. This hands-on, iterative approach would not only strengthen their ability to craft persuasive SCVs but also foster critical thinking about the role of digital media in scientific communication.

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7. CONCLUDING REMARKS

This study identified a stable set of seven compulsory rhetorical moves in the digital genre of SCVs, through which scientists aim to engage online audiences in the funding of a research project, while also building a research network, disseminating

their work, educating the lay public in science, and improving their science communication skills. SCVs typically begin with a self-introduction of the scientist and the research territory in question in order to claim competence and provide the audience with some background information. Once the scientist and the research have been introduced, the SCV content progresses to the research problem and gap that motivates and justifies the goals of the promoted project. Next, the research methods to be adopted are described in varying levels of detail, followed by an announcement of the potential project benefits. Finally, an appeal for support is made, inviting the audience to participate in the research project presented.

From these results, several considerations about the rhetorical organisation of SCVs can be made, including both the repertoire of moves through which scientists can accomplish their communicative goal and the order in which those moves should generally appear to enhance persuasion. Furthermore, this analysis has helped to observe the hybrid nature of the SCV, combining generic moves from academic and vernacular discursive practices to make the content accessible and appealing to popular audiences, while maintaining the scholarly rigour required to present reliable academic research. Ordering and hybridity thus emerge as two salient findings from this analysis and provide empirical data on the formal structure of SCVs, expanding knowledge on new digital forms of scholarly communication. These insights can guide researchers in structuring persuasive SCVs and training initiatives in digital science communication courses. Therefore, pedagogical materials could be derived from the data to train scientists and scholars interested in promoting their research work through short videos.

The study, however, presents some limitations that could be tackled in future research. The sample of 50 SCVs may not fully represent the diversity of crowdfunding videos across different scientific fields, platforms, or cultures. Hence, it would be interesting to compare this study with SCVs from other science-specialised platforms and disciplines. Likewise, the small sample size of the interviews limits the ability to make generalisations, highlighting the need for additional interviews with other scientists involved in the production of this genre. Furthermore, as SCVs constitute an emerging genre, the structure and rhetorical moves identified may evolve over time, requiring future research to assess their ongoing development.

Last but not least, it is important to acknowledge some ethical considerations when using crowdfunding videos for research purposes, particularly regarding the public dissemination of scientific projects. While these videos serve as a tool to engage broader audiences and secure funding, researchers must be mindful of the potential impact on privacy, intellectual property, and informed consent. Scientists should ensure that all individuals featured in the videos, whether researchers or participants, have consented to their inclusion and are aware of how their involvement may be presented. Furthermore, ethical transparency is crucial in portraying research objectives accurately. This means that they should avoid exaggerated claims about what their projects can achieve, without promising results

that are unrealistic or implying outcomes that have not been confirmed by the research. Adhering to ethical guidelines not only protects the integrity of the research but also fosters trust between scientists and their diverse audiences.

Acknowledgements

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Appendix 1. Sample of SCVs

The list of the 50 SCVs analysed, including their corresponding project titles, launch dates, weblinks, fields of knowledge, duration, and the degree of expertise of their author scientists, can be consulted at the following link:

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Od71K0Oo0lrrZ97lsgD4RJu3EVGZqvBP/view?usp=sharing

Appendix 2. Interview protocol

1) Did you get any other funds for this project (e.g., national grants or the like)?
2) What motivated you to launch this crowdfunding campaign?
3) Had you ever launched a crowdfunding campaign before?
4) Apart from getting the necessary funds for your research, what benefits has crowdfunding brought to your research?
5) Which were your aims in creating a video (SCV)?
6) What type of audience did you have in mind when creating the video?
7) Did you follow any model to create the video (e.g., watched other videos, followed experiment.com guidelines, got advice from a video professional, etc.)?
8) In terms of the script, how did you plan it ahead? Did you write an outline of what should be included? What was in that outline?
9) Has crowdfunding helped you disseminate your research on the web (gain more visibility)?
10) Now that you have the experience, would you recommend crowdfunding to other scientists interested in funding research?