Multiplatform Strategies of Public Service Broadcasters: An Exploratory Comparative Analysis of North Macedonia, Montenegro and Kosovo

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DOI: 10.64370/VPEB3433

Abstract

This paper analyses how three public service broadcasters in the Western Balkans integrate social media into their digital strategies: Macedonian Radio Television (MRT), Radio and Television of Montenegro (RTCG) and Radio Television of Kosovo (RTK). Through a brief institutional overview of each of the three broadcasters and an analysis of their official social media posts in the period from 8 to 12 June 2026, the study examines posting frequency, choice of formats and the extent to which content is adapted to the logic of each platform. The weekend was excluded from the analysis to avoid possible distortion of the results caused by the usually reduced volume of editorial activity on non-working days. The findings show significant differences in the way the analysed public service broadcasters use digital platforms. MRT has virtually no active official presence on the social networks covered. RTCG clearly adapts its content for Instagram and TikTok, while it mostly uses Facebook as a distribution channel. RTK, for its part, has the highest volume of posts on Facebook and shows pronounced, though not always consistent, efforts to adapt content for Instagram and TikTok. The paper indicates that the mere existence of social media profiles is not sufficient for public service media. Genuine digital transformation requires adapted formats, a clear editorial plan and a serious commitment to reaching audiences who increasingly rarely get their information from traditional television.

Keywords: public service media; Western Balkans; digital transformation; social media strategy; platform adaptation

1. Introduction

For decades, public service broadcasters have played an important role in informing citizens, supporting democratic debate and producing cultural content for diverse audiences. Today, however, their work has long ceased to be limited to traditional radio and television. Audiences increasingly follow news and public interest content directly through social media, streaming services and short-video applications. This shift means that public broadcasters cannot simply transfer their television content online; they must fundamentally rethink the way they communicate with audiences across different digital platforms.

The transition from traditional public service broadcasting to digital public service media is particularly important in the context of the Western Balkans. Public service broadcasters in this region face serious political, financial and institutional constraints that reduce their capacity to modernise, attract younger audiences and compete with commercial media, global streaming platforms and digital news outlets. Therefore, the presence of a public service broadcaster on social media can be regarded as an important indicator of its digital capacity and its ability to adapt to changing media habits.

This study analyses how the public service broadcasters in North Macedonia, Montenegro and Kosovo use Facebook, Instagram and TikTok. Rather than merely establishing whether they have active profiles, the research examines the specific formats they use and assesses whether content is adapted to the logic of each platform. The main question is whether these public broadcasters use social networks only to redistribute existing content, or whether they develop distinct, platform-specific communication strategies. By comparing their activity during one selected working week, the paper offers an exploratory assessment of the use of selected social platforms by public media in the region and provides practical recommendations for improving platform-specific digital communication.

2. Literature Review

2.1. From Public Service Broadcasting to Public Service Media

Media researchers have analysed the transition from public service broadcasting to public service media extensively. Lowe and Bardoel (2007) frame this transformation as a shift from traditional television and radio broadcasting towards the provision of public service across multiple platforms. In such a model, public service media should preserve their democratic, cultural and educational functions while simultaneously adapting to new technologies and to changing audience habits. Banerjee and Seneviratne (2005) emphasise that the core values of universality, diversity, independence and quality remain essential to public service broadcasting. In the digital era, however, these values need to be applied under new communication conditions. This means that public service broadcasters must be present where audiences actually spend their time, including on social media, without lowering their editorial standards.

2.2. Multiplatform Content and Audience Participation

Multiplatform communication involves creating and distributing content across different digital spaces, each platform having its own logic, technical affordances and audience expectations. Enli (2008) points out that audience participation fundamentally changes

public service broadcasting. Today, the audience is no longer only a passive viewer or listener; it comments, shares and actively interacts with content. For this reason, public service media need to adapt content to the specificities of each platform. Posting the same video or the same piece of information on several channels may increase reach, but in itself it does not constitute a developed digital strategy. Genuine platform adaptation means adjusting format, length, tone and visual style to the particular network. For example, Facebook is suitable for news with links and longer videos, Instagram relies on visual posts and Reels, while TikTok requires short vertical videos created for mobile use.

2.3. Challenges for Public Service Media

Today, public service media face strong competition from commercial television, streaming services and social media, as well as rapid changes in audience habits. Freedman and Goblot (2018) emphasise that public television is under pressure to respond to new audience expectations and intensified competition while continuing to create public value. Głowacki, Świtkowski and Johnson (2025) highlight the need for public service media to strike a balance between legacy broadcasting structures, new technologies and changing audience expectations. As Jędrzejewski (2024) observes, European public media have responded differently to technological change, depending on their institutional capacity, strategic decisions and the political and regulatory environment in which they operate. Some have developed stronger digital strategies, while others have remained constrained by traditional broadcasting practices. It is precisely these differences that help explain why certain public service broadcasters are more successful on social media, while others find it harder to adapt to the new digital communication environment.

2.4. Public Service Media in the Western Balkans

In the Western Balkans, public media organisations face additional challenges, including political pressure, financial instability and slow technological modernisation. Jusić et al. (2021) show that public service media in the region operate under persistent political, financial and institutional constraints. This regional context is crucial for the present study. The broadcasters analysed do not have the same resources as large Western European media organisations. Therefore, understanding their digital strategies requires taking into account limited budgets, fragmented audiences and the broader struggle to modernise media systems in transition.

2.5. Research Gap

The existing literature provides important insights into media policy, the legal framework and organisational change, but pays less attention to everyday content production. We still know too little about how public service broadcasters actually manage their Facebook, Instagram and TikTok profiles in their day-to-day work. This study addresses that gap by measuring how often MRT, RTCG and RTK post, which formats they choose and to what extent they adapt content to each specific platform.

3. Research Questions and Hypothesis

RQ1: How do the public service broadcasters in North Macedonia, Montenegro and Kosovo use social media in their digital strategies?

RQ2: To what extent do these public service broadcasters adapt content for different platforms?

RQ3: Which multimedia formats do they use most frequently?

RQ4: Do these public service broadcasters use social media only to distribute existing content, or do they build distinct communication strategies for each platform?

H1: Public service broadcasters in the Western Balkans primarily use social media to distribute existing content, rather than to create fully adapted, platform-specific material.

4. Context: Public Service Media in the Three Countries

This section presents the institutional context of the three selected public service broadcasters. This context links the social media analysis with the broader realities of public service media: organisational structure, legal rules, language obligations and digital development in the region.

4.1. MRT – North Macedonia

Macedonian Radio Television (MRT) is the public service broadcaster of North Macedonia. National legislation and MRT's institutional documents require the organisation to meet the informational, cultural, educational and linguistic needs of the public. MRT broadcasts programmes in Macedonian and in the languages of the communities, including Albanian, in order to serve the country's multilingual audience. MRT is included in this study as the case with the lowest visible activity on the digital platforms analysed. Although it has an official website and traditional broadcasting, no active official presence on the social platforms covered was observed in the period analysed. Therefore, in this research MRT serves as an example of the absence of visible activity on the social media analysed, and not merely as a case of low posting frequency.

4.2. RTCG – Montenegro

Radio and Television of Montenegro (RTCG) operates as the national public service broadcaster providing television, radio and online services. In recent years, RTCG has turned towards digital modernisation, adopting development and digital transformation strategies for the period 2023–2027 with the support of the OSCE Mission to Montenegro (OSCE Mission to Montenegro, 2023). For this reason, RTCG is a relevant case for analysing how digital transformation strategies translate into everyday social media practice. During the period analysed, RTCG posted actively on Facebook, Instagram and TikTok, which allows a comparison between a platform with a higher volume of posts and a more pronounced distribution function, such as Facebook, and platforms oriented towards short video, such as Instagram and TikTok.

4.3. RTK – Kosovo

Radio Television of Kosovo (RTK) operates public television, radio and online channels. It addresses diverse audiences, with the RTK2 channel specifically dedicated to the Serbian and other non-majority communities, including programming for Bosniak, Turkish and Roma audiences (European Broadcasting Union, 2013). RTK's challenges related to stable

funding and institutional independence are frequently highlighted in public debate. In 2026, media freedom organisations pointed out that the proposed funding levels were below the amount stipulated by the Law on RTK (European Centre for Press and Media Freedom, 2026).

RTK was selected for this study because it has a substantial Facebook audience and actively updates its Instagram and TikTok profiles. Its case makes it possible to assess whether a large volume of posts actually indicates platform adaptation or whether it mainly represents intensive content distribution.

5. Methodology

This paper uses comparative content analysis to assess how three public service broadcasters in the Western Balkans – MRT, RTCG and RTK – integrate social media into their communication strategies. The cases were selected because they share a regional context, have similar public service obligations and face comparable pressures related to digital development, audience fragmentation and competition from digital platforms.

The study is based on a limited five-day sample from one working week, from 8 to 12 June 2026. The weekend was excluded from the analysis to avoid possible distortion of the results due to the slower weekend rhythm of newsrooms and reduced posting activity. However, such a limited time frame does not allow broad generalisations about the long-term digital strategies of the public service broadcasters analysed.

Therefore, the findings should be understood as an exploratory snapshot of visible social media practices during one selected working week, and not as a comprehensive assessment of each broadcaster's overall multiplatform strategy. More generalisable conclusions would require a longer period of analysis covering several weeks and different news cycles.

The comparison is also asymmetric because MRT did not publish content on the Facebook, Instagram and TikTok profiles analysed during the selected period. Consequently, MRT was not analysed through the same post-level content analysis approach as RTCG and RTK. Instead, MRT was treated as a case of inactive or absent presence on the selected social platforms. This means that the empirical content analysis mainly compares RTCG and RTK, while MRT serves as an important negative case demonstrating the absence of visible platform activity. Hence, the study should not be read as a fully balanced trilateral content comparison, but as a comparative analysis of different levels of social media presence and activity among three public service broadcasters.

The analysis uses the number of posts and the distribution of formats as indicators of platform activity and format adaptation. It does not claim to fully reconstruct the editorial process behind each post, nor to systematically trace each story from the website to all social platforms. Therefore, the study measures visible platform use and format adaptation, not the full internal multiplatform strategy of each public service broadcaster. A high share of standard posts indicates a distribution-oriented approach, while a high share of Reels or short vertical videos indicates stronger adaptation to platform-specific formats.

5.1. Unit of Analysis

The unit of analysis is each individual post or video published on the broadcaster's official social media profile during the five-day period. For Facebook, standard posts, videos and Reels were coded. For Instagram, single-image posts, galleries/carousels and Reels were coded. For TikTok, all short vertical videos were coded.

5.2. Key Variables

The data were coded according to three key variables: platform activity, content format and platform adaptation.

- *Platform activity* measures the total number of posts during the working week. This indicator shows whether the public service broadcaster uses the platform for daily communication or only occasionally.
- *Content format* identifies the technical style of the post, such as a text post, standard video, Reel, carousel or TikTok video. This variable shows whether the broadcaster relies on traditional formats or uses platform-specific media forms.
- *Platform adaptation* measures the extent to which the broadcaster adapts content to the rules and culture of the specific network. Native formats such as Instagram Reels or TikTok videos indicate strong adaptation. A combination of standard posts and native videos indicates partial adaptation. Inactive profiles or heavy reliance on basic link sharing indicate weak adaptation.

5.3. Coding Categories

The coding categories applied to each platform are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Coding categories by platform

Platform	Coded formats
Facebook	Standard post, video, short vertical videos in Reels format
Instagram	Single-image posts, gallery/carousel, short vertical videos in Reels format
TikTok	Short vertical video

5.4. Analytical Logic

The analysis does not assume that each social media post can be directly linked to a specific article on the website. Instead, the distribution of formats and posting patterns are used as indicators of communication strategy. A high share of standard posts indicates a distribution-oriented approach, while a high share of short videos created according to the logic of the platform itself indicates stronger platform adaptation. This approach makes it possible to assess whether public service broadcasters use social media mainly as distribution channels or as distinct communication environments.

6. Results

6.1. MRT's Presence on Social Media

MRT represents a different case in this study. Unlike RTCG and RTK, which posted actively during the selected working week, no regular posting activity was observed for MRT on the platforms analysed – Facebook, Instagram and TikTok. Therefore, MRT cannot be included in the same post-level content analysis approach as RTCG and RTK. Instead, it is analysed as a case of inactive presence on the selected social platforms.

The official Facebook page has approximately 14,000 followers and was created on 27 December 2010, but the last identified post dates from February 2019. The official Instagram profile has 476 followers, and the last identified post is from 23 July 2021. No official TikTok profile was identified (Table 2).

Table 2. MRT's official social media presence

Platform	Followers	Status
Facebook	14,000	Inactive; last identified post in February 2019
Instagram	476	Inactive; last identified post on 23 July 2021
TikTok	N/A	No official page identified

MRT therefore cannot be analysed through the same content-based approach used for RTCG and RTK. Its case is analytically important because it demonstrates the absence of active multi-platform communication on the selected platforms. In comparative terms, MRT is the case with the lowest visible activity and the most limited platform adaptation among the three public service broadcasters analysed.

6.2. RTCG on Facebook

RTCG's official Facebook page had approximately 262,000 followers and has been active since 26 January 2013. During the working week analysed, 75 Facebook posts were identified, or about 15 posts per day (Table 3).

Table 3. RTCG Facebook posts by format, 8–12 June 2026

Format	Number of posts	Share
Standard posts / links / photographs	50	66.7%
Reels	21	28.0%
Videos	4	5.3%
Total	75	100%

The dominant format is the standard Facebook post, which indicates that Facebook is mainly used as a channel for distributing regular news and information. Nevertheless, the presence of 21 videos in Reels format shows that RTCG is also experimenting with more visual formats adapted to the logic of the specific platform. Overall, RTCG's Facebook strategy can be assessed as partially adapted: it combines traditional distribution with elements of communication tailored to social media.

6.3. RTCG on Instagram

RTCG's Instagram profile had 103,000 followers and 8,794 published posts, and followed 56 profiles. During the period analysed, 28 Instagram posts were identified (Table 4).

Table 4. RTCG Instagram posts by format, 8–12 June 2026

Format	Number of posts	Share
Reels	24	85.7%
Gallery / carousel	2	7.1%
Single-image posts	2	7.1%
Total	28	100%

The results show a clear dominance of Reels. This indicates that RTCG uses Instagram mainly through short vertical videos, which are among the most platform-specific formats on Instagram. Unlike Facebook, where standard posts dominate, RTCG's Instagram strategy is strongly adapted to the mobile and visual logic of the platform.

6.4. RTCG on TikTok

RTCG's TikTok profile had 51,200 followers and 2 million likes. During the period analysed, 12 TikTok videos were identified (Table 5).

Table 5. RTCG TikTok posts by format, 8–12 June 2026

Format	Number of posts	Share
TikTok video	12	100%
Total	12	100%

TikTok is by its nature a video platform, and RTCG uses it through formats that are aligned with the way the platform itself functions. The relatively small number of posts shows that TikTok is used more selectively than Facebook and Instagram. Nevertheless, in terms of format, RTCG's TikTok strategy shows a high degree of platform adaptation.

6.5. RTK on Facebook

RTK's Facebook page has approximately 656,000 followers, making it the largest social media presence analysed in the sample. During the period covered by the research, 234 Facebook posts were identified, an average of 46.8 posts per day (Tables 6 and 7).

Table 6. RTK Facebook posts by day, 8–12 June 2026

Date	Number of posts
8 June	41
9 June	50
10 June	47
11 June	45
12 June	51
Total	234

Table 7. RTK Facebook posts by format, 8–12 June 2026

Format	Number of posts	Share
Standard posts	130	55.6%
Videos	102	43.6%
Reels	2	0.9%
Total	234	100%

RTK's activity on Facebook is very high. Standard posts are the most common format, but video is also significantly present. This indicates that, for RTK, Facebook functions both as a distribution channel and as a space for publishing video content. However, the very small number of videos in Reels format shows limited adaptation to the newer formats characteristic of Facebook. Therefore, RTK's Facebook strategy can be described as highly active and predominantly distribution-oriented, with strong use of classic video posts.

6.6. RTK on Instagram

RTK's Instagram profile had 21,036 published posts and 55,500 followers, and followed three profiles. During the period covered by the research, 51 Instagram posts were identified (Table 8).

Table 8. RTK Instagram posts by format, 8–12 June 2026

Format	Number of posts	Share
Reels	29	56.9%
Single-image posts	21	41.2%
Gallery / carousel	1	2.0%
Total	51	100%

RTK actively uses Instagram, with approximately 10 posts per day. Videos in Reels format account for more than half of the sample, which indicates significant adaptation to Instagram's video-oriented logic. However, the large number of single-image posts shows that RTK continues to rely on more traditional visual journalism formats as well. The strategy can therefore be assessed as mixed: stronger than simple distribution, but not fully optimised for storytelling adapted to Instagram's logic.

6.7. RTK on TikTok

RTK's TikTok profile had 37,100 followers and 311,600 likes. During the period analysed, 11 TikTok videos were identified (Table 9).

Table 9. RTK TikTok posts by format, 8–12 June 2026

Format	Number of posts	Share
TikTok video	11	100%
Total	11	100%

RTK uses TikTok in a format that is aligned with the logic of the platform itself, since all the content analysed consists of short vertical videos. However, the volume of activity is moderate compared with Instagram and Facebook. Hence, RTK's TikTok profile shows a high degree of format adaptation but more limited posting activity.

7. Comparative Analysis

7.1. Platform Activity

Table 10 summarises the activity recorded on each platform during the week analysed.

Table 10. Platform activity by public service broadcaster, 8–12 June 2026

Broadcaster	Facebook	Instagram	TikTok	Total active posts/videos
MRT	Inactive	Inactive	No page identified	0
RTCG	75	28	12	115
RTK	234	51	11	296

The comparison reveals an asymmetric pattern of social media activity. RTCG and RTK can be compared through post-level content analysis, while MRT is included as a case of inactivity on the selected platforms. No regular posting activity was observed on MRT's

official profiles analysed. RTCG has an active and relatively balanced presence, with Facebook as the most frequently used platform, while Instagram and TikTok are used for more adapted video formats. RTK, for its part, has the largest volume of posts, especially on Facebook, where its activity is considerably higher than that of RTCG.

7.2. Distribution versus Adaptation

The results show that high activity does not automatically imply a high degree of platform adaptation. RTK publishes the most content on Facebook, but a significant proportion of that content consists of standard posts or classic video posts. This points to a strongly pronounced distribution model. RTCG, on the other hand, publishes a smaller volume of content overall, but its activity on Instagram is more strongly adapted to the logic of the platform, since 85.7% of the sample analysed consists of videos in Reels format. For both RTCG and RTK, TikTok is used in a format consistent with the nature of the platform itself, but with a limited volume of posting. Table 11 summarises the assessment for each broadcaster and platform.

Table 11. Assessment of platform adaptation by broadcaster and platform

Broadcaster / platform	Assessment
MRT – social media	Inactive/absent multiplatform strategy on the platforms analysed
RTCG Facebook	Partially adapted; distribution remains dominant
RTCG Instagram	Strongly adapted; Reels dominate
RTCG TikTok	Strong format adaptation; selective use
RTK Facebook	High-volume distribution with strong use of video
RTK Instagram	Moderate to strong adaptation; mix of Reels and static posts
RTK TikTok	Strong format adaptation; limited volume

7.3. Answers to the Research Questions

RQ1: The public service broadcasters use social media in different ways. MRT is largely absent from the platforms analysed. RTCG actively uses Facebook, Instagram and TikTok, with more pronounced adaptation on Instagram and TikTok. RTK, for its part, uses Facebook extremely intensively, while at the same time maintaining active profiles on Instagram and TikTok.

RQ2: The level of adaptation varies depending on the broadcaster and the specific platform. RTCG shows the strongest adaptation on Instagram, while RTK shows high activity but a mixed degree of platform adaptation. For MRT, no meaningful adaptation can be established, since the profiles analysed are inactive or absent.

RQ3: The most common formats differ across platforms. Standard posts dominate on Facebook for both RTCG and RTK, while videos in Reels format dominate RTCG's Instagram and make up the majority of RTK's Instagram content. The TikTok content of both RTCG and RTK consists entirely of short vertical videos.

RQ4: Facebook is most often used as a distribution platform, especially by RTK. Instagram and TikTok, on the other hand, show stronger evidence of platform-specific communication, particularly where videos in Reels format and short vertical videos dominate.

8. Discussion

The findings should be interpreted with caution, since the analysis covers only one working week. The results identify visible patterns of platform use in the selected period, but they do not represent a full assessment of the long-term institutional strategy of the public service broadcasters analysed. This is especially important in the case of MRT, where the absence of activity on the platforms analysed does not allow a direct content comparison with RTCG and RTK. The study therefore offers an exploratory comparison of platform presence and format adaptation, rather than a definitive ranking of the overall digital transformation of the public service broadcasters.

The results partially support the hypothesis. The public service broadcasters analysed continue to use certain platforms, especially Facebook, mainly to distribute existing television and web content. However, this conclusion should be nuanced, since RTCG and RTK show clear format adaptation on Instagram and TikTok.

The most significant finding is the difference between merely having a profile, posting frequently and genuinely adapting content. MRT shows no visible activity on the platforms analysed. RTK posts very frequently, especially on Facebook, but a high volume of posts does not always imply creative and platform-specific storytelling. RTCG, for its part, posts less than RTK overall, but its Instagram strategy shows stronger adaptation through the substantial use of videos in Reels format.

This difference matters for public service media. Digital modernisation cannot be measured solely by the number of posts or the number of followers. A genuine multiplatform strategy requires clear editorial planning, adapted formats and a good understanding of audience behaviour on different networks. To remain relevant, public service broadcasters need to create public value through formats that actually reach and engage the fragmented digital audience, rather than relying mainly on traditional news and links.

9. Recommendations

9.1. MRT

- Reactivate and clearly label its official social media profiles, so that audiences can easily recognise them as authentic MRT channels.
- Develop a basic multiplatform strategy covering Facebook, Instagram, TikTok and the official website.
- Establish a minimal but regular process for publishing public interest content, including explanatory formats and video content.
- Use social media to reach younger and fragmented audiences who rely less and less on linear television.

9.2. RTCG

- Maintain its strong Reels strategy on Instagram and link it even more clearly to topics of public interest.

- Improve adaptation on Facebook by reducing reliance on standard posts and making greater use of visual explainers, platform-adapted videos and audience-oriented formats.
- Use TikTok more consistently if the aim is to reach younger, mobile-oriented audiences.
- Develop more carousels and explanatory formats for complex public interest topics.

9.3. RTK

- Reduce its excessive reliance on high-volume distribution on Facebook and prioritise clearer editorial selection of content.
- Increase the use of short formats tailored to Facebook, instead of relying mainly on classic video posts.
- Develop more carousels and explanatory formats on Instagram for public interest topics.
- Use TikTok more strategically and more regularly, since the content format is already aligned with the logic of the platform but the volume of posting remains limited.

9.4. General Recommendations for Public Service Media in the Western Balkans

- Measure digital success not only by the number of followers and the volume of posts, but also by the degree of platform adaptation and the creation of public value.
- Develop social media editorial guidelines tailored to the specificities of each platform.
- Invest in short video, mobile storytelling and visual explanatory formats.
- Treat social media not merely as distribution channels, but as spaces for public communication, greater accessibility and audience engagement.

10. Conclusion

This paper analyses the digital strategies of three public service broadcasters in the Western Balkans: MRT, RTCG and RTK. The results show marked differences in their visible activity and in their capacity to adapt to contemporary digital platforms. No regular posting activity was observed for MRT on the social networks analysed, which points to a significant gap in its digital communication. RTCG shows a more developed strategy, especially on Instagram and TikTok, where it successfully uses short video formats. RTK, for its part, has the largest volume of posts, mainly on Facebook, but this high volume does not always mean full platform adaptation.

The findings indicate that public service media cannot rely solely on the fact that they have social media profiles. To reach the fragmented digital audience, public service media need to communicate actively on each platform through formats and content adapted to its logic and to users' habits. This requires adapted formats, clear editorial planning and a deeper understanding of audience habits and expectations. Today, public value is created not only through traditional radio and television, but also through social media formats that are accessible, relevant and meaningful to digital users.

The findings also suggest that the use of social media by the Western Balkan public service broadcasters analysed was considerably inconsistent during the selected period.

Some platforms are mainly used as channels for redistributing existing content, while others show clearer format and platform adaptation. The future relevance of public service media in the region will likely depend on a gradual shift from basic content redistribution towards more deliberate, platform-specific communication strategies.

Statement on the Use of Artificial Intelligence

The author used ChatGPT for language editing, translation support, proofreading and improving the clarity and readability of the text. NotebookLM was used to support the organisation and review of research notes and source materials. These tools were not used to create the research design, collect data, conduct the analysis, interpret the findings or write the conclusions. Full responsibility for the content of the manuscript remains with the author.

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