

# Synergies of sorority in virtual communities of women's magazines. The case of the closure of the Vogue forum

Sinergias de sororidad en las comunidades virtuales de las revistas femeninas. El caso del cierre del foro de Vogue

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## ABSTRACT

**Introduction:** The progressive disappearance of the forums as an already archaic element of conversation on the cyber-media is a fact with the closure of one of the last ones that remained active as is that of the Vogue magazine. A closing that is preceded by insults and threats to blogger Lovely Pepa that are what has triggered this closure. **Methods:** This qualitative research has been conducted through structured surveys to 47 users of the Vogue magazine forum **Results and discussion:** The results obtained highlight the importance of synergies above all of sorority that have been created in a female community that was part of a medium but that was completely independent of it. A group with a need to be informed, to converse and to address richer and more varied topics than those proposed by the publication

**KEYWORDS:** forums; interactivity; magazine; sorority; woman.

## RESUMEN

**Introducción:** La progresiva desaparición de los foros como elemento ya arcaico de conversación en los cibermedios es un hecho con el cierre de uno de los últimos que quedaban activos como es el de la revista Vogue. Un cierre que viene precedido por los insultos y amenazas a la bloguera Lovely Pepa que son los que han desencadenado esta clausura. **Metodología:** Esta investigación cualitativa ha sido realizada mediante encuestas estructuradas a 47 usuarias del foro de la revista Vogue. **Resultados y discusión:** Los resultados obtenidos destacan la importancia de sinergias sobre todo de sororidad que se han creado en una comunidad femenina que formaba parte de un medio pero que era completamente independiente de él. Una agrupación con necesidad de informarse, de conversar y de tratar temas más ricos y variados que los que propone la cabecera.

**PALABRAS CLAVE:** foros; interactividad; revista; sororidad; mujer.

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Translation by **Carlos Javier Rivas Quintero** (University of the Andes, Mérida, Venezuela).

### 1. Introduction

The last study published in 2017 by the Basque Woman Institute, Emakunde, and titled “New male chauvinism in the face of news about women: Analysis of the public participation in media forums from Euskadi Autonomous Community CAE”, analyzes the forums from the main Basque digital newspapers. The masculinization from these sites stands out along with the scarce female participation in them, alluding to the digital gap, dynamics that make public women participation difficult, lack of knowledge and male chauvinist reactions towards feminist speeches. (Emakunde, 2017).

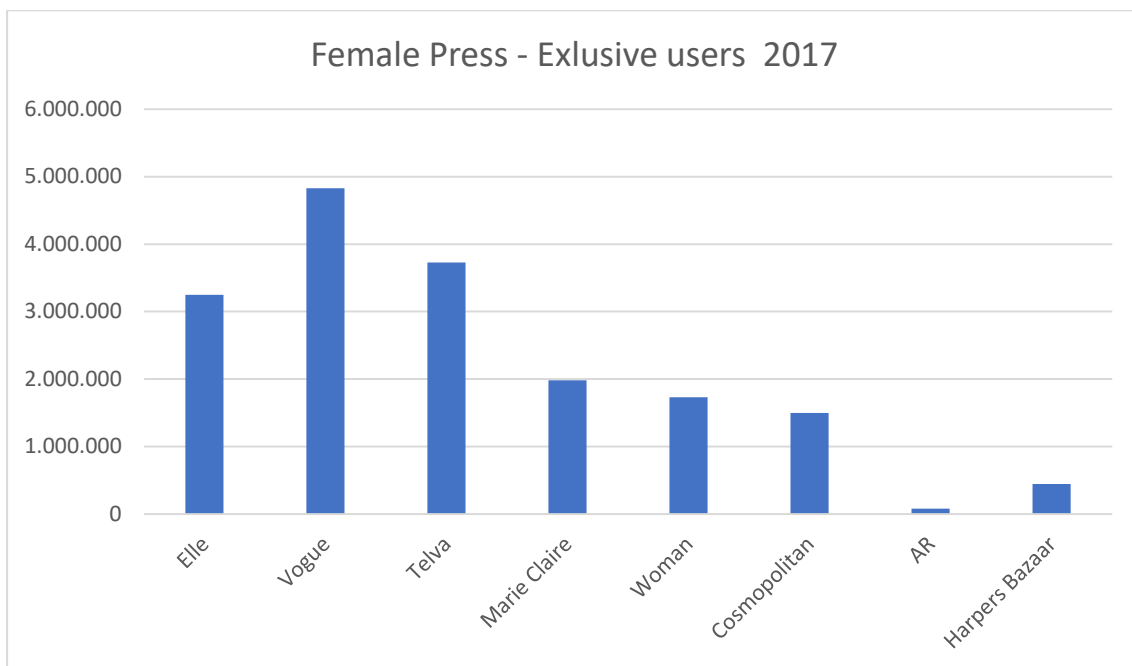
However, there are other sites on the web where women are the leading role. Exclusively feminized places that have always cared for women, one way or another, and where the exception and invisibility is placed on male’s opinion and participation (Gallego, 1990). These are isolated places, absolutely distant from the norm and unequal, denigrating and “the humiliation liturgy” treatment (Bengoetxea, 2006) that media have against women. These places are female magazines, and more specifically, female forums for these magazines digital editions.

The precise aim for this research will be to understand the features and the scope of one of these digital female communities, as important as it is the case of the Magazine Vogue forum. We will study what their protagonists think, their interests, the main topics, their ways of interaction and the relationship with the media in which they belonged. We will also highlight dichotomous elements such as cyber-bullying attacks along with diverse elements of sorority that have flourished in this place.

### 2. Vogue Forum

Initially founded in 1909 in the United States, it would not be until 1988 when Condé Nast brought the paper version of this magazine to Spain. In 2001, it appears the web edition of Vogue and, practically since its beginnings (2003) forums were part of this publication.

Vogue is the leading Spanish female magazine in its digital edition, having 4.828.073 exclusive users in 2007, followed at a far distance by Telva with 3.728.000, Elle with 3.247.285, Marie Claire with 1.981.787, Woman with 1.729.447 and Cosmopolitan with 1.497.430 exclusive users respectively.



**Figure 1:** female audience for Digital Press 2017.

**Source:** My own elaboration with data from Hearst, Condé Nast, GyJ, Zeta group and Unidad Editorial.

The progressive disappearance of all conversational sites from female magazine digital editions has already been researched by female authors like Ganzábal (2018), who highlights the survival of forums such as the ones from Vogue and Telva as the only bastions that have these websites to interact with their readers.

However, the digital edition for Vogue Spain decided, on January 26<sup>th</sup> 2018, and after fifteen years of existence, to shut down its forum sections. This closure has been massively followed up until today through the hashtag #adiosforosvogue (EN: #goodbayvogueforums) and it will unfold as the beginning of the end of one of the most important female communities that existed on The Internet. A closure without precedents that leaves a group of women without a conversational site, with over 16 million messages and more than 150.000 topics that have been discussed during these past 15 years of existence on the web.

The definitive cause for the closure of this place by Vogue has been the lawsuit of blogger Lovely Pepa, for cyber-bullying and threats, precisely, in the same place of participation. It was Alexandra Pereira (Lovely Pepa) who in a videoblog <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=goYuFYvMfmk&t=3s> uploaded on January 25<sup>th</sup>, and with over one million views, 9.000 comments on YouTube and more than one million reproductions on Instagram, accuses the magazine directly for keeping a forum in which people insult, attack and threaten in the face of the indifference from moderators and administrators of the site.

The day after the lawsuit, Vogue decides not only to close the threat “Celebrities”, where these humiliations happened, but to definitely shut down the entire forum with all its conversational

threats. Vogue publishes an announcement on social media justifying the measure, and that way following their policy not to participate or consent any type of harm that humiliates women. The announcement continues with its brand policy in which they have decided to suppress their collaboration with the photographers Mario Testino and Bruce Weber after being accused of presumed sexual harassment by several models.

The significance of the closure has been such that every newspaper national wide picked up the story. El País, El Mundo, ABC, La Vanguardia, El Confidencial, eldiario.es, Huffington Post y El Español explain the hatred messages the blogger received throughout the threat from this website and the decision from the magazine for its cancellation.

Nevertheless, this closure comes after years of insults and threats to many “social media influencers” on this site (Díaz, 2017). There had already been many claims from famous people before, like Sara Carbonero or Paula Echevarría, and it was then when the magazine made specific decisions of closing conversational threats, but not definitive like this one in which the lawsuit has turned out public and viral.

Due to this closure a movement started on social media in support and understanding to Lovely Pepa, and as a claim from many users that were loyal to the Vogue community and now they see themselves abandoned by the magazine. The forum users adduce other types of reasoning for this magazine closure like clearing their image when they could have opted for other measurements such as the specific closure of threats, to delete sub forums or the investment to improve the moderators work that has been, up until now, done for free and unprofessionally.

### **3. Virtual Communities and Sorority**

All of these repertoire elements for interaction and participation with the readers that communication media has been developing like surveys, forums, comments, digital interviews and recommendations has been profusely analyzed by authors like Thurman, 2008; Hermida y Thurman, 2008, García de Torres 2012, Massip y Suau, 2014; Linares, Codina, Pedraza, 2015...

According to Massip and Suau (2014) in spite of the initial hopes, to this date, communication media have not been able to build true places for debate. And contrary to this, when they manage to do so, they do not take care of it alluding moderating problems and younger users changing to social media websites.

Regarding the forum topic, they are considered by some authors as primitive relationship communities that have been disappearing as nexus bonds within the own media (García de Torres, 2010). So much so that no newspaper currently has this citizen participation tool on their websites. However, these primary forums have some specific features that make relationships that are built in it, to cross the impersonal line. That way, once the participation from the members in a community consolidates; deep and interesting shapes of interpersonal relationships can flourish (Valiente, 2004).

Authors like Rojas *et al.* (2005) consider that these forums stand out due to 4 elements: the thematic structure, creation of a community from the outside in, hierarchical structures (there are editors or moderators and different levels of participation depending on their time in the forum, quantity and quality of their contributions) and interest from the participants searching for specific information so that they can contribute to an open debate or start a new one.

The motivations that lead people to take part in these virtual communities are varied and many (Weber, 2004, Benkler, 2006, Browman and Wills, 2006), among others: to gain status within the

community, to connect with other people with similar interests, to learn how to give meaning to things, to inform and to be informed, to entertain, to be understood and to create.

The person that participates in a discussion forum, according to Valiente (2004), needs an active attitude and what that person is looking for is to get in touch with other people that share his/her same interests, they discuss about topics that interest them, increase their knowledge about a topic or they just chat with other individuals and exchange experiences.

When talking about types of communities, we will make reference to classifications like the ones from Hegel and Armstrong (1997) to refer to these female forums like communities for relationships or places for debate (Ferri, 1999). In these communities, people with similar vital experiences congregate or participate. These are often intense and search for others who are in the same situation to share them. Lots of times higher levels of mutual understanding and deeper relationships are built, where participants are aware of the real identities of others and their experiences, and even bigger contact is established with some members and the relationship continues by phone, mail...

We would also be talking, in these associations, of a type of dialectic interactivity (Williams 1988 and Juan Van Dijk 2000) and communicational one (Rost, 2006) in which an authentic conversation between the participants is allowed. There are interaction offers that are responded and a dialog is established in which the roles of the sender and receiver are alternated and where the infinitive possible responses acquire public dimensions.

We have to highlight the specificity of the community we are presenting here. Beyond being an association of relationship and debate, it is an eminently female community, around 95%, and in which support networks combine to personal relationships that have been built to help female empowerment during critic moments (Boix, 2001, Del Valle, 2001). We can't leave aside the emancipating power that these women's participation in this forum had. It is at this point in which we would like to introduce Lagarde's concept of sorority (2014). The term sorority according to Lagarde "...means friendship among different and peered women, accomplices who are committed to work, create and convince, who meet and recognize in feminism to live life with a deep freeing sense" (2014, p. 356).

That way, sorority is a concept that, being based on other practices of solidarity traditionally coined among girl friends, colleagues or family that, without having proper feminist awareness, builds mutual support relationships. Lagarde highlights two important elements of these relationships, 1) support and alliance relationships will not be based on similarity or esteem for others, but on recognition of every woman (also of one self) as a subject with dignity, full right human and such; and 2) the ultimate intention of the support and alliance will always be liberating, meaning that it will always be led to face patriarchal oppression (Lagarde, 2014).

However, we can't forget the elements of hatred and misogyny on the forum because, as we have explained before, they have been the main cause of its closure. These insults and threats toward other women have made it possible for trolls and hackers to act as active subjects and part of the hatred cyber-attacks.

Digital newspapers have taken different measures to fight against broadsides and intolerable comments on the web, being women one of the main targets of all rage in all aspects like male chauvinism, new male chauvinism and post male chauvinism respectively (Lorente, 2009).

It is evident that the level of verbal aggression on forums and virtual communities is very high (Sánchez, 2008) and sometimes it is complicated to fight against it without attacking the innate principle of freedom that shelters the network. Spams, insults, false information, comments with an evident purpose of provoking upon trivial topics (Noblía, 2015) or even threats like the one in which the blogger Lovely Pepa claims.

Feminized communities are not free from this invading phenomenon. So, misogyny attacks from women to women are present in some of these forum threats. They are, in general, specific threats, very focused on famous personalities or celebrities that receive the rage from some forum users that insist on threatening or hindering the forum with images or obscene and outrageous videos. The threatening attitudes and the defamation from this minority have provoked the closure of a community where there was a high level of participation and interest.

#### 4. Research Methodology

For this analysis we chose one of the oldest and most important female communities on the web, consolidated along with its cyber-media, such as the forum from Vogue magazine.

From all digital editions of high range female magazines that exist in Spain (Armentia, Marín, Ganzábal, 2010) only Telva and Vogue had a forum on their websites. Other publications like *Elle*, *Cosmopolitan* and *Woman* shut them down. Marie Claire also ended its community in 2016 and, *Harper's Bazaar* and *AR Magazine* never had neither a forum nor any other type of community to interrelate with their readers (Ganzábal, 2018).

We expected to analyze this forum as a conversational community and to see its synergies and features, but when the research was already starting, Vogue magazine decided to shut down its section. This closure, massively followed through the hashtags #goodbayvogueforums and #vogueforums (ES: #adiosforosvogue #forosvogue), brings a new dimension to our analysis. Our project began in 2017 when we got graphics and charts on the subjects, threats, the number of messages and the participation in each one of them. We have thought of this information to be valid and very useful to analyze a topic of current rage, like this one. We have also turned to the website backups where every analyzed forum remains intact:

<http://web.archive.org/web/20170902091718/http://foros.vogue.es/>

On January 29<sup>th</sup> and aware of the dimension that this analysis was reaching, we requested help from Twitter to carry out our research. We asked collaboration to fill out our survey to every person who was willing to do so and that had participated in any way on the Vogue forum. Our tweet, with a total of 1.506 impressions and 45 interactions, making it one of the most followed ones related to the topic.





**Figure 2:** Twitter activity, impressions and interactions.  
**Source:** Twitter of @maganzabal

The collaborations came very soon and in one week the number of female and male forum users that participated in this research were of 47 (with one moderator of one of the threads included).

Every one of them gave us their e-mails via direct messages on Twitter and was contacted individually sending them a survey and thanking them for their collaboration. We used the open-ended questionnaire technique and we could reach a wide number of followers with this technique at a low cost (Díaz-Bravo *et al.*, 2013 and De Rada, 2012).

Some of them have requested us to keep their anonymity based on the privacy of the topics they commented on the forum and that they openly express on their statements in our content. Therefore, we are going to maintain anonymity for each and every one of the participants. All of them have signed an informed consent document so we could use the data legally. From now on, we will label them VFU (Vogue Forum Users) followed by a number that corresponds to each one of the participants in the research.

We wanted to include specifically some of the most significant direct testimonies to help others understand the scope of many of the sensitive topics and the conversational synergies that have been present in this community. It is the study of forum female user's voice and opinion that really matters. This is one of the distinguishing key aspects that demonstrate the originality and novelty of this research.

Out of the 47 registered surveys, 46 are from very active female forum users in that community and 1 from an also very active male user. We have not done any special differentiation based on this aspect because the answers offered by the male interviewee don't differ at all from the ones we have received from the surveyed females. Out of the 46 female forum users, one of them also worked as a moderator on one of the most troublesome threads: "Celebrities". All of the women comprise ages from 25 to 37 years old.

The survey pattern that is shown below comprises 3 analysis fields which are audience, community construction, and its relation with the cyber-media and the own features from that community within the media. The parameters shown below are based on some of the studies about interactivity performed by Rodríguez Martínez, Codina y Pedraza-Jiménez, (2012) but shortened and presented in a limited way, taking into account the features of our sampling and the difficulty of sending a long text and with complex variants from the female forum users.

**Table 1.** *Survey-pattern sent to the female forum users.*

<b>Parameter 1- Audience</b>	1.1.Target audience
<b>Parameter 2- Community in a cyber-media</b>	2.1. Magazine – forum relation
	2.2. Differences between magazine and forum
	2.3. Use of other female publication forums.
<b>Parameter 3- Features of Vogue Forum</b>	3.1. Vogue forum
	3.2. Content: Threats and their features.
	3.3. Debate and participation
	3.4. Other elements: Sorority
	3.5. Publicity
	3.6. Moderation
	3.7. Problems: trolls, spam...

**Source:** own elaboration

On the other hand, this qualitative proposal that we expect to analyze entails an analysis of the symbolic configuration of the social reality or of a very specific and concrete social reality, like the one in this association (Conde, 2014). This research would be incomplete if we wouldn't have gotten in touch with the manager of the digital edition of Vogue, Inés Lorenzo, with whom we have spoken by phone to corroborate the stance of the publication and to explain their behavior. We thank her, too, for her help.

## 5. Results

### 5.1. Parameter 1 and 2. Audience and cyber-media community

According to the results obtained, it is noteworthy that 80% of female users from the Vogue forum were not readers of the magazine, neither its digital edition nor its hardcopy one. They state to be readers that are not especially interested in fashion and they share other type of interests such as literature, cinema, politics, culture, decoration, beauty... a much wider and closer world rather than the one offered by the magazine.

It is curious that some of the users categorically affirm: "I don't like female magazines like Vogue, Elle..." VFU6 or "I don't like fashion magazines. Every now and then I have scanned them at the salon to pass the time..." VFU8.

From the ones who affirm to be female press readers, some of them are frequent readers of other publications like Vanity Fair and others claim that "I've been reading Vogue for many years" VFU45.

In addition to the dissociation among the forum users and the magazine readers, it turns out to be important the separation from other female magazines and other forums from publications of this kind. When asked about the forum from Telva magazine, none of our participants claim to know about such forum or to be a reader of this publication.

There is also a disconnection between the topics addressed in the magazine and the ones commented on the forum. The publication centers its themes in: fashion, beauty, celebrities, living and brides. However, the forum covers a larger variety of aspects like: fashion, beauty, celebrities, brides,



decorating, kitchen, travels, motherhood, work, health and leisure. We attach a summary chart of themes in both places.

**Table 2.** *Themes for Vogue Magazine and themes for Vogue Forum.*

Themes for Vogue Magazine	Themes for Vogue Forums
Fashion	Fashion
Runway	Celebrities
Beauty	Beauty
Celebrities	Runway
Living	Brides
Brides	Decoration
Tv	Gourmet
Blogs	Travels
	Vogue Moms
	Work and studies
	Health
	Your world
	Leisure and culture

**Source:** own elaboration.

It calls one’s attention the divergent paths that magazine and forum follow. Precisely, the last researches on female press are already noting down the new guidelines that have been followed by these publications. Now, women appear to be more concerned about fashion trends and get interested mainly by their physical looks, being this one of a young, white and ultrathin woman the only one possible (Menéndez, Figueras 2013), (Riera y Figueras, 2012).

These magazines leave aside the role of the woman as a house keeper, as a friend and as a mother. Meaning that they suggest a profile of a single woman, without children and with an ultimate goal: to be pretty and fashion trendy (Almansa and Gómez de Travesedo, 2017).

Despite the publication not including topics as motherhood, they do have an interest on the forum because the readers for this research are in the target average age in which women agree to motherhood in Spain (31 years old, according to the Statistics National Institute| ES: INE). The target for the Vogue reader is also comprised of these ages: 45% of the readers are up to 34 years old and 55% are over 35 years old (Condé Nast). However, this opposite end is not addressed on the web

“They would have never published an article about labor precariousness saying your boss mistreats you psychologically and on top of that doesn’t write a job contract for you and you don’t know how to make it till the end of the month. You could write about stuff like this on the forum like you were saying it to your friends and the other users replied giving their support, solutions...” VFU25.

“Magazines want to sell magazines and make money, not talk about controversial topics. On a forum you can write about topics that interest you... as if you were talking to your friends... On a magazine there could be an article about vaginitis and that’s all it is, but a woman can write on a forum ‘it hurts when I’m having sexual relations’ and receive 30 replies. Some will say ‘it also happens to me’, others will give their support, others advice and other will laugh at her” VFU18.

The interest to get closer to this community is, in 98% of the cases, curiosity and the need of information. In some isolated cases, due to loneliness. Some forum users explain the immersion in this society in the same way you watch TV or spend time on social media at the end of the day.

The female forum users highlight as features from the forum: its diverse target (from 20 to 37 years old), activity (professionals and users of all kinds: journalists, lawyers, pharmacists, philologists, entrepreneurs, students, doctors, unemployed, housekeepers...) and above all, themes. The richness and variety of ideas, suggested by the readers is one of the aspects that users appreciate the most.

However, after the closure of these forums all of them assure they will migrate to any of the two forums that have been already created: either <https://www.forovogue.com/> or <http://forosvogue.es/>, where they will try to take up pending conversations. In fact, these new sites have recreated the same conversational threats that the forum Vogue had.

This way, the magazine loses 20.11% of users from its digital version in January to its edition in February 2018 (with the forum already shut down) and goes from 5.722.895 to 4.611.734 of exclusive browsers. The visits drop from 12.22.504 in January to 9.816.110 in February of that year according to data from the Interactive Justification office of Diffusion (ES: OJD Interactiva).

## 5.2. Parameter 3: Vogue Forum Features

This forum, according to the number of threats and messages in each subforum, was one of the historical ones on the web. Always bear in mind that there are other forums that are superior in audience but are independent from any kind of communication media.

**Table 3.** *Vogue Forums: Threats, themes and messages.*

VOGUE Forums	Themes	Messages
Fashion	38.890	2.508.643
Celebrities	12.233	3.750.196
Beauty	31.013	2.390.613
Runway	1.744	382.384
Brides	3.503	295.364
Decoration	2.175	52.336
Gourmet	2.571	164.730
Travels	3.837	53.005
Vogue moms	5.032	318.022
Work and studies	3.876	109.417
Health	2.105	114.674

**Source:** own elaboration.

The forum has a total of 14 conversational sub forums with a higher or a lower success that are the ones that comprise the main themes of it. Within these themes, the threats are made up by very concrete topics that interest the forum users in a very punctual way during time.

**Table 4.** *Vogue Forums: Threats, themes and messages.*

Open Debate	Themes	Messages
Your world	36.979	4.014.660
Leisure and culture	4.444	2.463.218
New users	4.202	22.614

**Source:** own elaboration (January 2018).

Within the General Category there were several sub forums with lots of threats for discussion. That way, Fashion had threats for “Clothes by Sara Carbonero”, “Clothes by Paula Echevarría”, “Cockroach style”, “Dulceida” or “Lovely Pepa”. On Celebrities there were threats like “Tom Hardy”, “Beyoncé”, “Rihanna”, “Blanca Suárez”, “Leonardo Dicaprio”, and “Yon González”. On the sub forum for Beauty the threats were “Deliplus” (perfumery from Mercadona), “The red-haired threat” (to know about dyes, shampoos...). On the sub forum Examinations and Education there were threats for “Examination for health service”, “Examinations for Education”. On Health, sub forum derived on Doctor’s Office mainly, the threats were “Anxiety”, “Dermatitis”, “Migraines”... On Vogue Moms they created threats about “Diet”, “Nurturing Styles”, “Conflicts with mothers-in-law”... On Brides, information about photographers was shared, flowers, restaurants... all very useful for organizing a wedding. On Travels, trips of every one were shared; they talked about budgets, hotels, restaurants, zones...

On the *Open Debate* category, on the sub forum “Your world” (over 4 million messages) there were threats like “Misogyny, art and fame” (where topics related to Weinstein, Woody Allen and others were discussed), “Reunited Feminisms”, “Diana Quer case”, “Independence of Cataluña”, “The sex post”, “Suicide: the invisible evil”, “The crazy cat ladies”, “The crazy dog ladies”...

On the sub forum for Leisure (one of the most visited with over 2 million messages) there were threats about “Made in the UK productions”, “European Series”, “New Series”, “Game of thrones”, “Save me” (ES: Sálvame), “Eurovision”...

As a response to our questionnaire on point 3.4, all the answers highlight the importance of an element that is sorority. This, understood as help among women within a community, is the main topic that everyone confirms. The testimonies told are innumerable.

“... on the sub forum for Leisure and on Your World” there really was sorority because we had created a community, many of us had known each other for years... when one new user joined to ask for permission, the others always tried to help her and give her advice” VFU28.

“Many of us had been there for years, we didn’t know our real names, but we were a group of friends. And as in every group we argued, we laughed, and above all, we gave our opinions...” VFU34.

“Some years ago I underwent to an in-vitro fertilization that worked, and so I had a hard time physically and psychologically... Then I started looking up online about my symptoms and by pure chance I ended up with the threat from the forum about fertility “The seekers”... I read messages from other women who had been through the same thing as me. From “The Seekers” threat I jumped to the threat for “Natural remedies for pregnancy” that’s where all the sick and tired of science were... This threat was an encyclopedia about infertility and there was lots of support among us...” VFU4.

“During the 10 years I participated, I’ve seen forum users open threats to fight sentimental, health and professional problems... and the rest was very willing to help them...” VFU15.

“...a few days before its closure, one forum user that participated on the threat “Say what you think” (general debate threat from “Your World”) asked for help because she just had been told about her dismissal and she was suspicious that it was because she informed the company, a week earlier, that she was pregnant. Two forum users that were lawyers got in touch with her and they were helping her” VFU8.

“...there was a lot of sorority, even though we were always on the digital world and people didn't use to meet personally. They would offer to buy and look for clothes that other users were looking for and couldn't find. They would always try to help with doubts; they would stand up for each other if in any social media website any of the influencers attack one of the users” VFU2.

“...sorority, yes, but not all was a paradise. I was dead when a girl asked how to put the tags back on the clothes to return them, and then a very unethical and unhygienic practice was unleashed to buy clothes, wear them and return them to the store...” FV10.

On the advertisement section (section 3.5 of our questionnaire), every participant highlights its explicit prohibition by the moderators on this site. However, there was implicit publicity because there was a constant reference to beauty, fashion and leisure products and you could put the links where you could hire or buy them. This way, when a user would write, we had to differentiate several parts of the message:

1. There was the nickname, the user's avatar (it was optional), date of comment or register, range (it depended on the number of messages: new arrival, VIP...), number of messages and you could put the location option.
2. The message. If a comment was posted about a product you could put the link of the webpage where you could find it. When talking about movies you could put the trailers. When talking about youtubers or instagramers you could put the videos or the links to their accounts.
3. The signature. Placed at the bottom part of the message where you could include images (fixed, videos, GIFs), phrases and it was allowed by moderators to put a blog URL (whether it was owned by the users or not).

That way, the inclusion of blogs and links was frowned upon and even the forum users were warned and banned. What was more and more indiscreet was the advertisement from the magazine itself within the forum, with more and more intrusive and annoying banners.

A lot of authors like Singer, 2010; Pastor, 2010 and Ruiz et al, 2011; Richardson and Stainer, 2011; Diakopoulos and Naaman, 2011; Binns, 2012; Manosevich and Walker, 2009, doubt that there is an actual generation of ideas on these forums due to the problems provoked by their moderation.

The conflicts like insults, spam, disqualifications and even threats, make moderation and the previous register to be necessary for a good management of the content (Martínez-Martínez, 2012). Furthermore, Massip (2011) proposes: to suppress the possibility to comment, prohibit anonymity and limit the content. Pre-moderation systems, that the forum members moderate themselves or incorporate a paying system so the person can be a moderator.

On this point, related with moderation (section 3.6 and 3.7 of our questionnaire) all the answers express that it has been a minority in the community. The fundamental problem has lain upon the absolute delegation of control to the users over this forum from the magazine. The lack of professionalization of administrators and moderators has made it impossible for them to manage a community with over 50.000 users in Europe and America.

This is how one of the moderators has explained it to us, during 10 years, who claims the massive spam attacks, and hundreds of topics filling the forum with illegal porn links and even images of dead babies on the Pregnancy threat. In addition, she also alludes to harassment to their private lives only for moderating or even threats to different forum users, including threats from Forochoches to Forovogue.

It is important to bear in mind that these moderators were not professionals. They were women who worked as threats moderators just by choice or pleasure and always in an amateur way.

“...the less visited sub forums lacked moderation and they were always full of spam and trash... It hurt me to see how they were in a complete mess without any type of control, so, after becoming friends with one of the moderators from “Celebrities”, I volunteered to clean “Leisure” and organize it as it deserved to be...” VFU moderator.

Throughout the forum history (since 2003) there has been more efficient moments for moderation, and when the “report” option was used, bad behaviors were informed and in sub forums like “Celebrities” threats for Sara Carbonero and Patricia Conde were shut down. The normalized behavior was, up until that point, to close the threats temporally, delete every insult or harmful threat, to ban the forum users and reopen the threat.

There have also been insults and threats among forum users that were sparked after banning forum users. These political or feminist threats are the ones who brought up more controversy among users in this community.

“...therefore it was way more than a site were Lovely Pepa was criticized. It was a meeting point, for gathering, for information, for sharing doubts, for learning, for searching... I myself decided to do a master at the UOC because I saw really good opinions on the forum about that university” VFU20.

Every forum user that has participated in this research assures they have read insults or unsuitable comments, but never threats or attacks to the honor in a brutal way. Every one highlights the very low level of insults despite being a forum and none of them claim to have ever seen a death threat.

“There was a threat “Youtube rumors” but several months ago the moderators had to close it because it was getting out of hands. There were so many comments belittling youtubers, and people who had found their houses and had given information to see the prices... the moderators decided to shut it down and nothing happened. The forum continued without problems” VFU26.

The forum closure is not understood by any of the participants in this research. They are all dissatisfied by the lack of empathy towards the community. Some forum users foretold its closure, not because of the pejorative comments but for the management abandonment, the lack of moderation and the technical problems that the forum had every week during the last months.

The users accuse Vogue for lacking planning and to save their brand rather than the community. There were forum users that only related through the forum and now have lost all their information, contact, conversations...

## **6. Discussion and conclusions**

Forums, as an element associated with a communication media, have disappeared forever. They are now obsolete and have derived, many times, to conversations on social media networks. The female press was one of the last bastions where the few remaining laid.

The Vogue Forum, as a meeting point, constituted a historical community, independent from the magazine content and that did not follow the agenda set by the media. That way, the content on the web was totally dissociated from the content on the forum. A forum with richer conversational threats, more varied, and referred more to the female topics (Menéndez, 2009) rather than fashion

and beauty content, that the magazine proposes almost exclusively. Travels, motherhood, culture, leisure, health, work or studies, are topics that interest women but that could only find a place on this forum.

However, the editor has undervalued the power of a community such as this one. An association of women with desire of information: to communicate, and to share tips and experiences. A group that is already migrating to other sites where they can keep the conversation going; a chat about other subjects which seems to be inexistent in the market.

Vogue magazine digital edition hasn't been able to deal with a big community of women interested in a type of content and that has entered their web only and exclusively to participate on their forum. One million exclusive users and over 3 million visits, that this publication leaves behind and they will never get back.

Reasons for this discrepancy of a community that has been left exhausted and outstripped by the activity from readers on social media websites, that have their own regulation mechanisms, have been some of the justifications that the manager from the magazine has given us. This along with the need to protect the brand and separate it from any scandal and lawsuit against women, have been the final and official triggers for the closure.

It is evident that cyber-attacks with insults and threats to certain personalities or even to moderators cannot be tolerated in a forum with these features, but the magazine has forsaken the site. Continuous changes of administrator, where the maximum time in that job position was a year with constant changes every 15 days, not including the option to report claims... the forum users protested because they wanted to update the forum and be heard, but there were no solutions, especially when the job for moderation was done practically for free and without any type of economic remuneration.

However, this publication could have had other alternatives like closing offensive and indictable threats, but also to professionalize or outsource moderation. Also, the lack of a notification beforehand to the users, previous to the closure, so they could obtain the contact information from the threats and conversations

The detailed analysis of the interviews suggests that the elements of sorority that we have found and which testimonies we have included are indispensable to understand the key points of this group that surpasses all the features included on the forum. We were amazed with the level of empathy seen and with the very honest statements from many of our forum user protagonists. This is a network of networks of women, who consult, get informed, give opinions and help each other: something without comparisons on the current Internet. A community to which, incomprehensibly, the media have turned their backs on insisting on marginalizing, shutting down and making women's real interests invisible.

This disappearance is followed by the closure of the forums from the only other magazine that had them: Telva. Reasons like lack of control, no monetization and lack of use to communicate the content and values of the magazine have been the definitive reasons for its closure. However, this community was way inferior in number and messages from the one analyzed here (930.000 messages, 24.000 users, but only 10 active members), additionally, it was unknown to the total 100% of our surveyed users.

Where can these women discuss now? It seems that social media networks absorb all of our attention, but don't resolve all the conversational needs of women today. There are still young



women that need meeting, interaction and sorority places. The media hasn't been capable of delivering this place to a female audience which is ignored and that comprises over 50% of the Spanish population.

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