Social networking sites and museums: analysis of the Twitter campaigns for International Museum Day and Night of Museums

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Abstract
Introduction: Social networks represent an opportunity for communication management in museums. This work analyses the joint initiative of five museums on Twitter during the most important milestone events of the year for the sector: The International Museum Day and the Night of Museums. The relevance of the study lies in the confluence of different disciplines and approaches: the humanities, corporate communication, digital communication and public relations. Moreover, these types of institutions are not a common object of study, despite their great relevance in the museum sector: The Lázaro Galdiano Museum; The Museum of Romanticism; The Cerralbo Museum; The National Museum of Decorative Arts; and The Sorolla Museum. **Methods**: The study

is based on the content analysis of the Twitter accounts of the aforementioned museums as means to evaluate the campaign's content management and generation of participation in the social network. **Results and Conclusions:** The results indicate these museums need to develop a more defined strategy that takes advantage of the potential of social networking sites, given that content is not used as a strategy and user participation is not as high as expected during these very relevant events.

Keywords
Museums, Twitter, participation, content, communication.

Contents

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1. Justification and objectives

Today, museums have more virtual visitors than real visitors (del Rio, 2012) and these are increasing by 2.1% (Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport, 2014). Museums face a new scenario in which many experts believe communication must be a strategic part of the management (Cordón, 2012; Camarero; Garrido, 2010; Jung 2010; Mateos, 2012; Oliveria, Caprioti, Wintzerith, 2010). With more than twenty centuries of history, in little over twenty years, museums have lived two transcendental revolutions, the new museology at a particular level and the Internet at the global level, plus the increased offer of both public and private museums.

While social networks are an opportunity for a sector whose communication actions tend to be very conditioned by the management style and resources used, it is necessary to adopt a strategic approach that facilitates the achievement of goals (Fortaleza, 2012). The value of this study lies in the novelty and originality of the campaign: small-scale museums with very specific collections located in representative buildings. The sample is comprised of five museums, and their selection is justified by the fact that, since four years ago, these museums decided to work together to improve their position in the sector and take better advantage of the most important milestone events in the museum industry to generate visibility and engagement on Twitter. The study revolves around a specific case study: the campaign promoted by these five museums on Twitter. The study aims to verify whether these museums have actually implemented a common strategy, and whether the implementation of this campaign has shown differences across the participating museums that may affect the achievement of the objectives.

To contextualise this study, it is important to mention that these five Madrid-based museums -The Lázaro Galdiano Museum; The Museum of Romanticism; The Cerralbo Museum; The National Museum of Decorative Arts; and The Sorolla Museum- have collaborated since four years ago to jointly manage their public communication. From 2013, they opted to adopt initiatives that are based

on a common identity that positions and differentiates them in the museum panorama (Viñarás, 2014). In 2015, the campaign #5Museos became an innovative initiative in which, for five days, each museum encouraged the public to visit the rest of the museums through social networks and using the slogan "5 Museums, another Madrid" (Viñarás, Caerols-Mateo, 2016).

In institutions that traditionally have few economic and professional resources for corporate communication (Viñarás, 2011), social networks are an opportunity to spread their messages.

On the other hand, from the point of view of public relations, milestone events are an opportunity to generate new information and increase notoriety. In the case of the museum sector, the International Museum Day and the Night of Museums, celebrated on 16 and 18 May, respectively, are the most important milestones of the year. They are the ideal time to generate content, to achieve visibility and develop specific initiatives to exploit to the full these events. It is the right time to intensify activities on social networks, generate content and gain participation of users. For this reason, the campaign developed on social networks, specifically on Twitter, by these museums on the occasion of these milestone events became a relevant object of study. Thus, the objective of this study is to analyse the communication of these five museums in the social network Twitter during this relevant period. The secondary objectives are: to determine whether these museums generate content especially for these events to take advantage of their relevance, and to evaluate the level of commitment and user engagement the campaign generated during this period. The results will enable us to know in depth this initiative from the perspectives of the institution and of the public. In other words, the study will allow us to know how these museums managed their communication on social networks during the most important milestone events of the year, and to measure the public's degree of participation and interest. The latter aspect is of vital importance given that various studies have demonstrated that virtual visitors have a variety of interests (Reynolds 1997; Kravchyna, Hastings, 2002; CHIN, 2006; Marty, Chen 2006) in an over-informed society. "The user of social networks feels part of the museum project, identifies with his values, commits himself to the mission of the institution and even recommends the museum to his acquaintances..." (Merín, 2015).

2. Methods

For the development of this work we used content analysis for the systematic collection of the information published by the museums in their Twitter accounts, which is known as monitoring. The analysis has been divided into two sections, the content analysis that allows the evaluation of the museums' campaign management and the analysis of the engagement, which allows us to evaluate users' participation and thus users' behaviour in the form of responses. It is a quantitative type of analysis that allows us to assess the effectiveness of the initiative.

The sample units are the Twitter accounts of the five museums while the registration units are the tweets, retweets and replies. For the encoding of material, we established a system of categories based on different variables. The field work was carried out, as mentioned, from 11 to 25 May, 2015, which covers the two most important milestone events in the international museum panorama: The Night of Museums and the International Museum Day, held on 16 and 18 May, respectively.

Table 1. Units of content and engagement analysis

CONTENT PUBLISHED BY THE MUSEUM	
Variable	Category
Message type (one-way/two-way)	- Tweet - Reply - Retweet
Type of content included in the message	- Text - Photo - Audio - Video - Links
Author of the posted message (links, audio and video)	- The Museum - Other museums, institutions or professionals
Use of hashtags (in both tweets and replies)	- Does the message contains a hashtag?
Type of hashtag	- IMD (International Museum Day) - NM (Night of Museums) - Hashtag of exhibitions or activities - Other
ENGAGEMENT	
Variable	Category
Favourites	- Number of favourites and replies received by the tweets published by the Museum
Retweets	- Number of retweets, tweets and replies published by the museum
Mentions	- Number of mentions received by the account of each museum
OTHER	
Findings of interest for the study of the variables	

Source: Authors' own creation.

This content analysis does what is known as monitoring in social networks. It aims to actively listen to the opinion of followers and to select Key Performance Indicators (KPI) that will enable measurements, extract results and draw conclusions about the actions. KPI are essential to achieve the objectives in the social media strategy (Mejía-Llano, 2013) and to evaluate the effectiveness of the strategy.

First of all, in terms of the messages published by the museum, the content analysis will allow establishing their typology and to relate them with the efficiency in social networks. Today, content is a form of strategy, which is known as content marketing (Font & Cuesta, 2012; López, 2012). The quantification and classification of the published messages (tweet, retweet or reply) will allow us to determine whether the museums opt for informative one-way type of communication or a more

participatory and open two-way type of communication. The analysis of the format of the content (link, text, photo, audio or video) is interesting to assess the attractiveness of the account to users.

Another variable of interest is the use of links, which are very convenient to enrich the text as they allow the expansion of information (Lucio, 2011). Finally, in relation to the messages posted by the museums (tweets and replies), the analysis focuses on the use of hashtags and their typology: hashtags about the Museum (exhibitions, events, etc.), the Night of Museums and the International Museum Day or other events. This tool is fundamental in the dissemination of the content on Twitter and its use is determinant (González, Fernández, Villavicencio, 2014).

Second, the study focused on the analysis of the engagement, i.e., of the ability of companies and institutions to generate a relationship or commitment with the audience through actions on the network. For Jiménez, engagement is "the formula to build solid relationships or ties through the new media" (2013). In general terms, the formula takes the name of "Engagement Rate" (ER) and although there are various formulas, this work uses the one proposed by Mejía-Llano (2013, p. 267), which takes into account the most common elements in these formulas.

The numerator: represents the interactions on the Twitter account (number of mentions + number of retweets) in a given period, divided by the number of tweets generated in that period.

The denominator: represents the number of followers of the Twitter account.

$$ER = \frac{\dfrac{(\text{mentions+retweets}) \text{ in the period}}{\text{Number of tweets in the period}}}{\text{Number of followers}} \times 100$$

In short, a new formula has been designed to carry out a more detailed and concise quantitative analysis of the data, whose interpretation will allow us to know the actual application during the most important milestones for museums and to identify the most active account on social networks.

3. Introduction. Museums and social networks: a new culture of participation

"For the museum, since it opens its doors to the public, it does so to create an atmosphere of dialogue, conversation and communication. And social networks are the most conducive platform to generate that environment". This is how the President of ICOM -the International Council of Museums of Spain- (Rodríguez, p. 3) expresses the awareness of museums about the opportunity posed by social networks for their institutions. Museum professionals have incorporated social networks in the development of their communication strategy in a widespread manner, but not without difficulties. In 2010 they spoke of the need to "analyse, evaluate and show the new realities of the museums environment of the ICT'' (Ibáñez, 2020, p. 6). They define themselves as "curators converted in community managers, who are aware that the management of resources has begun to

transition from the excesses of the education in the 20th century to the sacrifices of the 2.0 in the 21st century" (National Museum of Sculpture, 2014).

In 2006 social networks had little presence and the web was a platform that was used more to disseminate information than to encourage participation (Celaya; Viñarás). For Gómez-Vilchez (2012), 2010 is the beginning of this explosion, where "there is some improvisation in the performances of museum in the network and the lack of structured web communication programmes that give a specific meaning and objectives to the different media that can be used". The consulting firm Dosdoce (2011) agrees that there was a significant increase in the use of resources 2.0 but also a lack of strategy: "being there just for being there". Losada and Capriotti (2015, p. 901) have reached the same conclusion: "the major art museums in the world and Spain have of a wide and very good presence in the Internet, but their activity and predisposition to dialogue is not so remarkable and can be improved". In general, once social networks are incorporated into the communications strategy, it is necessary to implement a strategic approach based on the specific objectives of the digital media (Badell, 2015). While these quantitative studies reflect a high use of social networks and a poor strategy, the analysis of specific cases collects interesting initiatives, mostly in the social network Twitter. Thus, in 2010 the initiative #AskACurator was launched and generated more than 26,000 tweets from users, which were responded by thousands of experts from around the world. In 2014 the #Museumweek initiative was launched on Twitter to promote museums in this social network with the participation of institutions from all over Europe.

As with all advances, the praxis is being diverse, but social networks are being strengthened both quantitatively and qualitatively (de-la-Peña, 2014, p. 110):

> "Cultural creation must be designed by taking into account this new reality, knowing that there is a digital culture in which institutions must converge to meet their more active audience. Culture must be opened to this new digital culture and at the same time take advantage of what it can provide and the savings that it can bring in areas related to dissemination. In order to do it well, it is necessary to implement a strategy, clear objectives and a consistent measurement."

4. Results. Content as communication strategy

With respect to the content analysis, of the number and type of messages, there is a big difference across museums despite they are part of the joint initiative. According to a study by the consulting firm Social Bakers (2013), engagement decreases after the third tweet in the same day. The Romanticism and Lázaro Galdiano museums carry out a more two-way type of communication, betting on replies and retweets.

The day with the highest level of activity was 18 May, the International Museum Day, with 18% of the Tweets recorded globally. It is the day with the highest activity on Twitter for the five museums. The situation changed on 16 May, the Night of Museums, when there was hardly any activity.
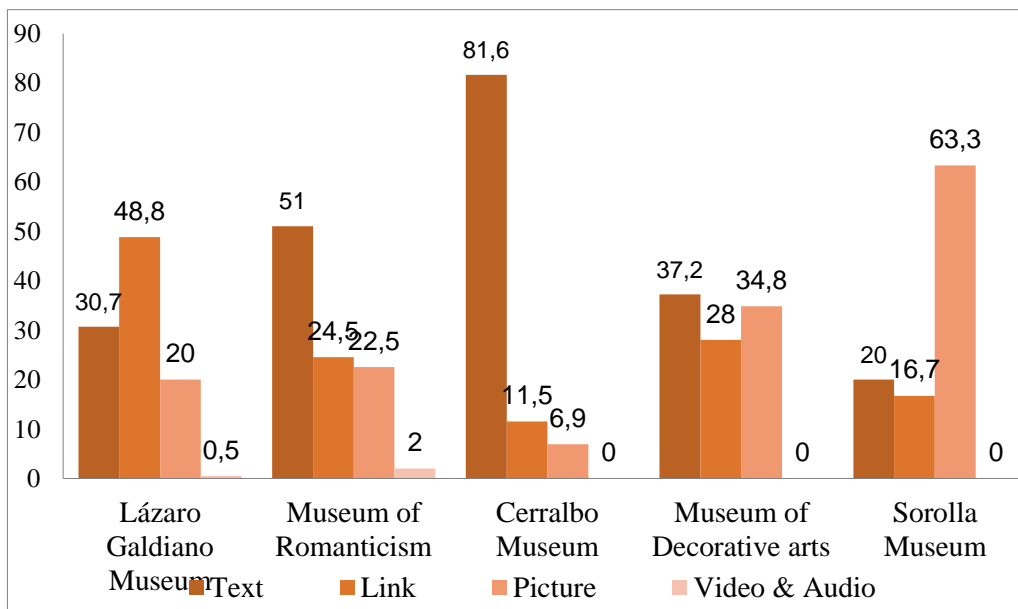
Table 2. Typology of posted messages (absolute numbers).
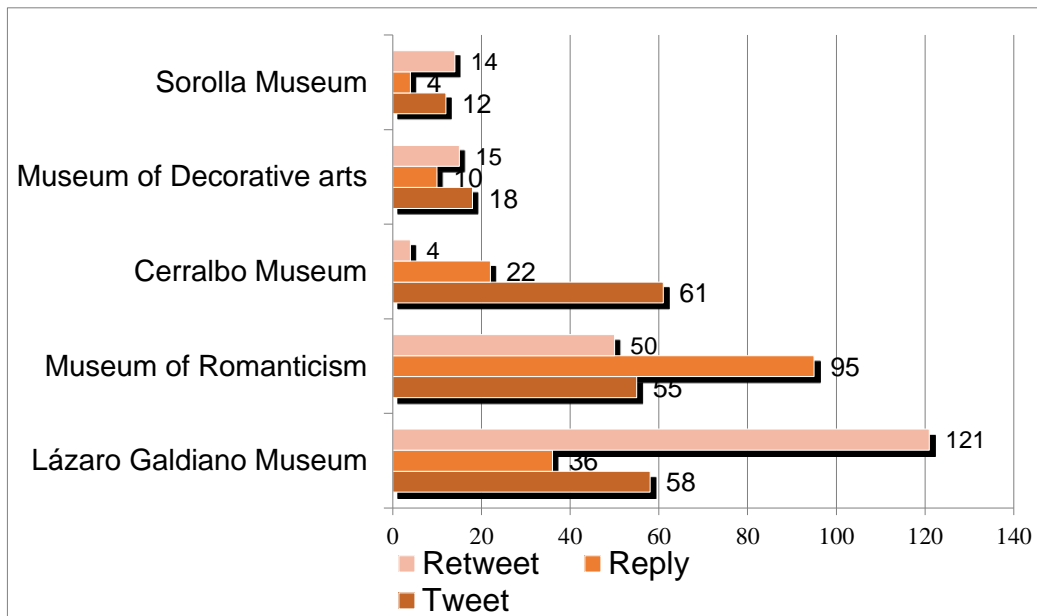
Source: Authors' own creation

With regards to the content of the posts, in general terms, there is a predominance of text over image: 45.4% of the posts only contain text, 31.4% contain a link, 22.3% contains a picture, and only 0.9% contains video or audio.

Table 3. Distribution of message format types

Source: Authors' own creation

The question of the authorship of the content**,** i.e., whether the museums offer information generated by other institutions or people, is vital to improve the Search Engine Optimisation (SEO), which is known as *link building* strategy, and secondly, to establish relations with influencers in the industry.

Table 4. Distribution of origin of linked content (in percentage).
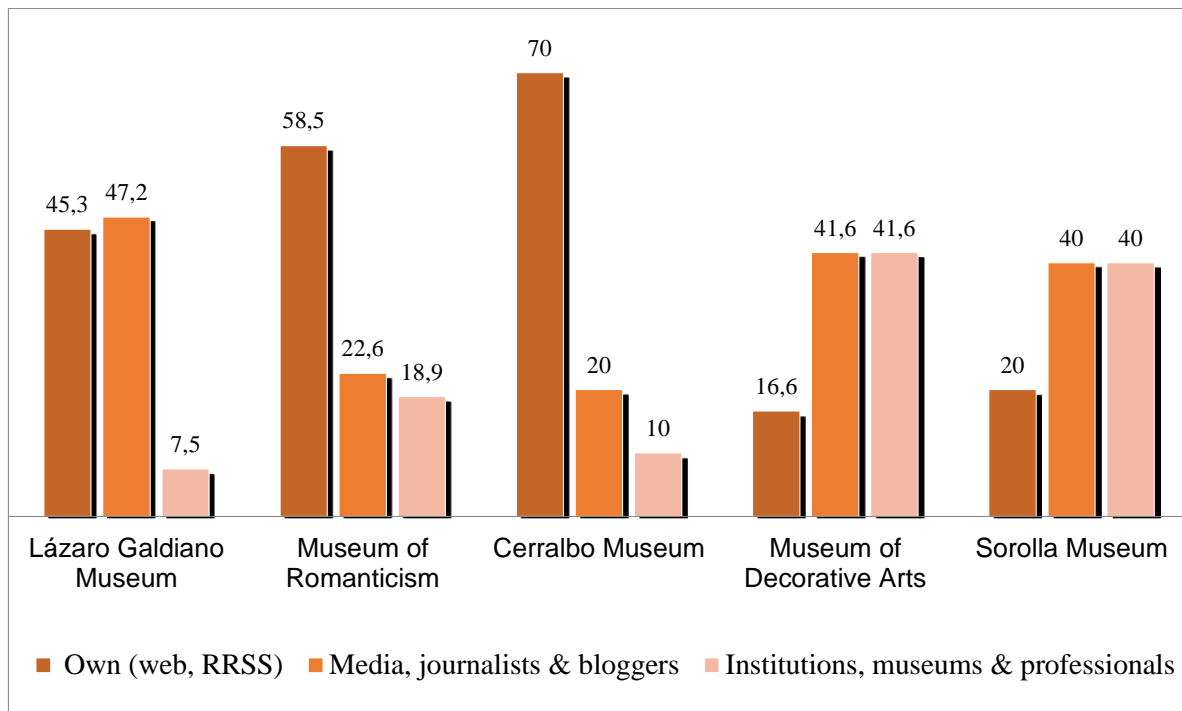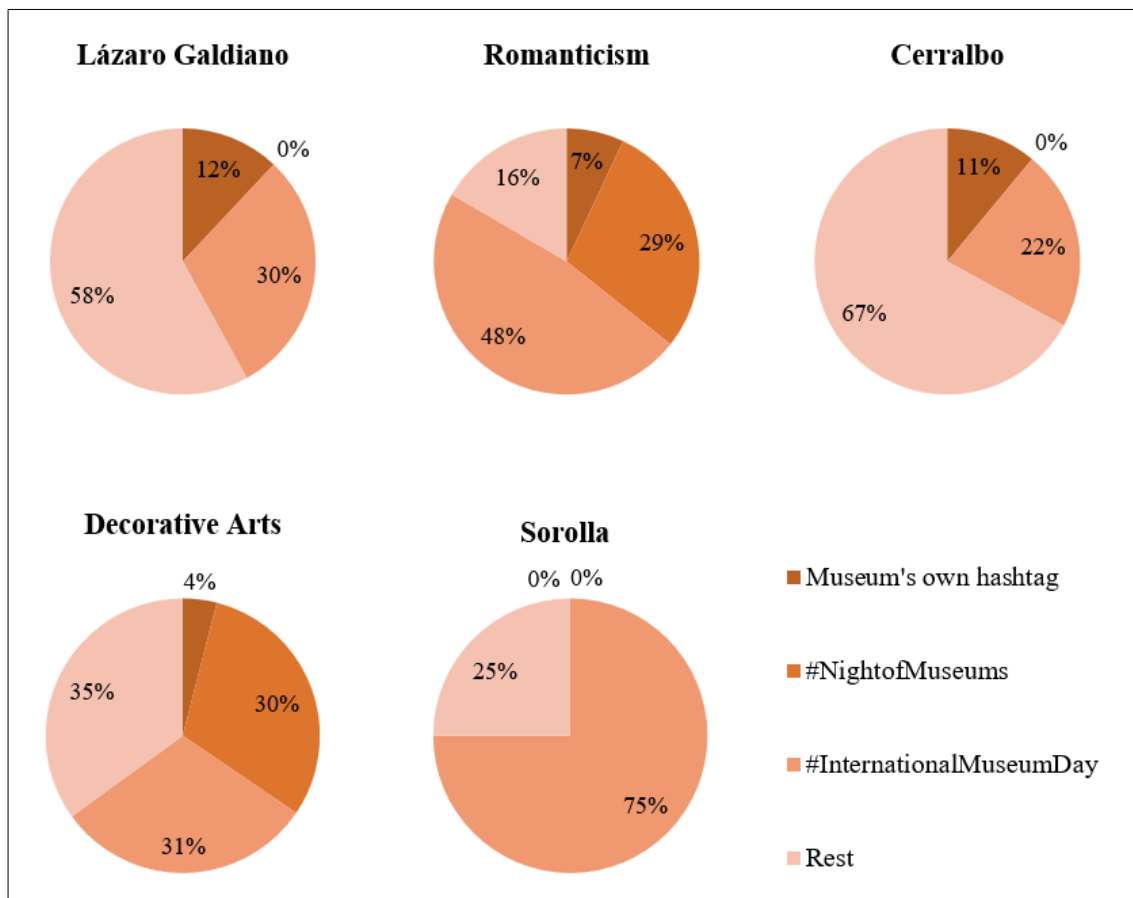

Source: Authors' own creation

48% of what is published is content generated by the museums, 38% corresponds to content published by other media (newspapers, specialised magazines, etc.), journalists and bloggers, and the remaining 14% comes from other cultural institutions.

The last category of content analysis is the use of the main resource and essence of Twitter, the hashtag. The use of the hashtag was analysed only in tweets and replies, which are the publications generated by the museums. The first finding is that 52.5% of all the analysed tweets and replies contained a hashtag, specifically, the hashtag was used in 74% of the tweets posted and only 43.3% of the replies.

With regards to the types of the hashtags in use*,* 9.3% corresponded to activities of the museums, 34% referred to the International Museum Day, and 9.7% referred to the Night of the Museums. The rest of the hashtags constituted 47% of the total.

Table 5. Distribution of hashtag types (percentages).

Source: Authors' own creation

Lázaro Galdiano Museum used the hashtag of the IMD in 30% of the tweets, and the hashtags that made reference to its activities (*#AnaAlvearMLG, #RweissMLG*) 12% of the tweets, while the remaining 58% of hashtags referred to other things (like *#TalDíaComoHoy* and *#FelizLunes*). The Museum of Romanticism used the hashtag of the IMD in 47.7% of the tweets, the hashtag about the *Night of Museums in* 28.7% of the tweets, hashtags about its own activities in 7% *(#VeladaGótica)*, while the remaining 16.6% hashtags referred to other aspects. However, the Museum of Romanticism does not tends to use the hashtag as a usual tool in its publications, and when it does, is does so to strengthen these two events. The Cerralbo Museum used the hashtag of the IMD in 22% of its tweets, hashtags about its own activities in 11% of the tweets (*#MuseoCerralbo* and *#ComparteCerralbo*).

There is an outstanding low use of the hashtag to promote the museums' own exhibitions, workshops or activities, and also to promote the main events of that period: IMD, the Night of Museums and San Isidro. Only the Museum of Romanticism and the National Museum of Decorative Arts made a reference to the Night of Museums: the former used *#NocheDeLosMuseos* and, repeatedly, *#veladagótica* to refer to its own event; while the latter used several different hashtags: *#NDM15, #NocheDeMuseos, #NocheEuropeaDeLosMuseos*.

As for the International Museum Day, the museums opted for various hashtags: *#DíaInternacionalDeLosMuseos,* #DíaDeLosMuseos, *#DíaDeLosMuseos, #DIM2015*, *#MC_IMD*, *#DíaInternacionalDelMuseo,* *#DíaDelMuseo,* *#MuseumDay,* *#DIM2015*, *#Lunes18deMayo*, *#DIM15* and *#DíaDeLosMuseos2015*. The museums did not take advantage of the content searching options of this network and its visibility (*trending topic*). Despite being a common project, there is no coherent strategy based on a key message that is shared by means of the hashtag.

In general, we see that the museums prefer to use the hashtag, the links and the text over pictures. However, each institution shows its own management style, and in some cases they do not show a strategy that clearly responds to the objectives set for this initiative in such a short period of time.

5. Efficiency in terms of engagement

The degree of commitment or engagement of the followers of the museums' Twitter accounts depends on the level of interaction generated by different actions: Favourites, retweets and mentions. In addition to the number of followers, the study seeks to measure the engagement of users with the contents of the museum. This participation, which can take different forms, implies that the person interacts with the museum, with its brand represented and expressed in the social network.

Table 6. Engagement variables (absolute numbers) and engagement rate on Twitter by Museum

	Followers	Tweets & replies	Favourites	Retweets	Mentions	Engagement Rate
Lázaro Galdiano Museum	29,104	94	423	442	91	0.0194
Museum of Romanticism	28,043	150	984	787	117	0.0214
Cerralbo Museum	15,886	83	233	162	49	0.0160
Museum of Decorative Arts	8,969	28	53	31	41	0.0286
Sorolla Museum	22,577	16	130	136	44	0.0498

Source: Authors' own creation

According to the data obtained, the Museum of Romanticism obtained the highest number of retweets, favourites, and mentions in the analysed period, and, as mentioned, also the highest number of replies, reflecting its clear intention to strengthen the loyalty of its 28.043 followers, who

constitute the second largest community. The study confirmed that this strategy was effective given the high number of favourites (984) and retweets (787) received by the museum's tweets and replies.

In contrast, the Sorolla Museum received a considerably high number of retweets and favourites for the activity it generated on Twitter, only 16 tweets and replies in the analysed period. This level of interaction is explained by the museum's high number of followers, 22,000, and the great national and international projection of Joaquín Sorolla and his work. Obviously, with a more appropriate use, this museum would increase its visibility dramatically, since its audience seems to be eager to receive and share any information this museum posts.

The application of the Engagement Rate formula to the obtained data indicates that this rate is low in all museums. This is possibly due to several reasons: limited online activity; the publication of content that in some cases do not generate interest and do not encourage interaction; activities that are not communicated, in general; and a merely informational, non-social use of the platform.

6. Conclusions and discussion

After this analysis, we have extracted a series of conclusions on the strategic management of the museums' communication on the online and, therefore, social environments. The conclusions are presented from the most general and strategic to the most specific and tactical.

☐   Need to improve the design and execution of the digital campaigns. There is no strategy to systematise content and participation on Twitter. The museums generate specific content but it is insufficient and it is generated in unequal volumes. There does not seem to exist a *social media plan* to promote certain actions on the platform. There is a clear waste of the tools that this network offers, mainly the hashtag, and the visibility of the museums' actions is practically non-existent, despite the very representative and media events that took place during the monitored period.

☐   Monetise the milestone events that generate visibility. The museums have generally showed limited or almost zero activity on Twitter during the milestone events the Night of Museums and the International Museum Day. These significant dates in the museum industry is when museums should strengthen their communication, especially on social networks to increase notoriety.

☐   Limited social content. There is a predominance of own content over shared content, despite social network users tend to value mentions and allusions to other users because of SEO and the relations this generate. However, the museums have opted for a more informative and disseminating policy with the museums' own content, which is more characteristic of offline communication and not ideal for communication on the Internet.

☐   Predominance of information over participation. This conclusion is a consequence of the previous one. The museums use Twitter to inform and show the public what they do, by means of one-way and little social communication. The museums do no actively listen to their audiences, nor encourage participation.

☐   Low level of engagement. In general, with some exceptions, the engagement of followers has not been encouraged sufficiently so that they can contribute to the creation of an online community.

☐   Limited use of the communicative power of the image. There is a clear predominance of the text over the image, both moving and still. Photography is not used on a regular basis, while audios and videos are almost never used despite their use as a communication resource has great potential in the promotion of the heritage, exhibitions and events curated by these museums.

☐   Creation of original content and interest. The museums value positively the creation of specific content for the two milestone events: The International Museum Day and the Night of Museums. These events are thus taken advantage of to provide new information and the possibility to generate more visibility and work on the image of the museum.

☐   Lack of strategy on the use of the hashtag. The use of hashtag requires a strategic vision because it allows reaching new audiences when using generic tags that are already followed by a group of people. In the same way, the hashtag of hashtags generated by other institutions or users, such as *#DIM2015,* facilitates the development of a specific community given that they open the museum world to a particular community, defined and generally well known.

These data show that while museums have incorporated social networks in their management, the design and execution of online communication strategies is complex and requires specific skills. Online communication represents a paradigm shift that forces us to think and act differently, often in ways that are unthinkable in the traditional development of communication.

Despite the intentional involvement and presence of the five museums on social networks, we can say that they have not reached the optimal outcomes that they could have achieved, and that this online space -ideal for engagement- could have facilitated. Digital communication through social networks does not only require knowledge on how to use their tools, but also thinking in a strategic way and using the resources needed to run these campaigns. It is necessary to create an identity, a digital brand coherent with the real one, in order to enable a communication channel with the museums' public, a channel that not only informs the public, but one in which the public can participate in the construction of the discourse through the content and engagement.

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