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The image use on Twitter during the 2015 municipal election campaign in Spain

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Abstracts

Introduction. This article presents a research based on the use of images on Twitter by 36 competing candidates at the 2015 municipal elections in Spain. **Methodology.** The empirical research consists of a content analysis completed through a selection of variables drawn from a thorough literature review. **Results.** The interpretation of the fieldwork, which consisted of 388 graphic resources, has revealed the indexical character of the photographs of the candidates for mayor and the preponderance of personalization techniques. **Discussion.** The possibilities that *microblogging* platform entails for the extension of contact between leaders and citizens demonstrate the need to change the traditional interest towards the television and reflect now about the scope of social networks. **Conclusions.** A better use of graphic resources and political communication is possible on Twitter.

Keywords

Twitter; political communication; municipal elections; photography; framing.

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Translated by **M Portalés-Oliva** (TOEFT iBT Test Score 99 year 2012) and **Yuhanny Henares**
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1. Introduction

The progressive protagonism of Internet as a platform that shapes new forms of interpersonal communication is rather unquestionable, to the extent that it conveys the certainty that the effectiveness of the communicative action developed on digital media only differs from the face-to-face scope by the mediation of technological tools or, in other words, through the absence of the corporeal nature that characterize relationships in the physical context.

The possibilities of interaction the Network entails have contributed to its consolidation as an alternative or complement for socialization until shaping what Echevarría called “third environment” in 1999, by understanding the fact that the natural and urban environments are positioned on the top two places. This third scenario of sociability generates the opportunity of creating public profiles, as well as establishing new bonds of unreachable access in the *offline* dimension, turning *online* proposals as part of a space favorable for the dissemination of ideas and the adequate representation of the ‘self’ in the digital plane.

Politics and the series of strategies performed in order to achieve a positive response from electorate have not remained alienated from the communicational transformation of the last years. Thus, it is rather positive to accept the assumption that the unprecedented use of technology influences both on the population as well as the art of governing (James, Khansa, Cook, and Liginlal, 2011: 20), which has opened its unassailable perimeter of action to the traditional demand of bi-directionality conveyed by citizens to induce leaders to create accounts with their image, name and surnames on the main social networks.

In this context that evokes the idea of an interconnected world, it is difficult to conceive electoral campaigns that do not consider the planned use of resources Internet offers. Its power as electoral tool encompasses a considerable number of researches in the field of science closer to politic communication every year (Selnow, 1998; Farrell, Kolodny and Medvic, 2001; Webster, 2001; Stein, 2003; Klotz, 2004; Del Rey, 2007; Hendricks and Kaid, 2010; Túnuez and Sixto, 2011).

The *microblogging* Twitter system, with a number superior to 220 million active users around the world, is positioned among the preferred options by leader men and women of the different parties in order to reinforce their profiles in the communicative sphere, draw new sympathizers, issue messages linked to their campaign and, definitely, shape what Trivinho calls “transpolitic capital” referring to the series of texts, images and sounds that adapt their connection from the public mass scene to a more interactive scenario where action “escapes from the administration, management and control of political entities inherited from modernity” (2011: 116). In this sense, the pioneer use that President of the United States, Barack Obama, exemplified in 2008 through the use of the platform in that presidential campaign (Harfoush, 2010; Hendricks and Denton 2010; Beas, 2011), represented

an anticipation of the effectiveness which social networks promote the evolution of current strategies of political communication today.

In Obama's case, studies such as the one developed by Hendricks and Kaid in 2010 delve on the fact that the governor's account doesn't show hints of interaction between the president and its followers; However, confirm that the presence of the democrat representative as user was a key element for its victory on the ballot box and inspired the posterior use of Twitter in other democratic processes examined by the scientific community (Ammann, 2010; Williamson, 2010; Jungherr, 2010; Marwick and Boyd, 2010; Maarek, 2011; Holotescu, Gutu, Grosseck and Bran, 2011). Therefore, it is not surprising that a good part of research about *microblogging* praise the United States governor to the altar of the pioneers, just by the side of the collective imaginary that John Fitzgerald Kennedy occupies since the issuance of the first electoral debate on TV.

Both, examples of Kennedy and Obama contribute to the extension of a bet for the implicit possibilities in the new scenarios and tools for persuasion. And even though is true that in the television market case, there are numerous proof confirming the relevance of this media to condition the opinion of the citizen-electors (García-Beaudoux and D'Adamo, 2006), influence on electoral campaigns plan and favor emotivity of politics before the "*homo videns*" described by Giovanni Sartori (1998) in his most cited work, there are still many mysteries left unsolved on the virtual plane.

In this article, the first aspect of reflection adopted is the characteristic assumption of Sartori referring to the "supremacy of image" and the preponderance of the visible over the intelligible in the interpretation of power conveyed by the television (1998: 12). From this idea, the transcendence of the visual in the traditional media representation of politics is accepted and the objective of extrapolating said consideration to the Twitter context is introduced. Thus, it is intended an approach towards the conjunction between the *visual framing* and the *verbal framing* (Goodnow, 2013; Grabe and Bucy, 2009) of the *tweets* issued on the previous days to the elections of candidates that participated in the municipal electoral process of 2015 in Spain, as well as to compensate the absence of researches that, compared to the volume of works focused on analyzing the textual contents of social networks as sources of information, they barely pay attention to the message conveyed by graphic elements within those same spaces (Verser and Wicks, 2006; Schill, 2012).

Through a specific proposal, the inquiry established here, supports its justification in the innovative nature of its approach, and also on the high correlation of 95% that, according to a study performed in 2015 by the Carlos III University of Madrid [01], exists between the vote indecision and the volume of electors that follow the activity of those parties they consider voting for on the Internet. Therefore, the document supports the thesis that Twitter is a determining tool to mobilize the undecided electorate and, by extension, supports the relevance of stretching out the evaluation of its contents to a transcendental range in the politics-media scope: the image scope.

The main goal specified, focuses on confirming the truthfulness of a pre-established hypothesis that states the assumption that leaders grant a predominant indexical character to photographs they disseminate through *tweets*, so most often these are used with the intention to make evidence or

notice the candidate's movement during the electoral campaign, besides reminding about his/her presence in a space of bidirectional communication. Moreover, it is deduced that considering the careful visual strategy politicians keep during their apparitions on television programs and in graphic reports published on printed means, images used in the *microblogging* platforms often acquire an epithetical value in relation to what is being explicated on the textual discourse, either as a self-promotion tactic to optimize the space available in characters or either to demonstrate the management and use of a tool which is a synonym of modernity even today.

On the following pages, we explain the sample selection criteria and the methodology applied in order to, at a second phase, analyze the outcomes collected from the *visual framing* perspective and elucidate the communicative value of microtexts. Finally, the opportune conclusions are exposed and we suggest undertaking a reflection exercise about the potential of contents analysis to delve on the use of image that 'twitter' politicians demonstrate when elections are nearing.

2. Method

The methodology used in this research corresponds to the quantitative contents analysis technique, inspired on the model suggested by Andréu-Abela (2002), Muñoz, Igartua and Otero (2006), and Hernández-Sampieri, Fernández and Baptista (2010), and carried out from the selection of qualitative variables collected from a thorough bibliographic review.

2.1. Strategy and sample collection

The methodological weight of the proposal supports on the action of analyzing a sample comprised of 388 photographs published between days May, 19th and May, 23rd, 2015 (reflection day of municipal and autonomic elections in Spain), on Twitter accounts of some of the candidates who participated in the electoral process. Specifically, the publications issued by 36 politicians of seven different cities were collected in a non-randomly manner, over a total of 685 candidates for 52 provinces [02].

Leader profiles were chosen intentionally looking after the sociodemographic aspects of electors that allowed including in this study of exploratory nature, the capitals of Provinces with a voters' census of more than a million, understanding that these localities have a great capacity of irradiation on population and, by extension, some governors that have a significant visibility on social networks.

Table I: Provinces with higher electoral census

Province	Women	Men	Number of voters
MURCIA	511.719	488.851	1.000.570
MÁLAGA	570.417	539.496	1.109.913
ALICANTE/ALACANT	623.304	595.030	1.218.334
SEVILLE	773.865	726.165	1.500.030
VALENCIA/VALÈNCIA	978.253	915.236	1.893.489
BARCELONA	2.074.451	1.895.497	3.969.948
MADRID	2.446.669	2.192.055	4.638.724
National Total	17.868.872	16.765.700	34.634.572

Source: author's own creation derived from data of INE (2015)

Once the first selection filters were applied, the candidates for mayor among parties that, in the electoral day of May, 24th, achieved a representation in the Governments of Murcia, Malaga, Alicante, Seville, Valencia, Barcelona and Madrid were identified, in order to categorize them by cities in the corresponding identification template.

Table II: Political population

City	Political Party	Name of candidate	Twitter Account	Number of followers [03]
Madrid	PP	Esperanza Aguirre	@EsperanzAguirre	319.311
	Ahora Madrid (Podemos + Ganemos)	Manuela Carmena	@ManuelaCarmena	83.879
	PSOE	Antonio Miguel Carmona	@AntonioMiguelC	46.063
	Ciudadanos	Begoña Villacís	@begonavillacis	15.163
Barcelona	Barcelona en Comú (IU+ Equo + Podemos)	Ada Colau	@AdaColau	233.781
	CiU	Xavier Trias	@xaviertrias	75.344
	Ciudadanos	Carina Mejías	@CarinaMejias	7.361
	ERC	Alfred Bosch	@AlfredBosch	59.832
	CUP	Maria José Lecha	@MJLecha	3.117
	PSOE	Jaume Collboni	@jaumecollboni	11.340

	PP	Alberto Fernández	@albertofdezxbc	4.911
Valencia	PP	Rita Barberá	@ritabarbera	18.353
	PSOE	Joan Calabuig	@joancalabuig	3.111
	Ciudadanos	Fernando Giner	@Fginer	2.206
	València en Comú (Podemos + Guanyem)	Jordi Peris	@jordiperis2015	1.249
	Compromís	Joan Ribó	@joanribo	8.105
Seville	PP	Juan Ignacio Zoido	@zoidoalcalde	58.682
	PSOE	Juan Espadas	@JuanEspadasSVQ	12.819
	Ciudadanos	Francisco Javier Millán	@fjmillan69	1.538
	IU	Daniel González Rojas	@rojosevillano	3.479
	Participa Sevilla (Podemos + Ganemos Sevilla)	Susana Serrano	@Susana_Serrano_	1.983
Alicante	PP	Asunción Sánchez Zaplana	@ASZaplana	2.401
	PSOE	Gabriel Echávarri	@gechavarri	5.478
	Ciudadanos	José Luis Cifuentes	@CifuentesCs	1.066
	Guanyem Alicante (Esquerra Unida + IU)	M. Ángel Pavón	@pavoneualacant	26.594
	Compromis	Natxo Bellido	@NatxoBellido	1.512
Málaga	PP	Francisco de la Torre	@pacodelatorrep	26.594
	PSOE	María Gámez	@Maria2Gamez	13.278
	Ciudadanos	Juan Cassá	@Juancassa	40.485
	IU	Eduardo Esteban Zorrilla	@ZorrillaEduardo	2.232
	Málaga Ahora (Equo + Podemos+ Ganemos)	Ysabel Torralbo	@pituskaya	3.260
Murcia	PP	José Francisco Ballesta	@Ballesta_Murcia	1.658
	PSOE	José Ignacio Gras Castaño	@ji_gras	549
	Ciudadanos	Mario Gómez Figal	@mgfigal	1.483
	Cambiamos Murcia (Equo + IU+ Podemos)	José Ignacio Tornel	@NachoTornel	1.404
	Es Ahora Murcia (Podemos)	Alicia Morales	@AliciaAhora	300

Source: author's own creation

In order to monitor the activity of every subject, we used the options offered by the *microblogging* platform to create a follow-up list encompassed by the 36 accounts of the candidates for Partido Popular (PP), Partido Socialista Obrero Español (PSOE), Podemos, Ciudadanos, Convergència i Unió (CiU), Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya (ERC), Candidatura de Unidad Popular (CUP), Compromís, Izquierda Unida (IU) y Unión, Progreso y Democracia (UPyD), as well as the different coalitions. This action allowed us to perform a systematic sampling where the microtexts with images associated to each politician were collected, without incorporating the analyses of *retweets* nor responses to other users to the task.

Finally, as a definitive step towards the completion of the Excel data base, the frequencies processing and the variable crossing using IBM SPSS Statistics Data Editor, the constitution of the sample was defined and completed manually through screenshots, which enabled collecting both textual contents of messages as well as the photographs that illustrated them. Likewise, in order to complement data extraction, Twitonomy tool was used, which enabled the compilation of additional information about every account analyzed and the incorporation to the study of data such as the typology of the device from where *tweets* were published, most popular *hashtags*, frequency of contents published and the number of followers these generated.

2.2. Procedure

The design of the analysis data sheet applied in this research includes different categories and variables, of which selection is based on *visual framing* assumptions, that is, the visual message that a source of communication conveys –candidate, party, media or organization – with the purpose of influencing an audience’s perception (Chihu-Amparán, 2010).

In the specific case of this proposal, whereas every unit corresponds to a text of up to 140 characters accompanied by an image, a triple intention conditions the interpretative labor: the purpose of reviewing identification data, analyzing the contents of the textual message and paying attention to the elements that converge on the photograph.

a) Identification data.

On one hand, we try to answer questions such as what candidate is responsible for the *tweet*, what political party he/she belongs to or in what city he/she presents himself/herself as candidate, while on the other hand, the URL address the message corresponds to is observed, as well as when and from what device it has been issued and the times it has been *retweeted* or marked as favorite.

b) Text analysis[4].

According to argumental function (Vázquez-Barrio and Cebrián, 2013) and ideal and popular candidate variables (Goodnow, 2013), the sense of the image predominates over the text. On the other hand, the later gains greater relevance if the interest is to delve the main subject of the communicative action (García-Beaudoux and D’Adamo, 2006). As a consequence, both

aspects, graphic and textual, need to be reviewed with identical depth in order to determine their influence on the contents that encompass the study.

c) Photographs analysis.

The protagonist and secondary actors or objects on the image are elements that circumscribe the interpretation of what is photographed, therefore the inclusion of every item in the concretion of the methodological tool is also transcendental.

Table III: Contents Analysis Data Sheet

Variables	Categories
<p>“Argumental function” Author’s own creation inspired on Vázquez-Barrio and Cebrián (2013), Benoit, Blaney and Pier (1998)</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Proposal 2. Attack 3. Defense 4. Acknowledgment 5. General statement 6. Presence indicator 7. Request of vote
<p>“Ideal and Popular Candidate” Categories according to Goodnow (2013)</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 0. Category not applicable 1. <i>Statesman frame</i> 2. <i>Compassion</i> 3. <i>Mass Appeal</i> 4. <i>Ordinariness</i>
<p>“Symbolic roles” Author’s own creation inspired in García-Beaudoux and D’Adamo (2006)</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 0. Category not applicable 1. The great communicator 2. The hero 3. The protector 4. The prime manager
<p>“Protagonist of the photograph” Author’s own creation</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 0. Unrepresented candidate 1. Candidate 2. Party (members of the own party or other political formations) 3. Citizens (without presence of the candidate) 4. Mass media (without presence of the candidate) 5. Text / graphical symbol 6. Landscape
<p>“Secondary actors or elements of the image” Authors’ own creation</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 0. There are no secondary elements or actors 1. Citizenship (multitude in general, crowd) 2. Working class (subjects that represent their professional collective in the photograph) 3. Elderly 4. Women 5. Youth 6. Candidates’ party (General Secretary, team, volunteers...) 7. Collective with greater risk of social vulnerability 8. Mass media 9. Party and multitude 10. Others
<p>“Image-tweet consistency” Authors’ own creation</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 0. No 1. Yes
<p>“Theme” Authors’ own creation</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Request of vote Campaign acts Subjects

Source: author’s own creation

The three dimensions of the fieldwork have enough weight as to enable the extraction of interesting data by themselves. However, an interpretation of results with complete meaning demand the application of other variables such as the symbolic roles (García-Beaudoux and D'Adamo, 2006), or the image-*tweet* consistency. Both, with recent application to works that allowed outlining a detailed analysis template.

Nevertheless, in the research presented herein, categorization has been slightly modified when request of vote was incorporated among said options (applicable when leaders explicitly asked their followers for support on the ballot boxes), and when the category “context description” was replaced by the “presence indicator”. With this innovation, it is possible to confirm whether, as one of the hypothesis in this article suggests, a great part of issued messages is impregnated of a self-referential character in order to make electors aware about the presence of politicians in the streets and its involvement on campaign’s activities. Secondly, the observation of the structured data sheet evidences how the analytical effort also comprises the application of the variable of the ideal and popular candidate, from which Goodnow compiled in 2013, the images published on Facebook by United States’ politicians Mitt Romney and Barack Obama, in order to group them into two blocks: those that represented the ideal candidate and those that represented the populist candidate.

Figure I - “Presence indicator”



Source: @Ballesta_Murcia

The researcher inspired himself in Grabe and Bucy's (2009) categorization, whereas each one of these structures was divided in two. In accordance with this idea, the assumption that the figure of "ideal candidate" encompasses the images illustrating the incarnation of emotions and the art of governing ("compassion" and "statesmanship") is accepted, while the popular candidate ("populist campaigner") refers to the action of integrating with people through allurements of masses and a representation of quotidianity that is closer to ordinary ("mass appeal" and "ordinariness").

According to the aforementioned explanation, the authors of this proposal accept the suggested segmentation and group under the "compassion" category the gestures of leaders towards risk of social exclusion groups or in attitudes that inspire emotivity during campaign acts; in "statesmanship" the photographs that expose the subject as government model and head of State; in "mass appeal", the representations of "huge gathering of people supporting the candidate" (Goodman, 2013: 1.586), and in "ordinariness", the photographs that evoke the most human condition of the politician in a context apparently distant from the governmental aspect.

Figure II - "Ordinariness"



Source: @CifuentesCs

Regarding the symbolic role variable, located in the third section of the table, it is based on the use given by García-Beaudoux and D'Adamo in 2006 when carrying out an exhaustive study of electoral spots. The usefulness of the resource, grounded on the association of concepts and images with leadership forms, was approved through the application of different categories corresponding to identities established by Roberts (1993), among which were selected for the development of this

article, the role of “the great communicator”, which shows the candidate for mayor offering discourses, interviews, press conferences or talking with voters; “the hero”, where the multitudes acclaim the subject in massive events and, the “the prime manager”, focusing on the candidate who talks about economy, taxes, inflation and social plans (García-Beaudoux and D'Adamo, 2006: 97-98).

On this classification, where alternatives such as the “fatherly figure” were also originally included, the role of “protector” is added to this work so to refer to the subject from a more inclusive perspective and study him/her as guardian of values that stimulate the personalization of politics and make known a less professional profile.

Figure III - “The protector”



Source: @AntonioMiguelC

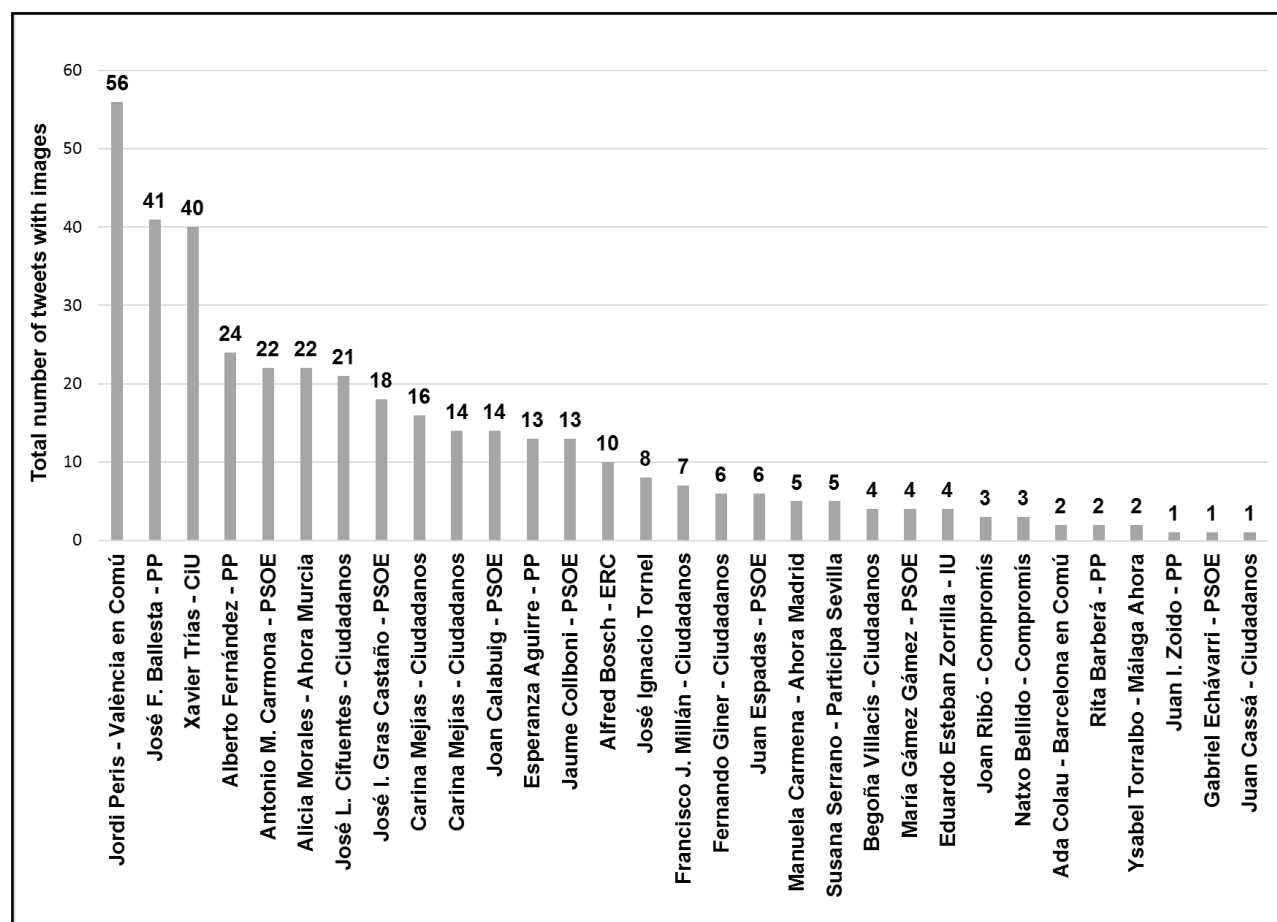
Finally, once the relevance of identifying the protagonist and the secondary elements appearing in each photograph was specified on the template design, we use a variable of reason to respond to the consistency with text (*image-tweet*) and the subject issue. Regarding the later, since the limits of research are restricted by timing and characteristics of elections, the interest is circumscribed to finding out whether the theme impregnating each message is located in the category of “direct request of vote”, in the “campaign acts” (where the presentation of electoral programs is included, as well as the participation in mass media and activities of similar characteristics), or in “other subjects”.

Filling the data sheet comprising all these variables and collecting data corresponding to every analysis unit will enable the interpretation of results as following and definitive step to complete researches such as the one detailed herein.

3. Results

Within the epigraph corresponding to the data interpretation, the fieldwork performed allowed processing a series of considerations supported in an essentially quantitative methodology. Therefore, among the multiple percentages collected from a sample comprised by 388 analysis units, there outstands the fact that 25.8% of *tweets* were issued by candidates of coalitions that emerged from Podemos [5] party, 20.9% by representatives of Partido Popular, 20.1% by local leaders of Partido Socialista Obrero Español and 13.7% from Twitter accounts linked to Ciudadanos.

Graphic I: Relation of *tweets* published by candidate and party








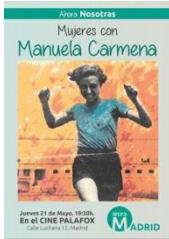




Source: author's own creation

In a more detailed manner, the interpretative process revealed that during the days of electoral campaign submitted to study, *microblogging* messages that included images exceeded 10% of total publications, from them a 77.8% responded positively to the of image-*tweet* consistency variable and that the most present candidates as users on the social network were Xavier Triás (author of 10.3% of collected material), from CiU for Barcelona; Jordi Peris (14.4%), of Valencia en Comú; José Francisco Ballesta (10.6%), from PP for Murcia; Alberto Fernández (6.2%), from PP for Barcelona, and with an identical percentage of 5.7%, Antonio Miguel Carmona, from PSOE for Madrid, and Alicia Morales, from Es Ahora Murcia.

Curiously, the names of the politicians who published the most shared contents do not coincide with the most active ones, hence Ada Colau (Barcelona en Comú), Manuela Carmena (Ahora Madrid), Esperanza Aguirre (PP for Madrid), Carina Mejías (Ciudadanos for Barcelona) and Begoña Villacís (Ciudadanos for Madrid) achieved the greatest amount of *retweets* and favorites accumulated between May, 19th and May, 23rd.

Table IV: *Tweets* with most popular images

Twitter User	Tweet	Image	Retweet	Favorites count
@AdaColau	Un honor conversar sobre el futuro de las ciudades con Pepe Mújica, ex presidente de Uruguay y un gran referente para mí http://t.co/iMfHxqPgXx <i>(It is an honor to talk about the future of cities with Pepe Mujica, Uruguay's ex-president and a great reference for me)</i>		1.142	993
	Muchos lo habían intentado, pero sólo La Vanguardia me ha pillado: Bin Laden! LOL http://t.co/Vx1xaNpczy <i>(Many have tried and failed, but only La Vanguardia could get me: Bin Laden! LOL)</i>		1.935	957
@ManuelaCarmena	Reconozco que éste me ha hecho reír muchísimo. Muchas gracias, de verdad. (Y seguid, que queda poco) http://t.co/hPE4LdAxxp <i>[I confess this one made me laugh a lot. Thank you very much, really (-and continue, that there is little time left-)]</i>		802	892
	La bondad solo es sospechosa para quien tiene algo que ocultar. @EsperanzaAguirre, pasa un buen último día de campaña. http://t.co/H2cYW5ihLm <i>(Kindness is only suspicious for who has something to hide. @EsperanzaAguirre, spend a good last day of campaign)</i>		465	372

	<p>Preciosa foto con las candidatas de @AhoraMadrid. Sin mujeres no hay democracia, #AhoraNosotras. http://t.co/8RWAtXJq4</p> <p><i>(Beautiful picture with the candidates @AhoraMadrid. Without women there is no democracy #AhoraNosotras)</i></p>		253	267
	<p>A las 19:30, #AhoraNosotras: estaré con muchas mujeres con mucho que decir sobre democracia e igualdad en el Palafox http://t.co/E8LQ00KnF9</p> <p><i>(At 19:30, #AhoraNosotras: I will be with many women, with a lot to say about democracy and equality in the Palafox)</i></p>		174	158
	<p>Esta noche cerramos la campaña electoral pedaleando del Museo Reina Sofía al parque Martin Luther King. Luego fiesta. http://t.co/xLyeSjfEYc</p> <p><i>(Tonight we close the electoral campaign biking from Reina Sofía Museum to Martin Luther King Park. Then party.)</i></p>		164	103
@EsperanzAguirre	<p>Pido el voto a los madrileños para que Madrid siga siendo la capital de la libertad. http://t.co/MASkNMK0yi</p> <p><i>(I ask for the vote of people of Madrid, so that the city could continue being the capital of Freedom)</i></p>		210	193
@CarinaMejias	<p>Este domingo vota por un proyecto de esperanza e ilusión. #YovotoCiudadanos http://t.co/AkAZFKkx3L</p> <p><i>(On this Sunday, vote for a Project of hope and illusion #YovotoCiudadanos)</i></p>		172	119
@begonavillacis	<p>Ha llegado la hora, cambiar Madrid está en tu mano, sólo te pido que votes de verdad, vota valiente #IlusionCiudadana http://t.co/pBNWDaocPw</p> <p><i>(The time has come, changing Madrid is in your hands, I only ask that you vote for real, vote bravely #IlusionCiudadana)</i></p>		124	105

Source: author's own creation

From a gender perspective, this last appreciation evidences that comments and proposals in 140 characters that showed a greater impact on May 2015 were those published by women leaders,

although the activity of their men counterparts on the social network demonstrated a fluid practice of *online* communication by the male group.

Likewise, the use of contents managers such as Hootsuite, TweetDeck or Echofon unveiled that in multiple occasions the texts and photographs gathered were part of a well-defined strategy, whereas the publication did not depend on the latest news or the information demands manifested by followers in real time, but instead the contents were written and programmed beforehand to the moment of their publication. This trend would explain the reason why the candidates that do not use management tools had and have a percentage of publications considerably inferior to the rest.

Table V: Correlation between quantity, popularity and publication device

Candidates that <i>twitted</i> with images the most		Candidates publishing the most popular <i>tweets</i>	
Name of the candidate	Devices from which he/she <i>twitted</i>	Name of the candidate	Devices from which he/she <i>twitted</i>
Jordi Peris (València en Comú)	-Web -iPhone -Android -Hootsuite	Ada Colau (Barcelona en Comú)	-Web -Android -iPhone
José F. Ballesta (PP)	-Android -Hootsuite	Manuela Carmena (Ahora Madrid)	-Android -Tweetdeck -Android Tablets
Xavier Triás (CiU)	-TweetDeck -Web -iPhone	Esperanza Aguirre (PP)	-Web
Alberto Fernández (PP)	-Android -Hootsuite -Web -iPhone	Carina Mejías (Ciudadanos)	-Windows Phone -iPad -Web
Antonio M. Carmona (PSOE)	-Echofon	Begoña Villacís (Ciudadanos)	-Web -iPhone -Android
Alicia Morales (Es Ahora Murcia)	-Android -iPhone		

Source: own author's creation

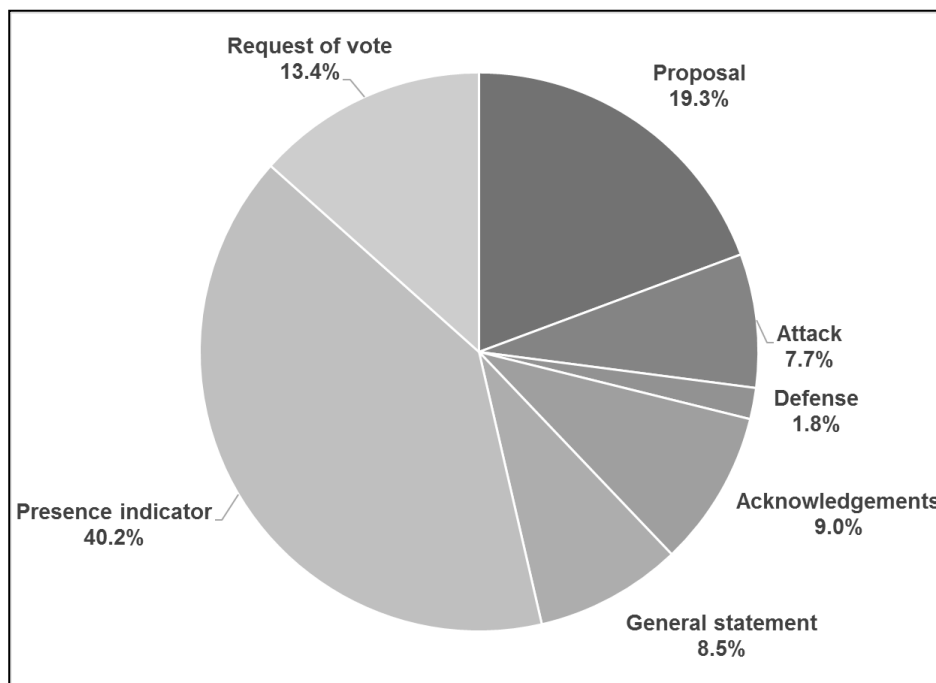
The use of referred tools when it comes to managing the exercise on Twitter furthermore entails an allusion to the falseness of the authorship of some of those *tweets*, expressed as part of a party strategy to favor the leader's image. Therefore, it is evidenced in this way the already commented trend to personalize political formations, which grant a complete protagonism to people that leader them and with whom the electors identify them, similarly, they explain the degree of virality reached by the messages agglutinated under the surname Colau, Carmena or Aguirre. No wonder that the later even turned to her pet, the dog Pecas (@SoyPecas), in order to create a message that, even

though it was the only one registered in that account during the previous days to the elections, it had a huge impact on the Twitter community: “Mi rubia castiza se ha merendado a Manuela. ¡Guau! (My pure blonde snacked Manuela. Guau!) #EspeAlcaldesa #DebateTM” (@SoyPecas, 2015).

In a somewhat different sense, data derived from analytical labor confirm the existence of a correlation between the higher number of contents illustrated by images and the variety of devices used for their publication (computers, tablets and mobile phones, among others), although not between that diversity and awareness achieved. As a result, it is deduced that the popularity of the *microblogging* platform not only depends on the group of *community managers* a politician might have and its constant movement on social networks, but also on originality and personalization of every action is quite decisive.

The personification techniques are precisely the answer to the cause by which most *tweets* have the argumental function of indicating action and location of a candidate in the form suggested by the main hypothesis of this research. Specifically, in 40.2% of analyzed cases there was the use of some image either to announce or inform about the participation of local leaders in events related to the promotion of their candidacy, in order to show most of users that the candidate for mayor had presence in the neighborhood, that attended to acts with young volunteers and that he/she listened to citizens nearing him/her to show interest about their problems.

Graphic II: Argumental function of analyzed *tweets*



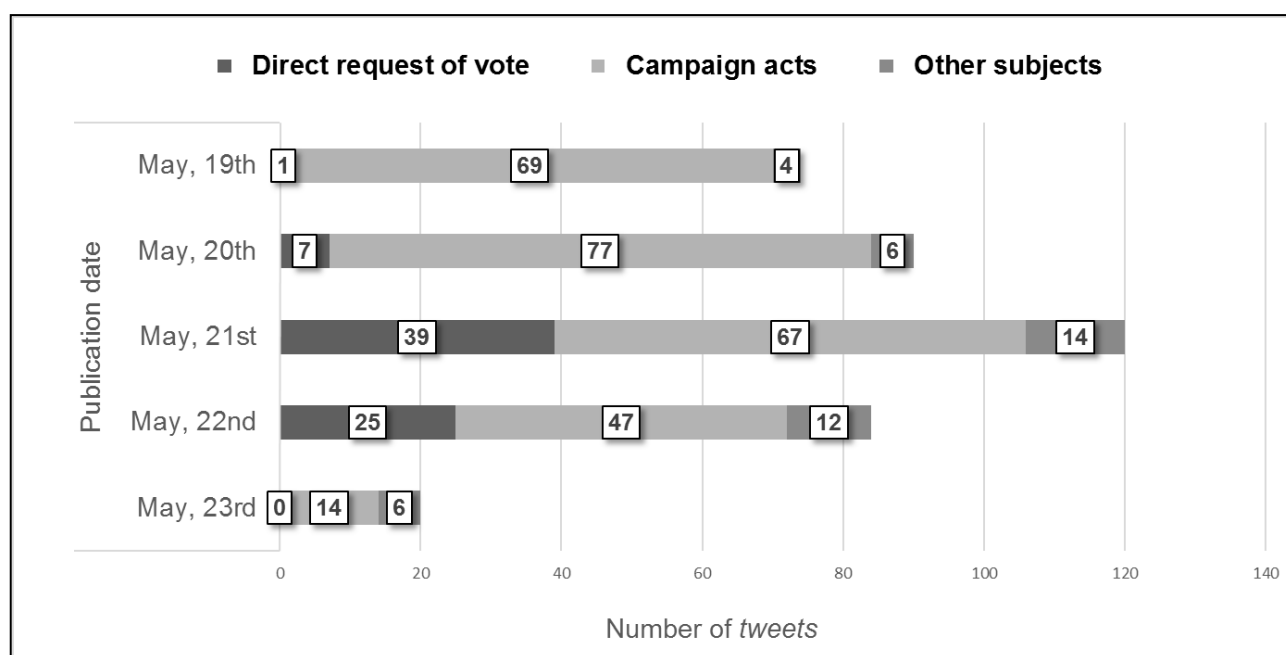
Source: author's own creation

The mentioned percentage is followed in frequency, although reduced to half, by the analysis units that identify with proposals, because 19.3% of them match with plans and promises claimed on electoral programs. Consequently, it is understandable that a good part of illustrations accompanying these kind of messages are infographics or extracts of programs, whereas they are not photographs taken during signature of agreements, establishing of pacts or while holding meetings with different collectives.

Finally, the remaining percentage of the classified sample according to the argumental function was distributed among requests of vote (often formulated through images or explicated through labels or *hashtags*), acknowledgments, general statements and attacks to other parties, in contrast to the number of messages focused on manifesting positions of defense against critics.

Regarding publication dates, when crossing the theme variable with the moment of publication of every *tweet* it is possible to determine that the day of greater activity was May, 21st and that in twenty-four hours the amount of comments destined to request for vote was very superior to what was registered during the rest of the week.

Graphic III: Correlation between the publication date and the message theme



Source: author's own creation

Likewise, even though day 23rd has been marked on the Calendar as a reflection day, nine candidates used different communicative strategies on Twitter, highlighting for example the acknowledgment statements towards volunteers, mass media and citizens in general, the demand of support in order to achieve victory in elections and, in a closer field to politics humanization, expressions of a quotidianity of someone who enjoys a moment of rest and family life after their

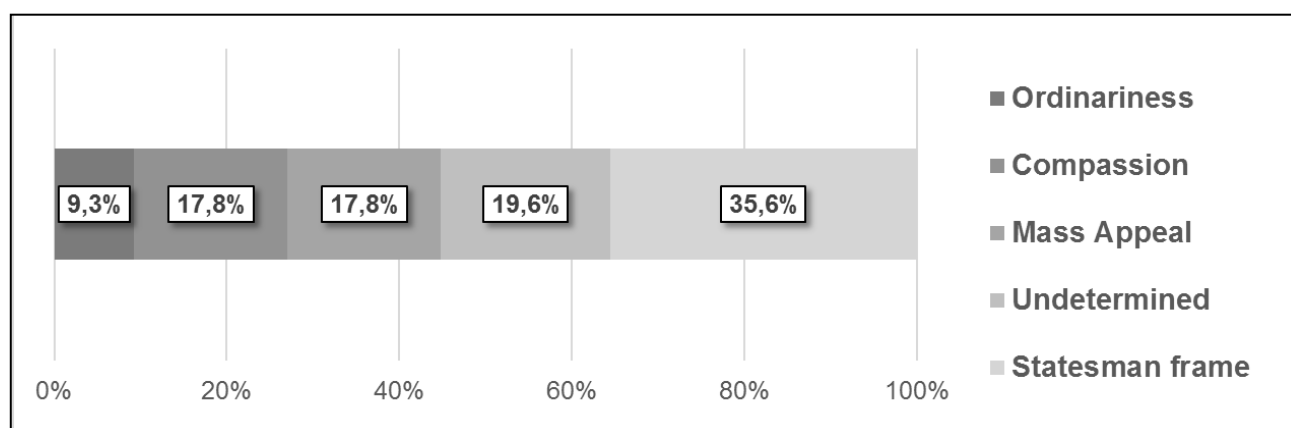
working schedule. In total, 21 programmed microtexts with image, of which nine were issued by PSOE politicians, nine by coalitions with Podemos, four by Ciudadanos, three by PP and one by CiU.

Once the elemental data was interpreted, the observation of photographic material enabled inferring that 63.1% of analyzed units had a photograph where the candidate was the protagonist; 18% where the main element were infographics, or screenshots with texts and slogans; 7.5% with party members on first plane, although with a participation of the local leader as secondary component in 14.4% of occasions; a 7% of landscape or unanimated objects photographs, and lastly, a scarce 3.6% dedicated to evoking the relevance of citizens who, nevertheless, did appear in a second plane on 16% of cases.

Within the list of secondary visual resources, mass media, considered essential for the development of any campaign, occupied the third position as its presence was identified in 14.2% of sample. However, mentions to the journalist collective were more than those of other group of professionals who only occupied jointly a 10.8% of fieldwork, besides obtaining a great amount of references very superior to youth, elderly and women, who in total did not exceed 3%.

Regarding ideal and popular candidate variable, the representation of candidates for mayor as government men and women (*statesman frame*) was 35.6%, while in 17.8% of situations the use of images that appealed to the emotional aspect was registered, another 17.8% where the summoning of the electorate mass was evident and a 9.3% that showed facets of daily life, aligned with the growing trend to make the most of “*the personal is political*”, already worked by feminist Carol Hanisch in an essay on 1970.

Graphic IV: Percentages corresponding to the variable “Ideal and Popular Candidate”



Source: author's own creation

Finally, after analyzing the type of symbolic roles incarnated by candidates for mayor through the huge denotation power of photography (Barthes, 1992), it was determined that 32% of published contents pursued an identification of the user with the figure of great communicator, a 25% with the protector figure, 10.8% with the prime manager and 8.2% with the hero's.

4. Discussion and conclusions

In this proposal, contents analysis has been conditioned by an approach that addressed the verbal and visual framework of messages as elements inherent to it. In this way, a trend of study of the image has been carried out which, in contrast with the constant evolution of political communication, it has been restricted to the press and television media almost exclusively for many years.

The inclusion of Twitter as new scenario for the observation of photographic resources enabled the enrichment of the analytical task and its application for interpreting *tweets* published by 36 of candidates that participated in the municipal electoral process of 2015. In this sense, however, the first conclusions that the authors of this research have elaborated, refer to the fact that these accounts on the *microblogging* platform were not managed by most of the politicians that named them and put a face on them, or at least, not totally. The deduction is supported on the data corresponding to the microtexts' programing that candidates for mayor shared with their followers on the previous days to elections, the diversity of devices used for publication and the existence of numerous photographs focusing on reflecting the leader movements in real time during his/her campaign acts.

Nonetheless, doubts about the authorship of *tweets* are not extendable to all reviewed profiles. Likewise, an increase in publications is not always translated into a greater popularity for the user. The consideration of this last value on fieldwork confirmed that the originality of contents, personalization and the previous awareness of the character (usually acquired through other means) are decisive in order to increase the number of favorites and followers on social network, as Aguirre, Carmena and Colau cases demonstrate.

Moreover, personification techniques are the reason why politicians are protagonists of most part of photographs they disseminate, and in which they try to appear accompanied by anonymous citizens, volunteer youth and large groups of sympathizers. As a result, the most human profile of the candidate is reinforced and a feeling of closeness, commitment, availability and people skills that might clear doubts in undecided electors is created.

The potential voter that goes to Twitter in order to better know those who aspire for command, find proposals, promises, support requests and critics to different political formations on the Net but, above all, a complete record of activities that comprise the agenda of candidates for mayor, with special reference to their press and television interviews. Therefore, not only the initial hypothesis of this study is confirmed, based on the idea that leaders attribute a predominant indexical character to visual elements in order to evoke the figure of the professional that is in contact with the street and permanently at the service of a common good, but also the eagerness to channel the *followers'* interest towards traditional mass communication spaces is observed.

Many of the images selected to redirect citizen's curiosity towards printed and audiovisual means show an identical message to the specified discourse in less than 140 characters, which often turns them into mere epithets. Nevertheless, in other occasions photographs with a meaning independent from the text they accompany are found, hence it is not reproachable to use the reflection day to

elaborate some acknowledgements to young volunteers, without it exempting the practice of a kind of publicity through photography, that is personalized and undoubtedly oriented to attract vote.

Finally, on the previous day to the electorate mobilization, the efforts on the digital plane are focused on stimulating the emotional aspects, while the role of great communicator hands over protagonism to the roles of protector and hero. A few hours later, the execution plan during the campaign will be over and the completion of this exploration will allow deducing that there is still possible to achieve a better use of graphic resources on Twitter, suggest new strategies to optimize the efficacy of the tool in political communication and achieve new studies that deepen on the preponderance of the visible over intelligible (for example, on Instagram). Future researches should consider whether it is really feasible to extrapolate the traditional interest for political image on the television field to one as ever changing as the social networks.

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4. Notes

1 Published by the Office of Scientific Information of the Carlos III University in Madrid “Twitter se consolida como plataforma clave para movilizar electorado y captar indecisos” (Twitter consolidates as a key platform to mobilize electorate and attract undecided voters). Consult:

http://portal.uc3m.es/portal/page/portal/actualidad_cientifica/noticias/Twitter

2 Study published on newspaper ‘El Confidencial’. Consult:

<http://www.ecestaticos.com/file/d2d41447368131e477d53a86732ff99e/1430832356.xls>

3 Number of followers showed corresponds to the followers every leader had on May 24th, 2015.

4 On this section excluding categories are allowed, therefore in the selection of the category the image always predominates over the text.

5 Political parties sample was biased since it was comprised by a great number of coalitions, hence the percentage was grouped by political affinity in order to better analyze and visualize data.

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