The communication strategy developed on Twitter to promote a mockumentary: *Operación Palace*

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Abstract: Introduction. This article analyses the strategy developed on Twitter to promote the prime-time premiere in the Spanish TV network *La Sexta* of the controversial TV programme *El especial 23F: Operación Palace* on 23 February 2014. **Method.** The activity of six Twitter accounts that promoted the TV programme was monitored for two weeks: the one prior to the broadcast and the one after. **Results**. The activity of these accounts was very uneven; the accounts of TV Presenter Évole and the TV programme stood out as the most active. **Discussion and conclusions.** Although Twitter could be used to establish a dialogue between the programme and its public, the analysis allows us to conclude that, with the exception of Évole's account, most accounts did not establish this dialogue with their Twitter followers. Moreover, these accounts contributed to the confusion of the audience during the promotion of the mockumentary.

Keywords: Social audience; Twitter; mockumentary; social networks; television; audience.

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1. Introduction

In a constantly changing media context, the convergence of social and traditional media has led to greater public participation. The changes provoked by the digitalisation of the media in the audiences have favoured greater interactivity, and as a consequence the traditional roles of transmitter and receiver proposed by Lasswell in the 1940s have become blurred as now people can participate actively in the communication process. Receivers have become prosumers who contribute to the communication process with their own creations.

In the case of television, its intersection with the social networks has resulted in social television, which is defined by Lorente as "the increasing convergence between television and social networks, which allows viewers to share anywhere and anytime the television content that interests them most, and adds value to the audiovisual experience" (Lorente, 2011: 4). In turn, this apparent phenomenon of convergence (Jenkins, 2008) has led to the birth of a new kind of audience known as social audience, made up of all the Twitter users who tweet something related to a TV show, from 30 minutes before to 30 minutes after its broadcast [1]. This is in fact a fragmentation of the traditional audience according to the activity on social networks, mainly on Twitter and Facebook (González-Neira & Quintas Froufe, 2014). Therefore, this type of audience does not include all sectors of the population, and leaves out those individuals that do not interact in these networks.

In terms of development in social audience, Spain is one of the greatest countries in the world [2] and the first in Europe. A study by WitsspottER indicates that along with Brazil, Argentina, Chile and the USA, Spain leads the ranking of most active countries on social networks in terms of comments about television content. The cause of this intense activity may be the high penetration in Spain of mobile devices, which are one of the main routes of access to social networks (IAB, 2014) [3]. In fact, Spaniards are, next to the British, the most mobile users in Europe [4]. This study also confirms the enormous relation between television and Twitter, since two of every three users claim to use this network while watching television.

In fact, individuals who are part of the social audience are also multitasking people, i.e., people who simultaneous use television and other devices with access to social networks, like computers, mobile phones and tablets (The cocktail analysis, 2013). Another study from 2014 has indicated that 56% of internet users have carried out online activities related to the TV content they are watching and that 30% admits using social networks to watch or comment on the TV content they are watching. There is therefore a clear convergence of screens between television and other devices.

There are other features that distinguish the social audience from the traditional audience. While the television audience already used to talk about television, this exchange used to be carried out only between close individuals who watched the same programme and their opinions hardly reached the TV producers. The innovation in comparison to the traditional audience is that the conversations that arise in social networks may occur among all spectators and between the latter group and the TV programme (its network, production company, presenters, etc.) in an active and continuous way. Therefore, we have gone from the one-way vertical communication from television to the public, which used to characterise television since its emergence, to a two-way vertical communication model complemented by a two-way horizontal model that corresponds to the communication among users who watch the same programme.

In the discussions about TV shows, viewers can have direct access to extra exclusive content disseminated on networks, exchange opinions with other distant and unknown users as well as interact directly with the TV producers or presenters, which favour the loyalty of the traditional audience in an increasingly competitive television market. This also enriches viewers' experience.

The social audience constitutes an important source of information for networks since they can know instantaneously and free-of-charge about the impact that a TV show is having on spectators, which allows networks to improve or correct certain aspects. Social networks act as providers of audience data as they provide valuable information about the people making comments, which is very attractive data for advertising agencies. Therefore, the audience is also valued as an attractive market, which has a known socio-economic profile, because it is composed of consumers of advertising brands (McQuail, 1999: 438).

Thus, apart from being an important source of information about the reception of a TV show, social media give television networks an instrument to increase audience loyalty, to promote television programmes (since social networks multiply the impact of TV programmes and extend their life beyond their broadcast) [5] and become a possible source of information for advertising. In addition, various studies have shown that there is a relationship between the increase in social audience and the growth of the traditional audience, which varies depending on age, so its increase also pays off in the traditional audience meters (Nielsen, 2013).

This type of audience has developed with such force that most Spanish TV programmes and channels are present in the two major social networks. Television networks have implemented various mechanisms to encourage, stimulate and increase their social audience. Still at an experimental stage, these mechanisms have been varied, ranging from the on-screen introduction of hashtags or tweets to the launch of applications created specially to promote TV shows (*La Voz*) or networks (*Atresmedia Conecta*); the integration of contests in which the names of the most active users appear live on-screen during the broadcast of TV show; the implementation of transmedia experiences, such as the *twittersodes* of *El Barco*; the integration of spaces dedicated to the analysis of the reactions/comments on social networks about the show (*La Voz* and *Top Chef*); and the hiring of influential tweeters to stimulate conversations on the social networks (*Top chef*).

In previous studies (González-Neira & Quintas Froufe, 2014) have demonstrated that there is no parallelism between the most-watched programmes and those with the greatest social audience. The most-followed programmes on the social networks include reality shows, fictional series, football matches, talent shows and talk shows. In fact, in 2013 the finale of the second season of *La Voz* broke social audience records when it got 689,256 comments during its broadcast. Other TV shows with high social audience ratings in 2013 were *Gran Hermano Catorce*, various football matches and the Goya Awards (Tuitele, 2013).

In view of this panorama, this article analyses the strategy developed in Twitter for the promotion of *El especial 23F: Operación Palace*, a controversial mockumentary that was broadcast on the prime-time slot of La Sexta TV network, on 23 February 2014, and provoked a huge stir that lasted several days. The study also makes references to the programme broadcast after the mockumentary: *Noche 23F: el debate* [6].

The research focuses on this mockumentary about Tejero's attempted coup d'état. This genre is unusual on television Spanish and its precursors are *Operación Luna* (2002) **[7]**, *Holocausto Caníbal* (Deodato, 1980) and *Alternativa 3* (1972), among others. In the words of Diaz Gandasegui, the mockumentary is a sub-genre that "uses documentary techniques and code conventions to appear to be it (Roscoe & Hight, 2001: 2) but in the middle or at the end of the programme it reveals its true nature to the viewer" (Diaz Gandasegui, 2012: 154). In many cases, as the one analysed here, this type of programme tries to mix reality with fiction in order to stimulate the critical capacity of the viewer. In fact, after the broadcast of the mockumentary under study, its presenter, Jordi Évole, revealed to the audience that they aim of the programme was to show television's power of manipulation. In the words of Alberto García Martínez, it would be a "form of exorcism" and a criticism to artistic postmodernism. However, there is a dangerous coincidence since the tools and the object of the complaint in this programme are the same, so "the representation becomes trapped in the loop of a permanent simulation, unable to blend with its referent" (García Martínez, 2004: 140).

At the end of this type of programmes, as it was the case with *Operación Palace*, the public is often divided between those who feel anger, surprise or humour, depending on whether they have been accomplices or victims of the programme's deception. It was this mixture of feelings which cause a huge stir in the social networks, in which usually the most emotionally-charged content triggers the largest number of conversations. In fact, this programme became a worldwide trending topic for more than two hours.

Although *Operación Palace* is not part of *Salvados*, the investigation show promoting it, both shows share the same broadcast network, presenter and screening time. In fact, as it will be explained later, these similitudes contributed to audience's confusion.

Salvados has a faithful audience accustomed to its own narrative approach and a particular strategy focused, above all, on three phases of the programme: the production, the broadcast and the post-production. Through their official accounts, *Salvados* and Évole reinforce, through tweets, their collaboration and involvement with the audience in these three phases, building a collective discourse on the television content with the viewer (Noguero, 2012: 57).

The positioning of this programme towards its audience is based on the selection of some of the communicative codes used throughout its past eight seasons. One of the techniques used by this programme is to preview part of the content on Twitter (Merino, 2013). The messages posted by these two accounts', most of which are self-promotional in nature, created expectations to encourage people to watch the programme and, as Sequera points out, "aimed to generate habits, aware that television viewers often obey quite standardised behaviour patterns, with tendency to serialisation in their daily TV watching preferences" (Sequera, 2013).

With regards to the social audience, according to data from 2013, La Sexta was the fourth (Tuitele) or fifth (Global In Media) network with the highest number of comments (5,239,563 or 4,259,481, respectively) **[8]**. In turn *Salvados* has been this network's leading programme in social audience. From 2011, *Salvados* has been one of the programmes that have shown the greatest commitment to social audience and one of the first to introduce the hashtag on the screen of Spanish TV, with which it usually manages to become trending topic. It also has more than three hundred thousand followers in Twitter (April, 2014).

The presence of presenter Évole in the social networks is also very significant since he achieved the second largest number of comments during October, November and December, 2013, in all networks (in December alone, for instance, he had 27,737 comments). In February 2014, this presenter had more than one million followers. The wide presence of Évole and *Salvados* in the social networks undoubtedly influenced the success of *Operación Palace* in terms of social audience.

2. Method

This article was guided by two research questions: 1) what was the communication strategy developed on Twitter by all parties involved with the programme to avoid revealing it was a hoax? And 2) what type of messages were launched via Twitter to the audience? Based on these questions, we formulated three research objectives.

The main objective is to examine the communication strategy developed on Twitter by the TV broadcaster to promote the *Operación Palace*. The study is based on Arellano's (1998) definition of strategy as "a series of scheduled and planned actions, implemented to fulfil certain objectives and needs, in a programme of human interaction, in a variety of times. (…) the strategy is based on the formulation of certain objectives and guiding principles that coordinate the implementation of a variety of actions that lead to the desired goals". This definition is complemented with Galindo's conceptualisation, which distinguishes the informative and communication functions of a strategy (Galindo, 1996).

In this case, we consider that the sender of the message is not a single person or account, but a set of communicating subjects who participate in one way or another in the creation of messages. We identified six transmitters and their corresponding official accounts: TV presenter Jordi Évole (@jordiÉvole), *El Terrat* production company(@ElTerrat); *Salvados* television series (@salvadostv); the account created especially for the programme: *Noche23F* (@Noche23F); *La Sexta* television network (@LaSextaTV); and the *Atresmedia* group (@AtresmediaTV).

To meet this objective we monitored the activity of the six accounts, i.e. the tweets posted by them. To identify their strategy, we employed a corrective assessment of the results, applied in the monitoring of the digital brand and in the monitoring of the performance of the social media strategy (Smolak-Lozano, 2013: 473). These accounts were analysed for a fifteen-day period, which covered one week before and one week after the premiere of the programme (from Sunday 16 February to Sunday 2 March).

The selected unit of analysis was the tweet. The categories of analysis revolved around: a) the accounts' activity, b) the typology of the tweets, and c) the dissemination of the tweets. On the one hand, we registered all the tweets and hashtags used during the period of study. These messages were subsequently filtered according to their direct relation with the programme. All those messages with no relation to the programme were discarded. The related messages were analysed from the form and content points of view (b.1 b.2, respectively). First, messages were classified according to their contribution to the message (retweet or modified tweet, reply, original text and link). Secondly, tweets were thematically codified according to their senders' intention to disseminate messages. To determine such intention we created a set of mutually exclusive categories in relation to the nature of the tweets' content: 1) informational; 2) opinion; 3) gratitude; 4) conversation-generation and 5)

unclassifiable. These categories allowed the collection of data to subsequently perform a detailed interpretation of the programme's Twitter promotional strategy.

Finally, we monitored each of the tweets posted by the six broadcasters in order to assess their propagation. To assess tweets, we used the concept of propagation which, as Deltell et al. point out, "measures the viral impact of a tweet in the Internet" (2013: 702). The objective was to determine the impact and dissemination of such tweets among followers because, as Arellano (1998) indicates, the communication strategy seeks to generate interactions between actors. We registered all retweeted tweets, favourited tweets, and those with the largest number of responses from the audience. These data helped us to measure the true impact of the messages (Sánchez, 2012).

The second objective, of secondary nature, is to determine whether the programme's promotion strategy was appropriated the style and communication tools of the documentary genre to offer a sense of verisimilitude (García Martínez, 2007: 306). The intention was to identify what type of sources of meaning about the content and format of the programme were given to the viewer before the broadcast. To this end we collected and analysed all tweets posted by the six aforementioned accounts before the end of the broadcast in order to confirm (or not) whether the broadcasters chose to "simulate the modes and conventions of the documentary genre and, in some cases, make viewers fall into the trap of deception" (García Martínez, 2007: 316). Tweets were classified in two groups: those whose content tried to deceive the audience into believing that *Operación Palace* was a documentary; and those whose content made any indication about the real nature and credibility of the programme.

The third objective is to comparatively analyse the social and real audiences of the programme to study the relation between both audiences. To this end, we gathered social audience data (provided by Global in Media) and real audience data (provided by FórmulaTV with data provided by Kantar Media) from the day of the broadcast **[9]**. This allowed us to measure the social impact of this programme and to know whether the desired changes were achieved (Smolak-Lozano, 2013).

In relation to the method used, since the subject of study is very recent there is a lack of standardised and widely accepted methodological procedures. Therefore, we followed the recommendations made in other studies on social television: Bredl, Ketzer, Hünniger & Fleischer (2014); Arrojo (2013); Gallego (2013); Deller & Hallam (2011). We also took into account the contributions made in studies on social networks within other fields such as election campaigns (Deltell, Congosto, Claes & Osteso, 2013; Coates Nee, 2013; Said & Arcila, 2011) and advertising (Castelló, Del Pino & Ramos, 2014), as well as various case studies focused on television (Claes, Osteso & Deltell, 2013; Congosto, Deltell, Claes & Osteso, 2013; Highfield, Harrington, Bruns, 2013; Larsson, 2013).

In addition, we took into account the contributions of studies on the mockumentary genre, coming largely from the field the communication theory (Gandaegui, 2012; De Felipe, 2009; García Martínez, 2004 and 2007). Other outstanding works are those carried out by Gómez Tarín (2009) and Hight (2007), who analyse the features of the multiplatform documentary, which is similar to our object of study. These works were used to identify the features of this genre and deepen into the analysis of its dissemination strategies.

The selected method responds to a quantitative non-experimental cross-sectional research design, i.e., we studied the impact of the aforementioned TV programme on the social network Twitter

during a defined period of time. The instruments of analysis were matrices of data created *ad hoc* for this research. The information was collected directly from Twitter.

3. Results

After explaining how the information was collected and analysed, this section presents the results of this research according to the aforementioned objectives. First of all, we present the results of the activity of the accounts; second, the results of the analysis of the information broadcast about the mockumentary; and finally, the results on the relation between the social and real audiences.

3.1. Activity of Twitter accounts

The activity of the accounts was very uneven during the period analysed. Table 1 shows the activity of broadcasters during the fifteen-day period, including the number of daily messages posted by each account and the number of tweets actually related to the programme *Operación Palace*.

Table 1. Number of tweets posted by each of the six accounts from 16 February to 2 March (PT: posted tweets; RT: tweets related to *Operación Palace*)

Day	16		17		18		19		20		21		22		23		24		25		26		27		28		1		2	
	PT	RT	PT	RT	PT	RT	PT	RT	PT	RT	PT	RT	PT	RT	PT	RT	PT	RT	PT	RT	PT	RT	PT	RT	PT	RT	PT	RT	PT	RT
Atresmedia	0	0	5	0	7	0	3	0	5	0	2	0	0	0	2	2	6	4	5	0	2	0	1	0	5	0	5	0	0	0
El Terrat	1	0	6	2	5	0	5	1	5	0	5	1	1	0	3	2	7	2	9	3	4	0	5	0	3	0	0		0	0
Jordi Évole	119	5	11	3	3	0	2	2	1	1	0	0	7	4	104	98	1	1	5	4	8	0	5	0	1	0	6	3	67	0
La Sexta	ND	ND	46	2	45	0	41	1	41	3	47	1	22	4	41	23	52	14	60	3	53	0	43	1	41	1	26	4	20	0
Noche 23F	2	2	3	3	0	0	9	9	5	5	9	9	6	6	76	76	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	0		0		0	0
Salvados	48	3	3	2	1	0	0	0	1	1	5	4	2	2	25	18	0	0	9	2	2	0	3	1	1	0	2	0	57	7

Source: Authors' own creation.

On the one hand, in relation to the general activity of the accounts, Jordi Évole's was the most active in terms of the number of posted messages. Focusing on the messages actually related to the programme, Évole was also the main transmitter, since he reached 98 tweets the day of the broadcast. Conversely, the account of the Atresmedia group hardly shows any activity in the period of study.

As shown in table 1, the generation of message seems to be more linked to the source's degree of relation to the programme, and that is why Évole and Noche23F are the accounts posting the largest number of messages about the programme. However, the accounts of Atresmedia and El Terrat did not generate any kind of message.

In addition, the relationship between the posted tweets and the programme-related tweets increased on the day of the broadcast and the previous day, which indicates that most of the activity on these Twitter accounts focuses on *Operación Palace*, which becomes the main target.

On the other hand, it is important to talk about the hashtags created and used by broadcasters because they are the backbone of the conversation on Twitter. These hashtags make reference to the day of the broadcast (#Noche23F, #HoyNoche23F), the programme (#OperaciónPalace) and the subsequent debate (#DebateNoche23F). Évole is responsible for presenting the hashtag that to be used during the broadcast: ("@jordievole: ATTENTION: today the hashtag to discuss *Operación Palace* is #OperacionPalace. Very creative, right? 25 minutes left!!!"). It is important to mention that the

expectation created by the programme was such that the hashtag #HoyNoche23F was trending topic just before the start of the programme.

However, the programme also became the subject of conversation on Twitter around other hashtags and got a total of 13 trending topics: 9 national: (#HoyNoche23F, #OperacionPalace, #23-F, #Garci, #Évole, #Fernando Ónega, #Tejero, #Kubrik, #Orson Welles) and four international (#OperacionPalace, #Garci, #Évole, #Tejero y #23F).

3.1.1. Evolution of tweets related to *Operación Palace*

The temporary flow of messages is completely discontinuous and reaches its peak, as expected, on the day of broadcast. Messages begin to increase on the 19th (see Figure 1), four days before the broadcast, and the programme's account (@Noche23F) is the main source responsible for sending them. However, during the programme's broadcast, Évole's account stands out for being the most active.

Figure 1: Evolution of number of tweets (16 February - 2 March)
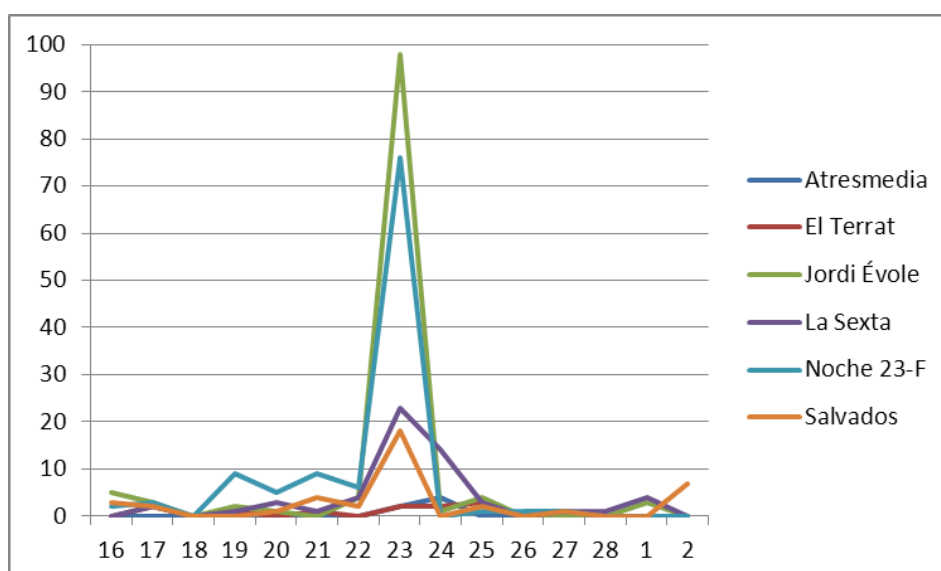
Source: Authors' own creation.

From the 24th messages about the programme cease to be launched, but on the 1st of March *La Sexta noche* posted another message related to the programme.

3.1.2. Typology of tweets

This section presents the results of the analysis of the format and content of tweets. On the one hand, and due to length limits, we only selected three key days (the day prior to the broadcast, the day of the broadcast, and the following day) to analyse the format of the messages.

As mentioned, on the day of the broadcast the flow of messages increased considerably. The accounts that stood out for their activity, although with very different levels, are: @jordievole and @Noche23F. Évole chose to retweet or modify tweets while the programme's account creates

original content through its own tweets. The dissemination of these tweets by @Noche23F is almost twice as intense as that of Évole's. In addition, Évole is more participatory with followers, as he responds to received messages while @Noche23F hardly pays any attention to them. Therefore, Évole's activity, based on the retweets and modified tweets, as well as on the replies, implies a closer relation with the audience.

Table 2. Typology of tweets
(RT/MT: retweets/modified tweets; R: reply; T: text; L: Link)

|	Day 22				Day 23				Day 24			
	RT/ MT	R	T	L	RT / MT	R	T	L	RT / MT	R	T	L
Atresmedia	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	2	0	0	2
El Terrat	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0
Jordi Évole	3	0	1	0	46	27	24	1	0	0	1	0
La Sexta	2	0	0	2	12	0	0	11	2	0	0	12
Noche 23-F	5	0	0	1	24	2	47	4	0	0	0	0
Salvados	1	0	0	1	15	0	3	0	0	0	0	0

Source: Authors' own creation.

It should be noted that the activity of the TV network, La Sexta, which does not create original content but disseminates messages related to the programme in the form of retweets or modified tweets and links. Most of the links show audiovisual content related to the programme and included in the special section created for the programme in the website of the network. The account of *Salvados* also retweeted messages posted by @Noche23F and @jordievole. The six accounts feed on each other because most of the retweets and modified tweets come from these six sources.

On the other hand, messages were analysed depending on the intention of the sender (see Figure 2). In general terms, broadcasters choose to send informational messages to the audience. The theme of these tweets revolves around the programme's screening time and content (@Noche23F: "Only 24 hours left to see what is behind "*Operación Palace*". It will be on at 21.30 hrs, in #Noche23F of @lasextaTv pic.twitter.com/CaDL7mKiMu"

As noted, the accounts of Évole and the mockumentary were the most active but the intention of their messages is different (see Figure 2). Messages generated by Évole express opinions and gratitude to his followers, the programme's audience and participants (@jordievole: And many thanks to those who supported a format that was weird from the start) Iñaki, Ónega, Ansón, @LeguinaJ...). On the contrary, the programme's account focuses on sending informational messages ("@Noche23F: #HoyNoche23F: 1 HOUR for the premiere in @lasextatv of the special programme of @jordievole about the coup of 23F, an unforgettable day...") and to a lesser extent in opinion messages.

Figure 2. Typology of tweets according to senders' intention (expressed in number of tweets)
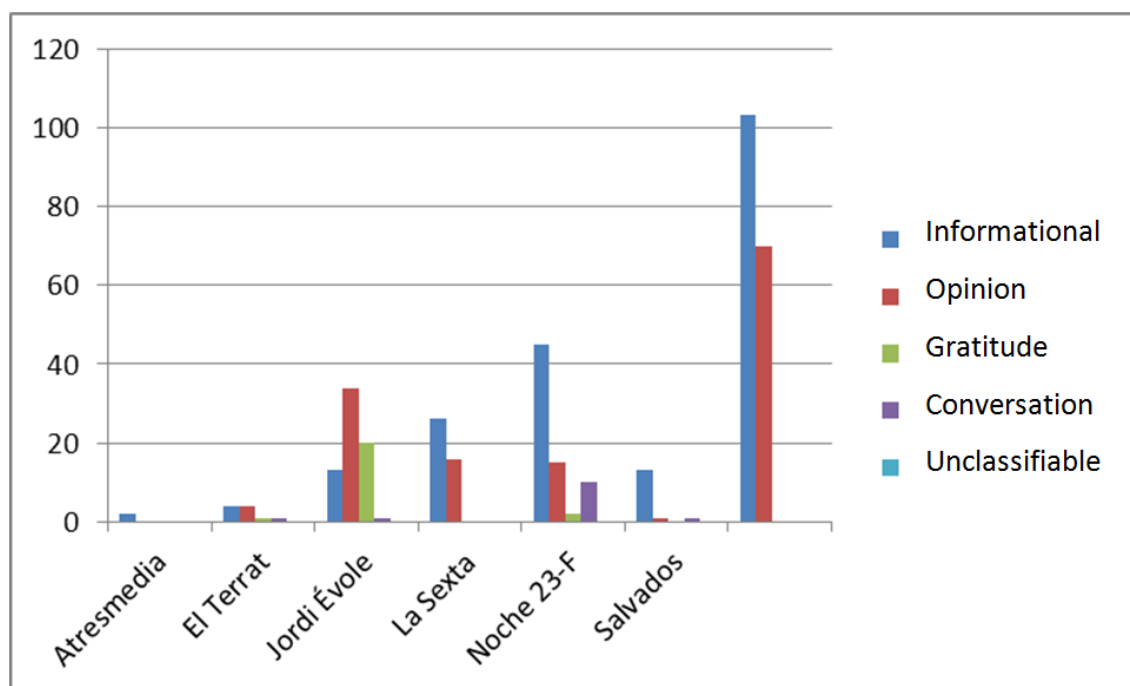
Source: Authors' own creation.

It is important to highlight the insufficient weight of the messages that attempt to generate conversation. The account @Noche23F launches the largest number of tweets with this intention while the rest of the accounts do not show explicit interest in talking with their followers (for example: ''@Noche23F: What is the secret hidden in the white box that always accompanies the monarch? This is a question yet to be answered... #OperacionPalace'')

3.1.3. Dissemination of tweets

Table 3 shows the most retweeted and favourited tweets among the audience of the six accounts under analysis. While the retweet involves a higher level of dissemination as it becomes part of the timeline of other accounts, in this particular case, given the theme of the programme, it is also worth noting the messages that were marked as favourite by followers, since it involves linking and agreement with the content of the messages.

The first remarkable fact is the relationship between retweets and favourite tweets. In the six accounts the most retweeted message is also the most favourited message.

Table 3. Dissemination of tweets

	RETWEETS	N°	FAVOURITED TWEETS	N°
Atresmedia	#Audiencias #OperacionPalace led in all the targets and regional areas in @laSextaTV, leader of the PT (16.4%) http://www.antena3.com/objetivotv/analisis/operacion-palace-arrasa-mas-millones-239-share_2014022400037.html …	3	#Audiencias #OperacionPalace led in all the targets and regional areas in @laSextaTV, leader of the PT (16.4%) http://www.antena3.com/objetivotv/analisis/operacion-palace-arrasa-mas-millones-239-share_2014022400037.html …	4
El Terrat	Did you know that the images of the 23F were not shown until the next day? @Noche23F of @jordievole [video] http://noche23f-23feb2014.click.ug	161	Did you know that the images of the 23F were not shown until the next day? @Noche23F of @jordievole [video] http://noche23f-23feb2014.click.ug	45
Jordi Évole	If #OperacionPalace has contributed a little to our reflection on how to filter the information we receive, then it is welcome.	11832	If #OperacionPalace has contributed a little to our reflection on how to filter the information we receive, then it is welcome.	4562
La Sexta	Jordi Évole: "Surely they have lied to you other times and no one has told you" http://bit.ly/1lculYj #OperacionPalace	1069	Jordi Évole: "Surely they have lied to you other times and no one has told you" http://bit.ly/1lculYj #OperacionPalace	388
Noche 23-F	"End of #OperacionPalace We hope you are not disappointed... Thank you for following our story to the end. It was important."	305	"End of #OperacionPalace We hope you are not disappointed... Thank you for following our story to the end. It was important."	246
Salvados	REMEMBER that next week there will not be [new episode of] *Salvados*, but there will be something better than *Salvados*, "*Operación Palace*" : http://www.lasexta.com/especiales/operacion-palace-23f/%E2%80%9Cel-pueblo-espanol-estaba-preparado-saber-toda-verdad%E2%80%9D_2014021600144.html	201	REMEMBER that next week there will not be [new episode of]*Salvados*, but there will be something better than *Salvados*, "*Operación Palace*" : http://www.lasexta.com/especiales/operacion-palace-23f/%E2%80%9Cel-pueblo-espanol-estaba-preparado-saber-toda-verdad%E2%80%9D_2014021600144.html	122

Source: Authors' own creation.

The message with the greatest impact on Twitter, for being the most retweeted and most favourited, was posted by Évole: "If **#OperacionPalace** has contributed a little to our reflection on how to filter the information we receive, then it is welcome".

It is worth mentioning that the account of Évole obtained the largest number of replies from followers. The tweets with most replies from fans, with 39 replies each, were: "If **#OperacionPalace** has contributed a little to our reflection on how to filter the information we receive, then it is welcome" and "And why did Salvados have to do this? Because of the need to experiment and take risks. This is how we understand an exciting medium like TV".

3.2. Characterisation of the mockumentary in tweets

The analysis of the original tweets posted by each accounts allowed us to extract the typical features of the mockumentary, such as offering a response to a controversial issue, generating ambiguity and expectation, providing false information with appearance of verisimilitude, as well as featuring

testimonies from prominent figures corroborating the programme's main argument. The style and rhetoric of credibility of this programme were simulated with the use of all these elements.

As Arellano points out, the times and stages in the distribution of information are an essential part of the communication strategy (1998). In the case under analysis, during the two weeks prior to the broadcast, broadcasters promoted confusion between this special programme and Évole's weekly programme, although they repeatedly insisted that the special programme was not an episode of *Salvados* (@salvadostv: "REMEMBER that next week there will not be [new episode of] Salvados, but there will be something better than Salvados, "*Operación Palace*"; "This Sunday @jordievole welcomes you in @Noche23F. We continue working to surprise you on Sunday 2 March with a mega programme."). The fact that both programmes have Jordi Évole as presenter and are presented at the same time (on Sunday night) and the fact that the account of *Salvados* is releasing information on this programme certainly originates some confusion in the audience. In fact, the first announcement was released precisely during the commercial breaks of *Salvados* in the forma a tweet by @Noche23F: "Today, in the advertising break of @salvadostv, see the premiere of the TRAILER for "*Operación Palace*". "Warning: it will set you back to the past".

The programme uses the fame of its presenter Jordi Évole, as a sharp journalist, to present a programme that "is not just another documentary", which creates expectations among viewers who have prior knowledge about this person. Given that the success of the mockumentary is precisely based on the interpretative capacity of the public, the producers take as a premise "the knowledge that individuals have acquired during their life as media spectators" (Díaz Gandasegui, 2012: 154). The public knows Évole and *Salvados* and from that perspective will complete the meaning of messages it receives, and that is why the reactions to the special programme are so different.

All the analysed accounts, with the exception of @Atresmediatv, posted messages promoting *Operación Palace* during the days prior to its broadcast. These actions fit with the strategy that *Salvados* has followed from 2011 to generate interest and excitement among its followers by previewing some parts of the content of the next programme. Being a recorded programme, the Twitter strategy is better defined because tweets are prepared in advance. The accounts of Évole, *Salvados* and *La noche 23F* follow this strategy during the broadcast itself. Therefore, Twitter is used to accompany the sale of a fake information product so that none of the many followers of Évole or *Salvados* receive prior information that can makes them suspect about the true nature of the programme.

As all fake documentaries (García Martínez, 2004: 140), the programme under study aims to answer confusing questions about the coup d'état, as reflected in the tweets. They throw many questions in order to awake the curiosity of followers and provoke conversations in the social networks: @ElTerrat: "Did you know that the images of the 23F were not shown until the next day?" and @Noche23F: "Why don't Suarez and Mellado hide behind their seat at the moment of the assault?". This practice extends far beyond the social networks and builds a transmedia strategy supported with the programme's website, with such texts as "Next Sunday in LaSexta, the protagonists of the 1981 coup d'état speak up". "The story that we know about the 23F, we know what happened, but we don't know why it happened", "It was a truly exceptional operation", and "Nobody has ever talked about this meeting".

The tweets ported prior to the broadcast of the programme aimed to create a climate of expectation and ambiguity towards a controversial issue like the coup of 23 February 1981 (@Noche23F: "1 HOUR for the premiere in @lasextatv of the special programme of @jordievole about the coup of 23F, an unforgettable day..."""). However, the central thesis of the mockumentary, the coup, is never revealed to be a hoax. Évole himself confesses so in a tweet after the end of the programme: "In the promotion we were ambiguous: "Can a lie tell a truth?". And yes, we wanted to generate expectation, which is our obligation". This aura of suspense was intensified with the links to videos hosted on the website of *Operación Palace* and the YouTube channel of La Sexta. In these videos, Évole explains the special character of this broadcast, always giving the appearance that this is exclusive information. This atmosphere of suspense is also supported by tweets that convey the surprise of the first viewers of the documentary **[10]**: @LaSextaTV: "*Operación Palace*: If it turns out that all that you presented is true, then it is very difficult to digest".

Parts of the content of the programme, which are actually false clues with appearance of verisimilitude, are presented through many messages. These messages build the rhetoric of mockumentary that feeds the confusion. The accounts that offer misleading information the most are @Noche23F and @LaSextaTV. Some examples are:

@Noche23F:

- "And what was the King going to say?" New clues from "*Operación Palace*". @Noche23F 4 days away. There is anxiety"
- "Were you surprise by the Oscar won by Garci in 1983 for the film "Begin the Beguine"? You will understand by the end of #OperacionPalace"
- "How and when was The King's Speech filmed? #OperacionPalace"
- "Was there director behind the 23F? Next in #OperacionPalace"
- "Fernando Onega, @josebaazkarraga and Alejandro Rojas Marcos are other people who will help you discover the story of the 23F #OperacionPalace"
- "Why didn't Suarez and Mellado hide behind their seat at the moment of the assault? #OperacionPalace"
- "#OperacionPalace explains why José Luís Garci won an Oscar for "Begin the Beguine" against all odds"
- What is the secret hidden in the white box that always accompanies the monarch? This is a question yet to be answered... #OperacionPalace"

@LaSextaTV:

- "*Operación Palace* is almost here on @Noche23F: "The Spanish people was not ready to know the truth""
- "@Noche23F a history of@jordievole: "Tejero immediately agreed to participate in the operation of 23F"
- "Can a lie tell a truth? #HoyNoche23F: "We had to convince Tejero to stage a coup"."

@jordiÉvole:

- "The Gordon came out at 21:41 hrs. "The King agreed". #OperacionPalace"

This development of this false rhetoric is supported by the appearance of renowned people who allegedly witnessed the staging of the coup. The tweets report the appearance of Fernando Ónega, Iñaki Gabilondo, Joseba Azkarraga, José Luis Garci, Luis María Anson, Andreu Mayayo, Federico Mayor Zaragoza, Felipe Alcaraz, Joaquín Leguina, Jorge Vestrynge and Alejandro Rojas Marcos, who add seriousness to the documentary feed the public's confusion.

Precisely, some of these figures are also involved in the creation of this aura of mystery and anticipation prior to the broadcast. The leader of IU (United Left Party), Felipe Alcaraz, published a week before the broadcast: "@FelipeAlcarazM___lasexta.com/especiales/operacion-palace-23f/%E2%80%9Cel-pueblo-espanol-estaba-preparado-saber-toda-verdad%E2%80%9D_2014021600144.html … Are you ready to know all the truth of the 23F next Sunday? Put your safety belt on your coach". Joaquín Leguina also gets involves when publishing the following message on 23 February: "Finally, the intelligent @jordievole tell us the story of the 23F which nobody had dared to tell before". Today @salvadostv @Noche23F La Sexta. Watch it!". Similarly, Iñaki Anasagasti tweeted: "Today, 33 years after the 23-F and, see you tonight (at 21.30, in @laSextaTv) in "*Operación Palace*" #Noche23F with @jordievole. I assure you will like it!".

3.3. Analysis of real and social audiences

On Sunday, 23 February 2014, *Operación Palace* led both social and traditional audience ratings. This coincidence rarely occurs since the list of most watched programmes, based on traditional audience meters, tends to differ from the list of the most commented programmes, based on social audience metrics, which are provided by the two leading companies in Spain: Tuitele and Global In Media.

With regards to the real audience, *Operación Palace* led the prime time slot with a share of 23.9% **[11]** and 5,229,000 viewers. It reached its peak at 22:21 with a 27.5% share and 6,229,000 viewers. It is worth noting that these data exceeded the average audience of *Salvados* **[12]**, which in the following week obtained a 15.6% share and 3,262,000 viewers. For its part, the following programme, *Noche 23F: el debate*, reached 3,991,000 viewers and an 18.8% share. In the whole of February, *Operación Palace* was also the most-watched programme of the network while *Noche 23F: el debate* was the third.

In terms of the social audience, data provided by Global In Media indicate that the programme obtained 143,608 mentions coming from 64,254 users. It reached its social audience peak at 22:27, with 4,855 comments per minute, which coincided with the last moments of the mockumentary, when Évole explained to the audience that it was a fiction product. In terms of the social share, the programme had peaks of 73%. The following programme, *Noche 23F: el debate*, reached 139,788 mentions and 71,467 social users, reaching 4.464 comments in its social audience peak at 22:32, right at the beginning of the debate, when the public was still surprised by the end of the mockumentary and shared its surprise, anger and praise in the social networks. These figures exceed the figures usually reached by *Salvados*. In fact, one week after the broadcast of *Operación Palace* (on 2 March), Évole's programme reached 25,264 comments. This mockumentary was the third most-talked about programme in February 2014 just after the Goya Awards and *La Voz kids* (Global In Media, 2014). This fact makes it the network's most followed programme in social audience, above *Salvados* and *La Sexta*.

The data provided by Global In Media indicate that the percentages of support and rejection reached by this programme in the social audience were almost the same, with a proportion of 20% of positive comments and 22% of negative comments (the rest was neutral). When the public discovers that it was all fiction there are reactions of amusement and surprise but also of anger at the fact that the programme joked with a subject that a part of the social public considers as too serious. In terms of gender differences, men were more active in terms of comments, since 60% of the comments were made by men and the rest, 40%, by women.

It is very likely that the intense activity of Évole on Twitter has influenced the success of the programme in this social network. The presenter himself is aware of the power of Twitter and on the day of the broadcast he tweeted: "Suh as exciting Twitter afternoon-evening. It is for days like today that it is worth it to dedicate my life to a medium as brutal as television. I'm a bag of nerves!" #HoyNoche23F".

Finally, it should be noted that the audience peaks reached among both audiences were only 6 minutes apart. They were reached in the last part of the programme, when the real fictional nature of the documentary was revealed.

4. Discussion and conclusions

This research study has examined the communication strategy developed followed on Twitter to promote the TV programme *Operación Palace* by its broadcasters. The activity of its related accounts has been very uneven. The official accounts of Évole and the programme have stood out as the most active in terms of the number of messages generated. It was found that although the temporary flow of messages is discontinuous, the promotion of the promotion efforts focused on the day prior to the broadcast and the day after.

Even though Twitter allows the establishment of a dialogue between the programme and its public, the analysis shows that most accounts do not establish that type of contact with their Twitter followers. The promoters of the show used their Twitter accounts only to launch messages and did not really exploit all the interaction possibilities. In other words, they do not promote audience loyalty through conversation and *feedback* with viewers on Twitter, which can enrich and correct various aspects of the programme and to provide more specific data about its Twitter followers. An example of this situation is the small number of people these accounts follow, which denotes that they are more attentive to what they transmit than to the messages they can receive from third parties. Only Évole's account shows a closer contact with the rest of the Twitter users that follow the programme. Therefore, the promotion has been prioritised over the exchange of opinions between promoters and followers.

In this sense the analysis also detected a low rate of response from followers. The comparison of the proportion of replies to the tweets posted by the accounts with the number of retweets or favourited tweets confirms that users hardly reply to the tweets and do not engage in conversation. However, users do share massively some of the tweets posted by the broadcasters, which can be considered as a form of less active participation.

With regards to the second objective, the analysis allows us to conclude that the promotion strategy prior to the broadcast of the mockumentary *Operación Palace* followed the same guidelines

followed by the TV programme *Salvados*, which favoured the confusion of the audience. In other words, the promotion of the mockumentary used the same codes used to promote a special information programme: preview of information, support from experts in the field in order to foster a climate of expectation around a controversial topic.

The tweets posted prior to the broadcast, mostly by the account @Noche23F and @LaSextaTV, followed a style and rhetoric of verisimilitude that led to the confusion of viewers. The mockumentary deconstructs reality to remake it with a varnish of truth about an event as controversial as the coup of 1981. A false intertextuality is created with references that seek to legitimise the broadcast content. Based on these data, users complete the meaning based on the prior knowledge that possess. That is why the presentation of the programme by the same insightful journalist, Jordi Évole, and at the same time than *Salvados* favoured its credibility, which relied on the trajectory of the journalist. This is how the confusion was encouraged.

Finally, in relation to the third objective, there was a remarkable coincidence: both audiences, real and social, supported the programme. *Operación Palace* led among both audience groups, which is an uncommon situation in the Spanish television landscape. In addition, the behaviour of both types of audiences was very similar, since the times during which the programme reached its peak in the different audience groups were only six-minute apart, and both occurred at the end of the broadcast.

The success of this programme in Twitter resulted from the reactions provoked among the public, since the more controversial an issue is, the more people tweet about it. It is also necessary to note the high number of followers Jordi Évole has in this network (over one million), which undoubtedly contributed to the high propagation of tweets, since the followers become transmitters when they retweet the presenter's messages. In addition, the introduction on screen and on Twitter of hashtags about the programme contributed to its success on Twitter as they became the centre of numerous conversations and manage to become trending topics.

It is worth noting that the messages posted on Twitter were part of a wider transmedia strategy, since a special website and promotional videos were created for the TV programme. This reflects an adaptation to the new models that respond to the current information needs and consumption habits.

The main limitation of this research study is related to the promotion channel under analysis: Twitter. In order to have a more complete analysis, it would be interesting to compare the results achieved in Twitter with those achieved in other social networks in which the audience of *Operación Palace* also interacted.

In addition, the analysis presented here could be supplemented with a comparative study on the perception of *Operación Palace* by its real and social audiences. This qualitative study would yield valuable information on the relationship between both audiences.

5. Notes

[1] Definition provided by Enrique Martín, founding partner of Tuitele in September, 2013.

[2] This is a phenomenon in constant growth since the number of unique users increased from 743867 in December 2012 to 1290697 in December 2013; while the number of comments increased from 3,578,207 to 6,931,297 during the same period (Tuitele, 2013).

[3] A recent study by Nielsen has revealed that 80% of Spanish users access Twitter via mobile devices. Available at: http://www.puromarketing.com/16/19330/usuarios-espanoles-utiliza-movil-para-acceder-twitter.html

[4] One of the leading companies in audience measurement, Kantar Media, recently launched a series of tools to measure social audience in these two countries. Available at http://www.kantarmedia1.es/noticias/view/96

[5] Three years ago, well-known series such as *El Barco*, *El Internado* and *Física o Química* hardly reached half a million followers but today they almost double that figure: *El Barco* 1,070,000; *El internado* 913,000; and *Física o Química* 834,000 (Data from March, 2014).

[6] This programme started after the mockumentary and had the participation of Eduardo Serra, Iñaki Gabilondo, Garbiñe Biurrun and Jordi Évole. The debate revolves around the convenience to keep certain official state records secret.

[7] Jordi Évole admitted after the broadcast that this mockumentary was inspired by *Operation Moon*, broadcast three years ago.

[8] This reflects the lack of standardisation in social audience meters since the two main companies devoted to this measurement use different measuring methods.

[9] This research does not take into account the subsequent retransmissions of the programme.

[10] Few days before the broadcast, producers gathered a group of 20 viewers to show them the first few minutes of the documentary and examine their reactions.

[11] The average audience share of the network in February was 6.9% (Barlovento, 2014).

[12] The premiere of the ninth season of *Salvados* (on Sunday 2 February) reached a share of 19.4% (and was the most-watched prime-time show that day), which decreased to 11.4% the next Sunday, and to 14.8% on the week before the broadcast of *Operación Palace*.

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