

Religion through the Local Media on Twitter. The Holy Week in Malaga

La religió a través dels mitjans locals a Twitter. El cas de la Setmana Santa a Màlaga

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This research is part of the work of the Cátedra de Estudios Cofrades, Culturales, Sociales y Económicos de la Semana Santa Malagueña (Chair of Brotherhood, Cultural, Social and Economic Studies on Holy Week in Malaga) of the University of Malaga. The main purpose of the study is to deepen understanding of this local festivity. The article addresses the question of how social networks, particularly Twitter, are being used as a new resource for the transmission of religious values. People are able to find out more about this festivity by interacting with the platform. Examples of this interaction have previously been seen in the World Youth Day in Madrid, the Pope's Twitter profile and the case of Sister Lucía in Spain. This study aims to confirm the hypothesis that the local media makes a special effort to report on the event by means of Twitter while preserving its religious

Aquesta investigació s'emmarca dins de la Cátedra de Estudios Cofrades, Culturales, Sociales y Económicos de la Semana Santa Malagueña, l'objectiu principal de la qual és fomentar el coneixement en profunditat de la Setmana Santa a Màlaga. L'article reflecteix com les xarxes socials, Twitter en especial, es converteixen en un nou suport per a la transmissió de valors i creences religioses, apropant la tradició a l'interactiu, gràcies a exemples com la Jornada Mundial de la Joventut de Madrid, el perfil de Benet XVI o el cas concret de Sor Lucía Caram a Espanya. L'estudi tracta de confirmar la hipòtesi que els mitjans de comunicació locals fan un esforç especial a Twitter per donar cobertura a aquest esdeveniment conservant-ne l'essència religiosa pel que fa a la selecció de paraules. La metodologia s'ha basat en una anàlisi de contingut

essence using the appropriate choice of words. The methodology is based on a detailed analysis of content found in the tweets of nine important local media organizations: three radio stations, three television channels and three newspapers. The content has been taken from 13th to 20th April 2014 (Holy Week) and classified into three categories of terms: religious terms, tourism terms and artistic terms. The results confirm that the local media use religious vocabulary on Twitter as compared to tourism or artistic terms, commonly used in general publications.

Key words: *Holy Week, Malaga, Twitter, religion, tourism (translation from the Spanish terms)*

dels tuits publicats al timeline de nou perfils de Twitter dels mitjans locals més rellevants: tres emissores de ràdio, tres cadenes de televisió i tres diaris. La data de la selecció dels continguts ha estat durant la Setmana Santa del 13 al 20 d'abril i se n'han creat tres categories de termes: religiosos, turístics i artístics.

Paraules clau: *Setmana Santa, Màlaga, Twitter, religió, turisme.*

Holy Week in Malaga is an event aimed at the general public, not only the local public but tourists from all over the world. This year, from Sunday 13th to Sunday 20th April 2014, hotel occupancy was nearly 90%, up four percent from last year.¹ In total, 323,000 people visited the city during Holy Week. In terms of visitors by country of origin, 74% are Spanish and there are a large number of tourists from the United Kingdom, Germany and France among the remaining 26%.

Over a week-long period, the city of Malaga becomes a huge stage on which 39 associated brotherhoods mount processions through the historic downtown streets and different neighbourhoods of the city. The communication media take part in all these celebrations with dedicated teams and special programmes to broadcast the event live. They bring this religious holiday to all the people in Malaga who cannot travel for any reason and to many fans and other interested people from different parts of Spain and other countries. In recent years, certain social networks have been used in addition to radio, television and press reports. In this regard, Twitter is the main example as it helps to strengthen the relationship between the religious followers and the mass media and audiences.

Until recently, only traditional media (radio, press and television) covered Holy Week and the rest of the city events. However, this model is continually changing, especially since the Internet has become involved in the dissemination of information. Special attention should be given to social networks which are “configured as a new entertainment and information system with elements, resources and features from traditional media, but which involves a degree of interaction and a less profitable business model. It is likely to develop more in the direction of audiovisual and virtual media rather than print media. Being new, these networks are applied and disseminated through the Web 2.0 and the so-called social software”, Campos Freire (2008).

In addition to these changes in the media and the connection with the digital world, one should note the presence of the Catholic religious community on the Internet. A case in point was the appearance of the Supreme Pontiff on social networks in 2012. This took place during the Papacy of Benedict XVI and was the starting point for a study based on the importance of understanding the relationship between leaders and followers: “in the context of social networks, this relationship is vital for the current organization. Pope Francisco will take up the same challenge as Benedict XVI, which is to interact directly with his followers. On Sunday 17th April 2013 Pope Francisco posted a tweet for the very first time on the account @pontifex. This is a challenge that more and more political and social leaders are taking up and this is why the authors consider that a reflection about this issue is necessary since it is an unexplored subject in the academic field”, (Villamizar and Noguera, 2013).

Some of the personal profiles on Twitter are related to religion and have numerous followers. In Spain, we can highlight some of them. For example, the profile of Sister Lucia Caram (@sorluciacaram) belongs to a Dominican contemplative nun (with nearly 100,000 followers) who has become a media personality who frequently appears in the media as an important member of the progressive wing of the Catholic Church. On another level, Jesuit José María Rodríguez Olaizola (@jmolaizola), priest, writer and sociologist, has appeared in the media too and he has nearly 5,000 followers. Olaizola is responsible for RezandoVoy.org, the first download platform for prayers in the Spanish language. During the last Holy Week, this Jesuit narrated the Passion of Christ in the present tense in his personal profile. At a local level, the diocesan priest in Malaga Francisco Aranda Otero (@Paco_Aranda_Es) has more than 2,600 followers. Aranda has played an important role in the world of the brotherhoods during his tenure as Brotherhoods’ Delegate for the Bishopric of Malaga. He used his account to openly criticize the attitude of Bishop Jesús Catalá. From his point of view, he has a job “with no tasks”.²

According to the *Cluetrain Manifesto* (2008), “the Internet is enabling conversations among human beings that were simply not possible in the era of mass media” in a society where “markets are conversations”; markets should be understood not only as the places where goods and services are bought and sold, but also as all the dialogues taking place in the network. For Castells (2001), the Internet becomes “a preferred tool to act, inform, recruit, organize, dominate or counter dominate.” On the other hand, Fernando Sáez-Vacas

(2004) talks about a “new techno-social environment” supported on social network sites that provide “Web-based services that allow individuals:

- To create a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system.
- To create a list of other users with whom they share a connection.
- To view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system,” (Boyd, 2007).

In this sense, we will focus on the main characteristics of what Campos Freire (2008) calls “the so-called social network, that is to say, the concept of community by creating user networks where one can interact, dialogue and provide opportunities for communication and knowledge”. When using social networks, we can find two different types of content: relationship content and information content. In this second case, information comes from the traditional media and the feedback sent by users. That production and contribution process ends with the selection, assessment and comments about the importance of the content posted by the user community (Campos Freire, 2008).

This study focuses on the social network called Twitter. This “seems to be the most democratic and participative social network. It seems certain that the voice of the individual user can be heard in broad-ranging social discussions, thanks in part to its forum nature open to comments about current affairs. However, it is difficult for a regular user to take part with an opinion that becomes relevant, since the leaders and celebrities control the huge tide of opinion. Also, messages and standards (tweets) are very fleeting, they go really quickly” (Romero-Moreno, 2013). It is because of its open and rapid nature that we focus our study on Twitter during a period (Holy Week) when the global and local media covers an important event in real time.

Twitter is a microblogging social network where users can share messages up to 140 characters long. 42 per cent of Spanish Internet surfers use this social network, the average age is 28 years old and the main appeals in the eye of the users are the high level of popularity and the fact that it is a place where anything can be found: news, television shows, sports...³ In addition, this is, after Facebook (with 99%), the second most well-known social network with a knowledge index of 92%, ahead of others like YouTube (88%) or Tuenti (76%),⁴ while on the fleeting quality, Twitter is the “The Triumph of Immediate” (Ruiz and Tauler, 2011). The local communication media uses social networking in order to generate specific content about a particular event for the target audience. That is, social communication media fosters “brand loyalty, audience research, content promotion, service community building for users, broadening attention and a source for story leads and references” (Stassen, 2010).

In this respect, it is worth mentioning the way in which the different media create interdependence with its audience, enhancing this sense of community (Peña and Pascual, 2013). Talking about religious macro-events, one must mention the celebration of the World Youth Day (WYD) in Madrid in August 2011 as a paradigm of this community; “300,000 followers of different nationalities (21 languages) have taken part in the informative and relational activity of the WYD,

as well as in Tuenti with more than 15,000 followers, in Twitter with more or less 18,000 followers and more than one million views in YouTube. The media coverage of the WYD has been quite remarkable. There have been more than 4,500 accredited communication media and key events have been broadcast to more than 30 countries” (Merino and Alcaide, 2012).

In the WYD, the importance of the use of the social networks in big events became apparent as well as its integration in the media landscape. In this research, we will analyze the use of the social network Twitter by communication media with respect to another international religious event on a different scale: the Holy Week of Malaga.

OBJECTIVES, HYPOTHESIS AND METHODOLOGY

The basic objective of this article is to analyze how the different local media in Malaga plan their presence on Twitter during a religious celebration: Holy Week. Therefore, this study focuses on the profiles of the three main newspaper mastheads in the province of Malaga (*Sur*, *La Opinión de Málaga* y *Málaga Hoy*), three radio stations (Ser, COPE and Onda Cero) and three local TV channels (Procono TV, 101 Television and Onda Azul RTV). Likewise, we intend to assess the degree of interaction and visibility of this media and the corresponding content during these days.

The study starts with the hypothesis that the local communication media makes a particular effort on Twitter to cover this event of a religious nature and to report on this increasingly popular occasion, while reflecting all this religious feeling by means of a careful selection of words.

In this sense, the investigation is supported by the content analysis technique of tweets shared by the selected media on 13th-20th April 2014. The sample consists of 3,743 tweets posted in the timeline of the nine analyzed local media profiles (including the retweets). Of this total, 2,667 are tweets of the selected media and 1,076 are retweets. This is the number of messages on each profile:

Medium	Total of Tweets
ptvmlg	203
OndaAzulmalaga	375
101TvMalaga	874
LMMalaga	305
AlHombro	323
SerCofrade	239
CofradesMLG	611
LapasionMLG	716
malagahoy	97
Source: Twitter. Own preparation.	

It should also be noted that four of the nine analyzed media appealed to specific profiles for the Holy Week programming, in comparison to the remaining five media that used the same profile as for the rest of the year.

The media with a specific profile for this religious event are Cadena Ser (@sercofrademlg), Onda Cero Radio (@Al_Hombro), *La Opinión de Málaga* (@LaPasiondeMLG) and *Sur* (@CofradesMalaga). These profiles have had 26,264 followers, 10,188 followings and 23,471 tweets since their creation date.

User	Medium	Followers	Followings	Total of Tweets
Sercofrademlag	Cadena Ser	1,035	216	664
Al_hombro	Onda Cero	1,247	89	1,945
LaPasiondeMLG	La Opinión de Málaga	7,640	1,041	6,253
Cofradesmalaga	Sur	16,342	8,842	14,609
Total		26,264	10,188	23,471

Source: Twitter. Own preparation.

For the tweets content analysis, key words and concepts found in each tweet were classified according to the content, depending on whether they relate to religious terms, tourism terms or artistic terms. In this way, we analyze the approach of the different target profiles relating to an event that is somewhat controversial since the inhabitants often question whether it retains its religious nature or if, over time, it has turned into just another cultural activity in the city.

In addition, the study focuses on the graphic content of the tweets, if present (photos, videos and links); the most often used hashtags by each medium; and in particular, the coincidences, terms and key words used and their religious connection or relationship with this event. For this purpose, we used the Twitter profiles of each medium as direct sources. First, we organized all the data in a data base and then we exported the required queries to a spreadsheet. After this, we assessed the results according to the objectives we had set.

RESULTS

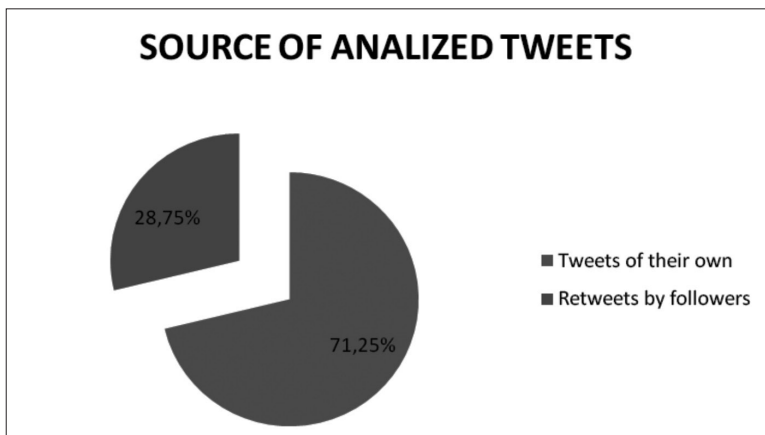
According to the analysis, the local media in Malaga used Twitter as a programming complement during the Holy Week. Occasionally, this complement became the main mean of dissemination to report on how things happened during each day. As a rule and for the analyzed communication media, Twitter is only a mean of dissemination with little interaction other than retweets. Moreover, all analyzed profiles are based on content that has been already shared by users, that is, one of four tweets was not their own, but retweets by followers.

SOURCE OF THE TWEETS

Although there are only a few differences concerning the source of the tweets analyzed in all case studies, the volume of shared content on each profile is very different during Holy Week. For example, *101 TV* is the medium that shares most content on Twitter during this time: more than 800 updates; over half of which are their own tweets (465) with photos and videos, and the other half of which (409) are retweets by followers.

After *101 TV*, we find the press media profiles: *La Opinión de Málaga* and *Sur*. The content of these two profiles are of their own: 621 and 608, respectively. In both cases, there are few retweets by followers; the same trend can be seen on the profiles of *PTV* (197 tweets of their own and 6 third-party retweets) and *COPE* (297 tweets of their own and 8 third-party retweets). The outcome is the complete opposite for *OndaAzul* (106 tweets of their own and 269 tweets by followers) and *Cadena Ser* (65 tweets of their own and 174 third-party retweets).

Málaga Hoy (only 89 tweets) and *Cadena Ser* (65 tweets) are the media sharing least information in relative terms, both their own and third-party content. In the first case, the reason for this is that this medium is a local newspaper of a regional masthead edition and it is assumed they have reduced number of editors working on this task. In the second case, this medium has developed its own app with specific content. They put all their efforts into this, although other radios have developed their own application too, while also paying particular attention to their social network profiles.

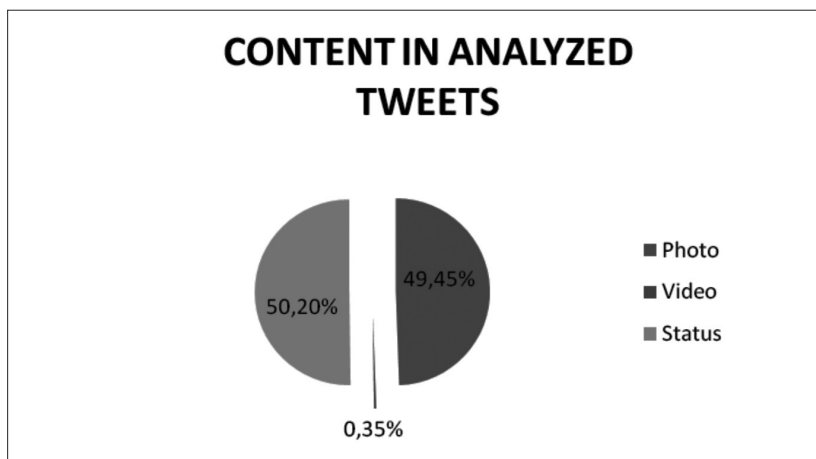


Source: Twitter. Own preparation.

CONTENT

If we analyze the content of the 3,743 studied tweets, it is observed that only 13 of them have links to videos, which are produced by the two most recent local TVs in Malaga: *101 TV* (3 links) and *OndaAzulMalaga* (10 links). One fact was

noteworthy: newspapers do not share videos on their Twitter profiles. If this were the case, they could distribute the user traffic to their website.

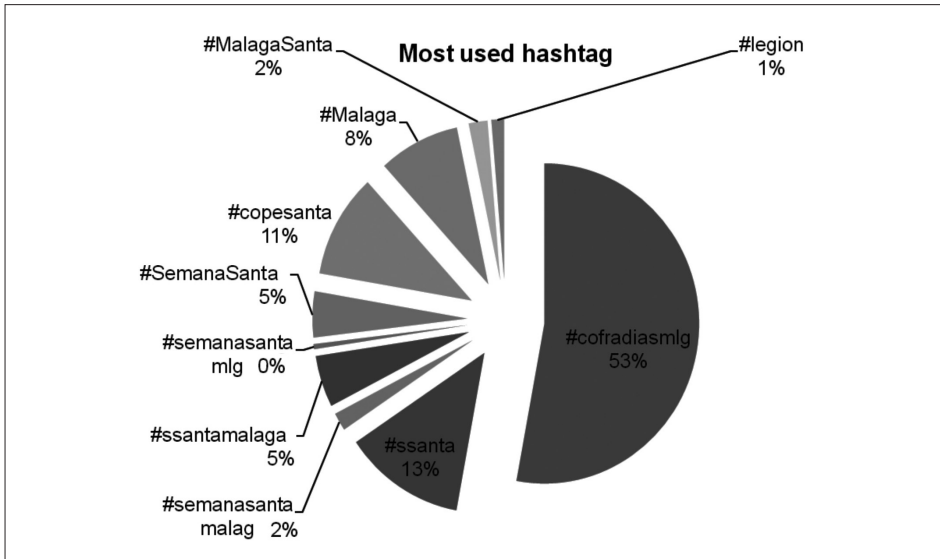


With regard to publishing photographs, *La Opinión de Málaga* is the medium that most uses these complements, with a total of 493 links; 101 TV used 307 links, Sur used 284 links, Onda Cero used 264 links, Onda Azul used 178 links, Cadena Ser used 144 links, *Málaga Hoy* used 9 links and COPE used 7 links.

HASHTAGS

On the use of hashtags, it should be noted that 95% of posted tweets included specific hashtags: 158 for @ptvmlg, 236 for @OndaAzulmalaga, 390 for @101Tv-Malaga (#ssanta), 298 for @LMMalaga (#CopeSSanta), 126 for @AlHombro, 88 for @SerCofrademlg, 594 for @CofradesMLG, 476 for @LaPasionMLG and 80 for @malagahoy. The most generally and commonly used hashtag in all analyzed profiles is #Cofradiansmlg with 1,485 instances. This is the tag that the brotherhoods of the city use. It was spontaneously created in order to index all content related to this event throughout the year. Other hashtags frequently used during this specific week by the local media are #ssanta, #semanasanta, #ssantamalaga14, #semanasantamlg, #SemanaSanta, #copessanta and #MalagaSanta.

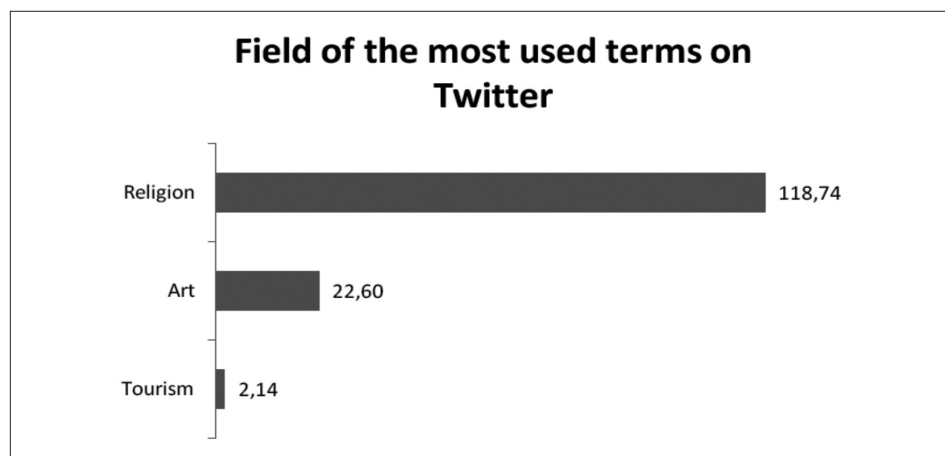
As can be seen, only one of the nine analyzed media used its own hashtag: COPE used its name for this purpose, while the other media only made the association with a generic word or a term used commonly by the followers.



ANALYSIS OF TERMS USED ON THE MEDIA PROFILES

Exactly 31 key words used on the different local media profiles during the Holy Week in Malaga were selected for the term and concept analysis and their connection to this specific event. These terms were classified in three categories: religion, tourism and art. The results showed 18 religious terms, 7 terms related to tourism industry and 6 artistic terms. We found a total of 2,684 matching results for these key words: 15 results related to the tourism industry, 113 results related to the art world and 2,256 results that confirm the religious approach of the content shared by the media on Twitter.

Translated from Spanish, the most frequently used words relating to Holy Week are: marching band (37), saeta (37), raise by sheer strength (23), music (15), work (17) and sculptural (7) as artistic terms; port (5), tourist (3), airport (3) and cruise (1) as words related to a touristic view of the Holy Week. As for the most used religious concepts on Twitter by the local media, we can highlight: Holy (1,112), Saint (479), Virgin (327), Christ (317), Nazarene (171), Resurrected (35), Church (26), Chapel (19), Silence (18), Prayer (6), Faith (5), Mass (4), Devotion (4), Mystery (4), Easter (3), Religious services (2) and Retreat (1).



According to this ranking of terms, we can see that “Holy” is the most frequent word: it appears in one of three tweets. Onda Azul and COPE are the media which uses this word most. In the former case, this is because they link all their tweets to the hashtag #ssanta; in the second case, they link the tweets to #copessanta. It is interesting to see how *La Opinión de Málaga* uses the word ‘Nazarene’, ‘Christ’ or ‘Virgin’ in nearly one in three tweets, well above the rest of the terms and the media.

In all cases, religious terms show a higher percentage than the rest in regard to their presence in the media. More than 90% of tweets include religious terms. As for the press, *Málaga Hoy* uses 92.42% of religious terms, compared to 7.58% of tourism terms (no percentage for artistic terms); *Sur* uses 90.12% of religious terms, 9.63% of artistic terms and 0.27% of tourism terms; *La Opinión de Málaga* uses 94.53% religious terms, 4.81% artistic terms and 0.66 tourism terms.

As for radio, Onda Cero uses 89.22% of the chosen religious terms, 10,78% of artistic terms and no tourism terms. COPE, PTV and 101 TV are the three media which uses most religious terms: more than 98%, compared to 1.56% of artistic terms and 0.26% of tourism terms. Finally, Cadena Ser uses 95.40% of religious terms and 4.60% of artistic terms; there is no case where a tourism term is used by this medium.

As for the television media, 101 TV uses 98.51% of religious terms in the publications shared during the Holy Week, 1.28% of artistic terms and 0.21% of tourism terms. PTV Malaga uses but 98.42% of religious terms and 1.58% of artistic terms but no tourism terms; Onda Azul uses 96.73% of religious terms, compared to 2.29% of artistic terms and 0.98% of tourism terms.

CONCLUSIONS

Even if some media configured other specific profiles for the programming and dissemination of the Holy Week event, most of them also used Twitter as a programming complement during the period. Occasionally they used this social net-

work as the main way of disseminating information about events taking place each day.

One can say that the target media did not get all the performance this social network can provide since there was not enough incentive for interaction with the audience; due to the lack of reaction, there were only retweets: one of four messages shared by the media on the social network was a retweet from a retweet shared before. It is probably for this reason that the most used hashtag is #cofradiasMLG, which emerged spontaneously from the activity of Twitter users related to the Holy Week of Malaga.

Due to the huge media coverage of this event and its ability to group target audiences (consequently, advertisers too), some media chose to develop other social networks too, such as Facebook, Pinterest, Instagram or YouTube, as well as other interactive multimedia products such as apps for mobile devices.

Despite the popular nature of the Holy Week every year, it is observed that this event maintains the religious feeling of such a great moment. On Twitter and by the traditional means, the media continues to use terms which are more related to religious matters than to other mentioned fields in connection to the Holy Week, such as tourism, culture or arts. As noted from the analysis above: more than 90% of tweets shared by the analyzed media include vocabulary related to religious terms. There is little difference between the written media and audiovisual media in this sense. This fact should be taken into account since their respective characteristics appear to imply the opposite.

In connection with the main terms each media use, we can see that in the case of Onda Cero and Cadena Ser (radio stations), religious terms are more common since this media created specific profiles for Holy Week; however, in the case of COPE, tourism terms are also present but in a lower percentage compared to religious terms. This is probably because the medium provides general information on its Twitter profile. As for the television media (with no specific profiles), this happens in exactly the same way, but here the use of religious terms is greater than in the press or radio media.

It is considered that during the Holy Week this year the media in general and especially the press media did not take full advantage of the opportunities available on the Internet, such as hypertexts, multimedia features, interactivity and community building. Twitter could be a powerful 'ally' when it comes to distributing user traffic to the media websites (particularly to press websites) where informative texts can be supported by videos of particular moments like the first appearance or final storage of the floats or during the course of the different processions passing by symbolic locations in the city; other videos could show quizzes and interactive questions in order to foster interaction with users and engage people in the broad dissemination of information on this religious event, as many media related to the Holy Week have already done. Similarly, it is also suggested that radio and television stations could make better use of the possibilities offered by Twitter by offering video and audio recordings about the most memorable moments after the event.

There should be greater interaction between the local media and its audiences on Twitter. This interaction is not currently being encouraged through questions,

requests or suggestions addressed to the target audience which can facilitate open dialogue on this particular subject through this medium.

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Notes

¹ Please see the report: *El impacto económico del turismo en la ciudad de Málaga durante la Semana Santa alcanza los 29 millones de euros* (The economic impact of tourism in Malaga city during the Holy Week reaches 29 million euros), published on 21st April 2014. Available at: <http://www.malaga.eu/ayto/temas/portal/seccion_0011?id=94482&tipoVO=1>.

² See the article *El sacerdote tuitero se queja de*

tener un cargo "sin tareas" (The twitter priest complains about his office "with no tasks"), published on 21st October 2014. Available at: <<http://sevilla.abc.es/andalucia/malaga/20131016/sevisacerdote-tuitero-queja-tener-201310162007.html>>.

³ Please see *V Oleada del Observatorio de Redes Sociales* (5th Study by the Observatory of the Social Networks), prepared by The

Cocktail Analysis and Zenith. Available at: <<http://www.slideshare.net/TCAnalysis/5-oleada-observatorio-redes-sociales>>.

⁴ Please see *V Estudio anual de Redes Sociales* (5th Annual Study of Social Networks),

prepared by IAB Spain. Available at: <<http://www.iabspain.net/wp-content/uploads/downloads/2014/04/V-Estudio-Anual-de-Redes-Sociales-versi%C3%B3n-reducida.pdf>>.

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