How open are journalists on Twitter? Trends towards the end-user journalism

¿Qué transparencia tienen los periodistas en Twitter? Tendencias hacia un periodismo centrado en el usuario

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ABSTRACT: **The many activities of journalists on Twitter should be analyzed. Are they doing a different kind of journalism? With a content analysis of 1125 tweets, this study reveals trends of some Spanish journalists using Twitter. A traditional role like gatekeeping can be highly amplified in terms of transparency and accountability with actions as retweeting or linking. The landscape offered by this platform is framed with the "ambient journalism", which will help to understand the proposal of this study: the end-user journalism. The findings will show the level of opening with the audience in aspects about replies, requests and linking.**

RESUMEN: Los periodistas establecen relaciones en Twitter de diversas formas que deben estudiarse. Mediante un análisis de contenido de 1125 tweets, el estudio refleja varias tendencias que esbozan el uso de Twitter por algunos periodistas de relevancia. ¿Están practicando un periodismo diferente? Por ejemplo, un rol tradicional como el de gatekeeper puede verse notablemente amplificado al retuitear o enlazar. El panorama ofrecido por esta plataforma se enmarca dentro del llamado ambient journalism, que contextualizará la propuesta de este estudio: un periodismo centrado en el usuario. Los resultados mostrarán la apertura respecto a cómo responden, preguntan o enlazan algunos periodistas en Twitter.

Keywords: Journalism, new media, online communication, social media, Twitter.

Palabras clave: comunicación online, medios sociales, nuevos medios, periodismo, Twitter.

1. *Introduction*[1]

Early 2011, Twitter celebrated its fifth birthday with one billion tweets per week and a rising presence on international conflicts such as Libya, Tunisia or Egypt[2] (An et al., 2011). The project that Jack Dorsey started in March 2006 with eight employees reached 400 employees five years later, and 140 million tweets per day were sent in February 2011.[3] Nowadays, citizens, media, politicians and companies are so close to each other on this microblogging platform as they have never been before. However, the new media landscape is being redefined without clear movements coming from the side of media organizations, which are not doing much more than delivering headlines. Even Twitter as a company knows that its role in journalism is going to be a key issue for media in next years. An official guide of Twitter for newsrooms was launched in June 2011, perhaps following the initiative of the Page for Journalists on Facebook, launched in April 2011. As it was said in the official page of the guide, "Twitter is a tool all journalists can use to find sources faster, tell stories better and build a bigger audience for their work".

Even when is clear the fact that community of news consumers through Twitter was still small in 2012[4], at the same time the social recommendation of news is increasing much more than via Facebook. And for Twitter users, "most of these users also feel that without

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1 This research was made possible by the Program José Castillejo for a research fellowship from April to July 2011 at the UBC School of Journalism in Vancouver, Canada. Special thanks go to professor Alfred Hermida for his advising.

2 Cfr. AN, J., *et al.*, "Media lanscape in Twitter: A world of new conventions and political diversity", in *Proceedings of 5th International AAAI Conference on Weblogs an Social Media*, Barcelona, 2011, pp.18-25.

3 "#Numbers", *Twitter Blog*, March 14. 2011, http://blog.twitter.com/2011/03/numbers.html, May 2011.

4 Cfr. MITCHELL, A.; ROSENSTIEL, T. & CHRISTIAN, L., "What Facebook and Twitter Mean for News", in PEW RESEARCH CENTER, *The State of the News Media 2012. An Annual Report on American Journalism*, 2012, http://stateofthemedia.org/2012/mobile-devices-and-news-consumption-some-good-signs-for-journalism/what-facebook-and-twitter-mean-for-news/, retrieved 25 June, 2012.

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Twitter, they would have missed this kind of news"[5]. The role of media and journalists under this landscape of User-Distributed Content (UDC) is still unresolved and it redefines the journalism itself in terms of transparency, accountability and participation by the audience.

Nowadays there are several examples on how, thanks to this platform, newsrooms are becoming more transparent and media are connecting faster with their audiences. It is turning a common practice to see editors ask for opinions on Twitter about headlines, next topics or on pre-publishing issues around the news. At the same time, the audience and sources are transforming some traditional journalistic basis as well. Celebrities are launching scoops to avoid the media pressure and the users are changing the agenda creating new topics through hashtags and other mechanisms to promote conversations. Under this frame, Twitter has built the relations with "its own media logic, shapes and structures"[6] and journalism might need to decide sooner than later what kind of role it must adopt[7]. Media have to change some basis because many routines in consumption have changed too, and some are happening on Twitter, "a harbinger of a futuristic technology that is likely to capture and transmit the sum total of all human experiences of the moment"[8]. Media still need to find journalistic uses of this platform to connect with young people and therefore, with the audiences of the future.

Brown, Hendrickson and Litau[9] studied the motivations that lie behind the use of Twitter by the young through interviews. They found that the main motivation for them is not news, but they followed some journalists´ accounts and liked the platform as an easy way to scan headlines. In a journalistic sense, the key issue is not about to be faster publishing headlines, but how to be deeper thanks to Twitter. The present work use the concept of "end-user innovation"[10] to be applied in the Twitterverse for a general improvement of the journalism. Interactions, shared content and specific resources on Twitter will be analyzed in terms of opening (for instance, links to non professional media) or collaboration with the followers (presence of job talking) to find if there are enough signs of what is going to be called here "end-user journalism".

This introductory study tries to define the state of art around Twitter and the journalistic experience, and it will help to understand how some of the most important Spanish journalists are using Twitter and how journalism itself is adapting to a networked environment, identified by some authors like "ambient journalism"[11]. In this article the ambient journalism is defined as a social environment where all the activities made by

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6 Cfr. HERMIDA, A., "Twittering the News. The emergence of ambient journalism", *Journalism Practice*, 4(3), 2010, pp. 297-308, p. 300.

7 Cfr. NOGUERA, J.M., "Managing brief data from users to professionals: Collaborative trends around microblogging for journalism", in FRANCQ, P. (ed.), *Collaborative Search and Communities of Interest: Trends in Knowledge Sharing and Assessment*, IGI Global, New York, 2010, pp. 182-205.

8 Cfr. SANKARANARAYANAN, J. *et al.*, "TwitterStand: news in tweets", in *Proceedings of the 17th ACM SIGSPATIAL International Conference on Advances in Geographic Information Systems*, Seattle, 2009, pp. 42-51, p. 51.

9 Cfr. BROWN, C., HENDRICKSON, E. & LITAU, J., "New Opportunities for Diversity: Twitter, Journalists and Traditionally Underserved Communities", Paper presented at 12th International Symposium for Online Journalism, Austin, 2011.

10 Cfr. VON HIPPEL, E., *Democratizing Innovation*, The MIT Press, Cambridge, 2009.

11 HERMIDA, Alfred, *op. cit.*

citizens and journalists are changing the traditional journalistic experience, turning the news in a dynamic and collective process rather than a product. That is Twitter. Twitter is not the only one environment to develop the ambient journalism, but it is the chosen scenario for this study.

This new landscape could be described as what Kleinberg defines as "the human texture of information"[12]. According to the author, now the value of information emerges bottom up, with thousands of tiny pieces from everywhere. Twitter is a clear example of that phenomenon, a human texture of information built with retweets, mentions, favourites, lists, hashtags and all the special grammar that surrounds microblogging. For journalists the big deal is not just what they do, but how they are going to do the same things with different rules and how they will create new routines with these social and technical rules. Some basic aspects like gatekeeping (what kind of content is retweeted, presence of internal or external links…) or agenda setting (public requests looking for sources and information, trending topics…) are redefined daily on Twitter, and journalism needs to adapt to it. Several authors presented general studies on topological properties and intentions, social interactions and users' behavior, however they did not referred to a specific community on Twitter[13].

Even when it is commonly accepted that sites like Twitter are "reshaping journalism as we know it"[14], it is still difficult to know how the end of this process is going to be. It is true that "the notion that every journalist should be a Social Media Editor is expanding"[15], and in recent years some authors have published scientific works about Twitter and Journalism, such as the emergence of new practices[16], media consumption and media diversity[17], or journalistic conventions on microblogging features[18]. The specific role of Twitter in journalism is becoming visible in the main conferences and journals, but there is still not a large bibliography on it. Despite the media obsession[19] about Twitter since early 2009, the scientific and academic world does not move forward so fast. Twitter is one more chapter within the growing tension between journalism and

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12 Cfr. BROCKMAN, J., *Is the Internet Changing the Way You Think?*, Harper, New York, 2011, p. 83.

13 Cfr. JAVA, A., *et al.*, "Why we twitter: understanding microblogging usage and communities". Paper presented at 9th WebKDD, 2007; HUBERMAN, B., *et al.*, "Social networks that matter: Twitter under microscope",   *First   Monday*, 14(1),   2009, http://firstmonday.org/htbin/cgiwrap/bin/ojs/index.php/fm/article/view/2317/2063, 2009, retrieved 20 July, 2011; and NAAMAN *et al.*, "Is it Really About Me? Message Content in Social Awareness Streams", paper presented at ACM Conference on Computer Supported Cooperative Work, Savannah, 2010.

14 Cfr. O´CONNOR, R., "Facebook and Twitter are reshaping journalism as we know it", *Alternet*, 2009, http://www.alternet.org/media/121211/facebook_and_twitter_are_reshaping_journalism_as_we_know_it, retrieved 20 Juny, 2011.

15 Cfr. GARCÍA DE TORRES, E., *et al.*, "See you on Facebook or Twitter? The use of social media by 27 news outlets from 9 regions in Argentina, Colombia, Mexico, Peru, Portugal, Spain and Venezuela", paper presented at 12th International Symposium for Online Journalism, Austin, 2011.

16 HERMIDA, A., *op. cit.*

17 AN, J. *et al.*, *op.cit.*

18 Cfr. LASORSA, D., *et. al.*, "Normalizing Twitter. Journalism practice in an emerging communication space", *Journalism Studies*, iFirst, 2011, pp. 1-18.

19 Cfr. FARHI, J., "The Twitter Explosion", *American Journalism Review*, 2009, http://www.ajr.org/Article.asp?id=4756, retrieved 25 May, 2011.

participation[20] or, in other words, between editorial control and collaboration. This research underlines, through a preliminary picture of the situation in some Spanish journalists, the need of new paradigms for journalistic practices in social media like Twitter.

2. *Twitter as a holistic media system*

There are different studies on partial aspects of Twitter and others works focus more on general approaches. The rate of users´ activity was treated by Huberman[21], the main activities and specific uses with microbblogging were described by Java[22], and Krishnamurthy[23] studied the possible correlation between updates and followers. On the nature of trending topics and retweets, the findings of Kwak, Lee, Park and Moon (2010)[24] are especially interesting. They found that "any retweeted tweet is to reach an average of 1000 users no matter what the number of followers is of the original tweet"[25]. These studies, among others, moves from general overviews (motivations, trends, activities) to specific uses like the "@" sign,[26] but there are still not many views that combine a global landscape of Twitter within specific target groups and their jobs, such as journalists[27]. Anyway, most works consider Twitter like a system where the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. The results of Kwak[28] are a clear example of that idea.

The relations between users and media on Twitter are still in a beta stage. Challenges like gaining confidence and credibility are the first borderlands. If journalists reach a complete relationship with users, they will get benefits like constant advising and feedback about their news. However, to reach to this point, media and journalists must offer new values on Twitter, something more than just repeating headlines. As Cardoso[29] points out, relations between journalists and users on Twitter are being redefined by new paradigms. The highly connected environment represented by Twitter can only be understood under global views that pay attention to the value of all the interactions and relations as a whole. In other words, it needs to be viewed in the holistic value of Twitter as a system.

As some authors have underlined, journalism need more works on "the extent to which such systems of ambient journalism allow citizens to maintain an awareness of the news

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20 Cfr. ANDERSON, C.W., "What Aggregators Do: Rhetoric, Practices and Cultures of Digital and Analog Evidence in Web-Era Journalism", paper presented at 12th International Symposium for Online Journalism, Austin, 2011.
21 HUBERMAN, B., *et al.*, *op. cit.*
22 JAVA, A., *et al.*, *op. cit.*
23 Cfr. KRISHNAMURTHY, B., *et al.*, "A few chirps about Twitter," in *Proceedings of the First Workshop on Online Social Networks*, Seattle, 2008, pp. 19-24.
24 Cfr. KWAK, H., *et al.*, "What is Twitter, a Social Network or a News Media?", Paper presented at International World Wide Web Conference (IW3C2), Raleigh, 2010.
25 Ibíd. p. 10.
26 Cfr. HONEYCUTT, C. & HERRING, S., "Beyond microblogging: Conversation and collaboration via Twitter", Paper presented at 42nd Hawaii International Conference on System Sciences, Honolulu, 2009.
27 HERMIDA, A., *op. cit.*; LASORSA, D., *op. cit.*; & AN, J., *op. cit.*
28 KWAK, H., *op. cit.*
29 Cfr. CARDOSO, G., "Más allá de Internet y de los medios de comunicación de masas. El nacimiento de la comunicación en red", *Telos*, 86, 2011, pp. 14-22.

events would be a fertile area for future study"[30]. Naaman[31] studied a characterization of the content of messages published by active users who were not organizations or marketers. But the concept of "active" used in this study can be considered weak (users with at least ten followers and ten messages). In any case, their research questions and findings are relevant when we think about how journalism on Twitter could be: a majority of users focus on "self" and a smaller set of users are more driven by sharing information[32]. If, as these authors highlighted, even the "self-messages" are useful to maintain relationships with strong or weak ties, it is relevant to know how these mechanisms appear (if they do) in the journalists´ profiles. The lack of relevant bibliography implies the need of specific works about journalistic routines on Twitter. "It is important to explore in greater depth the qualities of microblogging –real-time, immediate communication, searching, link-sharing and the follower structure– and their impact on the ways news and information is communicated"[33].

There is a huge group of concepts which need to be redefined in order to understand the journalistic activity in the Twitterverse.

Cha and others authors[34] measured the concept of influence on Twitter to find that popularity is not related to engaging audience, and that news organizations have a high percentage of retweets about different topics. These authors sum up that influence is more associated with personal involvement, since that influence "is not gained spontaneously or accidentally". Boyd, Golder and Lotan[35] studied the conversational features of retweets. In their work they underlined the ambiguity around authorship and attribution, and a large variety of retweeting practices according to the different goals of users. Building community with strong and weak ties was registered by Naaman[36] with some interesting variables like "presence maintenance" to register those messages with the unique goal of reminding the presence –a sort of "Hi, I'm here" message–. Honeycutt and Herring[37] studied the specific uses of replies. They worked with seven categories to code its function in each case, while thirteen categories were used to classify the main content theme of each tweet. Lasorsa[38] found a strong presence of opinion in the journalists´ tweets, and significant use of external links, job talking and retweet, which amplifies their role as gatekeepers.

A study of 16937 tweets from a sample of twenty Spanish editors provided relevant information about the use of mentions and hashtags[39]. According to the results, more than 22% of messages contained mentions, but it is not explained the use or intention of that

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30 HERMIDA, A., *op. cit.*, p. 303.

31 *Op. cit.*

32 Ibíd.

33 HERMIDA, A., *op. cit.*, p. 304.

34 Cfr. CHA, M., *et al.*, "Measuring User Influence in Twitter: The Million Follower Fallacy", *Association for the Advancement of Artificial Intelligence*, 2010, http://an.kaist.ac.kr/~mycha/docs/icwsm2010_cha.pdf, retrieved 5 July 2011.

35 Cfr. BOYD, D., *et al.*, "Tweet, Tweet, Retweet: Conversational of Retweeting on Twitter", Paper presented at 43rd Hawaii international Conference on System Sciences, Honolulu, 2010.

36 *Op. cit.*

37 *Op. cit.*

38 *Op. cit.*

39 Cfr. COLLADO, E., El microblogging en el periodismo español: relaciones de los directores de medios en Twitter, Thesis master, Open University of Catalonia, Barcelona, 2011.

"@" sign (reply to someone, direct request, comments on the message of another person, retweet of a reply, etc.). In connection with the hashtags, the same study explains that only 1% of tweets (1.987) had a hashtag. In these cases most of them were dedicated to self promote own media, so they are not framed by the editors as connectors of issues for conversations[40].

In all these kinds of studies analyzing the results there is a problem: the lack of context, the risk of taking each tweet in isolation from the context. Many media make this kind of mistake when they underline the tweet from a celebrity as if it would be a headline, almost without context and probably missing factors like irony or humor. For instance, in January 2011 the Spanish film maker Nacho Vigalondo was fired from *Elpais.com* (where he wrote a blog). He used his Twitter account to say jokes about the Holocaust. The first one said: "Now I have more than 50000 followers and four wines in the body, I can say my message: The Holocaust was fake" (@Vigalondo, January 28, 2011). Although Vigalondo was the main character in a TV campaign for the newspaper, the incident made that the TV commercial be withdrawn. "The tweet that has raised the controversy is not the declaration of a revisionist is the parody of this attitude. I repeat: I am not anti-Semitic", said the film maker in his defense.

If Twitter is a public global conversation, at least a potential conversation in "my" timeline, the context has to be highly considered in all kind of analysis or journalistic treatments. In other words, and as many authors have pointed out, Twitter has to be considered a holistic system with interrelations to be taken into account. For Naaman *et al.*[41], Twitter is typified a "social awareness stream" (SAS) which is distinguished by three factors: public and personal nature of communication, brevity and highly connected space. To these components, it is necessary to add that in Twitter "the value does not lie in each individual fragment of news and information, but rather in the mental portrait created by a number of messages over a period of time. I describe this as ambient journalism"[42]. Each individual message has no value without the context of the rest of tweets and, as a consequence, the reactions created must be seen as a whole. According to Dan Gillmor, Twitter is a "collective intelligence system" for journalists[43], a community that provide news, opinion and trends.

From a social perspective no matter whether it is called collective intelligence system or social awareness stream, or from a journalistic perspective, "ambient journalism", in any case "it can be seen as a system that alerts journalists to trends or issues hovering under the news radar"[44]. Nevertheless, the journalistic objective on Twitter cannot be just active listening looking for breaking news. The whole variety of new relations could produce an unpredictable media landscape, mixing professionals and amateurs in the deepest way ever seen in order to get something more than just a new news-dissemination channel.

3. *Looking for a new kind of journalism*

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40 Ibíd.

41 NAAMAN *et al.*, *op cit.*
42 HERMIDA, A., *op. cit.*, p. 301.
43 FARHI, J., *op cit.*
44 HERMIDA, A., *op. cit.*, p. 302.

This new job for the "ambient journalism" still needs a previous stage for testing tools and coverage models, especially if we consider that traditional media are usually conservative with those changes coming from the culture of new technologies and they "have tended to transfer their journalistic culture to digital media rather than rethink established routines and conventions"[45]. The same idea is pointed out by Nguyen[46], who underlines the "fear-driven defensive innovation culture of traditional media" over changes perceived as a threat for the monopoly that they usually enjoy. Thus, the late arrival of media organizations to social media is still a common practice and just when these social platforms become a "killer-app" –Twitter, Youtube, Facebook…– and therefore, a place where media must be, is the moment when media owners start to think about strategies for the new spaces (new for them).

Most of the innovative ways of journalism with Twitter have been distinguished by a special effort in data visualization rather than in the integration of Twitter in the editorial processes (pre-publishing or post-publishing). The research and development laboratory of The New York Times, known as NYTLab, launched in April 2011 Cascade, a data visualization project to show the behaviour of Twitter users with the news coming from the NYTimes website. The site was developed with open source tools and it shows examples about how news was disseminated on Twitter, showing the most influential users and the life cycle of the news.

If the management and visualization of User Generated Content is going to be a key issue for journalistic models on Twitter, the use of specific resources of microblogging is not going to be less important. The concept of "opening" is narrowly related to the transparency of media and it depends on how the media share the routines of their journalistic job.

One of these routines is the relation with different sources and it becomes a public process through the lists of Twitter. It is not common that the media promote a public and intensive use of the lists on Twitter to show some of their sources, but the BBC did it during the first months of 2011 to cover the conflict in the Middle East. This fact was a real tipping point because, even without a huge journalistic impact, "for the first time, the BBC is curating third-party content on a third-party site –and this presents real challenges"[47]. On @bbcworldservice, the BBC created Twitter lists to show all the faces of the story, following journalists, bloggers and institutional sources. In this sense it is important to remember that, as it has been proven, "Twitter users who follow journalists tend to seek more diverse types of information"[48] and therefore, to know who the journalists follow is one of the more valuable types of information that users can get. The sources become public for everyone.

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45 Cfr. HERMIDA, A, "New Challenges for Journalism in the 21st Century", in BENEDETTI, P., CURRIE, T. & KIERANS, K. (eds.), *The New Journalist: Roles, Skills and Critical Thinking*, Emond Montgomery Publications, Toronto, 2010, pp. 9-21, p. 9.

46 Cfr. NGUYEN, A., "Facing the `Fabulous Monster", *Journalism Studies*, 9(1), 2008, pp. 91-104, p. 92.

47 Cfr. SAWYER, A., "Twitter for journalists: beyond gathering and distributing content", *BBC College of Journalism Blog*, 2011, http://www.bbc.co.uk/journalism/blog/2011/03/twitter-for-journalists-beyond.shtml, retrieved 25 May 2011.

48 AN *et al.*, *op cit.*, p. 2.

Along with lists, personal branding is another way to take advantage of key features of Twitter. Jisun An and other authors found that the personal accounts of some journalists on Twitter have more audience than accounts of media organizations, and that even "journalists are 6 times more likely than media organizations to receive a mention for each of their tweets"[49]. These findings have close relations with the suggestions of Messner, Linke and Eford,[50] who found weaknesses in the Twitter strategy of most newspapers and television stations (the study was about media accounts, not on personal accounts of journalists). In this sense, official accounts of media should look out for how some journalists, like editors, freelancers, bloggers or some famous correspondents, with a high number of followers, use their Twitter accounts.

Journalists may use Twitter to classify and reach different kinds of (networks of) sources. As Paul Grabowicz points out, the platform should be a daily tool for newsrooms: "Who are the people and target groups you're trying to reach? Can you start a Twitter group to follow those people?"[51]. Moreover, users can also get extra content if they follow some journalists. For instance, they can be able to get for free a kind of content that is a paid content in other platforms. This was the case of the Spanish newspaper *Elmundo.es*, whose editor Pedro J. Ramírez (@pedroj_ramirez) published some messages with free access to some news that belongs to the paid platform Orbyt. These kind of tweets are called by Ramírez "bonus para tuiteros" (bonus for Twitter users) and they can be tracked with the hashtag #bonusparatuiteros. Orbyt (orbyt.es) is the paid content news platform that belongs to *Elmundo.es*.

The last example is just one of many which are making a landscape of experimentation for journalism in a new platform. As some authors underline, what Twitter shows is still "an early stage of micro journalism"[52]. The findings in this period of almost trial-and-error method will be the guides in the journalistic manuals of journalistic style and usage in the future. Physiognomy and the social architecture of Twitter are changing the way how news is distributed, so the traditional schemes should be updated: "the institutionally structured features of microblogging are creating new forms of journalism, representing one of the ways in which the Internet is influencing the journalism practices and, furthermore, changing how journalism is itself defined"[53].

When time is a priority, Twitter becomes an irreplaceable journalistic tool. That is the opinion of Craig Stoltz, editor of 2ohreally.com, who highlights the common point in all the news where this platform is successful for journalism: "The plane crash, the riot, the political event… these are the kind of stories where the time is important and the facts are scattered"[54]. It is at the same time a challenge and a problem related to issues such as filtering, quality and credibility of the information: "Sometimes it is too fast. Twitter happens in moments (…) for the mainstream audience Twitter might need better filtering

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49 Ibíd.

50 Cfr. MESSNER, M., LINKE, M. and EFORD, A., "Shoveling tweets: An analysis of the microblogging engagement of traditional news organizations", Paper presented at 12th International Symposium for Online Journalism, Austin, 2011.

51 FARHI, J., *op cit.*

52 AN *et al.*, *op cit.* p. 1.

53 HERMIDA, A., "Twittering the…", *op cit.* p. 300.

54 FARHI, J., *op cit.*

tools", says Catone[55]. However, this author is talking about journalistic filtering within a landscape which is just partially journalistic. Media can be responsible for the content published and retweeted from their accounts (media and journalists), but not from others. Professional responsibilities of journalism are usually transferred unconsciously to every user of social media.

Hard news is also the best proof to argue for developing innovation in media. During the Egyptian revolution and the Middle East protests, some media did experiments visualizing Twitter data, especially The Guardian and Al Jazeera. For the former, the platform was an interactive map with the location of the last tweets coming from a network of experts, bloggers and journalists. For the latter, Al Jazeera made what they called Twitter Dashboard, a site with statistics of the tweets published in five countries (Bahrain, Egypt, Libya, Syria and Yemen) and the hashtag distribution. Both examples could be considered previews of future "tools that are more than simple posting and reading timelines"[56], but as it was said previously, this is a stage still in experimentation on data visualization, more than journalistic sense makers.

The new directions for journalism are not mainly about removing practices, the innovation is more associated with openness to new ways of collaboration. "A future direction for journalism may be to develop approaches and systems that help the public negotiate and regulate the flow of awareness information", so "journalists would be seen as sense-makers, rather than just reporting the news"[57]. A perfect example of a news model according to this concept is the kind of sites called aggregators. In Anderson´s words, aggregators could be defined as "hierarchizers, interlinkers, bundlers, rewriters, and illustrators of web content"[58]. The Huffington Post is a clear paradigm of news aggregator.

Maybe news aggregators are some of the models that are best adapted to the new landscape, characterized by a tension between control and collaboration. As Hermida underlines, journalism has a culture based on editorial control and "new media are characterized by their connected and collaborative nature. The challenge for journalism, and the journalist, is to find a place along the continuum between control and connection, and between a closed and a collaborative media culture"[59].

This idea is associated with recent results in Twitter studies, which found that through the indirect exposure to media (RT, mentions, via…), people receive from six to ten times more media messages than from direct exposure[60]. This indirect exposure is the result of the implicit negotiation built between sense-makers (active users) and passive users. Under this phenomenon, the goal of the media would be to have excellent journalists able to become real sense-makers on the Twitterverse. An executive of news company explained to Anderson[61] how news aggregators see their role: "it is about making sense of the Internet (…) It is not about journalism, at least the way we have always thought of

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55 Cfr. CATONE, J., "The Rise of Twitter as a platform for serious discourse", *Read Write Web*. 2011, http://www.readwriteweb.com/archives/the_rise_of_twitter_as_a_platform_for_serious_discourse.php, retrieved 13 Juny 2011.
56 SAWYER, A., *op cit.*
57 HERMIDA, A., "Twittering the…", *op cit.* p. 304.
58 ANDERSON, C.W., *op. cit.*
59 HERMIDA, A, "New Challenges for…", *op. cit.*, p. 18.
60 AN *et al.*, *op. cit.*
61 ADERSON, C.W., *op. cit.*

journalism up until now". That role (sense-makers) is just possible with a journalistic ongoing process of collaboration with people in all the news phases: observation, selection, filtering, editing, distributing and interpretation. In this study, that full process will be defined as end-user journalism.

4. *Journalism as end-user innovation*

Innovation is still an issue that the media have to overcome, and assume like a common practice even when many people recognize that traditional media "enjoy steady growth via incremental, predictable changes" and with the development of last decades "this long-established fear has become intensified"[62]. In other words, "for years, newspapers have treated innovation like a trip to the dentist-a torture to be endured, not encouraged (…) Now that's all changing, of necessity"[63]. However, innovation can be considered the daily routine for social media.

Innovation as a process closer to audiences than professionals is not a new idea that was originated from Web or Social Media. Elements such as creativity or intuition are common qualities in people who have been involved in any kind of successful processes of innovation, and these skills are not just in professional environments. Actually, creativity and intuition are not welcome in many institutions or companies, which might be due to its unpredictable results. As McLuhan and Fiore highlighted more than forty years ago, professionalism is uncritical with its environment: "amateurism seeks the development of the total awareness of the individual and the critical awareness of the groundrules of the society. The amateur can afford to lose. The professional tends to classify and to specialize, to accept uncritically the groundrules of the environment"[64]. The roots of the same idea have been taken more than thirty years later in journalism,[65] when the concept of participatory journalism[66] makes more sense than ever thanks to the spread of a Social Web and the permanent mixing of professionals and amateurs in all the fields (journalism, education, music, arts…). This unavoidable mixture is the source of the growing tension in journalism between all the sides of power (credibility, authorship, distribution…) and all the kinds of participation.

The expert (or professional) is who knows the rules, but in many cases s/he is not someone who is thinking about the future rules. Innovation does not happen in this context due to the lack of critical thinking. In the journalism field, Twitter is an example of narrow coexistence between amateurism and professionals. It is a kind of environment where everyone can learn from each other. Elements such as experience, knowledge, intuition or creativity are shared every day, in a complex scenario with high rates of cooperation and its own social filters (retweets, mentions, hashtags, lists, trending

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62 NGUYEN, A., *op. cit.*, p. 92.
63 Cfr. SMOLKIN, R., "Adapt or Die", *American Journalism Review*, 2006, http://www.ajr.org/article.asp?id=4111, retrieved 10 June, 2011.
64 Cfr. MCLUHAN, M. & FIORE, Q., *The Medium is the Massage*, Bantam Books, Toronto, 1967, p. 93.
65 Cfr. BOWMAN, Shayne. & WILLIS, Chris., *We media: how audiences are shaping the future of news and information*, The Media Center at the American Press Institute, Reston, 2003; and GILLMOR, Dan, *We the Media: Grassroots Journalism by the People, for the People*, O´Reilly Media, Sebastopol, 2004.
66 Cfr. SINGER, Jane *et al.*, *Participatory Jounalism: Guarding Open Gates at Online Newspapers*, Wiley-Blackwell, New York, 2011.

topics…). Innovation can happen thanks to the collaboration between amateurism-amateurism, from amateurism to the professionals, or from professionals to the amateurism.

The idea of end-user innovation has been more present in computer sciences than in social or communication sciences as a way to analyze the development of software such as UNIX or freeware in general[67], but the arts and design are fields where this concept has a natural environment. For the contemporary participatory design, elements such as opening, online platforms where to share and communicate, and news ways to collaborate are the key issues[68]. Under a general definition of "end-user innovation", this phenomenon means that people "are increasingly able to innovate for themselves" and the trend towards the democratization of innovation also applies to information products[69]. Twitter could be a great example in this sense.

It is that kind of combination –for instance experience and resources from professionals plus creativity and intuition from amateurs– that has made the way Twitter connects people about any issue acquire importance. It does like most processes of innovation we know, in a place where "these things are accumulative, accretive processes of happening upon, connecting, and assembling: an infinite Erector set, not just a few pretty I-beams strewn about on a concrete floor", as Kedrosky says[70]. Jonhson[71] remarks that the short life of Twitter is characterized by several processes of end-user innovation: hashtags or the uses related to the "@" sign are clear examples of practices made in cooperation between amateurs –users– and professionals –Twitter as a company–. If Twitter is seen as a perfect scenario for the "ambient journalism"[72], journalists could take advantage of the natural environment that Twitter offers for innovation. As Hermida highlighted, "in the case of ambient journalism, the role may be designing the tools that can analyse, interpret and contextualise a system of collection intelligence, rather than in the established practice of selection and editing of content"[73], but it is not only about tools. It is also about attitudes and new practices.

Furthermore, it is about new media literacy[74]. All new media start with stages where languages, formats and processes are copied from the old media, but later in the following stages the own language is developed and thus the "mediamorphosis"[75] is completed. In that moment professionals usually start the discussion about literacy, a group of tacit skills already developed tremendously by most active users or early adopters. For journalists, Twitter is a huge public mirror where thousand of users test

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67 Cfr. PROCTER, R. & WILLIAMS, R., "Beyond Design: Social Learning and Computer-Supported Cooperative Work: some lessons from innovation studies", in SHAPIRO, D. (ed.), *The Design of Computer-Supported Cooperative Work and Groupware Systems*, Elsevier Science, Amsterdam, 1996, pp. 445-464.

68 Cfr. BATTARBEE, K., *et al.*,"Designed for co-designers", Paper presented at Tenth Anniversary Conference on Participatory Design, Indianapolis, 2008.

69 VON HIPPEL, *op. cit.*, p. 1.

70 BROCKMAN, *op. cit.*, p. 46.

71 Cfr. JOHNSON, S.,"How Twitter will change the way we live", *Time*, 2009, http://www.time.com/time/business/article/0,8599,1902604-4,00.html, retrieved 15 May, 2011.

72 HERMIDA, A., "Twittering the…", *op cit.*

73 Ibíd., p. 304.

74 Cfr. LANKSHEAR, C. & KNOBEL, M. (eds.), *Digital literacies*, Peter Lang, New York, 2008.

75 Cfr. FIDLER, R., *Mediamorphosis: understanding new media*, Pine Forge Press, Thousand Oaks, 1997.

their skills to connect and communicate. The failed attempts are ignored by most people, and the successful ones are promoted by the social architecture of Twitter (replies, lists, favourites, mentions…). The end-user innovation on Twitter will continue happening with or without journalists, it is their turn to become also in end-user journalism. This mirror is a perfect reflection on where new media literacies are addressed: "participation over publishing, distributed expertise over centralized expertise, collective intelligence over individual possessive intelligence"[76], among others features.

A similar concept of the end-user journalism is called the "co-producing experience" pointed out by Humphreys in the edited work of Peck and Malthouse[77], who remembers that a media like the newspaper was co-produced in its origin, and just in the last two centuries turned professional. So, these movements through cooperation are maybe not more than a return to basics. According to Humphreys, in a co-produced scenario (like it could be Twitter) "one is forced to ask: Where do the media end and the audience begin?"[78]. There is not an easy answer since on Twitter the roles are constantly being changed: sources become media, media become sources, users become media, and this sequence would continue because they are all at the same horizontal level of conversation or active listening. The latent requirement in all the processes for cooperation is the opening through new practices and content. Ironically, one of the hardest things to always do for the media companies has been to break the "walled gardens"[79]. This is a traditional expression to define the historic resistance of the media to open its contents with all the consequences.

"To leave room for the independent development of content without censorship" is a big challenge for the media, as Humphreys recalls[80]. Twitter offers several ways to open several journalistic processes that traditionally have been closed to the audience. Given the five stages of the called "News Value-Chain"[81], microblogging has opportunities for innovation: a) access and observation; b) selection and filtering; c) processing and editing, d) distributing and e) interpretation. Innovation, however, is not a process that happens during the first steps of any technological system, what is thus needed is that the technological system turns into a normal practice for the society. It is in that moment when technological innovation can turn into what it really matters: social innovation[82]. For journalists on Twitter, maybe that moment is now.

5. *Case study: qualitative categorization and content analysis of journalists´ tweets*

The main objective in this study is to identify the different types of professional activities practice by some of the most important Spanish journalists on Twitter. This topic implies

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76 LANKSHEAR, C. & KNOBEL, M., *op. cit.*, p. 21.

77 Cfr. PECK, A. & MALTHOUSE, E. (eds.), *Medill on Media Engagement*, Hampton Press, Cresskill, 2011, p. 95.

78 Ibíd., p. 96.

79 Cfr. SANCHA, D., "The convergence of newsrooms in the era of the open garden", *Quaderns del CAC*, 31, 2009, pp. 77-83, p. 77.

80 PECK, A. & MALTHOUSE, E., *op. cit.*, p. 104.

81 Cfr. DOMINGO, D., *et al.*, "Participatory journalism practices in the media and beyond", *Journalism Practice*, 2(3), 2008, pp. 326-342.

82 VON HIPPEL, *op. cit.*

several discussions which need deeper and further studies about issues such as contents, sources, style and relations as a whole. Thus, the first findings in this work must be taken as an introductory approach about the new and specific journalism that can be developed with Twitter. And these findings are just a part from the whole flow of data obtained in the research. The study addresses the following research questions:

RQ1: How are the interactions of journalists in the microblogging?

RQ2: What kind of content do they prefer to publish and share?

The methodology of this case study is based especially on several authors who designed specific categories based on qualitative categorization of Twitter messages, such as Honeycutt and Herring,[83] Naaman[84] and Lasorsa[85]. Linked to the uses of the ''@'' sign, the two first categories of Honeycutt and Herring –addressivity and reference–[86] are selected and developed deeply in the present study, while the chosen variables of content analysis are Exhort (it encourages others to do something), Metacommentary (comments on Twitter or twittering) and Request information (–with or without addressee–).

Lasorsa[87] studied tweets by journalists in terms of a) non-partisanship and impartiality (opinion); b) gatekeeping (retweet) and c) accountability and transparency (job talking, excluding self promotion). In our paper the variable "retweet" is selected like a variable of gatekeeping and it is also developed in terms of direction (positive or negative). Opinion, linking and job talking has been included in this study in some different ways in order to get a deeper picture of journalists´ activities. The designed template[88] is divided into two sections. The first one contains variables related to the Twitter account, and the second one has variables related to the content included in each message. This study presents a content analysis with variables from categories according to the research questions and studies from other authors.

The journalists who were chosen for the sample were selected using the tools Twitterholic and Postrank, the searcher Search Twitter and a personal research looking for 25 specific spanish profiles of editors and former editors (16 selected), media bloggers (4 selected), freelancers (3 selected) and correspondents (2 selected).

The sample of tweets (N=1125) is made up of some of the most important Spanish journalists on Twitter. Editors, correspondents, bloggers and freelancers have been chosen not just by the number of followers. The selection was made according to the media where they belong to and their position in several Twitter rankings like Postrank and Twitterholic. They have also been chosen because editors, correspondents and freelancers are supposed to be profiles which have an especial interest in issues such as maintaining a high personal branding with their Twitter accounts and using it to improve their journalistic job. So this sample should not be considered just in terms of quantitative value, but qualitative too (see Annex 01).

In this approach, the study gathers a preliminary flow of data that originates after analyzing 1125 tweets of 25 Twitter users. 45 tweets from each journalist were randomly chosen and coded during six weeks (between May 24 and July 4, 2011). In this way, the

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83 *Op. cit.*
84 *Op. cit.*
85 *Op. cit.*
86 *Op. cit.*
87 *Op. cit.*
88 The designed template *ad hoc* for this study is available to anyone, contacting via e-mail with the autor.

research has been made with similar proportions to the one used by Lasorsa[89], who needed 500 journalists´ accounts to study a sample of more than 22000 tweets. In our case, due to logistic reasons (just one coder –the author–) the sample is smaller, but the study has been improved in many ways: the research presents more variables, more tweets from each user are coded, the Twitter users are selected using different tools and the author is at the same time the coder of all the sample (reliability of coding due to advantages of analyzing context –technical and Spanish context–).

The final data were obtained using the software SPSS v19 to get simple frequencies and contingency tables. Due to the huge amount of varied data that a template with 24 variables can offer, only some partials results will be analyzed in this preliminary study. For the purposes of the research questions and the aforementioned concepts (mainly the concepts of opening, cooperation and collaboration), only the most significant results will be included. The rest of the data and variables will be used in future studies about the same topic.

6. *Findings*

In this preliminary research the selected results are the most useful to answer the research questions. If the end-user journalism has to be made with people, the type of interactions, the published content and the special resources used by journalists on Twitter are some routines that are identifying the real journalism we have now in this social network. In this sense, the level of openness (in terms of participation, access to information, transparency or accountability) is a key issue to understand how journalists are using new media. The following findings can be used as its indicators:

A) Related to the interactions of journalists with their followers.
- 01. How many tweets are explicitly requesting information?
- 02. Addressivity (use of the "@" sign).
- 03. Retweet.

B) Related to the published content.
- 04. Percentage of internal and external links.
- 05. Breaking news.
- 06. Hashtags (as a word or "out of message").

C) Relations between variables.
- 07. When an external link is present, how many of them are linking to non professional media?
- 08. When a retweet is present, how many of them have external links?

Results 01: How many tweets are explicitly requesting information? 5.3% of the tweets request information. 94.7% of the tweets were not asking explicitly for any kind of information. These results show clearly that journalists are not using Twitter as a tool for asking explicitly about new information, data or sources. This does not mean that they do not get new information and sources from this platform, either, but maybe the best way for them to get it is through is other kinds of messages and interactions. On the other

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89 *Op. cit.*

hand the results offer an open question about what would happen if Twitter were used by journalists to openly ask people in much more ways to more issues.

Results 02: Addressivity. 50.6% did not contain the "@" sign. 27.6% of the tweets were a direct reply. 7% were tweets commenting the information of another person. 6.4% were tweets to other uses, like RT an answer or to promote own media. 5.9% were tweets to put someone in contact with some information. 2.5% were a direct request. According to these findings, replying is an important activity for journalists on Twitter, more than any other kind of use with the "@" sign. Other kinds of interactions, such as putting someone in contact with information or commenting the published content, have significant presence as well, but in a minor level. The direct request has the lowest percentage, confirming the results shown at variable 01, where only the 5.3% were message requesting information from people. The sum of all the minor uses of "@" amount just half (14.8%) of the tweets dedicated to replies (27.6%).

Results 03: Retweet. 77.1% of the messages were without retweet. 21% of the retweets were without comments. 1.3% of the tweets contained positive comments with the retweet. 0.4% of the retweets were with non-aligned comments and 0.3% of the retweets had negative comments.

Graphic 1: Types of retweet
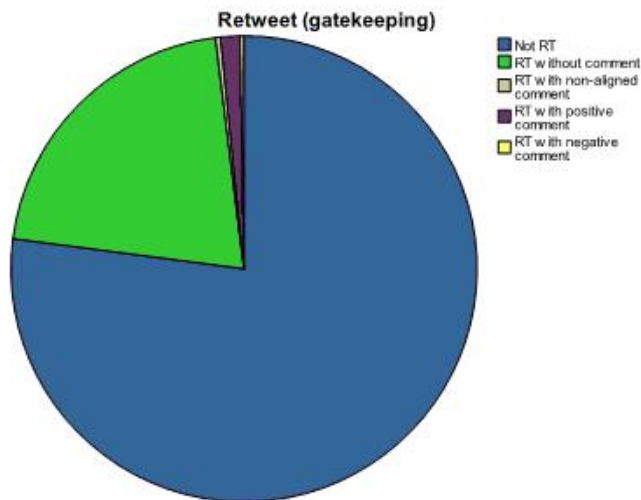
Own elaboration

As shown in this graphic, the gatekeeper's role is highly modified by retweets on Twitter, due to the fact that more than 1 out of 5 messages are retweets. When this activity appears, the journalist usually prefers to do so without comments. The presence of retweets with some type of comment (non-aligned, positive or negative) is only the 2% (versus 21% of retweets without commenting).

Results 04: Percentages of internal/external links. 68.3% of the tweets had no links. 13% of the messages contained internal links. 18.8% of the tweets had links to external sites.

Graphic 2: Type of linking. Own elaboration
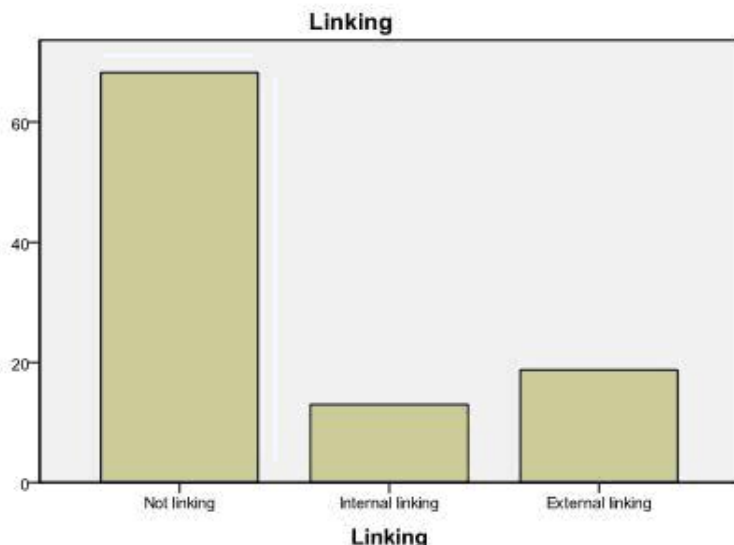
Linking is also a result related to the gatekeeper's role. In this sense, the findings are highly significant because most of the links published by journalists are external links. This means there is not a relation with the content published by the own professional media. These results are affected by the high presence of retweets as well, where there is usually an important number of external links. Anyway, most of the messages (68.3%) do not contain any kind of link.

Results 05: Breaking news. 55.3% of the tweets were without breaking news. 17.5% of the news came from the own journalist. 12.6% of the news were linked to own media. 9.9% of the news with links to other professional media and 4.7% of the breaking news with links to non-professional media.

Graphic 3: Tweets and breaking news. Own elaboration
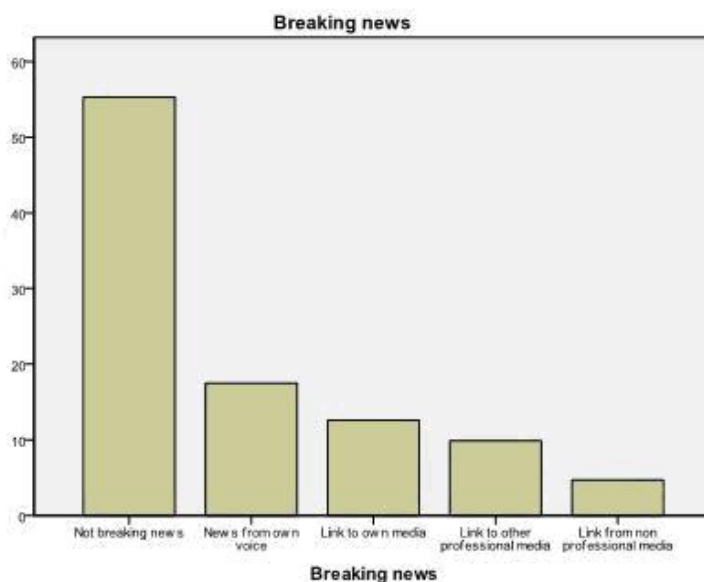
These results suggest that the personal content has a strong presence on the journalists' accounts, because 55.3% are not content with breaking news. However, with news published the high percentage to external links is significant, professional and non-professional (14.6%). News from own voice, without links to other sources, is showing that journalists are managing their personal branding in a significant way (17.5%).

Results 06: Hashtags, as a word or "out of message". 83.6% of the messages had no hashtag. 10% of the tweets introduced the hashtag "out of message" and 6.3% of the tweets with the hashtag as a word within the message. These findings are clearly showing that the hashtag is not a common resource for journalists. Less than 17% of the messages contained one and most of them were not integrated within the message as a word. In this sense journalists are not giving advantages to promote visibility of their content.

Results 07: When an external link is present, how many of them are linking to non-professional media? In 211 messages with external links, 32 were linked to non-professional media. According to these findings, the opening of journalists' messages could be stronger when external links are used. The links to non-professional media are just 1 out of 6 messages with external links.

Results 8: When a retweet is present, how many of them have external links? In 258 messages with RT, 94 had external links. The opening related to retweets is bigger than published messages with links (there is a high presence of RT without links = 133; RT with internal links = 31). When there are retweets more than 36% contains external links. In this sense, the journalistic task of gatekeeper is amplified in terms of transparency and accountability. With this fact, the sources and data chosen by the journalist (the gatekeeper) are more public than ever, and it comes from any direction at the same time that the information is being deeply disseminated through the journalist´s community.

7. *Discussion*

The study has shown a set of practices where journalists seem to be able to collaborate with their followers and practices where they are not so ready. The end-user journalism is the landscape that tries to fix the traditional journalistic tensions between control and collaboration, with more participation from non-professionals and more decisions made by the professionals. If professionals do not take that step (more decisions related to job talking, linking or sharing) the end-user journalism will not be developed. And Twitter is just a platform within that landscape, but not the only one.

According the findings, it seems that the ambient journalism within Twitter is developing audience activities rather than professional decisions by the journalists. The phenomenon of end-user journalism can not be fully completed if media do not take advantage of the ambient created by Twitter. Only 5% of tweets analyzed requested information from the followers; 27% were direct replies and 32% of tweets contained links. This last aspect (linking) was the variable where the journalists showed a very high level of openness, with more external links than internal.

The trends that were identified are of especial interest to develop a picture of how some journalists are using Twitter and how that is affecting journalism itself, creating new

kinds of journalism described in this article like "end-user journalism", following a similar process than the end-user innovation. Therefore, the data can represent a step towards an understanding of how journalists could improve their daily job with the help of platforms like Twitter. This social platform, represented as the killer-app for microblogging, is a perfect place to study the growing tension during the last years between editorial control and open participation in journalism, and the ways to fix it.

Concepts like openness and collaboration play a new role in this media landscape, even in traditional journalistic tasks such as gatekeeping (for instance linking or retweeting). According to the findings, the chosen sample of Spanish journalists on Twitter can be considered quite open in terms of participation due to the high level of direct replies. Nevertheless, there is not the same opening in terms of content and issues (more than 66% of the messages are not related to any kind of job talking).

Related to news and information, external links are used (15.6%) more than links to the own media (12.6%), which implies high managing of personal branding and quite opening in terms of linking. In this sense, despite the presence of external links, the professional media are still the favourite ones, with more than double of presence than links to non-professional media (social media). In this sense, research lines about how external linking differs from traditional practices will be useful to show in a clear way how these new landscapes created by social media are definitely more open (linking to competitors) than traditional journalism, as well as how it differs from the traditional concept of gatekeeper.

According to the retweets, it is not used very much to promote the processes of job talking. However, when the journalist is retweeting a message with links there is a strong presence of external links, so the gatekeeper role is being amplified and modified on Twitter thanks to retweets. In other words, hierarchy is less important on Twitter, where the use of links is commonly focused on promoting media non-related with the gatekeeper (the journalist). It is a task more related with the management of the personal account and its credibility than with the traditional role of gatekeepers. We have to underline in this sense the high level of self-content managed, even bigger than the content related to own media. It seems a clear reference to the importance of personal branding and the kind of content that they prefer to publish and share.

All these practices would come from the concept of end-user journalism. These data offer insights to media and journalists, but we need more research focused on this topic. For instance, to define the role of the non-professional media in the daily job of journalists, as well as the role of journalism itself on a social network like Twitter. We need to have future studies about the same topics to know if journalists are increasing their decisions in aspects such as linking, sharing or requesting information on Twitter, to find if they are approaching to more open ways of journalism, like the end-user journalism.

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Annex 01. Selected sample of Spanish journalists in Twitter

1. Ignacio Escolar, @iescolar, former editor newspaper *Público*, columnist.
2. Ramón Trecet, @trecet, blogger sports newspaper *Marca.com*.
3. Pedro J. Ramírez, @pedroj_ramirez, editor newspaper *Elmundo.es*.
4. Vicente Vallés, @vicentevallesTV, editor news program La Noche, *TVE 24h*.
5. Alfredo Relaño, @AS_Relano, editor sports newspaper *As.com*.
6. Gumersindo Lafuente, @sindolafuente, editor newspaper *Elpais.com*.
7. Antonio Delgado, @adelgado, freelancer.
8. Melchor Miralles, @melchormiralles, freelancer.
9. Javier Ares, @javierares, editor sports program Radioestadio, *Onda Cero* radio.
10. Almudena Ariza, @almuariza, Asia correspondent *TVE*.
11. Antonio Martínez, @aberron, coordinator newspaper *lainformacion.com*.
12. Rosa Jiménez, @petezin, tech editor *Elpais.com*.
13. Carles Capdevila, @carlescapde, editor newspaper *Ara*.
14. Ramón Lobo, @ramonlobo, correspondent and blogger *Elpais.com*.
15. Javier Moreno, @morenobarber, editor newspaper *El País*.
16. Delia Rodríguez, @delia2d, tech blogger *Elpais.com*.
17. Mario Tascón, @mtascon, former editor *lainformacion.com*, consultant.
18. Vicent Partal, @vpartal, editor newspaper *Vilaweb.cat*.
19. Felipe del Campo, @felipedelcampo, editor *Marca TV*.
20. Borja Echevarría, @borjaechevarria, assistant manager *Elpais.com*.
21. Fernando Berlín, @radiocable, editor *Radiocable.com*.
22. Andrés Segovia, @asegovia, tech blogger *Elpais.com*.
23. Jaime Estévez, @jaime_estevez, editor news agency *Agoranews.es*.
24. Silvia Cobo, @silviacobo, freelancer.
25. Rafa Sahuquillo, @sahuqui, editor sports program DirectoMarca, *Radio Marca*.