

THE STUDY OF ACADEMIC OUTPUT ON SOCIAL MEDIA RESEARCH TOPIC IN JCR AND SRJ JOURNALS SPECIALIZED IN COMMUNICATION IN SPAIN

ESTUDIO DE LA PRODUCCIÓN CIENTÍFICA SOBRE SOCIAL MEDIA. EL CASO DE LAS REVISTAS ESPAÑOLAS DE COMUNICACIÓN EN JCR Y SJR

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ABSTRACT

The object of the study of this article is the presence of Social Media in the dissemination of Spanish scientific research. In particular, it focuses on the Spanish journals included in JCR and SJR rankings: *Comunicar*, *Comunicación y Sociedad*, *The Professional of Information*, *SCIRE*, *Signa*, *Latina Journal of Social Communication*, *Ibersid*, *History and Social Communication*, and *Studies on the Journalistic Message*. There has been carried out the content analysis of 2,427 articles during the period of 2012 and 2016, illustrating the maturity in the development and implementation of social networks in human communication.

KEYWORDS: social networks; communication; scientific journals; investigation, bibliometric studies.

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RESUMEN

La presencia de los *Social Media* en la difusión de la investigación científica española es el objeto de este estudio. Concretamente, se centra en las revistas españolas indexadas en JCR y SJR: *Comunicar*, *Comunicación y Sociedad*, *El Profesional de Información*, *SCIRE*, *Signa*, *Revista Latina de Comunicación*, *Ibersid*, *Historia y Comunicación Social* y *Estudios sobre el Mensaje Periodístico*. Se ha realizado un análisis de contenido de 2.427 artículos para el periodo 2012-2016, ilustrando la madurez en el desarrollo y la implementación de las redes sociales en la comunicación humana.

PALABRAS CLAVE: redes sociales; comunicación; revistas científicas, bibliometría, investigación.

Translation by **Paula González** (Universidad Católica Andrés Bello, Venezuela)

1. INTRODUCTION

Scientific journals are the main instrument for disseminating research so that they are known to the scientific community. Consequently, analyzing the contents of the journals allows us to know the type of research that is being carried out in a scientific field or on certain topics.

In this sense, journals are the main instrument for disseminating research both within academia and in society. It is possible to know the evolution of a scientific field through the analysis of its texts in the reference journals, either through thematic aspects, sources, authorship, gender, or origin of its authors, among other issues (Canaza-Choque, 2018).

This article analyzes, in particular, the line of research of *Social Media*, in the main Spanish journals in the field of Communication, to know the typology, temporality, and modality of the research. All this framed in the characteristics of Communication, with a high trans-disciplinary nature (Repiso, Torres-Salinas, and Delgado, 2016), which gives it the possibility of showing the study of Social Media from different disciplinary fields and on various objects study, as can be seen in the case of the work on use, typology, and consumption of social networks (Caldevilla Domínguez, 2010).

Research shows that the "academic-university predominance is overwhelming compared to those authors linked to professional sectors or institutions other than the University" (Castillo-Esparcia, Rubio-Moraga, and Almansa-Martínez, 2012). That is, it will be mainly academics who make publications in journals. Furthermore, among these researchers-academics, interuniversity collaboration tends to be common, so that "in those articles in which more than two authors appear, their origin usually corresponds to different Universities or Institutions" (Castillo-Esparcia, Rubio-Moraga, and Almansa-Martínez, 2012).

Research on journals in Spain has aroused great interest in the last decade, in which publications on this field have been made (Martínez-Nicolás and Saperas-Lapedra,

2011; Giménez-Toledo 2013; Montero-Díaz, Cobo, Gutiérrez -Salcedo, Segado-Boj, and Herrera-Viedma, 2018; Castillo-Esparcia and Carretón Ballester, 2010; Torres-Salinas, Delgado-López-Cózar, García-Moreno-Torres, and Herrera, 2011; Repiso-Caballero and Torres-Salinas, 2014; De Filippo, 2013; De Pablos-Coello, Túñez-López, and Mateos-Martín, 2015), especially in the case of Communication. And from the perspective that theoretical texts are included, but also applied, to the different organizational typologies, such as companies, public institutions, social associations, political parties, among others (Almansa-Martínez and Castillo-Esparcia, 2014). Social Media has experienced its development in different professional fields, currently being an important part in the communication strategy of various types of organizations (Annual Study of Social Networks, 2019).

This interdisciplinarity and interrelationships between different organizations influence how Social Media is being applied, where, and since when. Thus, we can establish an X-ray of the degree of insertion of Social Media in the communication strategies of organizations and people (Barón Pulido et al., 2021); and if that implication has occurred quickly or not, by studying when the digital application is available and the time of use of the organizations. Social Media has, thus, become a clear object of study of both professional and scientific interest.

Having information on a specific field of study helps to make it possible in the scientific field to know the emerging research lines among its researchers (Torres-Salinas, Jiménez-Contreras, and Robinson-García, 2014; Park and Leydesdorff, 2009), since Communication is shown as a discipline interrelated with different scientific contexts, such as economics, sociology, or political science (Leydesdorff and Probst, 2009).

Social Media has had in the last decade a great social implementation, in general, and professional, in particular, also turning the citizen as the protagonist of communication as shown by bibliographic studies on this topic (Landeta Bejarano et al., 2020). Therefore, the study of Social Media seems to be one of the main lines of research in scientific journals, also taking into account the special significance of two-way communication in communication strategies.

In this sense, the first studies (Boyd and Ellison, 2008) emphasize the theoretical elements, at the same time that they begin to influence the modifications of the communication process with the empowerment of all the actors who participate in the communicative action (Diga and Kelleher, 2009; Eyrich, Padman, and Sweetser, 2008). Studies on the use of Social Media in Communication have proliferated in Spain in recent years, in different disciplines and areas (Rúas-Araújo and Casero-Ripollés, 2018; Ramos Soler, Del-Pino-Romero, and Castello-Martínez, 2014; Castillo-Esparcia, Almansa-Martínez, Smolak-Lozano, 2015; Ure, 2016; Almansa-Martínez, Fonseca, and Castillo-Almansa, 2013; Sánchez- Hervás, 2013; Rosero Molina *et al.*, 2020).

2. OBJECTIVES

The main research question guiding this study focuses on the following: what space does the research of and in Social Media occupy in articles published in these five

years in the journals indexed by JCR and SRJ in Spain in the field of Communication Sciences?

The objective of this research is to precisely determine the scope of Social Media in the dissemination of Spanish scientific research. Specifically, the research focuses on the considered best Spanish communication journals, as it is understood that maximum quality and impact constitute the development guidelines of the field of Communication in Spain.

Starting from the premise that Social Media increasingly arouse scientific and professional interest in the field of Communication, two research questions have been determined:

Q1: Does Social Media constitute the majority of the topic in the research published in the impact journals in Communication?

Q2: Does the scope of interest in research in Social Media grow exponentially as social networks are developed and established as the main communication tools?

Based on these research questions, we have set two specific objectives for our study:

SO1: Determine scope and degree of academic interest in Social Media in high-impact publications

SO2: Determine the direction and degree of growth of this interest based on the growing popularity of these communication tools in various sectors.

3. METHODOLOGY

To quantify scientific production on the subject of Social Media in communication research published in high-impact journals, the Spanish journals indexed in JCR and SJR have been selected: *Comunicar*, *Comunicación y Sociedad*, *Profesional de Información*, *SCIRE*, *Signa*, *Revista Latina de Comunicación Social*, *Ibersid*, *Historia y Comunicación Social*, and *Estudios sobre el Mensaje Periodístico*. The analysis period has been 5 years (2012-2016, both included), being the time of development of social networks -their development and implementation in society in turn- enter the phase of maturity and consolidation in Spain and worldwide.

The research technique used is a quantitative and qualitative bibliographic review and systematization (Codina, 2018; Hernández Salazar, 2019), based on content analysis and semantic techniques, through an item template created for this purpose. The analysis template contains the identification data of the journal, such as journal name, number, volume, year of publication. These variables provide us with illustrative periods when interest in the subject grows, as well as the volumes most dedicated to 2.0 phenomena, and the journals that publish the most on this field. Elements of the research template were as follows:

Table 1. *Analysis template*

Journal name	Article title
Journal number	Keywords
Volume	Year of publication
Year of publication	Authors' names and surnames
University	Country of publication
Country	Methodology

Source: self-made (Smolak-Lozano and Almansa-Martínez)

With the instrument used in the research, each web page of the selected journals has been analyzed through the Dialnet search engine to check the presence of the texts that include the keywords Social Media, *medios sociales*, digital media, digital social media, social networks, and digital social networks.

Once the existence of the texts with at least one of the keywords has been verified, we have downloaded the text and analyzed the article title, abstract, keywords, and full text, using the template.

Table 2. *Keywords used in the bibliometric search*

<i>Top Search Keywords</i>	<i>Social Media</i>
	social media
<i>Secondary Search Keywords</i>	digital media
	digital social media
	social networks
	digital social networks

Source: self-made

Given the plurality and complexity that exists regarding the use of this term universally applied in its Anglo-Saxon origin (Social Media), it has been decided to contemplate all these names, besides the specific names of social networks. Also, it has been extremely important to look at both the abstract and the text to ensure the validity and consistency of the study. Additionally, the use of bibliometric techniques allowed us to contrast the volume and its fluctuation of publications on Social Media with the total scientific production in Communication and the indexed journals. In this way, from November 2017 to December 2018, the analysis of the publications from 2012 to 2016 in the indexed journals has been carried out, through their digital versions. In total, the research covered 2427 articles in the 9 JCR and SJR journals mentioned above³.

³ To clarify the use of the names of the journals, it should be mentioned that for reasons of space in the graphs and the tables, the names of the journals have been shortened as follows: *El Profesional de Información* as EPI, *Estudios sobre el Mensaje Periodístico* appears as ESMP, and *Revista Latina de Comunicación Social* as Revista Latina. In other cases, Com. has been used instead of Communication, always for reasons of space and to promote the visibility of the data and facilitate its reading.

4. DISCUSSION

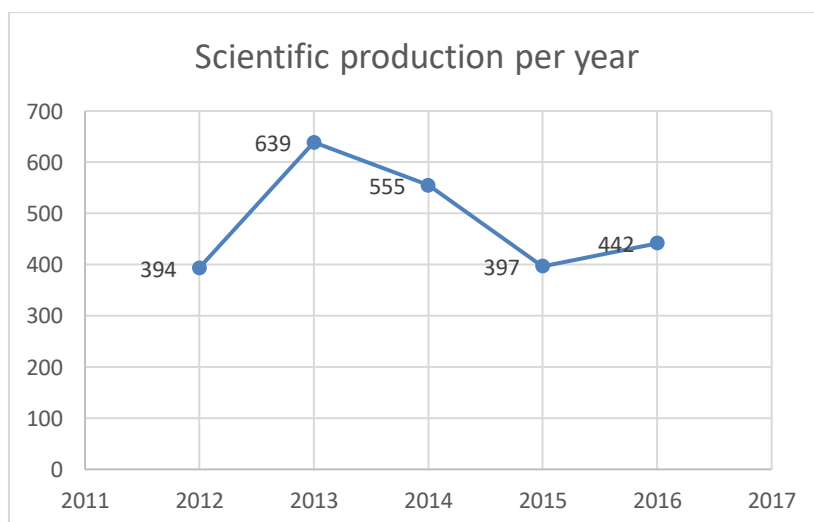
The results have shown, in the first place, the large volume of research publications in Communication in the last 5 years that the journals cover: 117 numbers accumulated in 38 volumes, with a total of 2427 articles, as shown in Table 3.

Table 3. *Scientific production in indexed journals 2012-2016*

Year	2012-2016									
Journal name	Comunicar	Com. y Sociedad	EPI	SCIRE	Signa	Revista Latina	Ibersid	Historia y Com. Social	ESMP	Total
Volume-quantity	6	5	5	5	na	Na	7	5	5	38
Number -quantity	12	18	30	10	5	5	7	13	17	117
No. Articles SN	64	34	63	4	1	40	5	38	67	316
No. of Articles per Total No.	200	192	381	86	173	213	100	507	575	2427

Source: self-made

It can be seen in figure 1 that the years 2012 and 2015 were the years with the lowest number of publications, although there were 400 of them, slightly below the annual average of scientific production for all the analyzed journals. The curve shows us that scientific production in Spanish journals varies greatly from one year to another, without a clear and defined trend. The peak of publications that exceeds the annual average by 30% stands out, with 639 publications in 2013 and 555 in 2014. However, afterward, a fall was observed in 2015 and slight growth in 2016.



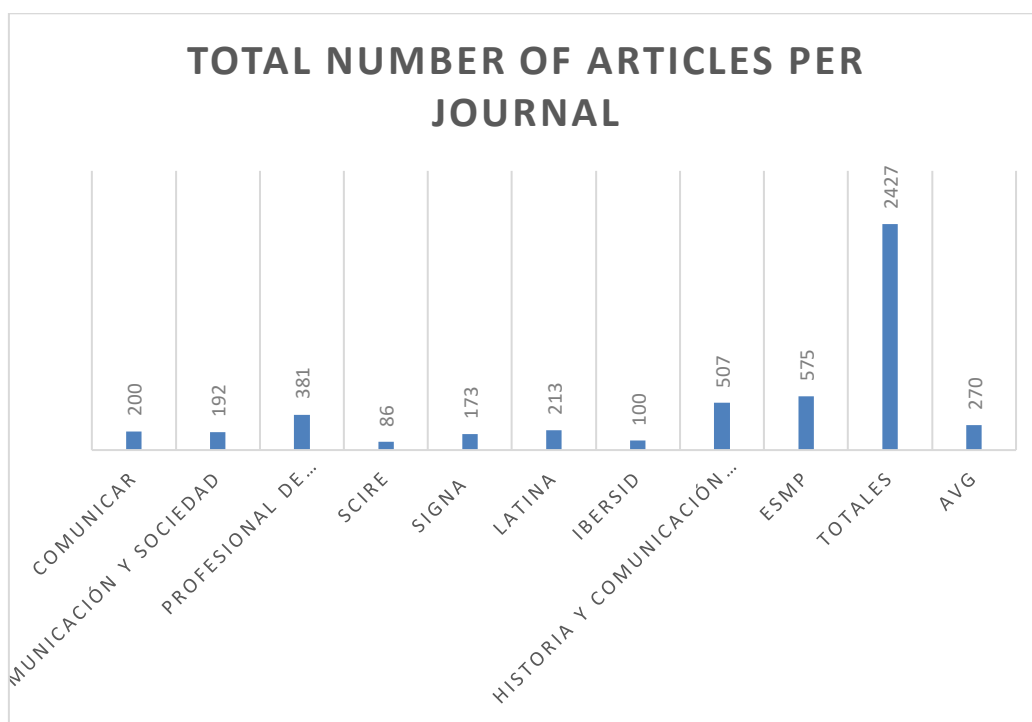
Graph 1. *Scientific production per year*

Source: self-made

The magazines that publish the most are *Historia y Comunicación Social* and *Estudio sobre el Mensaje Periodístico*, as they have the largest number of special volumes. In third place, *El Profesional de Información* is located, with 381 publications in the analyzed period, which demonstrates its scientific impact on Communication research.

The average in the analyzed period of 5 years per journal is 270 articles, which is a high number of high-quality scientific production. The average annual production, by journal and year, that covers these 5 years is detailed in Table 3.

It is observed that *Estudios sobre el Mensaje Periodístico* has the highest average of the analyzed journals (115 articles on average), followed by *Historia y Comunicación Social*, with 101 and almost doubling the annual production in the same period of *El Profesional de Información*, with 76.2. Only *Comunicar* keeps stable the number of publications each year, from 2012 to 2016 (40 articles each year). SCIRE has an average of 50% below the annual average for all journals (20 articles published compared to more than 40 on average for all journals in the years 2012, 2015, and 2016).



Graph 2. Scientific production 2012-2016 per journal
Source: self-made

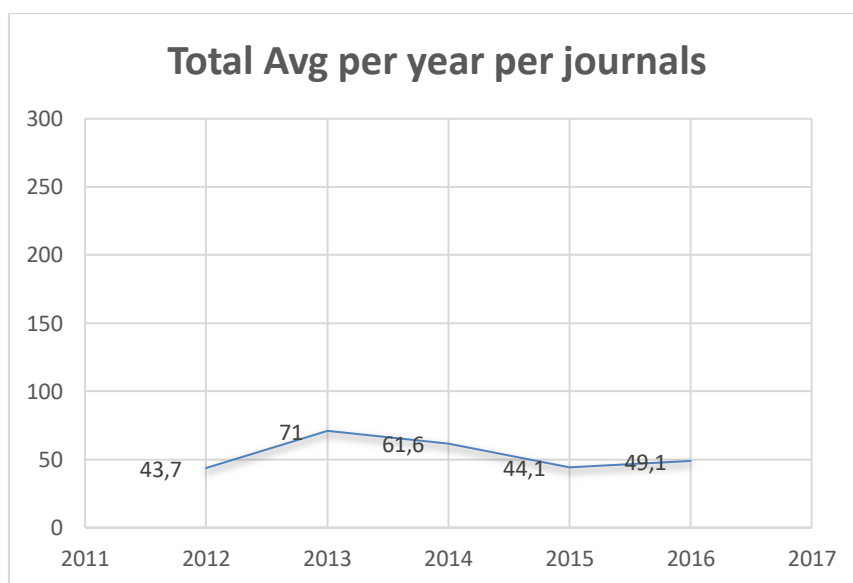
In general, in the last 5 years, the total annual scientific production is around the average of 485 articles.

Table 4. Average per journal within the 5 years

Number of total articles	Total AVG per year in the period and per journal
Comunicar	40
Comunicación y Sociedad	38.4
El Profesional de Información	76.2
SCIRE	17.2
Signa	34.6
Latina	42.6
Ibersid	20
Historia y Comunicación Social	101.4
ESMP	115

Source: self-made

The average number of publications per year in all journals -taking into account fluctuations in scientific production- is around 40 articles per year and per journal, with a visible peak of 30% in 2013 and 2014 (71 and 62, respectively), which is due to the higher production of the journals mentioned above.



Graph 3. Average production per year within the analyzed period

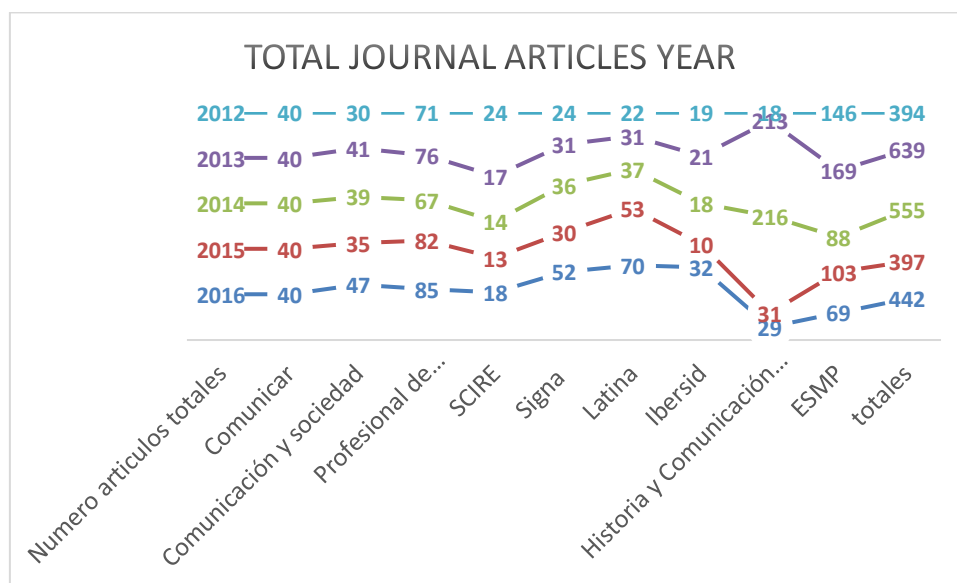
Source: self-made.

However, the annual evaluation shows considerable variations, in terms of the number of publications in different journals and different years. As indicated above, *Comunicar* continues to be the only journal that publishes the same number of articles each year -200 in total between 2012 and 2016-, followed by *Comunicación y Sociedad*, *El Profesional de Información*, and *SCIRE*, with a similar policy of stability in the volume of publications from one issue to another. *Signa* and *Ibersid* have doubled the number of publications and *Revista Latina de Comunicación Social* has quadrupled it.

Regarding the annual variations, 2012 and 2016 are the years with the smallest differences or, rather, with less abrupt differences between journals. The period

between 2013 and 2015 are years in which there are more variations between journals. The case of *Historia y Comunicación Social* stands out, which has increased its volume of publications from 18 in 2012 to more than 200 in 2013 and 2014, to lower it in subsequent years. Another example of changes of a similar nature is that of *Estudios sobre el Mensaje Periodístico*.

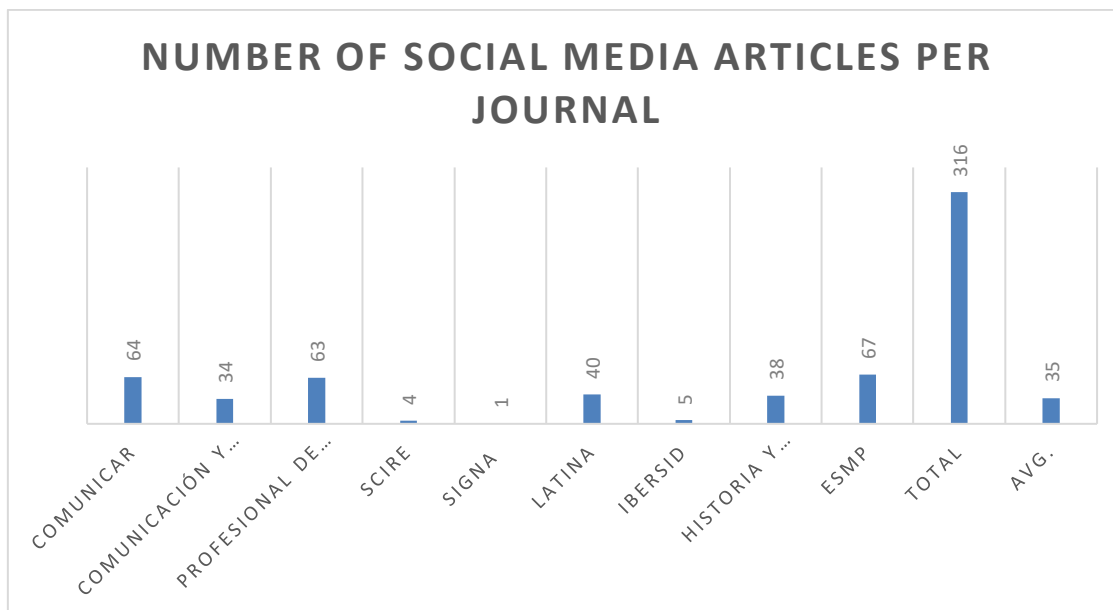
Thus, it can be noted that, despite the large volume of annual publications in their totality and on average, per year and journal, four journals highlight the editorial stability in terms of the number of articles published each year, three journals have increased the volume of publications, and two show great variation from one year to another and from one issue to another. The annual analysis per journal also demonstrates the variety in the number of published articles.



Graph 4. Variations in the volume of publications per year and journal
Source: self-made

In 2013 and 2014, record figures were recorded in terms of the number of publications, exceeding by 30% the annual average of the total volume of publications in the analyzed period: specifically, there were 639 publications in 2013 and 555 in 2014.

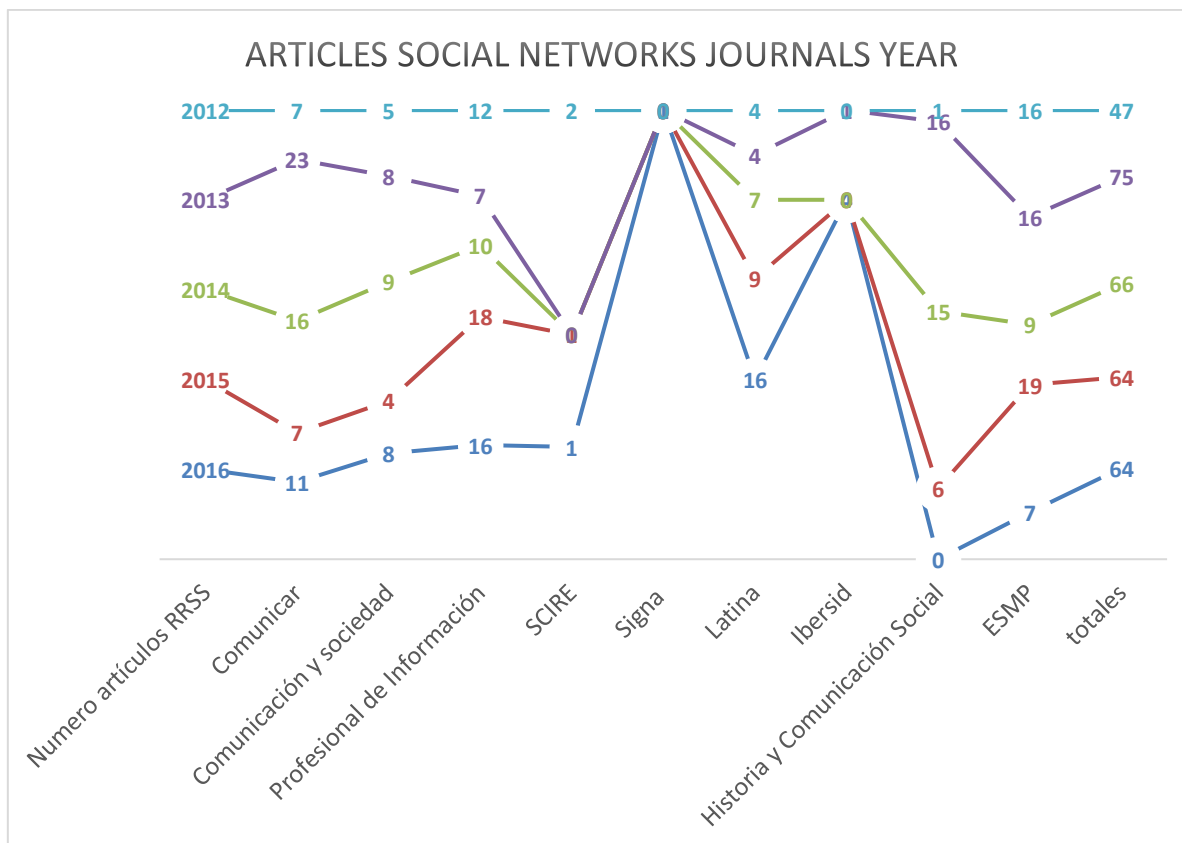
Focusing on publications about Social Media, it has been found that, among the 2427 articles published in the impact journals of the field of Spanish Communication Sciences in the last 5 years, 316 are dedicated to this subject, which constitutes 13% of articles published from 2012 to 2016.



Graph 5. *The number of articles about social networks in each journal*
Source: self-made

Graph 4 shows how, of the 316 articles about the subject in question, the journals that have published the most have been *Estudios sobre el Mensaje Periodístico* (67), *Comunicar* (64), and *El Profesional de Información* (63). They are the three journals in which Social Media occupies a considerable space as a thematic axis, standing out for innovation in research and publication on emerging issues. At the opposite end are *Ibersid*, with 5 articles, *Scire*, with 4, and *Signa*, with 1. In the analyzed period, it is clearly seen that these journals have a research profile that is not focused on digital communication as such, but rather that the area is marginally present and even absent in many issues.

The average number of articles about Social Media published per journal in the 5 years analyzed is 35, compared to the 270 articles published on average by each journal in this period.



Graph 6. Variations in the volume of publications per year and journal of articles about social networks

Source: self-made

The analysis of publication variation about social networks per journal and per year provides a very detailed perspective of the development of interest in this topic from 2012 to the present in the different impact journals. It is observed that the general trend of publication about Social Media experiences a clear growth and, in turn, certain stability, with a tendency to decrease (in terms of the total number of publications about social networks in the sector of high impact journals); Despite the increasing complexity of the Social Media area and the professional and academic interest that this area of Communication has achieved.

This trend is contrary to the peaks and falls observed in the general scientific production in these journals. Since 2012, when there were 47 publications, the number has grown to more than 60 articles per year. The number has remained almost stable since 2014. The year 2013 stands out, with a peak of 75 publications, which is largely due to the publication of 23 articles in *Comunicar*. Likewise, in 2015, *Estudios sobre el Mensaje Periodístico* made the great contribution of 19 articles published on the subject. The year 2013, in general, with the contribution of *Comunicar* and the case of *Estudios sobre el Mensaje Periodístico* in 2015, are the moments in which the greatest scientific interest is detected in the thematic axis of digital tools. It would be interesting to go deeper in this direction to discover the reasons that justify this phenomenon.

Regarding each journal, it is observed that *Comunicar* registered the highest growth in 2013 and 2014 (23 and 16, respectively), while the previous and subsequent years show a lower level of interest in this aspect and also in comparison with other journals in the annual frame.

For its part, *Comunicación y Sociedad* -except in 2012 and 2015, years in which it publishes less- keeps the number of articles stable: around 10 publications a year about digital social media.

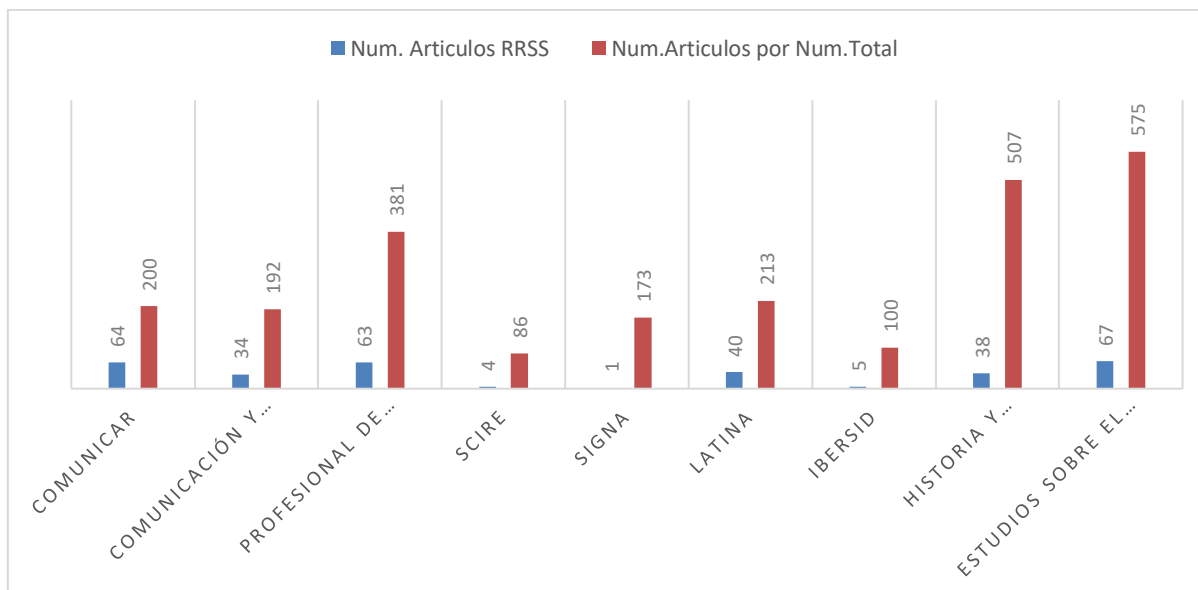
A similar situation can be seen in *Estudios sobre el Mensaje Periodístico*, which also maintains a high number of publications on this subject in 3 different years: 2012, 2013, and 2015. This peak of interest and abundant publications during these years is striking; and that the number of publications cuts in half in 2016.

The clear tendency to publish less about social networks in recent years is also seen in *Historia y Comunicación Social*. The journal registered two peaks, in 2013 and 2014 (with 16 and 15 articles published about this subject, respectively), while articles on the subject were almost non-existent in 2012 and 2016.

El Profesional de la Información stands out for its innovative approach, with 12 publications in 2012, at the beginning of the boom of social networks, together with *Estudios sobre el Mensaje Periodístico*, with 16 titles that same year. However, *El Profesional de la Información* demonstrates a growing trend of editorial and research interest reflected in publications regarding social networks, together with *Revista Latina de Comunicación Social*. In the case of the latter journal, the growth in the number of publications about social networks is even more noticeable.

In general, we can see that Social Media registers peaks of interest, with their corresponding drops or decreases in the number of publications. Only in the case of two journals can we speak of a clear growth trend of research in this area (*El Profesional de la Información* and *Revista Latina de Comunicación Social*) or certain stability (*Comunicar*) during the researched period. Although we observe that in recent years digital media has been the protagonist of research more than in 2012, the years 2013-2015 were those with the highest number of publications about this subject.

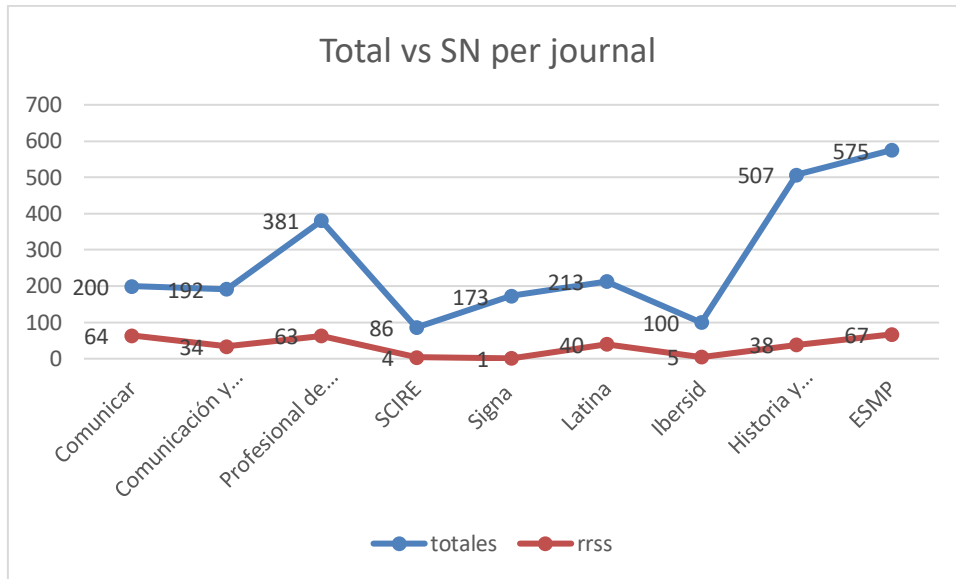
THE STUDY OF ACADEMIC OUTPUT ON SOCIAL MEDIA RESEARCH TOPIC IN JCR AND SRJ JOURNALS SPECIALIZED IN COMMUNICATION IN SPAIN



Graph 7. Comparison between the total number of publications and about social networks per journal

Source: self-made

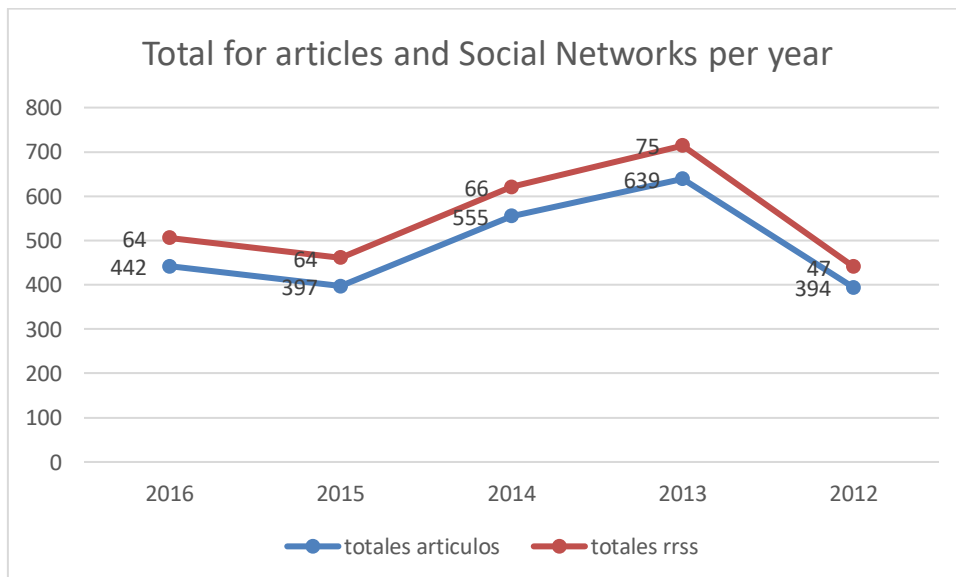
In general, articles about social networks were scarce, if we take as a reference the total number of publications between 2012 and 2016. The journals with the highest number of publications on the subject under study, compared to the total, were *Estudios sobre el Mensaje Periodístico* (with 67) and, secondly, *Comunicar* (with 64); followed in the third place by *El Profesional de la Información* (with 63). In such a way that the two journals with the highest number of publications in the analyzed period are also the ones that publish the most about Social Media: *Estudios sobre el Mensaje Periodístico* and *El Profesional de la Información*. The exception is the journal *Historia y Comunicación Social*, in which this relation does not occur. *Comunicar* and *Revista Latina de Comunicación Social*, for example, account for the highest percentage of publications about social networks. Specifically, 64 articles about social networks have been found, among the 200 published by *Comunicar*, and 40 of 213, in the case of *Revista Latina de Comunicación Social*.



Graph 8. Comparison between total publications and about social networks, per journal, in the period 2012-2016

Source: self-made

This relation shows that the balance between the number of publications and high interest in the field of digital media is undoubtedly more useful in terms of impact. However, it is noteworthy that, in general, the research devoted to this emerging topic is relatively low, in the case of all the journals in the analyzed period (as shown in Figure 7). It is low despite registering peaks, both in growth in scientific production in general in Communication and in this specific area, being related to each other (see Fig. 8).

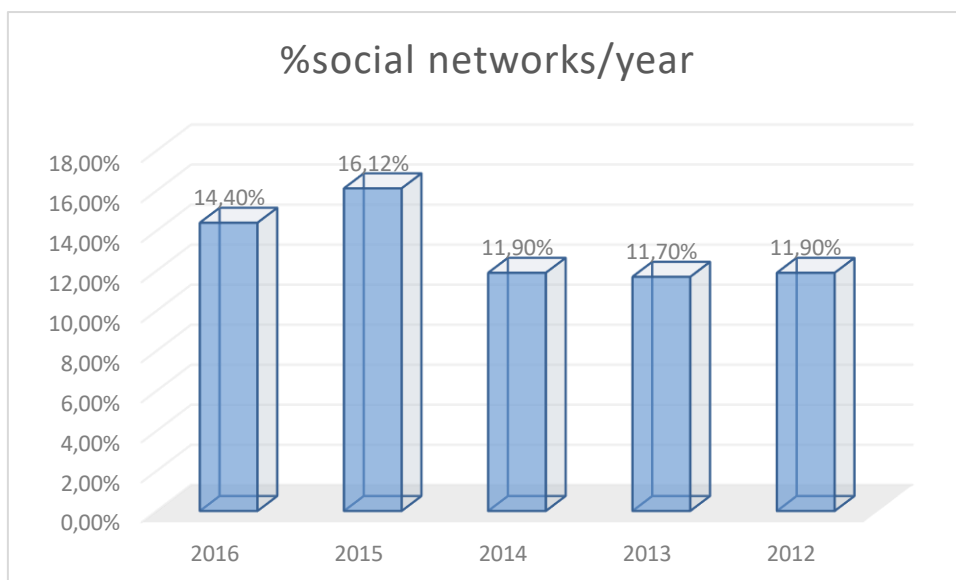
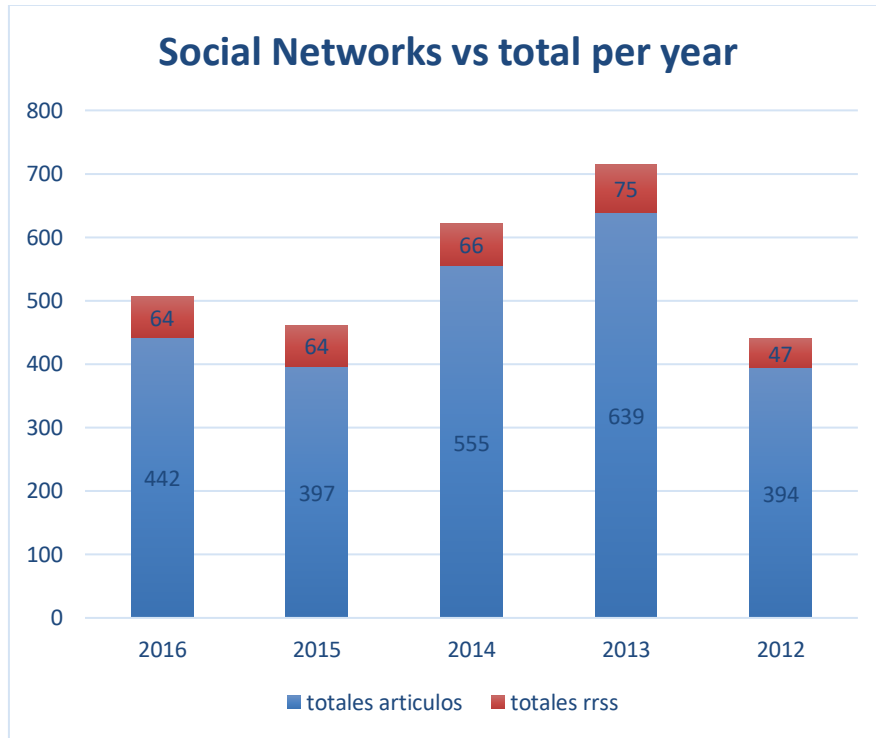


Graph 9. Comparison between total publications and about social networks, per journal, in the period 2012-2016

Source: self-made

THE STUDY OF ACADEMIC OUTPUT ON SOCIAL MEDIA RESEARCH TOPIC IN JCR AND SRJ JOURNALS SPECIALIZED IN COMMUNICATION IN SPAIN

The numbers give us a general idea about the perspective of the research, both in total scientific production in the years analyzed and per journals. Similarly, in the case of publications about digital social media. Therefore, it is of the utmost importance to see these comparisons.

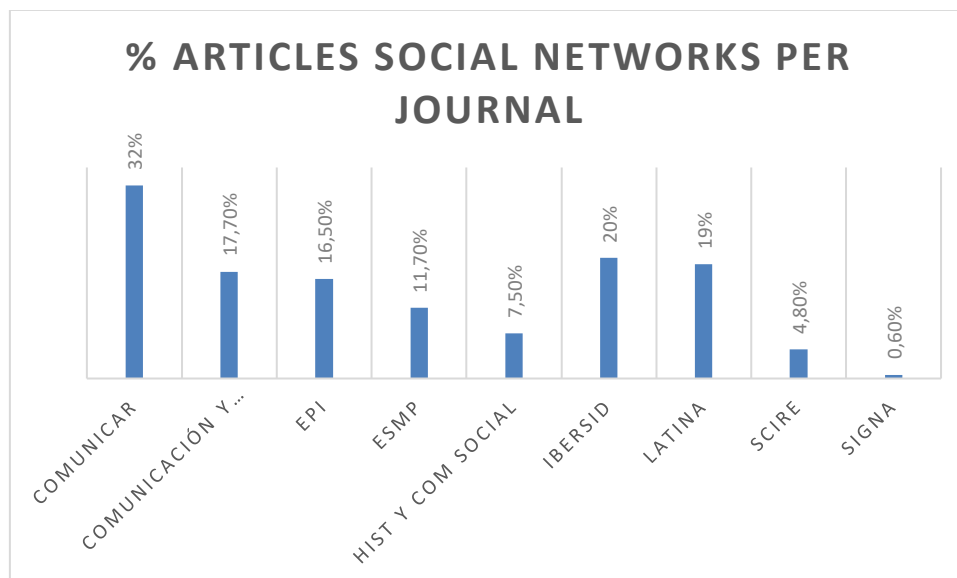


Graph 10. Total scientific production and about social networks, in real numbers and percentages

Source: self-made

The years 2013 and 2014, followed by 2016, was the period with the highest number of publications about social networks in impact journals, although they did not even reach 100 publications per year. However, if we relate the numbers, it turns out that,

despite the growth in publications observed in these years, 2015 has a higher percentage of impact research about Social Media, followed by 2016. Thus, Social Media entered with more impetus to academic research of impact recently, despite the peaks registered in previous years.

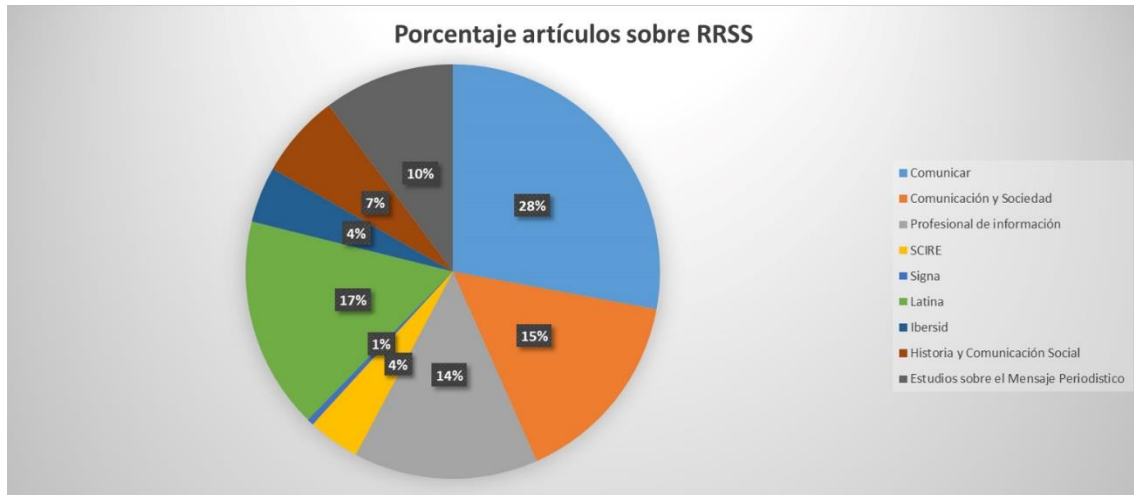


Graph 11. *Percentage of articles about social networks, per journal, in the period 2012-2016*

Source: self-made

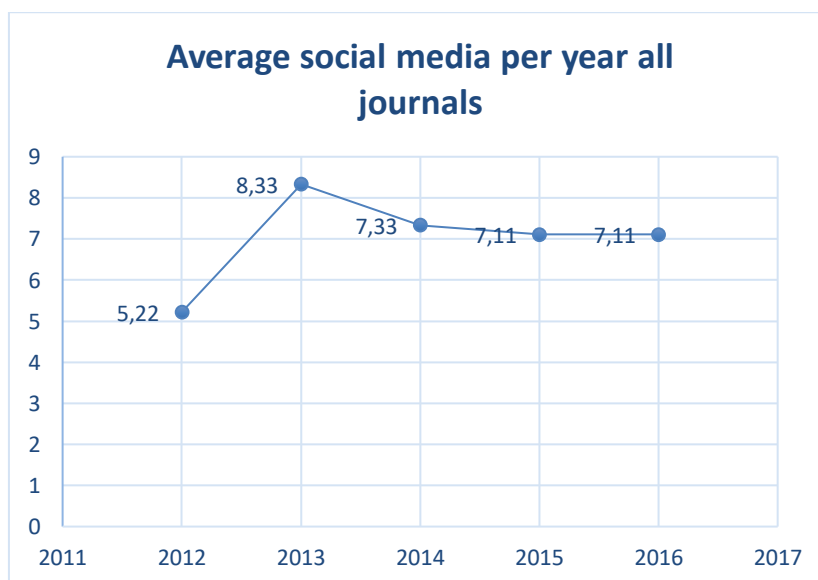
After identifying the journals with the highest number of publications in general and, especially, about social networks, in the field of Communication, we can see that the quality academic research journals in the last 5 years with a clear profile on Social Media are: *Comunicar* (with 32% of its articles about social networks), *Revista Latina de Comunicación Social* (with 19%), *Comunicación y Sociedad* (17.7%), and *El Profesional de la Información* (16.5%). We exclude *Ibersid* from this cutting-edge research in impact Communication because, despite having 20% of the publications about the subject in question, it generally has a small number of publications compared to other journals, being relatively insignificant in terms of the total number of articles published by other journals.

As for articles about social networks, they are distributed among practically 4 journals: *Comunicar* (28%), *Comunicación y Sociedad* (15%), *Revista Latina de Comunicación Social* (17%), and *El Profesional de la Información* (14%). They are the pioneers in the analyzed period in quality research about digital social media, highlighting their innovative approach in this regard.



Graph 12. *Distribution of articles about social networks in journals with impact in the period 2012-2016*
Source: self-made

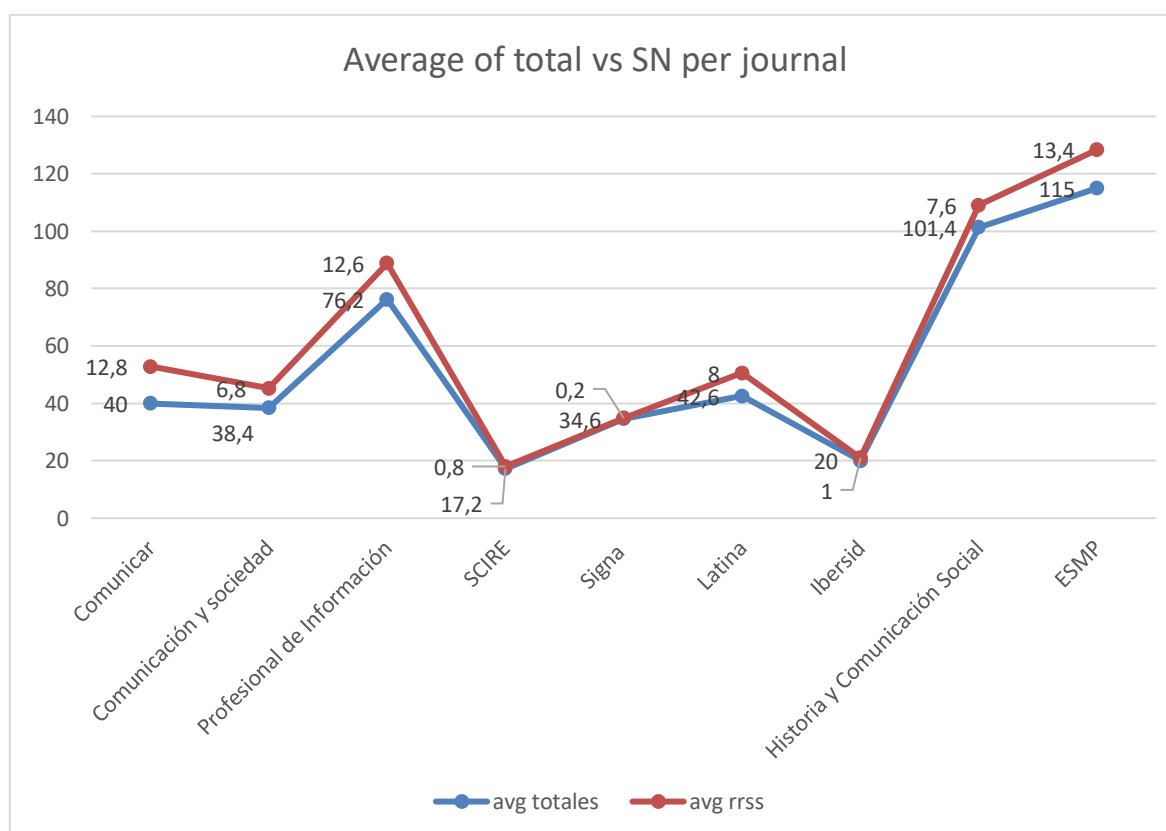
To definitively illustrate the weight that each journal has in scientific production on the new field of digital communication and social networks, we have analyzed the average number of articles devoted to the subject in question per year and journal. 2013 is, once again, the year with the greatest dedication to the subject of social networks, with the subsequent stability in the most recent years, although it is the last few years that register the most publications –especially in 2015 and 2016. The average per year can be checked in Fig. 12.



Graph 13. *The average number of publications about social networks, per year, in the analyzed period*
Source: self-made

If we compare journals, the first places are occupied by *Estudios sobre el Mensaje Periodístico*, *Comunicar*, and *El Profesional de la Información*. The averages of articles

focused on social networks tend to coincide with the averages of general scientific production, although here we must highlight the journal *Historia y Comunicación Social* and, secondly, *Estudios sobre el Mensaje Periodístico*. But this obvious trend is not always going to be demonstrated. If we look at the most stable averages of publications in their entirety and compare them with the averages of articles about social networks, *Comunicar* and *El Profesional de la Información* are the two that in the analyzed period demonstrate, prominently, this perspective of providing the academic focus to the emerging theme, followed by the *Revista Latina de Comunicación Social*. In this sense, they can be considered leaders between 2012 and 2016, while other journals show variations with ascents and descents or assume an almost insignificant relation.



Graph 14. *The average number of publications about social networks, per journal, in the analyzed period*
Source: self-made

5. CONCLUSIONS

The analysis of the results shows that it is necessary to approach the study of the data from different procedures and perspectives, relating the numbers and data both by years and by journals, to obtain a more detailed and in-depth X-ray. In this way, the applied method seems appropriate, which is based on descriptive statistical procedures from different approaches: percentages, averages, comparisons, development curves, etc. This extensive analysis procedure allows us to reach well-founded and justified conclusions.

In this way, we must first consider that, in general, the Spanish journals indexed in two of the main journal indexes in the field of Communication Sciences, from 2012 to 2016 dedicate a relatively small space to the avant-garde theme of social networks: 13% of publications. Despite a large number of publications (2427 in total in the analyzed period), those linked to social networks account for only 13%. This indicates that the subject, despite the development and establishment in daily practice in the professional world, besides the growing teaching and professional interest, does not achieve a notable dedication in terms of prestigious research.

Second, despite the high average number of publications in general per year (485) or per journals (242) in the analyzed period, the average number of publications about social networks is relatively low and is around 13 articles per journal and 7.33 per year. It would also be interesting to research the reasons for the fluctuations observed in the number of publications in 2014 and 2016.

Taking into account that university preparation requires, more and more, to devote attention to issues related to digital media, academic research should accompany the professional and teaching world with quality research projects on this subject. In general, here we can detect aspects that can be improved in terms of the work that Communication scientists have been developing. The phenomenon of Social Media has already established itself, human and business practices are widespread, and, consequently, the scope of its impact must be researched from scientific fields, to better understand it.

Furthermore, it is worth noting the great annual variation in terms of the total number of publications and articles devoted to the subject in question. The large number of publications in 2013 and 2014 stands out, especially, either in journals such as *Estudios sobre el Mensaje Periodístico* or *Historia y Comunicación Social*. *Comunicar* is the only journal with a stable publication policy, and the *Revista Latina de Comunicación Social* stands out for its considerable but reasonable growth in the number of publications. The large volume of publications, in short, per year and journal, reflects the tremendous impact that journals included in the best indexes have on the field of Communication. However, editorial policies that establish clear criteria for the volume of scientific production would be of great help to make this sector more transparent.

These annual variations are even more evident in the case of journals and specific years, in terms of articles dedicated to the theme of Social Media. Despite the peaks observed, the annual development of the number of publications on this topic indicates a stable growth in recent years, more than 60 articles per year. This was confirmed with a percentage analysis, which showed that the years 2015 and 2016 register greater interest in the subject as social networks develop (since 2012). The stability of the average number of publications about social networks in the last 3 years in all journals justifies this. The fluctuations are even more evident in the case of the journals in the different years, in which *Comunicar*, *Revista Latina de Comunicación Social*, and *El Profesional de la Información* demonstrate certain stability or growth in terms of scientific production based on social networks.

For its part, the variation in the average of total publications indicates the need to work on editorial policies in prestigious journals in the field of Communication, except in exceptional cases such as *Comunicar*, *El Profesional de la Información*, or *Revista Latina de Comunicación Social*, which maintain stable policies regarding the number of articles to be published in each volume.

To this panorama, we must add that the high publication of articles in impact journals, accompanied in several cases by the high number of publications dedicated to the avant-garde field of Communication, is not clearly related to the leading or innovative profile of the journal in this field. The results show that the three journals (*Comunicar*, *Revista Latina de Comunicación Social*, and *El Profesional de la Información*) demonstrate a clear orientation to research on the emerging communicative issue in recent years and are the journals included with the best impact indexes. Together with *Comunicación y Sociedad*, they are responsible for 75% of the publications about social networks in the last five years.

However, the large volume of scientific production is not accompanied by a high interest in Social Media in the journals indexed in JCR and SJR, although the opposite was assumed. The variations between the total scientific production and that dedicated to Social Media, both from an annual perspective and by journal, also indicate the need to stabilize and improve on this point. Although recent years demonstrate the growth and stability of quality research in Social Media, greater efforts are needed from editorial policies and the intrinsic and extrinsic motivation of researchers in Spanish-speaking Communication Sciences.

Likewise, the analysis from various approaches have allowed us to identify which are the impact journals with the greatest orientation towards communicative innovation; being, in this way, those that hold the leadership among the indexed journals and in the scientific field in general.

Regarding future lines of research, it should be noted that, although the multi-variable and multi-focus study has allowed us to establish certain guidelines and indicate points of interest, it is necessary to develop studies in the near future that address impact scientific production about social networks and communication; to delve into the set of articles identified in terms of their methodological orientation, subject matter, and field of application, as well as scientific data from authors, centers, and projects. This study is planned in the near future, accompanied by longer-term research that researches the reasons for the observed peaks; as well as the motivations of the researchers regarding their limited scientific interest in the subject in question.

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