

INTERACTIVITY IN SOCIAL NETWORKS TO CREATE RELATIONSHIPS OF TRUST: NAVARRA CITY COUNCILS IN TRANSIT

INTERACTIVIDAD EN REDES SOCIALES PARA CREAR RELACIONES DE CONFIANZA: AYUNTAMIENTOS DE NAVARRA EN TRÁNSITO

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ABSTRACT

Public institutions were created to serve the needs of citizens and the territory and, in that sense, city councils are the institutions closest to the population. In the middle of 2021, Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) have transformed society, now all people and organizations, including public institutions, are permanently interconnected and related. Precisely, the two-way symmetric interaction is the basis of the ideal public relations model, also that of social media. This serves to transmit messages and create links between the organization and its different audiences, listening, dialoguing, and sharing. Most organizations go from one-way communication to an interactive one, with new relational and collaborative models in search of mutual benefit. The objective of this research is to determine whether the municipalities of Navarra with more than 10,000 inhabitants strategically use social networks, how they interact with citizens on social platforms, and the professional profile that manages them. For this, a mixed methodology has been used that has combined quantitative techniques, such as the survey and content analysis, with qualitative ones, such as the in-depth interview. The results make it possible to determine and conclude that the implementation of social media in these municipalities of Navarra is practically generalized, showing a timid trend towards strategic planning, together with a lack of trained professionals and an absence of technical resources.

KEYWORDS: Public relations, institutional communication, interactivity, digital communication, social networks, city councils, Navarra



RESUMEN

Las instituciones públicas fueron creadas al servicio de las necesidades de la ciudadanía y del territorio y, en ese sentido, los ayuntamientos son las instituciones más cercanas a la población. En pleno 2021, las Tecnologías de la Información y la Comunicación (TIC) han transformado la sociedad, ahora todas las personas y las organizaciones, también las instituciones públicas, están permanentemente interconectadas y relacionadas. Precisamente, la interacción simétrica bidireccional es la base del modelo ideal de relaciones públicas, también la de los medios sociales. Esto sirve para transmitir mensajes y crear vínculos entre la organización y sus diferentes públicos, escuchando, dialogando y compartiendo. La mayoría de las organizaciones transitan de una comunicación unidireccional a una interactiva, con nuevos modelos relacionales y colaborativos en búsqueda del beneficio mutuo. Esta investigación se plantea como objetivo determinar si los ayuntamientos de Navarra de más de 10.000 habitantes usan las redes sociales de forma estratégica, cómo interactúan con la ciudadanía en las plataformas sociales y el perfil profesional que las gestiona. Para ello, se ha empleado una metodología mixta que ha combinado técnicas cuantitativas, como la encuesta y el análisis de contenido, con cualitativas, como la entrevista en profundidad. Los resultados permiten determinar y concluir que la implantación de los medios sociales en estos ayuntamientos de Navarra está prácticamente generalizada, apreciándose una tímida tendencia hacia la planificación estratégica, unido a una falta de profesionales formados y una ausencia de recursos técnicos.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Relaciones públicas, comunicación institucional, interactividad, comunicación digital, redes sociales, ayuntamientos, Navarra.

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

1. INTRODUCTION

Society is constantly evolving; the ways of relating to each other change and the ways of communicating also change. Castells (2006) talks about Network Society, Gutiérrez-Rubí (2018) about Digital Culture, and both coincide in ensuring that Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) have transformed modern societies.

According to sources from the Government of Navarra (Nastat, 2021), 82.6% of people between 16 and 74 years old connected daily to the Internet in 2020. The use of social networks is also the majority, the study reveals that 98.4% of young people between 16 and 24 years old participated in social networks in 2020, as well as 88.55% of young people between 25 and 34 years old, 75.6% of adults between 35 and 44 years, and 50.3% of the group aged 45 to 54 years old. In this context, organizations must adapt with flexibility and agility to new communication habits, including public institutions.

In this sense, Navarra is a community of contrasts, 70% of the city councils have 1,000 inhabitants or less, on the other hand, 60% of the population lives in only 12 city councils with more than 10,000 inhabitants each. If there is any local institution with the resources to adapt to this changing reality, these 12 consistories should be the spearhead of the digital transformation in the Navarrese local entities.

At this point, the question behind the research is obvious: how do these consistories use social networks? City councils are the public institutions closest to citizens and the ones that offer the greatest diversity of services. Citizen attention and the public information service are two of the great functions they fulfill and social networks play a fundamental role in them.

One of the basic characteristics that guide social media is interaction, conversation, two-way communication; precisely the same one that characterizes the ideal model of public relations described by the leading authors of this discipline, Grunig and Hunt, as the bidirectional symmetric model. Two-way communication encourages dialogue, mutual understanding, collaboration, and the common good, key elements that according to Canel (2018) favor the culture of participation, governance, and public innovation.

That is why the first objective of this dissertation is to expose the importance of two-way communication in institutional communication, also in digital platforms. Secondly, the aim is to examine the strategic use that city councils make of social networks, as well as to measure the level of professionalization of this task. And, finally, the study aims to culminate with concrete recommendations to advance on this path.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The following lines expose the theoretical foundation of the research that, starting from the foundations of public relations analyzed by the authors Grunig and Hunt, will expose the irruption of new paradigms associated with the Network Society and, later, it approaches the discipline of institutional communication in social networks.

2.1. Bidirectional symmetric model

One of the greatest contributions of Grunig and Hunt to the academic study and its conceptual structure was the identification of 4 behavioral models of public relations in their evolutionary professional development (Grunig and Hunt, 2000): 1) Press agent or publicity model, 2) Public information model, 3) Bidirectional asymmetric model, and, 4) Bidirectional symmetric model.

Grunig and Hunt (2000) describe the bidirectional symmetric as the ideal public relations model. Its objective is to modify and adapt the attitudes and behaviors of both the organization and the public in the search for mutual understanding, collaboration, and conflict resolution. In other words, a balance is sought between the interests of the organization and those of the environment and the public, and in this context, the main task of public relations is negotiation and collaboration. It may be that both groups employ persuasion, both the organization and the public; In any case, what is enriching about the model is that it is the two groups who modify their behavior or attitude in a certain way, the result of understanding and negotiation between their interests.

It should be noted that in the first 2 models, research is practically non-existent, contrary to the bidirectional models where research acquires a fundamental role. In the latter, research is key at the beginning of the process to study the environment and audiences, perhaps during the process to adjust the strategy, and, without a doubt, at the end of the process to evaluate the results.

2.2. Network society

Society is in constant motion, constantly changing, and it is not the same society in which Grunig and Hunt analyzed public relations. Several sociologists and communication experts have perceived an important change in the social paradigm in which bidirectionality and interaction in social networks have taken a leading role. One of them is Castells (2006), who warned at the beginning of the 21st century of a profound social transformation associated with the microelectronics revolution, giving rise to the so-called Network Society.

The network organization is not a new structure in human civilization, however, Castells (2006) describes 3 substantial changes brought about by the new information and communication technologies (ICT) and that have transformed the way of organizing the society and the daily life of citizens: the ability to transmit, receive, and process huge amounts of information; the permanent interconnection between the different nodes of society; and, the interactivity in real-time between all these nodes.

Years later, Gutiérrez-Rubí (2018) also refers to a radical change in the socio-economic and cultural sphere caused by ICT that would have given rise to a new paradigm called digital culture. Like Castells, Gutiérrez-Rubí suggests that the Internet is not just another channel or another tool but a new culture when it comes to linking and relating people and their interests.

In this new scenario, the roles of sender and receiver are blurred and, as Aced (2018) points out, all people become *senrecs*; the change of roles is constant, simultaneously acting as senders and receivers. Referring to the Cluetrain Manifesto, Aced points out that one of the challenges of public relations is to internalize that markets are now conversations, that organizations are no longer in control of discourses, and that participation is democratized.

Therefore, one of the new tasks of public relations is the management of virtual communities, which, among other tasks, includes the detection of strategic audiences on the Internet, monitoring conversations related to the organization on the Internet, participating in these conversations, generating their own content, and starting new conversations (Wilcox et al., 2012).

2.3. Connected public institutions

Escalona (2015) states that institutions are created at the service of the needs of a delimited territory and Canel (2019) mentions as its functions the search for the common good, the projection of the public services it provides, that of its regulatory and coercive capacity, or listening and interaction with society. Generically, the first of the authors shows greater precision when listing the functions related to institutional communication in digital environments: not only should citizens be informed but also the participation and involvement of civil society should be facilitated, as well as provide immediate responses to users on the network. As can be seen, the two authors characterize institutional communication oriented to the common interest and both give special relevance to listening to citizens and two-way interaction, not only to respond to needs and social problems but also to make them participate and involve them in governance.

In this way, in a social context in which ICTs allow and favor greater interaction between citizens and public institutions, the first step must be to encourage participation and enable channels for it, essential to listen to what citizens say, think, and propose (Canel 2018).

In short, it is about using ICTs to contextualize citizens' behaviors to adapt government policies at the same time as contextualizing institutional actions so that the public can adapt; In other words, it is about seeking mutual understanding, exactly the objective pursued by the bidirectional symmetric model of Grunig and Hunt (2000).

2.4. Social media disruption

Criado and Rojas-Martín (2013) have observed that the incorporation of social networks into the institutional communication of city councils in Spain has been uneven and without any organized order, guided by informal experimentation in most cases, although the opportunities that these platforms offer institutions stand out. These authors speak of the disruptive capacity that digital social networks have in the management of public institutions at three levels, some of them already mentioned so far. First, users go from being merely passive to being potentially active in the production of content in the form of a prosumer; second, they recognize opportunities for public innovation beyond the institution and, thus, extend the idea of collaborative intelligence; and, thirdly, it implies the disintermediation of the relationship between the institutions and their publics, the citizens.

In this sense, Hernández (2018) highlights how public administrations are forced to reformulate their communication with social networks, having to adapt the message so that it is clearer and easier to understand, adapt the tone so that it is closer and more attentive, and practice active listening, paving the way for dialogue and conversation with other social users.

Along the same lines, Gutiérrez-Rubí (2018) focuses on the relational capacity of the Internet and social networks, pointing out that they can become a tool that helps institutions and governments to improve relations with citizens, offering the possibility to communicate and govern in another way.

To do this, Gutiérrez-Rubí (2018) lists different key elements when engaging in this type of conversation with citizens that help to create new bonds and relationships of trust: monitoring to anticipate issues and learn about the concerns and proposals of citizens; the politics of small things or micropolitics that helps to connect with citizens from closeness; the transmediation or use of integrated and multiplatform strategies; credibility and trust; the micro-segmentation of messages, conditioning channels and messages based on the target audience; and, lastly, transparency to show openness and bet on the culture of sharing.

Therefore, knowing the audience takes on extraordinary importance. When an institution knows the population and adapts its messages to their tastes and needs through micro-segmentation, it will have a better chance of these messages penetrating the population's networks, turning neighbors into prescribers of institutional messages; This will not only help to amplify dissemination but also multiply the possibility of generating close conversations with the population and increasing, at the

same time, its credibility and their trust in the public institution. At the end of the day, it is about creating stable relationships over time between public institutions and citizens.

2.5. Proximity as an antidote to mistrust

However, relations between citizens and institutions are not at their best. Several authors (Canel, 2018; Escalona, 2015; Fumanal, 2018; Gutiérrez-Rubí, 2018; Moreno, 2018) have warned of the existence of a crisis of trust and credibility in political powers and public institutions, a sentiment of distance from rulers and the public administration.

In this context, Moreno (2018) presents institutional communication as a possible antidote to regain the trust of citizens; a close and effective communication could be “the way to regain the trust of the population” as Escalona (2018: 19) says; also, transparent and accessible communication, as Hernández (2018: 37) and Gutiérrez-Rubí (2018) point out. It is, therefore, about offering practical information for citizens, content of interest and related to topics relevant to the inhabitants of the town, and also understandable for all people.

Likewise, Canel associates communication with the ability to convey trust to citizens. Specifically, the author points out that communicative work can help identify and project the strengths of good management in Public Administration, avoiding the gaps that may arise between the perception of citizens and the achievements of institutional management (Canel, 2018). Likewise, the author adds that to project legitimacy, public institutions must incorporate and promote active listening and interaction with citizens, which also reinforces the importance of showing empathy.

Furthermore, the local sphere offers important advantages when it comes to connecting with citizens. Vicente (2018) maintains that the field of local institutions is the best due to proximity communication. The author praises the advantages of local institutions, defining them as those closest to citizens and those that encompass the most services, which allows them to create a stable link with the entire population of a specific territory. In this way, since city councils are the closest institutions and that offer the greatest diversity of services to the inhabitants of a population, the possibilities of establishing direct relationships and generating trust are greater than in the case of higher-level institutions such as the regional or national governments.

3. OBJECTIVES

The main objective of this research is to determine if the city councils of Navarra with more than 10,000 inhabitants strategically use social networks, how they interact with citizens on social platforms and the professional profile that manages them. To do this, the following specific objectives have been set:

1. Examine the strategic use of social media by the 12 largest Navarrese city councils.
2. Analyze the level of interaction of these city councils in digital social networks.

3. Measure the level of professionalization of their work in institutional communication.

4. METHODOLOGY

The research focuses on the largest city councils in the Navarra Community. The **sample** is made up of 12 city councils with more than 10,000 inhabitants¹: which cover a total of 60% of the Navarrese population.

The research has been carried out using a mixed methodology that has combined quantitative techniques, such as the survey and content analysis, with the qualitative technique of in-depth interviews to achieve a complimentary analysis of the object of study.

A/ Quantitative techniques:

- The **survey**: A questionnaire made up of 30 closed questions with various response options delimited and classified into 4 sections has been carried out to the 12 city councils: presence and motivation, planning, relationship and dialogue, and professional profile. The survey was self-administered between November 9th and December 2nd, 2020. It should be noted that the Aranguren City Council only answered the questions in the first 2 sections of the survey (questions 1-17) due to not having official municipal profiles. Likewise, it should be noted that the Tudela City Council has been the only city council in the sample that has not participated in the survey, despite committing to it.
- The **content analysis**: The publications of the official profiles of the 12 city councils on Facebook and Twitter in the period between October 1st and 10th, 2020 were analyzed. These dates were chosen to avoid the period in which the Foral Order 54/2020 (Government of Navarra, 2020) restricted public and private meetings.

B/ Qualitative techniques:

- **The in-depth interview**: In this case, various people with various profiles related to the object of study have been interviewed and they are: Itziar Berrospe and Josu Olóriz, responsible for the Directorate of Digitization of the

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- ¹ Ayto1 > Ansoáin (Pamplona Region): 10.833 inhabitants
 - Ayto2 > Aranguren Valley (Pamplona Region): 10.859 inhabitants
 - Ayto3 > Barañain (Pamplona Region): 20.199 inhabitants
 - Ayto4 > Berriozar (Pamplona Region): 10.426 inhabitants
 - Ayto5 > Burlada (Pamplona Region): 19.096 inhabitants
 - Ayto6 > Egüés Valley (Pamplona Region): 21.128 inhabitants
 - Ayto7 > Estella-Lizarra (Tierra Estella Region): 13.810 inhabitants
 - Ayto8 > Pamplona (Pamplona Region): 201.653 inhabitants
 - Ayto9 > Tafalla (Tafalla Region): 10.5095 inhabitants
 - Ayto10 > Tudela (La Ribera Region): 36.258 inhabitants
 - Ayto11 > Villava (Pamplona Region): 10.204 inhabitants
 - Ayto12 > Zizur Mayor (Pamplona Region): 14.894 inhabitants

Government of Navarra; Juan Carlos Castillo, President of the Navarra Federation of Municipalities and Councils (FNMC); Koldo Leoz, Mayor of Estella-Lizarra and active in social networks; Julen Urbano, head of social networks at the Pamplona City Council. All of them have been semi-structured interviews with a script of 10-12 questions that the interviewer has managed with flexibility. Each of them had an approximate duration of between 25 and 35 minutes and was held between November 24th and December 9th, 2020.

5. RESULTS

The results are structured in 5 sections: presence and motivation, planning, dialogue, the professional profile in charge of managing the institutional profiles, and, lastly, the analysis of the interviews.

5.1. Presence and motivation

To begin with, the digital platforms in which the city councils have a greater presence through official city council profiles, that is, generic profiles of the city council and not of the specific municipal areas, are Twitter (83.33%), Facebook (75%), YouTube (50%), and Instagram (27.7%).

The use of social networks is practically generalized in Navarre city councils with more than 10,000 inhabitants. To date, there is only one city council that does not have a corporate presence as a consistory in social networks and it is the Aranguren Valley City Council, which, however, does have specific profiles open for the areas of Culture, Youth, Social Welfare, and Equality.

The rest of the city councils (91.66%) have an official presence on at least one of the two most popular platforms, Twitter or Facebook, and 8 of the 12 city councils (66.66%) have profiles in both: Ansoáin, Burlada, the Egüés Valley, Estella-Lizarra, Pamplona, Tafalla, Tudela, and Zizur Mayor.

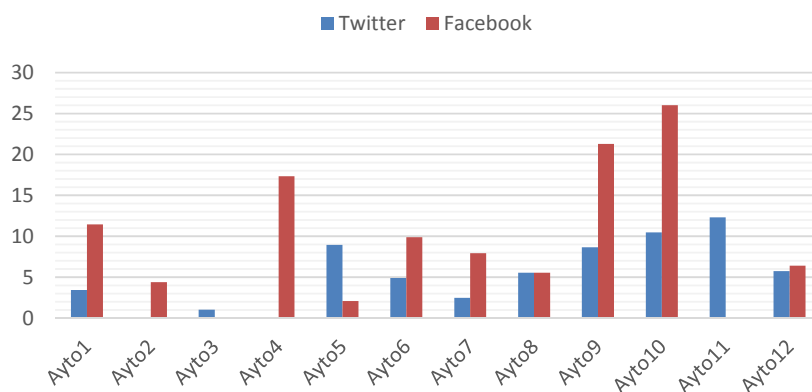


Chart 1. Penetration rate on Twitter and Facebook.

Source: own elaboration.

Another interesting piece of information is to observe the reach that these profiles have in social networks, data that can be measured, among others, by the penetration ratio. This is calculated using the relationship between the size of the population and the number of followers, and the results shown in chart 1 show that Facebook is the platform with the greatest reach, doubling in most cases the reach achieved on Twitter.

In this sense, 3 municipalities stand out for having a penetration ratio of over 17% on Facebook, these are Tudela (26%), Tafalla (21.27%), and Berriozar (17.34%), while most do not exceed 10% penetration. However, on Twitter only 2 municipalities exceed the 10% barrier, Villava (12.3%) and Tudela (10.48); only two others exceed the 6% barrier, Burlada (8.95%) and Tafalla (8.67%); and the other 8 municipalities have lower rates, the lowest being that of Barañain with a scarce 1.04%.

On the other hand, there are two key elements to analyze in terms of online presence and one of them refers to the reasons that have led councils to participate in social platforms. The major motivation is to offer information to citizens, an argument used by 83.33% of the city councils. Secondly, there is the desire to gain visibility and to interact with the public, both mentioned by 41.66% of the city councils. To a lesser extent, they are followed by reasons such as increasing transparency (33.33%), knowing citizen demands (25%), promoting participation (25%) and influencing the public agenda (16.66%). Other arguments discarded by city councils have been to reach younger audiences, improve the institution's position in society, improve the image of the institutional brand, improve deliberative processes, or reduce telephone calls in the council.

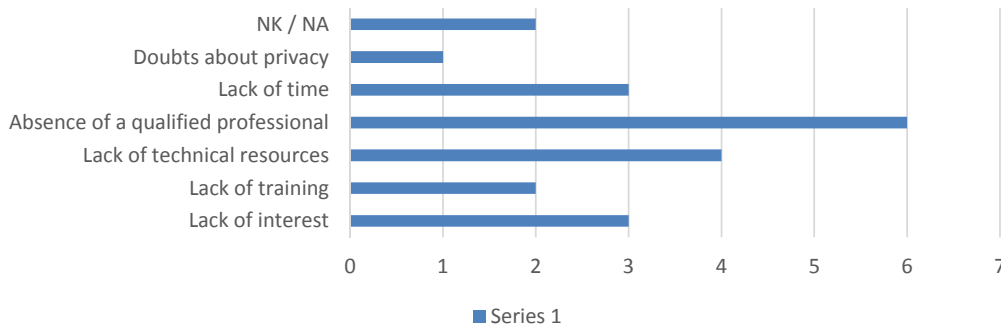


Chart 2. Obstacles for the incorporation of the city council to social networks.

Source: own elaboration.

The second key element refers to the possible obstacles detected when incorporating city councils into social networks, they are collected in chart 2, and the lack of resources in general stands out. Half of the city councils have indicated the absence of a qualified professional as the greatest obstacle, followed by other causes such as the absence of technical resources (33.33%), the lack of interest or the absence of time (both indicated by a 25% of consistories), lack of training (16.66%), and doubts regarding privacy (8.33%).

5.2. Planning

One of the key issues in this research is to analyze how city councils plan their communication on social media and the lack of resources detected in the previous section is once again the main obstacle to guaranteeing adequate planning.

As can be seen in chart 3, only 16.67% of Navarre city councils with more than 10,000 inhabitants have a written strategic communication plan that includes social networks compared to 75% that do not. Certainly, there is a relative trend towards the preparation of these documents, the city councils that have planning have been doing so for less than a year, 25% of the consistories plan to prepare the plan in less than a year, and 8.33% in a period over one year. Even so, it should be noted that 41.67% of city councils do not plan to design their communication in social networks using this strategic tool.

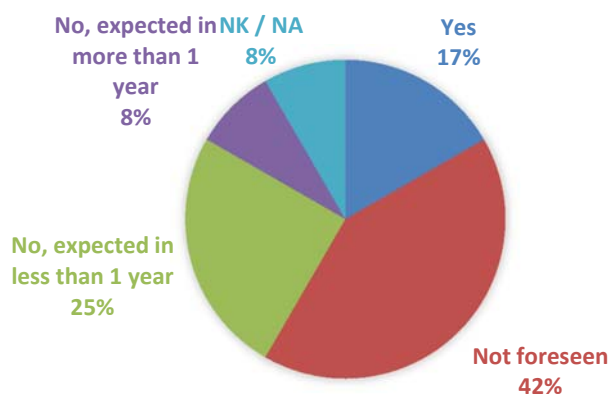


Chart 3. Strategic plan that includes social networks.

Source: own elaboration.

In this sense, the lack of resources is once again presented as the greatest obstacle to advance in the strategic planning lane; 44.44% of city councils accuse lack of resources as the main reason, 33.33% argue lack of time, and 11.11% simply neglect.

Finally, a fundamental piece that all planning must have has been analyzed: evaluation. When asking the Navarrese city councils if they use a system with which to monitor and evaluate the use of municipal profiles on social networks, half have answered yes, compared to 41.66% who have acknowledged not doing so.

When it comes to specifying which variables they measure and analyze to evaluate their performance on social platforms, the most widely used index is simply the number of followers, specifically used by 41.66% of councils. 33.33% evaluate the reach of the publications, an index that provides more significant data, 16.66% measure the comments, messages, and their topics, as well as the interaction indexes, and, to a lesser extent, 8.33% evaluate both publications with the local hashtag and published tweets and mentions.

Interestingly, although 50% admit taking measurements, only 41.67% make written reports with this information. Among the city councils that do not carry out the

evaluation in writing, 16.66% indicate that they plan to start doing it next year and 33.33% directly acknowledge that they do not plan to do so.

5.3. Relationship and dialogue

This section is one of the most significant, it will analyze how the city councils in the sample interact with citizens on the internet. Surveys show that 58.33% of city councils always pay attention to the comments that social network users make on institutional publications and that another 16.67% do so regularly, compared to 8.33% who never or almost never do.

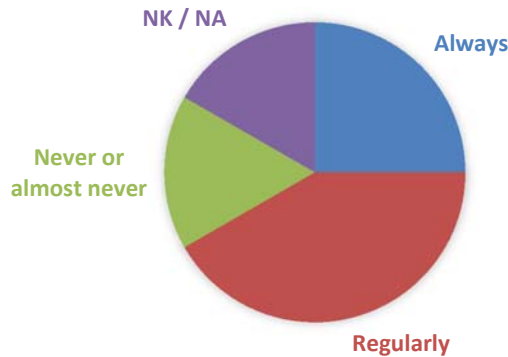


Chart 4. The habit of responding to comments on social networks.

Source: own elaboration.

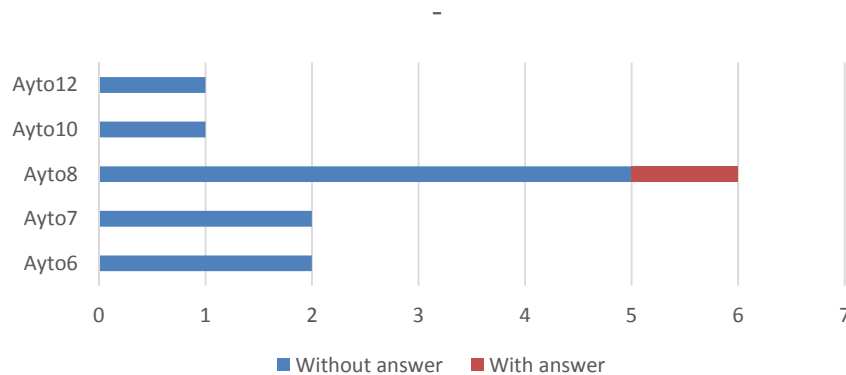


Chart 5. Publications of the city councils with comments on Twitter (1-10/10/2020).

Source: own elaboration.

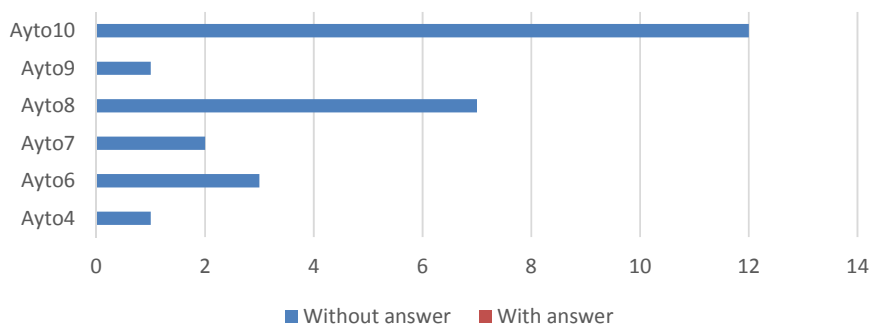


Chart 6. Publications of the city councils with comments on Facebook (1-10/10/2020).

Source: own elaboration.

However, beyond reading the comments of the users, the interesting thing here is to know if the city councils interact with that virtual community, if conversations are created on the social network. In this regard, chart 4 reveals that only 25% of the city councils affirm that they always respond to the comments of the population, 41.67% affirm that they do so regularly, and 16.67% admit that they never or almost never do so.

However, when analyzing in practice how city councils manage user comments, a different reality can be observed. Chart 5 shows the number of publications of the official municipal profiles that had comments on Twitter and chart 6 the equivalent on Facebook during October 1st and 10th, 2020. The truth is that on these dates only the Pamplona City Council (Ayto8) interacted with one of the comments and did so in the form of a "like", not even responding with another message. The rest of the city councils did not interact with the comments of the virtual community, neither on Twitter nor Facebook, not even when those comments were in the form of a question or query.

Consequently, and at least on the dates observed, a predominantly unidirectional practice is observed by the city councils on social platforms in which conversations with the virtual community are not created.

5.4. Professional profile

The fourth section of the results focuses on the staff who is in charge of managing the official profiles of the consistories in digital social networks, an element of great importance after detecting that one of the obstacles to a better functioning is the lack of human resources and professionals.

Regarding the number of people who collaborate in the management of official profiles, in about half of them, in 41.67%, between 2 and 3 people participate, followed by 16.67% in which a single person participates, and another 16.67% in which between 4 and 6 people participate.

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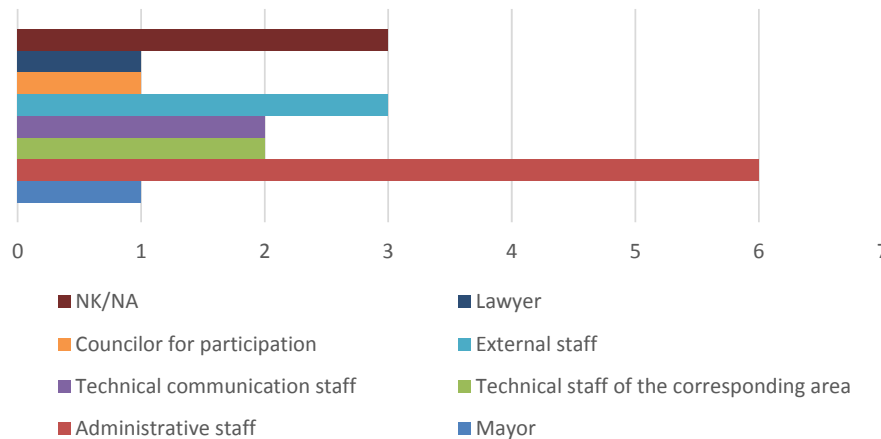


Chart 7. Who is responsible for responding on social networks?
Source: own elaboration.

To delve deeper into the matter, it is essential to know which figures are in charge of responding to citizens in social networks. Chart 7 reveals that the majority option is the administrative staff themselves, specifically in 50% of the city councils, and an external company is in charge of doing it in 25% of the cases. The technical staff of the area that corresponds to the subject of the publication is also in charge of this function, as well as the technical communication staff in 25% of the consistories, and to a lesser extent, the mayor, the council of participation, and the lawyer in 8.33% of the cases.

Asked specifically about the existence of professionals trained in digital communication who work in city councils, chart 8 shows that 25% of city councils have municipal staff with specific training while in 33% of city councils they have outsourced external staff. On the contrary, in another 25%, it is still not planned to have qualified personnel in this field, a very significant figure.

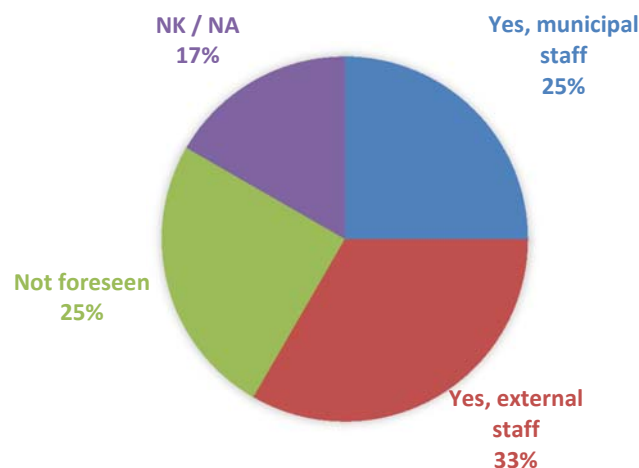


Chart 8. Professional staff with training in digital communication.

Source: own elaboration.

Finally, the existence of an economic item of its own in municipal budgets for digital communication has been analyzed, a fact that may reflect the importance that city councils attribute to this discipline. In this sense, 50% of the city councils do not define a specific item compared to 33% that do specify it, to a large extent the same city councils that have outsourced personnel for this task.

5.5. Perspective vision: interviews

Next, the most relevant information from the in-depth interviews carried out in the research process is analyzed one by one. They show different views on the use of social networks in city councils.

By way of introduction, Berrospe and Olóriz present the framework of action of the Government of Navarra with which they are promoting digitization and show the effort to reduce the digital gap and the problems of connection to optic fiber that still exist in many areas of the Community. Precisely, these problems are mentioned by the president of the Navarra Federation of Municipalities and Councils, Juan Carlos Castillo, and by the mayor of Estella-Lizarrá, Koldo Leoz, as the main obstacles to advance in the digitization and spread of ICT in the municipalities.

Regarding the specific use of social platforms in public institutions, Castillo views with suspicion and concern the speed of information that they impose and believes that they devalue official channels because they are slower, a lack to be highlighted. Likewise, he believes that one-way communication predominates in the city councils of Navarra and sees difficulties in doing it differently.

On the contrary, Leoz sees great opportunities in social networks and, as an active mayor on these platforms, he uses them as a speaker to publicize municipal policies and explain them, as well as to meet citizen demands, talk with residents, and evaluate the effectiveness of municipal actions when they detect complaints and criticisms on social networks.

The person in charge of the social networks of the Pamplona City Council, Julen Urbano, also values the opportunities offered by these platforms as positive but believes that a more serious profile should be offered from the official accounts of the city councils and finds it more difficult to interact with the public than from the profiles of other areas such as Culture or Youth. Certainly, due to its size, the Pamplona City Council has a large fleet of institutional profiles, not so in the rest of the city councils where the official profile covers most areas.

In any case, Urbano believes that institutional profiles should offer a valuable service to citizens, advocates accompanying the more formal publications of government action with lighter and more useful publications in which to inform about resources and services that interest and benefit citizens.

Lastly, both Leoz and Urbano underline the need for professionals with specific training in digital communication for planning and managing institutional profiles effectively.

6. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

As will be discussed now, it is concluded that the research has met its objectives. Despite having a quantitatively small sample, the reality of city councils is heterogeneous and uneven. However, several trends have been identified and are discussed below.

The implementation of social media in Navarra city councils with more than 10,000 inhabitants is practically generalized, only 1 of the 12 city councils does not have institutional profiles, only of specific areas. The rest of the city councils (91.66%) participate in at least one of the most popular platforms, Twitter and Facebook, and 66.66% participate in both.

Their main reason for making use of social networks is to offer information, as stated by 83.33% of city councils; and to a lesser extent, gain visibility and interact with citizens, both argued by 41.66% of city councils.

On the other hand, the greatest obstacles to go further in the use of social media are the absence of qualified professionals in 50% of the cases, the absence of technical resources in 41.33%, and the absence of interest or lack of time in 25% of the consistories.

When analyzing communication planning, 3 more-or-less stable groups are observed. In the first place, 16.67% of city councils have defined objectives, have identified their map of audiences, and have a strategic plan; it is only 2 out of 12 city councils and it has been less than a year that this work has advanced. Second, between 41.66% and 50% of city councils do not plan to use these planning tools. And, thirdly, 25% of city councils plan to have these tools next year.

It should also be noted that only half of the city councils measure and evaluate their role in social networks and the city councils that analyze it in writing are reduced to 41.66%.

Therefore, there is a timid trend towards strategic planning, some city councils have started to move forward and others are expected to start doing so soon. However, there is a nucleus resistant to the strategic use of social networks that ranges between 33% and 50% depending on the specific variable and that does not plan to take improvement steps. The main reasons argued for not having communicative planning are the lack of resources (40% of the consistories) and the lack of time (30%).

Regarding the interaction, a predominantly one-way practice is appreciated by the city councils in social networks and the conversations are exceptional. 25% affirm that they always respond to public comments and 41.67% state that they do so regularly; however, in the publications analyzed between October 1st and 10th among all consistories, the only existing interaction is a like to a comment, no textual response has been detected even when asking for information about a municipal service.

Likewise, in-depth interviews show that there is still suspicion towards social media interaction. Except for the mayor of Estella-Lizarra, Koldo Leoz, who is active on social platforms and observes important useful opportunities, both the president of the

FNMC, Juan Carlos Castillo, and the person in charge of social networks of the Pamplona City Council, Julen Urbano, express their doubts to interact with citizens from institutional profiles.

The result is a low rate of feedback from the virtual community. In general, the publications of the institutional profiles generate little engagement and the city councils do not take advantage of the opportunities they have to start conversations one-on-one.

It is concluded that, for the most part, the lack of trained professionals and the absence of technical and time resources are hampering the main motivations of city councils to participate in social networks. It will be difficult to offer a quality public information service if users are not answered when they ask about a service or show their concern with a specific municipal action; without mentioning the objective of interacting with the population.

Interaction and the culture of participation is something that must be cultivated and the proximity offered by city councils represents a great advantage for this. In the Network Society, it is not enough to spread information, it is time to listen and promote interaction to generate relationships of trust and create public value. The relational and conversational practice can serve to promote consensus and strengthen the community, as well as act as a catalyst to move towards new models of intelligent governance.

In 41.66% of the city councils, a group of between 2 and 3 people are in charge of managing the institutional profiles, in 16.67% a single person is in charge, and in another 16.67% a group of between 4 and 6 people.

In 50% of city councils, the administrative staff is responsible for responding to comments on social networks, in 25% an external company is in charge, and both the communication technician and the technical staff of the corresponding area do it in 16.67% of the consistories.

In this sense, 25% of city councils have their own professional staff with specific training in digital communication (the degree of training is not specified), while 33% have outsourced external personnel for this task. On the other hand, 25% admit not having it and not even being planned.

Therefore, although there are city councils that are taking steps towards professionalization in the field of institutional communication, there is still a long way to go and the biggest obstacle is turning out to be the lack of economic, human, and time resources.

Conversational practice in social networks should be an exercise of empathy that leads the institution to understand the community, at the same time that the community will better understand the reason for municipal decisions, reinforcing trust. Precisely, mutual understanding and the creation of trusting relationships are the final objectives of the bidirectional symmetric model of public relations described by Grunig and Hunt and this should be the horizon of communication in social media of the city councils.

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