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UNESCO World Heritage and digital marketing: The case of Monumental Consortium of Mérida

Patrimonio de la Humanidad Unesco y Marketing Digital: el caso del Consorcio Ciudad Monumental de Mérida

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Abstract

The development of content management in social networks and web 2.0 have become priority objectives in the development of digital communication in national and international cultural entities. In the research presented here, an analysis of the management of contents issued on the official website and on the official accounts on the social networks Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and Youtube of Monumental Consortium of Mérida, an entity founded in 1996, in charge of the management and conservation of the historical and artistic complex of the city of Mérida, of great cultural importance and which was officially declared a UNESCO World Heritage in 1993. The methodology used has been based mainly on the technique of analysis of the contents issued. The results of the study show the importance of a correct management of the analyzed media, and the preponderance in the emission of contents related to the patrimonial resources that the cultural institution has. The conclusions of the study can be useful as a guide for communication and content management managers in the digital environment.

Keywords

Content Analysis; culture; marketing; organizational communication; sites; social networks.

Rafael Cano Tenorio

Resumen

El desarrollo en la gestión de contenidos en las redes sociales y la web 2.0 se han convertido en objetivos prioritarios en el desarrollo de la co-municación digital en las entidades culturales nacionales e internaciona-les. En la investigación que se presenta, se ha realizado el análisis de la gestión de contenidos emitidos en la página web oficial y en las cuentas oficiales en las redes sociales Facebook, Twitter, Instagram y Youtube del Consorcio Ciudad Monumental de Mérida, entidad fundada en el año 1996, encargada de la gestión y la conservación del conjunto histórico-artístico de la ciudad de Mérida, de gran importancia cultural y que cuen-ta con la declaración oficial como patrimonio de la humanidad realizada la UNESCO en 1993. La metodología utilizada se ha basado principal-mente en la técnica del análisis de los contenidos emitidos. Los resulta-dos del estudio muestran la importancia de realizar una correcta gestión de los medios analizados, y la preponderancia en la emisión de conteni-dos relacionados con los recursos patrimoniales de los que dispone la institución cultural. Las conclusiones del estudio pueden ser de utilidad como guía para los gestores de la comunicación y la gestión de conteni-dos en el entorno digital.

Palabras clave

Análisis de contenido; comunicación organizacional; cultura; marketing; redes sociales; yacimientos.

1. Importance of Monumental City of Merida as an example of Heritage in its surroundings

The monumental complex of the city of Merida was declared a Heritage Site by UNESCO in 1993. The origins of the city of Merida in Extremadura date back to 25 BC, when Augustus founded the colony of Emeritus Augusta, which later became the capital of the Roman province of Lusitania. The reference within the UNESCO catalogue is 664. According to the authors Campillo-Alhama and Martínez-Sala (2019, p. 2), the group of World Heritage Cities in Spain represents a significant and relevant demand worldwide.

The remains of the ancient Roman city that lie in Mérida are in a perfect state of conservation. Among all the attractions it has to offer, the Aqueduct of Miracles, the Muslim Citadel, the Arch of Trajan, the House of Mitreo, the Roman Circus, the Crypt of the Basilica of Santa Eulalia, the National Museum of Roman Art-No, the Roman Bridge over the Guadiana River, the Roma No Theatre, the Temple of Diana or the San Lazaro Thermal Baths, among many others, are worth mentioning. The city therefore has enough attraction for potential visitors. In this sense, according to Europa Press (2019), Merida was the most visited city in the Autonomous Community of Extremadura in 2018, with a total of 427,928 visitors.

The World Heritage cities should be projected in the new environments. According to Gómez (2012, p.1), in just one generation, the impact of technology has been such that it has completely changed our reality, creating a new social and cultural environment in which the user is increasingly important. Technological changes, therefore, affect the way cultural institutions manage their communication.

2. Dissemination of heritage through communication by cultural organizations

The dissemination of cultural heritage through social communication, according to Moya (2019, p. 549), is an obligation in Spain that is included in various national and regional legal regulations. The importance of digital communication today is paramount to the work of dissemination. The authors García and Mata (2017, p. 75), for their part, point out that communication, together with information, is the basis of our current society and it is essential to understand how the professionals who manage it create and disseminate this information.

With respect to the importance of the tasks related to the conservation of the world's memory, according to the author Álvarez (2013, p. 156), and especially of the archivistic tasks within the World Heritage of Humanity, with programs led by UNESCO, they intend to promote, from the vision of the information professionals, the realization of preservation and protection tasks of all the documentary heritage of humanity, based on actions, strategies and projects supported in the preservation.

2.1. Innovation in digital communication by cultural organisations

In recent times there is a need for cultural institutions to adapt to new digital environments. According to the authors Moreno and Sariego (2017, p. 169), there has been a debate on the need to modernize the communicative management of cultural heritage and to overcome the old models that were more based on one-way communication. For their part, the authors García, Del Hoyo, and Fernández (2014, p. 15) point out that the tools of digital co-communication have revolutionised the opportunities for individuals to communicate. In a very short time, their use has become widespread. The use of new communication technologies, according to Husillos (2012, p. 39), has enabled the creation of environments that facilitate innovation, diversification and improved learning from history. Álvarez, Heredia and Romero (2019, p. 9) point out that the new communication technologies have brought about great changes in the inhabitants of this century, influencing even their education.

However, in this respect, as Moya (2019, p. 552) points out, even though history and archaeology are well accepted by society, they have great shortcomings in their dissemination and diffusion. In this sense the new digital tools that will be seen in the following section will be fundamental for the improvement of communication by cultural organizations.

2.2. Social networks and web 2.0 as tools in the management of digital communication by cultural organisations

The advantages of participation in social networks by cultural organizations, according to Gómez (2012, p. 7) bring benefits and create new possibilities. Cultural organizations must adapt to social networks by taking advantage of all the possibilities of interaction. On the other hand, Gatica (2014, p. 83), points out with respect to the management of social networks, that artistic and cultural resources cannot be conceived from the same prism as it was done, starting from a different space and context of delocalization, according to the author. Within the field of digital communication, according to Cano and Rostoll (2018, p. 42) the new technologies have made it possible to generate greater trust and media coverage in society. Likewise, according to Badell (2015, p. 162) there is a general commitment by cultural entities to be present and active on social networks. With respect to the possibilities of web 2.0 and social networks for cultural organisations, according to the researcher Del Río (2011, p. 121), they have recently made it possible for them to have new user indicators, which reflect the number of visitors subscribed to the channels of cultural organisations on social networks. However, the author points out that the degree of involvement of cultural institutions is more important than the mere indicator of the number of visitors in the digital environment.

With respect to the broadcasting of content using the new possibilities offered by digital communication tools, according to the authors Lima and Gaspar (2013, p. 107), there is a need for cultural organizations to build images. This aspect has become important in the field of cultural marketing. However, according to Pett (2012: 86) the institutional use of social networks can cause problems, depending on their management.

2.3. Importance of audience management in the digital environment by cultural organisations

In the cultural field, according to the author Gómez (2012), new tools have been created in recent times that allow better access, consumption and dissemination of cultural resources. According to the same author, this has led to a transformation in relations with audiences, giving rise to a new digital environment.

In the current digital environment, with constant changes and the need for adaptation by cultural institutions, digital marketing content appears as an important category of content in the digital communication of these organisations. Larsson (2018, p. 2235) points out that a greater level of effort is required from professionals, with the aim of encouraging interaction. For his part, Martínez-Sanz (2012, p. 393) points out that it should be borne in mind that the one-way communication model is not currently in use. The author points out that

previously, organizations mostly broadcast marketing or advertising content through passive public media. Today this aspect of audiences has changed and must be considered by cultural organisations, as will be seen in the following section.

According to Capriotti (2009, p. 69), audiences are one of the basic pillars of corporate communication, public relations, advertising or marketing. In this sense, the management of digital communication with them is important in cultural organisations.

Finally, it is worth noting as a future trend in the present context, and according to Jiménez-Orellana (2016, p. 199), the possibility of competition between cultural organisations, whether it be taking into account the broadcasting and dissemination of content or the mere fact of gaining a greater number of followers.

3. Methodology

Studying the digital communication that cultural organizations currently carry out is of great interest because it can have an impact on a positive image towards society. Better management of the tools offered in digital communication can be a profitable investment in order to attract more visitors to the attractions offered by cultural organisations in the medium and long term.

This research has mainly used the technique of content analysis. As Abela (2002, p. 2) points out, this technique in a broad sense allows for the correct interpretation of written texts. It also allows all kinds of data records.

The research process that has been carried out is described below. The research process of this study has been divided into the following main stages: firstly, the development and design of the research, secondly the process of data collection, thirdly the process of writing up the research results, and finally the dissemination of the research.

With respect to the development and design of the research, it includes the delimitation of the research, which will mainly be based on the following tasks: selection of the social networks that will be analysed in the study, temporal delimitation of the study and categorisation of the contents issued by the cultural entity analysed.

Next, the data collection has been carried out. All the data have been collected in the respective analysis sheets, which have been based on the design of the research. At all times, all the data that could be of interest have been noted down, so that they can be recorded on data sheets for the subsequent stage of drafting the results.

Next, the writing of the research results has been carried out. In this stage, the writing has been done always considering the original design of the investigation, and with the data obtained and ordered in the previous stage. Once all the data has been collected, graphs have been made, which allow a clearer interpretation of the relevant data of the present scientific research. In order to make the graphs, the correct presentation of them with different colors has been considered, which help to interpret the emission of contents of the different categories that have been proposed in the research.

Finally, as part of the research process, the study has been disseminated. It has been carried out firstly with the presentation of a paper at the II International Congress on Communication and Philosophy, held in November 2019 in Priego de Córdoba. The detailed data of the research are also included in this manuscript.

3.1. Social networks selected for the research sample

For the realization of the research, the social networks with the greatest monitoring in the current period have been considered. In the last decade, according to Losada and Capriotti (2015, p. 892), social networks have become a key factor in the development of communication in cultural organizations. Institutions in this field are increasingly aware of the usefulness and possibilities they offer, and therefore carry out strategies in them.

The process of obtaining the data corresponding to the identification of the official accounts in social networks of the Consorcio Ciudad Monumental de Mérida has followed the following order:

Firstly, the official website of Monumental Consortium of Mérida, resident at the URL is: https://www.consorciomerida.org/. After proceeding previously to the official website, links have been obtained to the profiles, channels, accounts and official pages in the social networks that will be analysed in this study. In the case of the official account on the social network Twitter, the URL from which the data have been obtained is: https://twitter.com/MeridaCiudad. The official Facebook page of Monumental Consortium of Mérida was obtained from: https://www.facebook.com/MeridaConsorcioDeLaCiudadMonumental/. The official profile on

the social network Insta-gram from which the data has been obtained is at the URL: https://www.instagram.com/consorciomerida. Finally, Monumental Consortium of Mérida inaugurated its official channel during the period of analysis in the social network Youtube, which was a novelty with respect to the original design of the investigation. It is considered important that it be included in the research. The link to the official channel can be found in the resident link in the URL: https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC03QvSXiBbDyytVM7Uiyrbw.

Table 1. Identification of the web addresses and official accounts in the social networks Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and Youtube of Monumental Consortium of Mérida in the media analysed in the research.

TESTED ENVIRONMENT	IDENTIFICATION
Official website of Monumental Consortium of Mérida	https://www.consorciomerida.org/
Official channel on Facebook	@MeridaConsorcioDeLaCiudadMonumental
Official Instagram Account	@consorciomerida
Official profile on Twitter	@MeridaCiudad
Official Youtube page	https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC03QvSXiBbDyytVM7Uiyrbw

Source: Own elaboration

3.2. Time limit

The correct delimitation of the research sample will allow the reliability and relevance of the research results. With respect to the sample of months chosen for this study, we have considered those that respect the highest hotel occupancy according to data from the National Institute of Statistics (INE), between the months of May and October 2019.

Figure 1. Hotel Occupancy Survey in Merida during 2018. Residents in Spain.
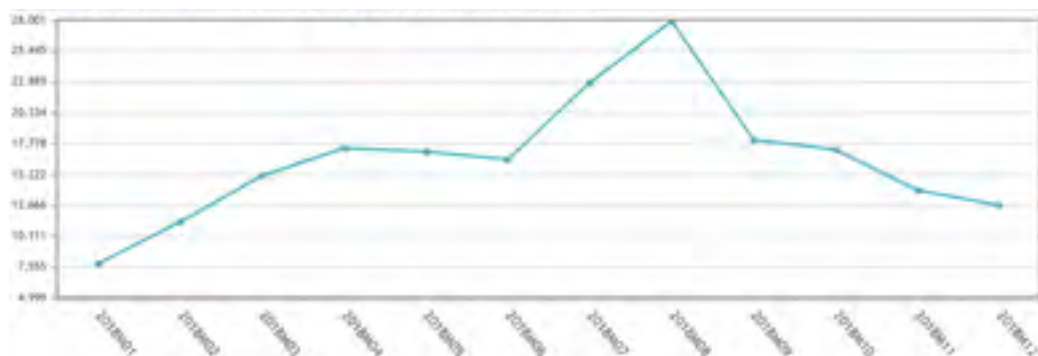
Source: Spanish National Institute of Statistics (2018).

In this regard, it is important to note that the months selected for the research sample are those with the best national and international tourism figures in the city of Merida, which is also the city in the Autonomous Community of Extremadura with the most tourist visits.

In the first figure, we can see how the summer months are those with the highest hotel occupancy of residents in Spain the city of Merida during the year 2018. The highest occupation figures correspond to the months of August, July and September, in that order. The months with the lowest occupancy rates are the inverse months, especially January and February.

Figure 2. Hotel Occupancy Survey in Merida during 2018. Residents abroad.
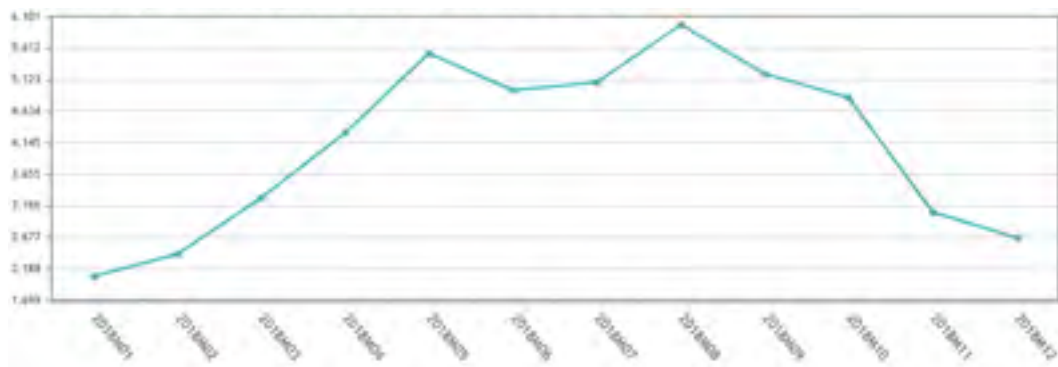
Source: Spanish National Institute of Statistics (2018).

The second figure shows the months of highest occupation during the year 2018 in the city of Merida by travelers from abroad. August, May, September, July and June stood out in figures, while the poorest occupation data were recorded during the autumn and winter months.

3.3. Categorisation of contents

The categorization of contents is important in the methodology of this research, since carrying out this stage correctly and persistently will influence scientific research that meets the required quality parameters. According to the author Abela (2002, p. 16), this methodological process is of a structuralist type, and should contain the following steps: first, the inventory, consisting of isolating the elements. And secondly, the classification process, which consists of distributing the data.

The content categories proposed for this study are described below:

Content of the entity: this category of content comprises all those that include archival themes, the collection of the site or the museum of the cultural organisation, corporate content, and the management of the centres that make up the cultural organisation. Also included in this category will be contents related to mercenary.

Agenda: this category includes all publications that provide information on events organised by the cultural organisation. Also included in this category is information on seminars, conferences or other activities with academic or scientific purposes organized by the cultural organization during the period of analysis.

Social environment: contents related to the audiences closest to the cultural entity. Visitors will be considered, as well as publications related to local, regional or state tourism.

Digital environment: this category of content contains all those related to the digital environment and the social networks Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and Youtube.

Marketing content will be analyzed as a category of content apart from the rest of those analyzed in this research. All those contents issued by the Monumental Consortium of Mérida in its official website, official account in Twitter, official page in Facebook or official profile in Instagram and that are related to the marketing carried out by the cultural entity will be considered part of it.

4. Results

Below are the results of the research divided into the following categories: content broadcast on the official website, content broadcast on the official Facebook social network page, content broadcast on the official Twitter account, content broadcast on the official Instagram social network profile, content broadcast on the official Youtube social network channel and content broadcast level according to the month of publication, adding up the data obtained from all the social networks analysed. A total of 47 publications made by Monumental Consortium of Mérida have been analysed in this research.
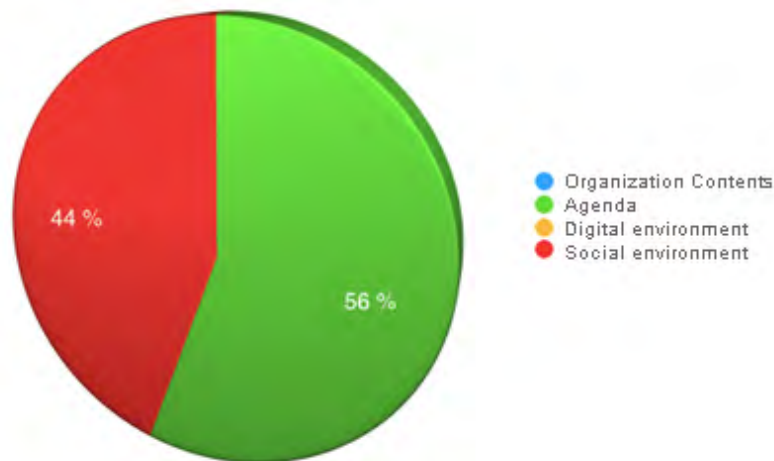
4.1. Issuance of content on the official website of Monumental Consortium of Mérida

Firstly, the results concerning the contents issued by Monumental Consortium of Mérida are presented on its official website.

The emission of contents in this media has been focused on the agenda of the cultural organization, which has meant more than half of the emitted content and in contents related to its social environment. A total of 9 publications have been issued during the research period. Fifty-five per cent of the content issued was in the category of agenda content and the remaining 45 per cent was in content related to its social environment.

According to the month of publication, it has been observed that during the months of June, July and August 2019 the cultural entity did not use its official website for publications. 11% of the contents issued were published during the month of May 2019. The month with the greatest weight of publications on the official website was September with 66% of the total publications for the period of analysis that were made on the official website. Finally, during October 2019, the last month analysed in the research sample, 22% of the publications were published on the official website.

Figure 3. Results of content broadcast on the official website of Monumental Consortium of Mérida

Source: Own elaboration.

4.2. Issuance of contents in the official page of the Ciudad Monumental de Mérida Consortium's Facebook social network

About the research data obtained from Facebook, the data show that it was the social network where the cultural organisation was most active, with a total of 35 publications made during the period covered by the research sample.

Of the total number of publications, 19 were of the entity's content, which represents 54% of the total publications made by Monumental Consortium of Mérida through this medium. Next, with respect to the rest of the publications made and their content categories in the official Facebook page, the agenda contents stand out, with a total of 14 publications made, which represent 40% of the total publications made. Other categories of content used by the entity were those of the social environment, with only 2 publications, which represent 5.7% of the total publications made.

Publications were issued in this medium in all the months analysed.

In the month of May 2019, a total of 7 publications were made, representing 20% of the total publications made. During the month of June 2019, 4 publications were made, representing 11.4% of the total number of publications. In July, 6 publications were made, which represent 17.14% of the total number of publications.

August 2019 was the month with the least amount of publications made by the cultural entity, only 3, which is the lowest percentage compared to the rest of the months, 8.57% of the total publications. On the other hand, the month of September 2019 had the figure of 6 publications, which is the same as the month of May, 17.14% of the total. Finally, the month of October 2019 had the highest number of publications, with a total of 9 publications, which was 25.7% of the total publications made by Monumental Consortium of Mérida.

Figure 4. Results of the emission of contents in the official page in the social network Facebook of Monumental Consortium of Mérida.
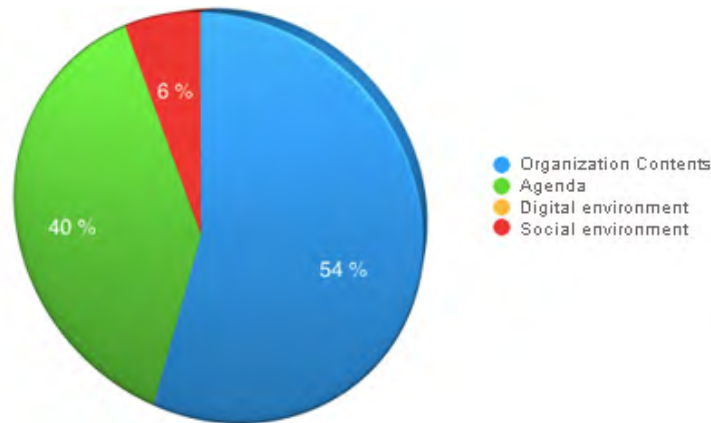
Source: Own elaboration.

4.3. Issuance of contents in the official account in the social network Twitter of Monumental Consortium of Mérida

Below are the results obtained on the social network Twitter. It is important to point out in this section that all the publications (100% of the total) made by Monumental Consortium of Mérida have been focused on the agenda of the cultural organization of the same.

About the date of its publication during the month of June 2019, 33.3% of the total publications were published, and during the month of October 2019, 66.6% of the total publications that have been made on Twitter by Monumental Consortium of Mérida. It is noted that in the rest of the months analyzed in the research sample no publication has been made, assuming in May, July, August and September 2019 0.0% of the total publications.

Figure 5. Results of the emission of contents in the official account in the social network Twitter of Monumental Consortium of Mérida
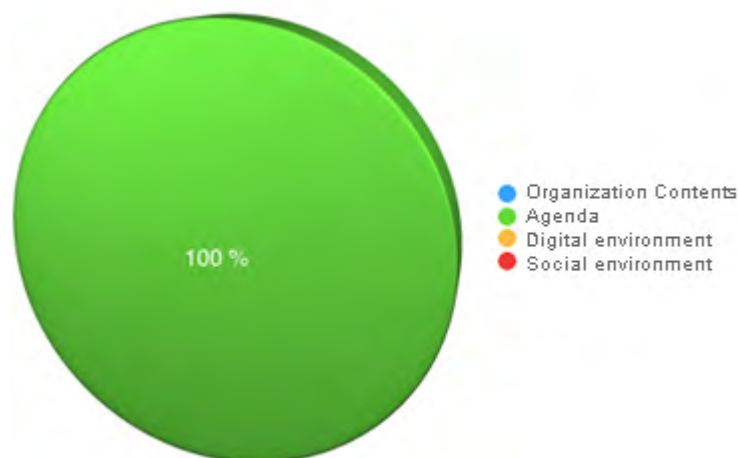

Source: Own elaboration.

4.4. Issuance of contents in the official profile on the Instagram social network of Monumental Consortium of Mérida

In this section of the investigation, the results have been insufficient. It has not been possible to collect the sample, since from the official profile of Monumental Consortium of Mérida in the social network Instagram no content or publication has been issued in the period in which the research has been carried out.

4.5. Issuance of contents on the official channel on the Youtube social network of Monumental Consortium of Mérida

The analysis of this medium has been a novelty with respect to the original design of the research. The official channel on the Youtube social network was inaugurated in the final months of research analysis and the publication of content for scientific dissemination purposes has been observed. The cultural organization intends to upload training and popularization actions to be carried out in this medium.

4.6. Level of emission of contents according to the medium analysed in the research

Below are the details of the publication of content according to the medium analysed. The medium with the largest number of publications was the social network Facebook, with most of the publications made being 35, and which represent 74.4% of the total publications made by Monumental Consortium of Mérida. The next most important medium has been the official website, with 9 publications, which represent 19.14% of the total publications issued by Monumental Consortium of Mérida during the period of analysis of the research.

Thirdly, only 3 publications were published on Twitter between May and October 2019, which represent only 6.38% of the total publications analysed.

Finally, no content was published on Instagram, which represents 0.0% of the total publications issued by the cultural entity.

4.7. Level of emission of content according to the month of publication on the social networks analysed

Finally, with respect to the section on the results obtained in the research, data is presented referring to the months of publication of the contents issued by Monumental Consortium of Mérida.

Of the 47 publications analyzed in the research, 8 were made during the month of May 2019, which represents 17.02% of the total publications made. The average of publications made during this month was 0.25 publications per day.

During the month of June 2019, the entity made 5 publications, the second lowest figure in this sense, with only 10.6% of the total publications. The average number of publications during this month was 0.16 publications per day.

In July 2019, 6 publications were made, representing 12.7% of the total. The average number of publications during this month was 0.19 publications per day.

In the month of August 2019, the poorest data was recorded in relation to the amount of content issued by Monumental Consortium of Mérida, since only 3 publications could be analysed, which is 6.38% of the total publications analysed in the research. The daily average is 0.09 publications.

In September 2019, the second highest number of publications was recorded, with a total of 12 publications analyzed, which are 25.5% of the total of the actual publications. The daily average during this month was 0.4 publications.

Finally, during the month of October 2019, the highest data was recorded, with 13 publications analysed, accounting for 27.6% of the total, more than a quarter of the publications analysed. The daily average of publications was 0.41 publications.

Figure 6. Results of the level of issue of content according to the month of publication.
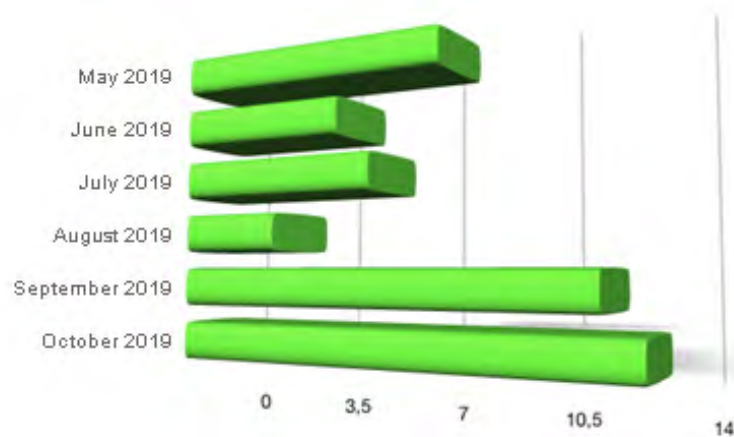
Source: Own elaboration.

5. Conclusions

The official website and the official accounts in the social networks Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and Youtube are important marketing and digital communication tools for Monumental Consortium of Mérida. It is worth mentioning that all of them can be improved in relation to the management made by the people in charge of the content emission.

It has been observed that the emission of content on the official website of Monumental Consortium of Mérida was quite low during the period of the investigation, although it was the second medium analysed with the highest amount of emission. Therefore, there is a possibility of improving the possibilities and not only informing about schedules, agenda or ticket sales, but also offering more content to the public that accesses this medium.

With respect to the social network Facebook, it is the best and most widely used medium for digital marketing actions by the entity. Most of the entity's related content has been published in this medium, with more than half of the content analyzed in this research. It is observed that contents related to the agenda and the social environment have been issued, being the analyzed medium with the greatest variety of issued contents. In addition, with respect to the date of issue of content on the social network Facebook, according to the period collected in the sample of the analysis carried out, unlike web 2.0 and the rest of the social networks analyzed, publications were made in all the months analyzed.

On the other hand, in the social network Twitter Monumental Consortium of Mérida only issues content related to the agenda of the cultural organization, without issuing any other type of content. A large part of the period analyzed with respect to this social network in the research sample has remained without activity on the part of the cultural entity. In this sense, the social profile in the Instagram social network has not issued any content in any of the months in which the analysis was carried out. In the short and medium term, this method should become an important communication and marketing tool for Monumental Consortium of Mérida. The official Youtube channel has a higher level of content broadcast for scientific dissemination purposes.

It has been observed that the months with the highest activity on the part of those responsible for managing the digital communication of the entity have been those corresponding to autumn, while those with the lowest activity have been those of summer.

With respect to the marketing contents issued by Monumental Consortium of Mérida, it is clear from the results of the research that more actions could be carried out in the digital environment used by Monumental Consortium of Mérida.

Finally, it is important to point out, with respect to the future lines of research that may arise from this study, that of the possibilities that arise to make comparisons between different cultural organisations, both national and international, that may carry out other different strategies of digital communication and marketing.

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