

Study analyzes use of social networks for media purposes after 11-M

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A study at the Universidad Carlos III de Madrid (UC3M) analyzes how social networks were used between the attacks on March 11, 2004 (11M) and the demonstration in the Puerta del Sol on May 15th (15M). Credit: uc3m

A book at the Universidad Carlos III de Madrid analyzes how social networks were used between the attacks on March 11, 2004, and the demonstration in the Puerta del Sol on May 15.

"On the tragic day of 11-M, there arose doubts about what the [traditional](#)

[media](#) was saying," explained Eva Herrero, researcher in the UC3M Department of Journalism and Audiovisual Communication. The response to this doubt resulted in "a call through SMS to demand explanations from the politicians," said Herrero. At the same time, she observed that "that day might be the starting point for the creation of an alternative agenda outside of newsrooms by citizens."

In the period spanning 11M to 15M, Herrero studies [citizens'](#) ability to convene thanks to social networks and the potential of these networks to change [media](#) practices. This analysis appears in her book, "Del 11M al 15M. Periodistas y redes sociales en España," recently published by UOC.

"For 90% of journalists, social networks are an everyday work tool," said Herrero. On the networks, "there are debates of interest to the media" which "journalists pay attention to" in search of something that "interests the citizen", of "a kind of agenda that is no longer set in the [newsrooms](#)."

However, in the search for these subjects through the social networks, journalists have been abusive. Eva Herrero assures this is so, although she attributes it to "the lack of knowledge" that stems from "how very rapidly social networks have evolved." These bad practices have been carried out in cases like the Marta del Castillo story, which saw the media publish images and private conversations lifted from the girl's profile on social networks, an act which led to a criminal conviction.

Journalists on the networks

The book contains some data about the routines of journalists. Among other things, it asserts that journalists use social networks more and better. However, more than 90% do not trust this tool, whose reliability depends on how it is used, as Herrero noted. Because of this, the study

urges journalists to treat these sources the same way they do traditional ones, as the networks are an enriching tool but require the same verification as traditional sources.

For the moment, Twitter is the 2.0 tool that is valued and used the most by the [journalists](#) surveyed for professional purposes. One of the most interesting features of the networks is their "virality" and their ability to promote news.

The results warn that the use of social networks in the media responds more to the need to be on each and every one of the new social platforms than to a defined strategy. Moreover, they indicate that it is not clear whether social networks have economically contributed to improving media business models, as "so far the number of followers does not seem to determine the investment of advertisers in the mass media," said Herrero.

More information: Del 11M al 15M. Periodistas y redes sociales en España. Author: Eva Herrero Curiel. Manuales 331, Oberta UOC Publishing, S.L.U, 2014. ISBN: 978-84-9064-226-9

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