

# Platforms #paraservir. The digital strategy of the Military Emergency Unit (UME) as a sample of social media potential in emergency situations and civil protection

Plataformas #paraservir. La estrategia digital de la Unidad Militar de Emergencias (UME) como muestra del potencial de las redes sociales ante situaciones de emergencia y protección civil

*Plataformas #paraservir. A estratégia digital da Unidade Militar de Emergência (UME) como mostra do potencial das redes sociais em situações de emergência e proteção civil*

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**ABSTRACT** | The Military Emergency Unit (UME, by its Spanish acronym) acts in catastrophic and emergency situations in national and international territory. The professionalization of their communication has increased the reach and understanding of their actions. Starting from a qualitative content analysis, we delve into how the unit exposes its content on social media. Three main conclusions can be drawn from the results: a) communication on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram is well planned, relies on quality visual and textual elements and humanizes the professionals who work in the unit; b) the dynamics of content varies substantially when there is an emergency intervention, generating a permanent story that helps society to be informed from the field of action itself, and c) the reaction of users is highly positive and there are hardly any negative criticisms towards the UME.

**KEYWORDS:** UME; army; social media; emergency; communication.

## HOW TO CITE

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**RESUMEN** | *La Unidad Militar de Emergencias (UME) actúa en situaciones de catástrofe y emergencia principalmente en España. La profesionalización de su comunicación ha incrementado el alcance y la comprensión de sus intervenciones. Partiendo de un análisis de contenido de carácter cualitativo en las plataformas Facebook, Twitter e Instagram (meses de junio y diciembre de 2022), profundizamos en cómo la unidad expone sus contenidos en las redes sociales. De los resultados se desprenden tres conclusiones principales: a) la comunicación en Facebook, Twitter e Instagram está planificada con solvencia, se apoya en elementos visuales y textuales coherentes, y humaniza a los profesionales que trabajan en la unidad; b) la dinámica de contenidos varía sustancialmente cuando hay una intervención de emergencia, generando un relato permanente que ayuda a la sociedad a estar informada desde el propio campo de actuación, y c) la reacción de los usuarios es positiva y apenas existen críticas negativas hacia la UME.*

**PALABRAS CLAVE:** UME; ejército; redes sociales; emergencias; comunicación.

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**RESUMO** | *A Unidade Militar de Emergência (UME, pelo acrônimo em espanhol) atua em situações de catástrofe e emergência principalmente na Espanha. A profissionalização de sua comunicação aumentou o alcance e a compreensão de suas intervenções. A partir de uma análise de conteúdo qualitativa nas plataformas Facebook, Twitter e Instagram (junho e dezembro de 2022), investigamos como a unidade expõe seu conteúdo nas redes sociais. Três conclusões principais emergem dos resultados: a) A comunicação no Facebook, Twitter e Instagram é planejada com solvência, é apoiada por elementos visuais e textuais coerentes e humaniza os profissionais que atuam na unidade; b) a dinâmica do conteúdo varia substancialmente quando há uma intervenção de emergência, gerando uma história permanente que ajuda a informar a sociedade desde o próprio campo de atuação; ec) a reação dos usuários é positiva e quase não há críticas negativas à UME.*

**PALAVRAS CHAVE:** UME; exército; redes sociais; emergências; comunicação.

## **INTRODUCTION: SOCIAL NETWORKS AS AN INSTRUMENT TO OPTIMIZE INSTITUTIONS' COMMUNICATION WITH THEIR AUDIENCES DURING EMERGENCY SITUATIONS**

Social networks, nowadays present in the lives of almost 90% of citizens (IAB Spain, 2022), allow to be informed in real time and to interact with users, institutions and, companies (Neuberger et al., 2019; Rissoan, 2016). With such interaction, these seek to generate a climate of trust that helps to foster the credibility of the messages they issue (Agnihotri, 2020; Martens et al., 2018) and become primary sources of information for their audiences, eliminating intermediaries from the communicative process who may distort the message. This can be instrumental in reducing the chances of succumbing to misinformation, as cited by Alcalá-Santaella and colleagues (2021):

The greater or lesser credibility of a news item is a multidimensional phenomenon that does not depend on a single factor [...] several elements come into play, the one that has the greatest influence on credibility is the way in which the item is accessed (p. 748).

Specifically on the subject of this study, communication in emergency situations, the news following a natural catastrophe or other type of social conflict require a continuous updating of information that cannot be doubted because it is considered erroneous or lacking in validity. In other words, they must be deemed credible and prevail over messages from unidentified sources that may lead to erroneous data, hoaxes or disinformation, harmful not only for the organization but also for the public (Rossini et al., 2021). Confusion can prevail in cases of emergency, so that resorting to this primary source, actively present in the attempt to resolve it, is key to ensure that the information is real and not a combination of real and fictitious data.

Emergency communication content must reach the greatest number of people involved. The combination of the institutions' own media participating in the attempt to solve the problem and the coverage of traditional media is the appropriate informative formula, considering also that the algorithms of social networks limit the scope of publications made from official accounts (Pont-Sorribes et al., 2009).

Beyond this duality between media and institutions, citizen collaboration is crucial in dissemination, since citizens have the responsibility to share content with their followers, as has been seen in emergency situations such as Ebola (2014) and listeriosis (2019), when the lack of a clear strategy in the profiles of the institutions was partly mitigated by the virality obtained by people thanks to their

willingness to be part of the communicative solution (Suau-Gomila et al., 2021). Among the most active and participative topics are those referring to prevention and how to deal with risk situations in case of direct or indirect involvement (Gonçalves, 2022), data that must be present to periodically create content dealing with the topics that most interest the audience, reducing the possible loss of interest or the unsubscription from the institution's account, which would result in a decrease in reach.

Besides the examples seen, it should not be forgotten that during the health emergency related to the pandemic caused by COVID-19 social networks were significantly used as a means of communication by public and private institutions to launch messages to society, whether by way of prevention, regulations, related to confinement, data on those affected, etc. (Abuín-Penas & Abuín-Penas, 2022). They quickly became a necessary tool to fight disinformation and hoaxes in a context where confusion and contradictory news were continuous (Sánchez-Duarte & Magallón Rosa 2020), and the effects of polarization and tension were visible (Robles et al., 2022), which made it even more necessary to reinforce the presence in social networks.

Institutions –public and private– that play a leading role in the involvement in catastrophic events and emergencies must be attentive to the changes that occur at the technological level and in the functioning of social networks. This is not a static communication phenomenon in which there are hardly any new developments (Preston et al., 2021). Use of technology in communicative formats is of interest to the public, as has been demonstrated in emergency situations and natural disasters; for example, in the fall of 2022 with the eruption of the Cumbre Vieja volcano on the island of La Palma (Canary Islands, Spain), where virtual reality was a resource that served RTVC (*Radio Televisión Canaria*) to differentiate itself from other networks and offer innovative content that recreated the scene of the natural disaster, expanding its coverage and offering information rated as highly qualitative by viewers (Sánchez-Calero & Triguero-Oliveros, 2022).

## **PROFESSIONALIZING THE MANAGEMENT OF DIGITAL PLATFORMS THROUGH THE FIGURE OF THE COMMUNITY MANAGER**

For institutions to properly manage social networks, even more so in emergencies, where the power of their content goes beyond commercial or leisure purposes, they must have a well-defined strategic planning by professionals (Hernández-Morales et al., 2013). The presence of a community manager who is responsible for managing the entity's accounts on social platforms, the relationship with followers,

solving incidents, acting as the institution's digital public relations (García-Nieto et al., 2020), and creating quality content that adds value (Hanusch, 2019; Martín-García, 2021) is essential. We are facing an ever-changing profession that expands its functions to communication aspects such as graphic design, media planning, or web positioning (Mañas-Viniegra & Jiménez-Gómez, 2019), which leads to multidisciplinary job profiles capable of mastering the essential elements of the relationship between the institution and its audiences (Hayasaki et al., 2019). In the case of the Spanish Military Emergency Unit (UME, by its Spanish acronym), we perceive that it is fully aware of the value of professionalizing its communication to the outside beyond its press department. Since 2012 it has been present on Twitter and later on Facebook and Instagram, involving the organization in its activity, inviting it to participate and go beyond being a spectator (Hernández-Corchete, 2021).

The predefined objectives are another key element that will mark the institution's journey in the digital ecosystem (Martín-García et al., 2022). It is essential to foresee the response that society will have to emergency situations so as to establish a list of contents in which there is room not only for dissemination, explanatory, or informative publications, but also for contents that arise from the emergency situation being experienced at a given time. It is not a matter of publishing for the sake of publishing (Campos-Domínguez & Calvo, 2017), but of discerning which data and which images have to be shared by the institution when it finds itself in a problematic situation and to act quickly.

### **The consolidation of the use of social networks by the Spanish Defense as an informative, image-enhancing, and collaborative tool**

Our subject of study is the Military Emergency Unit (UME, by its Spanish acronym), which is part of the Spanish Army and depends on the Spanish Department of Defense. It operates throughout the national territory and in international missions with prior agreement between countries. It was created in 2005 and approved by the Council of Ministers chaired by the then Prime Minister, José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero, on October 7 of that year.

A joint force, organized on a permanent basis, whose mission is to intervene anywhere in the national territory, to contribute to the security and welfare of citizens, along with State institutions and Public Administrations, in cases of serious risk, catastrophe, calamity or other public needs... (<https://www.defensa.gob.es/ume/>)

The Spanish Army has professionalized its communication, focusing it towards society, going from being considered a private and closed institution

to an open-minded one, which is in line with what armies in countries such as France, the United States, Australia, or Israel have done (López-Rodríguez & Castillo-Eslava, 2023), and which helps to eliminate ideological prejudices stemming from generalist dualities, such as the division between right and left (Sardón-Martín, 2021). Users of social networks show interest in the content posted from different channels, producing a particularly positive response when talking about topics such as values, military operations, and naval and aerial material performances (Carrasco-Polaino & Jaspe-Nieto, 2021). However, it is not only about showing the results of their work abroad. At the human resources level, making public its wide labor offer and turning it attractive for future recruitments is also a value to be considered, mostly among young people (Joachim et al., 2018). Likewise, and in addition to communication and image purposes, the military must be aware of the existing risks to the security of institutions and individuals (Wooten et al., 2014) and work on the understanding of all its functions and potential benefits and dangers.

We start from the premise that the communication management in the army is a challenge not only to improve its image in the eyes of society, but also to resolve the incidents in which it intervenes (Hernández-Corchete, 2021). To focus its presence in the digital environment, solely for aesthetic purposes or to open up to society, would be to simplify the power of the networks and their usefulness as an informative and collaborative space in the face of emergencies. Resorting to such networks for issues that go beyond communication and collaboration is an advance towards the consideration of these platforms as spaces for promoting the provision of public services coming from a collective effort (Criado & Villodre, 2021). This digital activity can, therefore, help in different ways the EMU's work, present in humanitarian action in the face of natural disasters of different kinds or as a consequence of warlike actions.

Authors such as González (2011) set as a precedent for the link between the countries' Defense Departments and Internet users the creation of the so-called warblogs during the Iraq war (2003), which for the first time produced a direct digital relationship that moved away from the colder and more traditional formats such as press releases, official communiqués and other forms of communication. Not only quantitative factors, such as the number of people receiving the message, but also qualitative aspects, such as the credibility that the receiver gives to the information, must be considered.

Warblogs' credibility during the war was ahead of the traditional media (...)  
Professional journalists themselves were readers of warblogs and the media  
issued invitations to citizen bloggers (...). The warblogs complemented and

did not supplant traditional sources, establishing a certain relationship of dependence between the two (González, 2011, p. 89).

Studies relating the use of social networks with armies, both nationally and internationally, become more prominent from the second decade of the 21st century, with works such as those by De Ramón-Carrión (2014) on the Department of Defense's use of Twitter, a platform especially critical in many of the debates that take place (Barbera et al., 2015; Boutyline & Willer, 2017; IAB Spain, 2022), or those on the specific uses that occur in different international military organizations (Schlagwein & Hu, 2017). In the UME, some publications related to the unit's strategy (Guerrero-Jiménez, 2013), its place in the framework of civil protection of the autonomous regions in Spain (Sedano-Lorenzo, 2011), the communicative management in risk situations (Hernández-Corchete, 2021), or a more unknown aspect within the scope of action of the UME, the protection of cultural heritage in emergency situations (De Carlos-Izquierdo, 2019), stand out.

The fact that most of these publications were written five or more years ago leads us to seek a new vision to update the analysis of the official EMU accounts on the three main platforms on which it operates: Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. As we have mentioned, the rapid transformation of social networks, technology and the uses that are given to them require an update to contrast data and to know which is the evolution occurring. For them, we establish the research questions we intend to answer:

*RQ1.* What are the predominant communication resources used by the EMU to inform about emergency situations?

*RQ2.* How does the audience react to the content published by EMU on the three digital platforms analyzed? Is there interaction with its audience or is it based on a unidirectional management?

*RQ3.* Does the EMU use its social networks to communicate its operations in real time during an emergency or does it talk about them after the event?

## **METHODOLOGY**

The methodological design was supported by a qualitative orientation based on content analysis (Sabich & Steinberg, 2017; González-Gómez, 2018; Buitrago & Torres-Ortiz, 2022a) and materialized through the direct study of the official EMU profiles in social networks that met the following characteristics:

- a. More than 50,000 followers/subscribers.
- b. Continuous frequency of publications, without periods of more than three months without publication.
- c. A minimum of three years from profile creation (at least as of January 2020).

The official EMU social media profiles that met the aforementioned criteria were those belonging to the Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram platforms and were therefore chosen to be part of the study. The official EMU profiles on the YouTube and Flickr platforms were not included as they did not meet the criteria. According to the study of social networks (IAB Spain, 2022), Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram are the most popular digital platforms (spontaneous recognition) in Spain and are among the five most used nationally: Facebook in second place (used by 71% of the population), Instagram in third place (66%), and Twitter in fifth place (42%).

Below is the data corresponding to February 2023 for the profiles analyzed in this research. The information has been extracted from the platforms studied and with the help of the digital tool Social Blade:

**Facebook data:**

- <https://facebook.com/UMEesp>
- Number of followers: 83,290.
- Account creation: January 6, 2016.

**Twitter data:**

- <https://twitter.com/UMEGob>
- Number of followers: 187,200.
- Account creation: February, 2012.

**Instagram data:**

- [https://www.instagram.com/ume\\_esp](https://www.instagram.com/ume_esp)
- Number of followers: 75,900.
- Account creation: October, 2018.



To contrast the evolution of the profiles, all the EMU publications in the three profiles mentioned above -as well as the comments received- were analyzed in two-time waves separated by six months: 1) from 1 to 30 June 2022 and 2) from 1 to 31 December of the same year. To this end, we applied an analysis sheet of our own elaboration composed of four categories:

1. Quantitative metrics (Buitrago & Torres-Ortiz, 2022b; Yalamanchili et al., 2022): number of interactions and formats chosen.
2. Intentionality of the message (Basch et al., 2020; González-Fernández & Martínez-Sanz, 2018): orientation, topic, tone, relation to current affairs, and level of disclosure, entertainment and promotion.
3. Verbal, audiovisual and printed resources (Castro-Higueras et al., 2021; Martínez-Sanz, 2021): speech, titles, sound effects, scenography, and costumes.
4. Audience care and reaction: proposals urging participation (Fernández-Gómez & Martín-Quevedo, 2018) and typology of content contribution (Martín-García et al., 2022): debate creator, affinity with EMU, belligerent, or hate disseminator.

## RESULTS

The communication routine of the EMU on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram does not vary greatly by season. With the exception of Christmas days, when the number of publications is slightly reduced, it moves in a range of three to four posts per week, except on Twitter, a social network more prone to increase content and where the user accepts more messages from brands and institutions than on other platforms (IAB Spain, 2022). Facebook and Instagram are the platforms where there are more positive reactions, not only because of the work done by this unit but also because the public is reached with a close tone that favors a climate of empathy between the emitter and the receiver.

Period	Number of posts	Interactions	Average interaction	ER <sup>1</sup>	Formats	Topics	Tone
Facebook June	15	10,802	720	0.86%	Video/ Photo/ Carousel	Fires/Demonstration of the intervention carried out (a posteriori) / Team work	Close, informative, and non-technical.
Facebook December	11	12,790	1162.7	1.39%	Video/ Photo/ Carousel	Christmas/ Training News (Constitution Day) Demonstration of the intervention carried out (a posteriori)	Close, informative, and non-technical.
Twitter <sup>2</sup> June	27	4,134	153.1	0.08%	Video/ Photo /Gif/ Retweet	Retweets from the accounts of Civil Protection and the Department of Defense/ Fires (progress and current situation)/ Teamwork	Corporate, close, informative and, in specific cases, with humor.
Twitter <sup>2</sup> December	22	3,858	175.3	0.096%	Video/ Photo /Gif/ Retweet	Retweets from Civil Protection and Department of Defense accounts/ Winter storms/ Teamwork	Corporate, close, informative and, in specific cases, with humor.
Instagram <sup>3</sup> June	15	22,706	1513.7	1.99%	Photo/ story/ reel	Fire/ Demonstration of work done in emergencies (a posteriori)	Informative, vindictive and serious in the face of conflictive situations.
Instagram December	14	29,585	2213.2	2.91%	Photo/ story/ reels	Winter storms/Christmas/ Demonstration of work done (a posteriori)	Informative, vindictive and serious in the face of conflictive situations.

**Table 1. Data obtained from the official EMU Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram accounts for the months of June and December 2022**

*Source: Own elaboration.*

1. ER = Engagement rate is a formula used to measure the degree of interest that the content published on social networks generates among fans. According to Hotsuite, a specialized platform, a percentage of between 1% and 5% on social networks such as Instagram or Facebook is considered optimal. The formula to calculate it can be based on the reach or the number of followers, depending on the objective of the measurement, with the formula  $ER = \text{no. interactions} / \text{no. fans} * 100$ .
2. For the purposes of this study, we have not included the posts on the EMU Twitter profile that originate from retweets, as we cannot determine which share of the interactions comes from its followers nor can we attribute the corresponding tone and scheduling, since it is not the main emitter.
3. The number of publications on Instagram does not take into account the stories because it is not possible to obtain results of participation or the exact date on which they were published, but they have been considered when analyzing their content.

## Content planning and attention to technical and visual aspects as key elements in the professionalization of EMU's digital communication

There is a planned difference in the type of content: practically all of what is published on Instagram is about UME's real work, showing actions mainly in image format and, sometimes, with reels, highlighting how they are helping in the emergency in which they are, giving information on progress, asking for collaboration or making forecasts of how it evolves. Some contents are disseminated in the same way in the three platforms, although the text varies depending on each one, with Instagram and Facebook being the ones where more space is dedicated, while on Twitter, limited by the 280 characters, the information is more direct.

The personification of the EMU is seen in different Instagram posts in which close-ups of different components of the unit are shown, without at any time giving proper names. It resorts to a very brief text, 'We...' and the picture. The image that is permanently projected is that of the team, never that of individual merit. We did not identify publications in which there is a military member fully protagonist or who shares his/her testimony in a specific way. We identified that not all the content revolves around emergencies; we also found moments of celebration and everyday life that help to partially break the seriousness of the topics they deal with.

Visually, there is a common aesthetic, with quality pictures and the same typography if there is text in any image. There is a predominance of UME members in action or in maneuvers -if no catastrophe is being talked about-, and when they do not appear, the contents are focused on the materials with which the military work.



**Image 1. Example of predominant visual style on Instagram during a real intervention**

*Source: Unidad Militar de Emergencias (2022)*

There are two main elements in the texts accompanying the audiovisual content:

1. Its condition of public service and the value of the work is specified based on the very nature of the unit: to help society and the environment when they cannot fend for themselves and need help in the face of unforeseen incidents and emergencies. This message prevails in the texts accompanying the audiovisual formats.
2. There are many references to values such as selflessness, sacrifice, teamwork (which includes the trained dogs that are part of the unit) or to give the best of oneself, among others.

Regarding the popular use of hashtags or labels, we did not find a clear continuity. For the same fire we observed that in some of them the name of the place is used, #Tenerife, and in others not, also with the hashtags #incendios or #ParaServir. The only two that appear permanently are #UME and #UnidadMilitarDeEmergencias, beginning each word with a capital letter to improve the legibility of the text. On Instagram they are placed at the end of the informative text, clearly differentiating themselves. However, on Twitter and Facebook they are combined with the content of the message, mixing words with tags and partly breaking the ease of reading.

Music plays an essential role in the videos edited. From epic pieces –when showing the work of the unit or its members (including the trained dogs)– to piano melodies with a more intimate character when showing the aftermath of a catastrophe. We also find carols to congratulate the holidays or more cheerful songs with more rhythm when showing the positive results of the work of the EMU. On the contrary, when the field work of the military is shown without any filter, whether it is putting out a fire, evacuating an area, deploying material at ground zero, etc., the music disappears and audiences hear the reality and listen to the sounds in all their rawness. There are no elements that soften it when it comes to sharing with the viewers the most difficult and dangerous part of their work.

Finally, without being the predominant tone, and although it takes place mainly on Twitter, humor is a resource that has a place in the EMU contents, adapting to the current culture of memes and gif format to tell some element of current events in a funny way. The fact that it is a martial institution does not deprive users of receiving messages that go beyond the work dynamics and talk about everyday issues. The texts seek closeness, with congratulations on the day of different patron saints, expressions such as ‘master of masters’, or ‘four-legged heroes’ –referring to the unit’s trained dogs.



**Image 2. Example of a tweet from the UME**

*Source: Unidad Militar de Emergencias (2022)*

### **Work dynamics adapted to the emergency situations in which the unit is involved**

Unlike other brands and institutions that, due to their typology, can plan the issues to be addressed with enough time (Martín-García & Buitrago, 2022), the content dynamics in the EMU depends on uncontrollable causes. Citizen collaboration is key and messages are periodically launched from social networks reminding that the role of the citizen is not limited to a mere spectator, or that the speed with which action is taken can reduce the effects of a catastrophe. It is also observed that these collaborative contents are more shared by users.

When faced with prolonged emergency situations, such as a fire, a story is told over several days, starting from the beginning, when the members of the UME join the firefighting efforts. Thus, they report the progress and problems, the data on participation and personnel, and explain the adversities they face, combining formats and using video to show more directly the work of its members. The tone varies from other less conflictive topics and the texts focus on objectively explaining how the incident is progressing. During these days, other topics that do not require a time constraint for publication are paused.



**Image 3. EMU publication appealing to citizens**

*Source: Unidad Militar de Emergencias (2022)*

On Twitter, own content is combined with that of other institutions that also report on the same emergency in which the EMU is acting, demonstrating that joint work is essential and that the protagonism and even the merit must be shared. Among these other accounts we find those related to civil protection, fire departments, or the official one of the Department of Defense, the institution on which the object of this study depends.

The visual content shows the harshness of the catastrophe; it is not softened with general shots that ignore important details. Close-ups are frequent, the faces of fatigue and effort are visible and the consequences of the situation they are working for –such as, for example, a fire that devastates thousands of hectares–, are shown in detail, making the viewer a participant in a reality that does not admit nuances and cannot be hidden.

**The support and gratitude of EMU’s followers on social networks as an oasis in a complex digital environment**

There is no two-way relationship between the institution and the public, which would be one of the most basic functions of social networks. Despite numerous messages of support for the EMU from the audience, none of the users who post comments receive a reply from the community manager, not even when they ask specific questions about the unit’s activity. On the other hand, each message receives a considerable number of likes, showing that they are at least read.

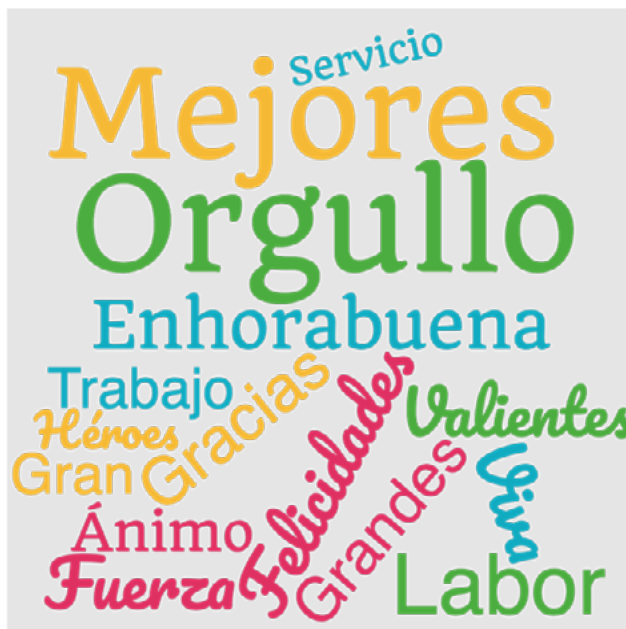
There are multiple responses from users on Facebook and testimonials on Twitter and Instagram. Messages of appreciation for the work of the unit predominate, much more than those aimed at creating debate or negative criticism:

Thank you for the work and the superhuman effort you do along with forest firefighters and environmental agents. The entire county cannot thank you enough for your work. Thank you for keeping us informed of your operations, training, training, and activities. This way we feel even closer to you: our EMU, that of all the citizens who admire and love you.

Such acknowledgements are not limited to current issues. It is common to find people recalling past moments, even from a decade ago, when the work of the unit was decisive in the face of a catastrophe, such as the 2011 Lorca earthquake:

In Lorca we will never forget what you did for us with the 2011 earthquakes. You are special and to congratulate you for your work seems to me an understatement. You are great, very great.

In the word cloud we define the most frequently repeated words in response to the work of the EMU. It is observed that the fifteen most common have a positive tone, starting with thanks and congratulations and highlighting attributes such as bravery, strength, greatness, or heroism.



**Image 4. Word cloud of fans' responses**

*Source: Own elaboration based on EMU social networks.*

The few criticisms received by the EMU are answered by other followers and not by the community manager, as we see in this sequence between two people, which reflects a recurring trend:

If we need the army to put out fires then it is clear that there is a surplus of military and a lack of forest firefighters → I see that you are not informed about the work of the EMU. They are not just military, they are highly trained personnel and a demonstrably effective means of fighting forest fires

Based on the appreciation of the unit, there are two themes that obtain the greatest number of responses: images and videos showing real emergencies, and the practical exercises with which the military train to prepare for action. On this occasion, the spectacular nature of the images, accompanied by the relevant music, obtained better results in terms of participation.

We should always be grateful to them. They are heroes without capes who put their own lives at risk to save the lives of others in any kind of situation. Once and a thousand times, thank you/ How brave, thank you for always helping everyone.

## **DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS**

The EMU takes advantage of the audiovisual formats present on each platform, combining photos, carousels, videos, reels, and stories in which they also make use of features such as questions, polls, gifs or mentions. The level of response in the interactions is constant, especially in the number of likes that the unit obtains in each post, exceeding a thousand in many of them. They resort to a tone that seeks to approach society (Castro-Higueras et al., 2021), and that is suitable for understanding without the need for technical knowledge on the subject. They have an impact on users by showing the reality of the EMU from different aspects: preparation, exercises, direct action, materials available, visualization of the catastrophe or emergency in which they are acting, etc. At the same time, they do not forget other more everyday aspects, which humanize their members and generate credibility (Alcalá-Santaella et al., 2021), such as Christmas greetings, the celebration of some other holiday or the humor that, without being the usual tone, appears on some occasions, usually on Twitter.

The contents are adapted to the specifications of each platform and follow a coherent line in which the daily activity of the Military Emergency Unit is prioritized. Values such as effort, sacrifice, teamwork or self-sacrifice are transmitted, always shown as a unit, never focusing on specific professionals, which shows coherence between what is promoted and what is communicated.



When monitoring the work of the EMU in a catastrophe, the contents during the days of the intervention are exclusively about that topic, pausing others with no priority and that may distract from what is most important. The three main communicative objectives observed in the analyzed platforms are: 1) to demonstrate that the emergency has a solution and that it is being fought; 2) the progress and destruction left in its wake by catastrophes such as a fire, and 3) the pursuit of citizen collaboration (Suau-Gomila et al., 2021).

With regard to user behavior, this breaks with a common trend in the social networks of many public institutions, that of finding a large number of negative comments and insults (Matamoros-Fernández & Farkas, 2021). After analyzing the responses, it is concluded that the feeling is very positive, and in terms of the relationship between the users themselves there are also no conflicts or discrepancies that generate personal attacks, as is the case when it comes to political parties, sports, public figures, among others (Martín-García & Buitrago, 2022). On the rare occasions when a person criticizes EMU functions, other followers quickly appear disagreeing with that opinion, although the controversy does not usually go beyond an exchange of impressions.

To conclude this study, we consider that the research questions have been answered after the analysis of the EMU digital platforms. Its informative resources are shown to publicize its work and the importance of good preparedness in all areas. It coherently adapts its planning to the interventions it carries out in emergency situations, most of them with an unpredictable nature, as we have seen in the fires of June 2022, and it has a loyal community that supports this Spanish military unit and recognizes its work.

We are aware, as a limitation of the study, that the sample could be larger. However, after an initial review covering a longer period, we observed that the two months analyzed in this study, June and December 2022, faithfully represent the reality of the management of social networks by the Military Emergency Unit and that the conclusions drawn are plausible. For future work, we plan to extend the sample to similar units in other countries to establish comparisons and new communication proposals for improvement.

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