Municipalities and Their Use of Social Media as Communication Tools: An Overview of Some Current Practices in the Aveiro Region In Portugal

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Abstract: Social media has gradually evolved into a phenomenon that transcends its purely technical nature and has become an almost ubiquitous part of the communication activities of our modern society, playing an essential role in numerous sectors, such as public administration, where its potential as a communication tool has helped local authorities to develop agile and easily accessible communication channels with their communities. Traditional communication strategies using leaflets, local television, newspaper and radio advertising, and even the authorities' institutional website are being replaced by more engaging communication strategies based on social media. The research presented in this paper took up the challenge of mapping and analysing during a short period the online presence of the 11 municipalities of the Intermunicipal Community of the Region of Aveiro (CIRA) in Portugal in terms of their use of social media as tools for communicating with their constituents and others living in the region. The information collected focused on the municipalities' activities on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and YouTube. Particular attention was paid to consistency and coherence of communication, engagement, and shared content. An empirical study was conducted based on quantitative information collected over 30 days through a web-based web analytics tool, with further review of some of the data collected by the researchers directly from each municipality's social media profile. The results show that municipalities are engaged in developing communication strategies and activities on social media, providing audiovisual content is becoming more critical, and followers are more engaged with audiovisual content and issues less related to political and administrative matters. The information gathered shows that followers are more engaged with content about cultural and sports-related news and that there is still room for improving the use of YouTube for sharing information about each municipality. The results also suggest municipalities can improve their current practices by developing their communication team's new communication design skills. These conclusions have already been shared with decision-makers to help them improve current practices and design future communication strategies based on concepts linked to new media and transmedia experiences.

Keywords: Social media, Communication, Engagement, Local government, Transmedia

1. Introduction

Social media has gradually grown into a phenomenon that strands beyond its sheer technological essence and has become an almost omnipresent piece of our modern society's communication activities. This hard-to-ignore reality, on the verge of a ubiquitous existence, has made it difficult to keep up with transdisciplinary dynamics due to their complexity, reach and depth. Social Media has gained a relevant role in numerous sectors, such as public administration, in which its potential as a communication tool has aided local government bodies in developing agile and easily accessible communication channels with their communities.

Local government has gradually begun to understand social media's relevance to engaging with communities and their constituents. The study conducted aimed to answer the following research questions: "What are the current practices adopted by the municipalities members of the Intermunicipal Community of the Region of Aveiro as to their presence on social media and their use as communication tools?" This paper presents examples of current practices and provides insight that may contribute to improvements and strategy design that may be used to take advantage of the potential presented by social media in local government communication activities. Some of its content may eventually be used as a reference point for similar assessments as to what is being done in other communities, thus contributing to the construction of some critical thought about the subject and providing tools for more active citizenship. The research presented in this paper took on the challenge of mapping and analysing the online presence of the 11 municipalities of the Intermunicipal Community of the Region of Aveiro (CIRA) in Portugal as to their use of social media as tools for communicating with their constituents and other people living in the region. The information collected focused on the municipalities' activity on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and YouTube. Special attention was given to

communication consistency, coherence, engagement, and shared content issues. The information was collected over 30 days using Fan Page Karma, a web-based web analytics tool, and direct observation and information collection from each municipality's social media profile with a comparison table with over 30 quantitive and qualitative indicators.

2. Theoretical Framework

The number of social media users has increased since a little after 2005. Despite the rise, fall, takeover, and diminishing of many social media networks and platforms, it has kept a steady pace and welcomed new generations of users. These new generations of social media users and a broad scope of other users who have used social media regularly for quite some time are currently the fabric of the local communities where the local government bodies work. For several reasons, traditional communication strategies that use leaflets, local TV stations, newspaper and radio ads and even the government bodies' institutional websites are being replaced by closer and more engaging communication strategies based on social media.

According to a study by Kietzmann, Hermkens, McCarthy, and Silvestre (2012), social media can effectively communicate with municipalities. The study found that municipalities can use social media to increase transparency, facilitate public participation, and improve customer service. A study by Arshad and Khurram (2020) found that the information provided on social media within this context played an important role in perceived transparency, trust in agency, perceived responsiveness, and online political participation. This relation is also found in other studies conducted in other parts of the world (Graham & Avery, 2013; Elison & Hardey, 2014; Lin & Kant, 2021; Padeiro et al., 2021; Torres et al., 2023).

Overall, research suggests that social media can be a valuable communication tool for municipalities, allowing them to increase transparency, improve customer service, and foster trust and engagement with citizens. However, there are cases in which engagement and freedom to express concerns and opinions are concepts still under development if, as in some cases, the social media platforms are managed by the government itself (Medaglia & Zhu, 2017; Zhang & Guo, 2021) Recent studies have, however, attempted to demonstrate some shifts in previous approaches (Zhang et al, 2023) that are still to be proven as widespread and a permanent change in the right direction towards a more democratic, free thought and open opinion relation between governmental bodies and the citizens. As in the case of individual users who opt to use social media as an extension of their real offline persona, municipalities must carefully manage their social media presence to avoid potential negative effects, such as spreading misinformation or creating conflicts. In the case of municipalities, this concern is closely linked to avoiding problems with their constituents. Municipalities must develop strategies for monitoring and moderating their social media accounts to ensure effective and appropriate platform use and manage conflicts that may surface with their users or even among them. Overall, the research reviewed suggests that social media can be a valuable communication tool for municipalities, but it must be managed carefully to avoid potential adverse effects. The content provided by municipalities on social media is highly relevant and influences not only the engagement rates achieved but also the construction and consolidation of relationships built on the foundations of trust and transparency. It is undeniable that audiovisual content is king and leads any given study to focus on the type of content consumed on the leading social media platforms (Kemp, 2022). User-generated content (UGC) has gained popularity throughout the years, and there has been an increase in studies involving local government bodies that are tapping into the valuable contribution that this type of content may provide for city planning and engaging with both resident and non-resident users (Ramadhani & Indradjati, 2023; Gryszel et al., 2023). To a certain extent, this trend may provide a sense of authenticity to the content and contribute to a sense of belonging between users and the municipality. Many municipalities have considered the main trends in using social media as a communication tool when designing their online presence.

The following are but a few of some trends that have been outlined in recent years and that are still up-to-date:

- Audiovisual content is king on social media, and users tend to prefer watching content instead of reading;
- Social media platforms are organic and change over time, which implies that communication strategies must be reviewed systematically and adjusted accordingly (Hruska & Maresova, 2020; Li et al., 2021);
- User-generated content and community building are critical issues for social media success (Santos, 2022);

- Artificial intelligence and machine learning are being used more frequently in social media management and content creation (Henman, 2020; Kerr et al., 2020; Anantrasirichai & Bull, 2022);
- Users are provided with information tailored to their profile (Winter et al., 2021; Zarouali et al., 2022);
- Content and conflict moderation is an enormous challenge that has to be tackled by municipalities if
 they want to build a relationship with their constituents based on trust and transparency (Gorwa et
 al., 2020; Rossini, 2022);
- Being on all trending social media platforms is highly time-consuming. It must be adequately assessed as to its implications and both positive and negative impacts on the municipality's image.

This theoretical framework enabled the study conducted and presented in the following sections to design the methodology which guided the work conducted.

3. Methodology

The research presented in this paper took on the challenge of an empirical study aimed at mapping and analysing the online presence of the 11 municipalities of the Intermunicipal Community of the Region of Aveiro (CIRA, 2023) in Portugal as to their use of social media as tools for communicating with their constituents and other people living in the region. As for the methodology adopted, the empirical study carried out consisted of a comparative analysis using a set of 31 indicators listed in Table 1, partly considering the work carried out by one of the authors of this article (Vieira & Raposo, 2020; Raposo, 2022), for the analysis and deconstruction exercise of the 11 municipalities analysed. These indicators were distributed into four main categories (Presence, Fans and Followers, Content published, and Engagement). The indicators were chosen and their clustering into the four main categories enabled the researchers to establish a clear image of: i) what characterized each municipality as to its presence on social media platforms; ii) What was the size of their following and its growth dynamic; iii) What each municipality posted on each social media platform (number, frequency, type of content, coherence, language); iv) and the type of engagement and its rate on each platform. A portion of the comparison grid is illustrated in Figure 1.

Table 1: List of all the indicators used for the comparative analysis and their categorization

Presence	Fans and Followers
Social platforms with active profiles	Number of fans for each profile – Total number
Profile name coherence	Fan growth
Profile links shared on the official website	Number of followers
Page performance index	The follower growth,
Content published	Engagement
Posts published per day,	Post likes
Post structure coherence	Post comments
Language used in posts	Post shares
Posts with photos	Post mentions
Posts with videos	Post impressions
Reels	Feedback to comments posted by followers or fans
Posts with links to other media	Videos most interacted with
Reposts from other sources	Photos most interacted with
	Links most interacted with
	Reels most interacted with
	Reposts most interacted with
	The total of engagement actions with each profile,
	the engagement rate of each profile,
	The engagement rate of each post
	the reach rate of each post

Metrics Overvie	w			Oct 1, 2022 -	Oct 31, 20	22	
rofile .	Network	Page Performance Index	Fans	Follower Growth (in %)	Post interaction	Posts per day	Link
/Junicípio de Aveiro	FACEBOOK	13,0%	52676	0,17%	0,13%	1,4	https://www.facebook.com/municipiodeaveiro
âmara Municipal de Ovar	FACEBOOK	29,0%	24291	0,49%	0,21%	1,4	https://www.facebook.com/cm.ovar
∕lunicípio de Águeda	FACEBOOK	26,0%	24277	0,38%	0,32%	1,1	https://www.facebook.com/cmagueda
Junicípio da Murtosa	FACEBOOK	39,0%	24189	0,51%	0,59%	0,9	https://www.facebook.com/municipiodamurtosa
/Junicípio de Ílhavo	FACEBOOK	31,0%	21430	0,26%	0,26%	2,5	https://www.facebook.com/camaramunicipalilhavo
Junicípio de Vagos	FACEBOOK	12,0%	21345	0,09%	0,1%	2,8	https://www.facebook.com/municipiovagos
/Junicípio de Anadia	FACEBOOK	38,0%	20314	0,46%	0,13%	4,4	https://www.facebook.com/municipioanadia
/Junicípio de Estarreja	FACEBOOK	22,0%	20048	0,24%	0,19%	1,9	https://www.facebook.com/estarrejamunicipio
/Junicípio de Albergaria-a-Vel	h FACEBOOK	40,0%	18151	0,41%	0,21%	3,5	https://www.facebook.com/municipiodealbergariaavelha
Aunicípio de Oliveira do Bairr	rc FACEBOOK	63,0%	15377	0,84%	0,27%	4,0	https://www.facebook.com/oliveiradobairro.municipio
/Junicípio da Murtosa	INSTAGRAM	20,0%	4373	0,48%	1,72%	0,5	https://www.instagram.com/municipiodamurtosa
∕lunicípio de Vagos	INSTAGRAM	10,0%	4246	0,19%	0,69%	1,0	https://www.instagram.com/municipiovagos
/Junicípio de Estarreja	INSTAGRAM	30,0%	3616	0,78%	1,02%	1,2	https://www.instagram.com/estarrejamunicipio
Aunicípio de Sever do Vouga	FACEBOOK	83,0%	3514	1,97%	1,58%	2,0	https://www.facebook.com/municipioseverdovouga

Figure 1: A small portion of the comparison grid used in the study

Figure 2 illustrates the process followed when carrying out the study. The information collected focused on the municipalities' activity on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and YouTube. Special attention was given to communication consistency, coherence, engagement, and shared content issues. The information was collected over 30 days, during October 2022, using Fan Page Karma, a web-based Web analytics tool, and direct observation and information collection from each municipality's social media profile with a comparison table with 31 indicators combining both quantitive and qualitative data.

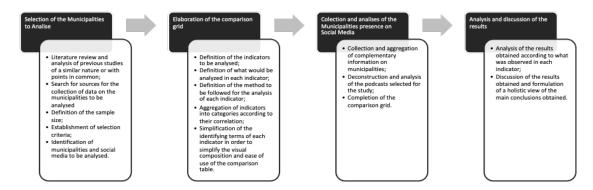


Figure 2: Stages of the study and tasks carried out

As mentioned, the 11 municipalities chosen are part of Portugal's Intermunicipal Community of the Aveiro Region. All municipalities were considered eligible for the study, and all complied with the basic criteria of having some online presence on social media platforms. In some cases, there was the need to search for some of the social media profiles that were not listed on each of the municipality's official websites. The sample of municipalities included in the study and the link to their official website are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: The sample of municipalities included in the study

Municipality	Website link
Município de Aveiro	https://www.cm-aveiro.pt/
Município de Ovar	https://www.cm-ovar.pt/pt/Default.aspx/
Município de Águeda	https://www.cm-agueda.pt/
Município da Murtosa	https://www.cm-murtosa.pt/
Município de Ílhavo	https://www.cm-ilhavo.pt/
Município de Vagos	https://www.cm-vagos.pt/
Município de Anadia	https://www.cm-anadia.pt/
Município de Estarreja	https://www.cm-estarreja.pt/
Município de Albergaria-a-Velha	https://www.cm-albergaria.pt/
Município de Oliveira do Bairro	https://www.cm-olb.pt/
Município de Sever do Vouga	https://www.cm-sever.pt/

4. The Study

As illustrated in Figure 1, the study comprised four moments, each with its purpose and period within the overall work conducted. Although the analysis stage of the study occurred during the whole month of October, the sample selection and the development of the comparison grid were developed over a month before the analysis stage. This enabled the research team to collect all the information regarding the municipalities' online presence and confirm if the profiles collected were, in fact, official profiles and not false profiles posing as official ones. There was also some attention dedicated to what may be considered discarded or forsaken profiles, which may be understood as profiles created at some point by a member of the municipality team but then left online unattended instead of being shut down. We opted to keep these forsaken profiles on our comparison list when there were no alternative profiles on the same social media platform. We chose to do so because, despite being left without any tending to, it was up and online. During October, the profiles collected and included in the comparison grid were monitored every week, and additional activities, such as reading the content of newly published posts and viewing videos recently uploaded, were completed to form a better understanding of the type of content published. It was interesting to find out that, at the time, most of the municipalities had inconsistent information on their official websites. With this, we mean that even though they have a presence on multiple social media platforms, most of them are not mentioned on the official website. This, of course, led to the need to spend some time on each social media platform to try and identify if each municipality had an up-and-running profile on Facebook, Instagram or any of the other more commonly used social media platforms. Much to the researchers' surprise the municipalities were falling short of properly sharing with their website visitors what other official communication channels could be found online. Table 2 illustrates an example of this inconsistency regarding each municipality's presence on Instagram during October 2022. Some of these inconsistencies have been reviewed since then while others are still in place.

Table 3: Example of inconsistencies regarding each municipality's presence on Instagram and the link provided on their official website during October 2022

Municipality	Official Instagram account	Link provided on website
Município de Aveiro	https://www.instagram.com/municipi odeaveiro/	No link
Município de Ovar	https://www.instagram.com/municipi oovar	https://www.instagram.com/municip ioovar/
Município de Águeda	https://www.instagram.com/agueda.t	No link
Município da Murtosa	https://www.instagram.com/municipi odamurtosa	No link
Município de Ílhavo	https://www.instagram.com/municipi o_de_ilhavo	https://www.instagram.com/municip io de ilhavo/
Município de Vagos	https://www.instagram.com/municipi ovagos	https://www.instagram.com/municip iovagos/
Município de Anadia	https://www.instagram.com/municipi oanadia	No link
Município de Estarreja	https://www.instagram.com/estarreja municipio	https://www.instagram.com/estarrej amunicipio/
Município de Albergaria-a-Velha	https://www.instagram.com/municipi odealbergariaavelha	https://www.instagram.com/cineteat roalba/
Município de Oliveira do Bairro	https://www.instagram.com/oliveirad obairro.municipio	https://www.instagram.com/oliveira dobairro municipio/
Município de Sever do Vouga	https://www.instagram.com/municipi oseverdovouga	No link

There are other examples of this type of inconsistency regarding Facebook and YouTube that may be easily solved and contribute to improving each municipality's visibility on each of these social media platforms. The empirical nature of the study conducted did not provide data or information regarding the reasons behind these issues still open to improvement. An additional issue identified and which may also be subject to further analysis is the fact that some of the profiles created by each municipality are given different names and branding. Probably the most evident case is the municipality of Águeda summarized in Table 3 that, for some reason, uses an Águeda TV brand on some of its official social media profiles such as Instagram and YouTube

while in others use the more institutional cmagueda brand. We mustn't ignore the possibility that the profile name may have already been taken when this municipality chose to create an account, but there is a relevant difference between cmagueda and aguedatv worth reviewing for the sake of brand consistency and coherence.

Table 4: Example of brand inconsistency regarding the Municipality of Águeda's presence on various social media platforms during October 2022

Município de Águeda	
Social media platform	Link to Social Media profile
Facebook	https://www.facebook.com/cmagueda
Instagram	https://www.instagram.com/agueda.tv
YouTube	https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC5MCZycylopJ6YWI79pZMGQ
Twitter	https://www.twitter.com/cmaagueda

Despite these inconsistencies and some difficulty in finding each municipality's official online presence, the study ended up collecting a diverse list of social media profiles that are, as a whole, presented in Table 4. It was interesting to see that at the time, all the municipalities had both a Facebook page and an Instagram profile, but not all had a YouTube channel, and less than half had a Twitter profile. While the relevance of having a Twitter profile now rebranded as X is debatable yet understandable due to its time-consuming nature, especially in small social media communication teams, the fact that not all municipalities have a YouTube channel is worth outlining. The time and effort put into creating good audiovisual content and properly managing a YouTube channel is probably as demanding, if not more, than other social media platforms. However, besides its relevant role in sharing information about the municipality's present and future activities, it may also play an important role in preserving and promoting the municipality's past. For this reason alone, it is worth looking at it from a different angle when discussing its importance as a communication tool.

Table 5: Summary of the number of Municipalities with an official presence on Facebook, Instagram, Youtube and Twitter during October 2022 the corresponding percentage with the sample

Municipalities (11)	Number of Municipalities with an official presence	Percentage of Municipalities with an official presence
Official Facebook pages	11	100%
Official Instagram profiles	11	100%
Official Youtube Channels	9	82%
Official Twitter profiles	5	45%

The results attained after thoroughly filling in the comparison grid are presented and discussed in the next section of this paper.

5. Results

The results attained with the work developed in this study may be analysed according to the data collected during October 2022, the picture it painted, and the reflections derived from what was learned with that same data. If we merely look at the data and try to establish a set of main conclusions contained within an established period, we may look at the results as instances of our sample's presence and activity on a set of social media platforms. Table 5 clearly shows that Facebook is the social media platform on which the sample of municipalities was most active, with a total of 688 posts, averaging a total of 25 per day, closely followed by Instagram, with 410 posts and an average of about 13 posts per day. YouTube and Twitter, on the other hand, had little or no content creation activities during the month included in the study. This clearly shows the municipalities' preference regarding their social media presence. However, it corroborates the idea that, at least in the case of YouTube, the time and effort involved in producing audiovisual content may lead municipalities to focus on other platforms, such as Facebook and Instagram. The content analysis did, on the other hand, show that some of the content published on Facebook could easily find its way onto YouTube, thus increasing the content published on the municipality's channel and, at the same time, contributing to its archiving, preservation and future retrieval for reuse.

Table 6: Summary of the average and total number of posts published by the sample during October 2022 on Facebook, Instagram, YouTube and Twitter

Social Media Platform	Average number of posts per day	Total number of posts during October 2022
Facebook	25	688
Instagram	13	410
Youtube	0,4	12
Twitter	0,2	5

Although the total number of posts on Facebook and Instagram shows some activity, it is worth outlining that not all municipalities produce the same publication patterns. Table 6 clarifies the most and least active municipalities on, in this case, Facebook.

Table 7: Summary of the average and total number of posts published on Facebook by each municipality during October 2022

Municipality	Average number of posts per day	Total number of posts during October 2022
Município de Anadia	4,5	126
Município de Oliveira do Bairro	3,9	108
Município de Vagos	3,8	106
Município de Albergaria-a-Velha	2,9	82
Município de Ílhavo	2,6	72
Município de Estarreja	2,3	65
Município de Aveiro	1	27
Município da Murtosa	1,2	34
Município de Águeda	1,1	31
Município de Sever do Vouga	1,0	28
Município de Ovar	0,3	9

One may think that posting many times will result in high engagement rates when, in reality, that is not the case. For instance, when considering Instagram, having a larger number of followers will not grant you a great engagement rate even if you publish less content to engage with. Table 7 proves this point by showing that, for example, The Murtosa Municipality, despite its 4373 followers on Instagram and 16 posts during the month considered in the study, was only able to reach a 0,9% engagement rate. A result similar to Aveiro, which had less than half of Murtosa's followers and only 6 more posts. Regarding engagement, Anadia and Ílhavo stand out with an engagement rate of around 5% and a similar number of followers. Anadia, however, posted more than twice as much as Ílhavo, which means that the latter got more engagement with less posting effort. This also provides evidence that by selecting the right content, there is no need to overflow your social media profile with much content. Less may mean more, and this is a great example.

Table 8: Summary of the engagement rate, number of followers (most to least) and total of posts published by each municipality during October 2022

Municipality	Engagement rate	Followers	Total of posts during October 2022
Município da Murtosa	0,9%	4373	16
Município de Vagos	0,6%	4246	31
Município de Estarreja	1,1%	3616	37
Município de Oliveira do Bairro	2,2%	2801	79
Município de Aveiro	1,0%	1913	22
Município de Águeda	0,5%	1361	11
Município de Anadia	5,4%	1306	130
Município de Sever do Vouga	0,0%	1183	0

Municipality	Engagement rate	Followers	Total of posts during October 2022
Município de Ílhavo	4,9%	1113	61
Município de Albergaria-a-Velha	2.4%	118	24

As for the type of content, most published pictures are the most posted (Figure 3) and the most interacted with, probably due to the need for some users to click on the picture to see it in full-screen mode.

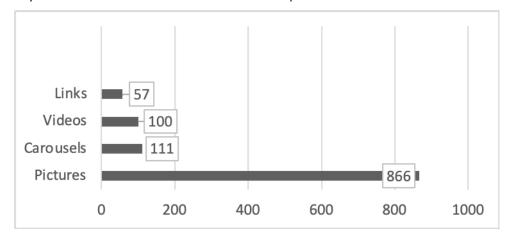


Figure 3: Type of content most published by each municipality during October 2022

It was interesting to see that the content that most interacted with, apart from pictures or videos, always included a personal story that may have touched base with the users' memories or gastronomical preferences (Figure 4). This engagement is a great pointer regarding the content these municipalities should share on their social media profiles and other more formal information. Keeping engaged with the constituents is a great way to establish communication and, in due time, create relations based on trust.

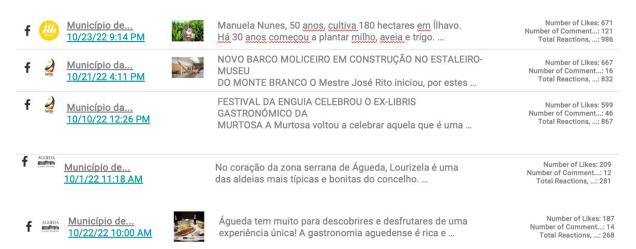


Figure 4: Examples of some of the posts most interacted with content during October 2022

These results and others to be published soon enabled the research team to draw the conclusions presented in the following section.

6. Conclusions

According to the results obtained from the study conducted, we may state that the municipalities from CIRA are concerned with developing communication strategies and activities on social media, that there is a growing concern with providing audiovisual content, and that followers engage more with posts which include pictures and audiovisual content and with topics less linked to political and purely administrative issues. Information collected shows that followers are more engaged with content about personal stories and cultural and gastronomic news something already identified in a study by Perea (Perea, Bonsón & Bednárová, 2021). There is, however, room for improvement as to the correction of inconsistencies linked to municipality branding on

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social media, rethinking the municipality's presence online by focusing on fewer platforms rather than trying to be everywhere but with little or no content or clear goals, understanding that their official website is a fundamental starting point for finding them on social media and the first alternative to making the user waste time searching for them online. It is also evident that most of the municipalities considered should improve their editorial guidelines for their presence on social media by further normalizing content such as post structure, the use of #tags and the tone of the language used (Stone & Can, 2020). The analysis conducted allowed the research team to identify that certain types of content, like videos about positive actions in local communities and associations, attracted a lot of attention and engaged a wider number of followers and fans. This should be something that municipalities may tap into as anchor content capable of attracting attention and a way of promoting a greater connection with their constituents (Faber, 2022). As a side-effect, other content may earn greater visibility. Working on this concept of Return on Engagement may also help promote connections with the municipality's constituents, which may help promote citizen participation in other forms beyond the typical online comments and opinions about everything but doing nothing in the real world. Attracting and involving the constituents in offline activities, attracting at the same time their attention toward municipal management and improving government-to-citizen relationships through call-to-action initiatives posted and promoted on their social media is also worth promoting (Sarantis et al., 2022). Mayors and their clear perception of the relevance of this effort are essential for tackling this challenge for they are the main decision-makers in these local governance bodies (Giacomini & Simonetto, 2020). The study also enabled the team to perceive that YouTube is underused and even its current use falls short of what it may be used for. As aforementioned, municipalities may resort to YouTube as a means to preserve, promote and discuss the territory's tangible and intangible heritage. A holistic analysis of the results also suggests municipalities may improve their current practices by developing their communication team's competencies in communication design for new media. This may, however, be a challenge due to possible limited resources as in the cases identifiable other studies previously conducted (Silva et al., 2019; Stone et al., 2024) Much of the work presented in this paper may contribute to the improvement of some of the practices identified in the study and the design of future communication strategies based on concepts closely knit with new media and transmedia experiences as practices useful for bridging the municipalities goals and ideas with their constituents and local communities. The study conducted has room for more in-depth research by adding the qualitative analysis of both the content posted by the municipalities and the comments provided by their followers and fans, structured interviews with the people responsible for managing the municipalities' presence on social media, a comparative analysis of social media activity over a longer period and a comparative analysis between municipalities according to the indicators adopted for this study. These possibilities may be considered as both limitations of the work done and opportunities for future studies.

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