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Item Type	Journal article
Authors	Mas-Bleda, Amalia;Makita, Meiko;Mrva-Montoya, Agata;Thelwall, Mike
Citation	Mas-Bleda, A., Makita, M., Mrva-Montoya, A. and Thelwall, M. (2022) ¿Qué hace que un tuit sobre un libro sea popular? Análisis de los contenidos más retuiteados creados por editoriales de libros españolas y extranjeras. Revista Española De Documentación Científica, 45(3), e332. <a href="https://doi.org/10.3989/redc.2022.3.1904">https://doi.org/10.3989/redc.2022.3.1904</a>
DOI	<a href="https://doi.org/10.3989/redc.2022.3.1904">10.3989/redc.2022.3.1904</a>
Publisher	Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas
Journal	Revista Espanola de Documentacion Cientifica
Download date	2026-03-10 03:10:19
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ESTUDIOS / RESEARCH STUDIES

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## What makes a book tweet popular? Analysis of the most retweeted content posted by Spanish and non-Spanish book publishers

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Recibido: 10-06-21; 2ª versión: 21-07-21; Aceptado: 22-07-21; Publicado: 06-07-22.

**Cómo citar este artículo/Citation:** Mas-Bleda, A.; Makita, M.; Mrva-Montoya, A.; Thelwall, M. (2022). What makes a book tweet popular? Analysis of the most retweeted content posted by Spanish and non-Spanish book publishers. *Revista Española de Documentación Científica*, 45 (3), e332. <https://doi.org/10.3989/redc.2022.3.1904>.

**Abstract:** The aim of this article is to identify content-related features of the most retweeted messages posted by Spanish and non-Spanish book publishers on Twitter. A content analysis has been conducted to identify the topic of the tweets and whether they include book title hashtags, images and hyperlinks, and if so, what the images are about and where the links point to. As a complement, a word association analysis has been carried out to determine which terms are associated with each of the different publishers. Overall, publishers tend to tweet about themselves and their books for marketing purposes. About half of the publishers have Twitter accounts. Spanish publishers' tweets often contain literary quotes, while the top tweets by non-Spanish publishers are more likely to contain free prize draws. Publishers seeking to engage with potential readers on Twitter could consider quotes and giveaways to build their audience, in addition to tagging author @usernames in book-related posts to help reach the author's network.

**Keywords:** Twitter; microblogging; retweets; content analysis; word association analysis; book publishers.

### ¿Qué hace que un tuit sobre un libro sea popular? Análisis de los contenidos más retuiteados creados por editoriales de libros españolas y extranjeras

**Resumen:** El objetivo de este artículo es identificar características relacionadas con el contenido de los mensajes más retuiteados creados por editoriales de libros españolas y extranjeras en Twitter. Se ha realizado un análisis de contenido para identificar el tema de los tuits y si incluyen hashtag para el título del libro, imágenes e hipervínculos, y en caso de incluirse, sobre qué son las imágenes y hacia dónde apuntan los enlaces. Como complemento, se ha realizado un análisis de asociación de palabras para identificar qué términos son asociados con cada una de las diferentes editoriales. En general, las editoriales tienden a tuitear sobre ellas mismas y sus libros con fines de marketing. Aproximadamente la mitad de las editoriales tienen cuentas en Twitter. Los tuits más populares de las editoriales españolas suelen contener citas literarias, mientras que los tuits más populares de las editoriales extranjeras tienden más a incluir sorteos. Los editores que buscan comprometerse con lectores potenciales en Twitter podrían considerar las citas y los sorteos para construir su audiencia, además de etiquetar al nombre de usuario del autor (@nombredeusuario) en tuits relacionados con libros para ayudar al autor con su red social.

**Palabras clave:** Twitter; microblogueo; retuits; análisis de contenido; análisis de asociación de palabras; editoriales de libros.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Book publishing has already been disrupted by digitisation (Crosby, 2019) and this has been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic (Brinton, 2021), causing a substantial shift online (e.g., Nguyen & Harris, 2020; Nguyen et al., 2020; Vargo et al., 2021). In particular, online methods to reach potential audiences have become increasingly central to the survival of publishers. New book review or recommendation websites, such as Goodreads, LibraryThing, and LoveReading, provide reader-generated information that can influence consumer purchasing behaviour (Chevalier & Mayzlin, 2006) and can be used to help assess the social value of books and book publishers (e.g., Kousha et al., 2017). Whilst these recommendation sites are not under the control of publishers, online marketing strategies are now widely used to reach potential readers. In particular, social media, such as Facebook and Twitter, have also transformed the book marketing strategies of publishers and authors (Throsby et al., 2015), so these are particularly important to investigate at the current time.

Prior research has discussed the opportunities and challenges of social media as a marketing tool for the publishing sector (Grima, 2017; Li, 2018) and has explored the use of social media by book publishers (Nolan & Dane, 2018; Thoring, 2011), authors (Laing, 2017; Wang & Zuccala, 2019) and readers (Krumova, 2017; Nguyen et al., 2019). However, no work has focused on tweets posted by book publishers and so nothing is known about overall Twitter campaigns or successful strategies in this context. To address this gap, the present study examines content-related features of the most popular (i.e., the most retweeted) tweets posted by book publishers on Twitter and applies a word association analysis to identify distinctive terms used by individual publishers.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 Social media as a marketing tool

Social media are popular platforms for many types of information dissemination. Their wide adoption and low cost have turned them into powerful marketing tools (Jansen et al., 2009; Leung et al., 2015) that companies have adopted as a part of their marketing strategy (Ashley & Tuten, 2015; Constantinides, 2014; Stelzner, 2020; Tsimonis & Dimitriadis, 2014). The same is true for book publishers (Grima, 2017; Throsby et al., 2018). Nevertheless, to be successful in their social media strategies publishers must remain

active (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010) and this requires time and resources that not all companies have. Social media marketing is more difficult for small publishers because of these factors (Martens, 2016; Nolan & Dane, 2018).

Social media campaigns can help book publishers to improve their online visibility, manage their brand and reputation, promote their books and authors, and engage with readers (Li, 2018; Lis & Berz, 2011; Mrva-Montoya et al., 2019; Thoring, 2011; Wang & Zuccala, 2021). Readers can use social media to gather and share opinions about books (Gruzd & Rehberg Sedo, 2012; Nguyen et al., 2019) and social media mentions help publicise a new title (Criswell & Canty, 2014). A convenience sample survey of Bulgarian readers showed that 86% of respondents had purchased a book after seeing it or reading about it on social media (Krumova, 2017), for example. Sweepstakes (free prize draws), giveaways or contests also tend to generate social media consumer participation (Berger & Schwartz, 2011; Jung et al., 2020), so they are frequently used as marketing tools (Teichmann et al., 2005). User engagement and participation have therefore become essential in marketing.

Social media marketing initially aimed to attract new audiences, but is now more concerned with the management of audiences by extracting data about reader preferences (Nolan & Dane, 2018). Through social media, a publisher can get valuable information about who its readers are and what they are interested in; however, this issue has rarely been investigated. One exception is a convenience sample survey showing that Bulgarian readers who are active on social media tend to follow book authors (73%), bookstores (66%), publishing houses (60%) and book bloggers (50%), and they follow publishers and authors to keep up to date with the latest book news (75%) and to get book recommendations (50%) (Krumova, 2017). A survey of 313 customers of four Vietnamese bookshops that used social media to seek books showed that most of these customers used publishers' social media to look for reviews, comments and posts generated by readers and customers (81.2%), information about promotions (68.4%), new books or titles (51.1%) and book fairs or events (50.2%) (Nguyen et al., 2019).

Neuromarketing, a novel field using neuroscience techniques and biometric instruments, has emerged as a tool to better understand customers' behaviour, preferences and decision making (Morin, 2011; Stanton et al., 2017). Neuromarketing research has shown that entertainment content with an

emotional charge generates more reactions from the consumers (Vences et al., 2020).

## 2.2 Twitter and the book publishing industry

Whilst Facebook and Twitter are the social media platforms currently most used for marketing by book publishers (Gómez López & Hellín Ortuño, 2019; Grima, 2017; Magadán-Díaz & Rivas-García, 2020; Martín Becerro, 2016), Twitter seems to generate more individual interactions (Criswell & Canty, 2014). Book publishers seem to use this platform to disseminate content not provided on their websites or other social media sites (Thoring, 2011).

Launched in 2006, Twitter is a microblogging service where each user has a profile page with a name and a @username and optionally can provide a photo/logo, a short description, a location and a webpage address. Users can post messages or tweets of up to 280 characters in length, which are public by default and displayed on their profile page. When a user tweets, the tweet will appear on their followers' timelines and can be found by other users searching Twitter. Connections among Twitter users are often not reciprocal, and it is normal to follow accounts for news without expecting interactions (Gruzd & Rehberg Sedo, 2012; Kwak et al., 2010).

Book publishers use Twitter to announce, promote and recommend their books, attract new authors, interact with other publishers and professionals, and post news about authors and illustrators (Campos Moreno & Fernández Cuesta, 2019; Martín Becerro, 2016; Thoring, 2011; Wang & Zuccala, 2019). Thoring's (2011) early study of 48 UK trade publishers found that only 42% of the sampled publishers had a Twitter account. It also reported that publisher's size influenced its general Twitter use, but publisher size was less influential in terms of patterns of use and the content tweeted. Research has shown that books mentioned by their publisher's Twitter account get significantly more Twitter mentions as compared to books mentioned by non-publishers Twitter accounts. Thus, by engaging on social media activity book publishers could increase both Twitter mentions and their books' visibility (Wang et al., 2021).

## 2.3 Content-related features of publishers' tweets

Through its Twitter account, a publisher can get valuable information about who its followers (audience) are, when they comment, like or share (retweet) tweets, which can help with developing an effective marketing strategy. Tweets can contain mentions of other users (@usernames), hashtags,

external hyperlinks (URLs) and emoticons. A hashtag is a word prefixed by the # symbol (#hashtag) that serves to identify a topic and find posts around that specific topic, and a URL points to outside content. As an example, a book publisher can tweet to announce a new book, mentioning its author by including the author's @username and a link to the sales page. This may help to promote that book on Twitter (González-Arenas, 2013).

A retweet is a re-posting of someone else's tweet or one's own tweet, broadcasting the message to the retweeter's followers (Kwak et al., 2010). This is a type of information sharing an engagement with content (Boyd et al., 2010; Gruber, 2017; Puschmann, 2015; Vargo, 2016). Retweeting has been investigated from different points of view; for instance, research has explored what is retweeted (Chung, 2017; Metaxas et al., 2015), who retweets (Chung, 2017; Luo et al., 2013), reasons to retweet (Boyd et al., 2010), and factors that affect retweeting (Suh et al., 2010). Retweeting often indicates interest in the message or topic, trust in the message and its creator, and agreement with the tweet content (Majmundar et al., 2018; Metaxas et al., 2015).

There are many reasons for retweeting (Macskassy & Michelson, 2011), such as spreading the information, publicly agreeing with someone, commenting on someone's tweet, saving tweets for future personal access, showing friendship or loyalty, or participating in promotions (Boyd et al., 2010; Majmundar et al., 2018; Recuero et al., 2011). Factors that may affect retweeting include the presence of photos or images (Chung, 2017), the inclusion of usernames, hashtags and URLs, the number of followers and followees of the original tweeter, the age of their account (Naveed et al., 2011; Suh et al., 2010), the perceived informational value of the tweet (Rudat & Buder, 2015), the emotional charge of the tweet (So et al., 2016; Stieglitz & Dang-Xuan, 2013) and the user's sentiment (Chen et al., 2020). Nevertheless, these motivations and factors can vary between contexts. For instance, whilst the use of URLs was positively associated with retweeting during World Environment Day (Pang & Law, 2017), it was not during a Breast Cancer Awareness Month campaign (Chung, 2017).

Features of tweets posted by book publishers on Twitter operating across different languages have not yet been investigated in detail. The present study gives insights into this gap through a content analysis of the most popular (retweeted) messages posted by Spanish and non-Spanish book publishers, and by comparing the content of

different publishers' tweets. Comparing Spain to the rest of the world gives an interesting contrast that may offer additional insights. Spain has a large publishing industry; Spanish publishers may target a more national audience (although Spanish is an international language) and they may follow different cultural conventions. The research questions are as follows.

- RQ1: Which book publishers post the most popular (retweeted) tweets?
- RQ2: What are the typical contents of the most popular tweets from book publishers?
- RQ3: Do book publishers tweet differently from one another?

### 3. METHOD

The research design was to gather the most retweeted tweets by Spanish and non-Spanish book publishers (RQ1), use content analysis to identify the content-related features (topic, hashtag for a book title, image/video and URL) of those tweets (RQ2) and use word association analysis to identify the terms that occur more often in a publisher account than in the other publisher accounts to identify thematic differences between them (RQ3).

#### 3.1 Data collection

The Scholarly Publishers Indicators (SPI) website (<http://ilia.cchs.csic.es/SPI>) was used to identify book publishers. This website ranks some Spanish (including from Latin America) and non-Spanish publishers that are relevant to humanities and social sciences researchers. The SPI portal includes two rankings: by thematic specialization, which lists book publishers according to the number of titles published in each discipline, and by editorial prestige, where prestige is based on the opinion of 515 Spanish scholars accredited as professors during 2010–2016 (Giménez-Toledo, 2018). More specifically, the SPI index includes all publishers recorded as relevant to their discipline by at least one Spanish scholar, with each scholar allowed to list ten publishers (Giménez-Toledo, et al., 2017).

The editorial prestige ranking includes a general ranking and a discipline-based ranking. The 2018 general ranking was used for this study, comprising 385 Spanish and 425 non-Spanish publishers, a total of 810 organisations comprising of scholarly and trade book publishers, as well as other institutions such as universities, cultural or academic/scientific institutions and governmental organizations for which book publishing is not a core business activity. Whilst editorial prestige is based on the opinion of a small set of Spanish scholars, a previous study using this ranking found

that the most prestigious book publishers also had the highest educational impact, based on syllabus mentions, and the highest research impact, based on Microsoft Academic citations (Mas-Bleda & Thelwall, 2018).

The SPI portal was selected because it includes publishers judged to be prestigious by academics and allows data collection from it. Whilst there are more comprehensive databases, such as the Spanish book publishers' database, they don't let data be collected automatically and so would need slow manual data extraction.

The first author [AMB] manually checked whether the 810 book publishers had a Twitter account during November–December 2019, collecting their usernames and Twitter URLs. She also checked the main language of the non-Spanish publishers' accounts based on their location and the main language of their tweets. The Spanish publishers were also manually searched for in the Spanish book publishers' database (<https://www.culturaydeporte.gob.es/webISBN/tituloSimpleFilter.do>).

This database is managed by the Spanish ISBN Agency and gives information about all Spanish publishers that are, or have been, active since 1972, such as their current name, other names previously used, their type, location, website and whether they are active. This database was used to verify the Twitter accounts of the publishers, based on their location (postal address) and their website address. Forty (10.4%) publishers were not found in this database and eleven (2.9%) were reported as being inactive.

Half (189, 49%) of the Spanish book publishers had a Twitter account (see Table I), of which 27 (14%) were university presses. Similarly, 236 (56%) of the non-Spanish publishers had a Twitter account (see Table I). These were mainly in English (122, 52%), but also in French (38, 16%), Spanish (33, 14%), Italian (24, 10%), German (12, 5.1%), Portuguese (6, 2.5%) and Dutch (1, 0.4%). A quarter (60, 25%) were university presses.

An in-depth analysis of Spanish publishers revealed some reasons that explain the low proportion with a presence on Twitter. For instance, a few publishers belong to publishing groups with a collective Twitter account for the group rather than the publisher, so these accounts were excluded. Some universities also had a general institutional Twitter account but not a specific account for its publication service, so these accounts were also omitted. Moreover, many publishers listed on the SPI portal were not named book publishers

but institutions that publish books of interest for humanities and social sciences areas. In particular, 112 (57%) out of the 196 Spanish publishers that did not have a Twitter account were cultural or academic/scientific institutions (e.g., Casa de Velázquez, Museo del Prado, Sociedad Española de Estudios Medievales, Fundación de Investigaciones Marxistas) or governmental organizations (e.g., Ministerio de Empleo y Seguridad Social, Xunta de Galicia, Instituto Vasco de Administración Pública). Almost all had a general institutional Twitter account, but not a specific account for their publication service.

**Table I:** Book publishers included in this study by country and Twitter presence.

	With a Twitter account	Without a Twitter account
Spanish publishers (n=385)	189 (49%)	196 (51%)
Non-Spanish publishers (n=425)	236 (55.5%)	189 (44.5%)
Total (n=810)	425 (52.5%)	385 (47.5%)

The social media data analysis software Mozdeh (<http://mozdeh.wlv.ac.uk/>) was used to collect, on 15 February 2020, all tweets from the book publishers, separating out the single most retweeted tweet from each publisher (if any tweets had been retweeted) using the retweet count information from Twitter. This retrieved 271 most retweeted tweets posted by the Spanish publishers, and 164 tweets posted by the other publishers. These 164 tweets posted by non-Spanish publishers were in English (99, 60%), French (52, 32%), Spanish (12, 7.3%) and Italian (1, 0.6%). This study focused on Spanish-language tweets posted by the Spanish publishers and the English-language tweets posted by the non-Spanish publishers; therefore, as there were 99 English-language tweets, the 99 most tweeted Spanish tweets were selected, to simplify the comparison between them (see Table II). The most popular Spanish tweet had 499 retweets whereas the most popular English tweet had 4461 retweets. For RQ1, an analysis of the most popular tweets was carried out.

**Table II:** The most popular tweets posted by book publishers on Twitter included in the analysis.

Number of analysed tweets	Posted by	Language of tweets	Maximum number of retweets	Minimum number of retweets
99	Spanish publishers	Spanish	499	161
99	Non-Spanish publishers	English	4461	201

### 3.2 Content analysis

For RQ2, inductive content analysis was applied to the 99 most popular tweets (Spanish language) posted by the Spanish publishers and the 99 most popular tweets (English-language) posted by the non-Spanish publishers, 198 in total (Table II). Content analysis is a “research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from texts (or other meaningful matter) to the context of their use” (Krippendorff, 2018, p. 24). It reduces content into categories to enhance understanding of the data and reflect the subject of the study in a reliable manner. In inductive content analysis, the categories are derived from the data rather than prior information or theory (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008). Standard trustworthiness criteria help to assess the reliability of the results (Elo et al., 2014).

The first author read and re-read a random sample of 300 tweets to get familiarised with them and created an initial coding scheme with four facets (topic, #BookTitle, attached image/video, and included link). Two coders [AMB and MM] then conducted a pilot study content analysis of a random sample of 60 tweets in order to test the reliability of the coding scheme, and discussed ambiguities to ensure that the descriptions were clear, with a particular focus on the topic facet. The coders then performed a second pilot study of 60 new random tweets, based on the revised coding scheme, achieving a Cohen’s Kappa score above 0.8 for all facets (Freelon, 2010; <http://dfreelon.org/utis/recalfront/recal2/>). The coders then carried out a content analysis of the final sample of 198 tweets, based on the final coding scheme, achieving a Cohen’s Kappa score above 0.95 for all facets. This very high agreement level reflects standardised clear tweets written for a narrow range of purposes. The few discrepancies were discussed and resolved by reaching a consensus.

This facet records the topic of the tweet.

#### Facet 1: Topic

- *Quote (general direct literary quote)*. Exact repetition of a sentence from another person, usually between quotation marks, and mentioning its author.
- *Quote from a publisher’s book*. Text extracted from a publisher’s book or from its author,

usually shown between quotation marks. The book title where the quote is extracted from and a picture of the book cover is usually attached.

- *Book launch/signing/talk*. Announcement of an event where a book or collection will be presented to the public for the first time (book launch). This includes book signings and book talks, usually specifying when and where they will be held.
- *Book fair*. Tweet reporting the publisher's participation in a book fair, usually indicating the stand number. It is sometimes accompanied by information about a book.
- *Sweepstakes*. Raffles, sweepstakes, giveaways, contests, prize draws, or quizzes held by the publisher in which users are invited to participate to win a prize. This also includes tweets reporting prize winners.
- *Award-related*. Announcement related to a literary award, usually referring to the winner of a literary prize given by the publisher. It can also refer to an external award won by a publisher's book.
- *New book announcement*. Announcement of a new (recently published) or upcoming book.
- *Featured book*. Featuring or recommending a publisher's book, but not a new book announcement.
- *Book review*. Publisher announcement that one of its books has been reviewed or recommended somewhere (e.g., in a newspaper, Amazon).
- *General news*. General news or information related to books, the book industry or related people, such as an interview with a writer, author-related updates, or a research discovery.
- *Not applicable (N/A)*. Not directly related to books or the book industry.

#### Facet 2: Book hashtag

This facet records whether the tweet includes a book title hashtag. The hashtag must be the complete title, not just part of it (e.g., "Los enigmas que Haruki Murakami plantea en #LaMuertedelComendador llegarán a su desenlace el próximo 15 de enero", or "The enigmas that Haruki Murakami introduces in #LaMuertedelComendador will be resolved on 15 January").

#### Facet 3: Embedded image/video

This facet records whether the tweet has an attached image or video and, if so, what type.

- No image
- Author photo
- Book cover/spine/poster/content
- Book launch/signing/talk related
- Book fair related
- Sweepstake related

- Quote
- Other (bookcase, drawing, mural...)

#### Facet 4: Embedded URL

This records whether the tweet includes a hyperlink or URL and, if so, what content it is linked to.

##### *Type of website*

- Publisher/Publishing group website
- Publisher social media profile (blog, Facebook, YouTube)
- Bookshop/Bookseller/Book recommendation site (e.g. Amazon, Goodreads, Five books)
- Media (Newspaper/Magazine/TV programme/Radio station)
- Other

##### *Specific website section*

- Author/book/collection page
- Mention/review/recommendation of the book
- Sweepstake Terms & Conditions (T&Cs)
- Interview
- Event information (book launch/signing/talk, book fair)
- Other

### 3.3 Word association analysis

RQ3 was addressed with a word frequency test using Mozdeh. The test helped to identify words that occur more often in one publisher's Twitter account (all tweets, not just the highly retweeted tweets) than in the other publishers' accounts (Thelwall, 2021). This is a statistical test that compares the proportion of tweets from a publisher containing a word with the proportion of tweets from the other publishers containing that word, producing a z value, that is (approximately) from the normal distribution. A higher value gives stronger statistical evidence that the difference between the proportions is not due to chance, so the top words are the most likely to be publisher-specific terms. This approach systematically identifies differences between publishers at the level of words rather than broad strategies, but strategic differences presumably translate into different words used, so the results may also hint at wider differences between publishers.

This word association analysis was initially applied to the 189 Spanish publishers and the 122 non-Spanish English-language publishers that had a Twitter account, and the top five words from each publisher with the highest z score were picked for the analysis. Tests were separated by language so that, for example, Spanish language tweeting publishers were compared only to other Spanish language tweeting publishers. Four Spanish publishers and three non-Spanish publishers were duplicates; for instance, the

*Universidad de Valladolid* appeared in the SPI portal as 'Universidad de Valladolid' (listed in order 69) and 'Universidad Valladolid' (listed in order 98). These duplicates were removed and, consequently, the final word association analysis was based on 925 words from tweets posted by 185 Spanish publishers and 595 words from tweets posted by 119 non-Spanish English-language publishers (see Table III).

**Table III:** Number of words and book publishers included in the word association analysis

Nº of words	Posted by
925	185 Spanish publishers
595	119 Non-Spanish English-language publishers

**Table IV:** Spanish book publishers from the SPI website posting the 99 most retweeted tweets

Publisher name	Publisher Twitter account features			Number of highly retweeted tweets (n=99)
	Likes given	Followers	Tweets posted	
Alianza Editorial	14547	420141	72098	72
Editorial Espasa	1366	127493	13913	8
Editorial Anagrama	19970	181328	22281	3
Tusquets Editores	34301	115262	39863	3
Unión Editorial	538	4157	2552	3
Alba Editorial	8947	59829	8394	2
Alfaguara	11652	213646	25201	2
Editorial Trotta	2819	5467	1914	2
Editorial Actas	1116	768	1177	1
Círculo de Lectores	2054	18244	16683	1
Editorial Planeta	13305	19649	13336	1
Virus editorial	2717	8217	4610	1

**Table V:** Non-Spanish book publishers from the SPI website posting the 99 most retweeted English-language tweets

Publisher name	Publisher Twitter account features			Number of highly retweeted tweets (n=99)
	Likes given	Followers	Tweets posted	
Frontiers	8206	38287	12884	46
Macmillan Publishers	4458	18975	11449	11
Bloomsbury UK	12862	162763	31739	8
Penguin Books	1083	333793	22608	8
Pearson	300	61222	11219	5
Hodder & Stoughton	9560	87174	29015	4
Thames & Hudson	3774	22607	11494	3
Duke University Press	10387	34552	30259	2
Hart Publishing	1306	4610	3356	2
AK Press	2806	28640	5065	1
Cambridge Uni Press	2730	17736	5339	1
Oxbow Books	680	4360	2876	1
Oxford Uni Press	1788	10675	3326	1
Reaktion Books	2173	3407	4317	1
Taylor & Francis News	966	7893	5740	1
TASCHEN	4937	53420	7565	1
Turner Publishing	10864	4314	15228	1
Uni of Wales Press	1493	1848	3528	1
Zed Books	5807	18688	20337	1

## 4. RESULTS

### 4.1 The most popular tweets

The 99 most retweeted Spanish tweets were posted by 12 Spanish book publishers (Table IV) and the 99 most retweeted non-Spanish tweets were posted by 19 non-Spanish book publishers (Table V). The Spanish publisher Alianza Editorial created 72% of the popular tweets, followed by the Editorial Espasa (8%). The non-Spanish publisher Frontiers posted almost half (46%) of the retweeted non-Spanish tweets, followed by Macmillan Publishers (11%), Bloomsbury UK (8%) and Penguin Books (8%). The Spanish publisher with the most retweeted tweets also had the most followers and tweets, although the same was not true for the non-Spanish publisher.

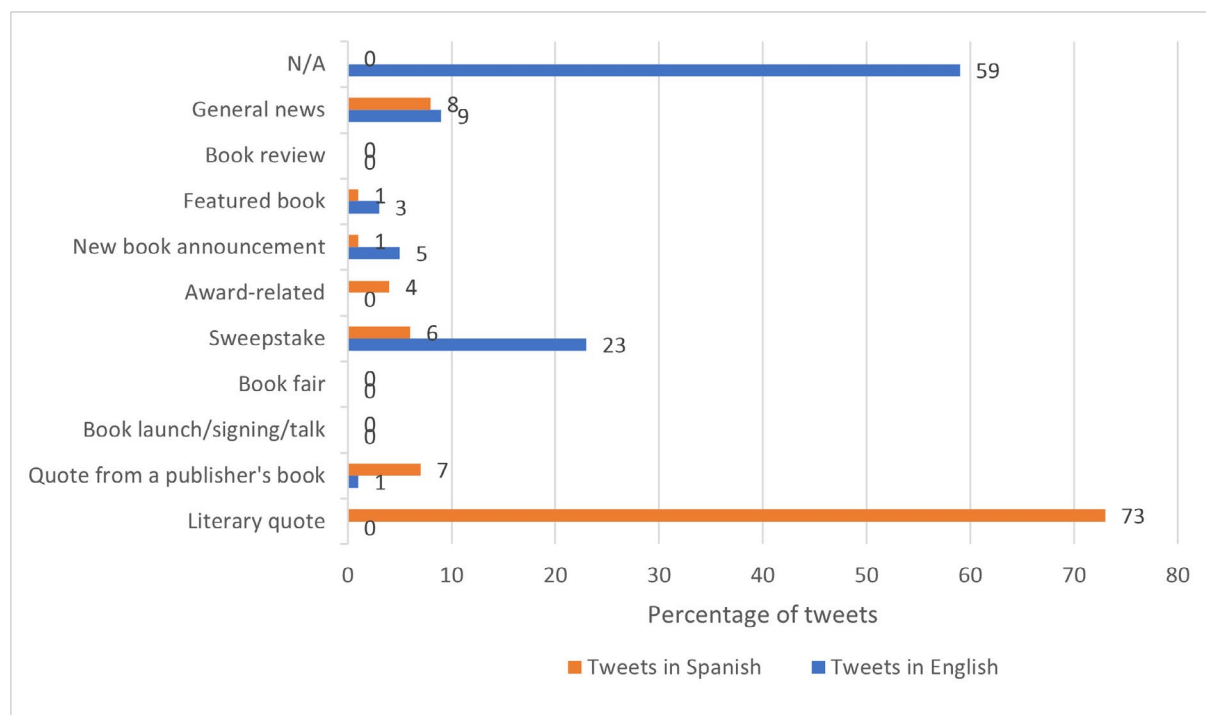
### 4.2 Content analysis of the most popular tweets

Four features were examined in the content analysis: topic, book title hashtags, images, and URLs. The topic of the tweets was examined for 198 tweets (99 posted by Spanish publishers and 99 posted by non-Spanish publishers). The other three features were not examined for tweets coded as "Non-Applicable" on the topic. Therefore, the inclusion of hashtags, images and URLs were examined in 140 tweets (99 posted by Spanish publishers and 41 posted by non-Spanish publishers).

As Figure 1 shows, most (80%) of the popular tweets posted by the Spanish publishers are general literary quotes (73%) or quotes from books published by the publisher (7%), while the remainder are mainly general news (8%), publisher sweepstakes (6%) and literary award announcements (4%). Unexpectedly, the majority (59%) of the popular tweets posted by the non-Spanish based publishers are not related to literature or the book industry. The reason is because almost all of them are posted by Frontiers, a large publisher that not only publishes books but also journals. Its Twitter account (@FrontiersIn) is a general account rather than a book-related account and all its sampled tweets are about research findings published in its scientific journals. The remaining popular tweets posted by the non-Spanish based publishers are mainly sweepstakes (23%), general news (9%), announcements of new books (5%) and tweets in which a book is featured or recommended by its publisher (3%). Tweets related to literary awards are only provided by Spanish publishers. None of the sampled tweets refer to a book launch, book signing, book talk, book fair or book review.

An in-depth analysis shows that each publisher seems to have a particular successful social media strategy. Almost all quotes (both general quotes and quotes from the publisher's books) were posted

**Figure 1:** Topic of the popular tweets posted by Spanish and non-Spanish publishers.



**Table VI:** Top 10 most retweeted literary quotes posted by Spanish publishers, translated into English.

Literary quote	Author	Number of retweets
We are addicted to what destroys us.	Fiódor Dostoyevski	418
The only way to deal with this world without freedom is to become so absolutely free that your mere existence is an act of rebellion.	Albert Camus	379
The best way to prevent a prisoner from escaping is to make sure they never know they are in prison.	Fiódor Dostoyevski	365
The noise of the people is unbearable. And I am very tired, I would like to sleep under some dark and silent trees.	Fiódor Dostoyevski	352
All of us, among the ruins, prepare a rebirth. But few know it.	Albert Camus	342
Loneliness is dangerous. It is addictive. Once you realise how much peace there is in it, you don't want to deal with people.	Carl Gustav Jung	339
The lucky find of a good book can change the destiny of a soul.	Marcel Proust	334
There are a number of people in the world who are in hell because they depend excessively on others' judgment.	Jean-Paul Sartre	334
Be careful when you expel your demons, do not go to reject the best of you.	Friedrich Nietzsche	329
It is impossible to exist without passion.	Søren Kierkegaard	326
I have also felt the inclination to force myself, almost in a demonic way, to be stronger than I really am.	Søren Kierkegaard	317

by Alianza editorial. Union Editorial posted only general quotes; Tusquets Editores, Hart Publishing, Hodder & Stoughton, Macmillan Publishers and Thames & Hudson mainly posted sweepstakes; Duke University Press only posted featured books; and Trotta and Penguin Books mainly posted general news. Other publishers, such as Editorial Espasa and Bloomsbury UK have posted popular tweets with different content.

Almost all literary quotes are classic quotes from well-known writers, novelists or philosophers, such as Fiódor Dostoyevski, Franz Kafka, Albert Camus, Jean-Paul Sartre, Søren Kierkegaard, Arthur Schopenhauer, Friedrich Nietzsche, Oscar Wilde and so on listed in the order of frequency. A few quotes (seven) are presumably extracted from a book published by the publisher, since the book title, its author and a picture of that book cover or

**Table VII:** Highly retweeted tweets from Spanish and non-Spanish publishers including book hashtags, hashtags, images/videos and URLs.

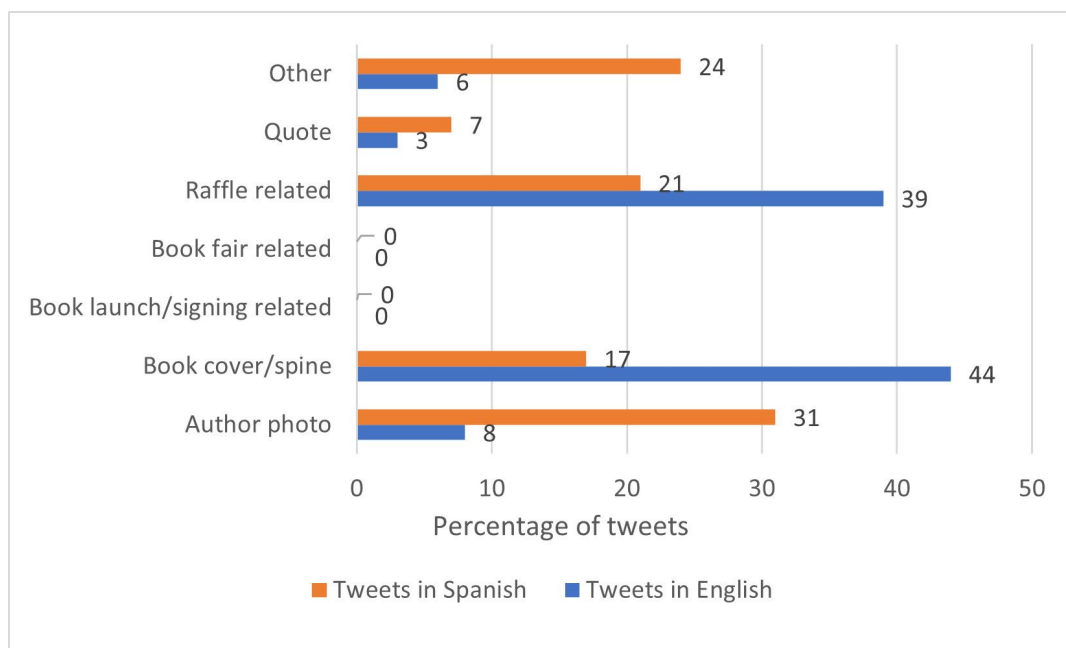
	Spanish publishers' tweets (n=99)	Non-Spanish publishers' tweets (n=41)	Total (n=140)
Hashtag	3 (3%)	5 (12%)	8 (6%)
Image/video	29 (29%)	36 (88%)	65 (46%)
URL	14 (14%)	17 (41%)	31 (22%)

a link to the publisher website are also attached in the tweet. These books are republished classic works from well-known writers rather than recently published books by contemporary authors. The shared literary quotes are somewhat inspirational, reflective or emotional sentences about freedom, solitude, emotions (anger, sadness, love, hope, hopelessness), knowledge and ignorance, critical thinking, passion, disobedience, or ways of living. Table VI displays the top 10 most retweeted quotes.

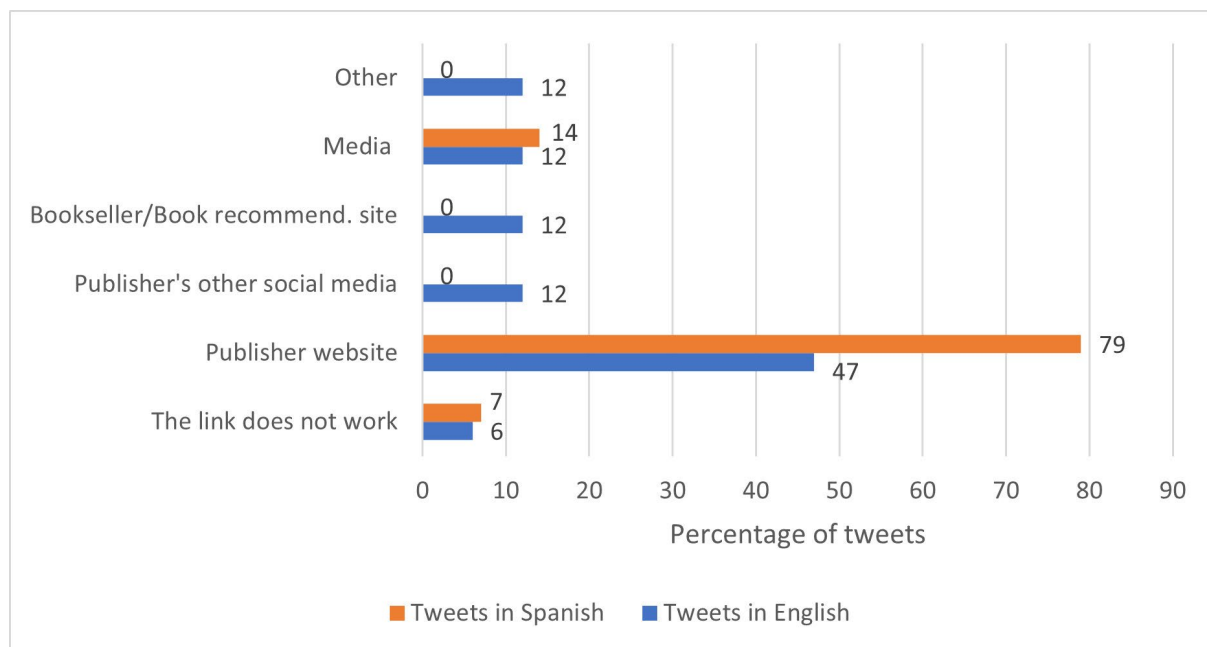
As shown in Table VII, the inclusion of hashtags of book titles, images/videos and URLs is much more frequent in popular tweets from non-Spanish book publishers than in those posted by the Spanish publishers. Out of 65 tweets that include images or videos, three are videos. The images are usually pictures of book covers or pictures related to a sweepstake. The sweepstake pictures usually illustrate the book or product being given away, often together with competition terms and conditions. Some images, especially in tweets posted by Spanish publishers, are author pictures (Figure 2).

Almost a quarter (31, 22%) of the highly retweeted tweets included a URL. Because of the Twitter length limitation, it is common to use a URL shortening service when including a URL in tweets (Suh et al., 2010), with t.co, bit.ly, ow.ly and goo.gl used in the sampled tweets. Out of 31 tweets including a URL, the majority linked to the publisher website (61%)

**Figure 2:** Type of image/video embedded in popular tweets posted by Spanish and non-Spanish publishers.



**Figure 3:** Type of website linked in the popular tweets posted by Spanish and non-Spanish publishers.



but some also linked to media sites (13%), such as newspapers, magazines, TV programmes and radio stations. Links to a publisher’s other social media (particularly to blogs) and links to booksellers or book recommendation sites were only included by two non-Spanish publishers (see Figure 3). Links pointing to the publisher website mainly target: 1) a page of information about the book and its authors, and usually the option of buying the book online, and 2) a page with the sweepstake terms and conditions. Links pointing to booksellers or book recommendation sites also point to an author or book webpage. Regarding the four links pointing to media sites, three point to an online newspaper and one to a book industry magazine.

### 4.3 Word association analysis

The word association analysis shows which terms occur more often in a Twitter feed of a specific publisher than the rest. Two sets of word frequency tests were carried out to identify the five most publisher-specific terms for each publisher. The first test generated 925 words from 185 Spanish publishers’ Twitter accounts and the second test generated 595 terms from 122 non-Spanish English-language publishers’ accounts. About half of the top words were hashtags or usernames (see Table VIII). Overall, the results suggest that the publishers mainly tweet about themselves. This is unsurprising since the purpose of each account is presumably to market publisher’s books, directly or indirectly. In this context, there are largely predictable differences in the people and books covered by the different publishers, rather than illuminating strategic differences between their tweeting strategies.

The most common type of term found for the Spanish book publishers was a publisher’s name:

135 terms (15% of all terms), of which 60 (44%) were their Twitter usernames and 19 (14%) were hashtags. Twitter accounts of authors (@author) associated with the publisher were also common (84, 9% of all terms) and there were a few other professionals related to the publisher, such as illustrators, translators and publisher directors/editors. Including the name of an author can help to market a book by reaching Twitter users that search for the author, and by attracting the author’s attention in the hope of a retweet to their followers. Some of the publishers included in the study are university publishers, so it is not surprising that some publisher-specific terms were university-related Twitter accounts (for a university, university faculty, university library or university research group). Rare terms included publisher news (13, 1.3%), book titles (11, 1.2%) and book recommendations (8, 0.9%), almost all as hashtags, and the city where the publisher is located (8, 0.9%). There were some references to book fairs (4) bookstores (4), awards (4), publisher adverts/news (3), book signings (2) and a publisher’s anniversary (1).

The results were similar for English-language publishers. The publisher-specific type of term most common in their tweets was a publisher’s name, with 149 (25%) occurrences, of which 45 (30%) were their Twitter usernames and 9 (6%) were hashtags. The results included Twitter accounts of associated authors (38, 6.4% of top terms), publisher subsidiaries, publisher imprints, journals, series, collections and projects related to the publisher (25, 4%) and university-related Twitter accounts (university, university faculty, university library or university research group accounts), the city of the publisher (13, 2.2%), events (conferences), publisher adverts/news (6, 1%) and

**Table VIII:** Publisher-specific terms from tweets posted by book publishers

Word freq. tests	Based on	Hashtag	Username (@username)	Publisher-specific terms
Test 1	925 words from Spanish publisher accounts	196 (21%)	227 (25%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Publisher name (135, 15%)</li> <li>- Author’s account (84, 9%)</li> <li>- University-related accounts (21, 2.3%)</li> <li>- Publisher news (12, 1.3%)</li> <li>- Book title (11, 1.2%)</li> </ul>
Test 2	595 words from non-Spanish English language publisher accounts	171 (29%)	148 (25%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Publisher name (149, 25%)</li> <li>- Author’s account (38, 6.4%)</li> <li>- Publisher-related collections &amp; projects (25, 4%)</li> <li>- University-related accounts (14, 2.4%)</li> <li>- City (13, 2.2%)</li> <li>- Event (8, 1.3%)</li> <li>- Publisher anniversary (6, 1%)</li> <li>- Publisher advert/news (6, 1%)</li> </ul>

publisher anniversaries (6, 1%). There were also a few mentions of book titles (4), associations (4), book fairs (2), bookstores (2) and book signings (1).

## 5. DISCUSSION

Previous research has discussed opportunities and challenges of social media as a marketing tool for the publishing sector, examined social media adoption among book publishers, authors and readers, and explored social media activity around books and social media influence on readers' book purchasing decisions. Since no work has focused on the tweets posted by book publishers operating in different languages, the present study examined the most retweeted tweets posted by a selection of Spanish and non-Spanish book publishers on Twitter, chosen from the SPI website. It also reported the terms that typically occur among one publisher's tweets by applying a word association analysis.

Some limitations should be taken into consideration. The study is based on a set of book publishers deemed as relevant by the Scholarly Publishers Indicators website. These are not exclusively academic publishers but also publishers that are of interest in humanities and social sciences areas, belonging to different sectors of the publishing industry (science, education, trade, etc.). However, the results cannot be generalized. This study includes 385 Spanish book publishers, which represents about 12% of the 3.169 active Spanish book publishers in 2019 (Ministerio de Cultura y Deporte, 2020) and the representativeness of the sampled non-Spanish publishers is much lower (e.g. see the number of book publishers in diverse countries in IPA-WIPO, 2018). Nevertheless, this exploratory study shows interesting results that can be taken as a starting point for subsequent investigations.

Some publishers' Twitter accounts might have been overlooked. Online content is unstable over time, so new accounts might have appeared or disappeared since the data collection. The study investigated the most retweeted tweets, but we have not examined the role of contextual features, such as the age of the account, the number of tweets, the number of likes, the number of followers or who retweets.

The results are based on a small sample of the most retweeted content on Twitter from the book publishers selected, so the results cannot be extrapolated to other social media platforms. One of the publishers included in the study, Frontiers, not only publishes books, but also scientific journals, which has influenced the results since this

publisher is the creator of almost half (46 out of 99) of the most retweeted tweets posted by the non-Spanish publishers, complicating the interpretation of the findings. Some of the publishers publish non-academic books (e.g., Penguin Books), so their tweets reflect non-scholarly interests.

**RQ1:** *Which book publishers post the most popular (retweeted) tweets?*

About half (52.5%) out of 810 book publishers included in the study had a dedicated Twitter account. This seems to be a low proportion, given the importance of social media. Although some accounts might have been missed, the main reason explaining this is that a lot of publishers listed on the SPI portal were not dedicated book publishers, but cultural or academic/scientific institutions or governmental organizations that also publish books of interest in humanities and social science areas. They usually have a general institutional Twitter account rather than a specific account for their publication service. In this regard, a recent study has reported that 91% of 46 Romanian universities presses do not have a social media presence on Facebook, Twitter or LinkedIn (Cernicova-Buca & Luzan, 2020). Martín Becerro (2016), however, found that 76% out of 49 Spanish book publishers specialised in children's and youth literature had a Twitter account. Thus, there seem to be both international and audience type differences in the likelihood that a publisher has a dedicated Twitter account.

Creating a profile on social media platforms is easy, quick and free (or relatively cheap); however, publishers must be active to be successful, sharing updated and attractive content and developing effective interactions with customers (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). This requires time and resources that not all companies have and, consequently, certain types of publishers, such as small publishers or self-published authors, might choose to have online presence on specific platforms. For instance, small publishers or those with specialist publishing programs might not feel the need to use Twitter and use other platforms instead, such as Facebook. As an example, based on 48 UK trade publishers, Thoring (2011) found that larger publishers were more likely to use Twitter as a marketing tool, with 70% of their content posted on Twitter being different to the content posted on Facebook, MySpace and their own blog pages, and that the proportion of exclusive content on tweets varied according to publishers' size.

Nolan and Dane (2018) also reported the influence of publisher size on the social media marketing strategy. As an exploratory test, the

sampled Spanish publishers were checked for having a Facebook profile. Whilst half (49%) of Spanish publishers had a Twitter account, slightly more (54.5%) had a Facebook profile. They were almost the same publishers, suggesting that the sampled Spanish publishers with Twitter accounts usually also have Facebook profiles.

Being part of a larger publishing enterprise might also influence publishers' Twitter presence. Without intending to be exhaustive, publishers that belong to some publishing groups (e.g. Grupo Akal, Wolters Kluwer) seem not to have a Twitter account whereas publishers that belong to other publishing groups (e.g. Grupo Anaya, Hachette Livre) are more prone to having Twitter presence. Alianza Editorial, a scientific-technical publisher focused on non-fiction literature, textbooks and scholarly monographs in humanities and social sciences that belong to the Planeta publishing group, was the dominant Spanish book publisher for popular tweets, posting 73% of the most retweeted tweets. This publisher also tweeted the most and had the most followers, helping generate retweets.

Frontiers posted 46% of the most retweeted English tweets. It is a large Swiss scientific publisher focused on both books and journals and all its tweets were about research findings published in its scientific journals. Frontiers has multiple Twitter accounts for specific journals in different disciplines, but it does not have a Twitter account for Frontiers Books, therefore its general account (@FrontiersIn) was selected.

Excluding Frontiers, the most retweeted English tweets were posted by Macmillan Publishers (11%), Bloomsbury UK (8%) and Penguin Books (8%), all of which are trade book publishing companies. There are no university presses among the Spanish book publishers posting the most popular tweets and there are four university presses for the non-Spanish publishers. This result shows that the most popular tweets are created by publishing companies operating in the trade sector of the industry. They may be more active on Twitter to gain readers, as they may place greater importance on the economics of book sales. A current study has also showed that commercial book publishers tend to be more active on Twitter (produce more tweets) than university presses (Wang & Zuccala, 2021).

**RQ2:** *What are the content-related features of most popular tweets?*

Four features were examined: the topic and the inclusion of hashtags, images and URLs. Regarding the topic, the majority (80%) of the most popular

tweets posted by the Spanish book publishers are literary quotes, confirming the function of quotes to attract an audience (Haapanen & Perrin, 2017). Nevertheless, almost all quotes were posted by one book publisher, Alianza Editorial, and a few quotes (six) by another two publishers, Editorial Espasa and Unión Editorial, suggesting that few book publishers actively use this strategy to gain attention. Almost all quotes are classic quotes from well-known writers, such as Fiódor Dostoyevski, Franz Kafka and Albert Camus, rather than from contemporary authors. Alianza Editorial is a publisher of literary fiction and nonfiction, and scholarly monographs, while Editorial Espasa and Unión Editorial are trade book publishing houses, publishing across many genres.

A doctoral dissertation examining tweets posted by American and Spanish book publishers has also reported literary quotes as the type of tweet most shared (Moll de Alba Mendoza, 2015). Prior work has shown that one of the reasons for retweeting is to publicly agree with someone and validate their thoughts (Boyd et al., 2010), also creating a link between the quoter and the quotee (Puschmann, 2015). Users therefore probably retweet quotes because they agree with the quote. Sailunaz and Alhaji (2019) found that users who reply to tweets usually have similar emotion or sentiment and agree with the tweet content.

Neuromarketing research has shown that messages on social media with an emotional charge produce reactions in users (Vences et al., 2020). The shared literary quotes in this study are somewhat inspirational, reflective or emotional sentences about freedom, solitude, feelings (anger, sadness, love, hope, hopelessness), knowledge/ignorance, critical thinking, passion, disobedience, or ways of living. Therefore, a good way of attracting attention and promoting a book might be to post a tweet including an inspirational, reflective or emotional quote extracted from a recently published book.

Most (59%) of the popular tweets posted by non-Spanish publishers were unrelated to books. These tweets mainly (46%) reported journal article findings from the Frontiers publisher. Thoring (2011) reported that 54% of all tweets posted by UK publishers were about topics other than books, authors, the publishing house or trade events. In addition to these unrelated tweets, almost a quarter (23%) of the tweets included raffles, sweepstakes or giveaways held by the publisher, in which users are asked to participate (follow the account and retweet the post) to have the chance to win a prize. Given their high retweet counts, these seem to be successful at rewarding existing

readers (followers), attracting attention to books and gaining more followers (potential customers), characteristics underlined in prior research (Ashley & Tuten, 2015; Campos Moreno & Fernández Cuesta, 2019; Grima, 2017; Jung et al., 2020; Martens, 2016). A study about brand posts on Twitter also found that giveaways received more retweets (Vargo, 2016).

Almost 10% of the tweets are general news or information related to books, the book industry or related people, such as an interview with a writer or author-related ephemera. A study involving 49 Spanish book publishers specialising in children's and youth literature showed that 57% posted news about authors and illustrators and 24% posted news about the publisher (Martín Becerro, 2016). Very few popular tweets were announcements of new titles or book recommendations. No sampled tweets referred to book launches, book signings, book talks, book fairs or book reviews, evidencing that the content of the most popular tweets differed from the random tweets used for creating the coding scheme. So book publishers provide information on Twitter about these events, but they are not among the most retweeted tweets. In contrast, a survey-based study found that most of Vietnamese customers used publishers' social media to look for information about promotions (68.4%), new books or titles (51.1%) and book fairs or events (50.2%) (Nguyen et al., 2019).

Hashtags of book titles, images and URLs are three times more common in the sampled tweets posted by the non-Spanish publishers than in tweets posted by the Spanish publishers. Creating a hashtag for a book is a way of promoting it on Twitter, connecting the book publisher, author and readers (González-Arenas, 2013). However, only 3% of the popular tweets posted by Spanish book publishers and 12% of the popular tweets posted by the non-Spanish book publishers in the sample included a hashtag.

Social media content with photos or images seems to be perceived as more attractive (Chung, 2017; Cvijikj & Michahelles, 2013). Whilst most (88%) of the popular tweets posted by non-Spanish publishers included an image or video, less than a third (29%) of tweets shared by Spanish publishers included either. In contrast, 14% of Spanish-language tweets and 41% of English-language tweets included a URL. Despite the small size of the sample, this finding is in line with two non-publishing-related large-scale studies. The first one, a study analysing 74 million tweets to discover factors impacting retweets on Twitter, reported that 21.1% of tweets and 28.4%

of retweets had at least one URL in their text (Suh et al., 2010). The second study, which examined conversational aspects of retweeting on Twitter and was based on a random sample of 720,000 tweets, found that 22% of tweets included a URL (Boyd et al., 2010).

**RQ3:** *Do book publishers tweet differently from each other?*

The results of the word association analysis among publishers did not reveal significant differences in strategies or topics. Instead, it emphasised that the primary function of each publisher's Twitter account is to promote their own books, authors, awards and other initiatives. As part of this, they link to their own content (e.g., book pages) and reference their own authors, presumably to generate retweets within the author's network. Publishers and authors feel obligated to engage with social media even though they cannot see a financial impact of their efforts (Laing, 2017). Thus, it is likely that any author receiving a tweet from their publisher announcing their own book would feel compelled to retweet it.

## 6. CONCLUSION

The results show that Twitter is widely used, but not universal, amongst both Spanish and non-Spanish publishers within the sample. Half of the publishers have a Twitter account; however, the majority of the sampled Spanish publishers that do not have a Twitter account represent universities, cultural or academic/scientific institutions and governmental organizations that have a general institutional Twitter account, but not a specific account for their publication service.

The success of a publisher's social media strategy depends partly on being able to broadcast to many potential readers. This is possible either by attracting many Twitter followers or by attracting retweets that will disseminate the original tweets further into the network of Twitter. The most successful strategy for this was to include a relevant quote (frequently used by Spanish publishers). Sweepstakes were also effective at this (and this was a strategy more commonly used by non-Spanish publishers). A sweepstake or giveaway involving retweeting not only raises the profile of a publisher through user engagement but also reaches a wider audience through the retweets and by attracting new followers. Publishers could also rely on the use of hyperlinks to relevant content so that potential readers can easily access the product, and on tagging author @usernames to encourage them to retweet announcements about their books to their own Twitter networks, which are likely to be rich in potential readers. Including images can

also help to attract retweets, either for the extra visual information or because it draws attention to the tweet. While there is a difference between how Spanish and non-Spanish publishers engage with Twitter, this may be due to the different industry sectors that the individual publishers operate in, with trade publishers being more commercially driven.

## 7. ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This research received no specific grant from any funding agency. All authors have reviewed and approved the final version. No other person has collaborated in this work.

## AGRADECIMIENTOS

Esta investigación no ha recibido financiación alguna. Todos los autores han revisado y aprobado la versión final. Ninguna otra persona ha colaborado en este trabajo.

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