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Identity-related implications of the dissemination of cultural heritage through the Internet: A study based on Framing Theory

Abstract

This research study focuses on the heritage of municipalities in an attempt to point out the cultural elements that are, in a latent way, a reflection of a town's collective identity on the Internet. It is thus posited that a municipal website is a mechanism related to identity, constructed on the foundation of heritage objects and historical events that categorize a social group and, at the same time, differentiate it from other groups. The aim of this study was therefore to locate the heritage components that receive the greatest coverage on Spanish municipal websites, to then point out the approach that predominates in their characterization, a frame based on the dialectics between the local and the global. With this goal in mind, we performed a content analysis of a sample of 500 websites throughout Spain. In light of the results, it can be postulated that heritage identity in Spain has a religious tenor, as the manifestations most presented are usually ecclesiastical constructions (on the tangible plane) and liturgical events (on an intangible level).

Keywords

Cultural Heritage, municipalities, websites, Framing Theory, Social Identity Theory, website content analysis.

1. Cultural Heritage as a foundation for group identities

1.1. Definition and types of heritage

Generally, “the concept of heritage leads us to a discussion of the continuity between past and present. Heritage provides historical depth and a permanent pattern in a perpetually changing world” (Bessière, 1998: 26). Heritage therefore traces a temporal bridge between the past and future of a social group, in whose present it must be cared for and preserved sustainably so that future generations can learn how their ancestors behaved and acted.

To go deeper into this concept, we need to describe the subtypes that comprise it. To do so, we use one of the classifications most widely used in the literature on this topic, and proposed by UNESCO. According to UNESCO experts, heritage can be divided into two

categories: cultural and natural. In regard to cultural heritage, our primary interested here, we have the following list of basic elements:

Monuments: architectural works, works of monumental sculpture and painting, elements or structures of an archaeological nature, inscriptions, cave dwellings and combinations of features, which are of outstanding universal value from the point of view of history, art or science;

Groups of buildings: groups of separate or connected buildings which, because of their architecture, their homogeneity or their place in the landscape, are of outstanding universal value from the point of view of history, art or science;

Sites: works of man or the combined works of nature and man, and areas including archaeological sites which are of outstanding universal value from the historical, aesthetic, ethnological or anthropological point of view (UNESCO, 1973: 136).

This definition in itself would have been insufficient, since it only took into account the material or tangible dimension of heritage, if it had not been completed in the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, which defines intangible cultural heritage as:

The ‘intangible cultural heritage’ means the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills – as well as the instruments, objects, artifacts and cultural spaces associated therewith – that communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage. This intangible cultural heritage, transmitted from generation to generation, is constantly recreated by communities and groups in response to their environment, their interaction with nature and their history, and provides them with a sense of identity and continuity, thus promoting respect for cultural diversity and human creativity (UNESCO, 2003).

Thus we see that heritage can be natural (relating to an environmental ecosystem), or cultural (pertaining to the social and human context), and cultural heritage in turn can be tangible or intangible.

1.2. Questions of identity in the current globalized context

Castells (2010) states that “in social sciences, identity is considered to be that process of construction of meaning on the basis of a cultural attribute enabling people to find meaning in what they do in their life” (p. 94). He also differentiates among three types of collective identities.

The first of these is what is known as legitimizing identity, “that which is constructed from the institutions and in particular from the state” (Castells, 2010: 94). The second type is identity of resistance, “which was asleep and which had not expressed itself with all the strength with which it is expressing itself now. And the cause is that it is structured as a resistance to the marginalization process in which the globalization of a certain kind places them” (Castells, 2010: 95). Project identity is the third type observed by this author, and is “structured based on a self-identification, always with cultural, historical and territorial materials. And although it is always with these materials, there is a project of construction of a collective” (Castells, 2010: 95).

After recognizing and describing the different types of identity, Castells makes the following consideration as to the relational dynamics that take place among them:

This legitimising identity is today faced with identities of resistance that are appearing throughout the world as trenches, with identities of being something particular when this something particular is not necessarily the most extraordinary. Between the two, the capacity of identity of resistance [...] to become a project identity that puts forward something with which all the members of a society can identify –not only in the past, but in the future– is the only thing

that can save the world from living among power apparatuses and fundamentalist communes (Castells, 2010: 98).

This valuable reflection allows us to introduce new notions, such as that of *glocalization* (Acosta, 2003; Bolívar, 2001; Robertson, 2000), in which the tensions derived from the interrelation between the local and the global, noted by Castells, become condensed. There is a consensus that *glocalization* can be defined as “the mixture that in cultural terms takes place between local, particular elements and those which are globalized (...). One of the objectives of the social sciences is to see how global forces interact with local cultures, at the same time that they are mediated and filtered by them, producing local configurations in a kind of *glocalism*” (Bolívar, 2001: 269, authors’ translation).

Another term that helps to clarify the complexity, in terms of culture, that we see in the current globalized context is that of *multiculturalism*. According to Bauman, this “seems to have been inspired by the postulate of liberal tolerance and support for the rights of communities to independence and the public acceptance of their chosen (or inherited) identities” (2013: 43-44, authors’ translation). The intention underlying *multiculturalism* is not to be found in the full recognition of cultural diversity, but in a surreptitious camouflaging of social inequality caused by the overwhelming consequences of globalization.

It thus seems reasonable to defend the idea that, as opposed to the “cultural homogenization which destroys local cultures, so-called ‘cocacolonization’ of culture” (Urry, 1999: 316), other local or regional patterns are emerging that are reclaiming their space and their importance in the definition of collective identities.

1.3. Cultural heritage and social identity: The communication of difference

Heritage plays a fundamental role in the construction of the social identity of peoples when they reaffirm themselves in their particular cultural values in opposition to other groups. In the words of Bessière, “heritage, whether it be an object, monument, inherited skill or symbolic representation, must be considered as an identity marker and distinguishing feature of a social group” (1998: 26). For her part, Tubella condenses this idea when she says that “the elaboration of identity includes the dissemination of symbolic representations and the forging of cultural institutions and social networks. We capture the meaning of a group through the images it projects, the symbols it uses and the fictions or narratives it evokes” (2006: 471, authors’ translation); a set of factors that provides the group (in this case, a given municipality) with a cultural system that differentiates it with respect to the rest of social categories (e.g. neighboring localities).

Likewise, and in the cultural and media coordinates of today’s society, it is essential to effectively disseminate the heritage repertory of a group. Capriotti illustrates this circumstance by finding that “communication becomes indispensable: if the existence of a cultural heritage is not communicated, it cannot exist for others. If its identity is not transmitted, its special characteristics cannot become known. If its difference is not conveyed, then there is no difference” (2008: 133, authors’ translation).

And, because of our globalized surroundings, “which tend to absorb regional cultures with their customs, traditions, and cultural products, the reconstruction of identity is extremely important, since it enables the strengthening of local cultures and the feeling of belonging to a place” (Kravets & de Camargo, 2008: 14, author’s translation), and therefore to a social group or category. Finally, we stress that “heritage (when it is defined and known by members of a society that is the subject and object of its own development and not affected by external agents) takes on the value of an instrument that helps individuals and groups to recognize themselves in their past and in their present” (Zamora, 2011: 109,

authors' translation); an idea that shows the essential nature of heritage in the configuration of group identities.

2. Theories of Social Identity and Framing

2.1. The principle mechanisms of Social Identity Theory

Traditionally, Social Identity Theory (hereafter, SIT) has been applied at an individual (micro) or group level, by not at a social level (macro). However, if we examine the core mechanisms through which SIT operates, as noted by Tajfel (1981) and which are social categorization and comparison, it is possible to argue that they are also present in the case of municipal websites.

Thus, through the information included on their websites, cities and towns bring together heritage objects and historical and social events that refer to their inhabitants, categorizing their locality as a unified cultural group. These shared traits brought together on the website make the difference between the municipal ingroup and adjacent outgroups, giving rise to the resulting social comparisons.

Furthermore, Hogg and Abrams (1988) suggest that the categories (or social groups) in which individuals are inscribed are part of a society structured *a priori*, and only exist in relation to and/or in confrontation with other categories. Thus, municipalities would be the administrative and spatial, as well as cultural units, into which the social environment was first divided.

It is also well known that "the extension of the range of application of SIT to ever more numerous contexts" (Lisbona, 2010: 187, author's translation) is already a reality. One of these many dimensions or spheres through which capturing a collective identity based on heritage could well operate is the Internet; it is a mission of municipal administrations to raise to a societal and media level the transmission of their cultural values.

Based on the ideas we have considered here, Carvalheiro makes the following affirmation:

In the contemporary context, studying social identities requires an analysis of the relation among the groups that are simultaneously configured as audiences and as representations in the media field, groups to which media texts provide a kind of symbolic interaction, even without messages being exchanged between them (Carvalheiro, 2008: 27, authors' translation).

That is, a reflection of the cultural identities of the different groups is produced through the media. This reasoning can be used in the case that concerns us here, because the web portals of the different town and city governments in Spain symbolically incarnate their population through the heritage and cultural information they offer, and which is a reflection of an identity that is inevitably compared with that of adjacent towns. We thus defend the idea that one of the things responsible for channeling this set of symbols that culturally represents the citizens of a particular place is, in our current environment conditioned by digital technologies, the institutional webpage of the different municipal governments.

2.2. Framing Theory and its application to web environments

It is also necessary to clarify some matters in regard to Framing Theory, since it has been mainly used to examine journalistic texts, giving rise to numerous research studies about so-called news frames. If this is the case, why is it pertinent to use framing theory in this particular study? What does a municipal website have to do with news?

It seems that the main similarity between these two units of analysis lies in the processes that take place when deciding on the contents: their selection and organization

and the emphasis placed on certain aspects of reality with the consequent exclusion of others (de Vreese, Peter & Semetko, 2001; Entman, 1993). Bessière defends the idea that "heritage is not a mere collection of things and products but a real social selection; a selection or a choice made according to the particular value accorded by the members of a social group" (1998: 27-28). Thus, it is on municipal websites where we find the premeditated selection of the most characteristic heritage elements that transmit the cultural identity of the citizenry.

This phenomenon situates the identity-related frames on the web in the line of framing as a macro-concept, which Scheufele and Tewksbury (2007) discuss. Conceived in this way, identity-related frames would come under a more sociological perspective called *frame-building*, much studied using content analysis methodology, and where not only journalists but also other communicators (such as website managers) are responsible for using a specific approach to the creation of contents.

In the present study, focused on municipal heritage, the idea was to detect which cultural elements lie latent under the reflection of collective identity that these municipal websites offer. For this reason the websites can be considered identity-related devices, constructed from heritage objects and historical events that categorize the ingroup, and, at the same time, differentiate it from outgroups. Thus, identity could have its foundation to a greater or lesser extent either in the tangible or the intangible heritage about which municipalities provide information.

As far as the framing of these heritage elements is concerned, a polytomous measurement scale (described below) was designed with the cultural alternative of current society in mind: local versus global. As a function of certain words or expressions that refer to the heritage trait in question (inventories in a codebook), the frame or scope of the heritage web content is measured in terms of local, regional, national or global. Thus, municipal websites fulfill an informative function, through which they extol some municipal heritage elements to the detriment of others.

3. Method: web-content analysis

As stated above, the main objective of this study was to identify the heritage elements receiving the most coverage on municipal websites in Spain, in order to then point out the focus or frame predominating in the characterization of each of these elements. Thus, following a previous research line (Piñeiro-Naval & Igartua, 2012, 2013; Piñeiro-Naval, Igartua & Rodríguez-de-Dios, 2015; Piñeiro-Naval, Igartua & Sánchez-Nuevo, 2017; Piñeiro-Naval, Serra & Mangana, 2017), we decided to perform a content analysis, which "is one of the most commonly used research methodologies by scholars dealing with media and communication" (Berger, 2000: 173).

As to the best way to do this in web environments, McMillan (2000: 81-82) established the following core stages: the researcher posits research questions or hypotheses, the sample is then selected, the analysis categories stipulated, the coders trained, the contents are examined by the coders, the reliability of their work is verified, and finally the data obtained are interpreted. Following this structure, the research questions we formulated are as follows:

- RQ₁: What elements of cultural heritage stand out in terms of information on the Spanish municipal websites selected?
- RQ₂: What is the predominant frame of these elements?
- RQ₃: In what regions of the country is there greater dissemination of cultural heritage through the municipal websites of their cities?

In addition, and taking into account the population of the towns and cities, the following hypotheses are posited:

- H₁: The larger the population of the city or town, the more heritage information its website will have.
- H₂: The larger the population, the broader the scope or frame of the heritage elements on municipal websites.

In the following subsections we describe the intermediate steps, leaving the interpretation of the data until the end.

3.1. Sample

Internet has brought with it such a flood of information that selecting a sample that represents the universe it comes from is a very complicated task. Krippendorff, in reference to the process of sample design, declared that: "it is guided by a sampling plan that specifies in sufficient detail how the researcher should proceed to obtain a sample of units that, taken together, are representative of the population of interest" (1990: 95, authors' translation). We shall thus proceed to explain the multi-stage sampling plan (Wimmer & Dominick, 1996) used in our research.

First of all, the universe (the web portals of the set of Spanish municipalities) was stratified into the provinces in which the national territory is divided: 50. The stratification addressed geographical criteria "in which the strata are compact areas and are generally accompanied by an increase in accuracy" (Cochran, 1987: 140, authors' translation). In a second stage, one critical case per province was intentionally selected: the website of its capital city. In regard to this criterion, Henry assures us that "the researcher selects a limited number of cases in which logic and previous experience indicate that they will allow a populational generalization to be made" (1990: 21, authors' translation). Thirdly, and finally, we carried out a random sampling of websites for each province with uniform affixation, that is, the same number of sampling units (specifically, 9 websites were assigned to each stratum). The places among which the random sampling was carried out, in which "each member of the study population has the same likelihood of being selected" (Henry, 1990: 27, authors' translation), had to fulfill an essential requirement based on population size: have over 1000 inhabitants.

We therefore went to the web directory of Spain's National Statistics Institute (Instituto Nacional de Estadística, INE) –an online source that is continually updated– to make a list of municipalities, and then used the Google search engine to make a list of the corresponding links.

In short, the final sample included 500 websites, a number encompassing 6.15% of the municipalities in Spain (8,117 in total), with a margin of error of less than the recommended 5% (specifically, 4.25%). In demographic terms, the 500 municipalities selected comprise 43.32% of Spain's total population.

3.2. Categories of analysis

Once the research questions have been formulated and the sample selected, "a codebook must be drawn up that specifies in detail how each criterion or variable should be evaluated" (Igartua, 2006: 204, authors' translation). The categories listed below were based on the *a priori* criteria of prestigious global entities, as well as on similar previous research (see: Hofstede *et al.*, 1990; Olivera, 2011; Piñeiro-Naval & Igartua, 2012; UNESCO, 1973, 2003). Furthermore, some of them are the result of what Stemler (2001) called emergent coding, in which the categories of analysis are established following a preliminary examination of the units of analysis (in our case, the pilot study carried out).

¹ To calculate the margin of error for the sample of 500 websites we used the following link: www.netquest.com.

Before providing the details of the categories that make up the codebook, we should clarify that we used certain data to identify the units of analysis, to wit: the number of the website and that of the province to which the municipality pertains; its population (thanks to data extracted from the National Statistics Institute, INE); the code corresponding to each of the coders; and the date the website was analyzed.

The variables were grouped according to the types of existing heritage. First, and in relation to cultural heritage (in turn divided into tangible and intangible), we evaluated the presence or absence of information relating to:

1. Aspects connected to tangible cultural heritage, such as museums, exhibition halls and cultural centers; archaeological remains and deposits; libraries, film libraries and other documentary archives; theaters and amphitheaters; cathedrals, basilicas and other types of religious buildings (churches, chapels, hermitages, monasteries); emblematic civil buildings (castles, forts, bridges, walls, towers, mansions, country houses); old quarters, urban centers or complexes; squares and patios of special architectural or artistic interest, parks and gardens designed and built by humans, statues and sculptures, and finally, bullrings.
2. Aspects related to intangible cultural heritage, such as: oral traditions and expressions of the municipality (proverbs, riddles, tales, songs, legends, myths, chants, epic poems or hymns); performing arts (vocal and instrumental music festivals; folklore; film, dance, theater or flamenco festivals); municipal festive events; religious and ecclesiastical events, typical gastronomy, traditional crafts, important public figures from the town or characteristic of the town, and finally festivals linked to bullfighting.

Moreover, and with respect to natural heritage, we also counted the presence or absence of information relating to: nature reserves and natural parks; places, roads, grottoes and caves, and beaches or coastal formations of special natural interest. Since all of these variables measure the existence or not of the information, their measurement scale is dichotomous: 1=information exists in this respect; 0=information does not exist in this respect.

Likewise, special attention was paid to the focus or frame of the information provided on all the heritage elements. Taking as a guide the dialectic between the local and the global (Bolívar, 2001; Castells, 2010; Robertson, 2000), the following categories were established, based on an ordinal scale: 0=no information in this sense; 1=local; 2=regional; 3=national; 4=global; 9=no focus needed. To facilitate the task of the coders, each of the frame types was defined in the following terms:

1. Local: pertaining or relating to the place, municipality or city in question and its surrounding area. This would apply to all the heritage elements that are informed about in local terms. For example, the Gate of Teruel, which is “one of the seven gates to the walled city of Sarrión in the 13th century” [www.sarrión.es]; or worship of good food, whose “aromas, colors, and flavors are a faithful legacy of the history of Vera and a reflection of its rich gastronomy” [www.vera.es].
2. Regional: pertaining or relating to the region in which the municipality is located, that is, the provincial subdivision, province or autonomous community to which it belongs. This would apply to all heritage elements informed about in regional terms. For examples, the Carnival of Viveiro, which “is among the oldest in Galicia” [www.viveiro.es]; or the Civil War Museum, “created to evoke the deep mark that this tragic conflict left in the province of Teruel” [www.sarrión.es].
3. National: pertaining or relating to the nation or country in which the municipality is located. This applies to all heritage elements described in national terms. Examples would be the Main Square of Salamanca, “declared a national monument

in 1935. It is the most decorated, proportioned and harmonious square of all the ones of its time existing in Spain” [www.aytosalamanca.es]; or an event relating to crafts, such as the National Lace Event of Chinchilla [www.chinchillademontearagon.com].

4. Global: referring to the planet as a whole. This would apply to any heritage element described in global terms. For instance, two heritage elements of Cordova, where “in 1994 UNESCO recognized the universal importance of Cordovan historical goods, extending the title of World Heritage not only to the Mosque-Cathedral, but also to the urban complex surrounding it” [www.turismodecordoba.org].

In addition to these definitions, we added the following instructions or criteria to calibrate the focus of the heritage information:

1. The nomenclature of the heritage elements. Examples are the “International Arts Festival of Castile & Leon” (global frame), or the “Municipal Book Fair of Salamanca” (local frame).
2. The identification of key words in the contents. An example would be the “Grape Harvest Festival of Cacabelos”, characterized in the hypertext as “one of the oldest wine festivals held in Castile & Leon” (regional context), whose frame is regional. In the hypothetical case where the event is described as “one of the oldest wine festivals of all those held in Spain”, then obviously the frame would be national.
3. The official cataloguing of the heritage element. Examples are the “Cathedral of Burgos”, the “Road to Santiago,” or the “Altamira Cave,” which have all been declared World Heritage Sites by UNESCO (global frame); the “San Fermin Festival (Running of the Bulls)”, declared one of the Festivals of International Tourist Interest by Spain’s National Tourism Office (global frame); or the “Holy Week in Viveiro”, declared a Festival of National Tourist Interest (national frame).

Finally, it was necessary to point out the origin or location of the heritage information, the possibilities being: the municipal website itself (1=yes; 0=no) or another thematic webpage, with a different URL, linked to the main page (1= yes; 0=no). The same specific weight was given to all the information, regardless of the place it was found within the map of the website, or even if it was found in another thematic portal.

3.3. Coding and reliability

The coding period took place between 17 February and 11 April, 2014. A team of four coders was involved in examining the 500 websites comprising our sample, and did not include the principal investigator. All of the coders received training in content analysis to familiarize them with it before beginning the coding. In this sense, Neuendorf was very illuminating when affirming that: “three words describe good coder preparation: train, train and train” (2002: 133). Thus, a pilot study was carried out on a selection of four websites that were not included in the sample, in order to calibrate how the categories worked and how the coders interpreted them.

Having reached a consensus with the team as to the definitive design of the tool, the next stage was the proportional and homogeneous assignment of the units of analysis to each member of the coding team. Each coder was randomly given 125 websites to inspect individually. In order to make the analysis conditions uniform, the coders were asked to use the same search engine (*Google Chrome*) and, to the extent it was available, to use the Internet connection of the Observatory for Audiovisual Contents (OCA), where most of the work was carried out and coordinated.

As regards the units of analysis, that is, the websites, we felt it was reasonable to take a screenshot of the homepage, which is usually the one most visited and the main showcase for anyone visiting the site. The screenshot was taken at the precise moment of coding, with

the idea of creating a repertory of samples, a kind of graphic file, that would later vouch for the state in which the websites were found at the time of coding. For this task we used the *Gadwin Printscreen* program, previously installed and configured in all of the equipment used for coding.

Initially, we considered the possibility of downloading the websites to massive storage systems, and from there begin the coding. However, and after a first attempt with the specific software programs *WebSuction* and *HTTrack WebSite Copier*, we found that capturing whole websites was going to be an excessively slow process and would take up too much space as well. We therefore decided to forego that option given our limited technical, human and temporal resources.

To verify intercoder reliability, we selected a subsample comprising 60 websites (12% of the total) coded by all the members of the team. This critical part of the work was carried out entirely in the Observatory for Audiovisual Contents under the supervision of the principal investigator, since it was very important that each website be examined within the same time span, thus palliating one of the major disadvantages of working with the Internet: the volatility of information.

To calculate intercoder reliability, we used Krippendorff's Alpha, the most statistically robust method, as well as the one best suited to the different types of measurement scales and an indeterminate number of coders (Hayes & Krippendorff, 2007; Krippendorff, 2012). However, due to the fact that the SPSS statistics program does not have a command for this type of calculation, we installed an extension called *Macro Kalpha*, developed by Andrew F. Hayes. Thanks to this extension, available for free download on the website of its creator², it was possible to check coder agreement.

As a result, the mean reliability of the 48 variables in the code book was $\alpha_k=.68$; a sufficiently satisfactory figure given that the recommendation made by Krippendorff (2004) is that when this index is greater than or equal to ".66", conclusions can be drawn regarding the object of study addressed in the research. The least reliable variable was the focus on urban complexes or old quarters ($\alpha_k=.47$).

3.4. Creation of aggregate indices

Before reporting on the research outcomes, we should address an important issue, since it will affect the next section a great deal: the creation of aggregate indices, whose explanatory power exceeds that of the variables that comprise it. Since the cultural heritage was divided into tangible and intangible elements, we considered it appropriate (in addition to creating a global indicator of heritage information) to configure two indices: tangible and intangible. Given that all of the variables involved have the same level of dichotomous measurement, it was not necessary to recode any of them, which meant that they ranged between 0 and 1.

The reliability of the overall Cultural Heritage Information Index (CHI₂) was $\alpha_c=.79$, and showed the following descriptive values: $M_{CHI_2}=.46$ ($SD=.19$). For its part, the Tangible Cultural Heritage Information Index (TCHI₂) showed a reliability of $\alpha_c=.73$, with $M_{TCHI_2}=.46$ ($SD=.21$). Finally, the Intangible Cultural Heritage Information Index (ICHI₂) reached a reliability of $\alpha_c=.61$, and descriptive values similar to the other indices: $M_{ICHI_2}=.47$ ($SD=.22$).

Different aggregate indices were also designed for the scope or frame of the heritage elements. Nonetheless, and on account of the ordinal scale the variables involved initially showed, it was necessary to recode them so that only the values comprised between "1=local" and "4=global" would be computed, treating the rest as lost. In this way, the indicators created concerning the focus of the heritage show a range of 1 to 4, in which, as a

² Personal website of Andrew F. Hayes: www.alfhayes.com.

semantic differential, the extremes (local vs. global) are bipolarized, with a series of intermediate values between them.

Following the same strategy described above, the reliability of the Cultural Heritage Focus Index (CHFI) was $\alpha_c=.56$, and showed the following descriptive values: $M_{CHFI}=1.67$ ($SD=.61$). As regards the Tangible Cultural Heritage Focus Index (TCHFI), its reliability was $\alpha_c=.83$, with $M_{TCHFI}=1.56$ ($SD=.65$). Finally the Intangible Cultural Heritage Focus Index (ICHFI) reached a reliability of $\alpha_c=.92$, with $M_{ICHFI}=1.84$ ($SD=.79$).

4. Results

4.1. Heritage elements

Table 1 (below) shows the percentages of websites that offer information with respect to some of the 23 variables into which municipal heritage has been divided (RQ₁):

Table 1. Percentage of municipal websites offering information about the different manifestations of heritage

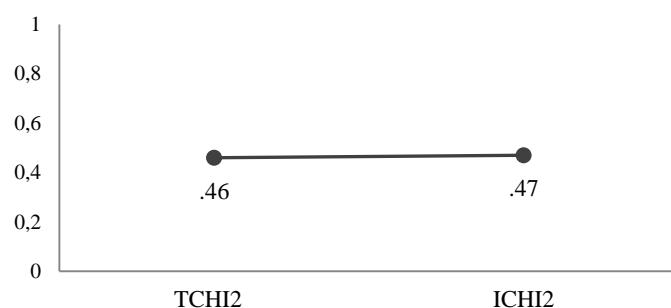
| VARIABLES RELATING TO HERITAGE | % OF WEBSITES THAT OFFER INFORMATION ON THEM |
|---|--|
| TANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE: | |
| •Museums, exhibition halls, cultural centers | 71% |
| •Archeological remains, deposits | 44% |
| •Libraries, film libraries, other documentary archives | 73.4% |
| •Theaters, amphitheaters | 27.6% |
| •Cathedrals, basilicas | 13.2% |
| •Religious buildings: churches, chapels, hermitages, monasteries | 87.2% |
| •Emblematic civil buildings: castles, forts, bridges, walls, towers, mansions, country houses | 78.8% |
| •Old quarters, urban centers or complexes | 39.2% |
| •Squares or patios of special architectural or artistic interest | 47.4% |
| •Parks or gardens designed and built by humans and of special architectural or artistic interest | 37.6% |
| •Statues or sculptures symbolizing famous people, heroes or historical events of the municipality | 25.4% |
| •Bullrings | 11.2% |
| INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE: | |
| •Oral traditions or expressions: proverbs, riddles, tales, songs, legends, chants, epic poems, hymns | 31.8% |
| •Performing arts: vocal or instrumental music festivals; folklore; film, dance, theater or flamenco festivals | 39.6% |
| •Municipal festive events | 88.2% |
| •Religious and ecclesiastical events | 77.2% |
| •Typical gastronomy | 69.2% |
| •Traditional crafts | 23.6% |
| •Important public figures from the town or characteristic of the town | 33.4% |
| •Festivities linked to bullfighting | 18.4% |
| NATURAL HERITAGE: | |
| •Nature reserves or natural parks important for the conservation of biodiversity | 26.4% |
| •Landscapes, roads, grottoes or caves of interest to heritage | 65.4% |
| •Beaches or coastal formations of special natural interest | 17.6% |

In the category of tangible cultural heritage, the most recurring manifestations are religious buildings with 87.2% of the sites offering information to this respect, followed by

emblematic civil buildings, at 78.8%. As regards intangible heritage, municipal festive events dominate the information offered (88.2%), over and above religious and ecclesiastical events (77.2%). In the category of natural heritage, landscapes, roads, grottoes and caves of heritage interest receive the most coverage, specifically, in 65.4% of the websites analyzed.

As pointed out earlier, several aggregate indices relating to heritage information were created, the most important being the CHI₂, which brings together the 20 variables into which cultural heritage was divided. However, before using the CHI₂ to make a series of comparisons, it is necessary to verify whether or not there are differences between the two types of cultural heritage, to wit, material or tangible heritage (TCHI₂) or immaterial or intangible heritage (ICHI₂):

Figure 1. Difference of means between the Tangible Cultural Heritage and Intangible Cultural Heritage Information Indices (Student's *t*).

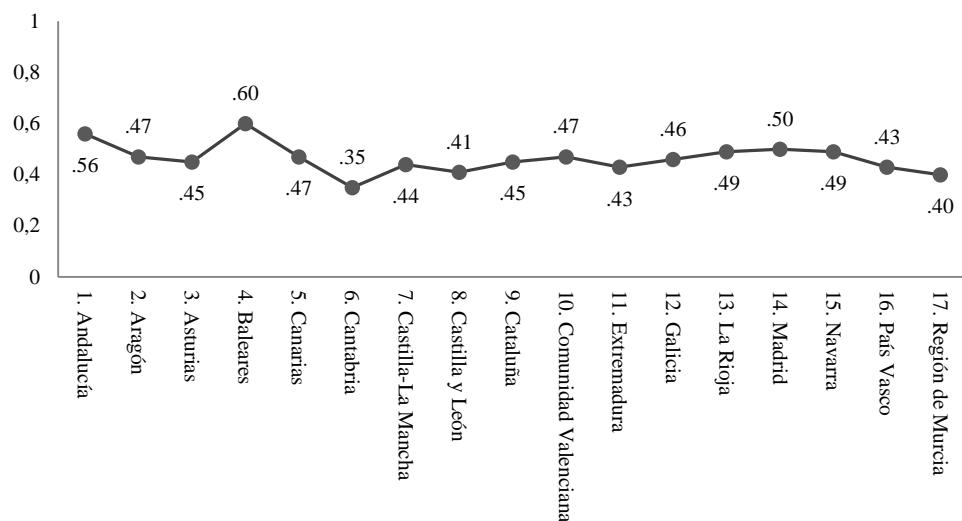


With the means shown in figure 1, and using Student's *t* test for related samples, it was found that there were no statistically significant differences between the two indices of cultural heritage information [$t(499)=-1.398, p=.163; d=-.04$]; this allows us to state that the tangible and intangible kinds of cultural heritage information offered have almost identical prominence.

Along the next few pages we use the CHI₂ to make comparisons according to administrative, demographic, and geographic criteria (RQ₃), which in turn have two versions: the coast as opposed to the interior, and the five territorial blocks into which Spain can be divided.

We begin with the comparison between Autonomous Communities derived from the recoding of the provinces; it is therefore a criterion based on the administrative division of the territory. Figure 2 below shows the Means of the CHI₂ of the websites corresponding to Spain's 17 autonomous regions:

Figure 2. Means of the Cultural Heritage Information Index (CHI2) according to Autonomous Community (ANOVA).



According to the numbers in figure 2 and after analysis of variance (ANOVA) was run, there are significant differences in the means of CHI2 according to Autonomous Community [$F(16, 483)=2.507, p<.001, \eta^2=.077$]. After running the Dunnett T3 test *post hoc*, it was observed that the most striking differences are between Andalusia and Castile & Leon ($p<.001$), and between Andalusia and Cantabria ($p<.025$).

In demographic terms, the means corresponding to CHI2 according to the seven groups of populations³ created as a function of the number of inhabitants are:

Table 2. Means of the Cultural Heritage Information Index (CHI2) according to types of population (ANOVA).

| TYPE OF POPULATION | M (CHI2) | SD | N |
|--------------------|-----------------------|--------|-----|
| Very small | .38 _a | .13 | 71 |
| Small | .37 _b | .16 | 72 |
| Somewhat small | .39 _c | .16 | 71 |
| Medium | .45 _d | .16 | 72 |
| Somewhat large | .46 _e | .16 | 71 |
| Large | .50 _f | .18 | 72 |
| Very large | .69 _{abcdef} | .17 | 71 |
| TOTAL | .46 | .19 | 500 |
| <i>F</i> (6, 493) | | 33.230 | |
| <i>p</i> | | .001 | |

Note. The means accompanied by the subscript letters «a», «b», «c», «d», «e» and «f» differ, respectively, in a significant way ($p<.001$), from the mean accompanied by the letters «abcdef».

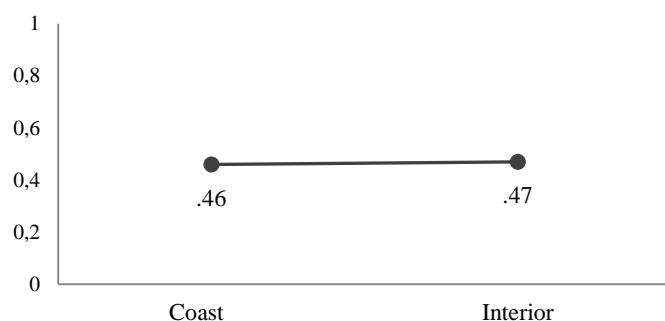
After analysis of variance (ANOVA), the numbers in table 2 show significant differences in relation to the CHI2 according to types of population [$F(6, 493)=33.230, p<.001, \eta^2=.288$].

³ We had the SPSS program divide the sample into seven equal groups to be able to determine the following population types: very small (from 1,008 to 1,406 inhabitants), small (from 1,497 to 2,406), somewhat small (from 2,407 to 3,537), medium (from 3,538 to 5,800), somewhat large (from 5,801 to 13,760), large (from 13,761 to 40,774) and finally, very large (from 40,775 to 320,7247 inhabitants).

According to Scheffe's test for *post hoc* analysis, the most significant differences are found between the municipalities with very large populations and the rest of the population groups ($p<.001$) that share the same subscript letter in the table. Furthermore, a positive correlation was detected between the CHI₂ and the "population variable" [$r(498)=.29$, $p<.001$], illustrating the fact that the larger the municipality, the higher the level of heritage information on its website (H_i).

From the geographical point of view, the CHI₂ values have been compared in terms of coastal and interior regions:

Figure 3. Means of the Cultural Heritage Information Index (CHI₂) according to the geographic criterion "Coast vs. Interior" (Student's *t*).



Student's *t* test for independent samples clearly confirmed that there are no statistically significant differences between the municipalities on the Spanish coast and those in the interior of the country in relation to the cultural heritage information offered [$t(498)=-.473$, $p=.637$, $d=-.05$].

The second geographical comparison involves the observation of the means of the CHI₂ according to the five geographical blocks stipulated, created by grouping bordering provinces:

Table 3. Means of the Cultural Heritage Information Index (CHI₂) according to geographical blocks (ANOVA).

| GEOGRAPHICAL bloCK | M (CHI ₂) | SD | N |
|--------------------|-----------------------|------------|------------|
| Northwest | .42 _a | .17 | 120 |
| Northeast | .46 | .17 | 100 |
| Center | .44 _b | .20 | 100 |
| Southwest | .54 _{ab} | .20 | 80 |
| Southeast | .47 | .19 | 100 |
| TOTAL | .46 | .19 | 500 |
| <i>F</i> (4, 495) | 5.321 | | |
| <i>p</i> | .001 | | |

Note. The means accompanied by the subscript letters «a» and «b» differ, respectively, in a significant way ($p<.001$; $p<.016$), from the mean accompanied by the letters «ab».

Taking as a starting point the data from the CHI₂ according to geographical block, it can be seen that, after analysis of variance (ANOVA), there are significant differences between the blocks [$F(4, 495)=5.321$, $p<.001$, $\eta^2=.041$]. More specifically, and after running Scheffe's *post hoc* test, it was observed that the greatest imbalances occurred between the

southwest and the northwest of the country ($p<.001$), as well as between the southwest and the center ($p<.016$), the pairs of blocks marked with the same subscript letter in the table.

4.2. The focus of heritage elements

In the section describing our research methodology, we pointed out that one of the purposes of the codebook was to determine the focus or frame conferred on the information offered about heritage elements. With that goal in mind we established six classes of focus, conceptualized on an ordinal scale. The table below shows the percentages of these focuses in relation to each of the heritage elements (RQ₂):

Table 4. Percentage of websites according to the focus given to the information about the elements into which heritage is divided.

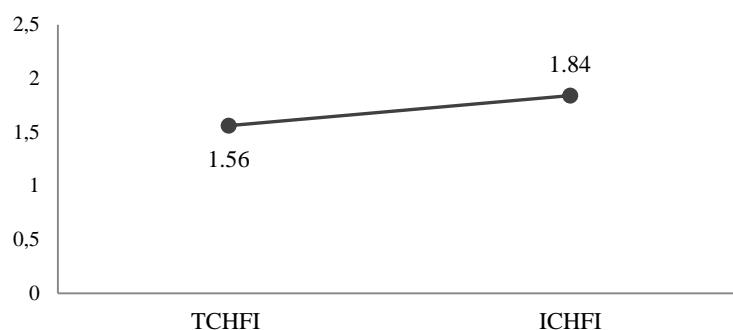
| HERITAGE VARIABLES | FOCUS | | | | | |
|--------------------------------------|-------|----------|----------|--------|-------------|---------------|
| | LOCAL | REGIONAL | NATIONAL | GLOBAL | NO FOCUS | NO INFORM. |
| TANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE: | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | |
| Museums | 23.6 | 8.8 | 4.6 | 8 | 25.8 | 29.2 |
| Archeological remains | 10 | 6 | 6.6 | 3.4 | 17.8 | 56.2 |
| Libraries, archives | 51.8 | 5.2 | .8 | .4 | 15.2 | 26.6 |
| Theatres, amphitheaters | 11 | 2 | 2.4 | .8 | 11.4 | 72.4 |
| Cathedrals, basilicas | 2.6 | 1.2 | 3.2 | 2 | 4.2 | 86.8 |
| Religious buildings | 32.2 | 8.6 | 10.2 | 1.8 | 34.4 | 12.8 |
| Civil buildings | 28.8 | 8 | 10.4 | 4.2 | 27.4 | 21.2 |
| Urban complexes | 17.2 | 2 | 4.6 | 1.6 | 13.8 | 60.8 |
| Squares, patios | 18.4 | 1.2 | 1.4 | .8 | 26.5 | 52.6 |
| Parks, gardens | 12.4 | 2.2 | 1 | 2.2 | 19.8 | 62.4 |
| Statues, sculptures | 10.4 | 2.6 | 1.2 | .8 | 10.4 | 74.6 |
| Bullrings | 3.8 | .6 | 1.2 | .6 | 5 | 88.8 |
| INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE: | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | |
| Oral traditions | 19.4 | 2.2 | 1.4 | 2.2 | 6.6 | 68.2 |
| Performing arts | 9.2 | 4.8 | 3.2 | 12.8 | 9.6 | 60.4 |
| Festive events | 39.4 | 9.8 | 7.4 | 4 | 27.6 | 11.8 |
| Religious events | 34 | 8.6 | 5.6 | 3.4 | 25.6 | 22.8 |
| Gastronomy | 22.6 | 15.6 | 4.8 | 8 | 18.2 | 30.8 |
| Traditional crafts | 10.8 | 2.8 | 2.4 | 1.6 | 6 | 76.4 |
| Important public figures | 7 | 4.2 | 4.6 | 11.8 | 5.8 | 66.6 |
| Bullfighting | 5.2 | 1.2 | 1.8 | 1.2 | 9 | 81.6 |
| NATURAL HERITAGE: | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | |
| Nature reserves | 5 | 6.8 | 4.8 | 5.4 | 4.4 | 73.6 |
| Landscapes and roads | 24.2 | 7.6 | 4.6 | 4.4 | 24.6 | 34.6 |
| Coastal formations | 5 | 3 | 1.8 | 3.8 | 4 | 82.4 |

As can be seen in table 4, the predominant focus is local, except in the case of information on cathedrals or basilicas (national), performing arts and important public figures (global), and nature reserves (regional). The fact that no particular focus is a

recurring practice cannot be overlooked, since in a high percentage of the information on heritage elements the focus given is not specified.

Likewise, several aggregate indices were drawn up relating to the focus of the heritage information, the most important of which was the Cultural Heritage Focus Index (CHFI), which brings together the 20 variables into which cultural heritage was divided. However, before going on to use the CHFI to make a comparison between the types of populations, we needed to verify if any differences existed regarding the two types of focus, that is, the one linked to tangible heritage (TCHFI) and the one linked to intangible heritage (ICHFI):

Figure 4. Difference of means between the Tangible and Intangible Cultural Heritage Focus Indices (Student's *t*).



According to the means shown in figure 4, and using Student's *t* test for related samples, there are statistically significant differences between the two indices on the focus of heritage information [t (393)=−6.409, $p<.001$, $d=−.32$]; it can therefore be said that intangible cultural heritage elements tend to be focused more broadly than the tangible elements.

Table 5 below shows the means of the types of populations as a function of CHFI:

Table 5. Means of the Cultural Heritage Focus Index (CHFI) according to the different types of population (ANOVA).

| TYPE OF POPULATION | M (CHFI) | SD | N |
|--------------------|------------------------|------------|------------|
| Very small | 1.53 _a | .51 | 64 |
| Small | 1.51 _b | .55 | 64 |
| Somewhat small | 1.50 _c | .58 | 64 |
| Medium | 1.56 _d | .55 | 69 |
| Somewhat large | 1.67 _e | .59 | 67 |
| Large | 1.62 _f | .52 | 69 |
| Very large | 2.25 _{abcdef} | .58 | 71 |
| TOTAL | 1.67 | .61 | 468 |
| <i>F</i> (6, 461) | 15.925 | | |
| <i>p</i> | .001 | | |

Note. The means accompanied by the subscript letters «a», «b», «c», «d», «e» and «f» differ, respectively, in a significant way ($p<.001$), from the mean accompanied by the letters «abcdef».

After analysis of variance (ANOVA), the numbers in table 5 show significant differences in relation to the CHFI according to population type [F (6, 461)=15.925, $p<.001$, $\eta^2=.172$]. Scheffe's *post hoc* test showed that the most significant differences exist between the very large populations and the rest of the population groups ($p<.001$), sharing the same subscript letter in the table. A positive correlation was also detected between the CHFI and the

“number of inhabitants” variable [$r(466)=.31, p<.001$], illustrating the fact that the larger the municipality, the broader the focus of their cultural heritage (H_2).

4.3. Location of the heritage information

Finally, we considered it befitting to measure the association between the two possible web locations of the heritage information, to wit, the official municipal website or another thematic website linked to it:

Table 6. Relation between the two possible web locations of heritage information: Institutional website vs. Other thematic website (% column).

| OTHER THEMATIC WEBSITE | % Total | INSTITUTIONAL WEBSITE | |
|---|---------|--------------------------------------|---|
| | | Yes, the information is located here | No, the information is not located here |
| Yes, the information is located here | 30.2 | 29.6– | 83.3+ |
| No, the information is not located here | 69.8 | 70.4+ | 16.7– |
| | N 500 | 494 | 6 |

– Statistically lower value (analysis of corrected standardized residuals).

+ Statistically higher value (analysis of corrected standardized residuals).

Although the percentages regarding the location of the heritage information indicate that the institutional municipal websites are the ones that most frequently contain the information in question ($N=494$; i.e., 98.8% of the total), the contingency table that relates both options allows us to affirm that there is a statistically significant association between showing heritage information on the institutional website at the same time as on some thematic website [$\chi^2(1, N=500)=8.133, p<.004, v=.128$]. More specifically, 29.6% of the municipalities that place the heritage information on their official website also show some kind of thematic website linked to heritage. Thus, having both portals available is not an isolated initiative.

5. Conclusions and general discussion

5.1. Substantive interpretation of the results

This section is organized around the research questions and hypotheses posited, and the findings will be addressed in relation to and in the order of those questions.

First of all, it can be postulated that the cultural heritage of Spain is clearly religious in nature, since the elements most present at the information level are ecclesiastical buildings and liturgical events. Although the Spanish Constitution holds that the country is secular, Roman Catholicism is still the dominant religion. Thus, one of the factors that would explain this religious orientation has its roots in a long ecclesiastical tradition, still alive today.

Nonetheless, the importance of other factors, such as local festivals with pagan roots or civil architecture, cannot be ignored, as they are elements of unquestionable importance in regard to the reflection of the cultural identity of towns and cities. Along this same line, it must be said that gastronomy plays a capital role in popular leisure time, since it is typically one of the main cultural activities in many Spanish municipalities.

Secondly, the predominant focus given to the information offered is undoubtedly local. This finding can be related to a clear appeal to the cultural genome of the towns, the purpose of which is to have cultural variety and heterogeneity in identity prevail. The fact that the information on the heritage attractions is generally framed from the local perspective represents the will of human groups to affirm themselves in their own legacy as

opposed to having a homogenizing global mold, as well as their desire to try to differentiate themselves from adjacent social groups.

This claiming of what is one's own genuine culture is a reaction that takes place in the midst of any social group when faced with an alienation of their identity. It is inevitable that global flows will have certain effects on the world population, but not to the point of converting all societies into a uniform mass. It is here where resistance identities and project identities come onto the scene (Castells, 2010), charged with unmasking *multiculturalism* (Bauman, 2013) and annulling, to a certain extent, the *cocacolonization* of culture (Urry, 1999).

In regard to the third research question, the geographical block that carries out the most work in informing about cultural heritage is the southwestern part of Spain, made up mainly of the Andalusian provinces. It can thus be assumed that their historical and cultural heritage, derived from the Muslim presence in the region for many centuries, was a historical period that exponentially enriched their culture. Another possible reason for this large amount of cultural dissemination of their heritage assets on the Internet may be found in "the impact of local conservation groups whose heritage-preserving actions will often increase tourism in an area (...), and the central organizing role of the local state" (Urry, 2005: 201). In the case of the southwest, these bodies and institutions are fully aware of the importance of heritage in their local dynamics, and they are also committed to the global of their cultural heritage dissemination (Mateos, 2008).

With respect to the hypotheses, we found that the larger cities are the ones that most promulgate their cultural heritage through their municipal websites. In all probability, and along the line of the findings in the studies done by Díaz and López (2012), the municipalities with the largest populations would have greater possibilities, means and preparation for cataloguing and exhibiting their heritage than the smaller towns. Furthermore, and in terms of their targeting, it was found that the largest municipalities are the ones that more widely disseminate their heritage, framing it within a broader perspective in order to make their cultural identity an attraction of general interest, in an effort to reach the tourist markets abroad.

5.2. Theoretical and methodological implications of the research

One of the principal theoretical implications of this study is related to Social Identity Theory (SIT), one of the most influential epistemological frameworks in the field of Social Psychology over the last few decades (Scandroglio, López Martínez & San José, 2008). This theory has been transferred to many fields of study, and given its permeability, we considered the possibility of applying it to the study of cultural heritage information on the Internet. As stated by Tajfel, a precursor of SIT, social identity is: "that part of an individual's self-concept that derives from the knowledge of his or her belonging to a social group (or groups), together with the judgmental and emotional meaning associated with that belonging" (1984: 292, authors' translation). Thus, here we posit that the citizens of a certain town or city (i.e. the members of the social ingroup) will tend to identify in a unitary way with their heritage, causing one part of the idea they have of themselves to be intimately linked to their cultural inheritance.

Another of the most important theoretical implications of our study has to do with Framing Theory. This theory (one of the most pervasive in research into mass communication) has generally been applied to journalistic texts in the traditional media. Our intention here was to provide the paradigm with a new field of application, the World Wide Web, not through a journalistic perspective, but rather addressing website contents. It was therefore an attempt to study the way in which municipalities frame their cultural identity through institutional portals. Following the central dimensions of framing theory

(de Vreese, Peter & Semetko, 2001; Entman, 1993), municipalities select a series of heritage elements from among all those available, organize the information on their websites, emphasize certain aspects of that cultural situation and, as a result, exclude others (or at least give them less attention) that they consider as not particularly representative or attractive. Using a deductive approach (de Vreese, 2005; Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000) to study how the site developers constructed the frames (Zhou & Moy, 2007), we reached the conclusion that both religious heritage (in the form of buildings and ecclesiastical celebrations), and secular heritage (civil buildings and popular festivals) are the cultural elements that most appear in website information. These elements are extolled, in turn, from a local viewpoint as a self-affirmation of what is the truest and most genuine identity of each town and city.

As to the methodology employed, we applied content analysis to the study of websites, a practice that to date has not been very widespread. This method (comparable to a microscope or magnifying glass) is known to be one of the most frequently used in communication research; however, its application to websites, as McMillan (2000) and Weare and Lin (2000) point out, demands certain added precautions, all of which were taken in the course of this study.

Among the strong points of our content analysis are the following. First, the principal investigator did not intervene in the coding of the sample, thus strengthening the objectivity of the process and avoiding the intrusion of extraneous bias. Secondly, a multi-stage sampling strategy was designed that allowed us to obtain a broad and representative sample. Thirdly, a pilot study was carried out with a dual objective: on the one hand, to test the design of the codebook before tackling the final coding, and on the other, have the coders familiarize themselves both with the research tools (the codebook and the coding form) and the analysis protocol. Our fourth strong point is that to confront one of the most critical stages in any content analysis, which is the verification of intercoder reliability, we used the most robust and demanding of the existing statistical indices, which controls chance: Krippendorff's Alpha (Krippendorff, 2004). Thus, having followed a sequential, logical and step-by-step protocol, we consider that this study can become a reference for future studies employing web analysis, whatever their subject.

5.3. Limitations and future research lines

First of all, it must be said that no attempt was made in this research to quantify the actual heritage of the municipalities and regions studied, but rather the information the municipal websites offered in this respect. Moreover, and somewhere halfway between theory and practice, we have to recognize how difficult it was to divide the heritage into the different categories of analysis (in this case, 23). Not even the definitions offered by UNESCO (the main international agency in charge of cataloguing cultural goods and expressions subject to being considered heritage) itemize all the forms it can take. As for the reliability of the variables, the fact that the coders had to inspect the websites in their entirety (as well as heritage sites linked to the institutional ones), with such a large sample, could have worn down their capacity for analysis.

As a complication inherent to interactive media, we must stress the volatility of the website contents. Since the time the coding was carried out many of the websites analyzed will have changed in some way. It is therefore essential to take our conclusions with some caution, since the current state of municipal websites in Spain may have changed.

Finally, and given the absence of any previous empirical references, there is another limitation: the descriptive nature of the research. Nonetheless, we clearly intend to aim future lines of research at delving deeper into the complex reality described here by triangulating different methodologies to help us understand not only the messages (the

information on the website) emitted, but also the motivation of the senders (municipal institutions) and the impact of the messages on the receivers (website users). Only in this way can we obtain a transversal understanding of the sophisticated relation between cultural heritage and social identity mediated by institutional online communication⁴.

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⁴ This article is a result of the research project “El Patrimonio Cultural en la Sociedad Digital. Un estudio de su difusión a través de Internet” (Cultural Heritage in the Digital Society. A Study of Dissemination through the Internet), and coincides with the Ph.D. dissertation of the first author, directed by the second author. This project was financed by the Foundation Santa María la Real del Patrimonio Histórico (2013-2015), which we would like to thank in particular for its collaboration.

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