

Twitter and the (de)construction of the myth: Maradona and feminist digital activism

Twitter y la (de)construcción del mito: Maradona y el activismo digital feminista

Twitter e a (des)construção do mito: Maradona e ativismo digital feminista

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ABSTRACT | This article examines the use of Twitter by feminist digital activists to (des) mythicise the figure of footballer Diego Armando Maradona after his death, on November 25, 2020. The athlete represents both an idol within the football sphere –Maradonian myth– and a personality rejected due to his violent behavior against several collectivities, including women. The research analyses the contribution of the interactive publics to the construction and deconstruction of this myth, using empirical data obtained from more than five million tweets, which were processed using Pajek and Gephi big data techniques. The study finds 23 Twitter communities that mainly participate in the digital conversation to mythicize Maradona. However, one of four tweets is submitted to criticize or disapprove his figure. The contents consistent with the feminist claims lead the critical voices collective and contribute to overcome the silence problematic affecting the freedom of expression in the digital and interconnected public space, even if they also show a limited impact of Twitter interactions to make visible and reinforce the feminist fight in the digital space.

KEYWORDS: social networks; myths; Twitter; feminism; Big data; digital activism; hashtivism; Maradona.

HOW TO CITE

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RESUMEN | El artículo examina el uso de Twitter por parte de las activistas digitales feministas para desmitificar la figura de Diego Armando Maradona en el ciberespacio tras su deceso, el 25 de noviembre de 2020. El deportista representa al mismo tiempo un ídolo en el mundo del fútbol –mito maradoniano– y un personaje objeto de rechazo por sus actuaciones violentas contra distintos colectivos, entre ellos, el de las mujeres. Se analiza la contribución de los públicos interactivos para construir y deconstruir este mito a partir de los resultados del análisis de más de cinco millones de tuits procesados con técnicas de Big data en Pajek y Gephi. Se detectan 23 comunidades que participan mayoritariamente en la conversación para mitificar a Maradona, aunque uno de cada cuatro tuits critica o reprueban su figura. Los contenidos acordes con los postulados feministas lideran el colectivo de voces críticas y contribuyen a superar la problemática del silencio que perjudica a la libertad de expresión en el espacio público digital e interconectado, si bien también evidencian un impacto limitado de las interacciones de Twitter para visibilizar y reforzar la lucha feminista en el espacio digital.

PALABRAS CLAVE: redes sociales; mitos; Twitter; feminismo; Big data; activismo digital; hashtivismo; Maradona.

RESUMO | O artigo examina o uso do Twitter por parte das ativistas digitais feministas para desmistificar a figura de Diego Armando Maradona no ciberespaço após sua morte em 25 de novembro de 2020. O esportista representa ao mesmo tempo um ídolo no mundo do futebol –mito maradoniano– e um objeto de rejeição por suas ações violentas contra diferentes grupos, incluindo as mulheres. Esta pesquisa analisa a contribuição das audiências interativas para a construção e desconstrução deste mito, com base nos resultados de análise de mais de cinco milhões de tweets processados utilizando as técnicas de big data em Pajek e Gephi. São detectadas 23 comunidades que participam principalmente na conversa para mitificar Maradona, ainda que uma em cada quatro tweets critique ou desaprove a sua figura. Os conteúdos de acordo com os postulados feministas lideram o grupo de vozes críticas e contribuem para superar o problema do silêncio que prejudica a liberdade de expressão no espaço público digital e interligado, embora também mostrem um impacto limitado das interações do Twitter para tornar visível e reforçar a luta feminista no espaço digital.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: redes sociais; mitos; Twitter; feminismo; Big data; ativismo digital; hashtivismo; Maradona.

INTRODUCTION

The show surrounding most sports disciplines is something essential and genuinely human; in this, overcoming, anguish, the struggle against time and space, the myth, the hero, doping, limits, meaning, among others, are elements that, as stated by Sánchez-Pato (2011), form a crystalline nucleus from which to begin an anthropological reflection. This already appears in the work *Mythologies* (original 1957) by Barthes (2013), specifically the close relationship between sport and the configuration of a symbolic world conducive to creating myths. Myth is a speech, Barthes states, and it is based on the legitimacy of the belief that serves a given culture as a stereotyped path, as moral and ethical forms (Murolo, 2015).

In this context, among all sports disciplines, soccer is one of the references of mass society (Álvarez-Ossorio, 2013). It emerges and expands in the 20th century and contributes to create public figures that push thousands of people in the world to a sort of collective delirium. Soccer could constitute one of those sanctuaries of the sacred, of what Luckman (1973) calls invisible religion in the heart of an already secular and secularized society (Carretero-Pasín, 2005).

The role of television as the most favored channel to generate a popular media spectacle is a fundamental ally for soccer to have been considered by the media as the king of sports during the last decades (Alcaide-Hernández, 2009). In a digital era starring the hyper-technologized homo (León-Ramos, 2016), the hegemony of the TV-football binomial to build myths is blurred. In this social and cultural context, this research is interested in the new orientation of contemporary digital audiences regarding the creation or deconstruction of certain popular myths. With the advent of the Internet and social networks, interactive audiences participate through their public discourses in the hyper-connected space in of narratives that help interpreting what is happening around us. Social movements and their numerous forms of activism converging on Web 2.0 act and construct their collective identities in that context (García-Estevez, 2015).

As Gómez (2002) indicates, today's society is made up of increasingly fragmented and dispersed subjectivities, a fact that also affects, from an anthropological viewpoint, the creation of myths or the demystification of legends, where social networks are part of a kind of popular scrutiny in the heat of the emotional (Arfuch, 2016) and narrative turn that we live, influenced by Web 2.0.

This paper studies a recent case that connects three elements: on the one hand, one of the great myths of the king sport worldwide, Diego Armando Maradona (Lanus, 1960 - Dique Luján, 2020), of intergenerational character; on the other

hand, feminism, one of the social movements with the greatest emancipatory potential (Varela, 2019), with a growing presence in digital media, and thirdly Twitter, a social network that represents an ideal scenario for diverse interactive audiences (Fernández-Gómez et al., 2018), and a sort of contemporary dialogic (non-deliberative) digital agora.

Based on this scenario, the purpose of this paper is twofold:

- To analyze the contribution that a social network such as Twitter can make to the construction or deconstruction of contemporary popular myths.
- To observe the behavior of a social movement such as feminism in articulating transnational and hegemonic narratives in a given public controversy.

Questions such as: What is the degree of presence of stories and interactions in favor of mythicizing Maradona? Which of the frames, that of soccer legend or that of victimizer, is quantitatively imposed in the digital conversation? What type of profiles and of what genre lead the aforementioned frames in the public controversy?

It is thus hypothesized that feminists will contribute substantially to the operation of demystification or deconstruction of the Maradonian myth in the digital conversation collected on Twitter in the days following his death.

THE MARADONA CASE AND FEMINIST ONLINE ACTIVISM

Maradona, a figure who comes from a low social and cultural background (Dini, 1991), became a local idol in Argentina and a global hero (Alabarces, 2006), and was the best player of the 20th century according to a popular vote organized by the Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) in 2000. For Guerra-Martín (2009) he was both God –on the soccer field– and the Devil –in his personal life–, and his character has fueled hyperemotional feelings, to the point of proposing representation logics that have bordered on the limits of the most exacerbated fanaticism. Numerous academic voices qualify the soccer player as the incarnation of a myth (Chavan de Matviuk, 2005), by personifying three elements that Baczko (1999) related, precisely, to characterize a myth: first, an affective context protected by those who love and support him; second, charismatic endowments or aptitudes, considered as a central theme of public discourse, and, third, the presence of actors who give significance and meaning to the myth.

Maradona died on November 25, 2020, after years of drug, medication, and alcohol addiction, due to a cardiac decompensation that caused a lung edema. He

is the soccer player who has inspired the greatest devotion ever (Smith, 2020), and who has been labeled a myth by many voices, and had accusations of pedophilia and complaints of assault and psychological violence filed by several women. He died on the same day that the international community commemorates the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women. In fact, this day is marked in red for all feminist collectives in most countries of the world, which have turned feminist cyberactivism, thanks to the Internet and Web 2.0, into a crucial element for discursive and ideological dispute (Eckert & Steiner, 2016; Li et al., 2021).

The aforementioned ephemeris was celebrated, moreover, in the context of pandemic, in which cyberactivism or digital activism takes the place, to a large extent, of other forms of offline mass mobilization (Bringel & Pleyers, 2020). Before the pandemic, cyberactivist experiences focused on denouncing violence against women stood out, such as the cyber mobilizations represented by the hashtags *#NiUnaMenos* (Laudano, 2019), *#Cuéntalo* (Fallarás, 2019) or *#EstaEsNuestraNuestraManada* (Orbegozo-Terradillos et al., 2019), referring especially to the Latin world. In the international context, significant and illustrative milestones of feminist digital activism are experiences such as the emergence and consolidation of the hashtag *#Metoo* (October 2017) (Page & Arcy, 2019; Hosterman et al., 2018) to denounce the sexual assault and abuse practiced by the American film producer Harvey Weinstein; the celebrations of March 8, International Working Women's Day, especially in 2017 and 2018 (Laudano, 2018; Idoiaga-Mondragon et al., 2021), and the viralization of the participatory performance *Un violador en tu camino* (A rapist on your path) created by the feminist collective *Lastesis* (November 2019) (Serafini, 2020; Pinto-Veas & BelloNavarro, 2022; Iwama, 2022).

Maradona's off-field behavior was already inspiring profound debates within feminisms before his death (Sosa-Vásquez, 2022). In fact, his life and legacy constitute one of the best cases in which feminists can discuss their contradictions and debates.

Twitter has been recognized as a space of equal opportunities to access public opinion (Orbegozo et al., 2020), and to make feminism visible from positions that can be positive or favorable to the movement, especially when it comes to making its voice heard among a multitude of voices far from its postulates. Since the suffragette movement in the first wave, feminism has specified and prized its public-media visibility as a prime variable (Rhode, 1995), even more so in Twitter, considered a forum in which the contribution to the debate tends to arise from minority feminist perspectives or readings, especially regarding cases of sexism

and other gender violence (Drüeke & Zobl, 2016; Núñez, Maceiras & Fernández, 2021). Likewise, Twitter has been considered a field with limitations to address transcendental issues for feminist theory and practice, such as intersectionality (Thelandersson, 2014).

This type of academic contributions enlightens the type of contribution to the feminist movement of spaces currently considered a priority for the formation and expression of public opinion, such as social networks. These help to elucidate and better understand the type of conditioning imposed on social movements such as feminism, based on dynamics such as the so-called silence spiral, i.e., the preference of some users to silence their opinions to avoid confrontation (Moreno & Sierra, 2016).

Twitter is a discursive and deliberative space that has emerged in the context of the digital agora, allowing people to be visible, to be seen, and to be heard in support of the most diverse causes, slogans, or situations of nonconformity (Baer, 2016). However, this network is also linked to the tendency to digital endogamy and the creation of digital niches, which the scientific community refers to as echo chambers (González, 2011). Other theoretical contributions of a critical nature around the communication of social movements on Twitter and, more specifically, of the feminist movement are addressed by Barker-Plummer and Barker-Plummer (2017) and Li and colleagues (2021). Some studies question the ability of digital networks to promote far-reaching changes in achieving the aims of the feminist movement, because of some inherent characteristics of interactive digital supports, beyond their potential to visibilize and give voice. For example, by encouraging individualistic and egocentric uses, Twitter appears traversed by mercantilist logic (Baer, 2016; Fotopoulou, 2016). Moreover, according to this same analytical framework, the polarization of opinions promoted by Twitter would lead to understand the difficulties of establishing strong sorority and consistent dialogues even among feminists who participate in the same debates or digital controversies (Thelandersson, 2014; Lommel et al., 2019).

In this context, the question on which this research aims to shed light is what importance was given to Maradona's death in the digital public debate and whether or not the discourses of referential women in feminisms highlighted Maradona's history of violence.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This research has a total sample of 5,157,838 tweets issued in a period from November 25, 2020 to November 28 at 9:00 (UTC time). The downloading and processing of these tweets was automated by using four softwares for their study

(figure 1), due to their proven validity in previous research: T-Hoarder, Pajek (Louvain-Multilevel algorithm), Gephi (Force-Atlas 2 algorithm), and Tableau.

To select the tweets that make up the sample, all of them had to contain the word Maradona. Their download and selection were automated through the use of the T-Hoarder software, a Python-based system capable of connecting with the standard Twitter API, downloading data retroactively and processing large quantities of tweets (Congosto et al., 2017). The download was performed on November 28 and retroactively through November 25, at a rate of 18,000 tweets every 15 minutes.

Once the tweets were downloaded, the mentions were extracted from the T-Hoarder software itself, synthesizing a network based on which users mentioned other users in the conversation itself.

The derived network was extracted and exported to the social network analysis software Pajek (Batagelj & Mrvar, 2002), widely used in social science and bibliometric analysis (Thelwall, 2009) or blockmodeling (Batagelj et al., 2004). Pajek is used here to identify communities by applying the Louvain-Multilevel algorithm with 10 iterations and has been recognized in the academic literature for its research interest in the social sciences (Apodaka & Moralesi-Gras, 2016; Blondel et al., 2008). The aforementioned algorithm allows generating densely interconnected groups of nodes (persons or profiles), as well as obtaining the best network partition or higher modularity figure. Thus, the groups or clusters representative of the digital conversation are identified with a degree of modularity of 0.6.

The synthesized network and the communities detected in the previous steps were further processed with Gephi software, an open-source tool developed in Java and of proven validity for improving the visualization and analysis of large network figures (Bastian et al., 2009). Despite its short life, Gephi has already become the standard for visualizing massive networks (Zarrabeitia et al., 2022). Gephi's Force-Atlas 2 algorithm (Jacomy et al., 2014) was utilized for its usefulness in bringing nodes that are part of the same communities closer together and away from those with which they are less algorithmically related, rejecting communities that do not reach 1% of the intra-node modularity. Likewise, as part of the sampling process, this software was used to obtain the weighted input degree variable to know the number of mentions that each node had received in a targeted and weighted way on Twitter.

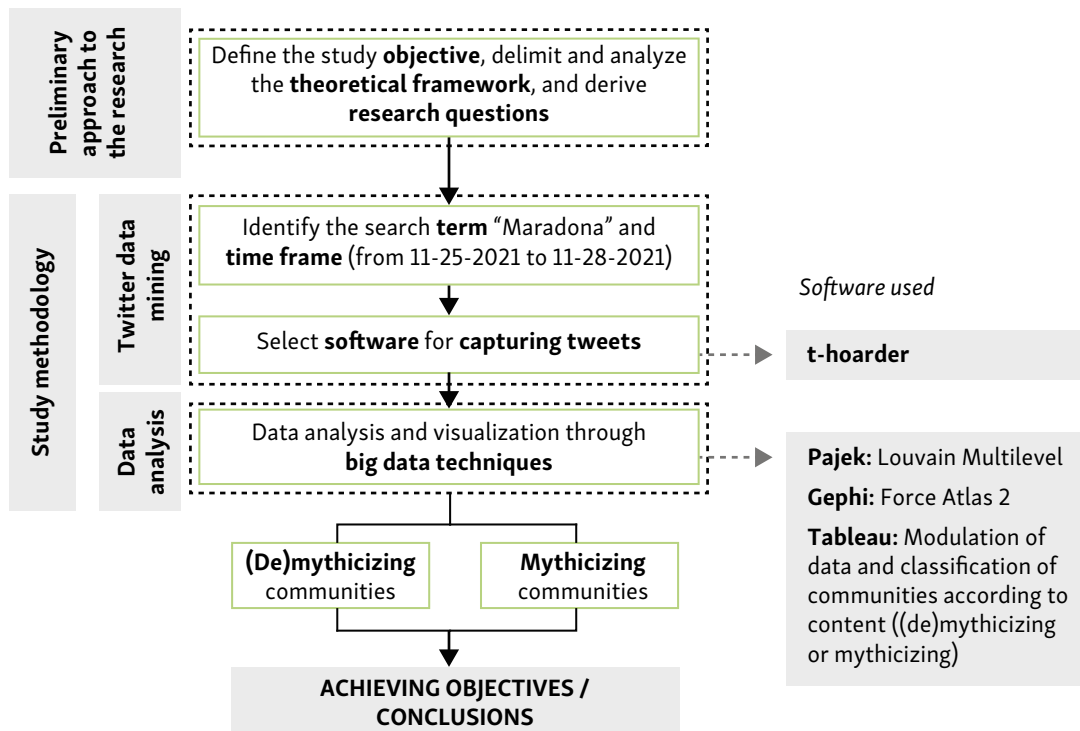


Figure 1. Methodological process applied in the study

Source: Own elaboration.

Thus, each community was isolated to observe their respective leadership according to their degree of entry and the following categorization was obtained for each community: percentage of the total conversation, size, main language, characteristics of the main accounts, and type of (de)mythicizing/mythicizing content.

All this was completed by using Tableau software to perform an analytical data modulation strategy thanks to its ability to assign each author of a tweet to her or his relevant community (Murray, 2013). Thus, a specific dashboard was created to observe the leadership and the tweets with the most impact by the users of each community. This made it easier to visualize intra-community leadership, its typology, and the content of the most successful tweets, classifying the communities into two large groups:

- (De)mythicizing communities: for multiple reasons, they give testimonies against the praise of Maradona or complain about other aspects surrounding his death.
- Mythicizing communities: clusters that actively reinforce the myth of Maradona or offer their condolences with some reference to his contribution in positive terms.

RESULTS

The digital conversation about Maradona

Using the methodological process designed and the algorithms implemented, this study distributes 82.67% of the total nodes captured and 87.94% of the standpoints in communities representative of the digital conversation around Maradona's death. In other words, almost nine out of every 10 impacts on Twitter on the day of his death and the following days are assumed by the system and distributed in communities or clusters, providing a network composed of 1,634,601 nodes and 3,973,508 weighted standpoints, representing a total of 4,509,513 established mentions.

This network is divided into 23 communities, six of which can be classified as (de)mythicizing. The other 17 contain discourse that reinforces mythicizing narratives or arguments (table 1). In total, in quantitative terms, the digital conversation is distributed as follows:

- Six communities (26.79%) concentrate content dedicated to criticize, reproach or vilify Maradona's character, i.e., approximately one out of every four interactions.
- 17 communities (73.21%) condensed the content dedicated to honoring, respecting or praising Maradona's contribution, i.e., almost three out of four impacts.

As for the sample's temporal distribution, the tweet flow is concentrated in the hours following the announcement of the soccer player's death (figure 2). The curve shown by the data reflects an intense and rapid reaction of the Internet community to the news at a global level. The tweets issued and the interactions produced on November 25 and part of November 26 concentrate the bulk of the conversation, which loses momentum as the days go by.

The graphical descriptive representation and caption of the communities is shown in figure 3, and the following information is obtained in graphical terms:

- Weight of each community in quantitative terms: the larger the community, the larger its size in the graphic.
- Degree of centrality in the digital conversation: the greater its geographic centrality, the greater the cohesion of its participants and the greater the degree of potential connection with the rest of the communities, their Internet profiles, and their contents.
- Graphical delimitation of the influence of the main (de)mythicizing (in red) and mythicizing (in black) communities.

Ranking	Cluster ¹	Presence degree	Main language	Characteristics of the main accounts	Content type
1	7	11.78%	Spanish	Argentine Internet users	(De)mythicizing
2	1	9.69%	English	English soccer clubs	Mythicizing
3	2	8.74%	Spanish	Argentine miscellaneous	Mythicizing
4	12	8.08%	Portuguese	Brazilian miscellaneous: soccer clubs, institutional accounts, media, and individuals	Mythicizing
5	5	6.14%	English	Miscellaneous: journalists, celebrities, and the media	Mythicizing
6	6	5.92%	French	Miscellaneous: media and journalists	Mythicizing
7	4	5.02%	Spanish	Argentine miscellaneous	(De)mythicizing
8	17	4.36%	Spanish	Spanish miscellaneous: sportspeople, journalists, and soccer clubs	Mythicizing
9	19	4.2%	Spanish	Mexico miscellaneous	Mythicizing
10	25	4.07%	Spanish	Spanish miscellaneous: journalists, feminists, and individuals	(De)mythicizing
11	22	3.41%	Spanish	Miscellaneous from Colombia and Mexico	Mythicizing
12	29	3.03%	Italian	Miscellaneous from Italy: sportspeople, politicians, individuals, and soccer clubs	Mythicizing
13	23	2.99%	English	Indian politicians and sportspersons	Mythicizing
14	18	2.95%	Spanish	Individuals from Argentina	Mythicizing
15	13	2.87%	English	U.S. media	Mythicizing
16	35	2.8%	Turkish	Journalists and soccer clubs in Turkey	Mythicizing
17	26	2.58%	Spanish	Journalists and opponents in Venezuela	(De)mythicizing
18	27	2.36%	English	Miscellaneous from England and the U.S.: individuals, media, and politicians	Mythicizing
19	3	2.18%	Spanish	Latin American socialist politicians	Mythicizing
20	14	2.04%	Spanish	Miscellaneous: personal accounts and Latin American celebrities	Mythicizing
21	31	1.77%	Spanish	Internet users and journalists in Chile	(De)mythicizing
22	15	1.65%	Spanish	Argentine feminists	(De)mythicizing
23	8	1.36%	English/Spanish	Paraguayan miscellaneous	Mythicizing

Table 1. General distribution of digital conversation

Source: Own elaboration based on Twitter data.

1. The numbers given to each community are provided randomly by the Gephi software and are used to name each of them in this work.

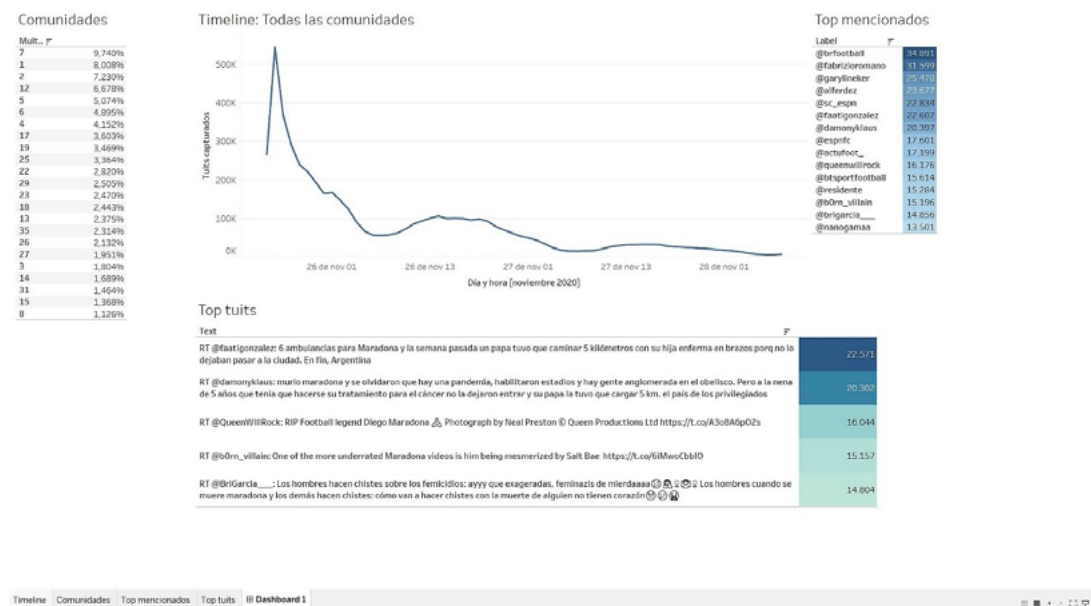


Figure 2. Temporal distribution of tweets of the whole conversation and most outstanding tweets

Source: Own elaboration.

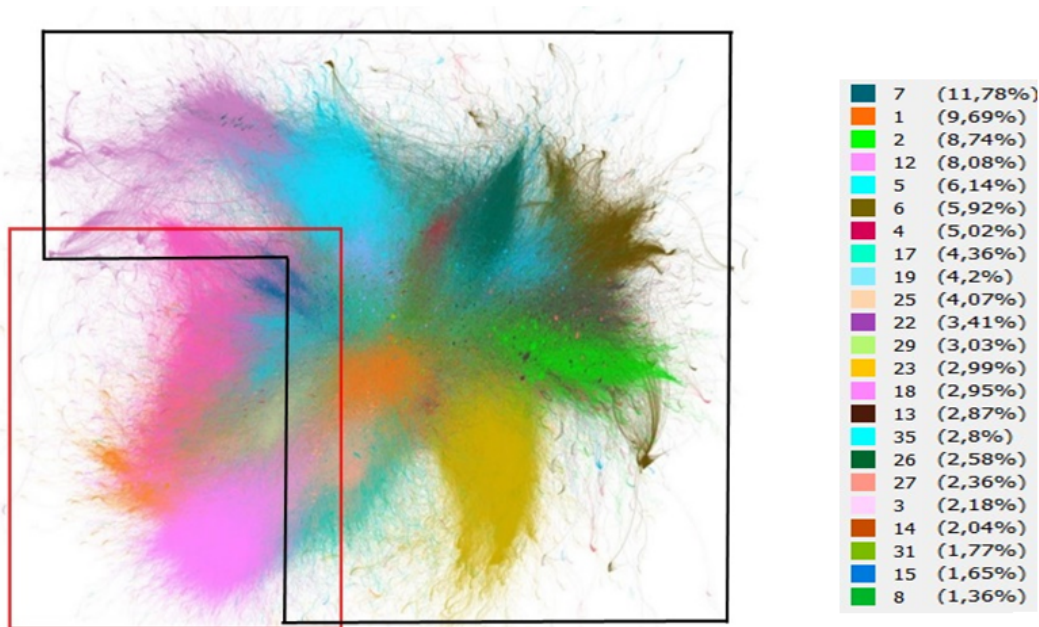


Figure 3. Graphical representation of the digital conversation about Maradona

Own elaboration based on Twitter data.

The communities categorized as mythicizing have a greater presence in quantitative terms and a greater centrality in the graphic (figure 2). Cluster 1 (in orange and second largest in the ranking, located right in the center of the graphic) has the greatest potential for connection with the rest of the clusters: its central location means that some of its nodes or Internet user profiles are more connected with other clusters in a smaller number of steps. Community 1 (figure 3), one of the most outstanding in quantitative terms, is mainly formed by world soccer referents, including media or soccer teams. In this network, Maradona is referred to as “legend”, “one of the great icons”, “genius”, “one of the all-time greats”, etc.

The impacts that address the phenomenon from a (de)mythicizing perspective are mainly located on the periphery of the conversation, which makes it more difficult for the contents emitted there to be potentially perceived or received by the bulk of the Internet users who interact in the digital conversation around the event. The area of influence of most of the mythicizing communities is delimited in figure 2 with a red quadrant (the black quadrant delimits the area of influence of the bulk of the mythicizing communities), which shows their collateral location.

(De)mythicizing and mythicizing communities

In terms of the leading profiles and the most popular contents of each cluster or community, a more interpretative vision was applied, in qualitative terms, of what is happening in this digital conversation.

We detected six clusters (7, 4, 25, 26, 15 and 31 in figure 2) whose main intra-community link is that they share arguments dedicated to criticize Maradona’s figure and the idolatrous reaction of the Internet community around it.

The (de)mythicizing network with the greatest success and size in quantitative terms, both at the general level of the entire conversation and at the specific level, among the collective of voices that reprove Maradona, is built around Internet users such as @faatigonzalet, @damonyklaus, @BriGarcia___, @nanograma and @luchibellante (cluster 7). They are linked by two main characteristics. First, five discrete profiles, in terms of popularity, make up the Top 5. Although they are not recognizable figures for the social mass and none of them has more than 6,000 followers, with three of them having less than 2,000, in the event analyzed they obtain a high degree of notoriety, reflected in the retweets, likes and comments that their content elicits (see tweet at <https://bit.ly/37Wd17P>). The second feature is that, besides criticizing the soccer player, there is a reproach to the Argentine society for the patriotic fervor shown in the face of his death.

Of the other five communities (4, 25, 26 and 15), four are considerably smaller in number and their contents deal with issues related to the explicit criticism of

the Argentine government for organizing the wake in the middle of the COVID-19 pandemic (community 4), and two (25 and 26) criticize Maradona and Argentines from an ideological perspective and with political overtones. There is also an expression of reproach towards the figure of the soccer player from feminist perspectives.

Finally, community 31 combines two visions of the phenomenon: in its Top 5 popular tweets there are arguments against the pro-Maradona patriotic fervor, notes about his “pedophile” and “violent macho” past, as well as tweets that expressly ask not to vilify from a feminist perspective those who mourn the death of their idol. It is the most ambiguous community and, nevertheless, this research places it on the side of the demystifiers for not clearly alluding in positive terms to Maradona’s contribution to society.

The remaining 18 communities are related to each other by contributing content to the digital conversation that either praises Maradona’s character or stands out for the absence of criticism of his figure. Unlike the (de)mythicizing clusters that exclusively use Spanish, a more transnational and multilingual element can be sensed. In fact, there are specific networks in English (communities 1, 5, 25 and 13), Turkish (35), Italian (29), Portuguese (12), or French (6), languages belonging to countries where soccer is the most popular sport.

Thus, the algorithms place profiles that interact in a specific language in the same networks, which coincides with the territorial spheres of influence of the most successful intra-community profiles. The language variable detects groups of Internet users of certain nationalities who interact in a specific language and the algorithms place them alongside their compatriots: Internet users from Turkey, Italy, France, and Brazil. In the case of Spanish, there are specific communities from Argentina, Spain, and Paraguay.

On the other hand, there is a clear difference with respect to the (de)mythicizing communities: the celebrity element in the broadest sense of the concept. Among those who participate there are famous and world-renowned people in various sports disciplines (Rafael Nadal, Pelé, Johan Cruyff, Carlos Saiz...), journalism (Fabrizio Romano, Elizabeth Vernaci, Connie Ansaldi...), politics (Alberto Fernández, Jeremy Corbin, López Obrador, Pedro Sánchez, Evo Morales, Nicolás Maduro...), or the performing arts (Ricky Martin, Juan Diego Botto, Alejandro Sanz...).

Other subjects of an organizational and collective nature with millions of followers on Twitter and great social influence participate in a sort of collective condolences in glorifying terms: soccer clubs (River Plate, F.C Barcelona, Manchester United, Chelsea F.C...), official institutions related to the world of sports (England National Team, Argentine Football Association...), generalist and specialized media accounts (*Bleacher Report Football*, *BT Sport*, *ActuFoot*, *ESPN*, *FOX*...), among others.

Figure 4. Tableau visualization of the main profiles and contents of the largest mythicizing community

Source: Own elaboration based on Twitter data.

The cluster with the greatest weight in this group of mythicizing communities (figure 4) is the aforementioned community 1, where Maradona is discussed in positive terms. This cluster includes accounts related to the world of soccer from very popular institutions worldwide: Bleacher Report Soccer (specialized media), Fabrizio Romano (sports journalist at The Guardian), Manchester United, Chelsea F.C, and Liverpool (soccer clubs).

It should be noted that this set of networks dedicated to praising, applauding, extolling, or simply expressing condolences in collective and positive terms, avoids potential controversies with Internet users or interactions that seek to dishonor them.

Feminists in the digital conversation

Of the six communities categorized as (de)mythicizing, four (7, 25, 31 and 15) have presence of messages related to feminist claims, by mentioning Maradona's past as a victimizer or alluding to the open debate on whether feminisms should participate in smear narratives. They represent 19.28% of the network, i.e., almost one out of every five impacts.

The timeline elaborated for this work superimposes the flow of interactions of these four selected communities and compares them with the rest, inferring that

there is no clear difference in their temporal pattern. I.e., the feminist profiles and messages react together with the rest of the Internet users, and the flow continues the following days with a similar trend for all communities.

Of the 30 most popular tweets in these communities (obtained from the Top 5 tweets with the highest intra-community impact), 11 contain a critical interaction with Maradona in the following terms:

- Allusions to his past as a macho victimizer: child abuser, wife beater (@Nanogamaa), whoremonger, and pederast (@lauralorien; @gigante_roja), violent macho man (@gigante_roja), pedophile (@mixxeria), etc.
- Allusions to the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women (@soyunjueves) and (@lauralorien).
- Allusions to femicides (@BriGarcia___).

Only two tweets (@lahernandez; @AdriBrillo) point to the open debate within feminisms on the relevance of suffering or not their death (community 31) (figure 5).

In the selected clusters, the absence of links redirecting to press articles or feminist blogs with debates on the relevance or not of honoring her figure stands out. Likewise, there are no interactions of referential feminist profiles in the Top 5 of any community, nor is there a plurality of actors (collectives, media, associations, public institutions, etc.). Only two of the 13 tweets cited in this section are issued by women who openly declare themselves feminists in their profiles.

However, as shown in table 2, in the clusters critical of Maradona, women have a greater presence than men (11 women to two men) –always in reference to the most popular profiles. Generally, they are discrete users, who do not have a significant number of followers (only two profiles exceed 10,000). Criticism was focused on the interactions of Internet users from Latin American countries, mainly Argentina and Spain.

Finally, special mention should be made of community 15 (figure 6). According to the analysis of the profiles and messages of its Top 5, it can be inferred that it is the cluster that gathers more women (all the network's leaders), more feminists (at least three of the five allude to feminist messages in their profile, in their featured tweet or in their cover photo), and more messages critical of Maradona (all the tweets), all from a perspective in line with the postulates of critical feminisms. However, the interactions of this community are still relatively marginal, because its presence in the general conversation is practically imperceptible due to its small size (less than 2% compared to the entire digital conversation).

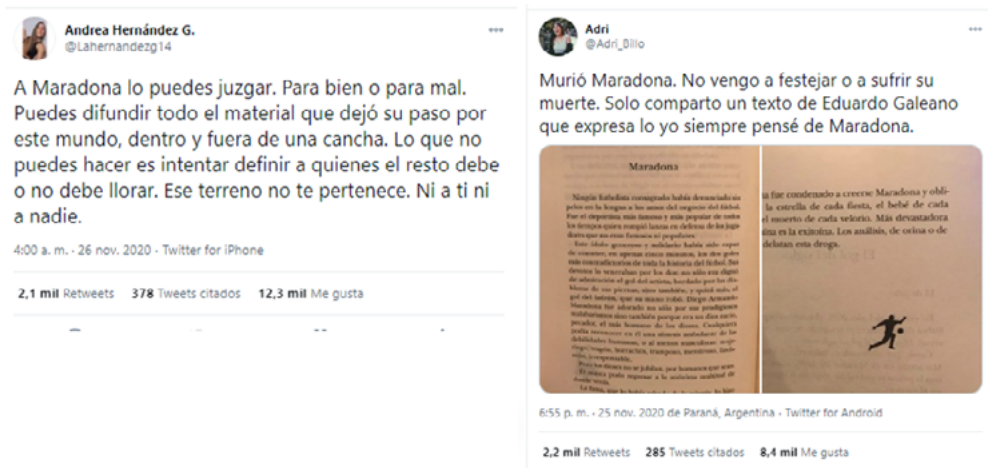


Figure 5. Tweets alluding to the open debate within feminisms (community 31)

Source: Own elaboration based on tweets from @lahernandezg14 and @adri_billo.

User	Gender	Followers number	Concerned tweet	Retweets	Likes	Origin ²
@BriGarcia (7)	Woman	1,442	https://bit.ly/3h661lt	21.1K	62K	Argentina
@Nanogamaa (7)	Man	1,047	https://bit.ly/3nFmvKq	18.3K	77.6K	Argentina
@luchibellante_ (7)	Woman	1,268	https://bit.ly/3rioMx5	11.6K	62.9K	Argentina
@lauralorien (25)	Woman	615	https://bit.ly/38joVlc	1.3K	3.7K	Spain
@_nachonoignaci0 (25)	Man	1,494	https://bit.ly/2KMEIXW	1.3K	12.9K	Spain
@Lahernandezg14 (31)	Woman	7,300	https://bit.ly/3nCIQbo	2.1K	12.3K	Chile
@Adri_Brillo (31)	Woman	235	https://bit.ly/3padadH	2.2K	8.4K	Argentina
@gigante_roja (31)	Woman	6,307	https://bit.ly/2KMD6BV	1.4K	4.8K	Chile
@soyunjueves (15)	Woman	355	https://bit.ly/2j777at	14.3K	86.8K	-
@rimeldemiel (15)	Woman	10,700	https://bit.ly/3nFL2ic	1.1K	7.3K	-
@mixxeria (15)	Woman	23,000	https://bit.ly/38fjlpW	612	4.1K	-
@windymercury (15)	Woman	5,109	https://bit.ly/3aAbojJ	521	6.8K	-
@esprovisional (15)	Woman	43	https://bit.ly/3at2wut	721	1.9K	Mexico

Table 2. Most popular critical interactions in the controversy over Maradona’s figure

Source: Own elaboration based on Twitter data.

2. In some profiles the origin cannot be identified.



Figure 6. Top tweets from the community 15

Source: Own elaboration based on tweets from @soyunjueves, @rimeldemiel, @richieofarrill_ and @mixxeria.

CONCLUSIONS

As evidenced by the case examined, the digital sphere hosts different ways of looking at the same subject, which makes it possible to approach the digital conversation as a dialogue, and not necessarily as a battle or competition between two confronted parties, with one winning and one losing faction.

In this regard, this paper shows that Twitter is an appropriate space to observe the social and cultural process of mythicizing public figures, in addition to representing a platform that reflects the transience of relevant events in history and their transient nature, an issue that is consistent with one of the main characteristics of contemporary digital society.

In the digital conversation analyzed, most of the time the focus is on glorifying the figure of one of the most important figures in soccer history. Three out of four interactions are produced to honor him or to offer a global condolence in positive terms, without any hint of criticism towards his past as a victimizer.

However, the group of (de)mythicizing voices focused on criticizing the soccer player has a considerable presence, with more than 25% of interactions. I.e., one out of every four inputs on Twitter is made in terms of reproach towards Maradona and the community that glorifies him, with the group that obtains the greatest presence

being the one that focuses its criticism from postulates related to feminisms. In this regard, in accordance with the initial hypothesis, this study corroborates that feminist digital activism serves to fuel the controversy about the figure of the soccer player and to actively participate in the deconstruction of the myth.

Feminist Internet users are in a clear minority from a quantitative perspective. However, this participation from the margins has a clear objective of intentionally re-signifying the symbol of an honored and glorified soccer player all over the world. This fact of moving away from the majorities is, in itself, a daring act. Namely, the (de)mythicizing alternative implies in the case studied a greater effort for users, in view of the preeminence in social networks of the so-called bandwagon effect, or tendency to join the majority (Sepúlveda-Acevedo & Valderrama-Riquelme, 2014).

The mere presence of feminist messages –and their clear leadership among the (de)mythicizing voices– contributes to overcome the risk of silence or omission to which opinions contrary to the mythologized vision of Maradona could be condemned; they also are a precise starting point in one of the narratives around the representation in permanent construction of Maradona, as well as a counterpoint to the Maradona myth, a legendary archetype reminiscent of what the American anthropologist Joseph Campbell (1949) called the monomyth or hero's journey.

In short, Twitter's capacity to generate controversy or debate, whether or not in terms of (de)mythicizing, would be demonstrated in this case study as advantageous for social movements that, like feminism, involve active minorities in certain digital spheres. As in previous feminist waves, contemporary feminism is constituted as a minority of action, especially in digital, rather than offline, spaces. Thus, from this and other public controversies, feminisms are defined in social and political terms in the digital agora.

Despite these limitations, this case study provides results to reflect on the contribution of the digital sphere to the development of contemporary social movements, in this case feminism. As a space for horizontal expression and communication, despite being a channel conditioned by certain dialogic dynamics, Twitter is a communicative medium that contributes to the characterization of the contemporary women's movement, as well as to its visibility in terms of its digital conversation with society, which is clearly an advance for the movement in communicative and epistemological terms.

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