Artivism and NGO: Relationship between image and 'engagement' in Instagram

Artivismo y ONG: Relación entre imagen y «engagement» en Instagram

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ABSTRACT

Due to the increasing importance of acquiring technological tools in communication strategies, and while taking into account that non-Governmental Organizations (NGO) use Instagram as a potential artivist tool to disseminate their initiatives and needs, the present article aims to investigate the form and content of photographs published on Instagram during 2017 by the 20 most relevant NGOs at the international level. Specifically, we study the choice of formal elements, such as the design and editing, the intended purpose and feeling of the message transmitted in the photographs, as well as the type of actor or actors in the images (including their role, number, gesture, sex and age). In addition, we study the use and the engagement generated by children's images. Content analysis, non-parametric statistical analysis with Chi-square test and variance analysis (ANOVA) are used as methodologies. The results of the study show how prototypical images used by NGOs (young children enjoying the benefits of aid with positive appearance and gestures) present content and formats that do not correspond to the type of image that generates more engagement from the target audience.

RESUMEN

Debido a la creciente importancia que adquieren las herramientas tecnológicas en las estrategias de comunicación, y teniendo en cuenta que las Organizaciones no Gubernamentales (ONG) utilizan Instagram como una herramienta con potencial artivista para difundir sus iniciativas y necesidades, el presente artículo tiene como objetivo investigar la forma y el contenido de las fotografías publicadas en esta red social a lo largo del año 2017 por las 20 ONG más relevantes a nivel internacional. En concreto, se estudia la elección de elementos formales, como el tipo de plano o la edición, la finalidad del mensaje que se quiere trasladar o el sentimiento transmitido en las fotografías, así como el tipo de actor o actores protagonistas de las imágenes (rol, número, gesto, sexo y edad). Además, se estudia el «engagement» generado por las fotografías y el uso que se hace en ellas de la figura del niño. Se utiliza como metodología el análisis de contenido, el análisis estadístico no paramétrico con prueba de Chi-cuadrado y el análisis de varianzas (ANOVA). Los resultados del estudio muestran cómo la imagen prototípica que usan las ONG –receptor de la ayuda menor de edad, disfrutando de los beneficios de esta ayuda y con gesto positivo– presenta un contenido y un formato que no se corresponden con el tipo de imagen que más «engagement» genera entre los usuarios y seguidores.

1. Introduction and status of the issue

For decades, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have been the primary vehicles from which humanitarian projects supporting the most disadvantaged groups have been carried out. The United Nations Organization (UN) has the most detailed official record of the number of NGOs. As of February 2017, the list had 13,137 organizations, with more than half (6,625) based in Africa (United Nations: Department of Economics and Social Affairs, 2014). When describing their fields of activity, the NGOs describe themselves as operating in the economic and social sphere (6,528), sustainable development (4,686), social development (4,686) and women-related issues (3,936). Other non-official sources, such as the International Forum of National NGO Platforms, (International Forum of National NGOs, 2012) estimates that there are 10 million non-governmental organizations around the world of all sizes and activities and equal to the fifth largest economy in the world – which provides an idea of its breadth and depth.

The term "non-governmental organization" was used in 1945 in Article 71, Chapter 10 of the United Nations Charter ((International Forum of National NGO Platforms FIP, 2012) with the purpose of regulating the concept of a non-profit organization independent of the state, and whose historical function developed as world-wide charitable and assistance associations, but without a legal framework that protected them. One of the main consequences of the process of separating them from states' powers is that, in most cases, they did not have a truly effective voice for their work, for raising funds for their job beyond limited promotional activities, and for the invaluable support from private patrons with an awareness of helping others.

Today, all these organizations are faced with the challenge of developing effective communication methods that help mobilize citizens by engaging them in their social assistance projects. To this end, NGOs seek strategies that allow them to denounce social injustice and raise awareness of unmet humanitarian needs, as well as to communicate and disseminate the benefits of their projects and their activities.

In this regard, new technologies have modified ways of communicating (Aladro, 2011) by providing empowering and facilitating advocacy methods (Soengas-Pérez & Assif, 2017; González-Lizárraga, Becerra-Traver, & Yanez-Díaz, 2016; Cmeciu & Coman, 2016). Social networks, in particular, have provided NGOs with tools not only for social and group cohesion (Blight, Ruppel, & Schoenbauer, 2017), but also for the communication and dissemination with a still fully unknown and unrealized power (Byrne, 2010). The NGO, Save the Children Fund, for example, was able to reach more than 10 million people through Twitter in 2010 (Cooper, 2011) due to, among other factors, the impact of the earthquake in Haiti, dubbed the "First Disaster on Twitter". For example, 2.3 million tweets with the words "Haiti" or "Red Cross" were published in just three days (Cooper, 2014) during the event. Similarly, during Hurricane Sandy, 10 disaster photos per second were uploaded to Instagram and a total of 1.3 million photos were shared on the platform under the same hashtag (Taylor, 2012).

Today, with limited human resources and at hardly any cost, a large number of NGOs make use of most of the major social networks such as Twitter, YouTube, Facebook, Instagram and Flickr, because they are a powerful showcase of unlimited scope to show their work.

The present research focuses on one of them (Instagram) because of its increasing relevance and notoriety, and for the interest of its main characteristic; the almost exclusive use of artistic images as a communicative tool.

Instagram is the social network that has grown the most in recent years. In September 2017, it reached 800 million users according to the latest data according to the company itself (Instagram for Business, 2017). 59% of users are between 18 and 29 years old, 33% are between 30 and 49. 60% have higher academic studies, and 63%, almost one in three, earn more than $50,000 per year, an important factor for any NGO (Greenwood, Perrin, & Duggan, 2016).

As mentioned above, its distinctive element, and perhaps one of the reasons for this increasingly widespread use, is the use of image as the main communicative tool (Lee & al., 2015). This is especially relevant because, as previous research has shown, an image has a communicative power that is different from the written word (and much more so when present in other social networks such as Twitter). For example, Knobloch and others (2003) showed how information that incorporates images receives more attention from recipients, is better understood, and generates better memory. Likewise, because viewers tend to assume that images are a true reflection of reality, they give greater credibility to the messages, since a large part of the public tends to question information less when it is presented with images (Messaris & Abraham, 2001).

On the other hand, the possibilities of photographic editing offered by the platform allow all users to make artistic decisions that increase and enhance both the beauty and the impact of the images, such as, how to frame the subject, which filters to select, etc. Thus, it could be argued that Instagram becomes a means in which a demo-

cratization of photographic art takes place (Millard, 2016). Thus, from this perspective, NGOs with a clear intention of promoting social mobilization through social networks can consider contemporary "artivism" as a new tool at their disposal. Felshin (1995) defines the term "artivism" as the conjunction between the world of art and political and social activism that also participates in the community in which it is directed (for research related to artivism, see Danko, 2018, and Delgado, 2013). Instagram not only allows artistic photography to be used in the service of activism, but also because of the interactivity of social networks, it allows participation (even as protagonist) in community dialogue. In fact, by mobilizing the use of Instagram, practically all of the main characteristics of artivism can be found: procedural forms and methods for its implementation, denouncing social problems, encouraging participant self-reflection, creating and promoting a social conscience, seeking the public manifestation of the issue, expanding on-going projects, using available public sites, using collaborative methods, and wielding advertising methods to exhibit their own work (Santos, 2015).

This research focuses, therefore, on NGOs use of the artivist style on Instagram. In other words, through content analysis, it aims to study how NGOs use photographic images to communicate, denounce, provoke reflect, and create social awareness on Instagram. Questions to be answered include: What types of images are used? Are they focused on people, and, within that question, is there a greater presence of volunteers or aid recipients? To what extent and under what circumstances are children used for social awareness campaigns? What feelings are conveyed in the image?

> NGOs have found Instagram to be a new tool (with artistic possibilities) to communicate and mobilize their audiences. The present study analyses for the first time the content and format of the images uploaded by NGOs and Instagram users' engagement. The results of this content analysis show that the most used images (an underage aid recipient with positive gesture enjoying the benefits of aid) is not what generates greater engagement in Instagram users and followers.

ed in the image? Do they rely on optimistic messages to arouse the conscience, or on the contrary, do they choose to show the realities of pain, suffering and urgency? Are these messages mainly used to offer congratulations for work well done, or as a wake-up call for the conscience?

This research also intends to study the extent to which each of the mentioned variables (independently or combined) generates greater "engagement" (as measured by the number of "likes" and comments) from the recipients, and therefore, greater communicative impact.

Thus, the research has the following objectives:

• Describe in a general way the main variables involved in the published images (type of actors employed, feeling transmitted in the photographs, etc.).

• Analyze the use of different variables depending on the purpose of the communicated message.

• Study the use of children in the photographs according to the different variables.

• Analyze and measure the engagement associated with each of the variables.

• Establish what the 'typical image' published by the NGOs studied looks like.

• Check if the 'typical image' coincides with the image model that generates the most engagement on Instagram.

From the objectives presented above, the following research questions arise:

• Are there common characteristics in the photographs published by the NGOs in terms of the purpose of the message to be disseminated?

How are children used in the published photographs? Is there any relationship between the purpose of photography and the fact that children appear in them?

• Do NGOs achieve their objectives from the published photographs? Does the most used type of image generate the most engagement?

2. Material and methods

In order to study the type of images used by NGOs and how they are used, a content analysis was carried out by Neuendorf (2002), for studies with a similar methodology (Berganza & del-Hoyo, 2006; Muñiz, Igartua, & Otero, 2006). To select the study sample, the 20 most relevant NGOs for 2017 at the international level were identified through NGO Advisor (NGO Advisor, 2018). Once identified, NGOs with an international profile in Instagram were found and all the photographs published in 2017 by each of these NGOs were downloaded. The total number of photographs obtained was 2,933. From this total, a random sample of 340 photographs was selected (the N necessary for a 5% margin of error and a confidence level of 95% according to the statistical equation for population proportions).

The data form used to perform the content analysis contained four fundamental parts. Although the study focused on what the image conveyed, when it was considered necessary, the text that accompanied each photograph was used to contextualize or to provide data not sufficiently made clear by the image alone (i.e., origin of the protagonists, their age, circumstances reflected in the message, etc.).

Although the comments published by the users in each of the photographs were used for the calculation of engagement, the content of these comments was not taken into account in this investigation.

• For each photograph, formal features and location data related to the photograph were analyzed, including the style of the image, and whether it was taken outdoors or indoors; if taken indoors, what type of indoor space.

• Analysis of message purpose: The photographs were classified from three points of view; first, depending on the purpose of the aid required (either a long-term project or an emergency call for a natural catastrophe); second, according to the intention of the message (I.e., whether the message seeks to promote and disseminate general activities of the NGO, provide examples of currently active aid and the actual results of donations, or the urgent reminder of uncompleted humanitarian work for which specific support had earlier been requested); third, whether the message is positive (with signs of happiness, active aid or ongoing projects), negative (wounds, pain, distress, concern for or the consequences of war, famines and natural disasters) or neutral (depending on the type of sentiment shown in the image).

• Analysis of the actors: the types of people (aid recipients or cooperators) that appeared in the images, in what number, and separately, their age, sex, and the aid recipient's gesture on one hand, and cooperators on the other, were studied independently. For a deeper study, an additional analysis was performed when children or babies appeared in the photographs. Although the Convention on the Rights of the Child is recognized for any minor under 18 (UNICEF Spanish Committee, 2006), for this research, a 'child' was identified as only to what is commonly recognized as a baby or child, and not adolescents or young people.

• Analysis of the artistic component: images were identified when some type of editing (i.e. cropping, filters, etc.) software was used through Instagram, or if they appeared unaltered.

• Engagement analysis: the "likes" and the comments of each photograph were codified for later analysis of the followers' engagement (n° likes +n° comments)/N°followers * 1.000) (Laurence, 2017) achieved by each.

Once the data collected was encrypted, they were analyzed with the SPSS program, Ver. 24. For the subsequent data study, first, a descriptive analysis was carried out (frequency tables) and later, the possible relationships between the different variables were analyzed through contingency tables using a non-parametric statistical analysis with a Chi-square test and by variance analysis (ANOVA).

3. Analysis and results

3.1. Descriptive results

The following shows the frequency table of the analyzed variables (Table 1).

Regarding the artistic component, it was found that most of the photos analyzed (61.7%) had undergone some kind of editing, which supports the hypothesis that the NGOs are concerned with the aesthetic and artistic side of the images they share on the platform.

As for the image type, the mid-shot predominates (45.7%), followed by the wide-shot (33.7%) and the close-up (20.6%). When including the close-up and mid-shot together (for which differentiation in many cases does not correspond to a specific intention on the part of the photographer, but simply with a camera shot only slightly more or less open), it is concluded that essentially two out of three photographs use a close-up image to establish an identification between the Instagram user and the aid recipient.

As for the purpose of the message, in almost half of the analyzed posts, 43.8% were chosen to show examples and

benefits of active support. Examples of such messages are images showing construction of water wells, minors attending school class, environmental projects, and job training programs. In a smaller percentage (26.4%), users are shown the humanitarian work to be done. In almost a third of the cases, the purpose was advertising and broadcasting campaigns (29.8%), although sometimes without identifying specific projects.

When focusing on the analysis of feelings shown in the photographs, only 15.6% of the images transmit a negative feeling, that is, one that shows pain, anguish, anxiety, worry or wounds caused by man or natural disasters. However, in 68.8% of the images, there is a message of positive sentiment with hopeful, smiling or obviously happy faces of cooperation and of aid recipients with graphic evidence of the collaborative results. Finally, due to the inability to choose openly bet-

Table 1. Frequency and percentage of the analyzed variables		
Variable	Count	Percentage
Image Type		
Wide Shot	110	33.7
Mid-Shot	149	45.7
Close-up	67	20.6
Purpose of the message		
NGO Promotion	98	29.8
Dissemination of activities	144	43.8
Dissemination of needs	87	26.4
Image feeling		
Negative	53	15.6
Neutral	53	15.6
Positive	234	68.8
Type of actors present in the image (Profile of the characters, not their number)		
Cooperators	63	21.9
Aid receivers	198	68.8
Receivers and Cooperators	27	9.4
Composition of actors (Profile and number)		
More than one aid receiver	84	29.3
More than one cooperator	24	8.4
Aid receivers and cooperators	25	8.7
One receiver	116	40.4
One cooperator	38	13.2
Gender of the aid receiver(s)		
Both	55	24.3
Male	51	22.6
Female	110	48.7
Unidentified	10	4.4
Aid receiver's gesture		
Negative	35	15.4
Positive	102	44.9
Neutral	75	33.0
Non-identifiable	15	6.6
Edited Photo		
No	128	38.3
Yes	206	61.7
Child aid-receiver		
No	80	35.6
Yes	145	64.4
Age of the aid-receiver		
Baby or child	21	9.2
Adolescent/Youth	145	63.6
Middle-aged	54	23.7
Unidentified	3	1.3
Elderly	5	2.2

ween a positive or negative sentiment, 15.6% of the images were determined to possess a "neutral" feeling, Thus, based on in the aid recipients' gestures, it was determined that the feeling of happiness dominates (44.9%) versus neutral expressions (33%) and feelings of pain/suffering (15.4%).

Also very relevant is the type of actors NGOs chose to use in their messages and in the design of the photographs. In a majority of cases (68.8%), only the aid receiver appears, while cooperators or volunteers appear in 21.9%, and in less than one in ten (9.4%), both are present in the image.

As for the analysis of the aid recipient's gender, half are girls/women (48.7%), while in a noticeable disproportion, males appeared in 22.6%, and in the remaining 24.3% of the images, both men and women appear.

In regards to their age, 63.6% of the aid recipients shown were either a baby or a child, and 9.2% are young or adolescent. The elderly barely amount to 2.2% of the posts, and the remaining 23.7% were middle-aged individuals.

As such, contingency tables were used and a non-parametric statistical analysis was performed using the Chi-square test in order to identify possible dependency relationships between the analyzed variables.

3.2. Analysis of the photographs according to the purpose of the message

Regarding the relationship between the image type used and the intentionality of the message, the data showed a significant dependency ratio ($x^2(4)=14.988$, $p=0.005$). Although the close-up is the type of framing that appears less (20%), its use increases to 31.8% when the NGO wants to show the viewer to what extent help is necessary by centering in a specific face.

Even more relevant are the differences ($x^2(4)=125.416$, $p<0.001$) relating to the sentiment and the intentionality of the published message. It is interesting to see how positive sentiment is most used by NGOs (80.6%) along with their activities and benefits (86.1%). However, when decrying the needs and work needed, the feeling most represented is negative (51.7%) versus neutral (18.4%) and positive (29%).

As for the differences in the type of actors present in the image depending on the purpose of the message, there were significant differences found ($x^2(4)=79.31$, $p<0.001$). In general terms, the central focus of the photographs is the aid recipient (69.1%), but the proportion is not uniform. While they are mainly used to raise awareness about the aid needed (97%) and the activities and benefits provided need to be promoted (68.7%), when promoting the NGO itself, they prefer to give prominence to the cooperators (51.3%) instead of the recipients (44.9%).

Significant differences were found when the analysis ($x^2(8)=80.862$, $p<0.001$) focused not only on the type, but also on the number of actors employed. One can see a tendency to personalize a single subject (in 53.4% of the cases by either a recipient or an aid provider), compared to an image of more than one cooperator, more than one receiver, or both categories (46.6%). Despite the fact that the differences are not as pronounced as in the previous ones, the same pattern is apparent: the beneficiaries of aid are used, in this case alone, when it is necessary to raise awareness about the need for aid. In this way, in over half of the cases (58.6%), the urgency of the needed aid is shown as being individualized toward the receiving person.

Regarding the relationship between the age of the recipient and the purpose of the disseminated message, it is significant ($x^2(8)=21.388$, $p<0.01$) that, despite the fact that the figure of the child is present in the majority of all types of messages (63.1%), it is at the time of requesting help and collaboration when the child is the protagonist to a greater extent (76.8%). If the age range includes youths and adolescents, the percentage rises to almost 9 out of 10 (85.5%) compared to middle-aged recipients (8.7%). Babies and children are also in the majority of the disseminated images that represent activities and project results (62.6%). Only when the message is related to the branding of the NGO do middle-aged adults (39%) appear most prominently. Finally, it is striking how seniors do not have a prominent presence in any form of NGO communication, never exceeding 3% in any message type on Instagram.

As for the gestures of the receiver, significant differences were also found depending on the purpose of the message (^{2}, $p<0.001$). In particular, the positive gestures (happiness, smiles) are most present and have a greater role in the messages destined to promote the NGO (42.5%) and the dissemination of activities and benefits (59.1%). The only message in which gestures of pain have a majority presence is the urgent announcement for help (40.6%) where only 21% of the actors are cheerful.

3.3. Analysis of the figure of the child in NGO communication on Instagram

When analyzing the use of images in which children appear, there are also differences depending on different variables. For example, with regard to the purpose of the message and the appearance of minors, the results show a significant difference ($x^2(2)=14.750$, $p<0.005$). When the objective of the published photograph is to make the NGO and its brand known, a child appears in only 42.55% of the images. However, when publicizing specific activities as well as the activity's results and highlighting the need for resources for different initiatives or projects, the child appears in 62.6% and 79.1%, respectively.

At the same time, the differences found in function of the protagonist's gesture were also significant ($x^2(3)=8.564$, $p<0.05$). Most children display a negative gesture (pain, suffering, sadness, etc. in 77.1% of the cases) or positive (smiling, playing, etc. in 69.6%). The figure of the minor does not appear as frequently (52.1%) when the protagonist presents a neutral gesture in the published image.

However, when analyzing the presence of children depending on the sentiment of the image, no significant differences were found ($x^2(2)=2.564$, $p=0.278$). In other words, the presence of children is majoritarian regardless of whether the transmitted sentiment is negative (74%), positive (61.6%) or neutral (62.1%). Regarding the appearance of minors according to the plane used, significant differences appeared ($x^2(2)=12.375$, $p=0.005$).

While children appear in equal measure as adults (50%) in wide-shot images, children are present in the majority of mid-shots (67%), but are especially present in close-up images (80.9%).

Regarding gender, the results showed that an exclusively female presence was much higher (70.5%) in those images using adults than in those with minors only (37,9%) (x^2(3)=24.937, p<0.001). From this it can be concluded that middle-aged and elderly men are under-represented in the photographs used by NGOs.

3.4. Analysis of the differences in the "engagement" of the photographs

To calculate the effect of each of the photographs published in each account of the NGOs studied, the "engagement" of each of the photographs was calculated to check whether there were significant relationships between the content of the images and their engagement. To determine the statistical significance among the different variables, a one-way ANOVA model (Tobergte & Curtis, 2013) was used.

When the engagement of the images was analyzed according to the purpose of the message, the ANOVA results showed significant differences (F(3)=7.51, p<0.001). Specifically, the images aimed at promoting the NGO generated more engagement (M=28.37, DT=024.55) than those in which the activities and their benefits are shown (M=18.61, DT=13.74) and those whose purpose is to announce urgent humanitarian and social needs (M=19.21, DT=11.04).

In turn, the results showed significant differences in the engagement depending on the emotion transmitted by the image (F(2)=4.376, p<0.05). When the photograph showed a negative feeling, the engagement (M=15.59, DT=8.75) was less than when the feeling of the photograph was positive (M=23.44, DT=18.81) or neutral (M=21.24, DT=18.02).

In the same way, significant differences were also found in the engagement depending on the type of actors that appeared in the image (F(4)=13.51, p<0.001). The images starring cooperators showed much higher engagement (M=32.90, DT=24.05) than those images in which the protagonists were the recipients of the aid (M=17.03, DT=11.86) or in which receivers appeared with cooperators (M=19.55, DT=21.59).

Significant differences were also found (F(5)=12.47, p<0.001) in engagement depending on the age of the aid recipient. Middle-aged people engaged the most (M=21.07, DT=17.24) followed by children (M=17.20, DT=11.14), while seniors generated the least engagement (M=6.84, DT=4.78).

The aid receiver's gesture in the images also significantly affected "engagement" (F(4)=17.33, p<0.001). When the protagonist of the image showed a positive gesture, the engagement was higher (M=20.07, DT=14.94) than when the person showed a negative (M=13.20, DT=5.26) or neutral gesture (M=13.98, DT=9.13).

On the other hand, no significant differences were found depending on the engagement and image type (F(3)=2.12, p=0.96), whether the images are close-ups (M=22.60, DT=16.82), mid-shots (M=23.86, DT=18.70) or wide-shot images (M=18.46, FT=16.81).

Likewise, when checking whether the presence of aid recipients as individuals or in groups had a different effect, no significant differences were found (F (1)=0.99, p=0.32). The same result was found whether the cooperator appeared individually or in a group (F (1)=0.002, p=0.963).

> It is precisely this commitment to the image with all the possibilities involved in editing, the selection of one type of message or another, the composition of the different actors that appear in it, the choices of a positive or negative feeling when transmitting, and the inclusion of filters, graphic details and other similar effects, which allows Instagram to be considered a platform from which to perform artivism.

4. Discussion and conclusions

Social networks represent a platform for NGOs from which to mobilize society and disseminate information about the work they do. Of all these social networks, Instagram, because of its rapid growth and the prominence it bestows on the artistic image, offers different characteristics from all other social networks.

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of message or another, the composition of the different actors that appear in it, the choices of a positive or negative feeling when transmitting, and the inclusion of filters, graphic details and other similar effects, which allows Instagram to be considered a platform from which to perform artivism.

And that is what this research aims to analyze: to see what this new form of artivism is and to what use NGOs make with it. As a starting point, it can be concluded that the typical post of an NGO in Instagram is that of an image of a possible aid recipient, usually in childhood, alone and female, posing in front of the camera in a mid- or close-up shot with a hopeful or at least neutral gesture, and as an example of the social activities and benefits that this NGO carries out while attempting to convey a positive feeling. In 62% of the cases, the image has some kind of editing.

This recourse of displaying only one aid recipient (usually accompanied by a text where personal data of the protagonist is provided) in a mid- or close-up image is probably due to the purpose of increasing the emotional burden of the message, and consequently, its efficiency. This strategy is in line with the theory known as the "arithmetic of compassion", which states that the fewer the number of aid recipients appearing, the greater the intentions and the satisfaction of donating and providing aid (Slovic & Slovic, 2015).

But, even more significant than this first analysis and all the conclusions derived from it are the results obtained by combining some of these variables, allowing for a more precise idea of the use of photographs by the NGOs.

For example, when analyzing the presence of different characteristics according to the communicative purpose of the image, it can be concluded that when the purpose is to raise awareness in the Instagram follower for the need to help, the NGOs try to transmit a negative feeling, showing mainly the potential aid receivers, usually alone, in a mid- or close-up image, with a gesture of distress or concern. However, when its purpose is to promote the NGO or show the benefits of a project, a positive feeling prevails. Finally, the only type of message that focuses on the cooperators is when the purpose is to promote the NGO.

On the other hand, when analyzing the appearance of the figure of the child in the images, it can be concluded that their presence occurs especially in those messages destined to show the need and the benefits of the aid (and less in the messages intended to promote the NGO). In addition, they usually appear in close-up and mid-shots showing an emotional expression on their faces, either positive or negative.

But does this type of pattern have any direct consequences in the number of 'likes' and comments received (indicators commonly used to evaluate the possible effectiveness of the message emitted) among Instagram users?

When engagement was analyzed according to the different characteristics of the images, the results showed that the type of image generating greater engagement was be composed of a middle-aged NGO cooperator or volunteer who, independent of the image type used, shows a smiling gesture in order to promote the NGO itself.

As a result, it can be concluded that, surprisingly, the 'type' image most used by NGOs is not the one that generates more engagement. It can be deduced that the traditional image so often used by NGOs, a recipient of help in an attitude of distress or suffering, does not generate as an intense interaction between Instagram users as do their own cooperators/workers in the promotion of the NGO. Whether provoking the phenomenon of "compassion fatigue" (Chouliaraki, 2006) or excessive information, the truth is that the followers of Instagram show greater involvement in positive messages and direct action.

This disconnect between what is done and what works to provoke engagement can be one of the reasons that explain why the engagement average of the photographs uploaded by NGOs (2.18% according to the data analyzed in the sample) is inferior to the general average among Instagram users (between 3% and 6%) (Laurence, 2017).

Finally, future research should establish what the relationship is between the interactions, or the engagement, in Instagram and the subsequent economic collaborations with humanitarian projects by the users – which is perhaps the main purpose of their presence in social networks.

Funding agency

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