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AND MARKETING MIX

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IROCAMM.
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The communication of social causes in times of Instagram. An analysis of its effect on society

La comunicación de las causas sociales en tiempos de Instagram. Un análisis de su efecto en la sociedad

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Abstract

Social networks are configured as a key tool in the marketing and communication policies of non-governmental organizations (NGOs). It is also a very useful medium for anyone who wants to inform and raise awareness in society about a specific problem with the intention of giving it visibility. This research seeks to analyze the power of social networks, specifically Instagram, as a communication tool in campaigns with a social cause. More specifically, the object of this work is Pablo Ráez, a young leukemia patient who used the RRSS as a communication channel to engage all users of its fight against the disease, implementing a social communication campaign called "Challenge one million" on the importance of donating bone marrow.

The objectives of this research are to analyze the communication made on Instagram during this campaign and the effect it had on society. The methodology used has been, on the one hand, content analysis and, on the other, the survey. Regarding the results, noting that the use of shocking images of their disease are those that have greater prominence, as well as motivational and positive nature of its publications despite the severity of their illness.

Keywords

Communication; communication with cause; non-profit marketing; non-governmental organizations; Instagram

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Resumen

Las redes sociales se configuran como una herramienta clave en las políticas de marketing y comunicación de las organizaciones no gubernamentales (ONGs) siendo también un medio muy útil para cualquier persona que quiera informar y concienciar a la sociedad sobre un problema determinado con la intención de darle visibilidad. Esta investigación busca analizar el poder de las redes sociales, concretamente Instagram, como herramienta comunicativa en campañas con causa social. Más específicamente, el objeto de este trabajo es Pablo Ráez, un joven enfermo de leucemia que empleó las RRSS como canal de comunicación para hacer partícipes a todos los usuarios de su lucha contra la enfermedad implementando una campaña de comunicación social denominada "Reto un millón" sobre la importancia de donar médula ósea.

Los objetivos de esta investigación son analizar la comunicación realizada en Instagram durante esta campaña y el efecto que tuvo en la sociedad. La metodología utilizada ha sido, por un lado, el análisis de contenido y, por otro, la encuesta.

En relación a los resultados, destacar que el uso de imágenes impactantes de su enfermedad son las que mayor protagonismo tienen, así como el carácter motivacional y positivo de sus publicaciones a pesar de la gravedad de su enfermedad.

Palabras clave

Comunicación; comunicación con causa; marketing no lucrativo; organizaciones no gubernamentales; Instagram.

1. Introduction

The development of new information and communication technologies has been a turning point for companies in the way they communicate with their audiences (Marín and Lasso de la Vega, 2017), and the use of the Internet and its derived tools in their communication strategies has become widespread. The digital revolution brought about by the information age has allowed the emergence of new media that, with the Internet as the maximum exponent of these advances and, more specifically, the possibilities offered by Web 2.0, have changed the traditional communication paradigms (Marín, 2019; García and Zugasti, 2018; Stieglitz and Dan-Xuan, 2012) and are configured as a key tool in the marketing and communication policies of organizations. The appearance of the web 2.0 offers a wide range of possibilities for entities of any type to transmit their messages in a more effective way than with the so-called traditional media. Social networks are configured as links between brands and their consumers, with whom they establish more direct conversations and relationships (Bort, García and Martín, 2011).

In the words of Perez and Luque (2018:257) "social media has changed the way consumers buy, think and act" and, in this process, the consumer has an active role becoming the center of marketing and communication strategies of companies and brands, increasingly focused on social media actions (Stelzner, 2019; Martinez, Segarra and Monserrat, 2018). The emergence of web 2.0 and the hegemony of social networks in today's world has revolutionized the way organizations communicate, integrating them in a decisive way in their communication strategies (Jiménez-Marín, Elías Zambrano, Bellido-Pérez & Sanz-Marcos, 2019)).

In this sense, a type of entity that has not let go of this potential offered by new technologies are Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) (Román-San-Miguel and Díaz, 2019) that have found in social networks an instrument that not only strengthens and facilitates activism (Carrasco, Villar and Martín, 2018; Soengas and Assif, 2017; González, Becerra and Yanez, 2016; Cmeciu and Coman, 2016) but, especially, improves communication and dissemination of them.

These new channels are especially useful for non-profit organizations, especially the smallest ones, which lack large budgets to invest in communication and have found in social media a useful way to reach society and give visibility to the activity they carry out and the problems they fight against. "Today, any of these organizations faces the challenge of developing effective communication that will help them mobilize citizens to involve them in their social aid projects" (Carrasco et al., 2018:30). As Almansa and Fernández (2011:338) point out, "in the case of social organisations, the Internet has been a great opportunity, as it allows them almost permanent contact with their main audiences at a reduced cost".

Some of the main advantages that the Internet and the RRSS offer for the communication of non-profit organizations are: speed in the dissemination of information; constant updating; interactivity with the public; use of multimedia resources; access from anywhere, immediacy; reaching large audiences; immediate response; horizontal communication; participatory nature; freedom of expression; mass participation; visibility;

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measurement and evaluation (Almansa and Fernández, 2011; Arroyo and Calle, 2018). All these characteristics fit perfectly with the nature of these organizations.

While until relatively recently, Facebook (for its ability to tell stories and allow participation) and Twitter (for the immediacy it allows when reporting) were the social networks on which any non-profit organization based its communication, they have been integrating into their strategies others like Instagram, which is the social network that has grown the most (it is the second by number of users), and is also the third best rated behind Whatsapp and Youtube and the third also in terms of frequency of use (IABSpain, 2020).

Instagram, because of its visual aesthetics, allows to relate in a different way to how it is done in other channels. In this social network, images are configured as the main communication format (Lee, Lee, Moon and Sung, 2015; Sanz-Marcos, Jiménez-Marín and Elías, 2019).) above the texts (unlike Twitter or Facebook) which are limited to a mere description or caption and in many cases are reduced to include the label or hashtag. In this sense, there are several studies that confirm the power of the image as a communicative element and the capacity to improve the memory, understanding and credibility of these visual messages (Dondis, 2017; Quevedo, Redondo, Portalés and Berrocal, 2016; Schill, 2012; Renovell, 2005; Frascara, 1999; Orts, 1996).

Due to its growing importance, Instagram has great potential for disseminating initiatives, which is why NGOs are actively integrating it as a communication tool: “not only does it allow artistic photography to be put at the service of activism, but also, thanks to the interactivity of social networks, it allows the community it is addressing to participate in (and sometimes even be the protagonist of) the dialogue” (Carrasco et al., 2018:31).

In short, as noted by Baraybar (2009:52),

> “With the development of the Internet, and especially with the birth of the so-called Web 2.0 or Social Web, a field of action has opened up in which organizations can carry out new forms of communication, far from those used in traditional media that have been betting repeatedly on the persuasion of the spectator through the exhibition of victims or volunteers turned into heroes”.

But not only are they used by these entities, but any individual can already act as a mass communicator (Girón, 2019) and develop a campaign on social networks with the intention of informing and raising awareness in society about a problem and giving it publicity. This digital activism makes it possible to give voice to causes that would not be visible in the traditional media (Azuela and Tapia, 2013).

Thanks to the RRSS, any individual, whoever and wherever they are, can communicate and establish a direct relationship with anyone they want, without the filter of the traditional media (Marín and Diaz, 2016). There is a lot of research (González and Martínez, 2018; García, del Hoyo and Fernández, 2014; Llamas and Pagador, 2014; Díaz, 2011; Caldevilla, 2010) that highlights the relevance of social networks as a means of overcoming physical barriers and establishing contact with people who, having common interests, hobbies or values, are geographically distant. There are also, as pointed out by Jiménez, Rebollo, García and Buzón (2015) a wide variety of reasons for the use of the Internet and social networks, one of which is, for example, to implement a communication campaign with a cause.

When we talk about non-profit marketing, regardless of whether we are talking about an organization or an individual, the final objective is to claim a cause and to raise awareness about it. And, to achieve this, communication is configured as a key strategic activity and “social networks become a useful tool to mobilize society” (Arroyo y Calle, 2018:124), achieving a greater dissemination of the causes they pursue.

This is the starting point of this research that seeks to analyze the power of social networks, specifically Instagram, as a communication tool in campaigns with a social cause. More specifically, the object of this work is Pablo Ráez, a 20-year-old leukaemia patient who used the RRSS as a communication channel to involve the population in his fight against the disease by implementing a social communication campaign called “Challenge One Million” on the importance of bone marrow donation, and whose main objective, among others, was to reach one million bone marrow donors throughout Spain.

More specifically, the objectives set in this research are

- To analyse the type of content published in Instagram
- Determine the engagement achieved on Instagram by the campaign
- Analyse the effect the campaign has had on young people

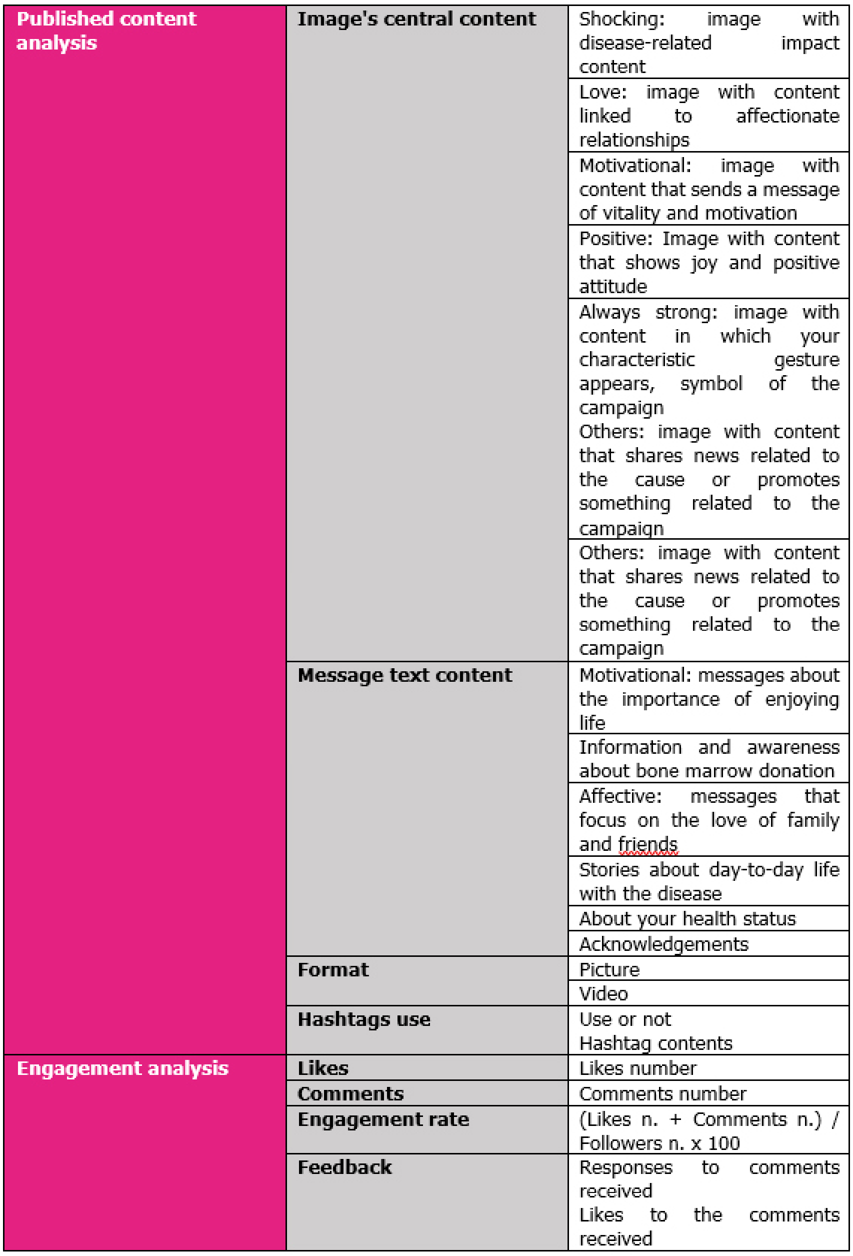
2. Methodology

Exploratory research based on a mixed methodology has been proposed. On the one hand, a content analysis has been developed for the study of communication on Instagram, which is complemented by a survey to analyse the impact of the campaign on young people.

2.1 Content analysis

The profile of Pablo Ráez (@srraez) has been analysed in Instagram for a period of 8 months, specifically from June 10, 2016 (when he is diagnosed with his second leukemia) until February 25, 2017 (date of his death). The following categories and indicators have been defined (see table 1), based on the work of Caerols, Viñarás and Gonzálvez (2017), and from which a separate analysis sheet has been designed.

Table 1. Analysis variables and indicators. Source: Prepared by the authors based on Caerols, Viñarás and Gonzálvez (2017)



Published content analysis	**Image's central content**	Shocking: image with disease-related impact content
		Love: image with content linked to affectionate relationships
		Motivational: image with content that sends a message of vitality and motivation
		Positive: Image with content that shows joy and positive attitude
		Always strong: image with content in which your characteristic gesture appears, symbol of the campaign Others: image with content that shares news related to the cause or promotes something related to the campaign
		Others: image with content that shares news related to the cause or promotes something related to the campaign
	Message text content	Motivational: messages about the importance of enjoying life
		Information and awareness about bone marrow donation
		Affective: messages that focus on the love of family and friends
		Stories about day-to-day life with the disease
		About your health status
		Acknowledgements
	Format	Picture
		Video
	Hashtags use	Use or not Hashtag contents
Engagement analysis	**Likes**	Likes number
	Comments	Comments number
	Engagement rate	(Likes n. + Comments n.) / Followers n. x 100
	Feedback	Responses to comments received Likes to the comments received

Source: Own elaboration.

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2.2 Survey

The third objective is to complement the communication analysis in Instagram and only seeks to determine whether the campaign has influenced young people. For this purpose, a survey was carried out for which a sample of 389 people claiming to know who Pablo Ráez was selected through a non-probabilistic sampling for convenience.
The elaboration of the questionnaire has been based on the following study variables (table 2)

Table 2. Variables for quantitative analysis.

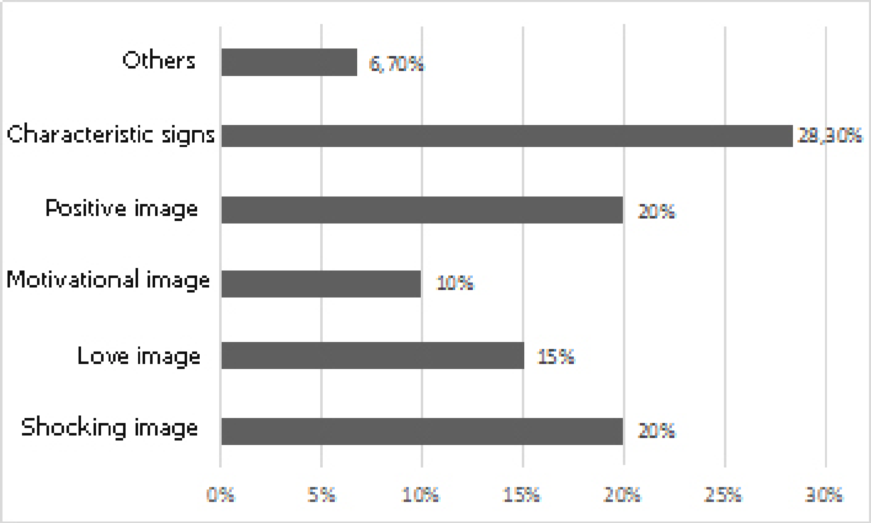
Analysing the effect of the campaign on young people	**Medium Interest in the topic**	Media through which you met Pablo Ráez
	Interest in the topic	Degree of interest in blood and marrow donation
	Direct effect	Donation of blood or marrow as a result of the campaign
	Perception of the impact	Increase in donations as a result of the campaign

Source: Own elaboration

3. RESULTS

3.1. Content analysis

Graphic 1. Image content.



Source: Own elaboration

It must be considered that Instagram is an eminently visual social network, so we wanted to study, first, what the image of the publication was focused on. Of all the publications analysed, the highest percentage of images/videos (28.3%) corresponded to Pablo making his identifying gesture, followed by publications with striking images (20%) and images of Pablo smiling (20%).

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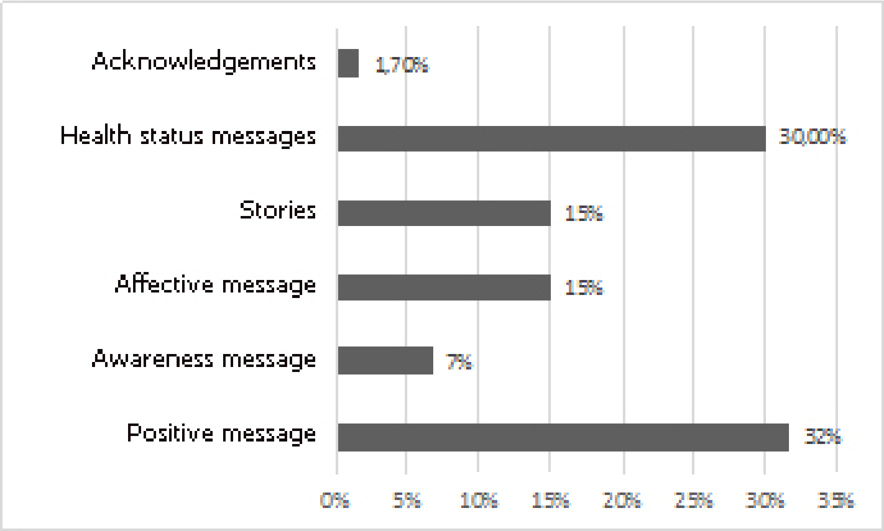
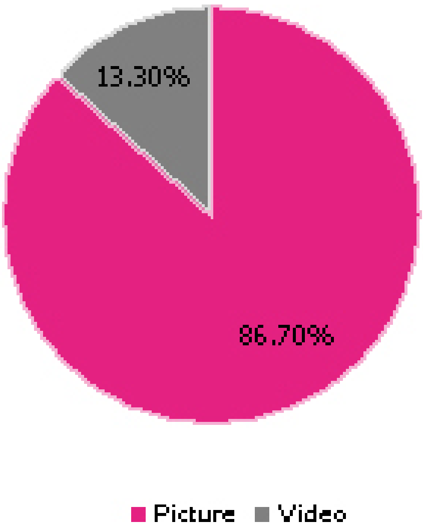
Graphic 2. Message text content.



Source: Own elaboration

In addition to audiovisual content, Instagram also allows you to include text in posts, either to describe the image or for any other purpose. Analysis of these texts shows that many the posts shared by users during their campaign consisted of positive messages (31.7%) or gave information about their health status (30%).

Graphic 3. Format

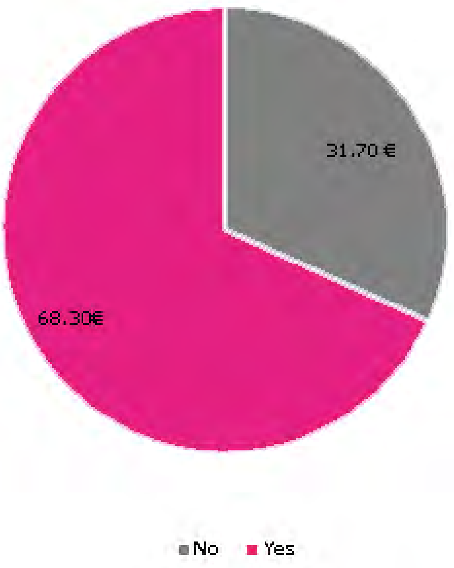


Source: Own elaboration

Instagram only allows you to upload pictures or videos. Regarding the format used in the shared publications the vast majority were photos (86.7%) while only 13.3% were audiovisual content.

One of the characteristics of RRSS is the possibility of including labels (known as hashtags -#-) that facilitate the search for content by subject and, from the point of view of virality, allows users to use the same hashtag proposed in their publications and give it greater visibility.

Graphic 4. Hashtag use

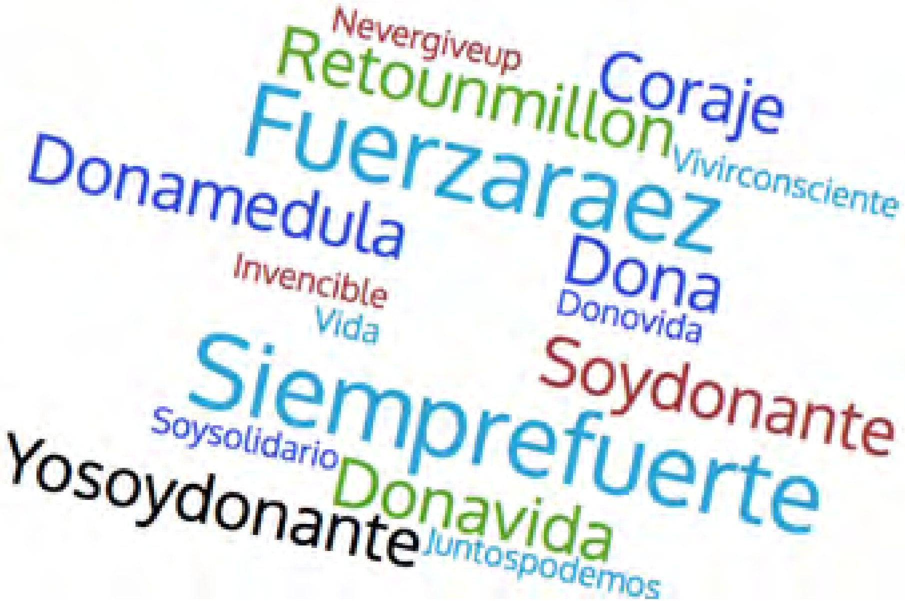


Source: Own elaboration

In this case, a remarkable use is made of this resource (almost 70% of publications are accompanied by a hashtag).

A more in-depth analysis of this resource allows us, through a word cloud, to check which were the most used hashtags. In relation to the main themes of these tags, we can see how they are directly related, on the one hand, to the promotion of donation and solidarity and, on the other hand, although to a lesser extent, to messages of encouragement and the fight against the disease.

Figure 1. Used hashtags (original version).



Source: Own elaboration

3.2 Engagement analysis

The concept of engagement refers to the degree of interaction generated by a publication or a set of publications (e.g. all publications linked to a specific campaign) on social networks. This engagement gives a measure of, on the one hand, the commitment or degree of emotional involvement of the followers of a person or organization and, on the other hand, of the success in social networks of that person/organization.

To calculate this ratio, we will use the formula proposed by Vilma Núñez, according to which the engagement for a campaign on Instagram is calculated as the sum of the average number of likes and comments generated by the publications, among the number of followers.

Figure 2. Formula for the Engagement Calculation

$$\frac{\underset{\text{Likes}}{\overline{X}} + \underset{\text{Comments}}{\overline{X}}}{\text{Followers}} \times 100$$

Source: Own elaboration based on Vilma Núñez

Therefore, both the maximum and minimum values and the average obtained for each of the measurement variables have been calculated for the publications analysed, i.e. the likes and comments received for each publication (Table 3)

Table 3. Likes and comments' posts

	LIKES	COMMENTS
Media	61.712,38	2.985,67
Minimum	3.355	18
Maximus	226.121	53.219

Source: Own elaboration

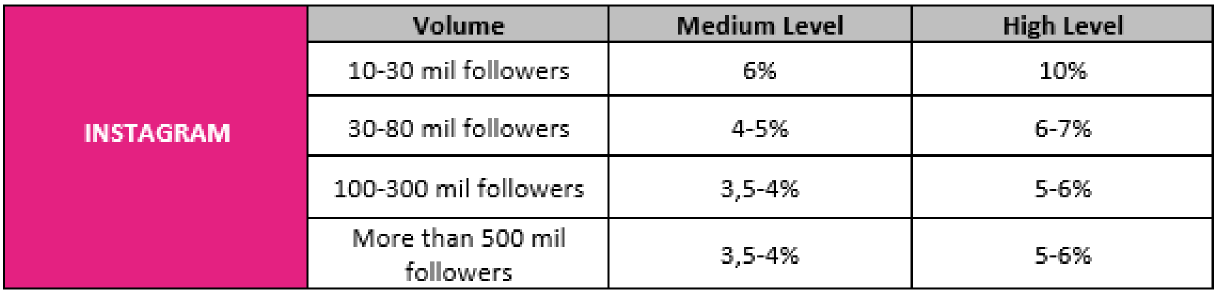
The average number of likes obtained per publication is 61,721.38 likes. The analysis shows that as the campaign has developed, the likes have been increasing. In fact, the minimum value (3,355 likes) corresponds to the first publication, while the maximum value (which obtained 226,121 likes) was reached by its last publication on February 25.

The average value of the comments made to the publications by the followers is 2,985.67 comments. Likewise, they have followed an increasing trend over time. While the minimum value (18 comments) corresponds to the second publication, the maximum value (53,219 comments) coincides with the last of the publications.

Once we have the values we need and considering that the total number of followers was 419,000, if we apply the formula to calculate the engagement ratio in Instagram, for the time during which the analysis has been developed, that is, 8 months, the engagement rate would be 15.4%.

$$\frac{61.712 + 2.985}{419.000} \times 100 = 15,40$$

Table 4. Engagement index rating as a function of the number of followers.



	Volume	Medium Level	High Level
INSTAGRAM	10-30 mil followers	6%	10%
	30-80 mil followers	4-5%	6-7%
	100-300 mil followers	3,5-4%	5-6%
	More than 500 mil followers	3,5-4%	5-6%

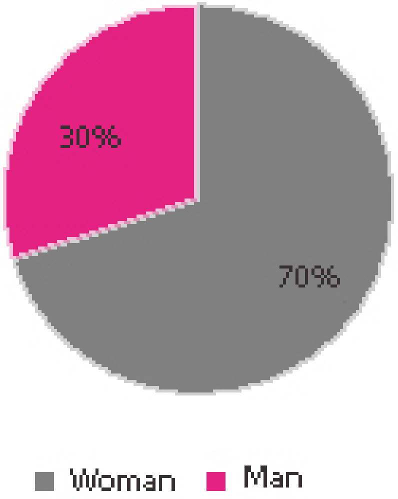
Source: Own elaboration based on influencity

This value alone doesn't say anything. To put it in context and assess whether this rate is good or bad, we will use the Influencity proposal (see table 4) which establishes a classification according to the engagement ratio and the volume of followers. For the account under analysis, this rate should be considered very good.
Finally, another variable that measures interactivity is the feedback or degree of response by the account in its relationship with its followers. In order to know if the user maintained a reciprocity with his followers, it has been measured if he responded or liked the comments that the users left in the publications. From the analysis, this feedback was non-existent, as there has been no correspondence with those who left comments on their posts.

3.3 Survey

Of the 389 people who answered the survey, 70% were women and 30% were men.

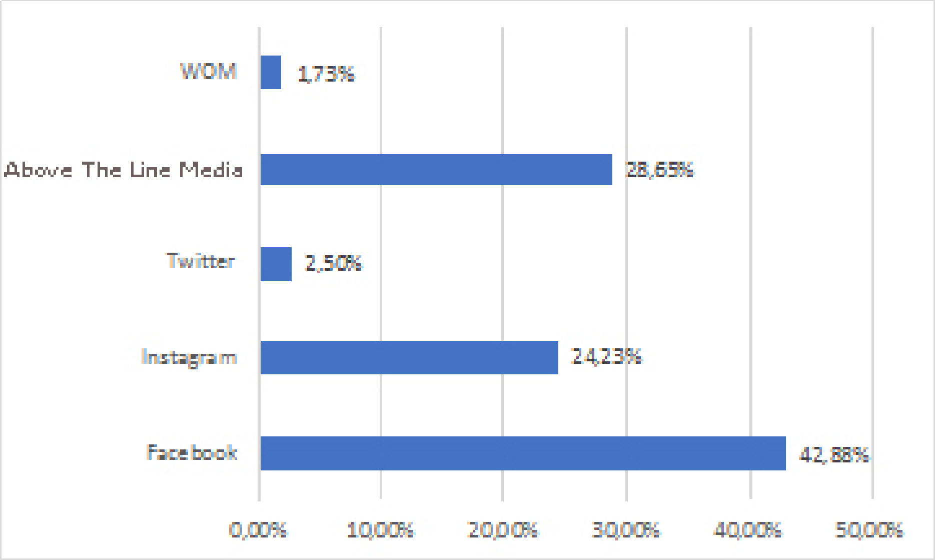
Graphic 5. Sample distribution by gender.



Source: Own elaboration.

One of the aspects that was analysed is the means through which they met Pablo Ráez. Social networks were the main medium (70% met him through social media). Of these, the main one was Facebook (43%). An interesting fact is that almost 29% acknowledged having met him through conventional media. This may be because the "Reto un millón" (Challenge One Million) campaign had a great media impact outside the networks, which gave Pablo Ráez great visibility.

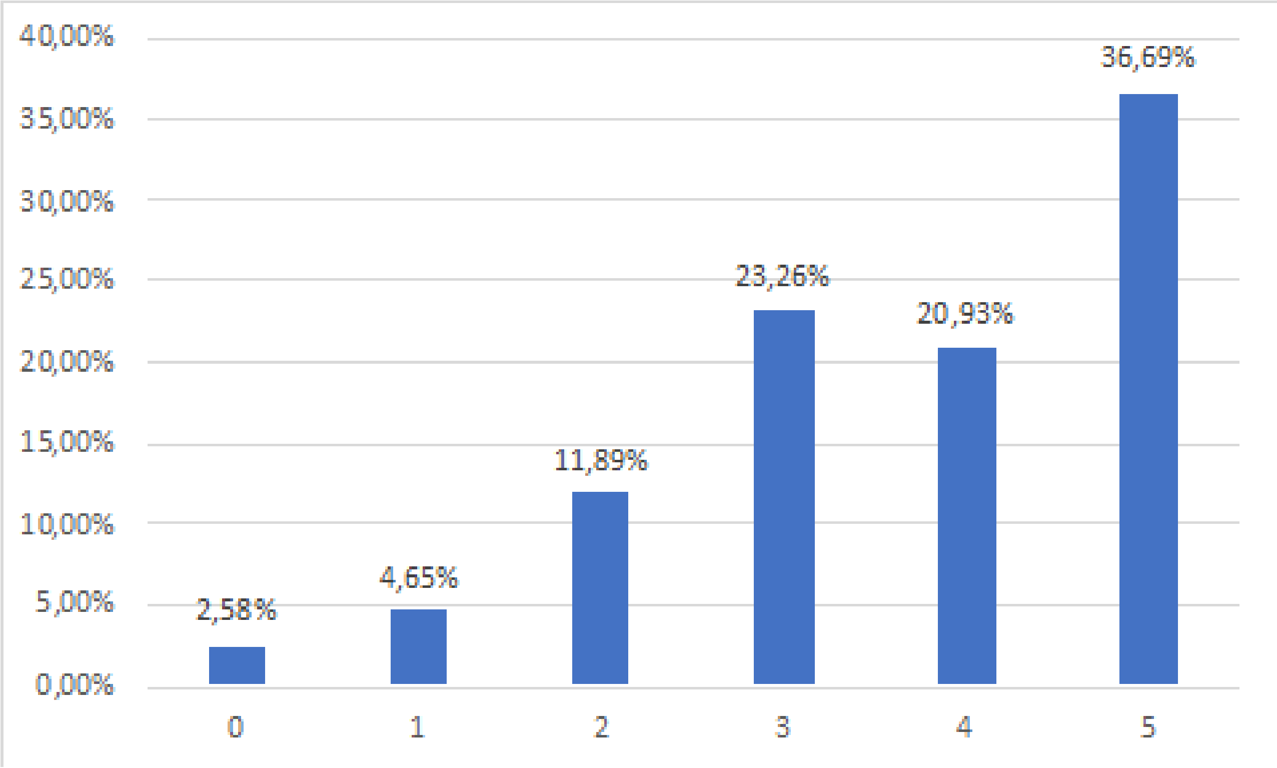
Graphic 6. Media through which you met Pablo Ráez



Source: Own elaboration.

As for the analysis of the level of involvement or interest in the subject of donations after meeting Pablo Ráez, more than 57% of those surveyed said they had a high or very high interest in this cause, while for only 7% this interest was low or non-existent.

Graphic 7. Level of interest in the donation process after meeting Pablo Ráez



Source: Own elaboration.

Finally, the real effect that this campaign had on blood or marrow donations has been measured. And, in this sense, only 16% of those surveyed said they had donated after learning about the campaign. Although it might seem that this figure is not positive, the fact that 62 people have donated blood or marrow thanks

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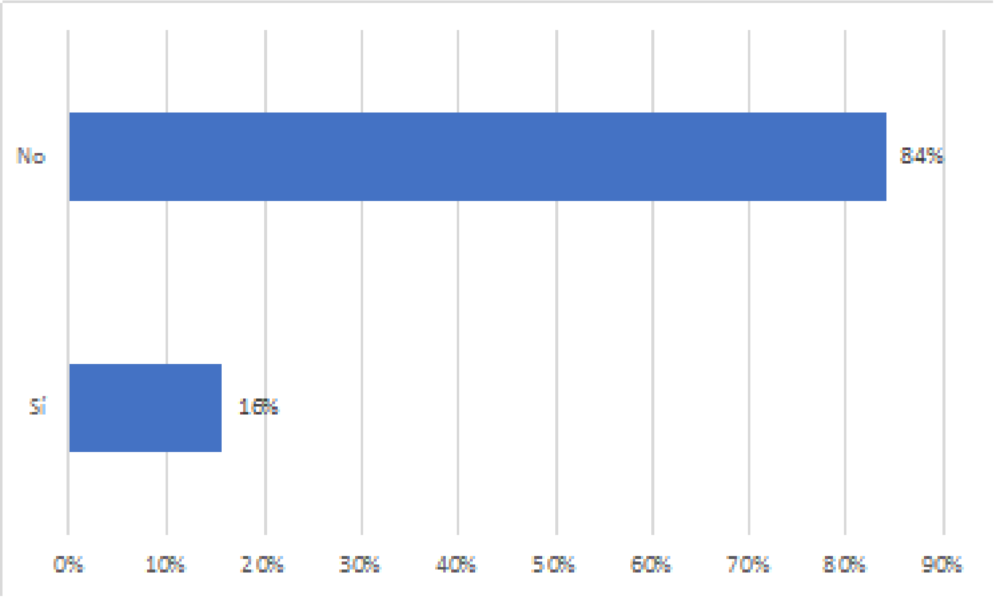
to this campaign does not seem to be a trivial fact. In fact, and doing an exercise to contextualize this data, if we extrapolate that 16% to the 419,000 followers that it had (only in Instagram), 67,040 donations would have been obtained.

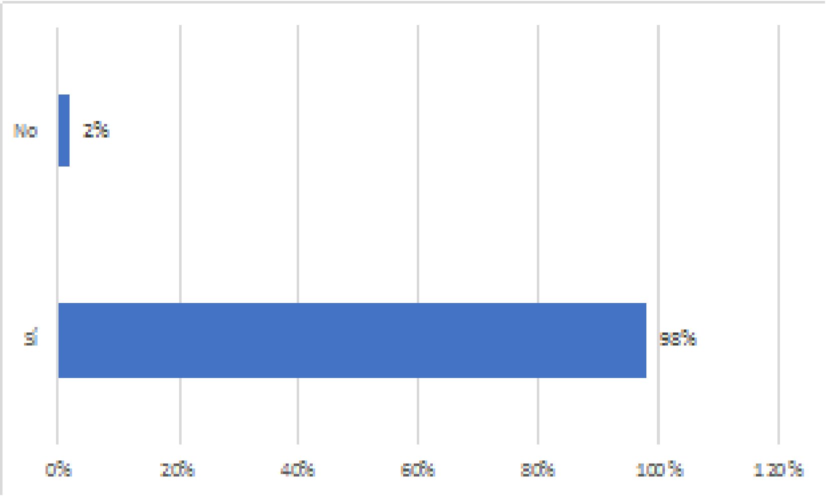
Graphic 8. Blood or marrow donation as a result of the campaign



Source: Own elaboration.

To complete this analysis of the effects of the campaign, the sample was asked if they considered that it had been positive and had favoured the increase of blood/medical donations in Spain and the result is conclusive, 98% considered that yes, the campaign helped to increase the number of donations.

Graphic 9. Increased Donations Percepcion as a Result of the Campaign



Source: Own elaboration.

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4. Conclusions

It is common for marketing or social communication campaigns and actions to be implemented by organizations that, to a greater or lesser extent, have a certain structure, level of knowledge and social recognition. The particularity of this work is that it has analysed a communication campaign with a cause implemented by a user who, being anonymous at first, thanks to the resources and characteristics of social networks, managed to become a communication phenomenon, reaching a high level of recognition and giving visibility to the problem of blood and marrow donations in Spain. And all this, through the messages spread through their profiles on social networks, without any knowledge or planning, which speaks very positively of the strength of social media to convey a message to the population.

From the analysis of the results themselves, the following conclusions are derived. The study of the images and videos published showed the day-to-day life of the disease, thus involving the followers and integrating them into their personal lives. This was also done by means of positive and motivational images and messages, which together with the use of striking images achieved a high impact. On the other hand, the creation of a characteristic gesture gave the campaign a representative sign to identify the cause.

As mentioned, a lack of planning has been detected when it comes to publishing content. There is no programming of the publications, nor treatment or organization of the images/videos. The evolution of the disease itself and its treatment were the main factors that set the pace of the publications.

With respect to Instagram's own tools, an appropriate use of hashtags has been made, which favours the visibility of the contents. In addition, these are integrated into messages that ask for the collaboration and help of the followers, while when sharing publications with a love or brand appreciation theme, no hashtags are used.

One of the main conclusions derived from this study is that this campaign has reached a very high level of engagement. The number of likes and comments on the publications has been high, as well as the number of followers reached. And all this without the interaction of the media itself, because the account did not follow, respond or like the comments it received from its followers in any publication.

Finally, from the point of view of the real impact that the campaign has had in reaching the goal of one million donations, it is considered that this has been positive. Although this figure was not achieved, it did generate a high degree of interest in the blood/medical donation process. In addition, 16% of the sample became donors after learning about it and, above all, 98% considered that Pablo Ráez had contributed decisively to increasing marrow donations in Spain.

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