Department of History

Fundraising and Online Marketing
How social media have an impact on the growth of a charity organization

Andrea Tonetti

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Supervisor:

Professor José Paulo Afonso Esperança, Full Professor, Finance Department

ISCTE-Instituto Universitário de Lisboa

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Acknowledgments

Thanks to all the people that crossed my path in the city of Lisbon. I would not be here without what each of them left me in the past two years.

Thanks to my family, unconditional supporters of my choices since day one.

Abstract

"We make a living by what we get, but we make a life by what we give." – Winston Churchill

The main aim of this dissertation is to study how digital marketing techniques can be implemented in the fundraising strategy of non-profit organizations, and how to face the transition from an old school fundraising approach to a digital one. During the past decade, the internet and social media deeply changed the way non-profit organizations approach fundraising. Digital communication became quick, multilateral and dynamic, thus making the mass communication techniques adopted until that period obsolete. In this context, organizations must adapt to be able to implement successful marketing strategies and collect the funds necessary for their own development. The biggest challenges are the lack of specialized professional figures in digital fundraising and the difficulty in keeping up with the rapid digital developments in the communication and marketing field.

This dissertation is divided into 6 main parts: The introduction, where the topic and the aim of the work are presented. Chapter 1, addressing academic background for fundraising and the challenges that currently exist in the digital world. Chapter 2, giving an overview of the current situation of digital adoption across non-profits all over the world. Chapter 3, where the differences between the main social media platforms are presented, as well as the guidelines to use them in order to produce an effective content strategy. Chapter 4, where strategies and best practices of non-profit digital fundraising are analyzed in details and compared with the classical methods. The conclusion, where recommendations for regulators and practitioners are presented.

Keywords

English: Fundraising, Marketing, Social Media, NGO, Charity, Non-profit

Abstrato

"*Vivemos com o que recebemos, mas marcamos a vida com o que damos*."

Winston Churchill

O principal objetivo desta dissertação é estudar como as técnicas de marketing digital podem ser implementadas na estratégia de captação de recursos de organizações sem fins lucrativos e como enfrentar a transição de uma captação de recursos da velha escola para a digital.

. Durante a década passada, a internet e as mídias sociais mudaram profundamente a maneira como as organizações sem fins lucrativos abordam a captação de recursos. A comunicação digital tornou-se rápida, multilateral e dinâmica, tornando obsoletas as técnicas de comunicação de massa adotadas até aquele período. Nesse contexto, as organizações precisam ser capazes de implementar estratégias de marketing bem-sucedidas e coletar os fundos necessários para seu próprio desenvolvimento. Os maiores desafios são a falta de profissionais especializados em captação de recursos digitais e a dificuldade de acompanhar os rápidos desenvolvimentos digitais no campo da comunicação e marketing.

A dissertação está dividida em 6 partes principais: A introdução, onde são apresentados o tópico e o objetivo do trabalho. Capítulo 1, abordando a formação acadêmica para captação de recursos e os desafios que existem atualmente no mundo digital. Capítulo 2, fornecendo uma visão geral da situação atual da adoção digital em organizações sem fins lucrativos em todo o mundo. Capítulo 3, onde são apresentadas as diferenças entre as principais plataformas de mídia social, bem como as diretrizes para usá-las para produzir uma estratégia de conteúdo eficaz. Capítulo 4, onde estratégias e melhores práticas de captação de recursos digitais sem fins lucrativos são analisadas em detalhes e comparadas com os métodos clássicos. As conclusões, onde são apresentadas recomendações para reguladores e profissionais.

Palavras-chave

Captação de recursos, Marketing, Mídias sociais, ONG, Caridade, Sem fins lucrativos

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Introduction

Fundraising is a fundamental activity for non-profit organizations. As the objective of such organizations is not to accumulate capital and produce a profit, but is following humanitarian targets, they have to find ways to gather the money to sustain themselves, their activities and developing the mission. In the past 20 years, the fundraising processes have experienced deep changes. The main cause of these can be identified with the development of the world wide web, that drastically changed the way in which people are exposed to information. The way in which brands, politicians and organizations communicate with the masses deeply changed with the creation of the internet and of social media. Nowadays, people are exposed on a daily basis to a number of inputs and pieces of information that is way greater than 30 years ago. Every time we look at our phones, Ipads or PCs, we are exposed to thousands of pieces of information, ads, and messages that are trying to catch our attention using the latest creative assets available on the digital platforms.

In this very competitive environment, NPOs, NGOs, and charities in every country have to build a careful and effective fundraising plan in order to identify the right demographics, assure themselves a strong online presence, create awareness about the cause, and gain new donors.

The age of the door to door knocking, paper advertising and mailing newsletters came to an end. To be correct is better to say that all of these processes heavily shifted to their online counterparts. Digital communication and content creation skills became important for NPOs as for every other brand that tries to break even in this 21st century's info-storm. When a company, or an NPO, fails in the digitalization process or makes it happen really slowly, generally means that is leaving money on the table. This means that the development and the success of the organization itself are slowed down, or even compromised.

In the period that we live in NGOs and NPOs have to keep up with the modern digital trends in order to implement an effective fundraising strategy. The so-called "Digital divide" (Norris, P., 2001) (the concept created in the 90s to describe the gap between the companies and institutions that had more access to technologies compared with other less developed ones) came to an end. Nowadays organizations and the potential donor are active on the same platform, they are both on Facebook, they both have access to the same 4G net, they both have the basic knowledge to navigate in the internet, open website, subscribe to newsletters and virtually send (real) money. In this context, becomes vital for such organizations to hire skilled employees in order to be able to gain the most benefits from the digital tools available.

In this paper I will focus mainly on:

_ Carrying out a review of the literature and secondary data regarding fundraising theories, and how digital marketing can be applied to this field.

_ Describing the most successful types of fundraising campaigns, and how they are structured.

_ Analyzing the process of building a donor persona and a content strategy for the non-profit.

_ Give an overview to the main platforms, tools, and KPIs to analyze when running a campaign.

Chapter One: Fundraising Literature In The 21st Century

_ What is Fundraising?

What do we mean with the word "Fundraising?" Nonprofit Quarterly (2017) defines it as it follows:

"Fundraising is generally defined as the process of soliciting financial support and is an essential way for most non-profits to bring in revenue for their organization's mission. Fundraising is about so much more than just asking for money. It also consists of ways for charitable organizations to build relationships, bring in foundation support, and attract new donors."

According to this, is clear that getting liquidity with no long-term plan is not what a serious fundraising plan should aim to. The whole process should be aimed at a bigger picture for a long-term, sustainable and profitable relationship with the donors. In fact, Greater New Orleans Foundation (2013) defines the term in this way:

"The true purpose of fundraising is to raise donors. The only way you can raise money year after year is by developing a broad base of loyal individual donors who are committed to your work.
To raise donors, an organization needs a firm understanding of its identity and mission so that it can tell its story in a compelling way that attracts individuals to its cause. On top of this, fundraising requires thorough planning and a willingness to make use of helpful resources, relationships, and information. Fundraising comes down to "the ask," but much planning and work must precede that important moment."

Exactly like a famous brand such as Nike can retain his customers thanks to their strong brand, the quality of the products and the strong celebrity endorsement that they seek through advertising, also in the non profit sector keeping the donor close to the cause is a crucial factor. A donor who gives $10 per month and feels involved in the cause (so he's updated on the development of the projects, has access to channels of communication and engagement with the organization and has an extent of transparency on where the money that he gives go) is worth way more than a single-time $200 donor that is abandoned after the donation. That's because the $10 donor is highly more likely to donate again and again without further advertising effort from the organization's side. In this perspective, modern solutions like digital peer to peer fundraising and crowdfunding play a key role (I will discuss these topics in the following chapters).

Most of the times, the whole existence of the organization depends on the success of the fundraising process. Finding ways to gather funds from private donors, public money, other organizations and being able to sustain retention in the cashflow is what guarantees the survival and the operativity of an NPO.

_ Main Fundraising sources

There are different ways in which an organization can raise funds, and each of them historically accounts for a larger or smaller share of the donation flow. Charity Navigator (2018) every year gathers data related to the fundraising processes in the United States and concluded that on an average referred to the period 2016-2018, donations come from the following sources:

_ Private donations. Only in the US individual donors gave $286.65 billion, accounting for the 70% of all giving.

_ Foundations, which usually give the 16% of all donations.

_ Donation by bequest increased slightly in the past decade, and now account for the 9% of all donations

_ Corporations giving grew too, accounting nowadays for the 5% of the total amount.

We can see that the main donors in the modern fundraising are private donors, which donation accounts for almost 80% of the total (if we count also the post-mortem will). This figure reflects a trend that is established historically, as private donors have accounted for the biggest share of donations, even before the digital age. Known this trend, looks clear that a big part of the effort that organizations should focus on for the future, is to reach potential private donors and to find effective ways to communicate with them, in order to make them engaged with the cause and, eventually, retain the donors and making sure that they keep on donating over time.

_ Fundraising challenges

Organizations that operate in the non-profit sector have to face challenges that are becoming bigger and bigger with the years that pass. First of all, according to the publication Charitable Contributions (2018) funding coming from government support became more limited in certain countries in the past 10 years. For example, US-based charities can nowadays count on an average of 10-15% fewer funds given by the government. As a consequence, it becomes every day more important to be able to get donations from external sources, especially from the biggest pool of potential donors: privates.

Here is where the marketing component (and alongside, digital marketing) of an organization becomes vital for the survival and the growth of a company.

It has become evident in the past decades how non-profit organizations need to put efforts in creating large-scale marketing campaigns in order to enhance their fundraising activities. This is a pain point for many organizations, as they are often lacking the budget for such operations (Hu, Kapuku & O'Byrne, 2014) as well as specialized employees to manage them. In this scenario, digital marketing offers a cheaper, reliable and scalable alternative to traditional marketing for these organizations that have the funds to hire specialists with the right skills.

Unlike corporate marketing, which final goal is mostly creating the right environment and brand awareness to increase sales and profits, non-profit marketing is more about seeking relationships, create trust and being able to keep them strong in time. The skill set needed to achieve such results are not easy to find, as most of the formative offer in universities and private institutes provides marketing courses, but just a few of them focus on the branch of the non-profit marketing. It is evident the need of talents with that specific expertise, also because it is impossible to think about a successful organization without such employees.

Due to the limited financial resources, organizations of small-medium size often don't hire specialized employees for managing the digital marketing branch, but they superficially give the role to people who are not really aware of the complexity of the system.

Marketing results for non-profit have always been more difficult to measure and track, as the core of the “business” is the relations that exist with the people. Thanks to modern digital marketing tools that are accessible to anyone (Such as Google Tag Manager, Facebook Pixel, Hotjar…), today is possible to see more precise figures about the user journey on the website, the social media pages and identify the patterns that donors follow in their acquisition path. Still, the accessibility of these tools doesn’t imply that they’re easy to use: it’s always required the support of a specialist.

_ The Fundraising Cycle

As for any company that carries out a laborious and complex activity, also non-profit organizations need to create a specific fundraising plan. Here I am going to explain a pattern that is adopted among the biggest NGOs currently operating worldwide. This operational process has been called: "Fundraising cycle". Melandri and Masacci (2000) defined it in this way:

"... The tool that (...) can help identify the right steps and the proper progression of activities, so that important elements are not forgotten (...) it represents a useful work scheme to guide that complex process of analysis, planning, implementation and evaluation which is the prerequisite for a failed fundraising activity. (...) In this key, it also and above all has the function of guaranteeing order logic between the different activities that need to be carried out ”

From these definitions, we can deduce that the fundraising cycle is nothing but the circular path that the organization should follow in order to analyze itself, measure itself in the competitive context in which it operates up to the point of implementing its fundraising activity. This process is concluded through an evaluation of the results obtained and the implementation of a new strategy. The fundraising cycle aims to help the organization not to lose the focus on its central objective, and to guide it through the complex activities it has to put into action in order to carry out a successful fundraising.

This work scheme involves the implementation of a series of phases; it is up to each organization to try to understand how to implement them, and in these pages, I will provide a general framework.

The phases of the Fundraising Cycle are:

1. Begin of the fundraising planning.
2. Internal organization analysis.
3. Market analysis.
4. Planning.
5. Implementation.
6. Evaluation of results.

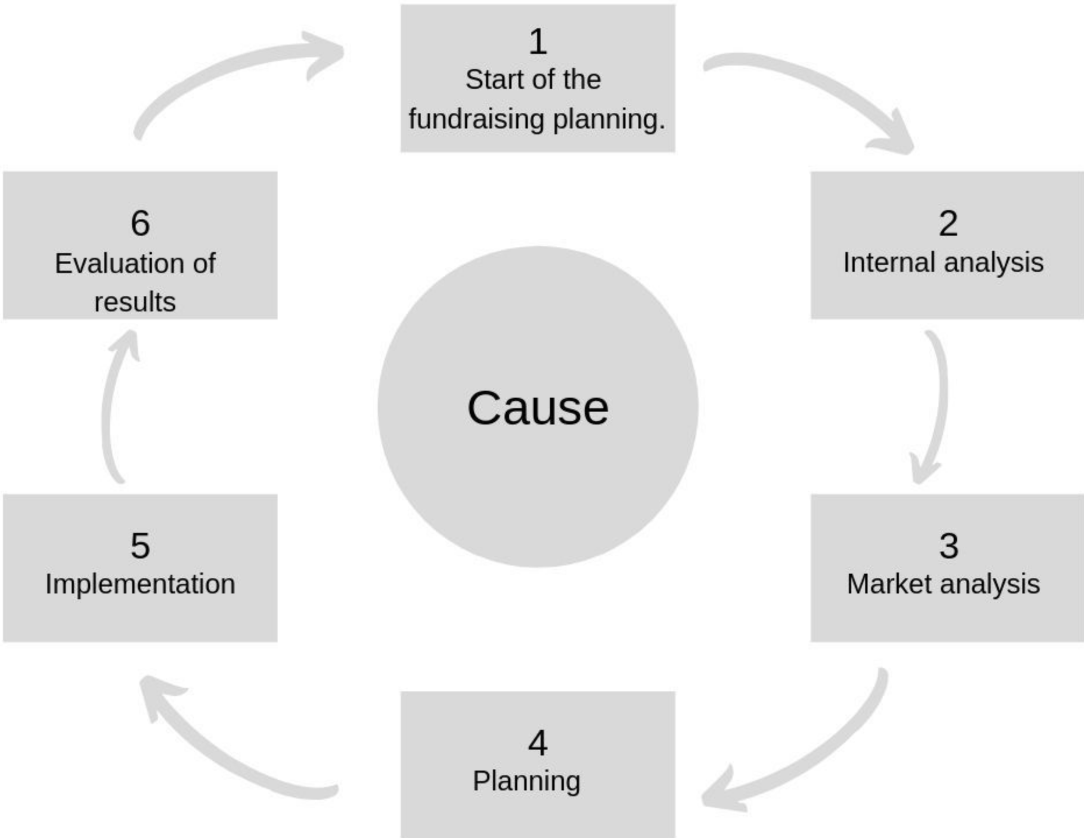

Figure 1.1: The Fundraising Cycle

The first three phases of the cycle (start-up, internal analysis, and market analysis) are linked to each other and are used by the organization to identify a fundraising model that better reflects its characteristics, also based on what is the external environment. Coen Cagli (2013) states that :

"A fundraising strategy (...) must be firmly founded on the strengths of those who will have to ask for money and on the opportunities offered by the environment to which it is addressed. (...) a large part of the possibility of creating effective financing strategies depends on the ability to adopt a fund-raising model capable of maximizing the factors of potential success, taking into account the institutional, organizational and above all socio-cultural characteristics of an organization".

Once the organization has been analyzed to identify its strengths and weaknesses, it will be necessary to analyze the external environment in order to understand what threats and opportunities exist, and then select the audience to address.

Once the first analysis process is concluded, the next step is the planning (phase IV), and subsequently the implementation of the fundraising plan (phase V) with which the ideas and intentions are translated into concrete facts, and in which specific tools are used for each specific fundraising activity. That's the moment when becomes vital a strong knowledge of the digital tools available on the market to help in this process, and to be aware of the main touchpoints (both online and offline) with the potential donors.

The success of the fundraising strategy depends also on the organization's ability to monitor the progress of the plan through a comparison between the results obtained and the general business objectives (phase VI). The last phase of the cycle refers to the overall evaluation of the strategies implemented and rethought a possible new strategy; this is the start of a new fundraising cycle.

Chapter Two: Digital Adoption Among Non-Profits

Before talking about the new tools and strategies that are becoming fundamental in the digital age of fundraising, let's have a look at the current situation of the digital adoption worldwide. How do NPOs use technology and social media today?

One of the most complete resource that I found on the topic is the Global NGO Technology report (2018), where a lot of interesting data can be found.

The transition to the digital world started in the early '90s. The first NGO to have a website and a real email marketing plan was Amnesty International (1992), followed shortly after by the WWF. Since then, the transformation began and nowadays the 92% of the NPOs worldwide have a website. As most of the traffic in 2018 happened from mobile devices, it is important that such websites are mobile-friendly and optimized to provide the best user experience. Out of the total, 87% of the websites are currently optimized for mobile.

Email marketing and mass communication via email is still one of the most used channels, that is used by 63% of the total.

The digital transformation of the non-profit sector has been accompanied by the mass adoption of the ".org" domain by all the organizations that identified themselves as charities. Every website published, and every email sent using .org reinforces the credibility of the organization, and makes it look professional and serious under the eyes of the users. Currently, the .org domain is adopted by 68% of NPOs.

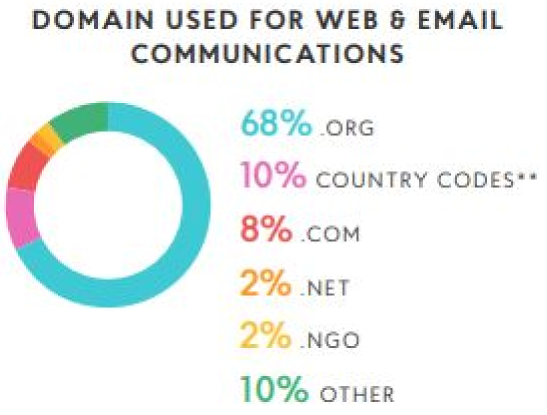

Figure 2.1: Domain used for Web and Email Communications. Source: http://techreport.ngo/wp-content/uploads/2018-Tech-Report-English.pdf

The natural consequence of this digital development has been the fact that NPOs started to collect funds using online payment tools. The most common tools used to collect payments are PayPal and Stripe, exactly as for most e-commerce stores. According to the report, currently, 72% of NGOs accept online donations in this way.

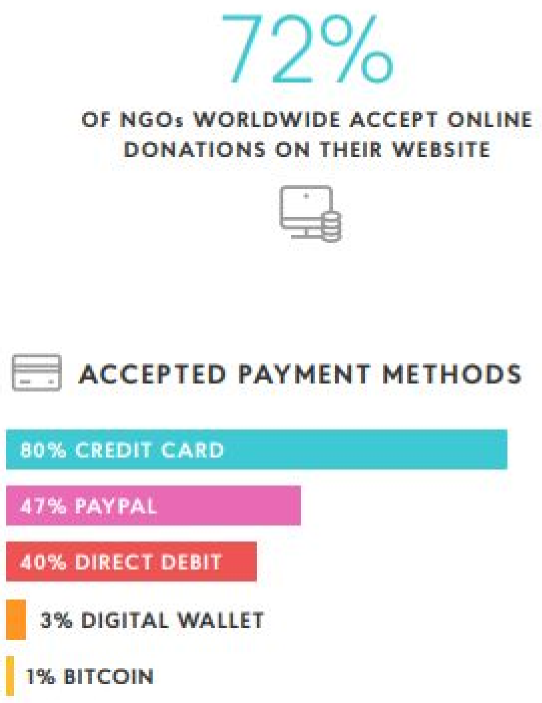

Figure 2.2: Accepted payment methods on NGO's websites. Source: http://techreport.ngo/wp-content/uploads/2018-Tech-Report-English.pdf

Social media has become a key part of the fundraising strategy. Since the founding of Myspace in 2003, NGOs have gradually moved on to publishing articles and blogs via social media platforms. Despite the initial fear of exposing their news to public comments, today almost all NGOs use at least one social media platform to communicate with users, spread news regarding the organization and the causes, promote campaigns and recruit volunteers.

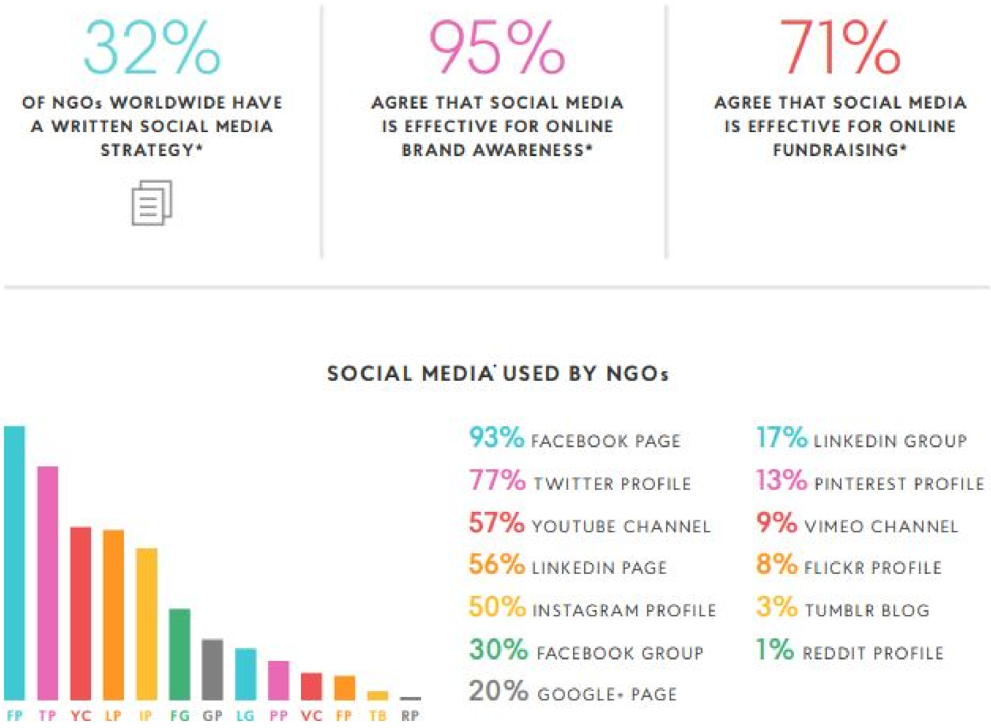

Figure 2.3: Social Media used by NGOs

As we can see from the image, Facebook is the most used platform overall. I will talk about each of the most important platforms in the following chapter.

Chapter Three: Content Strategy and Social Media Platforms

_ The Major Players

When it comes to reaching out to the audience an NPO has nowadays different social media channels that can be used in order to assure the best reach possible. Accordingly to the 2018 Global NGO Tech Report, currently more than 92% of NGOs use Facebook and 34% of these spend budget in advertising. In this section, I will focus on the channels, why is important to know them and how to use them in the most effective way in order to guarantee awareness and impact.

A wrong approach that many brands and organizations use is developing accounts for each social media and trying to reach the audience with all of them. Most of the times, this leads to a waste of time and few results. This happens because each platform has specific types of "persona" in their audiences (Ravella, 2011). For example, Linkedin is more suitable for professionals and entrepreneurs, Instagram for young, visually savvy people, Facebook is more suitable to a large scale audience.

Non profit organizations that succeed in communication through social media know which platform to use accordingly to the message that they want to pass to the audience.

_ Facebook

The most used social network platform in the world has little need for introductions. With 2.3 billion active users in the 1st quarter of 2019 (Clement, 2019), Facebook is nowadays a consistent part of the daily life of each person.

The fact that, whatever one's business might be, almost the totality of the audience is active on a daily basis on Facebook, explains well why nowadays this platform is among the most used for marketing and advertising.

Almost all the NPOs in 2019 have a Facebook Page, which represents one of the main channels of daily communication with the followers. With a page is possible to:

_ Post updates, news and various content (photos and videos) and to associate them with specific texts and Call to Action. Pages that provide relevant and emotional content, which empathizes with the audience and makes them feel like participants of what they can view and read, have a strong influence on the final users. Saxtom (2014) demonstrated the existence of a direct proportionality dependence between the number of fans of a page and the amount of money donated by private donors.
_ Create a group associated with the page, which helps to create a sort of private membership area (for example, only for the donors). Thanks to this feature, it is possible to get even closer to the most relevant part of the built online community, providing special content and engagement.
_ Run advertising campaigns, targeting a specific audience based on demographic information, interests and behaviours. The advertising platform of Facebook, provided by a specific tool called Facebook Business, is very powerful and allows the admin to collect enormous amounts of data from the existing fans of the pages, website visitors and donors. Thanks to the data collected, and to the machine learning of Facebook, the algorithm works in a way that allows the targeting to be more specific the more data is collected. This allows a super-segmentation on the targeting audience, with consequent ease in the analysis of the donor's online journey.
In figure 3.1, we can see the data collected from the M+R Benchmarks Study 2019, that showcase the percentage of post boosted with paid advertising on the Facebook platform, divided by category:

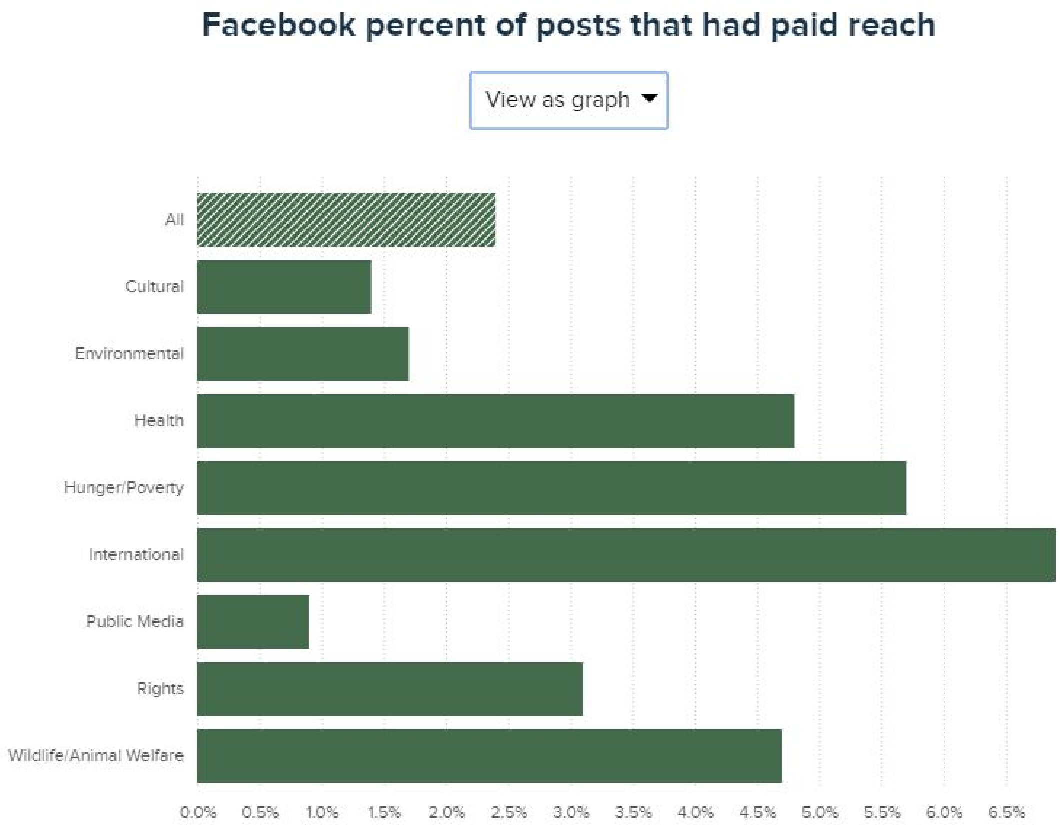

Figure 3.1. Facebook percent of posts that had paid reach. Source: https://mrbenchmarks.com/numbers/social-media

Most likely, for every NPO would make sense to use Facebook as a communication channel for their fundraising strategy. The main reasons are:

_ Facebook is the most various social media platforms in terms of demographics. People from every country, gender, age, and social status are using Facebook.

_ Facebook, altogether with Instagram and Twitter, is the platform that has already built-in specific tools and ad formats for fundraising. For example, Pages have the possibility to have a Call to Action button "Donate Now" on the homepage, on the posts, and on the ads. through this button, the Page has the possibility to directly receive donations through the platform, free of charge.

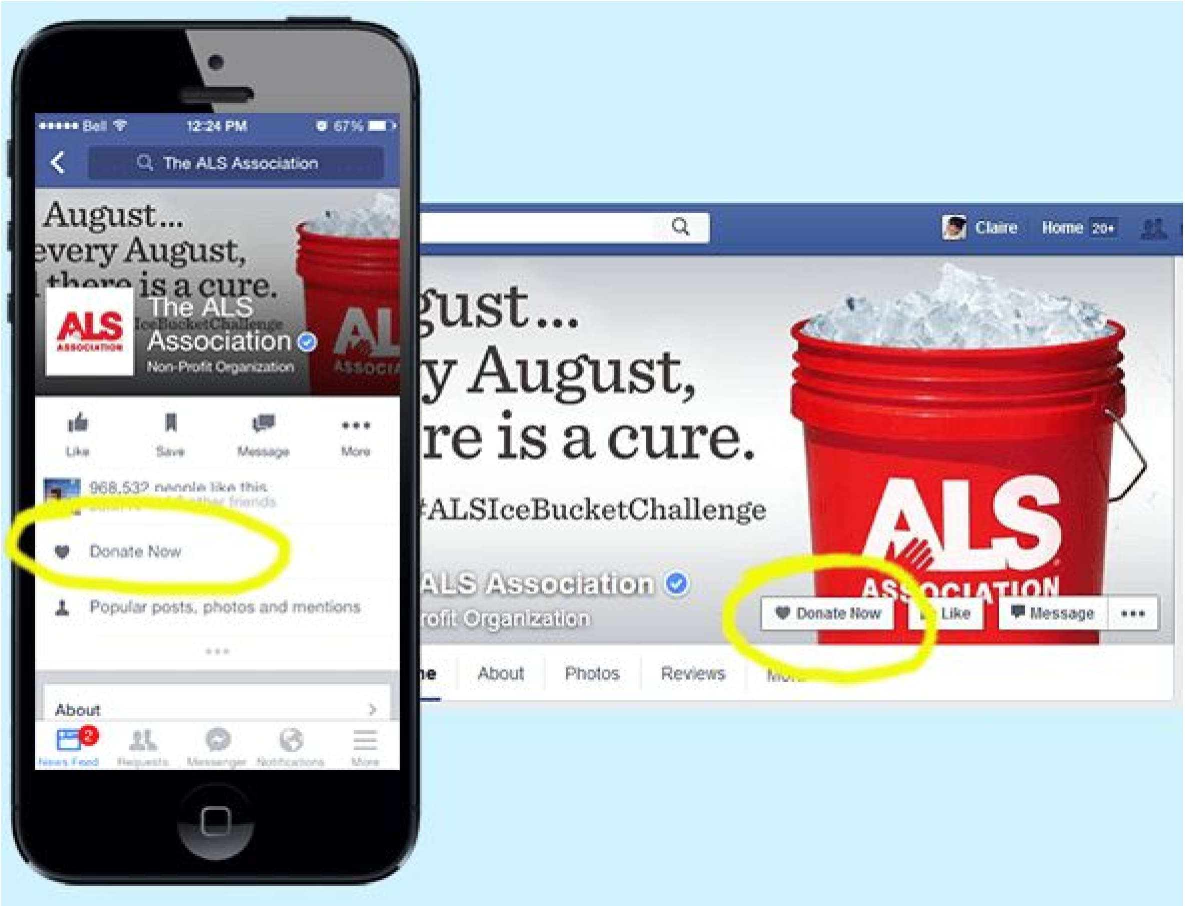

Figure 3.2. Source: https://www.frontstream.com/blog/donate-now-button-added-to-facebook

_ Instagram

Currently the most “visual” social network in the scene, Instagram was acquired by Facebook in 2016. This platform is based on photo and video sharing, which made it possible to create incredibly effective marketing strategies for the brands that invested in strong and catchy visual content.

With the updates of recent years, Instagram became the ultimate real-time update platform. The power of Instagram Stories (photos or short videos that are shared with your followers for maximum 24 hours) is crafting a new way to communicate with the fan base, more direct, personal and temporary compared to what was in the past.

The passage to Facebook’s family allowed the two platforms to cross-collect data about the users, in order to create detailed profiles about each person’s online behaviors, profiles that are targetable in advertising campaigns.

_ Twitter

This platform allows users to share short, engaging messages (called "tweets") with a broad audience. The format of the shareable posts is fixed: 140 characters, images or short videos, and link to Web Pages.

This minimalist structure has been the fortune of Twitter, which, despite the competition, is still a very trendy social media platform (especially in North America).

Most of the content is public, meaning that is not mandatory to follow another user in order to see their online activities. This made possible to Twitter to become a very famous platform for public figures, politicians, actors, brands, and organization to communicate with their fanbase. The "microblogging" style of communication makes possible to create big engagements with the users, which are naturally more likely to interact with short, juicy content, rather than with long and complex storytelling.

On the other side, is possible to run paid ads on Twitter. These ads are divided into two categories:

_ Ads that are aimed to drive traffic to the organization's/person's page, in order to increase the general fanbase and boost the awareness level.

_ Ads that promote a single tweet, very effective when the intention is to generate high engagement on a specific topic.

In figure 4.8 we can see the follower's growth percentage that happened between 2017 and 2018 across these main social media platforms. To a relatively slow growth of Facebook, we can see a major rise in Twitter and Instagram followers. This is explained with the fact that Facebook's organic reach (meaning the number of people who see the non-paid shared posts) has been recently cut down for business and charity pages, in favor of a more paid-reach approach. On the other hand, Twitter and Instagram still give big value to good quality content that is shared organically. That's why in recent years the "follow" action has become more meaningful in these platforms rather than on Facebook.

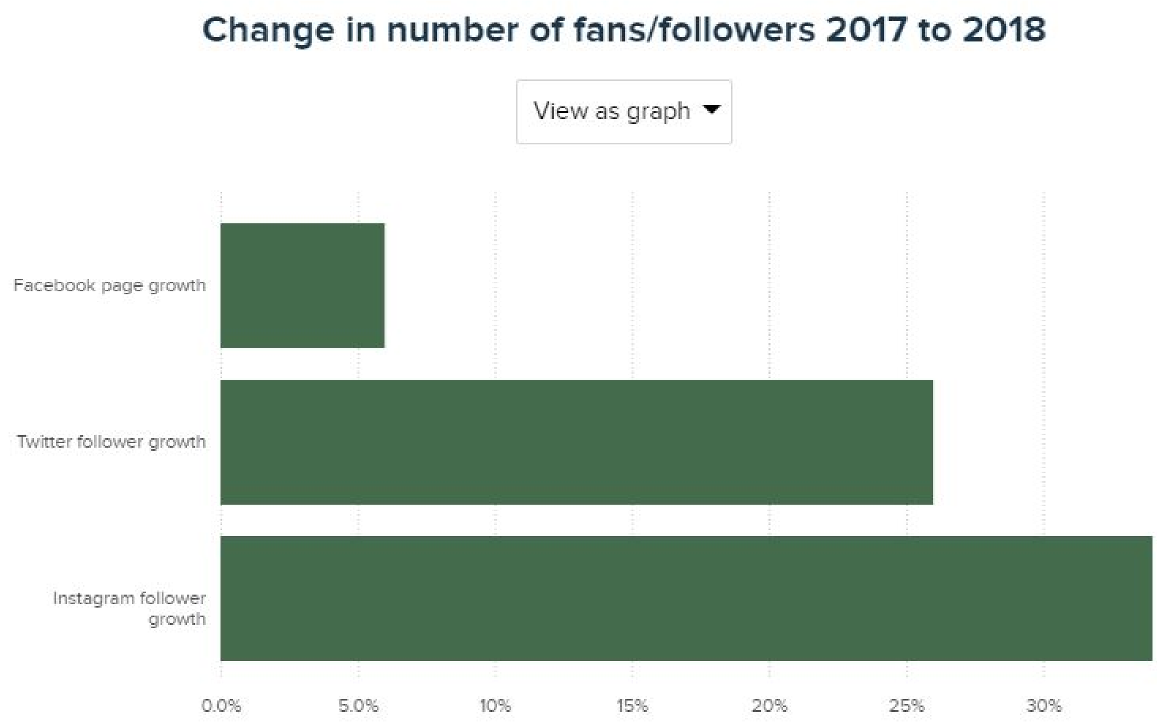

Figure 3.3. Source: https://mrbenchmarks.com/numbers/social-media

_ Linkedin

With 546 million registered users and 260 million active users every month (Cooper, 2019), Linkedin is nowadays the most used social network for professionals and organizations. The main difference with its counterparts is that Linkedin's nature is less frivolous and deeply professional – oriented. A large part of the users are in upper management, have a degree and are generally benefitting from a network of connections with people of similar status.

As opposed to Facebook, where paid advertising is the quickest and most effective way to drive a message out of your network and create awareness, on Linkedin organic engagement still has great value. When a user creates a high-quality content post and people in his network like it or comment on it, occurs a chain effect that shows the post to all the connections of the person who has commented/liked. This is a key mechanism because it rewards the users who put the effort in the creation of the content, rather than on the spending in advertising.

Also on Linkedin is possible to run different types of advertising campaigns, such as text ads, display ads and sponsored inbox messages ads.

A key aspect of advertising on Linkedin, like most digital advertising platforms, is the segmentation of the audience.
In this sense, Linkedin has a large amount of professional information on users. This allows brands to segment in different ways the public to which advertising is directed so that the appropriate information reaches a specific audience.
Useful pieces of information that can be retrieved from Linkedin’s profiles are:

_ Place of residence or work
_ Current job
_ Degree
_ Role or duties
_ Skills
_ Contacts

_ Google
Despite being a search engine and not a social media platform, Google and its advertising platform (Google Ads) are extremely relevant when it comes to driving awareness to the organization online.
According to The Wide Factory (2018), Google is the search engine used by over 90% of the users looking for a product, a service or pieces of information on the internet. Over 50% of people across Europe and the US use the search engine to get informed before buying. Not just for online purchases, but also for services, travels or charities.
Google Ads is the tool, made available by Google, to plan advertising campaigns on the network of Google's partner sites or for campaigns on the search network.
It is, therefore, the tool that should never be lacking in the communication budget of any company that wants to use its website to achieve corporate goals.
First of all, through the SEO (Search Engine Optimization) processes is possible to make lots of small adjustments to a website so that Google sees it as relevant and makes it appear on the firsts search pages of the organic results. This is a slow way to gain relevance and traffic for free.

On the other side, running ads on Google is possible in many different ways. Is possible to choose between different campaign types:

_ Search Network (where the results will appear in the search pages after the input of certain keywords)
_ Display network (images ads that appear on the partner's websites)
_ Shopping campaign (for the sales of physical products)
_ Video (advertised through the platform of YouTube)
_ App Install campaign.

_ Creating An Effective Content Strategy

In 2014 a survey revealed that among many charities organizations that operated online, 67% of them didn't have an established content strategy on their social media channels. Most of these NPOs followed a "Do It Yourself" approach for building their social interaction, not supported by any professional of the field or external agency.
In order to create an effective social media strategy is necessary, first of all, to brainstorm and figure out some important points:

_ Who is the Donor Persona? (I will explain in details the concept of Donor Persona in Chapter Four)
_ Which actions the user will be requested to perform? (Visit the website, fill a form, make a donation, share a post…)
_ What kind of content will be posted in order to encourage this action? (Photo, videos, gifs, text…)
_ Which channel will be used to post this content?
_ When will this content be posted? (Which days of the week, the period of the year, time of the day…)
_ How much budget do we need to promote the post through advertising?
_ Which advertising platform will we use to run our campaign?

These choices are important, also when it comes to measuring the effectiveness of the social media strategy.

The more social media become popular platforms for brands and organizations to drive their messages and to promote themselves, the more the competition is getting harsh. Nowadays on many platforms (first of all Facebook) is almost impossible to reach new people without having any advertising budget. This was possible some years ago, but, as the algorithm changes as the market changes, in 2019 every organization that starts to think about an online strategy (for awareness or fundraising) will need to realize the fact that is not possible to do it for free.

Once the objective of the campaign is decided, the content to promote and how the budget will be allocated, it's time to start the action. In fundraising, as in any other type of marketing campaign, works the same principle said by Bill Gates in 1996, when the internet epoch was just about to begin: "Content is King" (Evans, 2017)

This simple sentence reminds to all the communicators, fundraisers and marketers in the world that, in the end, nothing is more important than what the final user sees and how he perceives it in relation with your brand/cause/organization.

There are generally two approaches that I would suggest when it comes to a calendar for our social media posts and advertising: the rule of thirds and the 80/20 rule.

The rule of thirds states that all the posts scheduled by the organization's social media page, website or blog should be evenly distributed in these categories:

- Pieces of information about the organization, achievements, news, and updates on the activities carried in the various projects
- Other people's / organization's content, aligned with the organization's topic, that provides value and generates interaction.
- Posts that encourage the audience to engage. Polls, surveys, asking questions and start discussions around sensitive topics.

The second approach is the 80/20 rule, that comes from an economic theory made by the sociologist Pareto (Marshall, 2018). It states that about 80% of the content should be non-promotional, informative and should give real value to the user. The other 20% can be explicitly promotional. By following this rule a good balance will be kept with your content, and the users will not have the perception of an over-promotional brand.

Regardless of the objective of a campaign, the key of winning fundraising campaigns is to be able to match the right content with the right audience. Let’s have a look at the best practices to think about effective content for an NPO.

_ Telling a story

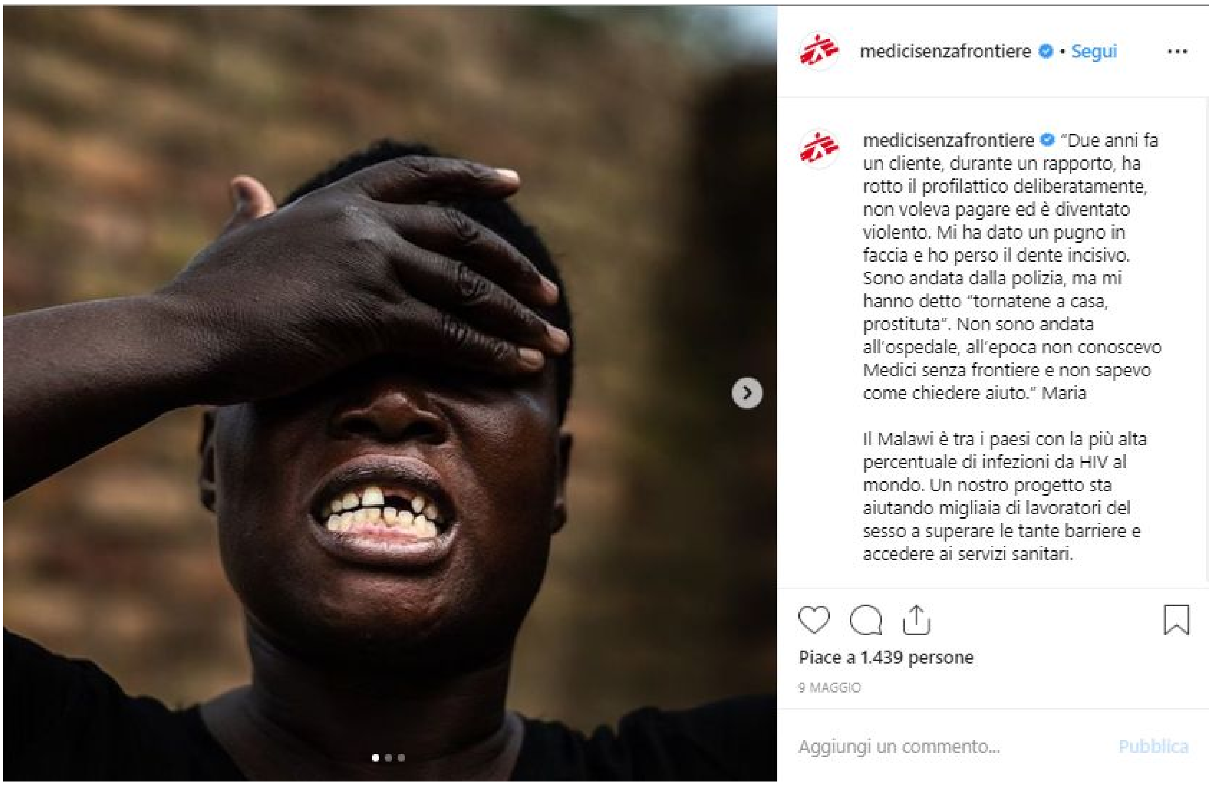

Image 3.4. Source: https://www.instagram.com/medicisenzafrontiere/

Image 3.5. Source: https://www.instagram.com/unicef/

People simply love stories. Many studies and researches showed how the fact to tell a story helps a lot the reader to remember about the message that lies behind the story. More than 75% of the people say that stories are fundamental to drive messages, especially about sensitive topics (Young et al., 2011). When promoting a cause, is often pretty easy to find sensitive stories to share with the audience in order to create sensibilization. Plenty of examples can be found across the social media channels of the most famous organizations (Unicef, UNHCR, Red Cross…).

_ Looking for engagement

Image .63. Source: https://www.instagram.com/unicef/

Most of the social media platforms (Facebook and Instagram in the first place) reward the content that generates engagements with the community. Doesn't matter that much how many followers a profile has. On social media platforms, the most important metric to look for when it comes to giving visibility to the profile is the Engagement Rate (amount of engagement (likes, comments, shares) in relation with the total amount of users who see the post).

Asking questions, creating giveaways and many other methods can be used to push the users to interact with the content. The more is the engagement, the more the platform will see the content as relevant and it will show it to even more people. Also, by creating a lot of engagement the content will gain the so-called "social proof", which will eventually increase the level of trust in the cause.

_ Being visual

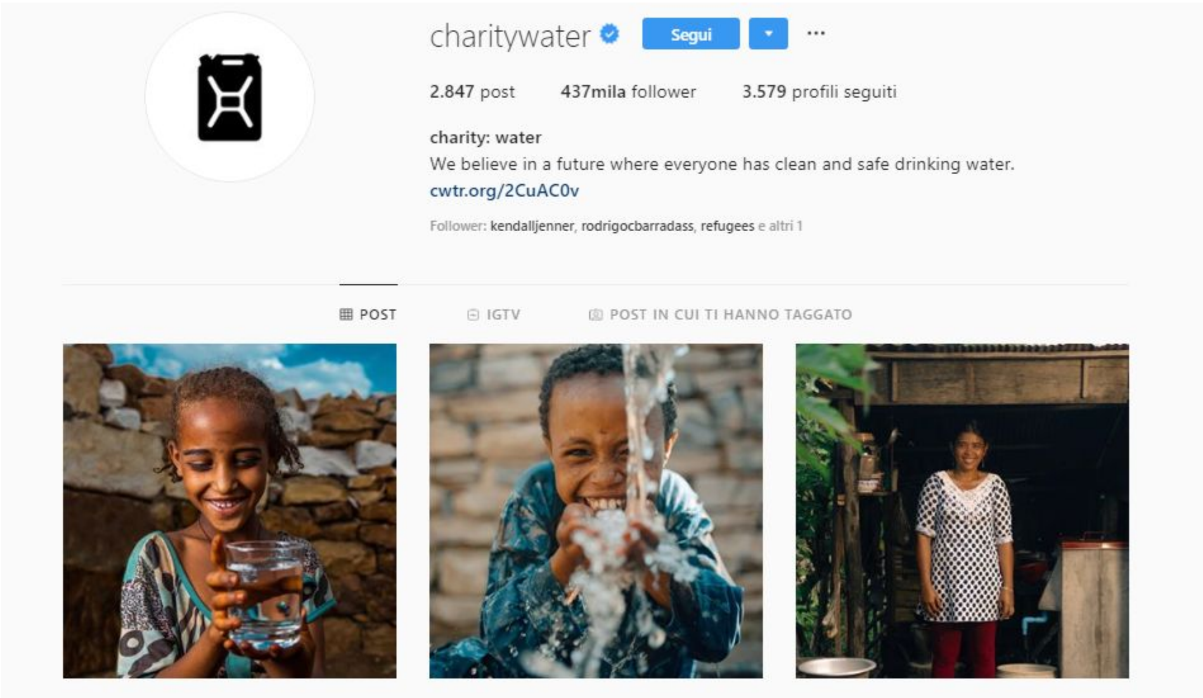

Image 3.7. Source: https://www.instagram.com/charitywater/

For the human mind is easier to process information that comes from images and videos rather than text. Creating powerful visual content is crucial in order to catch the attention of the users, appeal them and make them stop scrolling their news feed. Here I gathered some general tips to improve the visual communication of your organization:

_ Keeping it simple

Linear communication, direct, without too many frills if not necessary, is always the most effective. Combining multiple images, different fonts and shapes in the same graphic project can make the message confusing with the risk of losing of sight the main objective.

_ Choosing the right color palette.

Communicating an idea means choosing carefully the color or colors to be used. Too many colors clash, they are confusing and don't match. It's better to choose 3-5 main colors, and build the visuals around these and their shades, but using shades that blend together. To avoid risky combinations, the color wheel is useful to identify the right color combinations. Adobe

Color (color.adobe.com) is a very useful free online resource that can help to find the right matches.

_ Keeping the font style coherent

Following the logic of simplicity, it is essential not to use too many fonts or if necessary use fonts from the same family. Even the choice of fonts must be weighted based on what is the message to communicate.

_ Planning carefully the empty spaces.

Not necessarily empty space are bad for a page's design. The negative or empty space should always be considered in the realization of a graphic product. This can be a way to lighten the graphics and making it more readable by creating contrast between the elements and the empty areas.

For example, figure 3.8 is a good example of how all these principles are well combined.

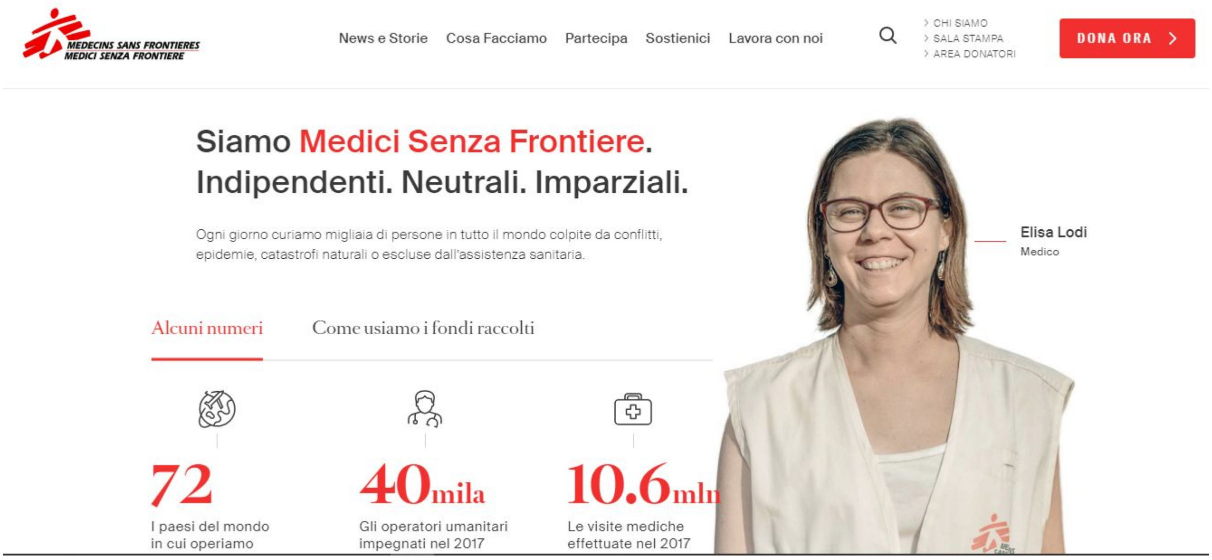

Image 3.8. Source: https://www.medicisenzafrontiere.it/

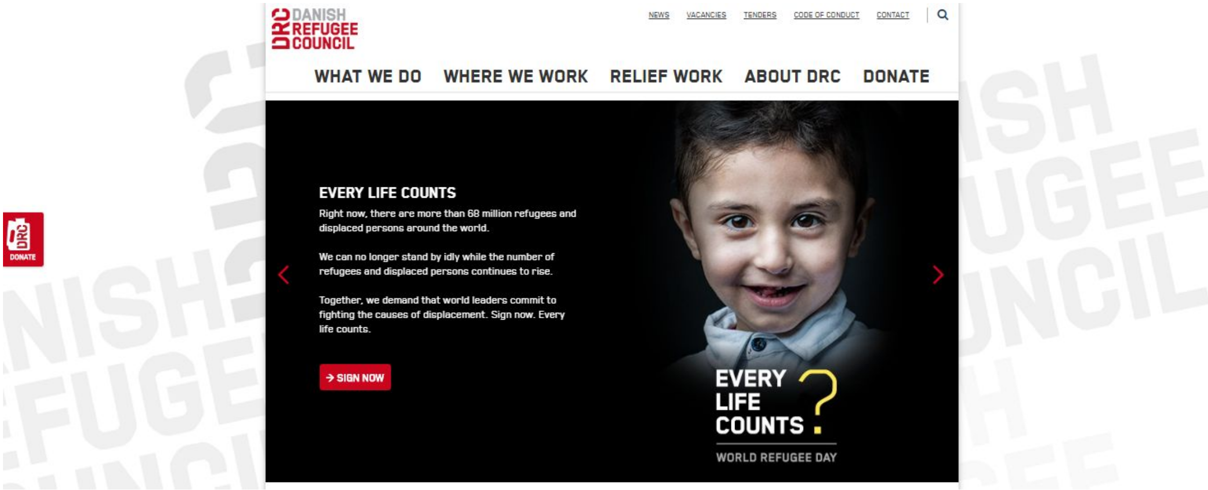

Image 3.9. Source: https://drc.ngo/

_ Using testimonials

Online testimonials and reviews have been replacing (almost) completely word of mouth for years, and represent a fundamental part of the marketing and brand promotion strategies.

How many times, in fact, before buying a product, we do have a look online at the comments of users who had already purchased from the seller? The same logic applies to the donor's path. Positive testimonials and reviews work like a magnet for donations. By providing evidence that people are satisfied with the donation they made, that the outcome is real and measurable, new donors will be appealed more easily.

_ Finding the "Pain Points" for the audience and addressing them the message.

Several years ago, the neuroscientist Antonio Damasio conducted a study (Castiglione, 2015) on some patients with brain damage that prevented them from feeling emotions: he discovered that these people were unable to make choices, even the simplest. Thus he demonstrated that emotions play a central role in decision making.

This led to a psychological theory, taken over by various scientists, that our brain processes information through two systems. The emotional system, automatic and unconscious, and the rational system, controlled and conscious. The first is fast, the second is slower.

Using the emotions of people is an important part of marketing. When thinking about the desired message for our audience, several "tricks" can be used in order to appeal to the people's unconscious, emotional side, hit their pain points, and push them to take action without thinking too much about it. For example, by talking about something that the audience is sensitive about (For example, the flood in a city close to the cost due to climate change) will instantly drive more attention.

Chapter Four: Fundraising Strategy, From Traditional to Digital.

_ Digital marketing and fundraising techniques for non-profits: the shift

It is important to point out again how the digital shift that happened in the past decades deeply changed the way in which people become aware of new brands, organizations, and products. The previously mentioned touchpoints are nowadays mostly online, and they are a very important part of each of the phases of the fundraising cycle. Among the most relevant offline touchpoints we had before the digital era there were:

_ Television
_ Street advertising, posters, flyers.
_ Word of mouth
_ Shops

Nowadays, we can find many touchpoints simply by navigating the internet with our phones, such as:

_ Social Media platforms (Facebook, Instagram, Linkedin…)
_ Google
_ Amazon
_ Blogs and websites
_ Online advertising

Among non-profit organizations, Social media and digital marketing strategies are nowadays used almost by the totality. This has not been a quick process, as non-profit were among the latest category of companies to get involved in this trend. During the past decade, the use rose consistently. According to Haytko and Krueger (2015) only between 2012 and 2013 the increase was of the 61%. At the same time, online giving rose around 10% annually according to the 2018 Global NGO Technology Report.

Is commonly agreed that with the rise of social media we entered in the so-called “web 2.0 age”. While during the web 1.0, the organizations had limited wai to interact with the users, mostly through mail or websites, nowadays things have changed deeply. In Figure 4.1 we can see how the outreach and inbound traffic happened in most of the cases for the first non-profits adopting emails and websites at the beginning of the web age.

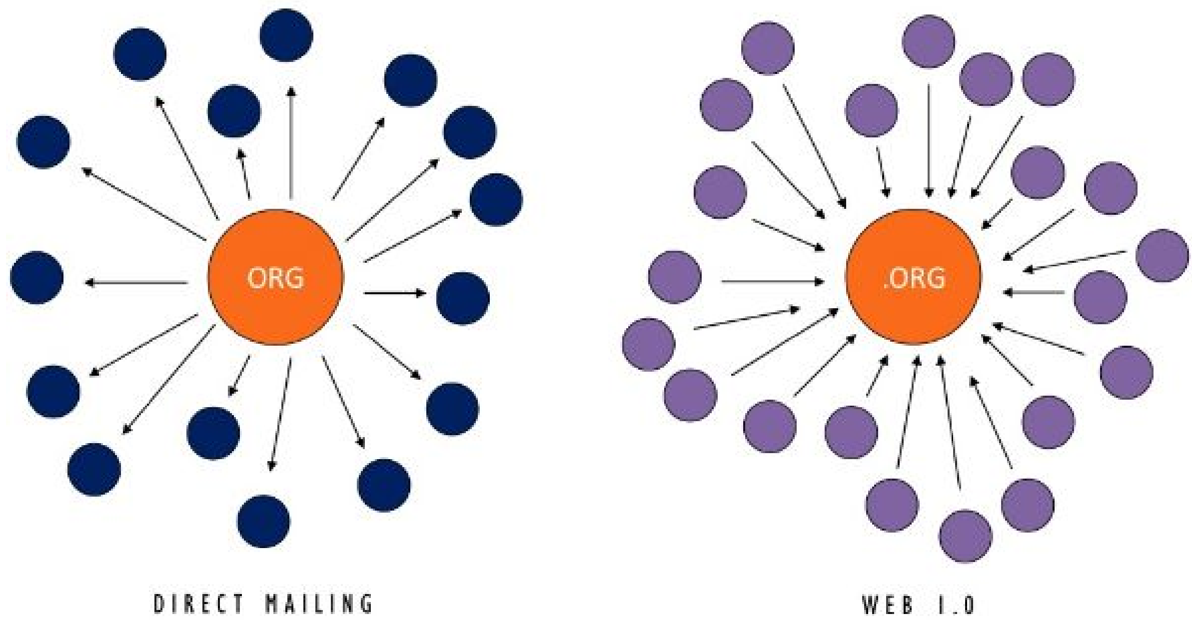

Figure 4.1: The unilateral ways that no-profit used to have to reach donors and prospect donors via email, and be reached by them on a static website platform during the web 1.0

In recent years, it has been proven that online presence assures a great source of income to non-profits all over the world. According to the data of M+R Benchmarks (2019) in 2018 the 92% of all non-profits worldwide used at least one social media channel.

Non-profits raised $0.83 per each website visitor in 2018. International non-profits raised the most, $1.82 per visitor, and the lowest revenue was in the Health sector, only with $0.59 per visitors. Overall, 1 website visitor out of 100 made a donation.

Let’s try to look at the current situation from a distant perspective and ask ourselves a simple, but vital question: why digital media and digital marketing have become so important for such realities?
This can be answered in different ways.

_ Traditional mass-marketing means are really expensive and can be a slow way to spread a certain message. Furthermore, these are suitable for addressing a broad audience, while are really inefficient for small and more precise audiences.
_ On the other hand, digital marketing allows us to segment more precisely the audiences, addressing different messages to, for example, men, women, millennials, people who live in certain areas, people who like certain brands or who have a certain education level.
_ The digital platforms where these messages are driven (social media, websites…) are a greenfield for shaping people’s opinion and appeals following the rules of social interactions. As Okazaki and Taylor (2013) said:

“Social media has three marketing strengths: it facilitates communication between companies and consumers; it helps consumers shape their public identity through the sharing of their brand decisions; and it provides a connection between consumers that allows them to share their experiences”

The connection between the organization and the user, and the one between the user (already aware of the organization) and the other users are the most relevant aspect of this shift.
While before the connection between organization and user was almost totally unilateral, thanks to social media now the users have the possibility to constantly interact with the organization, through direct messages, comments to the posts and similar activities. The feedback process is almost immediate, in both directions, and (most of the time) public and visible to all the external users. This underlines how the quality of such engagement can impact the brand, positively or negatively. While the communicational environment changes, for the fundraiser marketers it becomes necessary to change the tactics. Instead of pushing broad emails and communications to a large scale audience, digital marketing allows an hyper-segmentation of the audience, translated into the possibility to address very personal messages to every single user.

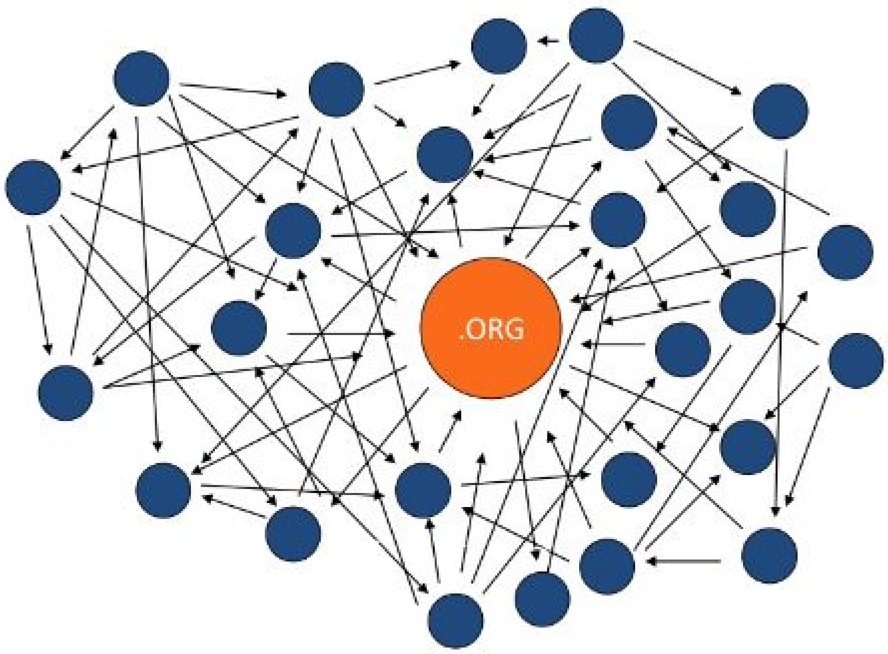

Figure 4.2: In web 2.0, communication is no longer unilateral but multilateral. Engagement happens across different channels and feedback is immediate and public.

On the other side, also the engagement between users is a vital part of this process. Successful non profits are able to create a big hype and awareness around the cause they are raising funds for, making possible to use the users themselves as fundraisers, and scale the number of donations without the need of big investments.

_ The Donor Persona

I am going now to address a topic that comes from traditional marketing: the Personas. When it comes to choosing the channel and the content to use in order to develop our strategy, is really important to have a clear idea of who the ideal "donor persona" is (Chisolm, S. 2018). Just by knowing who is the person who is willing to donate for the cause, what is his/her age, gender, what jobs and hobbies does he/she have, the organization will be able to create a detailed communication strategy and address the right social media channels.

Is it something sure that the same message sent to Millennials would be also effective for the Boomers (those born between 1946 and 1964)?
Will the GenXers (born between 1965 and 1980) appreciate the same contents that appeal and involve the Silents (those people born before 1946)?
The answer is: most likely no. That's why it's crucial to take care of all these differences and try to build the Donor Personas in the most effective way.
This term is defined as a single donor that is representative of donors who have the same:

1. Character traits,
2. Hobbies
3. Interests
4. Opinions
5. Behaviors
6. Habits
7. Lifestyle
8. Attitudes
9. Moral values
10. Prejudices
11. Fears.

These are the 11 information areas that should be considered and analyzed during this process.
Here I am going to talk about the 5 steps that are necessary to follow in order to define a donor persona. In order to follow this structure, it's necessary to have a database of donors already existing, even if not necessarily big. Then, in order to do a proper statistical analysis, an interview will be conducted.

_ Step one: The questions.
1. What is the age of the donors? What are other significant aspects of their demographic characteristics?
2. What are their interests? Their passions? Why do they feel involved in our non-profit cause?

3. What are the donation habits? Frequency? Amounts? Most relevant periods of the year?
4. Which preferred means of communication? Do they use social media? If yes, which ones?
6. What is their value scale? What upset them? What are they afraid of? What makes them happy?

_ Step Two: The Interviews.

As the second step interviews are going to be made on the selected population. The best practice would be trying to talk with various types of demographics (gender, age, education level, and social status). Also, will be relevant to interview the volunteers who are supporting the cause (they donate their time, they are donor personas too!). The more donors are interviewed, the more accurately the donor persona can be defined. The interview can be by telephone, by email, or through an online survey.

_ Step Three: Learn from the person

Lot of things can be learned simply by observing the donor. By trying to have a direct talk with these people, we can see how do they behave, which register they use to talk, how they dress, how comfortable they feel. Also, their social media profiles are rich sources of information.

_ Step FOUR: Create a pattern with the data gathered

With the data collected by the donors and the answers from the surveys, it is the moment to compare the pieces of information and finding trends and patterns.

Here the best practice is to prepare a diagram that highlights and summarizes the various features.

_ Step FIVE: The donor personas.

In order to be able to shape a great communication strategy online, will be necessary as the next step to translate the characteristics of this Persona into visual and textual content to publish and advertise online.

The work doesn’t necessarily end here, the donor personas can be deepen further by adding the results of future research (for example, after getting the first feedback on the average retention time of certain demographics, or the average amount donated) .It is a demanding job, but necessary and useful to build an effective content strategy!

_ Peer to Peer Fundraising

Peer to peer fundraising is a very important part of what makes an effective fundraising strategy in 2019. With this term, we define the process that makes a network of followers or donors to become an active part of a certain fundraising campaign through the use of social media and online platforms. This includes all the campaigns that require some kind of engagement from the user's side (share with friends, invite people to a certain page/blog, spread the word through messages). As Ferrara (2011) explains, this is an evolution of the concept of Personal Fundraising, a concept created in 2007 to define the possibility to use the social networks to transform every donor or volunteer in a fundraiser without using any intermediary.

According to the 2018 Global NGO Technology Report, currently, 33% of NGOs use an online peer-to-peer fundraising service. Since it is more likely to donate if someone is asked to do so by friends and family members, many fundraisers don't want to miss this chance and started looking for creative ways to engage with people's connections through peer to peer strategies.

Figure 5.3: Worldwide figures of Peer to Peer Fundraising according to http://techreport.ngo/wp-content/uploads/2018-Tech-Report-English.pdf

Here I am going to list a couple of examples of successful peer to peer fundraising initiatives:

_ The Mongol Rally (2019F) is a non-competitive Rally for charity purposes. The main starting point is the Goodwood Circuit, UK, with additional starting points distributed in other European countries and the finish line in Ulan Bator in Mongolia. It is described by the organizers as "the greatest adventure in the world". to participate in the rally it is necessary to register a team with a vehicle with a cylinder capacity of less than 1,000cc and at least 10 years of age. All vehicles participating in the tender are finally put up for auction once they arrive in Mongolia and the proceeds destined for charity work.
The rally was designed to be as much as possible an adventure for the participants, and it is not a rally in the traditional sense of the term. The organizers ("The adventurists") would like to point out that it is forbidden to use satellite navigators, and it is recommended to use the motorways as little as possible to reach the finish line. There are also other differences from traditional rallies, there is no prize for the first arrivals, the organization of the rally does not provide any kind of technical, organizational or medical assistance along the way.

The peculiar nature of the rally makes easy for every team to create a viral message to share with friends and connections. They can support the team by donating money, they can become sponsors and all the extra money collected will be given to charities.

_ The Ice Bucket Challenge is a viral campaign launched by the ALS Association with the aim of raising public awareness of amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS) and stimulating donations for research.
The phenomenon has spread virally on social media during the summer of 2014.
A person who takes part in the competition is filmed while pouring a bucket of cold water on his head and then he must make a donation to the ALS Association. The individual must then appoint three other people, who have 24 hours to respond to the challenge.
In the United States, people shared 1.2 million videos on the Ice Bucket Challenge on Facebook; moreover, the challenge was cited 2.2 million times on Twitter.
The initiative boosted greatly the donations made to ALS association. According to the study made by Struc (2019) the annual fundings reportedly increased by 184%.

As is possible to note, this is a great way to acquire new donors and strengthen the network of people related to the organization, here I list the main benefits of peer to peer fundraising processes:

_ Peer to peer fundraising can work alongside traditional fundraising campaigns. While the seconds normally require an investment and are mainly focused on the acquisition of new donors out of an audience mainly made by people who are not aware of the organization, the first is built upon pre-existing relationships! The target of this process will be the close connections of the people already in the network of the organization (family, friends…)
_ The growth is organic, and it can easily be started without any monetary investment.
_ It is potentially scalable without limitations. People will be the fundraisers on the organization's behalf, they only need to be provided with the right tools and a strong message in order to push them to become your advocates.

_ Crowdfunding

In the 21st century, when a project has no external funding or public relations resources and needs support and initial push to start up, crowdfunding can be the answer to its problems.
With the word "crowdfunding" we define all these fundraising processes that aim to collect money, mostly via the Internet, through small contributions from very large groups that share the same interest or a common project or intend to support an innovative idea (Luc et al., 2014).
Crowdfunding was born from the necessity that small businesses and private innovators had to find ways to raise funds that were less "complex" than banks, venture capitals, and business angels.
In the past decade, crowdfunding platforms helped to create amazing projects of any kind, from artistic ones to innovative technological products and raising funds for charitable causes.
According to Szimgiera (2018) in 2017 is estimated that globally crowdfunding platforms generated more than 33 Billion dollars in funds.
The main fundraising platforms, that is active globally and imitated by hundreds of similar local ones, is Kickstarter (www.kickstarter.com). Unfortunately, this platform is not providing support for charity projects, as it is focused completely on art and innovation. Similar platforms that, on the other hand, are designed especially for no-profit are Fundly (www.fundly.com), Causes (www.causes.com), CauseVox (www.causevox.com).
Here anyone can open a project page where to showcase the idea that they would like to raise funds for. On the page, the organization needs to tell the story of the project and make it appealing for the potential donor. It is possible to add media files (images or videos), description of the story of the project and of the campaign itself, and tell more about the benefits that the single funders will receive once the goal is achieved and the project is launched.

_ The Crowdfunding Campaign

Launching a crowdfunding campaign without careful preparation and with an improvised strategy (or rather, without a strategy) may lead to project failure. If the authors skip fundamental steps for the success of their campaign and underestimate its importance, as they hurry to start collecting funds they are more prone to fail. After analyzing several studies about the topic (Kromidha, E. & Robson, P., 2016; Vachelard J, Gambarra-Soares T, Augustini G, Riul P, Maracaja-Coutinho V., 2016), I would like to suggest the following steps, to ensure effective delivery of the campaign:

_ Setting a target amount to raise and a deadline for the campaign.
The goal set should be SMART: Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant and Time-Bound (Cole, K., Graves, T., & Cipkowski, P., 2010). Also, a period of action for the campaign should be set from the beginning, with an end date when the success (or failure) has to be declared.

_ Preparing the tasks and deciding the team members who will be in charge of each of them.
Who will be in charge of the written content? Who will create promotional videos? Who will manage the community online?
It is important to give specific tasks to each person in order to allocate the human resources in the best way possible and make sure that each person's expertise is used in the right context.

_ Setting up an online presence on social media and on the crowdfunding platform.
In order to attract people and create an online community is necessary to be present on the channels that are going to be used for the campaign. Creating the campaign's Page on the crowdfunding hub (for example, Kickstarter, Fundly, Indiegogo…) is a crucial starting step, as it would be the core of the attraction and the donation process.

Figure 4.4. Source: Fundly.com

Also, it would be good to consider the possibility to create a Facebook Page, a Group, an Instagram profile and a Twitter account for the specific campaign. Being active on all these channels, and link them between each other and with the campaign's main website, will help to significantly increase the exposure of the project.

_ Starting a pre-launch campaign in order to make people aware of the cause and build a subscriber list.

Reaching out to first connections (friends, family, friends of friends…) and telling them to spread the word before the campaign starts it is a good way to build a foundation of awareness. Post in relevant Facebook groups, advertise on Facebook and Instagram in order to make people sign up to an email list where you will update them about the beginning and the development of the campaign.

_ Telling a story and being creative.
It is ideal to build a simple, clear and user-friendly website where showcasing all the relevant information about the campaign using all the creative formats available.
The core of the storytelling should be a good quality, short video (2-5 minutes long) where to showcase the cause's background and purpose.
Telling stories with a long text/article supported by relevant images is also a best practice, in order to support the video content and provide additional pieces of information.

_ Choosing the right advertising channels.
What budget is going to be allocated the campaigns and which channels are going to be used? Most likely, the primary advertising channels would be Facebook, Instagram and Google ads, as they are a fairly low-cost way to create awareness and drive traffic to the crowdfunding page. Also, through these platforms it is possible to track every step of the user journey, so to measure the effectiveness of the campaign.

_ Aiming to raise the first 30% of the goal as soon as possible.
Campaigns that raise the 30% of the goal within the first launch week are most likely to succeed (Kuppuswamy, Bayusb, 2017), because of the strong social proof factor that the campaign gains in this period. Let's think about it with a metaphor: If we want to go out for dinner, and walking in the street we see a restaurant with a line of people waiting for their tables, and another one that is completely empty, which of the two would look more appealing?

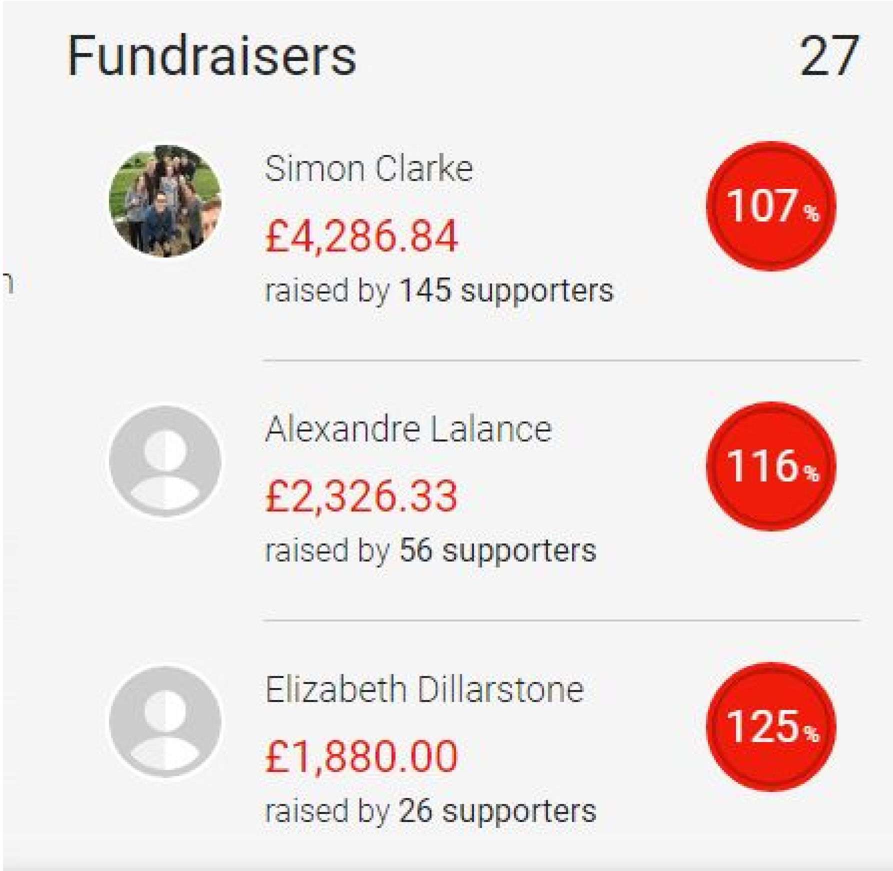

Figure 4.5: A good example of a crowdfunding campaign boosted by peer to peer interactions. The single backers, who got in touch with the campaign first, acted as fundraisers themselves by sharing the campaign to their connections (through direct message or social media channels) and pushing them to donate too. Source: https://www.justgiving.com/campaigns/charity/savethechildren/eastafricafoodcrisis)

Why peer to peer and crowdfunding work so well in the non-profit sector? Because they give people what they want. In particular:

_ Transparency: people want to know how their money will be used, and they care about the actual impact that their actions have. That is the reason why is also important to constantly share real stories and case studies, and relate them with the funds raised by the organization.

_ Choice: exactly as what would happen in a fashion store, people want to choose which cause or project to support, and they want to choose things that are aligned with their tastes or emotional connections. This big amount of retention is also the reason why donors are not anymore so faithful to only one organization, but they can easily change.

_ Social Media Community: people want to feel part of a group, and they interact easily with other people who share with them the same love for a certain charitable cause. They want to choose with who and how to interact, and they like to feel aligned with their peers. Social media platforms like Facebook and Instagram are the perfect field to build such communities, where the boundary user-user-organization can grow stronger and stronger every day if the engagement level is kept high (in quality and quantity).

_ Gamification: people like to play, to have a target to reach, a reward to achieve. Crowdfunding campaigns are perfect to create gaming dynamics, as they often offer rewards based on the reach of certain benchmarks (the amount donated).

_ Segmentation of the audience

In order to analyze the results of a fundraising campaign in an objective way, is good to establish some Key Performances Indicators (KPIs) and success benchmarks. Once the marketing campaigns are live and the donor base starts to grow, is a good practice to divide the donors (or prospective donors) in different categories, in order to be able to create new marketing strategies that might fit each of these. This process is called "segmentation"

Audience Segmentation is necessary to divide the donors into different categories based on how often they donate, how much they donate, through which channel they donate and other factors. In this way, the organization will be able to create specific messages to address each segment. For instance, a mail sent to a new donor will require a different communicative approach than a mail addressed to a donor who is engaged with the cause since here. Here I list the main categories of segmentation retrieved by Centro Studi Philanthropy (2010):

Segmentation based on time

_ New donors

These are the donors who just made few donations, and they are in a stage that is too early to consider them active donors. The objective is to keep them donating and turning them it on active donors over time.

_ Lost donors

These people donated the last time between 19 and 36 months ago, so they are about to be lost. The objective is to get them back.

_ Inactive donors.

Donors whose last activity happened between 37 and 60 months ago.

_ Reactivated donors

They made a donation with more than 37 months since the last one.

_ Current donors

Donors who made a donation in the past year

_ Renewal donors

Donors who have been active more than a year ago, and recently made a new donation.

_ Active donors

All the donors who made a donation in the past 18 months. This can include:

- All the new donors acquired in the past 18 months
- Reactivated or renewal donors
- Current donors

_ Donors of specific occasions.

People who donate only on certain occasions such as Christmas, Easter, Weddings, Birthdays…

Segmentation based on Frequency

_ One-time gift donors.

People who donated after a specific request and they are not up to donate again.

_ Multiple times per year donors.

People who donate more than one time per year

_ Pluriennal donors.

These are the people who follow the cause and donate every year (one or more times) since at least 3 years.

_ Regular donors (Monthly or Quarterly).

People who subscribe to a donation plan that automatically renovates every month/quarter. This is particularly important for non-profits, because it causes the highest return on investment and donor retention.

_ Yearly donors.

Regular donors who donate once per year.

Segmentation for platform

A common way to create segments of donors is dividing them by the platform/channel they donated from (or engaged the most with, when it comes to social media). In this way is possible to understand if the best return on investment comes from direct mailing, Facebook, face to face, etc…

Geographic segmentation

A common segmentation method to find out which cities, regions or countries are sustaining the cause the most.

Demographic segmentation

Another important way of segmentation consists of splitting the donors into different categories such as gender, age-range, and social status.

_ Fundraising Key Performance Indicators

In order to check the health status of a campaigns is necessary to establish the target benchmark to reach. Here I list the most important indicators when it comes to fundraising campaigns:

_ Break-even point.

This is a value that indicates the number of donations needed to cover the costs previously incurred, in order to close the reference period without profits or losses. Before starting a campaign, is necessary to do a break-even analysis, meaning the evaluation of the factors to consider and the strategy to adopt in order to reach the break-even point within a certain period of time.

_ Annual donation per person.

Total amount raised / Number of donors = Annual donation per person.

This can be applied to all the donor database or to single segments, in order to understand which one is the most profitable one.

_ Average number of donations per donor.

Total amount of donations / Number of donors = Average number of donations per donor.

Also, this can be applied to single segments in order to understand which one is the most active in terms of amount of donations.

_ Percentage of retention

*(Number of people who responds positively to the call/number of active donors in the past year) * 100 = Percentage of retention*

In case of subscriptions or annual/monthly/quarterly donations, it is important to retain the donors year after year by calling them to renew the donation plan. It is difficult usually improbable to retain the 100% of the donors, but the highest the percentage, the more successful the campaign can be considered.

Conclusions

In this thesis I carried out an extensive review of the literature and secondary data on the use of digital marketing for the non-profit sector. There are significant opportunities that have so far been largely neglected by the main actors in this highly important activity, limiting the access to strongly needed access to finance.
I discussed the main challenges that organizations have to face when the transition from a traditional fundraising model to a digital one occurs, which are mainly the scarcity of funds allocated to marketing activities and the lack of professional figures with specific skills. In this work it is possible to see how concepts deriving from traditional marketing, such as Persona and types of public, can be combined with digital thanks to the tools made available by the network and social media. Knowing these theoretical concepts and knowing how to apply them in practice is fundamental to being able to create an effective fundraising strategy.

After the topics presented, I would like to give the following recommendations to workers and managers of non-profit organizations who want to drive maximum benefits from digital resources:

_ It is very important to invest st in specialized personnel. Nowadays it is no longer possible to ignore the importance of social media when it comes to communication. For this reason it is crucial to have a person, or a team, who are qualified and totally involved in this branch of the organization.

_ Studying the audience in detail, and segmenting people based on specific actions most likely will bring huge benefits. Only in this way will it be possible to create specific communication plans for each segment, as opposed to the mass communication techniques that dominated the pre-social media era.

_ It’s good to diversify the message by using all the different creative specs and placements granted by each communication channel. The type of content suitable for Instagram's audience is different from that of Twitter or Linkedin. Studying the communication channel, as well as the public that populates it, is essential to convey the message as effectively as possible.

_ Create virality and amplify the scope of the campaigns through crowdfunding and peer to peer fundraising processes. Making people who really feel the cause close spread the word and become fundraisers themselves is the best way to exponentially increase coverage and new donations.

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