



# STUDY OF THE BOOMERANG EFFECT IN A DIGITAL COMMUNITY AMONG YOUNG PEOPLE

## Synergies and Differences between Advertising Communication and Museum Experience

ANA PEDREÑO SANTOS<sup>1</sup>, SONIA CARCELÉN GARCÍA<sup>1</sup>, MÓNICA VIÑARÁS ABAD<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Universidad Complutense de Madrid, Spain

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### KEYWORDS

*Boomerang effect*  
*Social Advertising*  
*Racism*  
*Museum*  
*Digital Community*  
*Communication*  
*Vulnerability*

### ABSTRACT

*This research proposes an exploratory work, through the search for new proposals to raise awareness of high-impact social issues, based on the potential of the museum experience as a persuasive communication tool. The purpose of the study is to compare the boomerang effect through the impact that can be caused by a traditional advertising communication and a museum experience. The work has been designed with a qualitative and experimental methodology through a Digital Community with a sample of young people divided into two groups and exposed to two different stimuli: a spot and a visit to the museum, working in both cases under the same social content, such as their attitude towards racism. The results show differences in the groups depending on the way in which they have been exposed to and consumed the content, which opens a way to investigate new alternatives in persuasive communication.*

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## 1. Introduction

The boomerang effect in advertising occurs when a campaign provokes the opposite effect to the desired one. This reaction is particularly noticeable in awareness campaigns related to vulnerable groups (for reasons of race, sexual diversity or gender, among others) (Viñarás et al., 2023). This effect has increased in recent years due to the existing media and social polarization. In social psychology, the *boomerang* effect occurs when the belief, attitude or behavior of the receiver of a message moves in the opposite direction to the position advocated in a message (Zhao and Fink, 2021). In a *boomerang* effect situation, the audience becomes defensive and rejects the message (Levit and Cismaru, 2020). This is not only ineffective communication, but also counterproductive.

This paper proposes an experiment that aims to find alternatives that complement traditional persuasive communication to raise awareness about social issues and vulnerable audiences. Specifically, in museum experiences based on museographic language and informal learning.

In order to carry out this experiment, focused on raising awareness against racism, we required the support of a qualitative social research technique that allowed the monitoring of two groups of participants. One of the groups was exposed to an advertising campaign to raise awareness about racism and the other was exposed to a museum activity with the same purpose. Through a digital community it has been possible to carry out this analysis, which has provided information on the changes in the opinions of both groups of young people.

The results obtained contribute to the literature on persuasive communication and the boomerang effect by providing a new approach to the use of museums as a complementary activity to advertising to reinforce messages, using a novel tool for the analysis and monitoring of this impact: the digital community.

## 2. State of the art

First, a state of the art has been established around the object of study rooted in the variables to be addressed: youth and racism, boomerang effect and persuasive communication and the museum, both for its social role as well as for the museum experience, its language and its capacity for informal learning.

### 2.1. Youth and racism

In the study carried out by the Queen Sofia Center, "Young people and Racism. Study on racist and xenophobic perceptions and attitudes among young people in Spain" (Sanmartín & Kuric, 2022), 75% of young Spaniards do not show racist attitudes or behavior. However, a worrying 25% do show clearly racist and xenophobic attitudes. This group is mainly made up of men who place themselves ideologically on the extreme right (Andújar et al., 2022).

Despite this, it is still worrying that 25% show a certain degree of agreement with racist statements and that up to 40.3% point out that the lack of adaptation of immigrants is the root of racist discourse, thus blaming and holding minorities responsible. Furthermore, only 57.2% of young people indicate that they would be happy if people from any of the minorities consulted were to occupy a social position of responsibility such as that of mayor.

Regarding the European Union, more than half of the respondents say that there is widespread discrimination in their country for being romani (65%), skin colored (61%), ethnicity (60%), gender identity (being transgender, 57%) or sexual orientation (54%) (Eurobarometer, 2023).

The first World Conference to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination was held in Geneva in 1978. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were adopted by all United Nations Member States. The fight against discrimination contributes to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

In recent years, the polarization of society has radicalized opinions, which may affect the evolution of racism. The fundamental rights of individuals are under threat across Europe. This is due to rising levels of poverty, persistent threats to democracy, widespread racism and challenges in the context of migration, as the FRA's Fundamental Rights Report 2024 (FRA, 2024) concludes. Hate crimes due to racism and xenophobia in Spain are the most numerous and represent 41.8% of the total (ONDOD, 2023).

Therefore, it is essential to know the stereotypes and prejudices among young people, since they reflect beliefs, generalizations and evaluations about other people or social groups based on their

characteristics, lifestyles, ideology, gender identity, ethnicity or sexual orientation, among others. In this regard, the study by Barral et al. (2021) on the prejudices of young Spaniards indicates that 80% of young people in Spain are aware of emitting harmful prejudices. Twenty-four percent do so on a frequent basis. 94% of Spanish youth (aged 15 to 30 years) are aware of receiving devaluation through harmful prejudices and 49% do so frequently. The researchers speak of a group of participants that they call "hot", since they receive and emit judgments. This group is constituted by the devaluing prejudices around political ideas (ideology) and their connection with issues of great weight in the country's scene such as nationalism, immigration and gender equality.

## 2.2. The boomerang effect

Theories related to the *boomerang* effect come from the field of psychology and are developed especially in the field of political communication and social marketing. People may perceive a message as more or less consistent with their initial belief or attitude on a subject (i.e. pro-attitudinal) or as discrepant from their belief or attitude (i.e. counter-attitudinal). The outcome of communication is determined by how a message is evaluated, and there is not always a relationship with the quality of the arguments used to persuade (Zhao and Fink, 2021). Counter-attitudinal messages have been studied as key antecedents of the *boomerang* effect in psychological reactance theory. According to reactance theory the most direct way for the individual to reestablish the freedom they feel they have is through the *boomerang* effect. Both message discrepancy and threat to perceived freedom directly predict reactance and with it the boomerang effect (Zhao and Fink, 2021).

This occurs even when the information is erroneous or false. Often misinformation can continue to influence people's thinking even after receiving a correction (Ecker et al., 2022). This is why fake news communicators encourage people to trust their emotions. Because emotions increase their vulnerability to misinformation. Between emotion and persuasion, people naturally gravitate toward more emotional language when trying to convince others (Ecker et al., 2022). The interpretation of information is also affected by one's emotional state. Thus, a cheerful state of mind increases the chances of deception in the most vulnerable people, sadness reduces credulity, and anger reinforces opinions consistent with one's own beliefs.

Increasing polarization has led to an increase in studies related to the boomerang effect in the political arena and citizens' beliefs. These opinions are formed influenced by cognitive, social, and affective factors (Ecker et al., 2022). Motivated reasoning theory indicates that individuals with strong personal convictions want to hear information that is in line with their way of thinking and reject others that do not conform to their previous opinions and beliefs (Zhou, 2016). When motivated reasoners are exposed to information that clashes with their beliefs, they develop motivated skepticism in which they mentally counterargue against any stimuli that might depolarize their opinions (Zhou, 2016). For example, if a message is valued as a threat to identity this may provoke intense negative emotions that motivate strategies such as discrediting the source, ignoring evidence inconsistent with their worldview, or selectively focusing on evidence that reinforces it (Ecker et al., 2022). These are clearly areas ripe for a boomerang effect to occur.

The communications that produce the greatest boomerang effect are those that ask citizens to change their behavior (Osman, 2020). Messages about social norms aim to encourage individuals to engage in socially beneficial behaviors by exchanging their individual benefit for the collective benefit (Kuang and Bicchieri, 2024). If the social norm is not accompanied by a peremptory norm, it is left to the citizen to decide whether or not to abide by the requested norm. To avoid the boomerang effect in these cases Chongwilaikasaem and Ayaragarnchanakul (2023), suggest the combination of a descriptive social norm together with an imperative norm.

The areas in which Osman (2020) found a greater number of boomerang effects after classifying 65 studies on the subject in more than twenty countries from different continents, are those communications related to behavioral interventions in the field of health (25%) (improving diet, doing more sport), environment (28%) (sustainable consumption, reduction of energy and water consumption), increase in charitable donations (13%) and increase in tax compliance (8%).

Social advertising is a type of persuasive, paid, intentional and interested advertising communication that serves specific social interest causes through advertising media (Viñarás Abad, 2018). It has non-commercial objectives that contribute to social and human development, either in the short or long

term, and can be part of programs for social change and awareness. This type of advertising is a persuasive force that manifests itself in two forms: persuasion and deterrence. For example, in two road safety campaigns, persuasion to use seat belts is not the same as dissuasion to drive under the influence of alcohol. This second form of persuasion is very common in social advertising.

In recent years, there has been a clear increase in social advertising campaigns. If we take into account the role played by this discipline in our society, this situation is not accidental. Codeluppi (2007) takes up the idea that advertising can exert a positive social influence as an instrument for the modernization of society. The French philosopher Mattelart (1991), in his famous book "Advertising", stated that the advertising institution proposes more than ever a model for the organization of social relations. Therefore, the development of social advertising is the fruit of social change.

In Spain there are no reference studies on advertising that raises awareness against racism (Pastor and Vizcaíno-Laorga, 2008), i.e., that which discourages behavior against people of races different from one's own. However, an increase in awareness campaigns can be observed through sports, where teams and federations have been including this type of messages for years.

### **2.3. Museums, Experience and Learning**

The ICOM (International Council of Museums) was born on November 16, 1946 at the Louvre Museum in Paris. Since then, it offers the definition of museum, whose evaluation responds to the social changes that take place. In Prague, on August 24, 2022, the Extraordinary General Assembly of ICOM approved the proposal of the new definition of museum with 92.41%:

A museum is a non-profit, permanent institution at the service of society that researches, collects, preserves, interprets and exhibits tangible and intangible heritage. Open to the public, accessible and inclusive, museums foster diversity and sustainability. Involving communities, museums operate and communicate ethically and professionally, offering varied experiences for education, enjoyment, reflection, and knowledge sharing (ICOM, 2022).

The New Museology was one of the great theoretical proposals that promoted the change in the purpose of the museum institution in the second half of the 20th century. In these years, the definition of museum acquires a sense of service to the community, where the museum is an institution at the service of the society to which it belongs and possesses in itself the elements that allow it to participate in the process of forming the conscience of the community it serves. In order for this to be carried out, museums must adapt and become authentic mirrors of the time they inhabit (Navajas Corral, 2017).

There are numerous authors and currents that advocate for a museum with a clear potential for social construction. Maicera argues that they should be considered as fundamental institutions for the humanizing education demanded by our context. For Córdón-Benito (2018) museums have reformulated their objectives by leaving their statism and becoming, through communication, spaces open to the public, more participatory and that promote dialogue and encounter of different social agents.

In this sense, museums have as a context the SDGs set by the UN. In addition to ensuring the protection and safeguarding of cultural and natural heritage, support for education for sustainable development and support for research and cultural participation in museums:

They help us focus our activity to help address poverty and inequality, the marginalization of communities and groups, climate change, energy use and waste production, species and habitat conservation, and all through a forward-looking collaborative agenda (ICOM, 2024).

However, this philosophy has yet to be incorporated into museums (Currello and Viñarás, 2021). For Ibermuseos, this is an unavoidable step to continue the work of the institution: "Museums are also spaces that contribute to meet the basic needs of the community, once they are inserted in the heart of the social and cultural dynamics of the territory, we can then continue to talk about heritage" (Ibermuseos in Currello and Viñarás, 2021).

The museum visit is the main tool the institution has to achieve its purpose, and the visit -the experience of the visit- is the unit of measurement in the relationship with the museum. In this sense, "Experiential learning is a process that allows the individual to construct his or her own knowledge,

develop skills and reinforce values directly from experience" (International Association for Experiential Learning, 2023). The theories around the visit and the experience are considerable, where it is emphasized that the visit is an experience that has been planned and that, therefore, starts from a motivation. In this line, the paradigmatic work of J. H. Falk and L. D. Dierking (*The Museum Experience Revisited*, 2013) refers to "the lens" from which visitors see the museum: the "identity-related motivations" (Gándara, 2015). "The museum can trigger learning that may materialize sometime later, in conjunction with other experiences, which may last for years" (Gandara, 2018, p. 71).

This is the line of informal learning, which finds an ally in the museum. Museums are ideal spaces for informal learning and motivation is a characteristic feature of informal learning, given that the experience is unique for each person.

From communication and marketing, experience is the object of study for its ability to persuade and influence, it is known as experiential communication, where museums seem to be experts: "Experiential communication is an intrinsic and inseparable element of the museum experience" (Justicia et al., 2022, p. 65). The proposal of Experimental Museology is interesting because it considers the museum as a social space (Aguilar Rojas, 2020), which has to do with alternative ways of sharing knowledge. Schmitt (2016) includes among the functions of the museum, to show stories linked to certain social situations of importance for the collectivity, "by showing us fragments of reality, they contribute to the awakening of people and to generate awareness regarding the discourse that is exposed" (p. 109). The same theory speaks of enactment in the process of the visit. Envisioning proposes an alternative way of knowing, where behaviors are preceded and conditioned by the environment. In other words, "Cognition does not happen only in the brain, but occurs throughout the body and is conditioned by the environment" (Aguilar Rojas, 2020). That is, the visit itself is already interfering in learning (Varela et al., 1992).

Likewise, the museum has its own language. The museum language (Fernández, 2022) is a language that, like any other, has its own characteristics and communicative resources, which make it unique and necessary, thus differentiating it from other languages. Just as the cinema has the film as its own product, the museum has the exhibition.

Beyond the visit, in relation to the role of the institution, several authors speak of a "participatory museum" in a "participatory culture", even a "participatory economy" (Cuenca-Amigo and Zabala, 2018). For many museum professionals and theorists, participation is the crux of this new paradigm of the 21st century, in which co-creation becomes one of its central cores. Falk and Dierking (2016) argue that the visitor no longer wants to be an external agent to the museum, nor that experiences are created for him, but with him, giving rise to different types of experiences (Radder and Han, 2015).

They are places where ideas, knowledge, concepts and situations are questioned and debated, so that they can be heard, known, understood, confronted, valued and vindicated (Hervás Avilés, 2010). So much so that during the COVID pandemic, museums had to make a great effort to try to maintain this work without being able to open their rooms (González Vallés et al., 2021).

### 3. Research Objectives and Methodology

This work belongs to a research project called "Presence of the boomerang effect in communication in favor of vulnerable audiences. Study of effective communicative alternatives" (Project PR3/23-30840). Its object of study is the boomerang effect in awareness campaigns and the alternatives offered by actions such as the museum experience as a persuasion tool.

The general objectives of the project are:

G01. To study whether advertising communication focused on social issues of high awareness can produce a boomerang effect and other possible negative effects among the young population.

G02. To study whether there are experiential communication alternatives that can be more effective in raising awareness of social issues among young audiences.

And as specific objectives:

SO1. To compare the impact -perception and attitude- that traditional communication campaigns versus experiential communication alternatives linked to museums and cultural spaces can have on young audiences in social issues.

SO2. Propose more effective alternatives in communication to raise awareness among young people on social issues of greater impact.



In order to respond to the proposed objectives, an experimental qualitative methodology was used through the digital community technique. The digital community constitutes "a virtual space created specifically for the research, where a qualitative sample of people interact digitally, sharing fragments of their lives and exchanging opinions with the aim of generating knowledge about the social reality under study" (Durán-Vilches et al, 2023, p.184).

The digital community allows the participant to express, over a relatively long period of time, his or her free discourse from three perspectives: individual, group and social. To this end, three fundamental tools are used within the digital community: the personal blog or diary, the forum and the social blog. The personal blog is a private space for the more reflective and intimate expression of the participant, since it is not shared with the rest of the members of the community and is only accessible to the research team. The forum is another place within the community whose objective is group conversation, where all members can share and exchange ideas and opinions always from the encounter with the other. And finally, the social blog is a space within the digital community where the participant expresses and shares freely and voluntarily with the rest of the participants those things that interest him, enriching himself in turn with the stories created by the other members of the community (Durán-Vilches et. al, 2023).

The sample selected for this digital community consisted of 16 young men and women between 19 and 29 years of age who, for one month (May 2024), participated in a reflective process, through blogs and forums, on their attitude towards inclusiveness. To this end, throughout the 4 weeks of the digital community, the same activities and different topics of reflection related to inclusion have been proposed to all participants. To make a contrast, at the beginning of the third week the participants were exposed to two different stimuli: half of the sample (8 young people) watched a spot focused on inclusiveness, and the other half (8 young people) carried out a museum activity where they worked on the same message addressed in the advertising communication. Subsequently, the remaining two weeks were spent working with the participants in order to know and compare simultaneously the impact that these stimuli had on the subject under study.

For selecting the advertising campaign, it was necessary that, in addition to being a relatively recent campaign and having used online and offline media for its dissemination, it should have a young audience among its final recipients and also, considering the previous literature, address a social issue with a high impact among this target audience. The 'Yes is racism' campaign of the Ministry of Equality was chosen. Launched in 2022 in both conventional (television, radio and print) and social media, its objective is to fight against racism and racial discrimination. This campaign shows everyday situations of racism, seeking the identification and solidarity of young people and society, encouraging them to denounce this type of situation.

As for the selection of the museum to carry out the activity, it was necessary for it to be an institution whose content alluded directly to the inclusion and diversity of races and cultures. For this reason, the Museum of the Americas in Madrid was chosen, since it is an institution dedicated to the preservation, research and dissemination of the heritage of the American continent and the peoples who have historically inhabited it. For the design of the visit, half of the participants from the community were summoned to the Museum and for an hour and a half, an expert in communication and sociology, accompanied the young people explaining a dozen objects chosen for their significance in relation to races and coexistence, making them interact and reflect on the different pieces they were seeing (some of them were paintings of miscegenation or castes or The Trocortesian Codex or Madrid Codex).

Table 1 shows the communication objectives of the two activities carried out.

**Table 1.** Objectives of the communication activities of the analysis

<b>Spot "I am not a racist, but... Yes, it is racism".</b>	<b>Activity Museum of the Americas</b>
Objectives: - To make Spanish society aware of the situations of discrimination to which people are exposed. -To publicize CEDRE's Service for Assistance and Guidance to Victims of Racial or Ethnic Discrimination".	Target -Raise awareness of the difficulty of identifying racist situations and positions in others and in ourselves.
STRATEGY To illustrate how explicit racism is normalized in society, through a series of creative pieces that reveal what lies behind that "but". These seemingly harmless attitudes imposed on society can be the first step towards racial discrimination, based on contempt for a person or group.	STRATEGY Through the viewing and commentary of pieces from the Museum and its history, reflect on how difficult it is not to make a distinction between "us" and "them" and how this has been the case at different times. The arrival of the Spaniards to the American continent is one of the most relevant and unique historical events to show the encounter of people of different races and cultures and how this relationship developed over the centuries.

Source: own elaboration, 2025.

Although the two communication activities differ greatly in terms of their formats, which makes it difficult to compare them, they do allow us to conclude which of them has had a greater appeal and emotional impact on young audiences.

#### 4. Results

Due to the methodology used, as a first relevant result there have been identified three positions from which the young people under investigation start out regarding inclusiveness.

First: "The blind spot", where the young person perceives him/herself as inclusive because he/she belongs to contemporary society. Being inclusive today is "the norm" and it is also "normativized", easily detecting the excluding attitudes and behaviors shown by other people. They are young people who are blind to their own gestures of intolerance.

Second: "The courageous response", where the young person mobilizes in the face of exclusionary gestures, provoking shame in those who emit them. This position determines that inclusivity is reached either by having suffered exclusion in one's own life trajectory, or by being extremely sensitive to the violence emitted with exclusionary gestures, whether for racial reasons, sexual orientation, status, race, religion, etc.

Third: "Reflection transforms", where the young person forges his own change by responding to the automatic gestures that he recognizes in himself as triggers of exclusion.

The analysis of the two activities carried out reveals that, in the face of these three previously detected positions, the museum activity has a greater capacity to mobilize people from the "blind spot", bringing them closer to self-reflection and/or active response.

Neither the age, nor the declared ideology of the young person, marks the attitudinal positions.

Below, we explain the impact caused by the two activities carried out in each group of the sample exposed to this communication experience.

##### 4.1 Results of the advertising campaign

The sample that watched the spot "I am not racist, but... Yes, it is racism", valued the communication positively, but questioned the capacity of the piece to generate impact on society and emotional identification in the viewer.

SPOT has a different impact depending on the profile of the participants:

Blind spot profile: activates a rational discourse that is not very enthusiastic, of a normative, almost institutional nature. It is not a spot that speaks directly to them, they do not feel identified with the representations in the ad, as they synthesize the message in "the importance of continuing to promote

equality and respect among all." It is considered to be a communication aimed at people who do not perceive themselves as racist, although it highlights the need for the viewer to be self-critical and observe themselves in their small everyday gestures. In this sense, it is a communication perceived for its educational character that promotes awareness with the aim of eliminating prejudices that reveal a clear discrimination.

There is still a long way to go and the video shows that there are many people who think they do not discriminate against anyone and in truth, they do. We have to be very self-critical and be aware of whether we are part of that group of people and if so, change it. In spite of this, I consider that the advances with the passage of time are positive (Female, 21 years old).

Courageous response profile: it activates a rational discourse that serves the young people to vindicate their struggle for the defense of minorities. It is not a spot that speaks directly to them, they do not feel identified with the representations of the spot. They synthesize the communication with the following expressions: "Fighting for a more egalitarian society", "society is not advancing as we think", "what we still have to work for". The spot conveys a message that mobilizes action in the face of an unexpected reality, which is part of everyday life and which prevents progress towards equal opportunities. On the other hand, it is a communication that leads to reflection because it transmits normalized and daily situations of abuse that young people see in society, but not in themselves, which prevents them from emotionally connecting with the message.

After watching the video, the feelings it brings me are of wanting to fight for a more egalitarian society, that it is not too late, that we are still in time... but we must see a reality and that is that society is still not as advanced as we think and that we should instill these values to the people around us, children, adults and even older people, make them understand that we have to respect each other and that we are all human beings in search of opportunities, that we should support each other side by side (Male, 28 years old).

Profile reflection transforms: it activates the reflective discourse by which it becomes necessary to continuously review apprehended situations that have a racist background. The spot has an impact on these young people, producing a real awareness. The message is synthesized in "A cold mug of reality". As in the other profiles, the person recognizes that the message shows everyday, simple and discriminatory acts; but unlike the other profiles, these are young people who are going to feel more challenged by the communication. In the spot, "I am not racist, but" is a cover for the real discrimination that we unconsciously translate into gestures.

I believe that today our society is making progress and we are eradicating racism in our society, however, we still have a long way to go, but we have made progress and we must continue working on it. The way in which I have connected has been positive, since they are everyday examples that we have of people with whom we live together regularly, and they surprise you in a negative way. On the other hand, the feeling that the spot has left me with is a cold jar of reality and that we must work together so that these prejudices are changed, and we can all live together in society (Male, 21 years old).

There is a shared idea among all young people that this is a piece of communication that will go unnoticed among non-inclusive people because it does not have high impact elements that stimulate change in people with more intolerant attitudes. The daily scenes presented in the spot are too basic and stereotyped to raise awareness and/or minimize racism.

#### **4.2 Results of the activity at the museum**

The activity in the museum, although it has nuances according to the different profiles analyzed, is an action that has a relevant impact on all of them. It is an activity that excites them and makes them want to learn more and return to the Museum. The following is an analysis of the response to this activity in each of the profiles of the young people identified:



Profile blind spot: activates a discourse that stimulates their curiosity, their desire to know more and ask new questions about the processes of inclusion through the knowledge of history. An activity that speaks directly to them and with which they identify. They summarize the activity as an experience that "generates the desire to know more, to come back, to debate".

My feeling with the museum has been very good. I felt interested in learning more and I would like to come back another day to see the works in more detail (Female, 18 years old).

In addition, the visit generates relevant questions and reflections in this profile, provoking a critical look at the unique historical moment to which the museum's works refer. The museum's artworks themselves amplify the value of the narrative, being in themselves thought-provoking.

The exhibition does not judge, it simply exposes certain ideas for you to debate and think about (Female, 18 years old).

I found it very interesting the way of expressing history through art and especially this reality that is so historically overshadowed (Female, 18 years old).

Profile courageous response: activates the most visceral discourse of the young person who rebels against any exposure that portrays situations where there is a potential for discrimination. An activity that speaks directly to them and with which they identify. They emotionally synthesize the experience with this type of expressions: "It stirred me up", "fascination", "interest", "broadening of perspectives", "remorse". These are young people who experience intense emotions through museum activity. Let us recall that in this profile they are particularly sensitive to intolerant gestures, being more active in reacting to social exclusion. Those who conform this profile empathize strongly with the story given in the museum activity by the guide-communicator, since it makes them experience a gradient of emotions, from anger to fascination, which will offer the young person the opportunity to open up to new perspectives, far from making judgments and provoking new questions.

I was sorry that the visit was so short! I thought it was a very good choice to go to the Museum of America, since it is a museum that exposes problems related to the history of our country, without bias about what is right or wrong in our history. That itself makes you the one asking questions. There were works that stirred my guts, others that were more enjoyable, and I enjoyed seeing history from different perspectives (Male, 18 years old).

To put words to the sensations and emotions that the experience has generated in me, I would say: Interest, broadening of perspective and remorse. Interesting for the amount of similarities that unite us (basic constructs that unite us as a species) and to see how marked we are by the context. Interesting to see how religion is so determinant in making differences (Male, 28 years old).

Unlike the previous profile, these young people, when looking at a singular historical time, project learning and knowledge from what they have already experienced to their contemporary time and react emotionally with certain embarrassment in some moments of the journey given their extreme sensitivity to gestures of exclusion.

I would like someday to know the reason or origin of such marked ethnic segregation, even when there is equal treatment, through labels according to complexion or distinctive social status that has been weighing for centuries, as we were able to verify (Female, 26 years old).

Profile the reflection that transforms: activates the reflective discourse on the opportunity to learn from history in order to advance in positions that promote transformation in the person with respect to their way of seeing and behaving with those who are different. An activity that speaks directly to them and with which they identify. They synthesize the activity from values such as: "gratitude", "intrigue", "curiosity". This profile, which especially values reflection as an antidote to the automated, reactive, discriminatory gestures of a reactive nature that assail everyone when they are apprehensive and/or fearful of those who are different, is going to live an experience tailor-made for them with the museum

activity. The experience allows to approach a current issue in an objective and respectful way, helping to "learn not to repeat mistakes" through art and history.

I really enjoyed the experience. I think that being able to look back at such a hot topic today in an "objective" way through art has given me a sense of gratitude. In my case, I make a great effort not to judge history. What has been was, and one cannot opine/judge/judge it from our point of view of the present. We have to study it objectively, respect it and learn from it in order not to repeat mistakes (Male, 27 years old).

### 4.3 Comparison of the results on the impact of the message of the two communication activities/experiences

Through an in-depth analysis of the reflections of the participants, made in the blog and the digital community forums, we can establish the differences between the different impacts received according to the communication action to which the participants are exposed.

Table 2 shows a summary of the messages perceived by the research participants depending on their exposure to one or another communication action.

**Table 2.** Impact of the message according to the communication action

<b>Spot "I'm not a racist, but... Yes, it is racism".</b>	<b>Museum of the Americas</b>
To make Spanish society aware of the situations of discrimination to which people are exposed in the country. To publicize CEDRE's "Service of Assistance and Guidance to Victims of Racial or Ethnic Discrimination" (this is not mentioned spontaneously).	Raise awareness of the difficulty of identifying racist situations and positions in others and in ourselves.
<b>Main message decoded</b>	
-The spot has been decoded as a communication that reflects small, everyday discriminatory acts that are normalized. -It is a spot that fulfills the objective of describing, it does not raise awareness among young people.	-The museum activity tells the history of racism, its origins and evolution. It helps to understand current racism and to take responsibility for solving it. Understanding the past in order to act in the present -It is an activity that shakes the conscience, reducing the difficulty of identifying racist situations/positions in others and in ourselves.
<b>Differences by profile</b>	
-Blind Spot Position: Generate empathy. -Position Courageous response: Eradicate racist behaviors. -Positioning Reflection transforms: Avoid justifying racist gestures.	-Blind position: Social commitment. -Position Courageous response: Understand racism by digging into the instinctual, cultural heritage and historical process. -Positioning Reflection transforms: Delving into the contradictions of the human being.
<b>Result message</b>	
-Main message, informative -Message reports racism	-Main message, sensitizing -Message commits against racism

Source: own elaboration, 2025.

## 5. Conclusions: analysis of the boomerang effect

In recent years, and as a consequence of social and cultural changes and also, of course, of the polarization they generate, organizations and governments are promoting social awareness advertising campaigns in which citizens are asked to change their behavior or attitudes. These campaigns can generate a boomerang effect of rejection of the message.

This research has been carried out with the aim of identifying forms of communication that avoid the boomerang effect. Specifically, we have compared the impact that can be generated by a traditional advertising communication versus a museum experience. The results show important differences and

give clear signs of the potential of each type of communication to mobilize and sensitize audiences from racist attitudes towards more inclusive positions.

From the analysis of the subjects' reflections, we have as a first conclusion that the spot does not cause a boomerang effect, since it has not produced reactions contrary to its objective (to make Spanish society aware of the situations of discrimination to which people in the country are exposed).

However, the spot has not achieved its objective of raising awareness because its impact has remained in the value of informing about racism, using a very stereotypical communication because it focuses on "what is already known". That is, it uses very standardized representations that, because they are topical, arouse less interest (faces of racialized people). It is a communication that goes unnoticed among the numerous advertising impacts that young people receive.

For its part, the activity in the museum has not generated a boomerang effect, since it has not produced reactions contrary to its objective (to raise awareness of the difficulty of identifying racist situations and positions in others and in ourselves).

However, this activity persuades and generates a movement from blind positions to positions with greater sensitivity towards inclusion: greater involvement from social denunciation or openness towards a reflective process that results in a real personal transformation.

Based on the reflections of young people in the digital community, it has been possible to identify guidelines in the communication pieces that seek to provoke greater impact on their audiences:

1. Identify the positions/sensitivities of the different audiences to be impacted. The young audience participating in the digital community considers that communication must be sensitive and careful since they indicate that "not every message is suitable for every type of audience". Social diversity must be taken into account when thinking about the audience and the ability to generate messages that have a positive impact on all types of audiences:

- People with deeply held beliefs or ideologies
- People belonging to vulnerable groups: different ethnicities, with other abilities, of different sexual orientations, ...
- People of different generations: children, youth, seniors, etc.

2. In the Digital Community, the young man makes reference to the fact that any communication activity that is selected in the future and that maintains the objective of raising the awareness of the audience with respect to the fight against racism, must contemplate:

- Pieces that are revealing, capable of opening eyes, of breaking beliefs, of producing impacts that tear the veils of unconsciousness to make people reflect on their daily gestures of intolerance towards those who are different.
- Use creative resources that bring notoriety to the communication to attract, awaken, the audience's attention to the automated justifications that are made, perpetuating the emission of discriminatory gestures.

In this sense, they recommend that the style, tone, images, selected works of art, etc., be highly attractive elements, including the use of digital resources (interactive games, virtual reality, augmented reality, etc.). Be highly attractive elements, including the use of digital resources (interactive games, virtual reality, augmented reality).

3. Communication pieces must not use messages that imply indoctrination. Dogmatic communication is rejected in favor of emotionally binding communication, without value judgments.

4. When carrying out museum activities that have an impact on small audiences that receive the communication in small groups (not massive), it is important that those who are selected to visit the museum are selected under a guideline in accordance with the awareness-raising objective. Young audiences understand that forming groups with similar affinities implies greater empathy and feedback among the participants of the activity.

5. The images used must be very respectful of the differences that inhabit cultural, ethnic, gender, etc. diversity. It is a matter of considering that every audience, by the fact of being an audience, is vulnerable

given its exposure to the message to be communicated. In this sense, it is important to avoid creative resources (images, words, music, etc.) that are stereotyped or have a marked ideological tendency.

6. When using the historical resource to communicate, it is convenient that the narrative facilitates the linking of the person between past and present to motivate him/her to produce situations in the future that include more inclusive attitudes.

The limitations of the study include the number of participants, which, although sufficient to obtain exploratory results, requires a larger sample to obtain conclusive results. Likewise, the fact of having had a majority of university students has surely influenced the lack of boomerang effect obtained. The greater openness to differences and the capacity for reflection and questioning that characterizes this population group may be at the root of this result, which contrasts with previous literature on the boomerang effect.

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