



NGOs AND SOCIAL MEDIA: A Study of Content for Social Change in Spain and Chile

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KEYWORDS

NGOs
Non-Profit Organisations
Activism
Social Media
Social Awareness
Visual Activism

ABSTRACT

A comparative study of the publications on Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, X and TikTok of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in Chile and Spain was conducted to ascertain whether their profiles facilitate the promotion of activism concerning social issues and what type of visual content they utilise. The methodology employed was a combination of quantitative and qualitative analysis. This comprised an analysis of 3,611 publications from 20 organisations, complemented by 12 in-depth interviews with the organisations' communication managers. The results indicate that photographs are the most prevalent form of content across all networks. However, it is noteworthy that only two Spanish NGOs are active on networks with an activist objective.

Received: 17/ 02 / 2025

Accepted: 04/ 05 / 2025

1. Introduction

In contemporary society, characterised by its high level of connectivity, the concept of public space is undergoing a transformation, giving rise to new contexts for activism and collective action (Suárez et al., 2021). The digital realm and social networks have become a public sphere in which diverse voices are generated and developed. These environments give rise to disputes between societal groups (Lapierre Acevedo, 2023). Furthermore, they have the capacity to alter behaviours amongst the population and to reach broad and diverse socio-demographic groups (Bergman et al., 2022). The utilisation of social networks by third sector organisations has been identified as a key instrument in facilitating communication (León et al., 2022). The impetus for this use is driven by the need to influence and generate interaction by citizens who become active users, sharing knowledge and opinions. The extant academic literature on public relations asserts that optimal communication between stakeholders and organisations should be two-way and symmetrical (Grunig & Hunt, 1984), and that listening should be part of the relationship (Brunner, 2008). This scenario is characterised by a reciprocal relationship between the organisation and its stakeholders, with a seamless exchange of information and feedback.

In a similar vein, Capriotti et al. (2021) posit that networks constitute an optimal ecosystem for interactive and dialogic communication between organisations and their publics. Dialogic engagement has been defined as a series of practices that facilitate understanding between individuals or organisations, thereby enhancing comprehension of their respective functioning (Kent & Taylor, 2021). It is important to note that dialogue is defined as an orientation of communicative engagement that prioritises open communication, mutual understanding and the co-creation of meaning between all individuals as equals in a relationship (Place & Ciszek, 2021).

The capacity of social media to disseminate informative content, in addition to its ability to expeditiously and cost-effectively attract attention, has been well-documented (see Bilgin & Kethüda, 2022). Concurrently, they generate positioning and collaborate in reputation management (Arroyo-Almaraz and Mendoza, 2018). As Buitrago & Martín García (2021) observe, contemporary models are predicated on the notion of the public as an 'active subject', a concept that demands recognition and consideration in brand interactions (p.174). Nevertheless, several studies on the dialogic approach to communication have indicated that organisations tend to utilise social networks for the purpose of sharing information and promoting their activities to the public (Dumitrica, 2021). However, these studies have also highlighted that organisations do not fully exploit the potential of social networks to facilitate interaction and dialogue with their audiences (Claro et al., 2023).

García Galera et al. (2018) posit that the presence of Non-Governmental Organisations (hereinafter NGOs) on social media serves a tripartite function: namely, to enhance visibility, raise awareness of their issues, and transform new media into a conduit for the allocation of funding to the organisations. Galiano-Coronil and Mier (2019) propose a culture of engagement, participation and dialogue as essential in NGO communication. The capacity for meaningful interaction, active listening and peaceful coexistence is contingent upon the social media interface evolving beyond its current state. This evolution must occur in a manner that replaces its current physical and design functions, which primarily serve the purposes of entertainment, marketing and advertising, with new functions that are designed to foster authentic interaction and deliberation among audiences.

As Alonso-González (2021) argue, social movements and civil society have found a space for debate and confrontation of ideas in new technologies. As Etter and Albu (2021) demonstrate, social networks offer activists a range of possibilities that can assist them in their individual tasks and transform their civic engagement. These possibilities include visibility, replicability, editability, association and searchability. It has been demonstrated that users participating in the discussion and dissemination of information play a pivotal role in determining the development and social impact of issues (Ma & Zhang, 2022), while influencing actions that increase the popularity of publications (Yang, 2016). Digital activism in social networks has been demonstrated to increase "capacities to give visibility to discourses that are not selected in the hegemonic public sphere" (Millaleo & Velasco, 2013, p. 9). Participation and engagement in online activism is less expensive, more straightforward, and offers a greater number of opportunities for recruitment in comparison with the period preceding the existence of social networks (Li, et al., 2021). As asserted by Abbas et al. (2022), virality of content is a crucial factor in the success of online social and political movements.

The prevailing nature of social networks is characterised by a preponderance of multimedia and interactive formats, which facilitate diverse forms of linguistic communication. These include, but are not limited to, videos, images, emoticons, hashtags and written texts. Consequently, this environment engenders a shift in the nature of narratives, with a concomitant adaptation to the evolving demands of audiences (Dhanesh and Rahman, 2021; Sidorenko-Bautista et al., 2021).

Images have been shown to function as an ancillary means of communication, serving to supplement text-based forms, establish causal relationships, and promote interaction (Fahmy et al., 2014). The utilisation of images in engaging audiences on social media has been demonstrated to be an effective strategy, particularly in the context of messages disseminated by humanitarian aid organisations (Lee et al., 2024). The employment of images has been shown to convey situations with greater vividness in comparison to textual messages, thereby generating immediacy and emotion, and thus overcoming the limitations imposed by language barriers (Borah, 2009; Jurgenson, 2019). The format of images allows for more dynamic communication (Chen et al., 2023). The creativity employed is integral to the strategy of communication, the dissemination of content, and the establishment of an emotional connection with the user (Mut-Camacho & García-Huguet, 2023). In the context of emojis and emoticons, these symbols represent a broad spectrum of concepts and ideas in a simplified form, thereby enhancing attention and facilitating better understanding through a more appealing format (Bai et al., 2019; Willoughby & Liu, 2018).

2. Objectives and Methodology

The objective of this research is to analyse and compare the communication strategies employed by representative NGOs in Spain and Chile in social media, with a view to identifying the elements that differentiate the two countries and their impact on social activism. The content and images used by these NGOs to communicate the social causes on which they focus their activity will be examined in particular. In order to this end, the following specific objectives were defined: SO1. To analyse the use that NGOs make of their profiles on Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, TikTok and X to determine which platform generates greater social influence. SO2. To identify the predominant themes in the publications of NGOs in both countries. SO3. To examine the use of hashtags as a tool to promote adherence to social causes. SO4. To identify content formats and analyse the role of images as elements that enhance the social message.

The following research questions have been posed in relation to the specific objectives: What is the significance of social media in the communication strategies of NGOs in both countries? Are there significant differences between those operating in both territories? What topics are most relevant in their publications, and do these vary according to the social media platform? Is the use of hashtags significant, and are there specific topics in which they are used more? What type of images do NGOs use to present their causes, and do they intend to generate impact with them, or are they merely complementary or informative? What type of images do NGOs use to present their causes, and do they intend to generate impact with them, or are they merely complementary or informative?

2.1. Research Methodology

The research adopted a mixed methodology. Firstly, a comparative descriptive analysis of the publications on social networks of the organisations in the sample was carried out, taking into account quantitative and qualitative variables. Subsequently, this analysis was complemented with in-depth interviews with the communication managers of the organisations in the sample. This approach allowed for the contrast of the empirical data collected and a more in-depth exploration of the planning of content on social networks. The employment of a mixed methodology ensures triangulation of data, enhancing the validity and comprehension of the phenomenon under study, and facilitating the extrapolation of results to more extensive contexts (Enosh et al., 2014; Maxwell, 2016).

The following criteria were used to select the study universe: It is evident that the organisations in question were relevant in their respective fields of action, as evidenced by the Map of CSOs 2023 in Chile (Centro UC Políticas Públicas, 2023) and the NGO Ranking of the Coordinadora de Organizaciones para el Desarrollo en España (2023). As posited by Salamon and Anheier (1997) in their seminal study, the John Hopkins University International Classification of Nonprofit Organizations (ICNPO) delineates a

diverse spectrum of domains of operation. The study further asserts that the global landscape is characterised by equitable representation, with a minimum of 30% of NGOs active in both developed and developing countries (see Table 1). The study universe was comprised of 20 NGOs (10 from each country, including four with a presence in both). The sample of analysis was configured with the total number of publications made by these 20 NGOs on Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, LinkedIn, TikTok and X, between 1 April and 1 May 2024. The temporal frame selected for the study was not driven by the consideration of time as a relevant criterion; rather, it was selected at random. Nevertheless, the analysis sample consisted of 3,611 posts.

Table I. Universe of analysis: 20 NGOs in Chile and Spain

CHILE	SPAIN
Amnistía Internacional Chile	Amnistía Internacional España
Caritas Chile	Asociación Española Contra el Cáncer
Coaniquem	Caritas España
Cruz Roja Chile	Cruz Roja España
Desafío Levantemos Chile	Entreculturas
Fundación Las Rosas	Greenpeace España
Greenpeace Chile	Médicos sin Fronteras España
Hogar de Cristo	Save the Children
Make a Wish Foundation	Unicef España
Techo	WWF España

Source: own elaboration, 2025.

The collection, coding and analysis of the sample data was conducted using Brandmetric, a social media data analysis tool that classifies publications according to the following variables: number of posts, reach, number of followers, mentions, keywords, influencers, hashtags and tone of the conversation (positive, negative or neutral). A comparative analysis was conducted on the social media strategies employed by NGOs in Spain and Chile. This analysis was undertaken with the objective of identifying the key elements that are integral to the success of such strategies. In addition, a review of keywords was conducted to ascertain the predominant themes, and a review of hashtags was carried out to determine whether they were linked to social causes.

In order to provide a more comprehensive analysis, a total of 12 interviews were conducted with communication managers from the organisations included in the study. These managers were based in Chile (eight individuals) and Spain (four individuals), and the interviews were conducted between 1 April and 30 September 2024. Of these, 10 were conducted face-to-face, while the remainder were conducted through an online questionnaire. The interviews comprised 15 questions, which were organised into two distinct blocks. The first block sought to ascertain the functionality of the communication department and the definition of its social media strategy. The second block posed more direct inquiries regarding the subjects of the publications, their content and format, and the utilisation of hashtags.

The information provided by the interviews facilitated the acquisition of a detailed and contextualised perspective on the utilisation of social media in NGOs in both countries. This complemented the descriptive quantitative analysis with qualitative information, thereby providing a comprehensive view of the NGOs' social media communication strategies and their social function, with a particular emphasis on images.

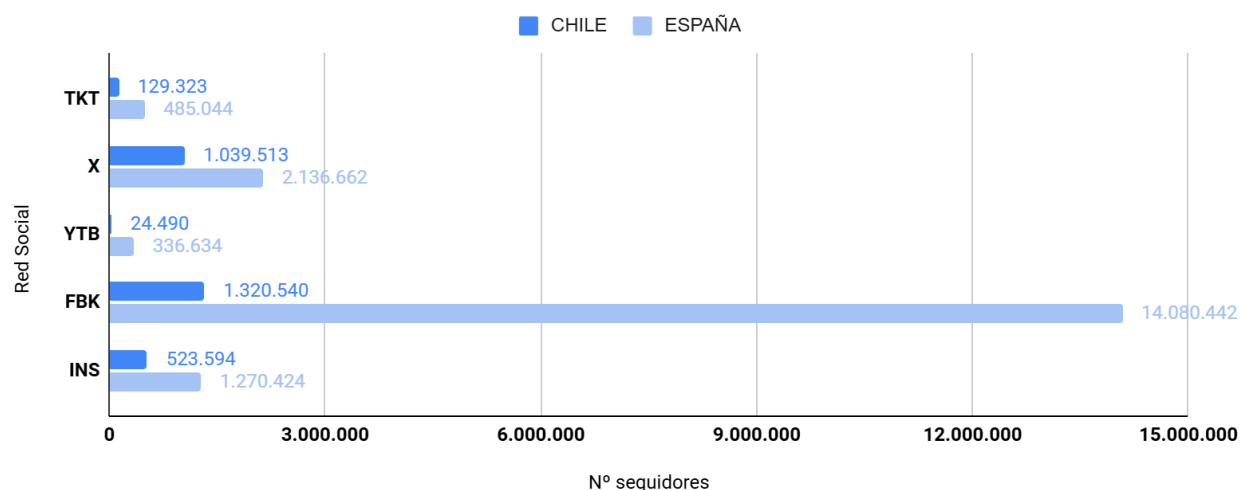
3. Results Analysis

The results of the quantitative analysis of the organisations' publications, taking into account the differences between countries, and the interviews are presented below. The results are presented by area, with consideration given to the research questions.

3.1. Use of Social Media and Reach of NGOs

To assess the social reach capacity of organisations, we considered the number of followers. Differences are observed across platforms and countries, with Spanish organisations, in absolute terms, achieving the highest number of followers across all social media, particularly on Facebook, where the difference is markedly significant. The content of Spanish organisations reaches over 14 million individuals, compared to 1.3 million for Chilean organisations. In any case, Facebook is the platform with the greatest reach and social influence in this sector in both countries, while YouTube has the least, even falling below TikTok, which has emerged strongly in the sector, with 55% of NGOs now maintaining a profile on it (Figure 1).

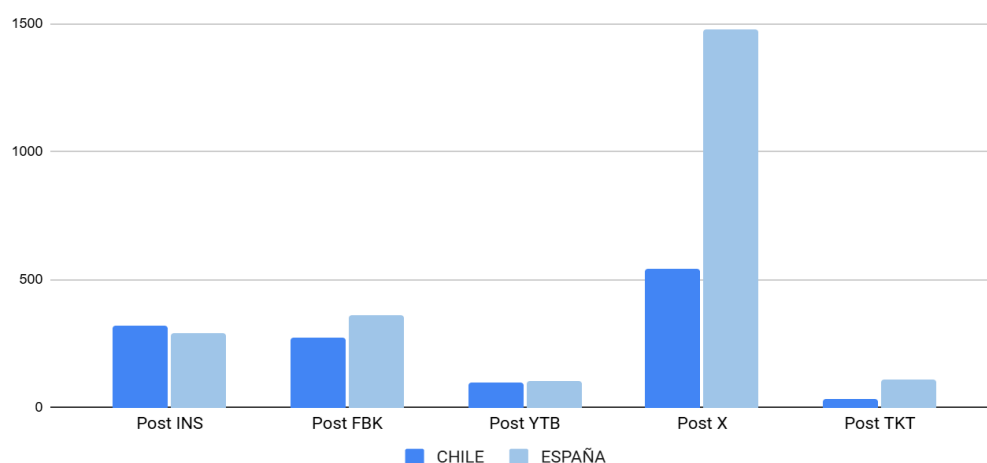
Figure 1. Number of NGO followers by country and by network



Source: Own elaboration, 2025.

However, it should be noted that Facebook is not the network on which NGOs in both countries publish the most content; this is in fact X, by far the most. In second place, Facebook is the most prevalent social media platform in Spain, while Instagram is the most prevalent in Chile. With regard to TikTok, the manner in which organisations utilise the platform in Spain is particularly noteworthy, as they publish a greater number of posts on this platform than on their YouTube profiles (Figure 2). In the course of the interviews, organisations with YouTube profiles indicated that they primarily utilise this network as a repository for audiovisual material. It was also acknowledged that TikTok represented a novel challenge, and efforts are underway to enhance consistency and dynamism in this regard.

Figure 2. Total number of NGO publications by country and network



Source: Own elaboration, 2025.

An analysis of the data according to country of origin reveals a high degree of variability in the number of followers of Spanish NGOs' profiles. In many cases, the number of followers increases by a factor of three or four (see Table 2). Following Facebook, X and Instagram are the networks with the greatest reach. It has been established that Spanish NGOs have profiles on all social media networks. However, there is one organisation (Entreculturas) for which no profile has been found on YouTube, and three for which no profile has been found on TikTok.

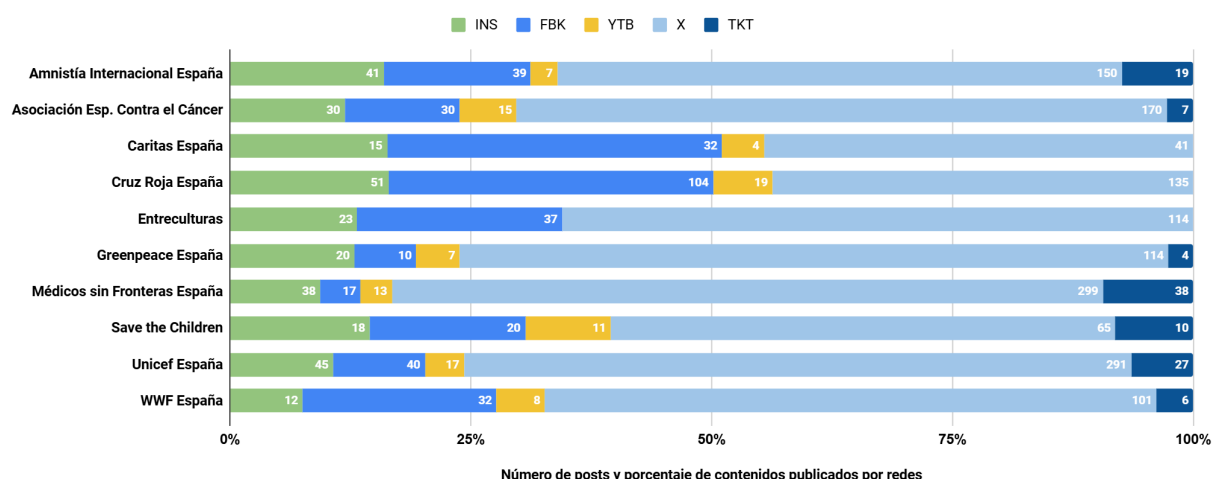
Table 2. Number of followers of NGOs in both countries by network

		INS	FBK	YTB	X	TKT
S P A N I S H	Amnistía Intnal Esp.	91.348	430.486	12.000	173.572	82.604
	AECC	129.486	458.000	23.600	85.131	288
	Caritas España	20.384	99.608	82.634	82.584	
	Cruz Roja España	110.141	339.554	26.400	129.201	
	Entreculturas	12.786	59.000		28.969	
	Greenpeace España	376.639	639.506	65.900	600.916	42.811
	Médicos sin Fronteras	84.079	11.000.000	37.300	435.169	310.529
	Save the Children	64.000	216.000	39.700	120.232	15.562
	Unicef Esp.	245.520	554.213	31.600	286.879	33.019
	WWF Esp.	136.041	284.075	17.500	194.009	231
C H I L E S E	Amnistía Intnal Chile	61.532	59.000	3.570	87.496	2532
	Caritas Chile	2.883	7.064		87.536	
	Coaniquem	27.073	48.528	2.040	4.360	15560
	Cruz Roja Chile	17.398	28.500		6.966	41529
	Desafío Levantemos Chile	162.009	134.042	3.840	600.917	64422
	Fundación Las Rosas	14.997	24.456	1.050	7.481	
	Greenpeace Chile	156.919	748.210	8.260	141.405	3302
	Hogar de Cristo	25.259	62.567	3.470	33.613	
	Make a Wish Foundation	2.692	10.501			
	Techo	52.832	197.672	2.260	69.739	1978

Source: Own elaboration, 2025.

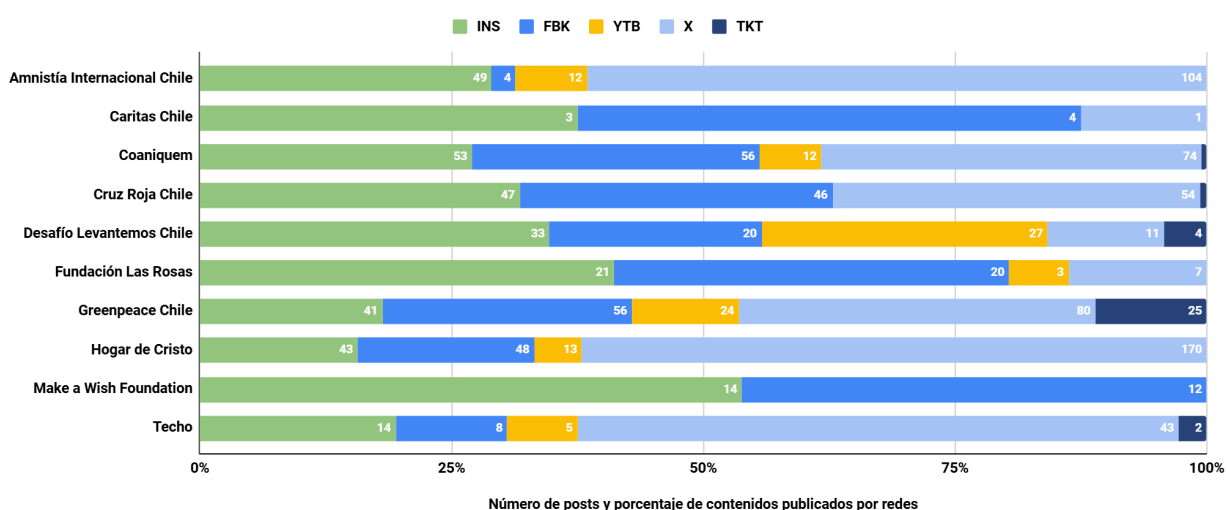
With regard to the Chilean organisations, it is evident that Facebook is the network with the most followers, followed by X, Instagram and TikTok. It is important to note that five of the ten organisations do not have a presence on all major social networks, which has a detrimental effect on the reach of their publications. This is particularly problematic for Caritas and the Make-A-Wish Foundation, which currently only have a presence on Facebook, Instagram, and X. It is also noteworthy that Cruz Roja Chile does not have a profile on YouTube, but it does have a profile on TikTok, which also has the highest number of followers (41,529).

With regard to the weight of content, X clearly prevails, followed by Facebook and Instagram. However, the most international organisations give priority to Instagram. YouTube and TikTok have been found to be the networks with the lowest number of posts by organisations, with the exception of Médecins Sans Frontières and UNICEF. It is noteworthy that several Spanish organisations, including Médecins Sans Frontières and Greenpeace, publish minimal content on Facebook, despite the fact that it is the network with the greatest reach and a very high reach (Figure 3).

Figure 3. Number of publications of Spanish NGOs by network

Source: Own elaboration, 2025.

In contrast, the results for Chilean organisations demonstrate a more balanced distribution of publications across networks in comparison to Spanish organisations (Figure 4). X emerges as the network where the majority of content is published, closely followed by Instagram and Facebook. It is interesting to note that Chilean organisations appear to utilise TikTok with minimal frequency, with the notable exception of Greenpeace, which employs the platform extensively.

Figure 4. Number of publications of Chilean NGOs by network

Source: Own elaboration, 2025.

In the course of the interviews, the managers of the Spanish organisations corroborated the fact that they publish content on a daily basis, disseminating it across all the networks they possess, employing the same content but adapting the descriptions. They also confirmed that they utilise hashtags in the campaigns they run. Furthermore, the utilisation of hashtags is a prevalent practice among Chilean marketers, with over 80% of respondents affirming the generation of a new hashtag for each campaign. However, the respondents expressed divergent opinions on the most effective description type, indicating that, depending on the campaign, they employ either simple calls to action and short phrases or longer descriptions in order to be more informative and generate greater interest in the content.

Finally, it should be noted that there are four organisations that have profiles in both countries, but there are major differences in the use they make of their social networks. One notable example is the case of Cáritas, which operates with greater frequency in Spain than in Chile, maintains a presence on a multitude of networks, and disseminates a higher volume of content. Consequently, Cáritas has amassed

a more substantial following. It is particularly noteworthy that X demonstrates a high level of activity in Spain, yet there is a paucity of evidence to suggest that this is the case in Chile, despite the presence of a significant number of followers. A comparable scenario is evident in the case of the Red Cross, which maintains a presence on TikTok in Chile, boasting a substantial following. However, its activity on the platform is virtually non-existent. In contrast, the Red Cross does not have a presence on TikTok in Spain. This diversity indicates a lack of international coordination, with organisations in each country developing distinct communication strategies tailored to local campaigns and projects.

3.2. Topics Discussed by NGOs

In order to analyse the topics discussed by the organisations, the most frequent words used by each organisation in all the publications analysed from all the networks were identified (see Table 3). There are significant differences between countries. In Spain, there is a clear prevalence and repetition of the use of strategic keywords in organisations dealing with children and international conflicts. It is important to note, however, that the most common words are those related to the purpose of the organisations in question. For example, in the case of NGOs promoting projects with children, such as Save the Children or UNICEF, the most common words are 'children', 'girls', 'childhood' or 'school'. In the case of Amnesty International, Coaniquem, however, the most common words are 'human rights'. The same is true of the AECC, with the most common words being 'rehabilitation' or 'cancer'.

Table 3. Most frequently used words by NGOs in both countries

Organisation	Thematic	Words	Quantity
Unicef	Childhood	children	386
Amnistía Intnal España	Social	human rights	299
Médicos sin Fronteras	Health	wars	270
Cruz Roja España	Social	red cross	216
Save the Children España	Childhood	Boys/girls	210
Unicef	Childhood	childhood / school	209
AECC	Health	Cancer	181
Unicef	Childhood	girls	181
Unicef	Childhood	help / rights / support	165
Cruz Roja España	Social	Persons	161
Médicos sin Fronteras	Health	our	150
Cruz Roja España	Social	gold/tickets/purchase	140
Save the Children España	Childhood	war, gaza, rafah, #notowaragainatchildhood (#noalaguerracontralainfancia)	139
AECC	Health	#allagainstcancer (#todoscontraelcancer)	119
Unicef	Childhood	#unicef	119
Greenpeace España	Environment	Repsol #wedenouncerepsol and #repsolispulling yourleg (#denunciamosarepsol and #repsoltetomaelpelo)	113
Médicos sin Fronteras	Health	hospital care	101
Greenpeace Chile	Environment	Los Bronces/Glacier	95
Cruz Roja Chile	Social	Information	65
Greenpeace Chile	Environment	Actions	46
Cruz Roja Chile	Social	Anniversary #RedCross	38
Coaniquem	Childhood	Anniversary/commemoration	35

Cruz Roja Chile	Social	Volunteering	26
Coaniquem	Childhood	Volunteers	26
Coaniquem	Childhood	Rehabilitation	24
Techo	Social	Camp	23
Amnistía Intnal Chile	Social	HUMAN RIGHTS	21

Source: Own elaboration, 2025.

With regard to the utilisation of hashtags or labels as a pertinent indicator of the issues that NGOs discuss, 81.8% of the organisations interviewed reported their use of these labels to support campaigns. Furthermore, some organisations stated that they employ regular hashtags linked to their name, a practice exemplified by the Red Cross. With regard to these tags, it is noteworthy that hashtags are among the most frequently used words, despite their lack of direct correlation with the projects of the NGOs that utilise them. As illustrated in Table 3, hashtags such as #denunciamosarepsol and #repsoltetomaelpelo, employed by Greenpeace Spain, and #noalaguerracontralainfancia, cited by Save the Children Spain, serve as prime examples of this phenomenon.

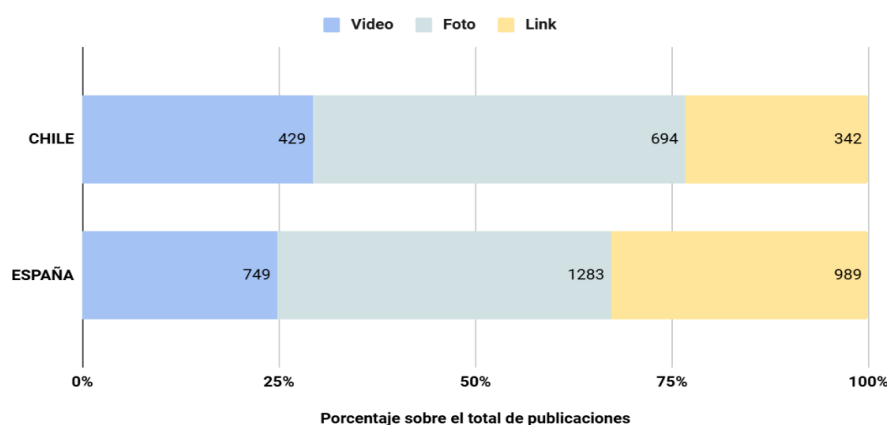
In addition to words associated with the organisations' purpose and labels, we also find terms that are directly related to the organisations' projects or activities. For example, the words 'Los Bronces/glacier' and 'actions' are particularly salient in Greenpeace Chile. Furthermore, in the case of Chilean organisations, several NGOs have indicated in interviews that they place particular emphasis on issues involving volunteers.

Finally, it should be noted that 90.9% of the organisations stated in the interviews that they publish content on a daily basis, although the rhythm differs by network. They highlighted Instagram as the network where they publish most frequently. In relation to content planning, interviewees asserted that they meticulously schedule topics with varying frequencies. Annually, they methodically plan campaigns, and the most pressing topics associated with scheduled projects. On a monthly or weekly basis, they meticulously arrange specific posts, taking into account subject matter, focus, and the type of content. It was also indicated that the periodicity is intensified during the course of campaigns.

3.3. Types of Formats Used

The results of the content analysis demonstrate that all the organisations, with the exception of Caritas Chile, utilise videos and photos in their publications, in addition to explanatory texts. However, photographs are the most prevalent format (exceeding 54% in both countries) in comparison to videos, including short videos, which are employed in 34% of the publications by Chilean organisations and 32% by Spanish organisations (Figure 5). Links are also a resource employed by NGOs in a significant number of posts, particularly by Spanish organisations.

Figure 5. Format of the contents of NGO publications by



Source: Own elaboration, 2025.

However, in the interviews, the majority of the managers (75%) indicated that they prioritised videos over photos, although photos remained a highly relevant format for them, as they enabled the display of the 'before' and 'after' of the interventions they carried out (50% of the interviewees). It is also noteworthy that four organisations have emphasised the significance of testimonials as a valuable format in their publications, predominantly on social and environmental issues. It was observed that only one organisation cited the utilisation of infographics as a resource for the purpose of explanation (i.e. the Red Cross). With regard to network formats, no significant data have been identified regarding the relative incidence of one format over another, depending on the network. Indeed, in several cases where organisations do not possess profiles on YouTube or TikTok, networks where content is inherently audiovisual, they publish in video format on Facebook, X and Instagram, indistinctly. However, the organisations that have profiles on YouTube have commented that they primarily utilise it as a repository of information and audiovisual material. Furthermore, the study identified TikTok as a novel challenge, with 55% of the sampled NGOs expressing a desire for greater consistency and dynamism on the platform.

Finally, it should be noted that organisations operating within the field of children's rights (Save the Children and Unicef Spain) as well as housing (Desafío Levantemos Chile), health and social welfare (Médicos sin Fronteras) and the environment (Greenpeace) publish the highest number of audiovisual content, coinciding with the significant emphasis they place on managing their TikTok profile.

4. Conclusions and Discussion

The subsequent analysis of the results has enabled the verification of the manner in which NGOs utilise their social media profiles (SO1). It has been determined that there are discrepancies in the potential influence capacity of the organisations, which are not attributable to their area of activity or to the strategic planning of content. The observed disparities in the number of followers of NGOs between different countries appear to be consistent with the documented differences in population size, with 20 million followers in Chile and more than 48 million followers in Spain. However, Spanish NGOs are more likely to influence their audiences due to the greater reach of their publications, especially on Facebook, a platform with users of various ages (Statista, 2024). However, a significant proportion of Spanish NGOs share less than 5% of their content on Facebook, despite Facebook being the second most used social media platform in Spain (69.7%), surpassed only by Instagram (76.9%) and followed by TikTok (51.2%) and X (45.4%) (We are Social, 2024). X is the platform on which NGOs in both countries are most active, especially during the middle of the week. Therefore, the extent of the organisations' reach is positively correlated with the frequency of their posting. Conversely, the most international organisations prioritise Instagram, as opposed to networks with purely visual content, although this is not a universal trend.

These results are consistent with those of previous studies, which demonstrate that NGOs perceive social networks as mere conduits of information rather than as platforms for fostering social dialogue and exerting influence in support of their causes (Claro et al., 2023; Dumitrica, 2021). Nevertheless, the observation that individuals responsible for communication cite testimonials as a potentially fruitful format for such organisations indicates an intention to generate more emotive content, with the concomitant capacity to exert a greater influence on their respective audiences. This represents a commendable initial step in the endeavour to wield influence.

Regarding the subjects that NGOs discuss in their publications on social networks and the representativeness of social causes (SO2), the analysis of the most commonly used terms revealed that the organisations focus their content on informing about their activities and projects, as well as reinforcing their brand. However, few examples of explicit activism were found beyond showing the social injustices they address. This thematic 'monotony' could explain the lack of engagement with the contents that most of the interviewed managers state, despite the fact that they claim to aim to generate two-way communication with their audiences and that they publish daily, including different types of content such as calls to action and informative content. The study demonstrated that NGOs continue to utilise a non-dialogic approach (Kent & Taylor, 2021; Place & Ciszek, 2021) in their management of social networks, which hinders their capacity to enhance influence and cultivate trust (Buitrago & Martín García, 2021). Notwithstanding the aforementioned, although rare, two organisations have been identified that demonstrate a more profound comprehension of the potential of networks as environments of influence. This is exemplified by the utilisation of the term 'Repsol' by Greenpeace

Spain and 'war' by Save The Children Spain, reflecting the adoption of a direct and persistent activism characteristic of NGOs.

Concerning the utilisation of hashtags (OE3), the study demonstrates that certain organisations employ them, and furthermore, with a discernible objective of engendering a current of opinion on matters pertaining to their domains of activity. The cases of activism in question are those of the organisations Greenpeace Spain and Save the Children, and the hashtags #noalaguerracontralainfancia, #denunciamosarepsol and #repsoltetomaelpelo. These organisations utilise hashtags to facilitate the viralisation of content, thereby increasing their reach and reinforcing their stance on the issues they advocate. The increasing influence of social media has had a significant impact on the traditional media landscape, leading to a shift in the role and function of social and political actors, including NGOs, in public communication. These actors have been enabled to generate mobilisations, influence public opinion and participate in processes of confrontation of social and political interests by new forms of expression (López-García and Valera, 2024). Greenpeace and Save the Children's utilisation of their networks serves as a salient illustration of this phenomenon. However, they constitute exceptions, as the employment of tags as a content enhancement strategy and the pursuit of activist objectives are not prevalent practices in NGO publications. The professionals interviewed noted that their utilisation of tags is primarily to support specific campaigns, and they perceive a decline in the effectiveness of these tags compared to previous years.

With regard to the formats that predominate in NGO communication on social networks and the weight of images (SO4), most organisations indicated that Instagram is the network where they post most frequently, which implies that they promote visual content over textual content, including both photographs and videos (Figure 5). Despite the majority of organisations interviewed asserting that videos achieve superior reach, the analysis of publications revealed that 16 out of the 20 institutions continue to publish more photos than videos on their social networks. However, the organisations stated that they prioritise vertical and dynamic videos in their content (72.7%), arguing that these are much more engaging for the audience and that they also allow them to transmit audiovisual information quickly and actively. Notwithstanding the fact that TikTok is a highly appropriate network for achieving these objectives, the platform remains a subject of consideration for many NGOs.

As posited by García, Fernández and del Olmo (2018), social networks are considered a valuable resource for NGOs in terms of awareness-raising and citizen empowerment. However, these networks also present challenges for engaging younger audiences. TikTok, the most popular network among this demographic, may provide a suitable environment for third sector organisations to augment their influence with new generations, particularly through visually appealing content. It appears that they are operating in accordance with this approach, taking into consideration the findings of the research which indicates that this network is of significance for a number of NGOs, eclipsing YouTube despite its comparatively recent incorporation as a communication channel (see Figure 1).

Social networks provide NGOs with a platform for the creation of opinion currents and the mobilisation of their followers in support of their projects and causes. However, these entities are not leveraging the potential of networks to generate interaction and engagement with their audiences, and they underestimate the role they could play as generators of dialogue, listening and social awareness (Claro et al., 2023). It is imperative to acknowledge the potential of social media as a conduit for meaningful discourse. However, it is crucial to recognise that for such interactions to be truly effective, they must not be reduced to a mere strategic communication process, as this would fail to harness the inherent value of authentic dialogue. Instead, it is essential to emphasise the importance of genuine engagement, unmediated by the metrics of social media platforms, as this is the only way to ensure the preservation of meaningful exchange and the cultivation of authentic relationships (Kent & Taylor, 2021).

5. Acknowledgements

This text constitutes a component of a research incentive project administered by the FAI at the University of the Andes in Chile, which is entitled 'Use of social media by NGOs in Chile.' The research was greatly enriched by the valuable contribution of research assistant Constanza Briceño, a journalism student at the University of the Andes in Chile.

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