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## TikTok as social communication tool to encourage participation in volunteering projects

### *TikTok como instrumento de comunicación social para fomentar la participación en proyectos de voluntariado*

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#### **Abstract**

Social media are regarded as tools of communication and social influence. Notwithstanding this, TikTok's majority audience in 2023 is made up of members of generations Z and Alpha, associated in previous studies with a participatory crisis. Given this contradiction, a research question is proposed: do young people use TikTok to consolidate social values such as solidarity? To answer it, the main objective is to analyse the use of TikTok as an instrument for youth participation in volunteer projects. A mixed methodology is used, based on a content analysis of the 150 videos uploaded to TikTok with the hashtag #voluntariado and which registered the greatest number of likes in the first quarter of 2023; and in a questionnaire distributed by the 50 volunteer offices of Spanish public universities among young people familiar with these projects. The results reveal a predominance of User-Generated Content (UGC) of an organic nature, narrated by young women who promote participation through predetermined templates of short videos in which they relate personal experiences in a neutral tone. A significant impact of UGC is also detected, both in TikTok users, who reflect their commitment through interactions, and as young people in the real world, who claim to identify with these types of publications.

#### **Keywords**

Digital communications; social media; TikTok; user-generated content; social participation; volunteering

#### **Resumen**

Las redes sociales son consideradas herramientas de comunicación e influencia social. No obstante, la audiencia mayoritaria de TikTok en 2023 está integrada por miembros de las generaciones Z y Alfa, asociadas en estudios previos con una crisis participativa. Ante esta contradicción, se plantea una pregunta de investigación: ¿Emplea la juventud TikTok para la consolidación de valores sociales como la solidaridad? Para responderla, se propone como objetivo principal analizar el uso de TikTok como instrumento de comunicación social para promover la participación juvenil en proyectos de voluntariado. Se opta por una metodología mixta, basada en un análisis de contenido de los 150 vídeos subidos a TikTok con el hashtag #voluntariado y que registraron más likes durante el primer trimestre del 2023; y en un cuestionario distribuido por las 50 oficinas de voluntariado de las universidades públicas españolas entre jóvenes familiarizados con estos proyectos. Los resultados revelan una predominancia de Contenido Generado por el Usuario (CGU) de carácter orgánico, narrado por mujeres jóvenes que promueven la participación mediante plantillas predeterminadas de vídeos cortos en los que relatan experiencias personales en un tono neutro. Se detecta también un impacto significativo del CGU, tanto en los usuarios de TikTok, que reflejan su compromiso mediante interacciones; como en la juventud del mundo real, que afirma sentirse identificada con ese tipo de publicaciones.

#### **Palabras clave**

Comunicación digital; redes sociales; TikTok, contenido generado por usuario; participación social; voluntariado

## 1. Introduction

Social networks act as windows to the world, enabling individuals of all ages to connect with diverse personal, commercial, and institutional profiles that pique their interest. These platforms facilitate barrier-free communication that significantly influences the daily lives of their users, enabling interactions that were previously unfeasible.

In this context, social networks are regarded as tools for citizen participation, online social activism, and collaborative democracy (Hernández, 2019). Users generate and share content that has the potential to cause a significant impact, giving rise to innovative concepts suited to these scenarios, such as "digi-impact" (Howard et al., 2016), and thus contribute to shaping new social perspectives.

This observation gains particular significance in light of the generally limited social engagement observed among younger citizens (Loader et al., 2014). Despite discussions of a participatory crisis (Castellano, 2019), millennials and members of Generation Z spend considerable portions of their lives on social networks. These platforms provide them with all the necessary resources and formats not only for developing critical thinking but also for voicing their opinions and contributing to social change.

In 2019, 68.97% of TikTok users were under 24 years old (Yang et al., 2019), and by 2020, the predominant user profile was identified as being between 16 and 24 years old (Quiroz, 2020). As of April 2023, 40.5% of TikTok's global audience fell within the 18 to 24-year age bracket (Statista, 2023). These users are deeply engaged in a participatory culture, adept at creating transmedia narratives and facilitating collective knowledge construction (Irigaray & Lovato, 2014). Despite this engagement, discussions persist about a participatory crisis among these newer generations.

This apparent contradiction, combined with the limited research focusing on these platforms as consolidators of social values such as solidarity, underscores the significance of this study. Consequently, the primary objective of this research is to analyse the use of TikTok as a social communication tool that promotes youth participation in volunteering projects, utilising content tagged with the hashtag #volunteering. Arising from this main goal are four specific objectives (SOs):

SO1: Investigate the profiles of TikTokers who produce content on volunteering, aiming to promote citizen participation.

SO2: Analyse the storytelling techniques within the videos, seeking to identify patterns of correlation between engagement and specific narrative elements.

SO3: Evaluate the impact of the videos related to volunteering by analysing recorded interactions.

SO4: Assess how well youth who are familiar with volunteering projects identify with the content shared on TikTok about such initiatives.

This research adopts a multifaceted approach, addressing the promotion of citizen participation in volunteering projects from both the perspectives of the content creator and the content receiver. This method allows for an in-depth evaluation of the relationship between these two groups through the impact generated by the content they share.

### 1.1. User-Generated Content (UGC)

Social networks have facilitated the emergence of concepts centred around the user as a creator. Among these, User-Generated Content (UGC) is defined as any online format created and distributed by a non-professional user (Fernández, 2014).

In this evolving ecosystem, the relationships between users are crucial (González, 2015; Marauri et al., 2015) as they cultivate emotional bonds that unify them as members of a shared community (Martin & Sharma, 2022). Users recognise the significance of reviews and the potent influence that opinions and comments can exert. Ultimately, they understand that social movements can originate from a social network (La Rosa, 2016).

However, as Durán-Becerra et al. (2020) and other scholars have noted, there is a noticeable scarcity of studies focusing on social platforms from this particular perspective. Existing research includes an exploration of how social networks contribute to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (Porcelli, 2020) and an analysis of the social participation of Venezuelan youth on these platforms (Moreno & Ziriff, 2019). Additionally, Jenkins's work on the relationship between networks and participation, which introduced the concept of 'participatory culture' (Jenkins, 1992; Jenkins, 2006; Jenkins, 2008), is fundamental. However, these studies do not specifically address TikTok, a platform known for its user-centric approach and amateur content creation. Furthermore, these works often adopt a broad

scope, assessing factors such as the utility of social networks for fostering social interaction and gauging the engagement levels of newer generations within the political sphere. This oversight represents a significant opportunity for the present research.

## **1.2. TikTok, the Social Network of Generation Z**

TikTok, which emerged in 2018 following ByteDance's acquisition of the app Musical.ly, became the world's most downloaded social network app in 2022 (Koetsier, 2023). Known for its interactivity and creativity, the platform has captivated users, who engage with it for entertainment, information, and education. TikTok hosts a diverse range of content, from tutorials on making coffee to travel guides, and even features representations of social movements such as #blacklivesmatter (Eriksson & Akerlund, 2022).

Moreover, TikTok's impact differs significantly from other social networks due to its unique algorithm, which does not rely on the user's relationships with known contacts but rather on previous viewing trends. This approach ensures all creators have equal opportunities to achieve virality with their videos (Cervi, 2021). The platform's lightweight content and powerful algorithm, capable of transforming anonymous users into internet stars, are key to its success (Abidin, 2021).

TikTok reached 800 million active users during the pandemic and is often referred to as the social network of Generation Z, a demographic known for integrating their lives with the internet (Anderson, 2020). Some scholars also include millennials in this categorisation, as both generational groups are highly connected and share characteristics such as advanced internet literacy, high academic performance, social awareness, and a propensity for product consumption (Luque, 2022; Ruiz et al., 2016). These traits are linked to a participatory intent that manifests in youth-directed cooperative projects, like volunteering (Brotos et al., 2020; Martínez et al., 2020). The concepts of participation, cooperation, and volunteering combine to promote values of solidarity, serving as strategies to combat structural deficiencies that lead to inequalities and injustices (Amate, 2021).

The opportunities for participation provided by TikTok have enabled users to develop new forms of activism, thereby enhancing civic awareness about social issues such as climate change (Hautea et al., 2021) and xenophobia (Kaur-Gill, 2022). Additionally, the platform is utilised to increase the visibility of collaborative projects that bridge generational divides (Zulli & Zulli, 2020) and blend social, cultural, and professional identities (Hartung et al., 2023; Vázquez, 2021).

Consequently, a search on TikTok using the hashtag #volunteering reveals not the number of videos uploaded under that tag, but their total views: 320.3 million, six times the population of Spain in 2023 (INE, 2023). A cursory review of some of these videos reveals an "amateurization" in promoting civic participation in these types of projects, as most are uploaded by anonymous individuals rather than NGOs or public institutions (Basch et al., 2022). These are users who engage with other users, positioning TikTok as a platform for showcasing participative experiences to other potential volunteers.

## **1.3. Communication in Volunteering Projects**

Previous studies have concentrated on the dissemination strategies employed in social participation projects, underscoring the coexistence of diverse channels used to engage the public. These include theatre, guerrilla advertising, informative talks, advisory sessions, and the development of proprietary volunteering brands by corporations (Blanco, 2023; Mañas, 2018; Nos-Aldas & Farné, 2020). All these methods can be considered extension activities that facilitate the transfer of knowledge to the communities involved (Benseny et al., 2013). However, these studies do not address the use of social networks as communication tools, despite platforms like TikTok beginning to play a significant role, as evidenced by the user-generated content that has been analysed.

The literature review reveals studies on social networks, primarily focusing on their use for social mobilisation and civic participation, both in general terms and in very specific contexts. Examples include the national strike in Colombia in 2019 (Giraldo & García, 2023), social demonstrations in Peru (Barrenechea & Goicoechea, 2023; Caballero, 2019), and political protests in Argentina (López, 2018). These studies share two commonalities: they are concentrated on Latin America and predominantly analyse platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube. The absence of studies focusing on TikTok and its use in Spain highlights a significant gap in the literature, presenting a unique opportunity for this research.

Furthermore, studies on volunteering indicate that associations and companies often disseminate their projects through their own communication channels, such as websites and partner or employee portals, thereby promoting the creation of shared value within the organisation (Mañas, 2018; Porter & Kramer, 2011). In the case of TikTok, this shared value is generated by users external to the promoting associations

who serve as mediators and broadcasters of their messages. User-generated content (UGC) often takes precedence over traditional dissemination channels, a fact that becomes even more significant given the tendency for younger people to participate more actively in volunteering projects when they are appropriately motivated (Waikayi et al., 2012; Pajo & Lee, 2011).

## 2. Methodology

A mixed methodology, employing two distinct tools, is adopted for this study. Initially, a content analysis—both quantitative and qualitative—was conducted on 150 TikTok videos tagged with #volunteering. These videos recorded the highest number of likes during the first quarter of 2023. To define this sample, statistical criteria from the sample size calculator developed by QuestionPro were used, establishing a confidence level of 95% and a margin of error of 8%. The reference population considered was the one million young people registered as volunteers in Spain, as reported in the study 'Voluntary Action in 2022' (Plataforma de Voluntariado de España, 2022). Following these criteria, the initial sample included 151 videos, but for practical reasons, this was rounded down to 150. This rounding does not compromise the validity of the analysis since the final sample size closely matches the calculated value, adhering to the statistical precision standards set by QuestionPro.

The study period is defined from 21 January to 21 April 2023, aligning with the enrolment periods for volunteering programs as listed on the INJUVE website (Ministry of Social Rights and Agenda 2030, 2023).

To facilitate the analysis of the videos, a structured form (Table 1) is utilised, incorporating both quantitative and qualitative approaches. The quantitative aspect includes nine categories of analysis, aimed at assessing the impact generated by the videos related to volunteering. This involves measuring various interactions recorded for each video, such as views, likes, comments, shares, saves, and engagement percentages. Following the coding of these results, an ANOVA variance test is conducted to identify correlations among the different study parameters (Cuevas et al., 2004). This methodological approach enables a comprehensive examination of the data, facilitating a robust analysis of the impact of user-generated content on volunteering engagement.

On the other hand, the qualitative approach is based on eight categories that have been previously validated in other content analyses of social networks (Basch et al., 2022; Durán-Becerra et al., 2020). These variables are tailored to fit the theme and objectives of the current study. The focus is to examine various aspects: the profile of the sender, categorised by their gender and generation; the nature of the discourse, analysed through the sentiment of comments, the formats and tones used, as well as the intended message; and the sentiment of the receiver, gauged by the tone of the comments and responses to them. This approach allows for a detailed exploration of the interpersonal dynamics and communicative strategies within the user-generated content.

**Table 1: Analysis Form**

Quantitative	Qualitative
<b>Date</b>	<b>Type of Comment</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Negative</li> <li>• Neutral</li> <li>• Positive</li> </ul>
<b>Followers</b>	<b>Responses to Comments</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yes</li> <li>• No</li> </ul>
<b>Number of Views</b>	<b>Gender</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Male</li> <li>• Female</li> <li>• Both</li> <li>• None</li> </ul>
<b>Number of Likes</b>	<b>Generation</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Alpha</li> <li>• Z</li> <li>• Millennial</li> <li>• X</li> </ul>

### Number of Comments

- Paid
- Organic

### Type of Content

### Number of Saves

- Template (video with voiceover or predetermined music)
- Challenge
- Experience
- Doing (tutorial)
- Discourse

### Storytelling Format

### Number of Shares

- Neutral
- Humour
- Sensitive
- Serious

### Tone

### Duration

- Convince
- Raise awareness
- Entertain
- Inform

### Intention

### Engagement

Source: Prepared by the authors based on Durán-Becerra et al., (2020) and Basch et al., (2022)

Secondly, in line with the fourth specific objective, an online questionnaire is developed using Google Forms to assess the relationship between the content disseminated and the participation of youth in volunteering projects via TikTok. This tool is regarded as ideal for gathering and quantifying personal perceptions about a specific subject within the fields of social sciences and communication (Blanco, 2011). Moreover, its digital format allows for the rapid collection of responses and broadens participant diversity due to its absence of dissemination limitations (Larrinaga, 2019).

The questionnaire comprises seven items: gender identification, age, search trends, consumption trends, interaction with the content, perception of the storytelling, and perception of the tone. Furthermore, it was validated by three experts selected based on their academic qualifications and professional experience, both of which are closely related to research and communication.

Subsequently, a search was conducted on the websites of the 50 active public universities in Spain (Ministry of Universities, 2022), from which the email addresses of their cooperation and/or volunteering offices were collected. The survey was then disseminated to 32 of these universities, with a request to share it with community members registered in their volunteering project databases. For processing the responses obtained, the use of the statistical software SPSS (version 23.0) is proposed.

## 3. Results

### 3.1. Content Analysis

Of the 150 videos that fit the sample, based on the defined period and the use of the hashtag #volunteering on TikTok, four were found to have content unrelated to the subject under analysis. Consequently, these videos were discarded in the initial phase of the study.

The 146 videos analysed garnered over 54 million views and more than seven million likes. The number of comments was comparatively lower, totalling 66,940. However, TikTok users demonstrated their engagement with the volunteering content through other means, notably by saving the videos 834,706 times and sharing them 571,646 times (Table 2). On average, each video received 370,702 views, 48,620 likes, 458 comments, over three thousand shares, and more than five thousand saves.

A marked variation is observed in certain analysis parameters, such as duration, which ranged from 4 to 287 seconds, and the number of shares, with the lowest at 14 and the highest at 159,900. Notably, the two videos that received the most likes, saves, views, comments, and shares were each four seconds long and utilised the same type of storytelling, template, and song—a lip sync to “My Superhero Movie” by Jeffries (2018). Both videos are narrated by women from Generation Z who, using a medium shot, humorously encourage users to engage in volunteering projects in various countries, including Italy and Hawaii. However, a significant distinction is observed in their approach: one video is organically produced while the other is sponsored by a volunteering agency.

An inversely proportional relationship is observed between the duration of the videos and the interactions they generate; as the duration increases, the interactions tend to decrease. Additionally, a trend is noted in longer videos: they primarily focus their storytelling on the personal experiences of the narrators, who often employ a predominantly neutral tone aimed primarily at informing the audience.

**Table 2: Statistics of #volunteering on TikTok**

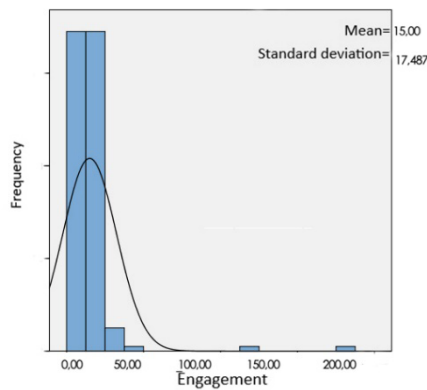
Variable	Minimum Number	Maximum Number	Average Number	Deviation	Total
Followers	139	7.100.000	254.919,41	707.371,00	37.218.234
Views	10700	6.900.000	370.702,05	913.612,75	54.122.500
Likes	1742	1.100.000	48.620,88	148.547,28	7.098.648
Comments	0	11.800	458,49	1.264,18	66.940
Saves	114	117.500	5.717,16	16.048,23	834.706
Shares	14	159.900	3.915,38	16.531,29	571.646
Duration (seconds)	4	287	54,36	55,25	7.937

Source: Prepared by the authors

Of the analysed videos, 39.72% (n=58) have a duration of 20 seconds or less, and 44.52% (n=65) last a maximum of 30 seconds. Only 29.26% of the videos (n=48) are more than one minute in length. This data highlights a prevailing trend towards shorter videos when discussing volunteering on TikTok.

Regarding the engagement percentage, calculated using the formula (likes + comments) / views × 100 (Metricool, 2022), an average engagement rate of 15%, a median of 13.15, and a mode of 10.22 are recorded. This indicates an asymmetrical distribution of engagement, suggesting significant variability in the level of engagement generated by each video in the sample. Additionally, a non-directly proportional relationship is observed among the various impact variables analysed, as detailed in Graph 1.

**Graph 1: Engagement Histogram**



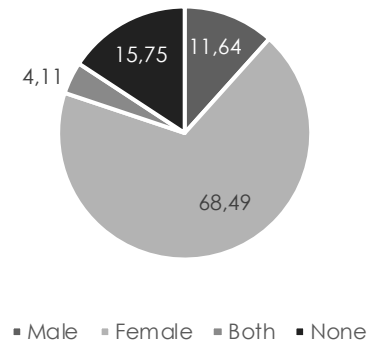
Source: Prepared by the authors

Regarding these interactions, the application of the ANOVA test has not indicated significant differences in the number of likes (sig.=0.992) or comments (sig.=0.987). Similarly, no significant differences were found in the numbers of saves (sig.=0.440), shares (sig.=0.733), and engagement (sig.=0.739). However, a significant difference is observed in the case of views (sig.=0.010).

Additionally, when considering the sentiment of the recorded comments, a predominance of positive sentiment is found in 89.04% of the cases. Negative comments are significantly less common, at 6.16%, and neutral comments are even rarer, comprising only 4.79% of the sample.

In terms of the storyteller, there is a predominance of female narrators, who feature in 68.49% of the cases, compared to 11.64% for male narrators. Notably, 15.75% of the videos represent an audiovisual format where the figure of the sender is omitted, a higher percentage than those generated by men. Additionally, in 4.11% of the cases, there is a dual representation of both a man and a woman (Graph 2).

**Graph 2: TikTok Profile by Gender**



Source: Prepared by the authors

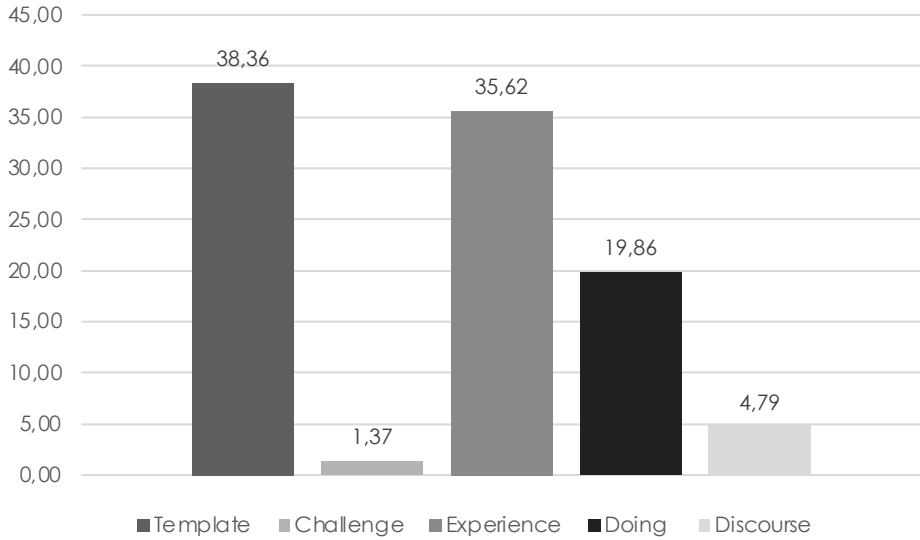
In terms of correlation between variables, the gender of the storyteller does not result in significant differences in the number of likes (sig.=0.579), comments (sig.=0.972), saves (sig.=0.556), shares (sig.=0.653), or engagement (sig.=0.816). However, a significant difference is observed in the number of views (sig.=0.001), indicating a notable impact based on the storyteller's gender in terms of viewer engagement.

Regarding the age of the TikTokers appearing in the analysed videos, 86.99% are identified as belonging to Generation Z. Only 8.22% of the videos are narrated by millennials, while Generation X is represented in just 2.05% of the videos. In 2.74% of the videos, members from several generations share the spotlight. The age of the storyteller does not result in significant differences in the number of views (sig.=0.703), likes (sig.=0.725), comments (sig.=0.929), saves (sig.=0.653), shares (sig.=0.838), or engagement (sig.=0.709).

Regarding the type of content, 59.59% of the videos are organic or not clearly identified as promotional actions. In contrast, 40.41% of the analysed videos are commercial or involve some form of collaboration between a brand and the TikToker in question. However, the strategy behind the content does not result in significant differences in the number of views (sig.=0.373), saves (sig.=0.107), shares (sig.=0.167), or engagement (sig.=0.317). Notably, significant differences are observed in the number of likes (sig.=0.038) and comments (sig.=0.037) generated, indicating that the content type influences these specific forms of interaction.

The theme of the storytelling is further analysed (Graph 3), focusing on how TikTokers encourage youth participation in volunteering projects. A predominant use of a template is observed in 38.36% of the cases, while experiential narratives account for 35.62%. These are followed by "doing" tutorials at 19.86%, discourse at 4.79%, and challenges at 1.37%.

**Graph 3: Videos by Storytelling Theme**

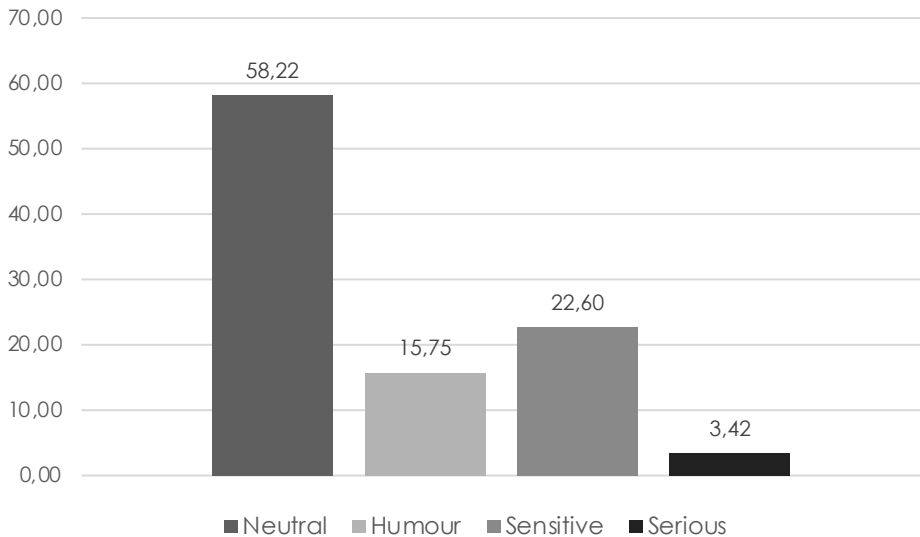


Source: Prepared by the authors

Regarding the theme of the storytelling, no significant differences are found in the number of views (sig.=0.438), comments (sig.=0.231), saves (sig.=0.888), shares (sig.=0.570), or engagement (sig.=0.214). However, a significant difference is observed in the number of likes (sig.=0.002).

Similarly, a predominance of videos featuring a neutral tone is noted, accounting for 58.22% of the sample. Additionally, some videos address volunteering from an emotional perspective (22.60%) or employ a humorous tone (15.75%). Only 3.42% of the videos convey their message in a more formal manner (Graph 4).

**Graph 4: Videos by Tone Used**

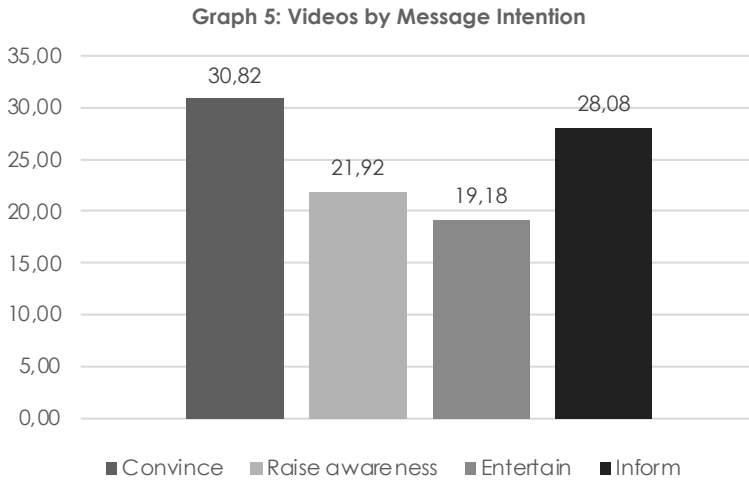


Source: Prepared by the authors

On this occasion, the adopted tone significantly affects the number of saves (sig.=0.014) and shares (sig.=0.794). However, this pattern does not extend to other interactions: views (sig.=0.118), likes (sig.=0.154), comments (sig.=0.129), and engagement (sig.=0.709) do not show significant differences based on tone.



Reflecting the prevalence of neutral messages, the primary intention of the message (Graph 5) is to convince the viewer (30.82%) of the importance of engaging in volunteering, depicting these programs as transformative experiences that every young person should partake in during their formative years. Additionally, some videos primarily serve to inform (28.8%), raise awareness about the social impact of volunteering projects (21.92%), and entertain (19.18%).



Source: Prepared by the authors

This variable only causes significant differences in the number of shares (sig.=0.014), indicating that the adopted tone impacts how frequently videos are shared. However, it does not significantly influence other interactions such as views (sig.=0.584), likes (sig.=0.221), comments (sig.=0.152), saves (sig.=0.359), or overall engagement (sig.=0.224).

### 3.1. Survey

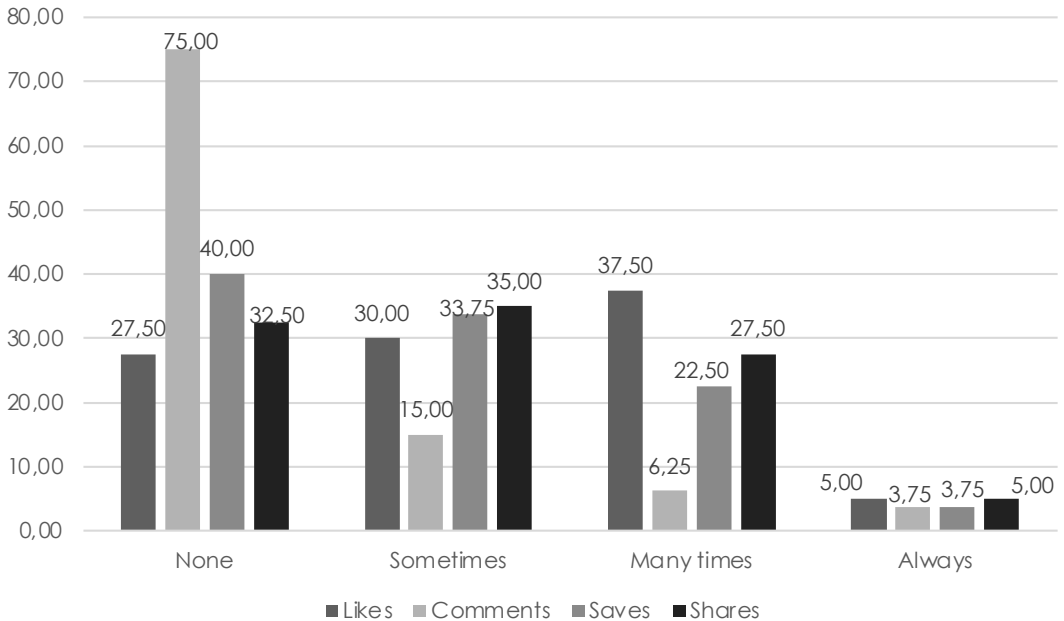
The questionnaire recorded a total of 80 responses, all from users associated with the cooperation and/or volunteering offices of Spanish public universities. Of these respondents, 75% are women (n=60), 23.75% are men (n=19), and 1.25% (n=1) identify as 'other'. This data indicates a significantly higher interest in volunteering projects among women, aligning with the observed predominance of women as storytellers in videos on this topic.

By age group, 87.50% of respondents (n=70) belong to Generation Z, 8.75% (n=7) are millennials, and 3.75% (n=3) are from Generation X. Therefore, the predominant age of participants, ranging from 13 to 29 years, aligns with the demographic that most frequently uses TikTok.

Regarding whether respondents search for volunteering opportunities on the social network, 32.50% (n=26) say they sometimes do, 28.75% (n=23) do so infrequently, and 27.50% (n=22) do not do it at all. Only 8.75% (n=7) report searching often, and 2.50% (n=2) do so every time they log onto the platform. Consequently, 72.50% (n=58) of the sample has used TikTok to some extent to obtain information about volunteering projects.

As for interactions with the content (Figure 7), liking is the preferred action for 72.50% (n=58) of the respondents, followed by saving, with 67.50% (n=54), and sharing, with 60% (n=48). Meanwhile, only 25% (n=20) of the respondents comment on the videos they watch.

**Graph 6: Interactions recorded in videos about #volunteering**



Source: Prepared by the authors

This response is consistent with the findings from the content analysis, which reveals that comments are the least common form of interaction by TikTok users, averaging 458 per video. In terms of content preference, 87.50% of participants (n=70) favour organic content over paid content, despite the fact that collaborations tend to garner more interactions. A notable trend is the tagging of the sponsoring company only in the video footer, which can obscure the commercial nature of the content unless the description is read.

Additionally, there is a strong preference for personal experiences in storytelling, favoured by 63.75% of respondents (n=51), followed by 'doing' or tutorial-type content at 15% (n=12), challenges at 8.75% (n=7), and templates at 7.50% (n=6). Discourse or narrative-driven content is the least preferred, making up only 5% of preferences (n=4). This preference data contrasts with the results from the content analysis, where the template format is most commonly used.

Regarding the tone of the videos, 50% of the participants (n=40) prefer a neutral tone; 27.50% (n=22) enjoy a humorous tone; 21.25% (n=17) opt for an emotional tone; and a minimal 1.25% (n=1) favour a serious tone. These preferences align with the interaction patterns observed in the content analysis.

#### 4. Discussion and Conclusions

The user-generated content (UGC) on #volunteering on TikTok showcases the platform's ability to foster intercreativity, making it an ideal environment for developing crowdsourcing networks (Vázquez, 2021). The analysis of 150 videos reveals not only a strong interest among TikTok users in promoting social values but also considerable audience engagement. This is evidenced by an engagement rate of 15%, which is considered high within the range of 4.5% to 18% (Hootsuite, 2022).

From these results, a distinct impact pattern for the videos has been identified. It typically involves short-duration videos, edited using a predefined template that includes music and user-replaceable clips. The storytelling approach is predominantly experiential, often delivered with a humorous tone to engage and entertain the audience.

In this regard, a significant variance was observed in the number of views depending on the viewer's gender, with videos watched by women receiving more views than those watched by men. Additionally, videos using a template to narrate an experience tend to receive more likes. Another crucial factor influencing the impact of these videos is the tone used; videos that evoke an emotional response tend to be shared and saved more frequently, despite a general predominance of content delivered in a neutral tone.

This analysis of the most shared content and what generates the most impact aligns with the defining characteristics of Generation Z, which include a passion for immediacy, a penchant for audiovisual consumption, and a drive for change (Castelló-Martínez, 2020). This desire for transformation correlates directly with the objectives of the analysed videos: to reinforce solidarity as a social value by promoting youth participation in volunteering projects.

Furthermore, two major categories of videos were identified. On the one hand, videos produced by anonymous TikTokers serve as a platform for sharing their personal experiences. On the other hand, there are videos narrated and shared by users as part of a collaboration with an intermediary volunteering agency. While the second type of video originates from a commercial agreement, both categories exhibit a humanisation of the message, aimed at fostering youth participation by highlighting the merits of the projects. Remarkably, a considerable number of promotional videos have achieved greater impact than their organic counterparts, although it remains unclear whether users are always aware of the commercial nature of these videos, given that the collaborating company is often only mentioned in the video's description.

However, the intervention of such organisations, like Worldpacker, Travelers, or Cooperating Volunteers, also leads to the generation of a type of video that distorts the concept of 'volunteering', presenting the projects more as a form of low-cost tourism than as social actions. These videos clarify that, in return for a payment, the companies connect users with hosts worldwide who provide accommodation in exchange for free labour. The content of these videos is both informative and promotional, guiding users through the registration and application processes on corporate websites. While there is a predominant stream of TikTokers who support these initiatives, only a minority highlight the detrimental impact these companies may have on the true essence of social participation. Notably, the videos that critique these practices tend to receive predominantly negative comments from the platform's users.

Regarding the profile of the TikToker, there is a predominance of young women who encourage public participation in volunteering projects through a positivist discourse, employing either a sensitive or neutral tone, and using images or clips from amateur videos that romanticise these activities. The primary goal is to enhance the visibility of the experience, often employing templates predefined by TikTok. Notably, 7.5% of the analysed videos (n=11) exhibit an identical editing pattern and use the same song, 'My Superhero Movie' (Jeffries, 2018). This consistency indicates that certain narrative elements, integrated with the platform's functionalities, have become symbolic of #volunteering on TikTok.

Lastly, the analysis conducted on TikTok, encompassing both the user-generated content (UGC) and the impact of such content, has been augmented by insights from students at Spanish public universities who are familiar with real-world volunteering projects. The results of the survey allow us to conclude that young people offline resonate with the content about volunteering shared online, particularly on TikTok. Most participants report frequently searching, or having searched at some point, for information about volunteering activities on the social network. Additionally, the majority express a preference for organic and experiential content, aligning with the content creation trends observed in the analysis.

The findings outlined above confirm the successful achievement of the primary objective set at the outset of this research: to analyse how TikTok serves as a tool for promoting social participation among youth through content tagged with the hashtag #volunteering. Additionally, both the content analysis and the survey have enabled the accomplishment of specific objectives: studying the profiles of TikTokers, examining the storytelling within the videos, evaluating the impact generated through recorded interactions, and assessing how the young audience identifies with the user-generated content in the real world.

In conclusion, TikTok can be considered a beneficial tool for promoting volunteering, particularly among the youth, by fostering citizen participation through content that resonates with the majority of users on the social network. However, the findings highlight the risk of losing the social focus with which this type of content should be addressed, particularly when the number of promotional videos exceeds that of organic ones. Therefore, user-generated content on TikTok must be approached from a more social perspective, not only promoting youth initiative but also reinforcing the values of commitment and responsibility among the public. In this context, the role of NGOs and public institutions becomes crucial, especially given that none of the analysed videos were uploaded by these organisations.

## 5. Specific contributions

Task	Author 1	Author 2
Conceptualisation	X	X
Data curation	X	X
Formal analysis	X	X
Funding acquisition	X	X
Investigation	X	X
Methodology	X	X
Project administration	X	X
Resources	X	X
Software	X	X
Supervision	X	X
Validation	X	X
Visualisation	X	X
Writing: original draft	X	X
Writing: review and editing	X	X

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## 8. Conflict of interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest in any of the content of this article.

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