Social media evaluation for non-profit organizations
The case of Oxfam Italia
Master Thesis

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Abstract

The thesis presents an evaluation of the Facebook page of the Italian non-profit organization Oxfam Italia from November 2013 to March 2014. The research’s aim is to analyze the community which follows the organization, how this community interacts with it and how the moderators of the page communicate with its followers. The research aims also to find ways to increase Oxfam Italia’s performance on Facebook. The theoretical framework focuses on non-profit marketing and its peculiarities, Social Media Marketing and notions such as engagement and brand community. The methods used in the research consist in data mining and content analysis. Data have been gathered from Facebook Insights and through the issuing of FQL queries from the Facebook Graph API.

The research found out that Oxfam has more female followers than male (62% vs 36.5%), the age range of them is 25-44 years. Oxfam’s presence, in particular, is very rooted in the region of Tuscany (where its headquarter is). Facebook followers showed a very good attitude toward the organization, even though criticisms are common, and Oxfam used its social media presence mainly to update the followers concerning ongoing activities and to urge to on-line activism. The users’ favourite engagement method was “liking” photographic contents.

Keywords
Social media evaluation – Non-profits organizations – Non-profits marketing – Facebook – Oxfam Italia – Facebook Graph API – Facebook Insights – content analysis
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1 Introduction

1.1 Aim of the research

A significant part of the literature in the field of media and communication has focused previously
on the topic of web 2.0 and the use companies make of it. The intent of this thesis is to focus,
instead, on humanitarian non-profit organizations and their endeavours in the field of social media.
Even though they are meant to be non-profit oriented, it has been shown that non-profit
organizations compete with each others, and in general with other institutions, to gain volunteers,
donations, legitimacy, acknowledgment and governmental funds (Hatch 2012). Furthermore, it has
been noted that the marketplace of issues in the audience minds is overstocked (Rice and Atkin
2012) and that the increase in web contents reduces the overall attention that users eventually pay to
them (Brown 2009).

These dynamics show how delicate public relations (PRs) in new media can be for
organizations that carry humanitarian and socially-oriented goals. The importance of this topic
underpins the aim of the scientific research presented in this thesis, which seeks to analyse and
evaluate the use of social media by one of the most important Italian non-profit organizations:
Oxfam Italia.

1.2 PRs and web 2.0

User-generated-contents (in the following part of the thesis UGC) have changed the world of PRs as
they have introduced the idea that the one who owns the medium does not control the message
production anymore (Brown 2009). Furthermore, the huge number of posts created by average
internet-users for each topic represents a challenge for moderators who only in a few cases edit the
UGCs and more commonly use artificial tools to catch the so called sentiment behind thousands of
posts concerning any topic (Ibid). The literature concerning PRs in the field of web 2.0. states that
the internet today has not only given PRs practitioners several new concerns, but it has also
provided them with important ways to enlarge the spectrum of their activities: PRs do not consist
anymore in interacting only with journalists but in interacting with (potentially) all the users which
populate the web.

The pros of such development are that PR practitioners can work 24/7 and they can enjoy
almost immediate feedback concerning their choices, the cons are that when the feedback is being
perceived (and it is negative) it is already too late to intervene because the message, once issued,
has already become public domain (Ibid).
The web has also multiplied the possible ways to communicate. During the period of web 1.0 websites were composed by texts and a few images (almost like electronic brochures); today the improvement of technological devices allows organizations to publish videos (social networks, YouTube, Vimeo), apps (Google Play, Samsung apps, App Store, Facebook app, Windows Phone Store), RSS, streaming of events and so on.

The general feeling concerning PRs and web 2.0, however, is that - given the almost 2.5 billions of internet users and almost 1.9 billions of social media users currently active in the world (Kemp 2014) - every company or organization knows that the conversation in the on-line world may be about them. In addition, the scientific literature concerning corporate communication still confirms the traditional assumption that puts reputation as the biggest concerns for organizations (Power 2008). This means that outside the organizations’ realm, people are shaping their opinion about such organizations and thus PR practitioners must be “there” to guide the conversation and to defend or to just represent the organizations they work for.

Because, to paraphrase the Italian saying, organizations must speak first in order to speak twice.

1.3 What is Oxfam?

The confederation of organizations “Oxfam” was born in 1995 as the result of the unification of several smaller independent NGOs. Oxfam takes its name from “Oxford Committee for Famine Relief”, a committee with the purpose of delivering supplies in war-marked territories during the Second World War (Oxfam International 2014a). Today Oxfam’s members fight poverty world-wide, promoting campaigns to stimulate active citizenship, agriculture, climate change awareness, education, emergency response, gender justice, health, indigenous & minority rights, fair trade and so on (Oxfam International 2014b).

Ucodep (Unity and COoperation for the DEvelopment of Peoples) was an Italian non-profit organization that had committed itself to the fight against inequality and poverty since the 70’s. During its more than 30-year long activity, Ucodep organized the local volunteers’ activities in Tuscany, promoted the spread of knowledge concerning fair-trade opening in Arezzo the first “Bottega del mondo” (World’s store) and represented an important reality in the environment of Italian humanitarian non-profits. In 2010 Ucodep joined the confederation Oxfam International and it changed its name in Oxfam Italia (Oxfam Italia 2014c).

Oxfam International is today composed by 17 member-organizations: Australia, Belgium, Canada, France, Germany, Great Britain, Hong Kong, Ireland, India, Italy, Japan, Mexico, The Netherlands, New Zealand, Quebec, Spain and the United States. This research, however, focused only on Oxfam Italia, which will be referred to simply as “Oxfam” from henceforth.
1.4 Why is it an interesting issue?

Oxfam Italia has been chosen, in particular, because it represents one of the leaders of the non-profit humanitarian sector through its activities in the field all around the world. Despite this, the Italian organization doesn’t enjoy, in the social media realm, a high-ranking position for the most known non-profit organizations in Italy, and has many less followers than its competitors (Non-profit online 2014).

Such a gap can be eventually dangerous for the organization because the lack of visibility may affect, in the long run, the effectiveness of the fund raising activities planned and thus the achievement of the organization’s noble goals.

1.5 Research question

In order to realize a Social Media Evaluation model for non-profit organizations, the present thesis will focus on the social media activities, together with their effects, performed by the non-profit organization Oxfam Italia toward its most important interlocutor: users. The analysis will focus on the period from 1st of November 2013 to 31st of March 2014, and it will produce a social media evaluation of Oxfam Italia’s Facebook page. The Social Network created by Mark Zuckemberg has been chosen for the research because it’s the most popular social network currently in Italy (Rotoli 2014).

The research questions the thesis wants to answer are:

- How many followers did Oxfam Italia have during the given period, what are their characteristics and how can they be increased?
- How was the community shaped and how did the different users behave during the time?
- What were the topics referred to and the attitude showed by Oxfam followers during those five months?
- What use did Oxfam Italia make of its Facebook page during the given five months?
- What kind of contents triggered the most the user engagement during the given time? How can such engagement be fostered?
2 Background and Previous Research

2.1 Introduction

The following chapter introduces the social conditions and the former theoretical inquiries concerning organizations and companies which have made PRs and social media marketing (SMM in the following part of the text) fundamental today. The chapter will initially present a general definition of what non-profit means, what is the non-profit marketing and what are the differences between it and the for-profit one. The chapter will also present reasons as to why SMM is so commonly used by non-profit organizations and with which results it is performed.

Furthermore, the problem of social media evaluation will be considered with an attempt to establish a definitive model. In the following part of the text, the need for the development of new methodological solutions will be introduced and justified. Further explanations will be provided in the theoretical and in the methodological chapters.

2.2 What does non-profit mean?

In the world, the terms “third-sector”, “independent sector”, “not-for-profit sector”, “charitable sector”, “voluntary sector”, “non-government sector” are often used without a clear distinction. Some of this words can be put together in order to identify a reality like Oxfam Italia. The Italian NGO, in fact, is neither private nor governmental, it doesn’t aim to profit and it financially supports itself through people’s charity. Nevertheless, confusion can be frequent in those cases of organizations which, even if independent, are also financed by governmental or private bodies.
The relation between governmental and private institutions can provide a first hint for the
definition of non-profit realities: non-profit organizations are most of the times neither part of the
governmental apparatus nor part of the private one. Figure 1, from Sargeant’s book *Marketing for
nonprofit organizations*, shows graphically government, private sector and third sector.

Accordingly to different economical theories, either the governmental or the
private sectors have to satisfy the human needs. Today, in western societies, both
realms live together and provide different goods for different social needs. In a purely
theoretical world the private sector, in a
developed country, should match demand and supply providing with goods and services those subjects who are able to pay for them.

Figure 1 Government, Private sector, Third sector

*The private sector or ‘market’ caters for the majority of human need, [...] matching the supply of producers with consumer demand for goods and services. This market ensures that people can obtain much of what they want and need from others at a reasonable price – or at least those with money are facilitated in doing so!* Economists argue that the market works since suppliers are prevented from charging excessive prices by the knowledge that others will enter the market to cater for the need if they do so. Similarly, the market ensures that a multitude of different needs are met, by ensuring that a reasonable profit will be available to suppliers in each case (Sargeant 2009b, 527).

The state apparatus, instead, is made by those institutions which are fully or partially funded by the state with the goal to both allow the continuation of institutions (i.e. politics, the military) and to pursue the interest of citizen (i.e. schools, hospitals and so on). The funds come mainly from the state (i.e. mostly taxation) and thus how they are spent represent a huge concern for the state and citizens (Ibid). The government-private dichotomy, however, doesn’t always work perfectly so the
non-profit organizations’ universe was born to satisfy those social needs which neither governments nor the private market could or had interest to satisfy. Some social issues, in fact, either for political or for economic reasons, are either underestimated or neglected by both the market and by the governments.

In this environment the “third sector” shows up as the result of individuals who, voluntary, gather in associations and work to help other people, both inside and outside the national borders. The nature of these associations is external to governments and to private actors (even though partnerships are seldomly established) and this is why such sector is called "independent" in USA or in general non-governative in the rest of the world (M. J. Baker and Hart 2008).

2.3 What is non-profit marketing

As Sargeant notes, for many decades marketing has been regarded as a pure business tool (and not available for non-profit goals) until during the late 1960’s, when academic research began focusing on non-profit-oriented uses of it. Since then, there have been huge number of academic works published, relating to the use of marketing for socially-committed goals, especially in the field of healthcare, education, Arts and fundraising (Sargeant 2009b).

Today, after decades of academic researches and marketing operations initiated by non-profits, the distance between for-profit and non-profit-oriented marketing has decreased sensitively, in particular because:

1. *The broadening of the marketing concept was no longer regarded as controversial.*
2. *The non-profit sector and the issues that must be addressed therein was completely integrated into all marketing courses and not treated as a separate subject.*
3. *Non-profit managers perceived their organizations as having marketing problems.*
4. *Non-profits established marketing departments (where appropriate) and employed marketing personnel* (Baker and Hart 2007, 527)

What has just been stated above, however, doesn’t mean that organizations of both sides perform their marketing activities in the same ways. Non-profit oriented organizations, in fact, must pay higher attention to some aspects which are peculiar of their status, peculiarities which will be further described in paragraph 2.1.1
2.3.1 Peculiarities of non-profits’ marketing

The difference between profit-oriented and non-profit organizations’ marketing has been deeply discussed in academia. In his *Marketing Management for Nonprofit Organizations* Adrian Sargeant identifies 8 main differences:

1) **Two distinct markets**

Profit-oriented organizations develop marketing in order to increase the sales toward customers in order to obtain the revenues necessary to buy new raw materials and to produce a second line of goods or services. For such reason marketing is addressed to only one category: customers.

In non-profits, instead, those who pay for the allocation of goods and services (funders) are seldomly those who eventually receive the final product (categories in need). Marketing has to be employed in two different markets: resource attraction and resource allocation.

By “resource attraction” is meant the environment in which resources are gathered: i.e. non-profits collect money from donations and accept volunteer work. By “resource allocation”, instead, it is meant the market in which the resources are used: i.e. non-profits spend their money for goods, hire their employees and so on.

2) **Multiple constituencies**

Even though organizations address two markets, they must engage in conversation with many more different publics during each of the phases of the strategy planning.

*For a charity, this [i.e. the set of publics] might typically include individual donors, corporate donors, trusts/foundations, legislators, the local community, the general public, local and national media, recipients of goods and services, the organization’s own staff, volunteers, etc* (Sargeant 2009a, 527).

The concept of public is defined by Sargeant as every group which the organization must focus on. Oxfam Italia, for example, does not use the same marketing strategies with its donors and with the suppliers of the goods it makes use of.

3) **Societal non-market orientation**

The orientation of the non-profit organization doesn’t aim to a short-term satisfaction (like in market-oriented campaigns) but aims to a societal change which may not be seen positively by the actors ruling the contexts the organization works in. Such mismatch may cause tensions which the organizations has to manage wisely in order to be able to achieve its goals modifying pre-existing
behavioural, cultural, religious etc patterns. For example the fair trades shops *La bottega del mondo* ("the world's shop") by Oxfam Italia sell items with a price higher than the average Italian shops, but Oxfam doesn't lower the prices (according it to the customers’ habits) because the short-term profit is secondary to the goal of improving the third-world workers' conditions.

4) **Non financial objectives**

In the phase of resources allocations non-profits do not pursue the goal of profit accumulating and for such reason the evaluation of their performance is tricky because of the substantial intangibleness of the campaigns effects. For example, the outcomes of the campaign aimed to facilitate the integration of immigrants’ children attending primary school in Tuscany may be hard to measure in a short time. Such kind of difficulty must be kept in mind when organizations try to motivate donors to endorse their activities.

5) **Services and social behaviours rather than physical goods**

As showed previously marketing has to advertise non-physical outcomes and for such reason it should not draw on the experiences of the marketing of goods but on the one of services. Both the services’ marketing and the non-profit share intangibility of the service, inseparability (the service doesn't not exist differently from the form in which it is delivered to the receiver), heterogeneity (no pre-inspection of the service may be done for quality control so monitoring becomes predominant) and perishability (services cannot be stored and if provided they have to guarantee a full stage to be maintained) (Zeithaml and Bitner 1996).

6) **Collaboration, non competition**

Generally non-profit organizations compete with each other but sometimes they can also prefer to collaborate. In order, for example, to minimize costs and maximize impact they can share the distribution channels with other organizations active in the same locations. Non-profits may also establish partnerships with private or governmental bodies. A good example may be provided by the tender issued by Oxfam Italia to find a fodder supplier for the the Palestinian NGO *Union of Agricultural Work Committees* (UAWC) in November 2012 (Oxfam Italia 2014b).

7) **Public scrutiny/non-market pressures**

Non-profits are object to intensive scrutiny by several controlling institutions which may undermine the organizations’ reputation, activities and even their existence. The charity sector, in particular, must abide by particularly restricted norms and, nevertheless, in Italy it is common that businesses
choose (illegally) to be officially recognized as ONLUS ("non-lucrative organization of social utility") to enjoy tax benefits they do not have the right to claim. Oxfam Italia publishes periodically the so-called “bilancio sociale”, an official document which states the financial and organizational outcomes of the organization.

A non-market pressure is performed also by the instability of the contexts in which Oxfam works (Palestine and Sri Lanka among the others) and marketing has thus to take account of risks which most of the profit-oriented organizations do not have.

8) Higher ethical standards

The growing attention on Corporate social responsibility, concerning profit-oriented businesses, calls for every company or government body to be careful about the ethics of their behavior. However, non-profit organizations impose on their management, an even higher level of moral responsibility. Non-profits do not seek revenue, yet they still must maximize the benefit of their activities, and make legal and ethical decisions.

Ethics is not universal, but it is connected to the ideological framework in which the organization works. Oxfam Italia, as stated above, does not abide by any religious principle, but inspires itself to follow well-defined moral values which marketers have to take into account and defend.

2.4 Humanitarian NGOs and SMM

In order to continue the present research has to provide a unique definition of what SMM is: According to Kirby and Marsden, SMM refers to those marketing techniques which are deployed on-line in order to stimulate users to talk positively about a brand, a company, a product or a service (Kirby and Marsden 2006). In her Social Media Marketing Benefits for Nonprofit Organizations, Laura Lake suggests that, at the time the article was written, 89% of charitable organizations had deployed a social media presence and 45% of those had stated that social media represent an important tool to use for fund raising activities (About.com Marketing 2014). The reasons for this trend have been pointed out by the same author in the article 5 Benefits Non Profit Organizations Gain from Social Media Marketing:

1. Non profits do not pay dividends, thus every surplus income (or saving) may be used for their activities. Saving money for communication, thus, has a double advantage;
2. Stakeholders can help the diffusion of causes which are related to themselves;
3. Social media allow for direct contact between followers and organizations. Non-profits increase their importance thanks to the followers and the users enrich their social media presence with the “like” for the organization. Other users may also follow the example and “like” the organization as well;

4. Videos can be use as leverage from the organization to engage followers. YouTube, in particular, has a nonprofit program with facilitations for NGOs;

5. Organizations can use social media to conduct surveys about their activities and achievements. Through this, they are able to receive suggestions, opinions and also create interest in the audience for the following fundraising campaigns (About.com Marketing 2014).

Other experts also focused on the technical possibilities that the web 2.0 gives to its users. Facebook causes, for example, allows charitable organizations to issue campaigns and fund raising. act.ly introduces on-line petitions on twitter, and matches every re-tweet with an official petition signature. flickr and shutterfly can display pictures of the effects of the fundraisings, in order to motivate users donate for the first time or continue donating (About.com Marketing 2014).

2.5 Previous research on non-profits and internet

Some of the previous research has stressed the importance of new media for non-profits. Waters argues that new media have increased the ability of non profits to communicate with clients, regulators, volunteers, media and public in general (Waters 2007) and for such reason the relationship between non-profits and social media has become critical for the organizational performance (Lovejoy and Saxton 2012). Such statement becomes even more crucial considering that the previous research has actually showed that non-profits weren't able to exploit their websites in web 1.0 platform as hubs for interaction, organization and engagement with stakeholders (Saxton, Guo and Brown 2007).

What do organizations use social media for? In their Information Community, and Action: How Nonprofit Organizations Use Social Media, Kristen Lovejoy and Gregory D. Saxton have examined the twitter use of 100 of the largest non-profits in USA. The two scholars have found out that such organizations use twitter with mainly three goals: sharing information, creating community and urging to action. Among those sharing information has been proved to be the most common activity, showing thus a clash with the previous assumption that the main purpose of social media is instead establishing a dialogue with followers (Lovejoy and Saxton 2012).
In the work *Tweet, tweet, tweet: A content analysis of nonprofit organizations’ Twitter updates* by Waters and Jamal, the authors endorse the idea that non-profits use only few of the potentialities provided by social media. The authors support the idea that the establishment of a symmetrical relationship between users and organization is made easier by involving users in on-line and off-line activities. However, their study proves that non-profit organisations use twitter mainly to convey one-way messages afferent mainly to public information and press-agentry. In a nutshell, thus, Waters and Jamal agree with Lovejoy and Saxton that organizations are using twitter for sharing information instead of community engaging (Waters and Jamal 2011).

Waters, Burnett, Lamm and Lucas examined 275 Facebook pages from non-profits organizations in order to understand how non-profits implement disclosure, information dissemination and users’ involvement in their Facebook profiles. The scholars proved that almost all the organizations made themselves recognizable providing a description of themselves (96%), a list of the administrators (97%) and linked the Facebook page with the external website (81%). Nevertheless only 43% of them mentioned the mission statement of the organization and only 22% reported details concerning their history. The study reveals also that organizations use Facebook to share organizationally-oriented news: the most used tool to share organizational strategy was the discussion board (74%) while only 56% and 54% of them posted photograph or provided links to external news and only the 20% and the 5% provided summaries of their campaigns and used the social network for their press releases. The performance of the organizations concerning involvement were scarce too as for only 37% of them provided an email address to organizational representatives, only 13% provided an outlet to make charitable donations and advertised current volunteer opportunities. Moreover, only 9% provided a phone number and only 8%, a calendar of events. The study by Waters, Burnett, Lamm and Lucas confirms that even though non-profits want to be on Facebook, they do not fully use its potential because they failed in exploiting the interactive nature of the social network (Waters et al. 2009a).

*Engaging stakeholders through Twitter: How nonprofit organizations are getting more out of 140 characters or less* (Lovejoy, Waters and Saxton 2012) analyzes 4655 tweets from 73 non-profit organizations to conclude, similarly to what seen above, that they use social media as a one-way communication channel, because only 20% of such tweets demonstrate actual conversation. The research thus proved that the aim of social media presence may not to establish a dialogue at any costs but to promote the page, sharing information and urge to action. Interactivity, consequently, can be only one of the several uses organizations can make of social networks.

In her *Perceptions of corporations on Facebook: an analysis of Facebook social norms*, Vorvoreanu traces the unsuccessful attempts to use social media (and in particular Facebook) as tool to engage with stakeholders to the basilar mismatch which exists between the social norms
ruling social networks and the norms which rule organizational PRs. Previous research, in fact, has proved that people use social networks to interact with their families and friends, for dating, for sharing self-made artistic contents, to create their own on-line identity, to buy and sell items and many other uses which are all different from visiting an organization's blog or website to be informed about its news. In short terms when a user spends his/her time on a social network, most likely he/she doesn’t want to read from press agents or marketers but just engage with friends or families. For such reason the Rumanian scholar calls for the academic community to focus their studies on the relationship between organizational communicative dynamics and social media native-users social norms (Vorvoreanu 2014).

As showed above non-profit organizations' difficulties in exploiting internet to enrich their relationships with their stakeholders have been a topic discussed even before the advent of social media. Scholars previously blamed the scarce results of non-profits on different factors: according to Hill and White non-profits do not enjoy enough resources to maintain sophisticated websites (Hill and White 2000). The same lack of resources hinders organizations to properly monitor communication efforts (Guo and Acar 2005) since the biggest amount of resource is destined to the achievement of the organizational goals (Markham, Johnson and Bonjean 1999). The limits in the performance in the field of social media, thus, could actually be not to be traced in poorly planned campaign but in technical and unsolvable issues.

Today, nevertheless, Twitter, Facebook, Linked-in and the other social media take care of technical issues on their own and offer a certain amount of free space and visibility. This factor lightens strongly the burden of the organizations which still have the duty to create contents and to focus on the policy planning of the campaigns: the social media, moreover, offer often valuable and free tools for the evaluation like the ones which are used for this research (i.e. Facebook Insights and Facebook Graph API, more described in the methodology chapter). The biggest responsibility, thus, still lies in the organizations and for such reason it is important that the scientific community focuses on such topics providing socially oriented-organizations with reliable guidances. Almost all of the studies mentioned above, indeed, are only a couple of years old but in the field of social media a short time can actually carry with itself huge changes. The research by Waters and Jamal, which shows that non-profits in the sample do not involve the public in a symmetrical relationship, is three-year old and the organizations may have changed in the mean time their policies (paradoxically perhaps after reading Waters and Jamal's article!).

The Italian context, moreover, is less studied that the American one and thus the present study wants to fill a gap in research exploring a new environment and a new reality. As said above, Oxfam Italia is a big organization which doesn’t enjoy a paramount position concerning its social media communicative achievements (Non-profit on line 2014) and for such reason it represents an
interesting case study. The present thesis, in fact, wants to propose the methodological pillars for further social media evaluations for non-profit organizations in the Italian environment. The goal of the study is to establish a guideline for the evaluation which dissociates itself from previous attempts to create a new and more effective model.

2.6 Social media marketing evaluation

After defining the non-profit organization, how it develops its marketing, the social media used, and how non-profits can use social networks, the research focuses its attention on the main issue at stake. Once the communication has been provided?

2.6.1 Difficulties of evaluation

The difficulties of performing a complete evaluation begin with the difficulty to establish clear goals that the SMM has to discharge. Research has proved that when an organization doesn’t establish in advance its performance goals, making measurements whether its strategic policy is successful or not becomes harder (Greenley 1986). Accordingly, in the environment of communication, not establishing performance goals in advance makes trickier evaluations as well.

The setting of the so-called key performance indicators, which prove or not the success of a social media strategy, is still up to the organizations which can prefer to focus on increasing the number of fans, improving the relationship with its stakeholders, increasing the views, stimulating the Word of mouth (WOM, in the following part of the text) and so on.

What has been noticed, though, is that even if non-profit NGOs have massively chosen to use social media, paradoxically scientific research hasn’t proved yet that efforts on social networks bring about increases of sales for profit-oriented organizations. For such reason Dubach Spiegler draws on, from the game theory, the famous prisoner’s dilemma: the fear to lose out in sales motivates organizations to invest in social media (even if the effectiveness of such media hasn’t been proved) simply because of the apprehension of being the only one not doing it (Dubach Spiegler 2011). Non-profit organizations may suffer as well from the same dilemma, whereas instead of sales the goal may become the increase of the loyalty of the brand community (see the theoretical chapter) or the donations’ rate.

2.6.2 The SN ROI

As mentioned above in many occasions, the discussion among the academic world whether and how to make sense of social media results is still ongoing and it is faced by different perspectives:
one of the attempts to find a valuable metric for social networks involves the so-called Social Networks ROI.

The ROI, return of investment, is a financial tool developed to quantify the effects of an investment. The ROI is calculated from the subtraction of the costs of investment from its gain, divided by the same investment costs (Lenskold 2003):

$$\text{ROI} = \frac{(\text{Gain from Investment} - \text{Cost of Investment})}{\text{Cost of Investment}}$$

Figure 2 The ROI’s formula
Source: (Lenskold 2003)

If, for example, a pizzeria sells a pizza for 80sek while its owner spend only 20sek to produce it, his ROI will be: \((80-20)/20=3\) (or 300%).

The ROI is an advanced tool which is taken from the field of business, thus this thesis will not further develop the topic, but scientific literature tried to connect the idea of ROI to social media giving birth this way to the SN ROI. Many scholars have expressed themselves toward the heuristic value and the concrete applicability of such tool. Some of them, like Zhen et al, and Dörflinger state that SN ROI is as impossible as useless to measure (Dörflinger 2011; Zeng et al. 2010). Hoffman and Fodor argue that “[…] instead of emphasizing their own marketing investments and calculating the returns in terms of customer response, managers should begin by considering consumer motivations to use social media and then measure the social media investments customers make as they engage with the marketers’ brands” (Hoffman and Fodor 2010, 120).

Blancherd states that the ROI measurement is a business and not a media metric that can only be used for social network only after a conversion of data from the field of finance till the field of communication (Blanchard 2009). The model is this way deployed and it refers to the ideal structure which efforts in social media should bring about:

\[ \text{INVESTMENT} \rightarrow \text{ACTION} \rightarrow \text{REACTION} \rightarrow \text{NON-FINANCIAL IMPACT} \rightarrow \text{FINANCIAL IMPACT} \]

In the model, the action (i.e. the issuing of Facebook campaign), made possible by the investment of the organization, causes a reaction from the audience (i.e. they get to know about a new product). Such reaction will reveal a non-financial impact (i.e. the audience looks for information concerning the product) which will bring to a financial-impact (i.e. the audience buys the product).

Some other scholars, instead, believe that SN ROI can be easily and precisely measured. According to Bughin and Chui, web 2.0 has proved to improve the companies’ performances
already and those organizations which are market leaders, which have higher profit margins and which gain market share are those who already cover the web 2.0 environment at 360° (Bughin and Chui 2010). According to Gillin, finally, internet is the “most measurable medium ever invented, and anything that can be measured can be used to calculate ROI” (Gillin 2010).

The ROI and the SN-ROI concept have been here introduces as examples of previous evaluation attempts meant to appraise for-profit oriented social network pages. The goal of the thesis, however, is to show that the same method cannot be applied to humanitarian realities such as Oxfam Italia because of the inner difference of goals which for-profit and non-profit oriented pages have. The ROI formula described in the figure number 2 can be easily applied to companies (which have just to consider the amount spent for social media and the revenue obtained from it) but research has also showed that the real purpose of social network pages’ is to establish a *brand community* and not to make profit (Cvijikj, Spiegler and Michahelles 2013).

This research endorses the importance of the creation of a brand community, for this reason such concept will be explained more accurately in the theoretical chapter. This research, consequently, proposes a method which goes beyond ROI and SN-ROI, which are here mentioned only to prove the necessity to develop new and more community-oriented models.
3 Theoretical framework

3.1 Challenges for social media campaigns

The web 2.0 represents for sure the biggest revolution in the field of PRs of last decades and the necessary condition for the birth of SMM. In order to understand the use of web 2.0 for Oxfam Italia, a step backwards is needed to define in first instance what is web 2.0. As Lorenzo Cantoni and Stefano Tardini wrote, the web 2.0 represents not the development of a new technology (even though from the development of it new technologies were born) but the different use of a previously existent technology. In particular the web 2.0 differs from its ancestor for:

1) Web 2.0 has witnessed the increase of the number of contents-generators (the users themselves); the thresholds for publications have been lowered by the web since everyone can produce and publish contents, even without a traditional device (i.e. personal computer) or particular skills (i.e. coding);
2) The web became in the collective imaginary more similar to a square, in which knowledge is shared and discussed, more than a library in which knowledge is stored;
3) The web 2.0 is much richer of multimedia contents than its predecessor (web 1.0). The latter, in fact, was much more structured as a massive text, while the improvement of the technologies of the bandwidth has made the former a stage for the exchange of videos, high quality photos and music;

Web 2.0 has also given birth and technological support to social networking: a habit which is aimed to create and support social exchanges between people sharing common interests and multimedia contents (Albertazzi 2010).

3.2 Social Media Marketing: efforts to build a brand community

According to Cantoni and Tardini, to sum up, web 2.0 has essentially lowered the threshold for publication, with the insurgence of USC. Web 2.0 offers extensive and enriching sources of information, which have made it a place in which knowledge is not only gathered, but discussed (Albertazzi 2010). Such knowledge has also stressed the need for organizations to interact with internet users.
Nico Wattimena, in his *Social media and PR tasks* has underlined the importance of considering social media not exclusively but just like another of the media which can be used by the organizations.

The social media platform, thus, must be exploited together with the other traditional ones already used by corporate communication. Wattimena suggests, in fact, that it is far more productive for companies to be present on many media rather than “invading” one of them, like the internet, trying to monitor the whole blogosphere and to be on every platforms (i.e. every social network, for example) (Wattimena 2014).

Since sixdegrees.com, the first example in 1997, social networks have hosted most of the UGC. The definition of social network that has been chosen for this thesis is the one proposed by Boyd and Ellison: *web-based services that allow individuals to (1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system*” (Boyd and Ellison, 2007, 301)

The connections proposed by Boyd and Ellison can be based on shared interests, political and ideological views and values. However they can also be established around a brand. This is called brand community (Muniz and O’Guinn 2001). The characteristics of a brand community have been underlined by Ulusu and endorsed by Irena Pletikosa Cvijikj, Erica Dubach Spiegler and Florian Michahelles in the study which has inspired the methodological framework of this thesis: *Evaluation framework for social media brand presence*. Ulusu in particular argues that the community members show openness toward brand announcements. They feel part of a community they have joined, they accept “friend requests” from the companies and value friends’ opinions about a brand (Ulusu 2014).

As seen in paragraph 2.6.2 concerning the SN-ROI, the traditionally used tools to evaluate marketing strategies reveal to be inadequate because of the ontological differences between for-profits and non-profits organizations. Hoffman and Fodor, in particular, identified a change in the purpose itself of SMM from increasing the sales numbers to fostering community engagement (Hoffman and Fodor 2010). This research is based, thus, on the assumption by Pletikosa Cvijikj, Spiegler and Michahelles which implies the creation of brand communities and the nurturing of their engagement as the purpose of SMM (Cvijikj, Spiegler and Michahelles 2013)

The improvement of the current brand community would positively affect Oxfam Italia’s presence on Facebook thanks to a higher diffusion of the organization’s communications, triggered by the mutual sharing of users, the support by hubs like v.i.p. close to the Oxfam ideological environment, smaller or local organizations (which are, nevertheless, more rooted in the territory), mass media’s Facebook pages, Facebook groups which share the same battles with Oxfam and so
Such apparatus would share Oxfam’s contents increasing their visibility, it would enrich the dialogue started by the organization, it would urge their own followers to action and augment the knowledge of the audience about the issues Oxfam treats.

Social media marketing is a tool developed in order to produce messages meant to be shared on social media in order to trigger the word-of-mouth among the social media users. Such initiatives are meant to stimulate the users to talk positively about brands, companies or particular products and services (Kirby and Marsden 2006). The use of social media, furthermore, makes the production of feedback from users much more immediate and direct, which represents an asset in the perspective of product development (Richter, Riemer and Brocke 2011).

3.3 The theory of the “three lacks”

As previously noted, the essay Evaluation framework for social media brand presence by Irena Pletikosa Cvijikj, Erica Dubach Spiegler and Florian Michahelles has provided the present research with a draft of model on which to perform the social media evaluation of Oxfam Italia’s Facebook page. The essay poses also some of the theoretical bases of the present thesis: in particular this can be described by the identification of three points which describe the current theoretical field in the domain of social media evaluation.

3.3.1 Lack of understanding of the communication medium

As noted by Brown, social media have revolutionized the mechanism of communication lowering the threshold a possibility to everyone to express his opinion. The effect of such mechanism brought about the proliferation of contents and the consequent idea that the medium doesn’t own the content anymore (Brown 2009). This new concept, applied to marketing, gave the consumers the power to influence the nature and the effectiveness of the marketing messages (Hanna, Rohm and Crittenden 2011) with the effect to change, once for all, the rules of the game.

For different reasons companies and organizations, on the other side, chose massively to join social networks to extend their users reach (Parent, Plangger and Bal 2011) without having the possibility to base their communicative strategies on definitive theoretical or methodological guidelines. The result was that research has documented many social media campaigns’ failures, happened also to some of the most influential brands in the world, like JP Morgan, Pepsi and Kmart (Costill 2014);
3.3.2 Lack of social media strategies

Many social media practitioners and academics have tried to overcome such campaign failures. As noticed by Cvijikj, Spiegler and Michahelles, however, huge differences in the suggestions proposed can be observed. According to Constine organizations should post every three hours (Constine 2014), according to Zarrella, instead, new posts should be published only once in a day (Zarrella 2014). According to Cooper the best days to posts on Facebook, in order to obtain a higher engagement, are Thursday and Friday (Cooper 2013). According to Widrich, instead, Saturdays represent the best choice for posting (Sterne 2014), while according to Bullas and Ray, Wednesday assures social media marketing practitioners a higher engagement (Bullas 2014; Ray 2014).

3.3.3 Lack of methods for effectiveness evaluation

As anticipated in paragraph 2.6.1., the evaluation of social media performances can be facilitated by setting clear goals. For example, in occasion of the Robin Hood Tax campaign of March 2014, Oxfam Italia chose to sponsor its posts to touch 10000 reaches. As the analysis will show later on, Oxfam Italia was successful because in that period there were over 40000 reaches. However, social media marketing practitioners may disagree on what “successful” means. For example, the communication department may see the increase of engagement or the number of followers as successful. On the other hand, the fundraising department director could consider only the increase of financial donations from the social media users as a success.

3.4 Algorithms regulating the news feed: Edgerank model

Another of the social media dynamics which have to be taken in account by marketers, is how social network choose which contents are shown to users. News feed is the name of the sequence of contents which are showed to any users once he/she has logged in Facebook. The news feed is automatically composed by Facebook, every time the user updates the page, through an algorithm (i.e. an effective method expressed as a finite list of well-defined instructions for calculating a value). The necessity of such algorithm is given by the fact that if the contents hadn’t been ranked and displayed by importance, every user would have been overwhelmed by less important contents.

The “importance” of contents is given by the sum of the factors which are included by the algorithm. Some of such factors are known, some other, nevertheless, are not shared by Facebook for a matter of inner policy. The first algorithm in Facebook’s history was called Edgerank and it had been implemented from Facebook since 2006 and it was presented to the world only in 2010 (Kincaid 2014).
Facebook sees every content it has inside as an object and every interactions with it as an “edge”. Not all the contents, anyway, have the same importance (for example photos are more important than statuses updates) and not all the interactions have the same importance (for example comments are more important than likes).

![Figure 3 The Facebook news feed’s algorithm: Edgerank](image)

In the formula \( u \) stands for the **affinity**, \( w \) stands for **weight** and \( d \) stands for **time decay**.

**Affinity** is a one-way relationship between a User and an Edge. It could be understood as how close of a “relationship” a Brand and a Fan may have. Affinity is built by repeat interactions with a Brand’s Edges. Actions such as Commenting, Liking, Sharing, Clicking, and even Messaging can influence a User’s Affinity. Weight is a value system created by Facebook to increase/decrease the value of certain actions within Facebook. Commenting is more involved and therefore deemed more valuable than a Like. In the weighting system, Comments would have a higher value than a Like. In this system all Edges are assigned a value chosen by Facebook. Time Decay refers to how long the Edge has been alive; the older it is the less valuable it is. Time Decay is the easiest of the variables to understand. Mathematically it is understood as \( 1/(\text{Time Since Action}) \). As an Edge ages, it loses value. This helps keep the News Feed fresh with interesting new content, as opposed to lingering old content (“What Is EdgeRank” 2014).

Even though the name “edgerank” has not been used for last three years and the algorithms has been implemented with hundreds of thousands new factors (some of them unknown) (McGee 2014) the parameters of affinity, weight and time decay provide insights concerning how the user engagement around the brand community must be fostered: for example increasing the affinity between Oxfam Italia’s Facebook page and its followers, more organization’s contents will show up in the fans’ news feeds. This stimulates the engagement through contents which encourage
commenting instead of “liking”, and can increase the weight value, whilst posting several times in a day can increase the time decay.

The description of the algorithm used for the filtering of the news feed is also important for the present thesis because of the huge difference between the paid reach and the organic reach enjoyed by Oxfam Italia. The former refers to the views obtained by sponsored contents which are shown to more, the latter refers to those contents which are naturally showed on the news feed accordingly to the ruling algorithm and which are shared on their walls by the users who find them interesting.

3.5 The three-step analysis

The analysis by Cvijikj, Spiegel and Michahelles will supply the present research with a guidance model to perform the Oxfam Italia’s Facebook page’s user analysis, content analysis and engagement analysis. This section will illustrate the theoretical standpoint which has promoted the adoption of the above mentioned model for the present research. The model proposed by Cvijikj, Spiegler and Michahelles represents a breakthrough in the field because of the integration in the model of the two phases of the user and engagement analysis, in comparison to the former models of social media evaluation which focused only on the user-generated content analysis (Cvijikj, Spiegler and Michahelles 2013). In particular the attention will be focused on why it is important to analyse the three steps above mentioned in order to perform a valid social media evaluation of a non-profit organization. Further details concerning how in practical terms such analyses have been both adopted and adapted will be provided in the methodological chapter.

3.5.1 The importance of user analysis

The identification of the users who followed Oxfam Italia in the period being examined is important for many reasons. Firstly, understanding the average user who follows Oxfam Italia can lead to identifying better strategies in order to enlarge the brand community (Li et al. 2014). The production of contents which appeal certain groups of people, in fact, increase the possibilities that more users join the community. In addition, the discovery of the users’ peculiarities can bring to the identification of other Facebook pages with which it could be productive to establish a “partnerships” in order to increase the echo of Oxfam’s contents.

Secondly, knowing the users’ demographics can also ease the creation of ad hoc contents and the promotion of initiatives which link the on-line with the off-line marketing realms (Fankhauser 2014). On-line engagement can be pushed through off-line activities (and viceversa) because on one side social media allow organizations to advertise future off-line events, and on the
other side the ones which happened already can be echoed sharing photos, videos and impressions (Nesterenko 2013; Dholakia and Durham 2010).

The data obtained will guide the researcher to the definition of categories of users which follows their behavioural patterns: the percentage of lurkers, in particular will be focused through the following the theoretical distinction between lurkers, likers, commenters and posters (Cvijikj, Spiegler and Michahelles 2013). The ratio between the four categories of users in the Oxfam Italia’s Facebook will reveal the real composition of the community and whether the differences among the categories must be interpreted either as appropriate or as a symptom of disproportion of the community. The traditional literature concerning the involvement of a given web community has identified the average ratio of 90% lurkers, 9% commenters and 1% content creators (Nonnecke and Preece 2000) and such value has been accepted by Cvijikj, Spiegel and Michahelles, but further studies have proposed different percentages which fit more the structure of web 2.0 (Schneider 2014). The present thesis, however, will adopt also a new approach which focuses more on the importance of the actual reach of the posts, more than the number of followers of the page. This approach became necessary because the analysis has showed a distance between the number of followers of the page and the average reach of its posts.

3.5.2 The importance of content analyses

The content analysis will shed light on the use which Oxfam’s fans and moderators make of the organization’s Facebook page. The first part of the analysis will focus on the texts of the messages and comments posted by the users on Oxfam’s page, while the second part will account for Oxfam’s messages. The content analysis is fundamental because, as drafted in paragraph 2.6.2, the use of the SN ROI, or other business-oriented tools, cannot be applied on the non-profit context because of the different nature between for-profit and non-profit goals.

Through the user-generated content analysis, PR practitioners can also realize what are the most popular topics and from those to trigger their own content production. Cvijikj, Spiegel and Michahelles, in facts, draw their position from Li, Kozinets de Valck, Wojnicki and Wilner and state:

*Building an engagement plan as a part of the social media strategy should start by focusing on the ongoing conversation (Li 2007a). It should be taken in consideration that the communication on social media platforms is affected by the type of offered product or service. Therefore, the first step towards understanding the conversation should be classification of different types of content (Kozinets et al. 2010) (Cvijikj, Spiegler and Michahelles, 2013, 1330).*
In addition, the importance to understand what Oxfam’s followers say concerning (and to) the organization, must be traced in the necessity to understand what users think about Oxfam. The identification of a bad attitude (and its motivations) can lead the moderators, and in general the management of the organization, to finance on-line and off-line activities in order to improve Oxfam’s reputation. The identification of the most common arguments used by Oxfam’s detractors can bring to a “hotlist” which the organization’s PR practitioners can keep in mind when they have to defend Oxfam on-line and the interactions can provide useful guidelines concerning when the PR practitioners should intervene or not (Brown 2009).

As depicted in paragraph 2.5, for-profit organizations indulge in SMM with the aim to increase the sale rates of the products or services proposed by the brand. Non-profit organizations, instead, employ new media for at least two primary purposes: information-sharing and dialogic relationship-building (Lovejoy and Saxton 2012). In order to verify such assumption in the case of Oxfam Italia, the content analysis of the moderators-generated posts will be performed, with the purpose to understand to what goal Oxfam uses its Facebook page.

3.5.3 The importance of engagement analysis
The engagement analysis is meant to furnish indications concerning those factors which affect and shape the interactions between users and the organization’s page. As mentioned above, the model proposed by Cvijikj, Spiegler and Michahelles represents a breakthrough in the field because of the integration in the model of the two phases of the user and engagement analysis, in comparison to the former models of Social Media Evaluation which focused only on the user-generated content analysis (Cvijikj, Spiegler and Michahelles 2013). Such choice is based on the assumption that an effective social media evaluation should be based on the estimation of the engagement engendered by a community and not by traditional sales number (Hoffman and Fodor 2010).

In addition, the academic research has shown that:

- The moderators’ actions affect the engagement obtained by its brand community on the page (de Vries, Gensler and Leeflang 2012);
- The increase of engagement around a brand community affects both the loyalty toward the brand/organization and the WOM (Verma, Jahn and Kunz 2012; Scott and Sterne 2010).

Once explained why the identification of the rules undermining the engagement have been considered as fundamental for the present research, paragraph 3.5.4 will focus on the theoretical standpoints concerning how such engagement should be triggered.
3.5.4 How to trigger on-line engagement

Research has so far proved that it is impossible to establish a unique social media strategy because of the huge variety between the different communities on the web and because of the lack of understanding concerning the ruling social media dynamics (Waters et al. 2009b; Cvijikj, Spiegler and Michahelles 2013). The obvious consequence is that SMM is performed according to the method of trial and error which has shed light on some of the mistakes that can be made (such as a too aggressive advertising approach or one which instead puts at risk users' privacy (Bolotaeva and Cata 2011; Kaplan and Haenlein 2010) and to some effective strategies: like posting always at the same time, engaging users as much as possible, avoiding abstractions and using a direct communication style (Brown 2009). The present research wants to identify, however, how Oxfam can increase its overall engagement and a closer look at the news feed will provide some useful hints. The news feed’s algorithm used today considers also variables such as the number of interactions a user had toward a certain type of contents or a certain page or the number of interactions users had in general with a certain content. This means that if a particular user tends to “like” videos, chances are that the user will see more videos in his news feed; if the same user interacts often with a page, chances are that most of the contents from the same page will show up in his/her news feed. Finally, if a content receives globally a high level of engagement chances are there that the user will see the content in his/her news feed (especially if one of his/her friends has interacted with such element) (McGee 2014). For such reason, many SMM practitioners suggest to “dope” the news feed algorithm posting contents which trigger engagement, such as asking help for photo captions, posing general questions, sharing inspirational quotes, political statements and so on (Lee 2012).

Amy Porterfield’s blog represents a good source of advices to improve the Facebook engagement: images which evocate nostalgia or good feelings are more likely to gain likes, the picture of a newborn child with a caption similar to “Like if you were the happiest person in the world when you saw this for the first time” should easily collect lots of likes doping your news feed. In order to trigger the creation of comments, instead, asking for an opinion represents always a successful hint: the Facebook page of a motorbike newspaper, for example, can merge the pictures of two new motorcycle models and ask: “Which one do you prefer? Type 1 for Suzuki or 2 for Kawasaki”. Another good hint to spread posts more easily is to attach, together with a textual content, an image which already shows the content’s headline (Porterfield 2014). Jason Allan suggests to post more links than texts: Facebook, in fact, will automatically attach to the post an image from the linked page and the footage will be more easily noted by the user. Moderators can also tag (i.e. mention another Facebook user or page) another page (maybe even a more famous)
and in this way the post will be more likely to be seen by the fans of both pages. Moderators can also leverage the interest of their contents drawing on (both in an ironic or in a serious way), pop culture or recent happenings to increase the inner interest of the post (Allan 2014).

Although there is no scientific truth concerning how to increase Facebook engagement, the suggestions just presented can provide many good hints to improve any page performances. It must be said, however, that the value of any such ideas is put at risk by any future policy changes by Facebook. A further change of the news feed algorithm, in fact, would devalue any of the above ideas. Therefore, social media marketers must monitor and develop their strategies accordingly to Facebook policies.
4 Methodology

4.1 Introduction to the methodological chapter

The following chapter will focus on the methodological choices which have been taken in order to perform the present study. In the next paragraph the model by Cvijikj, Spiegler and Michahelles, which has inspired the research, will be shortly depicted with its main features which made it the best choice for the present thesis. This, nevertheless, hasn’t been just adopted without any changes, thus paragraph 4.3 will focus on the differences between the described method and the one which has guided the thesis.

In the rest of the chapter many technical issues will be faced, with a particular focus on the way data have been gathered (paragraphs 4.4 and 4.5). For this purpose a general description of Facebook Insights and Facebook Graph API will be provided, together with an introduction to how to issue FQL queries. The procedures used to perform the users categorization, the content and the engagement analyses will be also described here.

4.2 Evaluation framework for social media brand presence as a model

As mentioned in paragraph 3.2, the study which animates this research has been described by the article Evaluation framework for social media brand presence (Cvijikj, Spiegler and Michahelles 2013). The model proposed by the three academics in their quantitative research is a four-step method meant to deeply evaluate the Facebook page of the Swiss food brand Ok-. The following figure shows a graphic display of the model:
The model begins with an user analysis which explores the users in all their demographics (age, gender, language and provenience) and which hence allows to establish an identikit of the “average user” both to match with the one expected by the company and to use as a prototype to program further interactions.

The user-generated content analysis, instead, deploys a method to identify the topics referred to in the posts, the intentions of the participants and the sentiment expressed in the contents produced.
by both the page’s moderators and by the followers. In fact, as it can be read in the article, […] in order to successfully run a Facebook brand page as a part of the SMM approach, marketing practitioners need to understand what people share and why (Cvijikj, Spiegler and Michahelles, 2013, 1334) and for such reason Cvijikl, Spiegler and Michahelles conceived a an approach which combines manual and automatic coding and which is explained through the next three points by the same authors’ words:

- **Coding strategy development:** A manual coding scheme is created to define the classification rules, e.g. ‘brand = mention of brand name’; ‘product = mention of product name’, etc.
- **Tagging:** Using the defined coding strategy, each of the posts is assigned one or more tags to identify the key concepts in the content, e.g. ‘my favorite: ok.-chocolate bar, when will there be a jumbo pack?’, would result in: ‘product’, ‘positive affect’, ‘information inquiry’, ‘suggestion’ and ‘package’.
- **Integrating:** Once the tags are assigned, grouping of similar tags is performed in order to identify group descriptors. For the previous example, the resulting descriptors are: (1) ‘Product: Affect: Positive’, (2) ‘Sales: Availability: Launch Date: Information Inquiry’ and (3) ‘Product: Feature: Package: Suggestion’ (Cvijikj, Spiegler and Michahelles, 2013, 1335)

The analysis was also extended to those contents which were outside the page but which were still about the brand.

The essays by Cvijikl, Spiegler and Michahelles also deployed an engagement analysis with the purpose to appraise the effect of the different moderators’ actions over the users’ interactions. In a nutshell the academics want to find out: what should a moderator post on the wall to trigger user engagement, and when the content should be posted (Cvijikj, Spiegler and Michahelles, 2013, 1336). The process implies that the post shared by the brand page will be divided by the posts’ media type (i.e. text, photo, video…) and its enclosed contents (i.e. advertising, information and so on). Besides showing what contents are more successful than others and what topics are the ones which trigger the user engagement the most, the engagement analysis can also help understanding what is the best time and day to post content in order to increase its reach.

The final step of the evaluation, the benchmarking, is meant to overcome the lack of standard parameters (discussed in paragraph 2.6.1) necessary to establish whether an initiative on Facebook made the grade or not. In absence of those criteria Cvijikl, Spiegler and Michahelles decided to match the parameters the marketers are interested other pages. Moderators can use similar pages (even from competitors) but also pages of celebrities, institutions and organizations
which successfully use social media: lists of pages ranked for number of fans or engagement produced are available at several different websites, such as Fan Page list (Fan Page List 2014). Facebook Graph API can be used on every page in Facebook, so the evaluator has just to monitor the data book Insights concerning the interested KPI (i.e. Key Performance Indicators) and to compare them with the ones from his/her page. Facebook Insights, in addition, provides Insights analysts with the possibility to directly compare different pages, but the data refer only to the current moment in which the service is used and one week before, so for data concerning further times the analyst will have to make use of Facebook Graph API.

Both Facebook Graph API and Facebook Insights will be further described in the rest on the chapter. The strength of the model just sketched above is given by the fact that it focuses on literally all the aspects which involve the page and for such reason it is reasonable to imagine that the insights obtained can be used as a reliable source of knowledge to understand and improve the user engagement, the WOM and the community growth (Cvijikj, Spiegler and Michahelles 2013).

In a nutshell, knowing with a discreet confidence the community demographics, the users’ favourite topics of discussion, the most effective moments to disseminate contents and so on can actually foster the strategic planning of upcoming campaigns. It can also suggest moderators the requests they are more likely to be asked about, enable predictions of changes in the community and in general, increase the reliability of all the predictions.

4.3 Interpretation of the model and methods used

The present thesis, however, doesn’t just apply the above described method but it interprets it accordingly to the research questions:

- How many followers did Oxfam Italia have during the given period, what are their characteristics and how can they be increased?
- How was the community shaped and how did the different users behave during the time?
- What were the topics referred to and the attitude showed by Oxfam followers during those five months?
- What use did Oxfam Italia make of its Facebook page during the given five months?
- What kind of contents triggered the most the user engagement during the given time? How can such engagement be fostered?
In order to answer the thesis has adopted and adapted the following steps of the model:

- User analysis,
- User-generated content analysis,
- Engagement analysis.

The analysis method used, nevertheless, has been modified to better fit into the organizational reality of Oxfam Italia. In the following table the main differences between the two methods are showed:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sections</th>
<th>Cvijikl, Spiegler and Michahelles’s model</th>
<th>Approach adopted for the present research</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Users demographics and categorization</strong></td>
<td>Synchronical (accounts for only a given period of time)</td>
<td>Diachronical (accounts for the whole 5-month period)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Users categorization</strong></td>
<td>Calculated over the overall number of the page’s fans</td>
<td>Calculated both over the overall number of the page’s fans and over the average number of reaches for the month</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>User-generated content analysis</strong></td>
<td>Manual and automatic</td>
<td>Manual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Suggestions aimed to increase the community and the engagement</strong></td>
<td>Only for on-line activities</td>
<td>On-line and off-line activities</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1 Adaptation of the model from the essay “Evaluation framework for social media brand presence”

The paragraphs dedicated to each of the sections of the research will further explain the differences.

**4.4 Data sources and software used**

This paragraph will presented the data sources of the research: a short description of Facebook Insights and Facebook Graph API will be hence provided, together with the general rules applied in order to issue FQL queries. In the same paragraph, moreover, the software adopted for the research will be mentioned.
4.4.1 Facebook Insights

Facebook Insights is a tool provided by Facebook itself which enables to monitor the activities of a page. Insights is provided only to the page administrators or to Insights analysts and it allows them to grasp info concerning the demographics of the followers (i.e. gender, age, language, geographical provenience and so on), the number of fans and the reaches of each post, the current user engagement, similar pages to use for benchmarking and much more.

Insights can also provide the averages of the users’ interaction reports (likes, share and comments) and the data can be either consulted on-line or downloaded (which is the only possibility for data from the past). It must also be stated that only Facebook Insights is able to provide the users demographics.

In some occasions, nevertheless, the data provided are not totally reliable: for example Insights reports that Oxfam Italia had lost 758 followers between February the 16th and the 21st. According to the same tool not only Oxfam Italia had lost those followers, but the page was able to re-gain them in only one day (during the 22nd of February).

The figure below shows graphically the February likers’ evolution and the drop is clearly visible:

![Figure 5 Trend of followers of Oxfam Italia’s Facebook page in February](source)

Source: Facebook Insights

Looking at the users which have “unliked” the page in the given days, still on Insights, there is no trace of such “exodus”:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>16 February 2014 to 22 February 2014</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Like Sources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Unlike Source</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On Your Page and Posts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After Hiding a Post</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

![Figure 6 Number of unlikes from 16th till 22nd of February](source)

Source: Facebook Insights
The reasons for such mismatch can be of two different natures:

1) Facebook may have chosen to eliminate those users. At the end of 2012 Facebook announced it would have increased the control measures to prevent fake accounts, purchased bulk likes, followers obtained though malwares and so on (Albanesius 2014) with purpose to increase the “true engagement” for brands. Consequently many important pages lost thousands of followers which were not authentic and Oxfam Italia may result among those pages.

2) A malfunction may have happened during the followers’ measurement phases in those days, with the result to bring about inaccurate data. The website socialbakers.com represents another valuable resource for SMM practitioners because it provides statistics concerning every Facebook page. According to socialbakers.com, Oxfam Italia didn’t suffer any fans’ drop during February (Socialbakers.com 2014) and for such reason this second possibility is seen as the most realistic.

4.4.2 Facebook Graph API

Facebook Graph API gives SMM practitioners the possibility to access to the interaction data contained in the Facebook Social Graph via a uniform representation of the objects (i.e. users, pages, contents, actions and so on):

The Graph API is named after the idea of a 'social graph' - a representation of the information on Facebook composed of:

- nodes (basically "things" such as a User, a Photo, a Page, a Comment)
- edges (the connections between those "things", such as a Page's Photos, or a Photo's Comments)
- fields (info about those "things", such as the birthday of a User, or the name of a Page) (Facebook Developers 2014)

In order to gain access to some of the data, however, the user must be provided with a security code, available only to administrators and Insights analysts, named access token. Once obtained it, the user can issue queries to obtain information, post and share contents and so on.

Facebook Graph API has been developed as a low-level HTTP-based API (Application Programming Interface, a sort of language used to interact with a software), thus queries can be issued with javascript, PHP, HTML and finally FQL (Facebook Query Language).

FQL is a SQL-structured language made for the purpose to query the data in the Graph API: the queries’ structures follow, in fact, the SQL model (i.e. SELECT xxx FROM xxx WHERE xxx,
where select specifies what kind of information are requested, from the table which contains the
given information and where implies the condition the information requested have to abide by).
SQL, which stands for Structured Query Language, is a language made on purpose the get
information from any database. The name FQL, instead, stands for “Facebook Query Language”
and it can be used only to browse Facebook data. Further information about how queries have been
issued will be provided in paragraph 4.5.2.1.

4.5 Data gathering and management

In the following paragraph the data sources and the data mining techniques adopted will be
presented. Each paragraph will depict each of the different steps of the research and, in addition, a
little digression will be provided about the FQL-query-issuing process.

4.5.1 Demographics

This section of the research wants to answer to the following questions:

- Who follows Oxfam Italia’s Facebook page?
- What are the followers’ demographics?

As stated in paragraph 4.4.1, Facebook Insights is the deputy source for the users’ demographics.
The tool, nevertheless, supplies aggregated data concerning the demographics only concerning the
current moment in which the page is consulted. Since the present research, however, focuses on a
given past time, the Insights ready-made results were not useful for the purpose and it became
necessary to download past data. After being downloaded and processed via spreadsheet software
(i.e. Microsoft Excel for the present case), the average for each month has been calculated.
Through Facebook Insights the following data have been obtained:

- User’s age
- User’s gender
- Users’ approximated language
- Users’ geographical provenience

The results obtained have been graphically showed through the use of descriptive statistics.
4.5.2 User categorization

Once the identikit of the Oxfam Italia’s average follower has been depicted, the second point the research had to inquiry was:

- How is composed the community around the Oxfam Italia’s Facebook page?

In order to find the answer to this question it must be specified that Facebook Insights doesn’t provide neither the names nor the identification numbers of the users which have undertaken interactions with the page (i.e. likes, shares and comments) but the gross number of such interactions. For such reason Facebook Insights wasn’t used for the users categorization of Oxfam’s Facebook Page, while instead Facebook Graph API provided the research with the possibility to identify exactly the identification numbers of the users which have performed each kind of interactions.

4.5.2.1 How to obtain the list of the contents published by Oxfam Italia

A FQL query must be issued in order to obtain a list of the contents (posts, statuses, photos, videos and links) posted either by Oxfam Italia or by other users directly on Oxfam Italia’s page. The table number 4 supplies an example of the queries issued to fulfil the first step of the inquiry:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>List of posts published on Oxfam Italia’s wall during the month of November</th>
<th>SELECT actor_id,source_id,post_id,created_time FROM stream WHERE source_id = 150200761667579 AND created_time &gt;= 1383264000 AND created_time &lt;= 1385855940</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Table 2 Example of FQL issued query for post on the wall from November 2013

The following is the result of the request for November after the query had been issued.

In figure 7 each group of fours lines represents a content, in addition the “actor_id” entry can be seen: this shows the id of the user who has posted the content, while the “source_id” shows where the content has been shared. The number 150200761667579 is Oxfam Italia page’s id, thus the posts which shows such number as “actor_id” have been published by Oxfam, the posts which show another number under the “actor_id” entry (like the last one in the figure) have been posted by another user on Oxfam Italia’s page.
The “created_time” entry, instead, states the date in which the content has been created in form of unix time (a way to measure time defined as the number of seconds that have elapsed since 00:00:00, Thursday, 1 January 1970). The “post_id” data are, in this case, what it was needed because they must be used for the composition of the next queries: the first part of the number reveals where the content has been published (i.e. Oxfam’s page), while the second part (separated by an underscore) is a unique number which refers to that content in particular and

Figure 7 Post on Oxfam Italia’s wall from November 2013

which must be used to see which users have commented or liked such contents.

4.5.2.2 How to obtain the list of the users which have interacted with each single content

Once obtained the identification numbers of all the contents from the month, the research looked for the list of the users who have undertaken a certain action. The following query is meant to show the number of users which have liked the posts of November. The identification numbers of the contents obtained thought the query issued in the table number 2 are here used as the WHERE clauses in the query in the table 3:
The results each query gave looked like the figure number 8 shows. The “used_id” entry shows a unique number which refers only to a certain user who has liked each of the contents, thus such number had been stored in a spreadsheet file in order to be counted at the end of the data gathering phase.

Figure 8 Likers of a given post as showed by Facebook Graph API

The importance of identifying the exact active users’ identification numbers through such procedure became evident because the simple number of comments, likes or views provided by Facebook Insights would have not given a reliable result. If, for example, a few users commented a content more than once, this would have falsified the estimation of the community’s size. In order to identify the actual size of the community around Oxfam Italia’s Facebook page, furthermore, the procedure described above has been performed several times, every time modifying the query in order to obtain:

- The number of users who liked a post;
- The number of users who commented on a post;
- The number of users who liked a status;
- The number of user who commented on a status;
- The number of users who posted (by their initiative) on the page;
- The number of users who liked a photo;
- The number of users who commented on a photo;
- The number of users who liked a link;
- The number of users who commented on a link.

As specified in paragraph 4.3, the count of active users (i.e. those users who interact in any way with the page (Cvijikj, Spiegler and Michahelles 2013) for each kind of engagement was compared to both the total number of Facebook fans of the page (following the original model) and to the actual average reach of each month. The reason for such choice is that Facebook shows huge difference in the reach that every post obtains whether such post has been (economically) sponsored or not. The phenomenon will be further treated and depicted through descriptive statistics in paragraph 5.1.2 of the analytical chapter.

### 4.5.3 Content analyses

Once the community which surrounds and interacts with Oxfam Italia’s Facebook page has been described, the research wants to focus on the analysis of the textual contents produced by both Oxfam Italia and its users. Both the texts of the messages, comments and statuses from Oxfam Italia to the followers, and of course those issued by the followers toward Oxfam Italia, have been collected via Facebook Graph API as well.

Similarly to the procedure explained in paragraph 4.5.2.1, the first queries were issued to obtain the identification numbers of those contents which had been commented or posted by Oxfam’s followers. To obtain the users’ posts, the same data obtained from the queries in the table number 3 could be used. The results obtained were divided according to the “actor_id” value. As said: if “actor_id” showed the number 150200761667579, then the post had been written by one of Oxfam Italia’s moderators/administrators. If the number was different from 150200761667579, instead, then the message had been written by other users.

Once obtained the identification numbers of the messages (for both users’ messages and for Oxfam’s moderators) further queries have been issued for each month of the research following the example provided in the table number 4.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>November posts</th>
<th>SELECT message, post_id, actor_id FROM stream WHERE source_id = 150200761667597 AND created_time &gt;= 1383264000 AND created_time &lt;= 1385855940</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Table 4 *FQL query to show the text of the posts from November*
The collection of the posts provided the researcher with a total of 123 messages from users and 229 messages from Oxfam’s moderators/administrators (for the whole 5-month period).

4.5.3.1 Content analyses: topic, sub-topics and purposes

The messages obtained have been gathered and manually processed through the software Nvivo 10, by QSR International: the different categories have been identified, coded and divided in groups called “nodes”.

Considering the different nature of the two sets of contents, the analysis has been performed through two different analysis criteria. Following the method described in paragraph 4.2 by Cvijikl, Spiegler and Michahelles, the first categorization has been performed manually by the researcher in order to understand what, in concrete, both the users and the moderators talk about. The result of the first inquiry (concerning the interactions by the users) showed that users tend to directly interact with the organization to express an opinion about it or about its activities. Consequently the research decided to focus on the topics reported by the users, recognizing also different nuances which have been coded as sub-topics.

By topics and sub-topics is meant either the arguments directly referred by the users (i.e. in the case of Scarlett Johansson), or the pragmatic action performed by the message itself (i.e. A passionate THANKS to Oxfam’s volunteers [...] or the attitude showed by the users (i.e. the case of the node named Criticisms, in which the reasons of the criticism have been nodes as sub-topics). The manual coding of the contents generated by Oxfam’s moderators, instead, did not focus on the topics of the posts because all the posts (except some of those which eventually were coded as “thanks”) referred to Oxfam’s ongoing campaigns. Since the present analysis cares about the kind of interaction Oxfam triggers with its followers and the use the organization makes of its page (and not which campaigns were ongoing during the given 5-month time), the analysis preferred to put the accent on the intended purpose of the content more than on the campaign the post refers to. By “intended purposes” is meant either the action which is encouraged by the post (i.e. “donate now!” or “come and visit us”) or the pragmatic action performed by the message itself (i.e. “Thanks!”), or the informative load the message bears (i.e. “In recent days it snowed in the Middle East, whitening even Cairo...”).

All the posts (both the ones issued by Oxfam Italia and the ones by its followers) were included in at least one node: some posts, in addition, have been coded after two or three nodes accordingly to each of the purposes or intentions they bore.
The table shows the coding patterns used for the categorization of both samples:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Oxfam fans-generated contents</th>
<th>Oxfam-generated contents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Thanks, endorsements and positive attitude</td>
<td>• Attempt to engage users in on-line initiatives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Criticisms</td>
<td>• Donation invitations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Requests</td>
<td>• Invitation or reference to off-line activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Scarlett Johansson</td>
<td>• Information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Empathy</td>
<td>• Thanks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Off-line initiatives and donation mentions</td>
<td>• Updates concerning achievements or ongoing activities</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5 Coding patterns used for topics for UGC analysis

The distinction of topics, sub-topics and purposes, together with their explanation, will be further described in the analytical chapter and more concrete examples from the messages will be provided for each of the categories.

Previous research, together with the daily work performed by social media marketers, have made use of textual automatic coding procedures (Sterne 2014). Automatic coding, nevertheless, didn’t fit the purpose of this analysis because of the use Oxfam’s followers made of the language (grammar mistakes, neologisms, sarcasm are not uncommon). The analysis of the contents posted by the users, for example, has highlighted the different meaning given to the same word (“shame”, for example) but used in different contexts and with different meanings (for example: “What a shame!” or “Shame of you!”).

Facebook Graph API, furthermore, doesn’t allow social media practitioners to download automatically the new data, thus not even this part of the research can be performed without human intervention.

4.5.4 Engagement analysis

The last phase of the evaluation proposed aims to confront different kinds of posts moderators can publish and to retrace their effects over the user engagement. In particular the thesis wants to find out:

- What kind of contents did trigger user engagement the most in the given time?
• What is the favourite engagement chosen by Oxfam’s followers?
• What kind of contents do the moderators of Oxfam Italia’s Facebook page should post in order to trigger its user engagement?

Together with the data previously presented, Facebook Insights shows the average engagement (and reach) for videos, statuses, links and photos. Exactly like stated in paragraph 4.4.1, however, such data cannot be used for the present goal both because Insights doesn’t show statistics about past. In order to obtain historical data the research made use again of Facebook Graph API and, similarly to how it was described in the previous paragraphs, queries were issued to gather the information needed. For this case as well the research had to account for the different kind of interactions available to the users. Unfortunately Facebook Graph API doesn’t allow researchers to inquiry concerning the number of “shares” a particular content received and the actual reach of it. For such reasons the present phase of the research (similarly to the model proposed by Cvijikl, Spiegler and Michahelles) has focused only on Statuses, Links and Photos as post categories and comments and likes as kind of engagement.

The engagement analysis is performed dividing the total number of the user interactions by the number of contents. In concrete, thus, all the likes and comments will be counted and divided by the number of each post media type (status, link and photo). The highest ratio obtained will highlight the content type which has mostly triggered the user engagement during the 5 months examined.
5 Results of the research and interpretation

5.1 User analysis: Oxfam Italia’s followers

Facebook Insights and Facebook Graph API will be the tools used in order to understand who were the users who followed Oxfam Italia during the given period, what kind of use they made of the page and what kind of interaction they have engendered.

As mentioned in paragraph 4.3, differently from the analysis by Cvijikl, Spiegler and Michahelles, the present thesis will conduct a “synchronously” led inquiry into Oxfam Italia’s page, thus monitoring it during all the given 5 months and not only at the end of such periods. The data proposed by Facebook Insights show that, during the whole period, the number of followers of Oxfam Italia has constantly increased. At the beginning of the given period Oxfam Italia used to have 10425 followers, while at the end they had 12095: that means that during the five months in exam the number of fans of Oxfam Italia had increased by 13.8%.
5.1.1 Demographics

The analysis of the demographic data by Facebook Insights gave the following result:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Number of Users (average)</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Women</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13-17</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>0,6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18-24</td>
<td>924</td>
<td>8,3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-34</td>
<td>2994</td>
<td>26,8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35-44</td>
<td>1647</td>
<td>14,8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45-54</td>
<td>791</td>
<td>7,1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55-64</td>
<td>282</td>
<td>2,5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;65</td>
<td>199</td>
<td>1,8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>6909</td>
<td>61,9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Men</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13-17</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>0,7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18-24</td>
<td>577</td>
<td>5,2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-34</td>
<td>1515</td>
<td>13,6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35-44</td>
<td>980</td>
<td>8,8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45-54</td>
<td>540</td>
<td>4,8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55-64</td>
<td>217</td>
<td>1,9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;65</td>
<td>164</td>
<td>1,5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>4076</td>
<td>36,5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Unknown</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13-17</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0,02%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18-24</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>0,15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-34</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>0,69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35-44</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>0,43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45-54</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0,09%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55-64</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0,06%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;65</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>0,18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>181</td>
<td>1,62%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6 Age of Oxfam Italia’s Facebook followers
The data here show that Oxfam Italia has more women followers (almost 62\%) than men (36,5\%). The age ranges with more followers were in both cases 25-34 and 35-44. In both genders the range 25-34 overtook 35-44 of 12\% for women and 5,8 \% for men. The comparison between the data presented in table 6 and the data concerning the gender of all the Facebook Italian users show that that there is a substantial match between the Oxfam Italia’s users’ ages and the ages of the Italian average users of the social network.

Figure 9 Italian Facebook Users’ ages: dark blue for men, light blue for women
Source: (Social Times 2014)

According to the website it.socialtimes.me, in fact, 24\% of the Italians who use Facebook are between 26 and 35 years old, 21\% are between 19-25, 20\% between 36-45 and so on (Social Times 2014).

Since the age range of users matches between the two sources, there is no reason to think of any gap to strategically intervene on: the number of followers can (and should) increase, but, since it follows the overall pattern of the Italian users, any dysfunction can’t be identified in the community composition.

A different conclusion, instead, comes from the observation of the genre statistics: it.socialtimes.me alleges that men use Facebook more than women (53,2\% vs 46,8\%, see figure 10) and, according to Sheryl Sandberg, chief operating officer of Facebook, women on average have 8\% more friends and participate in 62\% of the contents sharing on the platform (Forbes 2014).
As seen above Facebook Insights reported a much bigger presence of women than man: on average, considering the three higher ranges of ages of 18-14, 25-34 and 35-44, the difference of 7.4%. Such finding makes evident a huge potential of growth among men and should actually guide Oxfam in the direction of the production of more male-oriented contents.

The data provided by Facebook Insights, concerning the geographical provenance of the users, show that, not surprisingly since the page is in Italian, on average the biggest section of followers comes from Italy (9039), followed by Great Britain (224), United States (130) and Spain (99). Among the Italian audience, furthermore, it was noticed that Rome is the city with most followers (1331), followed by Milan (801), Florence (719) and Arezzo (491), but it must be noted as well that Insights doesn’t tell if those numbers refer only to the city inhabitants or to the whole provinces.

The presence of Rome and Milan in the ranking is not a surprise in virtue of the high number of inhabitants of the two metropolis, the presence of Florence and Arezzo (the city which hosts Oxfam Italia’s headquarter), instead, flashes out because of the clearly lower number of inhabitants of the two cities. In table 7 it is reported the number of inhabitants of the cities (data provided by the on-line encyclopedia Britannica.com), the number of followers and the percentage of Oxfam’s followers out of the city inhabitants.

It can be seen in table 7 that Florence and Arezzo enjoy a much higher density than the other cities:
### Table 7 Oxfam Italia followers divided by city density

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>City</th>
<th>City Inhabitants</th>
<th>Followers</th>
<th>Percentage of Oxfam followers out of city inhabitants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rome</td>
<td>2546804</td>
<td>1331</td>
<td>0.05%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Milan</td>
<td>1,303,437</td>
<td>801</td>
<td>0.06%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Florence</td>
<td>366,901</td>
<td>719</td>
<td>0.20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arezzo</td>
<td>95,229</td>
<td>491</td>
<td>0.52%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The fact that Florence and Arezzo (both in Tuscany) have a much higher penetration of users reveals that people from Tuscany, and in particular from Arezzo, know from off-line experiences and follow Oxfam’s activities because of its rooted presence in the territory. For such reason it would be productive to invest in the development of the relationships with local and more rooted realities, with the purpose of increasing the engagement with them, both in on-line (increasing the interactions between organizations and between organizations and users, sharing contents promoting each others’ activities) and off-line terms (possible sponsorships of events). Concrete examples of how to increase the engagement with local realities will be provided in the conclusive chapter of the thesis.

#### 5.1.2 User categorization

The different ways in which users interact with the Facebook page shape different profiles which users embody. The previous scientific inquiry has identified 4 kinds of them (Cvijikj, Spiegler and Michahelles 2013).

- **Lurkers**: category of users who are part of the community but do not undertake any action (Nonnecke and Preece 2000);
- **Posters**: users who contribute creating posts on the page;
- **Commenters**: users who respond to the above mentioned posts;
- **Likers**: users who indicate a preference using the “like” button;
The Oxfam Italia page, during the period taken in exam, has achieved the following goals reported by Facebook Insights:

![Figure 11](Image)

**Figure 11 Users interactions from November 2013 to March 2014-08-04**

Source: Facebook Insights

Figure number 11 shows an irregular trend in which the swing between high peaks and low performance is evident for the whole 5 months. It is also possible to notice that users tend to choose the “like” button as favourite way of interaction followed by the “share” one (which shows the post on their own wall in order to be seen by their friends) and the comment as last. The engagement analysis part of the thesis will provide more accurate data.

The likes of the page, during the 5 months, has kept an average value of 40 daily likes, with peaks of 104 (13 November 2013) 143 (5 December 2013), 138 (22 January 14), 174 (13 March 2014) and 118 (21 March 2014). The average of comments, instead, has been 4.8 comments per month, with peaks of 8 comments during the month of February 2014. Such data have been provided by Facebook Insights, while Facebook Graph API became fundamental for the following part of the inquiry, necessary because Facebook Insights doesn’t show data concerning the users who have actually been active, but only the number of interactions.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>November</th>
<th>December</th>
<th>January</th>
<th>February</th>
<th>March</th>
<th>Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Likers</td>
<td>361</td>
<td>375</td>
<td>458</td>
<td>292</td>
<td>1885</td>
<td>674</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commenters</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Posters</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Active users</td>
<td>380</td>
<td>417</td>
<td>499</td>
<td>316</td>
<td>1943</td>
<td>711</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Followers on average</td>
<td>10600</td>
<td>10952</td>
<td>11170</td>
<td>11350</td>
<td>11763</td>
<td>11167</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reach post average</td>
<td>3222</td>
<td>4145</td>
<td>4494.5</td>
<td>3625</td>
<td>8013</td>
<td>4699.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lurkers</td>
<td>10220</td>
<td>10535</td>
<td>10671</td>
<td>11034</td>
<td>9820</td>
<td>10456</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of active users (on total followers)</td>
<td>3.58%</td>
<td>3.81%</td>
<td>4.47%</td>
<td>2.78%</td>
<td>16.52%</td>
<td>6.23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of lurkers (on overall community)</td>
<td>96.42%</td>
<td>96.19%</td>
<td>95.53%</td>
<td>97.22%</td>
<td>83.48%</td>
<td>93.77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of active users (on actual reach)</td>
<td>11.79%</td>
<td>10.06%</td>
<td>11.10%</td>
<td>8.72%</td>
<td>24.25%</td>
<td>13.18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of lurkers (on actual reach)</td>
<td>88.21%</td>
<td>89.94%</td>
<td>88.90%</td>
<td>91.28%</td>
<td>75.75%</td>
<td>86.82%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 8 User categorization of Oxfam Italia’s Facebook page

The table above shows the trend of the active community around Oxfam Italia: the number of active users has constantly increased in the whole five months (but in the month of February) from 380 to 1943.

- The number of active users has been obtained through the sum of the users which have either liked or commented a post or who have directly written of Oxfam’s page;
- The number of followers on average has been obtained through the calculation of the mean of the followers during each month;
- The reach post average has been obtained through the calculation of the mean of the reach of the posts during each month (both organic and paid reach have been considered, for further details see below);
- The number of lurkers has been obtained through the subtraction of the average of Oxfam’s followers (or the post reach average, as will be explained in the following part of paragraph) minus the sum of the active users.

Figure number 12 shows that the total active users’ line and the likers one almost match, given the very small overall contribution given by shares and comments (which are almost invisible).
As mentioned in paragraph 5.1 the number of followers of the page has increased during the five months, but nevertheless the number of lurkers (i.e. those users who are followers but do not interact in any way with the page) has slightly decreased during the period (with the exception of February). In their research, Cvijikj, Spiegler and Michahelles, have quoted the sociological work by Simmel and Wolff in order to justify the decrease of active users consequent to the increase of the community (Cvijikj, Spiegler and Michahelles 2013). Such dynamics did not prove itself right, instead, in Oxfam’s examination, in which the percentage of active users out of the followers has increased from 3.58% to 16.52%.

The outstanding performance by the page during the month of March, in particular, calls for a closer look. The model provided by Cvijikj, Spiegel and Michahelles (Cvijikj, Spiegler and Michahelles 2013) used for the evaluation of the ok.- brand page, made use of the total number of followers of the page to find out the active users out of the followers. The case of Oxfam Italia, instead, shows how the news feed algorithm by Facebook obscures many of Oxfam’s contents to a huge number of users. Facebook Insights clearly shows the difference between paid reach and organic reach. During the whole period of time taken in exam, Oxfam Italia chose to pay to increase its visibility only in the last period of March. The figures 13, 14 and 15 show diagrams in which organic and paid reaches are confronted:
Figure 13 *Confrontation between paid and organic reach*
Source: Facebook Insights

Figure 14 *Average of the organic reach*
Source: Facebook Insights

Figure 15 *Average of the paid reach*
Source: Facebook Insights
During the period in which Oxfam chose to increase its visibility by paying Facebook, the average of the reaches has increased by 90.84%, reaching 45675 users, which means almost 4 times more than the number of followers the page had at that time. The organic reaches, instead, reached the average of 4184 views, only 35% of the followers at the time (and less than the 10% of the paid reach). Since there is so huge a detachment between the number of followers and the actual reach, the attempt to represent the active community around Oxfam has takes account of the actual reaches for each month, besides the number of followers.

The actual reaches of Oxfam’s posts have followed the same trend of the users’ trend and the active community: a general growth till February (from 3222 of November till 4494 of January, then 3625 in February) then the best result in March: 8013. The reason for such a difference in the month of March must be traced in the decision of Oxfam to push the signature collection among its followers to endorse the so-called Robin Hood Tax, a 0.005% taxation on the purchase of every financial stakes occurring in the stock market (Oxfam GB 2014). Such financial effort had the goal to achieve 10000 reaches, thus the result was accomplished.

The ratio between lurkers, commenters and likers of the Oxfam Italia’s Facebook page can be interpreted either as appropriate or as a symptom of a malfunctioning of the community. The traditional literature concerning the involvement of a given web community has identified the average ratio of 90% lurkers, 9% commenters and 1% content creators (Nonnecke and Preece 2000). The community which has grown around Oxfam Italia, nevertheless, shows contrasting data, with an average of lurkers of 93.78 for the whole 5 month. In general the data show that, with the exception of March, with a surprising 83.48, the number of lurkers stands definitely above the 90% (from 95.53% of January till 97.22 of February). Such a rule has been taken for granted by Cvijikj, Spiegel and Michahelles, while other commentators felt the need to re-discuss it also because of the new design that the web has taken. Paul Schneider writes that the so-called rule 90-9-1 was developed in 2006, when the web was different and, for example, Facebook had only 12 millions users. The social media expert stated, instead, that a more accurate estimation of the ratio between lurkers, commenters and content creators is 70-20-10 (Schneider 2014). Such insight, which is for this research considered more reliable because it accounts for a new structure and the new use of the web 2.0, is even further from the results the page has supplied.

The research provided in this thesis, consequently, has showed that Oxfam active users’ community should be enlarged through the publication of more engagement-oriented contents. The present thesis, however, showed the great influence which Facebook has on the reaches of each post through its news feed algorithm. For this reason, the research wanted also to calculate the ratio between active users and actual reach of Oxfam posts to find out the real ratio between those users who actually see on their news feed the organization’s post (and not those who can “potentially” see
them) and those who interact in any way with the contents. The percentages obtained from the calculation of active users out of actual reaches in the table number 7 show that on average 13,18% of the users who have received the posts by Oxfam Italia have actually interacted with them. The lurkers’ percentage, in this case, ranges between 91,28% (February) and 75,75% (March) engendering an 86,82% of lurkers on average. According to such data, applied to the 90-9-1’s rule, Oxfam’s Facebook community is better shaped because it has (on average) only 86,82% of real lurkers.

5.2 Content analyses
The following paragraph will describe the methodological choices which made both the content analyses possible. The research made use of two analyses to understand, in first instance what users communicated to Oxfam and what attitude they showed through the users’ comments and posts on the page. Secondly, through the analysis of Oxfam’s contents, the research will shed light on the use Oxfam Italia made of its page during the give period of time.

5.2.1 User-generated content analysis
The first goal of the user-generated content analysis is to understand what users write to Oxfam. The results of this step of the thesis can show important factors such as the attitude of users toward the organization and what they communicate to it.

Many users used peculiar textual choices which made the automatic coding by the software problematic and thus it needed to be replaced by a manual coding. For examples, some users posted little hearts to show support, some others used thumb-ups and some others emoticons. Some other posts, instead, were impossible to be coded by the software because, for example, some bore badly connoted terms (like “vergogna”, in English “shame of you!”) which users referred to the phenomenon described by the post and not to Oxfam. In this case the negative connotations the user attributed to social phenomena were interpreted by the software as posts bearing a bad attitude to the organization. For example some users replied “disgusting” to a post in which were highlighted the differences in the management of food for families from industrialized and underdeveloped countries. In this case the research has considered the negative comments attributed to the behaviour exposed by the post and not to the post itself, thus the manual categorization has coded it accordingly.

Some other posts bore neologisms which were impossible to be coded by the software: for example “AVANTISSIMO!”, the result of the Italian adverb Avanti (“forward”), conjugated as an
absolute superlative adjective. Few other comments, instead, made use of irony, like the one posted in occasion of the 005 campaign “Robin Hood Tax” (i.e. “It is easier to tax more pensioners!”).

In a nutshell, all the cases described called for a general understanding of the contexts and the intentions of the users which the software could not perform. For such reason the research chose a manual approach for the messages’ coding procedure.

5.2.1.1 Oxfam Italia’s followers’ user generated content analysis

In order to accomplish such analysis both the post on the page and the comments on the organizations’ posted contents have been taken into consideration. Through the criteria introduced in paragraph 4.5.3.1, the posts have been gathered and divided by topic treated.

![Figure 16 Topics mentioned by Oxfam Italia’s followers](chart)

In total the sum of the users’ contributions reached the number 123. Figure 16 shows the percentages of each treated topic, but each datum will be analysed (from the most common till the rarest) later in the discussion. What is easily recognizable is that users mainly use the Oxfam Italia’s Facebook page to show their thankfulness, approval and endorsement to the organization (52.03% of the posts). The second most common topic is linked to disapproval statements (23.58%) while the third most common category draws on requests to the organization (7.32%).
5.2.2 Topics and sub-topics division
As mentioned in paragraph 4.5.3.1, the user-generated contents published by Oxfam’s followers, have been categorized according to a topic and sub-topic criterion. This section has the goal of explaining the criteria which have underlain the topic differentiation and the creation of sub-topics to represent the nuances. It will also interpret the results obtained starting from the most common category and ending with the most uncommon.

5.2.3 Thanks, endorsements and positive attitude
52.03% of the users’ statements showed clear and undoubted signs of a positive attitude toward Oxfam Italia.
The following part of the chapter will provide several examples of users’ posts. Most of the posts have been published in Italian and for those there will be provided a direct English translation.

*A passionate THANKS to Oxfam’s volunteers [names] who with they sweetness and congeniality were like a sunray in the Christmas storm in the Mestre COIN shop ♡♡♡*

The users’ greetings which bore evident signs of a positive attitude were enlisted in the same category (i.e. “lots of greetings to you and thanks for what you are doing”), together with congrats (i.e. “Bravissimi!”) and praises (i.e. “great!”).

5.2.4 Criticisms
Users criticized Oxfam, in the given period, for different reasons and it highlights the fact that so a delicate category is the second richest with its 29 references. Figure 17 shows a graph of the sub-topics of the posts which have been interpreted as “criticisms”.
5.2.4.1 Criticism toward unfair initiatives
The node “criticism toward unfair initiatives” contains 11 references which are all related to the contents concerning the “Robin Hood Tax”.

*Why another tax? Aren’t we already full of them?*

*Thanks to our former Prime Minister (Mario Monti, NDR) we have barely something to eat. Don’t you think we have had enough?*

When the comment represented a proper question (and not a general complaint) the same reference has been considered also in the “Request” – “Information Asked” node.

5.2.4.2 Wrong resource management
The nine references in this node concern mainly one issue. Four users with Arabic names, in particular, wrote 6 posts to blame Oxfam Italia’s management for a wrong use of its resources and for exploiting the Syrian crisis to collect donation:
Ouraidstoleninfrontofoureyes

Dontvtsl I halp people syris please you lair oxfam itly filed

We Refugees stigmatized Syrians will not arrive any help you Tkspon money under the pretext that you help us Stop exploiting the Syrian crisis lie in order to Tmlaw pockets

The messages are all written in an uncertain English, probably translated from Arabic by Google Translate, and they are not supported by any proofs or extra contributions. For such reason, probably, no other users showed interest in them and they do not represent a serious risk for the organization (which, however, it should always be ready to face).

5.2.4.3 False or inaccurate reports
The four posts of this category refer to the reactions that 4 users embodied in occasion of the publishing of a report concerning the food quality in European countries. The post received 3 critical comments about the article contents and one concerning the statistical methods used:

Are you kidding me!?

There are some errors... check twice

In this case, even though the moderator replied to the complaints, the users didn’t agree with the report. The tones of the messages, however, were not harsh so no negative attitudes toward the organization could be traced.

5.2.4.4 Accusations of advertisement
Three posts out of 29 have directly mentioned or just implied the existence of a particularly soft and compliant attitude by Oxfam Italia toward Coca Cola. On one occasion, in particular, as a comment to a post in which Oxfam intimated Pepsi to prevent land grabbing, a user posted:
You convinced me, I will start drinking Coke and therefore he posted an article from an Israeli newspaper in which Oxfam International is accused of receiving a 2’900’000$ donation from Coca Cola (Facebook). Another user also liked the comment.
5.2.4.5 Anti-semitism accusations

The last point of criticism aimed at Oxfam Italia is also the most interesting. Two references by two users, in fact, blame Oxfam for being an anti-Semitic organization:

Besides being a strongly marked anti-semitic organization, do you have any other xenophobic aspects to highlight?

Shame on you! You prefer to get 500 families on the road just to damage an Israeli company! You will never have another cent from me, murderers!

5.2.5 Requests

Nine references among the user-generated contents contained requests for Oxfam Italia. Three users, for example, endorsed the “Behind the brand” campaign and suggested to increase the efforts to involve the Nestlè Corporation as well:

What about the fact that they [i.e. food corporations] dry out whole aquifers leaving whole town in India out of water? There is nothing to celebrate... corporations have more power that governments and they crush people’s rights and freedom, not thinking of the environmental damages... isn’t it enough to boycott all of them?

Nestlè should be included since they are parching and leaving out of water whole populations in Pakistan

Other users, instead, asked the organization info about how to act to support Oxfam’s activities:

Thanks for the info, let me know about your money initiatives to support the aid after this incredible tragedy

Beautiful, can I find and buy for you something fair trade or some clothes you can sell to obtain money?? Let me know…

In almost all the cases the users’ requests were replied to by the moderators with availability and kindness, leaving the users with the feeling to have been heard and satisfied.
5.2.6 Scarlett Johansson

As previously anticipated (paragraph 5.2.4.5), eight references were coded after the American actress Scarlett Johansson. 

*Great choice, Roberto!* (Roberto Barbieri, director-general of Oxfam Italia)

*Very good Oxfam Italia! One of the few NGOs which is brave enough to really side with the poors and which is not afraid to face very powerful enemies. I admire your courage!*

*Congrats, [it is] really a courageous choice and politically incorrect, I hope you will never suffer for!*

5.2.7 Empathy

The node is meant to collect those comments/posts in which users show to be emotionally moved by any of Oxfam’s contents. The node, nevertheless, contains only 5 references (4,07% of all the references).

*Poor people!*

*And some of us [western people] are so shameless to moan [about their lives]*

*These are true tragedies*

*I still hope something is going to change*

5.2.8 Off-line initiatives and donation mentions

The last two nodes of this inquiry were merged because of their very scarce utilization among the users (together they reach the 6,5%). Only 5 contents, in fact, were posted on Oxfam page in order to involve the organization (and to increase the posts visibility) and they concern mostly Oxfam’s activities (for example “prelovedtour”, an initiative which implies the establishment of an itinerant fashion shop in order to raise funds for charity):

*Annarita chose to spend her new years’ eve with @OxfamItalia! What about you? #prelovedontour #milan*
Some posts, instead, involved for-profit partners which collaborated during the deployment of Oxfam’s activities.

*Oxfam’s volunteers are also at the COIN shop in Rimini till tomorrow 24th of December! We are tired but happy to support a fair initiative!*

*Euronics Viale dei mille Firenze, Oxfam Italia’s volunteers wait for you to wrap your gifts till the 24th of December, with lots of cordiality and a smile for everyone*

These posts, nevertheless, did not receive any like or comments before being shared by Oxfam. Users, of course, are not supposed to brag about their donations, but a higher result here was expected: only 2 posts, in fact, in the same photo, mentioned the act of donation.

*Done!*

*Yes, my little drop…*

### 5.2.9 User-generated content analysis: interpretation

The qualitative analysis showed that users embody a range of very different behaviours. Users, in fact, gather, congratulate, advice and criticize the organization through its Facebook page. They also interact with each other, estimating each others opinions through likes and comments. Even though the analysis doesn’t show if new friendship requests were issued among the users, the establishment of a brand community, in Ulusu’s terms, is clear (Ulusu 2014).

The following part of the section will focus on the interpretation of the most important findings of the user-generated content analysis:

*Thanks, endorsements and positive attitude*

Since 52% of the users either thanked Oxfam or showed a generally positive attitude toward the organization, it can be said that the Italian non-profits’ followers make use of the Facebook page to show their positive attitude toward the organization. The purpose of social media marketing, according to Kirby and Madsen, is to stimulate users to talk positively about brands, companies or
particular products and services, thus it can be said that Oxfam Italia performs its SMM in a valid and productive way (Kirby and Marsden 2006).

**Criticism toward unfair initiatives**

In some cases, however, Oxfam Italia received criticism linked to its activities. The node criticism toward unfair initiatives showed how users didn’t like the 005 campaign promoting the Robin Hood Tax. Even though such a node is the second by dimension in our graph the datum should not be seen as a risk. Most of these comments condemn the institution of a new tax for the population, putting the blame already on the former Italian Prime Minister Mario Monti for the creation of new taxes. The “Robin Hood Tax” campaign and its goals, nevertheless, are described clearly enough in the link provided in the post and thus the fact that such extra tax will be paid only by the stock market users and not by the common people is simply ignored by the users who probably have not even read the article enclosed. On this case Oxfam Italia faced the accusations and replied, with courtesy, to such complaints. In some occasions the clarification brought to an agreement between user and moderator, on others the post was ignored by the user. The “Robin Hood Tax” campaign, however, was the only one which the organization decided to sponsor and it flashes out the fact that such campaign is also the only one which has been referred in the “criticism toward unfair initiatives” node. The ambiguity created by the campaign doesn’t depend on Oxfam, which has carefully described its goal, but on the scarce attention by the users. Oxfam, nevertheless, didn’t change its communication strategy during the 5 months, underestimating the negative reactions of the users (which, however, are numerically not important). This confirms the assumption through which organizations may suffer of a general lack of understanding of the communications medium (see paragraph 3.3.1), as noted by Cvijikj, Spiegel and Michahelles (Cvijikj, Spiegler and Michahelles 2013). The same mechanism can be noted in the cases grouped under the node named “false and inaccurate reports”, where a simple discussion about which country in Europe eats the best food started an argument in which Oxfam has been criticized for not checking its sources. The tones of the messages, however, were not harsh so no negative attitudes toward the organization could be traced, thus the discussion should not represent a big concern for Oxfam.

**Accusations of advertisement**

The accusation here, being strengthened by a well argued newspaper article, is plausible and thus potentially dangerous. Oxfam didn’t reply to the accusation and since the article didn’t go viral (or in general acquired consensus) the organization’s choice, although risky, revealed to be correct. Organizations, in fact, sometimes can choose not to answer to a provocation in order to not give importance to a controversy through its response (Brown 2009). Oxfam, however, in this case
disposed of a strong argument supporting its position by proving the honesty of its work displaying examples of its pressure on Coca Cola as well: in this way a potential risk could have been dismantled before spreading and the integrity of the organization would have been strengthened.

Anti-semitism accusations and the Scarlett Johansson’s case
Oxfam Italia took a clear ideological position concerning the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, condemning the Israeli illegal settlements in Palestine; the root of users’ anger comes from the (bilateral) decision from Oxfam Italia to interrupt its collaboration with the American actress Scarlett Johansson who, as said previously, sponsored the Israeli soft-drink factory SodaStream. Such an episode caused also many positive reactions from the users. The reaction chosen by the moderators in this occasion was to not reply. This choice can be endorsed (accordingly also to the insights by Brown mentioned above) given the delicate topic represented by the Palestinian issue, but for further accusations it may be useful for the moderator to draw on the official position taken by Oxfam’s Roberto Barbieri (Oxfam’s general director), valid both because of its being official (it was shared by the organization and by the most important newspapers) and because of its deeply-argued nature (Barbieri 2014).

Users reacted positively to the decision of Oxfam to offer an aut aut to Scarlett Johansson and they greeted the end of the collaboration as a sign of coherence and straight-forwardness: Four other users posted, in addition, videos and articles in which the American former ambassadress is blamed for sponsoring SodaStream. Only one user defended Johansson’s choice and accused Oxfam to be against the state of Israel. These demonstrations of solidarity from users are doubly important since research has shown that the user engagement around a brand community affects the loyalty toward the brand (Verma, Jahn and Kunz 2012): the image of Oxfam, thus, is doubly improved both for the decision to get rid of Scarlet Johansson and for the engagement triggered.

The “Scarlet Johansson’s case” was a successful PR occasion for Oxfam Italia also because, being the news a hot topic among the audience, it engendered almost automatically engagement. Research, in fact, has shown that engagement is more easily created around issues which are popular than around topics proposed by single users/organizations (Li 2007). This case, thus, has represented a good showcase for Oxfam under several points of view.

Empathy
The emotional aspect, together with the empathic response, represents an important factor in the management of the page because it fosters the solidarity mechanism and eventually the donation impulse. Research has shown that “the inclusion of persuasive content – like emotional and philanthropic content – increases engagement with a message while informative content – like
mentions of prices, availability and product features — reduce engagement when included in messages in isolation, but increase engagement when provided in combination with persuasive attributes” (D. Lee, Hosanagar and Nair 2014, Abstract). For such reason this research would have expected a much higher percentage of empathic matches.

5.2.10 User-generated content analysis: PRs suggestions

The node collecting the criticisms expressed by users toward the “Robin Hood Tax” showed that Oxfam didn’t change its communicative strategy during the five months, even after having read the users’ reactions. As stated above, such reactions were absolutely not harsh and absolutely not compromising the organization’s reputation: nevertheless the organization would have increased the communicative power of the campaign adopting a better fitting caption which didn’t make the users think that the Robin Hood Tax would have been paid by the common people. An example of a caption could have been: “It is finally time for the world’s financial leaders to finally stop poverty. Sign the Robin Hood Tax now!”

The research has enlightened a surprisingly low number of emotional contents. Such contributions both motivate Oxfam followers to donate and carry a higher engagement potential (D. Lee, Hosanagar and Nair 2014). For such reason it would be advised to stimulate the emotional response by the publication of strongly emotional contents (documentaries, pictures, photographs, reportages from war locations and so on) in order to stimulate the emotional users’ response.

The node named “Off-line initiatives and donation mentions” provides a hint concerning the necessity to link on-line and off-line activities. Research has shown, in fact, that on-line and off-line initiatives provide each other with an echo which increases their popularity (Nesterenko 2013; Dholakia and Durham 2010). Involving former donors in the creation of posts to invite other users to follow their example, or alternatively posting pictures of the donors with a member of Oxfam (or with the concrete effects of such donation) could be a good incentive for other users to volunteer or to donate as well. On the other side, to involve the off-line activists in the diffusion (or even in the creation) of on-line contents can foster the spread of the organization’s communications.

5.3 Oxfam-generated content analysis

The analysis of the contents issued by Oxfam Italia brought 229 references from statuses and posts. Since Facebook Graph API shows only textual contents, in fact, the photos could not be shown and for such reason the category of photos has been taken away from the analysis.

As explained in paragraph 4.5.3, the categorization moved from a topic-based criterion (user-generated contents) to a function-based criterion (moderators-generated contents). This happened
because all the posts and statuses proposed by the organization (except for a few which have been coded in the “thanks” node) concerned the campaigns proposed by Oxfam. Since the goal of this research is not to explore Oxfam campaigns but to understand what use Oxfam makes of its Facebook page, the research moved to a purpose-oriented classification in which the goal is to recognize the behaviour the organizations attempts to trigger (for example “Donation invitation”) or the behaviour it just adopts (for example “thanks”).

The first part of the paragraph will focus on the description of the results obtained through the research; the second will focus on their interpretation. Table 9 will provide all the nodes which have been identified in this phase of the research, figure number 16, instead, will show a bar graph aimed to show the nodes:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Number of references</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attempt to engage users in on-line initiatives</td>
<td>28.8%</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Donation invitations</td>
<td>4.8%</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Invitation or reference to off-line activities</td>
<td>32.3%</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral Information</td>
<td>7.9%</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thanks</td>
<td>4.4%</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Updates concerning achievements in ongoing activities</td>
<td>16.2%</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 9 *Nodes of the Oxfam-generated contents analysis*
As shown in figure 18, the main use performed by Oxfam Italia’s moderators during the 5 months has been to invite users to off-line activities or to inform them about off-line initiatives (32.3% of all posts);

The second most common category of posts, instead, referred to the attempt to urge the organization’s followers to engage in on-line activism (28.8%).

The third most common posts’ category involves the attempt, by Oxfam Italia, to inform its Facebook fans concerning its achievements in ongoing activities (16.2%)

Thanks to such data the research has shown that it is reasonable to believe that the main purpose by Oxfam Italia’s social network efforts is to inform users concerning its achievements, to create a brand community and to make closer the on-line and the off-line dimensions of the organization. The results match with what has been shown by Lovejoy and Saxton, i.e. that non-profits use social media mainly to share information, foster community and trigger action (Lovejoy and Saxton 2012).
5.3.1 Invitations or references to off-line activities

In the 32.3% of the posts published by Oxfam (74/229 posts), the moderators tried to bring attention to off-line activities concerning in most of the cases ongoing Oxfam campaigns. All those posts, i.e. those in which the followers have been invited to off-line events, have been coded under this node.

Are you in Rome on the 8th of March? Then you can’t miss this event!

Who of you was at the Swinging Britain on the last 19th of January in Milan? Here you can watch the video!

As drafted above, the purpose of these posts is to strengthen the relationship between the on-line and the off-line dimension of the organization. Some other posts, instead, tried to involve the page’s fans to adopt behaviours consistent with the goal of the organizations. Many of these posts invited the users to describe on-line their experiences, in fact many of these posts have been categorized also in the node attempt to engage users in on-line activities:

[here is a] challenge for the next week: make your school/university/office/condominium greener... turn the lights off together with all the electronic devices whenever you don’t use them! Then tell us who adhered http://bit.ly/Nm5kbA

Less plastic on your kitchen table... do not use not biogradable materials and use ceramic dishes and glasses. Then wash the dishes in company, it will be funnier! http://bit.ly/Nm5kbA

Renew your wardrobe... for free! Use old-clothes’ fabrics and create something new and original! Then post your creations http://bit.ly/Nm5kbA

5.3.2 Attempt to engage users in on-line initiatives

The second most affluent node of the research includes 66 out or 229 posts (28.8%) and it concerns the attempt, by Oxfam’s moderators, to engage users in different on-line activities or actions. The posts in this category include both examples like the ones mentioned in the previous paragraph (in which the moderators ask the user to share on-line their experiences with Oxfam’s initiatives with the other users in order to increase their echo) and cases in which Oxfam asks the users to perform an action online. The on-line campaign “Behind the brand”, for example, followed a study in which
some of the biggest food-production corporations in the world have been scanned in order to evaluate their environmental impact, their social impacts, their respect of human rights and so on (Oxfam Italia 2014a). A huge part of the campaign involved customers of such corporations (but also other internet users) to ask the companies through social networks, email and so on to stop some unethical behaviour (for example to replace local and smaller suppliers in virtue of their much greater power). Oxfam Italia never proposed, however, to boycott such companies.

Now that Coca Cola has stood up against land grabbing, Pepsi and ABF do not have anymore excuses [not to do the same]. Since an important Pepsi share holders meeting is approaching, we want to submerge them with emails to ask them to keep up with Coca Cola. Write now to PepsiCo and make them hear your voice, they can’t ignore you: http://bit.ly/1hhVLpo

The best way to be heard by corporations such as Coca Coca, PepsiCo and Associated British Foods to ask them fair and sustainable behaviours is to put your name on their products... How? Go to this link, discover the bitter taste of sugar and invite your friends to do the same. #behindthebrand! http://bit.ly/WTTsSN

The node also comprises those posts in which Oxfam directly asks its followers to share its contents to increase their organic reach:

During this week we convinced Pepsi-the second biggest food corporation in the world – to impose no-tolerance to the landgrbbing phenomenon in its supply chain and to prevent the land expropriations! For this result we want to thank you, [you] the almost 275000 people all over the world who made them hear your voice and who have obtained this huge achievement! Share this post with your friends and involve them in #behindthebrand! http://bit.ly/WTTsSN

You, who change the way the big food-corporations - like Coca Cola and Nestlè - treat the people and the planet, [you] are all in this video. Watch and share!

5.3.3 Updates concerning achievements in ongoing activities

The third node for number of mentions (37 out of 229, 28,6% of the total) has gathered all those posts in which Oxfam has communicated with its followers to update them about the progresses of the ongoing efforts all around the world.
In the following part of the section some examples of the posts coded in the node have been copied:

What a year for “behind the brand”! In 12 months, thanks to you, we began changing the policies of the biggest 10 food-corporations, like Nestlè and Coca Cola. Look at the video, share it with your friends and celebrate with us this very special birthday!

The third anniversary of the Syrian war is coming, almost half of the population had to leave its homeland and everyday children, women and men are forced to live in terror. We are #WithSyria, and you? Found out in the next days what we are doing and stay tuned...

In this video you can see the effects of our work in Sri Lanka in support of the local communities to face the effect of the climatic change http://bit.ly/119IZgI

5.3.4 Neutral Information

Such mode has collected all those posts which provide informational contents endorsed and shared by the page. Such information is, of course, somehow related to Oxfam’s universe but the posts in this node do not contain any references to action or do not embed any news concerning the organization’s achievements. The node contains 18 posts which represent the 7,9% of the total. Some examples are provided here:

In recent days it snowed in the Middle East, whitening even Cairo. If the images are fascinating, snow unfortunately worsens the situation of Syrian refugees as Salem and Kasser, 12 and 10 years. Fled Hama have found refuge along with hundreds of families in this informal settlement southeast of Amman, Jordan, where they built makeshift shelters made of cardboard, cloth and wood. To keep warm, they burn wood, rubber and plastic, but with the snow it has become almost impossible

If Syria doesn’t warm hearts anymore...
http://www.lastampa.it/2014/03/31/cultura/opinioni/editoriali/se-la-siria-non-scalda-pi-i-cuori_1hQedsV8kCm712uA1hdECO/pagina.html

We put an end to the madness of biofuels! Read the article in La Stampa that explains plainly why we can not go ahead with this European policy supporting biofuels that cause hunger and environmental damage. To feed our cars are losing people who

5.3.5 Donation invitations
In such node have been collected all the posts which, directly or indirectly, ask the followers to donate money to Oxfam. Only 9 posts have been issued to this purpose (3.9%) and some of them are also repeated. The posts in which Oxfam asks for donations are provided either with a story which conducts to donation requests, or with a link to a video or with an achievement obtained.

Another video that demonstrates how tough are the conditions of Syrian refugees: we are Zhgarta, north of Beirut, where many families have settled in makeshift shelters […] A tough situation for women in particular which forced to stay in the "house" and which bear the weight of children and elderly people without economic resources are sufficient to ensure the satisfaction of the needs. # Aid4Syria

Read some of the stories of Syrian refugees in their own words … so you understand better what is happening in # Syria. Please do not leave them alone # Aid4Syria

To this date we have helped more than 800,000 people in # Syria. But there is still much to do # Aid4Syria http://donazioni.oxfamitalia.org/dona-ora-siria.html

5.3.6 Thanks
In this last category are gathered all the posts in which Oxfam thanks its followers and the active members of the organization’s community. All the thanks are provided with a statement in which moderators update the users they want to thank concerning the achievements they have contributed to:

What can 400000 people who ask the same thing all along do? They manage to convince Coca Cola, Nestle and other big food corporations to improve their policies! # ScopriilMarchio is the proof that your power as a consumer works to change the system. Read what we have achieved together over a year, and most of all … THANK YOU! http://bit.ly/WTTsSN

12,000 THANK YOU :-) Help us spread our work! Invite your friends to click like on the page! Find the field below friends to the right of the page!
Some thanks are also provided with a tag for certain institutions who have given their contributions to involve their fans as well (Allan 2014):

So many friends 😊 Thanks youtmark #WomenCircle13.

5.3.7 Moderators-generated content analysis: interpretation

Invitations or references to off-line activities

The attempts by Oxfam Italia to merge and to link both on-line and off-line activisms comply with the necessity, and the opportunity, offered by social media to support each of the two realms through the exploitation of the other (Nesterenko 2013; Dholakia and Durham 2010). For such reason, Oxfam addresses the biggest part of its communication to link on-line and off-line work posting contents concerning activists, flash-mobs, fundraising occasions and so on. This section complies, also, with the assumptions by Kirby and Marsden which identify one of the purposes of SMM with the attempt to produce messages meant to be shared on social media in order to trigger users to talk positively about the brand (Kirby and Marsden 2006).

Attempt to engage users in on-line initiatives

The attempts by the organization to involve users in on-line activities can be understood under several perspectives:

- The organization involved customers of corporations (but also other internet users) to ask, through social networks, email and so on, the companies to stop some unethical behaviours (Oxfam Italia 2014a);
- The organization fosters the creation of a brand community (Muniz and O’Guinn 2001). Oxfam, in facts, asks its followers to act with the purpose to reach a common goal and users show openness toward the organization’s announcements, feel as a gear of the Oxfam apparatus (recognizing, thus, its goals as their owns) and interact with each other;
- The organization tries to create engagement in order to dope the Edgerank’s value of affinity with the purpose to increase its reach and to show up more easily in the users’ news feeds (“What Is EdgeRank” 2014).

Updates concerning achievements in ongoing activities

This node, which is the third node for number of mentions with 37 out of 229 posts, collects the progresses about ongoing Oxfam’s campaigns all over the world. Paragraph 2.3.1 has introduced
some of the peculiarities of non-profit marketing, in particular the difficulty in estimating (and communicating) the success of humanitarian initiatives because of the non-tangible nature of such goals (Sargeant 2009b). In addition, previous research has shown how the limitation of funds had hindered the strategies of non-profits in web 1.0 both because of the high costs of the maintenance of websites (Hill and White 2000) and because the biggest amount of resources in charitable organizations is destined to the achievement of the organizational goals (Markham, Johnson and Bonjean 1999). Paragraph 2.3 has showed, however, that exactly like all the other organizations on social media, Oxfam doesn’t experience any of those technical limitations in sharing its contents, since Facebook provides users and organizations with unlimited space. For this reason a much higher use of the Facebook page for this purpose was expected.

Neutral Information

Considering that only 18 out of 229 posts have been enlisted in the Neutral Information node, the research would have expected a higher result. The study of the dynamics which regulate the news feed mechanisms, described in paragraph 3.4 and 3.5.4, has shown that contents with a higher engagement have a positive effect on the diffusion of all the other contents published by the page. As said above:

- Contents with higher engagement (or even better many contents) influence the news feed incrementing the number of times future contents will be shown on the users’ walls. For this reason Facebook pages should push the engagement of less important posts too in order to ease the diffusion of those posts which carry more important messages (like fundraising initiatives) (Porterfield 2014);
- It was also noted in paragraph 5.2.10 that the user-generated content analysis research has enlightened a surprisingly low number of emotional responses by the users.

The node Neutral Information could be the one supposed to gather all those contents which have to trigger the most the user engagement toward the use of questions, opinion requests, information concerning ongoing global humanitarian issues, emotional contents and so on in order to satisfy both the conditions above.
5.4. Engagement analysis

The goal of the engagement analysis is to understand which type of contents has triggered the most user engagement during the given period of time. As introduced in paragraph 4.5.4, the engagement will be calculated by the sum of the interactions divided by the amount of the contents. Such calculations will provide the research with the likes and the comments’ ratios for statuses, photos and links: the higher the result will be, the higher engagement each kind of content will trigger.

![Figure 19](image_url) Engagement analysis: ratios between number interactions and contents for statuses, links and photos

Figure 19 shows the ratios for each of the post types and kind of interaction, while the table 10 shows the raw data:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types Of Contents</th>
<th>Number of Contents</th>
<th>Likes</th>
<th>Comments</th>
<th>Ratio Likes</th>
<th>Ratio Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Status</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>336</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>9.08</td>
<td>0.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Link</td>
<td>141</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>0.87</td>
<td>0.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Photos</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>2046</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>19.67</td>
<td>0.71</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 10 Engagement analysis data
The observation of both the graph and the table demonstrate the following points:

1. The most common way chosen by Oxfam’s followers to interact with the organization is the “like”, followed by the comment;
2. The user engagement has been triggered mostly by photos (19.67 for likes and 0.71 for comments), followed by status (9.08 for likes and 0.43 for comments) and eventually links (only 0.87 for likes and 0.27 for comments); Literature, moreover, has also shown that Edgerank prioritizes photos among other kind of contents such as statuses, thus such result was predictable (Al-Greene 2013).
3. The engagement engendered by the links is very scarce, considering also that among the three type of contents link is the most affluent (141 contents, vs 104 and 37 from photos and statuses);

The analysis showed here how, especially for links and statuses, Oxfam Italia should increase its engagement. In particular the production of comments should be pursued. As mentioned in paragraph 3.5.3, moderators can actually affect the engagement produced by the users (de Vries, Gensler and Leeflang 2012). Consequently, Oxfam’s moderators are supposed to produce contents which stimulate the conversation and, in the mean time, exploit Edgerank in order for them to be seen by as many users as possible.

5.4.1 How to improve Oxfam’s user engagement
The analysis here performed can be interpreted in order to grasp some useful hints to improve Oxfam’s communicative strategy: firstly Oxfam could further increase the publishing of photos, since the research has proved that users “like” them the most and literature has showed that in the news feed algorithm photos enjoy an higher rank than comments (Al-Greene 2013). Secondly, the links performance should be pushed in creative ways to increase their reach and exploit their communicative potential: every link, in fact, is published and showed to the users with a figure and a caption which flash out in the news feed, thus they enjoy a high communicative potential (Allan 2014). Marketers have also found out that posts with < 80 characters receive 66% higher engagement and posts which carry questions engender 100% higher engagement, so shorter posts are more likely to succeed (Bullas 2014).

As stated above, emotional contents have more possibilities to trigger user engagement (D. Lee, Hosanagar and Nair 2014). This implies that, in order to increase the users engagement, Oxfam should flank the informative contents enlightened in paragraph 5.3 with emotional and persuasive elements. In addition, as suggested by Lee, games could be provided (Lee 2012). For example, a
series of images showing quotes about peace, politics, gender equality, economics and in general socially-oriented issues could be prepared and posted: eventually the moderators will post them asking the followers to guess the author of the quote. The page can also make use of inspirational users’ comments found both on Facebook and on Oxfam’s page.

Oxfam could also exploit not self-generated contents from the web:

- Socially-oriented comic routines;
- Documentaries showing the beauties of the places in which Oxfam acts;
- User-generated artistic images;
- Interesting textual or graphic contributions from opinion leaders or other users;
- Humanitarian-committed songs or any other artistic content from artists in the days of their birthdays;
- Socially-oriented artistic performances or theatrical or movie parts;
- Short videos introducing the historical dynamics which brought upon by to conflicts or emergencies.
6 Conclusions

6.1 Introduction
To conclude the thesis this chapter will sum up all the findings obtained by the research: the research questions will be, thus, re-proposed and the results of the research will be presented, together with their interpretation through a theoretical perspective. Finally, in a separate section, the chapter will propose some of the possible practical outcomes in the field of PR which the research has put the spotlight on. The chapter will also present a critical review of the research which will account for its limits and possible future research sparks.

6.2 The growth rate and the population of the brand community around Oxfam Italia’s Facebook page
The theoretical framework of this thesis has highlighted the importance for organizations to create and foster the establishment of brand communities. Some of Oxfam’s followers, as anticipated by Ulusu, show openness toward the organization’s announcements, feel as a gear of the Oxfam apparatus (recognizing, thus, its goals as their owns) and interact with each other. The research has empirically shown that the Oxfam Italia’s Facebook page’s community grew by 13.8% during the period between the 1st of November 2013 and the 31st of March 2014. Furthermore the number of followers has increased during each of the 5 months in exam.

The research has also focused on the identification of the largest section of followers in order to identify the average Oxfam Italia’s follower and to enlarge the brand community (Li et al. 2014). Eventually, identifying the peculiarities of its followers may also ease the creation by Oxfam of initiatives which link the on-line and the off-line realms of the organization (Fankhauser 2014). In concrete is has been shown that there is a neat predominance of female followers (61.9%) over male followers (36.5%). Matching the statistical findings concerning the gender of Facebook users in Italy showed that men tend to use Facebook more than women (53.2% man and 46.8% women) (Social Times 2014). The research has also shown that the highest age range among Oxfam’s followers is 24-35 years.

The geographical provenience of Oxfam Italia’s Facebook fans has showed that, among the four cities with more fans, the presence of Florence and Arezzo flashes out. Both cities have fewer followers than Rome and Milan (the other two cities in the rank) but they are also much smaller. The ratio of city inhabitants/Oxfam followers has showed that Florence and mostly Arezzo (the city
which hosts the Oxfam headquarter) have the highest values in Italy and this has been interpreted as a sign that Oxfam Italia is very well rooted on a local level.

6.3 The brand community around the Oxfam Italia’s Facebook page
This part of the thesis aimed to identify the different behavioural patterns which Oxfam Italia’s followers tended to abide by during the given time. In these regards the research followed two different paths:

- Firstly, it has been showed that, if the 90-9-1 model endorsed by Pletikosa Cvijikj, Spiegler and Michahelles is accepted, the brand community gathered around the Oxfam Italia’s Facebook page is not homogenous in virtue of the average of 93,78% of lurkers (i.e. users which do not interact in any way with the organization) and to the average of 6,23% of active users. This negative result complies with the assumption by Pletikosa Cvijikj, Spiegler and Michahelles who argue that organizations lack of both a substantial understanding of the social media’s mechanisms and functioning social media strategies (Cvijikj, Spiegler and Michahelles 2013). This first approach described, however, accounts for all the page’s followers (thus those who are only potentially active users) and not for those who actually see Oxfam’s posts on their news feed.
- Secondly, another approach considered only those users who actually have been reached by Oxfam’s contents, and who chose not to interact with them. The calculation of such ratio brought to the realization that Oxfam’s brand community actually enjoys on average only 86,82% of lurkers (thus lower than 90%) and 13,18% of active users. In this perspective, Oxfam’s community is, instead, to be considered as active.

This theoretical twist is meaningful because it sheds light on the huge difference between the number of followers a page has and the number of users which actually receive the page’s contents. Such huge difference (which is easily overcome through the purchase of Facebook’s sponsoring options) must be accounted for by both further academic research and SMM practitioners in the field of Social Media Evaluation. I believe that referring to the actual posts’ reach (and not to the overall number of followers) implies a much more reliable method for social Media Evaluation because it really estimates the users’ attitude toward the page. Users which do not see their news feeds the page’s posts do not “choose” not to interact with them, so their behaviour should not be taken into account and they thus should not be considered as lurkers.

For such reason I believe that the second evaluation approach is more accurate.
6.4 The user-generated content analysis
The user-generated content analysis has been performed with the purpose to understand what followers thought and said about Oxfam Italia and in general what was their attitude toward the humanitarian organization. The research revealed that, at the moment, an automatic coding for users’ posts is impossible to realize. When Oxfam’s followers commented on the organization’s posts they referred in some occasions to the organization itself, in some occasions to other users and in some occasions to the phenomenon described by the posts. Followers, furthermore, used irony in certain circumstances and they stumbled in grammar mistakes in others. In some cases they also coined new terms and in general all the linguistic abnormalities described needed a reference to the context to be understood. Consequently it was impossible to set in advance a standard analytical method to automatically perform the Oxfam Italia’s Facebook page content-analysis.

The manual coding of the contents, however, has revealed that 52,03% of the posts from the followers to the organization concerned thanks, endorsement of Oxfam’s work and a positive attitude. 23,58% of the user-generated contents, however, involved criticisms to the organization but only few of them represented a risk because:

- Oxfam has been accused not to fruitfully manage its resources (an accusation which hasn’t been provided with documentary proofs at all);
- Oxfam has been accused to not to criticize Coca Cola for economic reasons (a well-supported accusation to which Oxfam didn’t reply);
- Oxfam has been accused to be anti-Semite (another non-supported accusation to which, however, Oxfam didn’t reply);

6.5 The moderators-generated content analysis
The moderators-generated content analysis was performed in order to understand what use Oxfam Italia makes of its Facebook page and what it communicated during the given five months. The analysis showed that Oxfam Italia posted and shared almost only contents concerning its work, in particular the 34,3% of its posts carried invitations or references to off-line initiatives, while the 30,6% of them carried attempts to engage users in on-line activities. These data show that Oxfam uses its Facebook page mainly to advertise its humanitarian activities and to urge users on on-line activism. 17,1% of the moderators’ posts, instead, meant to update Oxfam followers about the achievements in ongoing activities, so it can be said that Oxfam uses its page to inform its followers about its achievements, to link on-line and off-line activities and to foster the creation and the maintenance of its brand community.
Other goals, instead, such as to invite followers to donate, to involve users in different discussions, and to thank them are absolutely secondary.

What the research has found out, consequently, complies with the theoretical assumption by Hoffman and Fodor which implies that the purpose of SMM must be traced not in increasing profits but in community fostering (Hoffman and Fodor 2010). It has been shown, in fact, that Oxfam should increase the engagement produced, but the predominant quantity of posts which promulgate the organization’s achievements shows clearly that Oxfam uses it’s page to improve its relationship with its followers (Kirby and Marsden 2006).

6.6 The engagement analysis
This part of the thesis focused on the attempt to understand the dynamics which determine the engagement produced by Oxfam’s posts. The analysis of Oxfam’s engagement brought to several conclusions:

- It has been proved that between “Likes” and “Comments” the users’ favourite engagement method is the former;
- The user engagement has been triggered mostly by photos (and not by statuses and links);
- Oxfam’s links produced the lowest engagement among the content types available;

6.7 PRs-oriented suggestions highlighted by the research
The comparison between data concerning the users’ genders showed the need for Oxfam Italia to invest in the production of more male-oriented contents in order to increasingly involve the male audience with the purpose to increase its presence in the community. In these regards a very good choice has been represented by the idea by Oxfam Italia to sponsor the “Giro d’Italia”, the most important bicycle race held on the Italian soil, and to put up for auction the autographed jerseys of several sportsmen. Further efforts could be performed, without going over budget, toward other sport realities (local football teams) or local bodies which endorse male aggregation (motorcycles clubs, scuba diving association and so on).

The contrast between the average age of the Italian Facebook users and the one by Oxfam’s fans has not shown any discrepancies, thus no gaps to intervene on have been identified. The users’ geographical provenience, instead, showed that a high number of fans come from Tuscany, the administrative region which hosts Oxfam’s headquarter. This plans the way to several PRs occasions both on the on-line and on the off-line level. The Facebook pages “Te la do io Firenze” (which promotes commercial and cultural activities in the Tuscan administrative centre), “Firenze corre” (promoting jogging and sport activities in the city), “Firenze spettacolo” and “Toc Toc
Firenze” (which share news concerning cinematographic and musical manifestations), the newspapers “Firenze today” and “Corriere d’Arezzo”, the musical and cultural foundation “Fondazione Guido d’Arezzo” and so on can provide a good audience tank to invest on. In addition, such social media figures can on one side share Oxfam’s contents and increase the organic reach, and on the other side propose their own contents to be shared by Oxfam with the result to increase its variety. Furthermore, Arezzo hosts one of the most popular musical events among teenagers, the Arezzo wave concert: joining the communicative efforts (especially on social media) performed for the festival can be a valuable idea to involve both teen and in general young users.

The reach-oriented approach adopted by the research suggests that Oxfam Italia has, on average, less than 90% of lurkers. In particular it must be noted that, among the “active users” of this research, have been considered also those users who have just “liked” any of Oxfam’s contents. Such decision can be fairly contested because the “like” can be considered as a shallow interactions and not as worthy as a comment. If the importance of a “like” should had been decreased in comparison of a comment, the analysis would have shown a much inferior engagement rate.

This means, in a nutshell, that Oxfam’s community performance should still be improved through the promotion of more engaging contents.

The research has also introduced the concept of the news feed and the algorithm which regulates it (formerly called “edgerank”) and it has been shown that Facebook pages need to create as much engagement they can in order to constantly show up on the users’ news feeds. Oxfam Italia, consequently, should increase its organic reach through the creation of even less meaningful contents, but meant to be easily shared, commented or liked as explained in paragraphs 3.5.4 and 5.3.4. This should happen so that posts which carry more important messages (as donation invitations or updates about humanitarian achievements) can “organically” show up on many users’ news feeds.

The comparison of the obtained data in this part of the research with the theoretical framework, brought to the conclusion that Oxfam Italia should enrich its informative posts with emotively-connoted contents (D. Lee, Hosanagar and Nair 2014). In addition the quality and variety of contents should be expanded with the introduction of non self-generated artistic and informative posts. In order to increase the engagement, furthermore, users could also be engaged by moderators through the use caption advices requests, questions concerning their opinions, games and so on (Lee 2012). The research states also that Oxfam’s posts, finally, should not exceed the length of 88 characters to enjoy a higher engagement (Bullas 2014).
6.8 Relevance of the study on the field and further developments

The research which has been described by the present thesis confirmed some of the aspects which the previous research concerning SMM of non-profit organization had already stressed. Similarly to what Lovejoy and Saxton showed, Oxfam Italia uses its Facebook page for sharing information, creating community and urging to action (Lovejoy and Saxton 2012). On the other side, nevertheless, Oxfam Italia doesn’t make fully use of its potential to engage its followers. The research has showed, in fact, that even though the organization asks for the users to perform on-line activism, in no occasions Oxfam seemed intended to establish a symmetrical and dialogical relationship: in these regards Oxfam doesn’t behave differently from the other non-profits organization the scientific research has already focused on (Lovejoy, Waters and Saxton 2012).

The research, however, advocated Oxfam, and in general organizations, shedding light on the dynamics of the edgerank: the thesis, in fact, traced (at least partially) the responsibility for pages’ limited visibility to the Facebook algorithm. Not considering the month of March, whose reach has been pushed by paying Facebook, on average Oxfam’s posts reached only 35% of its followers. Facebook, besides being interested in privileging the diffusion of the best contents to endorse the creation of true engagement (Facebook for Business 2014), has all the interest to complicate social media marketers’ work with restricting rules to limit their work’s visibility in order to sell paid reach. The idea to modify the formula to calculate the active population of the community (switching from “active users/total users” to “active users/reached users”) on one side lightens the burden on SM marketers’ shoulders, but on the other side it urges marketers to continuously re-think creative communicative solutions (following the edgerank’s and the policy changes).

From the academic point of view, instead, my research could foster the attention of the academic community toward the interaction between the field of corporate communication and the edgerank algorithm. Further research could study the dynamics between non-profits organizations on social media and the way they try to bypass the edgerank-posed limitations of visibility. The thesis has also evidenced that the overall numerical increase of a community doesn’t always match with the decrease of the active community. Even though, in fact, such phenomenon has been taken for granted in their essay by Pletikosa Cvijikj, Spiegler and Michahelles (Cvijikj, Spiegler and Michahelles 2013), in the present research the number of active users has increased together with the overall population.

The user-generated content analysis, instead, has highlighted the importance for moderators to be always prepared to reply to criticisms which are more commonly expressed by users: in the case of Oxfam Italia it has been showed that important topics such as anti-Semitism, bad resource-
allocation and subjection toward Coca Cola were either frequent (the first two) or well-supported (the last one), thus moderators should prepare in advance their replies when asked about them. The limitations of my research, however, can provide inspiration for further academic in-depth analyses. The above research, firstly, refers only to Facebook (currently the most used SN in the world and in Italy (Rotoli 2014; Statista 2014) but an always increasing number of people and organizations use also Twitter, Google + and Instagram (just to mention the current most common SNs). The analysis of each platform will involve the use of different interaction tools, different contents, different data sources and different algorithms ruling the news feed. Another variable is represented by the fact that not all the social networks provide official APIs (such as Pinterest), thus different data gathering methods should be explored.

The introductory chapter of this thesis drafted the difficulties which organizations face when they try to perform PRs on social media. After deploying the whole thesis, those words become even truer in virtue of the direct observation of Oxfam Italia’s performance on social media. The introduction stated that social networks provide organizations with a huge asset because they take care of the technical issues of their platforms and they provide a potentially endless space for communicating. Such statement still proves to be right, but it must also be said that social media provide with the same possibilities any organizations, thus the competition among them can eventually only increase. Consequently, on one hand SNs ease the organizations’ work, on the other hand they provide them with another concern: NGOs, in fact, are “forced” to be on social networks to face their competitors, with the necessity of investing in SMM professionals and sometimes purchasing the visibility offered by the SNs themselves. In this situation organizations are forced to invest (time, human and sometimes financial resources) and users feel satisfied because they find their favourite organizations and thus they can further customize their SN experience.

The result is that, even though it is a significant advantage for organizations to have a free platform to communicate with its members, from the point of view of the SN this is a win-win situation, in which for the service provider it doesn’t really matter if the page with more fans sells cars or raises money for HIV prevention. In a nutshell, for-profit and non-profit oriented organizations have to compete almost on the same ground to gain users’ attention but seldomly the latter disposes of more resources that the first. For such reasons, the importance of the study of non-profit marketing and of social media evaluation for non-profit organizations like Oxfam Italia increases everyday.
Reference list


