Caring Leadership: The Alignment of Organizational Values and Social Media Messaging

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Social Projects are based on ethical values that members of their boards and staff defend, incorporate in their life and want to implement. Coherence between what you claim to be and what others see could differ. Identity and mission play an important role in the transmission of values within organizations, especially in the case of social oriented projects. In this paper we look into the digital communications of La Fageda cooperative. The research aims to discover how the project ethically communicates its action: making the life of people with intellectual disabilities better by producing high quality yogurts and other related products. Through focus groups, in-depth interviews and field visits we analyzed how La Fageda is explained through its ethical principles and values, as a way to articulate lessons for corporate communications field. We compare how the project is communicated and received in social media and if there is consistency and alignment or a distortion in this perception.

Keywords: values; corporate communications; digital ethics; social engagement; social cause marketing

Introduction

Integrity, trust, responsibility, optimism, effort, quality and people at the core. These are the main values of La Fageda cooperative, a social project based in Catalonia (Spain) that aims to improve the lives of people with intellectual disabilities and mental illnesses in the district of La Garrotxa, while producing its best-selling yogurts in the region (Nair, 2020; Casadesús-Masanell, Ricard and Mitchell, 2011). The model of this social project puts people at the centre (Greenleaf, 1998) and has been developed on the basis of the principles and anthropological foundations of its founder, the psychologist and social entrepreneur Cristóbal Colón. This study examines how the cooperative's values are being integrated into the company's digital communication. How does La Fageda communicate the good things it does without commercially exploiting its social cause? (Russell, 2001). Its corporate identity is built upon the seven main ethical

principles mentioned above. This study analyzes the accounts of the cooperative on

Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn and YouTube to assess the presence and role

of these principles in the digital communication developed by La Fageda. This case

study provides valuable insights for socially responsible enterprises who aim to

ethically communicate about their business model without opening themselves up to

charges of exploiting their cause.

La Fageda

The main goal of the cooperative, according to its founder, is improving the

lives of the mentally challenged people by collectively producing a high-quality yogurt

that is competitive on the market (Nair, 2020; Casadesús-Masanell, Ricard and

Mitchell, 2011). The link with the foundational values is a key factor to many aspects of

La Fageda: its objectives, its messages, its relationships, its development and also the

perception it creates. They all are aligned with its principles. These efforts contribute to

a communication strategy directly focused on the role these values play and how to

make them visible (Russell, 2001). It is important to highlight that Colón prefers not to

speak of values but of the principles of his cooperative. According to Russell (2001),

the concept of principle is essential in a servant leadership. For Torralba (2018), a

principle defines what is established, the basis of something that could not be

questioned. For him, citing Plato, —one of Cristobal Colon's references—, a principle

is considered stronger as it holds a building, an idea, an organization. Colón believes

values do not have the same unifying power that principles have. This corporate

philosophy is anchored by the unique ethical leadership of Cristóbal Colón.

Colón follows the theories of Franco Basaglia, an Italian psychiatrist who

transformed psychiatric hospitals, believing that they did not help their inmates to get

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better, as the offered activities there had no therapeutic value. Colon considers the

anthropological model and philosophy of authors like Freud, Marx, Plato and the more

contemporary Covey, when making decisions. In 1982 Colón, together with 14 patients,

left the mental health hospital of Salt, in Catalonia with the intention of beginning a

company. It started as an agreement with the City Council of the village of Olot —

nearby Salt, a town located 75 miles from Barcelona, in the north of Catalonia, close to

France—, that had mentally challenged people helped in tasks, such as gardening the

green spaces of the village. Shortly thereafter, a nearby farm with cows, within the

National Park of "La Fageda d'en Jordà", was put up for sale. Colón, with the help of

the city council and created a cooperative, bought the farm and started making yogurt

with the milk its cows produced. Their model aimed to achieve a complete circular

economy in which they would be able to produce all the raw ingredients for producing

their catalogue of products. Mainly, yogurts of different fruit flavors, but nowadays,

also liquid yogurts, jams, and ice creams. The fruit used for these products is also

cultivated on the same farm. This model fulfils the goal of achieving the best quality in

the products but also of providing people with a place to live, a job, and therapy in this

project. Following Basaglia's idea, Colón defends that work could be a therapy, as it

gives people a feeling of belonging, satisfaction and a place in a community. This idea

is the driving force behind this project.

Previous research has focused on the unique business model of La Fageda

(Casadesús-Masanell, Ricard and Mitchell, 2011) and its growth and development

(Vernis and Urriolagoitia, 2014). Ribera (2006) and Segarra (2015) looked also at the

business model; these two studies focused on La Fageda's way of producing and the

know-how created, and highlighted that it has become unique in the business field by

"doing good and doing well". However, none of them has analyzed the ethical values

underlying cooperative's communication and advertising strategy, especially as it

pertains to its social media presence. This article attempts to fill this void in the

scholarly literature on this unique project.

Ethical Leadership

In the field of leadership studies, starting in the 1990s, research began to include

ethics, as organizations realized the need for their leaders, through their ethical actions,

to become examples of integrity (Brito, 2016; Eubanks, Brown and Ybema, 2012).

Ethics in the act of leadership and corporate ethics have been analyzed by authors such

as Cortina (2017) and Steinbauer, Renn, Taylor, and Njoroge. (2014).

According to Bass, leadership is an interaction between members of a group that

involves the structuring of certain situations, perceptions and even the expectations of

its members. It takes place when one member of the group modifies the motivation or

competences of others or when their attention is directed towards goals or to the path

required to accomplish them. It has also been defined as the ability to motivate,

influence and awaken possibilities for individuals in the fulfilment of their

organisational objectives (House et al., 2004). For Correa, Rodríguez and Pantoja

(2018), leadership is based on a process of a reciprocal influence between a member of

a group recognized as a leader and the rest of its members. On this matter, authors

highlight two moments when the leader needs to be ethically effective: in her/his

processes and activities, and in establishing the goals of the group actions. This is about

leading by example, serving as an exemplar for the members of the group. According

to Neubert et al. (2009), managers have the potential to be agents of virtue within

organizations. Specifically, through ethical leadership they can virtuously influence

perceptions of ethical climate, which in turn will positively impact organizational members. Sison (2003) assesses the moral capital of leaders and argues that this moral capital consists of the good in a leader's actions or in a firm's products. Within the field of virtue ethics, Whetstone (2001) compares the pros and cons of normative leadership paradigms (each based on a combination of virtue, deontology, or consequentialist perspectives) and argues that the preferred paradigm is servant leadership, grounded in this tripartite ethic.

According to Kuczmarski and Kuczmarski (1995), leaders need to develop value systems that serve. Servant leaders assert the important place of values, beliefs, and principles in leadership (Covey, 1990; Ford, 1991). These leaders do not ask "What do I want" but "What needs to be done?" Thus, servant leaders are givers, not takers. They never hold on to a position or title. They listen and learn from those they lead (Darmanin, 2005). Spears (1998) identified healing, empathy, and listening among the ten essential ingredients of servant leadership.

Russell (2001) emphasizes that leaders must first examine their own belief systems in order to establish sound leadership practices, as they significantly affect followers and ultimately influence organizational performance. Leadership is a personal task that is hard and that should not be understood as an honorable distinction or a privilege (Charan, Carey and Useem, 2013) fundamental motivation for leadership should be a desire to serve (Greenleaf, 1977).

Doyle and Smith (2001) determine which characteristics of a leader distinguish her or him as ethical. Following Brown and Treviño (2006) and De Hoog and Den Hartog (2008), these characteristics would be integrity, honesty and reliability. Voegtlin (2011) speaks of responsible leadership and defines it as the interaction between ethical

leadership and CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility).Tu, Lu and Yu (2016), Bouckenooghe, Zafar and Raja (2014) and Covey (1990) examine the results and effects of the ethical leadership and conclude that it brings a positive effect in workers, employees and / or members of a social organization, especially in terms of job satisfaction.

The specific notion of servant leadership, its definition and the aspects related to these other models of value-based leadership serve as background to the very unique leadership model of Cristóbal Colón. These concepts and theories unveil how spirituality and anthropology are the essential basis for Cristóbal Colón ,as he confirmed during the in-depth interview the authors had with him. These insights help understand the consequences —in terms of production, marketing, communication, business— this model of leadership has in the specific case of La Fageda and how it can be communicated authentically.

Social Cause Marketing

Nair (2020) defines social cause marketing as business and communication actions carried out by companies with the purpose of successfully addressing worthwhile social causes, through collaboration with charitable organizations that help to increase profitability along with bettering the society, in mutually beneficial ways. Nair argues that while this is considered a good social initiative that could drive consumer choices to cause-related products, it also faces challenges. For instance, overcoming the scepticism of some of the public questioning the good intentions behind it.

However, between 2017 and 2020, the implementation and use of social cause marketing in business increased 3,1% (Carvajal, Saltos Cruz, Reyes Bedoya, and Garcés

Llerena, 2020). According to Carvajal, Saltos Cruz, Reyes Bedoya, and Garcés Llerena (2020), it arises as a strategy of brand development and lets the organization gain visibility, transmit social awareness, contribute to social engagement and even to a kind of patriotism. For Bloom, Hoefler, and Basurto Meza (2006), companies make substantial investments to try to demonstrate an affinity with consumers interested in social causes. According to the authors, these so-called "affinity marketing programs" have the goals of improving the corporate reputation, differentiating a brand, attracting the interest of targeted consumers, stimulating brand preference and loyalty, attracting loyal employees and, ultimately, increasing profits and stock prices. However, it is unclear if direct cause marketing can achieve these objectives (Bloom, Hoefler, and Basurto Meza, 2006).

Social cause marketing also aims to change behaviors. For example, NGOs use it to raise awareness and promote donations and social engagement for their causes (Arroyo, 2007). González Álvarez (2010) assesses, through social psychology, the need and the capacity of professional communication within social organizations to raise awareness and change behaviours in society regarding the causes they work with. The author concludes that professionalization in these offices contributes to a more effective, ethical, rigorous and excellent result. On this matter, La Fageda is a reference. The cooperative has taken a professional communication strategy developed by professionals since the very beginning, to cope with a challenge: communicate a commercial activity that raise awareness about a cause that has inherent value independent of the commercial activity in a way that stays loyal to the principles and leadership philosophy established by its founder. How La Fageda has answered this communicative challenge offers valuable insights for corporate communications professionals faced with reconciling a similar variety of competing duties.

Materials and Methods

We combined four different quantitative and qualitative research methods for this

project (Busquet, Medina and Sort, 2006): in-depth interviews (Voutsina, 2018; Elliott,

2005; Johnson, 2002), social media analysis (Kozinets, 2010), one focus group and non-

participant observation. This multi-method approach allowed us to come to a deeper

understanding not only of the communication output, but also of the philosophy,

business culture, and strategy behind these messages.

For the in-depth interviews, we selected three subjects based on their key

positions within the organization. Cristóbal Colón, founder, Albert Riera,

communications director and Esther Carreras, marketing director. An external interview

was done with Susy Schultz, former director at Public Narrative, a social organisation in

Chicago dealing with how to communicate social and community organizations and

their initiatives. All these in-depth interviews were carried out between February and

July 2018, face-to-face, individually, and were recorded and transcribed for further

analysis. The questionnaires contained a section with general questions —about the

institution, communication strategy, corporate culture and their outcomes— and a

section with questions targeted to the individual interviewees. According to Voutsina

(2018), in-depth interviews provide context to understand the attitudes and motivations

of the subjects, help compile in-depth data and in gaining a deeper understanding.

The social media analysis of La Fageda's accounts presented a research advantage

as its activity was not very high, so the analysis period —from October 16th 2017 to

January 15th 2018— allowed us to analyze a sample of posts from Facebook, Twitter,

YouTube, Instagram and LinkedIn that was representative and, at the same time,

manageable for a rigorous qualitative and quantitative assessment. We analyzed 263

social media posts: 72 from Facebook, 90 from Twitter, 48 from Instagram, 35 from LinkedIn and 18 from YouTube.

From the list of La Fageda's principles, essential for this research - people at the core, integrity, trust, responsibility, optimism, effort and quality - the team created a general analysis form which included specific elements for each one of the platforms: about videos for YouTube, about pictures for Instagram, etc. The goal was not only to detect the presence of these principles in La Fageda's posts but also to confirm if they were the main element of the posts or appeared as a background issue. Furthermore, the analysis also delved into the link between the principles and the main elements of La Fageda that appear in their social media platforms, identified through the content analysis and selected by quantitative criteria. These main elements are: the leader of the cooperative (Cristóbal Colón), its products, people, and the natural environment the cooperative is integrated in. The analysis also collected data about which multimedia elements reinforced the principles in each one of the studied platforms: live pictures, images, links, hashtags, mentions, etc. as well as the interaction related with these elements.

We did not deem it feasible to implement statistical methods because of the uniqueness, characteristics and variety of the publications selected for analysis. The team instead decided to develop a formal analysis —textual and multimedia— through a form integrated by several items to consider in each post, that embraced and made possible to assess the meaning, content, values expressed and objective of each post and its elements (videos, images, emojis, words, replies). When assessing each one of the analysed publications, researchers considered all these aspects one by one, checking every item integrated in the analysis form. This option of analysis is more aligned with the formal methodology of social media assessment proposed by authors as McTavish and Pirro

(1990: 245-265) or Kolbe and Burnett (1991: 243-250), and more recently with Bolter
(2002: 77-88), McCorkindale (2010), or Riffe, Lacy, Fico and Watson (2019).

- Eight people from the cooperative participated in our focus group. Each
participant came from a different department within La Fageda. It included individuals
working in communication, visitors' assistance department, psychologists, therapists,
administrative staff, factory technicians and schools visits' coordinators. Participants
did not include the mentally challenged employees.

Finally, in order to understand the business, dynamics and working culture of
the cooperative, we conducted a non-participant observation during four one-day visits
to the cooperative —between December 2017 and July 2018— when researchers had
the opportunity to view some of the tasks developed in the different departments. This
way, the scenes described in the focus group came to life for the research team, who had
also the opportunity to witness the human relationships in the cooperative among all
employees and also between Cristóbal Colón and each one of them. By so doing, the
team witnessed what had been discussed during the focus group and explained during
the in-depth interviews, confirming the validity of that information.

Findings

La Fageda let the research team discover a very unique model of social cause marketing
(Nair, 2020), linked to a very unique leadership model (Russell, 2001), based on one
main rule: not to talk about the social cause but about its principles. As Esther Carreras
the marketing director of La Fageda affirmed, "we do not do social cause marketing if it
is understood as launching the message that people should buy our products because of
our social project". La Fageda's communication does not aim to generate compassion.
Our analysis of its social media activity confirms the consistent implementation of this
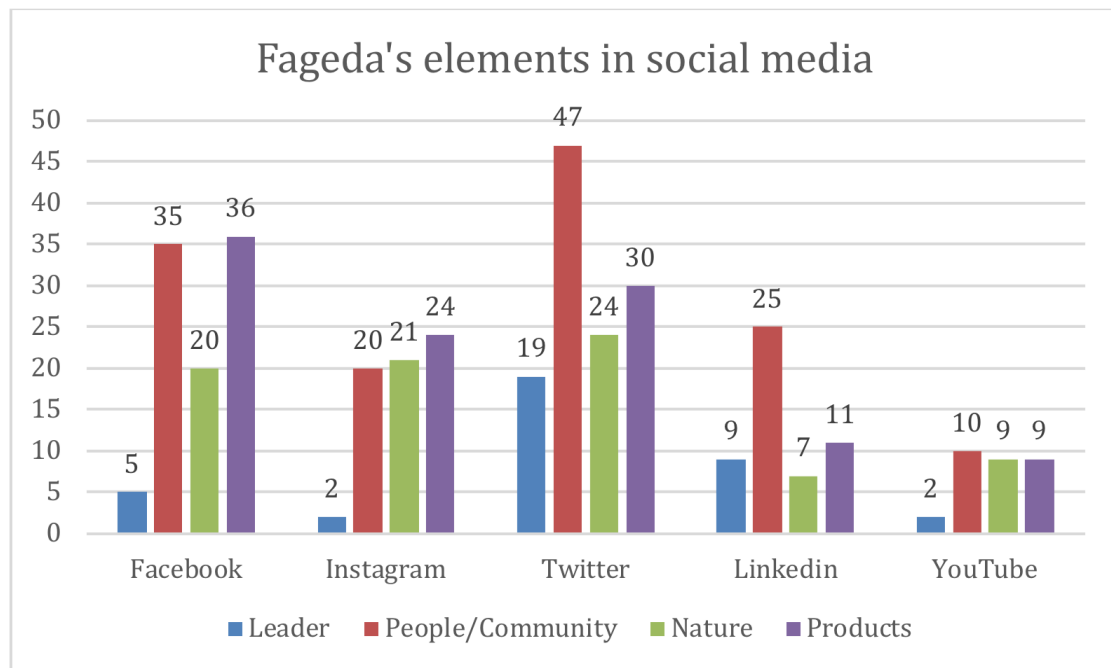
strategy in its outward communication.

Figure 1: Presence of La Fageda's elements in social media.

Among the main four elements of the cooperative detected —leader, people and community, nature, and products—, people and community elements are the one which appeared most frequently. The people appearing in the posts are not the workers with disabilities but personnel from the community who contributes to their task. The category "People/Community" also includes posts about human values, human-centered stories linked, in different ways, with La Fageda's principles. For instance, through short interviews with people working in the cooperative, inspiring video messages from them, messages about the importance of the care and the community, or even stories published in other media promoting La Fageda's values. The products of La Fageda appear second most frequently in its social media profiles, together with the nature that is an integral part of the cooperative and their principles. Cristóbal Colón, considered as the "Leader" of the project, with his messages and history, rarely appears in the published posts, as our interviews indicated, this is a deliberate communication strategy.

We can detect here how the cooperative communicates its task through these main four elements in a highly calculated balance. The communicators make visible what they have that is not explicitly visible, their principles. They want people to be happy while making high-quality yogurts, so the most important elements in their digital communication are people and the product, in this order. These results are also in line with the explicit analysis of the principles that come off the posts published in La Fageda's social media profiles.
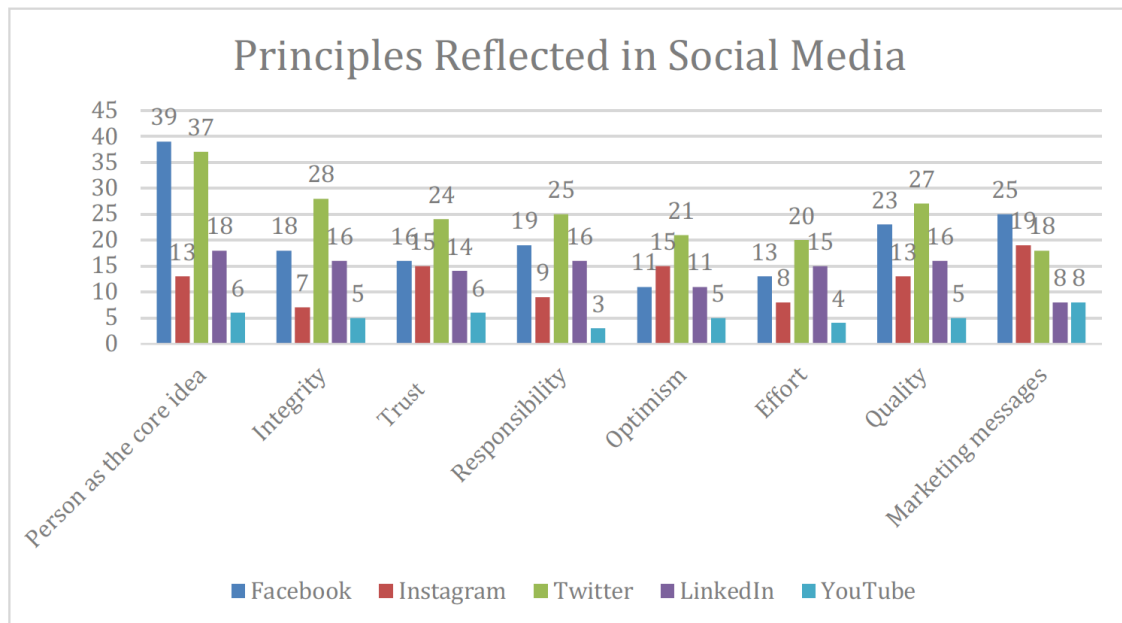

Figure 2: Presence of La Fageda's principles in social media.

Of these main seven principles, — people at the core, integrity, trust, responsibility, optimism, effort and quality— people at the core, understood as the human being, is, the one that is most prevalent in the social media accounts of La Fageda. This all appears consistent with the leadership model of Cristobal Colón. The research team identified the values in each post through analyzing the messages. One member of the team, who never visited the cooperative —and was not influenced by the environment and the interviews—, was in charge of this analysis, and labelled each publication with the value or values of La Fageda mentioned here; in some cases with

the explicit name of the value (or principle) was mentioned in the posts, in other cases the value was expressed implicitly.

It is necessary to remember that Colón prefers to talk about principles, not values, of the cooperative. In a framework as La Fageda, all communication should be done with these clear and shared principles. Social media analysis confirmed what the focus group and the in-depth interviews revealed: principles are brief, clear and unanimously shared through the internal messages, dynamics, meetings and events of the cooperative. Actually, all the activities; the therapeutic ones, the logistical ones, and the communicative ones, evolve around them. These conversations proved how, in daily routines, relationships and habits, these principles are present. Members of the cooperative affirmed that they not only know these principles but feel them. "We don't work in La Fageda, we are La Fageda", they stated.

For Rodríguez and Aguilera (2005), an anthropological vision is the key to understand how people work in an organization and to discover its institutional goals. This vision is the essence in the case of La Fageda. "The starting point of this cooperative is that all people have dignity. Integrity and ethical behaviour of people are two very important factors here" one of the employees of La Fageda who participated in the focus group stated. In the cooperative, according to Colón, the objective is to adapt the job to the person, not the person to the job. For this reason, flexibility is a principle that we also found in the analyzed cooperative and their communication. According to Esther Carreras (2018), all the cooperative's departments adapt the tasks to the skills of the person who carries them out. It is human-centered, so the main goal is the happiness of employees through the satisfaction of seeing how they improve their skills. This aspect contrasts with other companies with similar production levels —2 million of yogurts per week— where the structure is traditional and pyramidal (Argyris, 2017).

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Is worth pointing out that this ethical aspect is again linked to servant leaders, understanding leadership not as a rank, privileges, title or money. It is a responsibility towards service. Furthermore, this research considers that accompaniment could be the concept that best describes Cristóbal Colón's leadership role in La Fageda. The research methods implemented showed this leadership is horizontal (Martínez and Cegarra, 2014), fits in well with the definition of ethical leadership set out by Bass (2008), as well as what is found in House et al. (2004). It could be also considered an evolution of the mentioned servant leadership (Russell, 2001; Greenleaf 1998). For the above mentioned authors, leadership means having an influence, it is about modifying the attitude of the group so as to focus it towards a common objective. From the way this is grounded in concepts of spiritual leadership, the basis is to reach this shared goal. The role of Colón is not to influence, nor to help directly; rather, it is to empower, serve, and accompany others (Guibert, 2017), it is halfway between ethical leadership, servant leadership and spiritual leadership: it is a kind of leadership that accompanies, what could be considered a caring leadership.

As mentioned previously, According to Brown and Treviño (2006) and De Hoog and Den Hartog (2008), characteristics of a leader are integrity, honesty and reliability. They are qualities that can not only be associated with the founder of La Fageda, as seen in the interviews and focus groups —through the explanation of the cooperative story, development, daily routines and also shared anecdotes—, but are explicitly related to the organisation's principles showing coherence between principles and daily practices at La Fageda.

According to Colón (2018), however, his goal is to not fall back into paternalist mentalities. Max Weber (1947) explained that practices derived from this concept are obsolete in organisations, while considering paternalism as one of the most essential

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expressions of dominance. However, some authors like Westwood and Chan (1992), or

Redding, Norman and Schlander (1994) claim that leadership with a bit of paternalism

is positive, as it protects and accompanies. The vision the members of La Fageda have

of the founder of the project is somewhat linked to that of the 'pater familias'. In fact, it

is a cohesive community, bound together by strong links and bonds of an almost

familial nature. Cristóbal Colón is the ground for these ties. People want leaders who

are trustworthy, positive and honest (Correa, Rodríguez and Pantoja, 2018), and this is

the case at La Fageda.

This philosophy proved to be rewarding for employees, who admit that "what

you receive at La Fageda is priceless". This is a kind of emotional salary (Terán, 2017),

that becomes the main motivating factor for workers and that lets them work and live

more happily. The challenge for the organisation is to find a new body of leadership to

give the project continuity keeping the loyalty to its essence and principles. Its

communication practices can contribute to providing this much-needed continuity that

would allow the cooperative to transcend its current leader.

The slowness as the core principle

This focus on principles and caring leadership also has an effect on the rhythm

with which La Fageda digitally communicates. In a digital environment characterised

by speed and social acceleration (Rosa, 2020), La Fageda has a unique strategy aligned

with its unique principles and characteristics. It has what could be considered a slow

strategy. This slowness not only lets the team create engagement in social media, but is

the rule in the relations, objectives, narrative, development and perception of La

Fageda.

This slowness does not mean a slow-paced communication or one that is lacking

in intensity. This slowness is a strategy defined by the so-called slow movement

(Nalbone & Puliafito, 2019; David, Blumtritt, & Kholer 2010) and a philosophy

advocating for well-being as a way of life and for a more reflective, sustainable and

responsible human role in production and consumption. The slowness in this context

shows a social media management aligned with the rhythm, principles and dynamics of

the cooperative, with the human being at the core, following the main 7 principles as the

essence. On this matter, our analysis shows the following main characteristics of digital

communication in La Fageda;

- Use of emojis: We can find emojis in 19% of the analyzed posts. These elements
  express emotions and replace the sentiments that in face-to-face communication
  are shown through intonation, interjections, non-verbal language. Emojis ensure
  a cordial and open line of communication (Danesi, 2016), more focused on the
  human being and human engagement. This model is aligned with the slow
  philosophy as it puts the person in the core by highlighting human feelings,
  already expressed by words in a post, with an emoji that could make them more
  close and understandable.

- Horizontal treatment: the posted messages openly show the will to include
  everyone in their community. The social media analysis shows this willingness
  through the variety of elements —all related to the cooperative— present in their
  posts. Mainly, the people, the product, nature and the leader, combining posts
  about yogurts and ice-creams, but also about the weather in the farm, their cows
  or a message of Cristóbal Colón.

- Inclusivity: The tone, writing, elements and style of the messages reinforce this
  characteristic. The social media messages are aimed to create a feeling of
  closeness highlighting elements that could be of shared interest for several

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targets —again, messages related with the people, the products, the nature or the

leader— and could increase their engagement. For example, La Fageda

publishes cooking receipts that include yogurt, but also publishes a news piece

about ecology and National Parks in Catalonia or their collaboration with mental

health different organizations. According to Susy Schultz, one of the

interviewees for this project, inclusivity is the first step towards taking on the

leadership, so individuals might feel part of an initiative, community or project.

- Transparency: social media shows explicitly what La Fageda is, thinks and feels,

and the reasons why. Images (in the 58% of the posts) and videos (in the 31% of

the posts) show with no filter —and, sometimes, live— the reality of the

cooperative, its products, equipment, conditions, routines, members and,

environment.

- Limited commercial messaging: reflected in the posts that talk only about the

products of the cooperative. Among the total of the 263 analyzed posts, 78 were

about the products, most of them in Facebook.

- Network reciprocity: the different organisational networks (Facebook, Twitter,

Instagram, LinkedIn, YouTube) live together in a kind of a symbiosis. Despite

some messages and multimedia materials are used differently, depending of the

platform and its target, taken together they follow the same values and

accomplish the same objective. An overview:

  - Facebook: La Fageda uses Facebook for entering into a relationship with

    its users and for creating a community with them through direct

    engagement. It uses features that have the goal of increasing

    engagement, such as questions, short surveys or contests. Using these

    dynamics, the account shows a certain interest in getting to know the

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public, by asking them to interact and empathise, and by engaging

followers with subjects they may identify with. The number of postings,

which tends to be a daily single publication, shows the will to maintain

this line of continuity without insisting in advertising their products.

- Twitter: In the case of La Fageda, the tone on Twitter is equally warm,

  but its function is more informative than on Facebook. There are many

  postings related to its calendar, announcing events related to the

  cooperative, along with news on activities that have taken place,

  information on job offers, and so on. The Twitter account is

  characterised by its dynamic tone —using the "we" form, talking about

  the present of the cooperative, linking it with daily news, etc. —, despite

  the fact that there is normally only one daily tweet. This is also the social

  media platform where the cooperative makes the most mentions of its

  other social media accounts, where it most frequently reacts and requests

  a response with an eye for engagement. The most frequently used

  hashtags in social media by La Fageda are related to aspects that are

  closely linked to its identity. Not surprisingly, #fageda is one of the most

  used, but also #catalunya #fagedadenjordà and #lagarrotxa. These

  hashtags are linked with the territory, the community, the products and to

  La Fageda's image of proximity. This proximity is an aspect that

  contributes to the consolidation of its sense of community (Marwick and

  Boyd, 2011).

- Instagram: Le Fageda uses this platform to draw attention to the beauty

  of its location and to its products, and to highlight the emotions, values

  and feelings inspired by the images posted. This emotional approach is a

creative way of connecting with the public (Sheldon and Bryant, 2016), which is the main function of Instagram for La Fageda. In Instagram, the cooperative invites followers to participate. Through this demand for interaction, La Fageda creates a participative community that feels part of the project, reinforcing the inclusivity of their digital communication.

- LinkedIn: LinkedIn is the platform with the fewest number of posts, on average one every two days. The character of posts is fully informational. Most of them are related to job offers and institutional information. An interview is published every now and then, so faces and stories, from a professional approach, are also present in this platform.

- YouTube: 18 videos were posted over a 3-month period on La Fageda's YouTube Channel. The videos focus on the 4 main mentioned elements, and were all created by the cooperative and shared on its other social media accounts. These videos show the values of the cooperative through short interviews, messages or video summaries of activities which promote the mentioned values.

It is relevant to highlight that all of the posts mentioned have some relationship to the identifying features of the cooperative, whether in the form of products, the setting or the people comprising it. This alignment is explicit when directly linking the principles of La Fageda with the main characteristics we detected as guidelines in their social media platforms:

Social Media Aspect	La Fageda's Principles	
Use of emojis	Optimism	
Horizontal treatment	Responsibility	

Inclusivity	Person	Effort
Transparency	Trust	
Discreet commercial use	Integrity	
Network Reciprocity	Quality	

Figure 3: Alingment of La Fageda's principles with their characteristics in social media

management. Source: Own elaboration.

As the chart shows, each one of the detected characteristics of La Fageda's

social media is aligned with each one of their principles, having the value of effort as

the one underpinning all of them. The use of emojis is directly linked with optimism, as

the feelings these emojis expressed are related to happiness, and a positive outlook on

the future. The horizontal treatment that is explicit in the social media posts expresses

La Fadgeda's responsibility for the community and the society. Furthermore, the

inclusivity of their posts is aligned with the principle of people at the core, as it

reinforces the notion that the human being and everything around her or him is the

essence of La Fageda's mission. By being transparent in their social media interactions

and limiting commercial messages, the cooperative is able to show integrity which in

turn generates trust. Finally, the reciprocity of their networks reflects the quality of the

cooperative, the attention to the details, present in its communications, but also in its

production of yogurts and in its creation of a community of care.

The following chart shows each one of the elements used in social media that

contribute to the above-mentioned alignment. Results also indicate that while

interaction mostly happens on Twitter, Facebook and Instagram are the platforms where

the cooperative gets better overall results according to the number of comments—229

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on Facebook, 257 on Instagram, 23 on LinkedIn and 3 on YouTube— and retweets —

499 on Twitter— obtained by the analysed posts. For this reason, La Fageda ensures

engagement through the interactions from Facebook and Instagram, which fit well with

the organisation's profile, because of their greater proximity and their way of creating
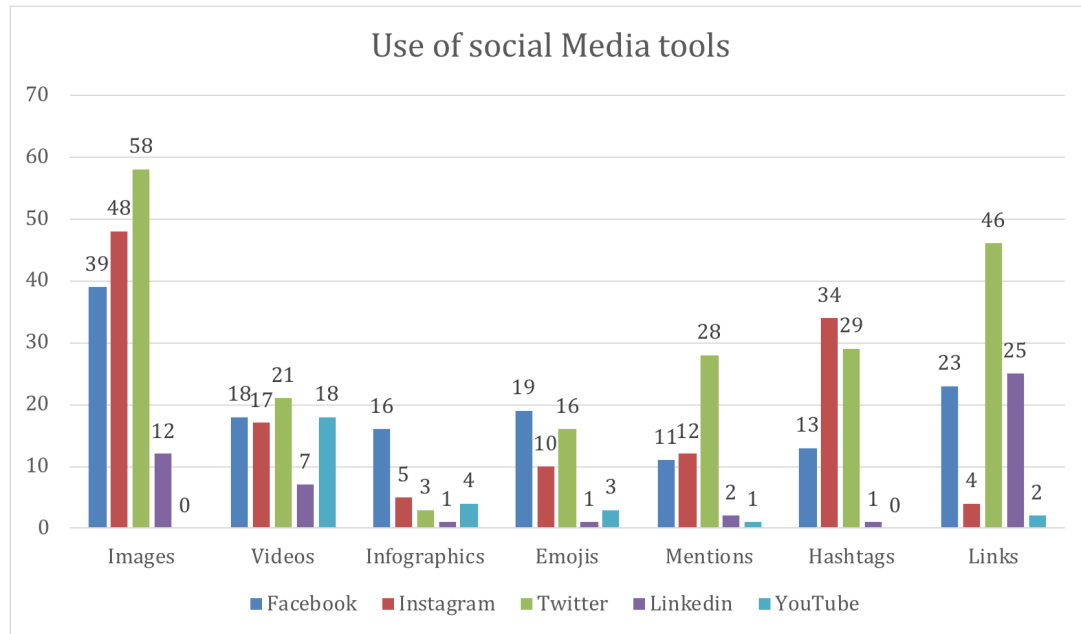
an engaging community.

Figure 4: Use of social media tools by La Fageda's accounts.

Conclusion

A unique kind of leadership focused on principles (Russell, 2001) and human-

centeredness creates an organizational environment of trust, in which personal bonds

contribute to construct a highly competitive product (Nair, 2020). This is what the social

media accounts of La Fageda tell about the cooperative, through a unique strategy

which is based on the same principles, human-centered and creating and reinforcing

personal bonds.

This is the example of a consistent and clear alignment between the idea of the

organization (manifested in its leader and his leadership), the organization itself and the

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digital communication that emerges from the initiative. The key to this all is a strong and firm anthropological vision that has been able to integrate all the elements and create a unique environment, product, project and even a unique digital communication strategy. For these reasons, La Fageda offers its uniqueness as a best practice to replicate. From this model, we draw a set of lessons that could provide a new approach to the field of corporate communications.

First of all, Colón's project exemplifies the importance for an organization to identify its principles and highlight which ones are at the center. In the case of La Fageda, the person is the entire focus of the project and this is reflected in its communications strategy. For example, for this cooperative, quality comes before quantity, and according to its founder, it does not want to increase production or export products but rather find the way to employ more people while improving the product and caring for the environment. As a result, their main goal in social media is not to gain followers, but to know them and engage them.

Clear principles should be shared, understood and practiced in the organization's (Torralba, 2018) environment in order to be assumed by its members . The leader of the organization should be the first one in implementing the principles through her or his behaviour and decisions. People feel part of a project and reach the highest rates of job satisfaction if leaders are ethical, servant and base their actions in listening and caring for others (Neubert et al., 2009), especially, when an organization is a non-profit organization with social impact (Russell, 2001).

If this alignment of principles and leadership is clear within the organization, the corporate communications team will be able to communicate the essence of the organization and engage its target audience with transparency and rigor. Esther

Carreras, as the marketing director of the cooperative, affirms that, for La Fageda, these elements are their main elements, reflected in the main categories detected in their publications: people, product, nature and leader.

In the case of non-profit organizations, the mentioned transparency and rigor are a must, and so is a communications strategy loyal to its principles. This alignment would also help social organizations to prove the honesty of their mission, without commercially exploiting the good they do. In La Fageda, the project is never used to advertise the product; only the principles are visible. This is their main rule, which makes their model of social cause marketing unique: not to talk about the social cause, but about its principles. These dynamics, which are consistent with the values of the social slow movement, are breaking the rules of a digital communication based on acceleration (Rosa, 2019) and open a new paradigm in digital social communication.

Acknowledgements

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