HOW NON-PROFITS USE CONTENT MARKETING TO TAP INTO OUR EMOTIONS AND HAVE A RETURN ON INVESTMENT

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Table of Contents

Introduction	3
I/ Focus on non-profits' communication	7
A. What kind of content do non-profits create?	9
B. How Social Media changed the game	10
II. Differentiation & Content Virality1	15
A. Differentiation through Content Marketing	15
B. What makes content viral? Case study: ALS Ice Bucket Challenge	19
III. Creating emotions through Content Marketing2	25
A. What makes us react and donate?	26
B. The use of virtual reality	29
Conclusion	32
Managerial Recommendations	35
Bibliography	36
Annexes	38
Annex 1: Questionnaire used for our qualitative survey	38
Annex 2: Snapshots from the virtual reality experience offered by Action Contre	
Annex 3: Snapshot from the 360° video offered by Action Contre la Faim	39
Annex 4: Snapshots from the virtual reality experience offered by Charity:Water	

Introduction

Nowadays, we hear a lot about charity, humanitarian aid, donations, philanthropy, volunteering. We also hear the term "non-profit" a lot. A non-profit organization, also known as a not-for-profit organization, is a tax-exempt organization with a social cause that does not aim to make profit but instead uses its surplus of revenues to further achieve its mission and help people. But where do these organizations come from? When did they first appear?

A little bit of history

Non-profit organizations have been present for the last two centuries. Although the idea of giving back has existed since Biblical Times, Foundling Hospital in London is considered to be the very first charitable organization. It was created in 1741 by Thomas Coram, a sea captain and philanthropist, in order to give homes and support to orphaned children.

A thousand years later, one of the largest worldwide organizations, the YMCA (Young Men's Christian Association), was founded in London by philanthropist George Williams and 11 of his friends. During the Industrial Revolution, a lot of young men were drawn to the cities to work and the only recreational activities available for them were taverns and brothels. Sir George Williams and his friends started preaching in the streets and distributing religious tracts to offer these young people a holistic development, a perfect harmony between the spirit, the body and the mind. As of today, YMCA has more than 60 million beneficiaries in 120 countries.

Then, in 1881, the powerful American Red Cross was created by Clara Barton, a hospital nurse, teacher and patent clerk. It provides emergency assistance, disaster relief and disaster preparedness education and has more than 500, 000 volunteers.

The 1940s were marked by the Second World War and by a fear in the United States that led Americans to unite their efforts and start fundraising on a global scale. It was achieved through sending supplies to troop overseas and developing relief programs for example. At that time, the idea was to collaborate to have a greater impact, even non-profit organizations started working together. For instance, the American Red Cross, the Salvation Army and the National Jewish Welfare Board came together and created the United Service Organization for National Defense. It was also at that time that the American Red Cross launched a war-related blood donation program for the very first time in the country.

In the 1970s, the US witnessed a paradigm shift brought about by the Civil War Movement and the opposition to involve in the Vietnam War. Following these events, Americans were organizing and working on specific issues while the government was getting more involved in social and cultural welfare programs. In 1969, President Richard Nixon signed the Tax Reform Act which was passed to help regulate tax advantages for non-profits and to establish a minimum annual distribution requirement. It was a revolution as it meant that non-profits could now offer tax exemptions to their donors. As a consequence, we saw the number of non-profits increase dramatically, resulting in the development of an official "non-profit sector".

Moreover, in 1976, Congress passed a bill that allowed non-profits to legally spend up to \$1 million each year on lobbying which gave them more influence in business and politics, the non-profit sector was now considered as "the third sector".

The 2000s saw the rise of Internet and social media. In 1991, Internet became available for public use and thus for companies who had to adapt their communication strategy. Nonprofits were not an exception. Then, with the creation of Facebook and Twitter, non-profits finally got a powerful and affordable platform for advocacy and fundraising. In 2012, online donations generated \$2.1 million for non-profits, which has only been increasing since.

According to a report published in 2016 by PNP Staffing Group, the non-profit sector has witnessed a 20% growth in the past ten years and more than 50 % of the non-profits have increased the number of their employees. With the amount of donations

increasing as well as the number of volunteers, it would seem that nonprofits are officially part of the culture in every single country. As a matter of fact, the competition for fundraising is tougher than ever. Non-profits have to be more creative to reach their audience's attention and to raise awareness about the cause they're advocating for. Content Marketing could be a powerful differentiation tool if used properly. But what is it exactly?

Understanding Content Marketing

According to Chief Strategy Advisor Robert Rose, « Traditional marketing and advertising is telling the world you're a Rockstar. Content marketing is showing the world you're a Rockstar. » I believe it is a great way to define Content Marketing as a more attractive and innovative concept.

The origins of Content Marketing can be found in 1895 when John Deere, an American corporation manufacturing agricultural and construction machinery, launched a magazine for famers. Then, in 1900, there was the launch of the famous Michelin Guide by the French tyre company Michelin.

Content Marketing can be videos, articles, images, gifs, magazines, podcasts, it can be anything that relies on editorial content provided your consumers are passionate about it and that it drives a profitable customer action. You find Content Marketing on traditional channels and also on digital channels.

There are 3 types of content. Created content is original custom content created by the brand. We also have curated content which is appropriate existing content selected and recontextualized. Finally, we have syndicated content which is appropriate content licensed and republished.

Methodology of the research paper

The problem statement of this research paper is: How do non-profits use content marketing to tap into our emotions and impact the return on investment? For now, there are very few studies dealing with the financial impact of emotional advertising in

the non-profit industry. At the same time, the main purpose of communication in the humanitarian area is to collect donations so it would be relevant to focus on how these non-profits play with content marketing tools such as storytelling or social media to impact the return on investment.

In order to address this problem statement, we will do a literature review using several articles about communication in the non-profit Industry. We will also do a qualitative field study through semi-directive interviews with five communication experts working in non-profits. To begin with, we will have a focus on non-profits' communication where we will briefly talk about the five non-profits surveyed, the kind of content they propose and how they adapted it to the social media revolution. Then, we will see what differentiation tools non-profits can use to have a bigger return on investment and how they can make their content viral. Finally, we will talk about how these non-profits create emotions using Content Marketing.

I/ Focus on non-profits' communication

Our problem statement is based on non-profits' strategy, so we decided to create a qualitative survey addressed to communication experts working in non-profits. The choice of the qualitative survey is relevant as it will allow us to talk in depth about the kind of content these non-profits create to raise awareness about the cause they are advocating for, how they adapted it through the years, especially with the emergence of new technologies, how they measure the return on investment and how they communicate emotions through Content Marketing. We created a list of 10 open questions (cf. Annex 1) based on our literature review and on our axes of answer to the problem statement. We did this survey with five non-profits that are all dedicated to children. Some of them work for a better access to education and health services in developing countries while others are focused on assisting children suffering from a serious illness. For confidentiality reasons, we will not reveal their names but instead refer to them as non-profits **A**, **B**, **C**, **D** and **E**.

The first non-profit we interviewed is **Non-profit A**. This association was created in the 1980s in Paris by a physical training teacher who wanted to help children suffering from serious diseases by making their dreams come true as she was convinced that a child living their passions and dreams would find an incredible energy to fight their medical condition. Today, this non-profit works with 150 hospital services in France and makes on average 1 dream come true per day. Since their creation, they made 7,500 dreams come true thanks to their influential sponsors.

Then, we have **Non-profit B** which was created in 1995 in Panama by a group of parents of children suffering from leukemia and cancer with the aim of assisting children in the same situation as theirs. Since its creation, this foundation provides housing, meals, transportation to the hospital, medical treatment, psycho emotional support and recreative activities at no cost to more than 600 children suffering from cancer or leukemia each year. All of that is possible thanks to their thousands of

volunteers and corporate partners. In 2019, they were able to raise more than \$270,000 during their annual 24 hour-radiothon where a lot of local artists participated.

We also interviewed **Non-profit C**, an independent development and humanitarian organization present in 77 countries in Africa, the Americas and Asia. They advocate for children's rights and access to education for girls especially. Behind the creation of this organization, it is the heartwarming story of an English journalist covering the civil war in Spain in the 1930s who met a little boy wandering in the Spanish devastated streets. The journalist organized the evacuation of the little boy and hundreds of other children and thus created the concept of sponsorship between an adult and a child who needs financial support. Today, **Non-profit C** has more than 1 million sponsors across the world of which 33,000 are in France.

Furthermore, we interviewed Non-profit D which has the same name than a big and well-known United Nations agency, but it is important to make a small distinction. The well-known agency was created in New-York, right after the Second World War, to provide humanitarian aid to children around the world. Today, they intervene in almost every single country the world and is considered as one of the largest organizations worldwide. In 2018, they assisted in the birth of 27 million babies, administered vaccines to more than 65 million children, provide education for 12 million children and treated 4 million children suffering from severe malnutrition. Non-profit D, on the other hand, is an association funded in the 1960s by a French scientist and plays an interface role between the United Nations agency and the local communities in the Rhône department. They are mainly in charge of promoting the agency's activities, finding financial support and establishing long-term partnerships with municipalities.

The fifth and last non-profit we interviewed is **Non-profit E**. It is a French association funded in the 1990s by a professor with the aim of assisting children with a medical condition who do not have access to adapted medical services in their country of origin. The association either brings the children to France or sends volunteer doctors overseas to provide treatment, perform a surgery and give training to the local staff. Thanks to their volunteer medical and paramedical staff and the 200 host families across France, they are able to operate more than 5, 000 children each year.

A. What kind of content do non-profits create?

To begin with, we asked the five experts what kind of content they use to promote their non-profit just in order to learn more about their communication background in general without going into details. Following that, we asked them which content, among those they use, is the most impactful according to them. Non-profit A for instance mainly communicates through pictures and videos on their website and social media. In addition to that, they have a short magazine published every 4 months where they talk about their team, their several partners and most importantly the children and their dreams. Moreover, they use brochures especially dedicated to people wishing to make a bequest to a non-profit, that is to say to people who decide to transfer all or part of their property to a non-profit after their death. According to them, each content can be impactful depending on the objective set, but they put an emphasis on the content present on their website since it is the first point of contact with the public. Just like Non-profit A, Non-profit B creates a lot of content on their website and social media, storytelling and a yearly magazine presenting the foundation's activities and accomplishments throughout the year. They believe the most impactful content is storytelling through pictures and testimonies as It allows the public to feel closer to the children and their families. Furthermore, Non-profit C communicates through storytelling, videos, gifs¹ and quotes on their website and social media as well as TV commercials. Like Non-profit B, they believe storytelling is the most impactful content and they like to share the stories of girls across the world who have big dreams and ambitions but unfortunately do not have access to education. On the other hand, we have **Non-profit D** whose communication relies a lot on communication materials provided by the United Nations agency they are depending on. Those materials include pictures, videos, articles and TV commercials. Nevertheless, Non-profit D tries to communicate at a local scale too through regional press and radio. They also have their own website and social media although they publish little content on them. They explained that it is impossible to tell which kind of content is the most impactful but tend to think that regional press and radio are relevant since their audience is mainly

¹ According to Cambridge Dictionary, a Graphic Interchange Format, commonly known as GIF, is a computer file that contains a still or moving image.

composed of seniors aged above 60 years old. Finally, **Non-profit E** essentially communicates through their website and social media where they regularly update the different actions carried out by the association and where they give news from the children and their host families after the operation, accompanying it with pictures and videos. They explain that pictures and videos from the children after their operation have more impact than any other kind of content because it generates empathy and attachment and it shows the importance of making donations.

B. How Social Media changed the game

After seeing what kind of content in general is used to promote the non-profits, we will focus especially on social media. The creation of the Internet in 1969 and the rise of social media in the 2000s truly disrupted the codes for every single industry in the world. Just like for profit businesses, non-profits had to rethink their communication strategy. Let's explore the way in which social media has influenced non-profits' communication.

To start with, we have an article entitled « Non-Profits on E: How Non-Profit Organizations are using the Internet for Communication, Fundraising, and Community Building » written by Pieter BOEDER in 2002. This article is particularly interesting because it was written 18 years ago, 2 years before Facebook's creation, 3 years before Youtube's creation, 4 years before Twitter's creation and 8 years before Instagram's creation. It deals with how non-profits were using Internet before the rise of social media. In this article, BOEDER explains that for-profit enterprises quickly identified the benefits of using Internet as it was a tool to increase revenue, customer interaction and distribution of goods and services. Consequently, non-profit organizations had to adapt to this changing culture and even though they were slow to realize Internet's potential, it started changing afterwards. In fact, Internet allows nonprofits to create new mechanisms for charitable giving and to interact with donors. Thanks to emailing in particular, they can interact easily with potential donors. The author found out that the development of Internet created a new category of potential online donors that is at least as important as the number of people that are contacted trough mailing. Moreover, this new category is younger and more ideologically diverse than the traditional mail donor population. Nevertheless, the big issue is that non-profits

10

have limited resources an do not invest as much as for-profit companies in their Internet strategy, even though it can be extremely beneficial.

Then, in an article entitled « Nonprofit adaptation to Web 2.0 and digital marketing strategies » published in 2015, Julia C. KRUGER and Diana L. HAYTKO point out that despite the fact that advocacy, stewardship, engagement and gratification are the preferred drivers of digital platforms, non-profits are still reluctant to include Web 2.0 in their strategy. Web 2.0 is a term invented in 1999 by web designer Darcy DiNucci which refers to the second stage in the development of the Internet characterized by user-generated content. In other words, Web 2.0 is a stage where users are able to interact and collaborate with each other thanks to social media. The authors explain that video, mobile and social media will become more and more popular and that nonprofits really need to adapt, or they will continue to lag behind. Digital marketing is an opportunity for non-profits to expand their message but also to attract more donors. Research have shown that if executed correctly, a digital marketing initiative can lead to more donor support, more awareness, engagement and retention, and new opportunities. 4 years after the publication of this article, we see a lot more of nonprofits using social media. We are given the impression that they finally realized how effective and powerful digital marketing can be.

We have another article dealing with non-profits and social media. It is entitled « Effective Social Media Engagement for Nonprofits: What Matters? » and was written by Julia L. CARBONI and Sarah P. MAXWELL in 2015. This article goes beyond the importance of social media for non-profits, and instead is more about using them effectively. Non-profits are required to have careful planning and strategy implementation to fully benefit from the potential of social media. The authors explain that many non-profits use social media for information dissemination while they should use it to engage stakeholders. It should be a two-way communication between nonprofits and social media users. The authors also point out the importance of Facebook for non-profits. In fact, Facebook allows non-profits to reach a large number of stakeholders quickly, more than any other social media platform. We will discuss the importance of Facebook for non-profits in further detail later on.

To support our articles, we also asked our communication experts in which waysocial media could allow them to have a bigger return on investment. They all believe that

social media is an opportunity to reach a completely different audience, a younger potential donor. Non-profit C tells us that social media is a key part of their communication strategy and furthermore an important pillar for fundraising. They usually share a lot of videos, gifs and quotes to build a relationship with teenagers and young adults and bring some modernity. Then, Non-profit E explains that if you are doing a fundraising campaign solely based on social media, the return on investment is bigger when you have a limited budget for social media, or if you do not spend money at all on social media. In their case, they frequently use the boost tool which allows your post for a limited chosen time period to appear as sponsored and be seen by a new audience who may be interested in your page but who are not yet subscribed. They explain that the prices for a boost are reasonable and they combine it with emailing, being an affordable multichannel strategy. According to Non-profit B, social media is an opportunity to freely interact with people, unlike TV or radio which are more formal and where they have a lot of restrictions and barriers. They can finally have a chance to speak directly to their donors and they value the use of hashtags and mentions, showing it is not only how they attract new volunteers but also how they raise awareness about the foundation's work, which definitely has a positive impact on donations. Next, Non-profit D believes that it is for sure a way to reach young people, but it does not imply a bigger return on investment since their typical donor profile is not very active on social media. They however acknowledge that social media could help them attract students to become volunteers or young ambassadors. Non-profit A, unlike Non-profit D, believes that the donor profile is changing throughout the years. Nowadays, young people also try to make a contribution, however small it can be, and it is necessary to include them in the fundraising. Consequently, they mainly use social media to share pictures and testimonies from the children with the hope of educating younger people about their organization. They also benefit from the public's generosity on their birthday. As a matter of fact, Facebook allows users to create a fundraising for the non-profit of their choice and ask their friends to make a donation on their birthday.

Facebook has really been a game-changer throughout the years for non-profits. In addition to the birthday fundraising, they launched 3 product features in 2019 to help

increase fundraising on both Facebook and Instagram ². Firstly, non-profits are now able to include a permanent donation button on their Instagram profile. Before that, they could only put a donation sticker in their Instagram Stories which would disappear after 24 hours. Also, the same donation sticker that we could see in the Instagram Stories is now also available in Facebook Stories. Last but not least, Facebook also made gaming live streams dedicated to raise money for charities. During live streaming, the creators of the gaming content can now decide to select a cause to support and request that the viewers make a donation while they watch the game. They can also set a goal amount, activate a donation progress bar and donation alerts that will pop up in the streaming and the chat.

Moreover, Facebook contributes every year in Giving Tuesday. Giving Tuesday is movement created in the United States to encourage people to make donations before entering the Christmas season. Since 2012, It takes place every year on the Tuesday after Thanksgiving, right after Black Friday and Cyber Monday. Initially, this movement was created to tackle excessive consumption happening on Black Friday and Cyber Monday and encourage people to spend their money for those who really need it. At the time we are writing this Research paper, the whole world is facing Covid-19 pandemic³. For this reason, an extra Giving Tuesday was organized on May 5, 2020. Every year, Facebook participates in Giving Tuesday by matching the donations people make on the platform. In other words, if you decide to donate \$1 to a charity through Facebook, the charity receives \$2. However, there are some restrictions. First of all, donations are doubled dollar for dollar on a first-come, first-served basis until the amount of eligible donations made on Facebook reach \$7 million. Then, donations can be doubled to \$100,000 per non-profit organization. Finally, for each donor, Facebook can double the donation up to a maximum of \$ 20,000. Last year, the company announced that on Giving Tuesday 2019, a total of \$120 million was raised, more than

² In 2012, Facebook bought Instagram for about \$1 billion. Since this purchase, most of Facebook product features can also be found on Instagram.

³ Coronavirus 2019 (Covid-19) is an infectious disease that appeared for the first in December 2019 in Wuhan, China. The virus that causes this disease can be spread easily through droplets produced by an infected person. Consequently, the virus spread very quickly in the following months all over the world. As of May 21, there were more than 5 million confirmed cases, almost 2 million recoveries and more than 300, 000 deaths reported.

1.1 million people created a fundraising or made a donation on Facebook and more than 97,000 charities beneficiated from Giving Tuesday on Facebook.

To put it in a nutshell, we see that the five non-profits surveyed essentially communicate through videos and pictures posted on their website and social media. However, some of them also use offline content like press, radio and television. In addition to that, some of them have launched their own magazine and put the emphasis on storytelling. Finally, most of them acknowledge that social media can, if used efficiently, have a great impact on the return on investment. We see that Facebook for instance is constantly looking for new ways to improve the donation experience through their platform.

II. Differentiation & Content Virality

Now that we have an idea of what kind of content non-profits propose, we will talk about how non-profits can use Content Marketing as a differentiation tool. As we discussed earlier in the introduction, the non-profit industry has been growing a lot for the last ten to fifteen years. Today, we have a plethora of non-profits and it is quite hard to stand out. Another way for non-profits to gain attention and public awareness is through Content Virality. According to Oxford Dictionary, virality is « the tendency of an image, video, or piece of information to be circulated rapidly and widely from one Internet user to another ». Content Virality can therefore be defined as content that spreads quickly over the Internet and reaches a mass audience. To illustrate Content Virality, we will focus on the ALS Ice Bucket Challenge.

A. Differentiation through Content Marketing

During the interview, we asked the non-profits surveyed what was their strategy to stand out from the competition. There was truly a consensus among the answers as they all talked about their storytelling. If Non-profit E admits that the non-profit industry is becoming extremely competitive due to rising digitalization and professionalization, they believe their story is their strength. In their communication, they put the emphasis on their founders and managers but most importantly on their beneficiaries, the kids. Concerning the founders and managers, Non-profit E likes to label them as doctors made in France that have a lot of medical expertise and experience with associations like Médecins du Monde and Médecins sans Frontières. To stand out from other nonprofits helping kids, they highlight the plurality of the children's pathologies so additionally to heart diseases that are common, they also communicate on orthopedic diseases and disorders maxillofacial for instance. Furthermore, they insist on the fact that these kids do not only receive medical treatment but also support for schooling and training. Non-profit A and Non-profit B consider that their differentiation weapon is that they offer a positive communication. Although both nonprofits are dedicated to children suffering from serious diseases, they never talk about the disease and the

complications. They instead decided to build their storytelling on magic, hope and dreams. It is quite interesting to see how these two non-profits have almost the exact same thoughts on the question. For **Non-profit C**, positioning is the key. They try to avoid being general in their communication and always put the emphasis on promoting education for girls, it is their DNA and that is what makes them different from other non-profits dedicated to kids. They also revealed that they are now counting on collaborations with influencers to help them stand out. Finally, **Non-profit D** takes advantage of the well-known United Nations agency brand. In their communication, they mainly insist on the agency's competency, efficiency & size.

In addition to that, we wanted to know how the non-profits measure the return on investment after a fundraising campaign. Unfortunately, most of them were not able to give us concrete actions. Non-profit A for instance could not answer this question because as they explained, they do not create fundraising campaigns, they just use communication to retain their donors. We were not able to have an answer from Nonprofit E neither because our contact person was essentially in charge of social media and did not have clear visibility on how the return on investment is measured. Similarly, Non-profit D could not answer because the return on investment is measured at a national scale by their Paris office. However, they know that they necessarily have a return on investment since they do not invest anything on communication as it is only done through volunteering and partnerships. Non-profit C on the other hand has more control on the return on investment of their fundraising campaigns. They told us that they had a software that could tell them how many people saw the campaign. They also measure the return on investment through the notoriety they gained after the campaign was released. To see that, they check the traffic on their website following the campaign. Finally, they carry out two studies each year with Kantar, the world's leading data, insights and consulting company. To conclude with, Non-profit B explains that they make a list of quantified objectives to reach prior to the fundraising campaign. Afterwards, they make an evaluation. In addition to the quantified objectives, they also consider the impact that the campaign had on the community, most importantly the reactions and comments about the campaigns.

Finally, we wanted to conclude this differentiation part by talking about celebrity affiliation. Companies like to use celebrities as their ambassadors, celebrities that

represent the values of the company and that will allow the company to gain notoriety. Non-profits are not an exception to this rule. The only difference is that non-profits generally do not pay their ambassadors. Even though it is not really a non-profit, we can talk about the United Nations for instance that grant a symbolic payment of \$1 per year to their ambassadors. When we think of World Wildlife Fund, we might also think of actor Leonardo DiCaprio while when we think of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the first familiar face that comes to our minds might be actress Angelina Jolie. A lot of non-profits have celebrities as their goodwill ambassadors, which allows them to create content with them that these celebrities will also share with their huge community on social media. But how does Content Marketing affiliated with a celebrity influence the return on investment?



Goodwill ambassador Angelina Jolie during a press conference in Bangladesh

Source: AFP

We asked the non-profits surveyed if according to them, the return on investment was necessarily bigger when there was an affiliation with a celebrity. For **Non-profit A**, celebrity endorsement is essential. It is true that this non-profit already works with several French celebrities that help make children's dreams come true. They believe it is way to raise more money and gain notoriety although the results might not be immediate. It should then be considered as a long-term strategy. **Non-profit B** also believes that being affiliated with celebrities makes fundraising easier. They had the opportunity to partner with Panamanian celebrities in the past and noticed the great

impact it had on donations. Similarly, Non-profit C believes it allows non-profits to reach a bigger audience and consequently has a positive impact on the return on investment. On the other hand, Non-profit D and Non-profit E are more mitigated. Non-profit D admits that the United Nations agency has some interesting and relevant choices of goodwill ambassadors and that using the celebrity's audience is beneficial for the cause but believes that it does not necessarily increase the return on investment. Then, Non-profit E explains that it truly depends on the type of partnership, the celebrity's notoriety and the social media platform concerned. For instance, the return on investment can be bigger providing the celebrity does it graciously. Otherwise, it does not guarantee a return on investment. They conclude by explaining that influencers for example generally ask a financial counterparty.

It seemed critical to discuss in further detail the impact that celebrity affiliation could have on the return on investment. In consequence, we wanted to support our survey with an article untitled « Analysis of the Value of Celebrity Affiliation to Nonprofit Contributions ». It was written in 2014 by Erica E. HARRIS and Julie A RUTH. The two authors carried out a study using a sample of more than 500 industry-diverse charities that are affiliated with a celebrity. The purpose of this study was to highlight the role that celebrity affiliation plays in fundraising. The two authors found out that statistically significant, the impact of celebrity affiliation on the return on investment is relatively small. In other words, non-profits affiliated with a celebrity do not necessarily receive more donations but celebrity affiliation allows them to increase brand awareness and credibility so it could definitely be beneficial. Furthermore, according to their study, celebrity endorsement is secondary for the donors, in comparison with the charity's core mission, activities and beneficiaries. Finally, they highlighted the fact that an affiliation with any celebrity is nearly equivalent to an affiliation with an A-list celebrity⁴, which means non-profits should look for partnerships with non-A-listers since A-listers are generally more difficult to obtain.

⁴An A-list celebrity is a bankable, visible and respected celebrity that is at the top of their career and has high press coverage. Actor George Clooney and singer Beyoncé are great examples of A-list celebrities. On the other hand, we also have B-list, C-list and D-list celebrities who are less popular.

B. What makes content viral? Case study: ALS Ice Bucket Challenge

The best example of Content Virality in the non-profit industry is probably the Ice Bucket Challenge. This challenge was so successful that we will talk about it in depth through a case study. But before exploring our case study, it would be interesting to hear communication experts' thoughts on this topic. We asked the five non-profits surveyed what makes content viral according to them.

According to Non-profit B, content virality is ambivalent because of social media. Nowadays, we are constantly overwhelmed with all types of content, there is a lot of competition but on the other hand, social media make everything possible. As a matter of fact, if people are interested by your content, it can easily be shared and reach thousands, millions or even billions of people all around the world. For a content to be viral, FANLYC explains it has to be simple and most importantly meaningful, embody a strong message or maybe an important cause. Similarly, Non-profit A believes a viral content has to be fun and engaging and it should also answer to a specific problem at a specific moment or maybe raise awareness about something. For Non-profit E, the content has to be simple and fun. If it is a challenge for instance, people should be able to reproduce it easily. It also has to gather people. Receiving endorsement from a public personality can be impactful. However, they believe that the message behind the content, no matter how strong it can be, does not necessarily imply its success. That is why so many challenges became viral despite the lack of a strong message or important cause behind. Concerning Non-profit D, a content can become viral if the proposal is original and attractive. In the past, they organized a flash mob in the streets of Lyon and then shared the video on social media. It was definitely one of their most viral contents. Finally, Non-profit C believes that the virality of a content mainly depends on its quality. Their most viral content was a motion-design video promoting education for girls all over the world. They believe it was viral because it was published for a special occasion, International Women's Day, and had a specific message.

Now that we heard what experts had to say on Content Virality, we are going to focus on the ALS Ice Bucket Challenge. ALS Association is a non-profit founded in 1985 in Washington that advocates and raises money for patients suffering from amyotrophic

lateral sclerosis. The Ice Bucket Challenge actually consists of people filming themselves dumping a bucket of ice water over their head or over someone else's head, posting it in social media and then nominating others to do the same. The rule is that people have 24 hours after the nomination to perform the challenge and post the video. If they do not want to perform it, they have to make a donation. They can eventually do both. It is important to point out that initially, the Ice Bucket Challenge did not have a relation with ALS as people would fulfill the challenge and/or make donations to the charity of their choice. But in July 2014 when professional golfer Chris Kennedy fulfilled the challenge and posted the video, he explained that he would donate to ALS for a very special reason. His wife, that he nominated, had a friend suffering from ALS. Because Chris was popular and because he and his wife shared this personal story, ALS started being associated with this challenge that we now refer as the ALS Ice Bucket Challenge. Everybody, from pop sensation Justin Bieber to designer Donatella Versace, football player David Beckham, billionaire Bill Gates and former US president George W. Bush took part to the challenge. It really went viral during Summer 2014 and was considered to be the world's largest global social media phenomenon.



Bill Gates fulfilling the ALS Ice Bucket Challenge Source: video from Bill Gates (snapshot)

Thanks to the graphs below, we can see how the donations received by ALS went from \$1.7 million on August 13 to \$11.5 million on August 22. The donations were multiplied by 10 in only 9 days. Furthermore, we see that in only 15 days, ALS was able to collect

almost \$100 million. It has been reported that ALS raised a total of \$220 million thanks to this challenge, although they have only received \$115 million to date. But what made this challenge so viral?



Ice Bucket Challenge data Source: Forbes

To explore the reasons behind its success, we picked an article written by Geah PRESSGROVE, Brooke WEBERLING MCKEEVER and S. MO JANG in 2018. It is entitled « What is Contagious? Exploring why content goes viral on Twitter: A case study of the ALS Ice Bucket Challenge ». According to the authors, the challenge was a success because it followed the STEPPS principles. The STEPPS model was developed by Jonah BERGER, a Marketing professor at the University of Pennsylvania and a best-selling author specialized in social influence, social contagion and social transmission. According to him, there are 6 principles that explain content virality: Social Currency, Triggers, Emotion, Public, Practical Value and Stories.



The STEPPS principles

Source: coolerinsights.com

To explore this theory, the authors conducted research based on a content analysis of tweets from the ALS Ice Bucket Challenge. Here is what they found.

- Social Currency: on a sample of 1,000 tweets, they found out that 55.3% of the tweets involved social currency, that is to say that people would share about the challenge on Twitter in order to «look good, smart or knowledgeable». It seems logical that this principle was found in most of the tweets because when people tweet about fundraising and advocate for an important cause like helping people suffering from ALS, they probably expect to achieve social currency.
- Triggers: 39.2 % of the 1,000 tweets involved Triggers. In other words, people shared about the challenge because they were constantly thinking about it, the challenge was occupying their mind.
- Emotion: 47.3 % of the tweets involved at least one kind of emotion. To understand the emotion principle, it is important to have a look at the matrix below.



Matrix of emotions Source: ahaadvantage.com

They were mainly high-arousal positive emotions found in the tweets: 24.4 % for admiration, 3.1% for awe and 9.7 % for humor. However, the authors also found high-arousal negative emotions such as anger in 4.6 % of the tweets and anxiety in 4.5% of them. Last but not least, sadness which is low-arousal emotion was also found in 2.3 % of the tweets. BERGER would certainly not be surprised with these findings. In a research conducted in 2012, he observed that content evoking positive emotions is generally more viral than content evoking negative emotions.

- Public: 43.9 % of the tweets involved Public. As a matter of fact, the idea of this challenge is to encourage imitation, it is a domino effect. People publicly share their video and then nominate people and ask them to do the same. It makes sense that the Public principle was found in almost half of the tweets.
- Practical value: Practical value was observed in 7.6 % of the tweets. Practical value means that people share content because it is useful. We cannot really say that the objective of this challenge was to give useful information, which might explain why this principle was found in only a small portion of tweets.
- Stories: The authors identified 3.3 % of the tweets involving stories. Unlike professional golfer Chris Kennedy, most of participants did probably not share a personal story while fulfilling the challenge. We can observe that this principle was not prevalent at all in the results.

Research conducted by the authors allowed to find some STEPPS principles in tweets about the ALS Ice Bucket Challenge. They mainly observed social currency, emotion and public in the sample of 1,000 tweets. The authors conclude by saying that non-profits could definitively learn something from this case study and should consider including some of these STEPPS principles in their campaigns because it is thanks to these principles that people got so involved. We can also explain the success of this challenge by its domino effect with people nominating their family, friends or coworkers.

In conclusion, we see that in a world where the competition for fundraising is becoming tough, non-profits however have a lot of opportunities to stand out and raise money for the cause they are advocating for. Some non-profits put their efforts in the storytelling while others decide to create partnerships with celebrities. They can also decide to use the STEPPS principles to make their content contagious.

III. Creating emotions through Content Marketing

In this third and final part, we are going to see how non-profits can create emotions using Content Marketing tools. We have all once been confronted to the "Starving African children" ads. It is true that non-profits have the reputation to use emotive advertising, pictures or videos, to reach a big audience because after all the goal is to raise money. Some non-profits are well known for proposing shocking content. Amnesty International is one of them. It is a non-governmental organization founded in 1961 in London which mission is to protect human rights. Amnesty International draws attention to human right abuses all over the world and generates pressure on governments. We can therefore understand why they opt for a shock strategy. Since their creation, they have been at the origin of some of the most powerful campaigns. The example below shows a series of children portraits. The first thing we obviously notice is that these children have bruised facial features and we can imply that they have been hit. The choice of the captions "He has his mother's eyes" or "He has his mother's nose" for instance is thoughtful and makes it even more emotional because it means that their mothers are also hit. We can also mention the choice of the black for the background and the lighting. This powerful campaign was realized in 2014 by Brother Ad School, a creative agency in Buenos Aires in order to denounce domestic violence.



Amnesty International Campaign by Brother Ad School - 06/2014 Source: Brother Ad School

Nevertheless, it is essential to precise that when we talk about emotions, it does not necessarily refer to a negative emotion. We previously talked about the ALS Ice Bucket Challenge which was a huge success. Although the purpose of this challenge was to raise money for people suffering from amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, the ALS Association decided to launch a fun summer activity that people from all ages could share with their family, friends or colleagues on social media. The objective of this research paper is to show how non-profits are able to play with different emotions thanks to different contents. Through Content Marketing, non-profits could eventually communicate sadness, shock, maybe guilt, but also joy or laugh.

A. What makes us react and donate?

It seemed relevant to ask the five non-profits surveyed how can emotions be created through Content Marketing. There was a general consensus among the answers. In fact, all five non-profits agreed that the use of pictures and most importantly videos was essential. Nevertheless, each of them had their own idea on how to create emotions using Content Marketing tools. Non-profit E explains that it does not take more than a video accompanied by a well-written text to create emotions. Similarly, Non-profit C also recommends videos and adds that you can definitely use the handwriting style and the iconographic to move people even more. Non-profit A for instance uses pictures but also children's messages through texts or videos in order to tap into our emotions. For Non-profit B, you can create emotions by sharing stories that people can relate to and that reach their hearts. The least we can say is that this non-profit has a well-built storytelling as they managed to create their own colorful, childish and dreamy universe. Finally, Non-profit D had a really interesting answer to this question. At the very beginning of the interview, they did not hide their mixed feelings about our problem statement. As a matter of fact, they do not consider creating emotions as the best Content Marketing strategy for a non-profit. This point of view leads us to rethink our initial hypothesis. Does a non-profit necessarily need to tap into our emotions to receive donations?

Then, we asked the five non-profits which emotions were more likely to make the audience react and donate. For Non-profit B, it is mainly about empathy and solidarity. It seems logical since their whole storytelling is about solidarity and friendship. You

can find the word « Friends » in the foundation's name as well as in its headquarters' name. Non-profit B's objective has always been to build lifetime partnerships with people and companies that they call friends, it is not really about monetary donations but rather having a strong network of volunteers that dedicate their time to children and eventually make material donations. Just like Non-profit B, Non-profit E also considers empathy as the main emotion that makes people react and donate but warns us about not falling into pathos. They believe that emotions like anger or fear are too negative and must be avoided because they might taint the donation experiencemore or less durably. They should most of all be avoided if non-profits wish to retain the donor, which is why **Non-profit E**'s calls for donations are very factual and simply present the story and the medical condition of the child accompanying it with a picture or a video. They also point out that the question of the type of emotions chosen depend a lot on the culture. For instance, shocking pictures are common and well accepted in Spain and do not taint the donation experience whereas this type of content would raise indignation in France and would be counterproductive in terms of donation. Concerning Non-profit A, they try to communicate humanity through their Content Marketing strategy. To get people to make donations, they highlight the fact that children suffering from a critical disease are innocent and that this situation is really unfair but once again without communicating anger, fear or shock. By contrast, Nonprofit C and Non-profit D decided to play less on emotions and more on facts. Through their Content Marketing, both non-profits told us that they want to create a need of feeling useful that will push people to make a contribution. Non-profit D explains that creating emotions is pointless because emotions are ephemeral and do not lead to a critical thinking and a concrete action. Instead of touching people at heart, Non-profit C and Non-profit D try to reach their mind and convince them that they have the power to change the narrative.

Finally, it was important to us to push their thinking to another level by asking them what they would do in order to tap more into people's emotions if they had a bigger Communications budget. This question allowed us to highlight an important aspect: some of these non-profits do not have a portion of their budget dedicated to Communications. The explanation is quite simple. All these non-profits live exclusively on donations. For this reason, most of them base their communication strategy on websites and social media because they can achieve a lot of things freely. Non-profit

D for instance explains that the entirety of the donations is directly offered to the beneficiaries and they would not use a portion of that money for Communications because the donors would not understand. If they could afford it, they would definitely invest more on expanding their Communications team. For now, they have a few volunteers, but they wish they could hire people that would work full-time to update the website and create more contents. For a non-profit like Non-profit B, they are able to achieve even more without having a Communications budget. As a matter of fact, they have a well-designed and very functional website, a yearly magazine and occasional television campaigns, all that exclusively thanks to their different corporate partnerships. Non-profit B explains that the only issue is that they are very limited in their choices because the partners are the ones taking the biggest decisions. If they had a proper Communications budget, they would do more «aggressive campaigns», communicate on billboards in the streets, TV campaigns that would last at least a month or maybe organize a telethon. Just like Non-profit B, Non-profit A would like to make a huge television campaign and billboard advertising if they had more money but for now, they admit that they essentially use the money they receive for their main purpose, which is making ill children's' dreams come true. Non-profit C on the other hand would dedicate this money in creating more viral content but also in doing public relations actions and creating more partnerships. To conclude with, Non-profit E would regularly use the boost tool on their Facebook and Instagram posts in order to build and increase their public notoriety. Their objective is to rise and stand out in a very competitive industry that they believe should become even more competitive in the following weeks and months due to the Covid-19 crisis we are currently going through.

We can therefore conclude that despite the cliché that we have of non-profits using shocking content, it might not always be the best alternative to generate negative emotions like anger, disgust, guilt, sadness or shame. It finally depends a lot on the purpose of the non-profit. In our case, we surveyed five non-profits dedicated to children. Three of them opted for more positive emotions like empathy, humanity, solidarity while the two others made the choice not to play on emotions at all but rather on rationale.

28

B. The use of virtual reality

We wanted to wrap up this research paper with an opening on what will non-profits might use in the future to tap even more into our emotions. Some non-profits have already started integrating virtual reality (VR) to their communication strategy. According to Oxford Dictionary, VR can be a defined as « the computer-generated simulation of a three-dimensional image or environment that can be interacted with in a seemingly real or physical way by a person using special electronic equipment, such as a helmet with a screen inside or gloves fitted with sensors ». For now, the use of VR is limited to only a few non-profits because it can be quite expensive. In this part, we will discuss the efficiency of VR thanks to two articles.

The first article is entitled « La réalité virtuelle: un levier de sensibilisation pour I'humanitaire » and was published by Fabienne MARION in 2019. In this article, we learn that Action Against Hunger partnered with smartVR studio, the French leader agency of virtual reality to design a unique 100% 3D modeled experience (cf. Annex 2) that allow participants to live a day in the shoes of a humanitarian aid worker. This non-profit has been created by a group of French doctors, scientists and writers in 1979 with the purpose of providing access to safe water and sustainable solutions to hunger to the most vulnerable communities around the world. The concept of the experience is pretty interesting. For just a moment, people are taken 7,000 kilometers away in Central African Republic at the heart of a conflict zone thanks to a virtual reality headset. The author describes this experience as « interactive, authentic and photorealistic ». Everything, including sounds of gunshot and a controller that vibrates to symbolize the reception of a message informing the participant about militias approaching was thought to make us realize how hard it is to be a human aid worker on the ground. In this VR experience, we are immersed in the skin of Antoine, a 30year-old Nutrition Programs Coordinator working in a pediatric hospital. He is trying to monitor malnourished children but has to deal with very stressful conditions due to the political instability. This VR experience was offered to participants in the street during special events or fundraising operations. In 2015, Action Against Hunger already proposed a beautiful 360° video (cf. Annex 3) entitled « Bangui l'oubliée ». Once again, the idea was to raise awareness about the harsh conditions in Central African Republic. While we cannot have the detail of how much this kind of content allowed Action Against Hunger to raise, we cannot help thinking that it is impossible to remain insensitive to this immersion on the ground. A VR experience is worth a thousand pictures and videos in terms of moving people. According to Mrs. MARION, VR is a way to create emotions and allow participants to develop empathy as they are put in someone's shoes and make the person's history theirs. She believes that VR is a new trend in the non-profits industry, a technology that will help bring awareness about important issues. For the very first time, the user is not a spectator but a front-row actor that truly lives and feels the moment. As she says, « it is a new form of storytelling where the user is no longer subject to a third-party opinion, but rather to his own interpretation of events ». VR provides authenticity and emotions and can definitely create a social impact.

Then, we have an article entitled « VR brings donors to the source ». It was published in 2016 by the NonProfit Times, a newspaper covering the management of non-profit organizations in the United States. This article highlights a communication action imagined by Charity:water, a non-profit founded in 2006 in New-York whose mission is to solve water crisis in Africa and Asia. They work closely with local experts and communities to bring clean and safe drinking water in 28 developing countries. As part of their 10th year anniversary, they wanted to raise awareness about the water crisis in Ethiopia and present one of their water projects but as the article points out, it would have been too expensive to bring thousands of people from New-York to Ethiopia. For this reason, the non-profit came up with the brilliant idea of setting up 16 virtual reality stations in Manhattan. Thanks to VR headsets, more than 10,000 participants were able to watch and live a beautiful film shot in 2015 in Ethiopia by the Charity:water team. The 9-minute film (cf. Annex 4) was named « The Source » as it revolves around Charity:water's action to bring clean water in an Ethiopian village. It narrates the story of Selam, a 13-year-old Ethiopian girl, who daily goes to collect water for her family. Selam is a very active young girl as she also takes care of her brothers and sisters and is very eager to learn and participate at school. Unfortunately, the only water they have access to is leech infested. The most memorable moment of the film is when a clean water-well is installed and we see water gushing. We almost have the impression that this water will reach us and wet us. Selam, her family and all her community finally get a source of clean drinking water thanks to this water project. Michael HOFFMAN, CEO of See3 Communications, a digital services consulting firm based in Chicago, truly believes in the power of VR as he says « This is just a powerful human experience. I think we are at the phase where no one knows where it's going or how it's going to play out ». The CEO however highlights that VR Is not for everyone. According to him, the production of a conventional video might cost \$25,000 while the production of a VR film might cost at least \$100,000. Moreover, the editing takes much more time than for a regular video. He adds that « The advantage for people doing it now is because there's the whole cool factor; that will be less cool a year from now because the pace at which this technology is changing is incredible. » The least we can say is that he was right. Today, 4 years after the publication of this article, VR has become part of our lives, notably in the gaming industry.

In conclusion, we see how several non-profits are looking for ways to communicate emotions through content marketing as it can have a beneficial impact on their return on investment. Whether it is joy, shock or sadness, they have a lot of tools to reach people's hearts, notably through storytelling and videos. For those who can afford it, a communication strategy based on virtual reality is a way to deeply tap into our emotions. This technology creates more emotions than a simple movie and offers unique and authentic experiences. Instead of being told a story, people can finally live it and thus develop more empathy. Nevertheless, we also have some non-profits that intentionally do not play on emotions but instead on rationale.

Conclusion

Discussion of the results

The main purpose of communication in the humanitarian area is to raise awareness about important causes such as hunger, diseases, water crisis, violation of human rights, access to education and so many others. Raising awareness is an essential step to fundraising, it is difficult to receive donations if people do not know about your non-profit, your story and your work. Most of non-profit organizations, because they do not make profit, are financially limited. They do not have a budget dedicated to their communication because all the money they raise goes directly to the beneficiaries.

Nevertheless, in a Web 2.0 era, there are now affordable solutions that non-profits with limited financial resources can use to reach their audience, such as social media. Thanks to the literature review and to our field study, we were able to see that there is a serious gap between for-profit businesses and non-profit organizations in terms of communication, even when it comes to the use of social media. Non-profits do not invest as much time, energy and money than for-profit businesses in the creation of content on social media. In our qualitative survey, we saw that Non-profit D for instance does not or very occasionally put content on social media. They explain this choice by the fact that their traditional donor is aged above 60 years old and thus does not use social media. Nevertheless, they should not forget that the donor profile is changing with time. Young adults are a new target audience for fundraising, although the amount of the donation they make is generally smaller in comparison with seniors. **Non-profit D** however admits that if they had a bigger communication budget, they would hire people to work on a full-time basis to upload content on their website and social media. In their case, we see that it is mostly a lack of time and human resources. On the other hand, the four other non-profits surveyed mainly based their communication strategy on social media and regularly update content on their several social media platforms. They understood that social media, if used effectively and combined with strategic planning, can make a real difference.

Because the non-profit industry is extremely competitive, each non-profit should think of a way to stand out. Some of the non-profits surveyed put the emphasis on Storytelling. It is a great way to attract donors because the more people know about you, the more they trust you. We also discussed the impact of celebrity affiliation on the return on investment. A non-profit affiliated with a celebrity can definitely gain more notoriety using the celebrity's fan base. Nevertheless, the literature review cast doubt on the benefits it could have on the donations. A partnership with a celebrity, even an A-list celebrity, does not necessarily imply a bigger return on investment. Another way to stand out from the competition is to create content that spreads quickly over the Internet and reaches a huge audience. In order to make their content contagious, nonprofits can use the STEPPS principles.

Finally, we were able to see that all non-profits are not necessarily looking for ways to tap into people's emotions in order to have a return on investment. Also, the concept of non-profits communicating emotions through Content Marketing does not necessarily refer to negative emotions. It is true that some non-profits, like Amnesty International for instance, decided to use shocking content but this choice is relevant to their DNA and their purpose. On the five non-profits surveyed, three of them told us that they were trying to communicate empathy, humanity and solidarity using only positive content, through a storytelling built on dreams and hopes combining it with pictures and videos where we see children enjoying themselves and smiling, By contrast, the two other non-profits told us that they were not trying to touch people at heart but instead reach their mind and convince them that they are responsible and have a role to play in order to help the most vulnerable populations. In fact, some nonprofits believe emotion is ephemeral while rationale leads to a critical thinking and a concrete action. To conclude, we saw thanks to two articles that virtual reality which is used a lot today in the gaming industry could also have a social impact. Some nonprofits tried to integrate this technology to their communication strategy and the results were impressive. It allows people to develop more empathy than any other piece of content. The big issue is that VR production can be very expensive, and we know that most of non-profits have limited financial resources.

Limitations

For this research paper, it would have been relevant to have a bigger sample of nonprofits to interview. With only five non-profits, we might have a small idea of nonprofits' strategy, but it is not enough to have a general tendency of the non-profits industry.

Moreover, this sample is not very diverse as all five non-profits are dedicated to children. It would have been interesting to have non-profits also working with women or refugees for instance.

It would also have been interesting to see how the concept of communicating emotions through Content Marketing varies from one country to one another. In our case, we have four non-profits based in France and one based in Latin America. For further research, we should also have non-profits based in Africa, South Asia, Middle East, North America and other European countries.

Managerial Recommendations

The very first recommendation we could give non-profits is to acknowledge the importance of communication. In spite of the lack of financial resources, communication should not be something done during their free time but rather a key part of their management strategy. We would like non-profits to realize that communication is not a waste of money and time but rather a way for them to collect more donations. Communication is essential, even for non-profit organizations.

The use of social media is affordable, efficient and should not be neglected. We recommend using social media but only after setting concrete objectives. Non-profits should also be frequent on social media, posting ideally everyday or at least 3 times a week. We therefore recommend having a social media planning.

Content Marketing takes time and requires a lot of efforts and creativity. Unlike traditional marketing, it is about creating passion among the audience. We recommend non-profits to have a look at what other non-profits and for-profit businesses are doing or have done and what worked well. We also recommend having a qualified team member who will be fully dedicated to communication. Because it is difficult to hire someone with a small budget, we encourage non-profits to look in their network of volunteers. They might find a communication student or someone who has years of experience in communication.

Finally, it is important to have something special. Most of the non-profits we surveyed told us that they were different because they were creating positive content and because they had a great storytelling. Unfortunately, they all had the same differentiation strategy. We therefore recommend looking for something that really makes the non-profit unique and put the emphasis on this aspect in the communication strategy.

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Annexes

I. Content Marketing

1. What kind of content do you use to promote your non-profit?

2. Among those kinds of content, which one is the most impactful according to you? Why?

3. In your opinion, what makes content viral?

4. For the last ten to fifteen years, the non-profit industry has been constantly growing. Nowadays, there are many non-profits and the competition for fundraising is tougher than ever. In terms of communication, what is your strategy to stand out?

II. Return on Investment/donations

5. At the end of a fundraising campaign, how do you measure the return on investment?

6. How can social media platforms allow you to have a bigger return on investment?

7. Do you think the return on investment is necessarily bigger when the non-profit is affiliated with a celebrity?

III. Emotions

8. How can we tap into people's emotions using Content Marketing?

9. In your opinion, which emotion(s) (joy, anger, sadness, fear, surprise, etc.) is/are more likely to drive people to donate?

10. If you had a bigger communication budget, what would you do to tap even more into people's emotions?

Amex 1: Questionnaire used for our qualitative survey





Amex 2: Snapshots from the virtual reality experience offered by Action Contre la Faim



Amex 3: Snapshot from the 360° video offered by Action Contre Ia Faim









Amex 4: Snapshots from the virtual reality experience offered by Charity:Water