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## DIGITAL AND SOCIAL MEDIA

In recent years, social media has become notorious for its use by traffickers in order to locate and coerce their potential victims. That means that social media is a necessary battlefield for those of us combatting human trafficking. Various online communication platforms – social media sites, news portals, chat applications – offer us a great deal of possibilities to expand the reach of our message, but also engage *directly* with various stakeholders.

Whether we are set to raise awareness of this problem among the general population, or to educate those in risk of trafficking, the main advantages of this set of tools boil down to their interactivity and the ability to narrow down and target our audiences with precision, based on their location and individual characteristics. For that reason, tools from this category allow the recipients to engage more meaningfully with our messages and calls to action, whether by leaving a comment or a like, by sharing our content or by deciding to join our group chat.

The interactivity possibilities provided depend on:

- the platform used for content placement,
- the type of content,
- and your creative.

This means that whatever you decide to set as your campaign goal, you have a variety of possibilities at your disposal: choosing the best communication channels that allow you to reach your audience, as well as the most suitable creative solutions to allow your message to stick with them.

When talking about social media, the first thing you need to have in mind for your campaign to be successful is two-way communication. Think about the ways the viewers of your content might provide feedback: do you want them to like the post, share your video with their friends, sign up for your mailing list, or maybe answer a poll question? Either way, always make sure that you reply to all the constructive comments attached to your content and hide the occasional trash-talker.

### *Image content*

Another important thing to keep in mind is that your posts must be visually appealing in order to attract users' attention in an endless ocean of content. That doesn't mean resorting to bright and sparkly colours, or in any way making the form of your photos and videos not match the seriousness of the content you are displaying. Rather, your subject should be sharp, your colours clear and the

image should ideally have no more than one focal point – don't forget that most content is viewed on small smart phone screens.

If you plan to use illustrations instead of real-life photography, spend some time researching the current visual trends. Illustrations make it easier to have uniform content over time, which in turn helps you establish recognisability and makes your messages stand out. Two of the most common ways to make your content internally uniform are your choice of colours (choose wisely and stick with them!) and your design style.

### *Video content*

Our attention span is getting shorter every day, so in order to drive our message home, we need to be relevant both in form and content. When it comes to video content, that means being able to succinctly provide added value to the viewer.

The golden rule is not to keep them at one-minute length (or shorter). Of course, an in-depth interview with an anti-trafficking specialist will not fit into that time frame, but in order to get users to watch a longer video it is best to make a short and dynamic teaser, with some important points raised by the person interviewed.

Another important point is the video thumbnail – the snapshot image users see while the video is not playing. These differ in size, but always try and equip your videos with custom thumbnails, instead of letting the platform choose one for you (it might end up being a completely random and unattractive still).

Below, we will cover some of the widely used digital communication channels and provide you with tips & tricks that will help your campaign become successful.

## **FACEBOOK**

Facebook is by far the platform with the largest number of users in our region. That being said, its active user base tends to be on average a bit older (30+). Moreover, Facebook is highly saturated with all kinds of ads. In order to run your campaign, you will need to set up a Facebook page – don't waste time building a huge fan base before unravelling your campaign because your content will be served to less than 10% of your fans. Instead, you need to carefully plan your campaign budget and have faith in your creatives.

Photos are among the better ways to drive engagement with your campaign content. Photos on Facebook attract 2–3 times more likes than posts not accompanied by a visual. Good images make the users pause while scrolling through the News feed, especially when they are authentic and accompanied by short messages (copywriting).

- Avoid visuals containing a lot of text – they are not visually interesting. Text should not take up more than 20% of the image. Anything more will be sanctioned by the Facebook Advertising platform.
- Recommended image aspect ratio stands between 9:16 and 16:9, but this tends to change as time passes. For current best practices it's best to search Facebook's official help page.
- Professional photos will sometimes attract less likes than a mobile photo taken at the right moment. Bright and engaging images of human interaction are particularly successful.
- Avoid stock photos. Users demand genuine content.
- Play with infographics, it's a great way to say more in just one post.

- Keep your copies short and engaging – wherever possible ask questions – and try to provide additional resources on the topic at hand (e.g. link to a relevant article on your website).

Video content attracts even more user engagement than photos, and performs better in terms of message retention. Whether you want people to remember information from your new infographic, or you are simply announcing your CSO's appearance in a popular podcast, video is the best format to do it. Facebook offers you the possibility of sharing videos from external sources (e.g. YouTube) as well as posting them natively on Facebook. The second option is favoured by Facebook's algorithm.

- Make video short! Videos of up to one minute in length perform the best.
- Make the video informative, original and attractive.
- Aim to produce clear image and sound, even if working with non-professional equipment.
- Keep in mind that people frequently use social media while on the commute and along other activities, so it's best to have your videos subtitled.

Apart from the content, make sure to regularly check your page inbox and reply to as many user comments as possible. If you are having problems with trolls and indecent comments, write up a short list of community guidelines and then proceed to hide and sanction those who do not adhere to it.

## **INSTAGRAM**

Instagram is a network that belongs to the Facebook family. It uses the same advertising platform, making it easier to place ads and target your audiences. Instagram is visually oriented, with different ways of presenting photo and video content. Its main audience is on average younger than Facebook audience, which should reflect in the tone of voice and liveliness of your creative solutions.

Instagram is a great platform for educating your audience, e.g. about the role of demand in the trafficking chain. You can split a few important thoughts and pieces of data into several stories, design/animate them and post it to your followers. Those not keen on reading scientific studies will gladly spend 15s reading your key message backed-up by hard data. Always try and provide followers with things they themselves can do in order to take part – even if it's just sharing your content.

- Since Instagram is primarily a visual platform, make sure to have a clear art direction that will be employed on most, if not all content.
- Posts can be either photos or videos of up to one minute in length.
- Aspect ratio should be between 1.91:1 and 4:5, but most Instagram content is 1:1.
- Make sure your images are at least 1080 pixels in width.
- Posts can contain up to 10 photos/videos.
- Tagging geolocation and other users on your posts is favoured by Instagram algorithm.
- Story format is more popular among youth, especially for its interactive features: polls, questions etc. that you can employ in order to start conversation with your followers.
- Stories are a 9:16 format for presenting content that disappears after 24h.
- Stories content can be photo or video, up to 15 seconds in length.
- Stories are a great way to interact with your followers – whether by asking them questions related to the topic of human trafficking, or by conducting polls etc.
- Stories allow users to share posts from their feed, as well as posts from other public profiles.
- All longer videos, as well as those in 16:9 resolution can be posted as an IGTV – another 9:16 format that also serves as a repository for your past live videos.
- If you produce anti-trafficking merchandise, Instagram has an integrated shop – making it easier to turn those who like your posts into those who wear your message on their sleeve.

Similar to Facebook, Instagram too has an inbox, called Direct Messages (DM), so keep in mind not to leave any messages unopened and unseen.

## **YOUTUBE**

YouTube is the world's largest video platform, as well as one of the most visited websites in general. It is used primarily for streaming music, but also for watching podcasts and videos by dedicated content creators, spanning from cooking to web development.

Whoever is not using social media at all, or at least not the social media that you chose to be present at, is definitely present on YouTube. As this platform is part of Google family, you can use its sophisticated advertising system to target specific audiences, or even retarget your own website visitors. Most importantly, you can view YouTube as a traditional TV – whenever you have an overarching message that needs to be heard by all target groups, YouTube is the platform to use.

- YouTube's native format is a 16:9 video, but channels are also able to post 9:16 stories.
- Sort your videos into playlists and name them using exact terms that you figure people would use in order to search for similar content. That will make them easier to discover.
- Don't rely on auto-generated thumbnail images –create your own instead that are visually appealing and can instantly grab user's attention; or use text complementing the video title.
- Use this platform as a video repository for all of your longer videos, as well as for advertising those shorter ones that focus on one message only.
- YouTube live offers you a great chance to reach large audiences, since this format is favoured by the algorithm.
- Always try and engage with the community by linking and replying to comments under your content.

## **MESSAGING PLATFORMS**

As already mentioned, every social media platform has its own messaging solution, allowing for private communication between two or more users. Facebook's Messenger serves as a stand-alone app and is very popular in our region. Besides Messenger, two of the other most popular chat applications are Viber and WhatsApp.

These applications can prove to be useful in maintaining direct contact with vulnerable groups, because they allow for a reasonable amount of anonymity. They can also be used for sharing important information that needs to reach their recipients as fast as possible.

Groups can be used to get all those sharing similar experiences in one place in order to share information that might make it easier to recognise patterns in traffickers' behaviour, strategies, locations etc.

But, most importantly, as a means to get people together in a virtual and private environment, chat applications can act as the only connection between a trafficking victim and the outside world.

Depending on your staffing, do a research regarding the chat app most commonly used by your stakeholders and consider making a group chat that you will populate over time with those who wish to stay in touch.

## **GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS:**

Awareness-raising campaigns on social media need to be continuously innovated and follow general and specific societal changes at the global and local levels, aiming to depict a comprehensive picture of trafficking in human beings in all its varieties.

Keep up-to-date with current socio-political, economic and cultural contexts and life habits of specific population groups to ensure that communication is well targeted and aligned on selected channels for your target groups.

Engage with younger population to raise awareness and educate them on human rights topics and trafficking in human beings by utilising the vocabulary, language style and register adjusted to specific target groups using social media.

Use social media to expand integrated communication activities primarily utilised on different communication channels such as print and online media, TV, outdoor events etc.

Keep in mind some of the key factors for the campaign success: short, simple and effective slogan/message and good identification of target groups covered by social media activities.

Key messages, slogans and visuals need to be well crafted and understandable to everyone, to induce empathy and emotional response.

Engage in collaboration with renowned public figures and celebrities as third party endorsers who effectively convey the campaign key messages and induce people to get emotionally involved.

Avoid real victims' photos (images), as experiences show this leads to secondary victimization. Do not use stereotype images depicting members of vulnerable groups.

Instead of real people images, you can also use internationally known symbols, cartoon and fictional characters on appropriate platforms.

Testimonials need to be carefully executed in all technical aspects and include different types of cover material to exclude the victim's recognition that results in secondary victimization.

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