



Social Marketing Strategies To Avoid Social Washing Under The Perception Of Generation Z Young People, In The North Of The State Of Mexico, 2023.

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ABSTRACT

This article begins with the description of social marketing, as well as mentioning some concepts of a not so well known topic Social Washing; in addition to generating a reflection to know if companies and public institutions make a correct application or if they only take advantage of Mexico's social problems to generate an economic and competitive advantage.

The objective is to know the perception of this issue by the students of the Ixtlahuaca CUI University who are part of generation Z and who, due to their own characteristics and even with their permanent contact with information technologies, do not have knowledge about the subject.

A survey was applied to the students, with the aim of knowing their perception regarding the term social washing, their participation and follow-up in social campaigns, if they identify other terms such as Greenwashing, Rainbow whasing, Purple whasing; in addition to knowing what their experience has been when participating in this type of campaign. The data obtained were analyzed to determine conclusions, the recommendations of the respondents were considered to propose strategies aimed at avoiding social washing and consequently that all actions carried out in favor of social causes have a real and tangible impact.

INTRODUCTION

This research begins with a theoretical framework in which concepts such as social marketing, social washing, as well as distinctive elements of generation Z are pointed out, as well as the impact it has on education, family and consumption trends.

In the same way, the location of the population and the chosen sample are contextualized, a descriptive research design is carried out through which primary data were collected with the survey technique, obtaining information that was the input for the proposal of strategies that contribute to reflect on the misuse of social marketing converted into social washing.

In relation to the findings, the analysis and interpretation are presented through graphs, showing the basic knowledge of the subject, the diversity of opinions of social campaigns, as well as the perception that young people of generation Z have about social marketing.

Strategies are specified so that companies, society, academics, government and the media fulfill their purposes in minimizing social problems that are latent in the daily life of the northern area of the State of Mexico.

The conclusions emphasize the work that we all have to contribute to the improvement of the economic, social, political and cultural conditions of the country.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

1.1 Marketing Social

Currently social marketing has had a great presence in the media, in fact, it has been a topic that generates debate in relation to its application in Mexico. For this reason, this topic is taken up again as a precedent of Social Washing, how it is understood and applied by companies in both the public and private sectors; the perception of the issue among students who belong to Generation Z is relevant.

1.1.1 Definition

It is of utmost importance to understand the term Social Marketing from a more specific perspective, the authors Fisher and Espejo (2017) define it as the application of the principles and techniques of marketing to influence target audiences to voluntarily accept, reject, modify or abandon a behavior for the benefit of other individuals, groups or society as a whole.

For their part, the authors Morgan and Voola (2000) mention that social marketing is a fairly complex process that involves the ability to convince the target audience to get involved in changes that marketing professionals seek to promote in order to establish communication and distribution networks from there. The focus is that the changes generated help solve known social problems. This entails infrastructure work, in addition to the expectations of maintaining the effects of change or stimulating continuous changes in the future, in order to eliminate the social problem in question (Souza, Santos, Silva, 2008, p.8).

With the two previous definitions, it can be mentioned that social marketing in essence and with a good application is beneficial for society itself, but today there are sectors that have used it to their advantage to obtain impact, credibility, trust and recognition from customers or consumers.

1.1.2 4 P's del marketing social

The 4P's focused on social marketing are presented below and are specified as follows:

Product: The social product – These are the ideas and behaviors related to them.

Price: Monetary and non-monetary costs related to the public commitment to the "acquisition" of the social product.

Place: Region to be addressed (where ideas will be disseminated and worked on) and channels of distribution.

Promotion: Communication of the idea or social product itself (delivery of the message correctly), seeking its acceptance and adoption by people (consumers). (Kotler and Roberto, 1992.)

1.1.3 Advantages and Disadvantages

In short, there are many advantages and disadvantages in relation to this area of marketing, but some are distinguished in the following table:

Table 1. Advantages and disadvantages of social marketing

ADVANTAGES	DISADVANTAGES
Influencing consumer behavior	No follow-up of social causes
Motivates people to change habits and certain social behaviors	Short-term work plans
Generation of alliances	Diversion of resources destined for the social cause
Media impact with support for social causes	Few benefits and beneficiaries
Closer company to customer	Poor results

Note: Own elaboration (2023)

1.1.4 Impact

The impact generated by the application of social marketing from a public or private sector is very high, because it allows supporting social causes that guide the consumption of products and services, that there is greater acceptance of these proposals but that it is also in the hands of everyone to support so that the problems that are present in the northern area of the State of Mexico are minimized.

1.2 Social Washing

Social marketing is a strategy that at some point all companies use because the idea of attracting more customers and increasing reputation in the market is attractive, but what happens when this strategy is abused? Once brands make use of charitable initiatives or donations to certain vulnerable groups to make significant profits, it turns out to be just a publicity stunt, what some experts identify as social washing.

Baeza, Franco and Ferruz (2020) when constructing a definition, attribute it to the circular economy fashion (understood as a business model that lives off and promotes consumerist values), according to the authors, large institutions have joined this trend, organizations that guarantee the global economic order such as the World Economic Forum, together with consulting multinationals such as Accenture. Thus, in 2019 these two entities awarded awards ("The Circulars") to a dozen companies mainly dedicated to recycling.

On the other hand, according to the Black Book of Trademarks (2003), in Europe, companies today must comply with much stricter environmental and social standards than in the countries of the South and even in

the United States. From a critical perspective, however, this only led many firms to move their production sites to regions with lower standards.

The global financial sector's strategy against climate change largely presupposes a biased vision of sustainability and the sharing of responsibilities, attributing more responsibility to the consumer than it deserves, and who ends up being burdened with environmental measures through cuts in public goods and services provided by the State. (Baeza, Franco, & Ferruz, 2020).

1.2.1 Concept

For a better understanding of the term social washing, it is necessary to start from the communication and intention of the messages of the brands or institutions that want to join social marketing, in this sense we take up the idea of Baeza, Franco and Ferruz (2020) state that business communication, associated with values such as solidarity and non-discrimination, It connects with a consumer concerned about social issues and is expressed through acts of help for people at risk of exclusion, groups of the elderly or women victims of "gender violence", through training activities, sponsorships or charity events that raise money, it is destined to its own foundations or to non-profit organizations with charitable or cultural purposes. The consumer empathizes with everything "social", connects with its most emotional side; This is where everything seems to be fine, however what is the real and tangible impact of these initiatives?

According to Pymo hub (2023), social entrepreneurship that emerged as a result of the earthquake of September 19, 2017; mentions that social washing is a term that generally covers all activities, or rather inactivities, with which companies appear to be more socially responsible than they really are. By this they mean those companies that run entire campaigns for specific causes without even trying to bring about real change.

The aforementioned group determines that talking about social responsibility automatically positions you in a standard in which a certain concision and proactivity is expected to be part of the movement. There must be a real desire to support the environment, human rights, gender equality, job opportunities, to name a few. Today we find multiple examples of companies trying to make themselves known as much more ethical entities than they really are, deceiving consumers with their false implementations of the corporate social responsibility model.

Having described the above; It can be said that social washing is the actions carried out by a company through the discourse of benefiting social causes or defending the rights of vulnerable communities or groups momentarily to attract customers and users, make a good impression on the market, without having real, tangible or measurable impacts to demonstrate or disguise the reality of a product and its effects.

1.2.2 Background

Let's start with the term greenwashing, which was coined in 1986 by a New York university student, Jay Westerveld, after his casual visit to a luxury hotel in the Fiji Islands where he saw a sign recommending customers to reduce the use of towels to save the planet. Before the term greenwashing became popular in the 80s in the US, green image washing techniques were already used in the 60s in the nuclear energy sector (one of the first companies to apply them was the electricity company Westinghouse). The classic example of greenwashing is associated with oil companies, with Chevron's "People Do" advertising campaign pioneering (Ecológico o Greenwashing, 2020).

The article entitled Ecological or Greenwashing (2020), describes that since the 70s, many multinational firms have become targets of environmentalists and human rights activists. This is how calls began to boycott companies such as Nestlé, McDonalds, Shell, among others; such companies are known to have been involved in shady dealings. In this sense, it is common to see that these companies and many others periodically publish extensive environmental and social reports, establish codes of conduct, self-impose rules, and involve stakeholders.

Among those different groups are workers and customers, as well as the environment and the countries in which a company operates. The same is transmitted through other concepts in vogue, such as corporate responsibility and corporate citizenship: the commercial actions of a firm are not limited only to economic criteria, do they also include social responsibility; Firms even want to be "good citizens" of a country or the entire planet.

1.2.3 Case Studies

1.2.3.1 Public Sector

In the public sector, we can mention as an example, the one referred to by Abramo (2019) the effects of public policies on non-contributory social protection and their link with employment are the subject of strong discussions around the world, and Latin America and the Caribbean is no exception. There are academic and political sectors that argue that non-contributory social protection cash transfers—such as those provided by conditional cash transfer programs or social pensions—are the cause of perverse incentives. These perverse incentives would consist, on the one hand, of a disincentive to look for work due to the benefits received "for free", and, on the other, of an incentive to informality, based on the assumption that with these resources the people who work will prefer to do so omitting the costs (but not the benefits) of formal employment. which in turn would promote a vicious circle in the relationship with employment and

would result in damage to the capacity for economic growth, productivity and levels of labor participation in the countries of the region.

1.2.3.2 Private Sector

This sector is part of a campaign by the Doritos Rainbow snack brand, owned by the food products company PepsiCo. The corporation announced a donation of R\$ 1 million (about 200 thousand dollars) for entities that support the LGBTQI+ cause. First launched in 2017, the Doritos Rainbow package and snacks are rainbow-colored, in reference to the LGBT struggle. And in that fight they have framed their entire marketing strategy. One of the problems is that many of these corporations manufacture ultra-processed foods marked with excess salt, sugar and fats that, in turn, are related to chronic diseases (diabetes, hypertension, cancer) and aggravate cases of Covid-19. That's not to mention his history of labor law violations.

1.3 Generation "Z"

The characteristics of today's young people are of great importance for the social, academic and personal system, since they mark in history new ways of visualizing the world, new trends of relating and perceiving the professional context and open the way to new entrepreneurship projects and commercial demand for goods and services, for this reason the world of marketing has proposed to characterize ages according to traits of social behavior. (Gómez & Palma, 2019)

It has always been mentioned that young people are characterized by their strong idealistic thinking, for being pioneers in the search for new ideas, transformers and fighters with a cause, however, each generation of young people socially faces unique, historical moments marked by particular, exclusive and own events.

1.3.1 Concept

The sector of the population born between 1994 and 2010 is a generation that has been born, educated and socialized under a scheme of freedom, with total access to the internet and the entire digital universe, it is a generation also known by other names such as **centurial** or **centennial**. (Prensky, 2001)

Generation Z predicts a paradigm shift, this is due to the experiences that young people of this age have lived, such as the promotion of gender equality, the enhancement of the role of women in the different productive sectors and the emphasis on human values. (Mastroianni, 2016)

From the perspective of the Polish philosopher Bauman, he calls this current era "liquid", because the current generation Z is capable of distancing itself from archetypes and old models in order to create its own decisions and design its own character and lifestyle.

Zygmunt Bauman's work is characterized by strong criticisms of the modern lifestyle, but it determines the relationship of generation Z with affection, love, relationships, work, education and social responsibility as members of a specific community, translated into fear of commitment, in the search for new experiences, in the ability to reinvent oneself a thousand times or in consumerism based on constant renewal and not on the conservation of products, everything is liquid, ephemeral, not at all lasting or fixed.

A new way of seeing the world, different from that of past generations whose range of updating was limited and restricted, is a generation defined by technological advances, globalization and communication in general, aspects that mark their identity and in some way define them.

1.3.2 Characteristics of a change-oriented generation

Under this generational change, educational, social and labor models are being analyzed, in order to reflect on the current dynamics, structures and current form of coexistence, because they are irreverent young people, they question everything, they live in a dynamic of immediacy, because for them everything is fast and fleeting, they defend inclusion and are protagonists of the collaborative economy and diversity. They have developed in a context of uncertainty and vertiginous permanent change where nothing is stable and everything has changed since they were born in the midst of the global crisis. (Vita, 2020). On the other hand, it is important to highlight the way in which they are socialized, the way they relate to their environment, the way they perceive reality in all areas of their lives, in an unlimited way through immediate access to the internet, in addition to this they have an enormous capacity for self-training, which has put the traditional educational system in check.

According to the study carried out by Atrevia and Deusto Business School (2018) entitled "Generation Z: the dilemma", 4 characteristics are established that allow certain traits to be highlighted, which are the following:

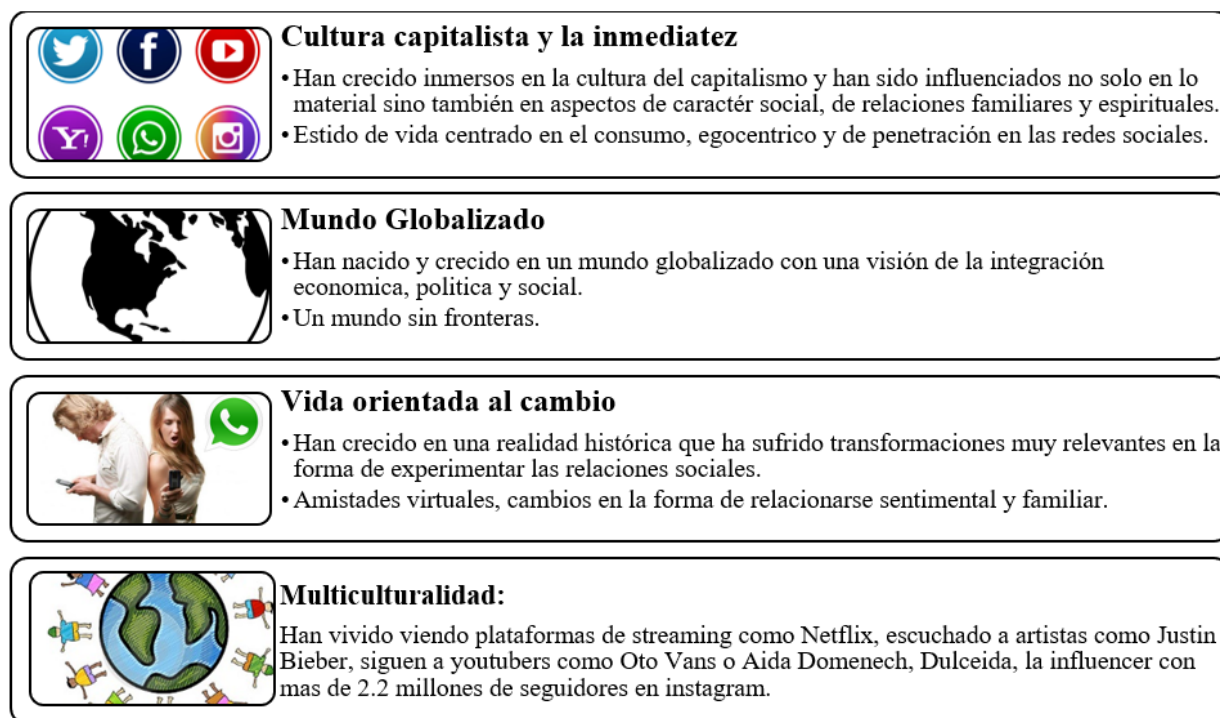


Figure 1. Aspects of Generation Z

Note: Prepared by the authors with data from the Atrivia and Deusto Business School study (2023)

From a general context, a moment of social, economic, consumer, political interests and evolution in communications is being experienced for all generations living together.

1.3.3 Changes in consumption dynamics, new rules in the world of work and family in a digital environment.

Generation Z expects a technologized educational system, which is adapted to the needs and demands of today, where the educational system provides the facility to manage the unlimited amount of information that young people have at their fingertips, where the traditional classroom model is losing more and more ground. (Vita, 2020)

They demand a solution based on an autonomous form of research and self-education, on specific and technical aspects, in this sense young people require accompaniment in the search for new information, from teachers, parents, work managers, etc.

On the other hand, this generation is characterized by being curious and have a great desire for self-learning, they explore and discover, they take initiative when looking for learning experiences, however, the members of this generation have a very low attention span.

On the other hand, the amount of information and data that is currently available regarding consumer trends is extensive, the widespread use of different platforms, channels, applications, social networks and mobile devices makes it difficult to recognize the origin of purchasing and consumption decisions in general. Purchasing habits, preferences for companies to look for work and brands when it comes to consumption have changed radically, because something more is needed to connect with these young people, a real and honest concern is required for the environment, for sustainability, for the dignity of workers, by the quality and origin of the products. (Mohr, 2019)

Within the family context, families are currently fractured, family relationships are weaker and more fragile. In the face of same-sex unions, divorces, lack of commitment, violence, obsession with work and success, deceit and disloyalty, the family is a kind of stabilizer.

1.4 University of Ixtlahuaca CUI

The University of Ixtlahuaca has since its origins, a clear social trend, which is why it is characterized by being a model and being at the forefront offering educational programs according to current trends, applying humanist and constructivist principles for the training of high school graduates, professionals and postgraduates.

In its curricular design, it assumes and develops plans from approaches by objectives or competencies according to programs with Recognition of Official Validity of Studies (RVOE) or programs incorporated into Public Education Institutions.

Within its organizational philosophy, it is presented as an institution whose Mission is: "*We are a university with quality and relevance of a social nature, which fully trains people, in congruence with institutional values*"

As part of the range of educational plans offered by the University of Ixtlahuaca, the Faculty of Business currently offers the bachelor's degrees in Marketing, as well as Logistics and International Business, which are described below.

1.4.1 Bachelor's Degree in Marketing

The Bachelor's Degree in Marketing trains professionals capable of efficiently meeting the multiple needs in terms of markets in the current context, based on the planning, design and evaluation of strategies for the application of marketing tools. Attending to compliance with ethical-professional precepts, environmental responsibility and social commitment, tending to detect situations of opportunity, profitability, growth and achievement of the greatest benefit for the company.

1.4.2 Bachelor of Business

The Bachelor of Logistics and International Business from the University of Ixtlahuaca CUI is a professional who advises institutions and companies in the field of logistics, both in their supply, storage and distribution processes. It is a degree that seeks to train professionals capable of solving problems, with special emphasis on what is related to international trade and those problems derived from globalization.

METHOD

The type of study that is carried out is *descriptive* according to the author Behar, D. (2008) defines it as that study that serves to analyze how a phenomenon and its components are and how it manifests itself. It allows the phenomenon studied to be detailed basically through the measurement of one or more of its attributes.

The characteristics of a descriptive study are:

- Establish the demographic characteristics of the research units.
- Identify forms of behavior, attitudes of the people who are in the research universe.
- Establish specific behaviors.
- Discover and verify the possible association of the research variables.

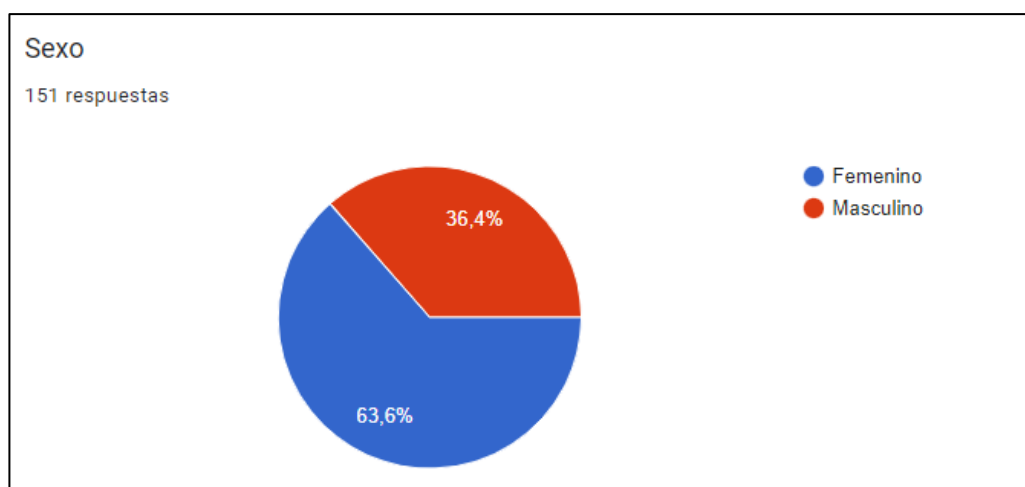
This research is based on the collection and analysis of *secondary data*, resorting to books and articles that allow generating the theoretical framework as well as finding base concepts, primary data is used by resorting to the formulation of a *survey* to apply it to students of the University of Ixtlahuaca CUI who are part of Generation Z, who are from the chosen segment, specifically students of the Bachelor's Degree in Marketing and the Bachelor's Degree in Logistics and International Business.

The survey is carried out through a Google Form with the following link <https://forms.gle/jwo34Mw8Whm6sAQi6> is structured with 7 closed questions and 2 open questions in which very interesting data are collected about the research topic.

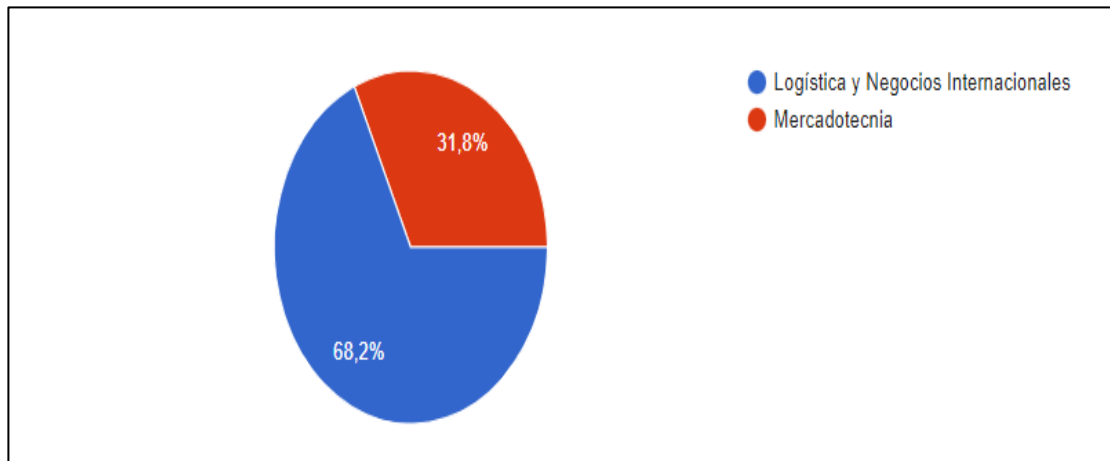
The probability sample is calculated, the application is carried out and the qualitative technique is answered by 151 students.

FINDS

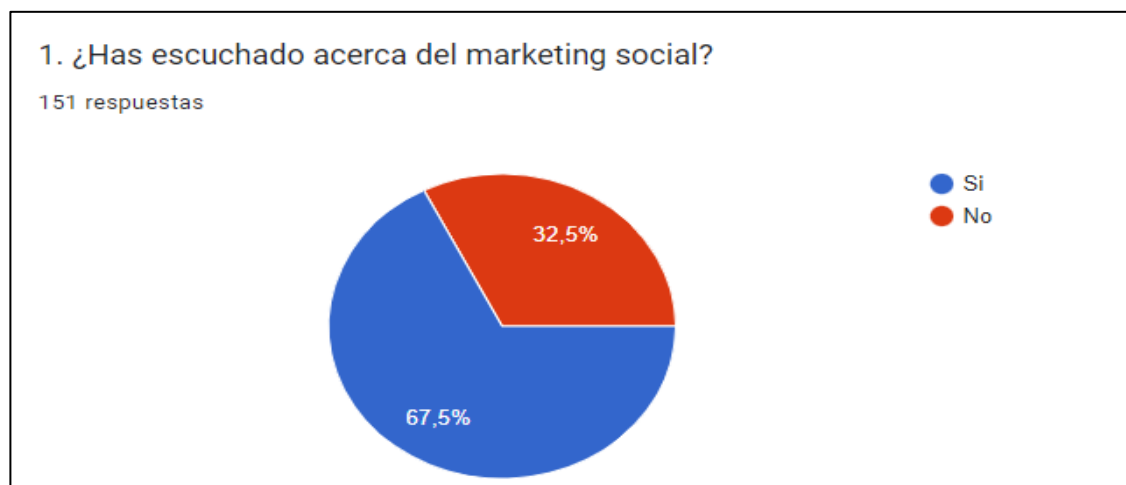
In the fieldwork, the following results are obtained;



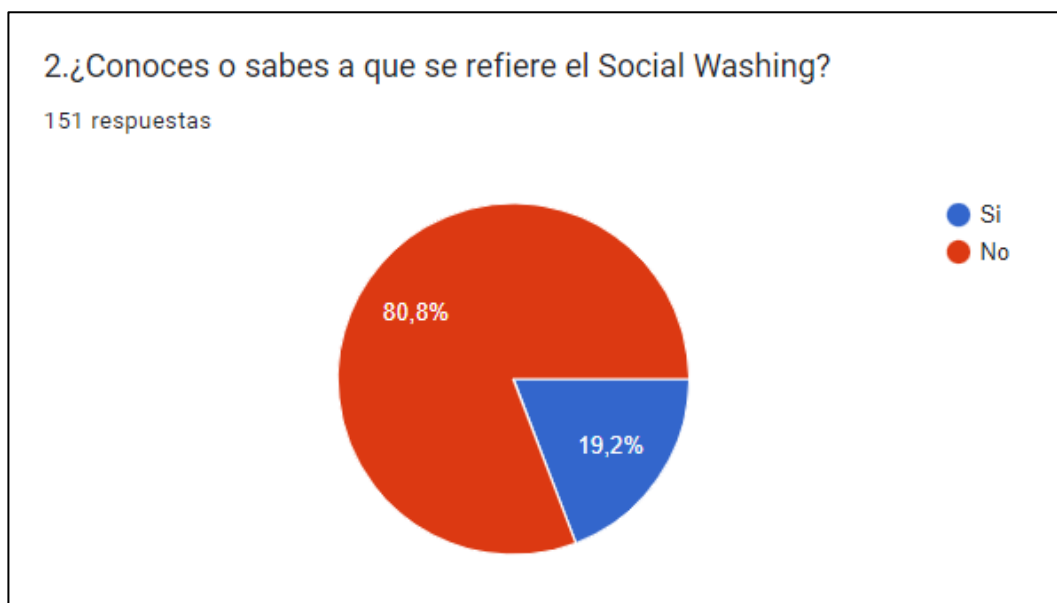
A total of 151 responses were obtained, 63.6% were female and 36.4% corresponded to the male gender.



68.2% correspond to students of the bachelor's degree in logistics and international business, and 31.8% are marketing students.



The data obtained were; 67.5% of students have heard of social marketing at some point, while 32.5% have never heard of that term.



With regard to social washing, 80.8% of those surveyed report not having heard the term or are unaware of its application, while 19.2% are familiar with the term. As can be seen, it is a topic that has not gained popularity in the media, since there has been little information or dissemination of it.



In this question, 72.2% report having seen a social campaign, and it is also identified that the vast majority of brands or institutions use this strategy to attract more attention and customers.

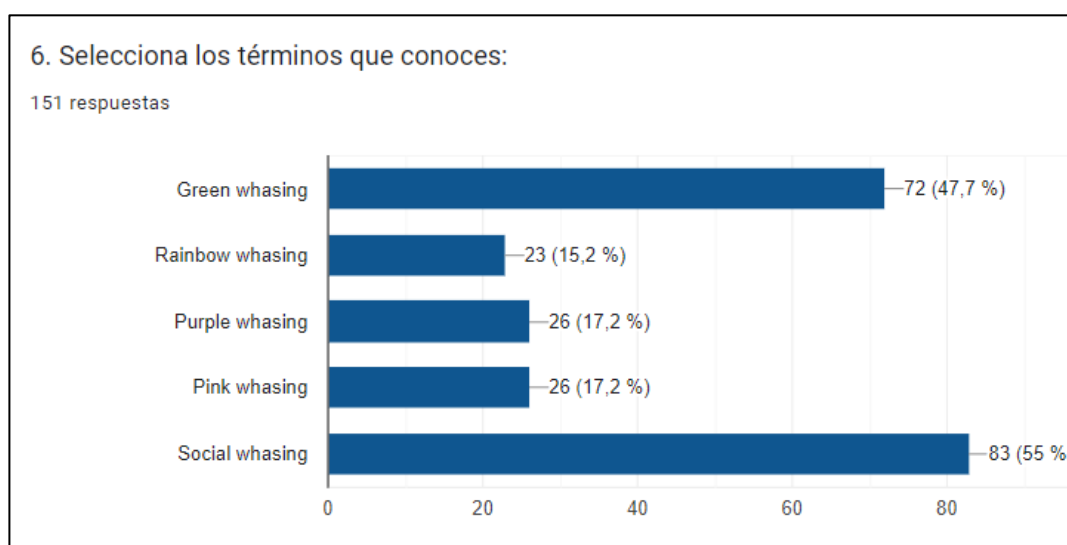
In this sense, the respondents mention the campaigns that have generated the greatest impact on them, among these the following stand out:

N.P.	Campaign name
1	Telethon
2	Against animal abuse
3	Vaccination of domestic animals
4	Greenpeace Campaigns
5	Adidas: collect pet from the ocean and make tennis
6	Televisa and Association of Banks of Mexico: Bécalos
7	Scotiabank, Soriana, Chedraui, Farmacias del Ahorro, Estafeta, Garis, Bodega Ahorra and others: Kilo de Ayuda
8	No Makeup Testing in Animals
9	Adidas: uniting brotherhoods without discrimination
10	Bonafont: no violence against women
11	Krispy Kream: fundraising campaign for non-profit companies
12	Rexona Empower woman
13	Nivea Clarant Against Racism
14	Juan Pa Zurita helping the victims of the 2017 earthquake
15	Victoria Secret the perfect body
16	Danone: let's build dreams
17	Mexican Red Cross



In this question, 37.7% totally agree that the social campaigns referred to do not contribute to the solution of the social cause, however, 35.8% agree; 21.9% are indifferent. There is no clear trend as to whether these

campaigns actually reduce or solve a problem, there is no transparency in their actions, or they are only used for an economic benefit in tax reduction.



Regarding the terms related to disguising philanthropy, we have the following:

Green washing: It projects a false ecological respect that is far from reality, it began with the love for the environment, "green labels" or 100% natural products.

Rainbow whasing: promotes products with the LGTBQI+ flag, changes in logo temporarily to have exposure as allies or inclusive of this community.

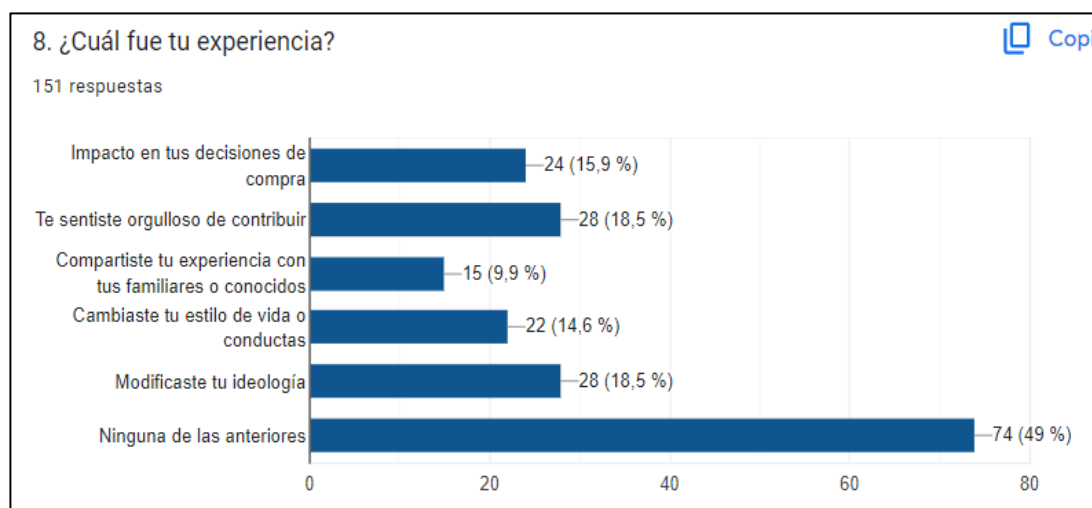
Purple whasing: they turn to feminism and women as a resource for campaigns or content that goes beyond words and avoid gender gaps or inequality.

Pink whasing: they are the ones who wear their products with pink ribbons and inspirational phrases, using the fight against breast cancer without contribution, or worse using it over carcinogenic products.

Social whasing: campaigns in favor of real causes that companies carry out without the intention of provoking a relevant change (Lescano, L. n.d.)



Regarding participation in social campaigns, 70.2% have participated, however, it is convenient to inquire what has been the impact on those involved?



According to the experience of participating in social campaigns, 49% of respondents reported that their experience is not found in any of the options placed, followed by 18.5% mentioned feeling proud to contribute and helping to modify their ideology; 15.9% had an impact on their purchasing decisions; 14.6% changed their lifestyle or behavior and finally 9.9% share their experience with family members or acquaintances.

Due to the previous answers where the respondents report not having significant experiences, they issue recommendations, which are taken up for the generation of strategies.

SOCIAL MARKETING STRATEGIES TO AVOID SOCIAL WASHING

1. Inclusion of the purpose of social marketing in Higher Education Institutions, to achieve reflection and awareness of the presence of social problems, as well as their long-term follow-up.
2. Generate advertising based on ethical principles without falling into legal and moral inconsistencies.
3. Companies must allocate resources and sufficient time to achieve transparency in their processes and in their communication with the social causes they defend.
4. Dissemination in traditional and digital media exponentially to achieve impact and encourage the participation of different social groups.
5. Use experiential marketing supported by reels with true stories.
6. Look for strategies with creative rationale to capture the attention of different generations from baby boomers to alpha.
7. Apply technology-related marketing 5.0 for humanity.
8. Promote workshops, conferences or talks that deal with the subject, so that when they are in professional practice they do not fall into social washing campaigns.
9. Messages should be largely focused on appealing to people's sensibilities.
10. Establish achievable metrics or indicators to visualize the real impact of the benefits promised in the campaigns, that is, identify your accessible and segmented market.
11. Design social media campaigns, specifically in the use of tools for companies to stand out through spot live.
12. Social marketing must be clear about the intention, intensity and effects.

CONCLUSIONS

Social washing, being a term little known by the beneficiary or the consumer and little disseminated by traditional and digital media, is disguised as philanthropy by companies, in this sense companies take economic advantage, social recognition for a short time, when in reality there is no follow-up or impact on their initiatives.

For social marketing to be practiced ethically, there must be good intentions from the beginning to eradicate serious social problems that are visualized in contemporary and current Mexico (poverty, deficient health services, damage to the environment, scarcity of natural resources, animal abuse, to mention a few).

On the part of companies, there is no transparency in the use of resources and because of the benefits offered to vulnerable groups, communities or families.

Finally, it is a commitment of educational institutions to promote professional ethics in the integral training of young people capable of modifying these actions that do not generate progress.

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