

Between humanitarian crisis and Instagram

The communicative role of influencers in promoting solidarity practices after the Russian invasion of Ukraine

Student Name: Jakub Snop

Student Number: 704174

Supervisor: David Ongenaert

Master Media Studies - Media & Business

Erasmus School of History, Culture and Communication

Erasmus University Rotterdam

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BETWEEN HUMANITARIAN CRISIS AND INSTAGRAM

ABSTRACT

In the aftermath of the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, almost 12 million people were forced to leave the country, resulting in the largest migration and humanitarian crisis since World War II. Poland has welcomed an unprecedented number of almost 3 million refugees and has seen a civic spontaneous mobilization to support arriving refugees. Social media influencers (SMIs), were also heavily engaged in aid and solidarity actions, by communicating about solidarity initiatives on their online channels. There is a growing body of literature studying celebrities' involvement in promoting humanitarian causes and first aid practices. However, to date, little research has studied the communicative roles of SMIs during migration and humanitarian crises. Therefore, this Master's thesis aims to discover about which themes of solidarity actions for the crisis after the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine do the influencers communicate through their Instagram posts of 2022. Moreover, this paper researches the interactions of platform affordances with certain solidarity practices and shaping humanitarian discourses. To this end, this thesis applied a qualitative content analysis on 150 Instagram posts and stories of 9 renowned Polish Instagram influencers published in the first 3 months after the beginning of the humanitarian crisis. The study found in influencers' communication four main solidarity actions: promoting, raising awareness, solidarizing, and giving financial or material resources. The results highlight that SMIs mainly increased exposure and publicity of existing solidarity practices, especially fundraisers and local food and clothes collections. Their Instagram communication was found to mostly reflect and reproduce depoliticizing humanitarian discourses, by shedding light on spontaneous, bottom-up provision practices and sharing stories of war victims. This study gives a mixed picture of influencer engagement in solidarity practices, with some of them confined to low-risk participation, and others committed to resource- and time-intensive practices. Moreover, the interactions between platform affordances and certain solidarity practices were discovered. Overall, the study proposes a new typology of SMIs' communication about solidarity practices and confirms the growing and diverse involvement of influencers in social justice communication. Given the main results, this research contributes not only to the state of art but also provides practical implications for NGOs and humanitarian aid organizations.

KEYWORDS: *Social media influencers, solidarity practices, celebrity humanitarianism, qualitative content analysis*

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1. Introduction

The full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 has caused nearly ten thousand civilian casualties and massive destruction of Ukraine's infrastructure (OHCHR, n.d.). Almost 12 million people were displaced from Ukraine (UNHCR, 2023), resulting in the largest migration and humanitarian crisis since World War II (Kaczmarczyk & Duszczuk, 2022, p. 36).

Poland, as a frontline country, has welcomed an unprecedented number of almost 3 million refugees, with daily figures of over 100,000 people crossing the Polish-Ukrainian border in the second week of the war (UNHCR, 2023). Consequently, in the first weeks of the invasion, thousands of Polish volunteers rushed to spontaneously help the arriving refugees by i.e. donating food, supporting fundraising initiatives, providing shelters, or offering transport (Podgórska et al., 2023, p. 1; Byrska, 2022, p. 465-466). According to the Public Opinion Research Center (CBOS), two months after the beginning of the Russian invasion, 63% of Poles declared that they or their household member were involved in temporary aid provision, i.e. donating food and supporting fundraising initiatives or providing shelters by inviting Ukrainians into their homes (CBOS, 2023). The unprecedented scale of grassroots solidarity actions was mainly coordinated or conducted via social media platforms (SMPs), which were utilized for disseminating information and mobilizing humanitarian aid. Facebook groups were flooded with offers of free accommodation or transport, and posts with lists of the most needed hygiene products and medicines. Social media influencers, particularly those active on Instagram, were also heavily engaged in aid actions i.e. by reposting Instagram Stories with appeals from aid organizations, promoting fundraising initiatives, or volunteering at reception centers (Godziński, 2023, par. 1-2; Ujagłowska, 2023, par. 3-4).

Previous studies have shown that SMPs are being effectively used for disaster management (Sherchan et al., 2017, p. 1) and can effectively mobilize fundraising efforts (Chugh, 2018, p. 636). Moreover, during migration crises, SMPs can act as a "lifeline for refugees" who seek asylum (Talabi et al., 2022, p. 8) and support informal civic humanitarian actions (Carlsen et al., 2023, p. 1). The logics of social media have thus influenced social activism and humanitarian actions. Concurrently, the role of social media influencers (SMIs), often perceived as celebrities who achieved their fame through social media (Hudders et al., 2020, p. 327-328), in activism and advocating for societal topics is increasing (Almela, 2023, p. 228). Since individuals rely on SMIs to guide their choices, online influencers with

extensive reach are capable of shaping societal values and influencing consumers' behaviors (Thomas & Fowler, 2023, p. 950). Current studies indicate that influencer activism plays a crucial role in conveying messages of corporate social responsibility (Yang et al., 2021, p. 565; Li, 2021, p. 462), and online creators can support disseminating information during disasters (Li et al., 2022, p. 1-2). While some argue that influencers' involvement in social justice communication is merely a form of promotional small acts of engagement (SAOE)(Picone et al., 2019, p. 2011), other studies depict the growing involvement of SMIs in social issues and activism. This aligns with the increasing participation of traditional celebrities in humanitarianism and raising awareness for NGO causes, conceptualized as celebrity humanitarianism (Mostafanezhad, 2013, p. 485; Mitchell, 2016, p. 288-290). The roles of traditional celebrities, who contrary to SMIs are famous for certain achievements outside social media, in supporting humanitarian efforts have been thoroughly researched (Almela, 2023, p. 228; Chouliaraki, 2012, p. 1; Yrjölä, 2011, p. 357). However, to date, little research has studied the communicative roles of SMIs during migration and humanitarian crises. Examining it can help to understand how SMIs facilitate solidarity practices and how certain Instagram affordances support it. Moreover, themes of their communication can shape the broader public debate by emphasizing certain forms of solidarity or narratives. In that regard, exploring SMIs' communication can help to identify whether they contribute to politicizing or depoliticizing the discourses about refugees and solidarity actions.

Acknowledging these societal trends and academic gaps, this study aims to investigate *about which themes of solidarity actions for the crisis after the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine do the influencers communicate through their Instagram posts of 2022?* The relevance of the analysis of the themes of humanitarian actions communicated by social media influencers is twofold.

Firstly, this study seeks to expand knowledge on the communication practices regarding spontaneous and grassroots humanitarian initiatives during one of the biggest migration crises after the Second World War. The study aims to contribute to existing literature depicting this humanitarian crisis by examining which themes were the most prevalent, and using which platform affordances they were disseminated on Instagram. More theoretically, this Master's Thesis will contribute to the literature on the mediated activism of SMIs, the interactions of Instagram affordances with certain solidarity practices, and the framework of small acts of engagement.

To answer the RQ, a qualitative content analysis will be conducted. Overall, 150 Instagram posts and stories, which were the two most important formats for disseminating information during the crises, published by 9 Polish social media influencers in 2022 will be examined. The chosen SMIs have a large reach and were extensively communicating and participating in humanitarian aid.

In the next sections, I will first discuss social media logics and key principles, which shape SMIs' communication, including on Instagram. Later, the subject will be contextualized by discussing aesthetic society, Instagramism, and the importance of visuals in political communication will be presented. Subsequently, the most prevalent Instagram affordances will be introduced and their significance for social justice communication. I then thoroughly discuss SMIs in the context of activism. Finally, SMIs' responsibility will be discussed with reference to the well-researched concept of celebrity humanitarianism.

2. Literature review

2.1 Social media logics and affordances

The advent and proliferation of social media platforms have transformed the core rules and conditions of social interaction. In the times of the ubiquity of SMPs, users can instantly generate, share, and exchange content online, and mass distribution is no longer limited to a select institutional few. The social media logics (SML) has shaped the rules of social interaction and influences not only human interactions, and politics but also activism, humanitarian actions, and migration. More specifically, SML can be defined as the “processes, principles, and practices through which these platforms process information, news, and communication, and more generally, how they channel social traffic” (Van Dijck & Poell, 2013, p. 5). In regard to the last point, Dekker and Engbersen (2013, p. 401) argue that social media logics lowers the threshold for migration and name four forms of SMPs migration facilitation: *helping to maintain contact with family members and friends, supporting the organization of the process and integration, building a new infrastructure of latent ties, and providing migrants with valuable insights and knowledge about the country they are migrating to* (Dekker & Engbersen, 2013, p. 401). In that regard, exploring the main principles and mechanisms of SMPs is significant for analysing Instagram communication of solidarity practices and examining their interactions with certain solidarity measures.

The SML is rooted in four fundamental principles and approaches: *programmability, popularity, connectivity, and datafication*. These core elements of SML not only influence and shape the rules of interaction and information dissemination in the digital media but also shape and facilitate social justice communication and activism communication on the SMPs. In that regard, understanding and discussing them is vital for the sake of answering the central research question and understanding the logic of communicating humanitarian practices.

The first principle refers to the new power structures offered by social media platforms, where one-way traffic yields two-way communication between users and programmers. In the SML, algorithms implemented in the platforms can incentivize users to share content and interact with it, while their interactions and engagement also affect the information flow. This principle is reflected in the social media platform’s business model, where users are not charged for access but are instead encouraged to create and share content themselves. Therefore, platforms are designed to promote continuous usage (Soto-Vásquez, 2021, p. 590).

The second principle of the SML, *popularity*, is prominently visible in sophisticated techniques of filtering content, amplifying chosen topics, and prioritizing influential users. Platform metrics which allow real-time popularity measurements, are increasingly acknowledged as valid benchmarks for assessing and ranking individuals (Van Dijck & Poell, 2013, p. 6-7). Van Dijck and Poell (2013) argue that the popularity principle leads to the staggering strive for online attention, which became an indispensable component of SML.

The principle of *connectivity* refers to the capability of platforms to link content with user actions and advertisers. In the interconnected realm of social media, the platform essentially manages user activities and dictates the formation of connections, although users retain some influence over content contribution. Moreover, SMPs provide users with the chance to select and engage with others on a personal level. Seen in this light, these mediums enable individuals to form personalized social networks and communities (Van Dijck & Poell, 2013, p. 8).

The last principle, *datafication*, is grounded on the ability of platforms to obtain, store, and modify many aspects of the world that have never been quantified before. In that regard, each type of content is treated as valuable data, used by SMPs to predict users' interactions and provide targeted advertisement and real-time analytics (Van Dijck & Poell, 2013, p. 9).

Given the key principles of social media logics, according to danah boyd (2011, p. 7) they can be transcribed to a set of four "meta-affordances" playing a key role in social media communication: *persistence, replicability, searchability, and scalability and*. For the sake of this study and the phenomenon of social media influencers, especially the first three affordances should be described. The first affordance refers to the default nature of social media platforms, where everything is recorded and archived. Consequently, even though some of the content is in its form ephemeral, it is almost impossible to delete digital traces of our activity and contributed content (boyd, 2011, p. 7-8). Moreover, in the realm of replicability, everything can be effortlessly duplicated and copied, blurring the line between original and artificial bits. At the same time, social media platforms offer potentially lavish visibility of content, that can be reached regardless of geographical location or time zone. However, from critics' perspective, this strive for visibility in social media entails the constant competition of users with algorithms, and platform owners (Cotter, 2018, p. 908-909). Finally, the last of boyd's "meta-affordance" – searchability – completely reinvents access to information. In the hyperconnected, digital world, search takes on a new role and is easier and more effective than ever before. Given the key rules and principles of social media logics, for the sake of the

study, it is crucial to underline that each social media platform, including Instagram, develops its distinct set of styles, grammar, and underlying principles, forming a prevalent mode of communication, termed a “platform vernacular” (Gibbs et al., 2014, p. 257). These communication styles arise from the affordances of specific social media platforms and how users adopt and employ them in real-world interactions. In the next sections, the Instagram-specific logics and affordances in the context of social change will be discussed.

2.2 Instagram communication and social change

Instagram is the most widely used photo and video-sharing platform, with over 2 billion monthly active users worldwide (Statista, 2024). With a wide variety of formats and sharing features, the SMP owned by Meta is not only used for lifestyle or fashion communication but is also gaining traction among audiences interested in activism, and political or social justice topics. Given the growing importance of Instagram, this section will focus on presenting Instagram communication in the context of social change and social justice communication.

In the following subsections, first, the key platform affordances will be described. Based on previous studies, researching these affordances is pertinent to examining representation on the platform, and understanding activism, social justice movements, and shaping solidarity practices (Dumitrica & Hockin-Boyers, 2022, p. 3318; Rosa & Soto-Vásquez, 2022, p. 1; Pearce, 2020, p. 209). Subsequently, the role of this SMP in social justice communication and its importance in the notion of aesthetic society will be presented in the following subsections.

2.2.1 Instagram communication and affordances

A unique feature that distinguishes Instagram today from other social networks is its strongly pronounced multimediality, i.e., the simultaneous combination of text, static images, audio, and video (Kozharinova & Manovich, 2024, p. 2). Consequently, the platform owned by Meta, offers numerous posting and sharing features such as hashtags, captions, tags, slideshows, or stories (Rosa & Soto-Vásquez, 2022, p. 1-3). All these features are part of platform affordances, which together with practices of use normalize and promote certain tropes, clichés, and templates (Leaver et al., 2020, p. 72). Among the key affordances

prevalent on the platform are: *brand-building news logic and hypertextuality, ephemeral affordances, status-seeking affordances, tagging affordances, filtering affordances, and mobile phone usage affordances*. In the following paragraph, these Instagram-specific affordances will be described.

First and foremost, Instagram operates primarily on a "brand-building news" logic , offering a high level of visually centered engaging content, that audiences can consume in a more passive way compared to other platforms like Facebook or X (formerly known as Twitter)(Hase et al., 2022, p. 1503). On the platform, the role of the algorithm in curating the feed is moderate, similar to the high level of hypertextuality (Hase et al., 2022, p. 1502). Hypertextuality is present on the platform in the form of direct redirection to other materials or outside sources – i.e. clickable links on IG story, links in profile description and collaborative posts.

The other significant characteristic of Instagram is the prevalence of ephemeral, short-lived content - Instagram Stories, which allow users to share moments of their everyday lives in a documentary and narrative style in a format that lasts for 24 hours (Hase et al., 2022, p. 1502-1503). This ephemerality also encourages higher levels of self-disclosure among users and reduces self-presentational concerns (Bainotti et al., 2020, p. 3658).

Kozharinova & Manovich (2024, p. 3) argue that even though Instagram is perceived as an instant photo and video-sharing social media platform, the affordances, features, and techniques of the medium make the app suitable for sharing long narratives, creating multifaceted “worlds”. In that regard, Instagram’s narrative capabilities can be compared to those of literature, film, or traditional media. These capabilities are especially prevalent in the function of Instagram Stories, ephemeral content published by users for 24 hours.

Among the most prominent affordances of the platform are status-seeking affordances, defined as “technical mechanisms that signal greater social status” i.e. all forms of reaction to the content shared by followed accounts (E. Marwick, 2012, p. 75). Users on Instagram can react to posts or Reels by clicking the heart button, commenting or reposting them on their Stories. Additionally, users can send each other content through direct messages. For content published on the Instagram grid, the platform offers three tagging affordances: hashtags, account tags, and location tags. The first one, hashtags act not only as a searchable tag but also can emphasize critique or additional comment to published visuals. Account tags involve mentioning other Instagram accounts, done by directly tagging them in the image or

mentioning them in the caption with the "@" symbol. Users can also use location tags to specify a geographic region, city, building, or address at the top of their post (Fiers, 2020, p. 4-5).

Under the term *Instagramable* stands the habit of polishing photo and video content before sharing it on the platform (Christanti et al., 2021, p. 396-397). Those visual alterations are enabled by filters in the Instagram app but also through external photo-editing software, providing filters and finetuning options to personalize self-representation and express personality traits, moods, aesthetics, and effects. More broadly, filtering affordances refer to beyond-visual excluding, including, manipulating, or enhancing content published in digital media. It encompasses issues like bias toward certain skin tones in digital photography, as well as the prevalence of automation and algorithmic cultures (Christanti et al., 2021, p. 398).

According to previous studies, visual filters applied to photos published on Instagram are associated with lower engagement rates and fewer number of received likes and interactions (Hong et al., 2020, p. 1). Therefore, some critics purport that the strive for perfect, polished and flawless visual content is the symbol of simulation, which is being presented on SMPs. Christanti et al. (2021) argue that interactions in the platform are “just to show what someone is doing” in order to receive intangible assets of likes or comments. In that regard, polishing of visual content is a form of “perform simulation”, where reality is replaced with reproduced false simulation (Christanti et al., 2021, p. 396).

Moreover, the accessibility and technological capabilities of smart mobile devices appear to introduce fresh methods for creating and distributing images, encouraging individuals to view events, people, and surroundings through a visual lens. These methods contribute to the transformation of social practices into visual data and increase the volume and diversity of visual content shared on the internet. Especially Instagram stands out for its significant usage on mobile devices, integrating seamlessly into daily routines (Gibbs et al., 2014, p. 258). The affordances of mobile devices coupled with Instagram features have led to the recontextualization of individuals' everyday lives into new arenas of social visibility and connection (Gibbs et al., 2014, p. 271). This pervasive mobile usage transforms Instagram into an "image machine," capturing and directing attention through the habitual scrolling, tapping, and viewing of images facilitated by smartphones (Carah & Shaul, 2015, p. 70).

This logic behind the addictive nature of the platform is evidenced by the increasing number of users worldwide and the average time they spend on it. Globally, Instagram reports

over 2,4 billion active users, spending an average daily time of 24 minutes on the platform. In Poland, Instagram is the third most popular social media platform with an average monthly number of 15,88 million users and a reach of over 53.19% of the Polish internet population. The platform is most popular among two user groups – 35-44 years old and 55+, with women dominating (Sadowski, 2023).

While Instagram, with its logic and affordances, is inherently associated with professional social media influencers, Peterson argues (2024, p. 154) that the landscape of the platform has undergone a significant transformation because of the professionalization of SMIs. The social medium designed to be a place for sharing personal photos with family and friends shifted towards a commercially-driven space flooded with sponsored posts, including from SMIs, targeted at a broad audience. However, concurrently with the professionalization of Instagram content, the number of entries referencing social justice or political causes is on the rise (Almela, 2023, p. 228). Therefore, in the next section, the usage of certain affordances of the platform by different prominent actors for activism causes will be discussed.

2.2.2 Instagram as a platform for social justice

Even though, in its nature, Instagram was designed to serve as a platform for self-representation, nowadays thanks to the platform's popularity medium is also used by groups advocating for social justice (Rosa & Soto-Vásquez, 2022) or supporting climate causes (Buhre, 2023, p. 252). Instagram affordances and visual rhetoric prevalent on the platform facilitate not only the visibility of the activists' claims but also help to raise support and share stories of minorities. For instance, Instagram is effectively utilized by feminist movements in Portugal to seek attention and strengthen popular cultural imaginary (Caldeira, 2023, p. 1) or grassroots climate activists (Buhre, 2023, p. 252). Following the death of George Floyd, grassroots organizations, activists, and the entertainment industry utilized Instagram as a platform for diverse forms of activism. These included initiatives like the contentious #BlackoutTuesday, live streaming street protests via Instagram live and raising awareness about social issues through Instagram Story and Carousel (Wellman, 2022, p. 1-3). One prevalent visual and rhetorical tactic, aiming at sharing social justice content on the platform is the slideshow activism (Dumitricia & Hockin-Boyers, 2022, p. 3317). This form typically comprises a series of slides, also known as a 'carousel' post, featuring brief texts and visual elements accessible via social media accounts. Utilizing Instagram's affordances, slideshow

activism employs a visual template tailored for accessibility and easy sharing. This format condenses complex political issues into accessible visualizations and creates a “vehicle for civic engagement” (Ledford & Salzano, 2022 as cited in Dumitrica & Hockin-Boyers, 2022, p. 3318). One of its key advantages lies in its cost-effective nature - both creating and further sharing, and disseminating slideshow content on Instagram takes the form of “low-risk activism” (Li, 2022, p. 719), minimalizing the cost of involvement in the matter. At the same time, studies prove that slideshow activism is an effective form of disseminating information and facilitating persuasion of knowledge on social issues and activism (Li, 2022, p. 719). This activist tactic has gained traction during solidarity actions with movements like Black Lives Matter and is currently being employed in causes such as the Israeli-Palestinian conflict (Ikhwan & Falah, 2024, p. 38).

Some of the visual techniques prevalent in the activist movements' communication on Instagram fit into the area of *artivism*, the practices popularized by anti-globalization movement established in the 1990s blending art with activism and using social networks as a crucial instrument of communication (Rodal et al., 2019, p. 25). Artivists can be characterized by having sophisticated, developed rhetorical language, mixing thematical and intertextual measures in addition to being highly skilled in the use of digital tools (Rodal et al., 2019, p. 26). In particular, the artivist movements gained traction among younger generations, who are digital native. In recent times, their engagement and political activism in civil and citizen protests have seen a notable rise. Undoubtedly, this trend is linked to the heightened attention of the younger population towards information generated and shared on social media platforms (Milner, 2013; Treré & Mattoni, 2016 in Rodal et al., 2019, p. 26). In particular, the techniques and “global language” developed by artivists are harnessed by present climate justice movements, feminism movements, critical urbanism or unequal globalization (Aladro et al. 2018 as cited in Rodal et al., 2019, p. 26).

There is a growing body of research examining the affordances of social media during migration and humanitarian crises. Studies reveal the significant role of SMP affordances in facilitating communication and information dissemination among refugees (Gillespie et al., 2018, p. 1). These platforms offer "communicative affordances" and "multimedia affordances," enabling refugees to share their experiences and evoke emotions such as hope or despair (Twigt, 2018, p. 1-2; Udwan et al., 2020, p. 2). Additionally, social media serves as a digital resilience resource, allowing refugees to maintain connections with family and friends in the absence of face-to-face interaction (Udwan et al., 2020, p. 5). In that regard, Dekker

and Engbersen (2013, p. 401) argue that these affordances facilitate the migration process and lower the threshold for migration.

In turn, examining empirical evidence from disaster response scenarios, such as the 2015 Myanmar flood and the 2018 Dead Sea flash floods in Jordan, highlights the role of social media platforms in mobilizing volunteers, facilitating immediate communication, and organizing relief efforts (Tha et al., 2017, p. 6-8; Banikalef et al., 2018, p. 5001). These findings underscore the transformative impact of social media on disaster response and crisis management, highlighting the platform's scalability and searchability in disseminating vital information and coordinating humanitarian efforts.

The growing role of visual SMPs, especially Instagram, in communicating political and societal topics should be seen in the broader context of visual global politics. Roland Bleiker (2018) argues that in today's mediatized world image not only shapes international events but also our understanding of them. At the same time, the democratization of visual politics can be observed, as capturing and distributing images is no longer reserved for global media outlets. Consequently, it is believed that in today's digital landscape, any group or individual, regardless of their location or political agenda, has the capacity to create and disseminate images that can achieve viral status (Bleiker, 2018, p. 6).

The significance of visuals in global politics stems from three key factors. Firstly, photographs often create an illusion of authenticity, leading to be perceived as unbiased representations of the world. However, this belief can be deceptive, as images can be manipulated or framed to convey specific messages or perspectives (Bleiker, 2018, p. 13-14). Secondly, images are not merely neutral recordings but are imbued with certain aesthetic choices, such as angle and composition, which can reflect power dynamics and convey stories from particular political positions. These choices influence how the content and the underlying narratives embedded within the images are perceived (Bleiker, 2018, p. 15). On top of that, the interpretation of images is crucial, as they derive meaning in relation to other images and societal assumptions and norms. Interpretation is inherently subjective and dependent on the values of the interpreters and evokes, appeals and generates certain emotions in viewers' minds. Thus, understanding images requires critical analysis and awareness of the contexts in which they are produced and consumed (Bleiker, 2018, p. 16-17). Given the growing importance of Instagram for social justice and political actions, the next section will describe the broader context of this visual platform popularity.

2.2.3 Aesthetic society and Instagramism

In the times of social media logics, images and visuals are being produced and shared in ever faster and more sophisticated ways than ever before (Kozharinova & Manovich, 2024, p. 3). The “pictorial turn”, first described by W.J.T. Mitchell (2018), is transforming not only culture, and global politics but also societal norms and rules. Lev Manovich, one of the most prominent researchers of digital culture, introduces the term “aesthetic society” and argues that we live in times where “the production of beautiful images, interfaces, objects, and experiences are central to its economic and social functioning, as well as the identities of millions of people” (Manovich, 2019, p. 1). In the aesthetic society, there is a high regard for professionals such as spatial designers, user-experience designers, architects, photographers, models, stylists, and other experts in design and media. Additionally, individuals proficient in social media usage, including the creation of polished media, and adept at utilizing marketing and analytics tools are valued. In this context, "using" denotes the ability to craft effective content, promote it, engage with followers, and accomplish specific objectives. From a broader perspective, he argues that aesthetics is no longer perceived as a property of art, but instead commodified and defined as the key property of commercial goods and services (Manovich, 2019, p. 5).

One of the most prominent areas of the aesthetic society is Instagram, which can be distinguished from other popular social media platforms since it has characteristic aesthetic strategies employed in many content published by the platform’s users. Manovich refers to this aesthetic of curated images published on the platform and introduces the term Instagramism. He argues that emerged in the early 2010s, Instagramism is represented by a new *global digital youth class* who use their skills on the platform to connect with other people, acquire social prestige and experience a sense of belonging (Manovich, 2019, p. 10). At its core, Instagramism, similar to earlier art movements (i.e. futurism, cubism, modernism), presents its unique perspective of the world and develops its distinct visual vocabulary. However, unlike traditional modern art movements, Instagramism is influenced by a vast network of creators, inspiring one another and exchanging tips on utilizing mobile photo applications for capturing, editing, and arranging photos to be shared on the platform. This specific aesthetic of the platform can be characterized by a high emphasis on *mood* and *atmosphere*, rather than solely depicting or conveying *emotions*. Moreover, photos designed using Instagram affordances often oppose traditional, mainstream image aesthetic – exaggerating perspective, applying visual filters or frame-cutting the center part of the photo

(Manovich, 2019, p. 13). Manovich also argues that the underlying principle of Instagramism lies in defining a particular, coherent style, which will be visible in all photos of one user's feed. Therefore, many Instagrammers use their skills and Instagram knowledge to design visually sophisticated feeds, which become part of their cultural capital.

Overall, Instagram as a leading photo-sharing social media platform is characterised by its own visual aesthetic. This distinct visual vocabulary is influenced not only by regular users, but also by prominent actors with large following and extensive reach – social media influencers. Therefore, in the next sections, the phenomenon of SMIs will be described in the context of digital activism and humanitarianism.

2.3 Social media influencers and activism

With the emergence and popularization of social media platforms, online content creators can amass an extensive number of followers and establish themselves as reliable and authentic sources of guidance for their online community, becoming social media influencers (SMIs) (Delbaere et al., 2020, p. 101). Defined as trusted individuals with extensive reach and impact on their audience attitudes, SMIs produce and share content presenting their daily routine, personal experiences, and outlooks, while engaging with their followers (Hudders et al., 2020, p. 327-328; Leung et al., 2022, p. 226). In their digital media presence, SMIs often reveal details about their personal lives and interact with followers as if they were friends, as they aim to cultivate parasocial relationships. These relationships entail a perceived sense of one-sided intimacy between media users and public figures like SMIs (Horton & Richard Wohl, 1956; Giles, 2002). At the same time, previous studies prove that SMIs serve as crucial role models, especially for adolescents (Hudders et al., 2021, p. 375). Although some definitions argue that there is a distinction between influencer and celebrity, SMIs are often referred to as micro-celebrities (Gaenssle & Budzinski, 2020, p. 79) and perceived as celebrities, who gained their fame through social media platforms (Hudders et al., 2020, p. 333). For the sake of this study, SMIs will be defined in this context.

2.3.1 Social media influencers: an introduction

Influencers play a pivotal role in shaping consumer decisions and behaviours, with their recommendations evaluated based on credibility cues such as expertise, attractiveness,

trustworthiness and similarity, as well as follower size, parasocial interaction, and sponsorship disclosure (Vrontis et al., 2021, p. 617). Their rise has contributed to a more egalitarian cultural landscape, lowering the barriers to celebrity status, but also exposing them to the risk of public backlash. At the same time, the growing number of SMIs activities not only advocate for consumers' interests but also societally relevant matters. For instance minorities, including LGBTQ+ individuals, find support and representation through influencers, aiding identity navigation (M. Li, 2021, p. 462-463). In addition, influencers have the potential to raise awareness for pro-social causes, such as health campaigns and body positivity, challenging societal norms, and promoting positive change (Lou et al., 2022, p. 71-72). Moreover, since influencers unlike traditional celebrities often maintain a higher level of interaction with their audience, they have the ability to foster a sense of community and connection. They can use their platform to establish “safe spaces”, where their followers can discuss taboo topics and normalize conversations around sensitive issues (Lou et al., 2022, p. 69-70). In that regard, numerous examples of SMIs supporting or allyship recent activism movements such as the Fridays For Future climate strike, Feminism movements or #BlackLivesMatter can be found (Knupfer et al., 2023, p. 4). Given that, Wellman (2022) examined the key reasons and motivations for their political engagement. Firstly, they post to satisfy their followers and meet audience expectations, maintaining their relevance and engagement. Secondly, supporting such movements helps influencers preserve their credibility and authenticity, reinforcing their commitment to social values. Additionally, education influencers use their platforms to advocate for social justice, aiming to inspire positive change and raise awareness about important issues like racial inequality. Overall, influencers engage in allyship to maintain their audience's trust, demonstrate their values, and promote social change.

Previous research on influencers can be broadly categorized into two main areas. The first focuses on influencers as cultural producers, examining how they build a career by cultivating an online following. In that regard, studies to date have researched the area of influencers' credibility, authenticity, and reasons for their success. Also, some studies gave insight into SMIs' motives for sharing particular content or disclosing statements on societal or political topics. In turn, the second category of existing studies explores influencers as a strategic tool employed by marketing and advertising professionals (Abidin, 2017, p. 1). This Master's thesis aims to answer the research gap in the first category of studies, namely providing a broader perspective on SMIs' responsibility and societal role during humanitarian

crisis. Therefore, in the upcoming section the framework of SMIs' social responsibility and existing research on the topic of celebrity humanitarianism will be discussed.

2.3.2 Social media influencers' responsibility

With the omnipresence of SMPs and a growing number of social media influencers, comes the discussion about online content creators' social role and the cultural capital they hold. Despite prevailing cultural pessimism regarding new technologies such as the internet and social networking sites (Knupfer et al., 2023, p. 2), the expectation for SMIs to advocate for relevant social issues and take responsibility for their following is growing (Tenbarga, 2020). At the same time, advocating for societal matters through SMPs is gaining significance (Yang et al., 2021, p. 565).

From a broader perspective, taking a stance in societal and political matters by corporate entities and brands is not a recent phenomenon. Corporate social responsibility (CSR) as “the responsibility of enterprises for their impacts on society and outlines what an enterprise should do to meet that responsibility” (*Corporate Social Responsibility: A New Definition, a New Agenda for Action*, 2011) is a well-researched concept that has been evolving since 1953 (Dahlsrud, 2006, p. 1-3). At the same time, the phenomena of brand activism and “prosocial corporate practices” (Vredenburg et al., 2020, p. 445 as cited in Thomas & Fowler, 2023, p. 2) are gaining significance, while studies prove its positive perceptions by consumers (Thomas & Fowler, 2023, p. 2-3). Therefore, some argue that influencers, as human brands, need to also meet certain expectations from consumers about their advocacy behavior and activism practices (Thomas & Fowler, 2023). Consequently, SMIs, similar to corporate organizations, are translating and implementing CSR principles to address social issues that are significant to their followers. Taking a proactive attitude and speaking out on relevant topics can help build trust and credibility (Francés & Piqueras-Tomás, 2019, p. 83).

Previous studies that investigated SMIs' activism found that through involvement in activism, SMIs can be seen as an ersatz for traditional medial channels (Fowler & Thomas, 2023b, p. 8-9; Tüfekçi, 2013, p. 848) and play a vital role in communicating corporate social responsibility messages (M. Li, 2021, p. 718). Jenn Burleson Mackay (2021, p. 152-153) presents an ethical perspective and argues that SMIs hold a unique position in society and can be described as “quasi-journalists”, who “share product news, but who have may a direct,

personal stake in brands that supply the merchandise they review”. Therefore, it is argued that SMIs hold the responsibility to support social values and use their following to reinforce them. At the same time, they build around themselves a community and should make decisions that serve the overall needs of the community (Mackay, 2021, p. 157-159).

SMIs activism can be also seen and rationalized from the perspective of citizenship behaviors, defined as spontaneous, beyond specified roles and requirements towards individuals (King & Grace, 2012 as in Thomas & Fowler, 2023, p. 2). Promoting a sociopolitical issue constitutes citizenship behaviours for the influencer, as they act as an informal supporter and aim to directly advance the cause. Individuals engaging in such behaviours often do so out of dedication (King & Grace, 2012, p. 469-470), and due to a perceived alignment between the brand and their self-identity (Helm et al., 2016, p. 58). In that regard, the results of the study conducted by Thomas & Fowler (2023, p. 1) prove that SMIs activism is positively correlated with consumers’ attitudes towards the influencer. However, when the influencer does not deliver the anticipated societal engagement, this results in decreased perceptions of authenticity and attitudes.

The SMIs involvement in activism causes often takes the form of *small acts of engagement (SAOE)*, defined as casual, productive audience practices with potential for resistance (Picone et al., 2019, p. 2011). Instagram practices like reacting or liking, commenting, and re-sharing (i.e. Instagram Stories) serve as small acts of political engagement, enabling the engagement of individuals who might otherwise be hesitant to participate. Even though these interactions are often low labour-intensive, and are described by critics as *slacktivism* (Cabrera et al., 2017, p. 400) since they can be performed without “stepping out of the comfort zone of our daily routine” (Picone et al., 2019, p. 2017–2018), they not only have the potential to facilitate the ongoing discussion on vital societal issues (Caldeira, 2024, p. 16-17) but also amass collective strength, possibly resulting in fundamental structural change (Picone et al., 2019, p. 2022–2023).

2.3.3 Communicative themes in social media influencers’ activism versus celebrity humanitarianism

Given the outcomes of SMIs’ activism, similar practices in the area of humanitarian aid were exemplified by celebrities. Due to the fact of limited and fragmented nature of previous studies that have depicted SMIs’ social activism, and the clear link between

traditional celebrities and online trusted individuals, this study will present the state of art in influencers' activism in comparison to well-researched celebrity humanitarianism.

The phenomenon of celebrities advocating for social issues and supporting humanitarian actions has been raising significance through the last decade (Almela, 2023, p. 228). Especially the advent of SMPs has revolutionized how celebrities can mobilize their fans for humanitarian causes. In times of social media logics, even with physical distances, a sense of closeness and intimacy can be established between the celebrity and their fans (Bennett, 2012). Consequently, prominent celebrities can disseminate their messages of concern and encouragement to their extensive fan bases. This form of “advocacy for the poor and ill, primarily those populations residing in developing regions” has been conceptualized as celebrity humanitarianism (Mitchell, 2016, p. 288) and has been extensively researched in the context of refugee crises (Turcott & Ariyo, 2022; Mostafanezhad, 2017). For instance, Almela (2023, p. 228) discovered that celebrities in their Instagram posts reproduce colonial and gender dynamics. Previous studies in the field of celebrity humanitarianism have also found that most of the initiatives taken by influential public figures victimize people in need of humanitarian aid and thus depoliticizing their issues (Turcott & Ariyo, 2022, p. 675).

Altruistic actions undertaken by celebrities can in general involve donating money, goods, or time. This may encompass activities such as increasing awareness, fundraising, political advocacy, policy lobbying, or discreet diplomacy with influential organizations, partnerships with the private sector, military interventions, training, workshops, and initiatives aimed at improving livelihoods (Richey, 2023, p. 212). Similar solidarity activities were discovered in Instagram communication of individuals during humanitarian crisis. The following main types of solidarity practices were distinguished: direct promotion, indirect promotion, fundraising, giving resources and time, helping, inspiring, interacting and raising awareness (McCosker et al., 2020, p. 1880). The first two categories referred to promoting existing humanitarian or solidarity practices on Instagram channels i.e. giving reach and publicity to food share actions or indirect participation at a charity ball. Next theme comprised supporting or informing about the results of fundraising practice, while giving resources and time often overlapped with directly helping for the humanitarian cause. The last three categories were form of indirect raising awareness practices, aiming to inspire and encourage others to act (McCosker et al., 2020, p. 1876-1878). This typology will be later harnessed to develop coding frame for this study.

However, to the best of the author's knowledge, no previous literature examined the humanitarianism framework in the context of social media influencers. Moreover, to date, little has been known about solidarity discourse disseminated by SMIs. It can be argued that since there is a theoretical overlap between celebrities and SMIs, which were discussed in the previous sections, examples of celebrity humanitarianism during migration crises can serve as a starting point for further research.

3. Methodology

3.1 Qualitative approach

Qualitative research is based on the assumption that meaning is socially constructed by individuals in interaction with reality, which has multiple interpretations, contexts, and constructions. Qualitative studies investigate those interpretations in a given time and context, to discover how people are experiencing some phenomena and interact with their social world (Merriam, 2002). This research method is most appropriate for answering “why” and “how” questions (Ritchie et al., 2013, p. 3) and helps to understand complex phenomena and problems (Thompson & Harper, 2011). Therefore, this approach is suitable for the aims of this Master’s thesis and central research question.

Brennen (2013, p. 4) emphasizes the interdisciplinary nature of qualitative research, which aims to comprehend the broader spectrum of human relationships. In contrast to quantitative approaches, qualitative methodologies prioritize delving into and interpreting the meaningful connections among data rather than simply quantifying phenomena. Commonly utilized within media studies, qualitative research facilitates an in-depth examination of complex, socially constructed phenomena, particularly focusing on the diverse meanings and values generated through discourse across various media platforms. Qualitative research is founded upon interpretive and theoretical frameworks, with the objective of elucidating the meanings individuals or groups attribute to social or human issues. Language plays a pivotal role in qualitative inquiry, functioning as a vehicle for communicating ideas, constructing social realities, and understanding the nuances of words and concepts within specific contexts (Brennen, 2013, p. 14). In contrast to quantitative methodologies, qualitative researchers eschew the identification of variables or the formulation of hypotheses. Instead, they pose research questions, seek to understand the meanings behind phenomena, and consider the research process within the context of relevant social practices (Brennen, 2013, p. 15).

Moreover, qualitative research is often undertaken when there is no theoretical framework or when phenomena cannot be adequately explained using established models. Thus, the research process is mainly inductive and richly descriptive (Merriam, 2002, p. 4-5; Vaismoradi et al., 2016, p. 100). Consequently, the qualitative method is the most suitable to examine themes used in online communication on Instagram and answer the central research question. Studying the themes prevalent in SMIs’ Instagram communication will help to give insights into how social media communication can shape the public debate about the

humanitarian crisis and influence spontaneous solidarity actions organized by citizens. This study will also uncover whether and how these patterns politicize or depoliticize the public perception of the war in Ukraine. At the same time, as the qualitative research enables the interpretation of meaning within textual and visual elements, this approach will be valuable to examine the role and importance of SMIs' Instagram communication and platform's affordances during humanitarian crises.

3.2 Qualitative content analysis

Qualitative content analysis is a type of qualitative analysis, suitable for visual, verbal, or textual materials. This method is commonly used in communication and media studies since it offers high flexibility and provides an in-depth understanding of the data under analysis (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005, p. 1277). Qualitative content analysis is distinguished by extracting the significance of qualitative data through the organization of extensive content into a condensed collection of categories that represent similar meanings (Schreier, 2014, p. 374). This methodological approach can be applied to examine the occurrence of concepts, terms, or expressions, such as those found in social media posts, in order to uncover their underlying implications and associations (Matthews & Ross, 2010, p. 124). The Qualitative content analysis is in its nature mainly inductive, making this method suitable for studies aiming to build new theories in the form of typologies or for exploratory research, when there is limited knowledge available regarding the phenomenon based on content that is under investigation (Parker et al., 2011, p. 4). This suitability aligns with the objectives of the current research.

In contrast to various qualitative approaches that often expand or contribute to data, qualitative content analysis aims to streamline the data by narrowing down the material, making it suitable for studying online communication and discourse. Additionally, this method entails concentrating on specific dimensions of meaning elicited from themes and patterns that relate to visuals and textual material. Therefore, QCA helps to narrow down the data analysis to relevant patterns to study online discourse and Instagram communication (Schreier, 2014, p. 170). Moreover, qualitative content analysis has been previously widely used in studies investigating social media influencers (Xu et al., 2020), Instagram communication (Goh et al., 2021), or humanitarian aid discourse analysis (Safarpour et al., 2019). Since this research method is not constructed to analyse only one type of material,

qualitative content analysis can be used to simultaneously look at both textual and visual materials. Consequently, the hidden meanings and relationships between different elements of analysed Instagram posts can be found, which makes this method the most suitable for studying and better understanding the phenomenon of SMIs' Instagram communication and platform's affordances during humanitarian crises and subsequently answering the central research question (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005, p. 1277-1280).

3.3 Sample & data collection

This Master's thesis examined the two most prevalent Instagram formats - posts and highlighted Instagram stories published between the 24th of February and 24th of May 2022 on the accounts of 9 Polish SMIs: *Marcin Dubiel (@marcindubiel)*, *Michał Marszał (@michalmarszał)*, *Rafał Myśliński & Kamil Natil (@sucharcodzienny)*, *Julia Wieniawa (@juliawieniawa)*, *Anja Rubik (@anja_rubik)*, *Nicole Sochacki-Wójcicka (@maginekolog)*, *Marta Manowska (@martamanowska)*, *Krzysztof Gonciarz (@kgonciarz)*, *Magda Jagnicka (@magdajagnicka)* (see Table 1). The SMIs have been chosen based on their reach, intensity of communication during that period, and active, continuous involvement or promotion of at least one humanitarian or solidarity action (Godziński, 2023). Analysis of the content published in the first three months of the Russian invasion of Ukraine is the most relevant since in that period the biggest number of refugees arrived in Poland and the largest scale of solidarity actions among Polish society (Kaczmarczyk & Duszczuk, 2020; OHCHR, n.d.). Instagram has been selected for this analysis due to its growing popularity in Poland and its utility during other humanitarian crises, as examined in previous studies (McCosker et al., 2020). The secondary data have been collected using the purposive approach to exclude the analysis of irrelevant posts, which do not refer to solidarity practices and might impact the research's validity.

Table 1

Selected SMIs

Number	Influencer	Reach (number of followers)
1.	<i>Marcin Dubiel (@marcindubiel)</i>	2 300 000
2.	<i>Michał Marszał (@michalmarszał)</i> ,	406 000
3.	<i>Rafał Myśliński & Kamil Natil</i>	1 900 000

	<i>(@sucharcodzienny)</i>	
4.	<i>Julia Wieniawa (@juliawieniawa)</i>	2 100 000
5.	<i>Anja Rubik (@anja_rubik)</i>	1 600 000
6.	<i>Nicole Sochacki-Wójcicka (@mamaginekolog)</i>	961 000
7.	<i>Marta Manowska (@martamanowska)</i>	212 000
8.	<i>Krzysztof Gonciarz (@kgonciarz)</i>	290 000
9.	<i>Magda Jagnicka (@magdajagnicka)</i>	48 000

A total of 51 posts and 99 stories were included in the study, all of which met the inclusion criteria. This sample size was selected in order to provide a comprehensive overview of the phenomenon and to reach the point of data saturation. The main criterion that the post or story needs to meet to be selected was the explicit textual or visual reference, presentation, or sharing of the story of supporting or solidarizing with Ukrainians and refugees who fled to Poland. The author initially examined all posts published during the research period and excluded content that did not meet the primary inclusion criterion. Subsequently, the highlighted stories section on each profile was examined to ascertain whether influencers had any highlighted stories devoted to solidarity practices. This sampling strategy enabled to effectively select appropriate and useful materials for the analysis (Campbell et al., 2020, p. 652).

Given the description of the methodological approach, it is worth underlying that qualitative study focuses on examining the issue from a certain perspective, which may be shaped by the author's certain suppositions, assumptions, and beliefs about the analysed topic. In that regard, my Polish nationality, age, liberal political beliefs, sympathy toward Ukrainian refugees and active participation in solidarity actions organized in the Polish capital may influenced the chosen angle of the study and the selection of social media influencers for the analysis. In order to minimize my personal bias, objective sampling criteria and an established typology of solidarity actions have been harnessed. Also, the author's assumptions and inclinations have been taken into consideration while preparing the final report. Moreover, in light of debates about ethical research in the social media context (Gerrard, 2020, p. 686), to take due care and protect the privacy of social media users, only publicly available posts and stories have been included.

3.4 Operationalization

According to the central research question, the main concepts that this Master's thesis focuses on are social media influencers, solidarity, and humanitarian action, politicizing and depoliticizing discourses. For the sake of this research, social media influencers were defined as “celebrities, who gained their fame through social media platforms and have an extensive reach and impact on their audience attitudes” (Hudders et al., 2020, p. 327). Considering the popularity of Instagram as the main platform for social media influencers' reach, this study included SMIs who use Instagram as the dominant platform of their communication. For the sake of this research, solidarity is seen as “the preparedness to share resources with others by personal contribution to those in struggle or need” (Stjerno, 2005, in Wallaschek, 2019, p. 79) and as a broader term also encompasses humanitarian actions, understood as “the active provision of aid designed to save lives, alleviate suffering, and restore and promote human dignity in the wake of disasters and during large-scale emergencies” (Pringle & Hunt, 2015, p. 1). In that regard, solidarity actions have been operationalized via the following types: *direct or indirect promotion, fundraising, giving resources or time, helping, inspiring, interacting, and raising awareness* (McCosker et al., 2020, p. 1880).

Since studying the themes SMIs' communicated during the first months of the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine aims to explore how their communication can shape the public debate and discourses about the humanitarian crisis and solidarity actions, it is worth studying the extent to which their communication refers to political themes and provide further contextualization of the war. For instance, previous studies in the field of celebrity humanitarianism have discovered that most of the initiatives taken by influential public figures are victimizing people in need of humanitarian aid and thus depoliticizing their issues (Turcott & Ariyo, 2022, p. 675). However, to date, little has been known about humanitarian and solidarity discourse disseminated by SMIs. Therefore, in this study, the terms politicizing and depoliticizing discourse have been utilized to describe overarching topics in influencers' posts and stories. For the sake of this Master's Thesis politicizing has been operationalized as “describing the humanitarian crisis as a political issue with certain political values and decisions that need to be taken by political representatives and referring to actions or narratives of the state authorities and political actors” (Krzyżanowski et al., 2018, p. 2). In turn, depoliticizing has been defined as “portraying the crisis as a non-political matter, subtly directed away from stated-based responses, and depicting refugees as powerless individuals lacking political agency” (Pandır, 2019, p. 409).

3.5 Data analysis

This Master's Thesis has integrated both deductive and inductive approaches to maintain the validity of the study. To enhance the reliability of the study, in the coding phases, the framework established by Schreier (2014) has been followed. Firstly, the content has been manually extracted from Instagram by the author and uploaded into an Excel file, where further analysis has been conducted. Each post and story have been analyzed individually and described in the table consisting of the following elements: number of saved content, type of content (Story or Post) publication date, author, and extracted caption (original and translated in English).

The coding frame has been developed based on inductive and deductive approaches and structured into three main topics – types of solidarity actions, Instagram affordances and functionalities of the shared content. Initially, the coding frame has been devised based on the existing categories of humanitarian and solidarity actions, derived from McCosker et al. (2020, p. 1880) and Kiess et al. (2018, p. 48), namely: *direct promotion, giving resources & time, solidarizing, and raising awareness*. Additionally, this typology has been reinforced by integrating the functionalities of social media posts for nonprofit communication outlined by Lovejoy and Saxton (2012, p. 337) – *informing, mobilizing, educating and building community*. Moreover, given the specific nature of social media platforms, their role in SMIs' communication, and the aim of this study to examine the interaction of platform affordance with certain solidarity practices, the codebook has been informed by the framework of social media logics. It has also been shaped by the chosen Instagram affordances prevalent in the analysed data, namely: *sharing affordances, hypertextuality affordances, tagging affordances, and mobile phone usage affordances*. Politicizing and depoliticizing features found in themes have been classified as meta-themes of humanitarian actions. In that regard, themes with direct reference to the political context of the war, promoting the institutional actions (i.e. official government website) or political memes or infographic were classified as politicizing. In turn, content focusing on stories of war victims, volunteers and grassroots solidarity initiatives, depicting the crisis as non-political in its core were reported as depoliticizing the discourse. It is important to note that the categories are not mutually exclusive, allowing for multiple codes or options to be associated with each (sub)theme. This ensures that overlapping themes can be accurately represented.

After the creation of the first version of the codebook based on existing literature and frameworks, additional categories were identified in the data and were incorporated into the

codebook. The creation of subcodes followed an iterative, data-driven approach involving the continuous movement back and forth within the sample to identify and code any emerging elements, with ongoing refinement of the coding framework (Kock et al., 1997, p. 1). Before proceeding with the primary analysis, the coding frame has been applied to a smaller dataset in a trial coding, a crucial component of the pilot phase. In the next step, the coded data was analysed to identify overarching themes and find relation to the existing theoretical frameworks in the field. Finally, the findings of the analysis were presented in a clear and transparent way in the results section of the Master's thesis.

Despite the common misperception that qualitative research methods cannot take into account figures and numbers, examining the frequency and salience of each theme is useful to generate meaning from qualitative data (Sandelowski, 2001, p. 230-231). Consequently, this study has also examined the frequency of occurrence of each sub-theme within the entire dataset. This have enabled the identification of the most prevalent themes of communication and the proportion of the total communication practices that they represent.

3.6 Validity and reliability

While using a qualitative approach, especially qualitative content analysis it is vital to identify on the initial stage of the research author's assumptions and biases that may affect the results of the study. To ensure the validity and reliability of this research, two specific procedures have been implemented. Firstly, the sample has been gathered using a purposive approach to prevent the inclusion of random or irrelevant posts, which could compromise the research's relevance and validity. Thus, posts have been purposefully selected based on predefined criteria established by the researcher (Tongco, 2007, p. 147). Additionally, to enhance transparency in the coding process, a codebook containing all identified subcodes and main categories has been appended to this paper (Sutton & Austin, 2015, p. 229). However, it is important to note that qualitative content analysis is inherently subjective, potentially resulting in divergent outcomes when analysed by different researchers. Nevertheless, such subjectivity is not anticipated to significantly impact the overall validity and reliability of the research conducted.

4. Results

The main goal of this study was to examine the types of solidarity actions communicated by Polish influencers on Instagram after the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022. Additionally, the author wanted to research how certain platform affordances supported different solidarity practices and how influencers' communication was shaping humanitarian discourse. The study identified and classified four main types of solidarity actions: 1) promoting existing solidarity practices; 2) giving financial or material resources; 3) raising awareness of the war and its victims; and 4) solidarizing with Ukrainians in the reflex of humanity.

The most salient theme referred to promoting existing solidarity practices. Through their Instagram content, Polish influencers increased exposure and publicity of fundraisers, food & clothes collections, and other local initiatives. Promoting was found to be facilitated by hypertextuality and tagging affordances of Instagram, which helped lower the threshold for donations. The second most widely reported type of solidarity practice encompassed giving financial or material resources. Among these actions was high-engagement direct support of offline relief efforts, requiring a commitment of own time and material resources, especially by organizing or co-organizing by SMI collection for food, clothes, medical supplies, or fundraisers for refugees. These initiatives were characterized by a high level of spontaneity, as well as the significant role of Instagram affordances and the power of influencers' community. Further, among others elicited types of solidarity actions were raising awareness practices, giving time & resources, and solidarizing practices. In the next sections, each theme will be sorely described.

Overall, the influencers' communication was found to reflect and reproduce depoliticizing humanitarian discourses. Although some of the shared content referred to the political background of the conflict or mocked Vladimir Putin, mostly influencers' coverage focused on presenting different types of humanitarian solidarity practices. Their communication depicts the grassroots, spontaneous nature of the provision practices and often shifts the attention to individual stories of victims, who serve as a witness to the cruelty of war. As a result, refugees and their issues are redirected away from political, state-based responses, towards individual forms of aid practice (Mitchell, 2016). What is more, focus was also put on the fate of animals, by endorsing and promoting fundraising initiatives for the

most vulnerable and forgotten victims of the war. Therefore, their communication reproduces depoliticizing humanitarian discourses.

4.1 Promoting existing solidarity practices

Among all of the analysed content, the largest number of posts and stories (39% of all the analysed materials) were focused on promoting existing solidarity practices. It is worth mentioning that in general, the acts of promoting were often blurring the line between different forms of solidarity actions, but for the sake of this study was distinguished by direct reference and encouragement to support already existing initiatives. In this theme, 5 specific types of actions were distinguished – promoting fundraising initiatives, promoting food and clothes collections, promoting Facebook support groups, promoting reliable NGOs and promoting initiatives for animals.

4.1.1 Promoting fundraising initiatives

The first and most prevalent type of content refers to posting or sharing direct references to fundraising initiatives. The analysed SMIs disseminated mainly fundraisers organized by reliable, often renowned NGOs who specialize in humanitarian aid and solidarity initiatives. Some of the shared fundraisers were repeated on the profiles of various influencers. For that sake, SMI harnessed mainly Instagram Story (see Figure 1), which is an ephemeral format for instant sharing updates and engaging followers with timely content and real-time interactions (Bainotti et al., 2020, p. 3658). In several cases, influencers rather than focusing merely on a certain collection initiative, shared a whole list of reliable and verified entities running fundraisers – often using for that sake the slideshow affordances (see Figure 2), especially popular among influencers with track records in supporting other social justice or political causes. Additionally, some influencers used the Instagram Story format to share several fundraisers in a row - just within a few minutes. As a result, their daily Stories consisted of numerous, single stories with similar content.

Posts and stories characterized as promoting were often location-based forms of “social media accounting” (Humphreys, 2018 cited in McCosker et al., 2020, p. 1884), helping to provide the necessary resources in a given time and place. These results align with previous studies, which also discovered the omnipresence of promoting practices in Instagram

communication during humanitarian crises (McCosker et al., 2020, p. 1870). Also promoting, as a natural part of social media logics (Van Dijck & Poell, 2013) and a tactic prominent in influencers' daily practices, was already found as the most salient theme in influencer's social justice communication, i.e. promoting Black Lives Matters protest (Wellman, 2022, p. 1).

Since posts characterized as promoting fundraising initiatives were the most prominent ones and often limited only to sharing a screenshot or reposting content from NGOs, these promotional and participatory practices can be seen as small acts of engagement (SAOE) (Picone et al., 2019, p. 2011). The acts of sharing, liking, and commenting require little time and resource investment and can be a casual form of promoting solidarity practices (Picone et al., 2019, p. 2011). In analysed examples, influencers often did not create any additional visual content on their own, merely adding brief, few-word text to encourage followers to support shared fundraisers. However, previous studies discovered that these low-engagement practices on an aggregate level of large online audiences, have the transformative power and potential to become powerful resistance acts (Picone et al., 2019, p. 2012). Moreover, promoting fundraising initiatives has a form of low-risk participation and civic engagement in solidarity practices, which in other studies was found to be caused by emotional reactions and basic human values (Gundelach & Toubøl, 2019, p. 199).

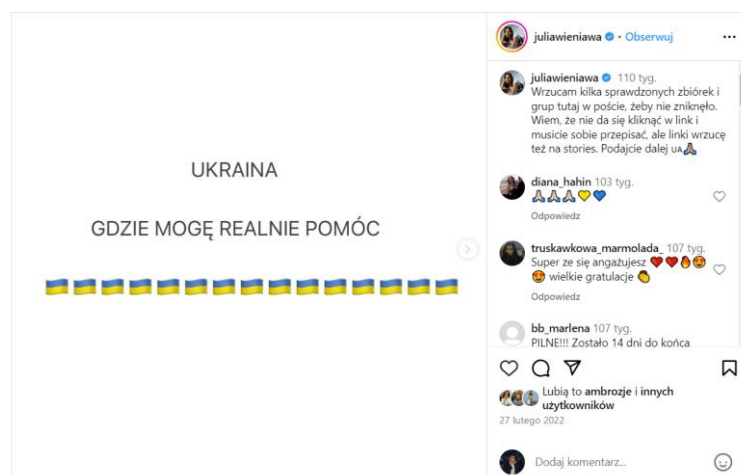
Figure 1

Fundraising initiatives shared on Instagram Story (Suchar Codzienny, n.d.)¹



Figure 2

Sharing a list of reliable fundraising initiatives in the form of a slideshow (Julia Wieniawa, n.d.)



¹ Instagram stories were collected manually from the highlighted stories section on each SMI profile, therefore the exact date of publication can not be determined

4.1.2 Promoting food and clothes collections

In turn, more personalized, influencer-dependent, and localized promoting practices referred to sharing food and clothes collections. Analysed SMIs' informed their followers about initiatives and provided updates on which products were needed in specific reception centers. It is worth mentioning that shared collections were often targeted to the local community, in certain cities or geographical areas. Therefore, these practices were acts of promoting focused on targeted, location-based content, having a form of "social media accounting" – media practices allowing users to document and circulate certain parties of the world around them. (Humphreys, 2018 cited in McCosker et al., 2020, p. 1884). Influencers chosen for this study, characterized by a wide following and diversified audience were able to reach with this specific, local message to certain followers, living exactly where additional support was needed. In that regard, also the spontaneous, grassroots nature of the solidarity practices was reflected in SMIs' communication since they were sharing often initiatives organized by unspecialized entities, i.e. their favourite local coffee, popular fashion agency, or restaurant. At the same time, given the spontaneous nature of the aid initiatives in the first week after the invasion, some of the aid provision centers and NGOs were flooded with food, clothes, or medical items that were not the first need at that time. Therefore, some of the organizations asked their regular followers, but also influencers to help disseminate daily updates with exact lists of products needed (see Figure 3 & 4). If you are going shopping today - these products are the top priority! (Julia Wieniawa, n.d.)² – these were messages disseminated by SMIs via their Instagram platforms.

² The text from posts and stories was translated by the author and according to APA 7 has a form of paraphrase

Figure 3

Instagram Story shared by Julia Wieniawa (Julia Wieniawa, n.d.)



Figure 4

If you would like to support helping these families then please buy a larger quantity of a product of your choice from this list and deliver to @terminalkultura – Instagram Story shared by Anja Rubik (Anja Rubik, n.d.)



While in the case of fundraisers, influencers merely promoted some initiatives and demonstrated small level of engagement, without disclosing whether they financially supported the shared fundraisers, in regard to food and clothes collections, their involvement was higher. For instance, influencer Julia Wieniawa (@juliawieniawa) posted on her Instagram Story photos of her sorting out her wardrobe to donate some of her unworn clothes to refugee families while informing her followers where they can donate their clothes or other needed resources. Consequently, by showing an example of personal commitment to helping refugees, influencers increased the credibility of the content they shared to promote other fundraisers and collections but also reinforced the mobilizing message and call-to-actions, featured in their posts and stories.

4.1.3 Promoting initiatives designed to help animals

The conducted study elicited that among promoting practices were also initiatives designed to help animals, including those remaining in Ukraine or having been relocated to Poland with their owners. Disseminated content promoting these practices often entailed mentioning the influencer's own emotional attachment to animals or sharing personal stories (see Figure 5).

Figure 5

My heart breaks...Buy food too + I will add info on how else to help the four-legged animals soon – Instagram Story shared by Julia Wieniawa (Julia Wieniawa, n.d.)



Similar to the personal involvement of SMIs' in some food and clothes collections, the study found out that discourse about animal-support initiatives was more personalized and diverse, with noticeably greater commitment of time and resources to promote these collections. Influencers, in their posts and stories, not only shared their emotional reflections on the fate of animals but also stressed that in the cruelty of war, the fate of the weakest should not be forgotten. Even though these promoting practices were less prevalent than the two main ones previously described, they confirm a growing visibility of nonhuman animals in the contemporary post-humanist humanitarian and solidarity narrative (Barona et al., 2024, p. 1-2).

At the same time, the prevalence of content-giving advocacy and aid for the needs of animals is an example of depoliticizing the discourse about humanitarian crises and shifting the attention to individual stories of victims. Similar to depictions of children tend to depoliticize and decontextualize refugees' situation and present them as lacking political agency and agenda, the portrayal of animals and their suffering is shifting the attention to emotional response, compassion, and empathy towards war victims (Mitchell, 2016, p. 288).

4.1.4 Promoting Facebook support group and informing about NGOs

Additionally, some influencers decided to use their platform and reach to promote the Instagram profiles of reliable NGOs specializing in humanitarian aid for refugees rather than promoting particular collections or fundraisers. Similar to the sub-theme for direct promotion of fundraising initiatives, these promoting practices can be classified as low-risk participation, focusing on increasing exposure and publicity of the organizations specializing in aid. However, by disseminating information about different organizations, influencers take on the role of quasi-journalists (Watkins, 2021, p. 153), who provide accurate, unbiased information and leave it up to their audience to decide which initiative to support.

While most of the solidarity actions focused on promoting existing initiatives harnessed the specific nature of Instagram and its affordances, some of the Stories or Posts published by influencers were redirecting to Facebook groups dedicated to building structures among volunteers or providing guidance for refugees (see Figure 6). This observation highlights the different roles each social media platform can play during humanitarian aid and solidarity practices. Instagram, with a prevalence of ephemeral content and visual nature, can be leveraged for sharing instant updates, promoting initiatives, or mobilizing an audience. In turn, Facebook's affordances and functionalities of Facebook groups can facilitate building community, organizing structures, and fostering the integration of refugees (Carlsen et al., 2023, p. 1). This finding regarding the mutual importance of these platforms as two complementary communication and mobilization channels aligns with previous studies. The research conducted after the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine in Denmark discovered that most of the Facebook groups created in the wake of the crisis focused on providing direct humanitarian relief aid while offering a structuralized and organized place for sharing recent updates. Moreover, the spontaneous and grassroots nature, especially in the first weeks of the solidarity actions, was later structured and organized with the help of Facebook groups. Thanks to the platform affordances, these informal groups formed on Facebook acted as central hubs for volunteer recruitment. In turn, Instagram with its visual nature and prevalence of ephemeral content foremostly facilitated the promotion of already existing solidarity and humanitarian initiatives, and the rapid dissemination of recent information – both from grassroots initiatives and official government sources.

Figure 6

This group was set up for people from Ukraine who are forced to flee and seek safe haven outside their country. Here you will find announcements about lending/renting you flats, rooms, houses all over Poland and other forms of assistance. – Instagram story shared by @sucharcodzienny (Suchar Codzienny, n.d.)



4.1.5 Tagging and hypertextuality affordances for promoting efforts

Considering the discussion of the most important promoting practices found and the crucial role of Instagram in disseminating information during a crisis, it is vital to underline the importance of certain platform affordances in humanitarian communication. The study found out that promoting existing solidarity practices was mainly possible thanks to the tagging and hypertextuality affordances, both implemented in the Instagram Stories format.

Hypertextuality, with its key feature of adding clickable hyperlinks to external sources, facilitated the promoting solidarity initiatives, especially fundraisers and collections. Thanks to the clickable button followers were able to instantly, with just one click go to the donation website, learn more about the campaign, and potentially contribute to it. Influencers were very keen to use this functionality, placing the button in a prominent position on the screen. Unlike other formats available on Instagram, which allow effortless, superficial practices of liking or sharing posts with fundraisers, clickable hyperlinks can have a significant impact on convincing users to take the next step and make an actual donation (Dehdashti et al., 2022, p.

2). Consequently, the threshold for financial support was lowered (Dekker & Engbersen, 2013, p. 401).

A similar role in the promoting practices played the tagging affordances, mainly in the form of account tags and location tags. The first feature enables locating in an Instagram post or Story direct, clickable tag to one's Instagram profile. Account tags were widely used by SMIs not only in reposted stories with fundraisers or collections but also for sharing reliable NGOs and directly redirecting followers to an Instagram profile of an organization. In turn, the location tagging feature was found especially useful for promoting local food and clothes collections, since followers instantly knew if they could donate items in their area. The prevalence of location tagging aligns with the results of previous studies, highlighting the deliberate use of this affordance to localize shared content (McCosker et al., 2020, p. 1874).

The last part of the analysis focused on discovering the functionalities of the promoting content published by chosen SMIs. By no surprise, the majority of the Stories and posts were reported to be most likely mobilizing. While influencers share fundraisers, or food and clothes collections, they often reinforce the message by adding mobilizing comments or text, often with a direct call to action. For example, lifestyle influencer Julia Wieniawa (@juliawieniawa) published on her Instagram Story graphic with the Ukrainian flag promoting "Pay for Ukraine" – joined initiative of National Bank of Ukraine and Polish Bank Gospodarstwa Krajowego. Underneath the graphic, she has placed a clickable link to the payment and a direct call to action to her followers: Let's help as much as we can (Julia Wieniawa, n.d.). In turn, influencer and YouTuber Marcin Dubiel (@marcindubiel) who co-organized a fundraiser for medical equipment for a Ukrainian hospital was encouraging his audience with a direct call to action referring to a sense of community he has with his followers: We are counting on your support; together we need to supply the hospital with the necessary medical equipment. (Marcin Dubiel, 2022) (see Figure 7).

Figure 7

Marcin Dubiel encouraging his followers to support the fundraiser for a Ukrainian hospital, 07.03.22 (Marcin Dubiel, 2022)



4.2 Giving financial or material resources

The second most salient theme found in SMIs' communication (27% of all entries) referred to giving financial or material resources. Under this umbrella term, all posts and Stories depicting influencer's direct engagement in offline relief efforts, requiring a commitment of own time and material resources were coded. This theme is an example of high-engagement involvement in solidarity practices and goes far beyond strictly promotional activities on the influencer's social media channels.

4.2.1. Organizing own, spontaneous initiatives

The examples of the greatest commitment to helping refugees are the organization by SMI or their foundation collection for food, clothes, medical supplies, or fundraiser for refugees. Of the analyzed 9 influencers, 3 were found to be directly involved in organizing their solidarity initiatives.

Lifestyle and medical influencer Nicole Sochacki-Wójcicka (@mamaginekolog) together with her publishing company organized an aid campaign, aiming to deliver necessities to refugees from Ukraine who are already in Poland. In a remarkable feat of

logistics, she transformed a Warsaw book warehouse into a collection center for clothes, food, and sanitary products in just 72 hours (see Figure 8). In response to the appeal published on her Instagram, followers started to deliver the necessary products but also offered their time to volunteer in the warehouse and help pack donations for the refugees. Subsequently, her foundation started a 24-hour fundraiser to buy a bulk of medical products for people fighting in Ukraine. The dedication of the followers of *@mamaginekolog* resulted in the collection of over 600,000 Polish zlotys (approximately 140,000 euros) in a single day.

Figure 8

We have prepared an aid campaign - to deliver necessities to refugees from Ukraine who are already in Poland. – Instagram post shared by Nicole Sochacki-Wójcicka (*@mamaginekolog*) on 26.04.22 (Nicole Sochacki-Wójcicka, 2022)



A similar spontaneous and remarkable initiative was organized by influencer and YouTuber Marcin Dubiel (*@marcindubiel*) who co-organized with another creator a fundraiser for medical equipment for a Ukrainian hospital. With the help of his followers, the influencer was able to amass the proper funds, purchase the requisite medical equipment, and deliver it to the hospital in person. I feel amazing energy, it's worth helping – concluded the successful initiative in an Instagram post (Marcin Dubiel, 2022).

On the other hand, a much more logistically complicated and long-term aid campaign was co-organized by Marta Manowska (*@martamanowska*), lifestyle influencer and TV presenter. Together with “Herosi” Foundation, where Manowska previously volunteered, she

organized transport and medical support for Ukrainian children undergoing cancer treatment. During the campaign, the influencer posted updates on her Instagram about the progress of the children's evacuation to Poland, informing about the ongoing need for free support or urgently needed medical products. What is more, the volunteers for the medical support center for evacuated children were mostly recruited via the influencer's Instagram communication. When all the victims were evacuated and the medical support center started operating Manowska thanked her followers: We did it! You are great.[...]. Without you it would be impossible (Marta Manowska, 2022).

Overall, the solidarity initiatives organized by influencers exemplify three main characteristics of their humanitarian communication. First of all, a high level of spontaneity and unpredictability, which was also found to be characteristic of lot of grassroots, bottom-up initiatives organized in the first weeks of the invasion (Byrska, 2022, p. 463-464). Therefore, numerous updates and alterations to the original content were often done, to provide followers with new instructions on how to help. At the same time, this spontaneity is facilitated by Instagram sharing and commenting affordances, which were widely used to promote influencers' initiatives and find volunteers or specific resources. Secondly, in these three described examples of organizing solidarity practices, Instagram acted as the only, or main channel of communication with supporters and volunteers. In that regard, the platform not only maintained the dissemination and promotion of initiatives organized by influencers but also played a vital role in seeking specific help or resources in certain areas. For instance, the evacuation action of children from Ukraine was only possible thanks to one of the followers, who was also the owner of a transport company. Similarly, in the case of a fundraiser for medical equipment, one of the followers privately contacted the influencer to help purchase needed equipment at a reduced price. Finally, all three influencers who decided to highly commit for the solidarity practices had previous experience either in humanitarian aid or voluntary practices. This is characteristic of all of the influencers, who supported any high-engagement solidarity actions. Having a track record in the humanitarian field was also found in other studies as one of the decisive aspects of an individual's engagement in supporting solidarity practices for refugees or NGO causes. Therefore, the involvement of certain influencers in high-engagement practices is likely to be influenced by their previous public support for social causes.

Given the description of the high-engagement practices, it is worth underlying the difference between influencers' involvement in humanitarian causes and celebrity

humanitarianism. The second phenomenon is a form of celebrity-mediated symbolic support or endorsement for humanitarian causes focused on emotional support, giving collective hope, and raising awareness on issues of marginalized groups (Mostafanezhad, 2017, p. 71-72). On the contrary, the research findings indicate that influencers' support for solidarity practices can have a form of high-engagement, unconventional practices. While celebrity humanitarianism is mainly confined to advocacy and symbolic actions, typical for neo-liberal depoliticized discourse (Mitchell, 2016, p. 288), influencers' engagement extends beyond purely promotional and symbolic activities to real, offline resource-intensive engagement and often involves taking the initiative.

4.2.2 Volunteering and documenting on the spot

The second most prevalent sub-theme elicited from giving financial and material resources refers to influencers' presence at the Polish-Ukrainian border or in one of the reception centers. Their participation in these sites was mainly intended to document the stories of the refugees fleeing from their homeland, but also to share the testimony of Polish volunteers and show the scale of support. A review of the content posted by influencers present at one of the border crossings gives a depiction of relief efforts initiated in the first days after the invasion. Particularly evident is the high spontaneity of the actions, often lacking structures or clear strategy of the involvement. Lots of individuals volunteering at the border are local people, who have come together to help, like Mr. Krzysztof, whose home is just across the border. The moment this all started he opened his home and started helping (Anja Rubik, n.d.).

At the same time, influencers' presence at the border gives their followers insight into the enormous mobilization of the Polish volunteers. Through Stories and Posts, they give voice to the volunteers, who share their testimonies and reasons for helping refugees. The discourse about volunteers is dominated by a sense of (national) pride, gratitude, and respect. Influencers emphasize that the dozens of people who have come here of their own free will felt the reflex of humanity and compassion with their neighbours.

The heart of the Polish border: volunteers and local community who were the first ones to react and offer help, and warm food to the escaping from war Ukrainian women and children. The gentleman in the picture is offering his locally famous pea soup that he brought on his tractor. "You need to help people" he said to me while

pouring a bowl of soup for a young girl who just crossed the border escaping from east Ukraine. Her parents stayed behind. (Anja Rubik, 2022)

On the other hand, influencers' shared with their followers photos and stories of refugees, mainly women and children. They are portrayed as full of heroism and courageous helpless victims, who had to flee their country overnight (see Figure 9).

Figure 9

This lady crossed the border at the Meka crossing. She tells her three children that they are traveling and will be touring Poland so that they will be at peace. - Instagram post shared by K. Gonciarz, 02.03.22 (Krzysztof Gonciarz, 2022)

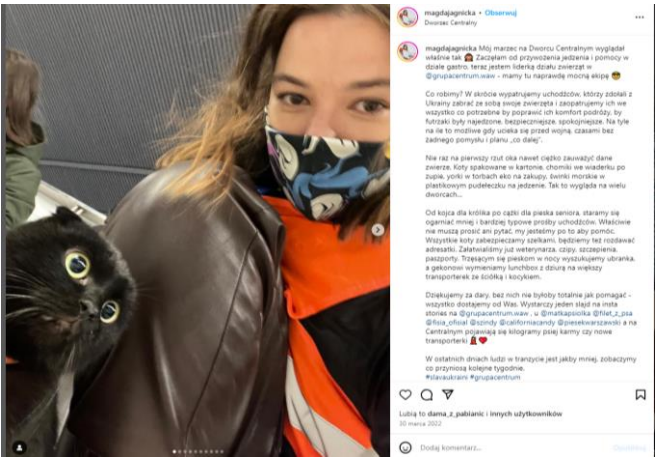


In that regard, the humanitarian discourse shaped by influencers is highly depoliticizing the matter, since they portray refugees as helpless victims, individuals without power and political agenda. Moreover, they concentrate on the documentation and dissemination of the personal histories of refugees, which serve as a witness to the cruelty of war. Such representations of refugees may be intended to motivate further support among their followers. An important part of the discourse is also shaped by solidarity practices aimed at helping non-human animals. While some of the influencers devoted their whole Instagram communication to sharing fundraisers for animals, others were helping in reception centers for animals. For instance, Magda Jagnicka (@magdajagnicka), volunteered in the

animal department at the reception center in Warsaw and harnessed her online reach to ask her followers for donations. Her appeals for aid were met with an immediate and favorable response: Thank you for your donations, without them there would be absolutely no way to help - we get everything from you. Just one slide on insta stories [...] and kilos of dog food or new carriers appear at Centralny (Magda Jagnicka, 2022)(see Figure 10).

Figure 10

Influencer Magda Jagnicka volunteering in the animal department at the Warsaw Central Station, 30.03.22 (Magda Jagnicka, 2022)



In turn, in entries presenting the activities of Polish volunteers, the emphasis is put on showing the individual stories of people, who decided to leave everything and donate their time and resources to help war refugees. In that regard, influencers’ communication highlights the bottom-up, spontaneous character of the volunteering practices, consequently depoliticizing the humanitarian discourse. This narrative is also likely to facilitate building community among Poles involved in solidarity practices.

4.2.3 Tagging, commenting, and mobile phone usage affordances for high-involvement practices

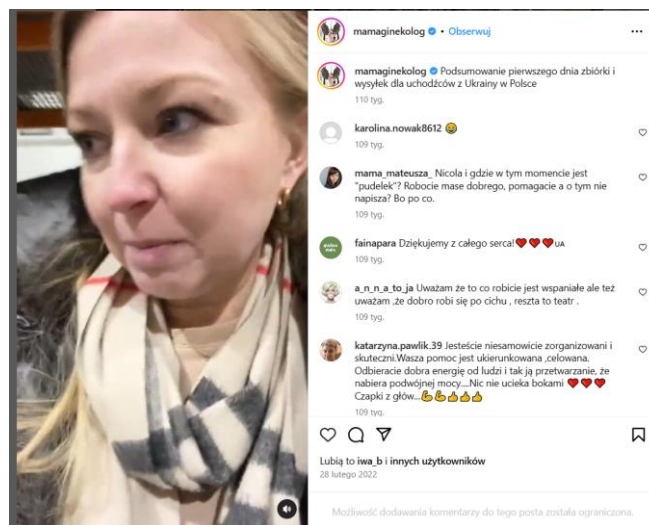
The high-involvement solidarity practices organized or supported by influencers are possible thanks to the features and affordances of Instagram. The conducted analysis resulted

in distinguishing three affordances, which were the most prevalent, mainly: tagging, commenting, and mobile phone usage affordances.

The tagging affordances were present in the form of hashtags and account tags. The first feature of the platform was used by influencers who organized their own solidarity practices. The employed keyword differed from the main solidarity hashtags widely used on Instagram, as they were personalized and referred to an initiative organized by the influencer. The same hashtags were often used throughout the whole communication on the influencer's profile. In turn, account tags were mainly harnessed to give credit and gratitude to certain followers or companies who extensively supported the influencer's initiative, i.e. donating huge amounts of money or helping to obtain certain resources.

Figure 11

Mama ginekolog hosted a livestream showing the warehouse with collected food & clothes (Nicole Sochacki-Wójcicka, 2022)



Thanks to mobile phone usage affordances, SMIs were able to capture, edit and instantly share videos and photos from the spot of the relief efforts. What is more, the live stream feature built in Instagram was also a significant facilitator of influencers' communication. SMIs used this format as a low-effort, authentic way of communicating and sharing recent updates with followers, who also had a direct chance to ask a question during the live stream (see Figure 11). Given that, mobile phone usage affordances play a significant role in lowering the threshold for documenting, sharing, and disseminating the stories of

refugees and volunteers. SMPs offer "digital humanitarian avenues of entry" (Burns, 2019, p. 1101) that foster emotional closeness to beneficiaries, generating a sense of legitimacy and motivating support for distant individuals (Woods & Shee, 2021, p. 7-8). The influencers' coverage can offer a unique, first-hand, almost live insight into solidarity practices and stories of refugees.

The analysis has also underlined the significance of commenting affordances, especially in community building and volunteer recruitment actions. Influencers' followers were actively engaging in the comment section of Instagram posts, responding to the appeals for support or offering help or direct contact to other volunteers.

4.3 Raising awareness of the war and its victims

The third most present type of solidarity actions in SMIs' Instagram communication refers to raising awareness about the war and its victims, identified in 18% of all materials. During the analysis two main specific sub-themes were elicited – sharing stories of war victims and giving the political context and informing. Although awareness-raising practices often resemble the theme of promoting existing solidarity practices and blur the lines between different types of engagement, this study differentiates them based on their informative, and contextualizing functions. These practices are defined as actions that indirectly highlight humanitarian (McCosker et al., 2020, p. 18) or well-being issues, i.e. by sharing stories of the war victims, providing additional context, and informing followers about helpful resources.

4.3.1 Giving voice to the victims

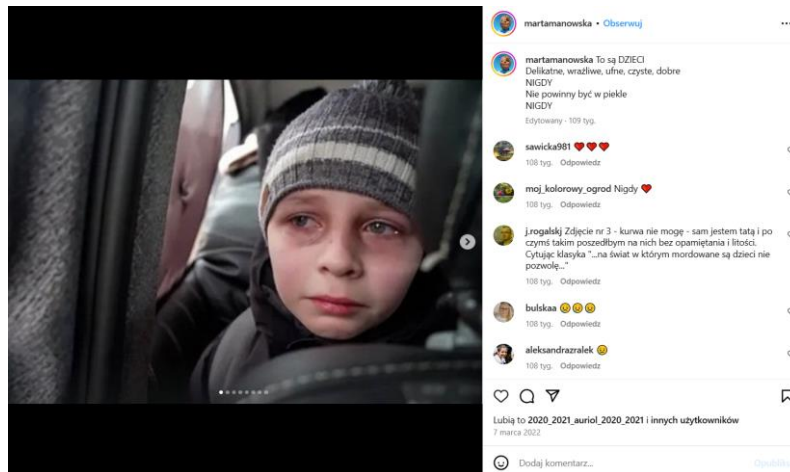
The dominant type of content was sharing or reposting materials with stories, quotes, or descriptions from the war victims. Moreover, analysed SMIs shared news coverage, or self-documented photos and stories heard from refugees at the Polish-Ukrainian border or in the reception centers. They gave a platform for victims of the war as well as Polish volunteers to share their stories. The main functionalities of this type of content can be likely classified as mobilizing and raising awareness about the impact of the invasion on people's lives.

Sharing photos from the war zone, depicting war damage, casualties, and victims is a well-research technique prevalent in humanitarian communication. The shock effect appeals

are likely to evoke guilt, pity and help generate awareness and mobilize solidarity measures (Ongenaert & Joye, 2019, p. 478; Ongenaert & Soler, 2024, p. 4-5). Portrayed people, mostly women and children, who are considered as “ideal victims”, are depicted as powerless, and innocent to evoke strong emotions and compassion (see Figure 12) (Scott 2014, p. 143). Due to their evident innocence and vulnerability, they tend to be more successful in eliciting sympathy and ultimately engaging audiences and raising funds compared to other demographic groups (Moeller 1999 in Ongenaert & Soler, 2024, p. 4).

Figure 12

They are children; Gentle, sensitive, trusting, pure, good; never they should not be in hell – Instagram post with story of children war victims shared by Marta Manowska, 07.03.22 (Marta Manowska, 2022)



4.3.2 Giving the political context and informing

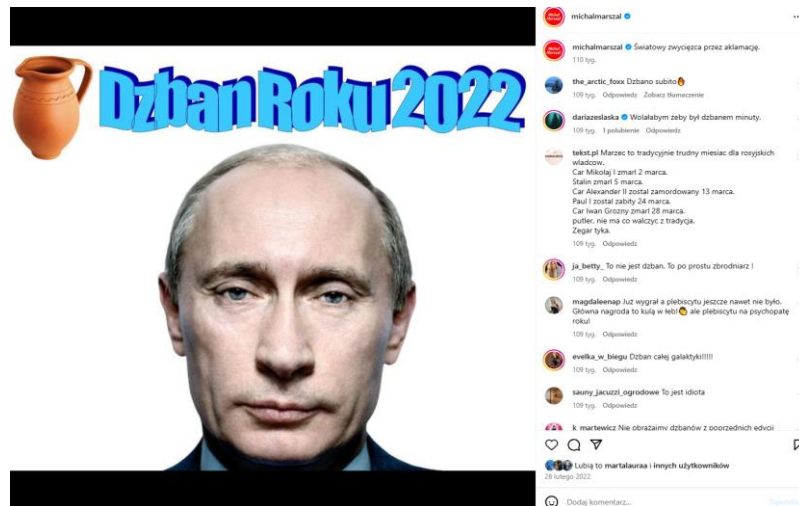
However, some of the influencers used the footage and stories of war victims not only to shock their followers and raise awareness about the fierce war actions but also to shed light on the political context of the invasion and the responsibilities of leaders. In that regard, they were describing all issues as political issues and politicizing the solidarity discourse.

Therefore, the sub-theme for political content was created, gathering all materials in the political context of the war – i.e. political leaders, the government's reaction to the Russian invasion, and public institutions. The political discourse in influencers' raising awareness communication centered on three topics – open hostility towards Russia, in particular in the person of Vladimir Putin; supporting the message from Ukrainian politicians and officials;

and criticizing the post-invasion reaction of Western-world political leaders. The first subtheme comprised mainly of memes or short mocking videos insulting Putin and naming him a war criminal, which was either created by influencers or shared from other meme accounts. They did not mince their words—wishing Putin that he will die as soon as possible or calling him the dumbest person of the year 2022 (Michał Marszał, 2022)(see Figure 13). Based on the conducted analysis, depicting Putin as a war criminal and anti-hero of all memes and political contexts is likely to not only mobilize but also support building community among hundreds of thousands of Polish volunteers. He was perceived as a common enemy, against which to mobilize. On contrary to the negative discourse about the Russian leader, all of the content referring to Ukrainian politicians, official institutions or Ukrainian soldiers had a positive overtone. Especially the person of Volodymyr Zelensky, the president of Ukraine was depicted as a hero, role model, and statesman, who rose to the challenge. I'm in love with Zelensky and it's official – commented on an Instagram Story video with V. Zelensky influencer @juliawieniawa (Julia Wieniawa, n.d.). The last political topic prevalent in raising awareness discourse focused on reflecting on the reaction and scale of support from the European Union and other Ukrainian allies. In that regard, influencers were sharing informative news coverage or photos of the war with their comment referring to politicians' reactions. Most of the narrative was either neutral or slightly negative. For example, Anja Rubik (@anja_rubik) in her Story comments on the story of a war victim: and so it starts. The leader will posture and give speeches. The people will suffer and become statistics (Anja Rubik, 2022). Overall, the presence of the described political topics in the influencers' communication and the tone of the narrative about each political actor involved indicates that SMIs' reproduce news narratives and common patterns from the public debate. These results align with previous studies examining the nature of politicized discourse about refugees after the Russian invasion of Ukraine (Zawadzka-Paluckta 2023).

Figure 13

Vladimir Putin - dumbest person of the year 2022 – political meme shared by @michalmarszal, 28.02.22 (Michal Marszal, 2022)



Ukraine has been a forerunner in facing advanced disinformation and propaganda, with its citizens subjected to systematic social media influence for much of the twenty-first century. Putin's full-scale invasion intensified these trends, starting an unprecedented scale of antagonistic cross-border disinformation campaigns, conducted mainly in digital channels. According to previous studies, Russia also harnessed nano-influencers in their semi-organic propaganda and disinformation operations (Woolley, 2022, p. 115). A response to Russia's disinformation activities was provided by Polish influencers, who raised awareness about polarizing and manipulating content spread by pro-Russian accounts. For instance, influencer Krzysztof Gonciarz (@kgonciarz), who was documenting Polish volunteers at the border and in the reception centers warned his followers about a massive disinformation campaign aiming to increase Polish-Ukrainian tensions. He used the visual affordances of the platform, to grab the audience's attention with big white text on a black background and caption: today everyone with a smartphone is on the front line. Putin's test: if the information is in favor of Putin's propaganda, don't pass it on (Krzysztof Gonciarz, 2022). This example of engagement in raising awareness about cyber threats fits into the role of societal responsibility of influencers, seen as a *quasi-journalists* (Watkins, 2021, p. 153). In that sense, SMIs acted not only as agents for solidarity initiatives but also as messengers of updates and guidance to their followers.

In the collected dataset, among posts and stories raising awareness were materials with helpful sources for Polish volunteers – often in the form of an Instagram slideshow or infographic. At the same time, influencers used their platform to help organizations effectively find volunteers or specific resources. Needless to mention the example published by @martamanowska, an influencer who found dozens of volunteers for her aid center in less than one day (see Figure 14).

Figure 14

WE DID IT!!!! You are great. Our centre 'Wierna' in Bocheniec near Kielce IS WORKING. Without you it would be IMPOSSIBLE. – Instagram post published by Marta Manowska, 04.03.2022 (Marta Manowska, 2022)



While the majority of published content was dedicated for Polish followers, who can themselves engage in solidarity practices or help further disseminate fundraising initiatives, some content was targeted to reach Ukrainian refugees. Influencer used their platform, to share initiatives from the NGOs, local communities or government institutions dedicated to refugees, such as information about free transport for Ukrainians on public railway operators (Julia Wieniawa, n.d.) or shelters for LGBT+ refugees (Julia Wieniawa, n.d.). At the same time, they asked their Polish followers to further disseminate the message to reach refugees.

4.3.3 Sharing affordances for raising awareness

Raising awareness practices shared by analysed influencers harnessed the key affordances of the platform, with sharing affordances being the most widely used. The feature of reposting on Instagram Story content published originally on Instagram Story from other users facilitated the dissemination of testimonies of war victims and amplified drawing attention to the updates from the warzone. At the same time, influencers were also sharing on their Story post originally published on other accounts – in most cases content from renowned news profiles or press agencies. Moreover, in a few cases functionalities of Instagram slideshow (carousel) were used to share helpful sources for volunteers in a clear way. Overall, the platform's affordances facilitated not only exploring forcibly displaced people's experiences and raising awareness practices but also helped to find valuable content in the spread of unverified information.

4.4 Solidarizing with Ukrainians in the reflex of humanity

The other prominent type of practices elicited from the analysed dataset refers to taking purely solidarizing measures (16% of all entries), particularly sharing the Ukrainian flag, adding Ukrainian stickers or graphics, attending solidarity protests, or sharing content from official UA channels. Actions of expressing solidarity were often first gestures and communication of the influencer in the first hours and days of the invasion, having a form of an emotional, self-centered act of solidarity. In that regard, this form of support gives resemblance to deliberate solidarity actions taken by celebrity humanitarianism, which are executed likely for visibility, legitimization, and branding purposes (Mostafanezhad, 2013, p. 67; Mitchell, 2016, p. 288).

4.4.1 Emotional acts of solidarity

The first and most prominent sub-theme of solidarizing practices refers to sharing the Ukrainian flag as a post, Story, or as a part of the graphic shared by SMI. According to the analyses, in the first hours and days of the full-scale invasion, the first content shared by influencers was often the Ukrainian flag in different formats – either as an original post, repost on Story or shared post. This form of low-risk was the first act of solidarity and often the promise of further support by the influencer. Sharing of the Ukrainian national symbol

was also sometimes followed by emotional comments or testimony from the influencer. For instance, Magda Jagnicka (@magdajagnicka) posted on her feed on 11.03 a photo holding a Ukrainian flag with a heart symbol and added a caption: If I've been waking up every day for over two weeks hoping it was just a nightmare, I can't imagine what Ukrainian women, Ukrainians and their families are feeling. #slavaukraini #glorytoulkraine (Magda Jagnicka, 2022). In the emotional posts and Stories published by influencers words of encouragement, support and solidarity are mixed with fear for the future and a sense of helplessness. Especially the last feeling is overarching in many entries, often explicitly named cognitive dissonance, or duality.

How to function on a daily basis? I have been to Lviv, I help many organizations, but other than that my life has not changed ... I am struggling to deal with this duality. I watch photos sent to me by people from Ukraine, I follow the news on TV, and what I see is terrifying. The cruelty and inhumanity is beyond words. At the same time, we laugh, we go to the cinema, sit in cafes, work ... But what else are we suppose to do? I help as much as I can. I will not take a rifle on my shoulder and go to war. The world should stop, pause, but I know that's not realistic. I feel very lost and powerless in all of this (Anja Rubik, 2022).

That type of personal, very emotional confession was found in at least few analyzed materials. Some of them besides voicing support and acknowledging the extraordinary bravery of the Ukrainians and determination of the soldiers, were reflecting on the rationale for the war and asking - why Putin has sent thousands of innocent people to their deaths: and the Ukrainian people are brave, strong, hard as a rock. Only why does it have to? It is also, fragile, sensitive, moved (Marta Manowska, 2022). This high level of self-disclosure, also on an emotional level, indicates the characteristics of the unusual parasocial relationship, a bond that influencers strive to build with their followers. Findings from previous studies examining this relationship prove that followers appreciate the potential for reciprocity in the influencer-follower relationship, even though the relationship itself is highly asymmetric (Dekoninck et al., 2023, p. 701).

The first reactions of solidarity from influencers, i.e. posting the flag, and using Ukrainian stickers or emojis with the flag, can be seen as a natural “reflex of humanity” (Fabiś et al., 2023, p. 11). According to studies of the motives for Polish solidarity with Ukraine, supporting and standing in solidarity with Ukrainians stems from a “reflex of humanity”, bolstered by geographical proximity and Poland's own wartime experiences. This

solidarity not only embodies a conviction of Ukraine's victory but also a hope for a return to the normal daily life once enjoyed before the war. Additionally, it reflects the fear of Polish people for their own homeland and a strong, historical hatred towards Russia (Fabiś et al., 2023, p. 11-14).

Solidarizing practices found in chosen SMIs' communication harnessed the platform's affordances with the particular omnipresence of tagging affordances in the feature of hashtags. They were widely used in posts with first solidarity messages, in which influencers shared the Ukrainian flag. Among the most popular ones were *#glorytoulkraine*, *#slavaukraini* and *#StandwithUkraine*. In that regard, the use of hashtags, a popular Instagram functionality, is probably aimed at expressing and reinforcing solidarity for refugees, while facilitating the dissemination of information about relief efforts (Arda, 2022, p. 539).

4.4.2 Attending protests and disseminating the Ukrainian narrative

While some influencers have limited their involvement to online activities and sharing their reflections and emotions with the audience, others decided to support offline solidarity actions. One of the flagship examples of showing solidarity in real life is attending peaceful solidarity protests. For instance, influencers from profile *@sucharcodzienny* encouraged their followers to attend a solidarity protest in Poznan, posting an official poster of the event with a link to the Facebook page and caption: Hello Poznan! On Thursday at Freedom Square such great stuff! I'll be there too (Suchar Codzienny, n.d.). In addition to promoting the event on their social media, they also took part in the protest, sharing it on Instagram Story.

The other form of solidarity with Polish neighbours was sharing content from official Ukrainian channels on influencers' stories or in posts. These practices were aimed at supporting the Ukrainian narrative during the widespread Russian fake news about the war but also advocating for military and financial support from the European Union and the United States of America. Some of the reposted materials depicted testimonies from Ukrainian soldiers, who gave updates from the battlefield. This sub-theme exemplifies that SMIs can be utilized not only for promoting and raising awareness about social justice or solidarity actions but also can be leveraged to disseminate certain narratives during information warfare. While social media and related technologies are key tools for cross-border disinformation campaigns, they are also vital for communication and organization among Ukrainians defending their country (Woolley, 2022, p. 115). Previous studies in that

field highlight the role of mega influencers (over a hundred thousand followers on SMP) in “getting lots of eyeballs” on certain messages or narratives, while nano-influencers (following of fewer than ten thousand users) were discovered to be essential elements of semi-organic propaganda operations (Woolley, 2022, p. 120-123).

5. Conclusion

5.1 Summary of findings

This Master's thesis aimed to bridge the research gap in the area of communicating about solidarity actions by SMIs on Instagram. Therefore, this study elicited and examined types of solidarity actions communicated by Polish SMIs on Instagram after the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022. Moreover, the author intended to research the interactions of platform affordances with certain solidarity practices and discover how influencers' communication was shaping humanitarian discourses. Overall, a conducted qualitative content analysis of 150 Instagram Posts and Stories enabled to identify and classify a typology of SMIs' communication about solidarity practices during humanitarian crises. The study found in influencers' communication four main solidarity actions - promoting, raising awareness, solidarizing, and giving financial or material resources.

The most salient theme referred to promoting existing solidarity practices. Through their Instagram content, Polish influencers increased exposure and publicity of fundraisers, food & clothes collections, and other local initiatives. Promoting was found to be facilitated by hypertextuality and tagging affordances of Instagram, which helped lower the threshold for donations. Posts and stories characterized as promoting were often location-based forms of "social media accounting" (Humphreys, 2018 cited in McCosker et al., 2020, p. 1884), helping to provide the necessary resources in a given time and place. The first theme was followed by content classified as giving financial or material resources. Among these actions was high-engagement, high-risk participation (Gundelach & Toubøl, 2019, p. 199) in direct support of offline relief efforts, requiring a commitment of own time, and material resources, especially by organizing or co-organizing by SMIs collection for food, clothes, medical supplies, or fundraisers for refugees. These initiatives were characterized by a high level of spontaneity, as well as the significant role of Instagram affordances and the power of influencers' community. Additionally, two other, less prevalent types of solidarity practices were found - namely raising awareness about war and its victims and solidarizing with Ukrainians. Both of them focused on disseminating certain narratives, information or testimonies through SMIs' Instagram channel and were classified as low-risk involvement.

The elicited types of solidarity practices, their salience, and interactions with Instagram affordances lead to three main conclusions of the study. First of all, promoting existing solidarity practices was found to be the most significant theme in SMIs'

communication and acted as a meta-theme present in the majority of analysed posts and stories. Promoting, as a natural part of not only social media logics (Van Dijck & Poell, 2013), but influencers' daily-basis endorsement practices (Fowler & Thomas, 2023), is the most effective tactic that can be harnessed by SMIs for social justice causes. Additionally, Instagram affordances facilitated access to online donation initiatives and helped to easily promote numerous solidarity practices with low-risk involvement. In that regard, these results align with previous studies, which also discovered the omnipresence of promoting practices in Instagram communication during humanitarian crises (McCosker et al., 2020, p. 1870). Secondly, the influencers' Instagram communication was found to reflect and reproduce depoliticizing humanitarian discourses. The majority of content focused on presenting different types of solidarity practices and raising awareness about the war. Polish influencers' communication depicted the grassroots, spontaneous nature of the provision practices and often shifted the attention to individual stories of victims, who serve as a witness to the cruelty of war. As a result, refugees and their issues are redirected away from political, state-based responses, towards individual forms of aid practice (Mitchell, 2016). What is more, focus was also put on the fate of animals, by endorsing and promoting fundraising initiatives for the most vulnerable and forgotten victims of the war. These findings not only add to the existing state of the art in humanitarian discourse studies but also confirm a growing visibility of nonhuman animals in the contemporary post-humanist humanitarian and solidarity narrative (Barona et al., 2024, p. 1-2).

Finally, the analysis gives an overview of the types and scale of involvement of SMIs during solidarity practices. Overall, a mixed picture of influencer engagement in solidarity practices has been reported. On the one hand, some SMIs focused merely on promoting practices, mainly by sharing fundraisers or collections. This type of communication was classified as low-risk participation (Gundelach & Toubøl, 2019), with resemblance to small acts of engagement (Picone et al., 2019). On the other hand, in the analysed data set numerous examples of high-engagement, resource- and time-intensive practices, such as organizing their own collection, volunteering at the border, and documenting volunteers' commitment, were found. Based on these results, it can be concluded that the role of SMIs in solidarity practices communication is nuanced and varied, and can be different at certain points of the humanitarian crises.

Overall, these findings confirm the previous body of literature examining the role of social media platforms and their affordances for social justice communication and during

humanitarian crises (L. Li et al., 2022; M. Li, 2022; Talabi et al., 2022). This study adds to the existing theory of social media logics, Instagram affordances, celebrity humanitarianism, and frameworks of small acts of engagement (SAOE). The scale and variety of SMIs communication confirm the growing involvement of SMIs in civic engagement and social justice communication (Wellman, 2022, p. 1-2; Thomas & Fowler, 2023, p. 1). At the same time, to the best of the author's knowledge, this research is the first attempt to examine and classify SMIs' communication about solidarity practices and humanitarian aid. Therefore, this study opens a new chapter in research on SMIs' communication for social good and can serve as a foundation for further studies in this area. Given the extraordinary context of the biggest humanitarian crises after the Second World War (Kaczmarczyk & Duszczuk, 2020, p. 36), the presented results offer an valuable insight into the role of Polish SMIs but also certain Instagram affordances for solidarity practices communication. Consequently, this paper significantly contributes to state of art in studies of social media logics and platform affordances, particularly in the visual realm of Instagram. The certain Instagram affordances are studied in the interaction with different types of solidarity practices, offering a new approach in this field of research.

Moreover, contrary to studies examining celebrity humanitarianism (Mitchell, 2016, p. 288-290), this analysis proves that Influencers reproduce depoliticizing humanitarian discourses and contribute to the growing visibility of nonhuman animals in the contemporary post-humanist humanitarian and solidarity narrative (Barona et al., 2024, p. 1-2).

5.2 Implications

The findings of this study have both academic and practical implications. From the perspective of the first field, the conducted analysis resulted in the new typology of solidarity practices communication and SMIs' role during humanitarian or refugee crises. Given that, this Master thesis contributes to the state of research on humanitarian discourse, social media influencers' social justice communication, and high- and low-risk participation in solidarity practices. What is more, this paper addresses a research gap in studies of Instagram affordances. By looking for interactions between platform affordances and certain themes of solidarity practices, this analysis provides an overview of significant affordances for solidarity communication and contributes to other literature, where affordances interact with certain types of communication (Jaakkola, 2019; Caliandro & Anselmi, 2021).

Furthermore, the results have several practical implications. First of all, since the author classifies and describes different solidarity practices with visual examples, this study can be beneficial for NGOs and humanitarian aid organizations, analysing bottom-up, spontaneous solidarity initiatives. Moreover, given the description of SMIs' different types and forms of engagement, it is clear that they are mostly helpful in promoting solidarity initiatives, especially those organized by renowned NGOs with already some digital presence. Therefore, the author argues that in the future humanitarian aid organizations should closely cooperate with Influencers to harness their reach and platform to disseminate and promote solidarity practices. Finally, as this is the first academic analysis of the role of Polish Influencers in the nationwide “reflex of humanity” (Fabiś et al., 2023, p. 11) after the Russian invasion of Ukraine, this study aims to shed new light on unprecedented civic mobilization in the face of humanitarian crises and contribute to public discussion on that matter.

5.3 Limitations and recommendations

Some limitations of this study might be addressed in future research. From the data-collection perspective, the posts and stories were collected manually, two years after their initial publication. Therefore, some Instagram Stories that were not saved in the highlights section were no longer available for analysis. In future studies, it would be necessary to collect Instagram data on an ongoing basis, especially ephemeral content which can be deleted or modified. Moreover, the future sampling strategy should consider a larger sample size, with a more diversified group of influencers. Collecting more posts and stories could provide a broader overview of Instagram communication and an in-depth analysis of the salience of each theme.

Given the limitation of this thesis, there is a potential for future studies, both using quantitative and qualitative research methods. In this first category, researchers can conduct a survey study to examine the effectiveness of Influencers' solidarity practices communication or carry out more quantitative content analysis about the exact prevalence of each theme. In regard to qualitative methods, future production research can focus on discovering the contexts and working routines of SMIs or their motivations for supporting solidarity practices. For that sake, in-depth interviews or focus groups research can be utilized.

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Appendix – codebook

Theme	Subtheme	Code	Code definition	Code description	Examples (number of saved post/story)
		Sharing post	Sharing on Instagram Story post originally published on other account than SMI's account	Helping to spread information and reach to broader audience	nr. 1
Instagram affordances	Sharing	Reposting story	Sharing on Instagram Story other Story originally published on other account than SMI's account	Supporting the dissemination of information and helping find valuable content in the spread of unverified information	nr.11
		Posting	Posting content on SMI's Instagram feed	The intensity of posting on feed dependent on SMI's engagement in humanitarian actions	nr. 42
	Hypertextuality	Link on story	Placing on SMI's Story clickable button with direct link to external sources	Lowering the threshold for followers engaging in humanitarian actions - just one click needed	nr. 41
		Accounts tags	Tagging in shared posts or story other profiles	Using the reach and the platform of SMI to promote valuable accounts of volunteers & NGOs	nr. 63
	Tagging	Hashtags	Using certain hashtags dedicated to support for Ukrainian refugees	Mainly general hashtags symbolizing solidarity with UA	nr. 55
		Locations	Adding location to shared content to inform and contextualize the message	Inform followers about SMI's presence at the help points	nr. 73
		Live streams	Conducting live streams to share with followers recent updates	Using instant form of communication, quicker than writing a post	nr. 79
	Mobile phone usage	Live streams	Conducting live streams to share with followers recent updates	Using instant form of communication, quicker than writing a post	nr. 79

			Smartphones as an instant, not-disrupting tools to record victims and refugees	Smartphone creates fewer barriers to capture authentic stories on the spot	nr. 56
Functionalities of the shared content (based on Lovejoy and Saxton, 2012)	Informing				
		Sharing news coverage	Reposting on story or feed Instagram posts from news outlets, screenshots of articles or photos from media	Contextualizing the crisis and adding the political context - taking the stance - politicizing	nr. 43
		Sharing infographic or slideshow	Reposting on story or feed Instagram posts with informative infographics or slideshows	Raising awareness of followers and contextualizing - politicizing	nr. 37
		Sharing message from UA politicians	Reposting on story content from UA politicians	Informing about latest updated from the battelfied	nr. 30
		Sharing NGOs profiles	Sharing on feed and story Instagram profiles of NGOs supporting humanitarian actions	Referring to official, governmental sources and redirecting followers to official websites with information for refugees and volunteers. Politicizing the crisis - promoting the institutional actions	nr. 111
		Sharing government sources	Sharing on feed and story direct links or graphics from official governmental sources	Referring to official, governmental sources and redirecting followers to official websites with information for refugees and volunteers. Politicizing the crisis - promoting the institutional actions	nr. 47

		Encouraging - call to action	Direct textual call to action in post's copy encouraging followers to support humanitarian actions	Using the moral responsibility and authority to convince followers to get involved	nr. 23
		Sharing results of help	Sharing effects of fundraising initiatives (amount of money collected) and how the money are being spend	Showing the effectiveness of SMI's support for humanitarian causes	nr. 78
		Sharing scale of support	Sharing the scale of grassroots collection actions and mobilization among Poles	Showing the effectiveness of SMI's support for humanitarian causes	nr. 80
	Mobilizing	Sharing stories of war victims	Posting photos depicting refugees, their quotes, or videos with their participation	Victimizing the refugees, depicting them as weak and powerless, rather than a subject with political agency. Therefore depoliticizing the matter	nr. 56
		Sharing bravery of UA soliders	Sharing photos or video depicting Ukrainians soliders on the war front	Showing the bravery and dedication of UA soliders	nr. 13
		Sharing emotional message	Sharing personal stories or thoughts and feelings about the violence in Ukraine and empathising with victims	Describing how Influencer deals with emotional pressure	nr. 147

		Sharing photos of children refugees	Posting photos depicting children refugees, their quotes, or videos with their participation	Children perceived as lacking political agency, therefore this content tends to depoliticize the discourse. The attention is shifted to emotional response.	nr. 45
	Educating	Sharing guidelines on how to help	Sharing tips, guidelines how to effectively support humanitarian actions, things to avoid	Depicting the spontaneous, grassroots matter of the support - depoliticizing	nr. 32
	Building community	Sharing stories of support	Sharing photos depicting polish volunteers, their quotes, or videos with their participation	Showing the grassroots, bottom-up nature of the support - depoliticizing, as support is not state-based	nr. 74
		Showing gratitude for help	Sharing appreciations and pride from support given by SMI's followers	Showing the real influence and sense of agency of SMIs'	nr. 82
		Anti-Putin content	Sharing content depicting V. Putin as a war criminal	Building community by finding a common enemy	nr. 143
		Sharing a sense of national pride	Sharing appreciation and pride from support and solidarity given by Polish society	Adding the broader context of the situation and providing rationale for support - Polish society as "obliged" to support neighboring country who is fighting for independence	nr. 140
Types of Solidarity actions	Giving resources	Donating food or medical supplies	SMI sharing on Instagram direct donating food or medical supplies	SMIs as humans like us - depoliticizing	nr. 10
		Donating clothes	SMI sharing on Instagram direct donating clothes	SMIs as humans like us - depoliticizing	nr. 39

	Organizing collections	SMI or his/her foundation organizing and communicating about collection for refugees	SMI's using their capital and resources to organize collections for refugees - depoliticizing	nr. 76
Giving time	Volunteering in reception centers	SMI being present and volunteering in reception centers	Focus on sharing the story of spontaneous groups, who organized instant help in reception centers in biggest Polish cities	nr. 106
	Volunteering at the border	SMI being present and volunteering at the Polish-Ukrainian border	Focus on documenting stories of volunteers and refugees while helping with easy, mundane tasks	nr. 104
	Documenting volunteers' actions on the spot	SMI taking photos or recording videos on the spot of humanitarian actions - at the border, in reception centers, in NGOs and collection points	Spreading the narrative about enormous mobilization of the Polish society	nr. 72
Solidarizing with Ukrainians	Sharing Ukrainian flag	SMI posting the Ukrainian flag as a feed post, on Story, or as an emoji in post's copy	First act of solidarity and often the promise of further aid measures	nr. 101
	Sharing content from official UA channels	SMI sharing or reposting content from official UA government profiles or profiles of UA politicians	Supporting the UA narrative during the spread of Russian fake-news about the war	nr. 30
	Attending solidarity protest	Sharing in post or story direct reference to fundraising initiative	Additional form of support	nr. 139
	Adding UA stickers/graphic	SMI placing on story or post gif/IG sticker or graphic with symbols of Ukraine or slogan of solidarity	Visual symbol often added on numerous Stories in a row	nr. 27

		Sharing fundraising initiatives	Sharing in post or story direct reference to fundraising initiative	Lowering the threshold for support; Often promoting fundraising initiatives from established NGOs	nr. 41
		Sharing food and clothes collection	Sharing in post or story direct reference to food and clothes collection	Promoting already existing solidarity practices by giving reach and publicity	nr. 26
	Promoting	Sharing initiatives for animals	Sharing in post or story direct or indirect reference to initiatives aiming to help animals of refugees	Promoting already existing solidarity practices by giving reach and publicity	nr. 127
		Sharing reliable NGOs	Sharing in post or story direct reference to IG profile or website of NGO	Promoting specialized NGOs' Instagram profiles and website	nr. 109
		Sharing FB groups with help	Sharing in post or story direct reference to Facebook groups connecting polish volunteers or providing guidance for refugees	Highlighting the different roles of platforms - IG for sharing instant updates, FB for building community and organizing structures	nr. 120
		Sharing initiatives dedicated to refugees	Sharing or reposting content for refugees in Ukrainian or Russian	Asking followers to further disseminate the message to reach refugees	nr. 14
		Raising awareness	Sharing stories of war victims	Sharing or reposting content with stories, quotes or descriptions of war victims	Raising awareness about the tragedy of the war close to the Polish border
	Sharing photos of the war		Sharing photos of war damage or war victims	Raising awareness about the tragedy of the war close to the Polish border	nr. 100

		Warning about Russian desinformation	Explicitly informing about the threats of Russian desinformation and warning followers	Raising awareness about the omnipresence of fake-news in online discourse	nr. 105
		Sharing helpful sources for volunteers	Sharing or reposting content targeted to polish volunteers with helpful sources/websites/profiles from organizations that are looking for volunteers	Often instant engagement from followers willing to volunteer	nr. 46