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Individual donations and social media communication: Italian cultural NPOs' strategies after the pandemic

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Introduction

As there is a dearth of research in this area, the present study aims to identify the most effective social media communication strategies for increasing individual monetary donations to Italian cultural NPOs in the post-pandemic era. However, although we have attempted to be as exhaustive as possible, we recognise the vastness of the subject and therefore do not exclude the possibility that future research may provide additional strategies to those presented in this study. Furthermore, since culture has always been ranked among the least supported causes, with medical research and social causes always taking the lead, special consideration has been given to cultural welfare. Specifically, our survey also examines whether highlighting the social and health impacts generated by cultural NPOs would increase donations and move culture up in the list of donors' preferred causes. Hence, for the purposes of our research we adopted a two-step mixed methodology. Initially we conducted in-depth interviews with three Italian cultural NPOs and two cultural fundraising consultants for third-sector organizations. Afterward, we administered two questionnaires for two distinct target groups – i.e.: actual and potential Italian cultural donors – to test their inclination towards the strategies, or aspects of them, emerged during the interviews. We have therefore organized the present thesis into four chapters, following a path from the general to the specific. Indeed, Chapter 1 opens with a brief introduction to cultural fundraising before delving into the existing literature on individual giving and defining the lacunae and the research question. Thereafter, Chapter 2 defines the empirical context of this investigation, Chapter 3 explains in detail the methodology adopted, and Chapter 4 reports the findings. Lastly, the Conclusions provide a concise overview of our work and suggest future directions for research.

1. Cultural fundraising: focus on individual donations

According to the Oxford Learner's Dictionary, fundraising is defined as «the activity of collecting money for a charity or organization, often by organizing social events or entertainments» (Oxford University Press, 2023). In a similar fashion, Treccani describes fundraising as «[tr.] the activity of seeking funds that are necessary for the functioning of nonprofit organizations» (Dizionario di Economia e Finanza, 2012). Through these definitions, one can easily understand fundraising as an activity aimed at raising financial resources and ensuring economic sustainability for a given organisation; however, it goes far beyond this simplistic notion. This is why we prefer the description provided by Pier Luigi Sacco, who sees fundraising as the end point of a chain of relationships and social interactions based on mutual exchange. Furthermore, as per Sacco contributing implies that all involved actors give and receive something, we can interpret fundraising as an activity that enriches all the stakeholders (Sacco, 2006). For this reason, many scholars stressed that building long-term relationships is a milestone for an effective fundraising strategy (Fishel, 2002; Bonicelli & Pasini, 2006; Waters, 2011; Lindqvist, 2012; Curry, Rodin, & Carlson, 2012; Azizi & Moon, 2013; Jung, 2015; Erwin & Dias, 2016). It follows that fundraising is not limited to simply 'asking for money'; rather, it requires a corpus of techniques, specialized knowledge, and professional experience to attract contributors who take active part in pursuing the mission and the objectives of the organization. It is important to note that people can support socially meritorious causes not only by donating money but also by giving their time, professional skills, physical goods, or any other means possible. All of the above forms of giving are interrelated and can potentially influence each other; for example, volunteers' advocacy and good

word-of-mouth can play an important role in attracting new donors (Sacco, 2006; Hommerová & Severová, 2019; Coen Cagli, 2022).

In what follows, we will enter the realm of cultural fundraising, namely fundraising for cultural and arts organizations.

1.1 First steps into the world of cultural fundraising

Albeit the term 'cultural fundraising' is relatively recent, its underlying concept is not new. Indeed, for many centuries the arts, at least in Europe, were financed by wealthy individual patrons who, on occasion, were aided by local governments (Masacci, 2006; Alexander, 1996, 1999). Nonetheless, Massimo Coen Cagli specified that most of Italy's public cultural institutions were created with the investment of communities, often including ordinary citizens as well, and not just a major patron such as Lorenzo il Magnifico and Alfonso I d'Este. In particular, Coen Cagli argues that Italian communities began to fund culture in the Age of Municipalities (between the 11th and 13th centuries) by investing in the commons for creating and maintaining welfare conditions (Coen Cagli, 2021; Zorzi, 2016). He also stressed how the phenomenon continued throughout history by reporting some 19th-century cases. For instance, he mentioned the Biblioteca Popolare Circolante di Prato, founded by Antonio Bruni, which was based on a system of community fundraising. Another example is the case of the Teatro Garibaldi in Mazara del Vallo's interior furnishings which were built with donations of wood from fishermen's boats (Coen Cagli, 2021). However, despite Italy's long tradition of community funding for culture, there has been a widespread perception in Europe over the centuries that supporting the arts was mainly a responsibility of the State and the upper classes (Srakar & Čopič, 2012, Martinoni, 2006). Nevertheless, certain political and economic developments of the last decades have changed this perception by strengthening the idea that supporting

culture is an interest of everyone who, thus, is called upon to contribute personally (Martinoni, 2006). Aimed at increasing the public awareness of the value of culture in our society, this new perspective is linked to the emergence of the 'knowledge economy' that is funded on the concepts of core innovation and creativity (Masacci, 2006; Sacco, 2006). In addition, if the industrial model was based on vertical integration, the knowledge society is founded on new forms of horizontal integration between different actors – e.g.: the public administration, the Third sector, the education system, the for-profit sector, and the civil society (Sacco, 2006). Looking at policy developments, there are three processes that a plethora of states – including Italy – have been embarking on since the second half of the last century and that are closely related to what we have just illustrated. Specifically, they are: the process of privatization, the one of decentralization, and the reduction of public support for cultural organizations. In the Italian framework, for instance, a turning point in the matter of decentralization was marked by the so called 'Legge Bassanini', which introduced the principle of vertical subsidiarity. What is important, here, is that all these actions had a common purpose, namely the «reduction or reinvention of the government's role» (Srakar & Čopič, 2012, p. 227; Masacci, 2006; Comunian, 2006; Legge Bassanini, art. 4, clause 3a, 1997; Arena, 2003). In such an intricate scenario, cultural organizations were encouraged to adopt the American model of the funding mix strategy based on the diversification of sources of income (DiMaggio, 1986; Alexander, 1999). For this reason, at the turn of the millennium an increasing number of European arts organizations began to assimilate the American approach to funding (Fishel, 2002). This strategy proved to be essential for guaranteeing organizations' economic sustainability, especially in times of crisis (Byrnes, 2009; Taylor, 2010; Lindqvist, 2012). Looking at our present, we can say that

these theories have not been abandoned in the drawer; rather, as recent economic crises have further exacerbated the decline in public support, some experts are still emphasizing the importance of the funding mix for cultural organizations (Proteau, 2018; Besana, Bagnasco, Esposito, & Calzolari, 2018). On the other hand, Katja Lindqvist observed that the diversification of sources of income makes cultural organizations dependent on several stakeholders, especially for NPOs, where this link is more complex than for for-profit organizations. This is why, according to her, for NPOs it is crucial to embrace a stakeholder perspective and develop a shareholder strategy in order to boost, for instance, donations and thus assure long-term financial stability (Lindqvist, 2012).

Returning to the discussion on funding mix, we will now list some possible revenue sources for cultural NPOs. However, we would like to emphasise that, as the literature on this point provides countless classifications, what we report here is not exhaustive, but limited to mentioning only some of the most important items. Moreover, as a preliminary point, we would like to clarify that, in general, NPOs can benefit from both indirect and direct funding. While the former consists mostly of tax exemptions, the latter is more articulated. Indeed, direct incomes can derive from organizations' own activities, public entities, other Third Sector organizations, corporations as well as from single individuals. Among the principal sources of direct funding we count: sales of goods/services (including commercial activities); membership and 'Friend of' schemes; donations (including crowdfunding); corporate sponsorships; partnerships; State or local calls; EU calls; revenues from systems of tax incentives (e.g.: the Art Bonus, 5x1000, and 2x1000 in Italy); bequests; and deaccessioning (Hommerová & Severová, 2019; Alexander, 1999; Comunian,

2009; Meoli, 2022; Agenzia delle Entrate, 2017; Calzaroni, Salvatori, & Scarpat, 2019; Vecco & Piazzai, 2014).

1.2 Individual donations: a journey through the literature

After the general overview provided in the previous section, for the purpose of our research we will now focus on monetary donations from individuals by looking at what literature analysed on this theme. Specifically, we identified four main areas of research that have been extensively investigated by scholars in recent decades, i.e.: donors' profile (who), their motivations (why), their preferences (what), and how to communicate with them (how). Additionally, special regard has be given to the social media realm.

Who:

In 2009, Byrnes asserted that for an effective fundraising plan, a cultural NPO should adopt an effective marketing strategy (Byrnes, 2009). Ten years later, Colbert & Dantas added that, for resisting market saturation, this marketing strategy must be based on a clear positioning, a customer-oriented approach, and an optimised technological system (Colbert & Dantas, 2019). In order to achieve a clear positioning, it is essential to segment the market and identify the targets and their peculiarities (De Pelsmacker, Geuens, & Van den Bergh, 2021; Hill, O'Sullivan, & O'Sullivan, 2003). In other words, operating a donor segmentation would increase the efficiency of the fundraising plan. However, this is not an easy task because several criteria can be considered in this stage. Nevertheless, experts seem to have focused on three main parameters, i.e.: donors' past behaviour, their sociodemographic context, and their psychographic framework. According to Srnka et al., the first is limited to the analysis of the organization's actual donors because it is based on variables such as donations' recency, frequency, and monetary value. For this reason, it

must be implemented with other approaches, such as sociodemographic and psychographic segmentations, which enable the organization to attract even those who have not yet supported it. For what concerns sociodemographic segmentation, literature analysed particularly aspects such as donors' age, gender, income, and level of education; sometimes also ethnicity and religion were considered. It is quite interesting to note that, despite cultural differences between countries, specialists around the world generally agreed on two facts, namely that ageing increases propensity to donate, and that individual donors tend to be wealthy women with an high level of education (Srnka, Grohs, & Eckler, 2003; Grizzle, 2015; IDD, 2020). However, we must say that even though this profiling can be useful in some ways, a cultural organization should diversify its target donors as well as its sources of income, so that it would not depend only on one donor segment. As observed by Jung, this assumes relevance especially if we consider that in the 21st century the traditional donor pool is decreasing as wealth is accumulated by a shrinking percentage of people. Consequently, according to her, the need to increase individual giving has become more urgent and can be faced by adopting more inclusive fundraising strategies based on a relationship approach which targets not only traditional donors, but also those segments who have been generally ignored (Jung, 2015). To facilitate this, it would be useful to adopt a psychographic segmentation and, thus, examine the motivations behind individual giving (Srnka, Grohs, & Eckler, 2003).

Why:

According to Wiggins et al., understanding the reasons why individuals give is useful to define how to communicate with both actual and potential donors, and which benefits the organization must highlight to attract them (Wiggins Johnson & Ellis, 2011). Therefore, literature extensively analysed donors'

motivations for giving that, in general, can be defined as a «complex set of reasons and emotions» (Byrnes, 2009, p. 380). Despite this complexity, scholars tried to classify donors' motivations into three categories, i.e.: intrinsic, extrinsic, and reputational motivations. Specifically, intrinsic motivations, such as the sense of social responsibility, moral satisfaction, and the 'warm glow' effect, stem from within an individual. Extrinsic motivations, such as fiscal incentives, are based on factors external to the individual. Lastly, reputational motivations (e.g.: gaining public acclaim, highlighting one's social status and wealth, or improving one's image) arise from the individual's desire for social recognition (Wiggins Johnson & Ellis, 2011; Bertacchini, Santagata, & Signorello, 2011; Camarero, Garrido, & Vicente, 2021). Additionally, it is worth noting that preferences can change with time. For this reason, Kim and colleagues emphasised the importance and potential of using data and marketing science tools to comprehend the evolution of donors' motivations for giving over time (Kim, Gupta, & Lee, 2021). Another strand that has been explored by numerous scholars concerns the impact of various variables on donors' motivations. For instance, several experts emphasised that it is important to highlight exchange benefits in order to increase donations (Sargeant, West, & Ford, 2001; Wiggins Johnson & Ellis, 2011; Reddick & Branco, 2012). Nevertheless, according to Camarero et al., excessively promoting extrinsic benefits may crowd out intrinsic motivations, resulting in a decrease in the overall amount of donations. Hence, achieving the right balance in communicating the benefits of giving is a key element that NPOs should keep in mind (Camarero, Garrido, Vicente, 2021). Moreover, since we mentioned the crowd out effect, we must say that the literature has discussed considerably whether public support stimulates a 'crowd in' or 'crowd out' effect on individual donations, or whether this has no effect at all

(Schatteman & Bingle, 2017; Krawczyk, Wooddell, & Dias, 2017). Similarly, various experts investigated the positive or negative effects of corporate sponsorship on public perception of a particular cultural NPO (Alexander, 1996; Proteau, 2018; Biraglia & Gerrath, 2020). Although we did not find any research that specifically examines the effects of corporate sponsorship on individual giving, it is interesting to note that Biraglia and Gerrath found that Italians tend to accept corporate sponsorship more in times of crisis, especially if it comes from local businesses (Biraglia & Gerrath, 2020). In addition, there is another open *querelle* among scholars regarding the weight on donors' decisions of NPOs' performance measurements, disclosure of information (especially financial information), and reputation. For instance, some experts argued that measuring the performance of a given NPO with both qualitative and quantitative data would increase its donations by creating a transparent environment and highlighting its positive impacts. However, Charles and Kim stated that there are not enough empirical evidence to demonstrate so (Lindqvist, 2012; Charles & Kim, 2016). Nevertheless, various research demonstrated that the reputation of the organization is quite relevant during donors' decision process (Bonicelli & Pasini, 2006; Jung, 2015; Krawczyk, Wooddell, & Dias, 2017; Camarero, Garrido, Vicente, 2021). On the other hand, specialists are still divided on whether or not financial disclosure positively affects donations. A compromise was reached by Krawczyk et al. who concluded that financial disclosure is important, but that its effect is too small to heavily influence the organization's ability to attract donations (Bonicelli & Pasini, 2006; Waters, 2011; Grizzle, 2015; Krawczyk, Wooddell, & Dias, 2017; Camarero, Garrido, Vicente, 2021; Barber, Farwell, & Galle, 2022).

What:

Over the years, researchers have consistently analysed the causes that donors around the world prefer to support, and unanimously reported that medical research always ranks first, followed by social causes. By contrast, culture has always been ranked among the least supported ones (Martinoni, 2006; Bertacchini, Santagata, & Signorello, 2011; Calzaroni, Salvatori, & Scarpat, 2019). Considering the Italian framework, it is worth quoting Marianna Martinoni who, in 2006, wrote that:

> «[Tr.] The lower willingness of citizens to invest in cultural causes may depend on several factors. The data show that there is indeed greater sensitivity and a clear preference among potential donors for social causes rather than cultural ones, which are still perceived by the average potential donor as elitist activities whose support is still the responsibility of the State or the higher-income social classes».
>
> (Martinoni, 2006, p. 166)

Subsequently, she denounced the lack of public awareness about the benefits and positive impacts generated by cultural activities. She also argued that while Italian cultural NPOs have not yet adopted a systematic fundraising-oriented communication, NPOs working in the health or social sectors have been raising awareness of their causes for several years, adopting engaging communication strategies and investing in human resources for fundraising activities (Martinoni, 2006).

How:

In *La comunicazione fundraising oriented: una visione strategica e un approccio metodologico per il fundraising* (2006), Bonicelli and Pasini observed that, nowadays, both the Third and Public sectors are aware of the importance of

communicating strategically with their audiences in order to stimulate consensus and participation. Nevertheless, as previously mentioned, numerous Italian cultural NPOs still need to implement systematically – and not sporadically – fundraising activities in their communication strategies. Furthermore, the authors posit that effective fundraising-oriented communication must encompass the disclosure of information, the stimulation of interaction and sociability, and the creation of a sense of identity and belonging to the organisation (Bonicelli & Pasini, 2006). All of what we just mentioned revolves around one word: relationships. Indeed, as indicated at the beginning of the chapter, most of the literature claimed that, in order to increase donations, NPOs should implement relationship marketing techniques aimed at building and maintaining long-term loyal relationships with both actual and potential donors (Fishel, 2002; Bonicelli & Pasini, 2006; Waters, 2011; Lindqvist, 2012; Curry, Rodin, & Carlson, 2012; Azizi & Moon, 2013; Jung, 2015; Erwin & Dias, 2016). Moreover, according to Lindqvist, building long-term stakeholder relationships is more effective in dealing with turbulent times than short-term strategies such as sporadic sponsorships (Lindqvist, 2012). However, if NPOs these days increasingly need to build long-term relationships with donors, the opportunities to do so continue to grow, especially in the digital realm (Bonicelli & Pasini, 2006). For instance, a plethora of scholars argued that social media are great facilitators for relationship building as well as for stakeholders' engagement (Guo & Saxton, 2014; Saxton & Wang, 2014; Panic, Hudders, & Cauberghe, 2016; Erwin & Dias, 2016; Zongchao, Yi, Weiting, & Zifei, 2022). On the other hand, other specialists interpreted digital relationship-building as the solution for gaining users' attention on social media, which is a great contemporary issue (Guo & Saxton, 2014; Xu & Saxton, 2019; Besana, Bagnasco, Esposito, & Calzolari,

2018). Additionally, some experts stressed the importance of stimulating interaction and engagement through social media communication for attracting both potential and actual donors (Reddick & Branco, 2012; Saxton & Wang, 2014; Panic, Hudders, & Cauberghe, 2016; Bennet, 2017; Xu & Saxton, 2019; Agostino & Arnaboldi, 2021). We could say that all the aforementioned observations pertain to the domain of 'digital fundraising', which is defined by Italia non profit as «[tr.] fundraising activities carried out through the use of digital technologies, often using online tools» (Italia non profit's website, 2023). Among these tools we count: social media; crowdfunding; websites; SEO and SEM; blogs and forums; solidarity e-commerce; DEM and Newsletter; personal fundraising; and solidarity auctions. Moreover, this fundraising approach is increasingly based on mobile technology, as data shows that more and more people are connecting to the Internet via smartphones. Indeed, this phenomenon has challenged fundraisers to rethink how, when, and where potential donors decide to give, and what they expect from interacting with online donation streams. However, Italia non profit highlights how currently digital fundraising is not yet the most effective tool for raising direct donations but its ultimate goal remains to create «[tr.] the right relationship and experience with the donor». In other words, Italia non profit's experts state that digital fundraising is not effective to increase donations in the short-term because, although it certainly enables collecting small amounts from many donors, its current greatest potential lies in other aspects. Particularly, digital fundraising is very effective in establishing and maintaining relationships with the organization's audiences by making it more visible and accessible to a different set of interlocutors than those reachable offline. In this sense, digital fundraising may also provide access to new market segments and, thus, encourage innovation. Furthermore, it

enables the gathering of information on the behaviours and interests of donors and prospects by analysing their interactions with the website or an ad-hoc landing page. However, as suggested by Italia non profit, when working with digital fundraising, NPOs should bear in mind four key aspects. Firstly, digital does not mean zero investment of resources and time. Secondly, its primary aim is to develop relationships by producing content tailored to specific target audiences, which must be clearly defined a priori. Thirdly, digital fundraising efforts must be integrated with other communication channels. Fourthly, it is crucial to establish a conversion funnel, namely a step-by-step path that leads potential donors towards becoming actual donors (Italia non profit, 2023). Nevertheless, despite what we just illustrated, certain adepts reported that several NPOs still only use one-way communication to build relationships today, rather than relying on the Internet. This is a significant drawback as it is far from meeting current communication needs and practices (Xu & Saxton, 2019; Kumar, Abdalla, Seshadri, & Vij, 2022).

Moreover, in communication, another crucial term is 'message'. That is why many scholars conducted several experiments related to this subject as well as to the willingness to donate. For instance, a deeply analysed topic consists in the persuasive effect of message framing on donations. Specifically, some scholars tested whether for NPOs it was more effective to use gain-framed or loss-framed massages. In a nutshell, both appeal to emotions, but while the former encourages people to donate by promoting the positive benefits and impacts of giving, the latter emphasizes the negative consequences of not supporting the cause by creating a sense of urgency and threat. In general, experts agree on the fact that, for NPOs, loss-framed messages are more effective and powerful than gain-framed ones (Das, Kerkhof, & Kuiper, 2008; Xiao, Huang, Bortree, & Waters, 2021; Yilmaz & Blackburn, 2022).

Nevertheless, as reported by Lee and colleagues in *Nudging Art Lovers to Donate* (2017), the findings for the cultural sector are slightly different. In fact, according to their research, individuals who visit art galleries frequently demonstrated a higher tendency to donate when exposed to the loss-framed scenario compared to the gain-framed and unframed ones. However, they found that both scenarios are effective with infrequent visitors – who generally represent the majority – but the gain-framed one appears to be more effective than the loss-framed one (Lee, Fraser, & Fillis, 2017). Furthermore, in 2019 Hogh and Lee stressed that the impact of gain or loss message framing may differ depending on the chronic regulatory focus of the receiver which can be promotion-focused or prevention-focused. While the former suggests an individual who prioritises achievement and progression, the latter suggests someone who is concerned with security and fulfilling responsibilities. In particular, they found that an advertisement featuring a promotional message and a preventive image is more effective than a promotional ad where the text and image match (Hong & Lee, 2019). Similarly, in 2016 Panic and colleagues discovered that using an incongruent celebrity endorser has positive implications for attitudes towards the charity. To clarify, the website's interactive features may increase cognitive elaboration, which is necessary to solve incongruities between the celebrity and the NPO. Once the incongruence has been resolved, positive feelings are evoked, which seem to increase the users' intention to donate (Panic, Hudders, & Cauberghe, 2016). Another noteworthy experiment was recently conducted by Zongchao et al. who explored the emotional content strategies adopted by NPOs on Facebook and its impact on public engagement behaviours. Their findings confirm that posts with emotional content, particularly negative emotions, result in increased public engagement, measured by the number of likes, shares and comments.

In addition, it was found that these emotional states are likely to encourage users to comment on the posts and to share them with others (Zongchao, Yi, Weiting, & Zifei, 2022). Mentioning sharing, we must say that in the last decade various experts highlighted the importance of advocacy activities on social media, especially in time of crisis (Guo & Saxton, 2014; Raeymaeckers & Puyvelde, 2021). Linked to this is also the theme concerning social media influencers. For instance, the recent study by Kay et al. demonstrated that consumers acquire notably higher product knowledge after being exposed to social media micro-influencers as compared to major influencers. Although this investigation did not focus on donations, we consider these findings interesting for our research (Kay, Mulcahy, & Parkinson, 2020). Lastly, in 2021 Alston et al. found that high-capacity donors are generally not persuaded to donate by impersonal communications, such as direct mail, or emails; however, they did not mention social media in their study (Alston, Eckel, Meer, & Zhan, 2021).

1.3 Gaps and research question

After our journey through the literature, we will now reveal some lacunae we have found. Firstly, there is a paucity of research on how cultural NPOs can use donor preferences for health and social causes to gain competitive advantage and thus increase individual donations. Secondly, there is a lack of investigation on which social media communication strategies are most effective in increasing individual donations for cultural NPOs in the post-pandemic era. Hence, the aim of the present research is to contribute to fill these gaps, but within the Italian framework. To say it explicitly, our research question is the following:

Research Question (RQ): For an Italian cultural NPO, which are the most effective social media fundraising-oriented communication strategies to increase individual donations and gain competitive advantage in the post-pandemic era?

Furthermore, it is noteworthy mentioning that this study gives special regard to cultural welfare and its potential in unlocking competitive advantage for cultural organizations. Specifically, this investigation attempts at comprehending whether promoting the social and health impacts generated by cultural NPOs would increase donations and move culture up in the list of donors' preferred causes. In other words, we sought to establish whether the truth lies in Hypothesis 1 or Hypothesis 2 (see below).

Hypothesis 1 (H1): Highlighting the social and health impacts generated by cultural NPOs in their donor-oriented communication strategies increases donations and could moves culture up in the list of donors' favourite causes.

Hypothesis 2 (H2): Highlighting the social and health impacts generated by cultural NPOs in their donor-oriented communication strategies does not increase donations, nor could it move culture up in the list of donors' favourite causes.

In the following sections, we will provide a more detailed description of the empirical context of this study and then illustrate the methodology and results of our empirical analysis.

2. Setting the scene: the empirical context of our research

Because of a chain of events (e.g.: Covid-19, the war in Ukraine, inflation) we are currently living through hard times of economic recession. Worldwide, the cultural sector is not exempt from this situation. Indeed, in 2020, a UNESCO report estimated that 13% of all museums around the world may never reopen due to the sudden drop of fundings (Biraglia & Gerrath, 2020). For what concerns NPOs, Kumar et al. denounced the inappropriateness and ineligibility of most of governments' financial packages provided during the pandemic. Specifically, the authors argued that these packages were often not targeted for NPOs because this kind of organizations was seen as at the bottom of priorities during the epidemic. In other words, Covid-19 outbreak has further exacerbated the process of diminishing of public support available for cultural NPOs. Consequently, the financial aids from foundations of bank origins and similar resulted to be insufficient; therefore, the race to alternative financial resources – which was already in place (see para. 1.1) – has further intensified (Kumar et al., 2022). For example, numerous cultural organizations have tried to cope with the dearth of funds by attracting corporate sponsors to fund their activities (Biraglia Gerrath, 2020). However, as mentioned previously, occasional sponsorships alone cannot solve the pathologic situation of cultural organizations' funding shortage (see p. 15). Furthermore, according to Kumar and colleagues, Covid-19 brought to the surface two other problems of NPOs on a global scale, i.e.: their digital unpreparedness and their lack of human resources for marketing activities (Kumar et al., 2022). For tackling the challenges encountered by the cultural non-profit sector in today's intricate scenario, Coen Cagli proposes cultural fundraising as the essential solution (Coen Cagli, 2021). By sharing this perspective, Contrino also commented that cultural fundraising has been shown to be an anticyclical

phenomenon. This means that during a crisis, its results tend to be better or, at least, more stable than other activities. This is why some cultural organisations that have systematically implemented fundraising strategies over the past three years have seen an increase in individual donations. However, Contrino emphasised that this phenomenon applies only to those organizations that have complemented their fundraising activity with an effective promotional campaign, using messages that attract both new and renewed donors (Contrino, 2021). Nevertheless, even if the importance of cultural fundraising has become more evident after the pandemic, in Italy there are still some obstacles and challenges that prevent its proper or effective functioning, which leads us to the next paragraph (Dal Pozzolo, 2021; Coen Cagli, 2021).

2.1 The challenges of cultural fundraising in Italy

There is a reason if Italy is also known as the 'Bel paese'. In fact, excluding for-profit companies, we count over 100.000 Italian cultural organizations in the Public and Third sectors, and all of them need to finance their activities. However, as denounced by D'Orsi and Coen Cagli, in most cases there is a large gap between the resources needed and the staff dedicated to fundraising activities (D'Orsi & Coen Cagli, 2021). This is just one of several issues related to cultural fundraising in Italy. To provide further insight into this context, the second edition of the event + *Fundraising* + *Cultura* was held in Rome from 13 to 16 December 2021. During this event, several experts shared their thoughts on the main challenges of cultural fundraising in the current Italian scenario. In what follows we tried to summarize these difficulties which are related to bureaucratic, administrative, fiscal, cultural, organizational, and social factors (Coen Cagli, 2021).

Bureaucratic obstacles:

Italy is the State of bureaucracy *par excellence*, and this often entails very long, intricate, and slow operating mechanisms that hinder effective functioning for a plethora of organizations. To better understand this point, we believe crucial to see some of the most important Italian laws related to cultural fundraising or the Third Sector. First of all, we want to start by mentioning the *Guidelines* adopted with the d.m. 13 June 2022 which provides a non-exhaustive and non-biding list of possible fundraising activities that an organization can adopt. To name a few: online donations, direct mail, telemarketing, events, merchandising, testamentary legacies, and others (Meoli, 2022). Secondly, since our research is dedicated to the Third sector, we want to focus more on the d.lgs. 177/2017, which implemented an important reform of this sector by introducing the *Codice del Terzo settore*. Precisely, this reform institutionalizes and encourages fundraising for Italian NPOs by extending tax benefits to all the organizations registered in the RUNTS, i.e.: the *Registro Unico Nazionale del Terzo Settore* (Prato & Romanelli, 2021). Furthermore, in its art. 83 the Codex recognizes donations' liberal nature and, thus, their deductibility from donors' taxes. Specifically, Italian donors have the opportunity to deduct 30% of the donated amount if their contribution was in money, and 10% if it was 'in nature' (Meoli, 2022). Furthermore, in its art. 89, clause 17, the Codex contains also the *Partenariato Speciale Pubblico Privato,* a regulation introduced by the d.lgs. 50/2016, which is also present in the *Codice degli Appalti* and the *Codice dei Contratti Pubblici.* Specifically, this regulation facilitates the establishment of an equitable partnership between public administration and private cultural organisations (Prato & Romanelli, 2021; Codice del Terzo Settore, art. 89, clause 17; Santoro & Tovaglieri, 2021; Codice degli Appalti, art. 151; Codice dei Contratti Pubblici, art. 151). Despite these aspects, cultural NPOs perceive

the Third Sector reform as an obstacle rather than an incentive for rejuvenation. As reported by Prato and Romanelli, part of the reason is that cultural organisations have been sidelined by the reform, which disregards the requirements, features, and nature of the cultural sector. For instance, many cultural NPOs have difficulties in obtaining the title of ETS (Ente del Terzo Settore, i.e.: officially recognised NPO) and are therefore unable to register to the RUNTS (Prato & Romanelli, 2021). Now, moving on to other tools provided by the Italian law to encourage individual donations towards culture, we must mention the Art Bonus, 5x1000, and 2x1000. The Art Bonus – introduced by the art. 1 of the d.l. 83/2014 during the famous 'Franceschini reform' – is a tool that provides a tax credit of 65% for liberal donations aimed at supporting cultural State organizations. Although the Art Bonus is targeted for public institutions, under specific and limited conditions some cultural NPOs can benefit of it. This is the case, for instance, of a foundation that manages a State cultural institute and whose collections are of public property (Art Bonus, 2023; Giraud, 12 April 2021; Agenzia delle Entrate, 2017). However, as currently in Italy the Art Bonus is the most powerful fiscal tool offered to the donor, many experts require that its use can be extended to the rest of the cultural NPOs – possibly starting from those registered in the RUNTS. The main point made by such specialists is that not benefiting of the Art Bonus greatly disadvantages these NPOs in attracting large donations from companies (but also individuals) because they cannot offer them a tax incentive of the same magnitude (Prato & Romanelli, 2021; Botti & Contrino, 2021). On the other hand, the 2x1000 and 5x1000 are special forms through which Italian citizens can choose to orient a small part of their taxes towards an Italian NPO, insofar as this is present in specific registers and has equally specific features (Meoli, 2022). Anyway, according to the experts, also these

tools must be improved and revised. For instance, in the case of the 2x1000, it was proposed: to extend and bring forward the accession window and the publication of eligible organisations; to increase the maximum ceiling available for the measure; to reduce the duration for the assignment and distribution of money to eligible recipients; and to better promote this instrument among Italian contributors (Botti & Contrino, 2021).

Lastly, despite the legal provisions we just reported, according to Coen Cagli, Italy still lacks cultural fundraising policies in its most complex and complete interpretation. In other words, there is the need of a policy structure that sets systematically in motion actions, programs, and investments for the cultural sector as it has been done in other countries. Activating such mechanisms can help fighting the common place that culture is a beautiful but unnecessary extra (Coen Cagli, 2022). Fortunately, participatory art and activities, which are increasingly present in today's cultural organisations, help to combat this prejudice by making people aware of the social, political, and economic value of culture (Franco & Giannachi, 2021). On the other hand, various studies recently demonstrated the strong link between cultural enjoyment and both individuals' health and the general welfare system. However, if it is true that the government should take more systematic actions, cultural organizations must do the same, and this leads us to the next point (Coen Cagli, 2022).

Lack of fundraising culture:

As per Istat data, 83% of Italian cultural NPOs still do not practice any form of fundraising. This is partly because in these organizations there is still the predominance of an old-fashioned management approach that leads to not appropriately consider fundraising and its potential. Coen Cagli observed that another reason is the common perception that only the State and wealthy private subjects (e.g.: patrons, companies, and grant-making foundations) are

interested in donating to culture. As he highlights, this factor – as well as the commonly held notion that Italians are culturally indifferent because they are deemed as an 'ignorant people that do not even read' – often leads to disregard the community's role when considering fundraising. However, the reality is quite different. In fact, a recent study by Cultural Philanthropy reported that 40% of Italians are inclined to support culture with an average of € 80 per year, while in the UK (where giving is a very common behaviour) only 20% of the population is inclined to donate to culture and with an average of € 36 per year. Additionally, some Italian cultural NPOs, such as the Fondo per l'Ambiente Italiano (FAI), have turned their fundraising activities to the community, finding extremely positive responses from all population segments (Coen Cagli, 2021; Carazzone & Coen Cagli, 2021). In conclusion, as stressed by Luca Dal Pozzolo, nowadays Italian cultural organizations can no longer postpone the need to revision or reinvent their models of economic sustainability. From this point of view, according to the experts a great opportunity for the Italian cultural sector consists in the *Piano Nazionale di Ripresa e Resilienza* (PNRR), i.e.: the € 750 billion package that is part of the Next Generation EU programme and was negotiated by the European Union to respond to the Covid-19 crisis (Dal Pozzolo, 2021; Andria, 2021; La Spina, 2021; Ministero dell'Economia e delle Finance, 2021). However, during the 2021 edition of *+ Fundraising + Cultura*, Massimo Coen Cagli noted that among the experts that the Italian Ministry of Culture intends to recruit in the near future (also thanks to the PNRR funds), fundraising staff do not seem to be included (Coen Cagli, 2021).

Prejudices towards fundraising:

Nowadays, in Italy, there are still some misconceptions on fundraising. For instance, various cultural organizations still do fundraise activities in the dark

by asking for donations in a veiled or hidden way, and not to their direct contacts, so that their reputation and cultural activities are not 'compromised'. However, as emphasized by Contrino, there is nothing to hide when doing fundraising; instead, it asks for transparency, sharing of its relational capital, and accountability logic. This is why these activities must be proudly and creatively communicated in official communications, including social media (Contrino, 2021). In addition, Dal Pozzolo also stressed that organisations need to do more than just communicate with their target audiences. They should increase the funds collected by highlighting the role of culture in our society and by encouraging citizens' active participation (Dal Pozzolo, 2021).

Lack of fundraising-oriented communication:

As mentioned in paragraph 1.2, in 2006 Marianna Martinoni had already highlighted the lack of a systematic and effective fundraising-oriented communication by Italian cultural organizations (see p. 14). However, this challenge appears to persist as in 2021 Massimo Coen Cagli reported that Italian cultural users are rarely reached by fundraising messages (Coen Cagli, 2021). Moreover, according to Contrino, fundraising can contribute to the creation and maintenance of economic sustainability for cultural NPOs only if fundraisers have the opportunity to trace a storytelling, as happens in other types of NPOs (Contrino, 2021).

In conclusion, nowadays organizations and cultural fundraisers must be able to face the intricate contemporary Italian scenario characterized by the challenges and obstacles that we have just reported. This requires collaboration from everyone: the government, organizations, experts, communities, businesses, and so on. However, despite the challenges, we must highlight that in the last few years Italy has started to make some steps for following this path. For instance, in 2019 Ales s.p.a. – an in-house company

of the Ministry of Culture (MiC) – selected ten national fundraising and cultural patronage experts for possible contracts regarding intellectual services. Specifically, these experts are: Martina Bacigalupi, Elisa Bonini, Andrea Caruso Caracciolo di Feroleto, Massimo Coen Cagli, Niccolò Contrino, Alberto Cuttica, Marianna Martinoni, Catia Mastrovito, Giosuè Pasqua, and Valeria Romanelli (Ales s.p.a, 2019). Moreover, it should be emphasized that while the pandemic has brought about new challenges, it has also paved the way for new opportunities for growth. In this matter, a great role is played by communities, whose central role in culture was already recognized by the 2005 Convention of Faro – recently ratified by Italy (Zane, 2021; UNESCO, 2020). Therefore, to quote Massimiliano Zane:

> «[tr.] To generate long-term value for the community and create new forms of inclusion for social actors and businesses, it is crucial to go beyond project-based fundraising and establish sustainable cultural systems».

<div align="right">(Zane, 2021, p. 51).</div>

2.2 Comparing eras: donations before and after Covid-19

Now, we will thoroughly analyse the current state in terms of individual donations to Italian cultural NPOs by comparing the pre-Covid situation with the one after the pandemic's outbreak.

Before Covid-19:

In December 2019, the Fondazione Italia Sociale (FIS) published the working paper *La filantropia in Italia nel confronto internazionale*, which shed light on the difficulty of clearly defining the situation in Italy about donations to NPOs. Actually, all the issues raised by the authors branch out from a single source, i.e.: a problem pertaining to data. Indeed, FIS' specialists stressed that while

Italian donors' characteristics are treated abundantly and with homogeneous results by surveys, economic data flow into a grey zone where approximation and uncertainty reign. For instance, in 2018 Istat counted 7.650.000 donors in Italy, while GfK 9.644.400 and BVA Doxa 14.673.063. These non-homogenous outcomes are mainly related to the lack of updated information, a systematic analysis, and common criteria in methodology and sampling. Taking the Istat case as example, we must say that it produces two documents, i.e.: the *Registro statistico del settore non-profit*, which annually provides information on the main characteristics of Italian NPOs, and a multi-year and multi-purpose sample survey that analyses their economic and social aspects. Together they constitute the *Censimento permanente delle Istituzioni non-profit* that shows a non-stop boost in the quantity of Italian non-profit organizations since 2001. However, even though Italy remains one of the few countries that makes an NPOs' census, the latter presents two problems: insufficiency of economic data – because they are not provided every year – and no distinction between incomes from individuals and those from companies. In fact, the item *Contributi, offerte, donazioni, lasciti testamentari e liberalità* includes sponsorships as well as liberal donations, 5x1000 and others. Conversely, according to FIS' paper, the *Italy Giving Report* by Vita is the only available survey in Italy that specifically deals with donations from individuals to NPOs. Specifically, in terms of the total amount donated, Vita reported an increasing trend between 2013 and 2016 (Fig. 1).

Fig. 1

Amount of individual donations - *Vita*

€ 4.545.000 (2013) € 4.588.000 (2014) € 5.094.000 (2015) € 5.367.000 (2016)
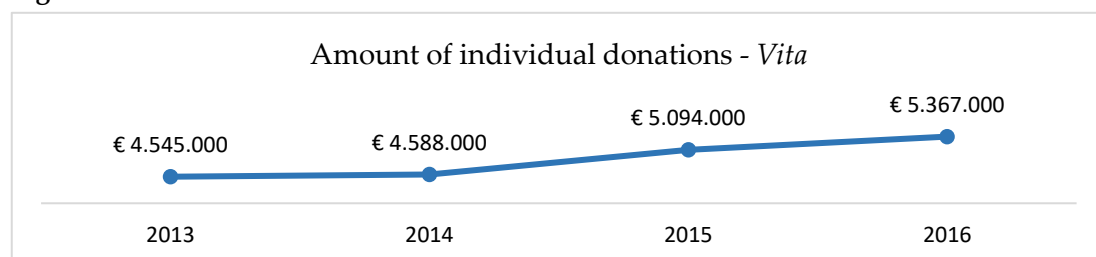
Source: FIS' paper

Nevertheless, as emphasized by FIS, there is still a problem because this report provides a precise number of individual donations without specifying the calculation criterion adopted. Furthermore, as mentioned earlier, there is a great difficulty in comprehending the quantity of Italian donors. Indeed, according to the FIS' paper, we have conflicting reports: both GfK (Fig. 2) and BVA Doxa reported a consistently negative trend until 2017, while Istat found a steady trend and the CAF's *World Giving Index* showed a fluctuating one (Fig. 3).

Fig. 2

Number of donors - *GfK*
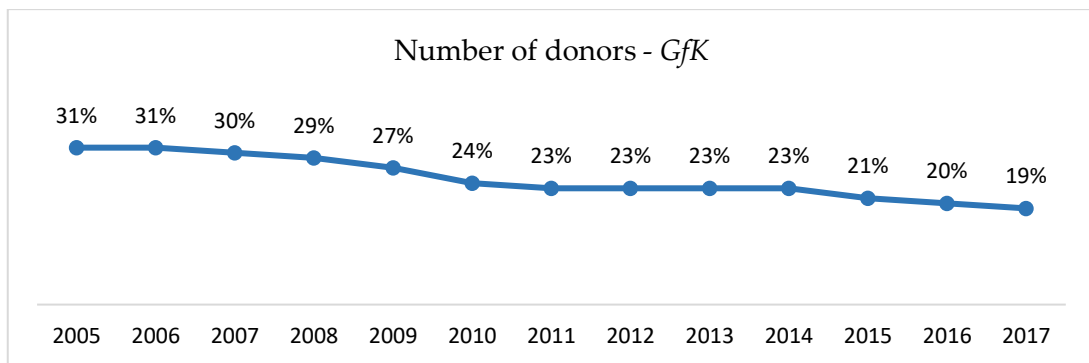
Source: GfK 2017

Fig. 3

Number of donors - *CAF*
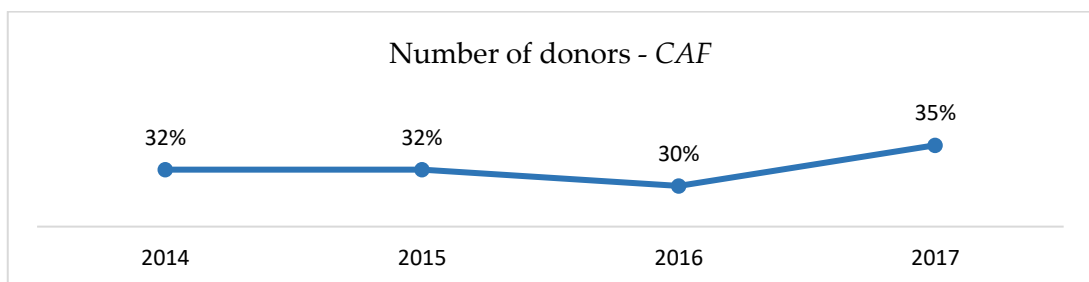
Source: FIS' paper

Unfortunately, we did not find the Istat and BVA Doxa's precise data used by FIS, either in their working paper or on the Internet. Therefore, a comparison of all graphs is not possible here. However, the FIS study allows us a better visual comparison for the year 2018 thanks to the following chart (Fig. 4)

Fig. 4

Organization	Sample	Year	% Donors	N°. donors
Istat (multi-purpose)	Around 25.000 households, housing approximately 50.000 individuals aged +14 years	2018	14,5%	7.650.000
GfK	Approximately 12.000 people aged +14	2018	18,8%	9.644.400
BVA Doxa	Approximately 1.000 people aged +15	2018	28%	14.673.063

Source: FIS' paper

Additionally, along with these issues, the FIS' working paper observes some other interesting aspects. For instance, in 2018 BVA Doxa registered medical research – followed by social assistance and emergency aids – as the most supported cause in Italy. For what concerns favourite channels, 63% of the survey's respondents claimed to prefer cash, 42% SMS, and 28% the postal bulletin (Fig. 5).

Fig. 5

Preferred channels for donations (2018) - *BVA Doxa, PayPal, and Fondazione Rete del Dono*

Cash — 63%
SMS/call with fixed charge — 42%
Postal bulletin — 28%
Donations at the cash desk — 8%
Bank transfer at a branch — 5%
Online transfer — 4%
RID — 3%
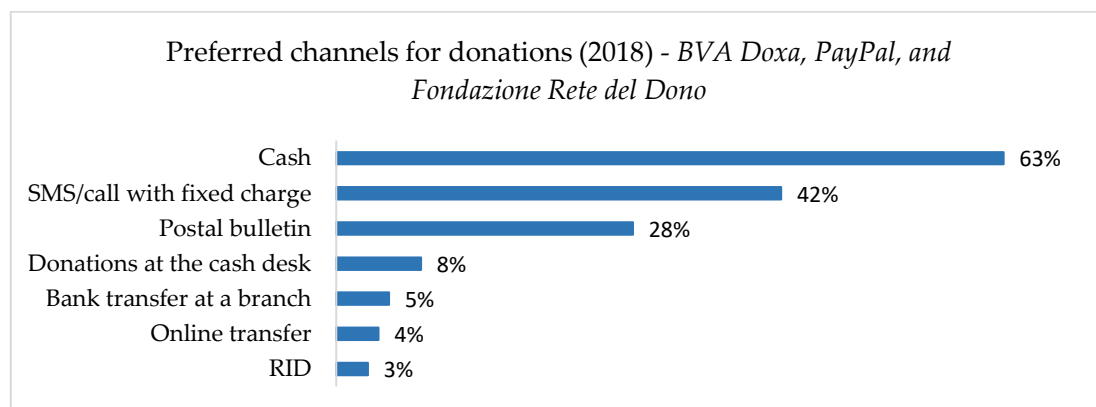
Source: FIS' paper

Moreover, the 2019 *World Giving Index* globally classified Italy at the 44th place for percentage of donors, and at the 3rd place for the total amount of individual donations. Trying to explain this apparent paradox, FIS' specialists supposed that the huge social gap in Italy contributes to a lower percentage of donors

than elsewhere, and that probably those who donate belong mainly to the wealthiest section of the population. They support this claim by mentioning the 2018 *Indagine sui bilanci delle famiglie italiane* by Banca d'Italia, which reported that 30% of the richest Italians hold 75% of the national net wealth. Nonetheless, they specify that this is only a supposition that is not yet scientifically demonstrated. Thus, in general, for 2018 FIS estimated a total volume of donations to Italian NPOs that exceeded € 8.000.000 and stressed that individual donations were the main source of this amount. However, we must underline that this sum also included donations from foundations of banking origin and companies as well as non-defined quantities from bequests and informal donations (Calzaroni, Salvatori, & Scarpat, 2019).

Furthermore, for the year 2019 – not analysed by the FIS' paper – the report *Noi doniamo* published in 2020 by the Istituto Italiano della Donazione (IID) mentions that both Vita and BVA Doxa appraised a 2019 decline in donations compared to the three precedent years. It reports also that people between 65-74 years old were the ones who donated the most in 2019; while, geographically, donations were driven by North Regions, Emilia Romagna, and Tuscany as in previous years. In addition, it informs that – according to the 2020 edition of *Donare 3.0* by BVA Doxa, PayPal and Fondazione Rete del Dono – while cash is still the preferred method, online donations are on the rise and postal bulletins have collapsed. Simultaneously, more people donated through the purchase of tickets for events and charity dinners. Meanwhile, medical research still reigned undisputed, and non-donors confirmed that the primary cause for which they do not donate to NPOs was lack of trust (IDD, 2020).

After Covid-19:

According to the 2021 *World Giving Index* by CAF, despite the pandemic, or maybe because of it, more people worldwide donated money in 2020 than in the previous five years (CAF, 2021). In Italy, it was reported by the IID that people donated more than usual in 2020 due to the health emergency. However, there was a decrease in donations to NPOs that year because several donors preferred to support other organizations such as hospitals, the Protezione Civile, and the Croce Rossa, which were heavily promoted by the media. Interestingly, the 7th edition of the survey *Donare 3.0* by BVA Doxa, PayPal and Fondazione Rete del Dono reported that 40% of respondents said they had decided not to donate to NPOs because of the pandemic emergency (IID, 2021). The following year, by interpreting data from Istat, Vita, and BVA Doxa, the IID confirmed both the general increased propensity to donate and the negative trend of donations to NPOs. While the former finds explanation in the 'long-Covid effect', the latter was faced by several NPOs by strengthening the relationships with donors and citizens (IID, 2022). Indeed, Istat disclosed that in 2021 nine NPOs out of ten have built significant relationships with different stakeholders (Istat, 2022). This might have borne fruit because, one year later, Vita's *Italy Giving Report* declared that in 2022 donations to non-profit associations reached unprecedent levels. According to Vita, a key factor that contributed to this rise was the war emergency in Ukraine, which intensified further the propensity to donate already encouraged by the pandemic (De Carli, 2023). Confirming these statements, the online fundraising platform iRaiser reported that 42,5% of the 2022 online donations received by its Italian NPO clients were collected in March after the outbreak of the war (iRaiser, 2022). This leads us to point out two relevant trends that have emerged in Italy during the last three years in terms of

individual donations, i.e.: online donations' increase and the lowering of the average age among donors (De Carli, 2023). To begin with online donations, we must report that according to BVA Doxa in 2022 online donations surpassed cash donations, as shown in Fig. 6 (BVA Doxa, PayPal, & Fondazione Rete del Dono, 2023).

Fig. 6

Cash VS Online donations (2022) - BVA Doxa, PayPal, and Fondazione Rete del Dono
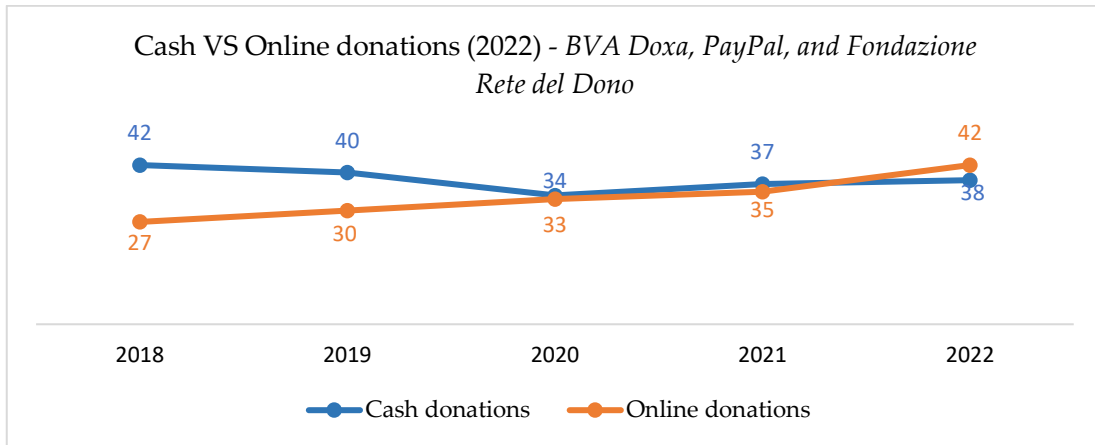
Moreover, iRaiser reported that in 2022 its 62 Italian NPO clients raised a total of € 11.000.000 in online donations. Thus, compared to 2021 – when 44 NPOs raised a total of € 3.200.000 – it registered a 266% increase in online donations. In parallel, the average online donation increased from € 52 in 2021 to € 62 in 2022. In particular, the average online donation to cultural NPOs in 2022 was € 69, thus exceeding the general average (iRaiser, 2022).

Fig. 7

Average online donation (2022) - *iRaiser*
(Tot average: € 62)

Human rights	€116
	€110
	€109
Childcare	€76
	€70
Culture	€69
	€68
International solidarity	€60
	€38
Enviroment and wildlife safeguarding	€35
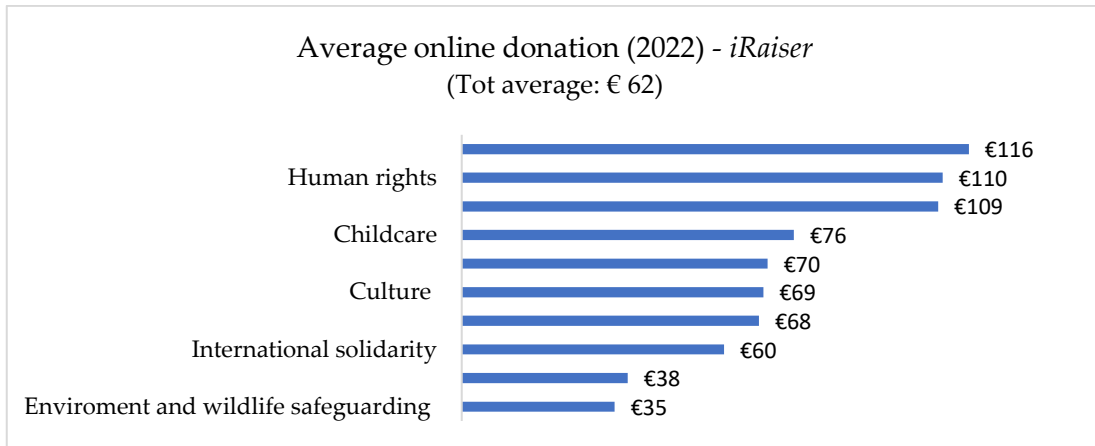
Nonetheless, the IID reported that, in 2021, 24% of the interviewed Italian NPOs stated that they do not use online tools to collect donations (IID, 2022). This brings us to the problem of digitalization. Indeed, according to Istat only 79,5% of all Italian NPOs used at least one digital technology in 2021 and, among these, cultural organizations were ranked at the 11th place out of fourteen (Fig. 8).

Fig. 8

NPOs that use at least one digital technology per sector (2021) - *Istat*

Labor relations and interest representation NPOs	94,6%
Education and research NPOs	92,4%
Health NPOs	91,4%
Protection of rights and political NPOs	89,8%
International cooperation and solidarity NPOs	88,6%
Philanthropy and voluntary NPOs	87,7%
Social assistance and Civil protection NPOs	86,7%
Others NPOs	83,6%
Economic development and social cohesion NPOs	81,5%
Environmental NPOs	80,8%
Cultural and artistic NPOs	80,3%
Sports NPOs	74,4%
Religious NPOs	72,4%
Recreational and socialising NPOs	71,3%

In addition, as per Istat findings the main reasons for the non-digitalisation of NPOs are: the belief that digital technologies are irrelevant for the organization's activities; the lack of financial resources, digital culture, and qualified employees; and the idea that there are more urgent problems (Fig. 9). The first and last points actually demonstrate that several Italian NPOs have not yet completely understood the potential of the digital in solving these 'more urgent problems' (Istat, 2022).

Fig. 9

Reasons for non-digitalisation (2021) - *Istat*

Irrelevant for the NPO's activities	29,60%
Lack of financial resources	26,40%
Lack of digital culture	15,70%
More urgent problems	13,80%
Lack of qualified employees	12,60%
Lack of investments in techonological innovation	9,00%
Lack of ICT training	5,00%
Process/infrastructure reorganisation	3,90%
Other	2,10%

Source: Istat 2022

Furthermore, the *Global Trends in Giving* reported that in 2020, at the question 'Which communication tool stimulates you more to donate?', 45% of the Italian respondents indicated social media, 41% email, and 35% website (Fig. 10). The same report disclosed that 53% of the respondents preferred donating online via Facebook fundraising tools, 39% via banking transfers, 23% via PayPal, and 12% via the so-called 'SMS solidale', as we can see in Fig. 11 (Italia non profit, 2020).

Fig. 10

Which communication tool stimulates you more to donate? (2020) -
Global Trends in Giving

35%

45%

41%

■ Social media   ■ Email   ■ Website

Fig. 11

Preferred channels for donations (2020) - *Global Trends in Giving*

12%

23%

53%

39%

■ Facebook fundraising tools   ■ Banking transfers   ■ PayPal   ■ 'SMS solidale'
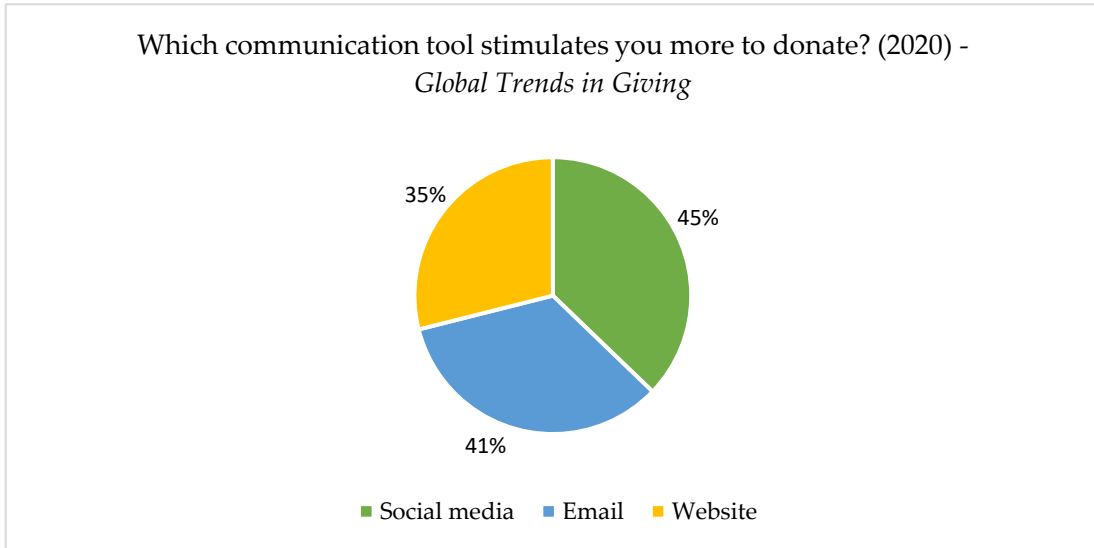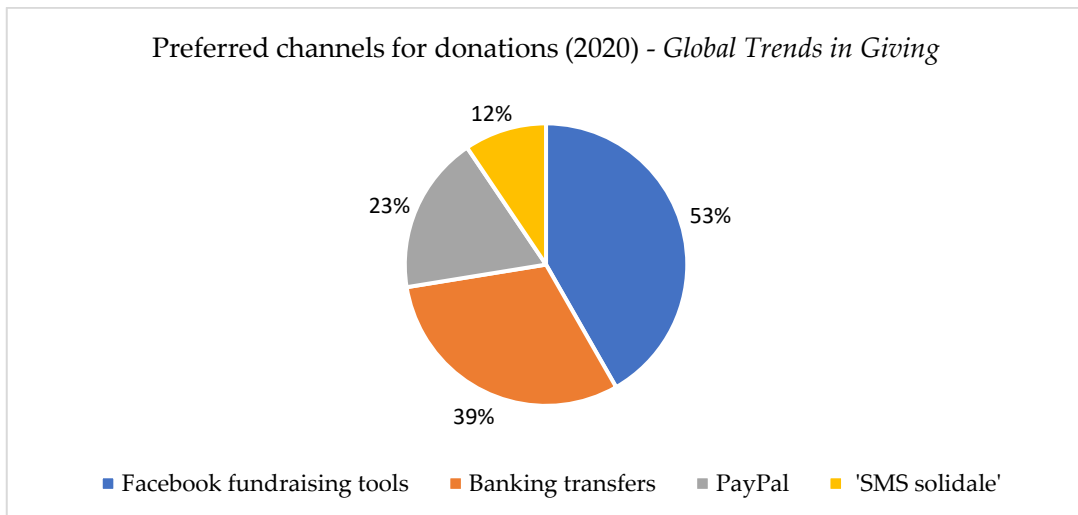
Similarly, for the year 2022 the report *Donare 3.0* declared that PayPal and the credit card were the preferred tools for online donations by Italians (Fig. 12). However, here unlike the Global Trend in Giving report, there is no specific item for 'Facebook fundraising tools' or similar (BVA Doxa, PayPal, & Fondazione Rete del Dono, 2023).

Fig. 12

Preferred channels for online donations (2022) - *BVA Doxa, PayPal, and Fondazione Rete del Dono*
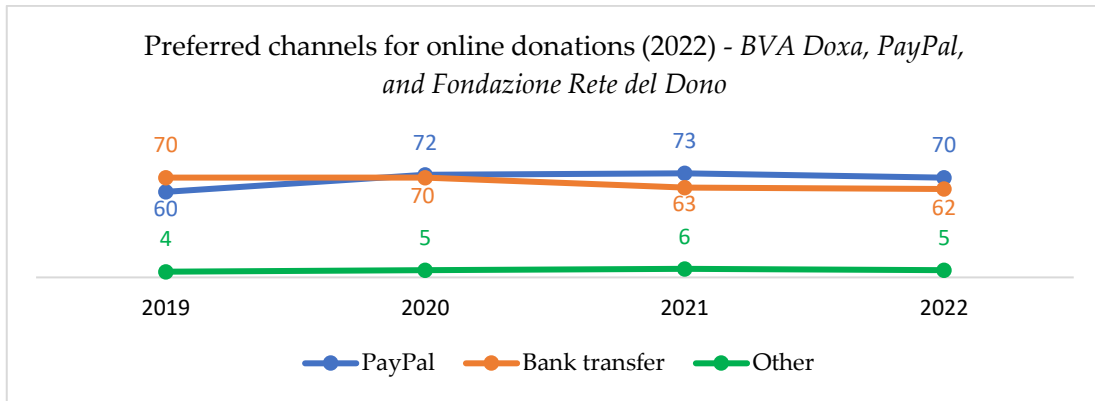
Furthermore, the pandemic impacted also on the typical Italian donor profile, which before was identified with a working woman from North Italy, who belonged to the baby boomer generation, and had an high level of education (IID, 2020). The major effect was on the age average, which was lowered by the entry of younger generations. For a better understanding, we have created the graph in Fig. 13 to observe the trends by age, using the latest editions of the IID's *Noi doniamo* reports.

Fig. 13

Donors' age trends - *IID*
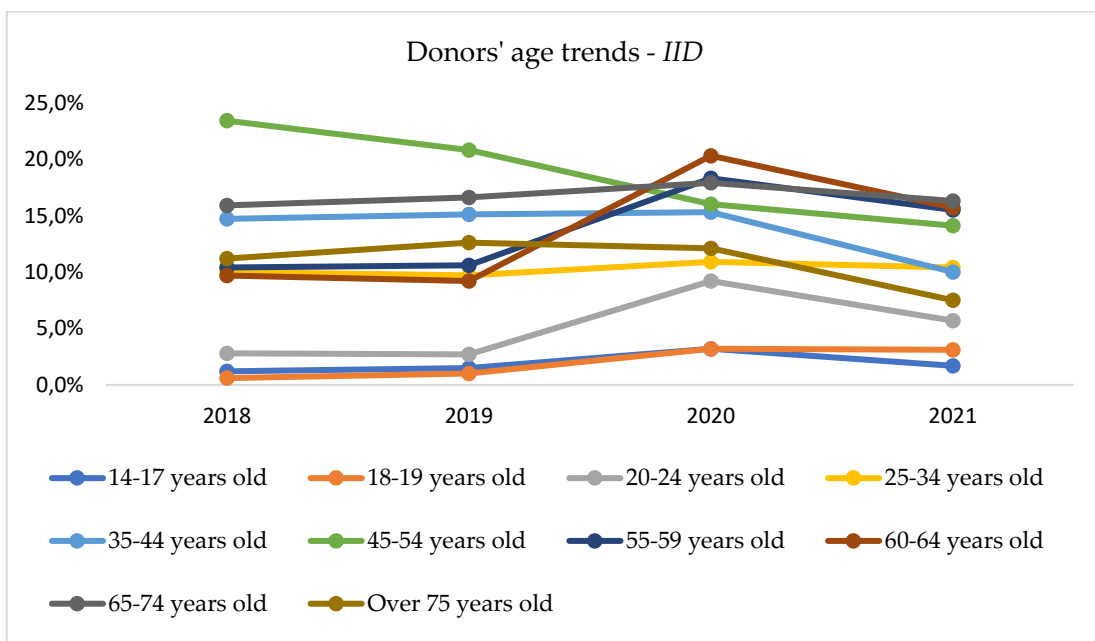
Likewise, the Vita's 2023 *Italy Giving Report* highlights the new role played by millennials and Generation Z, reporting that donors aged 18-24 have increased from 5% to 15% in the last three years (De Carli, 2023). Interestingly, according to the IID, the other characteristics in the matter of gender, geographical area, level of education and employment have remained quite unchanged. Other unchanged factors over the last few years were non-donors' trust issues and the medical research as favourite cause (IID, 2022; BVA Doxa, PayPal, & Fondazione Rete del Dono, 2023). However, for our research it is crucial to report that both Vita and BVA Doxa declared that in 2022 more people supported cultural causes in Italy, as shown in Fig. 14 (De Carli, 2023; BVA Doxa, PayPal, & Fondazione Rete del Dono, 2023). Moreover, *Donare 3.0* informs that, in 2022, cultural donors preferred to support interventions on the cultural heritage, while territorial cultural projects were second, museums were third and performing arts were the least supported cultural cause (Fig. 15).

Fig. 14

2021 VS 2022 Italian donors' preferred causes - *BVA Doxa, PayPal, and Fondazione Rete del Dono*

Source: Donare 3.0 2023

39

Fig. 15

Preffered cultural causes (2022) - *BVA Doxa, PayPal, and Fondazione Rete del Dono*
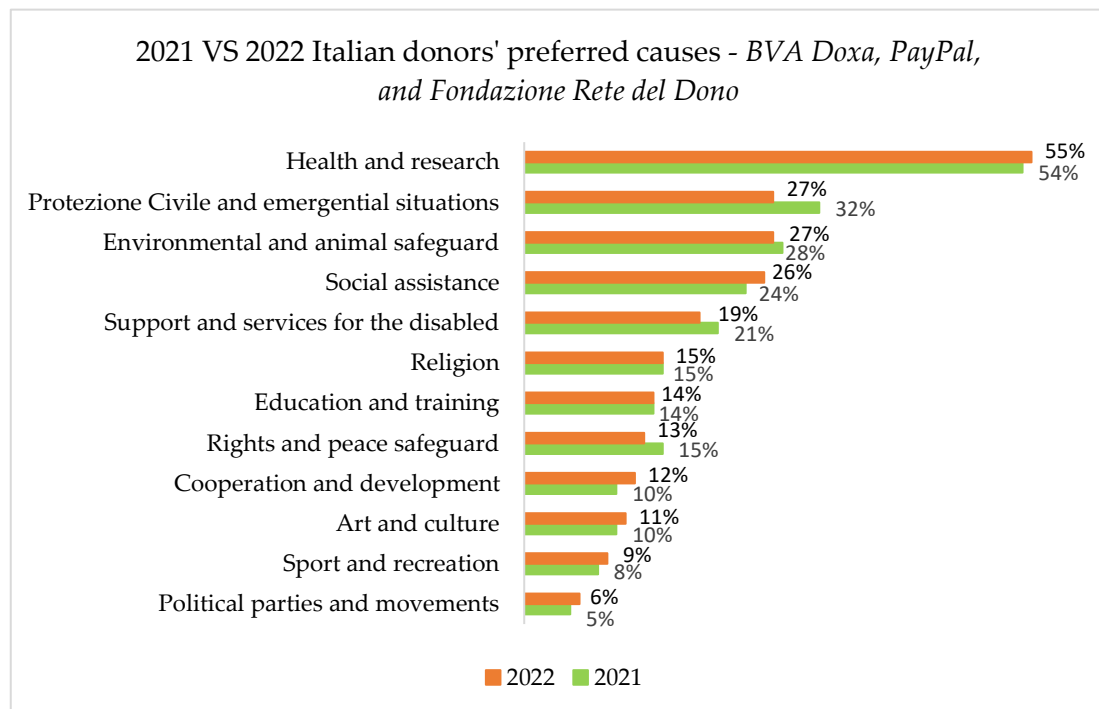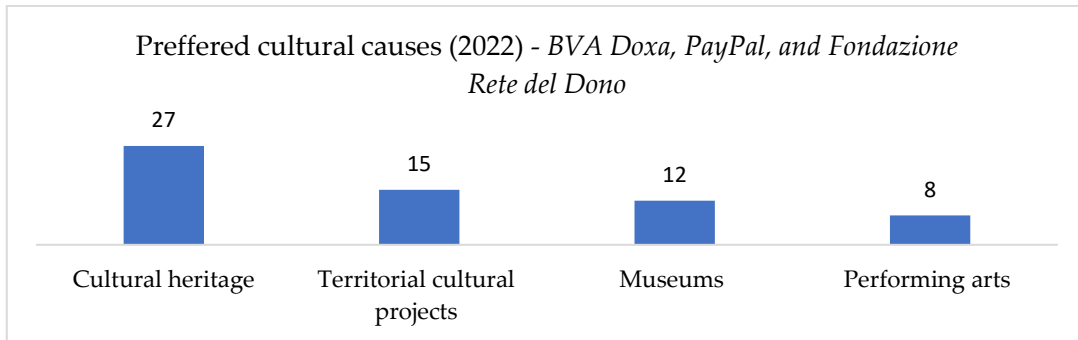
Source: Donare 3.0 2023

Additionally, according to the same survey, 55% donated less than € 50, 30% an amount between € 50 and € 100, and 6% more than € 100. Finally, in terms of motivations, Italian cultural donors in 2022 were mainly driven by the impact on their local area, their love for the arts and the fact they knew the organisation they supported. On the other hand, as shown in Fig. 16, fiscal incentives revealed to be the less important (BVA Doxa, PayPal, & Fondazione Rete del Dono, 2023). Furthermore, these data confirms the trend, individuated by Anselmi, of Italian donors' increased sensibility towards the territory and community of belonging (Anselmi, 2021).

Fig. 16

Motivations for giving to culture - *BVA Doxa, PayPal, and Fondazione Rete del Dono*
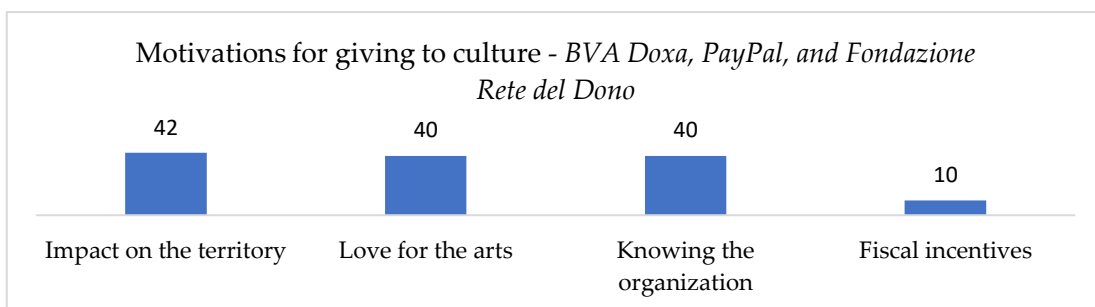
Source: Donare 3.0 2023

Last but not least, there is another trend worthy to be mentioned here, i.e.: crowdfunding. Actually, even before the epidemic, some academics had noticed and analysed the rise of social media-driven fundraising and crowdfunding (Saxton & Wang, 2014; Hommerová & Severová, 2019).

However, according to Valeria Reda (Senior Research Manager at BVA Doxa), after the outbreak of the war in Ukraine, crowdfunding experienced a further surge (Reda, 2022). Moreover, as depicted in Fig. 17, the 2023 edition of *Donare 3.0* shows a favourable attitude towards crowdfunding. In fact, 9% of respondents indicated that they would definitely donate through crowdfunding in the future, 32% said they would probably do so, 37% expressed uncertainty, and 22% said they definitely would not do so (BVA Doxa, PayPal, & Fondazione Rete del Dono, 2023).

Fig. 17

Attitudes towards crowdfunding (2022) - *BVA Doxa, PayPal, and Fondazione Rete del Dono*

'I will certainly do not so in the future'	22%
'I am not sure I would do so in the future'	37%
'I will probably do so in the future'	32%
'I will certainly do so in the future'	9%
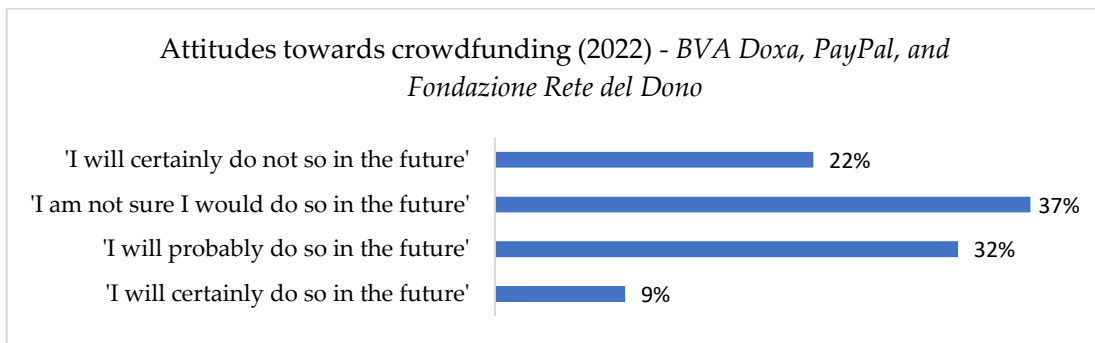
Source: Donare 3.0 2023

2.3 Cultural welfare: insights into the last edition of the Premio Crowdfunding per la Cultura

Since we mentioned crowdfunding in the previous section, it is worth noting that on 29th March 2023, it was hosted a live event on Facebook for the closure of the 2022 edition of the *Premio Crowdfunding per la Cultura*. The latter is a contest, conceived and organized by Rete del Dono, open to all Italian third-sector organisations wishing to promote a crowdfunding campaign to finance a cultural project. Specifically, the top three projects and two others selected by the committee receive a prize of € 3.000 in addition to the funds raised through their crowdfunding campaigns – which must exceed € 8.000 to be eligible for the prize (Rete del Dono's website, 2023). During this event, several

esteemed Italian experts provided a wealth of valuable interventions for the present study. Therefore, we have included a translated transcription of the experts' contributions in the Appendix. However, to avoid overwhelming the reader with excessive information, this paragraph highlights some of the most significant remarks. Additionally, to improve clarity, we organized what follows according to three thematic areas, i.e.: cultural welfare, proximity, and the trinomial territory-community-active participation. Thus, to begin with, Pier Luigi Sacco argued that nowadays:

«We are living in a moment in which cultural projects and interventions are becoming more and more central within policies, and not only cultural ones. Indeed, there is an increasingly complementary relationship between cultural initiatives, mental and physical health, social issues, and the emerging environmental sustainability challenges. […] It is interesting to note that, for a long time, culture was viewed as having a narrow and specific role, mostly related to leisure or entertainment. Today, however, it is widely acknowledged that cultural participation can assist individuals in acquiring new skills, modifying their behaviour, and significantly enhance the capacity of communities to explore innovative and valuable developmental trajectories. […] [This is why] cultural welfare is central to today's debate. Although we perceive the term 'cultural welfare' as natural, we must acknowledge that for a long time it was considered an oxymoron. This is because culture was viewed as a competitor to social welfare and health, all of which were brought under the umbrella of welfare. [...] For example, when funding for culture was cut, it was justified in the name of welfare, which took precedence [...]. The introduction of cultural welfare represents a significant shift in our view of social quality. Today we can recognize that culture is a crucial component of social quality, not only because it has an intrinsic value but because it holds a place of significance. Despite this, some still struggle to

acknowledge its value. Culture contributes to the same objectives as traditional welfare areas, addressing issues such as mental and physical health, social support, and fragile individuals».

<div align="right">(Pier Luigi Sacco, Cultural Welfare Center)</div>

In addition, Emmanuele Curti specified that cultural welfare does not concerns only fragile individuals. On the contrary, it redefines the concept of welfare in our society by linking culture and health without excluding anyone from this process. Thus, « […] today there is a profound need for a paradigm shift because we have entered different dynamics and overcome the 20th century concept of welfare» (Emmanuele Curti, Lo Stato dei Luoghi). Likewise, Alessandra Gariboldi stressed that everyone, including those who do not participate intensively in cultural practices, experience culture's impacts on themselves. «For example, merely listening to music could change one's self-perception, which could impact one's overall well-being». Therefore, she subsequently pointed out that:

> « […] This idea of impact assessment is about recognising that we [cultural organisations] exist to make something happen, and not just because we are good, beautiful and like doing what we do – which is true, but not enough. [...] Assessing impacts entails engaging with the communities, funders, and neighbours who will be affected by the change. Thus, a round-table discussion with all the stakeholders is essential to determine the aspects that are significant to them».

<div align="right">(Alessandra Gariboldi, Fondazione Fitzcarraldo)</div>

Concerning proximity, instead, it is striking to quote Martina Bacigalupi, who said that:

> «Today's cultural organisations are environments that foster proximity, relationships, conviviality, and dialogue. […] An article I recently read

compared [crowdfunding] platforms to shop windows. In my view, describing crowdfunding platforms as mere displays or catalogues for presenting projects lacks depth and is overly simplistic. The use of digital should not be reduced to a mere fundraising tool. Rather, digital provides a space for interconnection and 'liquid proximity' where opportunities for interactions in both physical and digital worlds are available. Therefore, the digital can facilitate physical proximity and vice versa. […] Today, we recognise that digital technology has an important role to play in fundraising by facilitating the disintermediation of the gift without subjective evaluation. What does disintermediation of the gift mean? It means that donors are willing to give directly and immediately in order to intervene in a cause or issue and have direct contact with the beneficiaries. This is due to the immediate nature of a direct donation, which generates positive emotions in donors. Furthermore, a direct donation reduces the psychological distance between the recipient and the donor, making the latter feel more involved and closer to the project, both physically and emotionally. In my opinion, proximity means both physical and emotional closeness. Thus, a cultural organisation – if it really wants to be at the centre of these new cultural and giving processes – should redesign processes and establish relationships that foster an emotional and immediate connection with proposed projects».

(Martina Bacigalupi, Fondazione De Gasperi)

Moreover, Marianna Martinoni commenting on the profile of the Italian cultural donor 2.0 argued that this donor « […] is distant from the traditional idea of the patron. He/she certainly has less economic availability to donate, but he/she certainly has an interest and a bond of proximity with the cultural organisation they decide to support» (Marianna Martinoni, Terzofilo). In addition, Pier Luigi Sacco denounced that a certain interpretation of

behavioural economics over the past fifteen years has led to the tendency to view donors as mere tools to achieve goals. Indeed,

> «The common idea suggests that people have various psychological weaknesses or biases (as we tend to call them improperly) that can be utilized to encourage donations from them. […] [By contrast,] people these days desire to engage themselves in something that has a personal significance to them. So, when we abandon self-referential protagonism and provide people with the opportunity to feel part of a group, they become more willing than we expect. The point is that they want to be part of something that makes sense. Hence, the dimension of proximity must become an integral component».
>
> (Pier Luigi Sacco, Cultural Welfare Center)

This leads us to the trinomial territory-community-active participation. Indeed, as argued by Valeria Vitali, «cultural organisations with a strong sense of community and territorial value [are] more successful in engaging their community in active and participatory ways [...]» (Valeria Vitali, Fondazione Rete del Dono). In other words, for increasing individual donations a given cultural NPO must actively involve the community by primarily utilising the connection with its territory.

3. Methodology

As announced in paragraph 1.3, this study aims at comprehending which are, for an Italian cultural NPO, the most effective social media fundraising-oriented communication strategies to increase individual donations and gain competitive advantage in the post pandemic era. Hence, to accomplish our purpose we developed our empirical analysis in two steps by utilizing a mixed methodology.

3.1 Empirical analysis phase 1: interviews

In the initial phase of our empirical analysis, we conducted in-depth interviews (30 min to 1 hour and half each) with three Italian cultural NPOs and two fundraising consultants for third-sector organizations. NPOs were chosen by adopting two selection criteria, i.e.: successful results in individual donations in the last three years and evidence of fundraising messages on their social media profiles. It is worth noting that meeting the second criterion was the most challenging. Whilst there were different Italian cultural NPOs that met the first one, most of them appeared to lack social media fundraising-oriented contents, and this led us to discard several potential interviewees. On the other hand, the fundraising consultants were chosen because of their successful careers as well as their specialization in cultural and digital fundraising, and fundraising-oriented communication for NPOs. Specifically, we interviewed:

- ❖ **Stefania Dal Cucco – Fondazione Teatro Civico di Schio**: Stefania Dal Cucco is the responsible for the Communication, Project Management, and Fundraising activities of the Fondazione Teatro Civico di Schio for fifteen years. The Foundation employs a funding mix strategy and has achieved great outcomes in terms of individual donations by utilizing tools such as the Art Bonus, the 5x1000, and crowdfunding. Besides, it won the third place for the 2021 *Premio Crowdfunding per la Cultura* organized by Rete del Dono.

- ❖ **Matteo Parmeggiani and Natalia Bracci – Senzaspine A.P.S.**: Matteo Parmeggiani is co-founder and Vice-President of Senzaspine A.P.S. - based in Bologna – as well as one of the conductors of the Orchestra Senzaspine. Natalia Bracci is a professional musician and co-director of the Scuola di Musica Senzaspine. They jointly lead the fundraising

department of the Association, which follows a funding mix strategy. In the last few years, the organization achieved significant success in terms of individual donations and won the first place for the 2022 *Premio Crowdfunding per la Cultura* organized by Rete del Dono.

❖ **Marica Messina – Fondo per l'Ambiente Italiano (FAI)**: Marica Messina is the responsible of the FAI's Mass Market division. To better understand her position we must specify that, since the FAI is a nation-wide Foundation, its fundraising department is developed into three sectors, i.e.: '*Privati*', '*Aziende e Grandi donatori*', and '*Enti ed Istituzioni*'. Under the jurisdiction of the FAI's '*Privati*' sector there are the Mass Market office, members' management, and the campaigns for the *Giornate FAI di Primavera e d'Autunno*. Messina's division oversees the recruitment of all members (which mainly occurs through digital channels) as well as the 5x1000 and television campaigns that include a solidarity number and the promotion of the *Giornate FAI di Primavera e d'Autunno*. Furthermore, we must stress that the FAI is the only Italian cultural organisation capable of sitting at the same table of NPOs such as Telethon and Save the Children in terms of 5x1000 results. In fact, in 2022 the organization secured the 20th position out of 71.498 organizations by raising € 2.550.541 (Agenzia delle Entrate, 22 June 2023).

❖ **Marianna Martinoni and Silvia Aufiero – Terzofilo**: Marianna Martinoni and Silvia Aufiero are co-founder of Terzofilo, a fundraising consultancy for the development of the Third Sector based in Padua. Both are specialized in fundraising for cultural NPOs and fundraising-oriented communication. Specifically, Martinoni co-authored the first book on cultural fundraising edited by Pier Luigi Sacco in 2005, and

from 2017 onwards she collaborated with Rete del Dono on the *Premio Crowdfunding per la Cultura*. Furthermore, since 2019 she has been included on the Italian Ministry of Culture's list of the ten fundraising experts selected by Ales s.p.a. on a national level. On the other hand, Silvia Aufiero is specialized in social media marketing, web marketing and management, digital fundraising, and crowdfunding for NPOs, especially cultural ones. Since 2015, she has accompanied her consultancy activity with training activities on fundraising and communication for various institutions – e.g.: the Ca' Foscari University of Venice, the CSV (Centri Servizi Volontariato) of Padua and Verona, the Istituto Veneto per i Beni Culturali di Venezia, and many others.

Furthermore, we would like to point out that it is feasible to obtain additional details by referring to the Appendix of the present document, which contains complete transcripts of the interviews with preliminary paragraphs on the respondents and their organisations. Instead, regarding how we structured the interviews, we must stress that the questions were created by considering all what we reported in Ch. 1 and Ch. 2, including thus literature as well as recent trends and data. In addition, even though the questions for consultants were posed slightly differently because of the different context, the content was the same. Thus, Fig. 18 reports only the NPOs' version.

Fig. 18 – Interviews' questions (NPOs' version)

1. On which social media are you present and how do you use them to build and maintain long-term relationships with your audience?
2. How do you use – or have you used in the past three years – social media to increase individual donations? Which strategies and social media have proven to be the most effective?
3. On social media, what storytelling do you use to attract individual donors? What kind of emotions do you try to elicit with your messages? Have you also used

vivid stories like those used by other types of NPOs (e.g.: the story of a child with a disease that you can help)?

4. For your organization, do you think it is more effective to use phrases that create a sense of urgency (e.g.: 'If we don't act now...'), responsibility (e.g.: 'It's up to us to make the world a better place, let's do it together') or opportunity (e.g.: 'Imagine what we could do with your help') to attract individual donations?

5. On social media, what benefits do you highlight most to attract individual donors and which do you think are the most effective? Intrinsic benefits (e.g.: moral satisfaction of supporting a cultural cause for your territory), extrinsic (e.g.: tax incentives), or reputational (e.g.: 'your name will appear as a patron')?

6. In the last three years, have you collaborated with influencers (including local micro-influencers) for advocacy activities aimed at attracting more individual donors?

7. Cultural causes have always been ranked at the bottom of the list of causes supported by Italian donors; by contrast, medical research and social causes were always ranked first. In your opinion, how can these donors' preferences be used to create a competitive advantage for your cultural organization?

8. Linking to the previous question, do you emphasise social and health impacts (such as individual health or the contribution to community welfare) in your social media donor-oriented communication strategies? Do you consider this aspect important to gain competitive advantage?

9. In the last three years, have your social media communication strategies (aimed at attracting individual donations) attracted mostly small or even large donors?

10. What do you think are the strengths of your strategies and why?

11. What do you consider to be the challenges of the future of fundraising in engaging individuals?

3.2 Empirical analysis phase 2: questionnaires

In the second phase of our empirical analysis, we administered two questionnaires – created with Google Forms – for two different target groups within the Italian framework. Indeed, one questionnaire targeted actual cultural donors (defined as those who have voluntarily donated to a cultural organization at least once in their lifetime), while the other targeted potential cultural donors – including both non-donors and those who donate to other causes. The questionnaires were distributed by snowball sampling, i.e.: we initially chose a group of individuals who subsequently shared the

questionnaires with others, thereby triggering a chain reaction. Moreover, the queries in this instance were devised to evaluate the preferences and reactions of the target groups to specific strategies, or aspects of them, emerged during the interviews (see Fig. 19 and Fig. 20).

Fig. 19 – Questionnaire for actual cultural donors

1. Have you made a monetary donation to an Italian cultural organisation in the last three years? Yes/No
2. If you answered 'No' to the previous question, why did you decide not to donate to culture in the last three years?
   - I preferred to donate to other causes (e.g.: War in Ukraine, Croce Rossa, etc.)
   - I did no trust and/or know how my money would have been used
   - I couldn't afford it financially
   - I had negative experiences in the past
   - Other: …
3. Why did you decide to donate to an Italian cultural organisation the last time?
   - I was motivated by my love for art and culture
   - I wanted to support an organization I know and whose values I share
   - I wanted to support a project with social impact (e.g.: inclusion of protected categories, etc.)
   - I wanted to make a positive contribution to my community and/or territory
   - I wanted to support artists and workers of the cultural sector
   - I wanted to feel morally satisfied
   - I wanted to be socially recognised as a benefactor
   - I wanted to enjoy tax incentives
   - I wanted to make a solidarity gift for someone close to me who loves art and culture
   - Other: …
4. Have you ever seen content from cultural organisations on social media inviting you to donate?
   - Yes
   - No
   - No, because I don't use social media
5. If you answered 'Yes' to the previous question, on which social media did you see it? (*multiple choice)
   - Facebook
   - Instagram
   - LinkedIn
   - YouTube
   - X (previous Twitter)
   - WhatsApp
   - Telegram
   - Other: …

6. Have you ever monetarily supported a cultural cause you discovered through one or more influencers on social media? *Micro influencers (1.000-10.000 followers) are also included.
   - Yes
   - No
   - I don't use social media

7. If you saw content from a social media influencer you follow and admire asking you to donate to a cultural organisation, would you try to donate? *Micro-influencers (1.000-10.000 followers) are also included.
   - Absolutely not
   - I might
   - Yes, but only after learning more about the organisation
   - Absolutely yes
   - I do not use social media

8. How likely are you to make a monetary donation to a non-profit cultural organisation as a gift for a loved one who loves the arts?

1	2	3	4	5
Not at all	A little	Enough	Quite a lot	Very much

9. If a friend of yours started a personal fundraising campaign (e.g.: for his or her birthday) and then wanted to donate the entire amount to an Italian cultural organisation, how much would you be in favour of donating in this case?

1	2	3	4	5
Not at all	A little	Enough	Quite a lot	Very much

10. How much are you in favour of starting your own fundraising campaign for donating the collected amount to an Italian cultural NPO you care about?

1	2	3	4	5
Not at all	A little	Enough	Quite a lot	Very much

11. How favourable are you to seeing social media adverts that invite you to donate to Italian non-profit cultural organisations that you follow or are similar to your interests?

1	2	3	4	5
Not at all	A little	Enough	Quite a lot	Very much

12. On Black Friday, how much would you be willing to donate to an Italian cultural organisation you care about?

1	2	3	4	5
Not at all	A little	Enough	Quite a lot	Very much

13. On Giving Tuesday (the International Day of Giving), how much would you be willing to donate to an Italian cultural organisation you care about?

<div align="center">

1   2   3   4   5

Not at all   A little   Enough   Quite a lot   Very much

</div>

14. During the Christmas period, how much would you be willing to donate to an Italian cultural organisation you care about?

<div align="center">

1   2   3   4   5

Not at all   A little   Enough   Quite a lot   Very much

</div>

15. Complete this sentence according to your opinion: 'Art and culture ...
    o Can only have historical-artistic value'
    o In addition to their artistic value, they also have an economic value because they generate tourism'
    o In addition to their artistic value, they generate all-round welfare (social, psycho-physical, economic)'
16. How important is it to you that an Italian cultural organisation also has positive impacts in terms of social, psycho-physical health, economic and general welfare?

<div align="center">

1   2   3   4   5

Not at all   A little   Enough   Quite a lot   Very much

</div>

17. Between a cultural organisation that communicates its positive impacts (social, etc.) and one that does not, which would you prefer to support?
    o Donate to the one that communicates them
    o Donate to the one that does not communicate them
    o Indifferent
18. Let's consider a cultural project that aims to raise funds for free dance classes at the museum intended for individuals with motor disabilities. Which of the following statements would most motivate you to support this cause?
    o 'Just imagine how much these people could benefit from your help'
    o 'It's up to us to improve society, let's do it together'
    o 'If you don't donate now, they may lose this opportunity'
19. Let's take the example of a fundraising campaign for the restoration of a historic building in your city. Which of the following statements would most motivate you to support this cause?
    o 'Donate now and restore your city's great beauty'
    o 'Your city needs you, support the restoration of the monument'
    o 'A piece of history risks to be erased forever, donate now and support its restoration'

Fig. 20 – Questionnaire for potential cultural donors

1. Have you ever donated money to a non-profit organisation? Yes/No
2. Your last monetary donation was made:
    o Before 2020
    o Between early 2020 and today
    o I have never made a monetary donation
3. Which of the following reasons is the main reason why you have never donated money to a cultural cause?

- o I have chosen to support other causes that I consider more important (e.g.: medical research, War in Ukraine)
- o I have had negative experiences with the art world and/or donations in the past
- o I have no interest in art and culture
- o I could not afford to donate money
- o I prefer donating material goods or volunteering
- o I consider culture an accessory good that must be financed by the State
- o I did not trust it (I did not know if my money would arrive/be well used)
- o I have never donated (not only to culture, but in general)

4. Have you ever seen content from cultural organisations on social media inviting you to donate?
    - o Yes
    - o No
    - o No, because I don't use social media

5. If you answered 'Yes' to the previous question, on which social media did you see it? (*multiple choice)
    - o Facebook
    - o Instagram
    - o LinkedIn
    - o YouTube
    - o X (previous Twitter)
    - o WhatsApp
    - o Telegram
    - o Other: …

6. If you saw content from a social media influencer you follow and admire asking you to donate to a cultural organisation, would you try to donate? *Micro-influencers (1.000-10.000 followers) are also included.
    - o Absolutely not
    - o I might
    - o Yes, but only after learning more about the organisation
    - o Absolutely yes
    - o I do not use social media

7. How likely are you to make a monetary donation to a non-profit cultural organisation as a gift for a loved one who loves the arts?

1	2	3	4	5
Not at all	A little	Enough	Quite a lot	Very much

8. If a friend of yours started a personal fundraising campaign (e.g.: for his or her birthday) and then wanted to donate the entire amount to an Italian cultural organisation, how much would you be in favour of donating in this case?

1	2	3	4	5
Not at all	A little	Enough	Quite a lot	Very much

9. On Black Friday, how much would you be willing to donate to an Italian cultural organisation you care about?

	1	2	3	4	5
	Not at all	A little	Enough	Quite a lot	Very much

10. On Giving Tuesday (the International Day of Giving), how much would you be willing to donate to an Italian cultural organisation you care about?

	1	2	3	4	5
	Not at all	A little	Enough	Quite a lot	Very much

11. During the Christmas period, how much would you be willing to donate to an Italian cultural organisation you care about?

	1	2	3	4	5
	Not at all	A little	Enough	Quite a lot	Very much

12. Complete this sentence according to your opinion: 'Art and culture …
    o Can only have historical-artistic value'
    o In addition to their artistic value, they also have an economic value because they generate tourism'
    o In addition to their artistic value, they generate all-round welfare (social, psycho-physical, economic)'
13. Would you be more willing to donate to an Italian cultural organisation that generates positive effects in terms of social, psycho-physical, economic and general welfare?

	1	2	3	4	5
	Not at all	A little	Enough	Quite a lot	Very much

14. Which of the following cultural activities would you be most likely to support monetarily?
    o Cultural activities that regenerate and enhance your territory
    o Cultural activities that create social inclusion and general welfare for the community
    o Cultural activities that have a positive impact on the psycho-physical health of individuals
    o Cultural activities that restore the cultural heritage for future generations
15. Let's consider a cultural project that aims to raise funds for free dance classes at the museum intended for individuals with motor disabilities. Which of the following statements would most motivate you to support this cause?
    o 'Just imagine how much these people could benefit from your help'
    o 'It's up to us to improve society, let's do it together'
    o 'If you don't donate now, they may lose this opportunity'
16. Let's take the example of a fundraising campaign for the restoration of a historic building in your city. Which of the following statements would most motivate you to support this cause?
    o 'Donate now and restore your city's great beauty'
    o 'Your city needs you, support the restoration of the monument'
    o 'A piece of history risks to be erased forever, donate now and support its restoration'

4. Findings

All the interviews revealed a wealth of valuable information, not only for the purposes of our research, but also for other cultural organisations that may be inspired by these stories of success. This is why we suggest reading the complete transcripts of the interviews contained in the Appendix. However, in order to prevent the reader from feeling overwhelmed and disoriented by the vast amount of information, we tried to summarize and comment interviews' findings in the following section.

4.1 Considerations on the interviews

Although each of these successful strategies is inherently unique as they are customized for different organizations, communities, and territories, they all share commonalities. To begin with, all the presented cases have a strong connection with the community and territory of reference. Furthermore, their relationship-building approaches are based on the same milestones, i.e.: transparency, community's active participation and involvement, and a multichannel strategy that includes social media. Regarding the last point, we would like to report here a specification by Silvia Aufiero, who argued that:

> «Certainly, social media channels are highly significant for cultural organisations to connect with their audience, including potential donors. […] [However,] donations are uncommon if a cultural organisation solely relies on social media for fundraising-oriented communication. […] Hence, social media should be combined with other communication forms since it cannot function optimally alone to collect donations. In any case, they are crucial for creating a clear message about the theme and the organisation, which then encourages potential donors to explore other

relevant contents, such as the landing page. In this sense, social media acts

as an initial hook or sounding board […]».

<div align="right">(Silvia Aufiero, Terzofilo)</div>

The other interviewees did not make an explicit comment on the role of social media in increasing donations like this one. Nonetheless, from their interviews it emerges their faith in social media's potential in attracting donors as well as the importance of implementing social media with other communication channels, especially the on-life ones. Therefore, we could argue that all the interviewees have recognized individuals' desire to be part of a community and social media's potential in terms of what Martina Bacigalupi as defined as the 'disintermediation of the gift' (see p. 44). Moreover, it seems also that respondents share the idea that social media are not a place for directly collecting donations, but rather the initial stage of a conversion funnel that guides, step by step, potential donors to become actual donors. Additionally, all the interviewees concur on the importance of calibrating the tone of voice depending on the communication channel or social media platform used. Nonetheless, it seems that Facebook is crowned as the most effective social media platform for attracting individual donors, with Instagram in second place, followed by LinkedIn, which is more business-focused and therefore far behind the leading two (see Fig. 21).

Fig. 21

	Teatro Civico di Schio	Senzaspine	FAI	Terzofilo
Most effective social media for attracting individual donors	«Facebook and Instagram are quite equivalent. However, […] Instagram has a greater potentiality than other social media. […] LinkedIn […] is better for creating and maintaining	«We mostly use Facebook for fundraising activities […] TikTok and Instagram are social media for content disclosure, in a more playful way perhaps, while Facebook allows us to add	«Facebook, but Instagram is also frequently employed. Our campaigns on LinkedIn are very limited in terms of targeting and timing since it is more dedicated towards companies;	« […] Each platform has its own language. […] LinkedIn is better suited for discussing topics related to the organisation's impact, perhaps by using numerical data. In contrast, Facebook

	relationships with corporations».	more text and information».	however, occasionally we also promote the 5x1000 there».	and Instagram allow for more visually driven content (videos and photos) and a more storytelling style».

As shown in Fig. 22, it seems that the winning storytelling strategy – shared by all the respondents – consists in creating a familiar environment for the individual by recalling daily-life images (e.g.: home, family, a worker rolling up his sleeves, etc.). «Conversely, self-referential communications that do not involve the donor, fail to yield positive outcomes» (Marianna Martinoni, Terzofilo). Furthermore, all the respondents reported the importance to use vivid stories to increase the effectiveness of these narratives and, thus, the probability of attracting individual donations.

Fig. 22

	Teatro Civico di Schio	Senzaspine	FAI	Terzofilo
Storytelling	«Our communication, including that on social media, is based on promoting the 'theatre as your home'».	«We have noticed that creating contents and using messages which people can perceive as something personal or familiar (for instance by seeing those children as their grandchildren or cousins) is very effective in attracting donations».	«We prefer a fact-based narrative. […] We always communicate […] in a specific and tangible manner».	«A storytelling that shows […] the heart of the organisation, its mission, its values, the people who work behind the scenes».
Vivid stories	«Yes, to attract donations from individuals, we promote vivid stories of people who participated to our activities».	«Yes, we used vivid stories, but we have always tried to not to have a too dramatic narrative. […] In that case we could fall into the	«We use vivid stories similar to the 'entrepreneurial style', where a person takes action to get things done. […] For instance, we	«We always suggest highlighting benefits and beneficiaries».

		'there are worse things in the world' critic. Hence, we always try to create an emotional engagement with a note of positivity».	demonstrate the restorer working or the gardener carrying out specific types of cultivation in a garden».	

Concerning the emotional leverages stimulated by donor-oriented messages, it appears that the NPOs interviewed view the sense of opportunity as the most effective in attracting individual donations, with those of responsibility and belonging following closely behind. Urgency, instead, was described by the three NPOs as non-effective for the cultural sector because it pertains more to other realms, such as medical research, childcare, and so on. On the other hand, Martinoni and Aufiero suggested mixing all these leverages – including urgency – to reach donors with different interests (see Fig. 23).

Fig. 23

	Teatro Civico di Schio	Senzaspine	FAI	Terzofilo
Most effective emotional leverages	«I think that in our case it is more effective to stimulate a sense of opportunity and belonging. Those few times we tried to stimulate a sense of urgency we did not receive donations. I believe that in the cultural sector the urgency strategy is not rewarding».	«I would definitely say the second one [sense of responsibility], maybe with some nuances of the third one [sense of opportunity] […]. For a cultural organization we do not consider effective to stimulate a sense of urgency».	«As our emergencies are rare and we are not perceived as such, we avoid an emergency tone. […] I would say opportunity. […] Our typical promotional phrases include 'Help us supporting Italy's beauty' or 'Help us supporting the most beautiful heritage in the world'».	«Mixing would be advisable to prevent boredom. Furthermore, a change in perspective may help you identify potential donors with different motivations».

Nevertheless, Aufiero specified that:

> «At different times in a campaign you use different leverages, which can
> be the urgency, the emotional part, the data, or something else. […]
> However, generalisation becomes challenging as each specific case
> requires tailoring. In any case, at a certain point it is also effective to
> leverage urgency, not in the beginning but when an organisation has
> already prepared the ground. Using urgency as a leverage right away
> without adequate audience engagement and development would lead to
> poor results. This is because we are discussing the cultural sector, where
> it is often imperative to explain the reasons for donating in more detail
> than for other causes, like medical research, etc. In fact, in the cultural
> sector, it is important to guide people gradually».
>
> (Silvia Aufiero, Terzofilo)

Nonetheless, we think that something that could recall a sense of urgency can be observed in the cases of the Fondazione Teatro Civico di Schio and Senzaspine A.P.S. Indeed, both the NPOs noted that in their crowdfunding campaigns for the *Premio Crowdfunding per la Cultura*, numerous donors donated multiple times to let the organizations winning the prize. Hence, it could be argued that, besides a sense of belonging, in these cases donors experienced a sort of 'urgency' due to the deadline, the prize, and the race's inherent competitiveness.

For what concerns the most effective benefits to enhance in order to boost individual donations, we gathered different opinions and experiences. From this, we concluded that intrinsic, extrinsic, and reputational benefits all have the potential to attract individual donors for Italian cultural NPOs. Indeed, according to Martinoni, it is advisable «to highlight all the range of benefits, so that people with different interests can be reached» (Martinoni, Terzofilo). Nevertheless, each organization has to understand what is more effective with

its audiences, also considering that this can change over time, therefore flexibility is required (Fig. 24).

Fig. 24

	Teatro Civico di Schio	Senzaspine	FAI	Terzofilo
Most effective benefits to highlight	«In general, the reputational ones because, in our experience, we have found that many care about this aspect. In addition, another benefit that we promoted during the 2021 Crowdfunding campaign was an experiential one […] This aspect has been greatly appreciated, to the point that people keep asking of it […]».	«I think that the best thing you can give to a donor is involvement, participation to the life of the organization, familiarity […] We promote [fiscal and reputational incentives] more with corporations and large donors. […] Rewards (e.g.: music lessons, concert tickets, etc.) […] did not work well for us».	«Ours are benefits both related to intrinsic values and practical benefits thanks to our membership card […] We frequently mention these benefits in our communication, including social media».	«I would always say to mix, keeping in mind that data suggest that tax incentives interest little, unless there is a very strong tax incentive such as the Art Bonus».

In addition, influencers' potential to spur individual donations remains a mostly unexplored field. In fact, all respondents showed hesitant behaviour because of the difficulty of managing influencers' narrative with which the organization would be associated. On the other hand, it was often observed that advocates from 'below' are preferable to influencers; however, we believe that this is not an *aut aut* choice since several hybrid formats could be experimented (Fig. 25).

Fig. 25

	Teatro Civico di Schio	Senzaspine	FAI	Terzofilo
	«I honestly don't know if we have the skills or the attractiveness to involve people through	«[…] [We are] focused on […] a communication from below [that] does not include collaborations	«The FAI's content and remuneration policy restricts its strategy, resulting in few	«Influencers are difficult to manage: the organization becomes dependent on

Social media influencers	influencers. […] I would not put this option among our priorities».	with social media influencers. However, it is not said that it will be like this forever. In any case, we should reflect on how to involve influencers or micro-influencers in our communication without overshadow the narrative of our Association […]».	collaborations with influencers. However, this policy has enabled us to maintain control over relationships with influencers – including occasional ones – by setting shared guidelines. Indeed, it is difficult to control what influencer say about our brand. […]».	them, and their actions have a significant impact – for better or worse – on the organization. […] We can consider the advocates from below as more befitting our model».

Nevertheless, the influencer strategy appears to have great potential if we consider the few cases mentioned during the interviews. For instance, Martinoni reported that it happened only once to them « […] with Zeldawasawriter, a prominent book industry influencer, and her endorsement was positive» (Marianna Martinoni, Terzofilo). Similarly, Marica Messina reported that:

«In the past we have had collaborations with influencers […]. However, since they asked us, we did not seek or paid these collaborations and, especially, we simply played the role of the 'framework'. They did not talk for us. […] However, these collaborations have resulted in an increase in brand awareness, even though there has been no increase in donations or subscriptions because of them. Nonetheless, our activities have witnessed a rise in participation, and there is greater awareness about our work. Thus, finding out how to work with influencers – and which influencers to work with – to promote tourism could be the way forward. This is why we are trying to individuate if there are some influencers who use a language that could be coherent with our storytelling, but the situation is intricated because of what I just illustrated».

(Marica Messina, FAI)

Here we would like to observe that the collaborations between the FAI and influencers may not have led to an increase in donations as this was not their initial intention. Therefore, it is still an open question whether starting partnerships with influencers specifically designed to attract new donors can be a winning strategy for Italian cultural NPOs or not. Anyway, Aufiero suggests appointing an influencer-ambassador to improve the effectiveness of this strategy. In other words, it is advisable to appoint an influencer – or micro-influencer – who not only shares the organisation's narrative, but also identifies with its values.

Moving on to cultural welfare, we must say that, despite the fact this is a hot topic in the current European panorama (see para 2.3), it still seems debatable whether or not highlighting social and health impacts generated by a cultural NPO can unlock a competitive advantage over other causes in terms of individual donations. For instance, Stefania Dal Cucco firmly stated that:

> «As per us, activities that generate cultural welfare are the only key to being competitive with other kinds of NPOs, at least for what concerns individual giving. This is why when we ask private citizens to contribute by donating money to us, we never do it for theatre performances or theatre season activities, but only for projects that have a cultural welfare background. For us the key is this, otherwise it would become very difficult to raise donations. For theatrical and cultural activities, we prefer to ask for sponsorship or support from associates if anything».
>
> (Stefania Dal Cucco, Fondazione Teatro Civico di Schio)

Similarly, Terzofilo's consultants argue that the close link between culture and health can be enhanced to attract donors with different interests, however «it is essential for organizations to disseminate abundant information since research and studies exist, but their awareness is not always guaranteed» (Marianna Martinoni, Terzofilo). On the other hand, the FAI appears more

hesitant about this strategy, although it seems to leave a door open for the near future. Indeed, Messina claims that:

> « […] We do not perceive these other causes as competitors due to their differing nature. Thus, we refrain from competing with them or utilizing similar arguments. […] [Furthermore,] people acknowledge that culture enhances well-being and generates quality time in non-emergency circumstances. [While] during situations such as the pandemic outbreak and the war in Ukraine, attention, time, and resources are directed towards addressing these issues rather than towards culture. […] So […] during times of peace and calmness – which have been in shortage since the pandemic outbreak – cultural organisations can also prioritize these aspects as part of their narrative. However, during emergency crisis situations, these elements would be best presented as secondary aspects of the organisation's narrative. […] Nonetheless, we are considering analysing the social and economic impact of our *Giornate FAI*, but we are still in the preliminary phase and cannot provide any information at this stage».
>
> (Marica Messina, FAI)

Lastly, a compromise is reached by Senzaspine, which does not see other causes as competitors, but enhances their social impacts in order to gain a competitive advantage over institutional cultural organizations (see Fig. 26). Anyway, we should also stress that this difference in answers may partly be due to the different NPOs' size. In fact, the FAI is the only nation-wide Italian cultural NPO, which is for this reason nationally recognized as cultural symbol. For smaller Italian cultural NPOs, instead, this strategy not only proved to be effective but crucial in acquiring competitive advantage compared to other cultural organizations, as explicitly emphasized by Senzaspine. Nevertheless, it is still an open question whether this strategy can

also provide a competitive advantage over other causes and move culture up in the ranking of donors' preferred causes.

Fig. 26

	Teatro Civico di Schio	**Senzaspine**	**FAI**	**Terzofilo**
Cultural welfare	«As per us, activities that generate cultural welfare are the only key to being competitive with other kinds of NPOs, at least for what concerns individual giving».	«For us the goal is not to compete with health and social causes […] We want to attract effective cultural donors who maybe are not yet sensitive in giving to reality other than institutional. As I was saying, we do it by emphasizing our social impacts».	«We do not perceive these other causes as competitors […] During times of peace and calmness – which have been in shortage since the pandemic outbreak – cultural organisations can also prioritize these aspects as part of their narrative. However, during emergency crisis situations, these elements would be best presented as secondary aspects of the organisation's narrative».	«This can indeed provide a competitive advantage. […] Culture and health are closely linked […]. Hence, although there is no direct connection with certain sectors, cultural organisations can still use these arguments, including scientific evidence, to promote its activities».

Additionally, all the respondents think that social media – in general – tend to attract mostly small donors. In fact, despite a small percentage of large donors, the latter still need one-to-one and more personalized communications (Fig. 27). Consequently, this aspect would seem to extend Alston and colleagues' findings also to the social media realm (see p. 16).

Fig. 27

	Teatro Civico di Schio	**Senzaspine**	**FAI**	**Terzofilo**
	«Both [small and large donors], and this applies to donations from individuals	«In our case social media attracted mostly small donors, with the	«I would answer your question by saying small donors. We have a substantial	«Social media can amplify the message, but big donors require one-to-one

Donors' dimensions	as well as to those from businesses. For example, we just collected € 3.000 from a company that wrote to us on LinkedIn».	exception of 2-3 people who spontaneously decided to donate € 500 or € 1.000».	number of major donors, however they make up a small proportion in percentage terms».	communication and what we can call the 'pampering'».

Furthermore, other effective strategies emerged during the interviews include: Giving Tuesday, Black Friday and Christmas campaigns; sponsored content to reach new potential donors targeted according to their interests; personal fundraising campaigns and solidarity gifts. Lastly, in relation to the future challenges of fundraising in engaging individuals, it is interesting to observe the wide range emerged during the interviews, which reveals both issues and opportunities, such as the AI, the gaming sector, and others (Fig. 28).

Fig. 28

	Teatro Civico di Schio	Senzaspine	FAI	Terzofilo
Future challenges of fundraising in engaging individuals	• Lack of staff	• Consistency	• AI, the metaverse, new payment methods, gaming sector for donations, and digital developments • Improvement of transparency and trust building	• Removing cultural organizations' discomfort of asking for money • Communicating cultural impacts beyond leisure and entertainment • Removing auto-referential narratives • Creation of cultural donors databases

4.2 Final results

After the overview contained in the previous section, we will now see how Italian potential and actual cultural donors position themselves in relation to the strategies – or aspects of them – emerged from the interviews. Therefore,

we organized the present paragraph in two parts. The first one reports a descriptive analysis of the questionnaires' findings with comparisons between the two targets. The second one, instead, is devoted to final considerations, especially by comparing the outcomes of the interviews with those of the questionnaires.

Questionnaires' findings:

As reported in paragraph 3.2, we employed snowball sampling to distribute two Google Forms questionnaires, which yielded a total of 235 responses. In detail, 60 individuals (25,5%) responded to the questionnaire for actual cultural donors, and 175 individuals (75,5%) to the one for potential cultural donors (Fig. 29). Additionally, almost half (47.4%) of potential cultural donors reported that they had donated at least once to a non-cultural NPO (Fig. 30). Consequently, these data validate the fact that Italians are a generous people as well as that Italian donors prefer to support causes other than culture. In other words, these initial findings confirm what was reported in Ch. 1 and Ch. 2 and highlight that cultural NPOs need to improve their donor-oriented strategies and gain competitive advantage over other causes.

Fig. 29

Total of respondents

25,5%

75,5%

■ Actual cultural donors in Italy   ■ Potential cultural donors in Italy

Fig. 30

Potential cultural donors -
Have you ever donated money to a non-profit organisation?

47,4%

52,6%

■ Yes ■ No
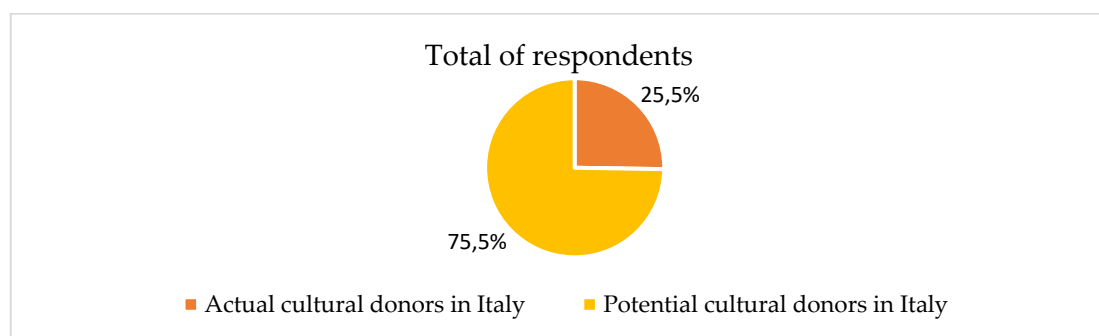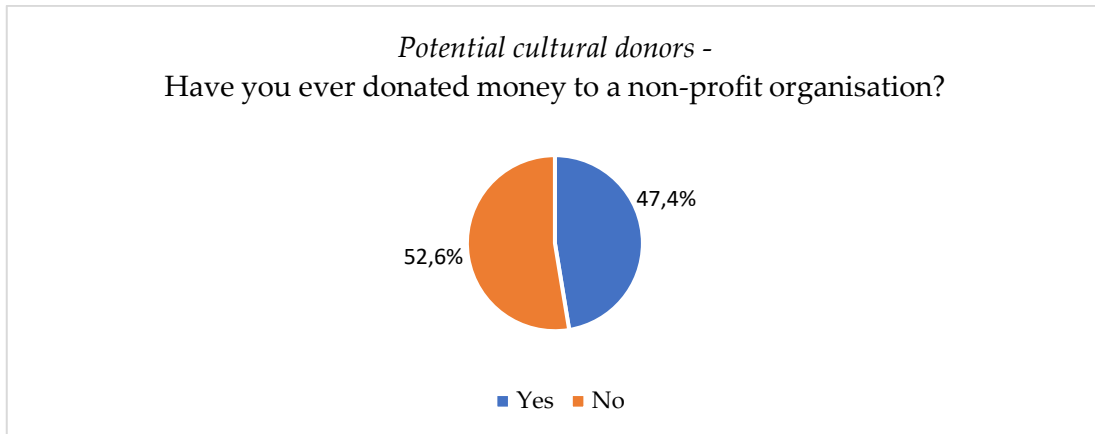
Furthermore, 14,9% of potential cultural donors made their last donation before 2020, 36,6% between early 2020 and today, while the remaining selected 'I have never made a monetary donation' (Fig. 31). In parallel, 75% of actual cultural donors reported having donated to an Italian cultural organisation in the last three years, while 25% had not (Fig. 32).

Fig. 31

Potential cultural donors -
Your last monetary donation was made:

14,9%

48,6%

36,6%

■ Before 2020 ■ Between early 2020 and today ■ I have never made a monetary donation

Fig. 32

Actual cultural donors -
Have you made a monetary donation to an Italian cultural organisation in the last three years?

25%

75%

■ Yes ■ No
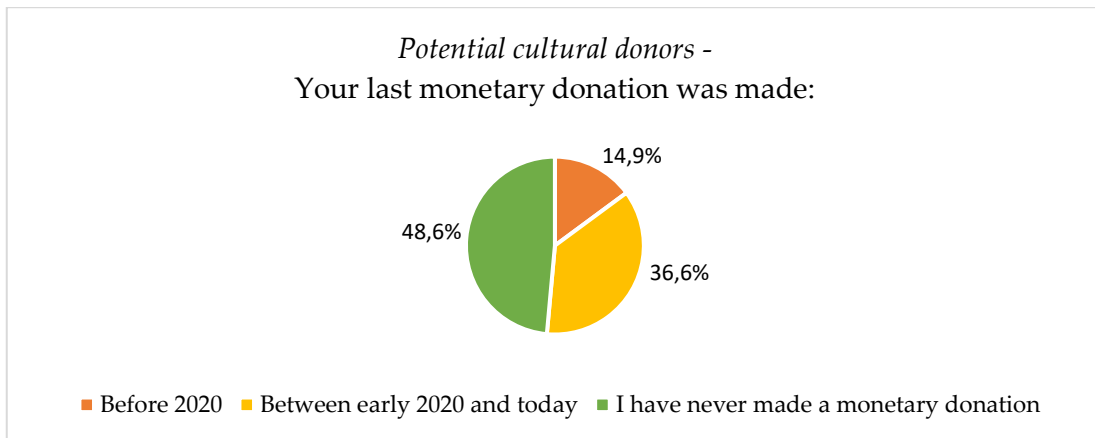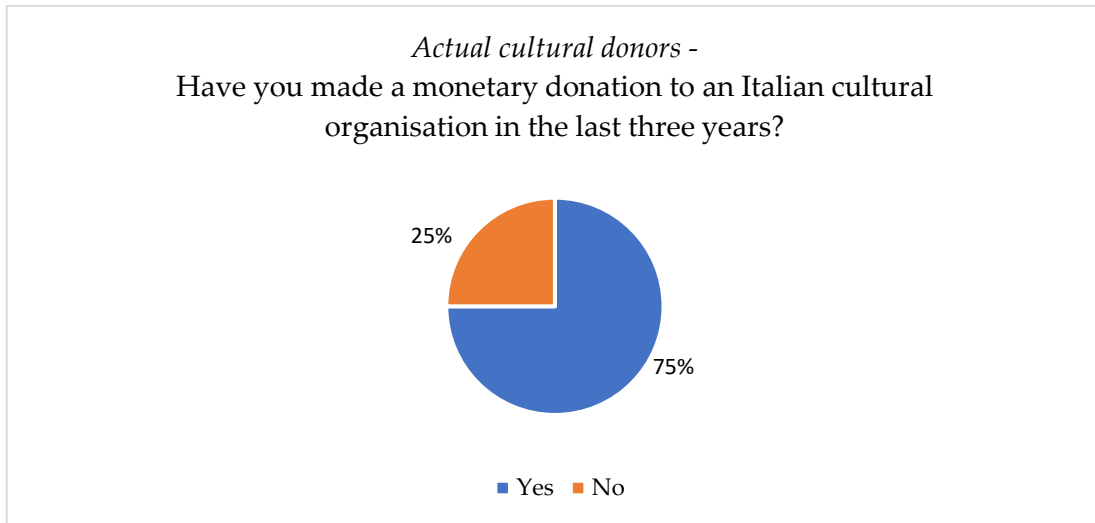
Concerning the reasons why this 25% of actual cultural donors decided not to donate to culture in the past three years, it is worth noting that 43,8% of them reported they preferred donating to other causes than cultural one. In addition, 18,8% lacked financial resources, another 18,8% lacked trust, and the remaining clicked on the item 'Other'. Regarding the latter, just an individual (6,3%) specified further and wrote 'I never thought about it' – a statement from which we can infer that culture was not considered a priority in the last three years by this person. Besides, no actual cultural donors chose 'Negative past experiences' (Fig. 33). Likewise, preferences for causes other than culture (34.9%), lack of financial resources (22.3%) and trust (14,9%) were also the top three reasons selected by potential cultural donors when asked them why they have never donated to culture. Furthermore, 13,1% opted for 'I have never donated (not only to culture, but in general)', 10,3% expressed a preference for donating material goods or volunteering. 2,3% reported that they are not interested in arts and culture, and 1,7% chose 'I consider culture an accessory good that must be financed by the State'. Lastly, just one person (0,6%) affirmed to have had negative experiences with the art world and/or donations in the past (Fig. 34).

If we compare these data with the quotation by Marianna Martinoni from 2006 (see p. 14), we could observe how the situation is slightly changed. Indeed, it is still true that there is « […] greater sensitivity and a clear preference among potential donors for social causes rather than cultural ones» (Martinoni, 2006). Nonetheless, just 1,7% of potential donors claimed that this is due to their belief that culture should be funded by the State. On the other hand, it is worth noting that the primary reason was because they prefer supporting other 'more important causes'.

Fig. 33

Actual cultural donors -
If you answered 'No' to the previous question, why did you decide not to donate to culture in the last three years?

6,3%

12,6%

43,8%

18,8%

18,8%

- I preferred to donate to other causes
- I did no trust and/or know how my money would have been used
- I couldn't afford it financially
- Other (not specified)
- Other ('I never thought about it')

Fig. 34

Potential cultural donors -
Which of the following reasons is the main reason why you have
never donated money to a cultural cause?

- I have chosen to support other causes that I consider more important
- I could not afford to donate money
- I did not trust it (I did not know if my money would arrive/be well used)
- I have never donated (not only to culture, but in general)
- I prefer donating material goods or volunteering
- I have no interest in art and culture
- I consider culture an accessory good that must be financed by the State
- I have had negative experiences with the art world and/or donations in the past

Regarding the reasons why actual cultural donors decided to donate to an Italian cultural NPO the last time they did so, it is worth observing that 33,3% answered 'I wanted to support an organization I know and whose values I share', and 25% was driven by the love for the arts and culture. 10% wanted to make a positive contribution to their community and/or territory, and another 10% wanted to support artists and workers of the cultural sector. Besides, 8,3% wanted to make a solidarity gift for someone, while 5% wanted to support a project with social impact. 1,7% wanted to feel morally satisfied, and another 1,7% wanted to enjoy tax incentives. Lastly, 5,1% indicated 'Other' without specifying further, and no one selected social recognition (Fig. 35). As a corollary, it could be argued that intrinsic benefits appear to be more

effective than extrinsic ones, and extrinsic benefits more effective than reputational ones.

Fig. 35

Actual cultural donors -
Why did you decide to donate to an Italian cultural organisation the last time?

- I wanted to support an organization I know and whose values I share
- I was motivated by my love for art and culture
- I wanted to make a positive contribution to my community and/or territory
- I wanted to support artists and workers of the cultural sector
- I wanted to make a solidarity gift for someone close to me who loves art and culture
- Other (not specified)
- I wanted to support a project with social impact
- I wanted to feel morally satisfied
- I wanted to enjoy tax incentives

Furthermore, 58,9% of potential donors and 65% of actual cultural donors saw at least one donor-oriented message from a cultural NPO on social media. Besides, 4,6% of potential donors and 8,3% of actual donors did not see these contents because they do not use social media. Nevertheless, we must stress that despite these relatively positive data, Italian cultural NPOs must be careful not to be lulled into complacency. Indeed, it should be noted that 36,6% of potential donors and 26,7% of actual cultural donors have never seen these messages, despite being social media users (Fig. 36). Moreover, we would like

to reiterate that most Italian cultural NPOs do not operate any fundraising-oriented communication, especially on social media – as reported by the experts mentioned in Ch. 1 and Ch. 2 and demonstrated by our difficulty in finding Italian cultural NPOs' that met our second selection criterion for the interviews. Additionally, future surveys might explore in more detail how often (potential and actual) Italian cultural donors encounter these messages, from how many and which organisations, and so on.

Fig. 36
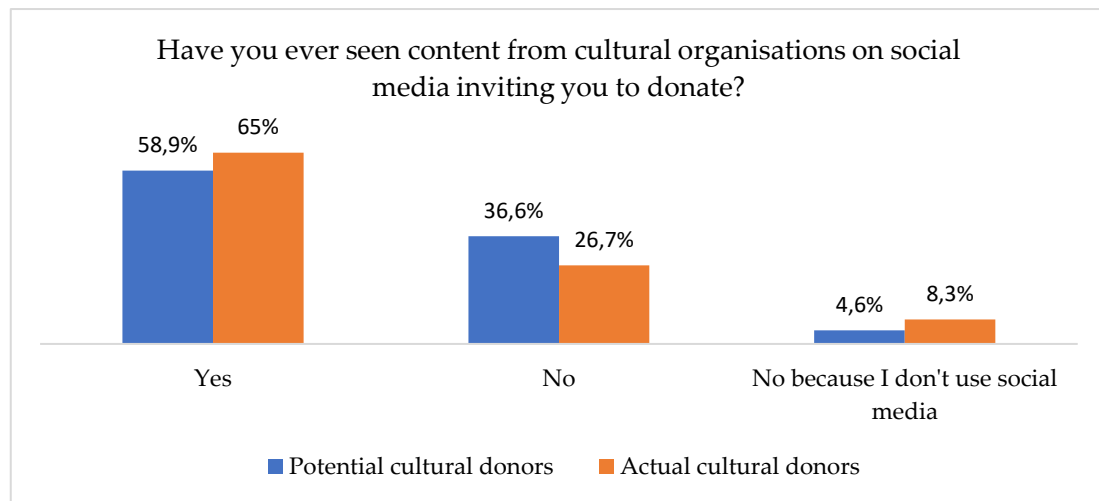
For what concerns the social media platforms where both the targets saw donor-oriented messages, Instagram and Facebook were the most selected ones, while X (formerly Twitter) ranks at the bottom. It also appears that YouTube and WhatsApp outperform LinkedIn. Moreover, we specify that those who selected 'Other', did not wrote other social media, but rather 'Tv', 'Website', 'Its own app', and 'Art magazines' (Fig. 37).

Fig. 37

If you answered 'Yes' to the previous question, on which social media did you see it?

- Potential cultural donors
- Actual cultural donors
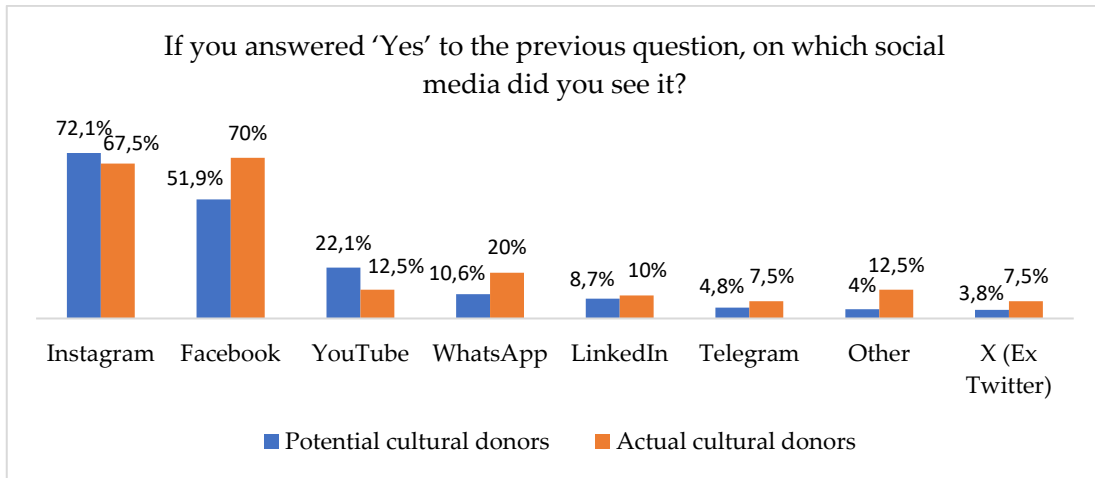
Now, moving on to the strategies for increasing the visibility of donor-oriented messages, it is noteworthy observing that actual cultural donors' attitude towards sponsored contents – aka advertisement, targeted according to market segments' interests – tends to be slightly more unfavourable than favourable. Nevertheless, 16,7% clicked on 'Quite a lot favourable' and 18,3% on 'Very much favourable' (Fig. 38).

Fig. 38

Actual cultural donors -
How favourable are you to seeing social media adverts that invite you to donate to Italian non-profit cultural organisations that you follow or are similar to your interests?
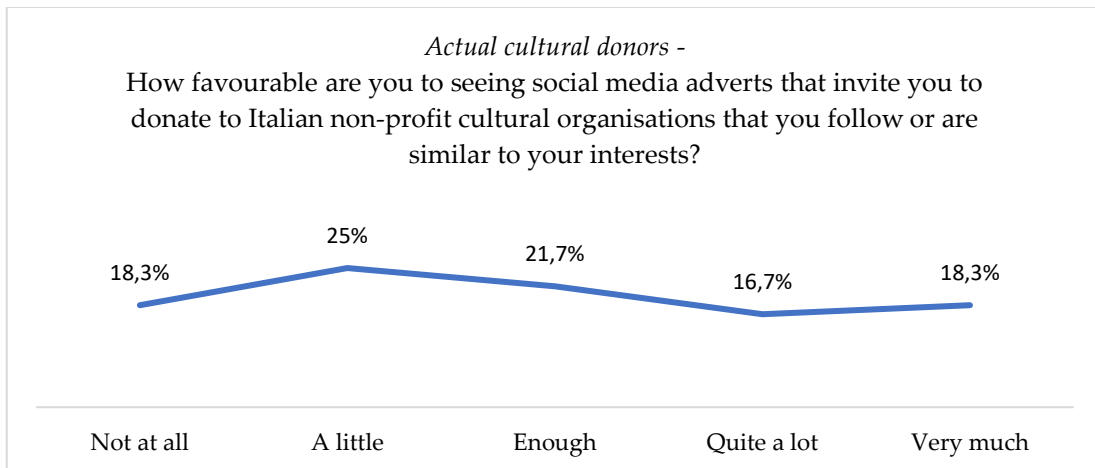
Also, the social media influencer strategy could be interpreted as a way for improving visibility of donor-oriented messages, and thus reach more potential donors. However, only 11,7% of actual cultural donors affirmed to have monetarily supported a cultural cause discovered through influencers on

social media in the past (Fig. 39). Nonetheless, a more encouraging framework emerged when both audiences were asked if they would try to donate after seeing content from a social media influencer they follow and admire asking them to donate to a cultural organization. Indeed, in both cases more than 40% clicked on 'Yes but only after learning more about the organisation' and more than 31% selected 'I might'. Moreover, 20% of potential donors and 11,7% of actual donors chose 'Absolutely not', others opted for 'I don't use social media', and 1,7% of actual cultural donors indicated 'Absolutely yes' (Fig. 40).

Fig. 39

Actual cultural donors -
Have you ever financially supported a cultural cause you discovered through one or more influencers on social media?
*Micro influencers (1.000-10.000 followers) are also included.

11,7% 11,7%

76,7%

■ Yes ■ No ■ No because I don't use social media

Fig. 40

If you saw content from a social media influencer you follow and admire asking you to donate to a cultural organisation, would you try to donate?
*Micro influencers (1.000-10.000 followers) are also included.

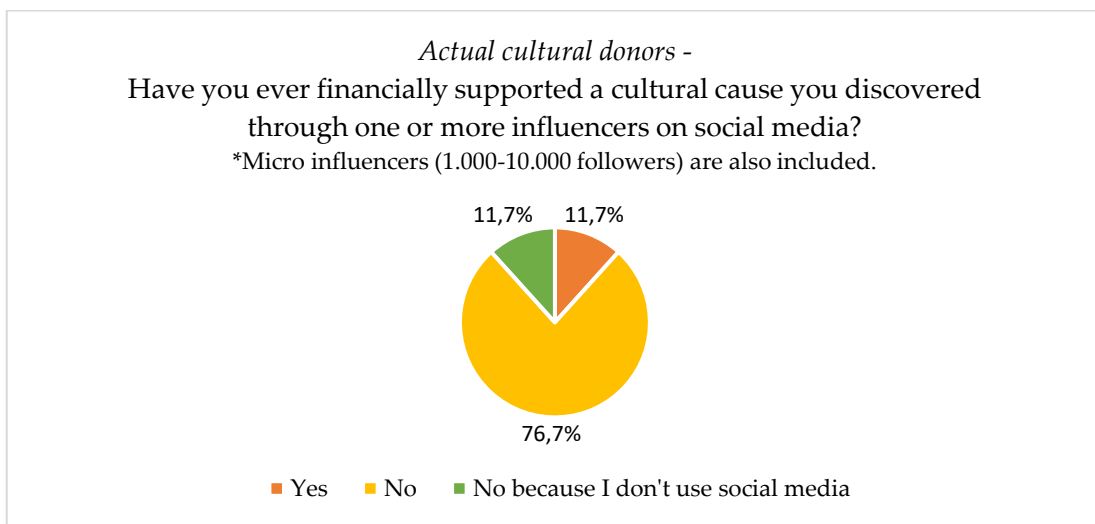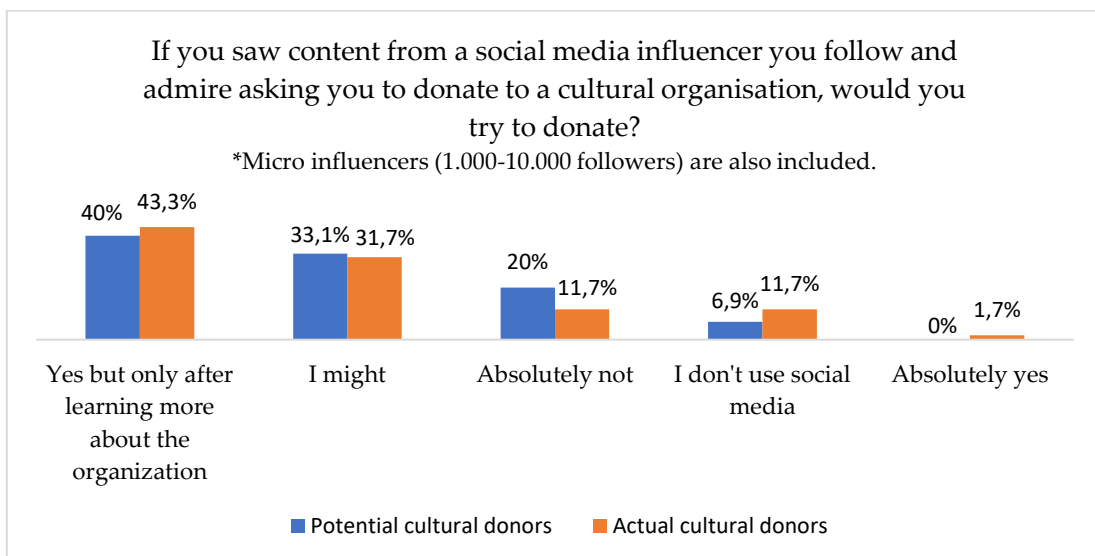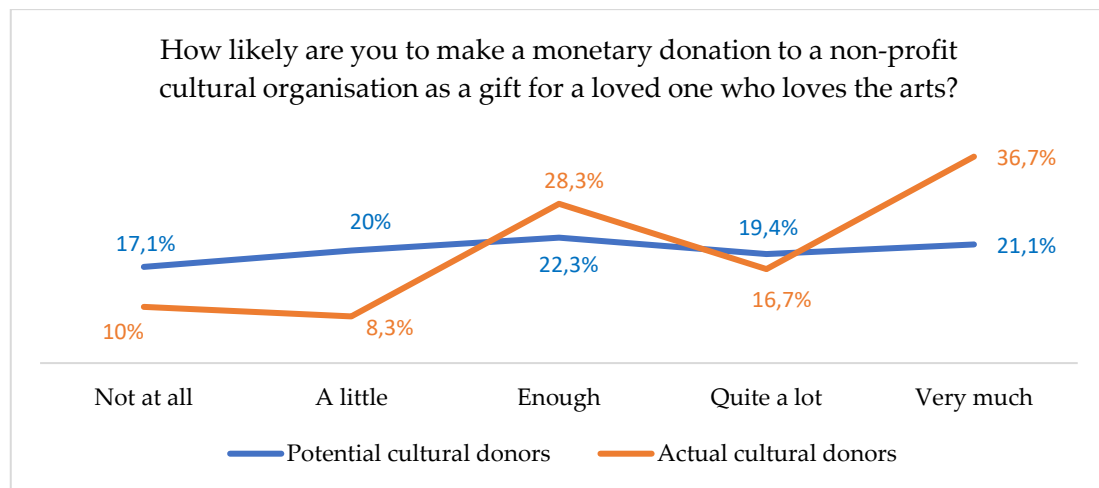|	Yes but only after learning more about the organization	I might	Absolutely not	I don't use social media	Absolutely yes
Potential cultural donors	40%	33,1%	20%	6,9%	0%
Actual cultural donors	43,3%	31,7%	11,7%	11,7%	1,7%

■ Potential cultural donors ■ Actual cultural donors

Concerning the willingness to make a donation as solidarity present for a beloved one who loves the arts, actual cultural donors' framework is more positive than the one of potential donors, whose responses are quite uniform. Anyway, the overall outcome could be defined as positive, since 'Enough' and 'Very much' were the most clicked options in both cases (Fig. 41).

Fig. 41

How likely are you to make a monetary donation to a non-profit cultural organisation as a gift for a loved one who loves the arts?

Moreover, with regard to the willingness of donating to a personal fundraising campaign of a loved one who wants to donate the entire amount to an Italian cultural NPO, both the targets show more a favoruable behaviour than a adverse one (Fig. 42). We also asked actual cultural donors to what extent they would be willing to launch their own fundraising campaign to donate the amount raised to an Italian cultural NPO that they care about. However, in this instance, the attitude appears slightly more negative than in the previous case. Anyway, the fact that 18,3% responded 'Very much' and 11,7% 'Quite a lot' is still promising (Fig. 43).
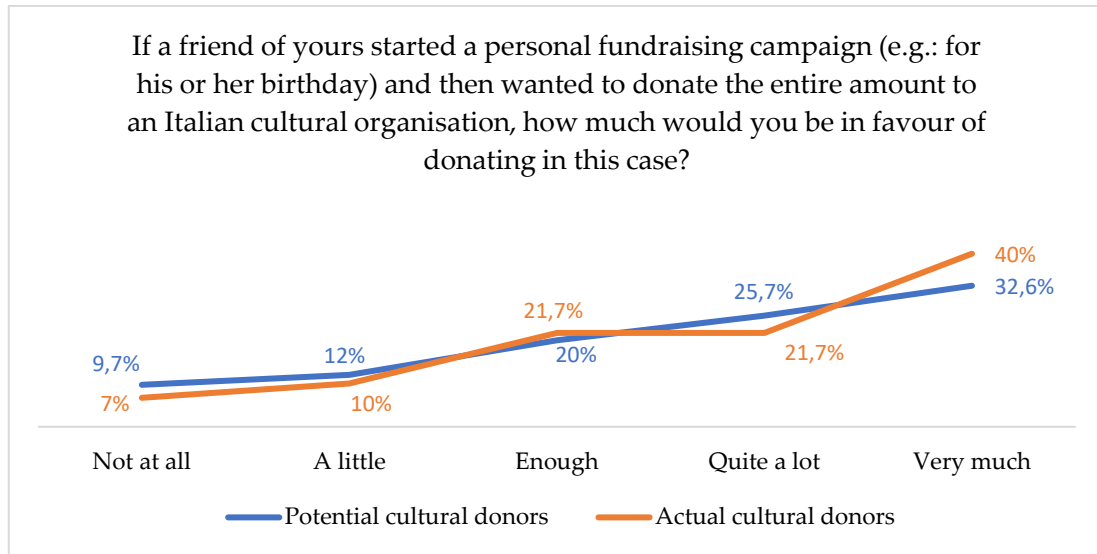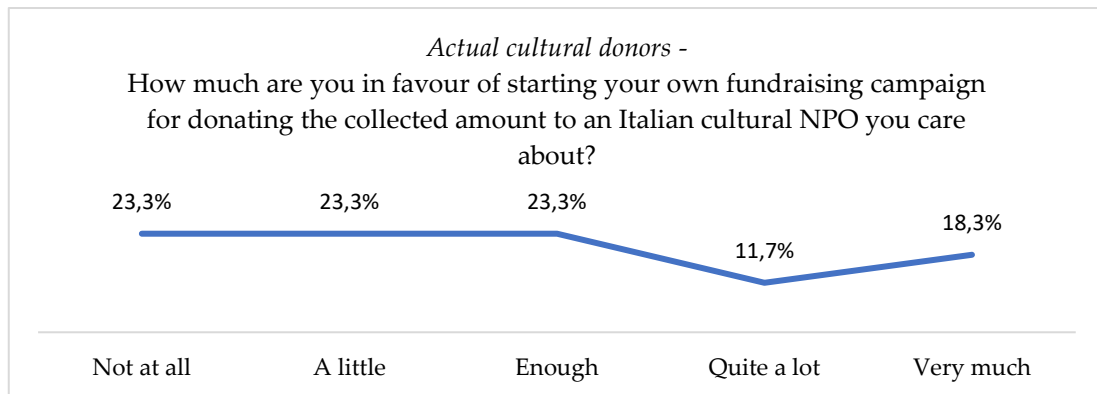
Fig. 42

If a friend of yours started a personal fundraising campaign (e.g.: for his or her birthday) and then wanted to donate the entire amount to an Italian cultural organisation, how much would you be in favour of donating in this case?

9,7%   12%   21,7%   25,7%   40%
7%   10%   20%   21,7%   32,6%

Not at all   A little   Enough   Quite a lot   Very much

Potential cultural donors ——— Actual cultural donors

Fig. 43

Actual cultural donors -
How much are you in favour of starting your own fundraising campaign for donating the collected amount to an Italian cultural NPO you care about?

23,3%   23,3%   23,3%   11,7%   18,3%

Not at all   A little   Enough   Quite a lot   Very much

Regarding the willingness to donate to culture during the Black Friday, the Giving Tuesday, and the Christmas period, the graphs in Fig. 44, 45, and 46 show targets' similar behaviours in all the cases. Although the peaks always fall within the neutral responses, the rest of the answers tend to be adverse rather than propitious, resulting in a negative overall picture. Nonetheless, the Christmas period presents the most encouraging scenario, followed by Giving Tuesday, and then Black Friday. However, we would like to highlight that in each case there are individuals willing to donate towards culture from both potential and actual cultural donors' categories.
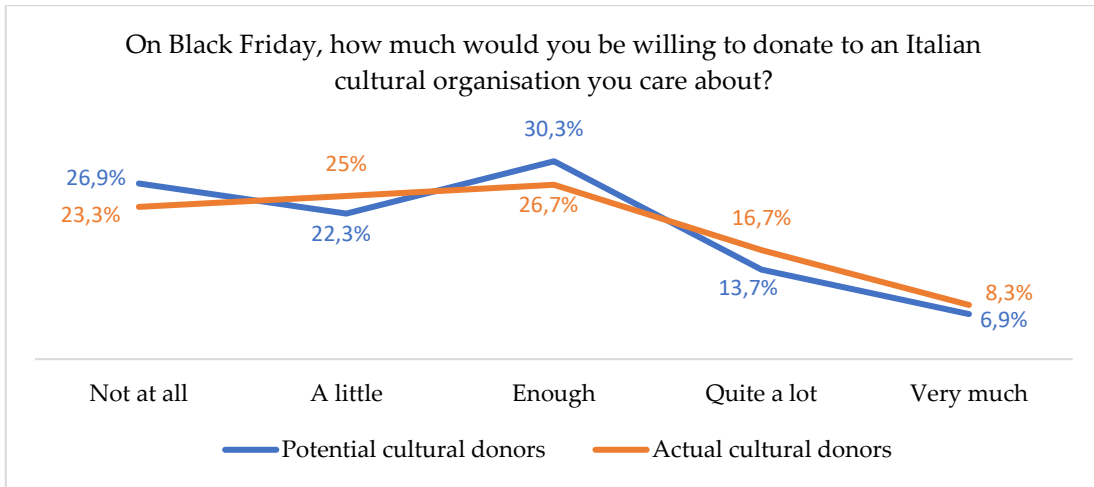
Fig. 44

On Black Friday, how much would you be willing to donate to an Italian cultural organisation you care about?

- 26,9% / 23,3% — Not at all
- 22,3% / 25% — A little
- 30,3% / 26,7% — Enough
- 13,7% / 16,7% — Quite a lot
- 6,9% / 8,3% — Very much

Potential cultural donors — Actual cultural donors

Fig. 45

On Giving Tuesday (the International Day of Giving), how much would you be willing to donate to an Italian cultural organisation you care about?

- 27,4% / 21,7% — Not at all
- 21,7% / 18,3% — A little
- 29,7% / 33,3% — Enough
- 14,9% / 16,7% — Quite a lot
- 6,3% / 10% — Very much

Potential cultural donors — Actual cultural donors

Fig. 46

During the Christmas period, how much would you be willing to donate to an Italian cultural organisation you care about?

- 22,9% / 21,7% — Not at all
- 21,7% / 16,7% — A little
- 29,1% / 31,7% — Enough
- 18,9% / 20,0% — Quite a lot
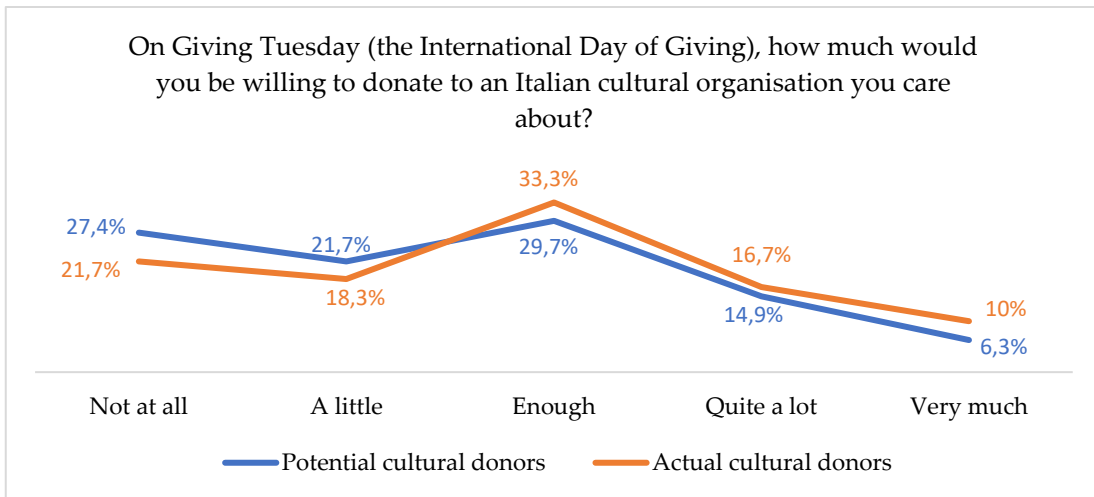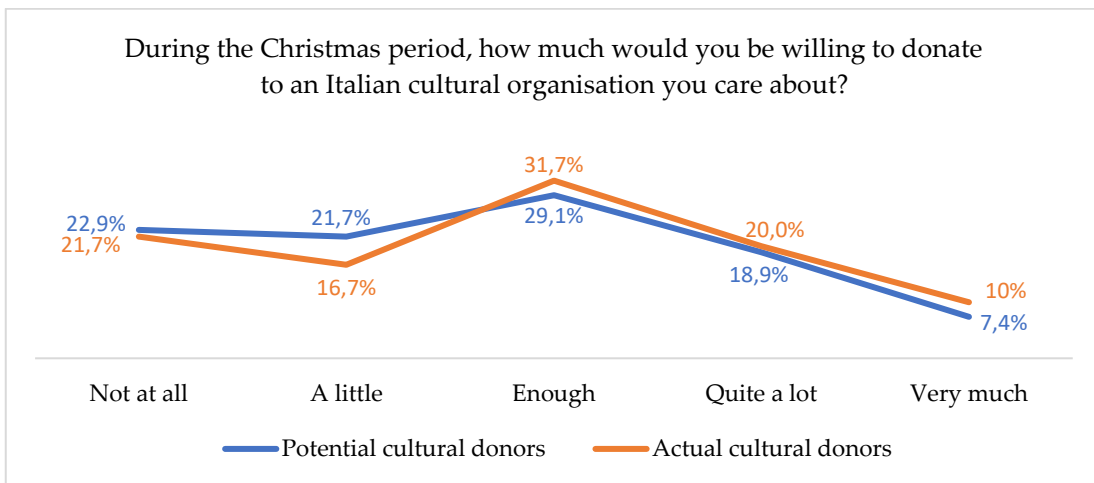- 7,4% / 10% — Very much

Potential cultural donors — Actual cultural donors

On the subject of cultural welfare and social and health impacts of cultural NPOs, it is notable that 91,7% of actual cultural donors and 74% of potential donors recognise culture's role in generating all-round welfare. On the other hand, 23,4% of potential donors and 6,7% of actual donors still acknowledge only the artistic and economic value of culture. Also, less than 2% of both groups are still convinced that culture has only an artistic-historical value (Fig. 47).

Fig. 47

Complete this sentence according to your opinion: 'Art and culture …
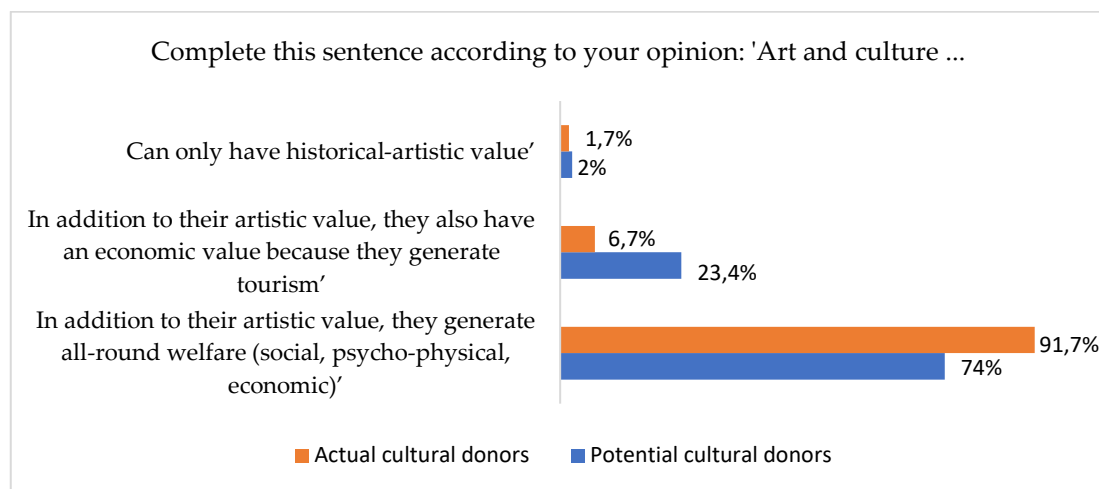
Furthermore, for more than 56% of the actual cultural donors, it is very important that an Italian cultural organisation also produces positive impacts in terms of social, health, economic and general welfare (Fig. 48). Simultaneously, as shown in Fig. 49, potential cultural donors become more willing to donate to a cultural NPO if it generates positive externalities in terms of social, health, economic and general welfare.
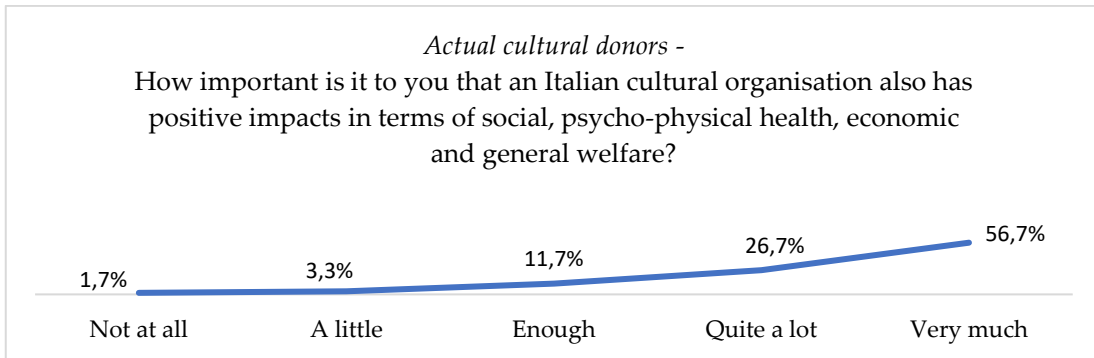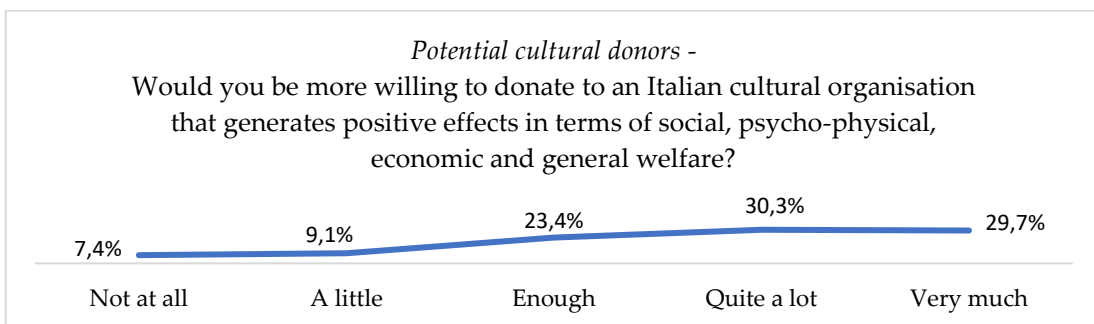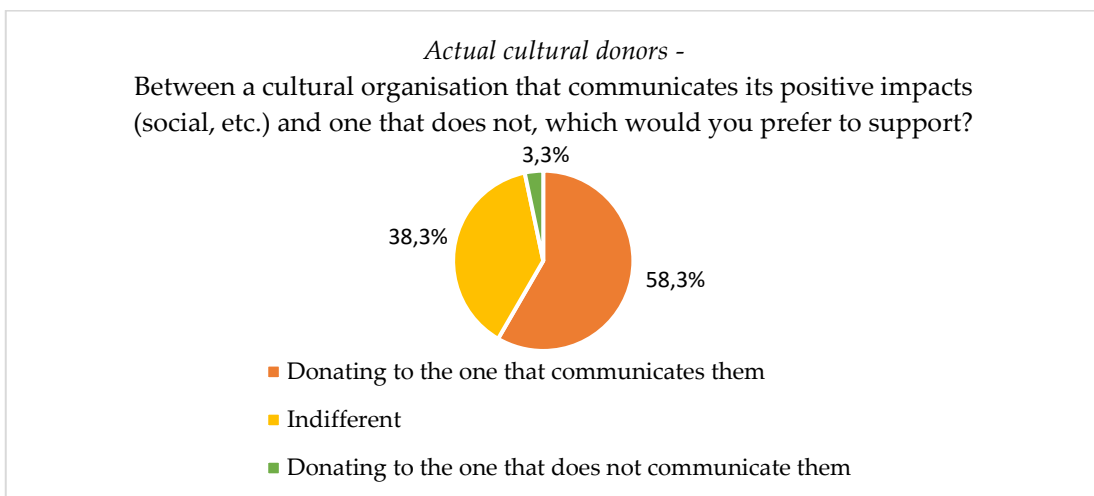
Fig. 48

Actual cultural donors -
How important is it to you that an Italian cultural organisation also has
positive impacts in terms of social, psycho-physical health, economic
and general welfare?

Not at all	A little	Enough	Quite a lot	Very much
1,7%	3,3%	11,7%	26,7%	56,7%

Fig. 49

Potential cultural donors -
Would you be more willing to donate to an Italian cultural organisation
that generates positive effects in terms of social, psycho-physical,
economic and general welfare?

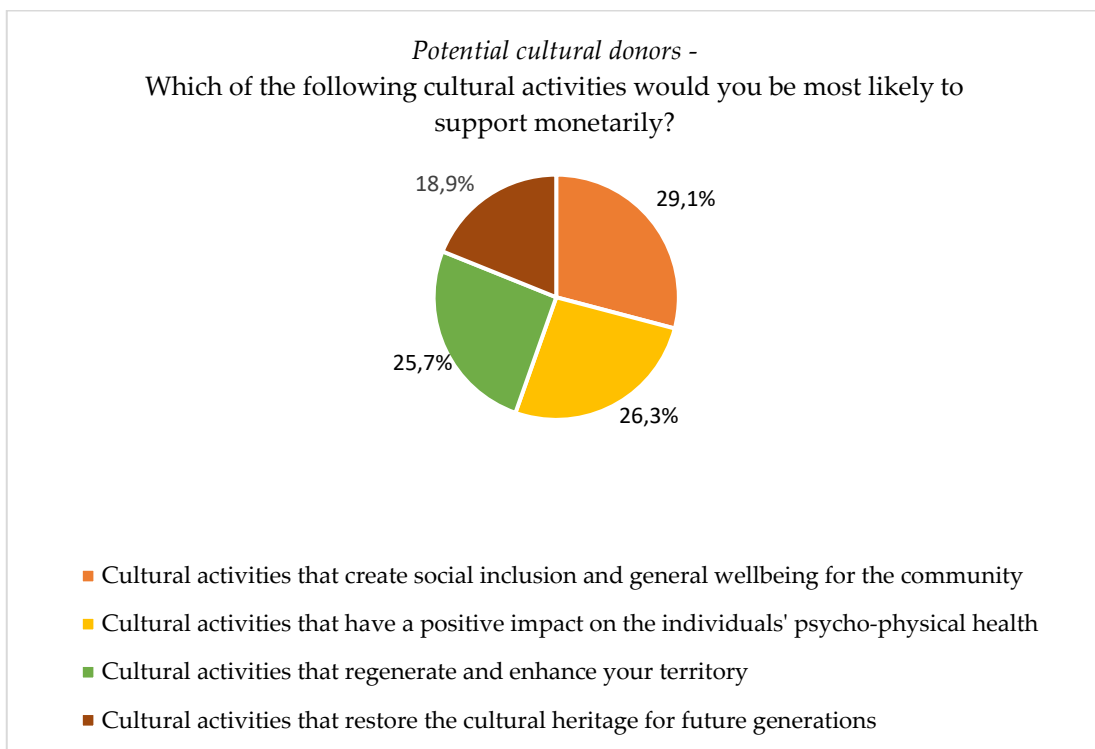| Not at all	A little	Enough	Quite a lot	Very much
7,4%	9,1%	23,4%	30,3%	29,7%

Additionally, 58,3% of actual cultural donors affirmed that they would prefer donating to a cultural NPO that communicates its positive impacts over one that does not communicate them. Besides, 38,3% is indifferent about this, and just 3,3% prefer donating to those that do not disclose this kind of information (Fig. 50).

Fig. 50

Actual cultural donors -
Between a cultural organisation that communicates its positive impacts
(social, etc.) and one that does not, which would you prefer to support?

3,3%
38,3%
58,3%

■ Donating to the one that communicates them

■ Indifferent

■ Donating to the one that does not communicate them

Regarding the cultural cause that potential donors would prefer to support monetarily, it is worth noting that responses are approximately homogeneously distributed. In fact, 29,1% selected 'Cultural activities that create social inclusion and general wellbeing for the community'. 26,3% chose 'Cultural activities that have a positive impact on the individuals' psycho-physical health'. 25,7% clicked on 'Cultural activities that regenerate and enhance [their] territory', and 18,9% opted for 'Cultural activities that restore the cultural heritage for future generations' (Fig. 51).

Fig. 51

Potential cultural donors -
Which of the following cultural activities would you be most likely to support monetarily?

- Cultural activities that create social inclusion and general wellbeing for the community
- Cultural activities that have a positive impact on the individuals' psycho-physical health
- Cultural activities that regenerate and enhance your territory
- Cultural activities that restore the cultural heritage for future generations

Lastly, concerning emotional message framing, we tested the effectiveness of different donor-oriented messages, which respectively stimulated a sense of opportunity, responsibility, and urgency within two distinct scenarios. More precisely, in the first scenario it was quite explicit the social value of the cultural projected that required fundings because of the involvement of disabled people. On the other hand, the second scenario portrayed a

traditional cultural cause, i.e.: the restoration of a local historical building, where it was more implicit the cultural welfare generated by the donation. So, in both the cases the rankings between the two targets were the same. However, in the first instance, responsibility holds first place, followed by opportunity, and lastly, urgency (Fig. 52). In the second instance, instead, urgency comes first, responsibility second, and opportunity last (Fig. 53).
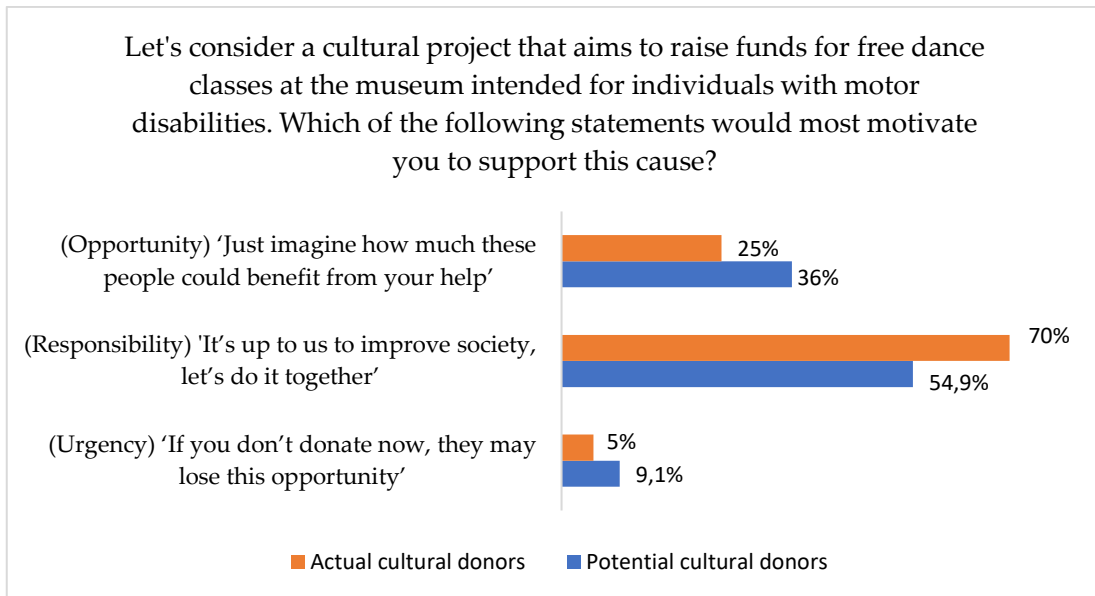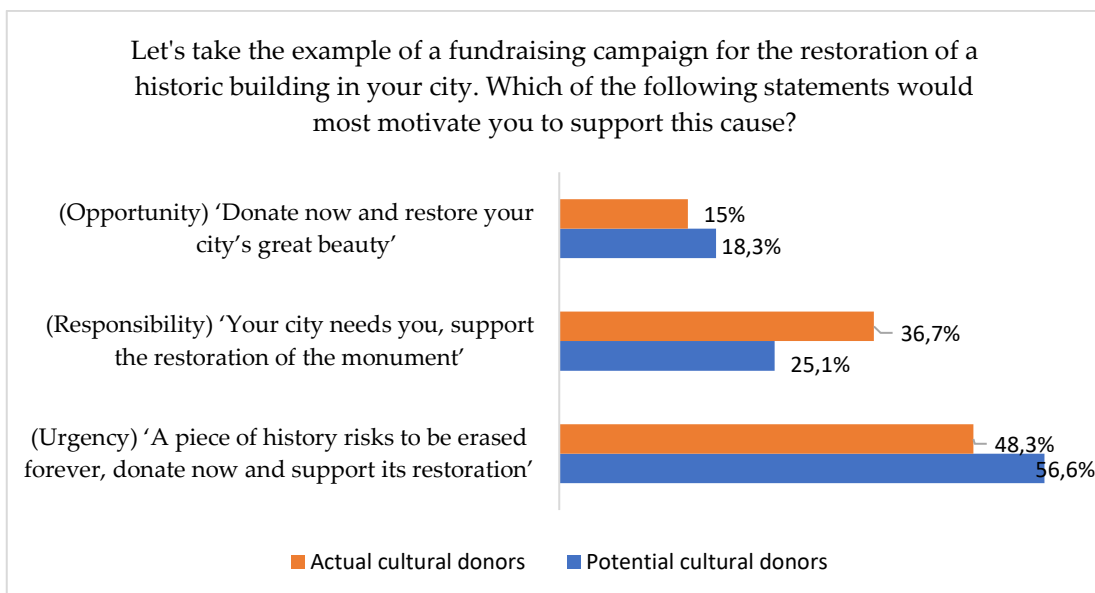
Fig. 52

Let's consider a cultural project that aims to raise funds for free dance classes at the museum intended for individuals with motor disabilities. Which of the following statements would most motivate you to support this cause?

(Opportunity) 'Just imagine how much these people could benefit from your help' — 25%, 36%

(Responsibility) 'It's up to us to improve society, let's do it together' — 70%, 54,9%

(Urgency) 'If you don't donate now, they may lose this opportunity' — 5%, 9,1%

■ Actual cultural donors ■ Potential cultural donors

Fig. 53

Let's take the example of a fundraising campaign for the restoration of a historic building in your city. Which of the following statements would most motivate you to support this cause?

(Opportunity) 'Donate now and restore your city's great beauty' — 15%, 18,3%

(Responsibility) 'Your city needs you, support the restoration of the monument' — 36,7%, 25,1%

(Urgency) 'A piece of history risks to be erased forever, donate now and support its restoration' — 48,3%, 56,6%

■ Actual cultural donors ■ Potential cultural donors

Final comparisons:

Now, if we compare the assertions from the interviews with the outcomes of the questionnaires, it transpires that some aspects need to be reconsidered or, at least, rethought. To commence, the primary social media platforms that interviewees mentioned as effective in attracting individual donations were Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn. Nevertheless, if collected data validate this for Instagram and Facebook, it seems that donor-oriented messages on WhatsApp and YouTube reach more potential and actual cultural donors than those on LinkedIn. Consequently, we opine that the potential of these two platforms should be re-evaluated (Fig. 54).

Fig. 54

	Interviewees	Actual and potential cultural donors
Most effective social media	1st Facebook 2nd Instagram 3rd LinkedIn	1st Facebook/Instagram 2nd Instagram/Facebook 3rd WhatsApp/YouTube 4th YouTube/WhatsApp 5th LinkedIn 6th Telegram 7th Other 8th X (formerly Twitter)

Moreover, in terms of emotional message-framing, it should be reiterated that, according to the NPOs interviewed, creating a sense of urgency is ineffective or even hazardous for cultural organisations. In contrast, Aufiero and Martinoni stated that cultural NPOs should use all emotional leverages at the right time, including urgency. Our findings seem to support the latter in arguing this. Indeed, we found that there are instances – such as the second scenario presented – where triggering a sense of urgency is more effective than arousing a sense of opportunity and responsibility. Hence, we concur with Terzofilo's experts on the importance of diversifying the emotional triggers; also, we stress that this should be done by striking the appropriate balance and timing according to a given specific context. However, for those who still feel

hesitant about this approach, we would like to note that leveraging moral responsibility appears to be slightly more effective than opportunity-framed messages (Fig. 55).

Fig. 55

	Interviewees	Actual and potential cultural donors
Most effective emotional leverages	**NPOs**: 1st opportunity 2nd responsibility & belonging Urgency excluded because ineffective and risky for cultural NPOs **Consultants**: Mix all of them, including urgency but at the right time, i.e.: «not in the beginning but when an organisation has already prepared the ground»	**Scenario #1:** 1st responsibility 2nd opportunity 3rd urgency **Scenario #2:** 1st urgency 2nd responsibility 3rd opportunity

Furthermore, after the initial phase of our empirical analysis, we claimed that intrinsic, extrinsic, and reputational benefits all have the potential to attract individual donations for Italian cultural NPOs, given the different opinions and experiences reported by interviewees. Consequently, we concluded that each organisation needs to determine what is most effective with its audience, considering that this may change over time. While maintaining this perspective, we would also like to emphasize that the questionnaires' data show that intrinsic motivations (e.g.: trust and sharing of values, love for the arts, desire to support the community/territory, etc.) are the main reason why Italian actual cultural donors decided to support monetarily an cultural NPO the last time they did so (Fig. 56). Hence, we could claim that emphasizing intrinsic benefits in donor-oriented communications might attract more donors than extrinsic and reputational benefits. Nevertheless, as stressed before, it would be advisable to diversify them in order to attract donors with different peculiarities.

Fig. 56

	Interviewees	Actual cultural donors
Most effective benefits to highlight	Highlight all of them since all could be effective depending on the context and audience	Intrinsic > Extrinsic > Reputational

Concerning the topic of social media influencers, we have seen that all interviewees showed a mostly cautious and hesitant attitude towards this approach, despite the fact that those few cases mentioned appear to hold a great potential. This potential, in fact, seems to be confirmed by the results of the questionnaires, where most of both actual and potential cultural donors showed a favourable although prudent behaviour (Fig. 57). Therefore, without denying the difficulties of managing influencers, we hope that such possibilities will be explored more by cultural organisations in the near future. However, in doing so it is important to bear in mind that advocates – including influencers as well as those from 'below' – should always share and believe in the organization's mission and values.

Fig. 57

	Interviewees	Actual and potential cultural donors
Influencers	Hesitant	Prudent but favourable

Lastly, with regard to cultural welfare, after the interviews it was still an open question whether the truth lies in Hypothesis 1 or Hypothesis 2 (see p. 20). On this point, the collected data seem to validate Hypothesis 1, namely that highlighting the social and health impacts generated by cultural NPOs in donor-oriented communication strategies increases donations to culture by attracting donors with different interests. As consequence, culture might be moved up in the list of donors' preferred causes (Fig. 58). Just consider the fact that most potential cultural donors indicated that they would be more likely to donate to a cultural NPO if it generates positive externalities in terms of

social, health, economic and general well-being. Or that, to take another example, a significant number of cultural donors have expressed a preference for donating to a cultural NPO that communicates its positive externalities. However, we would like to point out that, as stressed by Martinoni and Aufiero, this must be accompanied by data, studies and similar that demonstrate the solid foundations behind such claims. Otherwise, one would risk falling into the potential critics exposed by Senzaspine and the FAI. Furthermore, we would also like to clarify that when we talk about promoting these aspects in order to gain a competitive advantage over other causes and increase donations to culture, we do not mean to diminish the importance of other causes or 'steal' their donors. Instead, we believe that this approach serves to make people recognize culture's role in creating impacts beyond mere pleasure and entertainment also by a tangible perspective, i.e.: that of monetary contributions.

Fig. 58

	Interviewees	Actual and potential cultural donors
Cultural welfare for acquiring competitive advantage	Different opinions: Teatro Civico and Terzo filo agree on the fact that cultural welfare is essential for gaining competitive advantage. Senzaspine concur that this strategy serves for gaining competitive advantage over other cultural causes. The FAI is more hesitant about this strategy, although it seems to leave a door open for the near future.	Cautious but favourable

Conclusions

In conclusion, the present study attempted to determine the most effective social media communication strategies for increasing individual monetary donations to Italian cultural NPOs in the post-pandemic era. Moreover, we demonstrated that cultural welfare has the potential for increasing individual donations to culture and thus move it up in the list of donors' preferred causes. Besides this, both the interviews and questionnaires revealed a plethora of valuable insights, which we would like to briefly summarize here. Firstly, an effective fundraising strategy for an Italian cultural NPO is based on six pillars, i.e.: the diversification of sources of income; a strong connection with the community and territory of reference; the establishment and keeping of long-term relationships with all the stakeholders; transparency; community's active participation in the life of the organization; and an effective and multi-channel fundraising-oriented communication, including on social media. Secondly, for and effective social media donor-oriented communication, NPOs must recognize social media as places of 'liquid proximity', i.e.: spaces that facilitate the disintermediation of the gift by providing emotional and physical closeness between the recipient and the donor both in the digital and physical worlds. Furthermore, because of their role as sounding boards, it is more effective to use social media as first step of a user-friendly conversion funnel that leads, gradually, potential donors to become actual donors while also collecting their data for targeting purposes. Thirdly, Italian cultural NPOs must abandon self-referential narratives as well as their discomfort in asking for contributions. Instead, it is recommendable to adopt a simple, clear, and familiar storytelling that evokes everyday images and shows the hearth of the organization. Fourthly, concerning donor-oriented messages, cultural NPOs should highlight the donations' beneficiaries by using vivid stories. However,

in general, it is useful to use different emotional leverages (responsibility, opportunity, and urgency) as well as creating contents based on data, studies, and statistics. The key is to diversify to attract individuals with varying interests; this applies to every aspect, including the benefits and impacts to highlight. Nevertheless, we must stress that it does not exist a universal donor-oriented communication strategy that can be adopted by all cultural NPOs as a sort of panacea. Indeed, each situation requires tailoring. For doing this, it is fundamental to know the peculiarities of the external environments as well as of the target groups. For this reason, cultural NPOs must create donors' databases and use them for improving targeting and positioning of their strategies. Databases and periodical surveys would help a given cultural NPO to determine the attitudes of its audiences towards, for instance, the strategies we encountered during our investigation. To mention some: cultural welfare; social media influencers; sponsored contents; personal fundraising campaigns; solidarity gifts; Christmas, Giving Tuesday, and Black Friday campaigns; competitiveness for reaching a goal by a certain date or for winning a prize.

Hence, we wish that this research will contribute to a better knowledge on the effectiveness of some social media donor-oriented communication strategies of Italian cultural NPOs in the post-pandemic era. Additionally, it is hoped that the reader will be inspired by the case studies and strategies presented, or by the comments by the interviewees, other experts, or the author itself. Lastly, we would like to point out that these research present limitations because of the vastness of the subject, the post-Covid time-window, the Italian geographical area, and the non-profit sector. However, we do not exclude the possibility that future research may provide additional strategies to those presented in this study, extend the time-window, consider the for-profit or

public Italian cultural organizations, or explore the similarities and discrepancies with other countries.

Appendix

1. Live on Facebook for the closure of the 2022 Premio Crowdfunding per la cultura (29th March 2023)

Valeria Vitali (Rete del Dono): [...] We observed that cultural organisations with a strong sense of community and territorial value were more successful in engaging their community in active and participatory ways [...]. In other words, a territorial link facilitates the involvement of people, which is crucial since we found that, for being successful, a crowdfunding campaign must have a strong community support. Thus, donations are encouraged when the community has faith in the organization. […] To explore these issues more deeply, we have arranged this discussion and sharing session to gain a better understanding of the interplay between culture and its possibilities. We have invited the following experts: Martina Bacigalupi (Director of Fondazione de Gasperi), Emanuele Curti (cultural manager of Lo Stato dei Luoghi), and Alessandra Gariboldi (President of the Fondazione Fitzcarraldo). The session will be moderated by Pier Luigi Sacco, professor of economic policy and co-founder of the Cultural Welfare Center.

Pier Luigi Sacco (Cultural Welfare Center): We are living in a moment in which cultural projects and interventions are becoming more and more central within policies, and not only cultural ones. Indeed, there is an increasingly complementary relationship between cultural initiatives, mental and physical health, social issues, and the emerging environmental sustainability challenges. From a proximity perspective, it becomes clear that culture has the capacity to address issues and suggest possible solutions that cannot be addressed by traditional policies and approaches. It is interesting to note that, for a long time, culture was viewed as having a narrow and specific role,

mostly related to leisure or entertainment. Today, however, it is widely acknowledged that cultural participation can assist individuals in acquiring new skills, modifying their behaviour, and significantly enhance the capacity of communities to explore innovative and valuable developmental trajectories. The people who are with us today serve as excellent examples of this. To begin, Martina Bacigalupi has been co-teaching the cultural fundraising course at the Fundraising School with Marianna Martinoni and me for a prolonged period. She is one of the leading experts in the field and can give us a perspective on how this type of project also fits into the logic of fundraising.

Matina Bacigalupi (Fondazione De Gasperi): [...] Today I am here both as the Director of the Fondazione De Gasperi and a fundraiser with a long career behind. Specifically, for this edition of the *Premio Crowdfunding per la Cultura* I followed the Orchestra Senzaspine, which is one of the winners [...]. The word that characterises both this conference and my speech is 'proximity'. Today's cultural organisations are environments that foster proximity, relationships, conviviality, and dialogue. However, it remains uncertain whether cultural organisations are acknowledged as places that foster proximity or not, since there is a difference between being one and being perceived as one. There has been an acceleration of cultural planning after the pandemic, with increased strength and activity, particularly from a communicative perspective. Nonetheless, I wonder how much there has been a change in attitude. Concerning Senzaspine, I have observed a change in their approach. Their focus has shifted towards language innovation and transformation instead of returning to the status quo. They do not attach or separate themselves from a specific location; instead, they become a space where new relational dynamics are initiated. In my opinion, a number of cultural organizations are unable to perceive themselves as proximity spaces. Another closely linked element is

how digital technology shapes this perception. However, today, we are here to discuss crowdfunding platforms. So, an article I recently read compared these platforms to shop windows. In my view, describing crowdfunding platforms as mere displays or catalogues for presenting projects lacks depth and is overly simplistic. The use of digital should not be reduced to a mere fundraising tool. Rather, digital provides a space for interconnection and 'liquid proximity' where opportunities for interactions in both physical and digital worlds are available. Therefore, the digital can facilitate physical proximity and vice versa. Organizations that publish projects on the Rete del Dono platform and focus only on it as a source of new financial resources, fail to involve the community and broaden the relational field. Consequently, this approach hinders their success and should therefore be avoided. The Senzaspine have taken a unique path in this regard. Indeed, years ago, they conducted a crowdfunding campaign that yielded poor results. The problem was their perception of digital as a tool, rather than an integral part. Today, we recognise that digital technology has an important role to play in fundraising by facilitating the disintermediation of the gift without subjective evaluation. What does disintermediation of giving mean? It means that donors are willing to give directly and immediately in order to intervene in a cause or issue and have direct contact with the beneficiaries. This is due to the immediate nature of a direct donation, which generates positive emotions in donors. Furthermore, a direct donation reduces the psychological distance between the recipient and the donor, making the latter feel more involved and closer to the project, both physically and emotionally. In my opinion, proximity means both physical and emotional closeness. Thus, a cultural organisation - if it really wants to be at the centre of these new cultural and giving processes – should redesign processes and establish relationships that

foster an emotional and immediate connection with proposed projects. Lastly, I would like to return to the Orchestra Senzaspine, which has undergone a three-year journey consisting of three crowdfunding campaigns. The Orchestra has succeeded in creating and nurturing a real sense of community, building strong relationships, and demonstrating physical and emotional closeness. It was fascinating to observe their ability to create a seamless transition between physical and digital relationships. For example, some donors attended their shows only after making a donation to their cause [...]. Once again, this demonstrates a hybrid proximity that unites the community without differentiating between the digital realm, beneficiaries, and donors. Crossing the thresholds requires innovation and risk-taking. From my perspective, the Senzaspine young people have taken risks not only by choosing a challenging project theme but also by engaging children in their communication of the campaign [...].

Pier Luigi Sacco (Cultural Welfare Center): Thank you Martina for this clear and precise reflection as usual. One of the aspects you have pointed out and I would like to emphasise is that in the field of donation, there is a tendency to view donors as mere tools to achieve goals. In my opinion, a certain interpretation of behavioural economics over the past fifteen years has negatively impacted this situation. The common idea suggests that people have various psychological weaknesses or biases (as we tend to call them improperly) that can be utilized to encourage donations from them. Actually, as you pointed out, people these days desire to engage themselves in something that has a personal significance to them. So, when we abandon self-referential protagonism and provide people with the opportunity to feel part of a group, they become more willing than we expect. The point is that they want to be part of something that makes sense. Hence, the dimension of

proximity must become an integral component. The presented case study of Orchestra Senzaspine serves as an excellent example of this [...] because it demonstrates that we must abandon many mental automatisms and realise that people want to be part of a community of meaning […], without which their motivation will be sporadic and, sometimes, very fragile. Now, as we address the topic of proximity, I will leave the stage to Emanuele Curti. Emanuele has a strong background in archaeology and played a key role in the Matera 2019 project. Today, he represents one of the most fascinating examples at the European level concerning social and cultural innovation that is Lo Stato dei Luoghi. The latter refers to a network of projects that are often situated in challenging locations and thus tend to receive less attention or become the targets of depopulation dynamics. However, they are now being transformed into laboratories of social innovation that often have something to teach even to more densely populated and central realities. Therefore, in my opinion, no one could provide better insight than Emanuele into what the concept of proximity means today in terms of cultural innovation.

Emmanuele Curti (Lo Stato dei Luoghi): [...] It is vital not only to recognise but also surpass the concept of the donating from the 20th century as giving to weaker groups in order to uplift them a little. Culture has traditionally been viewed as something that exists outside of one's everyday life, as a form of leisure or entertainment. It is often seen as an extracurricular activity that requires a constant subsidy. I believe that today there is a profound need for a paradigm shift because we have entered different dynamics and overcome the 20th century concept of welfare. According to Paolo Venturi, nowadays there is a need for transformative fundraising and hybrid professionals who are capable of utilizing 'public-private' resources. In Lo Stato dei Luoghi, it is consistently stressed that it is necessary to think in terms of the new concept

of 'cultural welfare', which should not solely provide assistance to the underprivileged. Indeed, cultural welfare was developed to establish connections between culture and health. In fact, several beautiful cultural projects exist today for people who, from a healthcare perspective, require such activities to help in their healing. Cultural welfare, in my opinion, must not only concern these groups but redefine the concept of welfare in our society and community. Therefore, the tool of donation becomes indispensable only if its meaning surpasses the one it had during the 20th century. It must be, as Martina said, another instrument that calls to be co-responsible in one's own community [...].

Pier Luigi Sacco (Cultural Welfare Center): These important considerations lead me directly to the emphasis you have placed on this new concept, cultural welfare, which is so central to today's debate. Although we perceive the term 'cultural welfare' as natural, we must acknowledge that for a long time it was considered an oxymoron. This is because culture was viewed as a competitor to social welfare and health, all of which were brought under the umbrella of welfare. [...] For example, when funding for culture was cut, it was justified in the name of welfare, which took precedence [...]. The introduction of cultural welfare represents a significant shift in our view of social quality. Today we can recognize that culture is a crucial component of social quality, not only because it has an intrinsic value but because it holds a place of significance. Despite this, some still struggle to acknowledge its value. Culture contributes to the same objectives as traditional welfare areas, addressing issues such as mental and physical health, social support, and fragile individuals. It does so in new and effective ways. The maturity of this approach is remarkable, particularly given Italy's difficulties with traditional welfare and the related crisis in public vision. Today, public discussions of welfare are often

oversimplified and fail to consider the complex causes of various crises. The development of a cultural project like this, particularly in Italy, sets an example of great value and interest for Europe. Therefore, we do not only have to complain about the limitations of our country (which are enormous), because we are also capable of these positive steps that are beginning to inspire many other countries as well. Indeed, cultural welfare is a topic of emerging interest in European programming. Now, I leave the stage to Alessandra Gariboldi, President of the Fondazione Fitzcarraldo, which has a long history in Italy and Europe in terms of cultural planning and the growing focus on cultural welfare [...].

Alessandra Gariboldi (Fondazione Fitzcarraldo): [...] I would like to add a few things as a contribution. The first point relates to the issue raised by Pier Luigi about the cultural welfare's new relevance not only at European level but also in other contexts. This is evidenced by the existence of pilot programmes that put into practice the idea that cultural welfare has been present for an extended period of time. [...] I believe that Caterina Seia was the first one to use the term 'cultural welfare' in this country to describe the deep connection between culture and its impact on individuals. Individuals inevitably experience how culture impacts them. This applies even to those who do not participate intensively in cultural practices. For example, merely listening to music could change one's self-perception, which could impact one's overall well-being. Expressing this idea as a scientifically grounded concept and gathering evidence to support its existence, to bring it into policies, has been a journey (which is still ongoing) [...] Assessing the impacts is essential in this mechanism as it keeps everybody informed about the actions and the parties involved. [...] Let's say that this idea of impact assessment is about recognising that we [cultural organisations] exist to make something happen, and not just

because we are good, beautiful and like doing what we do – which is true, but not enough. [...] Assessing impacts entails engaging with the communities, funders, and neighbours who will be affected by the change. Thus, a round-table discussion with all the stakeholders is essential to determine the aspects that are significant to them. This process is both deeply relational and vulnerable. Culture struggles to do this because historically, it somehow defends its own 'territory of competence'. This is even more true for larger organisations that struggle more with this 'vulnerability' than smaller, more territorially rooted organisations. [...] When we will understand how to make even the largest institutions a little more vulnerable, we will be on the right track. I see this as a shared responsibility [...] We are planting individual seeds and working towards the growth of a forest that can only succeed if it is built into a system. We must make efforts at both national and European levels to raise awareness and enable organizations and policies to facilitate these steps.

[...]

Valeria Vitali (Rete del Dono): Thank you all for your wonderful contributions. [...] I will now invite Marianna Martinoni to provide some comments on the *Premio Crowdfunding per la Cultura*'s data.

Marianna Martinoni (Terzofilo): [...] I constantly seek out data because I think it helps us a lot to show that it is possible to talk about fundraising in the cultural sector, that there are donors, and that sometimes these donors do not correspond to the vision we tend to have of them. So, data help us to draw a new profile of the cultural donor. This 2.0 donor is distant from the traditional idea of the patron. He/she certainly has less economic availability to donate, but he/she certainly has an interest and a bond of proximity with the cultural organisation they decide to support. The analysis of the data over the past six years of the *Premio Crowdfunding per la Cultura* reveals some noteworthy

findings, with a trend notably impacted by Covid-19. During 2020, participants in the prize raised the highest amount of funds, while the last two years have 'settled down' and still do not reach that level of donor involvement. [...] Furthermore, in the last six years: the participating organisations raised € 526.000 through their crowdfunding campaigns; over 55 NPOs managed to raise more than € 1.000; and the total average fundraising amount per year was € 7.000. […] Over the last six years, more than 4.385 donors were activated indicating significant involvement of individuals (even though in some cases also companies and other NPOs donated) thanks to proximity relationships with the organization. […] Specifically, in the 2022 edition – which began to be an almost normal context – [...] 14 projects successfully managed to raise more than € 1.000. Notably, the top four projects raised over € 13.000 each and, specifically, the leading two projects raised more than € 20.000 each. Thus, both the Associazione Senzaspine and the Fondazione di Alto Perfezionamento Musicale di Saluzzo have far exceeded their initial fundraising goal, thanks to the widespread involvement of their communities and with 'real' crowdfunding campaigns, i.e.: there were not only a few donors giving large sums. Indeed, in this edition a total of 940 donors have contributed. This year's participating cultural organisations work in various fields. Although music remains at the forefront, the list also includes publishing, theatre, cultural heritage enhancement and restoration projects, as well as different academies and organizations that offer cultural and artistic programmes to younger generations. Numerous projects were interesting not only in terms of cultural welfare but also for their potential to make an impact on their communities. These projects are relevant precisely because, as pointed out, they respond to the needs that our communities articulate more than ever today. I appreciated Martina's point that crowdfunding is not simply a

showcase, as it is commonly believed. Additionally, I found Alessandra's metaphor of stakeholders gathering at a table particularly effective. In fact, crowdfunding entails all these aspects. This is because it provides cultural organisations with the opportunity to receive feedback from their donors and allows donors to express their reasons for supporting them. Indeed, I believe that the technical element introduced by Rete del Dono a few years ago – which allows donors to add comments to their contributions – enables organisations to receive a pamphlet containing a series of 'declarations of love' by donors along with the achieved goal. Furthermore, this pamphlet can be used to improve organizations' relationship with donors in the future […].

2. Interview with Stefania Dal Cucco – Fondazione Teatro Civico di Schio

For fifteen years Stefania Dal Cucco has been responsible for the Communication, Project Management, and Fundraising activities of the Fondazione Teatro Civico di Schio (VI). The latter was established in 1993 with the aim of bringing the Schio's civic theatre back to its original function by promoting the restoration of its architectural complex and taking over the management of its artistic activities. The organization carries out and promotes reviews of prose, music, dance, children's theatre, workshops, and other activities, such as Dance Well – i.e.: free dance classes on the theatre stage, open to all and, especially, to people with Parkinson's disease. In general, the cultural offer of the Foundation is articulated into two main strands, namely live performances and free educational projects. Furthermore, the Foundation's actions in the field of audience education create added value for the community of Schio by introducing cultural innovation and creating a conscious participation of the audience. Over the years the Foundation demonstrated to have great community-building abilities – an aspect that

revealed to be very helpful, especially after the outbreak of the pandemic. Additionally, the Fondazione Teatro Civico di Schio employs a funding mix strategy and has achieved positive outcomes regarding individual donations by utilizing tools such as the Art Bonus, the 5x1000, and crowdfunding. Besides, it won the third place for the 2021 *Premio Crowdfunding per la Cultura* organized by Rete del Dono.

1. On which social media are you present and how do you use them to build and maintain long-term relationships with your audience?

We are present on Instagram, Facebook, LinkedIn, and YouTube but, actually, we tend to use less YouTube and more the other three social media platforms. Our social media communication plan develops on two main fronts: one that promotes the performances, and one that highlights the value of our other activities, such as educational projects for teenagers, Dance Well, and so on. In general, we build and maintain long-term loyal relationships with our audience by promoting the value of these activities as well as their positive impacts on the participants. We often create social media contents by using some short interviews of people who took part to these activities. In parallel, we promote these values and impacts also during meetings with the Boards of Trustees, sponsors, and area stakeholders as well as during the conference that is annually held in September to inaugurate the new theatrical season. This conference is open to the community, and it is always an emotional moment where we all sit together on the stage, share the news of the season, and someone who has participated in the activities describes what it means to be a part of the Teatro Civico's life. In conclusion, all our communication – including that on social media – aims at creating a familiar atmosphere for people by inviting them to come at home, i.e.: the civic theatre.

2. How do you use – or have you used in the past three years – social media to increase individual donations? Which strategies and social media have proven to be the most effective?

As I said before our communication, including that on social media, is based on promoting the 'theatre as your home'. This narrative and our transparency are the key elements behind our strong relationship with the community and our positive results in the matter of individual donations collected. For example, many people expressed their gratitude to us during the 2021 crowdfunding campaign for providing them with the chance to reciprocate some of the benefits they have received from the theatre over the years. For the campaign we created and used two documents: an Excel file with the communication action plan (from 2nd November to 31st January) and a sheet of 'fundraising thermodynamics' to measure which actions were more effective than others. The social media communication was intertwined with the other communication channels (e.g.: the Institutional website, Direct Email Marketing, word-of-mouth, activities in physical presence, articles on the newspaper, and so on). By the end of the first week, we had already collected € 1.120, and by the end of the second one we received a total of € 1.500 from two corporations. For the whole duration of the campaign, every day we received at least one donation through Satispay, bank transfers, or other ways. The community was in support of the project from start to finish, even with recurring donations. Additionally, since in November of every year there is the GivingTuesday, we created a social media campaign specifically for that. We also did it for the BlackFriday, where we jokingly invited people to not to donate money to the BlackFriday but to our project. In such a way we collected € 540 during the BlackFriday. Moreover, to invite people to donate we created many social media contents with the sentences wrote by donors on the Rete

del Dono website. Additionally, on social media we did the Christmas campaign from which we collected € 2.050. We also activated two personal fundraising campaigns for the Artistic Director's birthday and for my birthday. In this way also people not from the territory donated; for instance, with my personal fundraising campaign I collected approximately € 590. In the last weeks of the campaign, we also received € 500 and € 720 thanks to personalized letters of our President to some of his important contacts. Furthermore, at one point, the donor community had become very passionate because we were also telling them about the prize. Indeed, for the entire campaign we were leading the contest, but during the last few days other organizations had collected some important donations, and so we had suddenly dropped to third place. Therefore, the last week we made phone calls and sent personalized messages asking people to help us not to lose. The entire staff helped by spreading the request to their personal contacts as well. Until the night before the end of the campaign, several donors wrote to us informing that they were checking the Rete del Dono website to make more donations so that we could win, and we did. We won the third place with the prize for the Best Project for Cultural Welfare, which included € 3.000 and some free courses for our staff. I must say that the crowdfunding campaign had the goal of raising € 10.000 but we collected almost € 13.000 with 140 donations. Then, we used the surplus to pay for an extra year of activities. After this campaign, the Board of Trustees realized that we are able to raise funds, so they decided to fund the creation of a donor landing page for our website.

Lastly, regarding the most effective social media to attract individual donors, I think that Facebook and Instagram are quite equivalent. However, I must say, that Instagram Stories' system is better and more effective than the one of Facebook. For example, during the crowdfunding campaign we created many

interactive Stories with opinion surveys and questions on both Instagram and Facebook, but Facebook Insights were much lower. In general, I think that Instagram has a greater potentiality than other social media platforms in terms of attracting individual donors – especially comparing it with Facebook. For what concerns LinkedIn, instead, we use it more in an institutional way, thus it is better for creating and maintaining relationships with corporations.

3. On social media, what storytelling do you use to attract individual donors? What kind of emotions do you try to elicit with your messages? Have you also used vivid stories like those used by other types of NPOs (e.g.: the story of a child with a disease that you can help)?

Yes, to attract donations from individuals, we promote vivid stories of people who participated to our activities (e.g.: teachers, children, audience members, Dance Well dancers, interns, etc.) both on social media and on the landing page. Specifically, on the landing page there are sixteen short interviews in which people explain why they feel at home at the Teatro Civico. These interviews are also used to create social media contents, such as Reels, posts, and so on.

4. For your organization, do you think it is more effective to use phrases that create a sense of urgency (e.g.: 'If we don't act now...'), responsibility (e.g.: 'It's up to us to make the world a better place, let's do it together') or opportunity (e.g.: ' Imagine what we could do with your help') to attract individual donations?

I think that in our case it is more effective to stimulate a sense of opportunity and belonging. Those few times we tried to stimulate a sense of urgency we did not receive donations. I believe that in the cultural sector the urgency strategy is not rewarding. It is better to sow over the years and start asking and collecting at some point.

5. On social media what, benefits do you highlight most to attract individual donors and which do you think are the most effective? Intrinsic benefits (e.g.: moral satisfaction of supporting a cultural cause for your territory), extrinsic (e.g.: tax incentives), or reputational (e.g.: 'your name will appear as a patron')?

In general, the reputational ones because, in our experience, we have found that many care about this aspect. In addition, another benefit that we promoted during the 2021 Crowdfunding campaign was an experiential one; specifically: if you donated more than € 100, you could do an individual Dance Well or Campus Lab lesson on the stage of the Teatro Civico. This aspect has been greatly appreciated, to the point that people keep asking of it, usually because they want to do a gift to someone. So, we are still doing this. However, it has not yet been promoted on social media because there is always a lack of time and staff, but I think it is an opportunity that deserves to be developed.

6. In the last three years, have you collaborated with influencers (including local micro-influencers) for advocacy activities aimed at attracting more individual donors?

We have involved some testimonials to disseminate the value of our activities, but always in person and never through social media. I honestly don't know if we have the skills or the attractiveness to involve people through influencers. I think that for our reality, it is better to put the efforts and the few human resources that we have in something that is more achievable for us. Let's just say that I would not put this option among our priorities.

7. Cultural causes have always been ranked at the bottom of the list of causes supported by Italian donors; by contrast, medical research and social causes were always ranked first. In your opinion, how can these donors' preferences be used to create a competitive advantage for your cultural organization?

Our Dance Well activity, even if it is not a medical practice, often attracts individual donors because of its social and health benefits, such as inclusion and the improvement of body movement for a person suffering from Parkinson's disease. In fact, all our 5x1000 campaigns used a kind of communication based not on highlighting the cultural benefits, but rather the generated cultural welfare. These strategies proved to be effective because over the years the amount of individual donations that we collected thanks to the 5x1000 increased. For instance, through this system, in 2022 we received € 9.000 from 140 donations; thus, the average donated amount was high. Unfortunately, because of the recent reform of the Third Sector we cannot benefit anymore of this kind of source of income because we are a Foundation, and we are not registered as an ETS. We cannot neither receive the 2x1000, so this is a big problem. Now we can collect donations from individuals only through the landing page, and crowdfunding or Art Bonus campaigns. We can benefit of the Art Bonus system because the management of the theatre is ours, but its property is of the Municipality, so of a public agency. The Art Bonus is really a great tool to collect individual donations because of the huge fiscal incentive. For instance, with our last Art Bonus campaign we exceeded the predetermined € 63.000 by raising € 10.000 more. Since the theatre was built between 1906-1909 by the will of the citizens, in the promotion, also on social media, we asked people to contribute because «today, as then, the participation of private enterprises and citizens in the cultural life of the Teatro Civico is an indispensable engine for its growth». If I remember well, we received 80 donations, eleven of them from enterprises and the remaining from individuals. Such donations ranged from € 50 to € 3.000. Furthermore, there are other theatres that can benefit of the Art Bonus also for supporting their activities, but we cannot because we do not receive the FUS fee (Fondo

Unico per lo Spettacolo). If we could, in my opinion, we would triple the received donations. In conclusion, we use the Art Bonus only for theatre renovations (category C), while the 5x1000 and crowdfunding for funding activities that generate cultural welfare.

8. Linking to the previous question, do you emphasise social and health impacts (such as individual health or the contribution to community welfare) in your social media donor-oriented strategies? Do you consider this aspect important to gain competitive advantage?

We use marginally the term 'cultural welfare' on social media, we use it more with sponsors or when we apply to calls for applications. However, for us, activities that generate cultural welfare are the only key to being competitive with other kinds of NPOs, at least for what concerns individual giving. This is why when we ask private citizens to contribute by donating money to us, we never do it for theatre performances or theatre season activities, but only for projects that have a cultural welfare background. For us the key is this, otherwise it would become very difficult to raise donations. For theatrical and cultural activities, we prefer to ask for sponsorship or support from associates if anything. Instead, when we reach out to private citizens the key points in our social media communication strategies are two, i.e.: community involvement and highlighting why and how you feel good at the Teatro Civico.

9. In the last three years, have your social media communication strategies (aimed at attracting individual donations) attracted mostly small or even large donors?

Both, and this applies to donations from individuals as well as to those from businesses. For example, we just collected € 3.000 from a company that wrote to us on LinkedIn. Social media can attract not only small donations of € 5 or

€ 10, but much bigger donations from individuals and businesses. The average donation of our individual donors, if I remember correctly, should be of € 40.

10. What do you think are the strengths of your strategies and why?

Our community. Specifically, our relationship with our community, the idea of co-ownership, active participation, transparency. And, above all, the fact that we continue to promote and communicate that 'the theatre is yours'. Here, people can participate in many ways, and, above all, we listen to them, to their comments, ideas, opinions. They are not just spectators, but citizens directly involved in the activities of the theatre. In other words, our people-centred cultural design as well as the audience development activities that we have enhanced over the last few years have made spectators and beneficiaries more open to donative behaviours. So, to sum up, our strong relationship with the community and their active involvement are the reasons behind our success in collecting donations from individuals.

11. What do you consider to be the challenges of the future of fundraising in engaging individuals?

The real challenge is getting someone within the organization to do fundraising activities. It may seem unrelated to your question, but actually if there were more staff, and especially more staff trained in fundraising, I have no doubt that the results would increase significantly. Especially considering that in one of our recent questionnaires, 56,6% of respondents declared their willingness to donate money to the Fondazione Teatro Civico di Schio. We also have the potential to attract individuals aged below 30 and 18, as they have contributed donations to us in the past few years. However, these aspects could be really improved only if it would be more staff and, consequently, more efforts and time to develop them.

3. Interview with Matteo Parmeggiani and Natalia Bracci – Senzaspine A.P.S.

Founded in Bologna in 2013 as a symphony orchestra for under-35 musicians, the Senzaspine Association was established by the conductors Tommaso Ussardi (President) and Matteo Parmeggiani (Vice President). The organization aims at offering job opportunities to young professionals just graduated from the Conservatory as well as at making classical music more accessible by expanding its audience and breaking down prejudices. In fact, the name 'Senzaspine' was chosen to recall the idea of removing 'thorns' and being accessible to everybody. Furthermore, even though nowadays the principal activity of the Association remains the one related to the Orchestra, over the years the organization has further developed its cultural offer. In this sense, a turning point was marked in 2015 when Senzaspine won a call from the Municipality of Bologna to re-urbanize the area of the former Mercato San Donato. The latter became the headquarters of the Association, which renamed it as 'Mercato Sonato'. Currently, this place is a very active, innovative, and multi-faceted cultural centre. For instance, it offers several workshops and activities that promote classical music, but it is also a live music club for listening to different music genres. Above all, however, it is the location of the Scuola di Musica Senzaspine, founded in 2017 by the current Directors (and professional musicians) Natalia Bracci, Annamaria Di Lauro and Rosalba Ferro.

Lastly, Matteo Parmeggiani and Natalia Bracci are the chiefs of the fundraising department – which follows a strategy based on the diversification of sources of income (e.g.: corporate sponsorships, 5x1000, crowdfunding, etc.) – and, thanks to their work, Senzaspine A.P.S. won the first place for the 2022 *Premio Crowdfunding per la Cultura* organized by Rete del Dono.

1. On which social media are you present and how do you use them to build and maintain long-term relationships with your audience?

Matteo Parmeggiani: As for the activity of Orchestra Senzaspine, the social media are Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, Telegram, and we have recently opened a TikTok channel. We generally use social media for promoting the orchestra's performances, but for what concerns fundraising activities we mainly use Facebook.

Natalia Bracci: Furthermore, regarding the School we have a specific profile on Facebook, and we recently opened a profile on Instagram. In addition, albeit we do not use only social media to create and maintain long-term relationships with our community, they are the most direct and informal way of communicating and implementing more formal communications, such as newsletters, personalized emails, etc.

2. How do you use – or have you used in the past three years – social media to increase individual donations? Which strategies and social media have proven to be the most effective?

Natalia Bracci: We mostly use Facebook for fundraising activities because it suits more to our target that, from a generational point of view, includes young, middle-aged people and elderly. TikTok and Instagram are social media for content disclosure, in a more playful way perhaps, while Facebook allows us to add more text and information. Moreover, Facebook is definitely a good dissemination tool but, in our opinion, what works best to attract donations is the content. For instance, during the last crowdfunding campaign – which won the *Premio Crowdfunding per la Cultura* – our short videos of the students were very effective because they stimulated people to participate, contribute, interact, and share our messages. We have noticed that creating

contents and using messages which people can perceive as something personal or familiar (for instance by seeing those children as their grandchildren or cousins) is very effective in attracting donations. This strategy works well with both Facebook and other channels, such as the 'on-life' communication, for instance during Christmas concerts.

3. On social media, what storytelling do you use to attract individual donors? What kind of emotions do you try to elicit with your messages? Have you also used vivid stories like those used by other types of NPOs (e.g.: the story of a child with a disease that you can help)?

Natalia Bracci: Yes, we used vivid stories, but we have always tried to not to have a too dramatic narrative. We are aware of the fact that we talk about culture and not health or urgent social issues. Thus, we use a narrative in which it is evident the need to raise funds to make children study music, but without entering into a storytelling too personalized, for instance with the case of a poor child that wants to study music. In that case we could fall into the 'there are worse things in the world' critic. Hence, we always try to create an emotional engagement with a note of positivity. For instance: 'Studying music is good and kids want to do it, they directly show you (in videos) how they have fun and want to continue to do it. Why not participate in their desire?'. So, in other words, we always try to stimulate involvement and participation with our contents. Regarding the 5x1000, for instance, we use a different narrative but with the same principles of participation. In particular, for the 5x1000 we try to create more ironic contents that convey simplicity (i.e.: that donating through the 5x1000 is simple) and we try to use a narrative that is fresh and not too abstruse.

Matteo Parmeggiani: I would like to add some specifications. As for crowdfunding campaigns, I would like to say that we have been doing them

for three years and during the Christmas period. We thought we should use crowdfunding for the School's activities because we felt it was more appropriate and effective to use crowdfunding for these activities rather than for others. Furthermore, in this choice it also weighed the fact that the company NaturaSì – which appreciated very much the idea of sponsoring scholarships for the music school – informed us that it would have doubled the amount collected through the crowdfunding campaign. In addition, our crowdfunding campaigns evolved during these three years; for instance, after the first two years with NaturaSì, we changed strategy.

Regarding the campaigns for the 5x1000, instead, I must say that we began to dedicate ourselves to this in a serious and structured way only two years ago. In this case the positive results lies in the increased numbers of people who donate us their 5x1000. The collected amount has also increased enormously, but I stress that it is not directly proportional to the number of people who donated because it depends on their annual income. In addition, two years ago, we were able to benefit from the 2x1000 (for that year only), and we achieved unexpected results in terms of both economic and national ranking. This is obviously more difficult with the 5x1000 because, here, we compete with organizations whose causes are generally considered by people to be more important than the cultural ones. However, recalling what Natalia was saying, we always create participation with our contents but without sacrificing the qualitative content of our cultural offer. On the contrary, we just want to communicate in a simple and direct way because it is more in line with our mission.

4. For your organization, do you think it is more effective to use phrases that create a sense of urgency (e.g.: 'If we don't act now...'), responsibility (e.g.: 'It's up to us to

make the world a better place, let's do it together') or opportunity (e.g.: ' Imagine what we could do with your help') to attract individual donations?

Natalia Bracci: I would definitely say the second one, maybe with some nuances of the third one, because in the end the Call to Action is always something like 'imagine what we could do thanks to everyone's help'. For a cultural organization we do not consider effective to stimulate a sense of urgency because today there is a great request for charity; so, we must know how to insert ourselves in a delicate and intelligent way. We have always been careful to sensitize people in an engaging and not oppressive way, and we have seen that it works.

Matteo Parmeggiani: The years of Covid-19 were the most delicate because we were certainly in a situation of extreme urgency and, at least in Italy, the cultural sector was the one that suffered the most because of the forced arrest. Hence, we needed financial support, but of course there were the hospitals, the Protezione Civile, and so on. It was very complicated to understand how to fit into a call for help in such a framework.

5. On social media, what benefits do you highlight most to attract individual donors and which do you think are the most effective? Intrinsic benefits (e.g.: moral satisfaction of supporting a cultural cause for your territory), extrinsic (e.g.: tax incentives), or reputational (e.g.: your name will appear as a patron)?

Natalia Bracci: I think that the best thing you can give to a donor is involvement, participation to the life of the organization, familiarity. Through social media, for instance, we keep people updated and they also can share with us their opinion. Concerning fiscal incentives, instead, I must say that we promote them more with corporations and large donors, because it is not decisive in small donors' decision process. Furthermore, we promote reputational

benefits (such as having a scholarship with your name) always just for bigger donors. In a past campaign on the *Produzioni dal Basso* platform, we promised some rewards (e.g.: music lessons, concert tickets, etc.) for everyone who would have donated. But this kind of reward did not work well for us, so we did not use this strategy in the last crowdfunding campaign.

Matteo Parmeggiani: Yes, in fact at the time many rewards were not even collected. For us, donors care more about being part of a project, a family, and the activities of the Association. I also want to underline that the competitive aspect worked very well in the last crowdfunding campaign. Surely better than the precedent campaign's rewards. People were motivated (especially at the end of the campaign) to donate multiple times in order to let us win the first place. This is something we played on a lot during the campaign, and we can say that it has paid off.

6. Have you collaborated with influencers (including local micro-influencers) for advocacy activities aimed at attracting more individual donors in the last three years?

Natalia Bracci: No, we have never collaborated with any prominent figures (if we want to call it like that) because we prefer a communication from below, such as the school children for the crowdfunding campaigns or Nonna Luciana who explains how the 5x1000 works.

Matteo Parmeggiani: We collaborated with OperaMeet, i.e.: a social media page of a music critic who makes reviews through Stories, etc. For now, however, the fundraising-oriented communication strategy of both the Orchestra and the School is primarily focused on, as Natalia just said, a communication from below and does not include collaborations with social media influencers. However, it is not said that it will be like this forever. In any case, we should reflect on how to involve influencers or micro-influencers in our

communication without overshadow the narrative of our Association with different kinds of communication.

7. Cultural causes have always been ranked at the bottom of the list of causes supported by Italian donors; by contrast, medical research and social causes were always ranked first. In your opinion, how can these donors' preferences be used to create a competitive advantage for your cultural organization?

Natalia Bracci: This is actually related to all our activity since 2013 as an association of social promotion. Let me explain: often people prefer to donate to large institutions, such as the municipal theatre, which, however, generally use donations for enriching the performances, collections, and so on. We believe that every 'emerging' cultural organization like us needs to create a network in which the desire to give arise from the desire to be involved in something bigger. For us the goal is not to compete with health and social causes but rather to compete with those cultural organizations that traditionally attract more donations from who is already propense to donate to culture. We want to attract effective cultural donors who maybe are not yet sensitive in giving to reality other than institutional. As I was saying, we do it by emphasizing our social impacts, by personally involving people and companies, and by creating a familiar atmosphere.

Matteo Parmeggiani: I just want to underline that when trying to attract sponsors, we highlight other (but related) aspects, such as how we are active in all the territory, how we create cultural ferment, jobs, value, and so on.

8. Linking to the previous question, do you emphasise social and health impacts (such as individual health or the contribution to community welfare) in your social media donor-oriented strategies? Do you consider this aspect important to gain competitive advantage?

Natalia Bracci: As I mentioned in the previous answer, we has done this since 2013. It is intrinsic of our organization because when we talk about culture, we also talk about accessibility for disabled or economically disadvantaged people. Similarly, giving a child the possibility to study music would place him in a socio-cultural context that allows him to grow better as an individual of our society. Furthermore, we also promote a lot 'cultural welfare' with corporations, which are very sensitive to this theme.

Matteo Parmeggiani: What Natalia has just explained is what differentiates us from the institutions that focus more on contents, collections, and similar. To better explain, a municipal theatre, as public institution, tend to be more focus on creating a content of the highest level and the narrative they use to attract donations is strictly linked to this. On the other hand, as Association of Social Promotion we start from below. We certainly tell our cultural contents, but simultaneously we always divulgate the impacts that we generate, our great work from an accessibility point of view, and so on.

9. In the last three years, have your social media communication strategies (aimed at attracting individual donations) attracted mostly small or even large donors?

Matteo Parmeggiani: In our case social media attracted mostly small donors, with the exception of 2-3 people who spontaneously decided to donate € 500 or € 1.000. Then it depends always on the point of view, I mean if you interpret these numbers as large or small donations. For instance, according to us these are large donations since they were collected with a crowdfunding campaign. However, we are talking about 2-3 people out of 250 or so. We reach large donors (both in terms of individuals and companies) through other channels than social media.

Natalia Bracci: The average donation in the crowdfunding campaign was between € 75 and € 100, while the total range went from € 10 to € 200. These figures also depend on the fact that the amount for the scholarship is € 200, so people were tempted to reach, if not the full amount at least half of it.

Matteo Parmeggiani: Clearly our donor pool is also composed in part by the parents of the music students who belong to families that have less economic problems. Since we have a very high membership pool (8.000 members) and a large number of musicians of the Orchestra and teachers of the School who decided to donate, we can say that we start from a loyal community of people directly involved and willing to donate. However, over the years we attracted many new donors. In fact, the crowdfunding campaigns followed the same trend as the Orchestra: initially only friends and relatives of musicians came to the theatre, but then the audience quadrupled. Similarly, crowdfunding campaigns were initially only supported by friends and relatives but, nowadays, our donor pool has become more and more bigger.

10. What do you think are the strengths of your strategies and why?

Natalia Bracci: Surely the experience with Rete del Dono has made us acknowledged of the fact that competition for reaching an objective is a strong stimulus for donors. For the first two years of crowdfunding, we had the doubling of the company NaturaSì, which was a winning strategy because while you were donating you could immediately see the doubling of the amount that you were donating. To be precise, the second year there was a 30-70 ratio, namely if we would have reached the 70% of the total desired amount, the remaining 30% would have been put by the company. However, then we understood that what stimulated donors to support us was the will to participate more in the life of the organization. In future we will try to further develop this 'race against time' strategy. Obviously, this cannot be applied to

the 5x1000 campaigns because there is not an immediate result in this case. Nonetheless, we recently started to tell our donors how much was collected with the 5x1000 and what we are going to do with this money. We care about showing that the 5x1000 gives concrete, useful and not abstract results. Thus, we could incentivize people to exceed the previous year's results.

11. What do you consider to be the challenges of the future of fundraising in engaging individuals?

Natalia Bracci: I would say consistency because it is important to take care of donors (as well as corporations and others) not only during the campaigns, but also when the organization is not directly asking for financial support.

Matteo Parmeggiani: Yes, I think that the dynamics for keeping long term relationships with individual donors and corporations are the same. The only exception is in the case of a large multinational company or a huge grant-making foundation where the staff change often or is very articulated. Instead, for companies that give us € 5.000, € 10.000 or € 15.000, it is important to cultivate a personal relationship. The same is valid for individuals. That is why we must avoid making both individuals and these companies feel like ATMs that just dispense money and then abandon them. This is the reason why we send personalised messages and emails – even to wish them a happy birthday – and generally do lots of little things to make them feel that they are always in touch with the Association. This is how we build long-term relationships with donors so that they will continue to support us in the future.

4. Interview with Marica Messina – Fondo per l'Ambiente Italiano (FAI)

The FAI – Fondo per l'Ambiente Italiano – is a non-profit Foundation that was founded in 1975 by Giulia Maria Crespi and is now recognized as an ETS. The

mission of the organisation can be summarised in four key terms: care, protection, enhancement, and education of Italy's historical, artistic and landscape heritage. Although the FAI was initially founded in Milan, it has developed into a nation-wide organization that protects almost 80 assets, 54 of which are open to the public. Currently, the FAI no longer purchases cultural assets, but receives them as donations through testamentary legacies from private individuals or enhancement and disposal agreements from public bodies. According to the official website, in 2022, for the first time since 1975, the running and maintenance costs of the Estates were entirely covered by fundraising, memberships, rentals and sales of tickets for its cultural heritage. To report some data, 2022 registered: 1.038.632 visitors, 268.796 cardholders, 11.700 volunteers, and € 38.422.609 deriving from individual donations, which correspond to 70% of the total annual income. On the other hand, 13% of the total funds came from companies, and 15% from the item 'Public Bodies, Bank Foundations, Private Foundations, and Associations' (FAI Official Website, Transparent Area, 2023). However, we must specify that – as underlined by Marica Messina, responsible of the FAI's Mass Market Campaigns – the organization does not follow the typical NPO structure because its donors are, by Statute, those who have the membership card. This is why in what follows we will include them in the category 'individual donors'. Nonetheless, FAI collects individual contributions also through voluntary donations (greater than € 3) during its events as well as through the 5x1000. Concerning the latter, we must highlight how the FAI is the only Italian cultural organisation capable of sitting at the same table of NPOs such as Telethon and Save the Children for the 5x1000 results. In fact, in 2022 the organization secured the 20th position out of 71.498 organizations by raising € 2.550.541 (Agenzia delle Entrate, 22 June 2023).

Furthermore, given its national reach, the organizational structure of FAI's fundraising department is complex and articulated. Indeed, as Messina illustrated during the interview, it is structured into three sectors, i.e.: '*Privati*', '*Aziende e Grandi donatori*', and '*Enti ed Istituzioni*'. Specifically, for what concerns incomes deriving from private parties there are there three operating levels. At the bottom there is the one for prospective members, at the second level there is the one dedicated to actual FAI members, and at the top there is the one that follows companies – which are often large donors. The Mass Market office, members' management as well as the campaigns for the *Giornate FAI di Primavera e d'Autunno* fell under the jurisdiction of the FAI's 'Privati' sector. In particular, the Mass Market division is responsible for overseeing the recruitment of all members (which mainly occurs through digital channels) as well as the entire 5x1000 campaign and television campaigns. The latter also includes the promotion of SMS campaigns (i.e.: a solidarity number) and of the *Giornate FAI di Primavera e d'Autunno*. To elaborate, the Giornate FAI are 'di piazza' fundraising events aimed at enhancing cultural heritage as well as collecting new subscribed and voluntary donations. Finally, since the Mass Market office is responsible for attracting new individual supporters, it works in synchrony with the office for donor retention.

1. On which social media are you present and how do you use them to build and maintain long-term relationships with your audience?

Our major presence is on Meta. We primarily use Facebook, but Instagram is also frequently employed. Our campaigns on LinkedIn are very limited in terms of targeting and timing since it is more dedicated towards companies; however, occasionally we also promote the 5x1000 there. Furthermore, we rarely use Twitter (now known as X). We reach our audience through both sponsored content (i.e.: we purchase spaces) and storytelling techniques. Our

editorial calendar is organized into weekly topics and campaigns, with a daily release schedule covering the respective theme or focus for the week. Storytelling is our main strategy to cultivate and sustain relationships with our audience by sharing information on current and upcoming events. We often blend informative content with calls to action for our audience to participate in our activities.

2. How do you use – or have you used in the past three years – social media to increase individual donations? Which strategies and social media have proven to be the most effective?

My premise is that the difficulty is in the early stages, also known as the 'top of the funnel' or 'attraction stage', because our cause, the cultural one, is less strong compared to others. Nevertheless, we typically publish sponsored content that encourages individuals to subscribe to the FAI and remains active for an entire month. Our content primarily targets audiences who are either already within the Foundation's sphere of influence (such as event attendees or website visitors) or those who resemble our audience (formerly referred to as 'look alike'). Our targeting is therefore consistently in line with the area of interest. For example, in 2021 we predominantly targeted individuals who showed an interest in environmental issues, as that segment was particularly receptive to our messages. This was in line with our new positioning towards environmental sustainability, which was achieved through the energy efficiency of our assets. Hence, we never start from a blank slate; rather, we begin with a hook by explaining what the Foundation's work is. So, this is more about brand positioning: we identify a target audience with specific interests and show them a message that invites them to subscribe. To identify the target audience, we do extensive testing. We conduct 3 to 4 monthly tests on both the target and the message. Our website experiences peak traffic of

approximately 5 to 6 million visitors per day during the *Giornate FAI di Primavera e d'Autunno.* Thus, during March and October, we examine the potential target audience, produce customised content, and disseminate it through various social media platforms (and other channels). In addition, it should be noted that we conduct the tests in-house to ensure cost-effectiveness due to their high frequency, rather than relying on external agencies.

3. On social media, what storytelling do you use to attract individual donors? What kind of emotions do you try to elicit with your messages? Have you also used vivid stories like those used by other types of NPOs (e.g.: the story of a child with a disease that you can help)?

As our emergencies are rare and we are not perceived as such, we avoid an emergency tone. For instance, during the recent 25th July storm in Milan, Villa Necchi Campiglio was damaged, but we did not communicate it as an emergency. We prefer a fact-based narrative and we use vivid stories similar to the 'entrepreneurial style', where a person takes action to get things done. This is because FAI's origin can be traced back to the Milanese entrepreneurial spirit. We always communicate the interventions we have undertaken and plan to undertake in a specific and tangible manner. For instance, we demonstrate the restorer working or the gardener carrying out specific types of cultivation in a garden.

4. For your organization, do you think it is more effective to use phrases that create a sense of urgency (e.g.: 'If we don't act now...'), responsibility (e.g.: 'It's up to us to make the world a better place, let's do it together') or opportunity (e.g.: ' Imagine what we could do with your help') to attract individual donations?

I would say opportunity, because for us it is effective to leverage the opportunity to preserve the rich Italian heritage which, otherwise, may

disappear. Thus, we highlight opportunities for both individuals and the community to maintain and experience Italy's artistic and landscape heritage. In fact, our typical promotional phrases include 'Help us supporting Italy's beauty' or 'Help us supporting the most beautiful heritage in the world'.

5. On social media, what benefits do you highlight most to attract individual donors and which do you think are the most effective? Intrinsic benefits (e.g.: moral satisfaction of supporting a cultural cause and your territory), extrinsic (e.g.: tax incentives), or reputational (e.g.: your name will appear as a patron)?

Ours are benefits both related to intrinsic values and practical benefits thanks to our Membership card that gives you access to various types of opportunities (e.g.: free access to all our assets open to the public, special discounts for visiting other organisations such as the Peggy Guggenheim Collection in Venice and Palazzo Strozzi in Florence, etc.). We frequently mention these benefits in our communication, including social media. For example, a common promotional statement for the FAI membership card claims that it provides 1.700 chances to discover Italy, and this is true. I mean, a FAI member can visit numerous places, develop a deeper connection with his/her territory and support it.

6. In the last three years, have you collaborated with influencers (including local micro-influencers) for advocacy activities aimed at attracting more individual donors?

The FAI's content and remuneration policy restricts its strategy, resulting in few collaborations with influencers. However, this policy has enabled us to maintain control over relationships with influencers – including occasional ones – by setting shared guidelines. Indeed, it is difficult to control what influencer say about our brand. In the past we have had collaborations with influencers, for example travel influencers who asked us to do a day in a

specific villa and then promoted it on their profiles. Also, Chiara Ferragni visited San Fruttuoso and asked us if she could share a photo tagging us. However, since they asked us, we did not seek or paid these collaborations and, especially, we simply played the role of the 'framework'. They did not talk for us. Additionally, I should say that we have very strict guidelines about communication because our Board prefers a more institutional and art historical narrative. However, these collaborations have resulted in an increase in brand awareness, even though there has been no increase in donations or subscriptions because of them. Nonetheless, our activities have witnessed a rise in participation, and there is greater awareness about our work. Thus, finding out how to work with influencers – and which influencers to work with – to promote tourism could be the way forward. This is why we are trying to individuate if there are some influencers who use a language that could be coherent with our storytelling, but the situation is intricated because of what I just illustrated.

7. Cultural causes have always been ranked at the bottom of the list of causes supported by Italian donors; by contrast, medical research and social causes have been always ranked first. In your opinion, how can these donors' preferences be used to create a competitive advantage for your cultural organization?

This is a challenging question as we do not perceive these other causes as competitors due to their differing nature. Thus, we refrain from competing with them or utilizing similar arguments. From our perspective, we cannot place ourselves at the same level as channels or messages since they would overshadow us.

8. Linking to the previous question, do you emphasise social and health impacts (such as individual health or the contribution to community welfare) in your social media

donor-oriented strategies? Do you consider this aspect important to gain competitive advantage?

No, we do not highlight them. The year 2020 was significant for our foundation that runs museums as we had to shut down for several months. During that time, we realised that our cause was not even on people's minds. This further reinforced our understanding that this kind of communication is effective only when everything is going well, even though we already knew it. In other words, people acknowledge that culture enhances well-being and generates quality time in non-emergency circumstances. During situations such as the pandemic outbreak and the war in Ukraine, attention, time, and resources are directed towards addressing these issues rather than towards culture. Professionals in this field are aware of this and recognize it as a valid priority. This is why we believe that an emergency tone is not appropriate in cultural contexts, as the cultural sector is not classified as a primary concern. This statement is not intended to diminish the importance of the cultural sector, which is, in fact, a vital element of Italy's PIL. However, culture is not viewed as an emergency in the country, and we hope it never will be. So, I would answer your question by saying that, during times of peace and calmness – which have been in shortage since the pandemic outbreak – cultural organisations can also prioritize these aspects as part of their narrative. However, during emergency crisis situations, these elements would be best presented as secondary aspects of the organisation's narrative. Let me give you a concrete example: I can attract you with a message of participation and then in the landing page I can illustrate these other aspects, but it will never be the first thing I would say. Nonetheless, we are considering analysing the social and economic impact of our *Giornate FAI*, but we are still in the preliminary phase and cannot provide any information at this stage. However,

I can say that these four annual days provide strong satellite activities, for instance by activating the economies of the suburbs where many visitors visit places that are often overlooked or unknown. This also leads to a rediscovery of the area and life outside the city, resulting in social impacts. Therefore, this could be highly relevant to your topic, but we are not yet at that stage and cannot provide further details.

9. In the last three years, have your social media communication strategies (aimed at attracting individual donations) attracted mostly small or even large donors?

I would say small. It should be noted that our average donation amount is € 39, namely the cost of our normal membership. This is not an insignificant amount in the non-profit sector, but I would answer your question by saying small donors. We have a substantial number of major donors, however they make up a small proportion in percentage terms.

10. What do you think are the strengths of your strategies and why? Especially for what concerns your successful 5x1000 campaigns.

Foreword: FAI has its 5x1000 campaign managed by the Mass Market office because it considers it an institutional brand positioning campaign that reinforces the organisation's message. Specifically, our communication campaigns for the 5x1000 are developed in two channels: the digital one and the physical one on the territory. The digital channel is segmented into social media and web communication. Furthermore, I must say that thanks to *Google for Nonprofits* we have access to a monthly budget of $ 10.000 for text-based ads on Google Search. Then we also have non-digital territory promotion that is targeted at those territories from which we know we receive the most 5x1000 donations. In fact, the government only communicates the region where the 5x1000 is donated, not the personal details of the donors. To answer your

question, I must also mention that so far we are included in two 5x1000 boxes, i.e.: the *Casella finanziamento ai beni culturali* and the *Casella Enti del Terzo Settore*. Therefore, I believe that a great advantage, and therefore a strong point, is precisely due to the introduction of the culture box, as it has positioned us in the sector for which everyone knows us, as shown by all the research we have done (also with research institutes). As we are the only nationwide organization in this category, the appearance of the cultural box itself conveyed our message. Unlike other cultural NPOs, which are linked to certain territories or specific realities, we have an inherent advantage as a nationwide foundation, which is one of the primary reasons for our privileged position in relation to other cultural NPOs. Moreover, we are committed to maintaining transparency and disseminating information about the 5x1000 program and its value to NPOs. Over the years, we have promoted the culture box, as we were the only organization that could advocate for it on behalf of everyone. Although we do not have the arrogance to think that we will always be first, we wanted the box to be stable and not to fade away as others have done over time. Thus, what we will continue to do is to tell people about the 5x1000 through our social media channels and our activities. In conclusion, the success of our 5x1000 campaign can be attributed to a combination of two factors: the recognition of our brand as a cultural symbol and the novelty of the cultural box that drew people to us. In fact, during the 5x1000's inception (when we were in the 'volunteering' box), our previous CEO recognised its significance as a positioning strategy for all NPOs. The 5x1000 was not yet institutionalised at that time and it was confirmed annually via ministerial decree. We made significant contributions to the cultural sector, learning from others by collaborating with the major players in the 5x1000 (e.g.: Emergency). We worked together with these NPOs to understand what the right strategies

were for us and for the cultural sector as a whole. We place special emphasis on systematic communication of the 5x1000, more than other cultural organisations, due to our financial investment in it. I understand that it may be difficult to invest in the 5x1000 if it is not financially feasible, as there may be other expenses to deal with. For this reason, we strive to assist all those in the cultural sector by consistently promoting the 5x1000.

11. What do you consider to be the challenges of the future of fundraising in engaging individuals?

Artificial Intelligence, the metaverse (also for event participation), new payment methods, and other things related to digital developments. We are staying updated on these themes to comprehend their impact on generating new donor hooks. For instance, this trend is already evident in America, especially in the gaming sector, where many Non-Profit Organizations are seeking contributions. Another challenge pertains to transparency. NGOs dealing with migrants have recently faced difficulties that could happen to any of us, to any cause, and to some extent it has happened also to some NPOs dealing with health issues. Donors are often concerned about how their money is spent, and this issue is not as outdated as it might seem. Many people do not donate 5x1000 because they do not understand how it works and whether the money arrives or not to the organization they choose. It is a major challenge for the future of fundraising to improve reporting and demonstrate the concrete utilization of funds, akin to the practice in Anglo-Saxon nations. Establishing channels of trust with donors is crucial in retaining their donations. Therefore, even though Italians are a generous people – as demonstrated by several surveys, such as those by iRaiser – we still need to overcome these barriers.

5. Interview with Marianna Martinoni and Silvia Aufiero – Terzofilo

Founded in Padua in 2015 by Marianna Martinoni and Silvia Aufiero, Terzofilo is a fundraising consultancy for the development of the Third Sector. More precisely, it creates effective fundraising and (fundraising-oriented) communication strategies for small, medium, and large NPOs operating in the cultural, public health, scientific research, welfare, and international cooperation sectors. Besides, it offers also educational activities (e.g.: workshops, training sessions, masters, and conferences) on fundraising, communication, digital fundraising, and people raising.

Furthermore, Marianna Martinoni and Silvia Aufiero are specialized in fundraising for cultural NPOs. Specifically, Martinoni is a professional fundraiser and consultant operating since 2001. During her long career, she collaborated with Bondardo Comunicazione for the *Premio Impresa e Cultura* and with Goodwill – a consultancy firm and research centre for fundraising and fundraising-oriented communication – with which she worked, for instance, for the Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo. In addition, from 2017 onwards, she collaborated with Rete del Dono on the *Premio Crowdfunding per la Cultura*. Since 2019 she has been included on the Italian Ministry of Culture's list of fundraising and cultural patronage experts who were selected by Ales s.p.a. on a national level. Moreover, since 2020 she is a also member of the *Tavolo per il fundraising culturale* organized by Assif (Associazione Italiana Fundraiser). Furthermore, we must say that she also works as conference speaker, teacher, and author. For example, she co-authored the first book on cultural fundraising edited by Pier Luigi Sacco in 2005.

Silvia Aufiero, on the other hand, is specialized in social media marketing, web marketing and management, digital fundraising, and crowdfunding for

NPOs, especially cultural ones. Before 2012 – when she specialized in digital communication and fundraising – she was already working in the communication field as press officer for many events and organizations. Among these we count, for instance, the Venice Film Festival and the OperaEstate Festival Veneto. Since 2015, she has accompanied her consultancy activity with training activities on fundraising and communication for various institutions – e.g.: the Ca' Foscari University of Venice, the CSV (Centri Servizi Volontariato) of Padua and Verona, the Istituto Veneto per i Beni Culturali di Venezia, and many others.

1. As expert consultants, in your opinion, what are the advantages offered by social media to Italian cultural NPOs to build and maintain long-term relationships with their audiences?

Silvia Aufiero: Certainly, social media channels are highly significant for cultural organisations to connect with their audience, including potential donors. I would like to say that a discernible shift has been observed since 2020, a year in which cultural organizations paused artistic activities. This gave the opportunity and time to consider an alternative form of communication to what can be referred to as 'institutional'. In this sense, social media communication has shifted towards revealing more about the internal workings of the organisation. Social media have thus become a kind of diary, a gateway to engage communities more and allow them to better understand the organisation. Social media has the advantage of extending the message to a wider audience while providing the opportunity to tell the organization's story in a language that can build connections with diverse audiences. Then it is always up to the organisation to be effective or not. Indeed, there are organizations that conduct extensive analyses of their target audience, identifying who sees and shares their posts. Then they use this information to

tailor their language to the specific target audience interacting with their social media content. Another distinction is based on the type of social media because each platform has its own language. As a cultural organisation, being mindful of the channel you use can also entail communicating different messages. For instance, LinkedIn is better suited for discussing topics related to the organisation's impact, perhaps by using numerical data. In contrast, Facebook and Instagram allow for more visually driven content (videos and photos) and a more storytelling style. The ultimate aim is always to pave the ways for bringing people into the cultural organization and, consequently, to create long-term relationships.

Marianna Martinoni: I would also like to point out some critical issues. Cultural organizations that are beginning to fundraise often struggle to find adequate space on social media for donation requests, support appeals, etc. Hence, devising a communication plan for fundraising is often challenging for them because sometimes they see such content as a diversion from their contents pertaining to their core activities. However, if they realise the importance of conveying fundraising-oriented messages through social media, even minimally, it can yield significant results. Not because social media convert interactions into actual donations, we can't say that, but because they create a play of mirrors that ultimately guide people to the appropriate channels for supporting and donating.

2. What strategies and social media have been most effective in increasing donations from individuals among the cultural NPOs you have helped in the last three years?

Silvia Aufiero: I would like to build on what Marianna mentioned earlier. Our observations, supported by data, suggest that social media channels have low donation conversion rates. Donations are uncommon if a cultural organisation solely relies on social media for fundraising-oriented communication.

However, people are likely to donate if they have a prior connection with the organisation or if they receive personalised communication (e.g.: a newsletter with a personalised incipit). However, this requires a well-segmented database and, as I said before, not all cultural organisations possess such comprehensive databases. Hence, social media should be combined with other communication forms since it cannot function optimally alone to collect donations. In any case, they are crucial for creating a clear message about the theme and the organisation, which then encourages potential donors to explore other relevant contents, such as the landing page. In this sense, social media acts as an initial hook or sounding board that amplifies the message of the donor landing page. When following cultural organisations, we always work on developing communication funnels that aim to direct potential donors to the appropriate donation channels where they can effectively donate (that is never on social media). In fact, none of the organizations we have worked with have ever used the classic 'Facebook birthday' method. We noted that this is a tool frequently used by large organizations, which, however, do not work in the cultural sector. Social media should primarily be used to direct potential donors to the landing page, crowdfunding page, or to sign up for the newsletter. In other words, to a place that is developed by the organisation for converting potential donors into actual donors. However, social media's ability to fulfill this essential role depends on planning. As Marianna mentioned, cultural organizations must be aware that contents need to be planned by deciding whether to use images, videos, or texts; and by deciding who will speak on their behalf, whether it is beneficiaries, management, or designers.

Marianna Martinoni: An appeal for donation may not yield results on the first attempt, hence the ability to appeal repeatedly is a valuable skill. We see this

when, for example, we do campaigns that have a 2–3-month time frame as it is unlikely that the appeal will generate results in the first few attempts. Nonetheless, if the messaging is creative, non-repetitive and includes an easily accessible donation link, there is a higher chance of the appeal succeeding after multiple attempts. Subsequently, the probability of people donating increases. However, if an organization becomes discouraged by the lack of results from the first appeal, the potential for social media conversion decreases.

3. Which storytelling has been the most effective in attracting individual donors among the cultural NPOs you have helped in the last three years? What emotions should their messages stimulate?

Marianna Martinoni: A storytelling that shows, as Silvia said, the heart of the organisation, its mission, its values, the people who work behind the scenes. This approach helps donors understand how their donations can make the difference. Conversely, self-referential communications that do not involve the donor, fail to yield positive outcomes. There are also extreme cases that include emergencies. For example, there was a recent flood in Emilia Romagna, and some of the theatres were able to raise a considerable amount of funds because they used the emergency leverage in their social media communication. However, this is not a usual situation in which we hope to work with cultural organisations.

4. Do you think that telling vivid stories (such as a video of a child you can help) is a way for cultural NPOs to attract more individual donations?

Marianna Martinoni: We always suggest highlighting benefits and beneficiaries. For example, there is an organisation we are following in the Asti area, Associazione Craft, which has done a 5x1000 campaign linked to making their theatre accessible to deaf-blind and neurodivergent people. In such

scenarios, discussing the issue to which we aim to address through donor involvement can be impactful.

Silvia Aufiero: Since you have had the opportunity to speak with Stefania Dal Cucco, the Fondazione Teatro Civico di Schio had also launched a campaign called 'Campus Well', which included emotional leverage related to Parkinson's disease.

5. For a cultural NPO, do you think it is more effective to use phrases that create a sense of urgency (e.g.: 'If we don't act now...'), responsibility (e.g.: 'It's up to us to make the world a better place, let's do it together') or opportunity (e.g.: ' Imagine what we could do with your help') to attract individual donations?

Marianna Martinoni: Mixing would be advisable to prevent boredom. Furthermore, a change in perspective may help you identify potential donors with different motivations.

Silvia Aufiero: I would also say to mix them. Again, it depends a lot on the planning because at different times in a campaign you use different leverages, which can be the urgency, the emotional part, the data, or something else. So yes, it's really a mix of all these things here. However, generalisation becomes challenging as each specific case requires tailoring. In any case, at a certain point it is also effective to leverage urgency, not in the beginning but when an organisation has already prepared the ground. Using urgency as a leverage right away without adequate audience engagement and development would lead to poor results. This is because we are discussing the cultural sector, where it is often imperative to explain the reasons for donating in more detail than for other causes, like medical research, etc. In fact, in the cultural sector, it is important to guide people gradually. After these premises, however, to

answer your question I would say a combination of the three that you mentioned.

6. In your experience, what is more effective for a cultural NPO: emphasising intrinsic benefits of donation (e.g.: moral satisfaction of supporting a cultural cause), extrinsic benefits (e.g.: tax incentives), or reputational benefits (e.g.: being recognized as a patron)?

Marianna Martinoni: Here, too, I would always say to mix, keeping in mind that data suggest that tax incentives interest little, unless there is a very strong tax incentive such as the Art Bonus. However, I think it is important to highlight all the range of benefits, so that people with different interests can be reached.

Silvia Aufiero: I concur. Moreover, although the tax incentive is the primary aspect to leverage when an organization requests support through the Art Bonus, it is still a donation. Therefore, the other benefits should also be emphasised. In fact, even though large individual donors, companies, or foundations that wants to donate through the Art Bonus could be at first interested in tax incentives, the organization has to keep them engaged by highlighting also other benefits that, afterwards, become equally significant for donors.

7. In the last three years, have any organizations you helped partnered with influencers, including local micro-influencers, for advocacy purposes aimed at attracting individual donors?

Marianna Martinoni: No because influencers are difficult to manage: the organization becomes dependent on them, and their actions have a significant impact – for better or worse – on the organization. Upon reflection, it happened only once to us, when we followed the campaign of the Fondazione

Forma per la Fotografia in Milan. There we had a collaboration with Zeldawasawriter, a prominent book industry influencer, and her endorsement was positive.

Silvia Aufiero: Moreover, I believe that when the influencer is appointed as an ambassador, the effectiveness of this strategy increases. In other words, an influencer should amplify a message with which they also identify, rather than being a mere transmitter of it. The ambassador should adopt the organization's style of communication. In this way, there is the potential for a more sophisticated form of co-operation.

Marianna Martinoni: I don't know if we can consider as influencers (and Stefania Dal Cucco might have told you about this) the numerous members of the public who were interviewed to explain why they support the Fondazione Teatro Civico di Schio. However, we can consider the advocates from below as more befitting our model.

Silvia Aufiero: Indeed, those that strengthen the message about the local community.

8. Despite the improvement reported by the 2023 edition of Donare 3.0, cultural causes have consistently ranked at the bottom of the list of causes supported by Italian donors, while medical research and social causes have always ranked first. In your opinion, how can a cultural NPO utilize the aforementioned preferences of Italian donors to unlock new competitive advantage?

Silvia Aufiero: If one's cultural organisation has any activity that in some way falls into the social, health or scientific category, it is important to also use these leverages to encourage donations. By doing so, the organisation can potentially attract donors who have an interest in either culture or social and health issues, such as Parkinson's disease for the Fondazione Teatro Civico di

Schio. Of course, there are cultural organisations that have no direct contact with such a cause. However, it seems that culture and health are closely linked: in fact, as many recent studies have shown, cultural consumption is associated with physical and psychological benefits and even economic returns. Hence, although there is no direct connection with certain sectors, the cultural organisation can still use these arguments, including scientific evidence, to promote its activities.

Marianna Martinoni: This can indeed provide a competitive advantage. Another noteworthy example is the Scuola di Alto Perfezionamento Musicale di Saluzzo, which we have followed for the past year. Currently, we are collaboratively developing a project with them to engage companies in an orchestra composed of children and young people. To achieve this objective, we are utilising data on cultural poverty and the lockdown's impact on the mental health of very young people to show how music has the potential to also play a preventive role against this type of threat. Our approach is based on the data published in the May edition of the monthly magazine Vita, which was entirely dedicated to the state of mental health of Generation Z, and contained data on addictions, psychiatric admissions, and self-harm. We frequently utilize this approach wherever feasible. Another case is the successful campaign we ran for the Canova Foundation in Possagno in 2019, which aimed to raise funds to make the museum accessible to people with motor and sensory disabilities. In any case, it is essential for organizations to disseminate abundant information since research and studies exist, but their awareness is not always guaranteed.

9. In your experience, do social media communication strategies aimed at increasing individual donations usually only attract small donors, or are they also effective in attracting large donors?

Silvia Aufiero: In our experience, major donors do not contribute just because they came across an organization on social media, but because they have personally interacted with the organization through meetings, personal communication channels, events and because the organization shares information transparently. Social media can amplify the message, but big donors require one-to-one communication and what we can call the 'pampering'. Therefore, as stated in the beginning, it is crucial to identify your social media audience in a clear and concise manner. If an organization has a significant social media following, it should aim to direct potential donors to the appropriate platform for donations, which is never the social media itself. The platform for donation is not limited to virtual means, as it can also involve private visits for major donors or something else. In this case, for example, the organisation may advertise the visit cycle on social media, but it is unlikely to attract major donors unless they receive a personal invitation or phone call. This represents the actual daily operational tasks that truly have a significant impact.

10. In the successful cases that you have followed, what do you think are the strengths of the strategies adopted and why?

Marianna Martinoni: Considering what Silvia just told you, it is recommended to adopt a multichannel approach using various communication tools (e.g.: instant messaging, customised DEM, phone calls, etc.) to enable both group and one-to-one contact, accompanied by a message that emphasizes different aspects of its positive impact and varied benefits. This is the recommended recipe.

Silvia Aufiero: I agree and would also like to add one more point. Social media can be a useful tool for organisations to collect data by sending people to a landing page to sign up for a newsletter or take a quiz. Gathering data can be

crucial, sometimes even more than receiving the donation itself. Before collect a donation, the organisation must possess certain information, including a full name, email address, and other details necessary to complete the donation process and maintain a relationship with the donor. Social media can be used to direct you to a platform where your data is collected, so that the organization can then add it to their database. From there, the organization proceeds with the multichannel work mentioned by Marianna.

11. What do you think are the challenges of the future of fundraising in engaging individuals?

Marianna Martinoni: Removing cultural organizations from the discomfort of soliciting donations and support poses a significant challenge. To meet this challenge, we need to use the available data on our audience to create communications in an appropriate tone of voice and with convincing arguments. Additionally, we must leverage research and data to communicate the impact of cultural activities beyond just leisure and entertainment. Cultural organizations must show how they benefit our territories, certain groups of people, and communities. In our opinion, this is the key.

Silvia Aufiero: It is important not to assume that the person you are requesting funds from is already familiar with the organisation and its goals. Again, people will support if they understand what an organisation is doing and what it is asking for. So that's another issue, which is capacity building, both in terms of what the organization does and the tools it uses to raise money. For example, the phrase 'support the crowdfunding campaign' may not be comprehensible to everyone as some may not be familiar with the concept of crowdfunding. This can lead to the reluctance to donate due to a lack of understanding about how to donate. However, if the concept is explained in detail, they might become more willing to donate. Furthermore, in cultural

organisations, there is a very common problem I think, which is that many tend to have a self-referential narrative in the style of 'Donate because I'm doing culture'. Instead, it is essential to put oneself in the audience's shoes, so that people understand what the organization does, why they should support it, what the impact is, and so on.

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