

# Lifestyle, activism and consumption in environmental influencers on Instagram

*Estilo de vida, activismo y consumo en influencers medioambientales en Instagram*

*Estilo de vida, ativismo e consumo em influenciadores ambientais no Instagram*

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ARTICLE



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## Abstract

Concern about the climate crisis has generated environmental activism on social media, largely led by influencers. This article addresses the relationship between such activism, lifestyle and personal narratives on Instagram, based on a case analysis of the account @vivirsinplastico. Part of an ongoing qualitative research is presented, the results of which allow us to argue that the figure of the “eco-influencer” opens up a new mode of social activism based on promoting a certain sustainable lifestyle in which images play a fundamental role.

## KEYWORDS

*Activism, Lifestyle, Influencer, Instagram, Environment, Sustainability.*

## Resumen

La preocupación por la crisis climática ha generado un activismo medioambiental en las redes sociales liderado en buena parte por influencers. En este artículo se aborda la relación entre dicho activismo, el estilo de vida y las narrativas personales en Instagram a partir de un análisis de caso, la cuenta @vivirsinplastico. Se presenta parte de una investigación en curso de carácter cualitativo, cuyos resultados

obtenidos nos permiten sostener, entre otros, que la figura del eco-influencer abre un nuevo modo de activismo social basado en promover determinado estilo de vida sostenible en el que las imágenes tienen un papel fundamental.

## PALABRAS CLAVE

*Activismo, Estilo de vida, Influencer, Instagram, Medioambiente, Sostenibilidad.*

## Resumo

A preocupação com a crise climática gerou ativismo ambiental nas redes sociais, em grande parte liderado por influenciadores. Este artigo aborda a relação entre tal ativismo, estilo de vida e narrativas pessoais no Instagram a partir de uma análise de caso, da conta @vivirsinplastico. Apresenta-se parte de uma pesquisa qualitativa em andamento, cujos resultados nos permitem sustentar, entre outros, que a figura do “eco-influencer” abre um novo modo de ativismo social baseado na promoção de um certo estilo de vida sustentável no qual as imagens têm um papel fundamental.

## Palavras-chave

*Ativismo, Estilo de vida, Influenciador, Instagram, Meio ambiente, Sustentabilidade.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Instagram is presented as a communication space in which profiles of influencers can be found whose personal narrative poses a direct relationship between an ecological lifestyle and sustainable consumption. This typology of users suggests a form of activism that has specific characteristics.

The role of the media in the field of environmental awareness has been key for some decades, since it is considered that citizens do not visualize the consequences of environmental deterioration in an immediate way (Olausson, 2011; Östman, 2014). Thus, it is argued that the media are of great value in raising awareness and actions regarding the environment. Although, according to Arlt et al., (2011), these messages are not quite effective, especially when they involve a change in lifestyle that makes us give up certain comforts. According to these authors, the most effective media actions in general can be observed in those cases that use several media: public television news, print media and online information media (Arlt et al., 2011). In this sense, social media would have the potential to activate participation in grassroots environmental movements (Huang, 2016).

Environmental activism promoted by organizations such as Greenpeace has encouraged citizen participation in protest actions and has mostly prioritized the use of negative images of environmental degradation. However, in a study by Leviston et al. (2014) found that images of natural disasters, extreme events and pollution used to have negative responses in the audience, while responses to images that represent climate solutions generated more

positive reactions, which is an alternative to the traditional way to communicate environmentalism.

Thus, the potential of the media and social movements in the face of climate change would lie in the ability to promote a stable awareness of climate problems and achieve a change at the level of attitude. In other words, it starts from the idea that, in the long term, the media and mobilizations can indirectly cause changes in consumer preferences associated with a change in lifestyle (Holbert et al., 2003).

In the current communicative context, social media have an essential role, especially Instagram where there are many profiles dedicated to spreading any kind of lifestyles. The objective of this research is to explore the relationship established between personal narratives, lifestyle and environmental activism on Instagram. A set of profiles (with a remarkable volume of followers) dedicated to the dissemination of ecology and sustainability are analyzed using qualitative methods in order to demonstrate the emergence of new forms of activism.

This activism proposes an ecological change starting from the domestic space, based on responsible consumption choices (consumer goods that respect the environment) or on reducing consumption as much as possible as a wearable solution. Thus, the articulation between activism and consumption will be one of the axes of the analysis. On the other hand, on Instagram, the role of the image is essential to support these environmental narratives. In this sense, it is interesting to analyze the emergence of a visual activism and a specific aesthetic that accompanies this movement in this social network.

## 2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND STATE OF THE ART

### 2.1. CELEBRITIES AND ENVIRONMENTAL ACTIVISM ON SOCIAL MEDIA

The presence of well-known people devoted to the environmental cause has a long standing trajectory if we consider Al Gore or Leonardo di Caprio. According to Abidin et al. (2020) although the role of these celebrities is essential when putting some issues on the agenda, in other cases they can contribute to processes of commodification of landscapes or natural environments contributing to consumer capitalism (Abidin et al., 2020, p. 16). In the same way, several recent studies on the influence of Greta Thunberg on young people (Pihkala, 2018) have been carried out highlighting her power of con-vocation.

However, less attention has been given to the role of new actors within the social media ecosystem, environmental influencers, which we tentatively call *eco-influencers* (Ardèvol et al., 2021). These new media actors, promote a sustainable lifestyle using their own experience and personal narrative to educate and engage with their community of followers. This fact, legitimizes and motivates them not to abandon in this endeavor.

The term *influencer* is developed mainly in marketing studies, such as the case of Pino-Romero and Castelló-Martínez (2017) that analyze the links between brands and influencers, and fashion influencers in Spain (Cuenca-Piqueras, 2021; Segarra- Saavedra & Hidalgo-Marí, 2018).

However, the approach of this study is within the digital culture and is close to the study of micro-celebrities and self-branding developed by

Senft (2013) or Marwick (2013), linked to anonymous users who gained visibility by publishing content on blogs, or on YouTube, for example. In this sense, the characterization of the influencer involves: 1) applying positive self-branding strategies, 2) managing his or her visibility in digital media 3) cultivating the community of followers so that they consume the content in an aspirational way (Leaver et al., 2020, p. 106). According to Ardèvol and Márquez (2017, p. 75) the success of these media figures is based on their direct, intimate and sincere communicative style with their audience.

In this research, the term *eco-influencers* on Instagram is used in reference to profiles committed to the dissemination of environmental-related content. These users, who are not necessarily involved in traditional activism and organized collectives, promote a sustainable lifestyle through their own example. Consequently, this becomes the main objective and theme of their communications.

It could be said that the figure of the *eco-influencer* responds to environmental activism promoting sustainable change by incorporating it into their own lives. In this sense, they present similarities with other influencers, for example, those who promote healthy eating habits (Marauri et al., 2021).

However, they differ from social movements activism in several aspects. The most notable is that their proposals are framed in a general way in individual action and not so much in collective action, since they do not present a collective articulation a priori (although they may

adhere to campaigns like #futuristicfebruary<sup>1</sup> or #Fridaysforfuture<sup>2</sup>). Another noteworthy aspect is its close relationship with consumption and with sustainable brands. They are contributing together for an emerging eco and sustainable market.

## 2.2. CONSUMPTION, LIFESTYLE AND ACTIVISM

According to Featherstone (1987, p. 59) “the new of heroes culture consumer make lifestyle a life project and display their of in individuality and of style the sense particularity the of assemblage goods, clothes, practices, experiences, appearance bodily and dispositions they design together into a lifestyle”. So, if we understand the practices of clothing, hygiene, savings, diet, cleaning beaches, etc. promoted by eco-influencers as a way for searching for a sustainable lifestyle, the action of many people following them could have a global impact on the generation of new consumption patterns, or in some cases, even non-consumption. This activism seeks a change in consumer habits from a direct small actions in the day to day and in the domestic space. In this way, the concern for a proper and authentic lifestyle that promotes the culture of consumption is hybridized, at least in this case study, with the proposal of a broader social change based in collective aspirations.

Eco-influencer environmental activism would therefore be situated at an individual level, in the sense that it generates confidence that our

individual actions can lead to a real, effective and long-term change also in productive structures, if they are many and coordinated.

It could be argued that social media and the notion of the influencer open new modes of activism based on promoting a certain lifestyle. Eco-influencers seek to create an audience that shares their aspirations, and in this way, the construction of a lifestyle is linked not only to a new fashion or personal taste, but to a collective aspiration to promote a sustainable lifestyle based on shared values and common practices. This point would differentiate it from other ‘fashions’ or youth styles to which the market has adapted without producing a correlative change in the productive structures, or in the forms of social or political organization.

For this reason, Haenfler et al. (2012) contend that the separation between lifestyles and social movements has left a blind spot, located at the intersection between private individual action and activism, personal and social change, personal and collective identity. They suggest the concept of social movements around the lifestyle (Lifestyle Movements) as capable of actively promoting new values and cultural meanings, challenging the hegemonic culture and fostering a broader social change. This new activism is based on three characteristics: a) lifestyle choices as a tactic for social change; b) the centrality of personal identity as the engine of change; and c) a diffuse organizational structure (Haenfler et al., 2012, p. 2).

In contrast to consumer mobilizations, for example through boycotts of certain brands, the change in lifestyle is seen as something permanent that has a longer-term effect (Holzer, 2006). It could be argued, according to Schlosberg and Coles (2016), that the sustainable and ecological lifestyle, green consumption, and anti-consumption practices (Black & Cherrier,

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1 It is a challenge powered by the Instagram account @sustainable\_duo. It consists of saving all plastic and non-biodegradable waste that we generate during the month of February and publishing a photo with them. Accumulating them and living with them makes us aware of the amount of garbage we create and the impact it has on the planet.

2 Movement led by young people who every Friday protested together against global warming.

2010, p. 439) that are disseminated through of social networks, can be considered as a type of social movement by promoting flows of alternative actions.

## 2.3. AESTHETICS AND VISUAL ACTIVISM IN INSTAGRAM

Several authors have theorized the close relationship between consumption, design and aesthetics in contemporary society. Lipovetsky and Serroy (2015) highlight the importance of design and photography, promoted in part by social networks, as a vehicle for transmitting visual styles and acquiring aesthetic skills. This issue is clearly visible on Instagram, considered by most users as the platform where content is the most important issue. However, Instagram goes beyond this question. The *Studying Instagram beyond selfies*<sup>3</sup> (2018) conference discussed the evolution of research on Instagram, pointing precisely towards its politicization or its use in the field of activism. The question that arises then is: Can a network based on aesthetics be a vehicle for social change?

The political use of social media has been extensively studied in recent years (Postill, 2018; Treré, 2018), especially focused on Twitter. However, the role of images in activism and social movements has not been so extensively studied, perhaps because they are generally limited to the local context (Doerr & Teune, 2012). In any case, the most specific concept of visual activism is usually referred to artistic or creative groups, who put their visual and performative skills at the service of a cause. For Demos (2016) the concept offers a provocative proposal, but at the same time admits that visual activism could be methodologically

weakening its political purpose, as it is aimed at aesthetic enjoyment, spectacularized, sold and consumed by those politically opposed. In this way, it is understood that visual activism, as aesthetic, would lose force.

However, environmental activists on Instagram propose personal narratives where the role of images is fundamental. Therefore, the relationship between Instagram aesthetics (Leaver et al., 2020) and visual activism should be explored.

## 3. OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

The objective of this research is to explore the relationship between personal narratives, lifestyle and environmental activism on Instagram.

This objective is structured in the following points. Firstly, it is intended to verify the existence of the emerging figure of environmental influencers. Secondly, it seeks to understand and characterize the activism that they pose in relation to the concepts of lifestyle and consumption. Finally, the aim is to delve into the role that images play and their relationship with visual activism.

For this, the methodological approach used is a remix (Markham, 2013) of qualitative orientation methods that combines participant observation online with in-depth interview and narrative analysis. We start from the duality of the Internet as a method and field of study (Hine, 2005). The Internet is not only a research tool for collecting data, but it is also the empirical field where research is carried out; Social networks are means of publication, but they also constitute the social context where people meet and interact (Ardèvol & Gómez-Cruz, 2012). In this way, the field work has consisted of the creation of a research profile on Instagram and the

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<sup>3</sup><https://londonenglish.live/2018/03/23/studying-instagram-beyond-selfies-instagram-conference-2018-01-june-2018-middlesex-university/>

continuous monitoring, from June 2020 to June 2021, of different profiles to constitute our field of study and that has allowed us to carry out 13 in-depth interviews via telematics<sup>4</sup>.

The theoretical sample includes 60 Instagram accounts whose objective is the dissemination of environmental content. It is a theoretical sample (Strauss & Corbin, 1994) as it seeks to maximize the differences, variety of content and approaches. It was generated through the 'snowball' system in which some users lead the following, because they follow each other or share the same hashtags in their publications. It was also influenced by Instagram's automated algorithmic system that detects like-minded users and generates recommendations. In this sense, it is considered that this sample has reached saturation, because, even if the number of profiles has been expanded -in order to find new particularities- a substantive change -that forces to change the characterization of the initial sample- has not been detected. It is not to obtain statistically representative data, but a significant typology in terms of characterization of the studied universe.

### 3.1. DESCRIPTION AND CHARACTERIZATION OF THE PROFILES

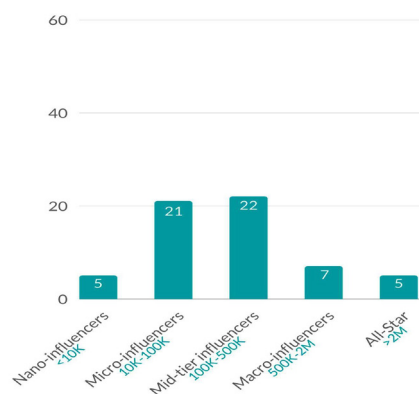
The criteria for the sample were: a) maximum variability of narrative profiles and styles that have sustainability, the environment and climate change as their theme; b) language: given that the universe of the sample is global and local, profiles are included in both English (30) and Spanish (25), extending it to other languages

such as Catalan and German (5); c) amount of followers.

In relation to this last criterion, it is important to note that according to the classification of the typologies of influencers by volume of followers, the bulk of the accounts studied in this research is between the range of micro influencers (10,000-100,000) and mid-tier influencers (100,000-500,000), which are quite even (21 and 22 accounts respectively). Some examples of accounts in the mid-tier range are @carlo-tabruna or @the.eco.warrior. In the macro-influencer range (500,000-2,000,000) there are 7 accounts, such as @nancy\_risol or @thezerowasteguide and in the All-Star 5 there were accounts like @kristenanniebell and @kortajarenajon who combine activism and other types of content. In addition, a fifth category has been added, called nano-influencers, which includes 5 accounts in other languages that have less than 10,000 followers.

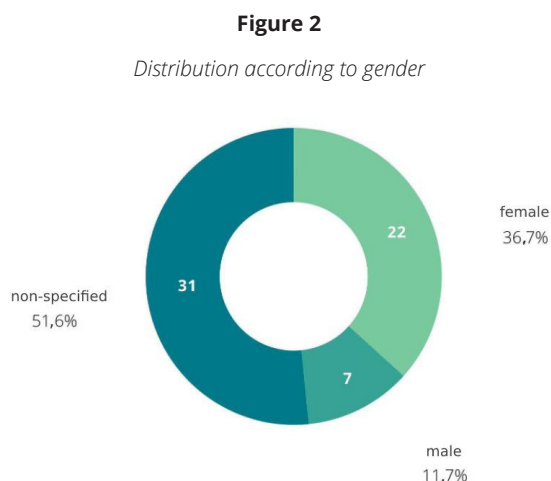
**Figure 1**

*Accounts by number of followers*



<sup>4</sup> Listed at the end of the article in the bibliography. In this article we focus on the first of them, although in subsequent articles we address other aspects that emerge from our field work (see Ardèvol et al. 2021).

It is worth noting that in the set of profiles selected there is a considerable female presence. Of a total of 60 accounts, 22 are visibly managed by women, and only 7 are identified with male users. The rest of the accounts present diverse ownership or leadership, including anonymous, collective or corporate profiles.



This bias is due, partly, to the method used to elaborate the sample (the recommendation algorithm, in addition to suggesting similar topics, may also suggest users with similar characteristics). However, this pre-eminence of female users coincides with other studies (Filgueiras, 2019; Murphy, 2019; Shabir, 2020) dedicated to the emergence of environmental activism on Instagram. Furthermore, in Shabir's study, 94% of the followers of these accounts are also women (Shabir, 2020, p. 25). This percentage also coincides, as evidenced in the in-depth interview, with 90% of followers of the @vivorsinplastico community, or 75% of followers of @publiclandhatesyou (another of the studied cases).

Participant observation and in-depth interviews show, on the one hand, a connection between this type of activism and eco-feminism in a certain way. On the other hand, it points to women empowerment in this type of environmental

struggle from everyday life, consumption and domestic space. It is also important to highlight the accounts promoted by couples and families (of two or more people), 6 in total, for example @nubiaehijos, @petitapetjada or @sustainableduo. They have decided to undertake a process of change in their domestic life to eliminate plastic at home, consume sustainable and local products, etc. and they have decided to share their experience by creating an account on Instagram and other social media, and even much earlier or in parallel, opening a blog where they can expand their narratives. This data is relevant and perhaps is indicative of a trend within this form of activism.

The rest of the accounts do not present a personal or family identity, but rather belong to groups of friends or organizations such as @greenpeace and accounts dedicated, to a greater or lesser extent, to the sale of organic products. This was the case of @esturirafi, led by two sisters who set up their company by selecting and testing the products for sale themselves based on their environmental and aesthetic criteria.

This kind of profiles also promote a lifestyle in line with the activists they follow and interact with.

Unlike the three categories that Shabir (2020) finds in her study: 1) shops or stores, 2) influencers and lifestyle bloggers, 3) tips and tricks for a more sustainable life; we observe that these categories hybridize between the different profiles in our sample, and it is difficult to establish clear boundaries between them. However, when adapting this classification to our sample, we found: 1) lifestyle activists and bloggers, which in turn, can be personal, partner or family accounts dedicated exclusively to the environment and sustainable consumption; 2) influencers and lifestyle bloggers who also pro-

mote eco products; 3) tips, tricks and memes; generally managed individually or collectively and are usually anonymous; 4) shops or small producers; 5) collectives and organizations, more focused on raising awareness and collective mobilization about the environment. In this study, the first three categories are considered eco-influencers, although as a whole they would form part of an “eco-sphere” in which environmental activism, ecological market and consumption, and proposals for a sustainable and healthy lifestyle are hybridized.

## **4. @VIVIRSINPLASTICO CASE STUDY**

### **4.1. CASE DESCRIPTION**

From this first overview we decided to deepen in a smaller number of accounts. This article analyzes the account @vivirsinplastico, promoted by a couple who introduce themselves as Patri and Fer, and who explain their own experience since they decided to eliminate plastic consumption (5 years ago), sharing advice about it with their community of followers (67,600 at the time of writing).

For this case study, the contents (narratives and images) published in this account were analyzed as a whole (576 posts as of 11/26/2020), especially the posts published in the last 2 months (7 posts as of 11/26/2020). On the other hand, an in-depth interview was conducted with the promoters of the project, asking them about the following aspects: a) the origin and motivation of the project, b) their perceptions about the concept of influencer and its relationship with activism and consumption, c) their creative process, d) their relationship with their audience, and e) their expectations with the project.

For the analysis of personal narratives on Instagram, the concept of ‘small stories’ (Georgakopoulou, 2016) is used, based on an analysis of the different semiotic forms (including images and collaborative narratives) of the publications of the selected profile.

## **4.2 ANALYSIS AND RESULTS**

### **4.2.1 PERSONAL NARRATIVE AND IMAGES**

As mentioned, Patri and Fer are a couple (in their forties) who decided to make a change in their lifestyle by reducing the consumption of plastics. Simultaneously, they began to write a blog relating their experience. A few months later they did it using Instagram. Currently, their ecosystem in social networks also includes Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and YouTube. The digital space with the most followers is Instagram, which has somewhat modified their creative process: before they thought of the blog first, but now they tend to think of content for Instagram first, although they often take advantage of it, expand it and, in that way, it also has a place in the blog.

It is interesting to note how the fact of sharing their process of change to a life without plastic with an imagined audience meant for them a way of motivating themselves to continue with their purpose, making a public commitment as well as getting their message spread. In this sense, their first post on Instagram is a photograph of their garbage accompanied by the text: “This is the garbage that we generated in week 0 of our #Vivirsinplastico challenge to recognize the plastics that we consume daily”. During the first month of their change of life, we observe that each post reflects the amount of plastic consumed, at the same time that they receive comments encouraging them to continue with the challenge.

**Figure 3**

*First post by @vivirsinplastico on 08/21/2015*



Source: @vivirsinplastico  
<https://www.instagram.com/p/6pz7gTRYM9/>

To this day, they publish posts of various kinds: garbage that they collect on beaches, news from the media, surveys, readings, motivational messages, recycling tricks, sustainable living practices, etc.

The story about a sudden change in their life is a narrative constant also reproduced in other profiles (@margreen, @laurainwaterland or @sustainableduo). There is a revealing moment (a visit to a beach, a family trip) that awakes them //of the need to contribute to sustainability and share this desire for change on social media. Therefore, this and other eco-influencers publish a post from time to time remembering the origin of their account and their motivation to the newbies / the new audiences.

Regarding the images on Instagram, @vivirsinplastico elaborate their publications with a remarkable aesthetic criterion, which denotes sensitivity and skills of photography and image (in the interview the training of both in this area was confirmed). The following types of published images are identified: fruit and vegetable still lives, images of events, promotion of their book, details of objects, complaint photos (for example, fruits wrapped in plastic), infographics, alternative products and compositions based on garbage collected. Although there is

no specific formal criterion in the grid, an intention is detected to display their information in a visually attractive way. For example, using a zenith point of view to highlight the geometry and symmetry in the food or in the shapes made from the waste collected on the beach.

**Figure 4**

*Composition of fruits and vegetables*



Source: @vivirsinplastico  
<https://www.instagram.com/p/BQw-f8kgOWp/>

**Figure 5**

*Composition made with waste found on the beach.*



Source: @vivirsinplastico  
<https://www.instagram.com/p/91KFFoRYFu/>

Instagram has been taking more prominence over time in its publication activity since they say that many times the audience they are targeting does not reach the blog. Of all the published content, they told us that their community prefers personal issues, anecdotes or their own experiences. That is when they receive the most likes, comments or other types of interactions. For example, in this post of August 2, 2020, they published a personal photo and the following comment:



Source: @vivirsinplastico  
<https://www.instagram.com/p/CDZKW8FqPWx/>

In this text, the interaction with their community is grasped, they collect their opinions and promote sending feedback that receives 813 likes and 34 responses. We highlight one of them:

The most difficult thing is finding where to buy in bulk depending on where you are. And the sites where they continue to insist that they have to put a bag for you ... Thank you for all the super useful information you give and for being a reference!!

This imbrication of the personal narrative in the purpose of its disseminating the problem with plastics, allows us to understand this type of practices from the concept of small stories that develop discontinuously in the feed of @vivirsinplastico, in the comments received and in the conversations developed through direct messages, “a lot of people write us privately” (@vivirsinplastico, interview 2020). The personal narrative, linked to the lifestyle proposed by Patri and Fer would fit in the characteristics of a small narrative (Georgakopoulou, 2016) supported by a set of images that capture attention and that are developed in a ‘friendly’ way in the Instagram context. Following this author, they are not stories that have a beginning, middle and end, but small personal stories that narrate a situation and a context and invite interaction through continuing with other stories that complete it.

### 4.2.2 RHETORIC OF CHANGE, ACTIVISM AND INFLUENCE

From the observation of the profile @vivirsinplastico it can be inferred that its message aims to contribute to social change from personal, small domestic actions, such as a change in habits in daily consumption. For this to happen, it is perceived as necessary to repeatedly educate their public and communicate their ideas, as stated in the interview, distinguishing between new followers *'who have basic knowledge needs'* and advanced ones *'who have been following them for a long time'* (this aspect also appears in other interviewees such as @publiclandhatesyou or @zeroxplastic).

Regarding the notion of activism and the emergence of these profiles on Instagram, it should be noted that they do perceive themselves as activists. It would not be a traditional activism linked to social movements and political protest, but an alternative one, based on the everyday. This type of day-to-day activism of small gestures would fit perfectly with the activism of Lifestyle Movements (Haenfler et al., 2012).

Thus, the activity of @vivirsinplastico takes place mainly online, although they are having more and more impact and carry out more offline activities.

After seeing how they influenced their followers, last year they decided to dedicate themselves exclusively to their task of raising awareness and information, so they created a non-profit association, while also opening a patronage account on Patreon.

Patri and Fer consider themselves more activists than influencers or communicators, although they recognize that they have contributed to the change in the mental framework of many people who follow them. In this sense, they distance themselves from the more con-

ventional influencer notions associated with the marketing world and highlight their aspiration to create a more powerful movement in awareness, beyond likes: "We do not want to be slaves of the algorithm" (@vivirsinplastico, interview 2020). This question is fundamental when it comes to conceptualizing this emerging phenomenon, this figure of influence in the Internet. Other cases studied also present an ambivalent relationship with the notion of influencer (although deep down they all recognize their positive influence on their community) and offer nuances regarding their vision of activism.

### 4.2.3 CONSUMPTION AS A CHANGE OF LIFE

The proposal of @Vivirsinplastico is based on reducing consumption, buying only what they really need. Within this approach, they propose that what they buy is as sustainable as possible, avoiding plastics, promoting reusable packaging and bags, betting on farmers markets, and in general, alternative products to other more polluting.

Their case differs from other profiles in our sample who openly promote or directly sell products of an ecological nature. Although they have received proposals to commercially promote products, they tend to stay quite apart from this type of activity since one of their maxims is to avoid unnecessary consumption. In five years, they have only said "yes" to two brands because they fit very clearly with their objectives. One of these commercial products or services is Storytel, which offers a version of the book they have published. The other is the Son Estrella Galicia Posidonia Festival, which dedicated part of the profits to the conservation of Posidonia.

During the project, they demonstrate that they know their audience very well and estimate that

the majority are women between 20-40 years of age. They claim that they do not like to “annoy” their followers with strategies such as “tag x people”, ask questions for them to answer, giveaways, etc. Therefore, they prefer the community to function organically, without making any kind of call to action or intervening in it, although they do question their community regularly, seeking complicity to share problems and solutions.

## **5. CONCLUSIONS. ECO-INFLUENCERS: BETWEEN ACTIVISM AND THE MARKET**

In the process of carrying out this research, different types of profiles that are dedicated to the dissemination of content on sustainability have been analyzed: from promoting the purchase of ‘eco’ products to indigenous profiles, stores and commercial profiles, associations, etc. All of them with connections and elements in common, and their link with an emergent market is one of them, a fact that has produced a certain difficulty in clearly categorizing them as “activists”. This mix of digital activism could define the figure of “eco-influencer”.

A high female presence has also been observed in this sector and a type of profile promoted by families and couples, such as the proposed case study, which distances itself from the idea of the individual influencer and which could have a certain path in this context. Taking into account the bias that the algorithm may have produced when suggesting certain accounts to become part of our sample, we see that the analyzed set is part of what we have called an “eco-sphere”, since the accounts relate to and follow each other, and in some cases, collaborations common between them.

From the analysis of the accounts’ sample and the case study, it can be inferred the emergence of a new phenomenon, that can be conceptualized at the intersection of personal narrative with environmental activism. This environmental activism is articulated through the idea of personal lifestyle as a possibility to exercise a domestic activism, from small daily actions and modulating our consumption capacity, so many individual actions may produce a social change in consumption habits that may lead to a social and political changes.

Regarding the eco-influencers’ narratives, we can avouch that a good part of the accounts studied propose a ‘green’ lifestyle through a cared aesthetics as a form of fostering social change (Autio et al., 2009), presenting a solution to climate change in positive terms in order to seduce the maximum number of people. But still, can we talk about activism? Or can activism be compatible with the dynamics of the Instagram market and influencers?

According to the observation of the accounts and the interviews carried out, it can be affirmed that it is activism but with its own characteristics. This affirmation fits well with the definition given by Haenfler et al. (2012) for the Lifestyle Movements. It is an activism linked to personal life choices, which promotes a concrete lifestyle based on sustainability. This lifestyle is interwoven with an emerging market to provide the movement with the products it needs to carry out its aspiration of a “Good life”, which contributes to alleviating climate change.

In this sense, it is important to continue observing the fusion between the notions of activism and influencers, taking into account the non-trivialization of lifestyle concepts in the capacity for mobilization and activation of social changes. In some way, the lifestyle articulated

by personal narratives acts as a mobilizer for change.

In fact, there is no consensus on the naming of this phenomenon, since in a more generalized way the idea of the *eco-influencer* is very new and is still associated with more conventional celebrities, such as Leonardo di Caprio or even Greta Thunberg. In this text it is proposed to expand the term eco-influencer to these environmental activists capable of attracting a large number of followers and who focus their activity on promoting changes in our lifestyle and our domestic practices with a philosophy based on individual “small changes” to achieve great collective changes, which challenges the most classic conception of a social movement linked to a political ideology.

As for visual activism, it can be said that most of the accounts studied have a neat image and their own aesthetic. In the case of @vivirsinplastico we observed that there was an appreciation for the images made with some care. They think that a careful aesthetic contributes to the diffusion of their fight in favor of the environment. This idea conflicts with certain conceptions of visual activism, as something based on the banality or superficiality of the images and that would make the ‘cause’ less effective. In this

sense, the examples studied in this research would fit with the Instagram culture in its forms of presenting content in an aesthetic way to articulate a lifestyle proposal. This approach would be more in line with other authors who point to the transformative capacity of aesthetics (Calvera, 2007; Lipovetsky & Serroy, 2015). Therefore, this combination of aesthetics, activism and daily life can have a path and perhaps may cause social changes in a direct and sustained way. Beyond conventional media and social movements based on collective action in public space, eco-influencers propose, through careful aesthetics, to understand political action as a practical and beautiful intervention on the world. We will be aware of its evolution.

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## ANNEX 1: ANALYZED ACCOUNTS

@carlotabruna	@gerardo-delvillar	@trashisfortossers	@leonardodid-caprio	@luisaneubauer	@gretathunberg
@vivirsinplastico	@sustainable_duo	@margreen_s	@laurainwaterland	@greentipsca-riuma	@the_plastic_free_people
@marianamatija	@petitapetjada	@kortajarenajon	@Happy_Planet_Lifestyle	@ecogodess	@nubiaehijos
@goodkarmamart	@julicarvajal33	@nancy_rysol	@ecoquotes	@zerowastes-toreecuador	@zerowastes-tore
@verdealalma	@publi-landshate-you	@fridaysforfuture.de	@reducewastenow	@about_environment	@kristenanniebell
@get.waste.ed	@futureearth	@elcambiologico	@planteaenverde	@ilovecyclo	@ecologistas
@easyecotips_es	@unpackedshop	@ceroresiduo	@esturirafi	@usaryreusar	@sinplastico
@ecoinventos	@mindbodygreen	@zerowaste-home	@chicksforclimate	@zeroxplastic	@goingzerowaste
@unep	@the.eco.warrior	@greenpeace	@thezerowasteguide	@wastefree-planet	@amenityofnature
@noe_ona	@honeycom_living	@mujer.se-milla	@package-freeshop	@planet_preserver	@need.eco.friendly

## ANNEX 2: INTERVIEWS CONDUCTED (IN CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER)

1	@vivirsinplastico	24/11/2020
2	@laurainwaterland	22/12/2020
3	@public_lands_hateyou	28/12/2020
4	@reducewastenow	04/01/2021
5	@easyEcoTips	15/01/2021
6	@petita_petjada	20/01/2021
7	@marianamatija	01/03/2021
8	@usaryreusar	07/04/2021
9	@esturirafi	13/04/2021
10	@unpackedshop	19/04/2021
11	@planet_preserver	20/04/2021
12	@noe_ona	28/04/2021
13	@ilovecyclo	11/05/2021