



ENGAGING MILLENNIAL NON-SCIENTISTS IN CORAL REEF CONSERVATION THROUGH DIGITAL MEDIA STRATEGIES



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ABSTRACT

Skandha is a project aimed at raising climate change awareness. Our focus is communicating science to the general public, particularly millennials, as they are digital natives well versed in the language of online media. In collaboration with more than 30 volunteers from different disciplines, Skandha has run several successful campaigns in Mexico City, including raising awareness of energy consumption, and organizing climate change talks with undergraduates. In an online campaign, we repurposed marketing techniques originally developed for commercial needs, and applied them in digital communication of climate science. With these methods, we designed a new digital communication strategy for the Mexican Coral Reef Society (SOMAC), using a Facebook fan page. In the first 3 months we reached more than 1,000 organic likes. In 6 months, 80 posts were published, reaching at least 1,300 people each, resulting in an average of 60 engagement actions per post. For each post in the fan page linked to the SOMAC website, daily visits increased 6-fold, with 86% being new users. The fan page audience is 91% Mexican, and 78% of the audience belongs to the millennial generation (ages 18-34). Initial results demonstrate that using methods developed for commercial marketing can enhance climate science communication by encouraging social media engagement, leading to increased traffic to environmental organizations' web sites for further learning. Skandha is taking novel steps toward improving climate change awareness and preservation of Mexican coral reefs.

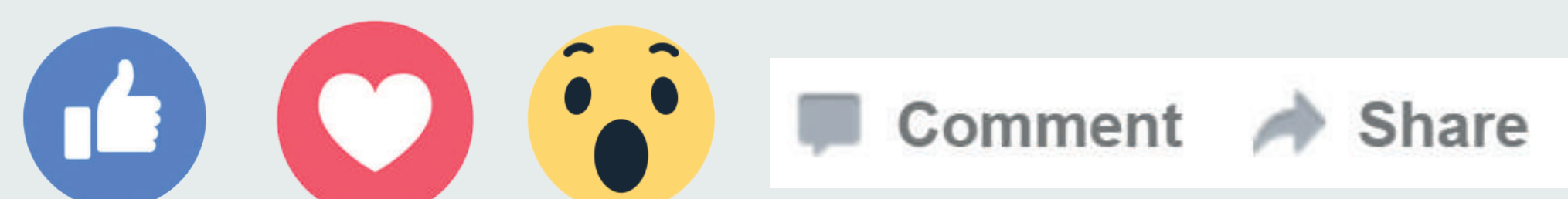
INTRODUCTION

Improving human direct or indirect impacts in coral reefs requires changes in human behavior. Public, especially non-scientists need to learn background information about coral reefs and which actions impact this ecosystem negatively in order to modify their behaviors. Searching to reach general public we decided to use digital marketing techniques that were initially designed for commercial needs. Kotler and Armstrong (2010) defined marketing is "a process by which individuals or groups obtain what they want through exchanging value with others." We use these techniques to improve education in coral reef conservation. Our target audience is the millennial generation (born between 1980-2000) since they are consumers interested in brands that have good impact in the world and that are committed to environmental care (Barkley Inc. and Futurecast LLC, 2016). With these facts we created the Mexican Coral Reef Society Facebook Fan Page. We analyze the impact of our content in our audience, and identify the characteristics of the content that generate outstanding positive reactions. By posting content that engage our public we aim for generating positive actions that improve coral reef

METHODS

On May 2015 we created the Facebook Fan Page of the Mexican Coral Reef Society. Our target is Mexican millennials since most of them are registered in a social media platform, especially Facebook. Images and video content were posted every 7th day and followed over time (n=122). Data was collected from Facebook Fan Page Insights. ANOVA tests followed by a Tukey HSD post-hoc comparison were performed to compare significant differences between five different media categories and type of content and marketing metrics. Two digital marketing metrics were measured: Post reach (number of people who have seen a post) and Engagement rate (percentage of people who saw a post and interact with it).

Interactions:



DISCUSSION AND RESULTS

1. Most of our public reached and engaged is millennial (Figure 1). Facebook is a good tool to attract millennials.

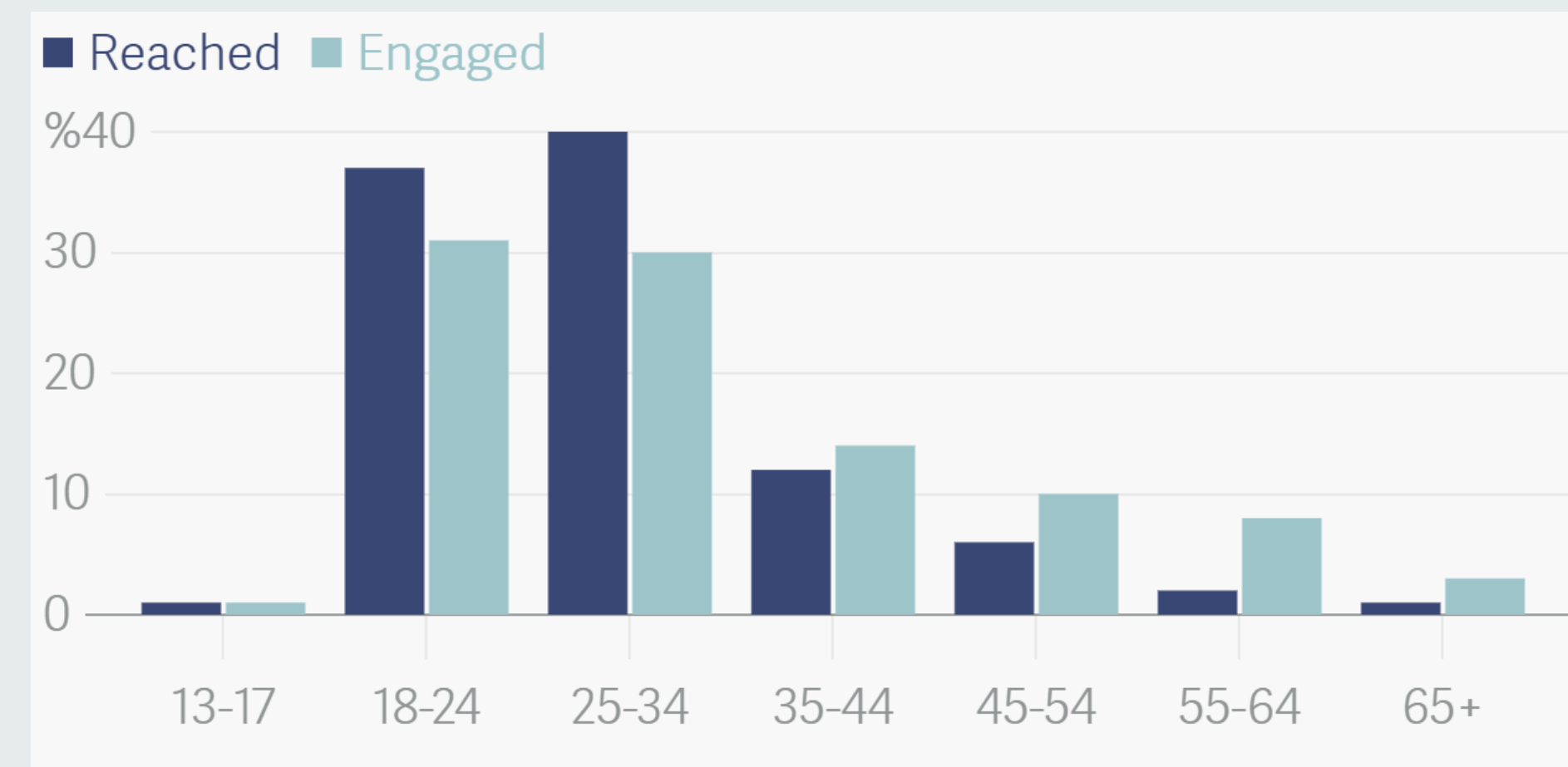


Figure 1. Fans age of SOMAC Facebook Fan Page.

2. There are not significant differences ($p > 0.05$) in the engagement ($F_{4,117}=1.67, p=0.1614$) and post reach ($F_{4,117}=0.623, p=0.65$) between different media types (Figure 2). This suggests that does not matter what kind of media we use our captive public will interact if the is something that can interest them. The majority of our public is happy sharing either video, images, news or gifs and engaging on the material as long as they like it. Doesn't matter what kind of content we are displaying our captive audience interacted with it.

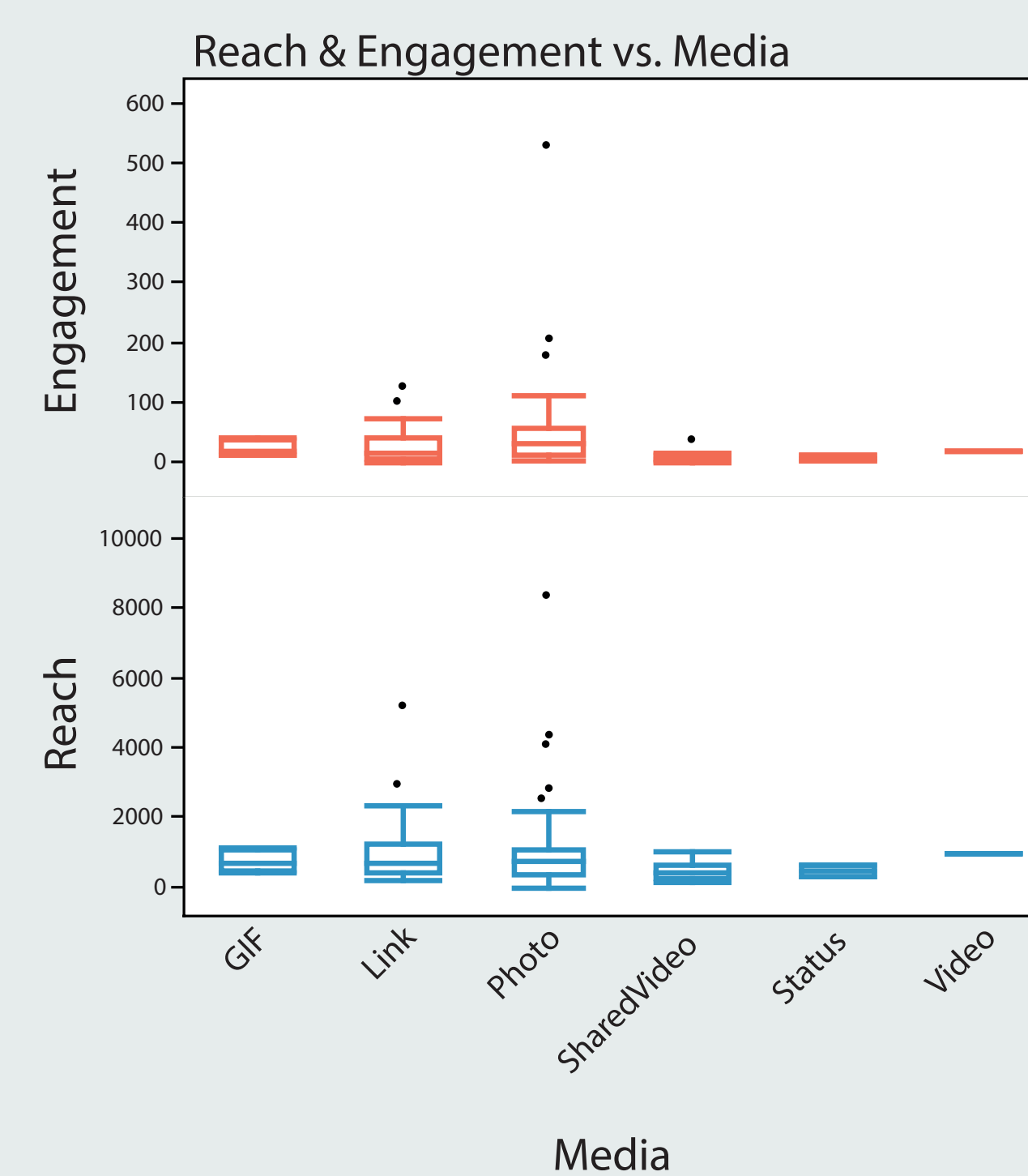


Figure 2. Reach and engagement of type of media.

3. There are significant differences among types of information and engagement ($F_{6,115}=2.698, p=0.017$) and post reach ($F_{6,115}=3.622, p=0.0025$) (Figure 3). Tukey post-hoc comparisons show higher engagement and post reach on vacation coral care recommendations posts. This demonstrates an increase in engagement public engages more when provided with useful information that can be translated into practical actions to follow.

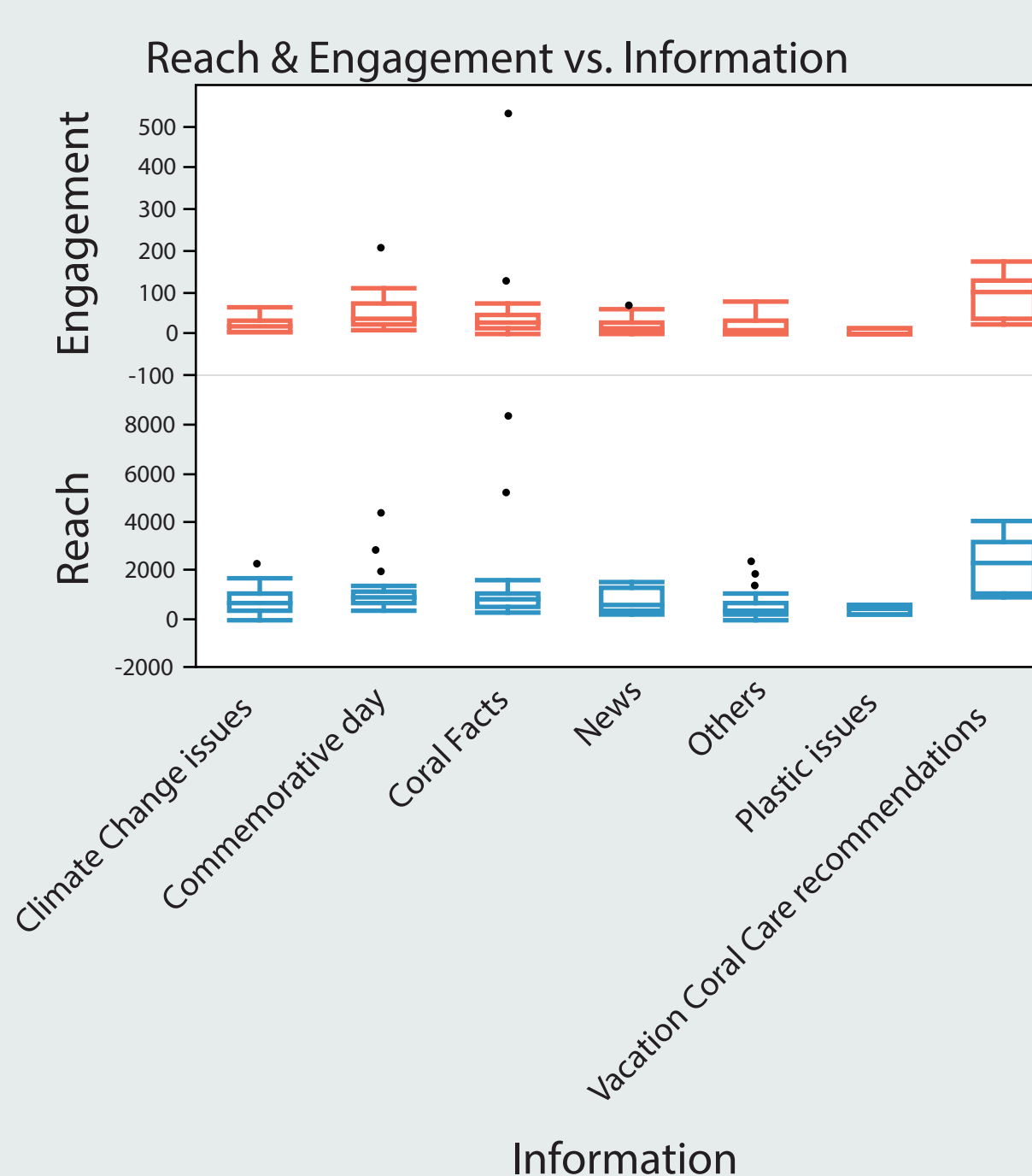


Figure 3. Reach and engagement of kind of information.

4. We were able to identify several posts with outstanding engagement and post reach (Figure 4.A and 4.B). Two of the most popular posts had an attractive photo and presented scientific facts easy for non-scientist to understand.



Figure 4.A. Our most popular post, with 8,349 people reached and 529 reactions.

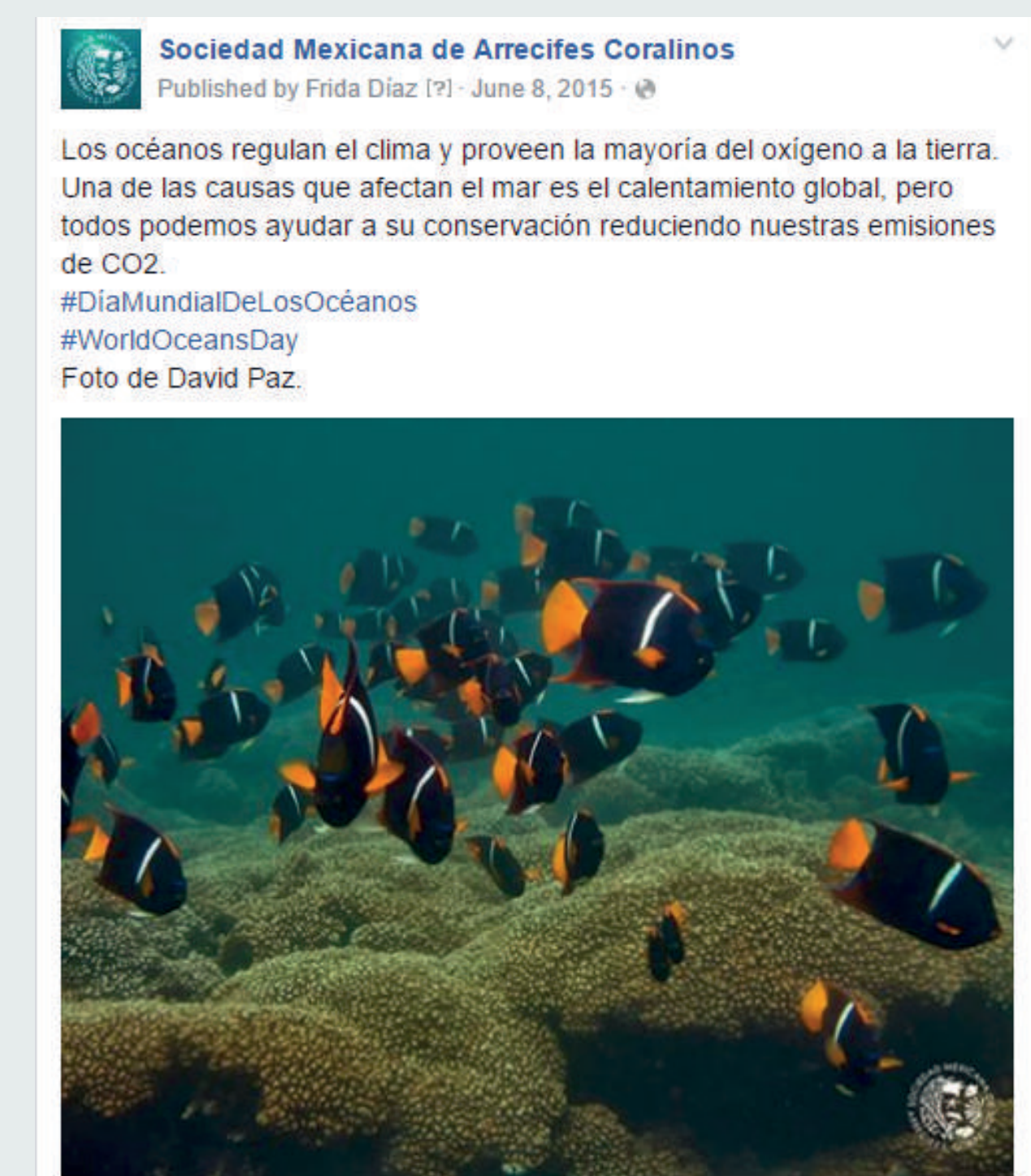


Figure 4.B. Our second most popular post with 4,338 people reached and 205 interactions

CONCLUSION

Strategies based on results of digital media strategies have positive results for the SOMAC Facebook Fan Page. We highly recommend studying your audience to improve coral reef conservation communication and education. In the future we seek to improve our communication techniques using design thinking (human-centered design) and storytelling. We expect that showing content that engage our audience positively we can generate changes in daily behaviors.

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- Barkley Inc. and Futurecast LLC, 2016. The Millennial Mindset: Quantifying the Impact on Consumer Spend and Brand Preference Across Generations.
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