



Treball de Fi de Grau

Silence and wellbeing in the XXI century:
A qualitative study on the promotion of silence as wellbeing

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Abstract: At a first glance silence can seem the mere absence of sound, however new initiatives around the world are promoting its values as a source of mental and physical wellbeing. The following qualitative study aims to identify what themes are used to promote silence as part of wellbeing. The research methods consist of personal interviews, a case study on four examples of silence promotion, and a thematic content analysis of the Instagram accounts of three different organisations. The study finds that highlighting nature, communicating the feelings of wellbeing from silence, reflectional messages and promoting practices of silence, are the most recurrent topics and consequently, are the most relevant to consider when promoting silence. Living in the digital century, this project believes it is relevant to investigate how silence can be communicated, especially on digital platforms, with the unique purpose to contribute to individual and collective wellbeing.

Keywords: silence; wellbeing; promotion; Instagram; content analysis

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Preface

«El silenci no és tan sols l'absència de soroll. En el passat, els homes d'Occident assaborien les profunditats i els matisos del silenci. El consideraven la condició per al recolliment, per a l'escolta d'un mateix, per a la meditació, per a l'oració, per la fantasia, per a la creació; sobretot com el lloc interior d'on emergeix la paraula. En detallaven les tàctiques socials. La pintura era per a ells paraula de silenci.

Avui en dia és difícil estar en silenci, cosa que ens impedeix sentir aquesta paraula interior que calma i tranquil·litza. La societat imposa rendir-se al soroll per tal de ser part de tot en lloc d'apostar per l'escolta d'un mateix. D'aquesta manera, l'estructura mateixa de l'individu s'ha vist modificada. Tanmateix, alguns pelegrins solitaris, artistes i escriptors, adeptes de la meditació, dones i homes retirats en monestirs, alguns visitants de tombes i, sobretot, enamorats que es miren i callen, són a la recerca de silenci i resten sensibles a les seves textures. Tot i això, són com viatgers atrapats en una illa, més aviat deserta, les ribes de la qual estan erosionades.»

- Fragment from *Histoire du silence, de la Renaissance à nos jours*, Alain Corbin (1936).

Introduction

Silence as wellbeing in the XXI century is situated in a context where more than 60% of the world's population is an active internet user and spends an average of 7 hours online every day (Kemp, 2021). According to the World Health Organisation, 2021, 20% of the world's children and adolescents have a mental health condition today, and it is said it will be one of the leading causes of disability in the world by 2030.

Contrarily, public interests and demands are starting to change, as century old practices such as mindfulness, yoga or meditation are increasing in popularity (Lange, 2021). During the COVID-19 pandemic, the amount of money users spent on meditation apps grew 52% from 2018 to 2019 (Chapple, 2020), and even the popular streaming platform Netflix created a series on meditation (Hunt, 2021). The concept of wellness is shifting to a more holistic point of view: "Wellness is so much more than what we eat and how we exercise, it's our relationships, our sleep patterns, our mindset, our stress levels, and just how we look after ourselves on a day to day basis", (Ella, 2020). Marketing expert Philip Kotler, states marketing¹ focus is heading towards value-driven and human spirit (known as marketing 3.0) (Kotler et al., 2010).

Within this context, this study presents silence as a worldwide accessible form of wellbeing. Related to mindfulness, the application of silence aims to move further toward the goals of alleviating human psychological suffering and helping others live a life that is happier and more fulfilling (Keng et al., 2011). The study analyses what topics are generally used to communicate the benefits of silence, focused on an analysis of three Instagram accounts that promote silence.

This project is structured with an initial problem statement, research objectives, a theoretical framework on the general concept of silence - its relation to wellbeing –the promotion of wellbeing, and conducts a qualitative research on initiatives that promote silence today. This topic of investigation was chosen firstly out of curiosity and by the fact that silence is such a basic yet mysterious phenomenon, and because of the potential of silence within the context of today: not only are we living in a time when technology is being used in its highest point in history, but we are also living in the noisiest period in history, for example: traffic noise, background music, or notifications, etc., and more importantly, the sound of thoughts, things to do, pressure and stress.

Silence can be easily experienced in nature and solitude but as most people live in urban areas, silence has become an exceptional phenomenon. As young members of society, questioning what type of future and societies are being built and, more importantly, how people will live within society, is considered relevant.

¹ Activity, set of institutions, and processes for creating, communicating, delivering, and exchanging offerings that have value for customers, clients, partners, and society at large. American Marketing Association (2017).

Problem statement & research objectives

As reports from the World Health Organisation predict a high increase in mental health, and at the same time, data shows there is a continuously increasing demand for wellbeing experiences or products, this project reflects on how silence can be a solution to this problem.

The basis of this study is that experiencing quiet time in silence can improve physical and mental health. However, prior research shows there are scarce initiatives around the globe that promote silence directly. This study aims to analyse what thematic patterns current initiatives use to promote silence, specifically through Instagram, as it is a popular social media platform. The purpose of the analysis is to identify key points for health institutions and organisations to promote silence in the future.

Research question: What themes are used to promote silence as wellbeing?

Primarily Research objectives

- Identify what themes are the most relevant to use when communicating silence as wellbeing

Secondary research objectives

- Identify general themes used in the promotion of silence as wellbeing on Instagram through a qualitative content analysis of the written messages used
- Raise awareness about the role of silence in society with this project

The research objective aims to connect three elements: silence – wellbeing – promotion, and extract conclusions on their viability.



Figure 1: Three key elements studied in the work: Silence – Wellbeing – Promotion

Theoretical framework

To define silence, the theoretical framework includes a brief overview of its meaning in different fields, followed by the effects of silence and noise on our wellbeing, defined in this project as the presence of positive emotions and moods, the absence of negative emotions, satisfaction with life, fulfilment and positive functioning (National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, 2018), and finally, includes examples of promotion of awareness and how silence can be promoted.

Introduction to silence

At a first glance, silence is defined as a period without any sound; complete quiet (Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary & Thesaurus, 2021). However, in further research on silence the following phrase appears recurrently: "Silence is not just the absence of sound". The foundation of the research is that silence is a basic phenomenon presented in the form of lack of sound, from which we can extract different understandings and uses, one of which can contribute to wellbeing: (silence) "is a primary, objective reality, which cannot be traced back to anything else. It cannot be replaced by anything else; it cannot be exchanged with anything else" (Max Picard, 1948; Lee, 2009).

A variety of religious traditions teach that silence is a means to develop self-knowledge, live more harmoniously and experience God's presence (J. Allen, 1969). Catholic priest Francesc Perearnau (personal interview, 2/4/2021) described silence as a way of interacting with God "God speaks through silence," and a form of peace.

Roman orator Marcus Tullius Cicero (106-43 BC) said, "Silence is one of the great arts in conversation." However, studies show western cultures tend to think that communication is a verbal activity and often feel uncomfortable when others are silent (Newman, 1982; Kawabata & Gastaldo, 2015). The perception of silence changes depending on the culture. For instance, in Japan, silence is valued and is a culturally grounded part of communication (Nakai, 2002, Kawabata & Gastaldo, 2015), that conveys emotions and shows respect (Jones, 2011).

In music silence is measured in 0 dB (decibels) and can be visually represented. Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756–1791), Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827), or John Cage (1912-1992) used silence to power the expression in their music and it has been a source of inspiration and creativity, (Kawabata & Gastaldo, 2015). Silence, the same as creativity, can be presented as a powerful, internal force that escapes capture by any scientific means (De Vet, 2007).

"Music is not the notes but the silence in between" - Mozart (n.d).



Figure 2: Symbol of Silence in music

However as (Kagge & Translation from L. Segarra, 2017) writes “silence is well hidden under a cacophony of traffic commotion, thoughts, music, machines, iPhones and snowplows”. Today society is accustomed to living in constant stimulation. A study from 2014 determined that 70% of men and 25% of women preferred to give themselves small electric shocks than to sit in silence for 12 minutes (Kulezic-Wilson, 2016), and in the US, dead air² is considered an offense that can be fined (Streamline RBR, 2015). According to (Daley, 2014), humans are avoiding stillness and solitude because we fear the truth a world without distraction would lead us to face. Agnus Dei from the cathedral of Vic (2021) shares the same idea: “Silence makes you face your consciousness, that is why many people prefer to have music or sound in the background, to not be left alone with their thoughts”.

“All of humanity's problems stem from man's inability to sit quietly in a room alone.” – Blaise Pascal 1654

Silence for wellbeing

According to the European Environment Agency (2021), more than 100 million people in Europe are exposed to harmful levels of environmental noise pollution³, responsible for premature deaths, cases of ischemic heart disease, and according to Stansfeld & Matheson (2003), related to child learning impairment, task performance, social behaviour and hypertension, amongst others. Neuroscientist Michel LeVan Quyen, talks about two types of noise pollution: exterior noise, such as the sounds of traffic or background chatter, and interior noise, understood as the background sound of thoughts, and states that both forms of noise are essential for our health (Michel LeVan Quyen, 2020). His research determined cerebral silence allows brain regeneration and is essential

² Radio silence: period of silence during radio or television broadcast that is not intended. (Webster, 2021).

³ Noise pollution: noise coming from a variety of sources and is widely present not only in the busiest urban environments but increasingly in once natural environments. According to European Environment Agency (2021). A

for creativity, memory, and personal building (Sanchis, 2019). Other scientific research shows silence improves individual and group focus and creativity (De Vet, 2007).

However, some effects of spending time in silence cannot be scientifically analysed. During history many authors have referred to silence as a way to self-awareness, inner-stillness, and creativity. Margaret Parry wrote “if we wish to attain an authentic life, it is indispensable to build in ourselves the monastery of silence”(Parry, n.d; Corbin, 2019).

Self-awareness is important because we are able to understand and experience ourselves as unique and separate individuals, that empowers to identify personal strengths and limits (Wellbeing Support Services, 2019). Professor and founder of the Institute of Silence Jordi Reixach (May 2021) says “silence is the most powerful tool the universe has put at our disposal to connect with ourselves. The magic of life takes shape, and we align ourselves with our purpose. We bring out our true vital and creative potential”. Furthermore, Pablo d’Ors describes the effect of meditation in his book *Biography of Silence* (2012):

“The more we meditate, the more capacity for perception we have and also a finer sensitivity. We stop living bluntly, which is how our days usually go. Our gaze clears, and we begin to see the true colour of things. Our ears are sharpened to unsuspected limits, and we begin to hear - and there is not an ounce of poetry in what I say - the true sound of the world.” – Pablo d’Ors (2012).

Other authors relate silence to being mindful. Kagge (2017) mentions silence is about “getting inside what you are doing, to experience more than to think and to live fully in each moment”. Furthermore, followers of the Instagram account of the Institute of Silence (2021) were asked to answer the question - “What does Silence mean to you? Answers included connectedness with the self (individual) - connectedness to the surroundings (the world) - peace - nature - presence – joy (see annex).

Promotion of wellbeing

In 2008, the United Kingdom’s New Economics Foundation created ‘Five Ways to Wellbeing’, consisting of health messages developed to reflect behaviour that people can undertake that leads to improvements in mental health and wellbeing (NHS Confederation, 2011). The Five messages consisted of: Connect, Be Active, Take Notice, Keep Learning and Give.



Figure 3: Five ways to wellbeing NHS confederation (2011).

One of the components is “take notice”, which is further described in the report as “To Be curious. Catch sight of the beautiful. Remark on the unusual. Notice the changing seasons. Savour the moment. Be aware of the world around you and what you are feeling. Reflecting on your experiences will help you appreciate what matters to you” (NHS Confederation, (2011). According to Headspace, (2021), the ability to be present, to rest in the here and now, fully engaged with whatever we’re doing in the moment is to be mindful, which is directly linked to various positive psychological effects, including increased subjective wellbeing, reduced psychological symptoms and emotional reactivity, and improved behavioural regulation (Keng et al., 2011). The Five Ways to Wellbeing are still popular and used today and have been adopted by other countries around the world.

How can silence be promoted

In personal interviews (2021), communication professor Ignasi Boada mentions: “The taste for silence does not arise from the person in the same way that oranges come from an orange tree. (...) A person fails to understand the importance of silence in a spontaneous way”.

Although communicating silence may seem a paradox, personal experiences and the empirical benefits of silence can be communicated: Blogs, books and academic articles explain the benefits of silence using words, such as this project, commonly known as storytelling. On the other hand, the creation of physical silent experiences such as silent areas, events, and government regulations to reduce noise pollution, are promoting silence through actions, known as story-doing⁴. Although silence can only be experienced physically and individually, both forms of raising awareness are important.

⁴ Story-doing: narrative technique that, through visual record, energizes wills and, in turn, provides credibility (Sarasqueta, 2021)

The intention of the Five Ways to Wellbeing report (NHS Confederation, 2011) was to develop a mental health equivalent of the popular message that people should eat five portions of fruit and vegetables a day, the base of which was to improve citizens health in both cases. In order for scientific facts to reach citizens, promotion is fundamental. "Rescuing silence seems to be less difficult than many other challenges we face, but first we have to recognize its value" (Hempton & Grossman, 2021). Although silence itself cannot be found online, the values it represents can indeed be communicated and promoted through digital platforms. Initiatives around the globe aim to promote the benefits of silence by reincorporating it into urban areas and individual practice, although both private and public initiatives are currently scarce.

Methodology

To investigate how to promote silence, this project has used a qualitative collection and analysis of data as qualitative research is shown to contribute to an understanding of the human condition in different contexts and of a perceived situation (Bengtsson, 2016). The qualitative research used 3 techniques to collect data: personal interviews, case studies of 4 examples and a thematic content analysis.

1. Personal interviews

The interviews were carried out to gain a personal approach to silence and because, according to (Hu et al., 2014), "interviews are an appropriate method when there is a need to collect in-depth information on people's opinions, thoughts, experiences, and feelings," and thus are useful if we want to understand how silence can be promoted effectively.

The respondents were two religious believers from the Christian Cathedral of Vic, selected regardless of religion type, and a communication and philosophy professor from the Ramon Llull University (Barcelona). Using the interviews was very effective as the topic of inquiry relates to issues that require complex questioning and considerable probing (Hu et al., 2014). The Interviews bring a more personal approach and broader understanding of silence and give consistency to the findings in the content analysis.

2. Case study of 4 silence promotion initiatives

The purpose to include 4 example studies was to mention real initiatives that focus specifically on the promotion of silence today. The selection criteria for the examples was to find initiatives that focused uniquely on the promotion of silence, within the European ambit, that were ongoing today, and that had some form of digital presence.

Very few initiatives were found through online research. Nevertheless, the examples selected represent exactly what this project is exploring: the direct

promotion of silence. The selected cases consist of: The Government of Finland, Silent Space from the United Kingdom, Institute of Silence from Spain and Guide to Silence from Sweden. Each example was studied individually through reports, webpages or social media platforms, in order to give a brief overview of their purpose and how they achieve it, and represent examples of the storydoing and storytelling form of promotion.

3. Thematic content analysis

The thematic content analysis (TCA) method was selected as it is the most foundational of qualitative analytic procedures and uses descriptive presentation of qualitative data (Anderson, 2007), which for this study is the most appropriate to answer the research question “What topics are used to promote silence as wellbeing on Instagram”. Three of the four selected examples in the case study had active Instagram accounts and were used for analyzing how they acted on social media. The study identifies common themes in the textural data from the captions of each post and text included in images or photos.

1. Data collection method

The thematic content analysis method is based on digital promotion of silence through active Instagram accounts. The data collected reviews a total of 72 posts from 3 different accounts from March 2021 to April 2021. The time period has been considered sufficient to gain understanding on the general typology of content posted. The data was extracted using a tabulated extraction form consisting of 5 items: 1- Upload date, 2- Caption, 3- Hashtags, 4- Media type, 5- Others. (Table 1 annex).

2. Data analysis method

Once the data was retrieved and tabulated, the contents of the posts were analysed using the thematic analysis method. The method usually follows six steps:

- 1-Familiarization with the extracted data
- 2-Identifying initial coding units
- 3-Generating themes
- 4-Reviewing themes
- 5-Defining and naming themes
- 6-Writing the report

The first step was to read through and examine the collected data and look for commonalities in the text, and text included in the images if there were any. The second step consisted of identifying initial coding units from an analysis of 111 individual keywords. These were analysed and counted using frequency word count to identify which codes were more recurrent, thus, used more often to promote silence. From the analysis from which 14 codes were extracted:

Table 1: Initial codes for the thematic content analysis

Codes		
1-About the organization	2-Collaborations	3-Community
4-Activities and Events	5-Nature	6-Peacefulness
7-Positivity	8-Mindfulness	9-Meditation
10-Reflection	11-Knowledge	12-Habits
13-Culture and celebrations	14-Current world affairs	

The third step was to classify the codes into themes. This process was done by grouping similar topics into wider groups, such as grouping the code for mindfulness and meditation under the theme “wellbeing practices”. The fourth step consisted of the review of the consistency of the themes. This step went back to the initial collection of data: the accumulation of posts that had produced a theme, and was contemplated in a backwards process, to see if the general theme was coherent with a determinant post. During this process, some codes and subthemes were revised to make them more precise. The last step was to define and name the themes and write down what each theme entailed in general terms.

The use of three different research methods to approach the subject of the project more broadly was useful to complement the different parts of the research that gave more consistency to the discussion.

Results

The following chapter refers to the results in the 1-interviews, 2- cases studies on silence promotion, 3-thematic content analysis results.

1. Personal interviews

The interviews approached the most humane facet of silence in this study. Agnus Dei, a nun, and Francesc Pere Arnau, a Catholic priest, are both individuals who live close to silence and who were able to express how they perceive silence and what benefits it has brought to them. In general terms, the outlook towards silence by both respondents was defined as “peace” and a way to communicate with God “a way to hear God and for God to hear you” (Francesc Pere Arnau, 2021). Agnus Dei, from the same cathedral, mentions silence can be found in the house of God – like the cathedrals – where “the peace that lies in silence fills you, reassures you”. However, Agnus Dei (personal interview, 2021) mentions this silence can also be found in nature: “If you go alone to the beach in winter, the sound of the sea brings that peace again”. As a result, from this peace, Agnus Dei, uses the adjectives “joy”, “charged batteries”, and “lifts your spirits again”. Francesc Pere Arnau further talks about silence as something deeply profound and used the depths of the sea as a metaphor to illustrate the spiritual life: “on the surface it is always rough, there is wind and storms, but as you sink down towards the depths

of the sea, it gets calmer. In the depths there is peace, and there is silence” (Francesc Pere Arnau, 2021).

Philosophy and communication professor Ignasi Boada, mentioned different facets of silence including the difference between being silent and being in silence, the inability to define silence quoting Wittgenstein (1921) "Whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent" and the fascination of silence by western cultures as the image of the suited engineer meditating in the grass of Silicon Valley. Boada mentioned personal worries about the number of students unable to sit still or concentrate and puts emphasis on the need for silence to be taught “a person fails to understand the importance of silence in a spontaneous way, but there is education which predisposes you to learn this” (Boada, 2021). Furthermore, the professor remarked on the association of silence in a more philosophical and religious tradition, as a tool to disarm language: “Silence is a symbol of pacification” and mentions how the lack of silence pays off in a very expensive way: with disorientation and a frantic state of existence. (Boada, personal interview 2021). Boada concludes how the importance of silence should be loudly and clearly communicated.

All the interviews spoke of silence positively, noting at the same time, how many people today do not enjoy silence. The interviews presented interesting correlations, specifically in terms of describing individual feelings or emotions when being in silence, specifically remarking on silence as an effective way to individual peacefulness, and the reflective and depth of silence, incorporating quotes and recommending books from other authors.

2. Case study of 4 silence promotion initiatives

The following chapter includes 4 cases of promotion of silence in the XXI century from 4 European countries: Finland, the United Kingdom, Sweden and Spain. All initiatives emerge from different starting points: the first acts as an institutional initiative, the second as a non-profit project, the third as a private organisation, and the fourth as a private project with institutional collaboration. The main focus of all initiatives is to promote silence for wellbeing although they have different forms of action.

Example 1: Branding silence for Finland

In 2010 the Finish Tourism Industry needed new marketing themes to brand the country and attract tourism. Silence - as a strong cultural background in Finland, and a unique characteristic of the country - was decided to be a resource that could be marketed, the same as berries, mushrooms and Finland’s clear waters. “Instead of saying that it’s really empty and quiet and nobody is talking about anything here, let’s embrace it and make it a good thing,” (Kiviranta, 2010). Finnish products were branded with silence (for example, Rönkkö watches “made in Finnish silence”), a new regulation on urban noise pollution was implemented by city planning, where quiet towns were branded as “quiet towns”, and holidays in Finland were promoted as “relaxing holidays to enjoy Finnish silence”. According to the Tourism Report Delegation, (2010) in the future, people will be prepared to pay for the experience of silence.

Example 2: Silent Space

Silent Space is a non-profit project based in the United Kingdom in 2016. Silent Space works to offer silent areas in public gardens, with the tagline “peaceful time in green spaces”. During the opening hours of the park in question, Silent Space promotes areas in which people can enjoy silence in nature to appreciate it more fully. The only rules are to be silent and turn off mobile phones and technology. The initiative received very positive feedback from visitors and the project now has 55 parks that offer silent spaces all over the United Kingdom. “How much easier might our lives be if green spaces for quiet reflection were easily accessible to all?” (Silent Space, 2019).

Example 3: Institute of Silence

The Catalan based organization, launched in October 2020, aims to promote wellbeing, happiness and creativity through the values of silence. The company offers activities and events that include silent experiences for individuals and corporations. The covid-19 pandemic led to physical events of the company to be cancelled or postponed. In this context, the Institute of Silence decided to create monthly live talks between Edgar Tarrés (founder) and a guest from a different background - writer, artist, entrepreneur and radio presenter-. Hosted on their Instagram account, the live talk allowed any member of the public to participate, comment and feel included in the conversation. The diversity in guests, the uniqueness of the idea, the possibility to interact, and the fact that it was on social media, made the live talks a great way to promote silence and raise awareness. Although the brand was not able to host planned events it could be said the company created an online community during the pandemic, contributing by exercising forms of raising awareness digitally.

Example 4: Guide to Silence

Guide to Silence is a project based in Sweden in 1998 which initially offered a guide book to market silence in Swedish nature and help people lower their stress levels, find new levels of well-being and enjoy nature in new ways. “The Guide to Silence project shows the way to green, calm places that can promote well-being and inner stillness. The focus is green places close to or in the cities of the world.” (Ulf Bohman, founder, n.d). The project acts both through storytelling and storydoing. Today, Guide to Silence offers planned virtual walks, 65 identified calm places in Stockholm and its surroundings, has improved the guide book with pictures and short texts to inspire to find calm places in nature, shares links of YouTube videos of silent walks, and also carries out regular Instagram promotion.

3. Thematic content analysis results

Using thematic content analysis, the text of 72 posts from three Instagram accounts from March 2021 to April 2021 were reviewed. Table 1 shows the backwards results from the thematic content analysis process. It illustrates the most frequently used keywords, their classification into the codes and then the grouping of the codes into themes.

Table 2: Themes, codes and keywords extracted from the thematic content analysis in the promotion of silence as wellbeing on Instagram.

Themes	Codes	Keywords
The brand	About the organization	Silent Space; Institute of Silence; Guide To Silence; Team; Founders
	Collaborations	Shout outs; Mentions; Guests; Conversation
	Community	Participation; Videos of silences around the world; Group experience

	Activities and Events	Live talks; Program;
Nature	Nature	Nature; Green places; Spring Wind; Sun; Birds; Forest; Lake; Trees
Wellbeing sentiments	Peacefulness	Calm; Relax; Inner-stillness
	Positivity	Joy, Love, Freedom; Acceptance; No judgement
Wellbeing emotions	Mindfulness	Listen; Awareness; Sounds of nature; Creativity; Silent Observer; Pay attention;
	Meditation	Connection; Inner-stillness; Focus on the breath; Physical activity
	Habits	Walk in nature; Silent observer; Mindset
Reflection	Reflection	Quote; Need for silence; Extinction of silence; Mystery of life; Personal experience; Beauty of silence
	Knowledge	Author biography; History of silence; Entrepreneurship; Scientific studies; Interview
Commonalities	Culture and celebrations	National day of Reflection; International Silent Day; Sant Jordi;
	Current world affairs	Pandemic; Spring; Busy world; Information and entertainment; Workspaces; school-environments

The results of the content analysis showed that there were 6 general themes that make up the main topics in the promotion of silence on Instagram. These are: the brand, nature, wellbeing emotions, wellbeing practices, reflection and commonalities. Essentially, a theme is a generalized name that describes similar elements and patterns in messages. The following points describe what each theme entails:

The brand
This theme includes all messages that refer to matters related to the organisation or project as such. The theme includes messages about the founders of the project, team members, new collaborations, engaging with the audience with the objective of creating community.
Nature
The theme values all elements that refer to nature, mostly seen in the analysis, in a positive outlook. The theme nature empowers outdoor experiences and promotes the beauty of natural environments. The theme includes specific elements - wind, birds, lakes, trees – and is specially used by Silent Space and Guide to Silence.
Wellbeing emotions
The theme comprises all descriptions of feelings and emotions related to spending quiet time in silence. Frequently appearing keywords include peace, joy, relaxed or inner-stillness and is a strong form to express the benefits of silence.
Wellbeing practices
This theme comprises all the practices that contribute to wellbeing and that are promoted by the organizations: meditation and mindfulness are the two general topics. However, other elements also include the purpose of these practices, such as habits and sub-terms that put emphasis on the practice: to listen, be aware, connection and focus.
Reflection

The theme reflection comprises quotes, knowledge, such as book fragments, scientific studies or interviews, or topics such as the extinction of silence. The theme includes all messages that promote silence through reflection. This can be quite direct, such as “Silent is an anagram of listen” or indirect, “I have but one wish / For all who walk this green Earth / To know peace like this” and is a very recurrent theme in all three initiatives to promote silence.
Commonalities
The last theme does not promote silence directly, but is recurrently used by the Instagram accounts that were analysed. “Commonalities” includes sub-themes in the post to boost engagement as a recurrent social media element, including topics such as culture, national celebrations, time of the year or the coronavirus pandemic. This theme empowers the organization to connect with the audience.

To clarify the description of the themes, Table 2 includes examples of some of the analysed Instagram captions.

Table 3: Themes with examples of post extracted from the thematic content analysis in the promotion of silence as wellbeing on Instagram.

Themes	Example Posts
The brand	<p>Silent Space is very simple. Think the garden version of the quiet carriage on a train. We are silent while the everyday sounds of the garden and its surroundings (...) (March 13 2021, @silentspaace)</p> <p>(...) Aquest muntatge ha set possible gràcies a totxs els que han compartit el seu moment de silenci amb nosaltres. (March 20 2021, @institutdelsilenci)</p> <p>Dissabte 20 de març és el dia Internacional del Silenci. Tindrem amb nosaltres Milena Llop, professional amb més de 30 anys d'experiència (...) (March 15 2021, @institutdelsilenci)</p>
Nature	(...) on a stormy day, nature roars at us. Total silence is rare in nature. There is often something calming and comforting in the sounds of nature.” (April 15 2021, @guidetosilence)
Wellbeing emotions	<p>Peaceful moments in another Spring in another world.(March 6 2021, @silentspaace)</p> <p>A peaceful walk on a Monday morning feels like a positive start to the week! (March 15 2021, @silentspaace)</p>
Wellbeing practices	<p>(...) “Being an observer, a silent observer - pay attention to life right here and now. Observing without deciding if it’s good bad or something else - without mental commentary. If only for a minute.....” (March 1 2021, @guidetosilence)</p> <p>Kobe Bryant on meditation video. Happy International Sports Day (...). (April 6 2021, @institutdelsilenci)</p> <p>“The Guide to Silence is mainly about one thing, the habit of being in silence and stillness in nature. This habit of going out often, preferably daily, listening and observing nature with all your senses. Yes, the world would most likely look different if we all could establish this habit. Five, ten or fifteen minutes of daily silence in nature. Can it be that simple?” (March 22 2021, @guidetosilence)</p>
Reflection	‘There is no need to escape from the world, but to enjoy it better we should leave some space for periods of reflective peace.’ (The Spirit of Silence - John Lane) (April 7 2021 @silentspaace)

	«El silenci no és tan sols l'absència de soroll. En el passat, els homes d'Occident assaborien les profunditats i els matisos del silenci (...) Corbin, 1936. (March 24 2021, @institutdelsilenci)
Commonalities	Pre-Covid we would sometimes tie notebooks to benches to see how visitors felt about a space. (...) (Bench - @dartingtontrust) (March 19 2021, @silentspace)
	Des de l'Institut del Silenci desitjem un bon Sant Jordi i bon cap de setmana a tothom(...) (April 23 2021, @institutdelsilenci)

In general, the themes represent aspects that all three organizations use in their communication of silence as wellbeing. Nevertheless, there are slight differences in the focus: Silence Spaces uses nature and green-places to promote silence, whilst the Institute of Silence is more about engaging with the community and forming collaborations to expand the general benefits of silence, and Guide to Silence offers more reflective content, specifically related to nature.

Table 3 illustrates the differences and similarities in the results of the individual analysis. Silent Space and Institute of Silence generally include hashtags referring to theme “wellbeing emotions” with hashtags such as – tranquility – peace - *benestar* (wellbeing) - *felicitat* (happiness) - etc. The hashtags used by Guide to Silence are more focused within the theme “wellbeing practices”, as they include sub-themes such as habits or practices for wellbeing – to notice nature – mindfulness moments – calm mind – etc. Silent Space and Guide to Silence give relevance to nature and the benefits from nature.

Table 4: Differences and similarities between result analysis of each organisation separately.

Organization	Recurrantly used hashtags	Total N. from March to April	Others	5 most frequent key words *
Silent Space	#silentspace #tranquility #natureconnection #peace #simplepleasures	N= 27 Images=23 Videos=4	Includes mentions to other accounts	silent-space quote nature visitor peacefulness
Institute of Silence	#silenci #institutdelsilenci #silence #benestar #felicitat	N= 17 Images=9 Videos=8	Often includes mentions to other accounts and signature (Salut i Silenci).	silence guest talks meditation live
Guide to silence	Always uses the same: #stillnessspeaks #noticenature #mindfulmoments #observenature #natureretreat ...	N= 29 Images=0 Videos=28	Starts with description of weather of the video. Ends with:more in the Guide to Silence book (It's now quietly released, first as an e-book: You can find it here: guidetosilence.org)	nature stillness silence walk world / inner / experience

*ordered by frequency

Further differential elements seen in the table include the regularity in posting, and the media type used. Guide to Silence only uses videos accompanied by the caption text whilst the Institute of Silence and Silent Space vary in media type.

The use of the digital accounts not only disseminate information, but also offer small experiences: both the Instagram account of Silence Space and Guide to Silence post videos of silent time in nature, and the Institute of Silence hosts monthly live talks that encourage participation. In this case, the Instagram accounts both promote silence through storytelling but also encourage visual or physical prompts that provide credibility (story-doings).

From the academic research, information interviews and the results of the content analysis, the topics used to promote silence as wellbeing on Instagram – avoiding the role of the organization and commonalities – are “wellbeing emotions”, “wellbeing practices”, “reflection” and “nature”. The themes appear to be the most relevant topics in the promotion of silence both online and offline. The patterns resulted from this research on promoting silence as wellbeing conclude that what is most interesting to communicate is:

1. Wellbeing emotions. Describing feelings such as joy, peacefulness and calm that arise from experiencing silence. Both in the answers from the Institute of Silence to “What does Silence mean to you?” and in the interviews, describing the feelings related to silence was the most recurrent element when talking about the benefits of silence.
2. Wellbeing practices. Silence can be wellbeing when practiced, linked to mindfulness, meditation and creating habits. In the promotion of silence as wellbeing the specific practices are incorporated: - to listen, be aware, take regular walks in nature, quiet time, etc.
3. Reflection. As silence is abstract, it cannot be fully defined. For this reason, the use of quotes, reflections, and personal experiences are used to express and define this phenomenon.
4. Nature. Highlighting nature is the final element this study provides when promoting silence. The personal interviews, academic research and content analysis strongly incorporate nature when communicating silence as wellbeing, elevating and recommending its experience.

An efficient and complete communication of silence as something that can contribute to living better lives can include the use of feelings, practices, reflections and our surroundings. Figure 4 represents the keywords in the 4 general themes to promote silence.

The conclusion of this project is that to promote silence is to promote wellbeing. As governments and institutions promote healthy eating, recycling or safe driving, the benefits of silence to wellbeing are yet to be widely communicated. It is a universally accessible, economic, and gentle way to help people and societies live better. From the academic research, information interviews and results of the content analysis, this study finds that describing the feelings of wellbeing from experiencing silence, promoting practices that conduct to silence, providing reflectional messages and highlighting nature as wellbeing, are the 4 most relevant topics to use to communicate silence as wellbeing.

Further studies on silence will surely be carried out as it is still a widely unexplored topic with many possibilities to contribute to creating richer life experiences and more balanced societies.

“I believe it's possible for everyone to discover this silence within themselves. It is there all the time, even when we are surrounded by constant noise. Deep down in the ocean, below the waves and ripples, you can find your internal silence. Standing in the shower, letting the water wash over your head, sitting in front of a crackling fire, swimming across a forest lake or taking a walk over a field: all these can be experiences of perfect stillness too. I love that.” — Erling Kagge, Silence: In the Age of Noise

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