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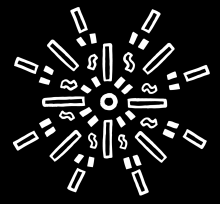
COMMONS /DELETION ISSUES



July 2023

CRIBA research

Scope

RESEARCH GOALS

- Understand the current user behavior in the image upload process specifying release rights.
- Understand the most common problems that result in deletion requests, identifying key commonalities of such deletion requests.

- 20 Participants:
  - 10 English users
  - 10 Spanish users
  - 12 Countries
  - All with previous activity in Commons

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CONTEXT
HOW PEOPLE PERCEIVE AND EMBRACE COMMONS

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FIRST REACTIONS

A priori Commons is directly associated with audiovisual content, specifically images.
With two broad definitions, which complement each other and are not exclusive.

As a tool to upload photos to WP articles

They met it out of necessity, for having to illustrate an article.
They tend to be curious users, very committed to their tasks and highly proactive

"I would tell them Commons is the database for the images that are used in Wikipedia and a place where you can share your images". (USA)

I reached Commons in need for images to illustrate my WP article. I thought nothing else could be done. (Argentina)

As a huge visual repository/library

People with some kind of activity linked to the audiovisual and/or academic/research world.
WC emerges as an ally when it comes to carrying out their projects.

"I'd say it is an open source, not for profit, repository for any creation you would like to share under a Creative Commons license, whether it is music, photography or illustrations, and so on" (USA).

CERTAINLY: No one considers WC as a tool isolated from WP
It is part of its ecosystem and drives the core attributes of the brand

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The drivers for uploading content to WC are diverse, but 3 great emerging ones were identified

Work/study

The vast majority recognize that they came out of necessity or due to a work/academic requirement. Workers from universities, NGOs or museums, as well as students were part of this sample.
As part of their duties, they had to write WP articles and, therefore, came to commons to illustrate them.

I met Commons because in the museum where I work there is a wikipedist. She explains us. I arrived by pure need, I had to upload an image to Wikipedia for an article that I published, I could learn with the wikipedist about use and I could learn in a simple way. (SPAIN)

Personal motivations

Vanity, personal promotion or even fun. Individual motivations are valid pathways to arrive and use Commons for personal gain.

"I came across Wiki Commons because I was searching for places where I could upload and share my images. So I did a Google search and one of the top choices was Wiki Commons. Flickr and Wiki Commons were the top choices." (USA)

Social contribution

Those with a more altruistic profile, have WC (as well as WP) as a tool to make contributions to the community in general
In the specific case of Commons, they range from providing content to capacitating and training society.
Although they are a minority, they are very intense profiles, activists and very involved with the tool.

"I have an archive of over 13,000 photos, and I found that by uploading them onto Commons I make a contribution by offering official-type reference photos, and I also get some extra views." (USA)

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Regardless of the DRIVERS, usability journeys are often similar

The know that it is not a massively-known tool, and understanding its usability required a learning curve with some trials and errors.

Even so, many have stated they do not fully understand the process yet. They still have some usability gaps and holes that they prefer to avoid.

Fewer requirements could cause greater massiveness and, consequently, fewer benefits.

"Experts" justify these hurdles and feel that it is part of the cost to access a professional, safe and free platform. In their minds, fewer requirements could cause greater massiveness and, consequently, fewer benefits. Those with less expertise, or with a less IT profile see it as an effective yet confusing tool, which could have a greater usability potential and popularity.

"The platform could be more intuitive. But at the same time I think that if it were simpler, people would spend their time uploading meaningless things. They would use it as an IG or as their own photo album. In other words, all the information they ask for is fine." (SPAIN)

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WC VS OTHER CONTENT PLATFORMS

Almost everyone sees WC and the entire WP environment as an ecosystem where seriousness and professionalism imprint their mark.

+ Mentioned — *- Mentioned*

COPYRIGHT RESPECT

The seriousness and professionalism with which the platform addresses and demands compliance with these rights is a differentiating factor that is highly valued by the community.

"You cannot reproduce images if you do not have the author's permission. We are too used to spreading images without having the rights. Or at least make sure it's a public image. I think it is appropriate from a legal point of view. I understand that it is more cumbersome, yes, and it can discourage someone who comes with another logic (ARGENTINA/SPANISH)

AN ACADEMIC / PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY

Unlike the playful, commercial or narcissistic spirit of most SSNN, WP/WC is a professional, serious and educational counterpart.

"Commons is not a social network but more like a reference site, so they want to make sure that the images you share are legit and have no copyright issues." (USA/ENGLISH)

ARTISTIC QUALITY

Last but not least: The quality of the images. Those with a more artistic eye recognize that other platforms compress and diminish the quality of their productions.

I used to share it on IG. but the quality of IG is horrible. Lots of compression. Before I used Flickr, I even paid for the license until 2 years ago. But what am I going to do with that good photo I took? Help someone at least (SPAIN/SPANISH)

In this context, many understand and justify the complexity and length of some steps when uploading material. They recognize that it can be tedious but at the same time they value the treatment and care that is given to the content.

"I'd say the upload process may be confusing to people, but it exists for a reason, which is protecting people's copyright or Creative Commons intentions. This is very important. So it is confusing, but there is a reason for it." (USA)

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SO, WHAT IS COMMONS?

- **For everyone:** a WP accessory. An image bank whose images can be reused legitimately and for FREE.

  For almost everyone: A WP plugin that could be better integrated. In addition to photos, they know they have videos and even a sound file.

- **For a few:** a tool with its own weight

"I would tell them Commons is the database for the images that are used in Wikipedia and a place where you can share your images." (USA)

"An image sharing tool. It is WP but in images. it's like another facet of WP. complements in images what is told in words. you have to upload them first to WC and from there they are shared to the WP article." (ARGENTINA)

"It is a platform where you can upload free-to-use images, sounds, videos, everything with regards to media. It is a platform where you can express yourself, how you perceive things."(NIGERIA)

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Summarizing
WC: Strengths and Weaknesses

Participants attribute the difficulties in the uploading process mainly to the complexity of the information required, which they consider of vital importance to maintain the seriousness and professionalism Wiki Commons has.

- Serious
- Respectful with copyright (the most respectful on the web)
- Professional
- Useful
- Free-use
- Collaborative
- AD-FREE

- Bureaucratic
- Requires learning
- Little intuitive
- For a few

Users have mixed feelings: They find the upload experience discouraging but also worthwhile. Do benefits overweight the burden? MAINLY YES, but they would really appreciate UX improvements.

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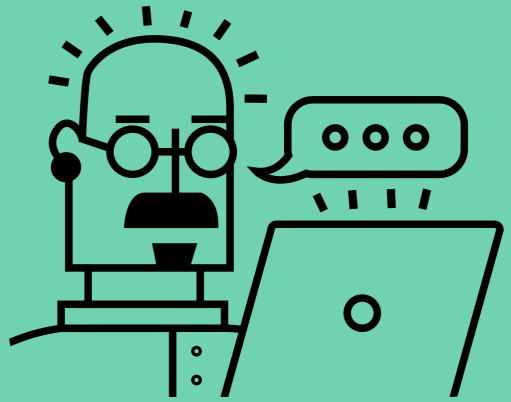
*“I think that the idea here is that the rights of the author, the rights of the publisher are handled much differently than they are in Instagram, which is funny because we upload more personal photos on Instagram than we do here. Here the idea is that other people can use the photo from this space, so they can be used elsewhere with Wiki as the source, so if there were no regulations, that would make that impossible.” (*SERBIA/ENGLISH)



*“I think a lot of people find Creative Commons licenses **confusing.** They should **be made friendlier**. Even I find it **daunting.** Creative Commons people are putting a lot of **burden on the user.** I think many people will think " this is much of a hassle, forget it".* (USA/ENGLISH)

“Because you have to respect copyright. They do it because it is an encyclopedia that has a different look, to give more academic information, with another approach. They give serious and reliable information. It does not have to be mixed with the content of social networks, but rather give another character to the information (9:50). There is historical information and serious topics, better to maintain an adequate level.”
(ARGENTINA/SPANISH)

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UX CHALLENGES

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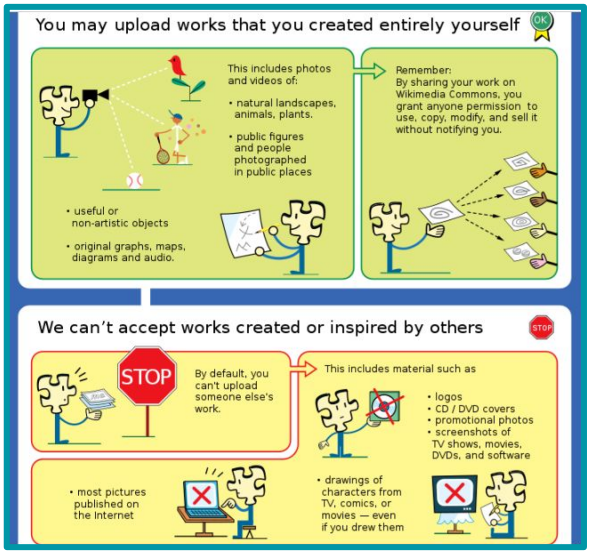
INFOGRAPHIC



- Not displayed on most users' accounts.
- Those who remember having read it in the past acknowledge that it was useful to understand what can be uploaded and what cannot, but they are not a majority.
- Some say it is useful, but in a deeper indagation, most are unaware of its actual content. They just mention it says that they can only upload images of their own.
- They do not seem to have read it thoroughly or even fully.
- Others state it is too wordy and that it should be more user friendly (video or voice).

"This is just a tutorial. I haven't read it. Personally, I would prefer if it was a video with a simple explanation. This is way too many words. I am more of a visual person, so only if I really really had a doubt I would read this." (PORTUGAL/ENGLISH)

"This tells me what I can do and what I cannot do. It says that I can only upload my images. I understand it and it is useful." (NIGERIA)

An infography that seems useful at first, but most actually dismiss or only read superficially.

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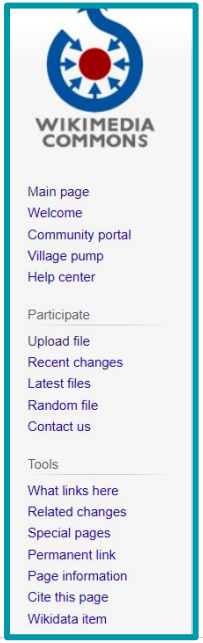
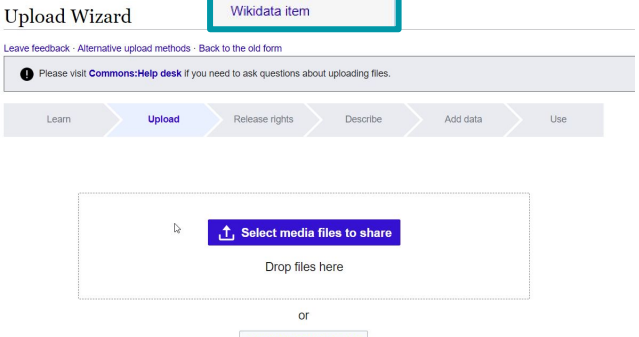
UPLOAD





- The UPLOAD process in general was not very complex.
  - However, it is pertinent to clarify that a couple of interviewees complained that the mere fact of reaching this point is labyrinthine for them.
  - They did not easily find the “upload” button and even resorted to googling and reaching out through other paths.
  - They demand more clarity on this point.

No major challenges at this point of the process. Some are unaware about what metadata is

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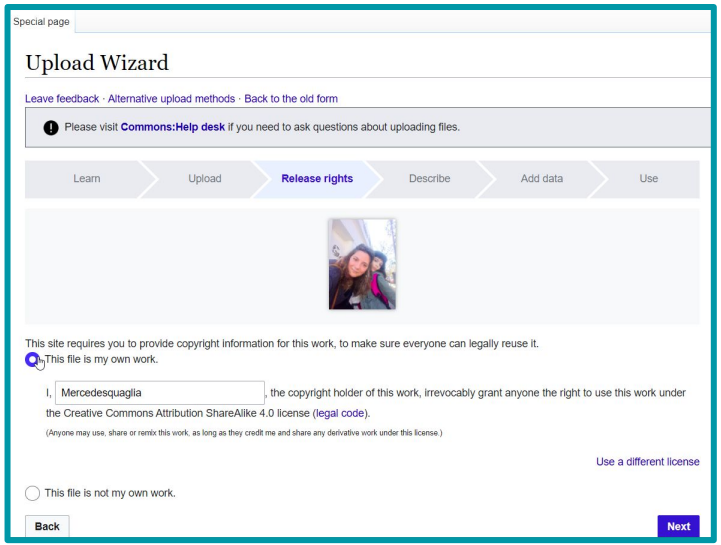
Release rights/ my own work



- ✓ **Users are unaware of the content of the licenses, but they assume they grant permission to share their images, and they trust Commons**
- ✓ **When it comes to their own images, they all accept the default option the system offers without further questioning.**

Although some mention reading the license in the past, the truth is that only a few seem to have actually read it in depth.

"I honestly don't know what the license says. I just trust Wikimedia. I guess it says that it is my work and I agree for it to be used freely by others." (USA)

"Yes, In license I leave that one there. I don't pay much attention to be honest.(SPAIN)

"When I upload my own work I choose the first option, which is Sharealike 4.0. I haven't read it but I assume I am giving the rights to use the image. I am not if it is the right one, but even if it isn't it is a contribution to the Internet and to Commons." (PORTUGAL)

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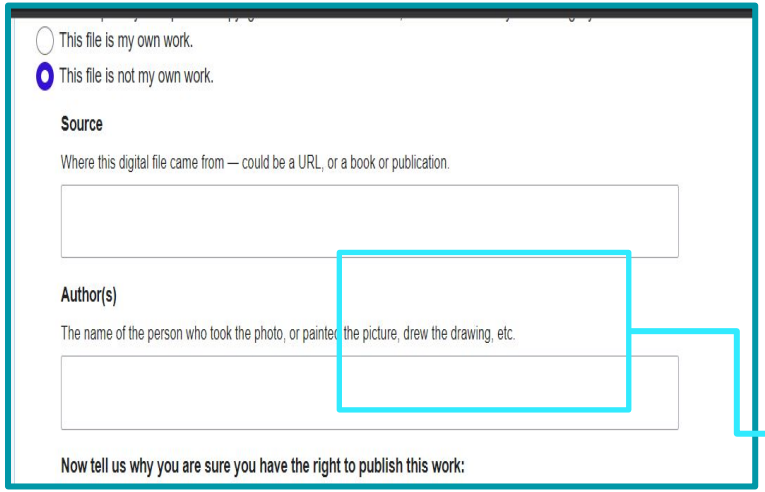
Release rights /Not my work



- ✓ **The guided experience to upload photos that have not been their own was a new activity for most.**
- ✓ **Most users have no previous experience uploading**
- ✓ **images that they have not created. What is more, many are completely unaware of the possibility to do so.**
- ✓ **Many were even fearful of possible sanctions and problems with their own account. The most suspicious ones only agreed when they were told not to do the full upload.**

"This is the critical part of it because if I say "this file is not mine", they will not allow me to continue with the upload." (UGANDA/ENGLISH)

"If you're going to upload a photo, ***it has to be yours. And that has to be explained somewhere. Now it feels more like you discover that on your own. Maybe there should be a warning when you create your account, that you can only upload your own images, or the ones you have a Commons license for, because even if you are the owner, you need a copyright for them****."* (USA)

The lack of experience and concern regarding the uploading of an image that they do not own is a confirmation that WC is a safe and professional site regarding the treatment they give to content.

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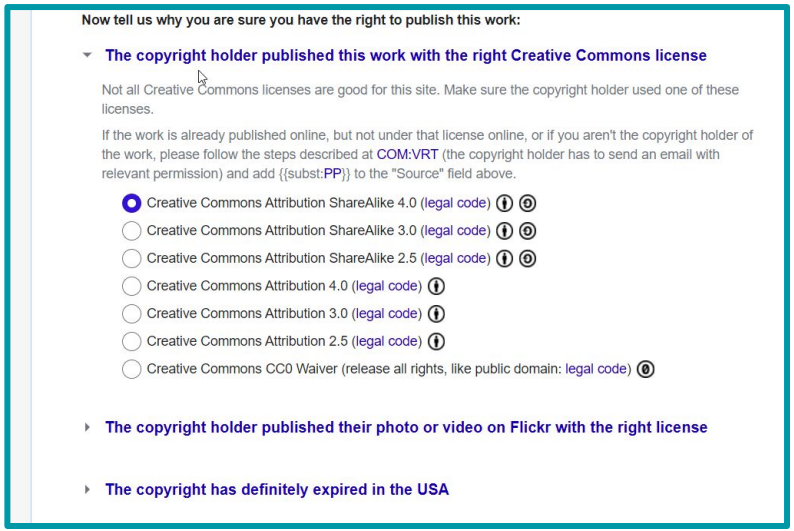
Release rights /Not my work II



- ✓ **Definitely: the most sensitive point and the one that generates more doubts to users.**
- ✓ **Users find this section too complex and demanding.**
- ✓ **They understand its importance but believe it should be made easier to understand.**
- ✓ **It takes too much time to read through the options and it requires certain previous knowledge/expertise to understand them.**
- ✓ **Although users do realize the importance of copyright, they trust that any of the license options provided by WC will be good, so they do not pay special attention to the choice they make.**
- ✓ **what they most demand: a brief explanation that clarifies the differences between the licenses**

I think a lot of people find Creative Commons licenses confusing. They should be made friendlier. Even I find it daunting. Creative Commons people are putting a lot of burden on the user. I think many people will think " this is much of a hassle, forget it".(USA)

“I am okay with doing it because I don't want to break any rules but I do think it could be easier. This almost feels like a test to me...I think it could be a bit more user friendly.” (SERBIA)

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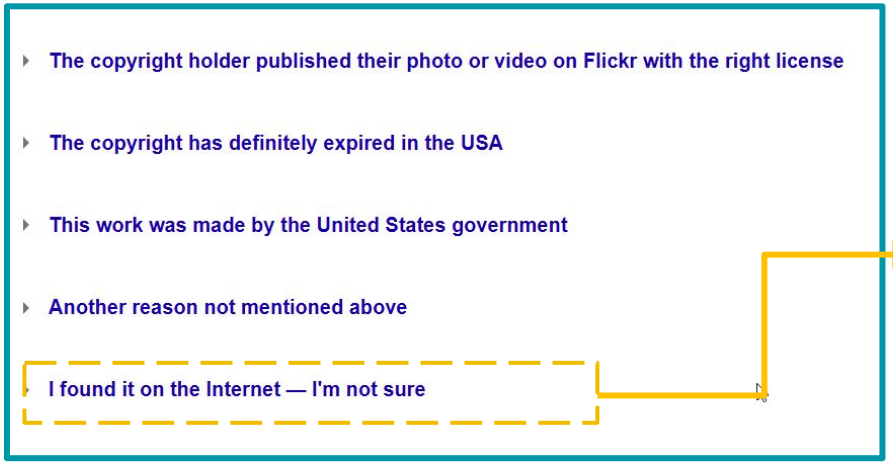
RELEASE RIGHTS III



- ✓ **Most did not realize that these were drop-down menus and that they could be possible options.**
- ✓ **In a guided manner, they were even more confused and without a clear criterion about the implications of these options.**

- ✓ **This option was overlooked by most. When they opened it, they were surprised. The broadness of criteria triggers more doubts than certainties. Can I put anything?**

"It is still not clear, because one thing is what Argentine law says and another is that of the USA, they are governed by different laws. I upload here a photo from 1952 and it is not the same here as in the USA. In that case they observed it, I repeat, it's confusing. From the user experience it is not easy. And I had a job objective and had taken a course. Someone more basic that comes with the logic of IG, I don't know if they are going to read everything from Creative Commons." (ARGENTINA/SPANISH)

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“I really don't know the differences between the different licenses. I suppose I would read the legal part and see which one applies. ***I know some details may change. I do admit that I find it complex.*** *The last one is the one that is in the public domain, which is shared without any copyright. in this case it is a photo of a photographic sample, I could put the address of the site, but I don't know if they would accept it.*

When I upload a photo of my authorship I choose the one given by the system by default, I trust that it is the most appropriate but the truth is that I do not know the differences.”

(ARGENTINA/SPANISH)

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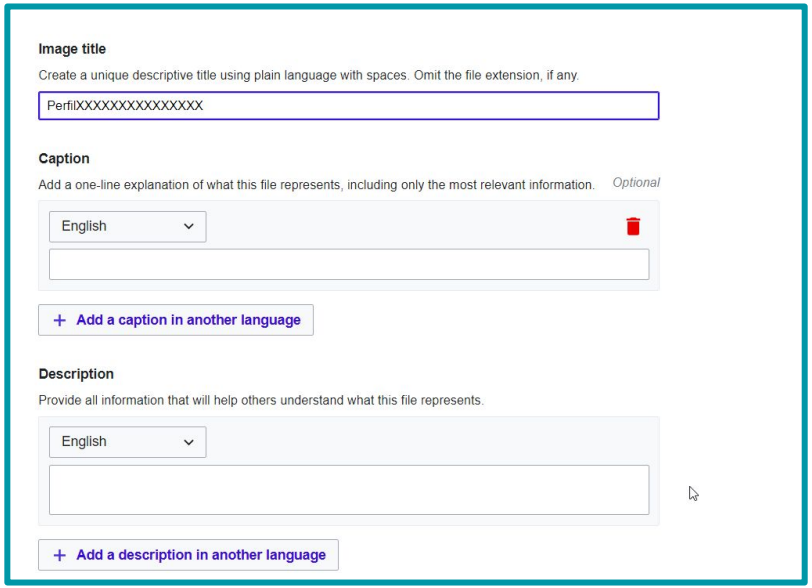
Image title/ Caption/Descriptiion/



- The difference between title and caption is unclear.
- Only a few understand the caption as a shorter description than the one in the description field.

"The title is like the name of the image, the caption is a short description, and the description is a longer description." (USA)

"The description allows people to understand what the image is talking about. The caption is not very far from the title, so you can use what you wrote in the title and then maybe add something like where you found that." (UGANDA)

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Date/ Categories

- ✔ **USERS UNDERSTAND THE IMPORTANCE OF CHOOSING THE RIGHT CATEGORIES, BUT FIND THIS STEP CHALLENGING.**

"Choosing the right categories can help if someone is Google searching, these categories will help the search engine to match the search with the image that is being searched for." (UGANDA)

"In categories is where I find challenges because the options I find are not the ones that I am interested in. If I don't find the option I am looking for I ignore those uploads. I see now that categories is optional, I hadn't seen that before. But if I don't choose the right categorie my image will not get to the right people, so unless I badly need the image to be uploaded I wouldn't do it." (UGANDA)

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SUMMARIZING THE UPLOAD PROCESS

- Regardless of the specifics of each step, the interface as a whole looks old-fashioned and little-intuitive.
- Too many or unnecessary steps which go against a safer and more fluent process.
- Users still contribute with content based on their past experiences, which were usually successful. However, the process has more doubts than certainties.
- They understand and acknowledge that:
  - It is a non-profit organization
  - It has no advertising
  - It is made by its users

- Some understand that WC prioritizes its resources in favor of offering high-quality storage, thus maybe sacrificing design or usability.

Spanish-speaking users are confused by the coexistence of Spanish and English on the home page.

A tacit agreement between users and the platform is perceived: users accept to sacrifice usability and clarity of information in favor of an honest, collaborative and high-quality product.

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DELETION CHALLENGES PERSONAL EXPERIENCES AND ISSUES

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REASONS FOR DELETION

Copyright infringement

Key point although not the main one

Lack of information

The various steps they go through may have missing or confusing information.

Poor quality

Uploading material involves compliance with minimum quality standards.

Inappropriate content

The general rules of the internet and the media in general also apply to WC.

Arbitrariness of the moderators

The subjectivity of a moderator can have a negative impact.

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*“The elimination of a file maybe is due to the lack of interest generated by the file either due to a wrong categorization, repetition and redundancy, poor image quality or lack of rights on the updated file when cataloged as a third -party image by the person who has uploaded said file. Some moderators might think that they have no interest .. or perhaps it is very repeated, too much and that has no interest. I understand that it is subjective. Also issue of rights, if you doubt rights, or if it is third. If it is a work of art that cannot be uploaded.” (*SPAIN/SPANISH*)*

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Copyright infringement

It is an important and large-scale issue, but not necessarily the main one

- Uploading images that do not comply with the law.
- Even public images or those that are supposed to be shared-use can be deleted, and the uploader may be subject to sanctions.
- The options for users to choose from are multiple, confusing and repetitive.
- While it was one of the most confusing evaluation points for participants, it is not the main reason for removal.

"I think the main reason for deletion is when the images are copyrighted by another party. Secondly, uploading an inappropriate image, a violent image, or maybe it promotes nudity." (UGANDA/ENGLISH)

"I guess copyright is probably the biggest issue. I think what could be done is maybe simplify the language, it was a big list and I didn't know what to get." (USA/ENGLISH)

"

Poor quality

- Users regard WC as a platform that truly takes care of content in all its aspects.
- In this sense, some believe that poor quality images, or even images that do not provide valuable content can be removed.
- Although they feel that evaluation standards may be subjective on the moderator's side, they understand that these are the rules of the game.

"I'd speculate that most deletions are due to lack of information, keywords, descriptions, and so on. Copyright violations would certainly be another one. I think another possible source of deletion would be images that are blurry, out of focus, files that are too small, that don't have enough resolution to be useful." (CANADA/ENGLISH)

"

Providing incomplete, confusing or wrong information

- Inconsistencies in location, description, caption, date or title.
- Although users who got images deleted suspect it was due to providing insufficient information in these fields, they are unclear about the specifics and claim more certainty to this respect in order to avoid repeating the same mistakes.
- They do not understand in which step the mistake was made in order to correct it. This impossibility generates frustration and anger.
- Some suspect lack of correlation between the image and its title/description.

“It is not clear to me if it is a bot or a real person, because they are all nicknames, they warn you that if you do not rectify your image it can be deleted. I received a notification that this file could be deleted due to lack of information. the whole explanation is not very intuitive, it looks like programming language, they could directly give you the option in that message to "edit" your publication and correct or add what is missing, but not like that. it's very confusing I guess the problem was the license I chose, but really not sure.” (SPAIN/SPANISH)

“I think people skip steps in order to get through the process faster. I don't know how other people are doing their uploads, I want my images to be found, and I want my descriptions and keywords to be as helpful as possible, so I try to fill in all the fields and provide as much information as I can. But I'd say there are a lot of people who won't bother, so they'll leave multiple fields blank and possibly not include keywords and metadata, so the pictures are on the system but they aren't particularly useful because they can't be located. I'd speculate that most deletions are due to lack of information, keywords, descriptions, and so on. Copyright violations would certainly be another one. I think another possible source of deletion would be images that are blurry, out of focus, files that are too small, that don't have enough resolution to be useful.” (USA/ENGLISH)

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Inappropriate content

- The rules about inappropriate content that rule many Internet sites also apply to WC.
- Although all of them see WP as a free and collaborative space, this does not prevent it from being alert to potentially offensive or unlawful content, such as child pornography.
- In this context, users assume they cannot upload content that may result offensive or hurt others' sensibility.
- Although they admit that the reach of this reason is unclear to them, they know that basic matters such as explicit sex or any type of violence are subject to sanctions by the community.

"Once they made me an observation about something that was not well referenced. But in the text of the article,not in the photos. I imagine that they delete it if it is inappropriate, for example pornography. Or offensive questions to some ideology or idiosyncrasy." (ARGENTINA/SPANISH)

Moderators' arbitrariness

- Although not mentioned by many, those who highlight this reason perceive it as a complex and hard-to-manage issue, which does not only affect WC.
- Moderators' identity and credentials raise suspicions and questions. They do not know who they are, and why they have this role.
- Whereas some of the deletions or observations seem logical, others do not.
- To this respect, users feel they are sometimes victim of some kind of bullying, or of subjectivities that are too arbitrary and only seek to take sides with certain ideology, or simply to feel powerful.

"The worst thing, and not only in Commons, is the entire Wiki environment, it is the caste, that chosen club of moderators. I created an entry of a Barcelona footballer. A moderator deleted it to me because his user is "athleticbilbao" arguing it wasn't relevant, pfff (42:00). Very silly really. They are content Nazis. Who are they to say whether it is relevant or not? I'd rather be fined 50,000 euros by the government than fight with a wiki moderator, it's unbearable" (SPAIN/SPANISH)

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SANCTIONS

MOST USERS ARE NOT SIGNIFICANTLY CONCERNED ABOUT THE SANCTIONS THEY COULD RECEIVE

- COMPLIANCE WITH REQUIREMENTS AND REGULATIONS IS RATHER GUIDED BY A SENSE OF RESPECT FOR THE COMMUNITY, FOR COOPERATION, FOR THE COLLECTIVE SPIRIT THAN BY THE POSSIBILITY OF AN ACTUAL SANCTION.

"I think it can affect my account because if the images get deleted , I would lose the trust of the people who use my images. Other than that, I don't know if something would happen to my account if the image is deleted." (UGANDA/ENGLISH)

"If I uploaded a photo that is not mine and say it is mine, and then the author complains about it, then there would be a consequence, I am not sure what, because I have the account under my real name, but other than that, there is nothing that pinpoints that account to me." (PORTUGAL/ENGLISH)

"I think the photo would be flagged down. And if you don't give credit to the person who created the picture you could also be banned from uploading images on Wikimedia." (NIGERIA/ENGLISH)

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SANCTIONS

- **A priori collaborators are not fearful of possible sanctions**
- **They are more concerned about understanding the upload process and providing accurate and high-quality information, that contributes to the community, rather than fear possible sanctions**
- **In any case, they know a misstep, SPECIALLY IN RELATION TO RELEASE RIGHTS, may have consequences.**

IMAGINED/FEARED SANCTIONS:

- **Content deleted**
- **Account blocking**
- **Account deletion (although they assume they can open a new one)**

Apart from this, they do not project greater issues.

"If no reason was given, I would contact the help desk. Other than that, I don't think it would affect my personal life. If my account was deleted or I were banned from posting, I would like to know why and to be ale to appeal that decision. I don't think it would cause me any financial or legal difficulty." (USA/ENGLISH)

"What can happen is they remove the photo, and ultimately kick you off Wikimedia." (VENEZUELA/SPANISH)

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How do they handle sanctions?

Nobody feels comfortable when a photo is deleted
However, 2 attitudes emerge in the face of this situation.

RESIGNATION

They imagine a tedious round-trip process that is not worth triggering

“I suppose I could answer and appeal, but I never quite understood the reasons and well, I didn't feel like it anymore.”
(ARGENTINA/SPANISH)

APPEAL

They contact a moderator, argue and give reasons that they understand to be valid and insist as much as possible.
Even so, some in the process, can get worn out and give up the "fight".

“On the deletion request there are two phases: you can either answer to the moderator or to the person directly.
I think they could block me, or lock my user's account, I don't yell out to try to defend myself... I try to find why that person truly doesn't want my image. Is it based on family or religious beliefs?” (USA/ENGLISH)

The lack of accurate information about the reasons for deletion raises questions that are difficult for the average user to understand. Clearer and more comprehensive rules are called for. Preferably, before uploading content to avoid wasting time and resources.

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CONCLUSIONS

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FINAL INSIGHTS

1.
They acknowledge the added value.

They see themselves as a part of a collective of specially proactive users that stand out from the average. In this context, the acknowledge the value WC has: a free, high-quality platform, with a collaborative and democratic spirit.The only truly for-free and high-quality bank of images. They even find material they cannot find elsewhere.

2.
Greater clarity about the rules

However, uncertainty rules the process. Most of the time, doubt prevails regarding whether the process was the right one, and whether their image will eventually be published or deleted.

3.
Release rights, information and image quality are the main worries

A better explanation about the differences between licenses. More clarity about the type and quality of information that is required.

4.
Little intuitive: An old-fashioned and entangled interface. They demand restyling

WC is not exempt from some criticism aimed at the entire Wiki environment. Although they acknowledge that it is a foundation with limited resources, which surely prioritizes other technical aspects such as storage, a closer approach to the average user is expected.

It requires a learning curve which not everybody is willing to go through.

5.
No fear for major sanctions.

Their worst fear is a potential account blocking and the subsequent deletion of its content.
Aside from that, nobody is fearful of severe consequences regarding the content they upload.

6.
Spanish experience

Spanish users expect the entire experience to be in their language. Although they generally understand English and have had successful experiences, the mix of languages in navigability adds more confusion.

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