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ADVOCACY ON FACEBOOK: A CONTENT ANALYSIS OF HOW SMALL LOS
ANGELES-BASED NPOs USE SOCIAL MEDIA TO ENGAGE AUDIENCES

by

Wen chen Denq

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

August 2023

Dissertation Committee

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TITLE OF DISSERTATION: ADVOCACY ON FACEBOOK: A CONTENT ANALYSIS OF
HOW SMALL LOS ANGELES-BASED NPOS USE SOCIAL MEDIA TO ENGAGE
AUDIENCES

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation examined the Facebook activities of seven small nonprofits in Los Angeles to understand their social media use and audience responses. Prior research has distinguished three broader engagement strategies used by Nonprofit Organizations (NPOs), including information provision (awareness-raising), action-related messaging (mobilizing), and community-building efforts (organizing). These strategies can play essential roles in drawing in audiences, but also in moving individual supporters toward greater levels of engagement by increasing donations or becoming more engaged champions for the cause. A qualitative and quantitative analysis of organizational Facebook messages and audience responses was conducted over 3 months. The NPOs included in this study were 20/20 Mom, Citizens for Los Angeles Wildlife, Community Trust Foundation, Invisible People TV, NAMI Glendale, NAMI Westside Los Angeles, and NAMI Urban Los Angeles. Organizational messages were coded for their intended goal (including information, action, and community) and contents (i.e., event-related, mission-focused, and advocacy). Audience responses were analyzed to identify the distribution of likes, shares, and comments. Additionally, a random sample of 76 supporter messages posted was qualitatively analyzed to identify their core intent with regard to information-sharing, mobilization, and community-building. The findings revealed that smaller NPOs primarily employed information and action-related messages, with an emphasis on events, while community-related messaging was much less frequent. Information-focused messages aimed to educate the audience and reinforce the NPOs' perspectives on social issues. The analysis showed a high frequency of incorporating both information and action elements into messaging. Community-building messages were much less frequent, they typically consisted of event announcements and recognition of contributions and directing audiences to other groups and networks. With regard to audience responses, a combination of information and action-focused organizational messages tended to receive above-

average response rates when compared to other types of messaging. A sentiment analysis of audience responses revealed a dominance of expressing positive views, but also a significant presence of negative sentiments. In contrast to organizational messaging, the audience responses featured a primary focus on community-building. By prioritizing community-related messaging and fostering a sense of belonging among their supporters, smaller NPOs can cultivate an active and engaged user community for advocacy purposes.

Keywords: comparative analysis, social media, Facebook, advocacy, (public) audience engagement, nonprofit or not-for-profit organization, 501(c)(3), philanthropy

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ORDER OF PAGES	
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	vi
ORDER OF PAGES	viii
LIST OF TABLES	xii
CHAPTER ONE INTRODUCTION	1
Social Media and Nonprofit Organizations	2
Social Media and Audience Engagement	3
The State of Research	4
Why This Study Is Needed	8
Overview of Study	9
Findings of Study	10
Organization of the Dissertation	15
CHAPTER TWO NONPROFITS AND SOCIAL MEDIA-THE STATE OF RESEARCH	17
Why Do NPOs Use Social Media?	18
Information-related Messaging	19
Action-related Messaging	20
Community-Related Messaging	21
How Social Media Has Been Used in NPOs	22
Length and Online Presence	24
Organizational Governance	25
The Size of Organizations	26
Different Forms of Social Media for Information	28
The Impact of Social Media Communication Characteristics (Engagements)	31
Interests (Or Needs) of Potential Audience	32

To What Effect NPOs Use Social Media	33
Increase NPOs Effectiveness in Awareness, Community Engagement, and Fundraising	34
Enhance Effectiveness of Social Change by Complement Offline Engagement	35
Increase The Importance of Audience Engagement	36
Staff-Led And Supporter-Led Activism	36
Measurement of Effective Social Media Use	37
Measurement of Engagement Level in Likes, Shares, and Comments	39
Correlation of Audience Responses to Message Functions	41
Effectiveness of Emotion in NPOs' Audience Response	42
Conclusions	43
CHAPTER THREE METHODOLOGY	45
Operating Definitions	45
The Conceptual Framework for Dissertation	46
Research Questions	49
Design of Research	50
The Pilot Studies	50
Organizational Sampling	51
Message Sampling	55
Data Analysis and Coding Procedures	57
CHAPTER FOUR RESULTS AND DISCUSSION ORGANIZATIONAL MESSAGING	60

Messages Frequency and Core Contents	60
Information-Focused Messaging	66
Action-Focused Messaging (Mobilizing)	69
Community-related Messaging	71
Conclusions	74
CHAPTER FIVE RESULTS AND FINDINGS AUDIENCES RESPONSES	76
Descriptive Analysis of Audience Responses (Likes, Share, and Comments)	76
Qualitative Analysis of Content Comments	82
Information-Related User Comments	83
Action-Related User Comments	84
Community- Related User Comments	85
Sentiment Analysis of Audience Responses	86
Conclusion	88
CHAPTER SIX DISCUSSION OF THE RESULTS OF CHAPTER FOUR AND	
CHAPTER FIVE	91
Organizational Messages: One-way Communication	91
Audience Responses: A Community Focus	93
Limitation	95
Future Research	96
REFERENCES	97
APPENDIX A Eight Levels of Ladder Engagement	114
APPENDIX B Six Types of Social Media	115
APPENDIX C Reaction in Facebook Behaviors	116

APPENDIX D Types of Advocacy Activities	117
APPENDIX E The Sample List of 10 NPOs	118
APPENDIX F Facebook Codebook with Frequencies and Percentages	119
APPENDIX G Content Comments Codebook with Frequencies and Percentages	120

LISTS OF TABLES

Table 1. Sharing Information	19
Table 2. Calling for Action	20
Table 3. Community building	21
Table 4. Internal Factors-Explaining Difference in NPOs' Social Media Use	23
Table 5. External Factors	27
Table 6. The Effective Social Media Use in NPOs	34
Table 7. Measurement of Effective Social Media Use for Advocacy in NPOs	37
Table 8. Types of Engagement Efforts	47
Table 9. The Major Findings of Two Pilot Tests	50
Table 10. Inclusion Criteria for NPOs Chosen	53
Table 11. Mission and Classification of Sampled NPO	54
Table 12. Comparison of the Percentage of Total Posts Per NPO in the Original Data Set vs the Sampled Seven NPOs	57
Table 13. Lovejoy and Saxton's (2012)'s 11 Subcategories	57
Table 14. Frequency of Facebook Messaging for Seven NPOs	60
Table 15. Frequency of Facebook Messaging Across Sample	61
Table 16. Distribution of Sampled Posts Across Three Core Categories	61
Table 17. Sampled Posts Across Three Core Categories by Each Organization	62
Table 18. Single and Multiple Codes Pattern	64
Table 19. Subcategories of Information-Focused Messages	66
Table 20. Distribution of Subcategories in Action-Related and Information-Focused Posts	68

Table 21. Subcategories of Action-related posts	69
Table 22. Subcategories of Community-related Posts	71
Table 23. Descriptive Analysis of Likes, Shares, and Comments Across All Posts	77
Table 24. Descriptive Analysis of Likes, Shares, and Comments Across Sampled Posts	78
Table 25. Likes, Shares, and Comments Distribution Across Five Categories	79
Table 26. Comparing Organizational and Supporter-Generated Foci (With Single or Multiple Codes)	82
Table 27. Content Comments Across Information Subcategories	83
Table 28. Content Comments Across Action Subcategories	84
Table 29. Content Comments Across Community Subcategories	85
Table 30. Positive, Neutral, and Negative In Likes	87
Table 31 Positive, Neutral, and Negative in Posts	87

CHAPTER ONE

Los Angeles County features a thriving nonprofit sector that plays a vital role in addressing a wide range of social, cultural, and environmental challenges facing the city and its residents. NPOs in Los Angeles serve a variety of purposes, including offering social services, supporting underserved communities, promoting the arts, and protecting the environment. NPOs range in size and scope, from grassroots community-based groups to large national organizations with a presence in the city.

Small NPOs play an essential role in serving LA residents because they can respond to the specific needs of diverse local communities (Ramirez, 2022). To address the different needs of many distinct cultural and religious communities living in LA County, the nonprofit sector has to maintain a wide range of services and requires extensive resources. For example, the LA metro area has some of the highest poverty rates statewide (Danielson et al., 2022). The ever-changing turbulent economic environment due to the COVID-19 pandemic requires NPOs to remain flexible and constantly acquire resources to address demands for their services.

With the emergence of social media platforms, NPOs have found the Internet to be a major fundraising and engagement site to promote their missions. Many NPOs have developed a social media presence as an essential part of their identity and as a means to appeal to a wider audience (Campbell et al., 2014; Guo & Saxton, 2014; Y. Zhang et al., 2022). Small NPOs can be particularly reliant on a social media presence to attract more resources and attention with relatively limited investments in time and money.

Social Media and Nonprofit Organizations

Nonprofit Organizations (NPOs) rely on a range of social media platforms to advance their missions, including YouTube (94% of respondents), Facebook (94% of respondents), Instagram (88% of respondents), Tiktok (86% of respondents), and Twitter (84% of the respondent; Statista Global Consumer Survey, 2022). Social media have transformed how NPOs interact with their audiences and have provided NPOs of all sizes new opportunities to deepen and broaden their engagement with their membership (Schmitz et al., 2020). Compared to letter writing or email, social media can reach more people, more easily create one-way communication, and spread messages at much lower costs. As a result, social media is an especially important tool for smaller NPOs with limited resources and a lack of broad brand-name recognition.

One area of NPO activity on social media is advocacy for mission goals. Such advocacy is often designed to bring about change by engaging audiences through messages focused on information distribution (awareness raising), calls for action (mobilization), and community-building (organizing; (Lovejoy et al., 2012; Lovejoy & Saxton, 2012). Advocacy messages can also serve to move individual audience members along a “ladder of engagement” (Arnstein, 1969) to successively increase their commitment to a given cause. This requires NPOs to not only rely on a one-way form of communication but invest in distinct social media strategies designed to regularly engage their audiences and create a community of dedicated members acting on behalf of the nonprofit.

Social media platforms have ushered in an unprecedented paradigm shift in NPO communication in the United States and around the world. The interactive and decentralized structure of social media provides NPOs the opportunity to instantly communicate with members

and the public (Bürger, 2015; Saxton & Wang, 2014). An NPOs' social media presence can generate an engagement experience between the users (the public audience) and facilitate two-way communication between the organization and its audiences (Seelig et al., 2019).

Consequently, social media can transform the process of audience engagement (how people interact with one another), organizations, and organizational tasks of employees or volunteers in NPOs.

Social Media and Audience Engagement

In 2019, 99% of NPOs in the United States and Canada maintained a Facebook page (Nonprofit Tech for Good, 2019) indicating the widespread adoption of social media in the nonprofit sector. Over the past 2 decades, social media has been used by NPOs for multiple goals, such as raising awareness, building a brand, connecting with stakeholders and potential donors, recruiting volunteers, and educating audiences on the organizations' missions and programs for advocacy and fundraising. In 2021, about 12% of total giving in the United States was transacted online, and smaller NPOs raised more of their funding (17.8%) from online sources than larger organizations (Blackbaud, 2022). Research has also shown that 55% of people who engage with NPOs on social media end up taking some form of action (NP Source, 2022).

The whole point of social media for NPOs is engagement, as social media allows them to communicate and respond to their audience who share an interest in the organizational mission. Engagement is defined as “a dynamic multidimensional relational concept including psychological and behavioral features of involvement, connection, interaction, and participation designed in a way to enable the achievement of goals at an individual, organization, or social level” (Olinski & Szamrowski, 2021, p. 4). On social media, evidence of engagement entails the

audience liking, sharing, commenting, or replying to NPO messages (Guo & Saxton, 2014). For example, NPOs can use Facebook to track the level of engagement of their audiences. This includes two forms of interaction: active interaction (liking, sharing, commenting, and reacting) and passive interaction (clicking, watching, and viewing; (Ekström & Östman, 2015).

Although social media offers various promising opportunities for nonprofits to engage with their audiences, many NPOs struggle to fully take advantage of these online opportunities. These barriers can be particularly challenging for smaller NPOs (Hou & Lampe, 2015). Smaller NPOs are constrained by time, expertise, and resource scarcity. Smaller NPOs also do not have the same brand recognition as larger ones, and cannot maintain an adequate social media presence to compete for top talent.

Social Media and Nonprofits: The State of Research

The extensive use of social media in practice by NPOs across the world has stimulated a body of research aimed at understanding social media adoption in these entities. The theoretical basis for this dissertation involves reviewing distinct research on why, how, and to what effect NPOs use social media. NPOs leverage social media platforms for various strategic objectives, and the effectiveness of these efforts depends on the extent of audience engagement with their messages. Consequently, measuring the level of audience engagement with an organization's social media content is critical in assessing its effectiveness (Saxton & Wang, 2014). Existing research has developed assessments of audience engagement in NPOs' social media use. This includes measurements beyond simple "vanity metrics" such as follower counts (Rogers, 2018).

Analyzing the level of engagement in audience responses can help NPOs gain insights into which content resonates with their audience and how to communicate more effectively with them for social media success.

Why NPOs Use Social Media

The literature has developed analytical frameworks to categorize NPO social media posts according to their underlying purpose. One such framework distinguished between messages focused on information sharing, instigating action, and building community (Guo/Saxton 2012). These three different content emphases correspond with how NPOs can use social media in the advancement of their missions. Information sharing represents a basic form of audience engagement focused on raising public awareness of the organization's mission or promoting public education on specific social issues. It also represented a critical way of shaping the perceptions of NPOs' success and purpose. Action messages on social media deliver specific 'asks' to audiences, including fundraising appeals and calls for specific other actions. Finally, community-building messages are designed to create and maintain connections between the NPO and its audience as well as between audience members. For example, Greenpeace and other NPOs have created dedicated volunteer platforms to create a community supporting their causes ("Greenpeace Volunteer Platform," n.d.). Such platforms can draw in individuals to do more than just donate or post likes.

The mission-driven logic of social media use suggests a progressive development of messaging from basic one-way communication of information to more sophisticated two-way forms of communication between NPO and audiences. Information sharing plays an important role for many NPOs, calls for action and community-building play an essential part in scaling up the impact by enlisting audiences into the mission, strategies, and tactics. For example, calls for action may include writing messages to politicians, and community building creates greater personal identification of audience members with an NPO and its mission. NPOs with limited resources must rely on others to promote their messages and goals. Social media mobilizes

audiences, transforming passive onlookers into active supporters who contribute to collective actions. By fostering conversations, social media enhance NPOs' interactive communication capacity, reinforcing community-building efforts. This empowerment and engagement move beyond one-way information provision to develop sustainable communities. A robust level of audience engagement in social media enables NPOs to address organizational needs and add supporters as an external resource to complement their limited capacity.

How NPOs Use Social Media

Research has demonstrated that NPOs differ greatly in their social media usage and scholars have identified internal (see Table 4) and external factors (see Table 5) to explain differences in NPO social media use. Internal factors are characteristics of the NPO or other issues the NPO leadership has control over. For internal factors, the size of the organization, organizational governance, and leadership have been identified as relevant factors in shaping social media use. For example, NPOs with tech-savvy leadership are more likely to invest in social media and develop a strong online presence. Studies have demonstrated that leadership plays an essential role in shaping an NPO's social media presence (Nah & Saxton, 2013; Saxton & Wang, 2014). In addition, the size of NPO may shape the social media presence, due to the availability of resources and a larger number of stakeholders.

External factors cover issues outside of the control of NPOs that may affect an NPO's social media use. For external factors, different forms of social media with pertinent unique features affect NPOs' usage patterns. By understanding the different types of social media (for example, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube) and how they contribute to building relationships and promoting content, NPOs can engage in diverse social media strategies. For

example, Instagram and Facebook allow for more visual types of engagement strategies, while Twitter requires short messaging.

In addition, since social media allow NPOs to engage with different audiences, their online presence can be shaped by the distinct needs of key stakeholders, including donors, volunteers, and employees. For example, NPOs relying more on private funding (vs. government grants), will likely rely on more extensive outreach, stakeholder engagement, and public relations (McCaskill & Harrington, 2017). Also, external stakeholders' pressures can push NPOs to employ new technology.

How Effective Is Social Media Use by Nonprofits?

The key goals of NPOs engaging online include raising resources, advancing their missions, connecting with the audience, building brand awareness, or gathering feedback. As NPOs are often resource-poor and social media investments could be viewed as unnecessary 'overhead' spending (Gneezy et al., 2014; Lecy & Searing, 2015), it is essential to establish if and how social media efforts pay off.

Scholars have identified a number of social media strategies that may increase the effectiveness of NPOs. For example, studies have shown that social media can increase public awareness (Lovejoy et al., 2012), community engagement (J. N. Smith, 2018), and fundraising (Milde & Yawson, 2017). Social media can also complement offline engagement efforts and increase offline support. Furthermore, social media can play an important role in gaining the trust of stakeholders, as audience responses become more significant. Social media have played a major role in many recent popular uprisings, including the Arab Spring case, where hashtags were widely used to disseminate information (Bruns et al., 2014). Especially for advocacy, such digital affordances are essential. Social media facilitates the increase of the audiences'

engagement in advocacy campaigns and can create a “major reservoir of civic energy” (Schmitz et al., 2020, p. 4). Frequent action among a large number of supporters increases audiences’ commitment to civic and political issues.

Measurement of Effective Social Media Use

If scholars and NPOs want to better understand how to best use social media for advancing missions, it is essential to develop valid measures of online engagement. For example, the number of likes may not be a very useful indicator of the quality of messaging with regard to community-building. To evaluate the effectiveness of social media use, several measurement methods have been suggested. These include using A/B testing to better understand what topics or messages resonate more with audiences (Hall et al., 2020; Karpf, 2016). Furthermore, sentiment analysis can be employed to categorize audience responses as positive, neutral, or negative, providing insights for optimizing brand recognition and understanding audience feedback (Poecze et al., 2018). The literature about social media measurement focuses on questions of quantity and quality of usage across audiences. Quantity measures focused on ‘likes’ or ‘retweets’ provide initial insights into social media success, but such “vanity metrics” (Rogers, 2018) do not provide strong insights into the depth of audience engagement. To get at more meaningful measurements, NPOs have to develop more complex analytical instruments focused on long-term donation patterns or on “supporter journeys” (Schmitz et al., 2020). Meaningful and reliable measurements are an essential part of understanding the effectiveness of social media use by NPOs.

Why This Study Is Needed

Social media use by nonprofits is an important research topic attracting the attention of scholars across a wide range of academic fields. The study contributes to a rapidly expanding

field of research focused on social media use among NPOs. The specific contributions of the study are threefold. First, this study provides detailed qualitative and quantitative insights about NPO social media use, complementing a majority of existing studies relying on quantitative methodologies (Guo & Saxton, 2014). My analysis provides an intimate view of audience engagement and its impact on other users in a social media network community. Second, this study focuses specific attention on smaller NPOs in a large metropolitan area, engaged in human services, environmental, and health-related activities. Small NPOs play an essential role in addressing the needs of urban communities (Mitlin, 2016). Research addressing these NPOs' community engagement matters because they often serve urban and underprivileged residents. Third, this study focuses on Facebook, rather than Twitter, which offers more space for content and analysis of stakeholder or follower engagement (Huang et al., 2016). In addition, many existing studies have relied on Twitter data, which has generally been more available for researchers.

Overview of the Study

This study investigated 3 months (July 1 to September 30, 2022) of organizational messages and audience responses in the Facebook accounts of seven NPOs in the Los Angeles area. The NPOs were identified based on the Nonprofit Explorer database (Schwencke et al., 2013). From this database, I identified a pool of eligible nonprofits based on a number of criteria, including their annual revenue (below U.S. \$500,000), mission focus on advocacy, and use of Facebook as a primary communication tool. I then randomly sampled seven nonprofits from this pool to include in my study. The seven NPOs included in this study are 2020 Mom, Citizens for Los Angeles Wildlife Inc., Community Trust Foundation, Invisible People TV, NAMI Glendale, NAMI Westside Los Angeles, and NAME Urban Los Angeles.

To establish the dataset of Facebook messages, 150 posts out of 505 organizational posts were randomly sampled. Among 149 user word (content) comments, 76 were randomly sampled for analysis. My code analysis relied on deductive and inductive approaches and unfolded in two steps for organizational messages. For the deductive analysis (Chapter Four), all Facebook messages were first categorized into three broad areas informational, action-, or community-focused. In addition, 11 predefined subcategories (Lovejoy & Saxton, 2012) were used for coding. These included: information; action-promote events, action-donation appeal, action-selling a product, action-call for volunteers and employees, action-lobbying and advocacy, action-join another site or vote for organization, action-learn how to help; community-giving recognition and thanks, community-acknowledgement of current & local events, community-responses to reply messages and community-response solicitation. During the analysis, four new categories or subcategories emerged and were added to the existing conceptual framework. These four new categories in the information category are event-related, mission-related, advocacy-related, and organizational information.

In the second part of the analysis, the focus shifted to audience responses (Chapter Five). First, I adopted an inductive content analysis for content comments because no previous frameworks for content analysis existed. Second, after completing the inductive coding process, I conducted an additional analysis of the Facebook content by counting the number of likes, comments, and number of shares, and “replies.” Finally, I performed a sentiment analysis of audience responses leading to a deeper understanding of audience reactions.

Findings of the Study

The findings of the study are summarized in two sections here. The first one summarizes the content analysis of the organizational Facebook messages sent by the seven LA nonprofits.

The second part summarizes the content analysis of audience responses to organizational messages.

The Contents of Organizational Messages

The analysis began with coding 150 organizational posts according to their contents across the information, action, and community-building categories¹. Results of the analysis showed that information and action-related content dominated the Facebook messages of the sampled NPOs. A total of 138 (92%) contained information-relevant content, 107 (71.3%) action-focused content, and 37 (24.7%) community-focused content. This baseline result shows a dominance of one-way messaging focused on sharing of information and calls for action. However, a closer investigation of the message contents reveals a number of interesting conclusions.

First, there was a strong overlap between information-related messages and action-related messages, indicating that the NPOs seek to support their calls for action through specific information that will be interesting and emotionally resonant for their audiences. When only considering the 72 posts with information and action-related contents, almost half combined the subcategories “information-events related” and “action-promote event.” These co-occurrence patterns suggest a dominance of the event-related messaging followed by messaging focused on enlisting audiences in advocacy and direct action for the mission.

Second, although community-related messaging was much less frequent across the overall sample posts, NPOs made much more extensive use of it than others based on 150

¹ Each message could receive multiple codes based on the presence of categories and subcategories found.

sampled posts. Third, information-focused messaging was dominated by mission-focused content which is designed to reinforce the NPOs' perspectives on the social issues they address. This included targeting the audience for continued education by suggesting checking links or watching videos.

Fourth, with regard to action-related messaging, the study found a prevalence of event- and supported-focused actions around advocacy and learning. Notably, NPOs do not excessively use action-related messaging for fundraising or volunteer drives. Instead, these NPOs are using calls for action in a more community-building effort than previously recognized in the literature. For example, advocacy-related messaging in this realm focuses on giving supporters the tools to contact local politicians or to connect to other organizations with similar missions.

Fifth, community-related messaging is dominated by two types of content: announcing events organized by others and acknowledging the contributions of employees, volunteers, and others. Messages are designed to keep supporters active on the platform by hashtag and @ and to retain and recruit supporters. The low frequency of community-based messaging is likely a result of the limited resources of these smaller NPOs. Community-based messaging as a form of two-way communication requires significant human resources to maintain an extensive social media presence.

The Contents of Audience Responses

The results are presented in three separate parts. The first covers frequency counts of likes, shares, and comments. The second and third parts present a sentiment analysis and a more in-depth qualitative analysis of the sampled contents of audience comments.

Likes, Shares, and Comments

Across all the 505 organizational messages posted during the study period, a total of 439 (86.9%) received any audience responses. All of the 150 sampled messages received responses. The word count of these responses ranged from one to 200 words. The analysis of audience responses on the Facebook pages of NPOs provides several important findings and insights. The descriptive analysis at the beginning of this chapter revealed that audience members used *likes* most frequently, followed by *shares* and *comments*. However, there was great variability across NPOs, indicating that some maintained a relatively active user base, while others did not. In other words, likes, shares, and comments also represent different levels of engagement, ranging from a low level. Further, the high standard deviation of likes ($SD= 6.51$) compared with shares ($SD= 1.73$) and comments ($SD= 1.19$) suggested that the shares and comments seemed to maintain a similar pattern along the mean as the audience attitudes to posts would be more consistent no matter what level of engagement they exhibited (shares or comments). Furthermore, based on the analysis of likes, shares, and comments distribution across five categories (information only, information and action, information and community, action and community, and triple codes), information-only messages are engaging, especially when combined with other action and community-related messages. Information combined with action-related messages is the only category above average across all three categories (likes, shares, and comments), so the combination of information and action appears to be the most engaging, as it provides engaging content while mobilizing the audience. However, community-building messages were not strongly supported, as their substantive content was identified as more aligned with personal engagement support rather than fostering a

cohesive community. These findings emphasize the importance of a strategic blend of information and action to maximize audience engagement.

Sentiment Analysis

The sentiment analysis revealed that 147 (98%) posts contained positive sentiments, 51 (34%) negative sentiments, and 10 (6.7%) posts neutral sentiments. The majority of audience responses on the Facebook pages of NPOs are positive, as demonstrated by the use of emojis and natural language in posts. Posts with positive or negative emotions received more audience responses than neutral posts. In addition to negative posts (e.g., anger) being more likely to attract arguments and debates, this disparity can be attributed to the fact that negative reactions serve as an expressing agreement with such posts in a negative sentimental manner.

Content Analysis of Audience Comments

Among 505 total posts, a total of 439 (87%) received responses (in the form of likes, shares, or comments), but a total of 149 (33.9%) received audience text comments. A sample of 76 content comments was analyzed and revealed that 62 (81.6%) were community-focused, 44 (57.9%) were action-focused, and 37 (48.7%) were information-focused (detail see Appendix G). The qualitative analysis of sampled user comments revealed the most interesting results of this chapter. The findings indicated that content comments as a form of high-level engagement reveal a distribution pattern dominated by a community focus. This result stands in contrast to the distribution pattern for organizational messages which are dominated by information-focused messaging. Audience members were much more likely to focus on community-building issues when using the comment function. Community-building posts received the highest percentage of comments, compared with action-and information-related messages.

Regarding the subcategories of information-focused messaging, it is notable that the vast majority of user comments are mission-focused. The majority of action-focused messages are also focused on advancing the mission, while the community-focused messages emphasize in what ways users engage either with NPO messaging, give recognition, or demonstrate support. Even when the NPOs themselves do little to create an online community, the users often step in to do so. This indicates that NPOs can increase engagement with their audiences by relying more on community-related messaging.

Organization of the Dissertation

The dissertation is organized around a total of six chapters. In Chapter Two, relevant theories and conceptual frameworks from the literature are introduced. These frameworks elaborate on the different ways in which NPOs and audiences can engage online. The chapter emphasizes the development of research focused on why, how, and to what effect NPOs use social media. It also reviews research on the appropriate measurement of social media engagement. This literature then serves as a basis for developing the study's conceptual frameworks, including identifying different categories for social media engagement (including information sharing, action calls, and community building).

In Chapter Three, the methodology of this study is presented including research design, sampling, and data analysis procedures. The study relied on both deductive and inductive analytical procedures and developed a descriptive analysis focused on NPO organizational messaging and audience responses. The chapter elaborates on the selection of seven small NPOs in the LA area. It identifies the study period (7/1-9/30/2022) and introduces the key areas of interest.

Chapter four summarizes the analysis of the sampled organization-generated messages posted by the seven NPOs on Facebook. This analysis covered 150 sampled messages from a total of 505 posts.

The results summarize how NPO posts were distributed across three major categories (information, action, and community). It also offers insights into the distribution of message contents across subcategories and reports the results of sentiment analysis of the posts.

Chapter Five summarizes the analysis of audience responses. The presentation here is divided into two parts. The first covers a frequency analysis of likes, shares, and comments posted by supporters to 150 organizational Facebook posts. The second part then focuses on the contents analysis of a sample of 76 audience comments out of 147 organizational messages receiving comments. The results provide insight into how audiences respond to NPOs' posts, including a comparison of engagement levels in the form of likes, shares, and comments. The findings of code analysis in audience content comments also offer what audiences' attitudes about three major topics including advocacy or mission NPOs would direct.

Chapter Six summarizes the key findings of the study, elaborates on the importance of these results in the context of past research, and suggests future research. First, the results from Chapters Four and Five are summarized and interpreted. Second, these results are discussed in the context of existing empirical research about the use of social media by NPOs. Third, the chapter outlines the practical implications of this research as well as suggested future research.

CHAPTER TWO

NONPROFITS AND SOCIAL MEDIA: THE STATE OF RESEARCH

This chapter provides the theoretical basis for the dissertation. The core concepts informing the dissertation research were developed by scholars focused on why, how and to what effect NPOs use social media. In addition, the chapter will review research concerning the measurement of social media engagement and its effects across NPOs. The first part of the chapter will review literature focused on why social media is used by NPOs. I synthesize extant literature to identify three goals for social media by NPOs: disseminating information, calling for action, and organizing communities. Information sharing is a basic and common purpose of social media use by NPOs, but it alone does not necessarily promote action. Mobilizing audiences for collective action involves using social media to engage supporters and move them from passive bystanders to active participants who contribute to causes. Finally, community organizing via social media involves improving engagement to empower participants to act on their own and leveraging their efforts for social change in the long term.

The second part of the chapter reviews literature focused on explaining variation in social media use across NPOs. There are significant differences in social media usage and scholars have identified both internal and external factors. Internal factors are characteristics of the NPO or issues the NPO leadership has control over and include size, sector, leadership, or organizational governance. External factors such as the type of social media platform, communication characteristics, needs of potential audiences, and funding sources or external stakeholder pressures also impact NPOs' social media practices.

The third part then reviews research on the effectiveness of social media use among NPOs. This research focuses on the effects of social media on raising funding and contributing to mission goals. As NPOs are typically resource-poor and social media investments could be viewed as unnecessary ‘overhead’ spending, it is essential to establish if and how social media efforts pay off.

The final part of this chapter focuses on questions of measurement of NPOs’ social media strategies. For example, researchers have explored the correlation between organization-generated messages and audience responses displayed in the form of likes, comments, and shares on Facebook. This focus on so-called “vanity metrics” provides very limited insights into the effectiveness of social media strategies because it doesn’t reveal anything about the long-term engagement of audiences. To better understand social media strategies, tools such as A/B testing (Karpf, 2016) or sentiment analysis can be used to measure audience responses. The goal for NPOs here is to better understand how audience members can be motivated to increase their commitment to the mission and take increasingly significant actions along a “ladder of engagement” (Arnstein, 1969).

Why Do NPOs Use Social Media

The widespread social media use worldwide has inspired scholars to study why and how the nonprofit sector uses social media for advocacy and fundraising. NPOs use social media for key organizational goals, such as fundraising, mission accomplishment, or social change. For the dissertation, I will focus on the mission-related goals of social media use and specifically how NPOs can use social media to share information, mobilize audiences, and organize communities.

Information-Related Messaging

The sharing information function is primarily used to raise public awareness of organizational missions and recruit potential supporters. Social media can be used to initiate relationships with new supporters (such as clients, donors, and volunteers). Such supporters can then enhance the NPOs' efforts in multiple organizational activities including advocacy (Kanter & Paine, 2012). Table 1 provides an overview of information-related messaging as it relates to social media use by NPOs.

Table 1

Sharing Information

	Sharing Information
Summary	Sharing information is a communication tool to raise awareness of the organizational mission in the form of a one-way interaction
Key Activities	Announcing organizational events and activities; broadcasting & advertising; posting updates; educational posts; sharing advocacy-related information.
Representative Sources	Goldkind, 2015; Guidry et al., 2014; Huang et al., (2016); J. Young (2012); Kanter & Paine, 2012; Lovejoy & Saxton (2012); Namisango et al., 2019; Scott & Mayman, 2016; Smith, 2018

Sharing information is the most basic and common purpose that nonprofit organizations (NPOs) use social media sharing information aims at increasing public awareness and maintenance of public attention to the issue (Lovejoy & Saxton, 2012), but sharing information involves one-way communication from the NPO to the audience (Lovejoy & Saxton, 2012; Scott & Maryman, 2016). A robust digital network increases the capacity for sharing information and expands the outreach for an NPO (Guo & Saxton, 2014). Examples of information sharing include messages about the mission designed to raise public awareness, announcements,

promoting public education, or organizational leadership news (Goldkind, 2015; Huang et al., 2016; Namisango et al., 2019; Scott & Maryman, 2016; J. Young, 2012)

Action-Related Messaging

Action-related messaging represents a second important goal for social media use in NPOs. Social media can be used by NPOs to mobilize audiences, rather than only share information. Mobilization turns online followers from passive bystanders to active supporters (Scott & Maryman, 2016). Such actions may include making donations, participating in a rally, or recruiting others to the cause. Table 2 provides an overview of action-related messaging as it relates to social media use by NPOs.

Table 2

Calling for Action

Calling for Action	
Summary	Turn the audience from passive bystanders to more active supporters of organizational causes.
Key Activities	Those actions can include donations, organizational activities, or independent activities by supporters, recruiting for public events; call for volunteers; letter-writing; fundraising
Representative Sources	Anagnostopoulos et al., 2017; Conroy et al., 2012; Huang et al., 2016; J. Guidry et al., 2014; J. Guidry et al., 2014; Namisango et al., 2019; Rainie et al., 2012; Scott & Maryman, 2016;

Social media can help NPOs mobilize audiences to advance higher levels of engagement for collective action (Anagnostopoulos et al., 2017; Huang et al., 2016). Such actions can be beneficial for the organization in various ways: financial support such as donations and fundraising campaigns, human resources (like attracting more volunteers and employees), and

support for social change efforts such as advocacy or policy to change legislation (Namisango et al., 2019).

Community-related messaging

Community-related messaging represents a third important goal for social media use in NPOs. Social media can be used by NPOs to organize audiences into communities, rather than only share information or mobilize supporters. Community organizing is essential for an NPO's mission because it increases the commitment of supporters by increasing their commitment to the cause and links their personal lives to the NPO. Community-building may entail creating an online platform for supporters to interact with the NPO staff or other supporters. Table 3 provides an overview of community-related messaging as it relates to social media use by NPOs.

Table 3

Community-Building

	Community-Building
Summary	<p>Community building moves from a one-way form of communication to a dialogue-focused engagement.</p> <p>Audiences (or participants) are encouraged to develop their activities independent of the organization and develop decentralized networks in support of the mission.</p> <p>NPOs start organizing this community, as an ultimate goal, by developing a sense of community for leveraging social change in the long term.</p>
Key Activities	Activities include creating interactive communication channels; building rapport; fostering a sense of community; organizing communities and recognizing their contributions; advancing leadership development
Representative Sources	Ang, 2022; Bürger, 2015; Dimond et al., 2013; Gálvez-Rodríguez et al., 2014; Goldkind, 2015; Guo & Saxton 2014; J. A. Young, 2017; Lovejoy & Saxton, 2012; Namisango et al., 2019; Olinski & Szamrowski, 2021; Rathi et al., 2014; Smith 2018

The functions of a community comprise two essential aspects: dialogue and community-building (Lovejoy & Saxton, 2012). In terms of dialogue, social interaction and conversation in NPOs have been shown to promote organizational socialization (Namisango et al., 2019). Scholars have noted that social media can facilitate socialization, enabling NPOs to increase the level of personal identification of supporters with the mission. Social media platforms can help NPOs to make linkages between their mission and the personal identity of supporters (Olinski & Szamrowski, 2021). Consequently, social media has the potential to enhance interactive and two-way communication, thereby reinforcing engagement and facilitating action (Guo & Saxton, 2014; Lovejoy & Saxton, 2012).

Community building is aimed at more directly empowering supporters and generating decentralized networks independent of the NPO, but serving its mission (Dimond et al., 2013). Social media can also foster a sense of community by promoting shared values, norms, and visions (Zhou, 2011). This sense of community can strengthen identification with the NPOs and encourage social support between members to bolster engagement and confidence in working together to influence social changes (Goldkind, 2015). The goal is to not just raise awareness or prompt specific actions, but to develop and expand like-minded communities advancing the mission on their own (Goldkind, 2015) .

How Social Media Has Been Used in NPOs

NPOs display significant differences in social media usage and scholars have illustrated internal (see Table 4) and external factors (see Table 5) to explain differences in NPO social media use. Based on the Global NGO Technology Report 2019, the most used social platforms in the United States and Canada were Facebook (95% of all NPOs), Twitter (64% of all NPOs), Instagram (56% of all NPOs), and LinkedIn (37% of all NPOs). For updated data consideration

in 2022, the most popular platforms become YouTube (94% of respondents), Facebook (94% of respondents), Instagram (88% of respondents), TikTok (86% of respondents), and Twitter (84% of respondents; (Statista Global Consumer Survey, 2022).

Internal factors are characteristics of the NPO or issues the NPO leadership has control over. External factors cover issues outside of the control of NPOs that may affect NPO' social media use. Internal factors identified in the search include the size of the organization, organizational governance, sectoral differences, or the age of the organization. External factors include differences in social media platforms, the interests (or needs) of audiences and communities, or feedback from social media communications and engagement. In research, these internal and external factors serve as explanatory variables identifying specific enablers and inhibitors of social media use. Researchers have identified a range of enablers and inhibitors of social media use. Enablers include leadership support, adequate resourcing, relative size of the organization, or strength of community ties. Inhibitors include the absence of many enabling conditions, a lack of trust in social media, an absence of measurement systems to understand social media impact, or an inability to connect to audiences (Namisango et al., 2019). Table 4 summarizes the three most frequently mentioned internal factors (capacity and size, and organizational leadership and governance) and studies exploring their role.

Table 4

Internal Factors: Explaining Differences in NPOs' Use of Social Media

Explaining differences in NPOs' use of social media	
Capacity and size	Size of organization: availability of resources for social media investment and a larger number of stakeholders

Explaining differences in NPOs' use of social media	
Representative sources (2013-2018)	Guo & Saxton, 2018; Nah & Saxton, 2013; Panic et al., 2016; Reddick & Ponomariov, 2013; Saxton & Waters 2014; Bhati & McDonnell, 2020; Guo & Saxton, 2018; Nah & Saxton, 2013; Saxton & Wang, 2014; Shier & Handy, 2012; Svensson et al., 2015; Zhou & Pan, 2016; Zorn et al., 2011
Organizational leadership and governance	Organizational governance related to leadership, including board membership or staff
Representative sources (2011-2019)	Alonso-Cañadas et al., 2019; Gálvez-Rodríguez et al., 2014; Gruber, 2015; Goldkind, 2014; Hou & Lampe, 2015; Nah & Saxton, 2013; Saxton & Guo, 2011; Seo & Vu, 2020; Shin & Chen, 2016

Length and Extent of Online Presence

The factor shaping social media adoption is related to the extent of an organization's online presence. If an organization has a history of being online using websites and email (Web 1.0), it can be expected to adopt social media more rapidly.

Organizational website capacities and social media presence, particularly for Facebook and Twitter, showed positive relationships with social media utilization (Nah & Saxton, 2013; Saxton & Waters, 2014). A larger online presence is associated with an increase in the quality and quantity of supporter engagement. However, research has also shown that a higher frequency of internet and social media use (without additional offline engagement) did not have a significant influence on the general propensity to donate (Reddick & Ponomariov, 2013). Research also showed that membership-serving NPOs were much less likely to engage in dialogic outreach than other NPOs, probably because they have a clearly defined primary audience already connected to the organization (Nah & Saxton, 2013). Overall, organizational factors have been shown to substantially shape social media efforts.

Organizational Governance

Organizational governance was shown to affect the virtual use of social media because the characteristic of governance is critical in ensuring effective resources and proper strategies regarding the adoption of information technologies. Research has shown that larger executive boards in NPOs are more likely to have a social media champion present, leading to the adoption of social media practices (Nah & Saxton, 2013). Furthermore, board members in NPOs are responsible for resources to the organization, which includes building valuable external relationships with key stakeholders. Research has shown a strong relationship between the social media literacy of board members and the capacities of the organization to use web technologies and to accomplish effective public relations online (Gálvez-Rodríguez et al., 2014; Gruber et al., 2015).

Organizational governance is affected by board performance and management's level of support for social media usage (Goldkind, 2014; Seo & Vu, 2020). For instance, Chief Executive Officers' messages were critical to social media use because they emphasized the organization's campaign and operations (Shin & Chen, 2016). Also, NPOs' leadership and leaders' vision, orientation, and commitment to advocacy are key factors in online advocacy engagement (Goldkind, 2014). Another factor researchers examined was board size (e.g., the number of board members). Some studies found that board size was positively correlated to an increased likelihood of adopting Twitter (Nah & Saxton, 2013) or social media (Alonso-Cañadas et al., 2019; Hou & Lampe, 2015; Seo & Vu, 2020). This illustrates that board size can affect stakeholder communication (Alonso-Cañadas et al., 2019). However, one study was unable to

generate conclusive results regarding the effect of board size on the use of Twitter among NPOs (Gálvez-Rodríguez et al., 2014).

Size of Organization

The size of nonprofit organizations matters for the adoption of social media. The availability of resources is generally associated with an organization's capacity to invest in new technologies (Zorn et al., 2011). First, larger organizations have more resources to strategically invest and access technology (Nah & Saxton, 2013). Second, larger organizations have a larger social media presence because they engage with a greater number of stakeholders and attract greater scrutiny due to visibility and size (Shier & Handy, 2012). However, some scholars have argued the influence of social media-related factors (on fundraising) is not primarily driven by organizational budget size (Bhati & McDonnell, 2020; Saxton & Wang, 2014; Svensson et al., 2015). Instead, they argue nonprofit organizations of all sizes use social media as a useful tool for different purposes.

Findings were mixed regarding the effects of organizational size. Some studies found that organizational size was positively related to the adoption of technology or social media (Shier & Handy, 2012; J. Young, 2012; Zorn et al., 2011) and that organizational budget size affects the acquisition of new technology (J. Young, 2012; Zorn et al., 2011). Scholars argued that small and medium-sized NPOs were less likely to adopt communication technologies due to a lack of human and financial resources (Seo & Vu, 2020). However, other studies have argued that the size of assets does not affect adoption patterns of social media, such as access to technology and the general IT capacity. Given social media's lower costs and technology requirements, social media has become a "democratizing technology" (Wallace & Rutherford, 2020, p. 629). These findings suggest that the Facebook network size (number of likes), activity (number of posts),

and audience engagement (number of shares is positively associated with fundraising success (Bhati & McDonnell, 2020). A study of Columbian NPOs found that many groups have yet to take full advantage of social media in developing stakeholder relationships, although required technologies are widely available (Gálvez-Rodríguez et al., 2014).

Overall, organizational size matters in terms of resources available, but smaller NPOs with effective communication strategies can take advantage of social media to level the playing field. Larger NPOs will likely have more resources and dedicated social media staff, while smaller NPOs are more likely to face resource constraints affecting social media presence as a core strategy.

External Factor

Table 5 summarizes the three most frequently mentioned external factors (technology, stakeholders, audience) and studies exploring their role.

Table 5

External Factors

Explaining Differences in NPOs' Use of Social Media	
Technology	Different platforms of social media (e.g., Facebook or Twitter) with pertinent unique features (e.g., visual, opportunities for user engagement).
Stakeholders	Funders may shape social media strategies through their donations
Audience	The needs of potential audiences, including donors, volunteers, and employees will require different social media outreach strategies Namisango et al., 2019; Olinski & Szamrowski, 2021; Rathi et al., 2014; Smith 2018

Different Forms of Social Media For Information

Different types of social media have unique features that allow each platform to serve different purposes and promote different outcomes (Guo & Saxton, 2018). For example, Twitter limits messages to 280 characters and is not as visual as Instagram or Facebook. Different platforms can also target and tailor messages differently to reach an NPO's audience (Tonetti, 2019). The platform features impact how social problems are discussed across platforms. For example, Austin et al (2020) found that in response to the Parkland School Shooting in 2018 “gun violence advocacy and risk perception variables were present more frequently on Instagram, while social ecological model policy-level factors were observed more frequently on Twitter” (Austin et al., 2020).

Facebook

Facebook is one of the most widely used social media platforms across the globe (J. A. Young, 2017). Research has explored various topics with regard to how Facebook offers unique features and is being used by audiences. For example, a study of a Facebook diabetes group found high levels of user engagement and the effectiveness of the platform in facilitating community building (Y. Zhang et al., 2013). A study of German foundations from 2015 found that Facebook was more frequently used than Twitter or YouTube (Bürger, 2015). Compared to other social media channels, Facebook offers a number of useful features to NPOs, including the creation of private membership groups or the running of targeted campaigns for specific audiences (Tonetti, 2019).

Research also shows that Facebook usage varies greatly across NPOs. A study of Polish organizations found that the vast majority of groups did not take full advantage of the digital affordances provided by Facebook (Olinski & Szamrowski, 2021). The study also confirmed that

larger organizations were more active on Facebook than smaller ones. A study of 110 HIV/AIDS nonprofit organizations from 2016 showed a similar under-utilization of social media. The researchers found a dominance of “informational messages as one-way communication with their audience instead of dialogic interactions” (Huang et al., 2016). A study of U.S.-based youth development organizations found strong associations between the type of Facebook post and stakeholder engagement. It also found that longer posts increased stakeholder engagement (Carboni & Maxwell, 2015).

Instagram

Since 2010, Instagram has been recognized as the most important social media for influencer marketing (GRIN, 2021). Images can be used as supplementary sources of communication, information, and text messaging. More importantly, this media may further promote online sharing and organization-public relationships by disseminating information primarily in a political/professional context (Russmann & Svensson, 2016). Research has demonstrated that Instagram posts in the aftermath of the 2018 Parkland shooting showed greater emotion and affectation (e.g., anger and fear) than Twitter messages (Austin et al., 2020). Other research also confirmed that image-based Instagram receives a higher amount of engagement and provoked more frequent expressions of social support than Twitter (Guidry et al., 2020). Infographics (Instagram) also can draw a motivated audience for political issues (or movements) as a useful introduction (Beard, 2022).

Twitter

The most valuable feature of Twitter is the capacity to deliver short messages called “tweets” (Guo & Saxton, 2018; Saxton & Waters, 2014). Its retweeting and favoriting functions can be presented as engagement beyond direct replies to audiences. Twitter was the primary

mechanism for providing information and building support with their stakeholders (Banks, 2022) but less mobilization function (Guo & Saxton, 2014).

Twitter's utilization practices were examined because of its microblogging style of communication (Lovejoy et al., 2012). Then, Twitter was used for advocacy (Guo & Saxton, 2014) due to the ongoing relationship-building process, disseminating information, building engagement, and facilitating action (Svensson et al., 2015; M. P. Taylor, 2021); other NPO tweets were mainly used to run paid ads for increasing general fanbases and producing high engagement on topics such as political campaigns (Guidry et al., 2020; Tonetti, 2019). Twitter also is in handy when urgent needs occur to create awareness (Kaur et al., 2019) and crisis management (Guidry et al., 2017).

YouTube

The images (e.g., photos and videos) feature of YouTube provides nonprofits with opportunities to present their stories in a powerful and emotionally connected way (Waters & Jones, 2011). As such, YouTube serves multiple purposes. In addition to the original purpose of informing and educating viewers about nonprofits' missions, YouTube can also produce more successful public service announcements than television due to creating a lasting image with the audience. More importantly, YouTube's connection enables nonprofits to build relationships, identify with stakeholders (Waters & Jones, 2011), and create an online community for advocacy, volunteering, and fundraising (Garczynski, 2017). NPOs also were suggested to use images to empower fanbases by using real-time media updates and by using a channel for Facebook for cross-collecting data about donors (Tonetti, 2019).

The Impact of Social Media Communication Characteristics (Engagements)

The commitment to communication characteristics of social media accelerated its uses as social media shifted nonprofit organizations' communication, including advocacy from traditional mediums (mail or letters) to the online environment; this even helped develop engagement with their community (J. Young, 2012). Communications are often examined based on message characteristics and demonstrate how this medium accelerated the development of online engagements beyond communication (Kennedy & Sommerfeldt, 2015). Engagement is a process including the public in the organization's activities so closely associated with relationship building and dialogue (Watkins, 2017). The more interactive (such as dialogue) and skilled communications are, the more successful engagements (relationships) will be built with target audiences (e.g., stakeholders or users). They also have a greater likelihood of reaching larger potential audiences while remaining cost-effective (Guo & Saxton, 2014). However, one-way communication can be an engagement function for advocacy purposes as they could build Twitter networks, advocate for supporters' claims, and promote public education. There may be three potential explanations for why one-way communication may be emerging as the most prevalent function of communication on Twitter for engagement. First, it might be indicative of branding and communication strategies among NPOs (Svensson et al., 2015). Second, social media engagement requires less staff and expertise due to limited allocated resources in social media (Quinton & Fennemore, 2013). Third, users (or audience) of tweets (or retweets) are not expecting two-way communication because of its features observed in experimental studies (Watkins, 2017).

One of the most important features of social media platforms is their capacity to create interactive experiences (Svensson et al., 2015; Waters, 2009) and dialogic communication

(Kang, 2014; Watkins, 2017). The interactive capacity (of social media), when used for advocacy, can help NPOs to develop networks of supporters and improve participation in decision-making for advocacy (Lovejoy & Saxton, 2012; Obar et al., 2012; Scott & Maryman, 2016). However, many studies focused on Twitter and other platforms show that NPOs primarily engage in one-way communications (Carboni & Maxwell, 2015; Ellison & Hardey, 2014; Seo & Vu, 2020). Dialogic communication should be viewed as a communication orientation instead of a technological feature (M. Taylor & Kent, 2014).

Interests (or Needs) of Potential Audiences

The “audience” represents the individuals or groups who receive the social media messages that NPOs disseminate through social media channels (*Differentiating Your Stakeholders vs Audiences*, 2019). In contrast, “stakeholders” refer to those who are directly impacted by an organization’s actions and hold a stake in its decisions, such as employees, donors, or beneficiaries. Unlike the unidirectional communication that often occurs with audiences, stakeholders may be more frequently and directly engaged in the organization, highlighting the importance of effective stakeholder management. Stakeholders can be broadly classified into two categories: internal and external stakeholders (*Differentiating Your Stakeholders vs Audiences*, 2019). For example, NPO board members will attend regular meetings and are internal stakeholders, while NPO beneficiaries receive services and are external stakeholders. With the rise of social media, audiences have become a vital group for engagement, in addition to more traditional stakeholders.

Research has demonstrated that the needs of potential audiences are a primary factor that motivates NPOs to adopt social media to build profiles and identify potential groups of donors, volunteers, and employees. Furthermore, private funding sources, as opposed to government

funding, significantly influence social media use in NPOs. Seeking private donors requires NPOs to conduct more extensive outreach and public relations efforts, which can be achieved through the effective use of social media (McCaskill & Harrington, 2017). Meeting the needs of potential audiences is particularly important for smaller NPOs, as it helps to fulfill both their own and their funders' expectations.

External stakeholder pressures are also critical drivers of NPOs' adoption of new technology, such as social media. Studies have shown that external groups, including volunteers or donors, can exert significant pressure on NPOs to adopt new technologies (Nah & Saxton, 2013; Zorn et al., 2011). Such pressure is especially relevant for NPOs that rely on public donations. Additionally, small NPOs are often more susceptible to such pressures. For example, charities may feel compelled to respond to external comments and requests by implementing social media activities to engage their stakeholders (Quinton & Fennemore, 2013). Finally, the needs of existing supporters, especially for small NPO, are primary drivers of NPOs' outreach efforts, as they strive to reach more audiences and satisfy their funders' expectations (Hou & Lampe, 2015).

To What Effect Do NPOs Use Social Media

NPOs adopt social media for a variety of reasons discussed above. Many of these reasons reflect specific expectations with regard to how social media will increase resources or help with mission accomplishment. Research in this area considers how effective social media usage is, and if NPOs are successful in their online mobilization. As NPOs are typically resource-poor and social media investments could be viewed as unnecessary 'overhead' spending (Gneezy et al., 2014; Lecy & Searing, 2015), it is essential to establish whether and how social media efforts

pay off. Table 6 provides a summary of research about the possible impact of NPOs' social media use on audiences, the served community, and the organization itself.

Table 6

The Effective Social Media Use in NPOs ("THE IMPACT" question)

The Impact of NPOs' Social Media Use	
On Audience	Increase supporter engagement and public awareness; complement offline engagement; increase networking and community-building.
On communities Served	Empowerment, community-building, leadership development
On the organization	Fundraising and brand development

Increase NPOs' Effectiveness in Awareness, Community Engagement and Fundraising

Studies have shown that social media use by NPOs can have a significant positive impact on awareness, community engagement, and sometimes fundraising. The impact of social media on fundraising is varied, with some studies finding no significant effect (Albanna et al., 2022), while others indicating that social media can be used as a fundraising tool (Tonetti, 2019) and significantly increase giving (Bhati & McDonnell, 2020).

NPOs use social media to connect with audiences, build brand awareness, share important information, and gather feedback. Social media plays a vital role in increasing public awareness, and it represents an important means of shaping perceptions of an organization's financial performance, success, and purpose (e.g., branding). Social media can be mobilized to augment marketing strategies, engage audiences, and raise the NPOs' public profile.

Regarding public awareness, NPOs can use social media to disseminate information and raise awareness about their goals. By actively engaging with the public, NPOs can foster

relationships with various stakeholders, including local communities (Albanna et al., 2022; Kim & Chen, 2015). This interactive process can significantly impact community engagement and public awareness as social media can assist NPOs in conveying their mission to potential supporters, connecting with individuals who are interested in supporting their cause and spreading their initiatives and campaigns to the community. In addition, studies have found that social media can contribute to increased civil engagement among audiences (Gil de Zúñiga et al., 2012; Kim et al., 2013; B. G. Smith et al., 2018). Scholars have noted that having more social media can lead to an increase in the frequency of discussions on public affairs and have a direct impact on civic engagement (Gil de Zúñiga et al., 2012).

Enhance the Effectiveness of Social Change by Complementing Offline Engagement

Social media can be used to complement offline engagement to enhance the effectiveness of a social change effort. Based on the literature, internet users who are highly engaged in more and various offline groups, causes, and networks are more likely to contribute monetarily because online donations are a form of engagement with social groups (Reddick & Ponomariov, 2013). Social media-based practices (e.g., fundraising) generate increased offline support such as promoting action among prospective donors (Thorpe & Rinehart, 2013), advancing organizational membership, and attendance at offline political campaigns (Gervais, 2015). However, social media use for NPOs does not replace traditional offline face-to-face advocacy; Instead, it “complements” in-person advocacy (Guo & Saxton, 2014). This is especially true for online and offline participation substructures that should augment supporters’ voices and help achieve their goals (Nabatchi & Leighninger, 2015; Scott & Maryman, 2016)

Increase The Importance of Audience Engagement (Responses)

Social media-based strategies could direct NPOs to allocate their resources to social media and call the attention of more stakeholders or audiences. Building interactive relationships via social media requires ample resources, labor, and time (Olinski & Szamrowski, 2021). Therefore, NPOs need to constantly engage with potential audiences on their social networking site to gain the trust of stakeholders because the audience who spends more time on the internet is more likely to socially interact with NPOs in offline environments (Piatak & Mikkelsen, 2021).

The association of dialogic content with actual dialogue for mass communication strategies was first studied in advocacy organizations (Bortree & Seltzer, 2009). Audience responses (as engagement) to organization-generated messages were observed to provide a more comprehensive framework about how stakeholders respond to messages, or, practitioners collected messages and later developed a hierarchy of engagement (Lovejoy & Saxton, 2012).

Staff-Led and Supporter-Led Activism

Digital affordances (such as social media) have impacted the organizational forms of advocacy as well as advocacy strategies and tactics (Hall et al., 2020). The key is a shift in the relationship from staff to supporters. This kind of supporter-led engagement may generate more advocacy for NPOs than traditional, staff-led activism designed to promote the organization.

NPOs initially employed social media for disseminating information mainly in a top-down approach as technological changes facilitated a new form of NPOs advocacy between the 1960s and 1970s (Seelig et al., 2019, p. 17). This initial way of advocacy communication via social media is more likely as Schmitz et al. (2020) called staff-led approaches; It requires large resources in organizations themselves and also needs to attract a number of members for regular

financial and human support as professionalized activism. However, the later internet-based interactive tools (e.g., social media) facilitate the increased use through which the audience and NPOs can engage in advocacy campaigns (Goldkind, 2015, p. 383; Guo & Saxton, 2014; Nah & Saxton, 2013). Additionally, online interactions can create a “major reservoir of civic energy” (Schmitz et al., 2020, p. 4) and even produce frequent action among a large number of supporters, especially for urban and youth populations (Chenoweth & Belgioioso, 2019). Social media use also can increase audiences’ commitment to the mission of the organization or civic and political issues by taking significant actions (Boulianne, 2015). All those presence of technology change have developed a shift toward a new form, support-led activism; In this strategy, NPOs allow supporters to determine key issues such as campaign topics and related NPO actions, follow the officials, or even directly join protests or social groups as owners of a campaign (Guo & Saxton, 2014; Scott & Maryman, 2016). As such, it enhances the legitimacy and ensures advocacy on topics that resonate with the public; It can more quickly adapt and scale up activism (Hall et al., 2020); It can also help organizations to lessen the burden on their staff and shift attention from simple awareness-raising to more meaningful mobilizing and organizing of communities.

Measurement of Effective Social Media Use (For Advocacy) In NPOs

Table 7

Measurement of Effective Social Media Use (for Advocacy) in NPOs

Measurement method	Audience Responses (Engagement Level)
Quantitative analysis	A/B test and engagement level (audience responses) in the form of likes, shares, and comments (from low to high) to assess the resonance of specific messaging.

Sentiment analysis	The sentiment analysis can categorize audience responses in the text as positive, neutral, and negative based on audience reactions (e.g., love, wow, haha, sad, angry). It could be employed to optimize brand recognition in social media use
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One approach was considered in studies from social media implementation (e.g., advocacy) to how social media use (for advocacy) as best practices (Guo & Saxton, 2014), more researchers have alternatives to investigate the correlation between organization-generated messages and the instant audience responses that displayed in the form of such actions as “likes,” “comments,” and “shares” on Facebook (Carah, 2014; Coursaris et al., 2016; Kaur et al., 2019). The measurement shift of almost real-time audience responses to NPOs’ messages related to advocacy from the perceptual to the behavioral domain (Saxton et al., 2015); the capacity to measure audience responses to organization-generated social media messages offered NPOs a quantitative and comparable method to measure their relative effectiveness in advocacy strategies.

Later, studies indicated the number of likes, comments, and shares to measure audience engagement on Facebook (Guo & Saxton, 2014). The ICA framework was expanded to identify message strategies, such as mission-related messages for specific health sectors of NPOs (Huang et al., 2016). Also, NPOs were advised to use A/B testing to evaluate audience resonance for specific messaging because advocacy organizations with social media can develop and refine their strategies and tactics (Karpf, 2016). In sum, audience responses (engagement) are critical for advocacy strategies via social media and can be used as a measure of successful engagement strategies (Guo & Saxton, 2018). The importance of audience responses is also confirmed by international studies. PBOs recognized a trend of audience relations to relationship management (as engagement; Olinski & Szamrowski, 2021).

Measurement of The Engagement Level in Audience Responses (In the Form of Likes, Comments, and Shares)

Audience responses are publicly available, so they could be beneficial for sentiment analysis of users and even mapped to the pattern of audience interaction as a predictive indicator on social media (Ross et al., 2018). Those audience responses are evaluated on their pertinent level of engagement, respectively, from low to high (Cho et al., 2014; Kaur et al., 2019). In Facebook, the type of organization-generated post is more likely to affect if users would engage with the post in the form of likes, shares, and comments. Facebook includes four types of posts; status updates, links to external sites, and multiple-media posts with photos or with videos (Carboni & Maxwell, 2015). Status updates refer to only text and can be read. Multimedia posts with photos and videos may have content. Those videos and photos can be viewed. Posts with the link would be web links connected to external websites.

Likes

Clicking the “like” button indicated that users (the audiences) agreed with the Facebook content and expressed their personal preferences, and provided positive feedback on specific items (Sumner et al., 2018). Users were 8 times more likely to click the like button than “share” and “comment” (Pelletier & Blakeney Horky, 2015; Ross et al., 2018) as it was comparatively easy and a quicker way to engage (Y. Zhang et al., 2022). The number of likes per post promotes more positive feedback for the subjects in NPOs, so the number of likes positively leads to a stronger sentiment.

Shares

Each “*share*” places a higher commitment compared to *likes*. The contents, once shared, are added to personal profiles permanently, which is suggested to be part of users’ self-presentation. In other words, the consequence of sharing content on Facebook advocates how the users evaluate themselves because their posted contents leave the Facebook users vulnerable to public engagement through viewing by all (Rui & Stefanone, 2013). Thus, (Facebook) users become more conscious about their shared content; that shared content is made visible to this community to reach a large audience and promote brand awareness campaigns (Coursaris et al., 2016). Along the same lines, an increase in the number of shares also leads to a stronger sentiment due to agreement from the audience on content.

Comments

These are generated content published by users and include more than only clicking buttons such as like and share. Facebook comments influence readers’ perception of discussion (Hong & Cameron, 2018), especially for public opinions as these (comments) are read by the first posting users through browsing the newsfeed, which implicitly influences brand awareness and purchase intentions (Carah, 2014). The contents of comments and the number of comments would contribute to increasing the intensity of the topic discussion(Kaur et al., 2019).

Furthermore, the influence of customer-generated information (about NPOs as audience comments) on trust is higher than the influence of company-generated information (about NPOs as organization-generated messages), given that trust in brand and product were significantly related to intent to purchase (which refers to action in NPOs)(Nikbin et al., 2022).

The Correction of Audience Responses to Messages Functions (As Measurement of Engagement Level in the Form of Likes, Shares, and Comments)

Audience responses are presented with different technological tools such as direct replies, hyperlinks, hashtags, and user mentions in addition to the form of likes, shares, comments, or reactions (for details, refer to “the Audience Responses in the Facebook Behavior” section). The present research categorizes likes, comments, and shares from the lowest to highest levels of engagement. Generally, the greater number of likes, shares, and comments (or user mentions and retweets) is the more effective audience responses. The higher number of shares there are, the higher the level of audience engagement. The relationship between message strategies and audience responses in the social media setting (e.g., Facebook or Twitter) is categorized into three subthemes described below.

Audience Responses’ Correlation to Types of Messages (ICA Model)

Numerous scholars have analyzed the relationship between types of organization-generated messages (information, community, and action) and the level of engagement from audiences:

- Community-related content: those community-related content generated a greater number of likes and comments than that information-related content (Guo & Saxton, 2014). Also, community-based messages had a much higher impact than information-related messages because community building is “a prerequisite for stimulating dialogue and user engagement” (J. N. Smith, 2018, p. 308).
- Information-related content: information-related content attracted more numbers of shares than the other two types of content with content analysis of Twitter messages. Information-related tweets were more likely to be liked and “retweeted” compared with

those tweets, including only dialogue (Wang & Yang, 2020). Along these themes, information-related Facebook messages were more likely to be liked, and action-related messages generated more shares from the audience (Lam & Nie, 2020; Y. Zhang et al., 2022).

- Social media can help NPOs develop and refine their strategies and tactics, such as A/B testing to evaluate audience resonance for specific messaging (Karpf, 2016).

Effectiveness of Emotions in NPOs' Audience Responses (With Sentiment Analysis)

Although extant studies have limited examinations of the effectiveness of emotions in NPO social media messages, the findings indicated that NPOs should employ social media-based strategies, especially at the message level, to acquire their stakeholders' engagement and support (Hu & Shi, 2017; Kanter & Paine, 2012; Swanson, 2012). Sentiment analysis is an area of inquiry that clarifies human moods, behaviors, and opinions from written text in natural environments (Kaur et al., 2019). The objective of sentiment analysis is to categorize audience responses in the text as positive, neutral, and negative based on audience reactions (e.g., love, wow, haha, sad, angry). Through sentiment analysis, there is a need to use natural language in posts to optimize brand recognition in social media use and emphasize the importance of public opinions for a better understanding of audience feedback (Poecze et al., 2018).

Emojis of *love* have the highest numbers, followed by *wow*, *sad*, *angry*, and *haha*, (Kaur et al., 2019). This finding indicated that the audience is more likely to click positive reactions (e.g., love, wow, haha) than negative reactions (e.g., sad and anger; Ortigosa et al., 2014). That result is in line with previous scholarship; the audience is more supportive of each other in the group concerning health-related issues (Frison & Eggermont, 2015). Furthermore, emojis (reactions on Facebook behaviors-see Appendix C) could effectively increase the number of

retweets based on factors contributing to retweet-ability (Chung et al., 2020; Y. Zhang et al., 2022). The use of emotive content has mixed results: posts with well-resourced information and personal stories could help create a supportive community, while posts with negative emotions (or reactions) such as fear or anger may lead to arguments and even spread unchallenged misinformation (Balfour, 2020) or get more shared and commented on more on the news (Ross et al., 2018).

Conclusion

The literature review indicates that social media can help NPOs achieve their mission-related goals, including sharing information, mobilizing audiences for collective action, and organizing communities. Social media can help NPOs, engage supporters and move them from passive bystanders to active participants who contribute to causes. Social media can help NPOs improve their engagement with audiences and stakeholders. It can be used to empower supporters, and it can be leveraged for social change in the long term. However, research also shows that social media is often underutilized by NPOs, and that success in using social media depends on effective messaging. Using social media without compelling content or a strategy is unlikely to contribute to NPO success.

Scholars have identified both internal and external factors that can influence how NPOs adopt social media. The current literature offers valuable insights into the impacts of social media use by NPOs on audiences, served communities, and the organizations themselves. In addition, the literature established valuable frameworks for analyzing and categorizing different social media contents. These frameworks and insights will be part of this study's investigation of small communities serving NPOs in the Los Angeles area. As the literature review also demonstrated, existing research has frequently ignored very small, community-serving NPOs,

and also rarely combined quantitative and qualitative analyses of organizational messaging and audience responses.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

This chapter identifies the methodology used for this study including operational definitions, conceptual framework, the research questions, research design, organizations and messages sampling, data collection, and data analysis. The chapter also reviews the results of a pilot study that preceded and informed the current research.

Operational Definitions

Emerging research about social media-related advocacy has analyzed diverse contexts across multiple disciplines and with different definitions of related terminologies. To clarify common confusing terms used in my study, I provided major operational definitions next.

Advocacy

Broadly, advocacy “describes a wide range of individual and collective expression or action on a cause, idea or policy” (Mosley et al., 2022, p. 4; Reid, 2000, p. 1). One particular type of advocacy is lobbying, which specifically targets legislators and other policymakers to vote (Jung et al., 2014, p. 70). Other forms of advocacy include strategic litigation to use the court system for accomplishing mission goals or mobilizing the public through the publication of research and other educational efforts. Advocacy may be directed at the general public, corporate actors, or other NPOs.

Advocacy Organizations

Advocacy organizations are groups with a primary emphasis on advocacy, rather than service delivery (Schmitz et al., 2020). Some scholars have also used the term “interest groups” or “social movement organizations” with an emphasis on developing new policy and

administrative rules, litigation, or lobbying (see also Appendix D; Berry, 1981; Mosley et al., 2022).

Nonprofit Advocacy

Nonprofit advocacy includes all organizational and individual efforts of NPOs to influence public policy (Jung et al., 2014) by direct lobbying or indirectly using information to raise awareness among the public for mobilizing for or against specific behaviors or policies. Such efforts may be aimed at “building grassroots constituencies and mobilizing citizens for policy positions” (Z. Zhang & Guo, 2012, p. 222). See Appendix D for the list of advocacy activities (Guerriero & Ditkoff, 2018). NPOs typically engage in advocacy as part of their overall mission, either because it is an important complement to service delivery or a stand-alone effort.

Social Media

Social media is a broad term defined as an internet-based communication technology that allows users to create an online profile, update their information, and develop social connections with others (Hu & Shi, 2017; Svensson et al., 2015). The most popular social networks worldwide include Facebook, YouTube, WhatsApp, Instagram, and Wxixin/Wechat and the list of most popular social platforms in Appendix B (Social, Hootsuite, DataReportal and Kepios, 2022; The Modern Nonprofit, 2021). TikTok recently became one of the top six largest platforms globally (as of January 2022; Clemence, 2022). Globally, there are more than 4.5 billion social media users (We are social Team, 2021)

Conceptual Framework for the Dissertation

I built on the existing literature to establish a conceptual framework to investigate how NPOs have used Facebook for their audience engagement in three message functions (as the ICA model): information provision, calls for action, and community building (Lovejoy et al., 2012;

Lovejoy & Saxton, 2012). The three types of NPO engagement with an audience can be understood as part of Arnstein’s ladder of engagement (Arnstein, 1969; Nared & Bole, 2020), which categorized different levels of citizen engagement from a passive stage of “manipulation” to the highest level of “citizen control” (see Appendix A). Applied to NPOs, information sharing reflects a low level of participation and more passive engagement. Mobilizing represents a medium level of engagement, and community-building is a high level of audience involvement requiring supporter-led activism. Table 8, based on Lovejoy and Saxton’s model and derived from Arnstein’s work (1969), illustrates three types of engagement activities, their goals, communication formats in social media, and the level of engagement between NPOs and their audience. The dissertation research used these three types of engagement activities to (a) categorize social media messages into information sharing for raising awareness, (b) call for action for mobilizing resources, and (c) community building for organizing audiences into active and self-directed participants. These different types of engagement strategies in the social media context reflect distinctions between one-way and two-way communication, as well as short-term or long-term perspectives.

Table 8

Types of Engagement Efforts

Engagement activity	Goal	Social media focus
Information sharing (mission-focused)	Awareness- raising	One-way communication to change how audiences think about a mission-relevant topic
Calls for action	Mobilizing	One-way communication, short-term actions, such as donations or letter-writing; staff-led activism

Community building (audience-focused)	Organizing	Two-way communication to create lasting relationships and networks; facilitate supporter- led activism
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The first function, disseminating information, may be especially important for NPOs in the initial stage of online relationship building because this engagement activity focuses on basic awareness raising. Sharing information focuses on the core mission, services, programs, or other related information NPOs believe is their target population or responds to supporters' interests.

The second function listed in Table 8 emphasizes action, which Lovejoy and Saxton's (2012) framework identified as the third function. Once online supporters receive information about a given issue, the NPO will seek to mobilize them to take action. This may include signing petitions, showing up for an event, or donating time or money. NPOs may want to mobilize resources and followers (or supporters) to fulfill financial and strategic goals. Lovejoy & Saxton (2012) have identified seven subcategories of mobilization, which include promoting an event, appealing for donations, selling a product, calling for volunteers and employees, supporting lobbying and advocacy, joining another site, voting, and learning how to help. These categories served as initial guidelines for coding schemes concerning action functions. I then also used inductive coding to add newly emerging subcategories.

I identified the third function of social messaging as a form of community-building. NPOs use these messages to create a community comprising individuals from different backgrounds. Through dialogue in such a community, the public can engage in two-way communication with the NPO and other supporters. By building a community around the NPO's cause, supporters are more likely to act and support the organization's mission. These supporters may then become champions and leaders of the NPO cause, generating their actions

independently of NPO advocacy (Heimans & Timms, 2014). Lovejoy and Saxton (2012) further categorize community-related functions into four subcategories, including recognition and thanks, acknowledging current and local events, responding to supporter messages, and soliciting responses. The four subcategories are not mutually exclusive and may appear concurrently in messaging.

Research Questions

To conduct this study, I focused on two important aspects of social media use. First, I investigated how NPOs used Facebook for outreach. Based on prior studies (Lovejoy & Saxton, 2012), this type of investigation distinguishes between three principal ways of outreach: information sharing to raise awareness, a call to action to mobilize, and community-building efforts to organize audience members. Second, I studied how audiences responded to messages posted on NNPO's Facebook accounts. The analysis of audience engagement is crucial as it can enhance the effectiveness of social media use, particularly when Facebook messaging is delivered in an audience-centered manner. However, identifying the audience can be challenging, which is why it is essential to understand audience members' attitudes about relevant topics, such as advocacy or mission. The research questions were as follows:

1. How do small Los Angeles-based NPOs engage their audiences on Facebook to share information, call for action, and build community?
2. How do audiences respond to different small Los Angeles-based NPO messages by using likes, comments, or shares?

Design of Research

To ensure I effectively addressed the two questions above, I conducted a descriptive and comparative study using a design from Doyle et al. (2020) and Sandelowski and Barroso (2003). This design was specifically applicable in social media research as this type of research is commonly concerned with how audiences engage with NPOs online. This descriptive and comparative design gathered data based on how NPOs and their supporters acted in a natural environment. The study investigated the underlying meanings of NPO postings and the target population's subjective experience of how NPOs or NPOs' supporters constructed their social community (social media world), and how they interacted in that context (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015).

Pilot Studies

I began this investigation by conducting two pilot studies in the spring of 2023. The rationale for conducting the two pilot studies was grounded in questions about the best criteria to use to access social media content between NPOs and their audience. I also examined if Facebook content had sufficient data for deeper analysis to answer my overall research questions regarding how NPOs use social media. The pilot studies also helped me to understand how best to navigate, manage, and anticipate any challenges or data entry problems (Jain et al., 2021).

Two pilot studies were conducted, and major questions and findings were listed in Table 9

Table 9

The Major Findings of Two Pilot Studies

	Pilot Study 1	Pilot Study 2
Study Period	16 days (3/16-3/31/2022)	15 days (4/1-4/15/2022)
Questions	How do large NPOs use Twitter to engage audiences for advocacy?	How do small Los Angeles-based NPOs Use Twitter to engage the audiences for advocacy?

	Pilot Study 1	Pilot Study 2
Study subject	2 large NPOs	10 small NPOs
Study subject activities	Food Bank and Environment	Environment, Education, Human Services (youth development...), Unclassified, Public Benefit, et., al
Posts investigated	Over 250 posts but lost tracking manually	132 posts with 302 codes (code analysis)
Supporter comments investigated	Over 150 content comments but lost tracking	125 content comments
Findings	<p>It was difficult to manually code a large number of posts. Software supporting coding is preferable.</p> <p>The content of Twitter is very limited and the majority of posts were due to Twitter's 140/280 character limit in single postings.</p>	<p>It was found that Twitter was not a major communication tool for the majority of the sampled NPOs.</p> <p>The source dataset (Great Nonprofits) website did not have the majority of Los Angeles NPOs. This prompted switching to Nonprofit Explorer.</p> <p>It was not possible to use the Ncapture function in NVivo.</p> <p>The preliminary results of the descriptive analysis suggested using Excel or SPSS for quantitative analysis and also helped define the study timeframe (3 months)</p>

Organizational Sampling

To capture small nonprofit organizations that serve urban communities, this study focused on Facebook strategies used by Los Angeles-based NPOs with annual revenue of less than \$500,000. This study used purposive sampling to examine NPOs in a large urban area because of my familiarity with the Los Angeles area and my own volunteer experience. Purposive sampling is “the method of choice for most qualitative [studies]” (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015, p. 96) because generalization is not a goal of qualitative research. In this study, I used a purposive sampling strategy to (a) accomplish information richness (Guetterman, 2015) on organizational and supporter messaging; and (b) address a bias in the existing literature which tends to sample larger and/or exclusively advocacy-focused NPOs.

Criteria for Purposive Sampling

To be included, all organizations had to meet the following criteria. First, the NPOs' annual revenue (or average revenue) did not exceed \$500,000 for the last three consecutive years (2017, 2018, 2019, or 2020). The threshold of \$500,000 was chosen because 66% of NPOs in the United States fall into this category of small organizations. The report also notes that these small NPOs only control 1.4% of the overall annual revenue of the sector (NCCS 2020). I also focus on these smaller NPOs because they face particularly high barriers to social media-based advocacy due to time, expertise, and resource scarcity.

Second, all organizations had to be recognized as an IRS 501c(3) charity organization, and not elect IRS 501c(4) and (h) for advocacy activities. Third, the sampled NPOs had to engage in advocacy or indicate that they advocate for their mission on their official website or Form 990. I chose this criterion because my literature review suggested that social media strategy often involves mission-related posts, and I expected to find a substantial number of advocacy-related posts among the sample. If NPOs are engaged in advocacy, they are more likely to engage in the types of outreach activities relevant to this study. Groups only engaged in services may have limited reasons to develop a social media presence.

Fourth, to obtain a diverse group of NPOs engaged in advocacy across several sectors, I sampled organizations active in promoting education, health, environmental issues, and housing (see Table 11). Fifth, I narrowed the sample geographically to the Los Angeles area because it is home to a diverse set of NPOs serving many different communities. As an urban area, we should expect general familiarity with social media which may ensure data availability. I am also personally familiar with the area and the residents. This allows me to interpret the results more confidently and rely on my background knowledge to avoid drawing questionable conclusions.

Lastly, the organizations were required to maintain an active Facebook account throughout the study period, using it as their primary communication tool. By sampling from their Facebook posts, I was able to easily access their most recent and major communications to (or potential) audiences without having to search across multiple social media platforms.

A summary of the inclusion criteria the for NPOs chosen is listed in Table 10.

Table 10

Inclusion Criteria for NPOs Chosen

Elements	Criteria	The rationale for target sampling
Size	<\$500,000 for at least 3 years 2018–2020	For covering smaller NPOs (bias: 100-style sampling)
Geography	Los Angeles County	For increasing the understanding of LA-based NPOs due to familiarity (bias: limited studies)
Activities	Must include “advocacy” in a mission statement or description of significant activities (e.g., web presence, annual reports, 990 forms)	For exploring the depth of the activities of NPOs for advocacy
Sectoral background	Sectors for relevance in LA: environment, health, education, human service-food, public community, housing shelter, and uncategorized	For multiple categories (bias: only advocate organizations as a single category)
Communicati on Level	Facebook as a major communication tool	To catch major and recent posts on the social media platforms

Organizations Select Processes

The dataset was set up by extracting NPOs from the most current version (updated as of April 2022) of the Nonprofit Explorer, a database that includes data on 3 million tax returns for

tax-exempt organizations since 2001 (Schwencke et al., 2013). ProPublica, a founder of Nonprofit Explorer, is an independent, nonprofit news studio that generates investigative journalism to spur reform through 100 dedicated journals. The selection process was filtered for each inclusion criterion. My selection process included: (1) filter for each inclusion criteria from the dataset, the most current version (updated as of April 2022) of the Nonprofit Explorer, which includes data of 3 million tax returns for tax-exempt organizations since 2001 (Schwencke et al., 2013), (2) on their website, I filtered “Los Angeles” in a “city” query, “California” in the “state” query, every category in the “major nonprofit categories” query, and “501c(3)” in “organization types.” Out of all NPOs that were initially considered for the study, only 14 organizations met all of the inclusion criteria and were included in the final sample list. From this list, 10 NPOs were purposefully selected (see Appendix E). Lastly, three NPOs were excluded from the final sample list due to their lack of social media presence during the study period. As a result, a total of seven NPOs were ultimately examined for this study.

Table 11

Mission and classification of sampled NPOs (as “Activities” of All Criteria Table 9)

NPOs	NTEE Code	Mission statement
20/20 Mom	Public, Societal Benefit- Community	To close gaps in maternal mental health care.
Citizens for Los Angeles Wildlife Inc	Environment	Our mission is to promote, educate and protect the fundamental importance of wildlife, wildlife habitats, and wildlife corridors in Los Angeles and beyond
Community Trust Foundation	Education	The mission of The Community Trust Foundation, Inc. is to strengthen the region by working in partnership with donors and community groups.

NPOs	NTEE Code	Mission statement
Invisible People	Human Service-Housing & Shelter	The most critical step to solving homelessness is public advocacy. Your voice is essential to influencing policy change, so we made it easy for you to speak up and be heard.
NAMI Glendale	Health-Mental Health	Since 1985, NAMI Glendale's no-cost support groups, education classes, and community presentations provide welcoming spaces of support for all those affected by mental illness; connect individuals to an empathetic community based on their shared lived experiences; and offer hope that recovery is possible.
NAMI Westside Los Angeles	Health-Mental Health	NAMI Westside Los Angeles offers free education programs along with support, guidance, and hope for the growing number of Angelenos affected by mental health conditions
NAMI Urban Los Angeles	Health-Mental Health	Advocating, educating, and supporting people with mental illness and their families.

Message Sampling

To ensure an adequate sample of Facebook messages fully representing NPOs' messaging strategies, I collected Facebook data using a three-stage process. The first step was to search organizational web presences media (e.g., an official website or social media accounts) to verify if the organizations maintain an active Facebook profile: I found 10 sampled NPOs used Facebook as a major communication tool and even two of them used Facebook as only communication tool without official original websites. In the second step, I manually gathered all the contents (e.g., words and photos) posted by each NPO on their Facebook profile for data collection from July 1, 2022, to September 30, 2022. In the third step, I collected the data from audience responses including comments posted by users (including comments posted to pinned posts), hyperlinks, and emojis. All data sets were collected for 3 months because they represented a reasonable timeframe due to the richness of Facebook content available. This insight had already emerged during my second pilot study (see Table 9), where I noticed the

overall (in-)frequency of organizational postings and audience responses. As I also sampled randomly from the total number of messages, I chose a 3-month period as a sufficiently long timeframe to capture a diverse set of contents. The unit of analysis was the specific Facebook content posted by the NPO and audience members.

Random Sampling

Random sampling was used to collect organization-generated messages from the Facebook accounts of seven NPOs for three reasons. Firstly, Gheondea-Eladi (2014) claimed sampling is performed to “estimate the true values or parameters of statistics in a population and to do so with a calculable probability of error” (p. 117); so, quantitative studies may employ probability samples to support statistical generalization. Second, the sample size of quantitative sampling is usually applying random sampling with large samples (in my case, 505 total Facebook messages). Random sampling is a solution as it makes more accurate inferences by choosing a greater variety of messages and simpler hypothesis testing. Third, the final sample size was justified based on the preliminary findings of the pilot study. In Pilot Study 2 (see Table 9), a total of 132 Facebook messages out of 10 NPOs for 2 weeks were sufficient for code analysis and descriptive analysis and further made some conclusions because the preliminary findings revealed how those messages come across three categories (information, action, and community) and also specify about subcategories of each category. Additionally, it is worth noting that a single NPO (IP) contributes to 50% ($= 218/439$) of the total posts with responses in the sampled pool, which may introduce bias. To mitigate this, random sampling (proportionally) is a suitable method that can reduce the potential impact of this dominant sample. Therefore, by proportionally sampling one-third of each NPO, I randomly sampled 150 posts (close to 132 posts in Pilot Study 2) out of a total of 439 posts with responses from each NPO in Table 3.5.

Table 12

Comparison of the Percentage of Total Posts Per NPO in the Original Data Set vs the Sampled Data Set.

NPOs (N=7)	Total Posts	Sampled Posts	% of Each NPO
20/20 Mom	85	26	31%
CLAW	32	12	38%
CTF	50	16	32%
NAMI-GLA	85	17	20%
NAMI-WLA	15	4	27%
NAMI-ULA	20	4	20%
IP	218	71	33%
Total	505	150	30%

Data Analysis and Coding Procedure

In the first stage, I first randomly selected 150 posts with text out of a total of 505 organizational posts. As one NPO was responsible for 218 out of 505 posts, I chose between 20% and 38% of all messages from each organization. These 150 messages were then coded in MAXQDA to assess the apparent modes of engagement. My code analysis relied on deductive and inductive approaches and unfolded in two steps. For the deductive analysis, all Facebook messages and content comments (audience responses) were first categorized into three areas (informational, action-, or community-focused) and coded based on the 11 subcategories from Lovejoy and Saxton (2012). Table 13 lists the subcategories identified in prior research.

Table 13

Lovejoy and Saxton's (2012) 11 Subcategories

Community	Action
Giving recognition and thanks	Promoting an event
Acknowledgment of current & local events	Donation appeal
Responses to reply messages	Selling a product
Response solicitation	Calling for volunteers and employers
	Lobbying and advocacy
	Join another site or vote for the organization

Community	Action
	Learn how to help

For the inductive analysis, new subcategories for informational messages were identified, including event-related, mission-related, advocacy-related, and organizational information. These subcategories were identified to complement the 11 existing subcategories suggested in the literature. Each Facebook message was coded based on segments, and messages could receive multiple codes.

In the second stage of my analysis, I analyzed the audience responses (i.e., Research Question 2) in three steps (Chapter 5). First, I performed a count of ‘likes,’ ‘shares,’ and ‘comments’ and conducted a descriptive analysis. Second, I also adopted inductive content analysis for text comments (because this qualitative data analysis was fit particularly for relatively small-scale, noncomplex data (149 content comments) and suited for where few or no previous frameworks for the content comments exist. Furthermore, content analysis could help NPOs understand audiences’ sentiments (which I also employed) or identify emerging trends by clustering themes and topics. Third, I employed sentiment analysis by counting positive (love, care, haha in emoji), negative (anger and sad in emoji), and neutral reactions (Wow in emoji) from the likes category responses from the audience.

After completing the coding process, I exported the report from MAXQDA to an Excel sheet for further analysis of the Facebook content for the number of likes, number of comments, and number of shares and “replies” (included in the number of “comments”) were counted and detailed in the codebook for all contents comments in the analysis. Information for the number of likes, comments, and shares provided a basic understanding of how an NPO used Facebook and what the resonance level or audience response was.

Next, along with traditional retrievable metrics (e.g., number of likes, number of comments, number of shares of posted contents), I performed sentiment analysis of audience responses complementary to achieve a deeper understanding of their audience reactions (e.g., if they were positive or negative in nature). All emojis were categorized into three classes: positive, negative, and neutral. The emojis of “likes,” “love,” “care,” and “haha” were defined as positive sentiment, and the emojis of “anger,” “sad,” or any negative term in the comments or replied to as negative sentiment. The emoji of “wow” and “shares” with information or articles were defined as neutral sentiments. The audience responses provided insights into the popularity of organizational messaging as well as the sentiments of responses.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

RESULTS AND FINDINGS: ORGANIZATIONAL MESSAGING

This chapter reports the main findings regarding NPO messaging. The results presented focus on the messages posted by the seven sampled NPOs. They were categorized according to three core content areas: information provision, call for action, and community-building. The research examined the characteristics of each sampled posting, including the overall frequency of specific content and possible multiple content areas. The chapter first provides a general overview of the contents analyzed and then moves to a more in-depth investigation of the three types of messaging.

Message Frequencies and Core Contents

Table 14 states the number of posts and frequency by individual NPOs not only overall data.

Table 14

Frequency of Facebook Messaging for Seven NPOs

NPOs	# of Posts	Freq (92 days)
20/20 Mom	85	0.92
CLAW	32	0.35
CTF	50	0.54
NAMI-GL	85	0.92
NAMI-WLA	15	0.16
NAMI-ULA	20	0.22
IP	218	2.38
Total	505	

Mean	0.79
Median	0.54

Table 15 summarizes the NPOs' total number of posts and averages. The total ranged from 15 to 218. The average was 72 Facebook messages during the period, while the median was 50. The average frequency of posts per day was 0.78 posts (median: 0.54), with a range from 0.16 to 2.38. There are no national data sets tracking the frequency of social media posts, but some research suggests that smaller NPOs post between 1 and 2 times a day (McLachlan, 2021).

Table 15

Frequency of Facebook Messaging Across Sample

Facebook Messages	Seven NPOs	Study Period
Total	505	92 days
Mean	72	0.78 (per day)
Median	50	0.54 (per day)
Range (# of posts)	15-218	0.16-2.38

Table 16 provides the classification of 150 sampled posts based on the content focused on information provision, calls for action, and community-building. I also assigned 15 subcategories of message contents that emerged during the coding process (Appendix F). Appendix F summarized the details of codebooks, including a brief memo (descriptions) of all modes of engagement codes, the frequency, and the percentage of posts that received one or multiple codes.

In Table 16, the sample reveals that 92% of the Facebook messages were used to distribute information. 71.3% of messages contained calls for action, while only 24.7% were focused on community-building. This dominance of information-and action-focused aligns with

expectations that smaller nonprofits may not have the resources to develop more complex and sustained social media strategies. However, a more in-depth analysis of these results below also reveals a more complex picture of how NPOs use information and action functions.

Table 16

Distribution of Sampled Post Across Three Core Categories

Core Category	Information	Action	Community-building
Actual Posts	138	107	37
Percent ($N = 150$)	92.0%	71.3%	24.7%

Table 17 provides a breakdown of all messages by organization and core contents category. Some organizations show a significant number of community-focused messaging, while others do not, including Invisible People (IP) with the most posts overall. As IP contributed almost half of all analyzed messages, it is possible that a different sampling method would have generated a larger percentage of community-based messaging. CLAW, NAMI-ULA, and Mom 20/20 featured over 40% of their messages with community-building content.

Table 17

Sampled Posts Across Three Core Categories by Each Organization

NPO	Sample Size	Inform	% of sampled posts	Act	% of sampled posts	Comm	% of sampled posts
20/20 Mom	26	26	100%	24	92%	17	65%
CLAW	12	12	100%	11	92%	5	42%

NPO	Sample Size	Inform	% of sampled posts	Act	% of sampled posts	Comm	% of sampled posts
CTF	16	16	100%	14	88%	4	25%
NAMI-WLA	4	4	100%	4	100%	1	25%
NAMI-GLA	17	6	35%	14	82%	6	35%
NAMI-ULA	4	4	100%	4	100%	3	75%
IP	71	70	97%	36	51%	1	1%
Total	150	138		107		37	

The information-focused messages typically convey content on the organization's activities, events, facts, or reports relevant to the organization's supporters and stakeholders. This can be considered one-way communication because it does not explicitly aim for an ongoing exchange between NPOs and their online members.

Multiple Content Areas Across Organizational Posts

One compelling observation emerging from the data is the presence of multiple content areas across Facebook messages. For example, a single posting may feature both information and action-related content (see Table 18). Slightly over 50% of the codes covered two categories, while less than a quarter each had one or three codes applied. The prevalence of double and triple codes in the sampled Facebook messages suggests that the NPOs use single postings for multiple purposes. For example, the high frequency of co-occurring information and action-related messaging suggests that NPOs use information strategically to motivate their supporters to become more active.

Table 18*Singular and Multiple Code Patterns*

	1 code applied	2 codes applied	3 codes applied
Number of posts ($N = 150$)	36 (24%)	79 (52.7%)	35 (23.3%)
Information (138)	36	73 (w/action) 5 (w/community)	
Action (107)	0	73 (w/information) 1 (w/community)	
Community (37)	0	5 (w/information) 1 (w/action)	

Singular and Multiple Message Contents

There are three categories: Single codes, double codes, and triple codes

- **Single Codes.** All single codes (36) were information-related posts. For example, this type of post conveys to the audience a core belief of the NPO such as “housing and physical stability is a foundational need to do anything else.”
- **Double Codes.** Slightly over 50% of the codes covered two categories. The prevalence of multiple codes in the sampled Facebook messages suggests that the NPOs use single postings for multiple purposes. For example, the frequent cooccurrence of information and action-related messages indicates that the NPOs seek to support their calls for action through specific information that will be interesting to and emotionally resonant with their audiences.

One example of an information and action post by 20/20 Mom is as follows: “I invite you to help us celebrate this milestone by making a tax-deductible contribution to 20/20 Mom today. Because of supporters like you, we have seen a narrative shift in this space over the last 11 years.” The content of the post provides informational messages as it discusses 20/20 Mom’s

current fundraising events and their 11-year duration; The statement “By making a tax-deductible contribution to 20/20” represents an action-related message, specifically a call for donations.

An example of a combination of information and community-building statement would be: “[#TBT](#) To that time [The Cause Connection](#) selected 2020 Mom as a beneficiary of their fundraiser this year, so we can further propel our work closing gaps in Maternal Mental Health.” The reference to #TBT’s events represents community-related messages, aligning with the subcategory-acknowledgment of current local news and events in Table 20. These messages contribute to building a sense of community with shared mission interests in maternal mental health.

- **Triple Codes.** There were less than a quarter (23.3%) of posts with contents covering all three categories. This suggests another way in which NPOs seek to promote multiple goals in a single Facebook message.

A representative post-coded under all three categories states: “Thanks to your generous support, we filmed Eviction last week. . . . With the affordable housing crisis getting worse, causing mass evictions, our social impact films will help push for policy change!” “Thanks to your generous support” could be interpreted as a community-related message, as it falls under the subcategory of ‘giving recognition and thanks’ mentioned in Table 20. This message not only expresses gratitude but also serves as a reminder or encouragement for the audience to take action in further donations. “With the affordable housing...help push for policy change!” presents an informational message about how this organization contributed to the mission by filming eviction to push for policy change.

Information-Focused Messaging

In this section, I illustrated each of the categories (information-focused, action-related, and community-building) by identifying subcategories and by elaborating on how the sampled NPOs use messaging, especially for advocacy.

Subcategories in the Information-Focused Messages

During the coding process, I identified inductively four subcategories (see Table 19) for information-related messaging. These subcategories effectively encapsulate the distinctive characteristics of each message type. These subcategories provide deeper insights into how the sampled NPOs share information across a range of relevant topics. The four subcategories include information about the mission, events, advocacy efforts, and the organization itself.

Table 19

Subcategories of Information-Focused Messages

Subcategory	Key contents	#Post	As a % of all information-related posts (138 posts/ 175 codes)
Mission	Information related to its specific mission to raise awareness of the organization's brand	88	63.77%/50.29%
Events	Information related to events or activities to promote organizational events/ activities	39	22.29%/28.26%
Advocacy	Information-related advocacy and lobbying such as policy or petition	25	6.8%/18.12%
Organization	Information related to organizational programs, services, board members, or photos posts for events	23	6.3%/16.67%
Total	Single, double, or triple codes (see Table 16)	175	

In information-focused messaging, mission-related content resented the only subcategory limited to the main category. It is also the most frequently found subcategory. For example, this message is exemplary for solely mission-focused content: “Celebrating the generous spirit of our humanitarians inspires each of us to do more, give more, and be more.” The goal is to positively reinforce the organizational mission, vision, and values and raise awareness among the audience.

All other subcategories (events, advocacy, and organization) constitute examples of combining information and action categories in messaging. Event-related information often included information focused on fundraising events, including time, location, or purpose, and was often combined with calls for volunteers or other actions to be taken by online followers. Advocacy-related information typically focused on relevant legislation or regulations, including a link to contact legislators or local policymakers. Organizational information included content about new programs, services, new board members, or event photos.

Cooccurrence of Information-and Action-Related Messaging

A breakdown of the 72 information and action posts (see Table 20) reveals that more than half (34) are event focused. They share information (e.g., date, time.) and ask for specific actions (e.g., attendance, donations). In addition, there are other combinations of action/information messages which focus on advocacy and mission issues. These co-occurrence patterns suggest that NPOs frequently combine various content goals to engage the audience. Although the posts are coded as information-and action-focused, they also reveal some potential community-building efforts focused on bringing supporters together and providing them with information and skills necessary to be more engaged, individually, and collectively.

Table 20

Distribution of Subcategories in Action-Related and Information-Focused Posts

Cooccurrence Information/Action (n = 73)	Event	Advocacy	Mission	Organizational
Action - promote the event	34			
Action - lobbying and advocacy		12	3	
Action - learn how to help		4	9	
Action - donation appeal	1		5	1
Action - know the organization better			2	
Action - joint and follow another site of the organization			1	

Advocacy in Information-Related Messaging

One key aspect of social media postings is advocacy used by NPOs to address the root causes of the social issues they focus on. In this sense, advocacy-related information often provides the audience with a specific call to act based on information about the extent the of problems to be addressed. For example, “The child care crisis is worsening each day” followed this message: “Support and vote for a budget reconciliation. ”

Advocacy-related information is also generally specific to the audience and emphasizes local issues. For example, IP posted “If you live in Los Angeles, here is a link for the City Council contact information” and then that organization later asked, “Please reach out to your legislators to demand they stop the sweeps.” Advocacy messages are also likely to contain emotional appeals, such as “People are dying on the streets every day because they do not have housing.” Such as message is then, again, combined with a call for action: “You can help - Contact your legislators today” Similarly, the NPO, Invisible People, wants to energize audiences: “*We must demand more affordable housing from our leadership,*” and then they ask

for specific actions to be taken, actions designed to convey to policy decision-makers that the NPO needs a lot of support from Los Angelinos: “contact your representatives today.”

In sum, informational-related messages were a common practice for advocacy. These posts typically addressed the root causes of social issues by specifying a certain audience and they emphasized local issues as well as delivered an emotional appeal followed by a call for action.

Action-focused Messaging (Mobilizing)

For the 107 action-related messages, the analysis presented in Table 21 revealed one type of message previously not identified in the subcategory (“know the organizations better”). In addition, I re-phrased one existing subcategory and labeled it as “call for volunteers, employees, and public representative.”

Table 21

Subcategories of Action-Related Posts

Subcategory	Key contents	# posts	As a percentage 107 posts/150 codes
Promote an event	Invited to attend the event or activities	41	38.32%/27.3%
Learn how to help	Requested to learn how to help NPOs	38	35.51%/10.2%
Lobbying and advocacy	Requested the audience to contact public officials and to lobby for policy petitions	21	19.63%/14.00%
Following the organization on social media	Invited the audience to follow NPOs on official websites or social media sites	15	14.02%/10.00%
Donation appeal	Requested monetary and in-kind donation	14	13.08%/9.33%
Know the NPOs better	Request to learn and read more information about organizations such as missions	10	9.35%/6.67%

Subcategory	Key contents	# posts	As a percentage 107 posts/150 codes
All other (miscellaneous)	Recruit volunteers and employees; join another site or vote for the organization; posted positive feedback	11	10.33%/7.28%
Total	Double or triple codes	150	

Action-related posts fall into several subcategories with specific goals pursued by the NPO. A leading goal is the promotion of an event and inviting the audience to join. This content category is followed by an action designed to empower audience members in specific ways by learning how to help. Such requests entail specific actions in support of the mission, especially for organizations with more complicated social issues such as homelessness. The third-most important category is lobbying and advocacy, often entailing requests to contact public officials or local representatives on relevant policies.

All remaining categories are much less frequent and include requests to follow the organization on social media, appeals for donations, call for volunteers and public representatives, announcing job openings, requests to learn more, or suggestions to follow other groups with related missions. Considering the prevalence of event-and supported-focused actions around advocacy and learning, it is notable that NPOs do not excessively use action-related messaging for fundraising or volunteer drives. Although donations may also be solicited at invited events, the analysis reveals a substantive focus on the mission and how supporters can get more involved to generate forms of supporter-led activism (Hall et al., 2020).

Advocacy in Action-Related Messages

Lobbying and advocacy in action-related messages often provided online supporters with easy access to elected officials. The NPO (IP) posted “You can help -Contact your

legislators today, and urge them to make ending homelessness a priority.” It received 33 likes, 14 shares, and five comments. The type of message also included a link or hashtag to direct them to send advocacy messages as citizens. For example, the NPO, Citizen for Los Angeles Wildlife, requested the following action: “Please show your support for this measure by submitting a comment here: <https://cityclerk.lacity.org/publiccomment/?cfnumber=21-1284>. The NPO, IP, requested action to support them by tagging “We have a perfect storm of homelessness coming, . . . @invisibSupport for criminalization increases while support for housing decreases.” The NPO (IP) was organized to educate the public (on homelessness) via storytelling and news. The NPO believes “homeless is very hard” and wants to “help make real, lasting change-policy change can end the homelessness.” These response patterns can be helpful for NPOs in assessing the effectiveness of their messaging. For more details, please see Chapter 5 which provides an analysis of audience responses.

A final action-focused type of messaging (rarely discussed in the literature) is the effort by NPOs to direct their audiences to other groups and networks. For example, the NPOs IP, CWE, and 20/20 Mom encourage the audiences to explore other information provided elsewhere. For example, 20/20 Mom posted, “Learn more about the work from this task force.” or CWE posted, “Learn more here: link with other website information.”

Community-Building Messaging (Organizing)

The least common community-related messages served as means to interact, share, and communicate with stakeholders in a way to eventually facilitate online and offline community-building. Table 22 provides a breakdown of these messages based on three subcategories.

Table 22

Subcategories of Community-Related Posts

Subcategory	Key contents	# of Posts	As a percentage of (37 posts/47 codes)
Acknowledgment of current and local events	Events not initiated by the organization	25	67.57%/53.19%
Giving recognition and thanks	Recognition of individuals or groups	19	51.35%/41.43%
Responses to replied messages	Responses as interactive communication	3	8.11%/6.38%
Total	Double and triple codes	47	

Community-related content was identified and coded in 37 (24.7%) of the sampled 150 posts. There were three subcategories with multiple coding. The two dominant subcategories were mentions and acknowledgments of current and local events that were not initiated by the organization itself and giving thanks and recognition. For example, the NPO, 20/20 MOM, stated that “CCBHCs, . . . provide a range of mental health and substance use disorder services.” This type of community-related messaging focuses on linking the NPO and its supporters to broader networks of actors with similar interests. Community-related messages reflect the broader views on social issues held by the NPOs. Although the reference in messages may not explicitly state how NPOs attempt to build up relationships, networks, and communities with the audiences, community-related messages demonstrated that NPOs reach out to larger audiences through their organizational or personal affiliations. Examples of these messages include “thanks to the American Rescue Plan.” or announcing other organizations’ events such as “Join national mental health leaders” In other cases, NPOs may recognize the accomplishments of others with similar goals: “The Honorable Mitchell L. xxx granted the Hillside Federation’s petition and has ordered the City to RESCIND the Bertoni memo.” Sharing hashtags or mentioning (# or @)) others’

advocacy also serves community-building functions. By communicating such messages to audiences, the NPO raises awareness among supporters about specific topics or contents which goes beyond simple information provision: For example, the NPO, NAMI Glendale, posted “Our friends @namisangabrielvalley invite you to their 38th Annual Georgette Shatford Memorial Lecture Series!”

Giving recognition and thanks represents acknowledging the contributions of their supporters, volunteers, and followers. This may include mentions of deceased employees. This message received the largest number of comments. Interestingly, the majority of thank-you messages were for the provision of direct services (11 of 19), not for financial support. Recognition for financial support is likely accomplished through more direct forms of communication (e.g., thank you letters or personal calls), rather than through the more anonymous online channels. Another goal of giving recognition is to retain and recruit supporters. For example, the NPO, NAMI Uran LA, posted: “Thank you to everyone who has been tagging and posting about Bebe Moore and BIPOC Mental Health Awareness Month.”

Community-Related Messaging Enhance Advocacy Effort

The findings of my code analysis of community-related messages yield two significant insights. First, all subcategories of community-related messages identified did serve as the cornerstone of NPOs’ advocacy activities. Secondly, the findings suggest that NPOs ought to integrate the characteristic traits of community-related posts into their content strategy for advocacy messaging. By fostering a community around the NPO’s mission, supporters are more likely to become engaged and actively support the organization’s cause, including its advocacy efforts.

Conclusion

Results of the analysis showed that information and action-related content dominated the Facebook messages of the sampled NPOs. This baseline result shows a dominance of one-way messaging focused on sharing of information and calls for action. The lower frequency of community-based messaging is likely a result of the limited resources of these smaller NPOs (see Chapter Two). Community-based messaging as a form of two-way communication requires significant human resources to maintain an extensive social media presence. However, the analysis also revealed that NPOs frequently combine different contents in their messages to improve audience engagement and responses. Chapter Four focuses on the audience responses and investigates how online supporters of these NPOs engage with their messaging. A number of additional insights can be derived from the analysis in this chapter.

First, there was a strong overlap between information-related messages and action-related messages, indicating that the NPOs seek to support their calls for action through specific information that will be interesting and emotionally resonant for their audiences. A majority of these combined messages were event-focus. Second, although community-related messaging was much less frequent across the overall sample, a few of the NPOs made much more extensive use of it than others. Third, information-focused messaging was dominated by mission-focused content which is designed to reinforce the NPOs' perspectives on the social issues they address. This included targeting the audience for continued education by suggesting links or watching videos.

Fourth, regarding action-related messaging, the study found a prevalence of event-and supported-focused actions around advocacy and learning. Notably, NPOs do not excessively use action-related messaging for fundraising or volunteer drives. Instead, these NPOs are using calls

for action in a more community-building effort such as the effort by NPOs to direct their audiences to other groups and networks than previously recognized in the literature. For example, advocacy-related messaging in this realm focuses on giving supporters the tools to contact local politicians or to connect to other organizations with similar missions.

Fifth, community-related messaging is dominated by two types of content: announcing events organized by others and acknowledging the contributions of employees, volunteers, and others. Messages are designed to keep supporters active on the platform by hashtag and @ and to recruit supporters. This type of community engagement emphasizes the importance of linking online and offline activities and the idea that NPOs rely primarily on dedicated stakeholders for their success.

So, apart from confirming expectations from the literature, these results build an important bridge to the next chapter focused on audience responses. Very few studies have attempted to provide detailed insights into both organizational messaging and subsequent audience responses. Given that NPOs use social media platforms for a range of strategic objectives, the effectiveness of the efforts hinges on the level of audience engagement with their messages. As such, measuring audience engagement is critical to evaluating the impact of NPOs' social media messages. Accordingly, I chose to quantify audience engagement by analyzing metrics such as likes, shares, and comments, and qualifying text-based responses (code analysis), as outlined in Chapter Five.

CHAPTER FIVE

RESULTS AND FINDINGS: AUDIENCE RESPONSES

Assessing audience engagement is crucial for NPOs as it can enhance the effectiveness of social media use and help develop a more audience-centered approach. In this chapter, I reported the main findings regarding audience responses to NPO messaging. This analysis builds on the previous chapter which provided a content analysis of the organizational Facebook messages. The audience's analysis presented in this chapter covers three separate parts. The first section of the analysis provides a descriptive overview of response rates in relation to the organizations' postings. The following is an interpretation of likes, shares, and comments distribution across five categories based on 150 sampled posts examined in Chapter Four, which could interpret how the audience responded to the content of organization-generated posts. The second part summarizes the results of sentiment analysis. Finally, the last part complements the first two sections by offering a qualitative evaluation of a sample of online comments posted by supporters of the NPOs.

Descriptive Analysis of Audience Responses (Likes, Shares, Comments)

Overall, 86.9% of all organizational posts (439 of 505) received likes, shares, or comments. Table 23 offers an overview count for all likes, shares, and comments for the total number of posts ($N = 505$) and the smaller sample ($n = 150$). This allows for assessing the representativeness of the sample in comparison to the entire 3-month social media engagement period. If you compare the mean and median responses per post in this Table 23, you will notice that the numbers are very close for shares and comments, with values of 2.44 and 0.80 as well as 0.76 and 0.24 respectively. However, when it comes to likes, there is a significant difference between the mean and median responses per post (11.88 vs. 4.45). The proximity in scores of

mean and median being close suggests that the majority of the data points are clustered around the center of the distribution, so it implies that the average value (mean) and the middle value (median) are representatives of the data as a whole. The results indicate the sampled posts are more representative of the full set of posts with regard to shares and comments, and not as representative with regard to likes by comparison to the median. However, the results also revealed that the closeness of the mean and median alone does not provide a complete understanding of the data distribution. To gain a more thorough insight, additional measures and visualizations including the calculation of standard deviation and related data in Table 23 are listed below.

Table 23

Descriptive Analysis of Likes, Shares, and Comments Across All Posts

	Likes received	Shares received	Comments received
Total no. of all posts	6,001	1,231	385
Mean response score per post	11.88	2.44	0.76
Median response score per post	4.45	0.80	0.24

Note. $N = 505$

Table 23 revealed that audience members used likes most frequently, followed by shares and comments. For all NPOs, the likes dominated, and only CTF had more comments than shares. The mission of CTF focuses on connecting donors with community groups by creating a grant or funding process, and most of the funding was awarded to youth (with education development) based on posts. Their unique mission involved more financial-related activities, which was reflected in their audience engagement and greater average comments (1.16) than

average shares (0.8) per post. Notably, the three NAMI chapters received significantly fewer responses than everyone else.

Likes, shares, and comments represent different levels of engagement, ranging from a low level requiring merely a ‘click’ (like) to sitting down and writing a response (comment). This finding indicates the number of likes, shares, and comments would be used as an indicator for comparing the engagement level of the audience to organization posts. This result also aligns with content comments via code analysis (see Table 26). The community-related comments were viewed having as the highest engagement level in three types (information, action, and community) because those types of comments included the most (72) comments, compared with action (44) and information (37) related comments respectively in the form of comments. This indicates that NPOs can increase their engagement with their audiences by relying on the content analysis of posts with the most comments, shares, and likes.

Table 24

Descriptive Analysis of Likes, Shares, and Comments Across Sampled Posts

NPO (n=7)	Sample Size	Like	Per Post	Share	Per Post	Comment	Per Post
Total	150	3,248	21.65	615	4.10	291	1.94
Mean	21.4	464	13.36	87.87	2.83	41.57	1.60
Median	16	190	7.31	31	1.94	22	0.85
Min	4	4	1	0	0.94	0	0.18
Max	71	120	32.46	30	6.92	34	3.58
Standard Deviation		6.51		7.13		1.19	

Notably, the number of likes per post varied much more greatly than the number of shares and comments. Zero likes, shares, and comments represented the lowest possible score, and the maximum score for likes was 120 ($SD = 6.51$), for shares 30 ($SD = 1.73$), and 34 for comments ($SD = .19$) in Table 23. This result suggested the shares and comments seemed to maintain a similar pattern along the mean as the audiences' attitudes to posts would be more consistent no matter what level of engagement they exhibited (shares or comments).

Based on my analysis, the high variability of the number of likes stemmed from a single organization (CTF) and had an 18.6 standard deviation because of four extreme counts of *likes*. The first post received 112 likes ("Let's continue Sean's legacy of giving and continuing to improve our community, it helps everyone"). The second post received 63 likes ("The Community Trust Foundation Board of Trustees is pleased to announce Mirjhana A Buck as their new Board President") and the third one had 48 likes ("A beautiful start to the evening for the 2022 Humanitarian Award Dinner"). The last one had 30 likes ("CTF, through Ray & Brenda Morriss Fund, recently granted to the joint effort of two theater companies for an outdoor touring production of Shakespeare in the Park") compared with other posts receiving no more than 10 likes. The four posts appear to foster a sense of community by acknowledging organizational awards, endorsing influential leaders, and recognizing sponsors as part of a united community. These posts are significant (receiving a large number of likes) because they discuss topics that generate interest and evoke emotions, which could further help to build long-lasting relationships."

Table 25

Likes, Share, and Comments Distribution Cross Five Categories (150 Posts in Chapter 4)

	Posts	Total	Avg No. of Likes	Avg. No. of Shares	Avg. No. of Comments	Total
only	Information	36	29.91	4.33	1.66	1,293
	Inform/Act	73	23	4.82	2.49	2,213
	Action/Com	1	10	3	0	13
	Inform/Com	5	21.6	3	0.6	126
	Triple	35	10.11	2.37	1.14	477
Codes	Average		21.52	4.06	1.9	4,122

After analyzing the general distribution of likes, shares, and comments (see Tables 23 and 24), I present several emerging key findings based on the distribution of likes, shares, and comments across the five categories, with a focus on the underlying 150 messages that were analyzed in Chapter Four. In Table 23, there were no messages coded as “action only” or “community only,” indicating a lack of such content in the analyzed dataset (consisting of 150 messages). The second finding highlights those posts in the “information only” and “information and action” categories tend to generate higher likes, while the “information and community” category receives more shares and comments. However, the “action and community” category shows limited engagement, suggesting a potential need for more targeted content or promotional strategies. The “triple codes” category exhibits moderate engagement across different metrics. The third finding reveals that the “information and action” category ranks second in terms of likes and shares, but first in terms of comments. The “information only” category ranks first in likes and second in comments. These findings indicate that the “information” category performs well above average across all three forms of audience response (likes, shares, and comments). Additionally, the combination of information and action appears to be the most engaging, as it provides engaging content while mobilizing the audience.

These findings could lead to three main interpretations. First, one-way communication (information-only messages) does not appear to be less engaging, although the absence of “action only” and “community only” coded messages limits the analysis. Second, information-based messages are more engaging even when combined with the other two categories (action and community). Third, the information/action combination is the only category with consistent above-average responses, so the combination of information and action appears to be the most engaging, as it provides engaging content while mobilizing the audience. However, community-building-related messages did not seem to be relatively strong, because the substantive contents of identified messages are contrasting with what is commonly discussed in the literature and recommended in practice. This outcome could be influenced by various factors, such as the absence of specific messaging that goes beyond basic “community” content. It worth refers back to Chapter Four, where it was mentioned that the “community-related” messages analyzed were characterized as “basic” and may not align with the conceptual idea of “organizing,” which is typically considered more significant than mobilizing and raising awareness.

The overall conceptual frame may be built up based on Table 25. Informational messages play an essential role in getting audience responses in addition to only raising awareness discussed in the literature. Information messages may reconfirm and reinforce audience commitment, reminding users about goals and missions. The limitation of this study was presented as we only have one “noninformation” category (action and community with only one message). Pertinent results may be unique to small nonprofits lacking dedicated social media teams.

Qualitative Analysis of Content Comments

Apart from the descriptive analysis of likes, shares, and comments, it is essential to explore the substantive contents of audience text comments. In the following section, I present an analysis of a sample of text comments ($N = 76$ content comments out of a total of 147 content comments; see Appendix G). One NPO was excluded from this analysis because they did not receive any content comments on their posts. Possible explanations for the lack of text comments could include: (a) NAMI West LA had the least posts than the second-least active NPO (15 vs. 20) over the 3 months, (b) it had the second lowest response rate (27% vs. 32%) compared to the third lowest NPO during the same period, and (c) six of its posts that received no responses (likes or shares) only were published for sharing information.

The first surprising observation is that audience responses generated an inverse ranking of the three categories (information, action, and community) when compared to the organizational messaging (see Table 26). Audiences expressed in their comments a greater focus on community, followed by action and information. The differences in emphases are not as pronounced for audience comments as for organizational posts, and Table 24 shows some initial evidence of what the supporters of these NPOs were interested in the most.

Table 26

Comparing Organizational and Supporter-Generated Foci (With Double or Multiple Codes)

	Community	Action	Information
Audience content comments (n=76)	80.3% (62)	57.9% (44)	48% (37)
Organizational posts (n=150)	24.7 % (37)	71.3% (107)	92% (138)

Information-Related User Comments

On table 27, information-related comments (a total of 38 comments) from the audience were also classified under each of the four subcategories: mission, events, advocacy-and, organization-related. The majority of the mission-related comments were the homeless storytelling and citing the concepts of homelessness such as citation from the book “Directions to the Dumpster” (receiving the highest number of “likes;” see also Appendix G). Information-related user comments rank lowest among the three core categories. Regarding the subcategories, a mission focus dominates all other ones.

Table 27

Contents Comments Across Information Subcategories

	Key contents	# of subcategories coded	As a % of total information contents messages (37 comments/ 37 codes)
Mission	Comments on organizational mission	24	63.89%
Event	Comments about advocacy	6	16.67%
Advocacy	Comments on events	4	11.11%
Organization	Comments on organization	3	8.33%
Total	Single, double, and triple codes	37	

Action-Related User Comments

In Table 28, action-related comments from the audience were classified under each of the five subcategories: help NPOs and their audience, other-replied with positive feedback, advocacy and lobbying, questions about how to help, and donations (see also Appendix G).

Table 28

Contents Comments Across Action Subcategories

	Key contents	# of subcategories coded	As a % of total information contents messages (44 comments/63 codes)
Help NPOs and their audience	Comments about the actions the audience voluntarily did to support organizations and their community	21	33.33%/47.73%
Other-replied with positive feedback	Comments to provide positive feedback to organizational and other users' posts	14	22.22%/31.82%
Advocacy and lobbying	Comments to advocate for NPOs and voluntarily request to vote or contact local presentative for NPOs	9	14.29%/20.45%
Questions about how to help	Comments to inquiry about how to support NPOs and audience	9	14.29%/20.45%
Know the organization better	Comments to express their intention to know the organization better by acting as the audience suggested	8	12.70%/18.18%
Donation appeal	Comments to donation request	2	3.17%/4.55%
Total		63	

Out of a total of 76 content comments, 44 comments were related to action (57.9%). The major subcategory included comments about taking action to support organizations and their

audience such as hashtags to support NPOs. For example, the hashtag #2020mom was used with the following response: “Can someone help John look into Biofeedback Therapy.” The second most frequent subcategory included comments with positive feedback to organizational and other posts. This demonstrated commitment to this online community from the audience because positive feedback (e.g., “Wish you good luck”) reflected recognition of organizations or others’ opinions, which lead to the subcategory (recognition and thanks) of community function. The third most frequent subcategory was advocacy and lobbying. Its characteristic was that the audience was not only actively involved with advocacy activities but also presented as leaders of advocacy process for common interests (e.g., “voice for the homeless to your state agent”). Interestingly, the key action goal of mobilizing donations did not translate into a corresponding level of audience reaction.

Community-Related User Comments

In Table 29, community-related comments from the audience were classified under each of the four subcategories: public replies, giving recognition and thanks, demonstrating support, and sharing current events or news (see also Appendix G).

Table 29

Contents Comments Across Community Subcategories

	Key contents	# of subcategories coded	As a % of total information content messages 62 comments/97 codes
Public replies	The audience replied to other audiences’ posts (or NPOs’ posts)	30	48.39%/30.9%
Giving recognition and thanks	The audience expressed appreciation for the organizational works	26	41.94%/26.8%

Demonstrate the support	The audience validated the relationship with the NPOs	23	37.10%/23.71%
Sharing current news and local events	The audience shared current and local events related to NPOs (not initiated by NPOs)	18	29.03%/18.56%
Total		97	

Out of a total of 76 content comments, 66 comments were coded as community-related audience comments (81.3%). The leading subcategory was public replies as the audience actively discussed the most interesting topics and activities by replying with their own opinions or related events or information (e.g., “So sad to hear! The Liberty Canyon Crossing needs to be built asap”). The second most common response was giving recognition and thanks as the audience expressed appreciation for the organizational work such as “Thank you so much for sharing about this.” The third most frequent subcategory focused on validating the relationship with the organization as the audience shared their stories with the organization or joined events such as “This is a photo she & I took 7 years ago at my first [@namicommunicate](#) national conference held in 2015.” Community-related comments represent a strong sense of a united community for common interests.

Sentiment Analysis

The contents of audiences’ responses in comments are important qualitative indicators that add information to the frequency counts of likes, comments, and shares. For example, emojis representing “like,” “love,” “care,” “haha,” and sometimes “wow” express positive sentiments, and the emoji of “anger,” “sad” or any negative term in the comments or replies express negative sentiment. Shares with information or articles represent a neutral sentiment.

On table 30, the analysis revealed that 85.0% of total likes contained positive reactions (likes, love, care, haha, wow), while 14.4% were recognized as negative (sad, anger), and 0.4% were classified as neutral (information or events).

Table 30

Positive, Neutral, and Negative In Likes

	Positive Reaction (+)	Neutral Reaction	Negative Reaction (-)
Likes #(N=6001)	5,100	21	880
% of total Likes	85.0%	0.4%	14.4%

This result indicates that the majority of the audience was more likely to provide positive reactions by clicking an “emoji” compared to the negative reaction. However, due to the majority of data (71.7% of total likes) coming from one organization (IP), I added a supplementary review in posts to my sentiment study in Table 31.

Table 31

Positive, Negative, and Neutral in Posts

	Positive Reaction	Neutral Reaction	Negative Reaction
Posts	147	10	57
Percentage (N=150)	98%	6.67%	34%

Surprisingly, the posts with negative reactions were 34 %, which were much higher than the posts with neutral reaction (6.67%) of total posts. Therefore, the initial finding (see Table 30)

indicating a preference for positive reactions among the majority of the audience led to a second study (see Table 31), which revealed that posts with negative emotions received more responses than those with neutral reactions. One of the reasons for this phenomenon of the second finding is that negative emotions not only serve as a means of tending to attract arguments and debates but also express agreement with such posts in a negative sentimental manner. Thus, the presence of negative posts, such as those evoking anger, appears to generate more engagement and interaction compared to posts with neutral emotions.

Conclusion

The analysis of audience responses to NPO messaging provides several important findings and insights. First, a descriptive analysis of audience responses (likes, shares, and comments) in Facebook accounts revealed that audiences used likes most frequently, followed by shares and comments. This is an expected result, considering that likes require the least effort by audience members. However, there was great variability across NPOs in the number of likes, shares, or comments, indicating that some NPOs maintained a relatively active user base, while others did not.

Second, based on the analysis of the distribution of likes, shares, and comments across five organizational message categories (information only, information and action, information and community, action and community, and triple coding), the analysis connected Chapter Five results to results presented in Chapter Four. The findings suggest that combined information and action messages received above-average responses across all three categories, while information-only messages scored above-average responses with regard to likes and shares, but not with regard to comments (see Table 25). These results are only suggestive because the Chapter Four results did not generate any messages coded “action only” or “community only” and only one

message coded “action and community.” As a result, there is no basis to fully compare audience responses across a representative sample of different organizational messaging. The finding also underscores the need for further exploration of community-building messages to better understand their impact on audience engagement.

Third, a content analysis of selected audience comments revealed a strong presence of community-focused content (see Table 26). This result stands in contrast to the content analysis of organizational messaging, which featured only a small proportion of community-focused content. Even when NPOs themselves make minimal efforts to create an online community, the audience (the users) often takes the initiative to do so. This suggests that audience members are more interested in community-building, which may suggest to NPOs strategies to increase their audience engagement. Audience members engage in a consistent record of expressing recognition or demonstrating support.

Fourth, audience comments on information messages primarily emphasize organizational mission in a confirmatory manner (see Table 27). Audiences primarily endorse the original messaging. In contrast, audience responses to action-focused messaging are distributed across a wider spectrum of subcategories (see Table 29). More than 60% of the coded messages highlight either supportive messaging, supportive actions taken, or a desire to learn more about the organization. Only a few comments explicitly engage with advocacy content. This result suggests that audiences primarily use their comments to endorse the mission by indicating support in words or actions. Finally, responses to community-focused messages show a broad range of interests, including (again) primarily showing recognition or demonstrating support.

Fifth, the sentiment analysis revealed that NPOs’ Facebook pages receive mainly positive feedback from audiences. There is also a significant presence of negative sentiments which are

often also supportive of the organizational messaging. Considering that none of the NPOs included in this sample are explicitly engaged in more controversial political messaging, they are not likely to receive audience messages opposed to their mission.

CHAPTER SIX

DISCUSSION OF THE RESULTS OF CHAPTER FOUR AND CHAPTER FIVE

This study explored how a sample of seven small NPOs based in Los Angeles engage their online audiences on Facebook. Based on random samples of organizational messages and audience responses collected during 3 months in 2022, the study extends our understanding of organization-generated messages and audience responses taking place on social media. The study employed a widely used analytical framework: (a) information-focused messaging aimed to raise public awareness about NPOs' mission (b) action-focused messaging designed to mobilize audiences for taking specific actions, and (c) community-focused messaging emphasized the need to organize audiences into collective actors. The study confirmed some of the existing claims about social media use among NPOs and contributes new knowledge by identifying new subcategories to the categories of information-, action-, and community-based messaging.

Although social media is easy to use, it is not an equalizer for smaller organizations in terms of reaching their audience due to various barriers such as time, human resources, and financial constraints. As such, many small NPOs struggle to effectively use social media and rarely can measure their social media engagement or compete with larger groups often able to employ dedicated social media staff. In this final chapter, I will first summarize the key findings from Chapter Four, then the results from Chapter Five, followed by a discussion of study limitations and future research directions.

Organizational Messaging: One-way Communication

Results of the analysis showed that information and action-related content dominated the Facebook messages of the sampled NPOs. This baseline result shows a dominance of one-way messaging focused on sharing of information and calls for action. The lower frequency of

community-based messaging is likely a result of the limited resources of these smaller NPOs. Community-based messaging as a form of two-way communication requires significant human resources to maintain an extensive social media presence. However, the analysis also revealed that NPOs frequently combine different contents in their messages to improve audience engagement and responses. A number of additional insights can be derived from the analysis in this chapter.

First, there was a strong overlap between information-related messages and action-related messages, indicating that the NPOs seek to support their calls for action through specific information that will be interesting and emotionally resonant for their audiences. A majority of these combined messages were event focused. Second, although community-related messaging was much less frequent across the overall sample, a few of the NPOs made much more extensive use of it than others. Third, information-focused messaging was dominated by mission-focused content which is designed to reinforce the NPOs' perspectives on the social issues they address. This included targeting the audience for continued education by suggesting checking links or watching videos.

Fourth, with regard to action-related messaging, the study indicated a prevalence of event-and supported-focused actions around advocacy and learning. Notably, NPOs do not excessively use action-related messaging for fundraising or volunteer drives. Instead, these NPOs are using calls for action in a more community-building effort such as the effort by NPOs to direct their audiences to other groups and networks than previously recognized in the literature. For example, advocacy-related messaging in this realm focuses on giving supporters the tools to contact local politicians or to connect to other organizations with similar missions.

Fifth, community-related messaging is dominated by two types of content: announcing events organized by others and acknowledging the contributions of employees, volunteers, and others. Messages are designed to keep supporters active on the platform by hashtag and @, and to recruit supporters. This type of community engagement emphasizes the importance of linking online and offline activities and the idea that NPOs rely primarily on dedicated stakeholders for their success.

Audience Responses: A Community Focus

The analysis of audience responses to NPO messaging provides several important findings and insights. First, a descriptive analysis of audience responses (likes, shares, and comments) in Facebook accounts revealed that audiences used likes most frequently, followed by shares and comments. This is an expected result, considering that likes require the least effort by audience members. However, there was great variability across NPOs in the number of likes, shares, or comments, indicating that some NPOs maintained a relatively active user base, while others did not.

Second, based on the analysis of the distribution of likes, shares, and comments across five organizational message categories (information only, information/action, information/community, action/community, and triple coding), the analysis connected Chapter Five results to results presented in Chapter Four. The findings suggest that combined information and action messages received above-average responses across all three categories, while information-only messages scored above-average responses with regard to likes and shares, but not with regard to comments (see Table 23). These results are only suggestive because the Chapter Four results did not generate any messages coded “action only” or “community only” and only one message coded “action and community.” As a result, there is no basis to fully

compare audience responses across a representative sample of different organizational messaging. The finding also underscores the need for further exploration of community-building messages to better understand their impact on audience engagement.

Third, a content analysis of selected audience comments revealed a strong presence of community-focused content (see Table 24). This result stands in contrast to the content analysis of organizational messaging, which featured only a small proportion of community-focused content when NPOs themselves make minimal efforts to create an online community, the audience (the users) often takes the initiative to do so. This suggests that audience members are more interested in community-building, which may suggest to NPOs strategies to increase their audience engagement. Audience members engage in a consistent record of expressing recognition or demonstrating support.

Fourth, audience comments on information messages primarily emphasize organizational mission in a confirmatory manner (see Table 25). Audiences primarily endorse the original messaging. In contrast, audience responses to action-focused messaging are distributed across a wider spectrum of subcategories (see Table 26). More than 60% of the coded messages highlight either supportive messaging, supportive actions taken, or a desire to learn more about the organization. Only a few comments explicitly engage with advocacy content. This result suggests that audiences primarily use their comments to endorse the mission by indicating support in words or actions. Finally, responses to community-focused messages show a broad range of interests, including (again) primarily showing recognition or demonstrating support.

Fifth, the sentiment analysis revealed that NPOs' Facebook pages receive mainly positive feedback from audiences. There is also a significant presence of negative sentiments which are often also supportive of the organizational messaging. Considering that none of the NPOs

included in this sample are explicitly engaged in more controversial political messaging, they are not likely to receive audience messages opposed to their mission.

Limitations

This study is subject to several limitations that should be considered. Firstly, the study included a relatively small sample size of seven NPOs based in Los Angeles. This sample was drawn from the Nonprofit Explorer database supported by ProPublica. The data used here is publicly available and contains reliable information about tax-exempt charities in the United States, but the platform only aggregates data from the U.S. Internal Revenue Service (IRS). This database is more extensive compared to resources like Charity Navigator or Candid (a joint initiative of Foundation Center and GuideStar search website), and it reflects the inherent limitations of reporting requirements in the United States. For example, religious organizations or groups with a budget of less than \$50,000 annual budget are not required to register with the IRS.

As a result, this sample may allow for transferring some of the results to similar organizations, but the results are not necessarily representative of the small nonprofit sector in Los Angeles or the United States. The study's focus on small NPOs in the Los Angeles area means that the results are more likely to apply to similar NPOs with limited resources to support a social media presence. Second, the study collected data over 3 months (July to September). Data collection during a different period may have yielded different results. For example, many U.S.-based NPOs engage in more fundraising efforts at the end of the year, which could generate a different set of organizational messages or audience responses.

Third, the study did not review all messages and audience responses, but only a random sample. It also excluded all organizational responses to audience postings and only focused on

original posts and audience responses. A full analysis of all messages may affect the final results. Finally, Facebook was used as the only social media platform for this study. This analysis did not explore the social media presence of these NPOs on other platforms, such as Instagram and TikTok with more visual content.

Future Research

There are a number of future research directions suggested by the results of this study. Future research could delve deeper into the dynamics of different message categories and explore additional factors that contribute to audience engagement. For example, interviews with leaders and staff of the NPOs study would likely provide additional insights not captured by only reviewing Facebook messaging. Increasing the sample size would enable more messages to be analyzed and would provide a better basis for determining the validity of the findings. For example, a future study could sample across major nonprofit sectors to increase organizational diversity, or it could introduce size-based variation to capture possible differences in social media use based on budget or other factors. Future research can focus additional attention on the subcategories of information-, action-, and community-based messaging. For example, it is essential to explore in greater depth the underlying intentions of both NPOs and audience members in posting online. This may entail exploring in greater detail what specific goals are pursued by messages categorized by researchers as information-, action-, or community-focused.

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Appendix A

Eight Levels On Ladder Of Engagement

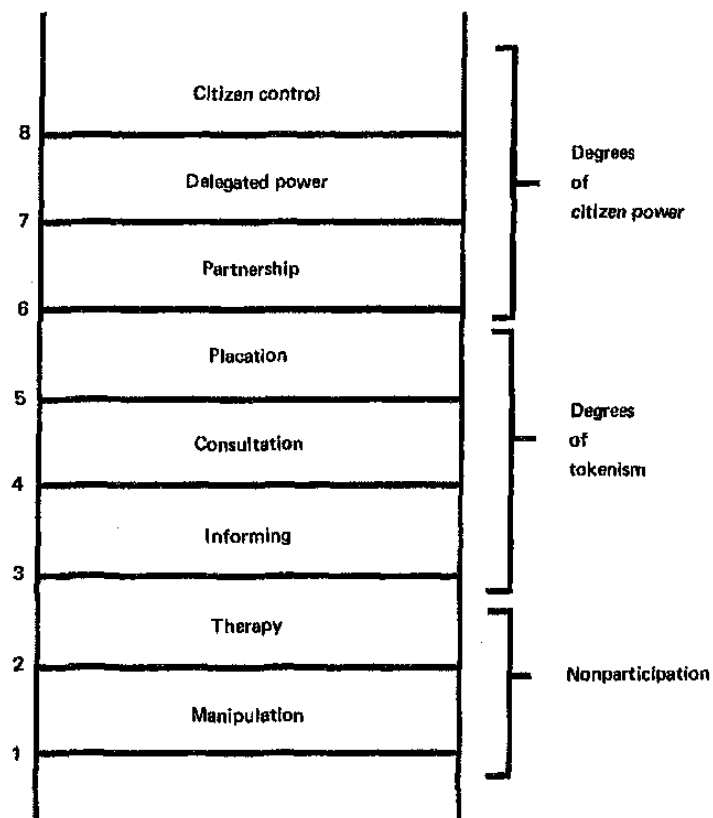








FIGURE 2 *Eight Rungs on a Ladder of Citizen Participation*

Appendix B

Six Types Of Social Media

Social Media Cheat Sheet

	<p>Facebook Used for: Connecting with friends and family, event invites, news and information Used by: Almost everyone (1.6 billion people and counting!) Best for: Most nonprofits</p>		<p>Snapchat Used for: Storytelling, connecting with friends and family Used by: Teens and young adults Best for: Forward-thinking nonprofits trying to connect with young people; nonprofits with strong story or visual content</p>
	<p>Instagram Used for: Visual inspiration, connecting with friends and family, storytelling Used by: Everyone except people 65+; leans female and millennial Best for: Nonprofits with strong visual media content (i.e. animal orgs, art museums, etc)</p>		<p>LinkedIn Used for: Networking; business to business sales, professional development Used by: College graduates aged 30-64 Best for: Advocacy organizations, hiring talent, finding volunteers, recruiting board members</p>
	<p>Twitter Used for: Industry networking, news and information Used by: Professionals, activists, thought leaders; college educated people under 50 Best for: Networking, public relations (most journalists are on Twitter), advocacy organizations, nonprofit leaders</p>		<p>Pinterest Used for: Planning projects, visual inspiration, discovery & sharing of new content and style Used by: Women (71%), mobile users (75%) Best for: Nonprofits with great images to share (low-quality images won't receive traction) or products to sell</p>

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Note: The Modern Nonprofit, 2021, p. 1

Appendix C

Reaction to Facebook Behaviors

Facebook extended the “like” button to five more emotions as “emojis” (Kaur et al., 2019). Those reaction buttons present audience behaviors and are acknowledged as “a modern form of speech” (Smieško, 2016). On Facebook, the list of emojis is shown in Figure 1 and counted in the “likes” group as one number. The “care” emoji (third one) was added in March 2020 as an additional choice for COVID-19 and used in reactions to FB posts.

Figure 1: Facebook reaction button



Appendix

Types of Advocacy Activities

Advocacy Activities That 501(c)(3) Organizations Can Engage In

Generally few
limitations
Some limitations

ACTIVITY	DESCRIPTION	EXAMPLE ORGANIZATIONS
Conduct research	Shape the debate by surfacing new insights via nonpartisan, independent, and objective research.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Urban Institute American Enterprise Institute
Develop model policy and administrative rules	Translate academic and policy research into general proposals such as model legislation or administrative rules that states may develop further.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> American Legislative Exchange Council
Litigate	Pursue policy changes and influence administrative practices through litigation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Center for Individual Rights Anti-Defamation League
Build coalitions	Coordinate an alliance of stakeholders to support a shared position or engage in a joint activity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> END Fund National Council of Nonprofits
Develop regulations	Ensure that legislation is backed by effective regulations and that regulations are enforced.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Earthjustice Natural Resources Defense Council
Engage in electoral politics	Engage in and support nonpartisan electoral activities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Western States Center's VOTE project
Lobby	Lobby policy makers to support specific legislative proposals.*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Alzheimer's Association
Mobilize the base	Attract and maintain a constituent base, and mobilize constituencies to advocate for specific legislation and policies.*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Liberty Hill Foundation Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids

* These activities are based on the assumption that organizations have made an election under IRC 501(h).
NOTE: Legal counsel should always be consulted when engaging in any advocacy activity.

Note: Guerriero & Ditkoff, 2018

Appendix E

The Sampling List of 10 NPOs

Nonprofit Organizations	Major Categories (NTEE)
1In 6 (remove from final list)	Human Service-Intervention and Crisis
20/20 Mom	Public, Societal Benefit-Community
Citizens for Los Angeles Wildlife Inc	Environment
Community Trust Foundation	Education
Invisible People	Human Service-Housing & Shelter
Kind Campaign (remove from final list)	Human Service-Youth Development
NAMI Glendale	Health-Mental Health
NAMI Westside Los Angeles	Health-Mental Health
NAMI Urban Los Angeles	Health-Mental Health
RARE Genomics Institute (remove from final list)	Educational

Appendix F

Facebook Codebook With Frequencies and Percentages

Code System-Subcategories	Memo	Frequency	% of codes
Information			
Mission-related information	information on NPOs is aligned with their missions and intended to raise awareness which may be developed to a higher level of engagement-action: mission-related activities	88	23.7%
Event-related information	Information related to a certain event such as time, contact, location, and purpose may be developed to a higher level of engagement-Action: promoting an event	39	10.5%
Advocacy-related information	Information on NPOs is to advocate their mission and intended to raise awareness which may be developed to a higher level of engagement as “ action-lobbying and advocacy”	25	6.7%
Organizational information	Information related to organizational activities such as partners, contact, program, social media updates even photos of events	23	6.2%
Action	calls for actions		
Promoting to events	Invite the audience to events that benefit organizations in any way	41	11.02%
Learn how to help	Request to learn how they can support organizations through the way organizations identified	38	10.22%
Lobbying and advocacy	Request to contact public officials or lobby for concerns or issues of organizations	21	5.65%
Follow organizations on social media	Invited audience to follow their organization on their official website or social media sites	15	4.03%
Donation appeal	Request to make a monetary or in-kind donation	14	3.76%
Know organizations better	Request to learn and read more information about organizations such as missions	10	2.69%
Call for volunteers, employees, or public representatives	Request for participants for research or posting a study, volunteers, and employees	4	1.08%
Join or follow another site or vote for the organization	Request to join another social media site or another website for the organization	4	1.08%
Other-positive messages	messages to warm or encourage the audience to get through the day, the week, or the month	3	0.81%
Community			
Acknowledgment of current and local events	Acknowledge other organizations and their community events and activities (not created by the organizations)	25	6.72%
Giving recognition and thanks	Acknowledge thanks for the contributions of their donors and supporters	19	5.11%
Responses to replied messages	Responses to the audiences’ comments about the organizations	3	0.81%
Total		372	

Appendix G

Content Comments Codebook With Frequency and Percentage

Code Subcategories	Memo	Frequency	% of 76 comments
Information	the comments include questions about organizational-related information		
Information > Mission-related	Information is related to the organizational mission and intended to raise awareness	23	30.26%
Information > Event-related	Comments or questions about organizational events	6	7.89%
Information > Advocacy-related	Comments on some advocacy-related information and help organizations advocate for their missions	4	5.26%
Information > Organization-related	Comments or questions for organizational information such as access code	3	3.95%
Action			
Action > Help organizations and their audience	comments on taking actions or jointing activities for organizations or their audience	21	27.63%
Action > Other replied with positive feedback	Responses to encourage organizations for their work	14	18.42%
Action > Advocacy and lobbying	Comments to advocate or lobby (or the audience were in the process of advocacy) about the missions of organizations	9	11.84%
Action > Questions about how to support	the audience asked for a way of supports	9	11.84%
Action > Know organizations better	The audience expressed their intention to know the organization better by taking action the audience suggested	8	10.53%
Action > Donate appeal	Comments on donations in monetary or in-kind stuff to the organizations	2	2.63%
Community			
Community > Comments to public reply messages (and posts)	Comments of the organization to respond to people's comments	30	39.47%
Community > Giving recognition and thanks	Express thanks and appreciation for organizational works	26	34.21%

Community > Demonstrate support for organizations	the audience expressed support for the organization in any way organization identified	23	30.2 6%
Community > Sharing current news and local events	Acknowledgment of mission-related events and activities (not initiated by organizations and attempt to build up the sense of community	18	23.6 8%
		<hr/>	
		196	