

Social Media Marketing – An Effective Solution for Non-Profit Organizations

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Abstract— Non-profit organizations (NPO's) are a core element of any civilized society that has outgrown, at least partially, its basic needs and instincts and has begun to think in terms of the maximum welfare of the maximum number of people on an altruistic plane. The main aim of such organizations is to be involved and raise awareness about a social cause or initiative. Though the operational aspects of such entities are not very different from their counterparts in purely commercial world, their resources are relatively limited and they need to leverage on the most cost effective technology solutions to enhance their reach, spread and appeal. The objective of this research is to highlight the significance of social media marketing in a non-profit organization by analyzing the factors promoting the popularity and growing use of social media channels by nonprofit organizations and their emergence as a primary marketing tool.

Keywords—Social media platforms, Social media marketing, Nonprofit organization, Demographics, Social initiative, Social cause

I. INTRODUCTION

Social networking sites have become readily accessible portals in today's technology-driven world where companies can design their marketing strategies and approach a wider array of users. Chi, Hsu-Hsien describes social media marketing as a tool facilitating a linkage between the company and its client, providing a client – centric engagement and convergence on a personalized digital portal. [1] Mangold and Faulds state that the emergence of social networking platforms has dramatically transformed the ways and means of engaging with the clients making it essential for the businesses to be equipped with the knowledge of using social media in a way as suits to their business strategy. [2] Emerging Digital technologies create an environment for people in which engagement and discourse are the foundation where people can express their opinions, suggestions, and innovations. This simulated world called social networking is a user-dependent community that is significant in terms of linking together audiences and growing their engagement. [26] There are more than three billion social media users across the world which is nearly fifty percent of the total population. The nonprofit organizations are experimenting with it in a big way to mobilize support, engage volunteers and to raise funds as donation. Making the right use of social media can promote the cause of the nonprofit and help them garner massive support along with resources for the cause it has flagged. The purpose of this research is to highlight the use of social media platforms by nonprofit organizations for spreading awareness about social initiatives and for developing brand identity and goodwill on the one hand and the aspirations of the member audience

which, in turn, is benefited by free flow of information through a platform giving them a sense of sharing and hope in an otherwise disappointing scenario.

After giving a brief account of the objective and methodology adopted in the paper in section II, the paper sums up the literature review in section III. Section IV is dedicated to the utility and significance of the social media platforms for non-profit organizations in achieving their business objectives. Section V dwells upon the role of demographics in making the right choice about the media with regard to its suitability in addressing the targeted clientele. In section VI, the paper discusses the challenges involved in the process and how they may be overcome. Finally, in section VII, the paper sums up its findings and concludes by highlighting the areas opened up for future research.



Fig 1: Source: “4 Benefits of Social Media for Non-Profit Organizations” [17]

II. OBJECTIVE AND METHODOLOGY

This research critically examines why and how social media marketing is being utilized by non-profit organizations to enhance and project their profile, grow their following and establish their brand identity by making use of different social media platforms. It looks in to recognition of the social media networks by non-profit organizations as a means of generating brand recognition and their adherence to it. It also proceeds to analyze the user's consciousness and the ways of growing user engagement. Finally, it examines the major challenges faced by the enterprises in social media marketing and whether they may overcome the challenges by employing the innovative approaches and tools. The demographic characteristics of those that use the web and associate with non-profit organizations is analyzed and contrasted. Literature reviews includes studying

interactive indicators of randomly selected national and international entities to find user behavior variations. Cheaply available mobile data and rapid spread of the smartphone usage in India is poised to impact not only the internet related habits but also on the whole media preferences. [27] Eventually, success factors are identified as strengthening the concept of social media marketing. The research paper is executed by compiling information from secondary data such as journals, reports, and reference books to provide a comprehensive insight into the importance of social media marketing in a non-profit organization; a qualitative approach is chosen to perform a detailed research. The report is holistic and has the potential for future projects.

III. LITERATURE REVIEW

According to Salamon, L.M., 2012, technical innovations represent a major source of potential and risk for the nonprofit sector. Nonprofit organizations (NPOs) face huge competition to integrate emerging technologies into their activities. Social media advances, on the other hand, are viewed to have massive potential for effective use by NPOs. [12]

Gupta A., Tyagi, M. & Sharma, D., 2013, opine that there are a variety of social media platforms. They are graded as collective projects, or wikis; Twitter-like blogs and microblogs; content platforms like you tube; and cultural/professional sites for networking, such as Facebook or LinkedIn. Platforms for social media are commonly used in the commercial and nonprofit industries and are recognized as instruments for generating and effectively developing a closely related web presence. [13]

Kanter, B. & Paine, K., 2012, put their emphasis on the value of establishing priorities and implementing attainable goals to promote the application and assessment of social media techniques. This is designed to support organizations in selecting different and suitable outlets of social media to satisfy their interests. Forming a strategy that is simple and well known will help maintain a clear message and help non-profit organizations to accomplish their goals. Adherence to the method will help NPOs capitalize on the flexibility of the cross channels and echo channel effects. These factors result when the information supplied by an NPO on each platform is integrated, unified, and interchangeable. [14]

Kanter & Fine, 2010, suggests that to encourage nurturing relationships and interaction with current and new networks NPO's must emphasize on corresponding interaction. For success, it is vital that NPOs consistently deliver information across their social media platforms. They have to go beyond merely giving relevant data and need to respond to reviews, comments, and solicit questions from users of their online networks. Responding to and posting contents relating to incidents in their particular area and current affairs influencing their jobs and the public at large is often helpful. By concentrating on the big multimodal stream of communication, NPOs can be players in online discussions that create a close bondage with other organizations, associations, and interest groups that they might not have been able to access through conventional media like face-to-face interaction, and advertising. Dedicated engagement in interactive conversations enables NPOs to communicate with bloggers and wider networks of representatives and investors not just to raise awareness of the audience, but also to influence them and mobilize supporters of the organization. [15]

Axelrad, 2015 states that equality of opportunity is a crucial marketing aspect of strategies and persuasive analysis. NPOs must be taking into consideration the concept "give to get". Organizations should appreciate the significance of monetary and human assistance first by offering it before asking. This implies that NPOs should routinely be able to focus on providing useful details to their viewers, apprising them of the involvement benefits, and practice articulation of esteem and recognition that highlight their contributions as also the

online requests of the audience by linking with the members' social networks. NPOs in these phases need to do much more than reassuring their viewers that they respect them. By listening to the feedback, using it and informing the members about the outcome regularly, the organizations must demonstrate their culture of being responsive and democratic. NPOs need to be aware of the feedback and must report on their social media platforms on how audience feedback has been used. [16]

Mirchandani, A and Gaur, conclude in their research paper that another important finding of this research is that small business with limited resources to fund a large marketing campaign can effectively enhance their customer loyalty, brand visibility and market presence through the use of social media which has the potential to eventually lead them to overall improved business performance in the interest of all stakeholders. [24]

Ruhela, Sonakshi and Bashir R., (2019) place on record that the name given to humongous volume of growth and capturing of internet based data is Social Media Big Data. It has plenty of data in the form of visual images and photographic contents, audio recordings, literary inputs, and multiple opportunities for group looking for data that could be transformed to information. [28]

IV. SIGNIFICANCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING FOR NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONS

According to Guo & Saxton, "Social media provides each organization an opportunity to build and enter new platforms and activate them to take action." Consumers who use social media to communicate with organizations have a generally high degree of loyalty to the organizations they associate with, and may thus act as advocates for those entities. The mechanism involves three stages: exchanging, then understanding, and finally promoting ideas and information. Social media marketing is utilizing online groups, social networks, and blog marketing to promote a product or service digitally and globally. In marketing, it is the new "hype." India is possibly one of the first social media marketing advocates. [3] The organizational motive has substituted the social issues these days as businesses aim to associate with their audiences across the internet channels. The rise of social media has empowered individuals to have realistic information about scheduling and immediate interaction. The media world over, as it is energized by technology creativity and innovation, is unfolding hitherto unexplored potential of establishing connection, communication and engagement. [25] In addition to its pros, its drawbacks such as lack of control in branding and the tracked messages, bad reviews, impression of wastage of time and money, came along. Social media assumes a significant part, particularly in non-profit groups, where the information has to be conveyed with due customization. Individuals have started to spend lots of time monitoring their social networking sites owing to technological advancements and the ability to communicate almost under any scenarios. The barriers of borders between nations, cultures, and ideas have been practically non-existent of late.

In marketing, the function of social media is to be used as a networking technology that helps businesses to become accessible to those interested and noticeable to anyone who is not familiar with their brand. It should be utilized as an instrument that builds a presence beyond their physical visibility and establishes bonds that they could never be achieve otherwise. Not only does this generate repetitive-buyers, but it also helps to win consumer loyalty. The truth remains that social media is so decentralized and comprehensive in its coverage that it could contribute to the objectives of any organization. [4]

The core tool for the growth of social media networks is the internet presence of an organization. Developing a reputation on the Internet to economically establish and nurture their brand, or goals and objectives, is an oft adopted marketing tactic for NPO's.

This offers them the means to increase their exposure to the wider populace and thereby impact the community and influence their integrity and ranking as professionals. [5]

The pillar of social media is honesty and sincerity, and these basic notions need to be followed in the domain of social media marketing. Certainly, it is the only promotional tool that uplifts networking and responsibility between organizations and users with detailed evidence. Multinational corporations have identified advertising on social media as a marketing strategy, using it to drive their publicity of their engagement with their cause. Social media helps businesses allocate their experience and skills, step into their user's wisdom, permits users to support other users on the platform and obtain potential users by sharing quality content. Thus, social media advantages include brand growth and recognition, user experiences through interactions, recommendations, and maintenance of credibility. [6] According to Kaplan and Haenlein, all organizations should analyze and understand the finer aspects of social media and accept it as a communication resource. Web 2.0, is a social media concept that defines a novel approach in which end users use the World Wide Web, a place where information is constantly modified in a distributed and interactive method by all participants. [7] Campbell et al. states that "It's much more about what people do with technology than about the technology itself, as users now are producing and utilizing it instead of simply obtaining data, and thus creating value to the platforms that enable them to use it." Web 2.0 has progressed over the years from basic extraction of knowledge to interactive content, integration, and communication. [8] Social media is a wide concept that plays on software applications producing user-generated content that can be circulated. "Moreover, certain key aspects are required for a platform to fulfill the criteria as a social networking platform: the web page should include user accounts, posts, and a tool that enables users to communicate and post a comment over each other's accounts, and create digital groups based on common interests. Social media is unique as it makes it possible for users to connect by creating profiles with personal details and allows family members and friends to view the accounts. The organizations using social network as the marketing platform would better ascertain and monitor the consumers' technology readiness for, if the desired target audience is not using social media, or they are not familiar with it, or have interpretation barriers, their marketing on social media is going to be ineffective. Technology readiness research may decide if advertising through interactive media is an appropriate choice or not. Social media serves as a tool to help communities grow their non-profit organizations and allows people with particular preferences to interact, collaborate and synergize. It assists these organizations to establish connections and interact with their core supporters.

The nonprofit organization known as Best Friends Animal Society helps seemingly unadoptable dogs and cats find a home. They provide with a face detection option for users who want to adopt dogs enabling users to upload self-portraits and then find a dog companion for them. Big Brothers Big Sisters request respondents to post their narratives on YouTube for content uploading, and the corresponding video collection could then be posted via other channels to propagate their project and support their efforts [9]. There are non-profit organizations that have interconnected approaches to social media interaction and have gained wide recognition for their successful social media strategies. Sura, Ahn & Lee, 2017, state that NPOs have started to use the Internet and related cost-effective solutions focused on the Internet to take its advantage. Using Social media for funding, primarily to move from physical to electronic donations, has paved the way for effective, quicker, and direct money transfers. Instead of creating web sites, many NPOs often actively use blog posts and social media accounts as public affairs and campaigning resources. [10]

To engage in social media forums, there is no explicit expense. However, they do require a cost in terms of time. Once a nonprofit chooses to engage with a specific social media platform, it must also adhere to keeping the posts up-to-date and innovative. There should be relevant posts daily to keep the viewers informed; incompetence to do so or any gaps in the required efforts may lead to individuals not viewing the sites, unfollowing or dis-liking the business, and ultimately, not actively contributing either their time or funds. Recognizing that many non-profits have limited manpower capacity, using an interface like Hootsuite, effectively an exclusive-stop site for maintaining multiple social media accounts can prove to be advantageous for them. This software allows an organization to track what users think about it and provides immediate actions for responses. Hootsuite's user-friendly interface makes it easy to access sources of data from separate channels. It is often advised that freshers and interns should not be left to manage it. It should be the priority pursuit and engage some senior and seasoned staff. The CEO, for example, should provide feedback on social media outlets and address the donor's queries rather than an anonymous online content writer. Interacting with the CEO sends a strong message that the company truly cares for its donors and acknowledges their input. Besides, it is essential for non-profits to monitor the competitors on social media and to remain one click away to respond to any potential donors and users to secure their increasing involvement and pull them to your social media platforms. [11] Today, NPOs are leveraging on social media to raise awareness and to obtain online help through campaigns since it enables them to communicate fundraising information and knowledge of the social cause to the intended audience efficiently and economically. With so many figures to drive through and yet so many demographic groups using the Internet in distinct aspects, it may look overwhelming to link a non-profit with its intended audience. However, the wide spectrum of Internet users can create opportunities for organizations: personalized interactions can be productive as long as non-profit organizations make an effort to study how their audience uses the platform. Since non-profit organizations require funds to operate, it is not feasible for all non-profit organizations to have physical presence.

Below are the graphs which represent the social media statistics for non-profit organizations. (Non-Profit Source)

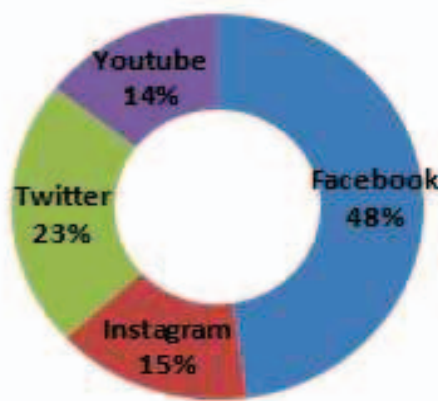


Fig.2, Source: NP Source, Social media platforms used by Non-profit organizations to establish a presence [22]

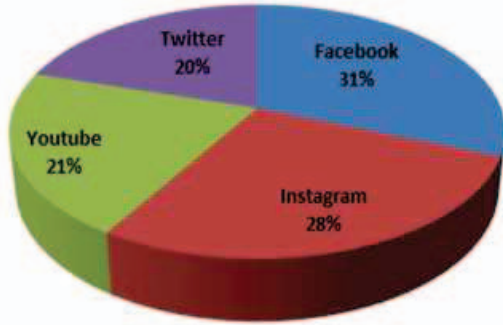


Fig. 3, Source: NP Source, Social media platforms of non-profit organizations widely viewed by users. [22]

A critical set of information for any marketing plan is consumer demographic information for any social media platform. It allows NPOs to understand which platform is doing well on social media and vice versa. It helps to make choices about analysis, publicity, and public relations. As the social space shifts continuously, the integrated aspects of social media, such as analytics and insights, help to provide updated figures to reconsider judgments and customize content in the direction the intended audience uses various types of platforms. In order to encourage the use of social media marketing for non-profit organizations they must work on comparing and contrasting their user insights and analytics to boost user engagement.

The objectives of the social media marketers among the non profits are primarily to raise fund, create brand image and its awareness, enlist volunteers and share the news and other developments on a regular basis, and social media is considered to be the most effective for all these purposes on account of its multiplier effect. Using interactive contents to promote participation, eye catching visuals and making use of hash tags can be the important components of the strategy. [18]

Making Impact with Little Budget

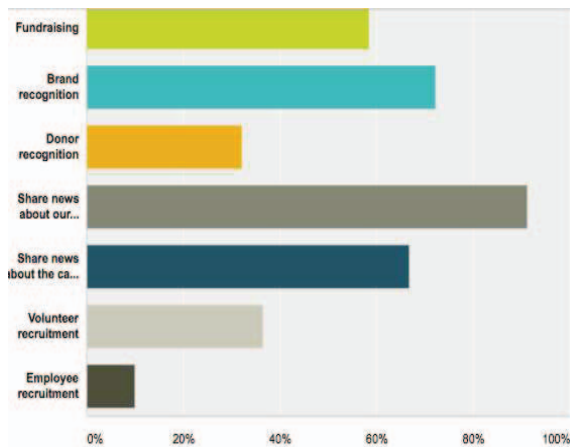


Fig 4: Source: "Social Media for Non Profits – How to make an Impact with Little Budget" [18]

The research has been carried out by analyzing the grounds whereupon different social media platforms are used by members of non-profit organizations and the different user demographics that influence the growth of social media platforms for any non-profit organization. The data are collected and combined from secondary means to highlight the significance of social media marketing for

non-profit organizations. The choice of social media platforms for spreading awareness is critical in making a difference. Non-profit organizations should carefully analyze the better performing and universally known social media platforms to intensify user engagement both horizontally and vertically and harvest an increase in page growth. Some of the popularly used social media platforms which can be used by non-profit organizations are Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, etc. Once non-profit organizations build their presence on the desired social media platforms they must focus on analyzing their intended audience with the help of inbuilt insights and analytical tools on social media platforms. They must then post the contents after examining the demographics of their users. Once the users are active, they gain more followers, impressions, and insights and the subsequent growth is exponential.

V. DEMOGRAPHICS OF SOCIAL MEDIA USERS

Proper analysis of the demographics of the social media users is the necessary homework before deciding upon the most suitable one. The demographic factors deserving consideration are listed below –

Demographics of Social Media Users

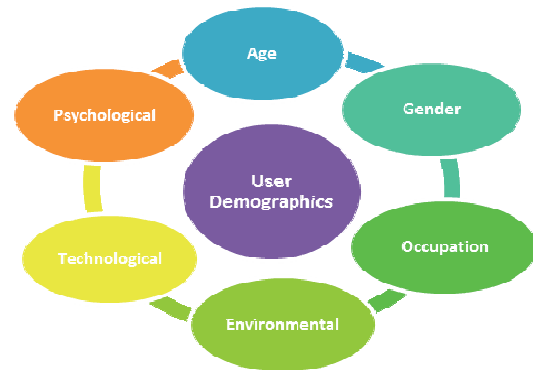


Fig. 5 Demographics of social media users (NPO's)

Age related Factors: As seen in the percentages, age is an essential predictor of social media adoption. Modern adults appear to socialize more often than the older population, thereby establishing the targeted audience for marketers.

Gender related Factors: Non-profit organizations should have a balance of both genders to increase user engagement. Men and women throughout various platforms have different levels of social interaction. Social networking is used by 74% of internet users, with women (76%) holding a narrow lead over men (72%).



Fig.6, Source: Tim, 2014, "How important is audience gender to social media planning for nonprofits?" [20]

Occupational Factors: When it comes to donating to a non-profit, occupation matters because it is the revenue source. When we think about embracing social media, it can be inferred that individuals with a secured job and income adapt to social media readily than the ones without jobs and income.

Environmental Factors: Environmental barriers are exterior and structural factors that affect the surroundings, such as encouraging and promoting incentives. The external factors likely induce b obstacles by bringing other media sites around, by the word of mouth operations of users against a unique social network. NPO's must carefully examine these barriers to overcome them and obtain success in their marketing strategy.

Technological Factors: NPO's must carefully analyze their target audience's acceptance towards technology and indulge in improving their social media platforms by keeping it user friendly. Since social media involves the use of the internet and technology, the interface becomes an obstacle for embracing it. As a means of seeking a purpose or helping an association, people may opt to have mass media. Besides, the social platform's integrity and anonymity will work poorly for social media acceptance.

Psychological Factors: The inner state, attitudes, values, and beliefs of an individual influence his or her decision to embrace a social media platform and actively support a non-profit organization. In order to not offend their adherents, NPOs must produce content by taking into consideration the universal values and opinions about a social cause.

Social Media Matters



Fig.7, Source: "Why Social Media Matters to Non-Profits [21]"

Therefore, this research has helped to understand how social media analytics operate and how non-profit organizations can achieve user engagement to grow their posts and followers organically. The social media platforms used the most worldwide in 2020 are YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and LinkedIn. This research has created a direction for non-profit organizations to adopt effective social media strategies to be recognized by their intended audience.

VI. CHALLENGES AND THE SOLUTIONS

Almost every nonprofit has a social media account with some objectives and aspirations, but mere presence on social media can never be a guarantee for achieving the targeted results. It is of great significance to use social media and leverage on its potential in full measure. It is important to establish that the objectives and the overall mission of the organization converges, and is relevant to, the needs of the audience. Content designing is of great significance in the success of any nonprofit when it uses the social media. Another area of challenge is the optimum utilization of the human and material resources as every nonprofit is under staffed and under resourced. [23]. An authentic connection with the audience is possible only

through designing an effective social media marketing strategy. Next comes the ability to lay down clearly the objectives to be achieved and measurability of their accomplishment. Another challenge is to create quality visuals and graphics and the contents that matter the most at any given point of time. [19] In deciding upon the content, though the quantity is critical to ensure visibility, the quality at the end of the day, must prevail over quantity. It is the quality of contents that establishes a brand rather than the quantity, though the latter deserves attention too and cannot be ignored. The next challenge is to take the contents to the wider audience. Every user of the social media has a specific networking which produces a multiplier effect through which the contents may be taken to a larger audience. The propensity to share with others some valuable and entertaining contents is the common psychology that needs to be played on. The challenge in designing the content is about arousing the intensity first to react and then to share.

VII. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study has discovered that non-profit organizations can raise awareness about their initiative by being innovative while engaging with users on social media platforms. The users active on social media such as Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn depend on them for quality content, information, and campaigns hosted by non-profit organizations to contribute towards the social cause. Social media networks like Facebook are found to be stronger than other marketing avenues. It retains information of all its users, the inbuilt insights and analytics feature that help to analyze the marketing activity of organizations along with the responses of their targeted audience. Many non-profit organizations have managed to gain recognition and have achieved their objectives economically merely through social media platforms. This research encourages non-profit organizations to adopt social media marketing as their primary marketing method and guides them to gear up for tackling the challenges effectively. The strategic ways and means of exploring the full potential of social media platform through its optimum utilization while minimizing resource use and appropriate content creation are the areas opened up by the instant paper for further research.

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